

Five domains of power

Community members are active in five institutional settings or functional sub-systems. Through them community members act to perform the different functions required for the community system to remain in business. The sub-systems structure and guide activities in the fields of livelihoods, human re/pro/duction, social re/pro/duction, community management, and ideas (see Table 1).

Table 1: The five domains of power / fields of action / functional sub-systems

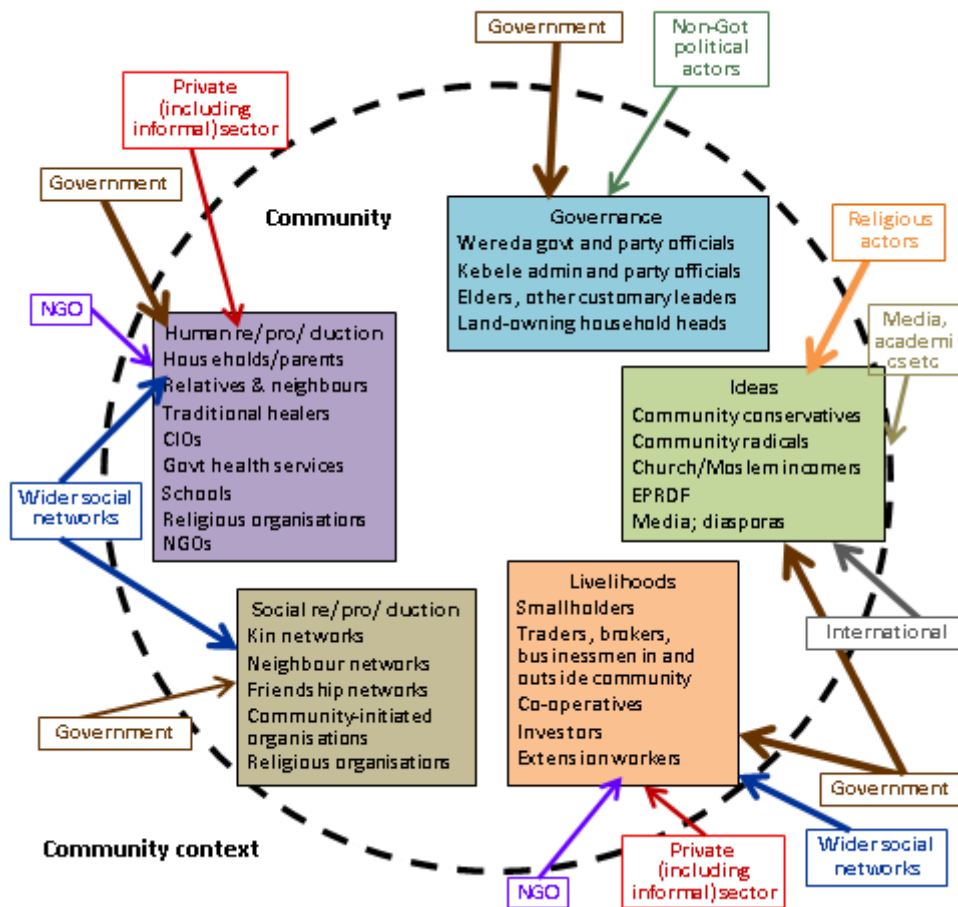
Livelihoods	Smallholder agriculture and agricultural employment
	Non-farm business and non-farm employment
	Migration and remittances
Human re/pro/duction	'Producing' people: pregnancy, birth, child-rearing
	'Producing' people: learning, training, formal education
	'Reproducing' (maintaining) people: domestic work, food consumption
	'Reproducing' people: housing, household assets, water, and sanitation
	'Reducing' people: illness, conflict, ageing
Social re/pro/duction	Social networks
	Social institutions: marriage, circumcision, inheritance, land/labour/oxen exchanges
	Social organisations (including households)
Community management	Community-initiated structures for decision-making and implementation
	Kebele (community government) structures
	Wereda (district) structures
Ideas	Local customary repertoires
	Local modern repertoires
	In-coming ideologies, religions, cultures and other ideas

From one perspective these five functional sub-systems are *fields of action* in which different kinds of community member are active in different ways. In these communities most farmers are adult men; the most-important human re/producers (baby-makers, small-child-rearers, and people-maintainers) are female albeit often operating to a degree under the authority of a husband; leading elders are older men; leading religious leaders are male; important political leaders are male.

The fields of action are also *domains of power*; all are hierarchically and unequally organised. In the economy there are rich, middle-wealth and poor smallholders, landless labourers, rich traders, petty traders, commuters, migrants etc and considerable differences in household wealth and incomes. Households into which children are born and raised are hierarchically organised in terms of genderage and resources and opportunities are not equally distributed among family members. Social structures include organisations with hierarchies which are also strongly linked with differences in genderage. Cultural ideas about superiority and inferiority may be attached to ethnicity, religion, craftwork, descendancy from 'slaves', and poverty. Control and influence over many decisions affecting the community are in the hands of adult male landowners. Richer men are likely to be the active leaders in most or all of the five systems with some elite members having key roles in more than one of the sub-systems.

These systems are not fully contained within the community territory as they depend upon interactions and relationships with wider systems including for example value chains, kin or clan systems, party hierarchies, national development programmes and world religions. While these functional systems are not directly visible to the human eye the day-to-day actions and social interactions among community members which constitute them are in principle visible, and further traces of their existence are found in, for example, fields of wheat, primary schools, funerals, elections, and religious sermons (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The five functional sub-systems / domains of power / fields of action



In the *livelihoods* field people are organised to work to produce, exchange and consume various goods and services. Rural *livelihood systems* extend beyond the spatial boundaries of the community as various inputs are brought in from outside and products distributed through external markets and other networks. People work in the *human re/pro/duction* field to produce new people, and invest in and service existing ones; contributions from/to the community context involve wider kin networks, health and education services, domestic technology producers etc. The *social re/pro/duction* system is where people invest in their social relationships creating, reproducing, adapting and sometimes destroying organisations, networks and institutions for various purposes; many of these extend beyond community boundaries. The creation, reproduction and adaptation of the system of *cultural ideas* requires thinking and dissemination work related to ideas, values, norms and more formal rules; many new ideas come from outside and some of those generated within the community are exported. Finally in the *community management* field people work in the areas of decision-making, implementation of government and community decisions, everyday governance, security and justice. They also work to maintain or change the ways these things are done in the community and beyond and/or the leaders in charge of doing them.

The functional sub-systems overlap and inter-penetrate synchronically as a result of two mechanisms. *First*, a *real action* never takes place in only one of the fields. For example, a man ploughing in a livelihood role is also playing a societal role as for example smallholder, share-cropper, ox-sharer. A woman feeding her newborn infant butter is using the local customary repertoire of ideas. *Second*, these sub-systems are also energised through *social interactions* which

always have implications for more than one sub-system. For example for a smallholder to produce and harvest crops labour must be organised for different tasks at different times of year through the societal system; the farmer might use household labour for some tasks, maybe a group labour-sharing arrangement with established norms for others, and someone in his/her network who is willing to do daily labour for yet others.