

Guide to planning and implementing a WIDE-style study

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Introduction

The key focuses of the longitudinal WIDE study have been the modernisation trajectories of the communities and the roles played by government-managed development interventions in those trajectories¹. But we have also used the WIDE 3 data in a number of synchronic comparative analyses of selected features of the communities².

It would be possible to do a longitudinal community study without getting into the complexities of complexity social science, although I have found its metaphors very helpful in trying to understand continuity and change in the WIDE rural communities. Also the notion that communities as complex systems can be 'deconstructed' in different ways informed the 'multiple perspectives' conceptual framework which connects the data-making process with the structure of the community narratives.

However, it would not be possible to undertake such a study effectively without some familiarity with the literature on case-based comparative analysis (for example, Byrne and Ragin (ed), 2009). The most important features of case-based research are (1) the evidence base comes in the form of narratives which are available to all; (2) the method of exploring the narratives for similarities and differences among cases in the sample encourages identification of different *types* or *kinds* of case which is useful for targeted policy-making; (3) quantitative case-based analysis techniques for causal analysis, such as QCA³, do not de-compose the cases as variable analysis does, which means it is possible to make direct links between the narrative interpretations and the causal conclusions, and 'causal properties' are not given to abstract variables such as 'education' measured in terms of years of schooling.

¹ See the Final Reports for the three WIDE3 Stages.

² Some of these can be found in our forthcoming book (Pankhurst ed) which will be available on the website while Paper 6 describes some policy-related WIDE projects which could be undertaken in the near future involving further analysis of the WIDE3 data and/or new fieldwork.

³ Qualitative Comparative Analysis; for a brief description see [Ragin, 2008](#)

In WIDE we do not have any quantitative skills and have not found anyone to engage with who is interested in using case-based quantitative methods in development contexts. However, we believe that nesting a qualitative study such as ours in a large panel community survey with a questionnaire designed using the multiple perspectives theoretical framework would be very fruitful and would recommend anyone starting out on a longitudinal qualitative study to try to do so. The first survey results could be used to establish the main different types of rural community and an exemplar community could be selected from within each type for an ensuing qualitative study. The findings from this could be used to improve the design of the second round of the panel survey which would then inform the second round of the qualitative study which would then inform the third round of the survey; and so on.

The other papers in this collection and methodology publications on our website describe the WIDE methodology quite exhaustively and provide a resource for those interested in pursuing a similar study. This paper briefly raises some key practical issues which are not covered elsewhere with examples of what we did. These are: (1) designing the baseline study; (2) choosing the communities; (3) using the multiple perspectives framework to link data-making with the writing of the community narratives; (4) designing the modules and constructing a research calendar; (5) the fieldwork process and the making of the database; and (6) interpretation and analysis of the data.

Designing the baseline study

A study such as ours should be conducted by people trained in social anthropology, sociology and policy analysis, with some experience of qualitative rural research in the country of interest. The first step should be a thorough review of relevant literature to provide an understanding of the recent trajectory of the country and to inform the choice of the communities. We would recommend conducting the baseline round of a longitudinal study in at least two phases. Phase 1 in each community should be exploratory with the aim of (1) establishing the main local features of the place and the four domains of power to inform the content of the detailed questions to ask in Phase 2, and (2) identifying the different social groups, organisations and individual social actors who should be the focus of the interviews.

Choosing the communities

If you are building on a (preferably random sample design) quantitative community study it would be advantageous to use this to select communities exemplifying the types which emerge as interesting in relation to your main question – maybe some because they are the most common, some which are important from a policy perspective, some which are at greatest risk.

We did not choose eighteen of our twenty communities as WIDE1 was an add-on to the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey and these communities were selected by economists as *exemplars* of Ethiopia's rural agricultural economies in the 1990s; fifteen in 1994 and 3 in 1997. We added two agro-pastoralist communities in 2003, identifying communities which had been studied by social anthropologists for doctoral dissertations in the 1990s giving us some kind of baseline. This was not possible in the communities chosen by the economists, but we did ask questions about the history of the community in the fifteen WIDE1 sites and in the baseline reports written for the new communities in 2003.

Using the multiple perspectives

The headings of the WIDE3 multiple perspectives framework were:

1. Community place and people
2. Community in its wider context

3. The community's households
4. Durable structures of inequality
5. Field of action/domain of power: livelihoods
6. Field of action/domain of power: human re/pro/duction – the making, maintaining and deaths of people
7. Field of action/domain of power: social re/pro/duction – organisations, networks and institutions
8. Fields of action/domains of power: ideas in the community
9. Fields of action/domain of power: community management

These nine headings were used to structure the narratives in the community reports. Within each heading a number of sub-headings and sub-sub-headings were developed as shown in Box 1. The sub-headings were also used in the design of the modules as discussed below.

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These sub-headings were also used in the design of the twelve modules used in each Stage. The contents of the Modules used in Stage 2 are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: The modules in the three WIDE3 stages

Stage 1 Modules	Stage 2 Modules	Stage 3 Modules
1: Wereda officials Round 1 2: Kebele officials 3: Community history and trajectory 4: Interventions: male and female household heads and wives 5: Wereda officials Round 2 6: Households 7. Interventions: dependent adults and youth 8. Community organisations and their leaders 9: Development actors 10: Gender & HIV/AIDS 11: Site specific 12: Research officer topics	1: Wereda officials 2: Community history and trajectory 3: Kebele officials 4: Experiences of recent interventions 5: Community organisations and their leaders 6: Community member vignettes 7: Households 8: Marginalised people 9: Youth 10: PSNP + OFSP/HABP 11: Site specific 12: Research officer topics	1: Wereda officials 2: Community history and trajectory 3: Kebele officials 4: Farming 5: Non-farming 6: Youth 7: Households 8: Notable people 9: Fact sheet 10: Daily diary 11: Election notes 12: Happenings since Fieldwork 1

The challenge was to design Modules that covered these sub-headings AND could easily be used with not too many respondents. So, for example, Module 1, which was used with *wereda* (district) officials, covered topics from all the fields of action as Table 13 in Paper 4 shows. While Module 8 in Stage 2 designed for marginalised people covered 33 men and women who were all asked similar questions about their problems, networks, access to the different government services and tax, cash and labour contributions. The process of matching topics with respondents is fiddly and very time-consuming.

The fieldwork process and the making of the database

Constructing the fieldwork calendar

In our case the number of fieldwork days had been guesstimated in the funding bid using rough calculations about how many interviews a research officer could conduct in a day. In all Stages we had two fieldwork visits with a gap in between for de-briefing, writing up in the Report Documents and identifying missing bits that needed re-visiting in the second round. In Stages 1 and 2 we had two field visits of roughly the same length. In Stage 1 the gap between the visits was too short and did not allow enough time for the data recording while in Stage 2 we over-compensated and the longer gap allowed some Research Officers to get involved in other work which was problematic. The Stage 3 solution worked better: most of the fieldwork was done in a long visit in the spring and most of the writing up completed before a short re-visit in October/November allowed for gap-filling and following up on interesting topics.

Choosing, training and working with the field officers

For gendered perspectives on the topics of interest it is vital to employ male and female researchers working as a team. All women and girls should be interviewed by the female researcher, but given the gendered nature of rural communities more of the interviews will be with men, and some of these can be conducted by the female researcher. The important qualities of a good fieldworker are that they:

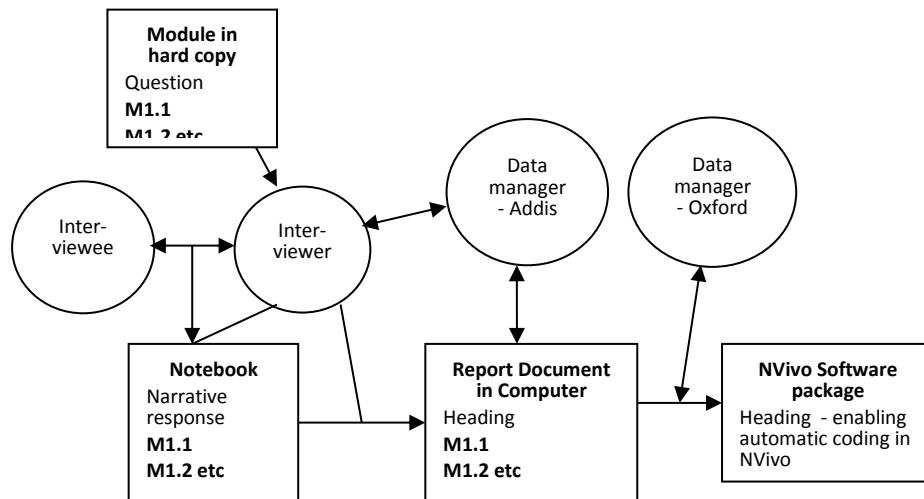
- Enjoy working in rural areas and respect rural people
- (Ideally) speak the local language
- Are social science trained preferably with a qualitative focus
- Are keen to contribute ideas and criticisms in training and de-briefing workshops
- Are reliable and able to work to deadlines
- Are team players

Training should involve going in detail through all the draft Modules with the group and following their suggestions for improvement. They need computers for writing up while in the field and maybe solar panels if they have no access to grid electricity. In Ethiopia the existence of a growing mobile phone network by 2010 made supervision much easier. On return from fieldwork stints we held group de-briefing workshops.

Making and recording the data

The process is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Data journey - from interviewee to NVivo software package



1. The Modules were designed so that each questions had an M number - e.g. M1.1.
2. The interviewer wrote the number in their notebook before recording the narrative response to the question.
3. The interviewer typed the narrative response into the Report Document space for the questions which was numbered to match the Module.
4. The Report Documents were entered into a qualitative software package (we used NVivo) by the research interpreto-analysts; using headings in the RDs supported a first step of easy coding

Interpreting and analysing the data

As described earlier the community reports should all be written using the multiple perspectives framework, simplifying the comparative analysis process. It would then be a good idea to use the reports to construct and archive analysis matrices on topics of interest in a systematic way before writing the final reports. Due to lack of time related to lack of budget we did not do this systematically in WIDE3 which has resulted in inefficient duplication by people working on the data later.

Conclusion

Each of the three stages of WIDE3 took more than a year to complete from beginning to end. There were four main phases. The first involved the writing of a paper on all the Government interventions we should expect to see in the communities and a paper on the methodology and the design of the research instruments. In the second phase the fieldwork was done and the database made and there was some early dissemination of findings to a 'worknet' of people interested in the project. The writing of the community and final reports in phase 3 was followed by dissemination workshops for

government, donors and academics in Ethiopia. Completing this schedule required careful planning and management, especially of the fieldwork and database-making phase.

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