

Control parameters

The material, functional and nested sub-systems and the encompassing systems contain potential 'control parameters' which are those aspects of the community system and its context that, working together as a *configuration*, have a governing influence on its trajectory at the point in time when the synchronic snapshot of the state of the system is taken in an empirical research process¹. The communities are contained within, and contribute to the constitution of, larger encompassing systems, including wereda, zones, Regions, the country as a whole, and the global system. From the perspective of each community system these are contexts; events and actions originating in them have the potential to set off change processes within the communities. Events and actions in community systems can also set off change processes in the encompassing systems that constitute part of their environment/context.

Internal to the community there are important community-specific parameters related to the material systems of Place and People and the five functional sub-systems. There are also external control parameters in the community *context*, which includes elements in encompassing systems like the wereda and non-spatial systems like the international coffee value chain which intersects with livelihood systems in coffee-producing communities. Table 2 identifies the control parameters which were important in guiding the trajectories of the fourteen communities studied in Stages 1 and 2. At a point in time the empirical content and contribution of each parameter to the governing configuration will vary across different community types.

Table 1: Parameters guiding rural community trajectories

Control parameter areas		Parameters identified as potentially important for the communities studied
Internal parameters	1. Place	Terrain, settlement, climate, ecology Remoteness - connections with wider world
	2. People	Current human resources/liabilities Aspirations Personal relations
	3. Lives	Human re/pro/duction institutions
	4. Livelihoods	Farming system
		Livelihood diversification
		Economic institutions
	5. Social relations	Community fault-lines Organised collective agency
6. Cultural ideas	Customary cultural repertoire Modern cultural repertoires	
7. Politics	Political settlement Government-society relations Opposition party organisation	
Contextual parameters	8. External aspects of intersecting functional systems	Economic – e.g. international coffee prices
		Lives – e.g. contraceptive provision, food aid systems
		Social – e.g. diasporas
		Cultural imports –e.g. religious, political, modernisation ideologies
	9. Encompassing meso systems	State of meso system: economy, society, culture, politics Government plans for the wider area
		10. Encompassing macro systems

In different types of community actual manifestations of these abstractly-described control parameters take different forms. Also in different types of system, or at different times in the life of

¹ In times of rapid change configurations can change rapidly.

one system, a different selective mix or configuration of control parameters may be important in guiding trajectories. For example in a crisis period in a 'fragile community' relationships and activities in the political domain may be very important, while in a remote but stable community customary cultural ideas may play a leading role.