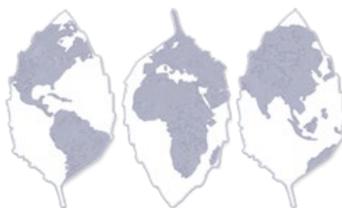


Human Behavioural Ecology of Labour Migration: Mobility in Arsi and Shewa, Ethiopia



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Labour migration has been intensively studied by social scientists but its mechanisms remain not well understood, because generalization has failed to explain migration in the past.

Here, a cross-disciplinary approach based on human behavioural ecology was carried out in order to bring new insights into the strategies of migration. Evolutionary theory predicts that parental investment biases are important explanations for dispersal by conducting part of the sibling group to migrate in order to obtain extra resources.

Patterns of low-skilled labour migration were explored in Southern Ethiopia. Anthropological qualitative data and demographic, economic and social network data were collected from 590 rural households in two villages in 2009, from 501 migrants in a regional capital and from 490 student families. Logistic regressions and general linear models were used to analyze the resulting database.

First, analyses to understand why some households experience migration and why others do not were conducted. Then, intra-household resource allocation and its impact on migration and on social support of farmers was analyzed. Finally, analysis of qualitative data assessed the outcomes of migration for these individuals and their families. Focus was emphasized on male migration, but data about female migration was also collected.

In line with evolutionary prediction, migration decisions appear to be dependant on resource availability. A U-shaped relationship is observed between household wealth and likelihood of migration with wealthier households experiencing migration.

Furthermore, a same-sex lastborn effect is noticeable in terms of likelihood of migration. There is also a male lastborn bias for support networks of farmers, enhancing a lastborn disadvantage at adulthood. And finally, the majority of the male migrants in the sample are young and unmarried individuals, suggesting a possible strategy to increase their embodied capital for the marriage market.

Lucie is a postdoc scholar working with Professor Jamie Jones. Her background is in ecology and received her PhD in human behavioral ecology at the University of Bristol, UK.

Monday
November 11, 2013, 12:00-1:05 pm
Conference Room, Building 50, Room 51A



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