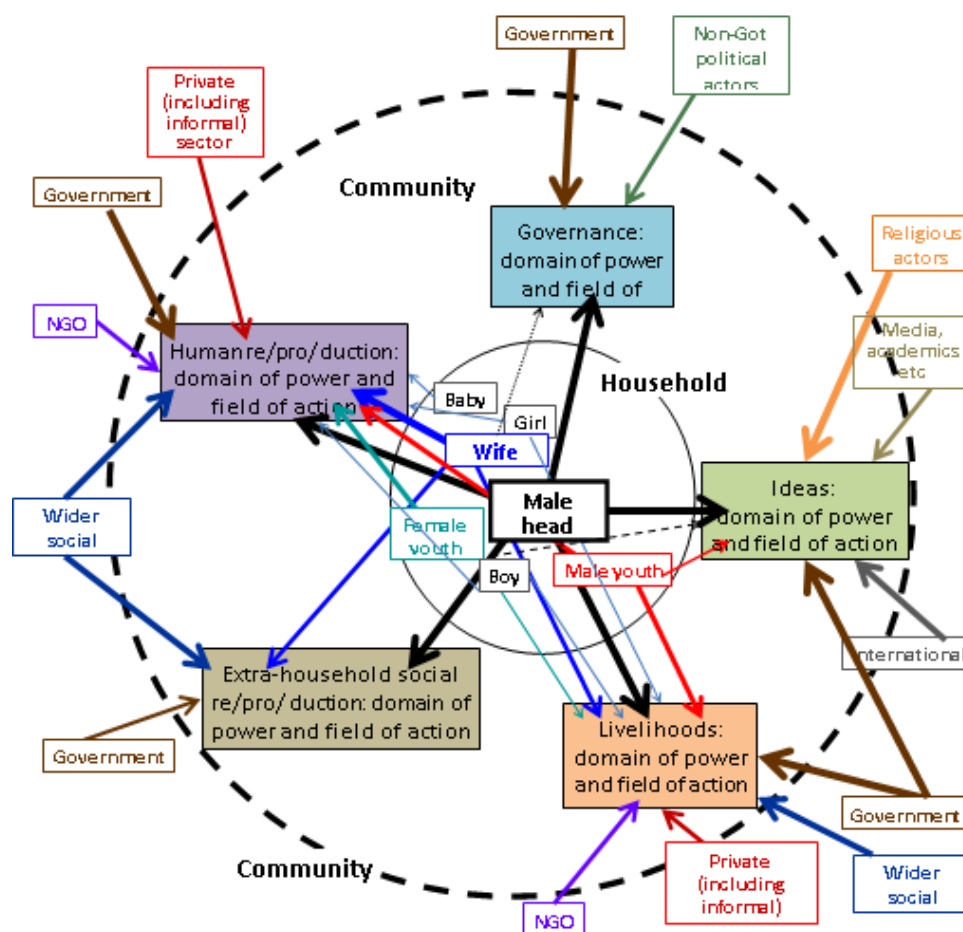


Household systems

The two important nested dynamic open complex systems constitutive of the community are *household systems of different types* spatially located in different parts of the territory, which themselves are constituted by *human systems or people of different genders/ages playing different roles in the functional sub-systems*. Households are important social organisations in the social re/pro/duction or society domain of power; people invest considerable time and energy in creating new households and managing social relationships within them as they pass through the household cycle and evolve. Household survey research undertaken in four WIDE sites during the WeD programme in the mid-2000s showed similarities in household structure patterns across the sites, and that, on average, only 62% of households were on the culturally-ideal track. This was defined as a progression from young couple, through young nuclear family, mature nuclear family, in some cultures polygynous families, emptying nest, old couple, male-headed 3-generations, and nuclear family with old parent (Pankhurst and Bevan 2007). The remaining 38% included female-headed households, sibling households, men and women living alone, and some more unorthodox combinations of people.

Households play an important role in co-ordinating the activities of members in the five functional fields to fulfil the economic, human re/pro/duction, , cultural, political and extra-household social re/pro/duction functions required for the particular type of household system to remain in business. Figure 1 shows the different participation of household members in the different functional domains.

Figure 1: Participation in the different fields of action by different kind of household member



Households can be seen as involved in a 'struggle for existence' through which they occupy an economic niche for longer or shorter periods. Those with greater wealth, status and political connection are likely to do better in the competition for positional advantage and leverage; those that are poor, socially marginalised, and politically irrelevant are likely to remain excluded and/or adversely incorporated. However, given the uncertainties of rural life, customary institutional arrangements for co-operation, and the important contribution to success of individual character, motivation and skills, there are varying levels of intra-generational and inter-generational social mobility both upwards and downwards.

Pankhurst, A. and P. Bevan 2007 'Unequal Structures, Unbuffered Shocks, and Undesirable Strategies' Paper for World Bank Social Protection Department
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277210622_Unequal_Structures_Unbuffered_Shocks_and_Undesirable_Strategies_Quantitatively-informed_qualitative_investigations_into_the_causes_of_extreme_poverty_in_rural_Ethiopia_in_2004 accessed 29/09/16.