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**Pursuing progress:
Urban-urban migration and meanings of
being middle class in Ethiopia**

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Submitted for Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology

University of Sussex

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ANTHROPOLOGY

PURSuing PROGRESS:
URBAN-URBAN MIGRATION AND MEANINGS OF BEING
MIDDLE CLASS IN ETHIOPIA

SUMMARY

Over the past two decades, major political, economic and social shifts have reshaped hierarchical relations in Ethiopia. The country has seen new dynamics of ethnic power relations and a rapid expansion of higher education, while the government's authoritarian developmental discourse has permeated people's lives and influenced their everyday perspectives on modernity and progress. Taking these conditions as its starting point, this thesis examines how people have responded to social change as individuals and in connection to relationships with others. It interrogates how these broader patterns of social relations have transformed through urban to urban migration – an important form of migration in Ethiopia, yet one that is largely unexamined within studies of Ethiopian migration. To understand the sociocultural dimensions of these processes, this thesis analyses the formations of hierarchical relations in terms of class, drawing strongly on Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) class theory and elaboration of cultural, material, social and symbolic capital. Through an emphasis on the contextual values of capital in Ethiopia, this thesis focuses on how migration to modern places creates the opportunities for new interactions with people of diverse backgrounds. In doing so, the thesis analyses how urban to urban migration shapes the possession and use of various forms of capital. The study employs higher education, ethnicity and progress as lenses to identify how everyday social processes surrounding urban to urban migration produce social distinctions. The ethnographic research that led to this analysis drew out the intersections and tensions between physical movement and social mobilities by relying on a multi-sited approach, with research carried out in Adigrat and Addis Ababa. Throughout, the thesis explores its central aim, which is to interrogate the role of urban to urban migration in generating a group with distinct cultural practices and shared characteristics that can be described as being middle class in contemporary Ethiopia.

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1. The relationship between urban migration and being middle class

1.1 Introduction - On the *Selam Bus*

Early in the crisp, clear morning before the sun came up and while most urban dwellers were still asleep, travellers gradually arrived at the point in Mekelle where the Selam Bus departs for the journey to Addis Ababa. Soon after, the big green-coloured vehicle, with 'Selam Bus' written in large letters on the side, pulled up. The travellers lined up with their luggage and patiently waited to have it loaded into the storage compartments before boarding and finding the seat number assigned on their tickets. With the passengers seated, all luggage and cargo loaded, and some final preparations sorted out, the bus started moving towards the capital. The lights inside were switched off and most people dozed off until about an hour later when daylight broke. The bus was travelling at high speeds through the winding mountain roads, keeping the assistant busy with frantic shouts of 'festa, festa!' to get a plastic bag handed over to someone getting car sick before it was too late. Upon reaching more pleasant stretches of the road, the assistant handed out bottled water and fresh bread for breakfast and put on an Ethiopian film on the two TV-screens.

Having arrived in the hot, small town where we were to spend the night, a fellow traveller who I had chatted to earlier helped me find a room in the large compound where the bus was parked. Over dinner, the man – Shiferaw, who was in his late 20s, and from Addis Ababa - told me that he had been to Axum, also located in the Tigray region but four to five hours travel north-west of Mekelle, to celebrate an annual Christian celebration of Saint Mary with his two sisters. They had flown there together, but because of the large number of pilgrims they had only obtained two tickets for his sisters to return by plane. I inquired about his background and economic situation that enabled his family to fly, and why he was willing to travel by bus for two days when he could have found a flight from Mekelle. Shiferaw said that he had studied at Addis Ababa University and had his own shoe shop in the Mercato area of the capital. Business was going well and he could afford to travel for leisure, but having already taken buses from Axum to Mekelle he said he could save a good amount of money continuing by bus instead of flying.

As I got to know more people on the Selam Bus, I gradually came to realise that many of the other travellers shared characteristics with Shiferaw. There were both men and women who had higher education, were employed or had their own business. Some were migrating to attend university or to find better employment, while others were visiting family or going for business. Considering that the route was between the Tigray region and the capital, many travellers were from the Tigrayan ethnic group. Despite their individual differences, varying reasons of travel and intended final destinations, the travellers on this fast, reliable service with comfortable seats, movies as well as drinks and snacks, had one thing in common: they were covering large distances on what many spoke of as the most modern bus service available in the country.

While recent changes have intensified urban-urban migration over the past two decades, this form of migration has been important in Ethiopia at least since the early 1970s (Bjeren, 1985). Still, little is known about these movements in the Ethiopian context,

particularly regarding who exactly engages in urban-urban migration, and why. Most of the travellers on the *Selam Bus* – as described in the anecdote above – did not have the means to take internal flights, but they were willing and able to pay for the comfort of this form of bus travel over cheaper, less spacious and slower overland alternatives. On a superficial level, these distinctions appear to be economic. A closer look at the backgrounds of the *Selam Bus* travellers, however, indicate that they apparently share much in terms of education, approach to physical movements and other sociocultural characteristics that are not necessarily strictly or directly related to economics. These distinctions set them apart from both the elite in Ethiopia, as well as the majority of the population that live more precarious lives. In a sense, therefore they could be described as ‘middle class’. But what does this mean in the Ethiopian context?

In the context of sub-Saharan Africa more generally, recent socioeconomic transformations have increasingly been analysed as the emergence of a middle class (Melber, 2016). In this, some academic and influential intergovernmental commentators (such as the African Development Bank) have focused only on economic aspects in their accounts of the expansion of middle classes in the continent. However, as I will elaborate below, other sociocultural processes, including migration, are also significant in shaping class distinctions and it is these that I seek to explore in this thesis. While urban to urban migration in Ethiopia has not been widely considered in academic literature, it seems to be one of the areas in which such social distinctions become especially apparent.

The remainder of this introductory chapter frames the subsequent exploration of the relationship between migration and class that is the focus of this thesis. Migration obviously requires money, yet the crucial link between migration and class is constituted by symbolic, social and cultural meanings and practices, not simply material ones – a perspective that draws strongly on Bourdieu (1984, 1986). The chapter also outlines how migration and class have been researched and understood both historically and contemporarily in sub-Saharan Africa, and identifies three specific lenses that illustrate recent transformations in Ethiopia through which the role of urban-urban migration in constructing meanings of being middle class can be analysed.

1.2 Emerging middle classes

Recent economic and social transformations have led to a considerable discussion of what it means to be middle class in sub-Saharan Africa (Resnick, 2015a). With high

GDP growth rates in several countries in the continent, notably Chad, Ivory Coast, Mozambique and Ethiopia, it has been claimed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) that ‘the middle class in Africa’ has risen from 126 million people in 1990 to 350 million in 2010 (AfDB, 2011). Such classifications are based a definition of the ‘middle class’ as all those living on the local equivalents of between \$2 and \$20 per day. Within this, it is proposed that there are three sub-categories: the ‘floating class’ living on \$2-4 a day, the ‘lower middle’ from \$4-10 and the ‘upper middle’ from \$10-20 (AfDB, 2011). This definition of middle class is purely based on the access to and possession of economic capital.

There have also been attempts to establish broader trends and characteristics of being middle class through the focus on shifting patterns of consumption as a response to the impacts of globalised capitalism across the Global South, regardless of contextual variations and emic constructs of social hierarchies. For example, in a study of middle classes ‘around the world’ (13 low-income countries), Banerjee and Duflo suggest that nothing ‘seems more middle class than the fact of having a steady well-paying job’ (2008, p.16). Such employment, they argue, enables people to develop particular patterns of consumption of food, entertainment, and domestic infrastructure, and also enhances their human capital through investments in health and education (ibid.). Also Liechty (2003, p.30) points out that ‘class and consumption have to be seen as mutually constitutive cultural processes’. In newspaper articles and reports, the increase in income among some groups is discussed in relation to changes in consumption patterns and regularly referred to as a transformation that reflects the ‘emerging middle classes’ in sub-Saharan Africa (Chimhanzi and Gounden, 2013; Jackson, 2016; The Economist, 2011; Tschirley et al., 2015). Although these representations and classification may give us an indication of certain characteristics associated with what it means to be middle class in low-income countries in the continent, the predominant focus on economic capital and consumption does not necessarily explain people’s experiences of privilege and inequality.

The use of class as an economic category suggests that social mobility is only dependent on increased income and wealth. Such an understanding resembles approaches to ‘human capital’ wherein individuals’ agency and particularly the pursuit of education have been considered central in increasing their economic situations and transforming their social positions (see e.g. Becker, 1964; Mincer and Polachek, 1974). However, these approaches have been criticised for overlooking cultural boundaries to

social mobility by, among others, Bourdieu (1984). Similarly, the more recent economic explanations of class in sub-Saharan Africa have been problematized. For example, Cheeseman (2015) and Resnick (2015b) criticise the tendency to generalise and present middle classes in sub-Saharan Africa as coherent groups with particular attributes based on economic criteria for not reflecting people's lived 'realities'.

The applicability of the term middle class to the Ethiopian context has also been problematized. Through ethnographic research and interviews with a wide range of people in Addis Ababa, such as shopkeepers, investors, garage owners, teachers and brokers, Nallet (2015) finds that the differences in people's social background, life trajectories, income and capacity to save, consume and invest give rise to different 'intermediate social groups' and argues that the concept of middle class is not suitable for this context. Nallet (2015) categorises three separate groups: a) people in precarious situations who have enough income to cover essential and occasionally discretionary expenses, but are at risk of descending into poverty at any time because their situation fluctuates depending on the political and economic context; b) people between the ages of 40 and 70, mostly working as civil servants, who have relatively higher incomes and a degree of security, such as owning their own house, and; c) youth who work in the private sector, have higher income and few economic responsibilities because they live with their families while waiting for the right time to get their own house and family. Her categorisation of three 'intermediate social groups' is based on degree of economic security and likelihood of falling back into poverty, which clearly resembles the African Development Bank's sub-divisions of 'middle class', but Nallet (2015) argues that the recent promotions of 'middle classes' in Africa by the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the media, are part of a strategy to portray images of economic development, democracy and stability emerging from the neoliberal ideology that has dominated in recent decades. Because hierarchical relations are more complex and the notion of middle class does not sufficiently explain contemporary conditions, Nallet (2015) argues that the term middle class is not well suited to describe the socioeconomic inequalities in the Ethiopian context. Cohesive middle classes with clear boundaries cannot be identified as an empirical reality in any context, but this does not necessarily mean that we have to dismiss the concept.

In sub-Saharan Africa, however, the term middle class is also frequently used as a backdrop or used in simplified ways without further examination in qualitative studies focused on analysing contemporary social life (Neubert and Stoll, 2014). Such

problematic employment of the term can be found also in anthropological studies of, for example, modernity in Togo (Piot, 2010) and international migration from Nigeria (Kastner, 2013) and Eritrea (Treiber, 2013). The term has also been taken for granted in studies in the Ethiopian context. A case in point is Abbink (2006, p.176) who suggests that the setback of the ‘process of democratization’ can partly be related to the ‘lack of a countervailing middle class in Ethiopia’. In the same article, however, he points out that for the 2005 elections the main opposition party:

was led by people from the urban middle class like Berhanu Nega, a well-known economist, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, an influential, retired professor, Lidetu Ayalew, a politician of the young generation, Hailu Shawel, a veteran businessman and former vice-minister, and Yaqob Haile-Mariam, a respected international legal expert (2006, p.181).

Abbink’s presentation of the opposition party leaders suggests that he considers there to be an urban middle class that is predominantly determined by people’s occupations and income. Although employment is clearly an important factor for accessing material capital in Ethiopia, without clarifying the social and cultural meanings of employment and the lifestyles it enables, the relationship to middle class remains an assumption. Melber argues against the slippery engagement with the term in research on sub-Saharan Africa and suggests: “‘Middle class’ is increasingly used in an inflationary sense to cover almost everything ‘in between’, thereby signifying little or nothing [...] and is devoid of almost any analytical substance’ (2013, p.115). The fact that middle class is often taken for granted in studies or is used in problematic ways suggests that there is an ambiguity surrounding meanings of class, and, as Mercer (2014, p.4) explains; ‘representation of Africa’s growing middle class as a homogeneous urbanized group with predictable economic, political and consumer behaviours is problematic when we know so little about them.’

There are, however, studies that consider the local processes that shape distinct meanings of being middle class in the continent. In Spronk’s (2012) research on sexual relations and leisure among Kenyan professionals, she takes the historical context into account to examine how her informants ‘embody postcolonial transformations, and in their ensuing lifestyles constructions of sexuality, gender and culture come to shift, engendering new modes of being oriented in the world’ (2012, p.16). By highlighting how historical patterns in Kenya have shaped contemporary cultural aspects of class, her study shows how being middle class is not only related to employment and income, but also to lifestyles that have emerged in this specific context. Her study demonstrates

the value of focusing on cultural processes, rather than access to economic capital, to analyse constructions of middle class.

It is clear that the recent economic transformations have induced more research on what it means to be middle class in sub-Saharan Africa and the Global South. This focus comes after a period where some academics have questioned the applicability of class as an analytical tool. About two decades ago, Pakulski and Waters (1995) announced the ‘death of class’. They argued that public attention had moved away from class and intellectual trends had changed to other models that could better explain social realities: ‘We believe not that class theory and analysis were a waste of intellectual effort but rather that their season and purpose have come to an end’ (Pakulski and Waters, 1995, p.vii). In this research landscape, where the concept of class has in some cases been deemed superfluous, the term middle class is used in oversimplified ways and sometimes taken for granted, I follow Ortner who argued that class remains a valuable social theory by arguing that classes ‘are not objects “out there,” but there *is* something out there in the way of inequality, privilege, and social difference which the idea of “class” is meant to capture’ (1998, p.8). In her terms, a class framework enables me to analyse and explain my observations of social differentiations in the field sites and to study how urban migration shaped social relations.

1.3 Developing an approach to class

While there are many different theories of class that can explain different elements of social relationships, the advantage of Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) theory of class is that it provides a framework for analysing the forms of social differentiation I observed during my field work. Bourdieu’s (1984) emphasis on the reproduction of social structure through social practice enables me to identify how social, cultural and relational aspects of class were produced and reproduced through urban migration in the context of Ethiopia. Bourdieu (1984) wrote against perspectives that suggest that individuals could permeate cultural boundaries and shift their class positions through education and increased income, in defence of a Marxist perspective to develop a comprehensive theory of the reproduction of class and the complex processes that sustain social distinctions and hierarchies.

In Marx’s view, class is constructed through unequal access to resources and the central criterion for individuals’ class positions was their relation to modes of production in the capitalist system (1978 [1867]). Marx found there to be two

fundamental classes in opposition to each other at that particular stage of history: the suppressed workers and the owners of the means of production. He did not consider this dichotomous relationship to be static, and at the point when the 'working class' developed a 'class consciousness', Marx (1978 [1867]) argued, people would contest the material inequalities and challenge the class divisions, which would eventually give rise to a more egalitarian system at the next historical stage of socialism.

Building and elaborating on Marx's ideas, Bourdieu (1984) developed an analysis of how hierarchical relations are produced and reproduced through the intersections of cultural, material (economic), social, and symbolic capitals. Cultural capital is embodied in individuals' behaviour through their skills in navigating institutionalised power structures, such as in education. Material capital is the resources people have access to, and is part of a broader institutionalised system wherein privileged individuals benefit and can accumulate more capital, for example through property rights and ownership. Similarly, social capital reflects formal and informal networks that people can draw upon for support and access to resources, and how these relations reinforce class positions. Symbolic capital is dependent on individuals' having the knowledge to use and engage with objects and relations within a system of value and meaning, and refers to the ways in which people distinguish themselves from other others through taste in food, art and lifestyle more generally. By highlighting that class position does not only depend on material capital, but that the privilege of elites is reproduced through particular values of capitals and intersections between them that are not readily available to people from other backgrounds, Bourdieu (1984) argued that opportunities for social mobility remain limited. In a later work, Bourdieu (1986) also introduced the idea that capitals can be 'converted'. In combination with his original theory of capitals, this refinement enables me to analyse how individuals' renegotiate their class positions through, for instance, sharing their material capital in ways that transforms it into symbolic capital.

Bourdieu's recognition of the importance of culture and status in constructions of class was partly drawn from Weber's class theory. His analysis of 'occupational status', 'chances in life' and people's lifestyles enabled an approach to class that was more centred on the role of culture and status than Marxist approaches, and Weber explained that 'a class situation is one in which there is a shared typical probability of procuring goods, gaining a position in life, and finding inner satisfaction' (1978, p.302). In addition, Weber took into account individuals' particular skills and that commodities

of labour are valued within a 'market' that offer people chances in life, which has led to a shift in focus from means of production to consumption, particularly in studies of middle class.

Scholars continue to engage with both Marx and Weber to study class. Liechty, for instance, proposes that an 'anthropology of middle-class cultural practice needs to unite a Weberian sensitivity to the powerful role of culture in social life with a Marxian commitment to locate different forms of cultural practice in the context of unequal distributions of power and resources in society' (2003, p.12). However, Carrier opposes such an approach and suggests that Marx and Weber 'were creatures of their times, and the nature of their simplifications and purifications became apparent as time passed' (2015, p.34). Bourdieu's (1984) theory of class unites these foundational works in a way that has made their insights suitable to study contemporary conditions. His approach to how social hierarchies, inequalities and differentiation are shaped through sociocultural constructs of the values of material, social, cultural and symbolic capitals, enables me identify how engagements with urban-urban migration produces and reproduces social hierarchies, inequalities and differentiation in ways that reflect being middle class in contemporary Ethiopia. Rather than following intergovernmental institutions more common determination of classes based on income, I will use the term middle class to identify individuals' possession and use of various forms of capital. By referring to being middle class, I am emphasising the formation of a loosely defined group through individuals' shared characteristics in terms of their education, wealth, networks, aspirations and values.

Bourdieu's (1984) scholarship on capitals has been applied widely to examine reproduction, negotiations and contestations of social positions throughout the world. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, for example, Mercer (2014) explores how people in Tanzania distinguish themselves from others through housing and the use of new designs, materials, and interiors from different parts of the world and argues that the processes of negotiating material culture illustrate how being middle class is interconnected with lifestyles, values and consumption habits (*ibid.*). In Bourdieu's (1986) terms, she shows how economic capital is converted into symbolic capital, but her study also shows that these processes and meanings of being middle class in contemporary Tanzania have emerged in a particular cultural context. Consequently, local cultural processes in other locations will generate other constructions of class.

The varieties of meanings of class are of particular importance to migrants. Different systems of meaning may decrease or increase the values of the capitals migrants possess, which gives rise to what Nieswand (2011) has coined the ‘status paradox of migration’. He argues that being in different locations has transformative implications for migrants’ status, such as, for instance, when migrants from a ‘higher class’ find themselves in ‘low-status’ positions in a country of destination. An example of such dynamics is Erel’s (2010) study of Turkish and Kurdish migrants in the United Kingdom and Germany. She examines how cultural practices become cultural capital and argues that the meanings of practices differ depending on the local, national and transnational context. By problematizing the idea of ‘cultural capital as transported from one country to another’ (2010, p.643), Erel explains that these migrants use the resources they brought with them to navigate among diverse migrant groups and the society they live in. These insights suggest that the ‘friction’ (Tsing, 2005) that arises in encounters between people from different backgrounds makes migration a compelling case for examining constructions of class relations, but also that Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) work on capitals is most suitable for this research to analyse class. To pursue my examination of the relationship between class and migration, I now shift the focus to consider how these dynamics have been addressed historically in academic literature.

1.4 Urban migration and ‘social change’ in sub-Saharan Africa

While arguably rare, there has in recent decades been research that contributes to the understanding of class and urban-urban migration in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, Brockerhoff and Biddlecom (1998) focus on people who migrate between urban areas. They find significant differences across gender and migration patterns in their research on high-risk sexual behaviours and HIV in Kenya, and suggest that urban-urban migration is associated with people who have different characteristics in terms of employment and economic capital from the poor people who engage in other patterns of migration. Although Brockerhoff and Biddlecom (1998) do not use class as their central tool of analysis, they highlight the importance of class in different patterns of internal migration, which suggests that research on this urban-urban migration pattern can shed new light on long-standing questions about the relationship between migration and class in the continent.

Until the late 1950s, migration was framed as a ‘problem’ and concerns over ‘detrribalisation’ were raised both by colonial powers as well as scholars associated with

them (Richards, 1939; Schapera, 1947). Anthropological studies were also influenced by this ‘sedentarist bias’ in which migration was seen as a form of deviance, potentially threatening social order (Malkki, 1992, 1995), and anthropologists generally preferred studying ‘spatially bounded’ communities and unravelling their social and cultural order, rather than processes of change, which migration often represents (Vertovec, 2007). However, colonialism produced radical social, economic and political changes, implemented ‘racial’ segregation, and also intensified labour migration (Kuper, 1965; Meillassoux, 1970; Mitchell and Epstein, 1959). With increasing movements of people in the parts of the world where anthropologists traditionally conducted research, it became impossible to ignore migration and increasingly necessary to reconsider ideas of ‘cultures as discretely bounded, territorialized, relatively unchanging, and homogenous units’ (Brettell, 2000, p.97). It was especially anthropologists associated with the ‘Manchester School’, such as Gluckman (1963, 1965), Epstein (1958, 1967) and Mitchell (1969) who worked in and around the ‘Copperbelt’ in Zambia, who developed more nuanced understandings of migration through their examinations of the processes of ‘social change’ in relation to the movements from subsistence agriculture to waged labour in urban industrial centres.

The industrialisation and urbanisation taking place across sub-Saharan Africa became part of a broader narrative of modernisation. Kearney (1986) has pointed out that modernisation studies especially in the 1950s and 1960s were ‘urban-centric’ and based on dualist assumptions between city and countryside, developed and underdeveloped, and modern versus traditional. The predominance of ‘modernisation theory’ led to an increase in studies of rural-urban migration, which was commonly explained through rural poverty (e.g. Gugler and Flanagan, 1978). Migration came to be understood as a form of modernisation and Gluckman (1961) considered it to play a central role in what he (mistakenly) envisioned as the ‘African Industrial Revolution’. Within this perspective, migrants ‘were seen as progressive types who would have a positive impact on development by bringing back to their home communities innovations and knowledge that would break down traditionalism’ (Kearney, 1986, p.333). Such assumptions contributed to migration from underdeveloped rural areas to developed cities (or countries) being seen as a ‘natural’ part of modernisation.

The focus on internal migration, and in particular rural-urban migration, brought forward new analyses of class. Such studies often highlighted how social hierarchies in urban contexts were significantly different from their more ‘simple’ rural origins

(Henderson, 1966). For instance, the ‘changes in distribution of power, interests, institutional arrangements, norms of conduct, and social values’ (Kuper, 1965, p.1) were being researched to understand how rural-urban migration transformed social relations. With the shifting focus from rural societies to cities and towns it became more popular to study class from the 1950s (e.g. Cohen, 1969; Epstein, 1958; Mitchell, 1969). The interest in more complex compositions of people and the stratification among them led to a new anthropological political economy where left-oriented ‘anthropologists responded by developing analyses based on world-system and modes of production models derived from a Marxian tradition’ (Kalb, 2015, p.8). A call by Meillassoux (1972), clearly inspired by Marx’s work, for more anthropological research on the social organisation of production, in terms of who controls labour and products, as well as how the economic system was reproduced, illustrates the increasing interest in the complexities of class in urban centres.

The emphasis on rural-urban migration and its role in ‘modernisation’ and constructions of class have been problematized in more recent academic literature. Ferguson has criticised the modernisation approach and the ideas that the transformations would lead to a ‘Western-style industrial modernity’ (1999, p.5). Moreover, he argued that rural-urban migration and permanent urbanisation in the Copperbelt became a myth that continued to circulate for several decades well up into the 1980s, as he explained; ‘a developmental process of transition from an initial migrant labor phase of short-term, cyclical male migration to a final phase of permanent urbanization characterized by life-long urban settlement, is not supported by the evidence’ (1999, p.78). Instead, Ferguson (1999) found that different patterns of migration were prevalent also in the past. For instance, when employment opportunities and means for getting by declined in cities people moved to rural areas to seek cheaper and more sustainable livelihoods. Ferguson’s critique showed that migration patterns in sub-Saharan Africa are not linear or ‘permanent’, but rather that people move in various directions for different lengths of time depending on their livelihoods and how they consider their prospects in different contexts. Although Ferguson (1999) prefers the term ‘style’ to emphasise the performative aspects of practices, his study makes it clear that class plays a central role for people’s migration choices as well as how migrations unfold.

During colonialism, and in the years after, studies of urban migration and class in sub-Saharan Africa often focused on poor people, in opposition to the ‘bourgeois’ or

white colonisers. Such research tended to draw on Marxist perspectives and centre on the idea of inherent conflict in the capitalist system or on how the 'lower classes' were exploited for their labour by the 'ruling classes' in cities. For example, Jeffries (1975, p.70) examined strikes among railway workers in Ghana and took that to mean increasing 'class consciousness' because 'unionised workers [were] expressing a generalized awareness of shared interests and shared oppression with other classes among the poor'. Also Sklar (1963), in his study of political parties in Nigeria, argued that 'class consciousness' was on the rise and new class formations were being shaped. Such transformations were reported across the continent, and Mitchell and Epstein predicted that it was 'possible that with the increasing differentiation of urban African populations on the basis of wealth, skills, education, standards of living, and so on, a class structure on the lines of the Western model may well develop' (1959, p.36). Similarly, Wallerstein (1967) emphasised the role of the emerging middle class for nationalist movements in West Africa. These, and a range of other studies, contributed to diversify perspectives on social relations in sub-Saharan Africa, but also highlighted the contestations over social inequalities in the continent.

The emphasis on the implications of rural-urban migration has, as Ferguson (1999) argued, left patterns such as urban-urban migration largely unattended in research of sub-Saharan African contexts. An example of this trend is Adepoju's (1995) overview of migration in the continent where he acknowledges that urban-urban migration is the predominant form of movement. Still, he chooses to pay more attention to other patterns. Following a comprehensive overview of international, rural-rural and rural-urban migration during colonial as well as postcolonial times Adepoju (1995, p.93) presents statistics from Ghana's census in 1984 where he demonstrates that 34% of internal migration was urban-urban migration. Rural-urban migration was less common being only 16%, whereas urban-rural migration counted for 22% (ibid.). Apart from stating that the trend of urban-urban migration is 'not surprising' considering that 83% of industrial establishments are in Accra and two other urban areas, he does not attempt to explain the circumstances that lead to such migration or the outcomes of this pattern; nor does he analyse it in terms of class. Rather, his overview reiterates the stereotypical representations of migration in sub-Saharan Africa as related to 'extremely low income, the unfavourable rural socio-economic structure, low skills in peasant farming, displacement of small farmers for large-scale farming, landlessness, and concentration of available land in the hands of few landlords' (Adepoju, 1995, p.92).

The avoidance of class in some studies of migration can partly be understood in relation to broader historical claims that class differentiation was non-existent in sub-Saharan Africa. Such understandings were, for instance, based on claims that income disparities did not materialise into social inequalities and ‘class consciousness’ because of strong networks between rich and poor (Hydén, 1983, p.22). Also Lewis (1965) in his study of politics in West Africa suggested that there was limited class differentiation, and for Young (1986, p.422), class only became central after colonialism in the 1970s when ‘transformations in the intellectual milieu’ started to reflect political changes. These views are clearly in contrast to the studies that have used class as a tool of analysis in the continent and illustrate an historical ambiguity towards the subject. Although no full conclusions were reached about the relationship between urban migration and class in literature on sub-Saharan Africa, researchers gradually shifted their focus away from migration within countries towards international migration and the transnational relations that arise through these movements.

Revisiting long-running themes in the anthropology of migration into sub-Saharan African cities and how authors associated with the ‘Manchester School’ approached class, allows for considering old issues in a new way. The transformations that have taken place in Ethiopia through the expansion of higher education, new ethnic power dynamics and a politicisation of ethnicity, as well as a state-led discourse of development and modernity are central changes that have influenced social relations. Employing Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) scholarship on capitals to analyse how social hierarchies are reproduced and contested through being ‘on the move’ in contemporary Ethiopia enables a study of how the relationship between migration and social mobility - the key topic of my ethnography – and the processes through which meanings of being middle class are shaped and reshaped.

1.5 Contemporary migration and class

In recent years, there has been an increase in scholarly attention to the implications of migration in constructions of class - and vice versa (e.g. Van Hear, 2014; Nieswand, 2011). Cresswell (2010, p.22) emphasises that human mobility ‘is one of the major resources of 21st-century life and that it is the differential distribution of this resource that produces some of the starkest differences today’. Somewhat similarly, Van Hear (2014, p.S101) argues that people’s capacity to migrate internationally depend on their class background and that class shapes ‘the routes would-be migrants can take, the

channels they can follow, the destinations they can reach, and their life chances afterward.’ Research on a wider range of migration patterns has led to an increased awareness of class in these processes. For example, studies of ‘lifestyle migration’ have demonstrated the significance of class in determining migration outcomes (Benson, 2011; Benson and O’Reilly, 2009). These studies reflect the broader shift towards studies of international migration and transnational relations, but also highlight that migration is central for the reproduction and contestation of privilege and inequality and have brought forward new perspectives on constructions of class.

Research on migration in the Global South, however, has often been of an applied nature, frequently with development related objectives and, as a result, has more often emphasised poorer groups of migrants. Conditions of economic hardship; environmental degradation; conflict and war in places of origin; dangerous migration journeys; and the difficulties of ‘being illegal’ and of ‘integration’ in destinations are among the concerns that have been given particular attention. One reason for the extensive focus on such issues is, as Olwig (2007, p.28) suggests, that ‘the very notion of migration has a class bias’. She argues that there is a tendency in studies of migration to focus on people from ‘lower-class’ backgrounds, which shapes the kind of knowledge we have about such processes. Similarly, in a volume focusing primarily on migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, pp.7–8) argue that what is often referred to as ‘economic migration’ is widely perceived to be mainly undertaken by people who are ‘considered economically and politically deprived and seek betterment of their circumstances.’

Such understandings are also reflected in studies of migration towards richer countries in Europe and North America. Gardner and Osella (2004, p.xi) pinpoint a ‘northern bias’ in migration studies, wherein international migration to ‘the West’ is given more attention than internal migration and places of origin. An example of this is the prevailing focus on international migration to Europe and concern for the large amounts of migrants who are expected to arrive unless such movements are restrained (Collier, 2013), as the discourse surrounding the ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015 illustrates (Hage, 2016; Holmes and Castañeda, 2016). Although the focus on people in unfortunate situations often brings forward critical perspectives on governments, environmental conditions and economic structures, it also risks ‘naturalising’ the idea of migration as inherently related to ‘problems’ and overlooks how patterns of migration produce new hierarchical relations.

Nowhere is the narrative of ‘problems’ more prevalent and has impacted how studies of migration have been conducted than in sub-Saharan Africa. Comaroff (2007) has pointed out that Africa is commonly thought of as a continent ravaged by poverty, war, disease and other disasters, and Flahaux and De Haas (2016, p.1) suggest that ‘the portrayal of Africa as a “continent on the move” is linked to stereotypical ideas of Africa as a continent of poverty and conflict.’ More broadly, it has been argued that migration is ‘a “normal” element of most, if not all societies’ (de Haan, 1999, pp.1–2), and in recent years, there has been an increasing recognition that migration is predominantly related to work, study and family also in sub-Saharan Africa (Bakewell and Jónsson, 2011; Schoumaker et al., 2013). This is exemplified by Flahaux and De Haas (2016) who refer to UNHCR numbers suggesting that 14 per cent of international migrants in Africa are refugees or in refugee-like situations, which they take to mean that the vast majority of migration is not caused by conflict. Similarly, Bakewell and Bonfiglio (2013, p.4) argue that although forced migration in the African Great Lakes region cannot be overlooked, it would be ‘equally wrong to neglect the ongoing, perhaps mundane social processes that drive mobility, such as the search for an education, a spouse or a better life in the city.’ Also Adepoju (2006) suggests that internal, urban-centred migration for higher education is a significant pattern of migration in the continent. By focusing on urban-urban migration, a pattern that is not associated with poverty, but rather with higher education, employment and leisure, this thesis emphasises a form of movement that is constitutive of daily life and seeks to shed new light on the relationship between migration and meanings of being middle class in Ethiopia.

While studies of migration have become increasingly complex and focused on new dimensions, the notion of migration itself has sometimes been contested and reconsidered in studies of migration. Van Dijk *et al.* (2001) argue that in much research there is an inherent assumption of sedentarism because it is often referred to as a change of residence across administrative boundaries. Such understandings privilege state-set boundaries over people’s experiences, and commonly see migration as a permanent movement from one location to another. On the other side of the scale, the ‘mobility paradigm’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006) focuses more upon ‘constant’ movements of people, such as business travel and commuting, but also draws attention to the mobilities of, for instance, objects, services, practices and values. While both sets of literature – ‘classical’ migration studies and mobility studies - offer important insights into different

forms of physical movement between locations, there are also forms of migration that are neither ‘permanent’ nor ‘constant’. King (2012, p.136) explains migration to be a process where people are ‘looking for a place to stop and settle down, at least for a while’. By drawing on perspectives that are more common in studies of mobilities, King (2012) emphasises that migration can be frequent and unpredictable, and recognises that people’s attitudes towards dwelling and onward migration are flexible. In this thesis, I refer to migration as a process that involves crossing of administrative boundaries and involves a substantial period in other urban centres, and I use the term urban-urban migration to refer to both temporal and permanent relocation, as well as the journeys and movements between locations.

1.6 Class in the urban Ethiopian context

The change of regimes in 1991 has affected class relations in Ethiopia. Bach (2011) argues that the ‘revolutionary democracy’ the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) claims to promote draws heavily on the ideology that shaped the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front’s (TPLF) war against the *Derg*, and that the current government’s ideology is a bricolage of Leninism, Marxism, Maoism as well as liberalism that it uses to stay in power. For instance, the government’s decision to maintain the nationalised land-ownership that the *Derg* implemented is in contrast to its claimed liberalist ideology (Abbink, 2009). Under these conditions, development has emerged as a concept that bridges these ideologies, and the current government claims to gradually turn Ethiopia into a full-fledged democracy and make it a ‘middle-income country’ where inequality will consequently be reduced (see e.g. Orłowska, 2013). To analyse class relations in these circumstances, the contemporary local values of capitals need to be considered. For instance, the value of material capital may have been reshaped through neoliberal policies and global capitalism, the values of cultural capital may have shifted and challenged social hierarchies through expansion of higher education. Also what constitutes social capital may be transforming where new networks are established through new patterns of migration, and, likewise, values of symbolic capital need to be assessed in relation to shifting ideas of modernity and progress. Consequently, in order to analyse the relationship between migration and what it means to be middle class, I here consider historical hierarchical relations and contemporary approaches to class in Ethiopia.

Historically, shortages of land contributed to a sharp distinction between land owners and peasants in highland Ethiopia, and the regular surplus of agricultural production ‘was adequate enough to support a class-divided society representing the classic trinity of peasant, warrior-ruler and priest’ (Markakis and Ayele, 1986, p.21). From the 1890s, however, the Amhara empire expanded into the southern and western lowlands partly in response to an increasing need for land (Donham and James, 1986). While the historical class relations persisted in highland Ethiopia, Jalata (2009) has referred to the expansion as a ‘colonisation’ where local people, such as Oromos, were subjugated by the Amharas. These hierarchical relations were briefly disturbed by the Italian colonial presence (1936-1941), but the occupation of Ethiopia influenced local power dynamics less than the major social reconfigurations the rest of the continent underwent during European colonial rule. The Amhara domination continued after the Italian occupation ended in 1941, and the lack of major political changes made Ethiopia a ‘special’ case in the African continent. James (1990, p.96) argued that ‘until very recent times, professional ethnographic writing about Ethiopia was dominated by essentially nineteenth-century styles of civilization-description and evolutionary explanation, at several removes from people and events “in the field”’. Studies of class up until the revolution in 1974 in Ethiopia often followed the common Marxist perspective of the rulers’ exploitation of the poor and subjugated, and an example of this trend is that the regime of Haile Selassie’s and the Amhara elite was often analysed in terms of hegemonic nationalist narratives of the monarchy’s rule for thousands of years in Ethiopia (Sorenson, 1992).

Middle classes were rarely considered within this dichotomous perspective on class in Ethiopia. For example, Levine (1966, p.312) argued that engaging with the concept of ‘middle class’ ran the risk of relying on ‘pre-fabricated concepts imported from the European experience rather than to attend to the realities of Ethiopian social life’. He highlighted that social change was affecting people’s class positions, but Levine (1966) used the term ‘new elites’ to refer to people who transformed their lives through the ‘modern’ educational system and to high-ranking government officials and people had become rich through import-export trade and real estate. Taking into account the increasing urbanisation and diversity of cities from the early 20th century, the emphasis on a dichotomous class system of elites and the poor did not attend sufficiently to the complexity of hierarchical relations in Ethiopia. Hoben (1970) provided a more in-depth analysis of how the expansion of urban centres transformed

hierarchical relations, such as the shift from landholding lords in power over peasants towards tax collectors, judges, police chiefs and the local governors controlling the population. This shifted opportunities for social mobility from careers in the military and the church towards school education, because, Hoben argued, '[e]ducation, particularly through or beyond the twelfth grade, carries great prestige but largely because it guarantees a person government employment, salary and authority' (1970, p.223). These changes also had implications for status: 'Wealth has also become a more significant factor in ranking, though if unaccompanied by title or authority it is still viewed with suspicion' (Hoben, 1970, p.223). By demonstrating how class relations were shifting in urban Ethiopia towards the end of Haile Selassie's rule, Hoben showed that increasing urbanisation was impacting both political power structures as well as social hierarchies.

Transformations of social hierarchies intensified during the rule of the socialist *Derg*. In his analysis of Marxism in Ethiopia in the 1970s, Donham (1999, p.34) explained why the fall of the monarchy and subsequent transformations by 1975 qualified to be considered a 'revolution' because of two basic changes: 'in the way that the state is organized, on the one hand, and in the means by which social inequality is structured and legitimated, on the other.' The military regime had ended the rule of the monarchy and the 'previous system of class relations based on land ownership had been upturned' (Donham, 1999, p.35). Despite its claims and intentions for a more egalitarian distribution of resources, the *Derg* was authoritarian and maintained highly hierarchical power structures, similarly to its predecessor.

In response to recent transformations in urban Ethiopia, there has, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa, also been an increase in qualitative studies examining middle class in terms of consumption, income and status in Ethiopia. As shown above, Nallet (2015) argues against the usage of the term middle class, a position she further justifies by explaining that there is no local history and terminology of being middle class, nor do government documents refer to middle class in Ethiopia. However, Mains (2012b) argues that middle class is a category related to status and prestige achieved through lifestyles emerging from particular forms of employment, housing conditions and systems of reciprocity. He explains that for unemployed youth in the city of Jimma, southwestern Ethiopia, the most feasible way to obtain the forms of capital associated with being middle class is through public sector employment. Mains emphasises that his informants aspired for public sector employment because of the power and economic

stability it offers, but that such jobs have become increasingly difficult to obtain because ‘at the historical moment when expectations of earning membership in an urban middle class through education were expanding, economic opportunity decreased dramatically’ (2012b, p.89). These conditions have, he argues, limited people’s opportunities for leading ‘middle class lifestyles’.

Through his emphasis upon a particular form of employment and the economic opportunities it offers, Mains (2012b) primarily analyses middle class in material terms. Although he employs Weber’s and Bourdieu’s work to analyse the implications of public sector employment upon power, status and class position, the ‘objective’ ascription of what it means to be middle class that prevails in his approach means that Mains’ argument should be viewed critically. My examination of class above demonstrated that the material aspect needs to be analysed as one out of several criteria, and although Mains takes into account the importance of status and social relations, he places disproportionately more emphasis on the material aspect by arguing that people’s opportunities for achieving middle class status are dependent upon economic conditions. Such approaches of class contribute to perpetuate the problematic ideas that there are African middle classes that can be measured and pinned down. I seek to extend on Mains’ analysis of class in the Ethiopian context by moving beyond the idea of middle class as an externally determined categorisation based predominantly on material capital. Instead, to focus on a wider range of capitals to analyse how meanings of being middle class are shaped through urban migration, I here turn to the broader recent transformations in the Ethiopian context to consider how these have influenced class relations.

1.7 Recent transformations in Ethiopia

An analysis of urban-urban migration and the meanings of being middle class requires a deep understanding of people’s engagements with this form of movement. Since the change of regimes in 1991, there has been a significant expansion of the higher education system, a shift in ethnic power dynamics and a government-led focus on development has given rise to new meanings of progress. Although these three themes are seemingly unrelated, they have in common that they have influenced people’s choices and experiences of migration as well as social hierarchies. In this thesis, I employ these themes as lenses to interrogate the role of migration in producing what I describe as being middle class.

First we may note that the enhancement of infrastructure and new policies over the past two decades have transformed opportunities for internal migration. For example, a large-scale construction and upgrade of roads has taken place across Ethiopia. In 2012, the total kilometres of road in Ethiopia was 63,083, which is a threefold increase from 1992 when it was 18,081 kilometres (ERA, 2012). Asphalt roads increased at a similar rate over the same period, from 3,542 kilometres to 9,875 kilometres (ERA, 2012). Another significant change is the constitutional right to free movement implemented in 1995: ‘Any Ethiopian or foreign national lawfully in Ethiopia has, within the national territory, the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence, as well as the freedom to leave the country at any time he wishes to’ (Constitution, 1995: Article 32, paragraph 1). Also the shift from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy, along with other factors such as absence of war, decrease in bandits and new forms of transportation, has transformed opportunities for movement and generated an increase in migration within Ethiopia (Kiros and White, 2004). In order to understand how these and other shifts in contemporary Ethiopia have shaped the role of migration in constructing class, I now turn to the three themes identified above; higher education, ethnicity and progress.

In the last 15 years, there has been a significant expansion of higher education in Ethiopia. Yigezu (2013, p.40) argues that the EPRDF issued a range of policies and strategies to expand the higher education system to meet Ethiopia’s need for ‘highly qualified human resources’. In 1997-1998 the number of students in higher education had reached 43,843 (MoE, 1998), but the large expansion of public and private institutions began in 2000. Until then, ‘Ethiopia’s higher education system was comprised of just two universities, seventeen colleges, a total of 31,000 students, and a small supervisory department in the Ministry of Education’ (Saint, 2004, p.89). While there is a discrepancy in the number of students at this time, some 15 years later the number of universities had increased to 31 (MoE, 2016), and the planned number of undergraduates in 2014/2015 was 467,000 (MoFED, 2010). In addition to allowing many more to study, ‘the government has adopted a policy of admitting a representative mix of students from the country’s eleven administrative regions to each university campus’ (Saint, 2004, p.92). Considering that the expansion of higher education has increased internal migration and generated new social relations, an examination of individuals’ experiences of these processes can shed light on how migration in Ethiopia shapes class relations.

The shift in political power in 1991 ended almost a century of Amhara dominance, but simultaneously intensified the politicisation of ethnicity in Ethiopia. To legitimise its rule, the EPRDF had to show that it was able to sustain peace in a multi-ethnic nation, was less oppressive than its predecessors and could make the country prosperous (Gagliardone, 2014, p.284). The EPRDF responded to these challenges by implementing a new ethnic-based political system (see Map 1 below) that came to be known as ‘ethnic federalism’ (Abbink, 2009). Ethnic federalism was supposed to emphasise equality and give the different ethnic groups and regions more autonomy (Fiseha, 2006; Joireman, 1997), but the imposition of a static system of regional belonging ignored the long history of, for instance, intermarriage and migration. Just a few years after ethnic federalism became a reality Abbink noted that ethnicity was ‘an ever-present, and often highly emotional, issue in the minds of Ethiopians’ (1995, pp.156–157) and that the system led to an increase in ethnic conflict (1998). Combined with intensified internal migration, the increased importance of ethnicity in contemporary social relations illustrates why this is another lens for analysing how class relations are reshaped through urban-urban migration.



Map 1. Administrative Regions of Ethiopia¹

¹ EthioVisit.com (2016).

Such new policies towards higher education and ethnicity can be seen in relation to the government's broader emphasis on development. According to the National Security Policy and Strategy (FDRE, 2002, pp.5–6), 'development' is fundamental for the 'survival' of the Ethiopian state as well as for Ethiopians to live 'free from poverty, ignorance and backwardness.' The government emphasises national development and individuals' progress to justify its 'developmental discourse' (Abbink, 2012), and these processes may influence how Ethiopians perceive of how they live their lives and how they associate certain forms of migration with modernity. By examining how individuals' migration corresponds to what they mean by progress, this lens enables a further interrogation of the ways in which urban-urban migration produce meanings of being middle class.

The recent transformations in higher education, ethnic relations and meanings of development and progress are unique to the Ethiopian context, and this thesis is structured along these themes to examine how individuals' class positions are shaped by the processes surrounding urban migration. In order to explore these dynamics, I conducted ethnographic research in urban Ethiopia. Bus journeys proved to be challenging sites for research, and I primarily conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews in Adigrat, a town of about 70,000 people some two hours travel north of Mekelle in the Tigray region (often associated with political power and economic privilege in Ethiopia) and in the capital, Addis Ababa. This approach enables me to provide an empirically grounded account of experiences, practices and interactions associated with urban migration and examine the social, relational and cultural processes that generate context-specific meanings of being middle class. Although anthropological research of urban migration and class has a long history in sub-Saharan Africa, the pattern of urban-urban migration is largely overlooked, and this thesis' original contribution to knowledge emerges from shedding light on this particular form of migration and how it constructs and reconstructs class relations in the Ethiopian context.

1.8 Thesis structure

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which urban-urban migration produces and reproduces meanings of being middle class in Ethiopia. To achieve this, I employ the three central themes of higher education, ethnicity and progress as lenses to examine the relationship between migration and class in

contemporary Ethiopia. The empirical examination is further framed in chapter two where I explore these themes theoretically and in the contexts of sub-Saharan Africa and Ethiopia, and set out the research questions this thesis examines. Chapter three lays out the methodological approach for researching migration in two field sites, Addis Ababa and Adigrat, and presents the data collection processes as well as contextual information about the field sites relevant to migration and class. The subsequent empirical chapters are organised along the three aforementioned key themes, and chapter four considers how the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia has affected class relations. The chapter examines how internal migration for higher education impacted people's employment and income, social relations and status, and analyses how these transformations influenced their social positions. In chapter five, I examine how the political system of ethnic federalism and the Tigrayan control of the EPRDF coalition government have influenced group belonging and individual identity in Ethiopia. Through a focus on how migration generated inter-ethnic encounters, I highlight the tensions that emerged in response to conflicting perspectives on Tigrayan privilege and dominance, and how such experiences shaped social distinctions. Chapter six examines how the state-led focus on national development and recent processes of social change have produced new ideas of individual progress. This chapter identifies how engagements with urban-urban migration over other patterns reflect particular meanings of progress that produce new and distinct cultural practices. Finally, chapter seven ties together the ethnographic material with the theoretical insights provided in this and the next chapter to highlight the arguments that are being developed throughout this thesis.

2. Framing the central lenses to interrogate class in Ethiopia

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I argued that class is a social, cultural and relational construct. I suggested that the major transformations in higher education, ethnic relations and how people perceive of progress are useful lenses through which to analyse the relationship between urban-urban migration and what it means to be middle class in Ethiopia. In this chapter, I pursue a further examination of these three themes to understand how class is produced and reproduced in Ethiopia. Here, I consider higher education, ethnicity and progress theoretically, how they have been engaged with and understood in sub-Saharan Africa, and their historical and current circumstances in Ethiopia. Through these discussions, I finalise the theoretical framing of the thesis and set the scene for exploring ethnographically in the empirical chapters how these themes intersect with urban-urban migration and class distinctions. To shed light on these relationships, I first consider the context of migration in Ethiopia.

2.2 Shifting migration trends in Ethiopia

Urban-urban migration is prevalent in contemporary Ethiopia and has intensified over the past decades. Although almost a decade old, data from the Central Statistics Agency (CSA) show large movements between urban centres in Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa, for example, out of a population of 2,739,551, some 587,661 (21,5%) were classified as migrants from other urban areas (CSA, 2007a, p.128). Similarly, in the Tigray region about 6,6% of the population came from other urban areas (CSA, 2007b, p.252). Despite migration between urban centres being a prevalent form of migration, there has, similarly to research in other sub-Saharan countries, been a dominant emphasis on migration originating in rural areas and, more recently, international migration.

The establishment of Addis Ababa in 1886 was the beginning of an intensified urbanisation of Ethiopia. In the early 20th century, military service and servitude were fundamental for the urbanisation of Addis Ababa, gradually transforming it from a permanent military camp to a bustling city. While colonialism shaped social life and political institutions over extended periods of time across sub-Saharan Africa, the Italian five-year occupation (1936-1941) did not have the same major impact on Ethiopian conditions. Shack argued that there was little industrial growth and there was yet to emerge an 'Ethiopian equivalent to the Central African Copperbelt town complex;

the handcrafts of potters, weavers, tanners, tinkers, silver- and gold-smiths, wood craftsmen, basketmakers, etc., are as essential to the daily activities of the urban masses in Ethiopia as to rural tribesmen' (1973, p.260). He described Addis Ababa of the 1970s as a vast non-industrial urban complex with a range of ethnic groups and a highly transient population, and found that the 'urban masses' relied on weavers, tanners, wood craftsmen and other handcrafts for their daily lives in similar ways to 'rural tribesmen' (ibid.). Even though the capital was less industrialised than cities in the Copperbelt, Shack explained that people were 'lured to the city because it is the political, economic, and religious center of the empire' (1973, pp.260–261). Analyses of decisions to engage in migration have become more nuanced since Shack's observation, but, importantly, his work demonstrates that urban migration has a relatively long history in Ethiopia.

Urban-urban migration had become an established form of movement towards the end of Haile Selassie's rule. In her research conducted in the early 1970s on migration to Shashamene in southern Ethiopia, Bjerén (1985) identified 244 people whom she classified as 'inter-urban migrants'. These migrants had in common that they had lived in at least one other urban centre before arriving in Shashamene, and while the majority had come from Addis Ababa, many were from surrounding towns. In Shashamene, Bjerén (1985) argued that it was mainly Amharas, and some Oromos, who held government positions and ran private companies, whereas migrants from other ethnic backgrounds did manual labour and worked in the service sector. In addition to demonstrating the prevalence of urban-urban migration during Haile Selassie's monarchy, her analysis highlighted that this pattern of migration reinforced existing patterns of privilege and inequality in an ethnic-based social hierarchy where rulers of Amhara origin dominated throughout most of the 20th century. Her study suggests the historical importance of ethnicity in both migration and class relations in the Ethiopian context.

Migration patterns in Ethiopia changed when the monarchy of Haile Selassie came to an end in 1974. Whereas Haile Selassie's 'feudal' rule had favoured landowners over farmers and tenants (Zewde, 2001), the new military government (*Derg*) nationalised all land in Ethiopia to provide a more equal distribution of resources. This revolutionary policy was portrayed by the *Derg* "as [an] anti-feudal" class struggle' (Abbink, 2009, p.9), and fore fronted with the popular slogan 'land to the tiller' (Chege, 1979, p.366). These transformations, as well as other policies, had implications for internal migration in Ethiopia. For instance, university students were in

the 1970s sent to rural areas across Ethiopia to educate the farmers (Zewde, 2001). In the 1980s, forced resettlement and villagisation programmes relocated about 10 million people (Abbute, 2004; Pankhurst and Piguet, 2009; Yntiso, 2004). In addition to forcing people to relocate, the socialist regime restricted internal movement by requiring permits for travel between cities (Young, 1997b). The *Derg* controlled the movements of people through these measures in order to dissolve potential opposition among students and move people away from areas where they could join rebel groups fighting against the government (Pankhurst and Piguet, 2009). Despite the *Derg*'s attempt to restrain the movements of the population, the civil war and drought contributed to increase international migration, and during the 1970s and 1980s, Ethiopia became one of the world's top producers of refugees (Levine, 2004). The refugee flows were predominantly to Sudan (Bulcha, 1988; Kibreab, 1996), but also to other neighbouring countries (Bariagaber, 1997).

Over the past decades, there is also a growing body of studies of international migration to and from Ethiopia. After 1991, the effects of the long civil war and large-scale international migrations have had lasting impacts on social relations into the present. For instance, Hammond (2004) has demonstrated how Ethiopian refugees in Sudan after the end of the civil war (1974-1991) were given land and the opportunity to return to Ethiopia. However, they 'returned' to a large empty field in the lowlands of western Tigray that was very different in terms of climate, soil and diseases from these refugees' places of origin in high-land areas. Even if they had returned to what they considered their country and region, Hammond (2004) argues that their experiences of being settled in such unfamiliar and difficult conditions challenged their notions of home, which eventually led them to produce new meanings of home. Her study illustrates how shifting political trends impact migration patterns, but also that historical events have long-lasting effects on people's lives and continue to shape migration for many years after their initial movement, which is a dimension of migration that also this thesis considers.

Another example of contemporary approaches to international migration in the Ethiopian context is Fernandez's (2010) study of labour migration to the Arab Gulf. She argues that such migration is a strategy to cope with the 'existing crisis' in Ethiopia, but that changes in policies will constrain this opportunity and lead to more undocumented migration (*ibid.*). Other studies have focused on the hardships that make people leave Ethiopia, the difficult journeys as well as the abusive conditions and issues of

integration in destinations (e.g. de Regt, 2010; Gebre, Maharaj and Pillay, 2010). While academic attention to international migration has increased, research on such migrations predominantly emphasises poor people.

At the same time, the focus on internal migration originating from rural areas has persisted. Mberu finds that urban centres have become increasingly attractive destinations after 1991 because of the ‘opening of branch offices of mass organizations, government and non-governmental agencies that created opportunities at district, provincial and regional levels of the country’ (2006, p.512). Even though people are by law free to move around Ethiopia, Blunch and Laderchi (2015) argue that there are social constraints especially for women and that migration from urban areas requires an official letter from the local government (*kebele*). Still, the transformations over the past decades have in many cases made it easier to migrate within the country than to cross international borders. Research on internal migration has often focused the challenges poor people face in getting by in urban contexts. For example, van Blerk (2008) argues that young women who migrate from rural areas to cities face limited employment opportunities and that sex work is a common path to transit and achieve status of adulthood. Other studies of urban migration have focused on topics such as children and youth migrating from rural settings to cities and becoming street-children (e.g. Erulkar et al., 2006). Within the trend of focusing on the migration of poor people, studies of rural-rural migration have concentrated on displacement related to food insecurity (Abbute, 2004; Keller, 1992; White, Cliffe and White, 2000) and war and conflict (Lamessa, Pankhurst and Piguet, 2004; Riggan, 2011). Such studies predominantly focus on other dynamics than class to explain these migrations, and by considering how urban-urban migration constructs class in this thesis, I will provide a new perspective on contemporary migration within Ethiopia.

Official statistics in Ethiopia have revealed large movements of people between urban areas and studies conducted during former regimes have demonstrated the historical prevalence of this pattern. The enhanced opportunities for migration within Ethiopia and social change over the past two decades have influenced migration patterns, and urban-urban migration has become an increasingly common form of movement. While this pattern accounts for a large percentage of internal migration in Ethiopia, contemporary internal and international migration are predominantly analysed in relation to poverty, famine and conflict. Rural-urban migration continues to be a common pattern among poor rural dwellers seeking better futures in the cities, but the

prevalent emphasis on migration as inherently related to poverty is a stereotype. Although studies of such conditions highlight important aspects of contemporary Ethiopia, they tend to overlook the fact that many people are in formal employment, engage in other forms of migration and live lives that are more comfortable. This thesis focuses on people who get by with relatively less adversity, and to analyse their migration in terms of class, I here turn to the three lenses through which I will employ to interrogate the processes through which meanings of being middle class are shaped in everyday life.

2.3 Higher education: Social mobility versus social reproduction

In chapter one, I pointed out that education has been portrayed as a key factor for individuals to increase their human capital and shift their class position. In developing a comprehensive theory of class through his elaboration of social, material, cultural and symbolic capitals, Bourdieu (1984) was also attentive to education as he considered that a major control on class mobility. In this section, I examine how higher education shapes individuals' social positions by considering broader debates on the role of education in reproducing privilege and inequality. Considering the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia over the past two decades and the policy of mixing students from different regions, I focus in particular on how urban-urban migration for higher education shapes social distinctions in this context.

Education, on the one hand, can be seen as a system of social reproduction through which privilege and inequality are reproduced. The idea that formal education transforms structural inequalities and creates 'meritocratic springboards for upward mobility' has been challenged especially since the 1970s (Levinson and Holland, 1996). For instance, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) found that even if there was an opportunity to access other class positions through education, it was primarily a cultural system for reproducing social distinctions and allocating positions in the social hierarchy. Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) scholarship on capitals, examined above, illustrated that he considered opportunities for social mobility to be limited because social distinctions are embodied and that it is therefore close to impossible to emulate the elite's value system of capitals. In these terms, education was just another system for the elites and higher classes to reproduce their privilege through cultural capital.

Other authors have reached similar conclusions in their examinations of education and class. For instance, Apple (1982) argued that economic privilege was

reproduced through education, whereas Willis (1977) showed how ‘the working class’ was shaped through education. Delamont (1989) and Weiler (1988) have illuminated how education reinforces gender roles and the subordination of women. In addition to social reproduction through education more broadly, Alon (2009) argues that privilege and inequality is reproduced from kindergarten up to high school and that these processes are further escalated in higher education. The continuous social reproduction also impact achievements, aspirations and interests, which make it more common for people from more ‘privileged’ backgrounds to pursue higher education (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). The social reproduction throughout all levels of education illustrates the role of cultural capital in shaping educational trajectories and why higher education is an arena where privilege and inequality is reproduced.

On the other hand, higher education has been found to offer opportunities for social mobility. For people from poor backgrounds, going through and completing higher education is a way to increase several forms of capitals. However, access to higher education often depends on individuals’ social positions and people living in poverty often lack the capitals that are necessary for completing lower levels of education and entering higher education. Despite these trends of social reproduction, it is necessary to acknowledge that those who access and succeed in higher education are not all from privileged backgrounds. Reay *et al.* (2009) have provided an example of how higher education becomes a path for social mobility for a limited numbers of students from ‘working-class’ backgrounds in an elite university in the United Kingdom, and argued that their academic success complicated the social reproduction of privilege and inequality. Considering the contrasting perspectives on the role of education, it is clear that there is no fixed relation between higher education and social mobility or reproduction, but that it depends on historical and contextual meanings of class as well as contemporary socioeconomic conditions.

While international migration for higher education is a form of migration that has increased significantly across the world in recent decades (IOM, 2008) and is an emerging field of research (King and Raghuram, 2013), such studies are predominantly centring upon international migration to Western Europe and North America. In sub-Saharan Africa, the relationship between higher education and migration has often been considered in terms of what is referred to as ‘brain drain’, dating back to the 1960s and referring to highly qualified workers who emigrated often to other parts of the world. Adepoju (2000) found that in the 1990s, that these migrations were increasingly taking

place within the continent. Here, I shift the focus to consider migration for higher education within countries in sub-Saharan Africa and its role in class relations.

In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, the historical relationship between higher education and class was strongly influenced by colonialism. After the early, formative phase of colonialism, Lawrance *et al.* (2006, p.30) argues that the ‘routinization of colonial rule, the elaboration of colonial institutions, and the regularization of authority associated with the development of bureaucratic states’ required a larger number of educated Africans to work as clerks and in more specialised positions. This led to wider opportunities for education, which often opened up employment opportunities. For instance, West (2002) highlights that the minority who gained access to and completed higher education in the Zimbabwean colonial context were often employed in the public sector. By demonstrating how educational trajectories generated opportunities for social mobility and new lifestyles for the well-educated, which were very different from the lives of peasants and workers, West (2002) illustrates that class relations during colonial times was partly shaped through education.

After independence, an expansion of higher education systems has taken place across sub-Saharan Africa. These transformations have led to debates about how privilege and inequality shape access to higher education as well as its role in social reproduction and social mobility in the continent. Mhlanga (2013) shows that many new universities and colleges have opened and that student numbers in sub-Saharan Africa have increased significantly over the past decades. He explains that these changes have transformed the student demographic as more people from ‘disadvantaged communities’ have been able to pursue higher education. Wiseman and Wolhuter (2013, p.11), on the other hand, are more critical of the transformations that have taken place because ‘access to higher education is extremely unequal, along the dimensions of geography, ethnicity, race, gender, and socioeconomic descent’. An example of how class influences access to higher education has been provided by Willott (2011). He argues that merit alone is not always sufficient to access higher education in Nigeria, but that personal connections and money are central to secure a place of study. By referring to merit as a matter of individuals’ skills, Willott (2011) does not take into account that students’ capacity to succeed at lower levels of education are related to their cultural capitals, but by making this connection in such terms here we can see that merit, just like personal connections and money, emerges through class, which shapes individuals’ opportunities for education.

Another factor that complicates the processes of social mobility and reproduction in relation to higher education is contemporary socioeconomic transformations. Since the early 1990s, neoliberal policies and global capitalism have decreased job opportunities across sub-Saharan Africa. The broader access to higher education combined with a shortage of jobs in the continent have led to an increase in unemployment and underemployment for people with degrees (Bryceson, 2002). Even if people from poor backgrounds complete higher education, the deteriorating employment opportunities have impaired their prospects for social mobility. The decreasing prospects for graduates have had serious implications also for fulfilling social obligations and following expected life trajectories. For example, in the context of Niger, Masquelier (2013) demonstrates that higher education does not offer the same work opportunities as it used to do in the past. She finds that young graduates expected ‘that their education would entitle them to a job “behind a desk” (that is, in the Nigérien administration)’ (2013, p.471). Because of their expectations of jobs that match their qualifications, she argues that it is more difficult for the highly educated to find employment than for those who do not have much formal education and can work as car mechanics, tailors or in other ‘low-skilled’ jobs. By highlighting the ambiguous status and lack of fulfilment experienced by people who complete higher education with expectations of improving their lives, Masquelier (2013) demonstrates that higher education can lead to paradoxical situations where people neither obtain the employment they desire nor find it satisfactory to work in jobs that are below their qualifications, and, thus, decrease their material capital. While there has been much focus on unemployment after higher education and the lack of fulfilment of expectations, to analyse the role of education in class relations these processes need to be understood in each local context, and I here turn to education in Ethiopia.

Expanding higher education and new opportunities for social mobility in Ethiopia

Similarly to many other countries in the continent, high unemployment rates and increasing numbers of graduates have limited well-educated Ethiopians’ opportunities to obtain jobs. However, unemployment is not only related to declining employment opportunities, but also to class. Mains (2012b) examines aspirations and employment among young people in Jimma, south-western Ethiopia, and finds that people’s employment choices are embedded in more complex social dynamics. He argues that unemployment is a strategy that can work for people from ‘middle class’ backgrounds

because they can rely on elaborate systems of reciprocity to get by until they find suitable employment. People from poor backgrounds are, however, not able to postpone employment and are ‘forced’ out of necessity to take employment below their qualifications and with lower pay (Mains, 2012b). Although education and higher education in Ethiopia reproduce privilege and inequality, there are opportunities also for people from poor backgrounds who complete higher education to obtain well-paid employment suitable to their degrees over time. The ways in which these processes unfold in this context relates to a particular history and contemporary condition, which the rest of this section examines.

Until ‘Western’ higher education became available, church education had been the primary institutionalised form of education in Ethiopia. Church education was central in justifying and reproducing the political legitimacy of rulers for several centuries (Milkias, 2008). This started to change in 1950 when Trinity College opened with 21 students and nine teachers (but changed the name into the University College of Addis Ababa later the same year) (Wagaw, 1990). The college gradually expanded and came to consist of ‘the faculties of Arts and Science, the Engineering and the Building Colleges located in Addis Ababa, the Alemaya College of Agriculture near Diredawa, and the Public Health College at Gonder’ (Semela, 2011, p.402). In 1961, the name was changed to Haile Selassie I University and further expansion took place, adding faculties of Education, Law, and Medicine, the School of Social Work, and the College of Business Administration (*ibid.*). Ottaway found that in the mid-1960s most students at the university were ‘from urban families of traders, clerks, policemen, lower-level government employees - in other words, the Ethiopian petty bourgeoisie’ (1976, p.475). The total number of undergraduates reached 10,000 in 1973 (Balsvik, 2005). The higher education system was from the beginning fully financed by the government, giving students access to free education, health care, accommodation, meals and in some cases allowances to cover living expenses (Wagaw, 1990). Despite such favourable conditions for students, their discontent with the monarchy continued growing. Through the independence movements across Africa in the late 1950s and 1960, students were becoming increasingly aware that Ethiopia was not in a better, but often worse, condition than nations that had been colonised (Levine, 1965). Milkias (2008, p.94) argues that the access to ‘modern’ education during Haile Selassie’s rule made it untenable to keep people in a ‘feudal’ system. As Marxist ideology was spreading across the world in the 1960s and 1970s, it provided students with a justification to

protest about the inequality in Ethiopia, and the 1974 revolution was partly initiated by university students (Donham, 1992).

Higher education remained largely unchanged during the *Derg* regime and continued to be fully financed by the government (Waweru et al., 2011). The new name of the university, Addis Ababa University, in 1974 (Wagaw, 1990) demonstrated a shift away from the monarchy, but did not dispose of pre-existing hierarchical relations. Krishnan (1996) argued that selection into higher education was determined mainly by family background, and higher education remained elitist. Similarly to Haile Selassie's rule, socialist policies prohibited entrepreneurial educational activities and between 1974 and 1991 there were no private higher education institutions (Akalu, 2014), and expansion of higher education was limited to the opening of the second university in Ethiopia, Alameya University, in 1985 (Ashcroft and Rayner, 2012).

As shown in chapter one, there has been a major expansion of higher education in Ethiopia over the past 15 years. In addition to the increasing numbers of undergraduates in universities, Yigezu (2013) finds that graduate students went up about 300 per cent from 2004 to 2009, taking the number up to 10,125 in public universities. The numbers have continued to increase up until present. Also new private colleges have been opening at a fast pace, and there are currently more than 35 of them alone in Addis Ababa (MoE, 2016). The expansion has brought forward new challenges, especially concerning quality of education. For instance, there has been a shortage of qualified academic staff. Reisberg and Rumbley (2015) observe that enrolment quadrupled from year 2000 to 2008/2009 whereas teaching staff barely doubled and that less than 20 per cent of the teachers had master's degrees and less than 4 per cent had PhDs. More recently, as an outcome of the requirement for enhancing staff qualifications, Van Deuren *et al.* (2016) find that 64.5 per cent of the staff at Jijiga University have master's degrees or PhDs. In addition to the low qualifications of academic staff influencing the quality of education, the large increase in student numbers has made overcrowded classrooms the norm, basic materials such as furniture and ICT are in short supply and universities lack up-to-date books and journals (Akalu, 2014). Reisberg and Rumbley (2015) point out that the limited classroom space and lack of other essentials affect the learning environment.

These deteriorating conditions have been explained in relation to the high costs of the rapid expansion of higher education, and in 2003, the government implemented the 'Higher Education Proclamation' to introduce 'cost-sharing'. Yizengaw (2007)

argues that the government could not afford to fund the expansion of universities on its own and that the rationale for cost-sharing was to diversify revenue. The policy of providing food and lodging for students had claimed around 15 per cent of university budgets and questions had been raised about the fairness of providing such welfare for the 0.8 per cent of the population attending higher education and who were already in privileged positions (Saint, 2004). Through cost-sharing students cover expenses for food and lodging as well as part of their education cost (Waweru et al., 2011). Students pay their share of the costs through a ‘graduate tax’, and their payments begins within a maximum of one year after graduation and should be repaid within 15 years (FDRE, 2003). Some study programmes are exempted from repayment, such as for students who are trained as primary, secondary and high school teachers, but these students have to serve as teachers in schools for a fixed number of years (Ayalew, 2012). Cost-sharing only applies to undergraduate studies, but Yigezu (2013) argues that the expansion of higher education as well as the cost-sharing policy is a major break from the former elitist tradition where only a small proportion of the population accessed higher education.

Despite this shift, cultural capital continues to shape people’s opportunities of completing lower levels of education and pursuing higher education. The enrolment rate in primary education was 85.3 per cent in 2010/2011 (MoE, 2011), but the dropout rate is around 13 per cent (Woldehanna and Hagos, 2015). In urban areas, the costs, accessibility of schools, and parents’ educational background play a role in school attendance (Poluha, 2007a), and in the country more broadly, circumstances such as a sick adult in the household or death of a parent, food insecurity and harvest failure have been found to decrease enrolment of children in school-age (Admassu, 2011; Chaudhury, Asadullah and Christiaensen, 2006). Although lower levels of education are provided for free, families have to cover expenses for educational materials and school uniforms (Woldehanna and Hagos, 2015). An example of how social position influences school attendance has been provided by Heinonen (2013). She argues that members of youth gangs and street children in Addis Ababa were unlikely to complete lower levels of education because many of them had to earn a living, faced ill treatment by teachers and saw that there were limited job opportunities for those who completed education (ibid.). Clearly, people from such backgrounds struggle to access higher education. On the other hand, Mains (2012b, p.5) argues that children from families who can afford the expensive, high-quality private primary and secondary schools that have opened

since the early 2000s are more likely to advance to university than students who attend government schools.

People's social origin also shapes their higher education trajectories. In Ethiopia, students cannot choose programmes and preferred universities freely (Van Deuren et al., 2016). As Ayalew (2012, p.115) explains, students are 'placed within universities in different parts of the country by the Ministry of Education'. In addition to shaping migration patterns, this policy also affects gender rates in higher education. Reisberg and Rumbley (2015) find that less than 30 per cent of undergraduate students and barely 10 per cent of graduate students are female. Interestingly, in private higher education institutions female attendance is much higher, at more than 50 per cent (Yimam and Nega, 2012, p.2). Saint (2004) suggests that the higher attendance of females in such institutions is related to the opportunities for living at home with family instead of moving to other parts of the country where they are beyond their family's control and protection. Another alternative for people who fulfil the entrance criteria, but do not meet the targets for government sponsorship, is to pursue higher education in evening and summer programmes (Waweru et al., 2011). Despite having to pay fees for these studies, Yizengaw (2007) finds that in some universities almost half of the students enrol in such programmes. Clearly, the expansion of higher education has enabled a much larger number of people to pursue such degrees in Ethiopia, but considering that people from wealthier backgrounds can access higher education when and where it suits them indicates that social inequalities continue to influence people's opportunities to obtain degrees.

The expansion of universities and private education institutions in Ethiopia since year 2000, combined with the policy of cost-sharing, has transformed access to higher education and made such institutions less elitist. There are still barriers to people from poor backgrounds accessing higher education and the need for them to migrate to other parts of the country adds to the difficulties of completing degrees. People from wealthier backgrounds are in comparatively advantageous positions for accessing higher education because they go through lower education at better schools and are in positions to choose where to go to university or pay for private higher education. In addition, the unemployment rates are around 42% in urban areas (Broussar and Teklesellase, 2012) and the challenges well-educated people from poor backgrounds face in obtaining well-paid employment, discussed above, suggest that Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990)

argument that higher education is a form of social reproduction applies similarly in Ethiopia.

To conclude this section, the debates regarding opportunities for social mobility and reproduction have made it clear that people's social origin and cultural capital are central in accessing higher education. Even though privilege and inequality are reproduced through higher education, there are also opportunities for people from poor backgrounds to enhance what Bourdieu (1984) referred to as symbolic and material capital through such degrees. In colonial times, completed higher education offered opportunities for public employment in sub-Saharan Africa, but more recent socioeconomic transformations have made prolonged unemployment common among the well-educated. While similar accounts have been put forward in the Ethiopian context, the large-scale expansion that have taken place since year 2000 suggests that higher education is a theme that can shed light on how urban-urban migration contributes to shape and reshape class relations. These dynamics will be examined empirically in chapter four. As discussed in chapter one, ethnicity is another theme that can help understand how migration informs class relations, which I discuss next.

2.4 The role of ethnicity in social hierarchies

Ethnicity in Ethiopia has become an increasingly contested issue since the shift of power in 1991 and the subsequent implementation of the political system of ethnic federalism. Simultaneously, internal migration for higher education, as well as for other reasons, has increased and generated new inter-ethnic encounters and relations. Through an examination of how these circumstances have impacted perceptions of privilege and inequality, this section employs ethnicity as a lens to understand how urban migration produces social distinctions.

With an increasing focus on migration and interactions between people from different backgrounds throughout the world, ethnicity has become a central concept in anthropology because it speaks directly to fundamental concerns about social relations. More specifically, 'cultural differentiation' and how meanings are shared through interaction without being fixed are reflected in how ethnicity is a contested part of identification of individuals and collectives (Jenkins, 2008, p.14). Jenkins argues that it necessary to avoid the tendency to reify ethnicity because it is not 'something' people 'have' or to which they 'belong', but is a process of identification through which people 'construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows' (2008,

p.15). Similarly, for Eriksen (2010) ethnicity emerges through the cultural differences and the tensions between members of groups that make it politically and symbolically important. In his consideration of the relationships between ‘primordialist’ and ‘instrumentalist’, as well as ‘subjectivist’ and ‘objectivist’, views on ethnicity, Eriksen (2010, p.66) argues that ‘[e]thnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both.’ In chapter one, I suggested that ethnicity is a central factor in social relations in Ethiopia and to examine the relationship between ethnicity and meanings of being middle class empirically in chapter five, I here consider how ethnicity has been approached historically in anthropological studies and specifically in the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

Up until the 1960s, there was a predominant emphasis upon ‘primitive’ peoples organised in ‘tribal groups’. Barth’s (1969) study of ethnic boundaries in the Swat valley in Pakistan was a key study in shifting the view of groups, or ‘tribes’, as relatively coherent entities towards a more process-oriented understanding of ethnicity. He argued that groups were defined by the negotiations of boundaries, and he opposed representations of groups as cultural entities because they lead us to ‘assume that boundary maintenance is unproblematic and follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply: racial difference, cultural difference, social separation and language barriers, spontaneous and organized enmity’ (1969, p.11). Earlier works had illustrated similar fluidity in ethnic relations, such as Leach’s (1954) study of the Kachin in Burma, but it was Barth’s (1969) work that led to a distinct break from former representations of social groups as bounded cultures.

Ethnicity became a central issue in anthropological studies in sub-Saharan Africa in the years after Barth’s publication. In the 1960s, Atkinson (1999, p.18) suggested that ethnicity was referred to, but not with much analytical emphasis and was regarded ‘as a parochial remnant of a “traditional” past that was fated to be transformed or overcome by modernisation, nationalism, and nation-building.’ Over time, however, it became increasingly clear that ethnicity would not ‘disappear’. Rather, colonialism was instrumental in shaping ethnic relations, as Welsh (1996, p.477) has explained: ‘boundaries had been the product of an imperial carve-up that cut through territories inhabited by indigenous societies and arbitrarily jumbled together a diversity of ethnic communities inside unitary administrative structures’. In addition to the impacts of ‘random’ national boundaries, the ways in which researchers used different terms impacted how they perceived and described people in the regions. In the studies

emerging from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Young (1986, p.444) has suggested that a 'sharp contrast was drawn between ethnicity in the urban areas and rural "tribe" with lingering implications that the latter represented the genuine unit and that the former was somehow artificial.' However, Mitchell's (1974) point, similarly to other scholars working on the issue, was to show that ethnicity was a cultural phenomenon that structured actors' experiences and that ethnicity was produced in new, dynamic ways in urban contexts. Such studies problematised the distinction between tribe and ethnic groups, and Southall (1970) argued that it was an illusion that tribes were 'whole' self-sufficient societies, with simple technology, no written language, politically autonomous and with own language, culture and religion. The shift away from 'tribe' made 'ethnicity' a central topic in anthropological studies during the 1970s and 1980s (Atkinson, 1999).

Ethnicity has received much attention particularly since the 1970s, and it has also been argued that it intersects with class. For instance, in her study from the United States, Ortner (1998) identified two trends in studies of the relationship between ethnicity (and race) and class; the first strategy is to ignore class and treat ethnicity as the primary social category, and the second is to engage with class as the economic aspect of determining people's life chances while ethnicity is seen as an aspect of prejudice and discrimination. In this context, she argued that class was largely 'hidden' behind ethnicity and 'tends to be the last factor introduced as an explanation of privilege and power on the one hand, poverty and social impotence on the other' (Ortner, 1998, p.13). This tendency is also relevant for understanding the relationship between ethnicity and class in sub-Saharan Africa. Comaroff and Comaroff (1992, p.59) have, for example, suggested that 'underclass Hutu in Rwanda or Kgalagadi in Botswana see their status as being ascribed by virtue of their ethnic affiliation and not vice versa.' They argue that the reason for such perceptions is that 'at the experiential level, it *does* seem to be ethnicity which orders social status, class membership, and so on - and not class or status that decides ethnic identities' (ibid.). Both Ortner and the Comaroffs argued that the tendency to analyse inequality predominantly in terms of ethnicity is problematic and overlooks the underlying issue of 'class'. Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) question what the factors are for class consciousness to replace ethnic ideologies, and Ortner (1998) engages with Bourdieu's work on habitus to highlight the importance of analysing social relations in terms of class. However, Ortner (1998) suggests that people can be located 'objectively' in class positions based on their economic and

cultural capital, whereas Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical contributions suggest that class is a wider cultural process that needs to be considered also in relation to other capitals. In this thesis, I draw especially on the idea of social capital to analyse the role of formal and informal networks to explore how ethnicity can help us understand how urban migration constructs new social networks and cultural practices that can describe what being middle class means.

Ethnicity remains a central factor in anthropological studies in sub-Saharan Africa. While the focus has often been upon power dynamics and the role of ethnicity in conflict and nationalism, it is also recognised that ethnicity has been given new meanings in response to shifting socioeconomic conditions emerging from contemporary global capitalism. For instance, Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) have examined how a group of 'traditional' chiefs in South Africa turned ethnicity into a business venture (among other examples). They argued that ethnicity is becoming increasingly commoditised through such enterprises and that these processes have implications for changing relationships between 'culture' and market. Considering their findings in Bourdieu's (1984) terms, the chiefs' strategy can be analysed as a mobilisation of social capital to reframe the meanings of ethnic groups in ways that are to their advantage. This and other contributions have made it clear that understandings of ethnicity have become increasingly complex since the earlier approaches to tribes, not only to researchers, but also for the subjects of such studies.

Ethnicity is a concept often applied to explore formations of individual identities and group formations in the meetings between people from different backgrounds, particularly with the increased focus on international migration, globalisation and transnationalism. Appadurai (1996, p.33) coined the term 'ethnoscape' to highlight how migration changes the landscape of social relations because 'moving groups and individuals constitutes an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.' Although he does not refer explicitly to ethnicity or to internal migration in his explanation of this term, various patterns of migration are shaping ethnic relations. Similarly to the mosaics the Chicago School identified in the United States almost a century ago (e.g. Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925; Wirth, 1938), international and internal migration are bringing together people from various backgrounds in sub-Saharan African cities. A key focus of anthropological studies in the continent has been, and continues to be upon how people from different backgrounds mix and generate new cultural formations (Myers, 2011). In

the past decades, as in much migration research, it is predominantly the international aspects of these processes that have drawn attention, but clearly, the issue of ethnicity can also be a powerful factor in internal migration and contribute to the processes of generating cultural practices and social distinctions.

Ethnic federalism and conflict in Ethiopia

In stark contrast to contemporary academic understandings of ethnicity as multifaceted and constructed, ethnicity is often portrayed and understood as inherent and unchangeable in Ethiopia. The implementation of ethnic federalism in 1994, discussed in chapter one, was intended to decentralise power and ensure equality between different ethnic groups in order to avoid further conflict between the state and ethnic-based liberation fronts (Aalen, 2011). This political system, however, has also contributed to consolidate ideas of ethnicity as fixed. The current ethnic-based map of Ethiopia ascribes ethnic groups to specific regions of the country and makes ethnicity an official and permanent component of individual identity and group belonging. The rigid approach is further manifested in people's ID-cards. A person's ethnicity is determined solely based on his or her father's ethnic background, regardless of place of birth, language, mother's ethnicity or any other factors. From the perspective of the Ethiopian state, ethnicity is, together with other 'facts' of individual identity, such as name and date of birth, permanent and unchangeable. Considering that ethnic identities are seen as anchored in particular regions in this simplified view of ethnicity, any migration across regional boundaries results in contact with people from different ethnic groups. Acknowledging that the topic of ethnicity is very complex in contemporary Ethiopia and that there is a range of ethnic groups, for the sake of my thesis, I focus primarily on the constructions of Tigrayan and Amhara group belonging and individual identity.

Essentialised perspectives on ethnicity have emerged through a long history of highland domination over other peoples. Rulers from Tigray and Amhara areas have shifted in controlling parts of highland Ethiopia up until the end of the 19th century, but from the 1890s onwards Amhara rulers dominated other ethnic groups in the lowlands of the country (Donham and James, 1986). While other multi-ethnic states in sub-Saharan Africa were created through colonisation, Aalen (2011, p.25) observes that the Ethiopian state 'was built by incorporating peripheral peoples into a state which already possessed a strong identity and historical core.' The Amhara often controlled the means of production and ranked higher than people from other ethnic groups. Consequently,

Aalen argues that '[i]nequality based on ethnic affinity has been part of Ethiopian governance since the establishment of the modern state at the end of the nineteenth century' (2011, p.4). Similarly, Donham and James (1986) have shown how the 'darker' side of Ethiopian history unfolded on the peripheries of the Ethiopian state, where assertions of highland superiority in terms of culture and religion were manifested in serfdom and slavery of other populations as well as extraction of resources. Also Bjerer's (1985) study of migration to Shashamene, discussed above, highlighted how class was intertwined with ethnicity in urban centres during the rule of Haile Selassie.

The discrimination against non-Amharas included Tigrayans and Eritreans and persisted after the 1974 revolution. The *Derg* attempted to control the northern regions of Tigray and Eritrea through force, to a greater extent than Haile Selassie, which led to further alienation of subjugated peasants (Donham, 2002). In the context of this suppression, Young (1998) explained, the TPLF told Tigrayans that their poverty and hardship was a result of Amhara domination. Donham (2002, p.4) argues that this ethnic mobilisation shaped a 'Tigrayan ethnic identity' and by the late 1980s, Tigrayans 'had apparently begun to see themselves in a different light – as another 'kind' of people, a people called forth by narratives of group injustice and suffering'. The notion of being Tigrayan was therefore largely shaped through the struggle against the *Derg* and Amhara subjugation.

The historical Amhara rule and exploitation of other groups has contributed to making ethnicity a more contested issue in Ethiopia than in many other post-colonial sub-Saharan African states (Aalen, 2011). Despite the implementation of ethnic federalism as a means for equality between ethnic groups, political power remains largely centralised and the system has been a source of much criticism. Many people in the lowlands of Ethiopia have seen the change in power dynamics and contemporary Tigrayan domination as a continuation of the highland rule of the Amhara (Young, 1996). At the same time, the former associations of Tigray as a region ravaged by civil war, poverty and famine have shifted towards it being seen as a privileged and favoured region. These changes have influenced inter-ethnic relations. For instance, the government's usage of cadres to control federations and local governments has created widespread suspicion towards Tigrayans (Tronvoll, 2001). According to Aalen (2011, p.4), 'the politics of ethnicity' has a long history of suspicion and inequality, and a 'popular perception today is that the Tigrayans are the new ruling ethnic elite and that they are attempting to monopolise political power and channel state resources to their

own region' (cf. Abbink, 1995, p.156). Ethnic tensions peaked when the opposition lost the 2005 elections and claimed that they had been rigged, leading to demonstrations and 195 protesters killed in Addis Ababa (Abbink, 2006; Lyons, 2006; Samatar, 2005).

While ethnic federalism has mainly been considered as an 'artificial system imposed from above' (Vestal, 1999, p.167) and an instrument to subjugate and control other ethnic groups, Young (1997a) has also demonstrated that people in Tigray have faced difficulties under the new system and political rule. Widespread poverty, limited support from the central government, perpetuation of the former bureaucracy and demands to provide free labour contributed to many Tigrayans' discontent with the new Tigrayan-dominant government in the early 1990s (ibid.). These different perceptions of the relationship between state power and privilege illustrate that people's conceptualisations of how ethnicity intersects with hierarchical relations to some extent depend on their own ethnic identity, but possibly also in response to their social positions.

The increased politicisation of ethnicity and transformations of power relations have played a role in contemporary migration patterns. Abbink (2011), for example, argues that the leasing of land to foreigners for commercial agrarian investment has 'forced' people to migrate because their only other option is to take employment on the 'mega-farms'. If they migrate, Abbink explains, no facilities are prepared for them and many become destitute. Part of the reason for their hardship is that 'territorial-administrative units' are based upon ethnicity and 'so-called illegal migrants from poorer areas and with another ethnicity have a tenuous status are regularly chased out by local authorities (from another ethnic group) from the areas where they migrate to' (Abbink, 2011, p.611). Abbink's case illustrates that the political system of ethnic federalism influences people's reasons for engaging in internal migration, but also that changes in inter-ethnic relations shape the outcomes of migration. For people engaging in urban-urban migration these dynamics may differ, but his findings suggest that ethnicity is a factor that has shapes experiences of migration within Ethiopia and impact renegotiations of social hierarchies through new cultural practices.

This section has highlighted how the shift from tribe to ethnicity transformed studies of group belonging and identity, and made ethnicity a key concept for anthropological analyses of social relations. In the Ethiopian context, the long historical Amhara and Tigrayan domination and subjugation of people from the lowlands have shaped perspectives on ethnicity. The recent change from an Amhara-dominated regime

to a government controlled by Tigrayans as well as the implementation of ethnic federalism have transformed hierarchical relations, and the predominant emphasis on ethnicity has led to a decreasing interest in class in studies of Ethiopia. For example, in a study of war and the politics of identity in Ethiopia, Tronvoll (2009, p.90) acknowledges the ‘feudal’ history as well as the revolutionary discourse of class, but argues that ‘the ethnic discourse is hegemonic in contemporary Ethiopia due to EPRDF’s policy of ethnic federalism’. Based on this justification, he focuses his study entirely on ethnic relations to examine how changing alliances are shaping identities. Although ethnicity is obviously central for grasping how recent transformations have affected people’s lives, this does not necessarily debase the value of analysing contemporary social relations in terms of class. Consequently, this thesis employs ethnicity as a lens to examine empirically in chapter five how urban migration enables the formation of new social networks and the role of these in being middle class in the context of Ethiopia. Having considered two out of the three themes that I identified in chapter one to be central in shaping people’s lives in contemporary Ethiopia, I here turn to the final theme, namely progress.

2.5 Individual progress in times of development and modernity

In the above sections, I have shown that even though there is no obvious relationship between higher education and ethnicity, both intersect with urban migration. These relationships have in Ethiopia been shaped by a particular history and sociocultural context, but also by new national policies and the government’s ‘developmental discourse’ (Abbink, 2012). Considering the politicisation of national development, this section examines how contextual meanings of individual progress shape urban migration and social distinctions.

Progress, however, is a contested term without a single or simple definition, but is often employed to refer to transformations in individuals’ lives, such as obtaining employment after higher education, increasing their incomes, getting married, building houses and having children. Development has similarly diverse meanings. One of the more dominant of these is that it is planned social change: the processes of attempting to improve national or regional conditions through, for example, enhancing infrastructure, expanding health programmes and stimulating economic growth. But of course development is also the results of such actions. The meanings people ascribe to such processes are shaped by the ways in which social change influences individuals’ sense

of their own progress and how such transformations intersect with their conceptualisations of modernity. By looking at the intertwined yet distinct notions of progress, development and modernity, I will clarify my analytical focus to emphasise the significance of people's own meanings of progress and how these are related to broader processes of social change.

Ferguson's (1999) examination of 'expectations of modernity' provides a starting point for considering how modernity is a culturally constructed idea that people draw upon and enact to negotiate their social positions and how meanings of progress emerge and are reshaped. In the 1950s and 1960s, according to Ferguson (1999), miners in the Copperbelt in Zambia, as well as modernisation theorists and policy makers, thought of 'modernity' as a coherent, linear process. The expectation was that continuously improving circumstances would enable people to lead their lives with predictable progress in terms of continued employment, urban livelihoods, economic security and social status. However, Ferguson (1999) argues that plummeting copper prices and widespread economic decline increased unemployment and forced rural-urban migrants to leave their urban lives and return to rural settings. Apart from a few cases of successful reintegration into village life, most of the ex-miners' saw their lives as '*not* "how it is supposed to be"', with their reactions ranging from being demoralised to desperate (Ferguson, 1999, p.137). Ferguson's study of the historical backgrounds for notions of modernity and progress, as well as how people responded when the socioeconomic circumstances shifted, set the scene for ethnographic studies to emphasise how meanings of such concepts are created and negotiated in different contexts.

Shifting ideologies and global trends of economic transformation have influenced people's expectations of modernity not just in sub-Saharan Africa, but across the world. Although the concepts of progress, development and modernity are closely interlinked, the ways in which people shape meanings and relate them to each other are highly contextual. In academic literature, the emphasis has often been upon the contrast between people's aspirations and the limitations for progressing in neoliberal conditions (e.g. Piot, 2010). It has also been demonstrated that some people fulfil their expectations of modernity. In southern India, urban modernity was a central imaginary for rural-urban migrants: 'Promises of economic progress, upward mobility and status enhancement are some of the most powerful images that colour the expectations of migrants on their entry to town and factory' (De Neve, 2003, p.277). Whereas Ferguson

(1999) found disappointment and decline in Zambia, De Neve argues that many of these migrants were able to transform their lives even beyond what they had expected. As he notes, ‘opportunities were abundant, promises soon materialised and expectations were fulfilled’ (2003, p.277). However, not everybody succeeded in improving their lives, and De Neve (2003) identifies that the majority of those who struggled were from the lowest castes. His study makes two points relevant to this thesis; first, that expectations of modernity can be fulfilled through migration, even though that may not always work as planned; and second, that privilege and inequality are central for people’s opportunities to progress. These different analyses illustrate that people’s expectations of modernity are shaped by contemporary ideologies and socioeconomic realities, but are simultaneously contesting and reshaping the meanings of them. The varying meanings of modernity shows that the ways in which people relate to context-specific discourses depend on their social positions. This thesis seeks to understand how people can progress through urban-urban migration, but also how such cultural practices generate social distinctions that can describe what it means to be middle class.

Over the past two decades, transformations in sub-Saharan Africa have impacted people’s opportunities for progressing as expected. ‘Expectations of modernity’ have in many parts of the continent, as in Ferguson’s (1999) case, been explored in relation to how people who already live in urban settings cope with decline (Mains, 2012b; Masquelier, 2013). In another study from Zambia, Hansen (2005, p.13) emphasises how economic decline influenced opportunities for material and social progress. A central condition for young men to get married and achieve ‘adulthood’ was to be able to set up a household and provide for the family, but Hansen (2005) argues that the privatisation of the housing market prevented many people from accessing affordable accommodation in Lusaka. Poor men ended up getting ‘stuck in the compound’ with their parents instead of establishing their own households, and consequently, according to ‘traditional’ meanings of progress, they remained ‘young’ much longer than expected. In response to these circumstances, Hansen (2005) questions if the experiences of prolonged youth will prompt people in such situations to challenge current conditions and demand more economic access and social space, through which she suggests that people will seek to find alternative ways to adapt to the changes and progress if their prospects remain limited. The ways in which social change affects people differently depending on their social positions suggest people’s

conceptualisations of progress can explain another dimension of what it means to be middle class.

While migration has often been analysed as an alternative for individuals to seek new opportunities and transform their lives, people's responses to broader economic trends and shifting employment opportunities vary between different contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Ralph (2008) has examined how young unemployed and economically marginalised men in urban Senegal have responded to being categorised by the state as a source of social problems. He argues that rather than being the origin of social unrest, this particular group is a demographic arising from the postcolonial economic stagnation. While he found that some are able to 'escape' the postcolonial predicament, the majority were left 'disparaged for not capitalizing on the opportunities that are allegedly available to all who seek them' (2008, p.15). To overcome the idleness of unemployment, these young men have found an alternative in preparing and serving tea, which offers them an opportunity to engage in what for them is a meaningful practice that also helps them avoid becoming 'pathologically unproductive subject[s]' (Ralph, 2008). Although this practice does not allow for major material progress, Ralph's analysis illustrates that people seek to overcome deteriorating conditions for status and livelihoods by developing new responses to social change (Similarly, Masquelier (2013) has analysed the role of tea brewing as a meaningful activity among young men struggling to find employment, purpose and direction in Niger). Even if these people are not able to progress because of declining opportunities for employment, their capacity to get by and develop alternative practices that enable them to maintain a certain status suggest that responses to new circumstances may to some extent reflect class relations. Although the focus in this thesis is on people who are more 'productive', I also consider responses to contemporary conditions by looking at how urban-urban migration relates to meanings of progress and seek to understand how meanings of being middle class are formed through such practices.

Through new social practices, people are also contesting social hierarchies. In the Ivory Coast, Newell (2012) provides an example of how unemployed men, known as *les bluffeurs* (bluffers), seek progress by drawing upon local ideas of modernity to trick people and obtain money, material goods and status. Through these actions, he argues that 'the representation of the bluff, even the imagination of it, was an activity with real-world consequences' (2012, p.109). Rather than taking the more common position of considering modernity as a condition that cannot be achieved (e.g. Latour,

1993), Newell analyses ‘modernity’ as both a discourse and a social skill that *les bluffeurs* master and proactively employ to make a living for themselves under conditions of unemployment and economic hardship. By showing that some urban dwellers have found alternative ways to increase status, Newell highlights that modernity becomes a ‘reality’. To consider how ideas of modernity intersect with individual progress in the Ethiopian context, Bourdieu’s (1984) work on capitals, and in particular material and symbolic capital, enables an analysis of how emic meanings of progress intersect with people’s choices to engage in urban-urban migration, and to consider how these dynamics generate social distinctions.

The economic transformations and failures of development across regions have often been emphasised as incentives for people to seek material and social progress especially through international and intercontinental migration. In anthropological literature from different parts of the world, migration has been examined to understand how people seek to overcome unemployment and other socioeconomic limitations, as well as a social opportunity to enact modernity (either at home or away). For instance, Gardner (1995) noted that in Bangladesh, migration to the ‘West’, as well as to other parts of the world, migration had become a source of status. Also Andersson (2014, p.19) explains that across postcolonial regions ‘access to foreign lands has become a source of increased polarization, with Europe rendered as a mythological repository of wealth and transformative power.’ Anthropologists have also noted the stigma towards those who are not able to migrate. In Mali and Senegal, for example, women expressed contempt towards non-migrating men and referred to them as ‘being stuck like glue’ for their immobility (Jónsson, 2008, p.28). Also internal migration, especially from rural to urban areas is analysed as a form of movement that influences status in different locations (Yan, 2008). Although migration is an important way for many people to transform their lives, meanings of progress vary between contexts and I here turn to the relationship between progress, migration and class in the Ethiopian context.

The state, development and meanings of progress in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, migration has been analysed as a response both to the contemporary developmental discourse and to economic decline. With limited opportunities for finding employment after completing education and the ideas that life was better elsewhere, Mains argues that leaving Ethiopia had for many of his informants become the most attractive alternative because ‘progress can only be experienced abroad’

(2012b, p.8). Among young people who struggled to find employment, *lewt* (progress) is understood as something that ‘occurs gradually, and improvement is divided into stages. These stages are organized in a linear manner, and progress involves movement from one stage to the next’ (Mains, 2012b, p.8). While international migration is a central meaning of progress for Mains’ informants, it is not its only meaning in contemporary Ethiopia. From a linguistic perspective, the term *lewt* is difficult to translate into English because it is widely used with senses of both individual progress as well as broader and national development. The complexity of these ideas demands further interrogation.

Development has been a central concept to rulers and subjects since the early formations of the Ethiopian state. In this context, ‘[e]xplicit attempts to reform, modernize, and centralize the Ethiopian polity can be traced back to the nineteenth century activities of Emperors Tewodros I, Yohannes IV and Menelik II, and arguably much further’ (Vaughan, 2011, p.621). Early in the twentieth century, ideas of development were central for how Ethiopians perceived their living conditions: intellectuals at the time called for ‘Japanisation’ to generate a similar ‘rapid development’ of Ethiopia as Japan had gone through (Zewde, 2002). Attempts to ‘develop Ethiopia’ persisted throughout the rule of Haile Selassie, for instance, by shifting power away from the authority of regional elites to people with higher education in urban centres to create a more bureaucratic state and centralised government (ibid.).

Despite such changes, Clapham argues that there was no dominant paradigm for development in Ethiopia at the time and that Haile Selassie drew upon ‘Western’ trajectories of industrialisation, not only to ‘develop Ethiopia’, but also to entrench his own power by adapting to the global system of ‘modernity’ (2006, p.112). Towards the end of Haile Selassie’s rule in the 1960s and 1970s, there was frustration among Ethiopians over the stagnation of development (Vaughan, 2011). When it became increasingly evident that people’s expectations of modernity would not be met under the monarchy, the regime was overthrown in an attempt to emulate development in other parts of the world (Clapham, 2006).

The state’s approach to development in Ethiopia changed after the 1974 revolution. The *Derg* implemented a range of radical national reforms to challenge the existing hierarchical relations, especially through a transformation of the agricultural production system (Viezzoli, 1992). Without any compensation for landowners, the land

reform proclamation of 1975 nationalised all land to abolish ‘feudal’ power relations. Donham (1999, pp.27–28) argued that the land reform was not primarily a response to peasants’ demands, but owed its implementation to ‘the intelligentsia’s image of their society as “feudal,” as a type of society that Europe and the developed West had left behind centuries ago’. The land reform did, Donham explained, ‘what Ethiopians intellectuals had dreamed about for decades. They designed Ethiopian Modern’ (1999, p.28). In his study of how the Maale in southern Ethiopia understood and responded to the students who came to educate them about Marxism and modernity, Donham demonstrated that their notions of modernity were shaped through their own narratives of history and mythologies, in addition to being impacted by an American mission in the area. Meanings of modernity were not only constructed through state policies and interventions, but Maale people were themselves agents in creating the meanings of it (ibid.). This perspective illustrates the complex ways in which meanings of modernity were shaped through multiple negotiations of political discourse in this particular historical context. Similar contestations and creations of meanings can be assumed to have occurred throughout Ethiopia and in response to shifts in political power, policies and discourses of development.

Also the current government has since 1991 employed development as a central term to legitimise its rule. Gebresenbet (2014) argues, the government frames development as apolitical and to be of such importance that it dictates all other issues. She highlights militarised words such as *tsere-dehenet tegel* (anti-poverty struggle), *lemat arbegna* (development patriot) and *jegna* (hero) to argue that the government portrays development as the most fundamental issue in contemporary Ethiopia (Gebresenbet, 2014). As discussed in chapter one, this has generated a particular discourse, and Rahmato (2011, pp.8–9) argues that in a document issued for leaders and cadres of the EPRDF in 2007, development is morally loaded and the government uses it to portray itself in a favourable way. The document makes a distinction between ‘developmental’ and ‘rent-seeking’ actors, and the former are described as ‘dedicated to the development of the country and the progress of the people’ whereas the latter group ‘seek personal gains in the form of wealth, property and status’ (ibid.). Rahmato argues that the EPRDF claims to be the only actor with developmental credentials whereas civil society organisations, opposition groups and private enterprises are portrayed as rent-seeking (2011, p.9). ‘Rent-seeker’ has become a political insult that indicates someone who is seeking personal gain over development (Vaughan and Gebremichael,

2011), and the term *tserelemat* (anti-development) is used in similar ways (Gebresenbet, 2014). Evidently, development is a highly politicised discourse in Ethiopia.

The government's developmental discourse has also been directed towards the wider Ethiopian population and had significant implications on people's lives. The TPLF's war against the Derg regime was largely a 'peasant revolution' (Young, 1997b) and after coming to power, the EPRDF coalition initially focused its development policies towards the approximately 85 per cent of the Ethiopian population that depended on rural agricultural production. The Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation (ADLI) policy from 1993 guided the initial formation of the developmental state because, according to the government, 'as a labour-rich and capital poor country, labour-intensive, non-mechanised agriculture should be implemented alongside technologies such as irrigation, fertiliser and improved seeds' (Lavers, 2012, p.109). This was expected to increase agricultural productivity and stimulate demand for domestic production of farming tools, fertiliser and consumption goods (*ibid.*), and thereby generate a broader process of development in Ethiopia. While the policymakers' focus was initially on rural development, the government gradually turned its attention to urban development, especially from 2000 onwards. Consequently, the capital and other urban centres have seen large population growth, upgrades of infrastructure and transportation as well as expansion of the education and health systems (Dorosh and Schmidt, 2010). These changes and the emergence of both new and bigger cities have generated new opportunities for higher education as well as possibilities for a wider range of urban employment, which has made migration between urban centres increasingly common.

The government justifies its (authoritarian) development policies partly by drawing on well-known narratives of Ethiopian history. Orłowska (2013) has examined how the state used the celebrations of the Ethiopian Millennium in 2007 to draw on a range of popular ideas of Ethiopian heritage to convey how it could develop the country into an equally great future. By illustrating how the construction of the biggest water reservoir, the 'Millennium Dam', is depicted in 'items of everyday use, such as the recharging cards for mobile phones and occasional cards' (2013, p.313), she suggests that the 'image of the new dam is replacing former historical icons such as the Gonder castle and the Aksum obelisks' (*ibid.*). To shape processes of development, she argues, the state is seeking to provide an identity for the modern Ethiopian nation that builds upon its history. Through her analysis of rhetoric and symbolism she illustrates how

development is politicised and that the Ethiopian past is a ‘contested terrain’ (Triulzi, 2006) that is manipulated for the purpose of ‘forging’ the nation. These processes of creating the nation through new narratives about the past and the future demonstrate how the government is seeking to legitimise its own role in developing Ethiopia into modernity. The government’s politicisation and unrelenting approach to development has contributed to make the idea ubiquitous, which has also influenced people’s expectations of modernity.

How people have responded to the developmental discourse in Ethiopia has been widely discussed. De Waal (2013), for instance, argues that the ‘hegemony of developmental discourse’ has gradually become an internalised set of assumptions among people. However, Abbink (2012) shows that people who were affected by and objected to dam construction in southern Ethiopia were silenced through this discourse. He argues that the government seeks development through infrastructural and technocratic approaches and that ‘evolving modernist governance modes in developing countries like Ethiopia reinvent modes of coercive state legitimacy by grounding their political practices in global developmental discourse’ (2012, p.125). Whereas de Waal (2013) finds that people have accepted the discourse, Abbink’s analysis of the authoritarian implementation illustrates that development is an imposed order with little room for contestation. Also Rahmato (2011, pp.8–9) argues that state-led development in Ethiopia is non-participatory and that ‘policy decisions and programme choices are made by central authorities which often are not accountable to anyone’. The authoritarian approach to development is further complicated by the EPRDF’s shifting ideological stances, as Ellison (2009, p.89) contends, ‘Ethiopia’s neoliberal reforms claim to advance democracy, economic rights, and freedom at the same time political activists are persecuted [and] economic disparities increase’. In these conflicting circumstances, development has become an ideology that supersedes other perspectives. To understand how urban migration shapes class relations, this thesis seeks to analyse how people construct meanings of progress in response to these dynamics.

Socioeconomic transformations over the past decades have affected social hierarchies in ways that have influenced meanings of progress. In his study of how the usages and meanings of the categories ‘Xauta’ (hereditary name for weavers, potters, merchants) and ‘Etenta’ (cultivators dominating social life) among the Konso ethnic group in southern Ethiopia transformed over time, Ellison (2006) highlights how the government’s implementation of neoliberal reforms since 1991 have reshaped

hierarchical relations. The liberalisation and ideas that ‘everyone can do as he wants’ played a role in how people reshaped inherited social categories through taking newly available occupations, married across boundaries and used new idioms and information (ibid.). These changes, Ellison (2006) argues, did not eliminate local hegemonies, but gave new meanings to social hierarchies. Ellison’s case focuses on a marginalised area of the country, but his study illustrates that social change has impacted ideas of progress and that people’s social positions are negotiated through their responses to broader processes of development.

Somewhat paradoxically, the socioeconomic transformations have taken place in Ethiopia since 1991 have also made the gaps between national development and individual progress more evident. Many of Mains’ informants (in a different study to the one mentioned above) considered Ethiopia to be developing as ‘roads were being renewed, high-rises going up, the government was creating new jobs’ (2012a, p.11). At the same time, however, their lives were shaped by economic decline and many struggled to afford three meals a day and lived with unreliable water and power supply (ibid.). These conditions influenced how they perceived development. People spoke about new roads as an improvement that would enhance employment, transport and business opportunities for local people, but referred to the construction of dams as being beneficial only to the government and foreign investors (ibid.). Their assessments illustrate that there is not a fixed relation between development and progress, which, similarly to Ellison’s (2006) study, suggest that people gave meaning to development partly in relation to how material changes were seen to determine opportunities to improve their own lives.

Academic perspectives on the role of different patterns of migration in formations of class have become increasingly complex, and Ferguson’s (1999) notion of ‘expectations of modernity’ has, in particular, been central for analysing how individuals’ understanding of their own progress intersect with broader processes of development as well as ideas of modernity. In recent years, the focus in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as other parts of the Global South, has often been upon rural-urban migrants and marginalised young men in urban areas, highlighting the contrast between their expectations and their actual opportunities to fulfil them. Similarly, the contrast between the developmental discourse and the continued poverty, lack of employment and other obstacles for fulfilling expectations of modernity have influenced how people in Ethiopia conceptualise national development and how they create meanings of

individual progress in response to the major transformations that have taken place during the current government's rule. International migration is commonly analysed as an option for people who face poor prospects within Ethiopia to attempt to transform their lives. However, considering the continued prevalence of migration within the country, I examine, in chapter six, how meanings of progress can help analyse the role of urban-urban migration in creating shared cultural practices and social distinctions that reflect what it means to be middle class.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has complemented the framing of the thesis that I developed in chapter one by considering why a focus on higher education, ethnicity and progress can generate an understanding of how class relations are shaped through urban-urban migration. The increasing prevalence of internal migration since 1991, as well as the expansion of higher education since year 2000, new ethnic power relations, as well as transforming ideas of progress have reshaped social hierarchies in Ethiopia. Higher education has shifted from being an elitist institution towards becoming a more feasible choice for people from different backgrounds, and the government's policy of mixing students has increased migration and social encounters between people from all over Ethiopia. The Tigrayan-dominated government's implementation of ethnic federalism to provide a more equal distribution of power has contributed to politicise and make ethnicity a contested aspect of group belonging and individual identity, which has also influenced how Tigrayans are perceived as well as their experiences of inter-ethnic encounters. Despite such tensions, the government's policy towards development and the hegemonic developmental discourse have transformed opportunities and people's expectations of modernity, and for many, migration is associated with ideas of progress.

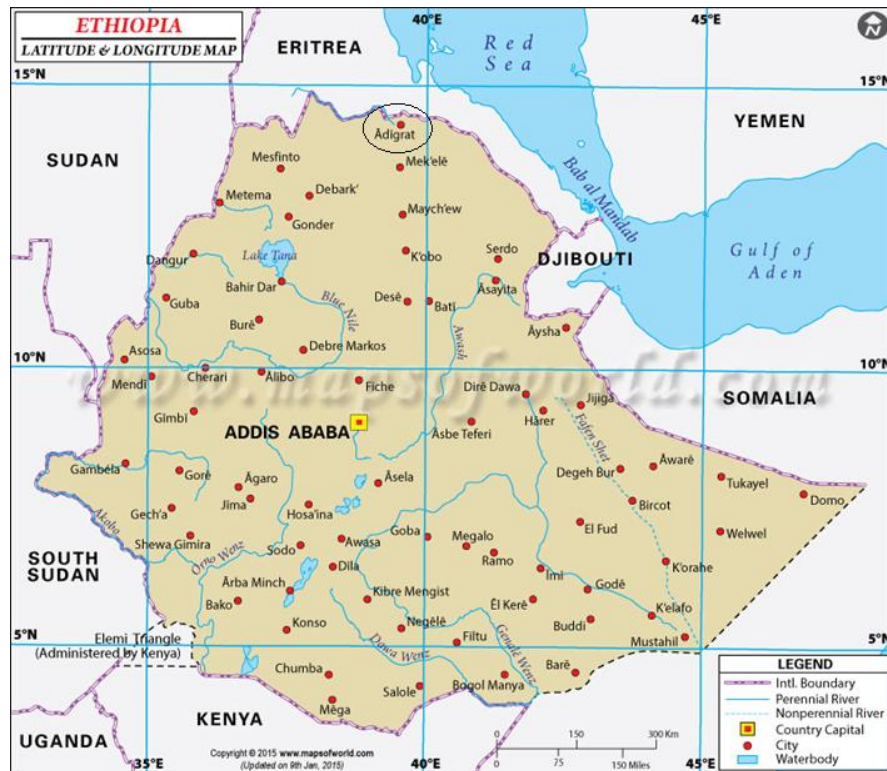
The examination of these themes has demonstrated that certain trends in Ethiopia are comparable to other countries in the continent, but also that there are sociocultural dynamics that are unique in this context. My account of the particular conditions in Ethiopia shows that social hierarchies and class cannot be taken for granted or assumed to be the same across sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, the questions this research seeks to examine are; what is the role of urban-urban migration in producing social distinctions? How do individual transformations through migration reproduce and contest social hierarchies? What are the cultural practices and characteristics of people who can be described as being middle class in Ethiopia?

Having outlined the theoretical approach for examining the concept of middle class in chapter one and the particular conditions in Ethiopia in this chapter, ethnographic research is required to identify the depth and variety of people's perceptions of these contextual specificities and to analyse their cultural practices in terms of class. In the next chapter, I complete setting the scene for the subsequent empirical chapters by describing the key characteristics of the field sites of this research and the process of data collection.

3. Researching the meaning of being middle class in Ethiopia

3.1 Introduction

Chapter one made the case that a study of urban-urban migration can generate an analysis of what it means to be middle class. It also demonstrated that recent transformations in the higher education system, politics of ethnicity and approaches to development, have influenced people's lives in contemporary Ethiopia, and, in chapter two, I examined these themes theoretically and in the contexts of sub-Saharan Africa and Ethiopia. In this chapter, I present the field sites of Adigrat and Addis Ababa (see map 2 below), with a specific focus on the historical circumstances that have framed and continue to impact contemporary class relations through the themes of higher education, ethnicity, progress as well as migration patterns. This is followed by an overview of my methodological approach and how I conducted the research, the processes of building relationships as well as an overview of my key informants. The chapter also discusses my positionality, ethics and issues of representation. In combination with chapter one and two, the discussion on the research process frames the analysis of the subsequent empirical chapters.



Map 2. Major cities and towns in Ethiopia.

Addis Ababa is located in the centre of the country, whereas Adigrat is in the north (circled).²

² www.mapsofworld.com (2016).

My interest in internal migration and social inequalities emerged from my former experiences in Ethiopia. In October 2006, I went to study for a term at Addis Ababa University as part of my undergraduate degree. Soon after arrival, I found out that the term start had been further delayed because of security issues related to the ethnic conflicts that had escalated after the contested election in 2005. While waiting, I walked through parts of the city, taught English in a private primary school, chatted to people and dealt with bureaucratic requirements for obtaining a residence permit.

After three weeks, I moved into the dormitory on campus where I shared accommodation with foreign students from several sub-Saharan African countries and begun my studies in Social Anthropology, Sociology and Amharic language for foreigners. Though I was not aware of it at the time, the large number of students in each lecture, lack of reading materials in the libraries and pressure on lecturers reflected some of the consequences of the fast expansion of higher education in Ethiopia discussed in chapter two. Over time, I learned about people's different social origins. For example, some students were from wealthy families in the capital, some from poor rural areas in the Amhara region many hours walk from the closest roads, and others came from urban areas in Tigray. These students lived in dormitories that housed from eight up to 24 students in each room, with relatives in the city or shared tiny rented rooms just outside the campus. Through interaction with a range of students from all over Ethiopia, the importance people attributed to ethnicity gradually became clearer to me. Getting to know students and other people in Addis Ababa, as well as a three-week journey around northern Ethiopia after the final exams where I got to experience a little of life outside of Addis Ababa, gave me an initial impression of contemporary inequalities in the country.

Over the following years, I returned to Ethiopia several times to study Amharic, travel to other parts of the country and visit friends. Each time, some of my acquaintances with higher education had moved on to other cities. Their movements within the country seemed to differ from poorer acquaintances who more commonly went to Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Middle East. These experiences and observations made me question how migration trajectories were related to social backgrounds and positions, and eventually led me to develop the research questions presented in chapter two.

3.2 The field sites: Adigrat and Addis Ababa

My interest in *Selam Bus* journeys to examine the dynamics of internal migration and cultural practices that can describe what it means to be middle class made it favourable to choose relatively long journeys and two field sites within Ethiopia. Addis Ababa is by far the largest and most multi-ethnic city in Ethiopia. It is also a popular destination for internal migration and has the widest inequalities. I considered Adigrat to be a suitable second field site because it is located about 900 kilometres north of Addis Ababa. The *Selam Bus* between these locations required two overnight stops, which I saw as an opportunity to immerse myself in the journeys and the social relations that were shaped both on the road and in shared accommodation. In addition, I found Adigrat attractive because of its location in the Tigray region associated with political power, its proximity to the Eritrean border and reputation for being place with a history and culture of migration to all parts of Ethiopia.

Adigrat: A small city in northern Ethiopia

Over the past 200 years, Adigrat (Tig. *Adi*=land, *grat*=farmland) has gradually transformed from being farmland to a larger settlement located below high mountain peaks. In the early 19th century, Adigrat was not much bigger than other surrounding villages (Isenberg and Krapf, 1843; Lindahl, 2005), but towards the end of the century, Adigrat had increased its political importance by growing in size and having a weekly market. In the build-up to the ‘battle of Adwa’ in 1896, the Italian army occupied Adigrat and the surrounding mountain ridges area for their strategically important location (Lindahl, 2005; Marcus, 1994, p.98), and was occupied again during the brief Italian colonisation from 1936-1941 (Mockler, 2003). Just a few years later, in 1943, the town was occupied by Tigrayan rebels (Lindahl, 2005).

Adigrat kept growing both in size and in political importance. In the early 1970s, the only high school east of Adwa and north of Mekelle was located in Adigrat (Young, 1997b). Adigrat students at the university in Addis Ababa supported and influenced the students at Agazi high school, turning it into a local centre for dissent against Haile Selassie’s regime and Amhara domination. Circumstances deteriorated in Adigrat under the Derg regime, especially from the late 1970s when the civil war intensified. Restrictions upon movements were imposed and private traders could only travel if they paid large bribes, though still risked being detained or executed (Young, 1997b). Under these conditions, Young argued, ‘Adigrat’s dependence on merchandising and trade

meant that the Derg's imposition of commercial and transport restrictions were strongly felt' (1997b, p.94).

When the civil war ended in 1991 and Eritrea became independent in 1993, people in Adigrat experienced new opportunities for making a living. Much of the trade between Ethiopia and Eritrea started to pass through Adigrat, leading to a surge in business. Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, is less than 200 kilometres away (Adigrat is located 30 kilometres from the Eritrean border) and for many it was the most common place to go for trade and labour both when Eritrea was part of Ethiopia and after its independence. As Dessalegn (2004, citing Hammond) explains, labour migration to and from Ethiopia has historically been a way for poor households both in Tigray and Eritrea to seek income.

The relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea has been central for Adigrat, and the 1998-2000 war had major implications on conditions in the city. Large-scale forced resettlement of citizens from both countries was implemented and Dessalegn (2004) found that between 1998 and 2001 almost 95,000 Ethiopians, of which 70 per cent were Tigrayans, were returned from Eritrea to Ethiopia. Most of these migrants ended up in urban areas and were initially provided with monthly grants and food rations, but Dessalegn (2004) argues that these supplements were not sufficient for people to get by and there were few employment opportunities for them. She highlights the case of Adigrat, where the population of about 50,000 increased with some 37,000 deportees in addition to 10,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Because of the large number of people arriving in Adigrat, Dessalegn (2004) found that the capacity of schools and health stations were stretched to the limit and that urban poverty had increased. She further argues that the halt in trade of commodities, such as grain and livestock, has had a negative impact on many people's lives in Adigrat, and that many young women have turned to sex work to compensate for dwindling income-opportunities (Dessalegn, 2004). The border remains closed.

At the last census almost a decade ago, the population was 57,572 (CSA, 2007b), and there were 14,000 households (Gebremariam and Addissie, 2014, p.2). Currently, Adigrat is not as big as Mekelle (the regional capital, about 120 kilometres to the south), but bigger than the nearby towns of Bizet, Idega Hamus and Sinqata. The city has two public health centres and a hospital, as well as bars, photo studios, cafes, restaurants and hotels. Main roads have been upgraded with asphalt and side roads in the city that used to be muddy alleyways have become cobblestoned streets. The largest

ethnic group in Adigrat is Tigrayans. In the Eastern Tigray Zone where Adigrat is located, the total population is 755,343, out of which 720,000 are classified as Tigrayan and the second largest group is Irob counting some 28,527 people (CSA, 2007b). In addition, there is a steady flow of people from surrounding rural areas, other towns in Tigray as well as Eritrea entering and settling down in Adigrat for shorter or longer periods. Also, soldiers stationed in the army bases as well as the increasing student numbers are adding to Adigrat's diversity. The population is predominantly Orthodox Christian, though there is also a Muslim neighbourhood as well as a group of Catholics, each representing about 3% of the population in Adigrat.

Since the opening of Adigrat University in 2011, the student numbers have increased each year and has reached more than 14,000 regular students as well as 5,000 students on evening or summer programmes (Adigrat University, 2016). There are no private higher education institutions, and the opportunities for pursuing higher education in Adigrat are limited to those who are allocated a space there by the government and those who can pay for tuition on evening or summer programmes. As elsewhere in Ethiopia, poor people in Adigrat are less likely turn down offers for university-places through cost-sharing in other parts of the country than prospective students from wealthy families who can choose to study where it is convenient for them.

Employment opportunities are similar in many towns and cities across Tigray. In Adigrat, the main industry is the pharmaceutical factory that opened in 1992 and employs more than 500 people, but Adigrat University has quickly become the largest employer. The number of academic staff is close to 1,000 and the number of support staff is expected to reach 1,500 in 2016 (Adigrat University, 2016). For those with higher education there are also opportunities for employment in the local government, as well as a limited number of jobs in NGOs and private businesses. People without higher education and from poorer or rural backgrounds primarily take jobs such as trading in the market place, manual labour, bus, minibus and rickshaw drivers, schoolteachers and in the service sector.

Over the past decades, the cityscape has transformed in ways that reflect these social and economic inequalities. For instance, a recent change is that buildings with more than one storey are becoming more common. In 1994, 98,3% of buildings in Ethiopia were single storied (Abelti, Brazzoduro and Gebremedhin, 2001), but currently wealthy investors have constructed many new multi-story buildings and houses in urban centres. In Adigrat, there are big mansions and relatively expensive hotels owned by

local businessmen or people who have emigrated to the United States or Europe, which are in contrast to the smaller buildings and stone houses where many people live together in small rooms.

The combination of the end of trade with Eritrea, limited opportunities for professional jobs outside of the public sector and the larger flow of students going to universities in other regions, has increased the scale of migration from Adigrat. There are three main roads that lead south (to Mekelle and Addis Ababa), west (to Axum, Shire and Sudan) and north (to Eritrea). While migrants going to Europe often travel west to cross the Sudanese border, young men and women heading to the Arab Gulf as well as people going for higher education or better employment opportunities travel the road to Mekelle and often onwards to Addis Ababa. There are no numbers available regarding migration out of Adigrat specifically.

Addis Ababa: the capital of Ethiopia

When Emperor Menelik II founded Addis Ababa in the late nineteenth century, it signified a change in Ethiopian state building. Whereas former rulers had frequently been on the move with their armies and rarely stayed long in one place, Addis Ababa became the first permanent location for ruling the territory (Pankhurst, 1961). Addis Ababa, Pankhurst argued, was different from the colonial attempts to create European-style cities, and ‘represented an attempt by an African ruler to forge something new in his country’s history by grafting modern institutions on a traditional living organism’ (1961, p.103). This turned what was initially a huge military camp into a growing city. In the early years, Addis Ababa was located and centred around churches and state institutions, but gradually expanded southwards with the introduction of railway in 1917 and with an airline from the mid- 1940s (Zewde, 2005). Each of the rules of Haile Selassie, the Italian colonisers, the *Derg*, and the EPRDF have shaped and reshaped the capital through shifting ideologies, power relations and policies controlling population movements.

Today, Addis Ababa is an economically, socially and culturally diverse city. Among the more than 2,7 million (CSA, 2007a) inhabitants there are people from all ethnic groups (more than 80), though the majority are Amhara (1,288,895), Oromo (534,547), Gurage (447,777) and Tigrayans (169,182). There are also non-Ethiopians, especially Somalis, Eritreans and South Sudanese. The variety of the population is also reflected by an increase in religious diversity, such as Pentecostalism, Jehovah’s

Witness and other branches of Christianity, in addition to the more ‘traditional’ Orthodox Christianity and Islam (Haustein and Østebø, 2011).

Migration to the capital is high, both from rural and urban parts of the country. Addis Ababa, located centrally in the country is ‘natural’ centre for migration from other parts of Ethiopia. Among the 2,7 million people living in Addis Ababa, almost half, 1,302,964, are classified as migrants (CSA, 2007a). Among these, 715,305 came from rural areas and 587,661 came from other urban areas (ibid.). Studies have often emphasised poor migrants from rural areas who struggle to get by in the city, such as van Blerk (2008) focusing on young women becoming sex workers and Erulkar *et al.* (2006) whose study centre upon young people coming to Addis Ababa for education and work, but end up in poverty. Despite many poor migrants’ unfulfilled expectations of modernity, migration to the capital persists.

Addis Ababa is a hub for higher education in Ethiopia. The opportunities are varied in the capital with Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa Science and Technology University and the Civil Service University, as well as almost 40 non-government higher education institutions offering programmes in a range of topics, such as, management and leadership, medicine, engineering and computer technology (MoE, 2016). The variety of opportunities for pursuing higher education has contributed to making Addis Ababa an attractive location for people from other parts of the country, though people’s opportunities to pursue such studies depend on their social positions and economic situations. For example, Atnafu *et al.* (2014) argue that many young people from rural areas come to Addis Ababa with aspirations for accessing or funding further education, but that their jobs as construction workers or domestic workers are exhausting and exploitative, which prevent many from pursuing education. On the other hand, as shown above, people in better economic positions are able to pursue higher education either in private colleges or through part-time university programmes.

The differences in opportunities for education are related to broader inequalities in Addis Ababa. The shopping malls, cinemas, government offices, international organisations, UN agencies, private businesses, expensive hotels, bars and numerous cafés as well as the booming industrial area in the southern part of the city are material manifestations of the city’s prosperity. Individuals’ wealth in Addis Ababa can be identified by the expensive cars on the roads, smartly dressed people in upmarket public spaces, and school children attending expensive international schools, such as Lycée franco-éthiopien Guébré-Mariam and Sandford International School. The wealth,

infrastructure and the sheer size of the city compared to any other place in Ethiopia has, according to Bonsa, made Addis Ababa ‘the prototype of a modernist urban and national enterprise’ (2013, p.194). Despite such an image, socioeconomic inequalities are obvious. Across the city, there are street vendors in ragged clothes selling socks, tissue paper or stickers as well as beggars asking for alms in the name of God and Allah. Poor housing conditions, street children and sex workers on the streets at night suggest that the economic differences in Addis Ababa pervade people’s lives in numerous ways.

Employment and salaries influence people’s economic situations as well as social relations. The high unemployment rates in urban Ethiopia can partly explain existing inequalities and the poverty many people have to cope with in Addis Ababa. Although unemployment in the capital is difficult to assess because of the large number of people working informally and when opportunities arise, it is clear that many formal jobs in government offices, NGOs and private companies require higher education, whereas people with limited education and few other options often take informal jobs. For instance, migrants from rural areas often take work as manual labourers, domestic workers, or other low-paid work (Erulkar et al., 2006; van Blerk, 2008). Manual labour often depends on the season, is informal and unstable whereas domestic work is easier to find but in many cases requires guarantors in case of theft or misconduct – a requirement that is impossible to fulfil for many (Atnafu, Oucho and Zeitlyn, 2014). Many also lack documentation from their place of origin that allow them to obtain identification card needed for formal employment (ibid.). Those who find employment as domestic workers make salaries from 350 [£12.50] to 1,000 Birr [£35.50] a month in Addis Ababa, while manual labourers face more uncertainty in numbers of working days per month and make daily wages ranging from 25 [£0.89] to 100 Birr [£3.50] (Atnafu, Oucho and Zeitlyn, 2014). On such wages, many rural-urban migrants barely manage to cover food and housing. For people in formal employment, however, there are better wages, more security and opportunities for career development. CSA (2012) presents material stating that people with diplomas earn between 1,000 [£35.50] and 1,500 Birr [£53] a month in Addis Ababa, whereas the median wage of people with higher education degrees is about 2,500 Birr [£89]. Education is central in shaping Ethiopians employment trajectories, and social inequalities are influenced by the kinds of employment people obtain.

Social inequalities are also reflected in people's living conditions. In the 1980s, rental housing accounted for 60 per cent of the housing and rates were cheap, but there was little investment in maintenance and housing quality deteriorated (French and Hegab, 2011). At that time, the average floor of houses was 20m², a third of all houses had only one room and almost 40 per cent of houses lacked potable water and sanitation (Noudehou and Azeze, 2001). After the change of regimes in 1991, the government has provided land and subsidised housing projects, but there is a continued shortage of affordable housing in Addis Ababa. Prices have increased significantly and made it challenging even for professionals in formal employment to access affordable housing (French and Hegab, 2011). In recent years, large numbers of apartment buildings have been constructed in Addis Ababa to provide better housing conditions for the low-income population, but the demand remains much higher than the supply (French and Hegab, 2011). These conditions, combined with high urbanisation, have made illegal housing a prevalent alternative, and currently about 20% of the housing in Addis Ababa is illegal shelters of low quality with limited access to water and electricity (ibid.). In addition to the many people who live in squalid conditions, the wide variety of housing reflects broader economic differences. For instance, many NGO and embassy workers live in mansions in different parts of the city, and wealthy Ethiopians reside in, for example, expensive apartments in the Bole area or in villas in the Entoto hills. In addition, a residential area on the eastern outskirts called 'CMC' is popular among high-income professionals. New houses are being constructed for high-income clients in large numbers throughout the city, and Admassie (2008) points out that 'gated communities' are becoming increasingly common in Addis Ababa. These upscale housing conditions are in stark contrast to the many wood and mud huts and other forms of cheap housing that poor people reside in.

Social and economic inequalities influence different migration patterns. In addition to being a destination for internal migration, Addis Ababa is a starting point for migration out of Ethiopia. International migration appeals to many in Addis Ababa, and Deressa and Azazh (2012) found that more than half of the undergraduate medical students they surveyed intended to emigrate after graduation. Estimates suggest that there are more than 1,000 brokers arranging migration to the Middle East (ILO, 2011), and there are a range of opportunities for overland transport to Kenya, Sudan, South-Sudan and towards Somalia. Bole International Airport is a gateway to the world for

people who are in positions to obtain visas and funds for more distant international migration.

3.3 Methodology and research methods: taking part in people's lives

During pilot research in 2011, many people I spoke to in Addis Ababa and Adigrat who had experience of travelling referred to the *Selam Bus* as the best overland option between these locations. As noted above, the distance between Addis Ababa and Adigrat is about 900 kilometres, and with a travel time of two days, including a night spent in roadside accommodation, as well as another night spent in Mekelle upon departure or arrival. This made me consider *Selam Bus* journeys an attractive research site. However, soon after my first journey, described briefly in chapter one, the bus company changed the schedule. The upgrades of the road and asphaltting all the way between the Mekelle and Addis Ababa enabled the *Selam Bus* to traverse this stretch in 14 hours of intense driving in one day. With the journey taking only a day, people could travel from Adigrat to Mekelle on the last minibus before sunset, spend the night there and reach Addis Ababa by the end of the second day. And similarly, travelling the other way, they could spend a night in Mekelle after arriving from Addis Ababa and go to Adigrat the next morning. The price was much higher than other overland options, but the *Selam Bus* became even more popular after the decrease in travel time and it became necessary to buy tickets about a week in advance. Although *Selam Bus* journeys were central in framing this research, the change meant that there were fewer opportunities to socialise and conduct research during the journey. This propelled me to shift the focus of my research strategy from journeys to explore urban-urban migration from the perspectives of people in Addis Ababa and Adigrat.

Over the past decades, it has become increasingly common to conduct 'multi-sited ethnography' and 'follow the people' to explore social relations beyond particular locations (Marcus, 1995). Such studies have also challenged how field sites are perceived and engaged with. For instance, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argued that by integrating informants' perspectives on locations and how they perceive the particular economic, social, ethnic and political conditions in each of them, examinations of connections across sites have broken down the associations between place and culture. Acknowledging that meanings of locations are shaped by people, rather than culture belonging to locations, field work in two (or more) locations can shift the focus to social networks and the role of migration in generating meanings of places. As Büscher and

Urry (2009, p.101) argue, social life ‘involves continual processes of shifting between being present with others (at work or at home, as part of leisure, and so on) and being distant from those others’ and that presence ‘is thus intermittent, achieved, performed and always interdependent with other processes of connection and communication.’ In focusing upon migration between Addis Ababa and Adigrat and the connections between them, I locate the research in social and spatial contexts while simultaneously recognising that these locations are neither bounded nor static, but entities that have shifting meanings to my informants. Still, there are, as shown above, differences between these locations in terms of opportunities for higher education, employment and modern lifestyles as well as variations in ethnic composition and housing conditions, that all serve as reference points for those who engage in urban-urban migration.

Several anthropologists have suggested that middle classes are especially difficult to research (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty, 2012; Liechty, 2003; Wacquant, 1991), and to study urban-urban migration and analyse meanings of being middle class beyond economic classifications, the methods employed in this thesis are ethnographic. I spent some six months each in Addis Ababa and Adigrat conducting participant observation. I also travelled regularly on buses, minibuses and airplanes, and spent time with informants during stopovers in Mekelle. After having improved my language skills, developed my understanding of the contexts and built trust, I complemented the data from participant observation with semi-structured interviews focusing on life histories.

Adigrat: building close social relations

In Adigrat, I stayed in a room in a walled compound with Mehari, a male key informant in his late 20s whom I had known since my undergraduate studies in Addis Ababa (details of Mehari and other key informants are provided below). Here, I gained access to a number of people and could interact relatively freely with women, many of whom I came to count amongst my most important informants. The population in the compound generally consisted of 20-25 people, but there were also relatives passing through for shorter or longer stays. Such movements was a common topic of conversation, and people often discussed and reflected on their own or others’ experiences in different places, and why and how they had gone there. Through spending time in this compound and interacting informally with the people that lived and stayed there, I collected details also on topics such as educational trajectories, ethnicity and notions of progress.

My understanding of these issues emerged through participation in mundane activities of everyday life, such as drinking coffee, sharing meals and conversations, as well as through the rituals of baptisms, weddings and annual holidays. Similarly to Hammond's (2004) research in western Tigray where people did not consider her exploration of their lives as 'real work', people did not always conceive of my research as a meaningful activity beyond the inherent value of social interactions. In Hammond's case, her role transformed when she obtained a car and started using it as an ambulance. Initially, she felt that people's many requests to take them to the hospital were distractions from her research. However, over time it became clear that her role as an 'ambulance driver' not only enabled Hammond to contribute to their wellbeing, but, in addition, it was through sharing intimate moments of distress that her relationships to informants deepened and gave her a meaningful social position and made the research feasible. The circumstances of my research were very different from the arduous conditions Hammond (2004) and her informants faced, but I also strengthened my relationships by participating in life in the compound, though in a less central role. Without having any special skills or material assets that could make a big difference in their lives, I took part in chores and did errands. These included making lunch, doing dishes, buying vegetables from the market, joining groups carrying poles and setting up tents for celebrations, taking objects to and from Addis Ababa, and other similar tasks. Although my participation was not life-changing to my informants, it made my presence more meaningful and deepened my relationships with the residents of the compound.

In addition to Mehari's family, there were several other families renting single-room stone houses from Mehari's parents. All these neighbours and tenants were poorer, had less education, worked in low-qualified or informal jobs and had different migration patterns than Mehari's family. In one house a bit away from the others, there was a woman in her 40s from the nearby town of Wukro. She had married a man from Adigrat, but had divorced him and lived on her own, making a living by brewing and selling beer from her house. Right next to Mehari's room, there was a woman from Eritrea who provided for her three teenage boys by growing vegetables that she sold in the market. In another building, there was a married couple who had three children, two teenage girls and a young boy of about a year. The woman, who was from Oromia region, stayed at home and her local husband patrolled the streets at night for the militia and worked as an usher some days a week. Another woman lived alone with her daughter. Her husband had sold clothes in small stall on the street for many years, but as

soon as their daughter had completed school and was old enough to conduct the daily business of the stall, he left for Saudi Arabia to increase their income. My main focus was not upon these other residents in the compound, but by observing and participating in the interactions between people in different social positions living next to each other I was able to explore how social hierarchies shaped interactions.

For example, through participant observation in the compound it became clear that the ways in which money were embedded in social relations differed significantly from the African Development Bank's (AfDB, 2011) economic descriptions and classifications of 'the middle class in Africa'. The economy of Mehari's family was interconnected in a number of ways. While Mehari had a relatively high income ranging from 4,000 Birr [£130] to 10,000 Birr [£320] a month, had his own savings account in the bank, and paid rent for the room to his parents, he often provided money for family members in need of cash both within the compound and in other parts of the country. Also other siblings provided support to each other or to their parents in times of need. Some of the money that changed hands was to cover immediate expenses, such as medicines, some was for buying materials for a new building in the compound, and some for was paying fees for splitting up a rural patch of land where each of the siblings could build their own houses in the future. The income from renting out rooms went to Mehari's father, whereas the salary for the relative employed to take care of the cattle and chickens was covered by Mehari and his brother. The constant flow of money between people in the family and the intricate system of covering expenses, made it impossible to categorise them as middle class based on a fixed economic classification, such as between 2 and 10USD a day. The economic context was much more complex, but also socially embedded in responsibility and security where individual income, investments, and joint expenses intersected in ways that makes it futile to measure exact amounts for the purpose of categorising individuals.

Participant observation also enhanced my understanding of the hierarchical aspects of social relations and interactions, which can be exemplified by the relationship between Mehari's family and their domestic worker. When Mehari's mother became paralysed after suffering a stroke prior to the start of my fieldwork, they had, as was common for people who could afford to, hired a young female relative from the countryside to come help out with the daily chores. On one occasion Rahel, Mehari's elder sister, made the domestic worker attempt to make butter for more than three hours before Mehari found out and told her to stop. Normally the process should take about an

hour, but Rahel had insisted that she continued despite it not becoming butter. Mehari was angry with his sister and said ‘she’s treating her like a slave’. Later, I asked Rahel about what had happened and she explained that the domestic worker did not know how to do anything because of her rural origin, and illustrated her point with another example of when the domestic worker had been sent to buy a Mirinda (soft drink) from a nearby shop but had come back with Coca-Cola instead. Her explanation can be seen in the relation to ideas of the city as a more developed place where people are more skilful and modern than people from the backward rural areas who have limited understanding of city-life (even if this does not explain the domestic worker’s lack of butter-making skills). Through observing and being involved in small and big occurrences, and following up with questions, I developed an understanding of social hierarchies and how they played out in everyday lives.

I also established relationships and conducted the research outside of the compound to explore migration and social distinctions. Mehari introduced me to a range of people and helped me access new informants, including his family and many relatives in surrounding rural areas and in different towns and cities, neighbours from other compounds, as well as friends and acquaintances. In addition, I identified other informants through a snowballing technique where informants referred me to other people who could be of interest, in Adigrat, Mekelle and Addis Ababa.

Addis Ababa: Establishing wider networks

In Addis Ababa, I employed the same methods as in Adigrat, but under very different circumstances. I drew upon my pre-existing network to identify informants from Tigray who had completed higher education. I also engaged with people from other social and ethnic backgrounds to build a broader understanding of urban migration as well as to grasp how cultural practices varied. With new acquaintances, I often socialised informally to get to know them by sharing meals, drinking coffee, going for walks, and discussing politics and other current affairs. In some cases, people asked me to help them, for example, to edit their business proposals or give them feedback on MA dissertation drafts, which were also opportunities for me to strengthen our relationships. I maintained an explorative approach, following along the lines of Fabian’s (2001, p.31) observation that ‘much of our ethnographic research is carried out best while we are “out of our minds,” that is, while we relax our inner controls, forget our purposes, let ourselves go.’ The conversations that arose during these meetings regularly led me to

discussions of, for instance, experiences of migration, comparisons between the modernity of Addis Ababa and other places in Ethiopia or abroad, obstacles to and opportunities for progress, challenges of combining higher education studies in the evenings with full-time employment, and ethnic tensions. I followed up discussions of such topics with questions to gather more information. This enabled me to interrogate the wide range of experiences and circumstances that impacted how privilege and inequality shaped people's perceptions of migration, higher education, ethnicity and progress.

Most of the time in the capital, I stayed in a cheap hotel in the Piazza neighbourhood and these living conditions shaped my fieldwork in very different ways from the shared accommodation in Adigrat. To meet and socialise with informants who had higher education and were employed in formal jobs, I was reliant on making appointments and spend time with them in appointed places at particular times of the day when they were available. Many meetings took place in public spaces, such as cafes and restaurants, but I also visited people in their homes in different parts of the city. Some were living in small rooms shared with others, some in apartment buildings, some resided centrally in old, wooden buildings, and others in villas. Upon such visits, I was often invited for meals or coffee and introduced to relatives and neighbours, making these informal events opportunities to conduct participant observation of social life in private spaces. Drinking coffee prepared in people's house in the 'traditional' way allowed me to take part in a space for sharing stories and events of daily life, sharing food, and discuss problems and support each other (Yedes, Clamons and Osman, 2004). Through visiting people in their homes and observing the differences between their living conditions, spending time in public places of different standards and discussing their lives I deepened my understanding of how people conceptualised and experienced privilege and inequality.

Another way I conducted the research was through walking with informants. These walks through different areas and neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa made it possible for me to gain new perspectives on their knowledge and understanding of the city. As Kusenbach (2003, p.478) argues, the 'go-along method' enables making 'visible and intelligible how everyday experience transcends the here and now, as people weave previous knowledge and biography into immediate situated action.' During walks, people told me about, for example, the buildings we passed, the churches we saw and sometimes entered, the predominant ethnic group in certain areas, private

colleges, the names and origin of rich people owning a hotel, and introduced me to friends and acquaintances we encountered on the streets. Through such observations, I enhanced my relationships with informants, as well as my understanding of how people experienced and conceptualised the city.

To compensate for the limitations of my participant observation in the capital I immersed myself in social life through mobile phone communication. Vertovec (2004) has argued that cheap phone calls have become the ‘glue’ of global social networks, suggesting that people have become able to maintain their social relations across large distances. Mobile phone subscription in Ethiopia has increased from 17,575 in year 2000 to more than 30 million in 2014 (ITU, 2016), and such changes in telecommunications have also impacted the ways people communicate within countries. Pelckmans (2009, p.46) argues that the ‘places, times, tools and forms in which oral communication takes place have profoundly altered research in the so-called “phone age”’. Changing communication patterns impact the ways in which anthropologists interact with informants, as Hannerz pointed out, many ‘anthropologists maintain more or less continuous contact with one or some handful of informants by way of letter, telephone or E-mail’ (1998, p.249). In my case, when I was in Addis Ababa, I often called and received calls from key informants in Adigrat, and vice versa. The conversations were sometimes brief chats just to catch up, and at other times to make arrangements for travel, to set up meetings, or longer conversations about current issues and sharing experiences. By participating in a form of social life that is less bound to physical locations, I gained insight into the forms of communication people practiced when separated by migration and physical distance.

Although I could not spend as much time with people in informal settings as I could in Adigrat, conducting fieldwork in Addis Ababa helped me develop an understanding of the social conditions migrants faced in the capital. The difficulties of socialising there provided me with insights into migrants’ social realities and were reflected in the way I conducted a more limited form of participant observation in the capital. The ways of social interactions in Addis Ababa was a recurrent issue in conversations with migrants, and so was the costs of living, employment, ethnic relations, distances and challenges of transport.

Key informants

In both field sites, I engaged with a range of informants and there were seven people who can be characterised as key informants. These key informants were selected based on their experiences of urban-urban migration, higher education, employment and economic situation as well as being classified as Tigrayan in their ID-cards (*metawaqia*). Two of the key informants were from the family I stayed with in Adigrat, and provided a case for studying social relations within the household as well as how their lifestyles differed from other people in the compound and beyond.

Mehari was in his late 20s and lived in his family's compound in Adigrat. He had studied for a BA degree in Business Management at Jimma University in southwestern Ethiopia, but fled the city in his final year without completing the degree after becoming entangled in ethnic conflicts related to the 2005 elections. He went to Addis Ababa to stay with his elder sister, Rahel, and began working in her stationary store. After two years of working long days with little pay, he moved back to his native Adigrat. His elder brother, Nebay, helped him find temporary employment for a government-led food security programme that required him to photograph rural residents in surrounding villages, and soon after completing this project he obtained permanent employment as a guide for tourists trekking in the mountains of Tigray.

Mehari's brother, **Nebay**, was in his mid-30s and had lived most of his life in Adigrat. He had worked in different jobs while studying part-time at Mekelle University, and with a degree in accounting, he was able to obtain a job in the finance office of Adigrat's local administration. He worked there for seven years before he left this secure position and moved to Mekelle for a new job as a factory manager. After two years, Nebay quit and started his own accountancy business in Adigrat and build up a network of clients across five cities and towns in Tigray. Nebay travelled frequently between these locations, and he earned well enough to invest and establish other businesses.

Haftay was 26 years old and had his own photo studio. During his teenage years, he lived with his father in several towns in Tigray for about a year in each place, and he completed a college degree in information technology in Mekelle before he returned to Adigrat at the age of 18. He moved back in with his parents and younger siblings in the rural areas just outside the city and soon found employment as a computer teacher for teenagers in a Catholic organisation. After about two years in this job, he set up a stationary store in central Adigrat with nine friends through a

government-supported initiative to employ young people in ‘cooperatives’. It soon became clear that the surplus was too low for all 10 associates to make a living, and when they split up the cooperative Haftay turned the store into his own photo studio. He filmed weddings and other events, designed banners and advertisement for local businesses and took portrait photos. Haftay occasionally made up to 10,000 Birr [£320] a month, and was renting an apartment in central Adigrat. He lived on his own and had a domestic worker who came by daily to prepare breakfast and lunch for him. Despite originating from a poor rural background, Haftay had been able to establish himself as a prosperous businessman and often frequented Adigrat’s upmarket bars and restaurants.

Tesfay was in his late 20s and had grown up in a poor family in the countryside outside Bizet (a town about an hour’s travel west of Adigrat). At the age of 15, he moved to Adigrat on his own to complete grade 10 to 12. During this time, he was very poor and struggled to afford food, but managed to obtain good enough grades to secure university education through the cost-sharing programme. He studied law at Jimma University. Tesfay could not afford to travel to Tigray, and spent the summer holidays in Addis Ababa where he worked as an assistant for his uncle on board *Higer* buses (cheap intracity transport). After graduation, he started training to become a prosecutor in Wukro, eastern Tigray, before starting his first job in Endabugena, western Tigray. At the time of my research, Tesfay had moved back to Wukro and was working as prosecutor making some 3,332 Birr [£115] a month.

Senait was in her mid-20s and lived in Adigrat. She did a bachelor’s degree in ‘Journalism and Communications’ at Bahir Dar University before returning to Adigrat. Within two months, she found employment in an NGO as a communication officer, and there she met and started a relationship with an NGO worker from Europe. She moved in with him after some time, and his high income allowed her to quit her job and pursue an MA degree in Development Studies full-time at Mekelle University. Towards the end of her studies, they got married and she returned to write her dissertation in Adigrat. Although she had grown up in poor conditions with her grandmother, through higher education Senait had been able to obtain well-paid employment, marry a high-paid foreigner, and pursue a second degree.

Tekle was 35 years old and originally from Korem in Tigray. He moved to Addis Ababa for university studies in his early 20s, but took longer to finish his first degree because he was injured in a grenade attack on Tigrayan students on campus. After recovering in a hospital for one year, he completed his BA degree, and as

compensation for his troubles he was provided funds to do an MA degree in Development Studies at Addis Ababa University. Upon completion, he obtained employment as a lecturer at Wollo University in Dessie, and within a short time, he got married and had a son. He made a salary of about 3,000 Birr [£106] a month, and was living with his family in a one-room house. Although he had little money left after covering essential expenses for his family, his social and economic condition had improved from when he lived in the rural outskirts of Korem, but still he was looking for better employment opportunities in Addis Ababa.

Abebe was 25 years old and lived in Addis Ababa. He was from a wealthy family of jewellers in Bahir Dar, but his parents were originally Tigrayan. He moved to Addis Ababa to study social sciences and after completing his BA degree he found a job as a consultant in an NGO for disabled people. He worked there for almost two years before he went to Sweden to study for an MA degree (self-funded). After a year of coursework, Abebe returned to Ethiopia to write his dissertation and, at the same time, started a company to import goods from China. After spending months overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, he started making high profits. He was intending to invest the surplus in establishing a factory in the future, but despite his wealth, he lived in a modest apartment with a friend.

In addition to these key informants, I conducted the research with a range of people to diversify the data collection. They will be introduced as they appear in the following empirical chapters. The majority of my broader sample of informants were Tigrayan males between 20 and 30 years old, and most of them had migration experience, higher education, were in formal employment and lived in stable housing conditions. However, there were also non-Tigrayan men and women in other life situations and of varying ages, but, importantly, the predominance of male informants has informed both my data collection and understanding of class relations. While Chant and Gutmann (2002) point out that gender has often been conflated with women and ignored the relational dimensions of it, which consequently reify gender binaries, Hodgson (2003, p.213) emphasises that it is necessary to go beyond the focus on experiences and ideas of women to analyse the ‘production, reproduction, and transformation of gender inequalities’. Similarly, a focus on men risks portraying male perspectives as a social reality that represents everyone rather than recognising that performances of being male are produced through gendered relations.

In sub-Saharan Africa, there has been an increasing focus on masculinities in recent decades. Based on the recognition that gender forms a central part of individuals' identity and subjectivity, Lindsay (2005) argues that gender identities across the continent were reshaped through colonial rule, and, more specifically, shows that Nigerian railway men developed conceptions of what it meant to be a man in relation to steady earning and acting as breadwinners. In a more contemporaneous approach, Miescher and Lindsay (2003) emphasise that men in the continent engage with, adopt and discard expectations of proper male behaviour, highlighting that meanings of being a man are spatially and temporally contingent.

In Ethiopia, masculinities are performed in conjunction with a long-standing historical gender ideology of women being inferior to men. For instance, Pankhurst (1992, p.122) demonstrated how marriage practices subordinated women:

These included such factors as the age difference between wife and husband, especially for a first marriage where this could be as much as 25 years. A number of asymmetric customs also operated, such as the one dictating that a woman should stand up when her husband enters the hut, that a wife should wash her husband's feet, be humble and, in general, servile in front of husband and master.

Such a representation of women's conditions resembles what Cornwall (2005, p.1) refers to as an 'insistently negative tale of the voiceless victims of ever-deepening multiple oppressions'. However, during the civil war, Ethiopian women who fought for the TPLF developed attitudes, skills and identities that defied traditional gender roles (Negewo–Oda and White, 2011). When the war ended, they were demobilised and many drew on their identities as fighters to readjust to the prevailing gender roles of what it meant to be women in civilian life (ibid.). These renegotiations of gender relations illustrate that both femininities and masculinities are continuously being reshaped in Ethiopia. Although this thesis focuses primarily on male perspectives, it recognises that current masculinities reflect Ethiopia's social history and a gendered ideology wherein male experiences, views and aspirations only partially represent female social realities.

Speaking Amharic and manoeuvring multilingual contexts

In both locations, speaking Amharic was central for conducting the fieldwork. Amharic is the *lingua franca* in Ethiopia and in the years prior to this research, I had studied Amharic at different institutions in Ethiopia and at SOAS in London. I studied basic

Tigrinya grammar on my own over the months before starting the fieldwork. While I was going through bureaucratic hurdles for obtaining research and residence permits at the beginning of my fieldwork, I spent my mornings in a language school in Addis Ababa to improve my Amharic. Although speaking Tigrinya would have been advantageous, most of my informants who were native Tigrinya speakers spoke more or less fluent Amharic. Their language skills can be explained by them learning Amharic in school, the similarities of the languages, their frequent exposure to Amharic through music, movies and TV, as well as my informants' regular experiences of interacting with non-Tigrinya speakers, such as during university studies. My improving command of Amharic enabled me to interact with them more efficiently than if I attempted to use Tigrinya as the language of research, and my Amharic skills became a tool for expanding networks, establishing trust, informal interaction as well as to conduct participant observation and interviews without relying on interpreters.

Conducting interviews

After I had developed a better understanding of the research topic and contexts through six months of participant observation, I started conducting semi-structured interviews. I used interviews to obtain more details about particular aspects of my informants' lives that had emerged through participant observation (see Davies, 1999). The focus in the interviews was on my informants' family backgrounds, education trajectories, work experiences, current living conditions, and their movements within and outside of Ethiopia. In addition, I asked follow-up questions in response to the answers and narratives they provided and encouraged them to elaborate on topics that emerged. For instance, I had daily conversations with Mehari and established an understanding of major events in his life. By interviewing him, however, I was able to inquire more systematically about his childhood, experiences in other places, how he managed his relationships with family and friends, as well as to let him share aspects that had not come to my attention earlier. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated into English.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with government officials and other professionals in Adigrat and Addis Ababa. In these interviews, I focused on migration patterns, the government's role in migration, infrastructure projects and other factors that could highlight the relationship between migration and class.

Table 1. Interviewees by ethnicity, gender and age

Ethnicity	Number
Tigrayan	27
Amhara	4
Oromo	2
Gurage	1
Foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin	2
Total	36

Gender	Number
Female	13
Male	23
Total	36

Age	Number
18-30	23
31-40	9
40-63	4
Total	36

Table 2. Official interviews

Organisation	Number
<i>Selam Bus</i> Operational Manager, Addis Ababa	1
Ethiopian Road Authority, Addis Ababa	2
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa	1
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Addis Ababa	1
Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Addis Ababa	1
IOM, Addis Ababa	1
Central Statistics Agency, Addis Ababa	1
NGO, Adigrat	1
Police, Adigrat	1
Local government, Adigrat	1
Total	11

3.4 Positionality and shifting social relations

My familiarity with the context and ability to speak Amharic decreased the social distance between my informants and myself, but I remained a stranger to many. How I was perceived and the attitudes towards me shaped my positionality and behaviour, and informed relationships throughout the fieldwork. How people attempted to make sense of me can be exemplified by an observation I made when I went with Mehari and several of his family members to a wedding in the countryside outside of Adigrat. Like other adult guests, I went over to the table where a man was receiving and registering donations for the hosts and contributed my share. As is customary in Ethiopia, donors were registered by first name and with their fathers' name as the surname. In my case, however, I went into the book as Markus Mehari. The registrar, hosts and many other people in the countryside knew I was staying with Mehari, but not who my father was or my family background. By categorising me into the existing system as a 'son' of Mehari despite our similar age they found a way to embed me in the local system, but the example also highlights that my social position was ambivalent.

Both in Addis Ababa and Adigrat, my interactions with people depended on factors such as their gender, social background, economic situation, experiences in meeting foreigners, as well as how we came into contact. Adapting to each situation and participant enabled me to conduct research with a range of people from varying backgrounds, but my gender and age impacted my positionality in ways that determined social interactions. The gender divisions in Ethiopia made it more feasible to engage with men than with women. Although I managed to interview several women and interacted with women on a regular basis in the compound in Adigrat, there were fewer opportunities for spending time informally with women in the town centre and in Addis Ababa. Similarly, my age made it more feasible to interact with people around my own age, often in their late 20s and early 30s.

In Adigrat, my reliance upon Mehari and his family offered me numerous avenues of inquiry and opportunities for finding new informants, but staying with this family also influenced my perspectives and impacted my understanding of a range of issues. Considering their socioeconomic position, it led me to the core of my research interest, but at the same time, by increasingly becoming part of Mehari's network of people in similar positions it became increasingly difficult to establish relationships on my own in Adigrat. As a guest, I was expected to behave in ways that did not reflect

badly on the family, and avoid interaction with certain people of ‘low’ social positions, such as those considered to possess ‘evil eye’ (*buda*). In the Ethiopian context, ‘evil eye’ is a term used about people who are of unknown origin or suspicious in terms of behaviour, and who have the capacity to inflict illness or other harm upon people (Reminick, 1974). This distrust of strangers and the risks such relations would pose to my close relationship to Mehari and his family limited my interaction with people from other backgrounds and access to other potentially important information.

My relationships with informants transformed over time, both because of how people saw me and how I saw them. For instance, through my emphasis on recording and reflecting on what was being said and done, I came to see Mehari in a different way from when our relation was just a friendship before the fieldwork. In the beginning, I was interested in his perspectives and fascinated by Mehari’s viewpoints, but towards the end of my fieldwork, I found his patriotism and belief in the superiority of people from Adigrat, Tigray and Ethiopia repetitive and problematic. Although we discussed topics freely and I often engaged in critical conversations with him, I withheld opinions and analytical perspectives to avoid challenging his views too often. Mehari, of course, noticed my decreasing interest and enthusiasm. However, rather than seeing such changes in relationships as a ‘failure’, Jackson (1998) has emphasised that intersubjectivity is not only about developing a shared understanding, but also needs to take into account the challenging and contested aspects of interactions. My relations to Mehari and other people shifted over time and impacted my positionality, but also led me to new understandings of myself (Crapanzano, 1977). As Haraway argued, the notion of ‘objectivity’ is an illusion ‘promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully’ (1988, p.586), and the recognition that positionality impact the data illustrates this point. Consequently, the negotiation of my background, interests and shifting positions in social relations may have produced unrecognised prejudice and bias that influence the research findings.

3.5 The moral justification of research, ethics and ethical representation

Finally, the ways I have collected data, developed social relations and present the findings are all shaped by the concern for conducting the research ethically. A central question that has followed me throughout the research is: ‘what’s it all for?’ (Caplan, 2003, p.27). My emphasis on urban-urban migration and being middle class did not seem to my informants to be engaging with an issue that would contribute to resolve

some of the many challenges of life in Ethiopia. When I explained that my research was about internal migration among Tigrayans with higher education, people often asked why I did not study migration to the Middle East instead. Many of my informants had relatives overseas or had seen the TV-campaigns trying to prevent Ethiopians from going there,³ and they perceived such migrations to be a more suitable topic for research because new knowledge would have the potential to improve people's conditions. If my research had been focused on finding solutions to the problem of illegal migration to the Middle East, or other urgent issues such as alleviating poverty, gender inequality, HIV or food security, it would have had a clearer purpose to people and would have made it easier for them to relate to the intention of the research. My research was, however, not 'development anthropology', but I had to justify my research to make people participate and I often had to argue that adding to knowledge was purposeful in itself.

Through negotiating the purpose of my research, my informants' role in it, and how the data would be used, I also obtained my informants' verbal informed consent. I emphasised that my enquiry was not limited to the topic of urban-urban migration and class, but that most aspects of their lives were of potential interest. Only a few people were familiar with such an all-encompassing approach, which made it imperative to avoid intrusion and to honour informants' trust (ASA, 2011). One high-profile informant disagreed with me using information about our meetings as data and another asked me not to use information about his wife because it could lead to him being identified – which I have respected. Maintaining consent and trust requires a continuous awareness of the ethical issues of research, as Simpson (2011, p.387) argues; 'there is not one ethical moment in the research process – encapsulated in prior review by committee – but many others, the most important of which arise during fieldwork and writing.' Over time, the boundaries between friendships and being informants became blurry to many of my informants, and to me. To ensure that consent was maintained throughout the fieldwork (ASA, 2011), I pointed out with regular intervals that I was conducting research at all times to remind informants that I was observing and writing elaborate notes based on our interactions.

When I conducted semi-structured interviews I gave the interviewees an information sheet to read before I started recording and asking questions. This sheet provided concise information both in English and in Amharic about my research,

³ A National Committee against Trafficking was established in mid-2012.

guarantees for my informants' anonymity, and their rights to not answer and withdraw from the interview at any time. I gave the interviewees the time they needed to read it, and then reiterated the key points orally before questioning if my informants had understood the implications of participating. Most of my interviewees were not concerned about such formalities, and several said that I could ask them anything I wanted, and use their names and their responses as I pleased. Although their cooperation was appreciated, it also increased my responsibility to ensure my informants' safety and wellbeing (ASA, 2011). The interviews took place in offices, cafes, in Mehari's room, and other places where we could talk with as privately as possible. I was much more concerned about my interviewees' privacy than they were, and I often had to insist on conducting interviews without other people present. In situations where I felt uncomfortable, I relocated the interview site or made new arrangements for interviews. For example, during an interview in a hotel restaurant in Addis Ababa two men came and sat down just a few meters away from my interviewee and me. There were several empty tables throughout the room, and I ended the interview when I suspected that they were listening to our conversation. I sought to ensure the wellbeing of my informants by being conscious of the potential risks and proactively seeking safe spots where we could interact without interruption.

Everybody referred to in this thesis has been given pseudonyms to avoid recognition and I have taken care to represent my informants in ways that will not provide any information that can cause them any harm (ASA, 2011). Informants' names were coded in my field notes and all materials related to my research were encrypted and hidden in separate partition of my laptop hard drive. I was aware of the Ethiopian government's extensive surveillance of data and mobile traffic (Horne, 2014), but took a calculated risk and made online backups to avoid losing my field notes and other digital data. Whereas all typed materials were encrypted, I was not able to add such a layer of security to the audio recordings of my interviews. Assuming that these can have been picked up by spying agencies, people only used their first names when I interviewed them and there is a limited risk of them being identified. Despite my concern over government surveillance, I was at greater risk for sharing collected data with other informants. I regularly took part in conversations where other informants were referred to and in such situations, I could not avoid talking about other informants. Even though the information shared in everyday conversations was not necessarily something my informants would consider confidential, I was not always able to recollect under which

circumstances I had obtained certain information and had to be careful not to share anything that would challenge my assurances of confidentiality and diminish my informants' trust in me. My continuous concern for the anonymity, safety and wellbeing of informants' has shaped the fieldwork, the writing up process as well as how I present the data.

3.6 Conclusion

Reflection upon the circumstances that led me to this research in the first place showed how the research questions emerged through a long-standing relation to a group of people in urban Ethiopia. The historical pattern of migration from Adigrat to other parts of the country makes it a suitable location for examining urban-urban migration. Addis Ababa, on the other hand, is perceived by many Ethiopians as the pinnacle of modernity in the country because it offers a range of higher education opportunities, employment and potential for progress, and is a favoured destination for migration from other urban centres. The differences in employment opportunities, housing conditions, social relations, distances and economic circumstances between the locations also influenced the ways I conducted the research. However, ethnographic methods enabled me to build and strengthen relationships and develop insights into the ways in which migration impacted people's lives and their social relations in both Adigrat and Addis Ababa. The specific contextual characteristics, key informants, methods as well as my positionality and the ethical issues provide the backdrop for examining empirically, in the following chapters, how higher education, ethnicity and notions of progress all play a role in urban-urban migration and shaping practices, knowledge and values that can describe what it means to be middle class in contemporary Ethiopia.

4. Augmenting capital through higher education

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I examined the theoretical background to an analysis of what it means to be middle class in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa and, more specifically, Ethiopia. To set the scene for the empirical examination of the role of urban migration in producing and reproducing privilege and inequality, I also highlighted the two field sites, Adigrat and Addis Ababa, and discussed the methods I conducted during the fieldwork. Here, I shift the focus to the empirical material by considering how the recent expansion of higher education, discussed in chapter one and two, has shaped my informants' lives.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, anthropologists have identified that young people, and especially men, with university education are struggling to find suitable employment (see e.g. Ralph, 2008; Masquelier, 2013). Similar observations have been made in Ethiopia. For example, Mains (2012b, p.89) argues that education has been a key narrative for finding work and achieving aspirations in urban Ethiopia for half a century, but that young people currently remain unemployed for extended periods of time because 'at the historical moment when expectations of earning membership in an urban middle class through education were expanding, economic opportunity decreased dramatically.' To consider to what extent education has been devalued and its current role in processes of social reproduction and distinction, this chapter examines how higher education and the surrounding processes of migration could increase what Bourdieu (1984) referred to as symbolic and material capital.

Of the 36 informants (23 men and 13 women) I interviewed, 26 had experience with higher education. The majority had completed BA degrees from universities as their highest degrees, and three had degrees from private colleges. Five had obtained MA degrees, and three were studying (one full-time and two part-time) for this degree. Two were studying for PhD degrees at universities abroad (both spent time in Ethiopia during my fieldwork, one to conduct research and the other to write the thesis). Four informants were studying for their first degrees at the time of my research, two of them at university and two in private colleges. There were also three informants who had dropped out of university.

Another important pattern is that all informants who had studied or were studying at universities had migrated to other parts of the country for their education.

These trends are central for examining how higher education transformed my informants' lives, and in the first section of this chapter, I focus on two case studies chosen to illustrate how higher education increased my informants' material capital. The case studies are constructed through many conversations throughout the fieldwork period as well as from interviews. The second section draws on the accounts and experiences of a broader range of informants to examine the trends and individual differences of how higher education influenced informants' social positions and status. Through the lens of higher education, this chapter begins the empirical examination of how urban migration generates cultural practices and social distinctions that can highlight what it means to be middle class in Ethiopia.

4.2 Completing higher education and finding well-paid employment

Recent portrayals of unemployment and declining economic opportunities for the well-educated, discussed above, are in contrast to the experiences of the majority of the participants of this research. All of my interviewees who had completed higher education had found employment in relatively well-paid positions and earned higher salaries than those with lower qualifications. People with limited education often did informal manual labour, domestic work, cared for animals, or more formal jobs as waiters and waitresses in cafes, bars and restaurants, and as drivers and assistants. In such jobs, salaries ranged from as low as 5,000 Birr [£173] to 15,000 Birr [£520] a year. Informants who had obtained higher education and became teachers made between 13,000 Birr [£450] and 18,000 Birr [£623], whereas those who worked in office jobs, as civil servants, in private businesses, and in universities made between 35,000 Birr [£1,211] and 50,000 Birr [£1,730] per year.⁴

Many of my informants originally came from poor rural backgrounds, but the expansion of higher education had enabled several of them to pursue higher education through the cost-sharing system (discussed in chapter two). The cost-sharing gave students the opportunity to study without paying fees upfront, to live in a dormitory on campus and eat three meals a day, and enabled poor people to afford study for several years while not earning. Despite these opportunities, some informants struggled to complete their degrees because of their poverty, as 24-year-old Petros from Adigrat stated:

⁴ For 2010/2011, the national poverty line in Ethiopia was set to an annual of 3,781 Birr [£120] per capita, and 25.7 per cent of the urban population earned below this amount (Atnafu, Oucho and Zeitlyn, 2014).

I studied anthropology in Gonder, a BA degree. In sum, my experience of Gonder was good, but there were some issues with the food there. Gonder is the worst for university food in Ethiopia. The food situation was very bad. After a while I chose to get 280 Birr [£10] cash a month from the cost-sharing instead of eating in the canteen. It was not enough and my family had to send me money, but they couldn't give me enough. I ate only twice per day, following the 5-11 strategy [*ammest-asserand*, i.e. at 11am and 5pm]. Eating less made it difficult to study, I didn't have any energy and I lost interest. I weighed less than 50 kilos at some point. When I think of Gonder now, I think of hunger. It was three years of famine.

Most of my informants who went to university completed their studies even though several of them were poor and experienced hardship. The reasons why they persevered despite difficult conditions are explored in the following, where I look at how higher education degrees transformed two informants' economic situations and social positions.

Yonas' story – Trekking guide, Adigrat

The first time I met Yonas, I noticed that he was well dressed, had expensive shoes, and wore a gold chain around his neck. I often encountered him when walking through Adigrat, or when I went with Mehari to meet him in cafes to discuss their work. Yonas, 25, was a colleague of Mehari and regularly took tourists trekking in the high mountains of Tigray. As I gradually came to know him better, he shared his story of how his life had changed from when he was a child.

Yonas was sent to live with his grandmother in the countryside outside Adigrat when his father divorced his mother and went away to be a soldier for the TPLF. From grade 1 to 6 Yonas attended a local school, and started seventh grade at Agazi high school in Adigrat. In the evenings, Yonas sold cigarettes on the street and he slept on the streets because he was scared of making the long walk to his grandmother's house in dark. During the war with Eritrea Yonas started making more money by being a *delala* (broker), bringing sex workers and soldiers together. They would each give him 10 Birr [£0.35], enabling him to make 20 Birr [£0.70] for each encounter he set up. He continued sleeping in the city, and found shelter with other children on the veranda outside the Red Cross building and was provided regular meals by the organisation.

Like many other informants who were born and grew up towards the end of the civil war (that ended in 1991), Yonas' childhood was influenced by the difficult economic situation and lack of stability in the Tigray region. The war with Eritrea (1998-2000) took place in close proximity and schoolchildren had to attend school

outside in safer areas south of the city. While these circumstances influenced the quality of education, Yonas completed secondary school and accessed university:

I studied foreign language, literature and journalism at Awassa University. I had heard good things about Awassa before going, but I was a bit scared and didn't trust anyone. There were thieves, but nothing happened to me. It was very good to be in Awassa, the city is beautiful and people are nice. The main problem was money, I had 150 Birr [£5,20] to live on each month. It took three days to finish it and then I had to borrow from friends. We shared what we had, for example if one guy brought khat we all chewed. We lived together.

The generation of recent students who came from poor backgrounds and who had accessed higher education often faced difficult economic situations during their studies, which also the example of Petros above showed. Students struggled even if food and accommodation was arranged for through the cost-sharing programme. Despite such troubles, only three out of my interviewees dropped out of university. In Ethiopia, there is a long-standing narrative that higher education helps for finding employment and fulfilling aspirations (Mains, 2012b), and in response to this perception, my informants from poor backgrounds developed strategies of reciprocity to overcome the difficulties that could hamper their trajectories of economic improvement.

After graduating, Yonas returned to Adigrat and got a job as a high-school teacher. However, he broke his verbal agreement and quit before even starting the teaching job that would pay him about 1,000 Birr [£35] a month: 'I became a research assistant and translator for an Irish MA student. We went to the countryside and did many interviews. I worked with her for five months and she paid 100 Birr [£3,50] a day. It was a good salary at that time.' The salary Yonas could make as a high school teacher was higher than what many people in the rural areas where he had grown up earned, but his preference for the job as a research assistant illustrates that he favoured an opportunity for a higher salary in short-term employment over a fixed, but lower, income. Informants with higher education were in positions to obtain different kinds of well-paid employment, both in public and private sectors, and were able to seek and find new employment with less trouble than has been described in other case studies from sub-Saharan Africa (Ralph, 2008; Masquelier, 2013).

When the foreign master's student completed her fieldwork Yonas started looking for work again. Through contacts from his student days, it only took him a few weeks before he got a teaching job in Awassa:

I was happy to go to Awassa. I said goodbye to my family and went to the bus station. I was already waiting for the bus to depart when they called me from the school here in Adigrat and offered me work again. I had to make the choice in the bus and this was a big test for me. The salary is the same in both places and I preferred to be where I have my family and friends so I decided to stay here. It was God's work that I received the call just before leaving. I returned home and my family was surprised to see me again.

With only minutes to decide whether to live in Adigrat or in Awassa, several days of travel away, his choice to live where he had a stronger social network reflected many informants' preference to live in their place of origin if they had the same employment and income opportunities as in other urban centres. Although Yonas accounted of his employment history as one of serendipity, it was primarily his higher education that gave him opportunities for different jobs. His career as a teacher was, however, short-lived:

It's hard to be a teacher. I was teaching ninth and 10th grade, and there were 65 students in the class. The students make a lot of noise and disturbance; one student shouts, one does this and another something else. I also had to prepare a lot and I had to start work very early. When I drank beer at night I thought about my work and my preparations. It was boring. I stopped because I wasn't satisfied with the work and the salary was too small.

People who had obtained higher education and developed expectations of pleasant and well-paid work were sometimes disillusioned. Teaching jobs were considered especially demanding and the income too low to lead the lifestyles my informants had aspired for. A common pastime for young men in Adigrat and many other towns in Tigray is to drink beer and try to pick up women. In Uganda, Mills and Ssewakiryanga (2005, p.91) find that money was the key symbol through which young men 'imagined, practiced and understood their sexual and social relationships with women', and, similarly, being a teacher made it impossible for Yonas to socialise with his male urban peers who had less rigid work hours and earned higher incomes, which impacted his performance of masculinity and relations to women.

It was these restrictions that led him to look for other employment opportunities: 'I saw an advertisement on the road for the job as trekking guide two years ago. I got a recommendation letter from the Irish woman and applied. There was an interview, which I passed and I got the job.' Although Yonas' salary was about the same as his teaching job during the first year, after two years in this position he was making a salary ranging between 3,000 and 8,000 Birr [£104-277] a month. Yonas' narrative of shifting employment shows that he chose more profitable and insecure employment over the secure, low-paid and unsatisfying job as a teacher. Informants with higher education

aspired for employment in the private sector, and their university degrees and experience of employment in the public sector were stepping-stones for obtaining such jobs. In addition to offering higher salaries, there were also better prospects for salary rises and career advancements in the private sector.

Yonas was renting a room for himself in a compound in central Adigrat. He also had a domestic worker who came to cook his meals for him. When he was not working in the mountains or resting at home, he often went out in the evenings to drink and dance with friends, and regularly treated women for dinners and drinks. Yonas' current job and salary enabled him to pursue a lifestyle associated with male urban prosperity. Socialising for leisure in upmarket venues was only possible through earning relatively high salaries, and it was predominantly young, unmarried men in private-sector jobs or who came from wealthy backgrounds who frequented such places. People with lower incomes and from poorer backgrounds would visit on a less regular basis, if at all.

Such urban lifestyles were expensive, and for many of my informants who had recently started earning relatively well, it was common to seek additional incomes to keep up with their expenses. Yonas invested some of his surplus to start a café in Adigrat to generate a second income. The café was located a bit outside of the city centre and I regularly stopped by on my way to or from the centre of Adigrat for a tea and to chat with Yonas and the waitress he had hired. There were rarely more than a few customers and after only a few months, he closed it down. Among those who experienced economic improvement through higher education, it was a popular strategy to set up businesses to generate more income, but many struggled to profit from such ventures. Still, their economic capacity to invest in public spaces contributed to make their economic transformations more visible. (The ways in which economic improvement through higher education influenced informants' status will be discussed in detail in the next section.)

Yonas' economic situation remained stable after his failed business-attempt, but he was regularly looking for other employment opportunities:

I applied for a job in Mekelle last summer and had an interview with Fana FM [radio station], but I didn't get it. Some two weeks ago I received a phone call from a friend I studied with in Awassa who could get me a job as journalist in Mekelle. I wouldn't mind moving to Mekelle because it's in Tigray and life is similar to Adigrat. If I get a good salary I'll go, but what they offered me was only 1,800 Birr [£62]. Being a trekking guide pays much more and gives me a lot of satisfaction.

Urban migration was a strategy for seeking better employment opportunities among informants with higher education. For many people in Adigrat, Mekelle was an attractive city with its wider employment opportunities, many bars, restaurants and cafes, as well as diversity and more cosmopolitan atmosphere. Yonas was in a position where he could engage in urban migration, but had already enhanced his economic situation to an extent that migration to a bigger city would not necessarily increase his income. Although Yonas' decided to stay in Adigrat, his consideration of moving to nearby Mekelle illustrates that urban-urban migration was a pattern of movement he and other informants with higher education associated with a broader range of work opportunities. This case study also shows the potential of higher education to transform individuals' lives as well as the centrality of migration in these processes, which provides an initial indication of a relationship between migration and the formation of my informants' shared characteristics.

Tesfay's story – Public Prosecutor, Wukro / Lawyer, Addis Ababa

In my conversations with Tesfay, 28, it became clear that higher education had been central in transforming his economic situation and way of living. Similarly to Yonas, Tesfay experienced poverty in his childhood. He was born to a farming family in the mountains outside of Bizet in Tigray. Even though he only had two siblings, his parents were uneducated farmers who struggled to provide for their children. In Tesfay's early childhood, his family was temporarily relocated to western Tigray when drought and famine made survival challenging. Tesfay went on to complete grade 6 in the rural area where he was born, before starting to do a daily walk of about an hour to and from the town of Bizet to attend grade 7 and 8. There was no opportunity for further schooling in Bizet at that time, and Tesfay moved to Adigrat on his own at a young age to pursue grade 9 to 12. In Adigrat, Tesfay had very little money, shared a cheap room with friends and could not afford to eat regularly. While Tesfay's struggles to complete his school resemble that of many other informants who grew up around the same time, he also found ways to get by and complete his final exams. Tesfay got into the law programme at Jimma University in southwestern Ethiopia through the cost-sharing programme:

It was a big relief for me when I joined the university because they served food three times a day. The food at Jimma University was very nice, especially compared to the food I ate when living in the countryside. When I was at university I had food and accommodation, so I didn't think about food, about house rent, only about my

education. I was really happy there. Many people complain of university life and the food they get served. Some pretend they had a better life before, but around 80 per cent of the students came from rural areas and surely they had worse lives before. For students from rich families it's difficult live in such conditions.

The cost-sharing enabled students from poor backgrounds to go to university, but their poverty continued to impact their lives also during their studies. University students who could not afford to cover accommodation and food expenses themselves were forced to cope with the food universities offered. Whereas Tesfay considered the food situation at Jimma University to resolve many of the problems he had faced earlier in his life, Petros, discussed above, found himself in a situation where food became a major challenge for completing his studies. Students' social positions were negotiated on campuses through their practices and attitudes towards shared accommodation and university food.

Such processes may be influential in class relations, but the main concern of this section is how higher education shaped employment trajectories and opportunities for enhancing informants' economic capital. After completing his university degree, Tesfay moved to Wukro, eastern Tigray, to pursue two and half years of training to become a prosecutor. As part of the cost-sharing programme, he was subsequently sent to work for two years as a prosecutor in Endabugena, western Tigray. When the mandatory placement ended, he obtained employment as a prosecutor in Wukro, where he made a monthly salary of 3,332 Birr [£115], plus a housing allowance of 200 Birr [£7]. The cost-sharing programme not only enabled students from poor backgrounds to go to university, but the placements after completing degrees also provided them with employment and income. This employment often required migration, and while especially students who were on study programmes for becoming teachers were sent to rural areas, those with other degrees were often deployed to cities and towns. Migration for employment across Ethiopia to repay the cost-sharing contributed to institutionalise urban migration, and in addition to familiarising informants with different locations, their migrations expanded their networks and often opened up new opportunities for employment.

The example of when Mehari and I took a minibus from Adigrat to visit Tesfay in Wukro illustrates how employment after higher education enabled new lifestyles. Tesfay picked us up on the street and showed us the compound where he had a small room for himself and shared the bathroom with other residents. There was a bed, a small TV, and a few cooking utensils, his clothes and a single lightbulb to light up the room. I

noticed that there was a charcoal-cooker and I asked him if he was a good cook, to which he responded 'I only use it to make tea in the morning, I eat my meals outside'. Although there were some exceptions, cooking and household chores were conducted by women and considered women's work by my male informants. These culturally constructed gender relations continued to influence how men lived their lives and performed their masculinities both in private and public spaces.

As the sun set, we went for a walk along the main road through the town on our way to eat dinner in popular restaurant, and we spent the rest of the evening drinking a few beers and chatting on the pavement outside a bar. Among male my informants who obtained well-paid employment after higher education it was common to socialise in restaurants and bars, which was very different from people who had lower incomes and other social networks. Men from poor backgrounds who pursued higher education and started earning relatively high incomes, often led urban lifestyles associated with prosperity and wealth. They regularly had lunch with colleagues in restaurants, and frequently went for tea and coffee in cafés. Single males often ate their dinners in restaurants and spent their evenings drinking beer in bars, whereas women would more commonly cook and maintain their respectability by not socialising outside the household in the evenings. Prices in such places were much higher than the places where informants with low incomes gathered to eat, drink and pass time. For example, the price of a bottled beer in bars popular among those with high incomes was between 12 and 15 Birr [£0.40-0.50], whereas people with low incomes often drank local beer for the price of one Birr [£0.04] a mug.

Even though they had a good quality of life, the majority of informants in Tigray with higher education argued that migration to the capital was the best alternative for living worthwhile lives. However, the living costs in Addis Ababa exceeded what most informants could afford immediately after graduating. Instead of moving to the capital, the majority of them worked in other parts of the country, both to complete the mandatory period of employment for the cost-sharing programme and to make a living afterwards. Many migrated to other urban areas in Tigray for employment, and for several informants it was only after enhancing their economic situations, or by having support networks offering accommodation and food while seeking employment, that they considered it possible to migrate to Addis Ababa. In 2014, Tesfay migrated to Addis Ababa and started his own law firm. The room Tesfay rented to live in was of a simple standard, but he had a professional-looking office and dressed well. The capacity

to relocate there and take the step from public to private sector illustrates a major economic improvement from when he was growing up in rural poverty. This became possible through his higher education and trajectory of urban migration in preceding years. While Tesfay had migrated widely, his family remained uneducated and living in rural areas of Tigray:

My father lives in Bizet. I have no mother, she died around the time I graduated six years ago. I have a sister and a brother. My brother and sister are peasants. My sister lives in the countryside an hour's walk from Bizet, and my brother lives a bit outside Shire.

There was an economic gap between informants who came from poor, rural backgrounds and completed higher education, and their families who often continued living in poverty. The case of Tesfay illustrates how higher education and frequent urban migration could improve people's economic situations, and through his account of his family's livelihoods, Tesfay illuminated the differences in their lives and what would have been a more likely life for him if he had not studied and obtained a university degree.

Economic improvement through higher education

Yonas' and Tesfay's stories highlight the patterns as well as individual variations of the transformations that took place in people's lives through higher education. The cases shed light on three key issues: 1) some people from poor backgrounds were able to access higher education; 2) higher education influenced people's economic opportunities, but their responses to these changes varied, and; 3) urban migration was central in these processes. First, Tesfay's and Yonas' stories show that the expansion of higher education enabled people from poor backgrounds to enter universities. Yonas' clearly came from a poor background, and having lived as a *godana tedadari* (someone who sleeps on the street) in his teenage years his circumstances had not been favourable for completing lower levels of education. Also Tesfay's living on his own from a young age and food shortage were similarly unfavourable for studying. As shown in chapter two, many children in Ethiopia who face such conditions struggle to complete lower levels of education (Poluha, 2007b; Admassu, 2011). These cases, however, highlight that the expansion of higher education, from two universities in year 2000 to 31 universities in 2016 (MoE, 2016), has enabled more people from poor backgrounds to enter university.

Second, by illuminating the opportunities for employment and economic improvement for informants who completed higher education, the cases also demonstrate how wider access to higher education has generated enabled people to increase material and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu, 1984). Both Tesfay and Yonas became able to pursue lifestyles associated with urban prosperity, such as spending time in restaurants and upmarket bars. They dressed well and distinguished themselves from those who lived in poverty, but neither of them invested in fashionable clothing to the same extent as *les sapeurs* in Congo (Gondola, 1999). Whereas poor people with little income often had limited number of such items, often showing signs of wear and tear, and rarely more than one pair of shoes, male informants who earned well could afford to expand their wardrobes and have several shirts, jeans, trousers and pairs of shoes, which enabled them to perform a distinct form of masculinity and sexual confidence determined by their visible wealth (Mills and Ssewakiryanga, 2005). While such shifts in lifestyles demonstrates economic improvement, Yonas' attempt to run a café and Tesfay's establishment of a law firm in the capital are indicative of how people attempted to invest their economic surplus in ways that could yield further income. In addition to the potential such business offered for economic income, being the *balebet* (person in charge) made material wealth visible and converted it into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Third, all informants who had been to university had engaged in urban-urban migration for their studies, but migration to different urban centres across Ethiopia also became a strategy for finding better employment after completing higher education. Among my informants, it was more common to migrate for employment and higher salaries in other urban centres than staying their place of origin as Yonas did. Although Yonas was able to obtain well-paid employment and had chosen to stay in Adigrat, urban migration remained an option for him both when he was jobless in Adigrat and when he was looking for better alternatives than his current position. As the second case illustrates, Tesfay had moved between several Tigrayan towns before migrating to Addis Ababa. While their trajectories of migration differ, both stories illustrate that urban migration was central for people from poor backgrounds to transform their lives through higher education.

4.3 Transforming status through higher education

As discussed in chapter two, higher education, as well as education more broadly, has been analysed as both a system of social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) and of social mobility (e.g. Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). In sub-Saharan Africa, anthropologists have over the past decade argued that higher education does not necessarily increase young people's material and symbolic capital. Challenging economic conditions and unemployment obstruct their fulfilment of social roles and has to some extent debased the value of higher education (e.g. Masquelier, 2013). In the Ethiopian context, Mains (2012b) has highlighted similar conditions by arguing that young, well-educated men from families who could support them financially chose to remain unemployed for extended periods until they obtained 'respectable' jobs, instead of taking low-skilled jobs that would be 'shameful' for people in their positions. He also shows that young educated people from poor families had to take low-paid jobs because they could not draw on their networks to sustain themselves, which illustrates that education-related social reproduction is a central idea also in Mains' analysis. As shown above, my informants' experiences of finding employment after completing higher education differed from prevailing representations of contemporary conditions in sub-Saharan Africa.

My informants' success in obtaining employment and regular income also influenced their social relations and status. Although status is less tangible than economic capital, it is a central concept for examining class. As discussed in chapter one, I draw on Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) work on capitals to consider how social differentiation is shaped through cultural practices, and this section examines how the expansion of higher education from 2000 onwards (Yigezu, 2013) has enabled informants' to increase their status. The importance of higher education can be illustrated through the emphasis people placed on graduation ceremonies. On certain days, graduating students can be seen in their gowns posing for pictures with families, friends and other students on university campuses as well as in cities celebrating their achievements in restaurants and other public places. Pictures from these events are often posted and circulated on Facebook, getting many 'likes' and congratulatory comments. Such rituals and representations of completed higher education can be seen as performances of their human capital and future prospects, which suggests that academic achievements were highly valued.

The following example of how higher education informed social interactions illustrates its social value. In the evenings, the electric stove in Mehari's room would take more than half an hour to get some water boiling, the stereo stopped working and the single lightbulb would hardly shine any light at all. After hoping for improvement for a long time, Mehari and I went to the electric corporation to see if the problem could be solved there. Eventually, Mehari got hold of the right person. He listened briefly to Mehari's explanation before telling us that the high use of electricity for food preparation in Adigrat during the holiday a few days earlier had led a transformer to break down and that this was the reason for our troubles. Mehari explained that the condition in his room had lasted for more than a month and was not related to the holiday. The man asked in a condescending tone why Mehari had not come before and said that such behaviour could be expected of people from rural areas, but not from an educated person. Mehari explained that he had been busy with work and spent much time out of town, and following some discussion the man promised to send an electrician to check the situation the same evening. As we walked out of the building, Mehari said to me:

That son of a bitch. Instead of acknowledging that the electric supply is in a poor condition he insults me for not having come before. He tried to divert my attention from them not doing their job. How rude! [*balege*]. If he talks to me like that, how do you think he treats humble farmers who respect authorities?

People's educational background and status were factors in encounters with government officials; those who were seen as 'educated persons' (*yetemare saw*) were treated more respectfully than 'simple', uneducated farmers who are often considered not to know what is best for themselves. To exemplify, in urban areas, informants playfully called people '*fara*' (country bumpkin) if someone said or did something foolish. It was used to suggest that the person was just like the simple-minded people from rural area, rather than having the knowledge and wit of urban dwellers who were '*arada*' (street smart). Having been with Mehari in many other social situations, I knew he was quick-tempered and always ready to respond with an insult, but here he maintained a more respectful tone than he normally did. Even though Mehari was in this encounter seen as an urban, educated person, he knew that the electricity would never be repaired if he did not speak respectfully to the official. To examine individual transformations through higher education in generating social distinctions further, I here turn to the processes that shaped the perceptions of being educated.

Negotiating social relations during university studies

For most informants, going to university was their first time to leave their parents' home for an extended period. These events influenced their social positions in the family, as Mehari stated about his experience of going to Jimma University at the age of 18:

It was my first time to leave home. I had not been to another region in Ethiopia before that, only to Mekelle a few times. I was very happy to go to Jimma because until I finished grade 12 life here was like prison. All the time work, work, work for the family. I was happy to go to a place far away, to see Addis Ababa and Jimma.

Many informants grew up in highly hierarchical families where they had little say and had to contribute to household chores and other labour. By moving to another part of the country for university studies, informants not only experienced a form of freedom from controlling parents, but also intensified the processes of transforming their status from being subordinate children towards becoming adults that are more independent.

The ways in which university education influenced family relations depended on individuals' social origin. For example, Solomon, a 24-year-old university student in Addis Ababa originally from the Benishangul-Gumuz region bordering to Sudan, expressed a sense of obligation to complete his degree and earn a salary:

Solomon: My father is dead, and the rest of my family live in the countryside and work as farmers. I'm the only one who has left to study and this gives me a lot of responsibility. I have to support my family.

Markus: How is your family? Are you in touch with them?

Solomon: I haven't had any contact with my family since I came here, there is no way of communicating. Anything could have happened while I've been away.

Going to university generated new social dynamics and responsibilities for informants from poor backgrounds. As shown above, moving to a city for university studies transformed my informants' tastes, aspirations and consumption patterns into a distinct but identifiable set of ideas that shaped experiences of class, and such individual and social transformations influenced their positions within families and as men. Whereas Mehari had experienced his university studies as a form of escape and freedom, Solomon's emphasis upon responsibility for his family illustrates that social ties persisted despite long distances and limited communication. Their different senses of responsibility can be traced to their individual backgrounds; Mehari came from a town where his father was a civil servant and had grown up with more economic security than Solomon who had not only assumed greater responsibility with the passing away of his

father, but was also the only child of the family who had accessed university and was in a position to significantly alter his family's livelihood. Both would, however, eventually seek paid employment and take on roles as breadwinners in correspondence to prevailing notions of what it means to be a man in Ethiopia.

In addition to the ways in which university studies influenced family relations, migration to other parts of the country and experiences of encounters with people from various backgrounds also contributed to my informants' social positions. An example of how being a student enabled people to expand their social networks is Abebe, a 26-year-old man who had moved from Bahir Dar to study at Addis Ababa University:

Thinking about being a student, it was a very good time. I met people from all over Ethiopia and there were also students from Nigeria and South Sudan. I like meeting people from other places because it widens your mind. It was very different from Bahir Dar.

Addis Ababa University has more foreign students than other universities in Ethiopia, but there are also foreigners on other campuses, such as the Eritrean refugees who obtain access to study and Indian lecturers who are hired to compensate for the lack of local qualified staff (Semela, 2011). In addition to the opportunities for interactions with foreigners, the government's policy of sending students to different parts of the country (Ayalew, 2012) enable students to widen their social networks and develop relations across ethnic lines. Abebe's account of his experiences of interactions with students from a wide range of backgrounds, and how this differed from the relatively big city in the Amhara region he had grown up in, illustrates how he established new social relations and enhanced his social capital by being a university student. Informants who lived in Tigray and did not go to university had limited opportunities for establishing networks with foreigners and Ethiopians of other ethnicities, and these differences of social capital contributed to the social distinction between those who were educated and those who were not.

The process of becoming an educated person did not yield status in a predetermined way, but was negotiated throughout the years of study both among students and with people outside of the campus. One evening when Mehari and I had agreed to meet in a restaurant for dinner, he brought a young woman I had not met before. While we were eating, she told me that she had moved from Awassa to Adigrat to study for a BA degree in accounting. She lived in a dormitory on campus and rushed off while we were still eating to make it back to campus before the gate closed at 9pm.

Mehari and I stayed in the restaurant, and he said; ‘She’s spoiled [*molqaqa*]. She told me that she stopped eating on campus after she got typhoid. Other people eat there every day so why can’t she?’ Similarly, Ferguson (1999: 188) pointed out that most men were convinced that women were grasping, greedy and selfish creatures who could not be trusted, and many of my male informants made derogatory comments about women who transcended gender boundaries. In addition to reproducing gendered ideologies, Mehari’s judgement illustrates that he considered the woman’s choice to not eat in the university canteen as an attempt to put her in a position above other students. While such concerns may have influenced her decision, the mass-produced food on campus affected her health in ways that gave her little option but to eat outside, similarly to Petros’ plight at Gonder University discussed above. Regardless of the reasons, people’s choices and behaviours became entangled in social interactions and in negotiations of status. These different cases illustrate that the status that emerged through higher education was not fixed, but was negotiated in response to its value in each context and in ways that contributed to shape new social distinctions.

Reciprocity and respect through employment

After completing higher education degrees, many informants experienced further shifts in their social positions. Yonas, 25, explained these dynamics in relation to his teaching job in Adigrat: ‘I didn’t like working as a teacher, but you get to know many people and you get a good name. People respect you as a teacher.’ Especially for informants who came from poor backgrounds, being a teacher was a job that enhanced their reputation and esteem. However, it paid relatively little compared to other jobs that required higher education and the opportunities for further economic improvement were limited. Like Yonas, several informants with higher education worked as teachers for less than a year before moving on to other more profitable employment.

My informants assessed their own social position partly through the kinds of employment they obtained after completing higher education, but it was their stable incomes that enabled them to transform their social relationships, as Tesfay explained:

When I joined the training centre to become a prosecutor in Wukro, it was the first place I started to earn a salary. I could buy everything I needed and pay back my debts. There were many people who helped me in the past, so I had to compensate them. I started to treat the people who did good for me when I was without money.

From having been reliant upon the support of friends and family, my informants' new economic situations enabled them to treat other people for dinners and drinks, give gifts and support others in need. Tesfay's account highlights how established social relations were renegotiated through the fulfilment of reciprocal obligations, and how this transformation influenced his symbolic capital. Although there were no formal accounts of who supported whom, Tesfay was well aware of who had helped him over the years when he had little money. After completing higher education and obtaining employment, he fulfilled his reciprocal obligations, which generated a shift in his relationships with friends and family.

For Tesfay, the economic improvement he experienced also enabled him to invest and develop his career further. While having dinner in a shopping mall in Addis Ababa 2015, Tesfay opened his wallet and pulled out his newly obtained driver's license:

Markus: Congratulations! But what will you do with it? Do you have any plans to get a car?

Tesfay: I'm arranging the paperwork for a car now, I'll pick it up next week.

Markus: That's great, but aren't cars very expensive?

Tesfay: It's a very small car, it's about 200,000 Birr [£7,000].

Markus: That's a lot of money. What will you use a car for?

Tesfay: I don't really need a car, but it is essential to attract clients. If I have a car it will enhance my reputation as a successful lawyer and I'll get more clients.

The increasing economic capital informants' experienced after having completed higher education could be transformed into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Cars were clear indications of individual's economic position and car owners were unconditionally spoken about as *habtam* (rich), regardless of the condition of their car or other aspects of their living conditions. A car cost much more than what my informants would spend on other living expenses over several years, but Tesfay's investment in a car would make his enhanced economic situation more visible and increase his opportunities for conducting business with wealthy clients.

Although there were individual differences depending on employment and economic situations, all informants' social relations transformed after completing higher education. The economic improvement enabled people to start treating people who had supported them in the past and to support others in need, which transformed my informants from being recipients to being benefactors. However, they did not settle for the status that emerged from higher education and earning stable incomes, but rather sought to enhance further both material and symbolic capitals by changing jobs,

engaging in urban-urban migration and establishing businesses – in ways that were influenced by gendered ideologies of what it meant to be a man. Both the examples of Tesfay and Yonas showed that their social positions and relationships to people transformed through their opportunities for relatively well-paid employment, but also that these shifts enabled them to pursue further change in their lives, as demonstrated in the example of Tesfay's investment in a car for attracting clients rather than for transport.

Negotiating discrepancies between wealth and status

The increased status many informants experienced through higher education generated new opportunities, but also new power dynamics and tension. An example of another informant who had come from a poor background, but had experienced major transformations in his life through higher education is Tekle, a 35-year-old university lecturer working in Dessie. When I met him during his visit to Addis Ababa to attend the funeral of Meles Zenawi, I asked him if it was because he was a member of the TPLF or just out of interest that he was going to the ceremony at Mesqel square. Tekle explained: 'I'm going as a representative of Dessie University with a few colleagues. It is impossible to enter the ceremony as an individual because of security issues'.

In the days before the ceremony, mourners could be seen in groups on the street wailing and carrying beeswax candles, and the bars and nightclubs that normally blasted music throughout the night were shut down or only playing instrumental mourning music. There was a subdued atmosphere in the city. While some informants were devastated by his death, others eyed hope for the end of the Tigrayan-dominated government. Many feared political turmoil and civil war. There was a high presence of police throughout the capital, and the funeral was a major event attended by officials from various countries in the continent and beyond, as well as by members of the ruling party and representatives from all over the country. Tekle's attendance and association with power elites illustrates a major shift in his life from when he grew up on the outskirts of Korem, a town most known for its camp for victims of the 1984 famine. Through his higher education and subsequent university employment Tekle experienced not only economic improvement from rural poverty, but also developed cultural practices that were distinct from people with less education and in lower-paid jobs.

Such social positions and networks gave my informants power over other people. These dynamics became evident on another occasion Tekle came to the capital. We spent the evening in a bar of Tekle's choice in the Piazza neighbourhood catching up over a few beers. Several sex workers were hanging out waiting or drinking with clients, and these surroundings reminded me of the stories I had recently heard about university lecturers who used their positions to establish sexual relations with female students either by threatening to fail them or give them better grades. I asked Tekle what he knew about this, to which he responded: 'Our salary is very small, only 3,000 Birr [£104] a month. This is our only wealth.' While my informants' income was not always satisfying, the status and power they attained through completed higher education and subsequent employment enabled them to pursue other ways of leading fulfilling lives. In Ethiopia, relations between men and women are highly patriarchal, and women have been and continue to be subject to a power relations skewed in favour of males (Ogato, 2013). Similarly to the stereotypically male supremacist ideologies that were manifested in 'incessant sexual banter, [and] the stylized "naughtiness" of men demonstrating their independence from women' that Ferguson (1999, p.188) identified among mine workers in Zambia, my male informants' misogynistic attitudes and behaviours regularly became evident. Tekle's position enabled him to take advantage of students who sought to transform their lives in the same way as he had, and female students from poor backgrounds who could transform their own and their families' lives with a university degree were vulnerable to extortion by university staff. It was not my informants' income that gave them power, but rather their increased status that enabled them to take advantage of others.

Informants' employment conditions in university settings were also influenced by negotiations of power. Daniel had become the head of the sociology department in a university just outside Addis Ababa despite being less than 30 years old and having only completed a MA degree. I wondered how he had obtained such a high position at his age, and he explained that it was not because of merit:

The senior staff don't want to do it because there is a lot of paperwork and no benefits from doing the job. That's why they assign someone like me and because I was new I had to take it. I want to do a PhD in Europe or Canada, but I haven't had time to apply because I have a lot of work.

While informants who completed higher education often found relatively well-paid employment that transformed their social positions, several were unable to pursue the

lifestyles they had anticipated. A title such as ‘head of department’ may have been considered a high-ranked position, but in Daniel’s case, it hampered his opportunities for developing his career, at least temporarily. Somewhat similarly, an Associate Professor told me that he had been invited to do a post-doctoral fellowship in the United Kingdom, but had to turn it down because he had not yet completed his PhD. These examples illustrate that high positions were ambiguous. My informants’ increase of some forms of capital sometimes highlighted that they lacked other capitals, suggesting that they did not shift their class positions even if they obtained higher education and employment. At the same time, however, these incremental changes produced social distinctions from people who did not experience such changes.

Dynamics of migration: shifting opportunities for ‘high’ lifestyles

Higher education and employment influenced informants’ opportunities for leading urban, upmarket lifestyles, but migration also played a role in how people’s status was negotiated. The changes in status related to higher education and migration is exemplified in the life and account of Medhane, a 28-year-old man from Adigrat who had recently migrated to Addis Ababa. After completing a degree in physics at Jimma University, Medhane was sent to teach in a small town south of Shire in Tigray for three years to repay his part of the cost-sharing expenses. Working as a teacher and having completed university influenced how people saw him there: ‘I got respect just for having a degree there’. When his three-year placement ended, he continued in the same job for two more years, but then migrated to Addis Ababa after a short period of teaching in Mekelle. Medhane was hired through a friend as a ‘Site Manager’ on a construction site, and started evening-classes studying civil engineering in a private college. He was living in a tiny room and just about managed to get by on his salary: ‘Sometimes the monthly salary runs out after two or three weeks, and then I have to ask for 500 Birr [£17] from next month’s salary. But then it gets difficult the following month again, so it’s a not easy.’ In addition to experiencing a more challenging economic situation and a poor quality of life in Addis Ababa, well-educated migrants experienced that the value of their higher education was lower there, as Medhane explained: ‘No one gives you respect just for having a degree, many people here have been to university.’ This statement contradicts the above discussion where it was pointed out that being educated equalled respect, which suggests that the meanings of higher education were not fixed, but varied between locations and individuals.

Medhane's experience of a decrease in respect for his higher education in Addis Ababa reflects his shift from being seen as a well-educated and respectable teacher in a place where few others had been to university towards being just one of many with higher education in the capital. Nevertheless, his higher education and social capital enabled him to obtain a better position on the construction site than uneducated migrant workers from rural areas who did manual labour.

My informants who experienced such shifts in social positions through migration also found that their opportunities for upmarket urban lifestyles transformed, especially if they moved to the capital. Elias, 28, a medical doctor from Tembien in Eastern Tigray who had been working in Adigrat before moving to Addis Ababa to train for specialisation, captured the paradoxes of his life in the capital:

I am a doctor, but what they pay me is not much. It is said that being a doctor is 'high work' [*kefetegna sera*] and that doctors live a high life [*kefetegna hiwot*], but I can't live a high life. I get by and rent a room for myself, but everything is expensive here. Sometimes I work nightshifts in private hospitals to add to my income. Even though I'm fine, I understand that people who can't find work or just work occasionally struggle to get by.

Also those who had fixed employment and income faced economic uncertainty, which highlights that 'high work' did not necessarily enable 'high living'. In the Ethiopian context, aspirations for such lifestyles are gendered. For men with higher education and relatively well-paid employment, it was not uncommon to refer to such prospects. Women, on the other hand, were more moderate in how they spoke about their own livelihoods and opportunities. Consequently, the ways in which people experienced and assessed shifts in their social positions reflect existing gender roles, both in terms of how they responded to new opportunities and how they aspired for the future.

The economic conditions in Addis Ababa challenged Elias' capacity to lead a life people associated with being educated and attractive employment. Through his account of his unfulfilled situation in Addis Ababa, Elias drew on his own challenges to empathise with people who were in worse economic situations than himself. Recognising such inequalities, people in 'high work' were considered to live more comfortable lives, but Elias, and others such as Medhane, found it difficult to pursue the lifestyles they had in smaller towns and cities in Tigray. In Adigrat, Elias had lived on the same salary and managed to get by well, pursuing a lifestyle associated with 'high work' just like others with higher education did there. While urban-urban migration clearly reshaped how higher education influenced my informants' ways of living, it also

illustrates that the increase of some forms of capital did not entirely shift their class positions.

My informants also assessed international migration in relation to education, as the example of Nebay illustrates. At the age of 35, Nebay had a degree in accounting from Mekelle University and was running his own business in Adigrat. Even though he had not migrated outside of Tigray he recognised that there were good opportunities for making money abroad, but questioned people's choice of doing so:

Those who go abroad now, they can find a solution here. It's about work ethic [*sera behari*]. Some people might go and not have the right work ethic and end up jobless abroad too. Still, because they went and have seen other places and take things back, especially those who have been to Europe or America feel a bit better than people who have stayed here. The people coming from abroad have money and their perspectives have changed. When they start working with people here they feel a bit above them. They look down on people here and see them as uneducated and bad workers. This attitude might lead them to fail because they don't work hard themselves. Especially people with little education have difficulties doing business here after they return from abroad. Many lose all their money.

Nebay's account of returnees' sense of superiority reveals his scepticism towards the 'uneducated' regardless of their wealth. Those without higher education who migrated abroad and made money circumvented the 'conventional' trajectory of increasing their wealth through higher education and employment, which frustrated people like Nebay who had studied at university, migrated internally and worked hard to prosper. International migrants sometimes returned with relatively large amounts of money and could afford lifestyles even successful local businessmen struggled to match. Despite their economic capital and envy from locals, many questioned how migrants had earned their money abroad. In Ethiopia, Mains (2012b) argues that several kinds of work are considered shameful (*yilunta*) and that migration to other places in the country or abroad offers opportunities for taking any kind of work without the humiliation of family and friends knowing about it. Even though international migrants avoided the shame of 'bad' work and earned salaries that made them seem prosperous upon return to Ethiopia, their status remained ambiguous. There was, in addition, a gendered dimension to the shame of migration-related work. Female migrants would be suspected of engaging in sex work or illicit sexual relations, especially when being live-in domestic workers, which constituted a challenge to women's respectability. Moreover, Nebay's analysis of the difficulties international returnees faced in profiting from their investments shows that he regarded uneducated people less capable than those who

were educated, which reflects the new social distinctions that were emerging through the expansion of higher education.

The ways in which people understood the prestige of higher education varied between different locations within Ethiopia, and my informants' perspectives upon migration highlight that status was relative and context-related, as Medhane's case of migration from Tigray to Addis Ababa illustrated. In rural places and smaller towns where there were fewer people with higher education, such degrees conferred status whereas in bigger cities where there were many people with higher education it carried less prestige. Also Elias' shift in lifestyle in Addis Ababa showed that urban-urban migration transformed the meanings of 'high work'. While economic prospects were perceived to be better abroad, international migrants' lack of higher education made my informants question the social value of such strategies for increasing wealth, as the example of Nebay showed.

The examples, quotes and patterns illustrate how higher education enhanced symbolic and social capital in urban Ethiopia. I have demonstrated that informants became educated through higher education and that it informed social relations, but also that status was contextual and depended upon informants' social origin as well as employment. The different examples highlighted how higher education shaped status through: 1) shifts in social relations while being university students; 2) increased respect arising from employment and renegotiations of reciprocal relations; 3) new power dynamics, and; 4) increasing symbolic capital through urban-urban migration.

First, starting university and moving to other parts of the country transformed hierarchical relations within the family, as Mehari's freedom from working for his family suggested, and enhanced poor students' sense of responsibility to provide for their families, as the example of Solomon illustrated. In addition to the shifting family relations, the particular social compositions on university campuses enabled informants like Abebe to increase their social capital in ways that were not possible for those who did not go university, generating a social distinction that led to informants being characterised as educated.

Second, higher education enabled informants such as Tesfay and Yonas to obtain employment that gave them respect. As a teacher, the ways in which Yonas perceived of himself and was perceived by others shifted from when he grew up in poverty and slept on the streets. Also Tesfay's capacity to treat those who had supported him in the past illustrate that higher education enabled him to obtain and transform

material capital into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The discussion about Tesfay's investment in a car illustrated that increased symbolic capital could generate more business and wealth.

Third, apart from becoming educated, the examples demonstrated that higher education did not confer a fixed status, but enhanced informants' symbolic capital in ways that generated new negotiations of social relations. The case of Tekle illustrated that higher education opened up opportunities for participating in important events and gave him more power over people in poor, vulnerable situations. Daniel's challenges in his university position illustrates the paradoxes of increasing status, and these examples show that even if informants obtained status as educated, their social origin constrained their social mobility.

Finally, informants' accounts of urban-urban migration demonstrated that the ways in which higher education informed social relations varied between different locations. The high costs of living in Addis Ababa made it impossible for Medhane and Elias to pursue the high lifestyles they had formerly associated with employment after higher education. These conditions impacted their status, and in particular Medhane experienced a shift from how he had been perceived and respected in a small town. The changes in status through migration were further highlighted by taking into account how uneducated international migrants who returned were envied for their economic capital, but lacked the symbolic capital of higher education that would make them educated and respected.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored how higher education transformed my informants' lives. Shifting socioeconomic opportunities have reduced the value of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa in recent decades, and anthropologists have pointed out that educated young men struggle to obtain employment suitable to their levels of education (Masquelier, 2013; Mains, 2012b). Here, it has been demonstrated that my informants were in fact able to find well-paid employment suitable to their qualifications, illustrating that the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia has the potential to significantly change people's lives. In addition to becoming educated and employed, higher education enabled them to pursue lifestyles associated with urban prosperity, to live with a higher degree of material comfort, to be at the giving rather than receiving end of reciprocal relations, and to engage in urban-urban migration to obtain employment that is more profitable

and establish businesses. The majority of my informants completed their degrees and experienced an increase in wealth, which enabled men to perform their masculinities in relation to a gendered discourse around envisioned life prospects.

There has been an expansion of higher education systems in many countries in the continent, but it has been argued that opportunities to study remain unequal in sub-Saharan Africa (Wiseman and Wolhuter, 2013). In the Ethiopian context, higher education has historically been associated with elites, at least until the massive expansion of universities and the implementation of the cost-sharing system from year 2000 onwards. While people's chances for completing lower levels of education remain embedded in broader patterns of privilege and inequality (Willott, 2011; Woldehanna and Hagos, 2015; Poluha, 2007b), it has been demonstrated above that there are opportunities for people from different backgrounds to obtain higher education. Social inequalities continue to shape people's education trajectories, exemplified by the difficulties some students from poor backgrounds faced in getting by on the cost-sharing programme. While higher education in Ethiopia was among my informants highly valued for providing people with opportunities to enhance their income and improve their lives, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that even if education could enhance individuals' incomes, it was unlikely for people from poor backgrounds to permeate cultural boundaries and experience social mobility. In their terms, education reproduced social hierarchies. Similarly, in the Ethiopian context, higher education conferred a certain status and enabled my informants to find employment and stable incomes, but even though they increased their possession of material and symbolic capital, their social origin and cultural capital constrained them from shifting their class position. However, the above examination has shown that their new tastes, aspirations, consumption patterns that emerged from urban migration for higher education and subsequent employment to some extent reproduced gender binaries while also generating other social distinctions. This demonstrates the role of higher education in producing a group that is distinct in terms of its possession and use of forms of capital, which I describe as being middle class.

However, the reproduction and contestation of social hierarchies go beyond what higher education alone can account for, and in the next chapter, I examine another social factor that influenced social distinctions, namely ethnicity. Ethnicity is a pervasive and contested issue in Ethiopia, and the widespread perception of people originating from Tigray being privileged is a source of conflict. Through an exploration

of how urban-urban migration shaped Tigrayans' identities, the following chapter analyses the relationship between ethnicity and class.

5. Ethnic-based class relations

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that my informants transformed through higher education, and demonstrated that migration within Ethiopia was common. These migrations generated new social encounters, and through the focus on the highly politicised and conflict-laden ethnic context in Ethiopia, I consider representations and perceptions of the Tigrayan ethnic group associated with political dominance to analyse how such ideas influenced my informants' experiences of migration. With a particular focus on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of social capital and his perspectives on how social identity is produced through difference, this chapter examines how informants manoeuvred their Tigrayan ethnicity in inter-ethnic social encounters and the ways in which these relations shaped social networks, cultural practices and social distinctions that can describe further what it means to be middle class in contemporary Ethiopia.

The chapter title, 'ethnic-based class relations', may first need a brief explanation. Many scholars have in recent decades come to focus on how ethnicity provides a lens on class and vice versa. In chapter two, I discussed how class often remains 'hidden' behind ethnicity, and in the context of the United States, Ortnner (1998), for instance, has argued that popular discourse and academic analyses of privilege, power, poverty and inequality are often focused upon ethnicity rather than class. By focusing on various colonial and post-colonial African contexts, Comaroff and Comaroff somewhat similarly argue that people generally consider inequalities in material, political and social power to be related to group membership, and that such differences contribute to shape ethnic identities (1992, p.56). Through such processes ethnicity tends 'to take on the "natural" appearance of an autonomous force, a "principle" capable of determining the course of social life' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, p.60). At the experiential level, then, ethnicity is perceived to be the factor that determines group privilege and inequalities. However, for the Comaroffs (1992, p.54) ethnicity 'has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy'. Consequently, formations of ethnicity reflect a broader range of inequalities, but, at the same time, individuals' everyday experiences of ethnicity contribute to making it a 'pervasive force in the social world' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, p.65). Building on such insights, and with a view to developing a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be middle class in Ethiopia today, this

chapter considers how meanings of ethnicity are shaped through migration and how this processual relationship influences class formation.

Through analyses of how ethnicity becomes essentialised through social processes, it is now well accepted in anthropology that ethnic identity and group belonging are not static or fixed, but are constructed, performed and negotiated (Barth, 1969), and both ascribed and achieved (Eriksen, 2010). The essentialisation of ethnicity in Ethiopia, discussed in chapter two, is particularly prominent when it comes to Tigrayans and narratives concerning their dominance, which is the focus of this chapter.

Aalen argues that inequality 'based on ethnic affinity has been a part of Ethiopian governance since the establishment of the modern state at the end of the nineteenth century, with the Amhara perceived as the ruling group' (2011, p.4). Although there is a long history of ethnic-related conceptions of dominance, Donham (1986) argued that during the Amhara rule ethnicity was not fixed because people from other backgrounds could become Amhara through adapting to Orthodox Christianity, Amharic language and intermarriage, and thereby seek state employment and political power. Over the past decades such flexibility has, however, been constrained by the new political system of ethnic federalism, and perceptions of ethnic privilege and inequality have transformed. The Tigrayan ethnic mobilisation during the civil war (1974-1991) was based on a narrative of Tigrayans as distinct from other groups (Donham, 2002), and was a precursor to how ethnicity has come to be understood after the shift from Amhara to Tigrayan political dominance in 1991. It has become a common perception that Tigrayans are 'attempting to monopolise political power and channel state resources to their own region in the north of the country' (Aalen, 2011, p.4). The government's systematic subjugation of political opposition and other ethnic groups (Jalata, 2009; Tronvoll, 2011), as well as 'extra-judicial killings and arbitrary arrests' (Tronvoll, 2008, p.68), have also contributed to intensify the perceptions of an ethnic-based system of inequality.

The EPRDF government has attempted to counter the perceptions of Tigrayan dominance and privilege. The most obvious strategy has been to not favour the Tigray region through official channels (Chanie, 2007). Another more subtle way of promoting the idea of ethnic equality has been identified by Orłowska (2013), who demonstrates that the government used the celebrations of the Ethiopian Millennium in 2007 to reconstruct former metaphors of nationhood based on highland 'culture' and Orthodox Christianity towards a more inclusive narrative of 'unity in diversity'. She argues that

the ‘celebration was a politically motivated project and many of its official discourses and symbols were meant to draw attention to the achievements of the current regime in order to enhance its legitimacy’ (2013, p.312). By promoting the idea and claiming that all ethnic groups are equal, the government’s position is that the Tigray region and individuals of Tigrayan ethnicity are not privileged over others.

In chapter two, I highlighted Abbink’s (2011) argument that ethnic federalism influences patterns and experiences of migration in Ethiopia. I also referred to Saint’s (2004) point that the Ethiopian government allocates students’ university places based on their region of origin to generate a mix of the population on each university campus. It is in these circumstances of internal migration and encounters with and formations of new ‘ethnoscapes’ (Appadurai, 1996) that I examine ethnicity and class, with a particular focus on people originating from the Tigray region. The next section discusses how the discourse of ethnicity in contemporary Ethiopia has helped to generate perceptions of Tigrayan dominance and privilege, and through this investigation, I consider how supposed ethnic privilege intersects with class. I then examine how migration and being in other parts of the country shaped my informants’ perspectives on ethnicity as well as their identities, and transformed their skills in manoeuvring inter-ethnic encounters and relations. By discussing the relationship between ethnicity and class in the Ethiopian context, this chapter considers how contestations over ethnic privilege and inequality generate new social distinctions.

5.2 Contesting fixed ethnicity

Although ethnic federalism ignores the continuous constructions, flexibility and performative aspects of ethnicity, the government’s policies have real implications for how people think and speak about their identities. For instance, Markakis (1998) examined how migration and increasing interaction with people from different backgrounds over several decades have shaped ideas of ‘the Gurage’ as an ethnic group with a distinct language and cultural practices. Similarly to the Comaroffs (2009) who argue that ethnicity is becoming increasingly commodified, Markakis found that by providing access to resources, ethnic federalism turned ethnicity into a ‘political asset’ and helped to solidify the idea of the Gurage as a distinct ethnic group. While Markakis argued that the government’s politicisation has influenced how people understand and perform ethnicity, Smith (2007) suggests that people also contest the political system of ethnic federalism and the ‘fixed’ official meanings of ethnicity. She supports this with

evidence from southern Ethiopia, which shows how people engaged in democratic processes to ‘shift’ and redefine their ethnicity, in this case from ‘Gurage’ to ‘Siltie’. This illustrates that even if people in Ethiopia to some extent share the government’s rigid approach to ethnicity and speak about it in such terms, some contest the official narrative and construct new identities through this framework.

This was also the case in fieldwork. Many of my informants spoke about ethnicity as a fixed part of people’s identity and group belonging, and thereby reiterated the government discourse of ethnicity. All of my informants who originated from the Tigray region and had grown up there, responded to my inquiries about their ethnicity by stating that they were Tigrayan. For instance, 40-year-old Robel in Adigrat told me: ‘My ethnicity is Tigrayan. Both my parents are Tigrayan.’ Such understandings of ethnicity resemble the government’s discourse, but also differ from the official approach that classifies a person’s ethnicity only based upon father’s ethnic background. Similarly to Robel, many referred to both parents to clarify their ethnic background. Mehari is another example of this: ‘My ethnicity is Tigrayan, but I can say I’m half Irob because my mother is Irob. On my ID-card it says Tigrayan because my father is Tigrayan.’ Although people’s understandings are influenced and shaped by the political system of ethnic federalism, the difference between the government’s fixed system of classification and informants’ own ways of speaking about their ethnic identity as Tigrayans illustrates that there are discrepancies even among those who adhere to the official categorisations.

How ethnicity is understood in contemporary Ethiopia is influenced by ideas of identity related to language, place of origin and culture as well as the long-standing patterns of highland domination over people from the lowlands. The historical circumstances discussed in chapter two, the current political system of ethnic federalism, and people’s own constructions have generated a unique discourse and meanings of ethnicity in the Ethiopian context. The discrepancies between the official approach to ethnicity as a fixed characteristic among equal ethnic groups and how people from different backgrounds talk about their own group belonging and identities leads me to consider how Tigrayan political domination influences perceptions of distribution of resources as well as Tigrayans’ ascribed social position. In order to understand how these dynamics produces social distinctions, this section first examines common representations of Tigrayans in the media, and, subsequently, considers perceptions of Tigrayan privilege among my non-Tigrayan informants.

Representing Tigrayans as a distinct class

Since the change of government in 1991, people claiming belonging to the largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia, Amhara and Oromo, as well as people from other backgrounds, have challenged the Tigrayan minority rule through both peaceful protests and armed resistance. This can be understood in relation to the well-established narrative that a disproportionately large part of government resources is being allocated to the Tigray region and that individuals of Tigrayan ethnicity benefit unfairly from the current political power structure.

On Facebook, the Tigrayan political dominance and privilege is a popular topic. There are numerous groups where the Tigrayan domination of power is discussed. For example, groups called the ‘All Amhara’ and the ‘Amhara Press’ post a range of pictures, videos, and texts focusing on the politics of ethnicity. These include, among others, news and stories about recent events related to ethnic inequalities, caricatures of the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, pictures of documents that ‘prove’ the policies of discrimination against other ethnic groups and distribution of more resources to Tigray, as well as video clips from demonstrations and close-up images of people who have been shot or abused in other ways by the police or security forces. Anti-government and anti-Tigray sentiments pervade much of the material and discussions that are posted on such Facebook groups and there is an obvious political agenda of discrediting and undermining the Tigrayan-dominated government.

Currently, the arguments about Tigrayan dominance and privilege can primarily be found on websites run by Ethiopians living abroad who are not limited by the censorship within Ethiopia (Stremlau, 2011). A number of websites dedicated to Ethiopian current affairs regularly post articles discussing the government’s dominance and Tigrayan privilege. For example, the favourable treatment of Tigray is discussed in the article ‘Tigray Economics and Ethiopian Politics’ (Abate, 2013) on a website called ‘Ethiopian News and Opinions’:

Ordinary conversations, media reports, and developments on the ground all seem to testify that Tigray is being preferentially and positively treated in all fronts. [...] The important question to ask is not why Tigray grows faster and stronger but how it does that. Meaning, given common macro-economic policy, how does Tigray outperform other regional governments in infrastructure development and crop production? It is well known that the weather and topography in Tigray are not any better conducive for crop production- we have there many arid, rocky and mountainous areas. In fact, one finds hectares and hectares of arable and fertile land in the other regions. It is difficult to argue that the labor force in Tigray is much more skilled and productive compared to

in those other regions. The only significant factor that should explain at least much of the variation must be related to the degree of investment made. Tigray must have enjoyed the highest resource pool over the last yesteryears. And this seems in direct parlance with the popular cry that the region is the ruling party's favorite stop for its economic train.

Online articles frequently question the legitimacy of the government by problematizing the distribution of resources and the alleged inequalities between ethnic regions. In this article, it is suggested that the agricultural performance in Tigray cannot be achieved without the government favouring the region through unfair shares of the country's wealth. Although it is argued that there is preferential treatment of Tigray, the case is based on speculation rather than evidence. Regardless of their truthfulness, however, such claims are often presented online and contribute to reproduce the narrative of Tigrayan privilege.

The distribution of resources is a frequent topic of contention on websites that oppose the current regime. Cartoons are, in addition to articles, regularly posted and circulated to reiterate the narrative of Tigrayan privilege. This drawing was posted on welkait.com (Qelemewerq, 2016):



Such cartoons provide additional impetus to the arguments of Tigrayan privilege. Similarly to the article discussed above, this image makes the point that the Tigrayan government allocates the resources belonging to all of Ethiopia to the Tigray region through oppression of other ethnic groups. In the bottom of the picture, the text states 'Building Tigray with Ethiopian looted Resources', and this point is illustrated in the image. The two elderly men on the left are portrayed as Tigrayans who took part in the

TPLF's war against the *Derg* (1974-1991) and by stating that it 'paid off' they are speaking about the current wealth of Tigray emerging from their victory and subsequent political control of the country. This wealth, however, is obtained through the subjugation of other regions of Ethiopia. OPDO and ANDM are the Oromo and Amhara political parties that are part of the EPRDF coalition in power, but are often considered to be puppets for the government. This point is made clear by the illustration of the TPLF cadre standing on the members of OPDO and ANDM and their boxes of cash, and metaphorically suppressing Amharas and Oromos and using their resources to build Tigray. As discussed earlier, the representation of Tigrayan privilege goes beyond financial issues, and suggests that Tigrayans are in a unique position of power over other Ethiopians. Through political dominance, Tigrayans are perceived to have the power to extract resources from other ethnic groups, and the combination of political power with economic advantages is seen as ethnic privilege.

Online articles also commonly argue that the government uses excessive force over people from other ethnic groups. In 'The Great Conspiracy against Ethiopia: Part 2 – The TPLF disorders', an article on zehabesha.com (Gizaw, 2016), Tigrayan privilege is portrayed in direct relation to the government's violence against the people of Ethiopia:

TPLF is a system of minority privilege and class rule based on satanic ownership of means of livelihood. This gives the groups of TPLF not only the power to exploit but to kill or burn humans alive.

In this article, the TPLF favouring of the Tigrayan minority through the violent exploitation of other Ethiopians is portrayed, rather extremely, as a class rule based on ethnicity. Just like in the cartoon above, the combination of favourable economic situations and the government's use of force to subjugate people from other backgrounds lead the author of this piece to argue that these privileges based on ethnicity have become a class distinction between Tigrayans and people from other backgrounds. While the use of the internet has increased significantly over the past decade, Sorenson and Matsuoka (2001, p.39) argued already 15 years ago that 'Abyssinian cybernauts' are 'committed to resurrecting and reinforcing former relations of power' rather than 'challenging boundaries with new values and perspectives'. Similarly, the above excerpts from different websites illustrate that current online articles, illustrations and debates reproduce the narratives of Tigrayan privilege.

At present, explicit portrayals of unfair distribution cannot be found in Ethiopian magazines, newspapers, radio or TV. Despite the restrictions of censorship, I often came across articles that hinted at Tigrayan privilege in much subtler ways, especially in English-language newspapers. For example, in the ‘Fortune’ newspaper (Feyissa, 2013), the distribution of resources is discussed through the focus on increasing food prices and, as shown in the following two excerpts:

Indeed, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, in one of his interviews, expressed his aspiration for the country to attain the level of being able to providing its people with at least three meals a day, in a decade’s time. Two decades have elapsed since then and that vision is yet to materialise, at least for the bulk of the population. [...] Performance reports by the concerned ministries do not match up to the food security situations on the ground, which has to be compared to the population explosion. The yields from agriculture, headed to the local markets could show positive growth. But, what matters is the proportion that each individual gets in terms of per capita share, or in terms of required calories or food value mix. A certain group in society are wasting time. These people do not represent the Addis Ababa urbanites. They grab everything they can get from the shelves of supermarkets. They can afford to buy burgers for over 100 Br [£3.50] a piece. These are people who worry about where to pass their Saturday nights. For the rest of us, however, Addis has become a question of to eat or not to eat.

Individuals originating from the Tigray region are considered to benefit from their ethnicity even if they are living in other parts of the country. Although the author of this newspaper article avoids mentioning who belongs to the privileged ‘group in society’, his case is similar to the online accounts of Tigrayan privilege; there is a minority who has the resources to buy upmarket food, dine in expensive restaurants and only have to worry about how to spend their leisure time whereas other people struggle to get by and eat enough. The (probably intentional) ambiguity of the article leaves it open to interpretation, but considering the prevalence of representations and perceptions of Tigrayan privilege it can be deduced that the author refers to the same idea.

To summarise, the claims of unrestricted violence against people from other ethnic backgrounds, as well as the protection of Tigrayans, shows that there is a discourse of Tigrayan dominance wherein the subjugation of other ethnic groups intersects with patterns of privilege and inequality. In this discourse, ethnicity is a criterion that shapes a clear distinction between Tigrayans and other people. The subtle and explicit representations of Tigrayans as a privileged ethnic group that equals them to a separate class illustrate that ethnicity is a central factor in contemporary social hierarchies. Below, I will discuss how my Tigrayan informants contested this discourse, but first I turn to how my non-Tigrayan informants perceived of the relationship between ethnic privilege and class – which enables me to consider further how urban

migration produced cultural practices and social distinctions that can highlight what it means to be middle class.

Presuming Tigrayan privilege

Among my 36 interviewees, nine classified themselves as non-Tigrayan. They and many other people I spoke to in Addis Ababa commonly perceived Tigrayans to be privileged. These opinions were expressed in conversations that ranged from inquiries about conditions in Tigray to heated discussions about the Tigrayan political dominance and their plot to deprive the rest of the country of power and resources. For example, Habte, in his late 20s, had migrated from Nazret to the capital and identified himself as Oromo. He had not studied for higher education, worked as a hairdresser and suggested that his predicament of low-paid employment and poor prospects for becoming rich was a result of the government favouring Tigray:

Markus: How do you feel about Meles Zenawi [the former prime minister] passing away?

Habte: I'm happy, he had been in power too long. On TV they showed only people crying, but in the streets people were cheering. Meles was a thief. He was just like Saddam and Gaddafi, killing any opposition.

Markus: Are you not exaggerating?

Habte: No, there is no work here and all the tax goes to Tigray.

Markus: How do you know that the government allocates more money to Tigray? Have you been there?

Habte: No I haven't, but Tigrayans are always wearing gold rings and necklaces.

My informants who originated from other parts of Ethiopia often considered the subjugation of people from non-Tigrayan backgrounds to be a strategy to extract and allocate resources to the Tigray region. Such ideas were not limited to people with little education or in positions of economic hardship, but also well-educated people who had stable incomes spoke about the government's favourable treatment of Tigrayans. A 50-year-old 'foreign national of Ethiopian origin', Hana, who had lived more than half her life in Ethiopia, but had been educated in Norway and the United Kingdom, stated that 'It is said that a lot of resources are going to the north [Tigray], that nice hospitals and factories are being built there. I think Tigray is favoured because the government is controlled by Tigrayans.'

My non-Tigrayan informants' perspectives on ethnicity differed also in more fundamental ways from the informants who described themselves as Tigrayan. For example, Aster, 21, was born to parents of Gurage origin in the countryside, but had

lived most of her life in Addis Ababa. She responded to my question about her ethnicity by stating:

Aster: I'm Ethiopian.

Markus: OK, but what does it say in your ID-card?

Aster: It says Gurage, but I don't think like that. I only think of myself as Ethiopian.

While my informants who originated from Tigray responded that they were Tigrayan, Aster's denial of her official group belonging illustrates a different view on ethnicity. Rather than referring to their ascribed ethnicity, several informants from other backgrounds primarily spoke about themselves as 'Ethiopian'. My informants who originated from outside of the Tigray region often contested the government's policies towards ethnic identity. For example, Abebe said:

For me, I don't think that I have an ethnicity. My parents are from Tigray, but I was born in Bahir Dar and grew up there, which is in the Amhara region. I don't think I'm Tigrayan or Amhara, I'm Ethiopian. However, in my ID-card it says Tigray, but I don't think like that.

The reflections of informants whose ascribed ethnicity did not correspond with their first language or who for other reasons did not feel that ethnicity was central to their identity often diverged from the government's discourse. Their emphasis on nationality over ethnicity differ from Mehari and Robel who, as discussed above, did not question their ethnicity as Tigrayans (even if they subtly contested the system of classifying ethnicity only based on father's origin). These differences highlight that people's ideas of ethnicity and ways of identifying themselves varied, and that their ethnic backgrounds and relationships to political power shaped their perspectives.

The fixity of ethnicity that makes it impossible for people from other ethnic backgrounds to become Tigrayan has contributed to the sense of Tigrayans' exclusive position. Interestingly, the representations of Tigrayans as a privileged group draw upon the same problematic assumption that the government employs in its rigid and fixed approach to ethnicity, and fail to acknowledge the inequalities and varying perspectives on group belonging and identity among people from Tigray. While Bayart (1993) argued that 'African elites' seek to control the state and 'eat' the resources, in the case of Ethiopia, the Tigrayan ethnic group is considered by other ethnic groups to be the one that consumes the wealth of the country. Tigrayan dominance and privilege is represented and perceived as a form of 'ethnic nepotism' (Van den Berghe, 1987), which frames ethnicity as the factor that 'defines' class. However, these discourses

reveal only one side of how the relationship between ethnicity and privilege is understood in the Ethiopian context, and I here turn to the perspectives of my Tigrayan informants to examine how they perceived these conditions.

5.3 Shaping Tigrayan identity through inter-ethnic encounters

As discussed in chapter four, going to university through the cost-sharing programme was an opportunity for my informants to transform their lives. In addition, it was central in shaping inter-ethnic relations because higher education was often the first experience of ethnic diversity for informants who had lived in ethnically homogeneous parts of Tigray. For example, Tekle explained how he experienced going to university in the capital:

It was very difficult to enter university at that time, but I had good grades and started my degree in geography at Addis Ababa University in 2001. Until then, I had only been to Korem and I was worried about thieves before going, but when I got there it was good. I met a lot of people from all over Ethiopia. In the dormitory there were people from different cultures, who spoke other languages and had other religions. Some had other food customs and there were many different styles of clothing. Some were very clever and some were fanatics [*akrari*]. There were many different people.

Through the expansion of higher education from year 2000, interactions between young people from all over Ethiopia increased and enabled them to widen their social networks with people from other ethnic backgrounds, which in Bourdieu's (1984) terms can be analysed as an increase of social capital. These movements, encounters and communications between people from different parts of the country were facilitated by the multilingual education policy that is dominated by Amharic because it continues to serve as a national language (Smith, 2008). Although many informants had concerns about going to big cities, Tekle's account of entering university and of living in a new environment on campus illustrates that he perceived the diversity both as enriching and as an opportunity for widening his perspectives.

Other informants from Tigray also spoke of the advantages of living in diverse settings without considering their ethnicity to be an issue in social relations. For example, Senait, 25, who was in the process of studying for an MA degree in Mekelle, explained:

For my first degree in Bahir Dar I lived with people from different backgrounds. It was very nice getting to know many people from all over Ethiopia, sharing experiences and exchanging ideas. Now for the MA degree, I'm staying in an apartment for myself in Mekelle and many of the other students on my programme are from around here. It's not so different from living in Adigrat.

Through migration for higher education, my informants came to know broader diversity. Combined with their high level of education, these experiences influenced my informants' tolerance and interest in living in multi-ethnic environments. Senait's account of her preference for studying and living with students from all parts of Ethiopia, rather than in Mekelle where the ethnic composition was similar to her place of origin, illustrates that her former experience of migration and relationships with people from other ethnic backgrounds had shaped how she perceived ethnic diversity. It also highlights that she saw inter-ethnic relations as valuable in themselves, indicating the importance of diversity in my informants' social networks to produce social distinctions.

The perceptions of Tigrayan privilege, however, did occasionally lead to dangerous situations for my informants who were living in other regions of Ethiopia. While people from other ethnic backgrounds had concerns for their safety because of the Tigrayan-dominated political power, several informants who migrated from Tigray to other cities said that they experienced discrimination and violence as a result of their Tigrayan ethnicity. For example, Petros told me about being a Tigrayan student at Gonder University in the Amhara region: 'I feared racism before going to Gonder, and it happened to me on the eve of Easter. Some guys on the street asked me "Why do you talk Tigrinya? Why don't you speak Amharic?" Then they beat me and kicked me. Except for that Gonder was fine.' The reasons informants from Tigray feared and, in some cases, hesitated to migrate to other parts of Ethiopia was related to the widespread discontent with Tigrayan domination of political power and the distribution of resources. Petros' experience of violence illustrates that he became a target for contestation of Tigrayan dominance because of the ascribed meaning of his Tigrayan ethnicity in the Amhara region. Individual narratives of ethnic violence and conflict varied, but my informants from Tigray had in common that the perceptions of their ethnic privilege influenced their sense of safety in other regions.

The majority of my informants from Tigray experienced relatively minor incidents during their university studies, but in some cases, the campuses became sites of contestations of ethnic privilege and inequality. For example, in 2004, men who were claimed to be members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) attacked a gathering of

students from Tigray on the Addis Ababa University campus.⁵ My informant Tekle was one of the victims and explained:

Some Oromo students who had joined OLF threw a grenade into the TV-room when there were Tigrinya programmes on. One guy from Adigrat, one from Dessie and myself were injured, and one from around Debre Markos was killed. I had to stay in the Black Lion Hospital for one year after the attack. I still have some problems with my leg.

Violence on university campuses suggest that the government's policy of mixing people from different backgrounds did not always generate inter-ethnic understanding, but also helped to turn campuses into battlegrounds over ethnicity. The grenade attack by Oromo students can be understood as a political contestation of Tigrayan power over other ethnic groups, but also as an event that transformed Tekle's understanding of his own ethnicity and what it meant to be Tigrayan; he had been familiar with ethnic tension prior to the attack, but this experience transformed his initial perceptions of ethnic diversity when he first moved into the Addis Ababa University campus, discussed above. Through migration to other regions, my informants from Tigray became increasingly aware of the perceptions of Tigrayan privilege and under these circumstances, it became impossible to remain 'neutral' to the politics of ethnicity. Rather than Tigrayans 'innocently' being considered a separate class, the ethnic politics was a hotly contested topic where ethnic belonging could mean injury or even death.

In 2005, ethnic conflict escalated and many Oromos contested the continued rule of the Tigrayan-dominated regime and their experience of long-standing subjugation by highland governments. Violence intensified on university campuses when it became clear that EPRDF was to remain in power and claims of fraudulent elections emerged. The police and security forces clamped down on protestors with 'excessive use of force' (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009). Around this time, informants from Tigray who had migrated to towns and cities in other regions, such as Oromia, experienced discrimination and violence. For example, Mehari, told me about the conditions at Jimma University: 'When I think of the campus I can only think of the racism. There was a lot of racism. Everybody was talking about Oromo, Amhara, Tigray.' As a Tigrayan in this environment of intensified emphasis on ethnicity, Mehari got himself into conflict with non-Tigrayans several times:

⁵ More information about the incident can be found on Ethiomedia.com (2004). Please note that the victims are named and that I have given my informant a pseudonym.

There were good khat houses, bars and places to go dancing. People in the city were nice, but when I think of Jimma what comes to mind is how bad the police was. They were racist and lots of time they beat people with sticks. Once I was going back to campus with a Tigrayan friend around 8pm, and two policemen called us over and asked 'where are you going?' We said we were going to the campus and they asked 'where have you been?' It's none of their business where we've been and we got scared because we understood they wanted to bother us. We said we'd been with a friend or something, but they wanted a reason to beat us and asked for our ID-cards. We showed it to them and there was no problem. They didn't have any reason, and then one of the policemen asked 'what is this hair?' while pulling it at the same time. I had an Afro back then and answered 'hair' and the policeman hit me with a flat hand. I hit him back with a flat hand and shouted 'wedi shermuta' [son of a whore] to him and then it started. My friend attacked the other policeman, so we fought one on one. More policemen came and they pushed me to the ground and beat me with sticks. Then they pulled me by my legs through the mud and took me to prison. The police were racist, they didn't know us at all and they wanted to beat us only because we spoke Tigrinya.

Perceptions of different ethnic characteristics influenced inter-ethnic encounters throughout Ethiopia and especially in Tigray. I regularly heard jokes and narratives about Oromo's inferior intellectual abilities and fighting skills. Although police violence can be understood in the broader contexts of the police exerting power over young men and enforcing conformity,⁶ the ways in which Mehari and his friend responded to the policemen with insults and violence illustrates a sense of power and superiority that were shaped through ingrained perspectives on ethnic differences. While Mehari had a history of violence and was partly to blame for the escalation, the circumstances of ethnic conflict as well as Mehari's background from Tigray influenced the power dynamics between him and the Oromo policemen and how the incident unfolded.

The ideas of Tigrayans as a privileged ethnic group were instrumental in my informants' social relations outside of Tigray, especially during times of political tension. Rather than class shaping ethnicity, as Ortner (1998) and the Comaroffs (1992) have suggested, these circumstances suggest that my informants' Tigrayan ethnicity ascribed them into a privileged, yet contested class position. The essentialised and externally ascribed ethnicity shaped inter-ethnic encounters, and acquainted and entangled my informants in contestations over Tigrayan dominance, distribution of resources and power. These experiences influenced what being Tigrayan meant to them, and, consequently, my informants reconstructed their identities as Tigrayans through cultural practices that were distinct to those who engaged in urban-urban migration.

⁶ The power dynamics between the police and young men has been observed both by Weiss (2005), showing that hairstyles led to tense relations between young men and the police in Tanzania, and Mains (2012b, p.108) who gives an example of the police in Jimma forcing a local young man to cut his 'provocative' hairstyle.

Asserting ethnic equality

After completing higher education, several of my informants from Tigray migrated to urban centres in other parts of Ethiopia where they experienced new and different inter-ethnic interactions. It was primarily through migration that the representations and perceptions of Tigrayan privilege became apparent and important in my informants' lives. For example, Anbessa told me about remembering a headline he saw in a newspaper after migrating from Mekelle to Addis Ababa in the early 2000s saying; 'Bleeding Ethiopia to decorate Mekelle' [*Ethiopian admto Mekellen mashebreq*]. Up until the ethnic conflict in 2005 there was a relative freedom of press in Ethiopia (Stremlau, 2011), and representations of Tigrayan privilege were more explicit in printed media in the past. The headline resembles the more recent cartoon, discussed above, and claimed that resources were extracted from other parts of the country for the benefit of Tigray. For Anbessa, who was from Tigray, but had mainly studied and worked in Addis Ababa since his late teens, spoke fluent Amharic and had close friends from the Amhara and Oromia regions, these representations of Tigrayan privilege continued to be a concern for him:

The ideas that Tigrayans are taking the resources and sending money to Tigray upset me because it's not true. I've lived there and I know what's happening there. Maybe in federal governments there are more Tigrayan ministers than from other ethnic groups, but this is changing with time. In terms of budget there is a formula for allocating resources throughout the country based on the number of the population and level of development in each region.

The perception of Tigrayan privilege influenced my informants' identities as Tigrayans even if they had strong inter-ethnic relationships. Having lived in Mekelle, Anbessa argued that the claim of resources being extracted from the rest of the country to make Mekelle look beautiful was unconvincing, but at the same time, he expressed concerns that people who had not been to Mekelle and seen the conditions there for themselves would believe such portrayals. Anbessa's sense of ethnic affiliation with the government was evident in his account of the 'realities' of distribution of resources, which shows that his Tigrayan ethnicity influenced his identity in Addis Ababa.

My informants' identities as Tigrayan combined with the common ideas of Tigrayan dominance and privilege influenced their social relations. Elias who had been living Addis Ababa for about year explained that: 'Some people think differently about you because you are from Tigray. There are people who think that Tigray is being given

advantages and that all the money goes to Tigray.’ Through migration, my informants became engaged in interactions where it became evident that people from other backgrounds related to Tigrayans in particular ways. In such social situations, some felt compelled to negotiate people’s prejudices against them, as Elias elaborated further:

For me there have been no problems because I’m from Tigray. My friends don’t judge me for my ethnicity, but we discuss it. I often have such discussions. Even today we discussed it, but in a reasonable way and just by talking. I use my own experience to explain to my friends that I don’t have any advantage over them. I tell them about my family’s situation, how they live in the countryside and that my father was a freedom fighter. I try to make them understand that our situation is the same; we are doctors and get the same salary. I don’t get one penny [*ammest santim*] more than them. There is a gap between people’s understanding and reality. If they believe me when I say that the government is not carrying money to us, they understand the reality. Most of my friends accept my explanation.

All my informants from Tigray who had migrated to the capital or other regions were familiar with the perceptions of Tigrayan privilege. Also Hewan, 26, who had lived in Addis Ababa for five years explained:

Many people have the wrong impression of Tigray and think that Tigrayans live an easy life. They believe there are asphalt roads everywhere, lots of universities and factories in Tigray and that Tigrayans get support from the government because the Prime Minister was from Tigray. It’s not like that, in Tigray there are rich people and there are poor people.

For my informants from Tigray, migration to other parts of the country and broader inter-ethnic relations generated reconsiderations of what it meant to ‘be Tigrayan’. Conversations and discussions about the ‘facts’ of distribution of resources and equality between ethnic groups with people who held different perspectives on Tigrayans’ social positions shaped social relations and informants’ capacity to manoeuvre a contested topic. Through attempting to portray more nuanced narratives of the conditions in Tigray my informants asserted their own ethnic identity in opposition to prevailing representations and ideas of their privilege. Elias’ account of his strategy to confront others and their ideas of Tigrayan privilege by drawing on his own background and their common employment conditions to demonstrate their similarities, illustrates that he was attempting to construct himself as equal to them rather than him belonging to a privileged class. Also Hewan emphasised that people from other backgrounds considered living conditions and infrastructure in Tigray to be of a higher standard because of the ethnic affiliation to the government, but highlighted the inequalities within Tigray to emphasise that these ideas were incorrect.

Despite contrasting perspectives on ethnic privilege and inequality, inter-ethnic social relations were common among my informants who had higher education and lived in urban centres outside of Tigray. Over the years in the capital, Hewan had widened her social network:

Markus: Do you have friends from other parts of Ethiopia?

Hewan: Yes, I get along with people easily and my friends are from all over the country. The woman who called a few minutes ago is from Gonder. I have friends from Shashamene, Arba Minch and other places, though many are from Adigrat.

Markus: And do you try to explain what the conditions are like in Tigray when you talk to them?

Hewan: No, I don't want to discuss it with other people, it's better to be quiet when it comes up.

Despite recurrent claims of Tigrayan privilege, there is little solid evidence and all my informants from Tigray denied ever experiencing any favourable treatment. Being perceived as privileged because of their ethnicity, however, forced my informants from Tigray to respond to others' perceptions, which demonstrates that the interactions in daily life were influenced by the essentialist ideas of ethnicity and the politics of Tigrayan otherness. While their ambiguous status as Tigrayans remained important in such relations, my informants manoeuvred their identities in ways that enabled them to maintain inter-ethnic relations and augment their social capital compared to Tigrayans who were less mobile. Hewan's account of having friends from different parts of Ethiopia illustrates that she had enhanced her skills in ways that enabled her to manage inter-ethnic relationships, and by proactively avoiding discussions about Tigrayan privilege she was negotiating her Tigrayan identity in a subtler way than Elias did. Regardless of the strategy my informants chose, their experiences of ethnic diversity contested their notions of what it meant to 'be Tigrayan'.

Above, I demonstrated that Tigrayans have come to be seen as a separate class that is 'defined' by their ethnicity, and here I have emphasised how inter-ethnic encounters through migration have generated new meanings of the intersections between ethnicity and class. Through the examination of migration for higher education it emerged that my informants found themselves in new settings of diverse ethnic relations that resemble what Appadurai (1996) termed 'ethnoscape', discussed in chapter two. Experiences of these circumstances influenced my informants' understanding of ethnicity and highlighted that originating from Tigray impacted social relations in particular ways. In addition, urban-urban migration to other regions after higher education influenced my informants' inter-ethnic relations and how they

perceived of themselves as Tigrayans. Informants who migrated became skilled in manoeuvring inter-ethnic relations, which generated a social distinction from less mobile people, such as poor farmers living in rural areas of Tigray who had limited experience of encounters with ethnic diversity in urban settings. This illustrates a paradox of the relationship between ethnicity and class; there is a class dimension in the essentialist representations and perceptions of Tigrayan privilege, but through migration my informants encounter and gain experience of ethnic diversity and essentialist descriptions in ways that enable them to amalgamate the ideas of their ethnic privilege with their subjective ways of manoeuvring their identity as Tigrayans, which highlights their distinct possession and use of capital.

5.4 Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that higher education increased my informants' material and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984), and argued that these transformations shaped social distinctions. In this chapter, I have examined ethnicity as a lens to understand how urban migration produces a distinct group that can be described as being middle class. The Ethiopian discourse of ethnicity combined with the well-established representations and perceptions of Tigrayan dominance and privilege portrayed Tigrayans as a separate class. However, my Tigrayan informants saw their social position differently. The history of ethnic mobilisation during the civil war and the political system of ethnic federalism have contributed to the ways in which people from Tigray spoke about their ethnic belonging and individual identities as a distinct ethnic group, but, at the same time, they generally considered themselves equal to other ethnic groups and that there was not an ethnic-based system of inequality. They disputed the representations of Tigrayan privilege as an outcome of Tigrayan political dominance, and insisted that they had the same opportunities and limitations as people from other ethnic groups.

Urban migration and inter-ethnic encounters enabled my informants from Tigray to experience ethnic diversity, but also led to tension and violence. Their social relations in other parts of Ethiopia were influenced by the perceptions of Tigrayan privilege and influenced their perspectives on ethnicity, but the variety of responses my informants developed to the perceptions of Tigrayan privilege illustrates that being Tigrayan was a negotiation of various perspectives – not a fixed attribute. Individuals' constructions and understandings of their own ethnicity were influenced by their skills in using the

national language, Amharic, which also shaped ethnic relations and facilitated national cohesion across ethnic boundaries. Their experiences and capacities to interact with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and manoeuvre the claims of dominance and privilege became embodied knowledge, or, what Bourdieu (1984) referred to as social capital. At the same time, my informants' manoeuvring of conflicting perspectives on the relationship between ethnicity and inequality in inter-ethnic social interactions highlights another way in which urban-urban migration shaped distinct cultural practices. Their developing capacity to manage ethnic relations in inter-ethnic contexts transformed their identities as Tigrayans, which highlights another dimension of how the processes surrounding urban migration contributed to distinguish my informants into a group with shared characteristics in terms of possession and use of capital.

The above examination illustrates that Ortner's (1998) and the Comaroffs' (1992) emphasis on class 'defining' ethnicity does not apply to the Ethiopian context. In Ethiopia, the political system of ethnic federalism influences the discourse of ethnicity, and combined with the representations and perceptions of Tigrayan privilege it seems to be other way around; that ethnicity influences the cultural practices and social distinctions that construct class relations. However, the negation of ethnic-based privilege by my informants of Tigrayan origin and their understanding of themselves as equal to people of other backgrounds suggests that ethnicity did not determine class. Rather, social distinctions were shaped through individuals' capacity to manoeuvre inter-ethnic relations in ways that enabled them to avoid conflict and violence despite the ascribed ethnicity and essentialised ideas of Tigrayan privilege. In this context, then, class relations are not only shaped through ethnic privilege and inequality, but also by people honing the skills needed to handle inter-ethnic relations in different parts of the country.

My examination of the themes higher education and ethnicity has provided insight into the complex ways in which urban-urban migration generates cultural practices, networks and social distinctions, and I now turn to the final theme I identified in chapter one: the notion of progress. As shown in the framing chapters, this concept intersects with broader discourses of development and modernity in Ethiopia. Through an examination of how urban-urban migration reflected what progress meant to my informants, the next chapter explores yet another dimension of how migration shapes cultural practices and social distinctions that can explain what it means to be middle class.

6. Distinct notions of progress

6.1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that being middle class in Ethiopia is not a fixed condition, but rather a continuous negotiation and reproduction of meanings. In chapter four, I examined the ways in which migration for higher education led my informants to get jobs with higher salaries and how this pattern was entwined with their apparently shifting status. Through the ethnographic exploration of ethnicity and class in chapter five, I emphasised how contrasting perceptions of ethnicity and contestations over ethnic-based inequalities generated new social distinctions. In the discussions in chapter four and five, the theme of progress has been underlying informants' accounts of their lives. Although higher education, ethnicity and notions of progress are not obviously related, urban migration has emerged as a factor that shapes the characteristics of a group that is distinct in terms of its possession and use of capitals. To pursue this analysis of the impact of urban migration on class relations, this chapter explores how my informants' conceptualisation of progress became another factor in shaping what it means to be middle class.

The analytical relationship among the English terms progress, modernity and development is a complex one, but the way I will approach them here is through equivalent local vocabulary, which shows significant degrees of overlap among them. As shown in chapter two, Mains (2012b) used the term *lewt* (which he translates as progress) to refer to changes in individuals' lives in Ethiopia. My informants used this term to refer to individual progress, but at the same time, they used it to refer to development both on national and place-specific levels. For instance, Tekle illustrated the multiple uses of the word:

There has been a lot of development [*lewt*] in Addis Ababa over the years. Since I first came here in 2001, Addis Ababa has been made again. Lots of small houses have been demolished and new, big buildings have been built. Life is progressing [*lewt*] too because there is a lot of growth [*edget*], and our ways of living have become modern.

Although there is an Amharic word, *lemat*, that can be translated as development, this word was primarily used by the government and in official contexts and documents, as exemplified in chapter two through the term *lemat arbegna*, meaning 'development patriot' (Gebresenbet, 2014). In quotes throughout this chapter I translate *lewt* either as development or progress, depending on what my informants were referring to in each

situation.⁷ The word *edget*, which means growth, was used in similar ways as *lewt* to refer to both broader processes of development and individual progress. The ambiguity of what *lewt* means, in sum, calls for an examination of how perceptions of wider national development intersect with notions of individual progress as an emic construct.

To understand how meanings of progress are shaped in both a social and individual sense, we may first revisit some of the insights from chapter two regarding the role of modernity in people's conceptualisations of their own life trajectories, seen through the wider lens of postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa. In the continent, over the past decades there has been a predominant focus on how deteriorating economic conditions and especially young men's inability to fulfil expected social roles and obligations have been analysed as meaning limited individual progress. In the context of Zambia, Ferguson (1999) argued that people's 'expectations of modernity' emerged through their perceptions of national development, which gave rise to ideas of continuous improvement in terms of employment, urban livelihoods, economic security and social status. However, Ferguson (1999) also demonstrated that economic decline led to unemployment, deteriorating livelihoods, loss of status as well as migration from urban to 'backwards' rural areas, suggesting that individuals' progress did not live up to their expectations. Similar trends of decline have been observed across sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, with limited opportunities for obtaining economic security through public sector employment, more entrepreneurial strategies have been observed among young men in Niger and the Ivory Coast, showing that people adapt and create new meanings of progress when circumstances and opportunities are shifting (Masquelier, 2013; Newell, 2012). This chapter builds on these insights, and is underpinned by Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) work on social distinctions to analyse what progress means in the Ethiopian context – which enables a consideration of how my informants' engagement with urban-urban migration are influenced by their perceptions of modernity and how these distinct cultural practices relates to being middle class.

In Ethiopia, as was shown in chapter two, historical processes of state-led development have created context-specific meanings of modernity. Approaches to development have changed with the shift from a socialist regime in 1991 to a government that follows an ideology that is a bricolage of Leninism, Marxism, Maoism as well as liberalism (Bach, 2011). The current government frames development (*lemat*)

⁷ To translate quotes from Amharic to English it has been necessary to use the word '*lewt*' sometimes as a noun and in other cases as a verb.

as apolitical and to be of such importance that it dictates all other issues (Gebresenbet, 2014). The government's authoritarian approach to development has been analysed both as an attempt to 'forge' the nation and to legitimise its staying in power (Orlowska, 2013), and, at the same time, the 'developmental discourse' (Abbink, 2012) has also influenced Ethiopians' understandings of development and modernity. Mains (2012a) argues that urban dwellers considered Ethiopia to be developing because of the construction of high-rises and roads, but, simultaneously they experienced a reduction of their own quality of life in terms of struggling to eat three times a day and facing unstable supply of power and water. Acknowledging these ostensible contrasts between the promises of the developmental discourse and the difficulties many Ethiopians have to endure, this chapter analyses how such ideas intersect with class through an examination of how my informants perceived the relationship between development and their own opportunities for progress.

The following exploration of my informants' perceptions of development, progress and modernity complements the preceding empirical chapters by adding another dimension to the analysis of the role of migration in shaping distinct cultural practices. In chapter two, I highlighted that international migration in sub-Saharan Africa has been seen as a source of individual transformation (Andersson, 2014). Also in studies from other parts of the Global South, it has been argued that migration is a transformative process that constitutes individual progress (Yan, 2008; De Neve, 2003). Somewhat similarly, Mains argues that for poor, young men in the Ethiopian city of Jimma the paradoxical conditions of development have made international migration a 'possibility for sudden and complete transformation' (2012b, p.137).

Rather than following the trend of studying international migration, I here turn to internal migration and the less immediate, but nonetheless crucial, changes in individuals' lives and social relations such movements produced. The chapter consists of three more sections. The next examines perceptions of development as well as how my informants could become modern through migration. Second, I focus on the ways in which employment and wealth shaped individuals' status in relation to notions of progress. Third, I consider how competing meanings of progress made urban-urban migration the most suitable form of movement to my informants. Through the analysis of the relationship between internal migration and progress, this chapter adds another layer to the findings in chapters four and five on the contemporary cultural practices and social distinctions that indicate a particular formation of being middle class in Ethiopia.

6.2 Becoming modern through migration

In chapter two, I argued that rural-urban migration has in academic literature been seen as a pattern to enhance status, pursue different lifestyles and increase economic income (e.g. De Neve, 2003). While such transformations in individuals' lives are often analysed as progress, it was also demonstrated that meanings of modernity and other intersecting concepts are contextual. In Ethiopia, as discussed in chapter two, the government's authoritarian approach to development, combined with a range of socioeconomic transformations over the past two decades, has generated a discourse that shapes local meanings of modernity and progress. To consider how these ideas intersect with migration and class, here, I examine how my informants responded to social change and the broader discourse of development.

Progress (*lewt*) was a common topic of conversations. My informants generally considered there to have been significant development in Ethiopia over the past decades in terms of material and social changes. These processes had made the country more modern (*zemenawi*) than it had been in the past, which had enabled conditions more suitable for individual improvement. In addition to ideas of material improvement and social transformations being central for how my informants understood development, modernity was at the same time perceived to be tied up with particular spaces. For instance, Haftay, 25, who had grown up in the countryside outside Adigrat, explained the conditions city life offered:

If you stay for a long time in the city and then go to the countryside, it's difficult to get along with people from the countryside. It's easy to move from the countryside to the city, but almost impossible to move the other way. In the city, you can do business, dress up in nice clothes and wear good shoes. You also get to know many people from different places and share ideas with them. In the countryside, you will eat with your family and be alone. It's difficult to get to know new people and people's perspectives are all the same.

The countryside was generally perceived to be backward and to offer a poor quality of life. In bigger cities, however, my informants explained that there were superior material conditions, work opportunities as well as a wider diversity that would enable them to become more knowledgeable of the world. Haftay's account of these differences illustrates that to him meeting people from different places as well as broader variety of style of dress are aspects of the modernity (*zemenawinet*) of city life.

Many informants shared these perspectives, but they also spoke about variations between the modernity of Ethiopian cities. After completing higher education in the south of Ethiopia, Samuel, 28, moved to Mekelle to work as a lecturer at the university. He told me why the conditions for progress differed between Mekelle and Adigrat:

Samuel: In Mekelle, there are lots of opportunities for work. There are lots of educated people, there is access.

Markus: Access to what?

Samuel: Access to work, there are lots of people and when there are lots of people demand is created. For example, every day people use internet and if it is fast people will use it. They make internet faster because of competition. Here in Adigrat there is little competition and the internet is very slow.

Among the English words my informants used in conversations in Amharic, they referred to ‘access’ rather than any local term. This abstract concept had different meanings, but the variations of it were all associated with modernity. To Samuel, access meant that there were opportunities for living more fulfilling lives, which meant to him that Mekelle was more modern than Adigrat. Also Tesfay associated access primarily with big cities: ‘There is access to everything in Addis Ababa!’ Similarly to Samuel, the large size of the capital and the access meant to Tesfay that it was a modern place.

Modernity was often spoken about in terms of access and a common trend among my informants was that they perceived there to be less access in small places because of the comparatively lack of development, as Senait explained:

Adigrat is not a convenient place for progress [*lewt*]. Adigrat is small and there is limited access. Many people have work, but they will stay in one job their whole life because they can’t see any better alternatives. This makes them sleepy and they don’t progress [*lewt*].

Similarly to Samuel and Tesfay, Senait referred to access as a property that defined the modernity of locations and influenced individuals’ lifestyles and attitudes. Whereas the access in big cities gave them opportunities to shift their ways of living, the backwardness of a place like Adigrat was understood to limit people’s aspirations and opportunities to improve their lives and become modern.

Another aspect many of my informants spoke about in terms of modernity was the diversity of large cities. For instance, Tesfay said:

If I live in Addis Ababa I will meet people from Bahir Dar, from Jimma, from Harar, from USA, from Norway. I would like to live in such situation because I want to have contact with a lot of people from different backgrounds with different knowledge, different culture, different awareness and different languages. Such conditions give you a broader awareness. In Tigray, we are very similar and if I stay here I won’t learn anything new.

Tesfay's account of the opportunities to gain new insights from social interactions illustrates that diversity was an aspect of what modernity meant to him. Like Haftay, engagement with people from different backgrounds was an opportunity for Tesfay to learn and develop new perspectives on the world. Migration to bigger cities where there was more access and diversity enabled my informants to engage with modernity, which transformed them and their knowledge in distinct ways.

Those who had little experience of migration also observed the transformations of migrants. Apart from one trip to Mekelle, Lemlem, 22, had hardly been outside of Adigrat, whereas most of her peers were more mobile:

Only a few of my friends from school remain in Adigrat. Most of them have gone to Mekelle or Addis Ababa, but also many have gone to Arab countries. When people go to other places, their perspectives change and they become more knowledgeable. They develop their perspectives and become city people [*yeketema saw*].

Lemlem's account shows how pervasive talk about progress was and that it often intersected with migration. In addition, her observation of how people changed when they went elsewhere illustrates how she understood migrants' engagements with access and diversity in more modern places to widen their perspectives on the world in ways that transformed them from being backward into city people, whereas people with little or no migration experience, like herself, remained unchanged. These transformations not only contributed to making those who migrated and those who were more 'stationary' distinct from each other, but also indicates that becoming modern meant progress to my informants. To develop a more comprehensive analysis of what progress means and its role in shaping particular cultural practices and social distinctions, the next section examines my informants' strategies to increase what meant status to them.

6.3 Reconsidering status

Above, it was shown that access and diversity meant modernity (*zemenawinet*) in the Ethiopian context, and that migration to places that offered such conditions would increase people's status. Here, I examine the meanings of progress further by looking at the processes of social differentiation.

People who continued to live in poverty despite Ethiopia's development and supposedly widening opportunities for individual progress (*lewt*) were sometimes

referred to as '*hwalaqer*', which literally means 'remain behind'. For instance, Elias explained that:

Investors are building big buildings and the government focuses on infrastructure and making roads, but, at the same time, there are people who don't eat and don't drink. I thought that all people in Addis Ababa live a good life, but when I came here I saw all the problems and that there are many people who don't live well. There is a big gap between rich and poor, many people remain behind. It's necessary to make these people progress [*lewt*].

There was clearly a material aspect to remaining behind. However, there were also those remained backward in a social sense, which was another meaning of the term. Petros, 24, who had studied at Gonder University and had returned to live Adigrat, pointed out how migrants changed compared to non-migrants: 'When my friends who have gone to Addis Ababa come back for holidays, they joke and say that Adigrat is the land of mountains and country bumpkins [*yeteraraena yefara hager*].' For those who did not migrate, they remained behind both in a physical and in a social sense, which was in opposition to the symbolic capital of migration to more attractive urban centres and engagement with modernity that meant an increase in status to my informants.

The lack of opportunities to enhance symbolic capital in Adigrat was perceived to be a result of its limited development. These conditions were central in my informants' reflections about migration to Addis Ababa, as Petros said:

There is a lot of choice there, many new things to experience. It makes me happy to see new things. Here in Adigrat life is easy because it's cheap to live here, but it's boring. There won't be any new things, and I don't have any expectations for progress [*lewt*] here.

It was a common perception that living in a place with access and diversity would enable my informants to improve their lives in ways that were not possible in Adigrat. Medhane who explained how migration to Addis Ababa transformed him further exemplifies this: 'It's better here because you become strong. I've learned a lot in seven months. In Tigray, I lived a simple life, drinking beer and sitting around, but you don't learn anything in that way.' Progress meant to Medhane that he did not continue living in the same way as he did while in Tigray. By migrating to Addis Ababa and pursuing new forms of employment, as well as living in a place with access and diversity, Medhane considered himself to be in the process of becoming a different kind of person from those who did not migrate. His account captures central reasons given by my informants for migrating internally: the opportunities to learn new skills as well as to

become resilient and more knowledgeable of more modern ways of living. The logic underlying the value my informants attributed to these elements is the pursuit of status through increasing symbolic capital, which highlights the centrality of sociocultural values in shaping social distinctions.

This trend of preferring internal migration is in contrast to the findings of Mains' (2012b), who argued that the 'backwardness' of Ethiopia shaped young men's personal relationships to modernity and that international migration was central for them to overcome these conditions. Although there is no doubt that many Ethiopians go abroad, my informants' perspectives differed from the narratives of international migration as the most attractive migration option in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, several informants considered going abroad unattractive. Mehari explained:

Everybody wants to go abroad, but I don't want to go abroad. I haven't thought about doing it, I want freedom. It doesn't seem to me that I can be free like I can in my own country if I go abroad. For example, many people who go from here they don't find good work, they become taxi drivers and domestic workers. They only get bad work [*metfo sera*]. I don't want to live like that, it's better for me here.

Mehari accentuated this point by telling me that international migrants were sometimes referred to as 'ground technicians'. He said that 'many people lie about the jobs they do abroad. Everybody knows that they work on the ground, but as cleaners and in other bad jobs.' By referring to them with a clearly exaggerated title that simultaneously located them in low physical and social positions through bad work, the term ground technician sarcastically contested the status of international migrants who attempted to transform their increased material capital into symbolic capital. My informants' attitudes towards employment opportunities abroad and the people who undertook such international migration shows that there is no direct relationship between material capital and status. Rather, it is distinct cultural practices surrounding possession and use of wealth that can transform it into status.

For similar reasons to those Mehari gave, 24-year-old Elsa had chosen to stay in Ethiopia and was not attracted to international migration:

I have seen people who come back with mental health problems. Especially those who go to Saudi Arabia are affected, but also some who have been to Europe and the US have problems with the mind. Many Ethiopians end up doing lower work [*zeqetegna sera*] and only get to rest three or four hours a night, especially in Arab countries. This hurts them and those who end up in such hard conditions worry a lot. If you go without any family and have no support it is difficult and you can lose your sanity.

As demonstrated in chapter four, among my informants it was common to obtain relatively well-paid and permanent employment after completing higher education. To my informants, the idea of bad or lower work overshadowed the prospects for accumulating wealth abroad, mainly because it would reduce their status. Their perception of the jobs that were available to Ethiopians abroad, such as drivers and domestic workers, as bad or lower, shows that international migration did not necessarily constitute a trajectory to overcome the ‘backwardness’ of Ethiopia, as Mains (2012b) suggests, but rather reproduced international migrants’ social positions.

My informants’ perspectives on international migration illustrates another dimension of how social distinctions were shaped. Although the perils of irregular migration and the poor working conditions abroad were well-known to my informants, many Ethiopians continue to engage in international migration, as Haftay explained:

People go abroad because there is no work or because they don’t make enough money from the work they do. Or if their hope is cut. Some people see no solution and think they might as well die, saying; “either I die or I become rich”. The people who say this think it’s better to die than to live like this, and it’s true for those who have no work.

Haftay’s understandings of why some engaged in irregular international migration reveals that he associated this pattern with people who were not in positions to live worthwhile lives in Ethiopia. For them, going abroad was not a threat to their already low status, but offered an opportunity to enhance their material capital, which would potentially transform their lives in ways that meant progress to them. This illustrates the ubiquity of the idea of progress among Ethiopians, but also that its meanings varied depending on people’s social positions.

Even though the status of international migration was low, it was evident to my informants that people could become richer in other countries than what was possible for most people in Ethiopia. For instance, the urban environment was perceived to be transforming through remittances, as Senait explained: ‘Many people come back with money and some send money before they return. One can see how the houses of the families of those who have gone abroad have changed and improved.’ Most people were familiar with whose houses had been amended through remittances from abroad, both in Adigrat and in other places. Some migrants financed cafes and bars and named them after the European and American cities where they had lived, and Haftay explained that the ‘diaspora builds houses, give money to their families, to organisations and also give students scholarships.’ The trends of generosity and investment in Ethiopia generated

perceptions among my informants of great economic opportunities abroad, and it was well known that work abroad paid higher salaries than what was available to most people in Ethiopia. When I asked Haftay if he was jealous of the wealth people accumulated abroad, he responded: ‘Of course, everybody is jealous of the diaspora’. Obviously, most people wanted to become richer, but the social costs of increasing material capital through international migration were, as we have seen, too high for my informants. In addition to the issues of bad work, international migrants who became richer were not unequivocally respected, which Haftay made clear:

My uncle went to the United States 30 years ago during the Derg. He sometimes come to visit and like other people who live abroad he is a bit difficult. People’s behaviour change, they become arrogant [*kurategna*] because they have money. Everybody is poor here in comparison and they feel above us. Even those who’ve been to Saudi Arabia change and become arrogant.

My informants’ disapproval of international migrants’ claims of superiority over those who stayed in Ethiopia illustrates that increasing wealth did not equal status, and wealth obtained through low and bad work abroad did not mean progress to my informants. Rather, as we saw in chapter four, the kind of employment my informants obtained within Ethiopia after completing higher education contributed to increase their symbolic capital and altered their relationships to other people in ways that conferred status and meant progress to them. Still, material capital is an important factor in class relations, and I now turn to the relationship between wealth and status.

Transforming wealth into status

Although my informants would not go abroad for wealth, many of them aspired to become richer. Such aspirations, however, were primarily related to their relationships to others, as Haftay explained: ‘I’m planning to become rich to help my family. You’ll be happy if you’re rich.’ Here status is directly related to wealth, but also influenced by what people decide to do with their money. Being able to provide for family and friends rather than being reliant upon others’ generosity would ease my informants’ worries (*chinq*) and enable them to find happiness. In the following, I focus on the ways in which wealth was related to status, or as Bourdieu (1986) would have it, how material capital could be metamorphosed into symbolic capital.

All of my informants were familiar with the richest man in Ethiopia; Mohammed Hussein Al-Ahmoudi. Being ranked as number 138 of the richest people in

the world (Forbes, 2016), he was regularly mentioned in conversations. His extreme wealth was primarily recounted in terms of his ‘contributions to development’ of the country by establishing numerous factories and giving Ethiopians employment. Travelling on the *Selam Bus*, one of my fellow travellers told me as we passed through the town of Kombolcha: ‘All the factories here are set up by Al-Ahmoudi, he has turned Kombolcha into an industrial zone’. While my informants admired him for his wealth and what he had done for Ethiopia, my informants also highlighted his generosity and reputation for social engagement and helping the poor. A case in point is when doctors in Addis Ababa informed Tesfay that his heart condition was too serious for them to operate and that his best option was to go to Thailand for heart surgery. The price for such an operation would come to about £12,700, a very large sum by my informants’ standards, but Mehari set out to collect money in Adigrat and other friends of Tesfay did the same in other cities. After a few days, however, Mehari was becoming frustrated by the small amounts people were donating, which he exemplified by referring to a person who gave 10 Birr [£0.36]. It was becoming increasingly clear to him that it was only possible to reach the money needed through the support of someone very wealthy:

Mehari: The problem would be solved if I could get hold of Al-Ahmoudi.

Markus: How come?

Mehari: He always helps people who are too ill to be treated in Ethiopia. For example, some years back there was a case where a woman was attacked by her partner with acid [which is not common in Ethiopia], and Al-Ahmoudi covered the woman’s face-restoring operations in Europe. He would definitively donate money to help Tesfay out. The problem is to reach him.

It was primarily through generosity that wealth became valuable in social relations and entangled in individuals’ status.

My informants were clearly in very different economic situations from Al-Ahmoudi, but they also shaped their social relations through generosity and sharing their wealth. Kidisti, Mehari’s youngest sister, was studying at Gonder University and regularly phoned him for financial support, either for daily expenses or when she needed money for medical treatment and travel. One morning when she called, I asked Mehari why she kept calling him, and not someone else, for money, to which he responded: ‘People always ask me because I’m easy-going compared to my brother and father. They will ask what they will do with the money and question if they really need it. If I have money, I will give it.’ A few hours later, we walked to the bank to wire 500 Birr [£18] to her. There were lots of people and while we were waiting for Mehari’s

turn, a young man came walking in between two policemen. Mehari pulled some money out of his pocket and went over to him to give him 50 Birr [£1,80], which the man gratefully accepted. After Mehari had sent the money to Kidisti and we were out on the street again, I asked Mehari who the man was:

Mehari: I have seen him around before, but I don't know him. I know he's got a long sentence and has already been in prison for several years.

Markus: So why did you give him money?

Mehari: It's normal to support and give money to people who have problems. It's like insurance. If I give to those who are struggling now, people will help me when I need it. It's the same for visiting sick people and going to weddings and funerals. I have to go so that people will come for me later.

While there was a degree of self-interest in being generous, my informants' sharing of wealth transformed material capital into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Mehari's emphasis on social support both for people in need and for events such as weddings and funerals illustrates that generosity also had a non-material side to it. People from all backgrounds could fulfil social expectations of non-material generosity, but it was Mehari's combination of material and non-material generosity with people whom he had different relations that shaped how he perceived his own status and how others related to him. My informants' ways of negotiating social relations show that the status they achieved through sharing was a specific cultural practice that reflected their distinct possession and use of various forms of capital.

My informants' strong senses of obligation to support their families and to share more widely gave impetus to their aspirations to become richer. For example, Gidey, a man in his early 30s who had grown up in poverty, had together with some of his siblings set up a hotel, a bar, a pharmacy and a restaurant, and still had plans for further expansion:

Gidey: I'm considering other options now, maybe buying a truck to empty septic tanks.

Markus: You have so many businesses already, are you trying to become rich like Al-Ahmoudi?

Gidey: Yes, I've got 15 siblings, I need a lot of money to support all of them.

Becoming rich was often referred to as a means to fulfil strongly felt social obligations to kin. Sharing wealth was common among my male informants, and these practices resonated with their ideas of being men who could provide for their families. Sharing with non-kin was not obligatory in the same sense, but such relationships also had a material dimension. Mains (2013, p.344) argues that friendships in urban Ethiopia depend on balancing affection and reciprocity, and that rather than being a means to an

end, the ‘relationship between material wealth and affection is mutually constitutive.’ My informants’ tendency to seek wealth and the practices of sharing indicates how, in this context, material capital is made socially meaningful through these practices. The transformation of material capital into symbolic capital enabled my informants to increase their status through fulfilling social expectations of sharing both with kin and non-kin, which indicates that wealth influences individuals’ social position, though without determining it.

Both Mehari and Gidey made enough money in Adigrat to be able to share material wealth, but for many other informants, migration was perceived to be central for finding the kinds of jobs that could make them richer. Paradoxically, in such locations people were considered to transform from being generous towards becoming more self-centred. In smaller towns and rural areas, relations to family and people were said to take priority over individuals’ needs and desires. Such behaviours were often referred to as ‘traditional’ (*bahelawi*), and as Mehari said: ‘In the countryside, people respect other people and guests. They are very kind.’ In bigger, more modern, places, however, Senait explained that people’s priorities were very different:

It is said that people from Addis Ababa don’t like their relatives. I have heard that they are becoming like Europeans. For example, in Adigrat you don’t have to ask to visit your family, you can just go there and stay there for a week or two. In Addis Ababa, you have to ask them in advance if you want to stay for two or three days.

Also Mehari made the point that social relations were different in Addis Ababa: ‘If guests are coming in Addis Ababa, people switch off their phones so they don’t have to provide for them. They think only about getting more for themselves, not about other people.’ In the capital, social interaction and strong social relations were thought to have been replaced with more modern (*zemenawi*) attitudes that placed the individual above social responsibilities. Through migration to Addis Ababa, my informants could become modern, but it could also make them more individualistic and less inclined to care for others, which was in contrast to the values of their highly valued traditions (*bahel*). Consequently, migration did not unequivocally increase symbolic capital and generate improvement in people’s lives, but the potential for metamorphosing wealth into status depended upon how people manoeuvred social relations and attempted to fulfil social expectations and moral obligations.

Increasing status has emerged as a central meaning of progress to my informants, and the ways in which they attempted to increase their status gives us

another indication of how the values of different capitals were shaped in the Ethiopian context, but also that their pursuit of material capital was related to their interest in increasing status - or in Bourdieu's (1984) terms, symbolic capital. For them, such increments could be achieved through internal migration rather than international migration; through urban migration, they could become modern and overcome the backwardness of Adigrat. Urban migration was a trend among my informants despite the challenges of maintaining traditional (*bahelawi*) forms of social relations, which highlights that transformations in individuals' possession and use of capital through migration produced a tension between increased status and social obligations. Migration and subsequent enhancement of status contributed to shift people's relations to kin as well as their responses to family obligations. While obligations towards extended family were felt less intensively over physical distance, their kin's expectations of their capacity to share simultaneously increased with migrants becoming more modern. These expectations led some of my informants to avoid returning to their place of origin for extended period. However, their shifting attitudes to what was considered to be traditional family relations and obligations does not necessarily imply the formation of greater individualism, but rather that reciprocal relations to friends and non-kin became increasingly important through urban-urban migration and in middle class formation.

6.4 Manoeuvring competing meanings of progress

We have seen that urban migration to places with access and diversity could enable my informants to increase their status. These transformations meant progress to them, but to analyse how ideas of progress shaped cultural practices and social distinctions that are entwined with what it means to be middle class in Ethiopia, I here examine how my informants manoeuvred the tensions between the competing meanings of progress discussed above: becoming modern and increasing status.

It was a common aspiration among my informants to go to Addis Ababa, which was often spoken about as the most attractive city in Ethiopia. However, the cost of living in capital cities is often higher than elsewhere, and Addis Ababa is no exception. The economic realities in Addis Ababa reduced my informants' standard of living, as Tesfay explained: 'If I get a job with the same salary as I'm getting now I'll be very poor in Addis Ababa. The cost of living is very high. If I had enough money I would have been in Addis Ababa already.' Those who had already migrated there and worked

in the public sector did face the challenges Tesfay outlined, as Senait said to me during a visit to the capital:

Life is difficult for people in Addis Ababa. For example, I have seen my sister's life. She's a public prosecutor and her salary, 2,500 Birr [£92] a month, is not different from what people in the same position get in other regions. Because of the expensive housing she lives far away from where she works and she has to get up at 5am to get ready to leave. She can't take lunch for her son at the day-care and she gets home late at night. To me this seems like a difficult life.

The high costs of living, long commutes and large distances made it unlikely for people to share wealth and to maintain strong social relations in the same way as they could in Adigrat. Despite their awareness of the conditions in the capital, many had migrated or aspired to do so, which raises a question about why my informants wanted to live in a place where they would have to reduce their quality of life?

Access and diversity constituted modernity to my informants' and were the key factors in shaping their intentions to migrate to Addis Ababa. In order to migrate and overcome the economic challenges in the capital, some of them attempted to become wealthier prior to migration. For example, Samuel, 28, had BA and MA degrees in mathematics and was working as a lecturer at Mekelle University, earning a monthly salary of 3,300 Birr [£114]. In the evenings, he was studying for a BA degree in economics and he explained to me why he had chosen to pursue yet another degree: 'I would be happy to live in Addis Ababa, but you have to have money to survive there. A normal income is not enough and the only way I can live there is if I get a job with an international NGO. That's why I'm studying economics.' It was primarily through private sector employment or by having their own businesses that my informants considered it possible to immerse themselves fully into the modernity of Addis Ababa. Several of my informants pursued second or third degrees to widen their opportunities for the kinds of highly paid jobs that would enable them to live in the capital, which illustrates that it was the opportunities for other lifestyles and increased symbolic capital that meant progress to Samuel and other informants, rather than increasing wealth in itself. The analysis of the local, culturally constructed values of various forms of capitals demonstrates why urban migration became a preferred choice among my informants, but also how the relationship between ideas of progress and distinct cultural practices contribute to the creation of a distinct group that can be described as being middle class in Ethiopia.

In addition to facilitating engagement with modernity, urban migration was also a common strategy among my informants for making the transition from public to private sector work and establishing businesses. For instance, Medhane relocated to the capital to find employment in the private sector, and he explained:

There is a lot of hope for me in Addis Ababa now and I have two opportunities to progress [*lewt*] here. I can develop my career at the construction site by doing building plans, and the other option is to get another job as an engineer after I finish my degree. [...] In Adigrat, you don't progress [*lewt*] because you don't have to think and you only guess your expenses. You can live for 1,000 Birr [£37] a month, and it will cover house rent, food and everything, but you will live like that for 30-40 years. If you like, you drink juice. Here it's not like that, you have to work all the time and think a lot. You have to budget all the expenses to survive, plan how much you have to use for transport, food and so on. Everything is expensive here. Even a 1x1 metre room where you have to leave the door open to lie down is expensive. In Addis Ababa, you will go through hardship for some time, that's mandatory, but then you will leave the problems.

My informants' interest in shifting from the public to the private sector was primarily related to the economic prospects. While public sector employment in a place like Adigrat offered them a relatively comfortable life, this convenience was spoken about as a condition that contributed to people's backwardness (*hwalaqernet*). Public sector work (*yemengist sera*) was not associated with similar prospects for prosperity as private sector employment, and the lack of opportunities for enhancing material wellbeing in Adigrat would lead people who chose to stay there to settle for an easy life with little improvement of their lives. Through migration to Addis Ababa, however, my informants anticipated progress in terms of becoming modern and more knowledgeable of the world, as well as finding private sector employment that would enable them to increase their material capital over time and transform it into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Such changes not only distinguished my informants from those who remained behind in Adigrat, but also enabled them to increase their status in ways that were not possible for international migrants. The social distinctions and hierarchical relations that emerged through urban migration illustrates that this particular pattern of migration appealed to people who shared particular characteristics as well as possession and use of different forms of capital.

The shift from public sector to other forms of employment was a common trajectory among my informants. Out of the 36 people I interviewed, 13 worked in the private sector and eight had their own businesses. The remaining 15 were either students, looking for employment, or working in the public sector, but had in common with the other 21 interviewees that they considered work in the private sector or having

their own businesses to be the most attractive option. For instance, when I asked Lemlem, 22, who had been at home looking after her sick mother for more than a year what kind of work she aspired for in the future, she said: ‘I want to have my own business, not to work for the government (*mengist*)’. Such aspirations were often framed in relation to economic opportunities, though becoming richer was, as shown above, primarily a means to enhance symbolic capital. An example of this wider trend is Nebay’s work history. Upon obtaining a degree in accounting from Mekelle University, Nebay returned to Adigrat to work in the local government’s finance office. After seven years, he quit this job and moved to Mekelle to work as a manager of a nail factory, and two years later Nebay started his own company in Adigrat offering accounting and financial services. He had clients in several towns and cities in Tigray and was also investing some of his surplus in setting up other businesses, such as a company he established for crushing stones in the desolate landscape outside of Humera (which he showed me a video of on his smartphone). He explained the logics behind shifting his employment: ‘The salary was enough to get by on when I did government work and it was secure because the job was permanent, but I make more money now. If one does private work (*yegil sera*) one can build a house and buy other things’. Nebay’s trajectory from a secure job with a fixed salary to private sector employment and subsequently to establishing his own businesses illustrates that he was seeking to become richer. In addition to sharing, increasing wealth would enable him to build a house and other material objects that would contribute to increase his symbolic capital, however, without involving himself in the bad or lower work that international migrants pursued to obtain wealth. By enhancing material capital within Ethiopia, my informants maintained more unambiguous social positions, which meant that their increasing wealth could be transformed into status.

The majority of my informants considered the opportunities for private sector employment and setting up businesses most feasible in places with access and diversity, such as Addis Ababa. Several people I spoke to in the capital had already turned away from the public sector. For instance, when Tesfay and I were having dinner in the Hayahulett neighbourhood in Addis Ababa in 2015, two friends of his entered the restaurant and joined us at our table. Tesfay introduced me to Fitsum and Adhane, both in their 40s, and as we chatted, Tesfay told me more about them:

Tesfay: They are both from Tigray, but have lived in Addis Ababa for many years. I used to work with this fellow [grabbing Adhane's shoulder]. He was a judge, but now he has started his own company.

Markus: Really? Why did you quit?

Adhane: The salary was too low and there is no growth [*edget*] if you do government work.

Tesfay: Like everyone else he wants to become rich!

Despite the security and stable salary of his job, Adhane had opted to start his own advertising business instead. It was also a common aspiration among informants who still worked in the public sector to make this shift in the future. Hewan, for example, had moved to Addis Ababa to study for a BA degree in electrical and computer engineering and had subsequently found employment for the Ethiopian Electrical Cooperation. She explained to me that she intended to take the step into the private sector after completing the MA degree she was studying for part-time: 'I'm planning to start my own work. Maybe after five years when I have more experience I can set up my own company. I can hire people and make good progress [*lewt*] for myself.' Shifting from public sector employment to the private sector or to establishing one's own business was often explicitly referred to as progress. Although a central meaning of such progress was related to the opportunities it generated for increased material capital, the value of material capital was, as discussed above, that it could be transformed into symbolic capital and increase their status. These cultural practices give us yet another indication of how urban migration generated new social distinctions.

While their justifications for choices of employment were often centred on economic factors, it was also a trend to seek work that was considered to be for the benefit of society. For example, Senait who had worked in an NGO in Adigrat after completing her BA degree and quit her job to pursue an MA degree in Development Studies in Mekelle, was eager to use her skills to help others: 'There are many challenges for women in Ethiopia. I want to work on gender issues to improve the conditions for women in my country, for example for an NGO or some other job.' Such aspirations were not explicitly related to increasing their own material capital, but rather of employing their skills to care for others. Also Tekle told me: 'I'm a member of the EPRDF, but I want to improve and become a politician. For money it's better to be a businessman, but I want to serve the country and the people.' The diversity among my informants' aspirations for employment and their work trajectories support the point made above that improvement in informants' lives through employment was not only related to increasing salaries, but also embedded in their broader concerns over social

relations. Both Senait and Tekle aspired for employment that did not necessarily give them much material capital, but their social engagement would contribute to increase their symbolic capital.

My informants' meanings of progress were instrumental in their choices to engage in urban migration. This pattern of migration appealed to them because it offered them both modernity and prospects for increasing symbolic capital, or status. Whereas becoming richer through international migration meant progress to people who struggled to get by in Ethiopia, to my informants, progress depended upon pursuing particular forms of employment that would enable them to enhance also symbolic capital. The conditions for increasing such capital in Addis Ababa were, however, conflicting. There was access and diversity, but, at the same time, my informants faced, or would face, economic hardship and a decrease in quality of life. The high costs of living would reduce their capacity to share, which was clearly in contrast to a central meaning of progress to them. However, the poor conditions in the capital were perceived as temporary because of the wider opportunities for private sector employment and establishing businesses, which would enable my informants' to improve their lives over time. These findings illustrate that urban-urban migration was a pattern of movement that enabled my informants to become modern and increase status in ways that meant progress to them, but that these processes also shaped social distinctions.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the theme of progress as used by my informants, and thereby added another dimension to the analysis of the themes of higher education and ethnicity examined in the preceding chapters. The discussion above showed that the contemporary developmental discourse in Ethiopia has shaped my informants' understandings of modernity and made progress a pervasive idea in this context. In addition, the social, economic and material changes that have taken place in Ethiopia over the past two decades have influenced people's ways of thinking about progress and what they consider to be worthwhile lives. Although international migration could make my informants richer, the bad work and poor quality of life abroad would reduce their status. To them, progress did not equal increasing wealth, but meant becoming modern and increasing status, which could best be achieved through internal migration to other urban centres. The research trend of focusing on international migration reflects a

broader tendency of focusing on poor people in the continent and Ethiopia (e.g. de Regt, 2010; Fernandez, 2010), but my informants' preference for urban migration highlights that focus on other migration patterns can enable analyses of other sociocultural processes in contemporary Ethiopia.

The findings in this chapter are in contrast to recent anthropological research in sub-Saharan African contexts arguing that the widespread economic decline and privatisation of the public sector have challenged people's opportunities to fulfil their 'expectations of modernity' (e.g. Masquelier, 2013; Hansen, 2005; Ferguson, 1999). To my informants, internal migration and being in places associated with access and diversity gave them new experiences and widened their knowledge, which enabled them to turn their increased wealth into status. Consequently, progress emerges as a cultural construct where the contextual values of material and symbolic capital shape its meanings, which is simultaneously a process of social differentiation. I have demonstrated that becoming modern and increasing status reflected competing meanings of progress, and that my informants attempted to manoeuvre these sometimes incompatible meanings through urban migration. These processes made urban migration a form of movement that was closely associated with cultural practices and social distinctions that formed a group that is distinct in its possession and use of various forms of capital, and can be described being middle class.

7. Conclusion: Producing unity through social distinctions

7.1 Defining and contextualising migration and being middle class as a focus of study

This thesis began on the *Selam Bus*. It has aimed to shed light on the role of migration in order to understand what it means to be middle class in Ethiopia. By seeking to reveal the interplay of the national context and local cultural practices in shaping social distinctions, the thesis has, in particular, sought to demonstrate how motivations for urban-urban migration are not only related to economics, but to a broader range of sociocultural characteristics. To do so, it has examined the processes surrounding urban-urban migration in Adigrat and Addis Ababa, and at the same time, it has analysed the role of this pattern of migration in producing cultural practices, networks and social distinctions that reflect what can be described as being middle class.

To briefly recap, in chapter one, I began by developing an approach to analyse hierarchical relations in the context of Ethiopia by drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of class. His elaboration of Marx's and Weber's approaches highlights how class is reproduced through inequalities in access to resources as well as through sociocultural meanings of status. For Bourdieu (1984), cultural capital is learned early in people's lives and their social origin is internalised in ways that form barriers to class mobility. On the other hand, material and symbolic capital can be accumulated through processes that include education, but they have limited impact on the social mobility of individuals. In Bourdieu's (1986) subsequent refinement of his ideas of capital, he brought in the possibility of converting capitals, which enables a consideration of how, for instance, material wealth can be transformed into status. With his emphasis on social reproduction, he argued that it was easier for the elites to convert capitals. For instance, their networks (social capital) placed them in favourable situations for transforming the symbolic capital of education into material capital through employment. These insights into social reproduction have underlaid the theoretical approach of this thesis and are particularly suited for examining the ways in which sociocultural processes shape social distinctions and class relations.

While being middle class in Ethiopia has primarily been analysed in material terms by, for instance, Mains (2012b), I identified a range of transformations that shed light on the sociocultural processes of social differentiation. Since 1991, improvements of infrastructure and shifts in the legal framework of Constitutional rights have enabled

an increase in internal migration. Due to the large numbers of urban dwellers whose former place of residence was another urban centre, contemporary urban-urban migration is recognised by public authorities (CSA, 2007a; b). However, this pattern of migration has largely been overlooked in studies of Ethiopia. To develop an understanding of the social significance of urban-urban migration, I explored broader political, economic and social structures that have significantly shaped social hierarchies in this particular context. Through my focus on the expansion of higher education and discussing how it has impacted the processes of social reproduction and mobility; how the shifting ethnic power relations have transformed social relations throughout the country; and how the government's authoritarian approach to development has influenced how people perceive their opportunities to improve their lives, I examined ethnographically how urban migration shapes distinct cultural practices, networks and social distinctions in Ethiopia.

7.2 Towards understanding the unconscious unity of being middle class

Having established how my introductory chapters emphasise the importance of the need to examine the sociocultural dimensions of urban-urban migration Ethiopia, I will now outline the key findings of my methodological and empirical chapters.

Even in cases of the absence of local class vocabularies, the strength of anthropology and ethnographic methods is to be attentive to people's lived experience of social processes that are neither tangible nor visible, but still fundamental in shaping social hierarchies and differentiation. Chapter three focused on how participant observation in two urban centres, Adigrat and Addis Ababa, enabled me to research the ways in which social distinctions were shaped in everyday life and how economic expressions of inequality reflected deeper social differences in both contexts. Additionally, I conducted semi-structured interviews to deepen my understanding of my informants' perspectives on the role of migration in transforming their lives. The details of the field sites and the overview of my key informants highlighted their distinct characteristics, which enabled me to bring out the particularities of the research and to pursue the empirical examination of the sociocultural aspects of the role of urban-urban migration in producing the practices, knowledge and values of being middle class in Ethiopia.

In chapter four, I argued that migration for higher education served as a means for various transformations within my informants' lives. I showed how higher education

enabled them to shift from poverty to obtaining employment in the private sector or in establishing their own businesses. Urban-urban migration was central to the processes of higher education and subsequent career development as it brought my informants into new geographic and social spaces to obtain employment, increase their income and live more comfortable lives. While my informants valued higher education for providing opportunities to enhance human capital and develop capacities to improve their lives, their increasing material wealth was primarily celebrated for enabling sharing that shifted their positions within reciprocal relations. Obtaining higher education conferred the particular status of being educated, yet it was through the processes of transforming material wealth into status, as well as through creating particular behaviours, tastes and consumption patterns, that my informants became considered as *yetemare saw* (educated person). This highlights Bourdieu's (1984) point that being seen to be educated requires more than a demonstration of pre-defined knowledge, and the chapter demonstrated that urban-urban migrants' social origins limited their social mobility even if they experienced incremental change of capital. There were clear limits to these transformations circumscribed by existing social hierarchies, but my informants' access to higher education, employment and material capital allowed them to engage in new forms of cultural production and generate social distinctions, which contributed to the creation of what I have described as being middle class.

I moved on in chapter five to argue that migration to other regions served to challenge my informants' ethnic identities as Tigrayans in ways that shaped social distinctions. The tensions underlying ethnicity in Ethiopia further complicated the relationship between migration and class, as the official discourse on ethnicity establishes it as a fixed, ascribed and apparently permanent aspect of individual identity and group belonging. However, my ethnography showed that ethnicity for my informants was not as simplistically constructed as the state discourse implies. There were clearly conflicting perspectives on the relationship between ethnicity and privilege depending on the ethnicity of the person stating their opinion. Among my non-Tigrayan informants, as well as in internet media, Tigrayans were perceived and represented as dominant and privileged over the rest of the Ethiopian population. My informants from Tigray, however, consistently asserted that all ethnic groups were equal and that Tigrayans had never been favoured in any way. However, through migration to other regions, they found themselves in more diverse ethnic settings and became acquainted

with people from other ethnic groups, but they also became more familiar with the widespread representations of their privilege and experienced occasional ethnic tensions because of these. Such inter-ethnic encounters entangled my informants in contestations over Tigrayan dominance, distribution of resources and power, which in turn gave them little choice but to modify their identities as Tigrayans to avoid conflict and violence. In addition to demonstrating that ethnic identities are more fluid in everyday life than the state discourse implies, this chapter argued that by increasing their skills in manoeuvring inter-ethnic relations as well as in expanding their networks - what Bourdieu (1984) referred to as social capital - yet another form of social distinction was produced. Combined with the individual transformations through higher education, these processes added to the formation of distinct characteristics, practices and knowledge that I have analysed as being middle class in Ethiopia.

In chapter six, I argued that ideas of progress were underlying my informants' choices for engaging in urban-urban migration and shaped another dimension of being middle class. The social, economic and material changes that have taken place in Ethiopia over the past two decades influenced how my informants negotiated status in relation to their perceptions of development, modernity and progress. Development was seen as a process of national improvement that had direct implications for their opportunities to improve their lives, and was primarily perceived to take place in big cities. 'Access' emerged as an important concept to my informants, and meant conditions where they would be able to live more fulfilling lives and pursue other lifestyles. Similarly, the more diverse composition of the population in bigger cities, such as Addis Ababa, created conditions within which they could expand their networks, as well as their knowledge of the world. These were understood as modern conditions and by migrating to such places, my informants could themselves become more modern. This form of status can be analysed as a manifestation of what Bourdieu (1984) meant by symbolic capital as the knowledge to use and engage with objects and relations with a system of value and meaning; and illustrates that migration contributed to my informants' distinct characteristics.

When my informants spoke of their decisions to remain in Ethiopia, they emphasised urban-urban migration as a form of movement that enabled them to improve their lives and live relatively comfortably. My informants often highlighted that the prospects for increased wealth abroad did not weigh up against the poor working conditions that international migrants confronted. Moreover, returning

international migrants were considered arrogant because of their wealth. Those who did not migrate at all were seen to remain behind both in a physical and social sense. In contrast, my informants' experiences of new circumstances in other Ethiopian urban centres, as well as of shifts in lifestyles, knowledge and patterns of consumption, were transforming their lives in ways that meant progress to them. Urban-urban migration both reflected and generated social distinctions.

Migration to the centre of Ethiopian modernity, Addis Ababa, did however, create tension between what they considered to be modern and traditional lifestyles. For example, because of the high costs of living and difficulties of transport in the capital, many struggled to share material wealth and could not live up to the supposedly traditional notions of strong social relations and providing support for family, relatives and friends. With long working hours and long distances in a big city with heavy traffic, both economic and time constraints led them to live very different social lives from in Adigrat. As such, even with an increase in symbolic capital in terms of becoming modern, their individualistic lifestyles in bigger cities were questioned when they were unable to share material capital and fulfil social and familial expectations, which in turn constrained their sense of fulfilment and class mobility.

In many cases, urban-urban migration enabled my informants to find employment and to become richer and modern. Their experiences of such transformations and their other characteristics of higher education and employment, as well as their strategies and practices surrounding this migration, reflect how their shared social competencies, knowledge and cultural production generated the 'unconscious unity of class' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.77), and in this case, of being middle class.

7.3 Conclusion: An emerging middle class rooted in urban-urban migration

On the face of it, migration is a physical movement from one location to another. However, upon closer analysis, my informants undertook urban-urban migration with the specific intention to transform their lives. Their migration histories and the continued engagement with this pattern reflect a social history of internal migration that is permeated by power dynamics in urban centres and the wider inequalities that characterise contemporary Ethiopia. Patterns of migration in Ethiopia are framed both by structures of political and economic inequalities as well as by powerful ideologies and discourses of development and modernity. Among my informants, their urban-urban migration was a response to the contemporary circumstances of increasing

opportunities for internal migration, as well as to the existing legal and social constraints against migration to other countries. My informants engaged with urban migration in a range of ways, to different places and for different lengths of time, but their choices, experiences and outcomes reflected their shared characteristics and social positions. Their individual strategies surrounding urban-urban migration illustrate their determination to transform their lives in ways that were meaningful to them, which in turn highlights that they were actors in cultural production and reshaping social hierarchies, rather than merely responding to structures or processes beyond their control.

Their choices for this form of migration were not purely shaped by economic concerns, but they were rooted in their perceptions of social change and the ways in which they understood development and modernity to influence their lives. Continued movements between urban centres or settling down in a specific location reflected their senses of fulfilment as well as their prospects and aspirations for further improvement in their lives. Even if migration only became important at certain times and within some social interactions, it was a process that informed and transformed most aspects of individuals' social relations and everyday lives. Through my exploration of the three lenses of higher education, ethnicity and progress, I have shown that migrants' capacities to obtain well-paid employment, develop skills in manoeuvring inter-ethnic relations, and gain the experiences of access to new lifestyles and diversity. I have argued that such transformations were central among the social distinctions that urban-urban migration produced.

While there was no 'class consciousness' of belonging to a distinct middle class, I have analysed the processes of social differentiation related to urban-urban migration in terms of class. I analysed the transformation in my informants' lives through a focus on notions of social, material, cultural and symbolic capitals as developed by Bourdieu (1984, 1986). These notions enabled my recognition of the processes through which social distinctions shape and are shaped through social practices that constitute urban-urban migration. My informants' urban-urban migration became a site that brought together a distinctive set of: practices involving higher education, consumption, private sector employment; knowledge of life in other urban centres, ethnic tensions and modernity; and values of sharing and in terms of what meant progress to them. This combination formed a process of cultural construction that shaped an unconscious unity of a middle class.

Within this analysis, Bourdieu's (1984) theory of class is fundamental. Bourdieu proposes that class formation is shaped by broader social stratification rather than emerging from individuals' increasing material and symbolic capitals, and my findings have reinforced such perspectives. For instance, my informants' experiences of higher education and obtaining employment transformed their social relations and status, but because of their poor social origin and relative lack of cultural capital, their experiences cannot be interpreted as a clear-cut form of social mobility. This thesis illustrates that my informants' urban-urban migration reproduced some aspects of class and certain social distinctions, but at the same time, their migration contested social hierarchies through emergent changes in individuals' practices and cultural production.

This brings me to Bourdieu's (1984) emphasis on the role of difference, or distinctions, as a key aspect of hierarchical relations - a line of thinking that my empirical examination has drawn upon to highlight the relational aspects through which being middle class was shaped. I have shown that my informants' choices and practices were shared by many of those who engaged in urban-urban migration, but at the same time, they were distinct from those of international migrants and those who did not migrate. Whereas work in the public sector has been emphasised as an attractive form of employment in Ethiopia (Mains, 2012b), my informants sought private sector employment or to establish their own businesses. In addition, their experiences of inter-ethnic encounters distinguished them from people who lived in ethnically more homogenous areas, which also their choices to engage in urban-urban migration over other patterns contributed to.

As such, this thesis demonstrates that practices, strategies and choices are central in shaping the commonalities that unite people by distinguishing themselves from others. My informants' particular educational credentials, increasing wealth, production of new identities, and status of becoming modern through migration within Ethiopia distinguished them from people who did not pursue this form of migration. Through these processes, my informants adapted to and renegotiated their position within broader social hierarchies, and produced the distinctions that have enabled me to describe them as being middle class.

By bringing attention to the social processes that underlie economic expressions of inequalities and distinctions, this thesis enables an understanding of contemporary class formations and relations in Ethiopia. As discussed in chapter one, Nallet (2015) argues that middle class is not a suitable concept for the Ethiopian context: because

there is no local equivalent term, and because the concept does not sufficiently reflect the more complex social realities she observed. In contrast, this thesis asserts that a study of being middle class can neither be based on predetermined economic boundaries, nor can it reflect exact local terminology. It builds the case that by employing class as an analytical tool, the complexity of the social processes through which social hierarchies are reproduced and contested can be identified. My journey on the *Selam Bus* led me to problematize the tendency to lump people into categories based on their income. Moreover, my ethnographic engagements in everyday life in Adigrat and Addis Ababa, has enabled me to demonstrate throughout the thesis that being middle class cannot be reduced to people's possession of wealth purely because economic categorisations are unhelpful in enabling understanding of the processes through which distinctions are produced in each context. Even if they emerge partly in relation to broader global patterns and structures, the practices, knowledge and values that shape class relations are deeply rooted in local social relations.

Although internal migration has to some extent been out of the academic limelight in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa, it continues to take new forms and meanings across the continent, and as I have demonstrated, is important to academic understandings of being middle class. Urban to urban migration remains a very common pattern of migration in different parts of sub-Saharan Africa (see e.g. Adepoju, 1995; Brockerhoff and Biddlecom, 1998). By shifting the gaze back to the more 'traditional' anthropological focus of urban migration in terms of its implications for social relations in sending and receiving communities within countries, I suggest that anthropological research on urban migration within sub-Saharan African countries can be brought out of its 'hibernation' to in turn generate insights into the role of migration in contemporary constructions of class. This has highlighted the value of recognising the significance urban-urban migration may have in many people's lives across Ethiopia, as well as in the continent more broadly. More specifically, my emphasis on this partly disregarded pattern of migration through the three lenses of higher education, ethnicity and progress, as well as my engagement with Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) class theory in the context of Ethiopia, has generated an understanding of how the processes surrounding individuals' pursuit of progress transform and produce new social distinctions, and thereby also demonstrated the social, cultural and relational dimensions of being middle class.

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