

Workshop: Transformation of an African town
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Gunilla Bjerén, Atakilte Beyene

In this workshop we want to brain storm around the analysis of data from Shashemene, collected in 2008.

The project is a re-study with the explicit aim of tracing and explaining change it makes sense to start out by going back to where I stopped thinking about Shashemene those twenty years ago. Two documents mark the end then: the dissertation *Migration to Shashemene* (1985) and the chapter “Migration and reproduction” (in Hammar et al, 1997).

One major question is: Should we retain the emphasis on migration from the earlier work? During the last decades, the major focus of migration research has settled on international migration, foregrounding the receiving countries. Internal and interregional migration is receiving a lot less attention as is the structural conditions in the sending countries. Does this speak for going forward with a new migration analysis?

Then I found that approaching the social structure (broadest possible sense) through the lens of migration was very fruitful; the negative side was that it was difficult to bring in women since they were less frequently primary movers. That can be repaired by closer attention to mobility generated by marriage and divorce rules/practices and also to the mobility of children.

Another way of bringing women in is to put more effort into the study of the new arrivals where Atakilte made important inroads last year. The new arrivals – people who literally have just stepped off the bus – were not present in the 1970’s materials and are not present in the 2008 survey². Nevertheless they are important in the town population and the town image. They are nowadays easily reached (a new development in itself) and ready to share their life stories.

Making a special case of the households that have members living abroad might be another way of bringing women in.³ Like from other poor countries, many women go abroad to work as domestic workers. A number of widely publicized abuse cases (from the Arabian peninsula and Lebanon) have brought public attention to abuse of domestic workers abroad and brings home a query of abuse of domestic workers in Ethiopia. I noted in the 1973 material that most domestic workers were children and it seemed to be the rule that these children left/fled when they reached puberty. Hannah’s work on HIV-carrying rape victims in Addis revealed stories of abuse of domestic workers; Lalo’s report on trafficking and “organ migration” are other indices of dark shades to the migration processes. But there are success stories in our survey material as well, as is the contribution by the “diaspora” to the households remaining at home.

What could be alternatives to entering the data through migration? One could be to focus not on change but on transformation/innovation – what is new? and developments that

¹ 1983, when I began working on the Shashemene material in earnest.

² because they were excluded from the sampling frame of resident households, for obvious reasons.

³ Before you ask, yes, this is an end in itself.

these new “things” have brought about. New would be the new administrative entities that have brought Oromo to political power in the region and broken the back (has it?) of Amhara dominance. New would be the new Protestant churches and the tensions within the Moslem community. New would be the massive investment in buildings, denominational and secular, and where does the money come from. New would be the institutionalization of old practices, such as the new “labour exchange” formed by the organizations of brokers. New would be the possibility of telephone and internet communication. New would be the imagined communities of the Rastafarians. New would be the HIV/aids epidemic and changing behavioural patterns that might have brought about. And more...

Any ideas?

To help you see what we have to think with we enclose the list of available materials at this point in time. In November the project will continue with a round of life history and key informant interviews in Shashemene.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Gunilla Bjerén
gunilla.bjeren@kvinfo.su.se

Atakilte Beyene
atakilte.beyene@sei.se

Types and categories of data collected in Shashemene (11 April to 2 July 2008)

Survey

- I. The Household
 1. Basics of household
 2. Language and ethnicity
 3. Religion
 4. Migration
 5. Literacy
 6. Livelihood sector/s
- II. Standard of living and wellbeing
 1. Housing standard
 2. Material Facilities
 3. Sanitation
 4. Drinking water
- III. Globalisation
 1. Relatives abroad
 2. Remittance from abroad
- IV. Life event histories (of all heads of households and wives and)
(Since 1965, if applicable)
 1. Mobility
 2. Livelihoods
 3. Marriage partners
 4. Children
- V. Special study of brokers
 1. Register of newcomers
 2. account of delivery to new jobs
- VI. Other data
 1. NGOs operating in Shashemene
 2. Micro-credit institute

Focus group interviews

- VII. Brokers (2 groups)
- VIII. Ketena leaders (6 groups)

Secondary data

- IX. Census 1994(SPSS)
- X. Short description of Shashemene (hard copy Amharic translation)
- XI. Shashemene socio-economy study 2008 (soft copy MS word)

Pictures