

Researching social change and continuity: a complexity-informed study of twenty rural community-cases in Ethiopia 1994 – 2015; book chapter draft

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1. Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium the pace of economic and social change in poor developing countries has accelerated considerably, eliciting a need for theoretical approaches and research methods appropriate for the empirical study of change. Complexity social science provides a paradigm for exploring both change and continuity, and when used with case-based methods can lead to innovative and practical policy-relevant conclusions. Complexity frameworks for studying the dynamics underpinning social change and continuity are of increasing interest in the UK in the fields of management (Allen, Maguire and McKelvey, 2011), social policy (Byrne 2011, Room 2011), and international development (Ramalingam and Jones, 2008, Ramalingam forthcoming). In the complexity framework which underpins the study described here the communities are conceptualised as 'dynamic open complex systems' co-evolving on path-dependent trajectories with internal sub-systems, for example households and people, overlapping contextual systems, for example wider clan and religious systems, and encompassing systems, for example the Region and the country as a whole.

The chapter describes a longitudinal research programme which began in 1994 as a synchronic comparative study of fifteen rural communities which had been selected as exemplars of the main agriculturalist livelihood systems in Ethiopia by economists planning a panel household survey¹. Parallel qualitative research using secondary sources, rapid assessment techniques, and protocol-guided semi-structured interviews produced fifteen 'Ethiopian Village Studies' (Bevan and Pankhurst, 1996) which later became known as *WIDE1* (Wellbeing and Illbeing Dynamics in Ethiopia). The *WIDE* acronym was introduced in 2003 when comparative qualitative fieldwork was undertaken in twenty communities (*WIDE2*²): the fifteen studied in 1994/5, plus three agriculturalist sites which had been added to the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey community panel in 1999, and two pastoralist communities where Ph.D. research had taken place in the 1990s.

Between 2010 and 2013 a donor group in Addis Ababa³ funded new fieldwork (*WIDE3*) in the twenty sites which has been conducted in three stages: Stage 1 in six sites in early 2010; Stage 2 in eight sites in late 2011; and Stage 3 in six sites in spring and autumn 2013⁴. The *WIDE3* data is being used in two ways: to conduct comparative case analysis of the communities in 2010-13, and, in conjunction with the *WIDE1* and *WIDE2* data, to investigate the longer-term cumulative impacts of development interventions and wider modernisation processes on the trajectories of the communities and the life qualities of their different kinds of member.

In what follows I describe the *WIDE3* research process from philosophical assumptions to policy-relevant conclusions. The next section outlines the Foundation of Knowledge Framework (Bevan 2007 & 2009) which identifies nine different linked aspects of knowledge generation which all

¹ Ethiopian Rural Household Survey <http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/ethiopian-rural-household-surveys-erhs>. The *WIDE1* research was financed by the UK Overseas Development Administration and the lead researchers were myself and Alula Pankhurst.

² *WIDE2* fieldwork was conducted for a month in each site under the aegis of the 2002-7 ESRC-funded Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Research Programme at the University of Bath <http://www.welldev.org.uk/>. As part of this programme in 2004/5 fieldworkers researched a range of topics in four of the *WIDE* communities over a period of 17 months in a project known as DEEP (in-Depth Exploration of Ethiopian Poverty). The lead researchers in *WIDE2* were myself and Pankhurst.

³ The donors are DFID, CIDA and the Dutch and the project is managed by the World Bank. The lead researchers are myself, Pankhurst and Catherine Dom.

⁴ This chapter was written in spring 2013 so is describing a work still in progress.

empirical researchers ought to address transparently⁵. Section 3 describes the research domain and questions, Section 4 the approach to theory, Section 5 the research strategy, and Section 6 the fieldwork process and making of the database. Section 7 outlines the interpretation and analysis process and Section 8 provides examples of the five different types of research ‘answer’ we are producing . Section 9, on rhetoric and *praxis*, describes how we have tried to bridge the disconnect between research and policy design and implementation by government and donors.

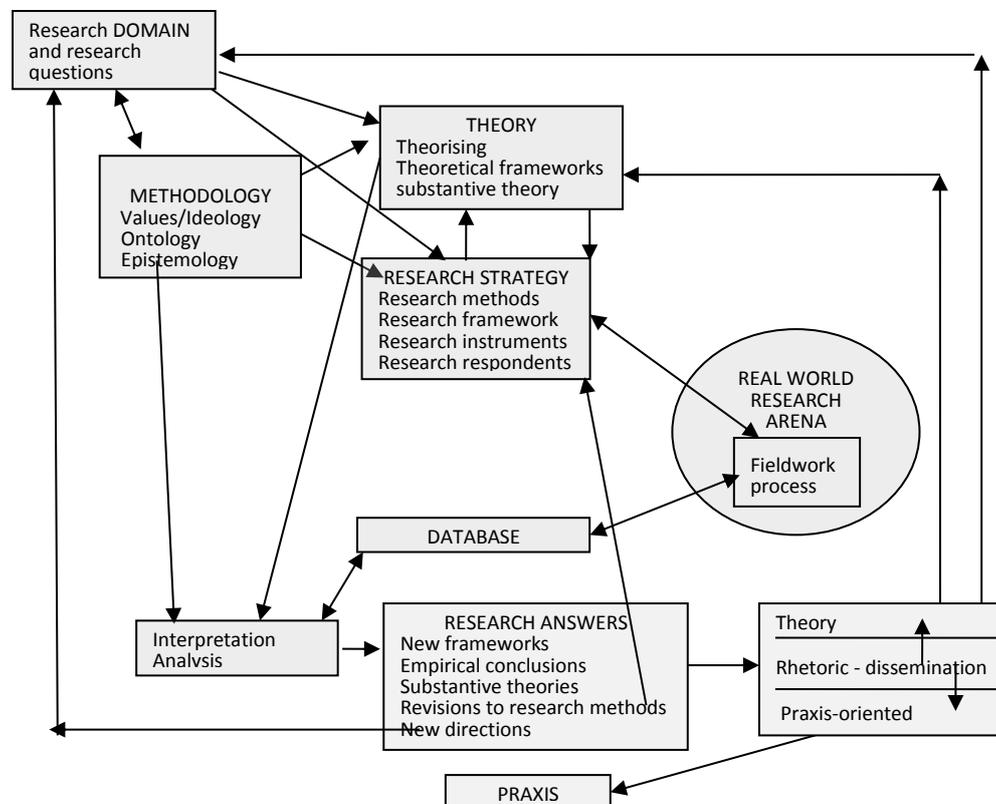
2. The Foundations of Knowledge Framework

Sound empirical research frameworks require transparent philosophical and methodological foundations and those designing research projects should be in a position to justify their choice of stance in nine scientific areas. These are:

1. Domain or focus of study: what exactly are you interested in?
2. Values/ideology: why are you interested?
3. Ontology: how do you understand the nature of reality?
4. Epistemology: how can you know about that reality?
5. Theory: how do you understand/explain your object of study?
6. Research strategies: how can you establish what is really happening?
7. Research answers: what (kinds of) conclusions do you want to draw from your research?
8. Rhetoric: how do you inform (which) others about your conclusions?
9. Praxis: what to do? who should do it?

The Foundations of Knowledge Framework (FoKF) shows how these different knowledge areas are linked (Figure 1). In the remainder of this section we very briefly describe the WIDE3 approach to

Figure 1: The Foundations of Knowledge Framework



⁵ The framework was used by Sumner and Tribe to structure a book on theories and methods for research and practice in international development studies (2008).

each of these knowledge foundations, returning to the most interesting in greater depth in the remainder of the chapter.

Research domain and ideological position

Our *research domain* is modernisation and change in Ethiopia's rural communities since 1991 with a particular focus on the roles played by development interventions since 2003. Our *ideological* commitment is to empirical research that is (1) relevant for improving the life chances of the poorest and most vulnerable people (2) scientifically important and (3) helps well-motivated practitioners at all levels to understand how their area of intervention really works, including potential unintended consequences of their actions, in order that they can act more efficiently and equitably.

Ontology

Our complexity social science approach⁶ pays attention to ontology – what is the world *really* like? Complexity scientists like Coveny and Highfield (1995) have provided much evidence that the world *really* is complex. 'The story of the universe is one of unfolding complexity. (p328) ...Energy and chemical elements produced by the stars have led to the emergence of intricate structures as organised as crystals and human brains (p10) ...Life is an emergent property which arises when physico-chemical systems are organised and interact in particular ways. ... A city is an emergent property of millions of human beings (p330)'.

From complexity ontology we take a number of key messages. Parts are related, inter-dependent and inter-act. Complex systems are characterised by emergence; the whole is more or less than the sum of the parts. 'Emergence means that something new comes into being. We have a change of kind rather than just a change of degree... p 13 .. Emergent phenomena are not explicable in terms of that from which they emerge p18 ' (Byrne, 1998). A simple example is water – H₂O – a molecule emerging from a combination of hydrogen and oxygen atoms. Degrees of connectivity among parts vary across systems leading to differences in overall resilience and adaptability to external changes. Degrees of connectivity also vary across different areas within one system, affecting the intensity of (negative and positive) feedback processes. Degrees of connectivity change through time. Initial conditions matter and trajectories are path dependent.

We conceptualise rural communities and their members as complex social and human systems which are open, as they depend on and interact with their environments, and dynamic as they are capable of non-linear changes. Complex social systems have material, technological, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions and are constituted by elements in relationships. People are organised in unequally structured co-evolving systems which, in Ethiopia, include households, communities, kingroups, lineages, clans, other community-initiated organisations, formal and informal enterprises, NGOs, political parties, national and international donors, government, transnational companies, etc.

Social systems have nested sub-systems, are nested in larger 'super-systems', and overlap with other systems. Interacting systems co-evolve: a change in a key aspect or parameter of one system is likely to lead to adaptation in others.

Epistemology

Knowledge is imbricated in historically-changing complex systems, so that what we can know is contingent and provisional, pertaining to a certain context. However, this does not mean that 'anything goes'. We are committed to the institutionalised values and methodological rules of social science which include logical thinking and the testing of ideas against reality through rigorous and transparent empirical enquiry, including in this project establishing an Evidence Base to which we

⁶ For more on this see Bevan 2010a and 2010b.

and others can turn if questions arise.

Complexity theory tells us a number of things of relevance about ways to know about complex systems. Research is usually exploratory, the aim being to identify (1) patterned similarities and differences among the complex systems under study and (2) common processes and mechanisms which play out differently in different contexts, rather than 'laws' or generalisations. Frameworks and methods depend strongly on the research questions. There is continuous interaction and iteration between ideas and the field. As explained further below data are seen as 'traces' of the passage of the communities and their sub-systems through time. Quantitative data tell you *how much* of the research object of interest there was at the time of measurement, while qualitative data tell you *what kind* of thing it was.

'More than one description of a complex system is possible. Different descriptions will decompose the system in different ways' (Cilliers, 2005: 257). As shown below the adoption of a multiple perspectives framework each focusing on a different level of community structure and dynamics generates a rich structured dataset which can be used to establish how the system, parts and context have worked together.

Theory

Theorising uses the ideas and theories of other scholars; 'building on the shoulders of giants'. *Theoretical frameworks* are exploratory tools which clarify concepts and identify key processes linking them. The FoKF is one theoretical framework used in this chapter and some others are set out in Section 4. Examples from the development literature include livelihoods and well-being frameworks. They are developed through theorising and in the dialogue between ideas and evidence and provide guides for the design of research instruments and the interpretation and analysis process. *Substantive theories* are to do with causal understanding or explanation. In complex social systems causation is complex; what happens is usually the result of the interaction of multiple internal and contextual causal mechanisms.

A fundamental theoretical framework for understanding longitudinal complexity-oriented research processes distinguishes between synchronic and diachronic analysis. Complex systems evolve through time and their past is co-responsible for their current state. 'An analysis of a complex system that ignores the dimension of time is incomplete, or at most a synchronic snapshot of a diachronic process' (Cilliers, 1998: 40). I describe in Section 4 how we are combining synchronic and diachronic analyses of our longitudinal data.

Research strategy

Our research strategy depends on *case-based methods* which fit well with the complexity paradigm since they do not depend on any assumption of linearity as most standard variable-based methods do. Also they can combine qualitative and case-based quantitative interpretation in an integrated fashion. Case-based quantitative analysis uses a conception of measurement that depends on *classification* which fits with the way in which people think. In everyday life we constantly use (stereo)typing to guide our responses to other people and their actions, events and so on. A case-based quantitative approach is contrasted with a traditional quantitative approach where variables (particular features of cases, for example education, income etc) are seen as causal agents while cases (people, households, firms, countries) are seen simply as sites for measuring variables. Analysis of quantitative data becomes a contest between disembodied variables to see which are 'significant'.

Byrne argues that 'integrated accounts constructed around a complexity frame offer the best narratives for describing change (2001:74)'. In order to achieve such accounts he advocates the use of four processes:

- *Exploring*: descriptive measurement of variate traces (see p12) and examination of the patterns generated by the measurements in conjunction with exploration of qualitative materials (which might be texts, photos, artefacts)
- *Classifying*: sorting of things into kinds on a proto-typical basis (Bowker and Starr, 1999) and (temporary) identification of meaningful boundaries of a system or ensemble of similar systems
- *Interpreting*: measures and narratives in a search for meaning
- *Ordering*: things sorted and positioned along the dimension of time and procedures for documenting changes and when they occurred.

The research process involves using the theoretical frameworks to develop a *research design* which identifies

1. What to ask about.
2. How to ask; including potentially surveys, protocols to guide semi-structured interviews, participation observation, photographs and the collection of documents.
3. Who to ask.

Fieldwork and database

In comparative community research such as this once the cases have been selected and the research instruments designed the *fieldwork* process involves time planning, training of fieldworkers, field supervision, and planning and implementation of the data journey from fieldworker notes to the *database*.

Interpretation and analysis

Comparative case-based analysis of qualitative data can take four forms (Tilly, 1985). One case can be analysed in terms of (1) its location in a larger system or (2) its internal dynamics. Two or more cases can be compared in a search for (3) diversities and/or (4) regularities. We are using all four approaches:

- *Structural location*: communities are spatially, economically, politically, culturally and historically located in wider complex systems. The relationships which each community has with these encompassing systems have a bearing on both the substance and the style of what happens.
- *Internal dynamics*: since communities are historically located each is on a trajectory constructed by the path- dependent actions and social interactions of the actors involved. Community trajectories can change direction as a result of internally-initiated changes, linked internal and contextual changes, or big changes in context.
- *Diversities and regularities*: increasing interest in case-based research (e.g. George and Bennett, 2005; Byrne and Ragin, 2009⁷) has led to recommended procedures for different types of cross-case comparison to identify common causal mechanisms, produce descriptive typologies sorting cases into different kinds, and typological theory development.

Research answers, dissemination and practice

There are five kinds of *research answer*: empirical conclusions, new theoretical frameworks, substantive theories, revisions to research methods, and new questions. Some examples from the WIDE3 research are described below in Section 8. For *dissemination* these answers have to be presented in *rhetorical* styles appropriate to different kinds of audience; academics, government and

⁷ The handbook edited by Byrne and Ragin contains examples of a range of case-based methods and techniques including explanatory typologies in qualitative analysis, cluster analysis, correspondence analysis, classifications, Bayesian methods, configurational analysis including Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), fuzzy-set analysis, neural network analysis, choice of different types of cases for comparison (e.g. most different cases with a similar outcome; most similar cases with a different outcome), computer-based qualitative methods, ethnographic case studies, and a systems approach to multiple case study.

donor development policy designers, implementers and evaluators, other practitioners, the communities under research, and the general public via various forms of media.

The complexity social science framework is highly suitable for *praxis*⁸-related research. 'Complexity is essentially a frame of reference - a way of understanding what things are like, how they work, and how they might be made to work.' (Byrne, 2002: 8). Policymakers should establish what is possible (and not possible) in the future for different kinds of system/case.

Having briefly outlined the knowledge underpinnings of the WIDE3 research, in the rest of the chapter we provide more details on particularly interesting aspects.

3. The WIDE3 research domain and research questions

Our *research domain* is modernisation and change in Ethiopia's rural communities since 1991 with a particular focus on the roles played by development interventions since 2003. The WIDE3 *research questions* are:

1. In each community what were the *key features of the development situation* at the time of fieldwork?
2. In what ways have the development situations of the communities changed since the mid-1990s? What *modernisation processes* were involved in each of *their trajectories*?
3. What *differences were made* to the trajectories and the communities by *development interventions* and the interactions among them since 2003?
4. What similarities and differences can we identify in these impacts? How did they *vary among different types of community* and what are the reasons?
5. How did what happened fit with *government and donor models* of how development *should* happen?
6. What do the *longer-term trajectories* of these communities look like? Where have they come from and where might they be going in the next few years?
7. In what ways have recent *social interactions*, relationships and processes across the development interface between government and community affected the *implementation and achievements* of the various government and donor programmes?
8. What have been the impacts of modernisation as a whole, and recent development interventions in particular, on the *lives of the different kinds of people* who live in the communities?

The map locates the twenty WIDE3 communities and Table 1 sets out some key similarities and differences.

⁸ 'the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practised, embodied, or realised. "Praxis" may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practising ideas' *Wikipedia*

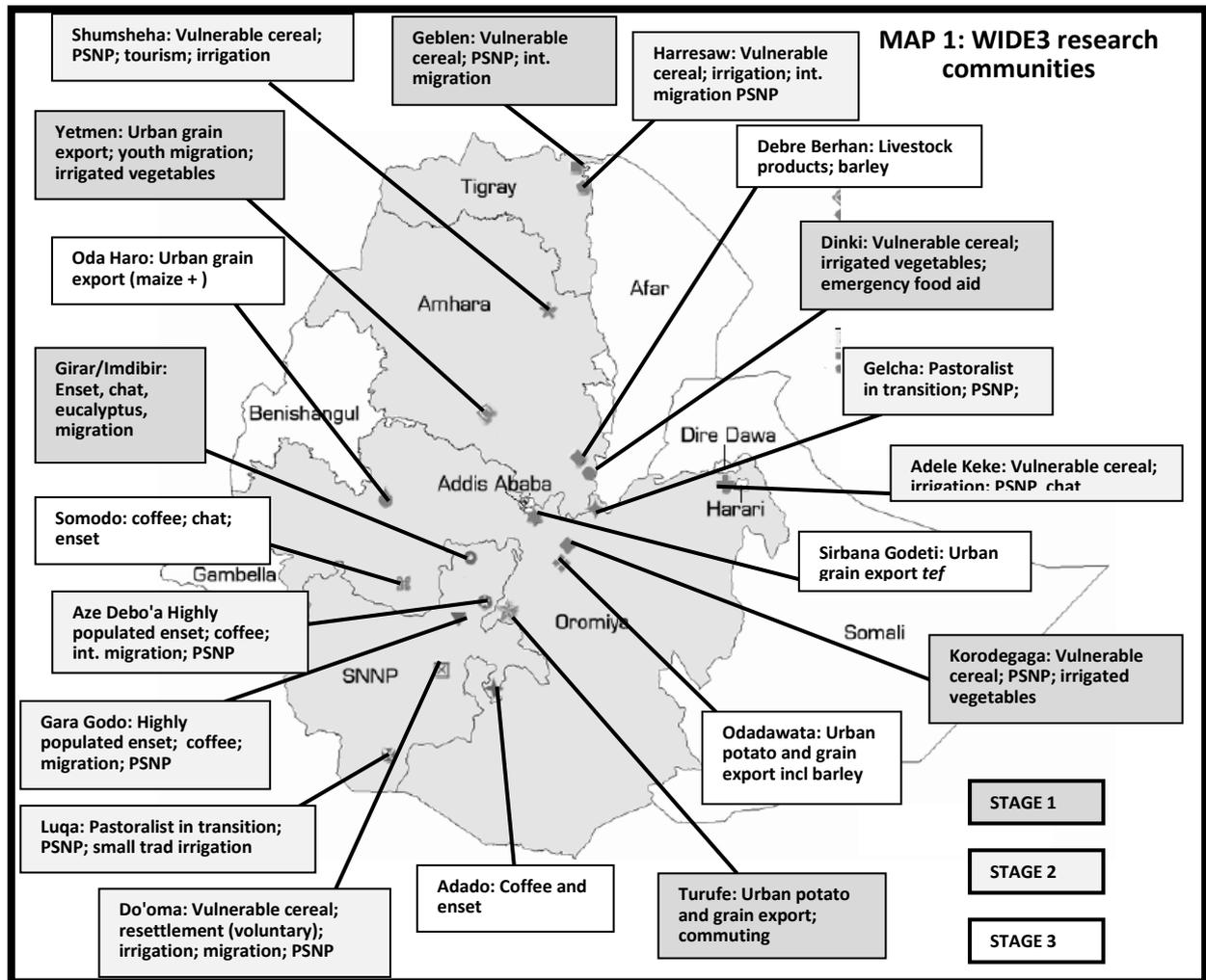


Table 1: The communities studied in Stages 1 and 2 – some key features

COMMUNITY	FIELD-WORK	LOCATION	LIVELIHOOD BASE*	IDENTITY GROUPS	REGION
<i>DROUGHT-PRONE AND REGULARLY DEPENDENT ON FOOD/CASH-FOR-WORK</i>					
Gara Godo	Late 2011	Remotish but new municipality	Highly-populated; gardens – cash-crop coffee, root crops, fruit & vegetables; other land grain; agricultural & urban migration; PSNP	1 ethnicity 2 religions	SNNP
Aze Debo'a	Late 2011	Near zone town but remotish	Highly-populated; gardens – cash-crop coffee, root crops, fruit & vegetables; also grain; illegal migration ⁹ to South Africa; PSNP	1 ethnicity 1 religions	SNNP
Luqa	Late 2011	Very remote	Pastoralist in transition + small irrigation + Emergency Food Aid (EFA)	1 ethnicity 2 religions	SNNP
Do'oma	Late 2011	Nr <i>wereda</i> town but very remote	Vulnerable cereal + some irrigation + agricultural and urban migration + PSNP	3 ethnicities 2 religions	SNNP
Adele Keke	Late 2011	Near Haramaya & on main road	Cash-crop <i>chat</i> [some exported to the Gulf] + vulnerable cereal; irrigation + PSNP; commuting for urban work	1 ethnicity 1 religion	Oromia
Gelcha	Late 2011	Near town & main road but remote	Pastoralist in transition + small irrigation + PSNP	3 ethnicities 2 religions	Oromia
Korodegaga	Early 2010	Remotish	Vulnerable cereal + some irrigation + migration + PSNP	1 ethnicity 1 religion	Oromia
Shumsheha	Late 2011	Near Lalibela town	Sorghum, teff, beans, cattle, shoats some irrigation + migration + PSNP	1 ethnicity 2 religions	Amhara
Dinki	Early 2010	Quite remote	Vulnerable cereal + some irrigation + migration + EFA	2 ethnicities 2 religions	Amhara

⁹ Migrants have no official papers and are smuggled across Ethiopian borders and on to South Africa where they mostly make a living selling goods on the streets with some graduating to ownership of small shops.

COMMUNITY	FIELD-WORK	LOCATION	LIVELIHOOD BASE*	IDENTITY GROUPS	REGION
Geblen	Early 2010	Quite remote	Vulnerable cereal + a little irrigation + migration + PSNP	2 ethnicities 2 religions	Tigray
Harresaw	Late 2011	Quite remote	Vulnerable cereal + some irrigation + illegal migration to Saudi Arabia ¹⁰ + PSNP	1 ethnicity 1 religion	Tigray
<i>INDEPENDENT ECONOMIES IN AREAS WITH ADEQUATE RAIN</i>					
Girar	Early 2010	Outskirts of <i>wereda</i> town but remotish	Highly populated; gardens - <i>enset</i> + cash-crop <i>chat</i> & eucalyptus+ migration	1 ethnicity 4 religions	SNNP
Adado	2013	Remotish	[2003] Gardens: cash-crop coffee, <i>enset</i> , barley, maize	1 ethnicity 1+ religions	SNNP
Turufe	Early 2010	Increasingly near to expanding Shashemene	Food surplus & cash crop potatoes & grain; commuting for urban work	5+ ethnicities 4 religions	Oromia
Sirbana Godeti	2013	On main highway between Bishoftu and Mojo – 20km to each	[2003] Food surplus + cash crop grain (<i>tef</i> , wheat)	1 ethnicity; 3 religions	Oromia
Odadawata	2013	On main road between Adama and Asella	[2003] Food surplus + cash crop potatoes, irrigated vegetables & grain in 2003	1 ethnicity, 3 religions	Oromia
Oda Haro	2013	Remotish – 16 km east of Bako	[2003] Food surplus + cash crop grain (maize+), oilseed, peppers, <i>chat</i> in 2003	2+ ethnicities; 3 religions	Oromia
Somodo	2013	Remotish – 5 km from main road Jimma-Gambella; 20 km from <i>wereda</i> town	[2003] Food surplus + cash crop coffee, <i>chat</i> , and grain in 2003	2+ ethnicities; 5 religions	Oromia
Debre Berhan environs	2013	Near Debre Berhan town	[2003] In good years some crops sold for cash - barley, beans, wheat; livestock, dairy products; weather problem – frost; 1999-2003 regular food-for-work programme	1 ethnicity 1 religion	Amhara
Yetmen	Early 2010	On allweather road but remotish	Food surplus + cash crop grain; new irrigated vegetables; agricultural migration	1 ethnicity 1 religion	Amhara

* *Enset (false banana) takes 8 years to mature & is drought resistant; contents of stalk and stems are allowed to ferment and then used for food.*

Tef is a grain endemic to Ethiopia used to make injera – a fermented pancake.

Chat is a narcotic plant whose fresh leaves are chewed.

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) has provided annual food and/or cash to selected Public Works and direct beneficiaries since 2005.

4. Theory

The distinction between three types of theory spelled out in Section 2 (theorising, theoretical frameworks, and substantive propositions) and used in this section came from Mouzelis (1995).

Theorising

The complexity approach and theoretical frameworks have been developed through an ongoing process of interaction between ideas and evidence which started during the 1994 Village Studies. The search for sound knowledge foundations for the WeD research in Ethiopia in 2002 led me to explorations of '(critical) realism' (Archer 1995, Sayer 2000, Pawson 1989, Pawson and Tilly 1997) and 'complexity theory' (Byrne 1998). These related emerging paradigms informed the development of the ontological, epistemological and ideological foundations underlying the research (Bevan 2007 & 2009).

We rely on complexity theorising about how social continuity and change happen. During periods when complex social systems do not really change it is possible to identify *control parameters*– dominating aspects with a governing influence – which, through a complex set of feedback processes ensure that the system reproduces itself in much the same way. For community systems on stable trajectories there are a number of ways in which change may eventually occur. One is a huge and sudden event or intervention from outside such as a war, land-grab, pandemic or the discovery of oil. At the other extreme myriad cumulative small changes in control parameters over a long period may, in complexity social science language, push the community further 'from equilibrium' until it is ready to be sent in a new direction by a relatively small new event or

¹⁰ These migrants are mostly smuggled to Djibouti and taken across the Red Sea to Yemen in small boats; most travel on to Saudi Arabia.

intervention. In between, one or more meso changes may lead to relatively rapid moves towards disequilibrium and change, for example green revolution changes combined with irrigation potential and increasing market demand or rapid urban expansion eating away at the borders of adjacent rural *kebeles*¹¹.

Key theoretical frameworks

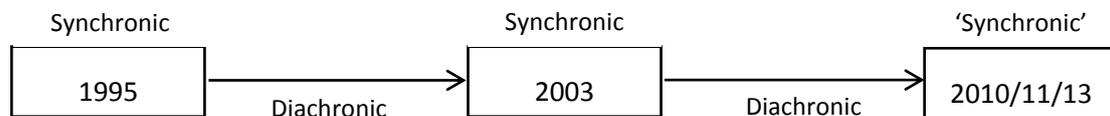
In this section we describe our synchronic-diachronic research framework in more detail, spell out the multiple perspectives we have taken on the communities, and describe two diachronic frameworks illustrating processes involved in community evolution and path-dependent trajectories.

The synchronic-diachronic research framework

Synchronic analyses of complex systems focus on a ‘point in time’ and use an ‘all-at-once’ logic to consider structures of systems. *Meaning* comes from difference and similarity and from (dis)connections and patterns.

Diachronic analyses follow the ‘sequential logic of a road’ and can answer two questions: why a current state was born of a prior state and why a certain state progressed to some future state. The focus is on process and *meaning* comes from the narrative produced through the tracing of plot and sequence. Figure 2 shows how we can conduct comparative synchronic analyses of the communities in 1995, 2003, and 2010/11/13 and diachronic ‘process-tracing’¹² of the trends and events driving community trajectories between 1995 and 2003 and 2003 and 2010/11/13. We can also compare the three sets of WIDE3 communities in early 2010, later 2011 and spring 2013 to identify common trends and idiosyncratic changes over the three years 2010-13.

Figure 2: Synchronic and diachronic analyses



The seven perspectives (synchronic) framework

Using Cilliers’ suggestion that more than one description of a complex system is possible we have looked at the communities from seven (synchronic) perspectives asking questions about (1) the community as a whole; (2) the community in its wider context; (3) household structures; (4) five domains of power/fields of action; (5) structures of inequality; (6) social interaction; and (7) types of social actor.

Perspective 1. The community in the wider context

Where is the community located in encompassing social, cultural, economic and political contexts?

Perspective 2. The community as a whole

What kind of community is it? How does it work as a whole? What are its main internal and contextual parameters? Which currently control its trajectory?

Perspective 3. Households

What is the local cultural ideal for household structures? What kinds of household structures actually exist? What are the important differences among households? How do households relate and interact with other households?

¹¹ *Kebeles* are the smallest unit of government in Ethiopia. The next level up is the *wereda*, often translated as district. Each *wereda* is made up of 20-30 *kebeles* and there are now almost 1000 *weredas* in Ethiopia.

¹² Process-tracing is a method used regularly by American political scientists to trace the sequencing and importance of trends and events in the lead up to an outcome of interest.

Perspective 4. Intermediate social organisation – five domains of power/fields of action

Community members are active in five institutional settings which are simultaneously domains of power and fields of action. These are:

The livelihood domain:

- smallholder agriculture and agricultural employment
- non-farm business and non-farm employment
- migration and remittances

The domain of 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

The domain of social re/pro/duction

- social networks
- social institutions: marriage, circumcision, inheritance, land/labour/oxen exchanges
- social organisations (including households)

The domain of community management

- community-initiated structures for decision-making and implementation
- *kebele* (community government) structures
- *wereda* (district) structures

The domain of ideas

- local customary repertoires
- local modern repertoires
- in-coming ideologies, religions, cultures and other ideas

Perspective 5. Community macro organisation - structures of inequality

How is the community structured in terms of class, wealth/poverty, and income? What forms do gendage¹³ inequalities and relations take? What other community-specific status markers structure inequality? Who are the community elites?

Perspective 6. Social interactions

The community system is reproduced and changed through the day-to-day actions and interactions of its members and relevant outsiders. What kinds of people do what in the five domains of power? What kinds of social interactions are involved?

Perspective 7. Social actors

Each social actor has a gendage, class/wealth position, ethnicity, religion, maybe other community-relevant social statuses, a personality, accumulated human resources and liabilities, and a personal history. How are individuals constrained and enabled by their histories, the roles open to them in the different fields of action, and their relative power positions in local structures of inequality?

Two diachronic frameworks

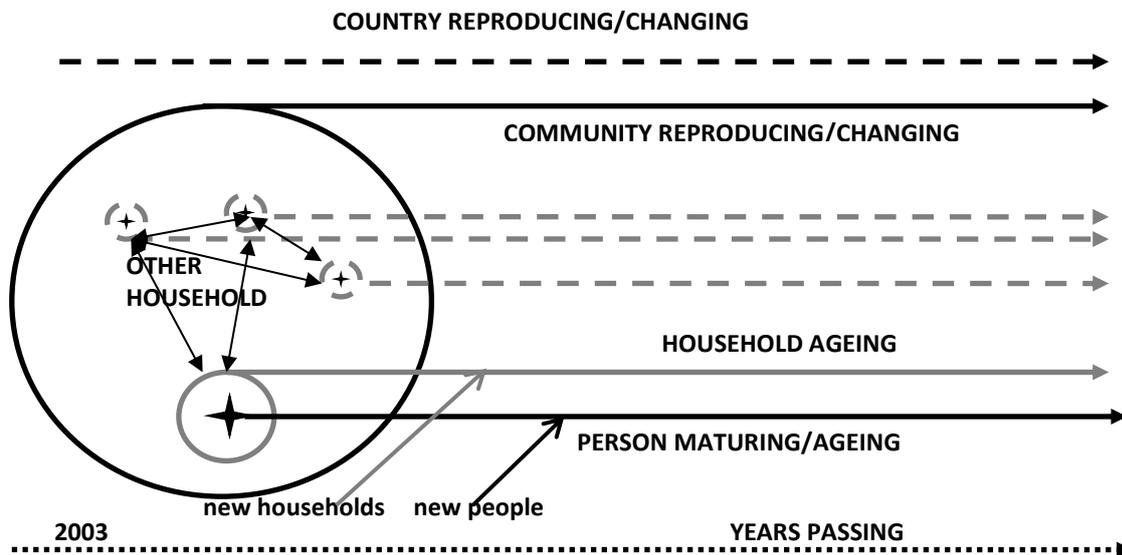
This section outlines two diachronic frameworks related to co-evolution and community trajectories.

¹³ In variable-oriented research gender and age are seen as independent causal variables which have separate independent effects on whatever the outcome under consideration. When the focus is on cases gender and age taken together describe different kinds of people with different kinds of bodies, minds and aspirations: for example what old women, adolescent boys, and five-year old girls do and their relations with other kinds of people in many respects are different.

The community co-evolving with context and sub-systems

Fig 4 depicts a community co-evolving with its households and people and wider context. Communities do not have life cycles as households and people do. The trajectory followed by each community system is the result of interactions among (1) a stream of external happenings to which people organised in household sub-systems have to respond and (2) creative activities generated from within the community.

Figure 4: Co-evolution of communities, country, households and people



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.

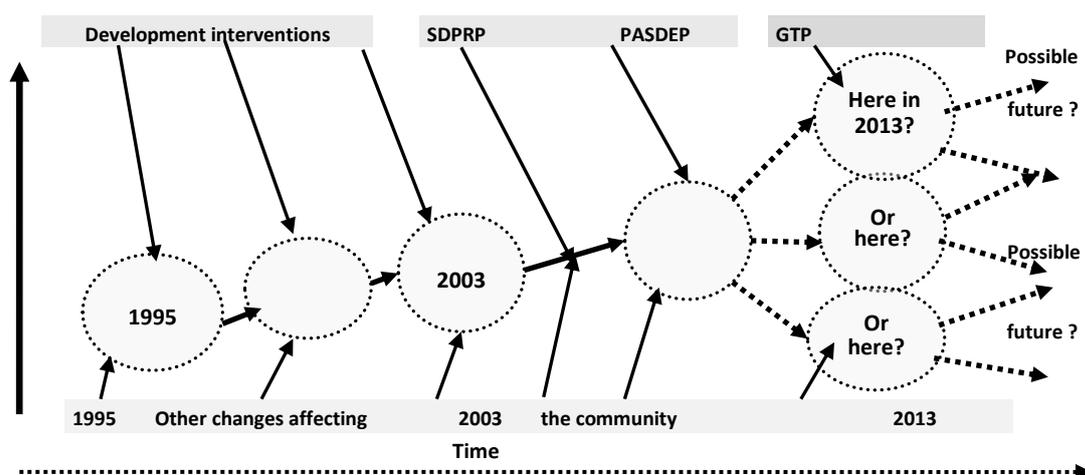
Men and women, youth and children 'co-evolving' with their communities and households are affected by what happens to each. Individual consequences depend on community trajectory, household trajectory, genderage, class-wealth, status, political connection, education, health, personal characteristics and chance. The complex of choices different kinds of people make in response to what happens to them also has consequences for the future trajectory of each community and, taking all communities together, for the country.

Community trajectories

What kind of trajectory is each community on? Where might each be heading? The framework in Figure 3 shows how development interventions related to government strategy plans (the SDPRP, the PASDEP and the GTP¹⁴) and wider changes in context have interacted with ongoing community processes since 1995.

¹⁴ The first government plan, the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme 2003-5, was followed by the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty 2005-10 and the Growth and Transformation Plan 2010-15.

Figure 3: Community trajectories



Substantive theory

Little in the way of substantive theory emerged from the exploratory Stage 1 project. Towards the end of the Stage 2 analysis I developed a theory about drivers of change and continuity in rural communities which is described below in Section 8.

5. Research strategy

Case-based research methods

In the original research design we chose as cases three kinds of open and dynamic complex social system: the communities and the households and people which constitute them¹⁵. As shown below this choice had implications for how we asked our questions and to whom we put them. We also had to choose the research topics and deconstruct them into manageable ‘variates’ whose traces at the time of the research we would be measuring quantitatively or qualitatively. In conventional quantitative research these would be called ‘variables’ but I have been persuaded by David Byrne’s rallying cry ‘Death to the variable!’ (2002: 29). Byrne argues that the term ‘variable’ is often used in a way that implies that measurements, such as education measured by years of schooling or income, are substances or forces with causal powers. But variables are not real; ‘(w)hat exists are complex systems.. which involve both the social and the natural, and which are subject to modification on the basis of human action, both individual and social (*op cit*: 31). What we measure are ‘traces of the systems which make up reality’ (*op cit*: 32).

Research design - what to ask

We used the seven perspectives framework in a number of ways. For example, the ‘Modernisation variate master list’¹⁶, i.e. traces of modernisation processes (Table 2) was used in Stage 2 to design questions and organise the Modernisation Evidence Bases matrices for 1995, 2003 and 2011. The *community features* list relates to the community as a whole in its context; the *livelihoods* list to the livelihoods domain of power; the *lives* list to the human re/pro/duction domain; and the *society and government* list to the social re/pro/duction, community management, and ideas domains.

¹⁵ In Section 8, Research Answers, under ‘New Directions’ I describe how we have started to use the data to analyse control parameters and sub-parameters as cases.

¹⁶ Most of these topics were covered in the 1995 Village Studies (WIDE1) and a large number of them in WIDE2 in 2003.

Table 2: Research framework – Modernisation variate master list

COMMUNITY FEATURES	LIVELIHOODS	LIVES	SOCIETY & GOVERNMENT
Terrain	Local economy	Population	Elders roles and activities
Ecology + environment	Credit, saving & debt	Household types & inequalities	Religious organisations and activities
Weather	Shocks & processes leading to food insecurity	Wealth differences	Other community-initiated organisations and activities
Land use	Land access	Social protection	Physical safety and security
Settlement pattern	Smallholder farming - crops	Class relationships	Group disagreements and conflicts
Urbanisation + public buildings	Smallholder farming - livestock	Genderage differences: children	Justice
External relationships	Irrigation	Genderage differences: youth	Informal welfare regime
Electricity	Other farm technologies	Genderage differences: adults	Governance structures: <i>kebele</i> and sub- <i>kebele</i>
Communications	Inward investors	Genderage differences: elderly dependents	Community and <i>kebele</i> leadership
Roads and transport	Co-operative farming	Marriage, widowhood and divorce	Government-community relations
	Agriculture market linkages - upstream	Gender and inheritance	Community modern repertoire of ideas
	Agriculture market linkages - downstream	Gender relationships: nurturing, income-earning, power relations	Community conservative repertoire of ideas
	Prices and inflation	Inter-generational relationships	Incoming religious ideas
	Agricultural labour	Elite-mass differences	Incoming government ideas
	Labour-sharing/co-operation	Vulnerability & social exclusion	Incoming urban ideas
	Diversification and non-farm activities	Other status differences and relationships	Incoming global ideas
	Migration	Social participation	Key clashes of ideas
		Deviance	
		Housing	
		Household assets	
		Household expenditure	
		Other consumer goods	
		Domestic technologies	
		Household work + workers	
		Leisure activities	
		Clothes	
		Food, diet, nutrition	
		Drinking water	
		Common illnesses and treatment-seeking	
		Producing children	
		Raising children: nurturing, socialisation & non-formal learning	
		Education generally	

Research instruments - how to ask

The Research Officers were given Modules¹⁷ (Table 3) to guide semi-structured interviews. They also observed and participated in community life to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the community and took a wide range of photographs. The contents of the research instruments responded to inputs from donor and research officer workshops. Phase 1 fieldwork reports informed the design of the Phase 2 modules.

¹⁷ Available on request.

Table 3: The WIDE3 Stage 1 and Stage 2 research modules

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
	Phase 1	Phase 1	Phase 1
M1	<i>Wereda</i> perspective 2003-10 (1)	<i>Wereda</i> perspective 2003-12	<i>Wereda</i> perspective
M2	<i>Kebele</i> perspective 2003-10	Community trajectory 2003-12	Community trajectory 2003-13
M3	Community trajectory 2003-10	<i>Kebele</i> perspective	<i>Kebele</i> perspective
M4	Community experiences of interventions	Experiences of recent interventions	Farming
	Phase 2	Phase 2	
M5	<i>Wereda</i> perspective (2)	Community organisations and leaders	Non-farming activities
M6	Interventions & households	Other community member vignettes	Young people's perspective
M7	Interventions & dependent adults	Households & interventions	Households & interventions
M8	Organisations & interventions	Marginalised people and interventions	Key informants' experiences & perspectives
			Phase 2
M9	Key development actors	Youth comparison	Site-specific gap-filling
M10	(i) Gender relations (ii) HIV/AIDS	PSNP	Site-specific follow-up
M11	Site-specific follow-up	Site-specific topics	Research Officer topics
M12	Research Officer topics	Research Officer topics	

Phase 1 modules

Phase 2 modules

Research respondents - who to ask

In each site male and female Research Officers conducted separate interviews. Women and girls were always interviewed by the women fieldworkers but, given that there were more questions for men due to their greater representation in official positions, the women also interviewed some men. Respondents included *wereda* officials, *kebele* officials, and others who were particularly knowledgeable about the community and its history. The same questions about interventions were put to rich, middle-wealth and poor men and women and there were in-depth interviews in each community with four male household heads and their wives from households of different wealths, plus rich and poor women heading households. There were also interviews with government employees working in the *kebele*, government volunteers from the community holding *kebele* Cabinet, Council, Committee and other official positions, leaders of community-initiated organisations, elders, religious leaders, clan leaders, model farmers, investors, traders, other business people, skilled workers, daily labourers, returned migrants, ex-soldiers, traditional health workers, youth, and various kinds of vulnerable and excluded people.

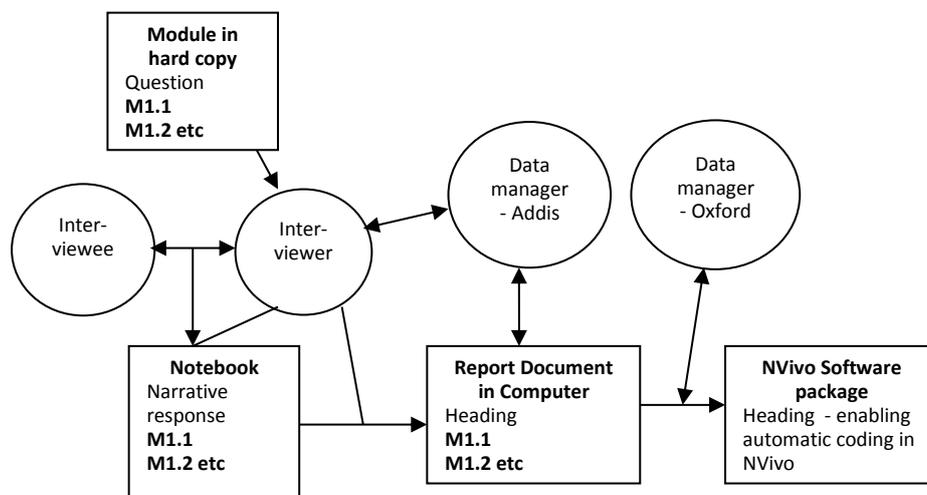
6. Fieldwork process and the making of the database

The *fieldwork* has been conducted by trained Ethiopian social scientists; the WIDE1 fieldworkers were all male but in WIDE2 and WIDE 3 male and female researchers worked together in each site. By Stage 3 eleven of the twelve researchers had worked on a previous WIDE project and were familiar with the approach. They used the Modules to guide interviews during which they wrote field notes which were used to produce Report Documents paralleling the Modules. Figure 5 shows the journey which the Stage 2 data¹⁸, in the form of a narrative guided and set down by the Research Officer, made from the mouth of the interviewee to the database organised in the NVivo9 software

¹⁸ In Stage 1 the programme was only used with data from two sites.

package. Community lead researchers¹⁹ loaded the Report Documents into NVivo.

Figure 5: Data journey - from interviewee to NVivo software package



7. Interpretation and analysis process

The interpretation and analysis process by the lead researchers began after the Phase 1 fieldwork with a Research Officer de-briefing workshop. This produced tentative findings which were shared with a network of people working for donors, NGOs or as researchers or consultants in a Rapid Briefing Note. In Stages 1 and 2 the feedback contributed to the design of the Phase 2 fieldwork which was followed by another de-briefing workshop and Rapid Briefing Note. The lead researchers then each wrote two *individual community case studies*. In Stage 3 we are conducting most fieldwork in a longer Phase 1, then writing draft community reports, using a short Phase 2 to fill gaps and follow-up community-specific issues.

The community reports are organised under four main headings with detailed sub-headings: the community as a whole, households, structures of inequality, and fields of action/domains of power. They are revised following comments from the fieldworkers. They are book-length reports and a good read in their own right but they also form part of the evidence base for the Final report.

The *synchronic comparative analysis process* began in the de-briefing workshops and was taken forward in dissemination workshops in Addis Ababa following completion of the community reports. During Stage 2 we made a clearer distinction than we had in Stage 1 between synchronic and *diachronic analyses*, with separate sections in the Summary Report on (1) what was happening in 2011 and (2) the trajectories of the eight communities. To support conclusions in both areas the community reports were used, along with return to the original data, and where appropriate the 1995 and 2003 databases, to construct four matrix-based Evidence Bases on modernisation, community-government (dis)connects, the impacts of development interventions on different kinds of people, and the longer-term impacts of development interventions. These four Evidence Bases were used with the community reports to write five related summarising Annexes. These Annexes were then used to produce the Summary Report which underpinned a range of headline findings for policymakers, a few of which appear below.

The longitudinal data related to the eight Stage 2 communities were used to produce academic papers using *paired diachronic comparisons* (Bevan *et al* 2012, Carter and Eyerusalem 2012; Dom

¹⁹ In Stage 2 Rebecca Carter, Catherine Dom, Alula Pankhurst and myself were each community leads for two sites.

2012; Pankhurst 2012). These paper were presented in a panel at the International Conference on Ethiopian Studies (ICES) in October 2012 alongside a paired comparison of two Stage 1 sites (Bevan *et al* 2013) and a paper on one of the pastoralist sites written by two Research Officers (Tefera and Aster 2012).

8. Research answers

Here are examples of the five different types of research answer described above.

New frameworks

During the Stage 1 research we inductively developed three (synchronic) theoretical frameworks to show how macro development interventions enter the rural communities they are designed to change. We used them to introduce new angles and questions in Stage 2.

1. The policy journey

Figure 6: The policy journey

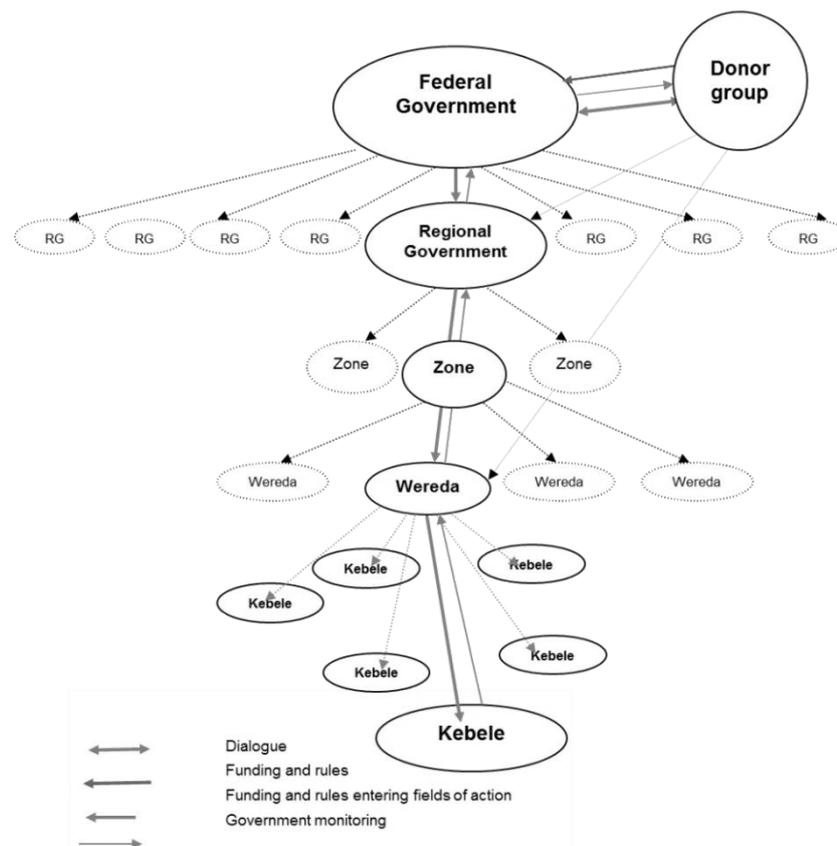


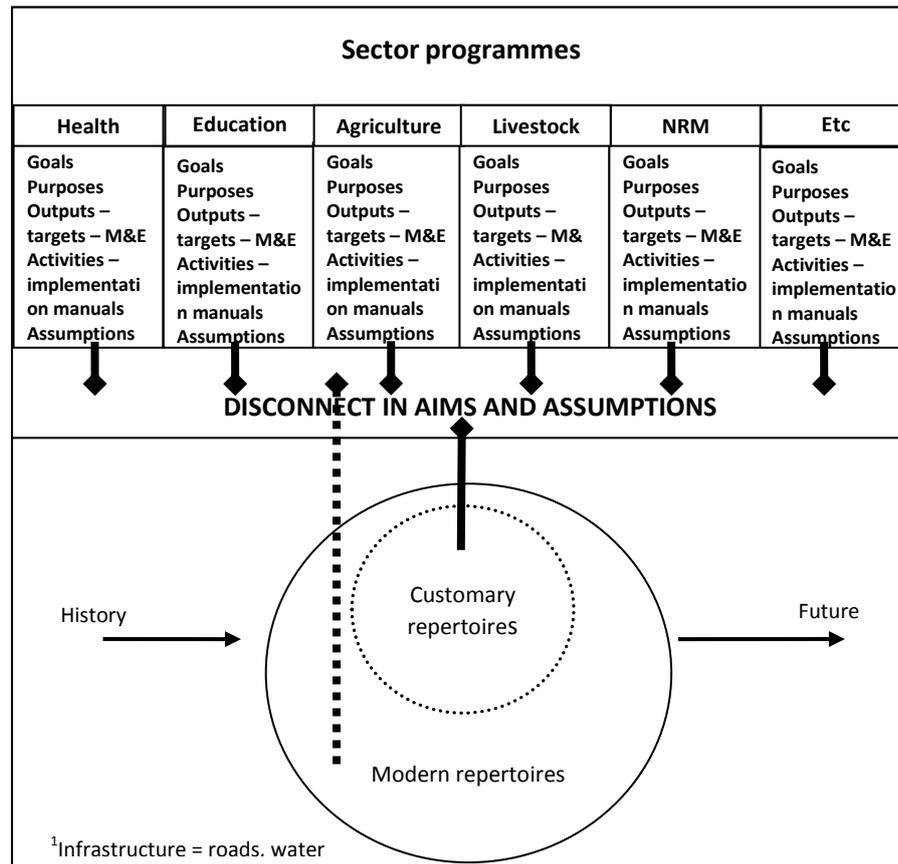
Figure 6 shows how most development interventions are transmitted to Ethiopian rural communities and how information about their progress is relayed back to government. As policies travel down the government chain at each stage it is not possible to implement the policy as designed and officials at each level have to be creative in dealing with risks not anticipated in the policy design (Hirschman, 1967). While our focus is on the *kebele* and its interactions with the *wereda* we are interested in how what happened compared with what federal and donor policymakers expected to happen.

2. Cultural disconnects

Development interventions are attempts to change the technological, institutional and 'ideas' landscapes within which community systems are working. Figure 7 depicts potential *synchronic*

cultural disconnects between the aims and assumptions implicit in the mental models (ideas) and institutional designs (norms and rules) associated with top-down sector policies and programmes and local beliefs, values, norms and ways of doing things which we are calling cultural repertoires. A simple example is the clash between nationally-designed school timetables and local daily and seasonal demands for household labour. This framework of cultural disconnects was used as one focus for a deeper exploration of sector interventions in Stage 2.

Figure 7: Cultural disconnects between top-down and local repertoires

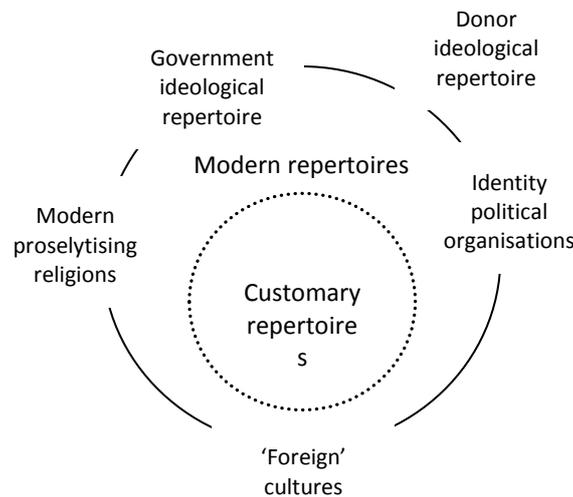


Taking a *diachronic perspective* on cultural change these communities have never been totally cut off from external influences though the degree to which such influences have entered over the years is related to levels of remoteness. Religious missionaries have operated in some parts of the country since the 19th century and since the fall of Haile Selassie local cultures have been increasingly penetrated by a number of different kinds of modern ideological repertoire. Through time aspects of these repertoires have fed into local repertoires in re-iterative processes of cultural 'bricolage', a term that describes 'the muddle' that happens when new rules and ideas meet long-standing ones (Pain and Cantor 2010: 34).

It is possible to look into the muddle and identify two ideal-type cultural repertoires available at any point in time: the local customary repertoires and local modern repertoires depicted in Figure 8. *Local customary repertoires* do adapt but they are slow to change. Given Ethiopia's cultural heterogeneity rural customary repertoires are diverse; however all contain traces of external values and beliefs which entered them during the Imperial era which ended in 1974, the military socialist regime of the *Derg* in power from 1974 to 1991, and the current EPRDF regime which came to power in 1991. *Local modern repertoires* contain the most up-to-date mental models and institutions accepted by community opinion leaders.

Local customary and modern repertoires are promulgated by cultural entrepreneurs, for example elders and teachers. People can pick and mix ideas from the different repertoires and may also be influenced by incoming *ideological repertoires* and other ‘foreign’ ideas diffused in less organised ways. In recent years local repertoires have come under increasing pressure from incoming ideas associated with religion (Protestant, Muslim and Orthodox Christian), politics, urbanisation, and globalisation (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Customary cultural repertoires under pressure



3. Social interactions in the development interface space

The cultural contradictions between top-down and community development models are not easily resolved and they cause difficulties for those whose official positions require them to bridge the cultural divide.

Figure 9: Social interactions in the development interface

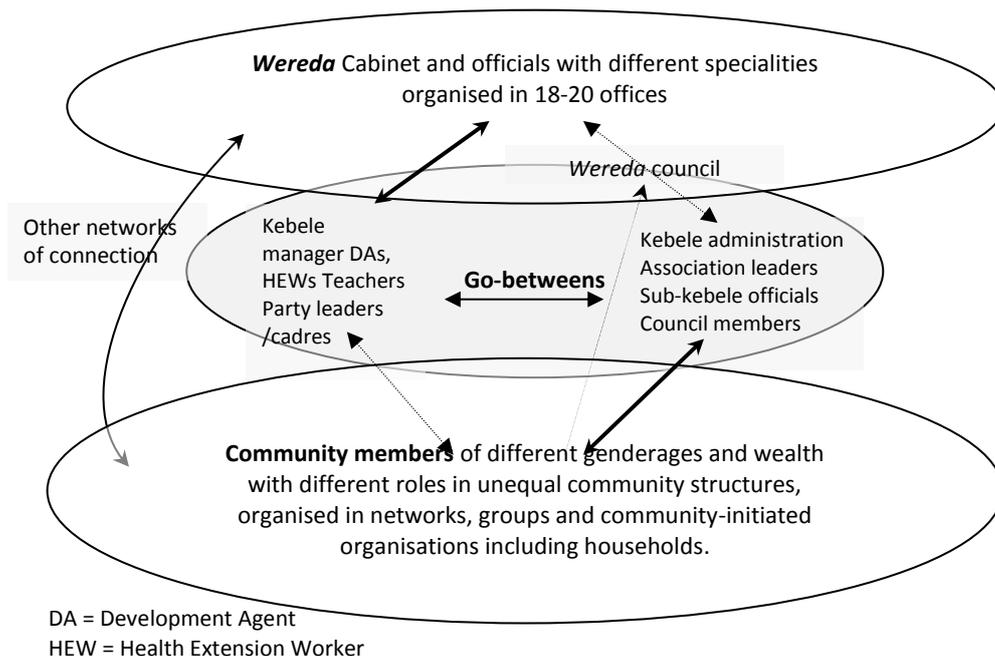


Figure 9 shows the key development players in the *wereda*, *kebele*, and communities and identifies a set of 'go-between' government employees who work in the development interface space interacting with *wereda* officials and community members. *Kebele* managers, Development Agents (Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources), Health Extension Workers and teachers mostly, though not always, come from outside the community. They are employed by the *wereda* and given performance objectives (targets) which, if not met, may have repercussions for their careers. A second set of 'go-betweens' – *kebele* and sub-*kebele* officials and *kebele* Council members - are (s)elected from within the community and embedded in community networks and structures whilst by their function they are also linked to higher government structures and increasingly to party structures. They are unpaid 'go-between' government volunteers. This framework was used in Stage 2 to design new questions and inform data interpretation.

There are four types of response that members of a community can make in the face of planned change from above: exit, voice, loyalty, foot-dragging. We have started to explore these different responses.

Some empirical conclusions

The Stage 2 communities in late 2011

The headline findings from the Stage 2 Summary report ran to twelve pages. Here a small selection is presented.

- There were reports of *climate change* effects from all sites including increases in temperature, shorter rainy seasons, more erratic and intense rains, unseasonal rains which damaged crops, streams drying up, and decreasing levels of groundwater.
- *Urbanisation processes* had affected all communities: in one *kebele* a new highway was a growth point for a tiny town, in three *kebeles* small towns were growing fast, while four *kebele* centres were in commutable distance of growing towns.
- All communities had suffered *annual rain shortages* whose severity varied by year; all had suffered at least one severe drought since 2003. Nevertheless the six agriculturalist sites had experienced *economic growth* related to improvements in roads, increases in agricultural and non-farm incomes and the PSNP. There had been no equivalent economic development in the two pastoralist sites although there were signs of a possible take-off in the more remote one.
- *Landlessness* was a problem in all sites, especially for youth.
- A *richer farmer class* was solidifying in the agriculturalist sites with many diversifying into trade or other businesses.
- The main focus of *agricultural extension* was *cereals and fertiliser* and the *shift to higher-value* crops such as onions, peppers, spices, sesame, *chat*, coffee, and eucalyptus was *mainly farmer-led*.
- Not all government-provided fertiliser and seeds were suitable for local soils and climates.
- Only two *wereda* agricultural offices were actively promoting *irrigation*.
- Five of the sites had been affected by different kinds of *inward investment* involving loss of community land but also new employment opportunities.
- Few livelihood interventions focused on *women* and *youth* were sustained for any length of time.
- In all communities provision of *health services*, *drinking water* and *education* had expanded considerably since 2003 bringing many benefits
- Ideal households were still *patriarchal* although men's authority over women and youth had declined and in some households greater female economic participation was paralleled with greater male domestic participation
- *Malaria* regularly caused deaths in the majority of communities.

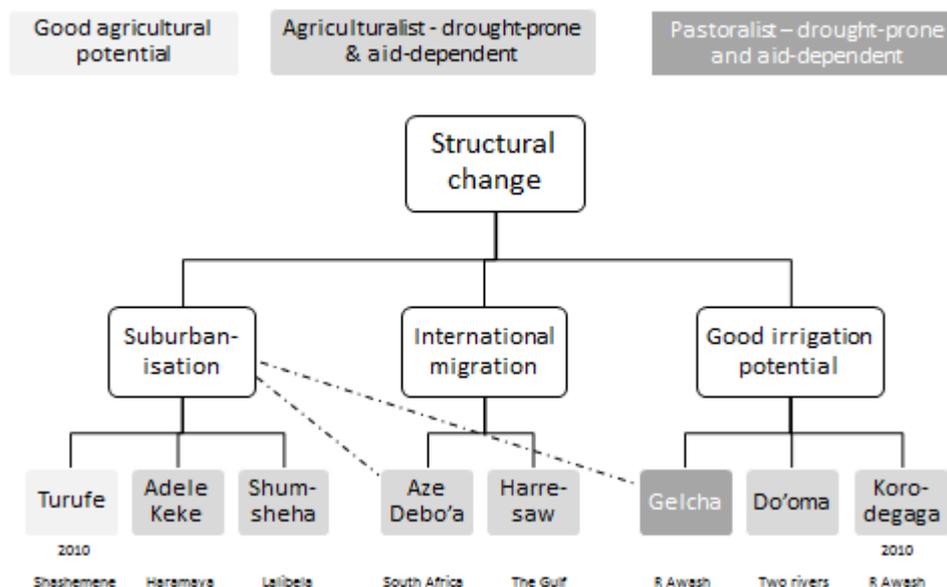
- Stigma meant that researching *HIV/AIDS* was impossible.
- *Very poor people* could not afford to use health and education services and use by poor people was restricted.
- In all communities there were *strong social networks* and numerous *community-initiated organisations*; informal social protection involved neighbours, relatives and wider kin, friends and in some places Protestant churches and/or clan/lineage structures.
- Religious identity was an increasing focus for organisation; *youth interest in religion* had increased.
- *Cultural entrepreneurs* potentially bringing new beliefs, knowledge, norms and values into the communities included *wereda* officials, school teachers and extension workers, opposition party followers, organisations associated with ethnic identities, religious leaders and missionaries, returned ex-soldiers, international and urban migrants, and media actors.
- In all communities *government-community relations* were influenced by people's appreciation of new infrastructure, improved security and services, particularly education and health, and some community-specific interventions. However, there were also instances of violent conflict, refusal to co-operate, foot-dragging, and resentful conformity.

The Stage 1 and Stage 2 communities: looking to the future

In Stage 2 we took forward a *prospective diachronic approach* introduced in Stage 1 which identified potential future trajectories for each community focusing on a few key internal and local parameters. Of the fourteen Stage 1 and Stage 2 communities eleven were drought-prone and aid-dependent while the others were in areas of good economic potential²⁰. Figures 10 and 11 divide them into communities which were experiencing the pre-cursors of big structural change and those which continued to reproduce structures which had been in place for some time.

Eight sites, seven of which were drought-prone and aid-dependent (Figure 10) were on *the edge of change* as a result of changes either externally driven or related to an internal control parameter.

Figure 10: Communities on the edge of a structural change process

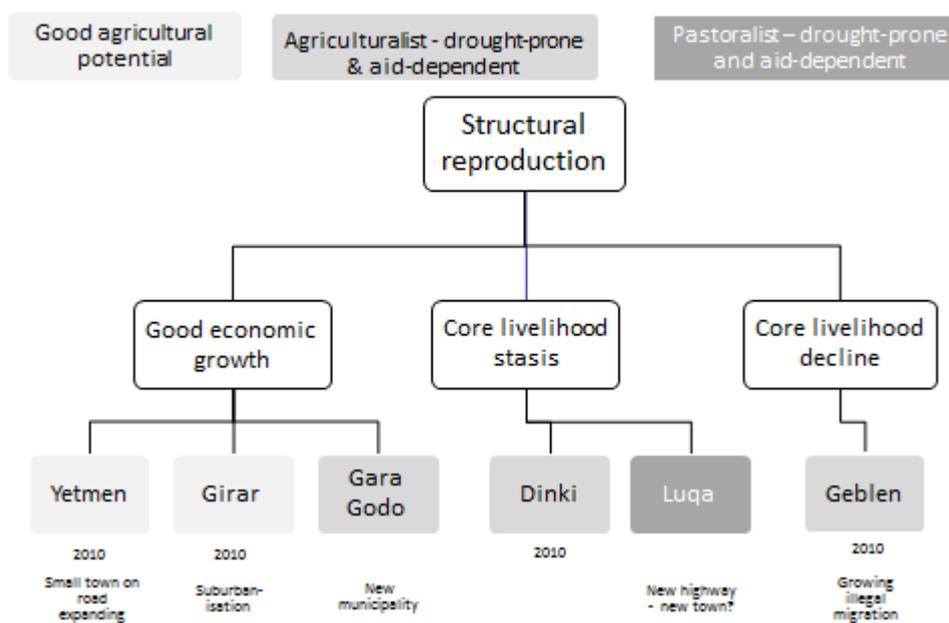


²⁰ The six sites being studied in Stage 3 are all in areas of good potential.

The cities of Lalibela and Haramaya were expanding towards Shumsheha and Adele Keke, increasing numbers were migrating to South Africa from Aze Debo'a and to Saudi Arabia from Harresaw, while the good irrigation potentials in Gelcha, Do'oma and Korodegaga were likely to be more fully exploited in the next few years. The site of good agricultural potential, Turufe, was doing relatively well in 2010 exporting potatoes and grain to Shashemene and Addis Ababa, but Shashemene city was expanding very fast and already a piece of land at the edge of the *kebele* had been incorporated into Kuyera town which itself had recently become a suburb of Shashemene.

Three of the six communities with *no strong signs of structural change* (Figure 11) were experiencing good economic growth: Yetmen (good agricultural potential) and Girar (*chat*, eucalyptus and considerable urban migration) in early 2010 and Gara Godo (coffee, diversification, small urbanisation) at the end of 2011.

Figure 11: Communities involved in a process of structural reproduction



In Dinki and Luqa there had been little growth. In 2010 remote Dinki's farming livelihood potential seemed to be fully exploited and there were no local off-farm opportunities and, while in late 2011 there were small moves in Luqa towards more agriculture, a little livestock fattening and a small roadside settlement, the core pastoralist livelihood had not changed. The Geblen economy was in decline early in 2010 as a result of repeated severe droughts and, while there was some (growing) illegal migration to Saudi Arabia it was not associated with the level of remittances and cash brought back. diasporic links, irrigated agriculture and other local investment found in Harresaw in late 2011.

Substantive theory

Looking ahead to the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan period in 2015 and beyond we have identified some wider less predictable forces for change with the potential to affect the WIDE communities. On the economic front there may be commercial investment in large-scale farming, small and larger scale industrial investment, and formalisation of the informal sector aimed at increasing the tax base. There is uncertainty in the political arena with, on the one hand, the prospect of further state/party penetration of communities, the private sector and civil society, and on the other, the pursuit by a growing class of rural-based relatively wealthy farmers, traders and businessmen of a market-led route to prosperity, and the possibility that organisations with local roots, including religious and ethnic networks, will get more active in the political arena. As a result

of increasing education and greater participation in income-generating activities women’s voices should grow stronger within the household and in the first instance, in economic and social domains, while the responses of the growing group of more and less educated youth to their difficult economic prospects may include a desire for political change. Illegal international migration is likely to increase exponentially creating diasporic linkages to some very different cultures.

Given this wider uncertain future we are theorising that conditions in four main areas will govern community trajectories: (1) what we are calling ‘place’, (2) the evolving state of the local economy, (3) the evolving state of the local political settlement, and (4) what is going on in the wider context. Table 4 shows ten parameters falling within these four areas, all of which are important for community trajectory continuity and change: a *big* change in one parameter could rapidly knock the system on to a new trajectory, or *incremental interacting changes in a number of parameters* could move the system in a chaotic direction opening up the possibility of structural change.

Table 4 : Parameters guiding rural community trajectories

Place		The state of the local economy			Political settlement		Wider context		
Terrain, settlement, climate	Remoteness	Agri-technologies	Farming system	Livelihood diversification	Community fault-lines	Govt – society relns	Relations with neighbours	Cultural imports	Strategic location

Place

‘Place’ encompasses two aspects. The first, *terrain, settlement, climate*, responds to the question ‘How (relatively) easy is it to grow crops, keep livestock and live here?’ The question for the second, *remoteness*, is ‘How easy is it to access people outside the community, markets, services, etc?’.

The state of the local economy

This has three aspects. The *farming system* question is ‘What crops and livestock are produced and how well do they work with the *place*?’ The question relating to *agro-technologies* is ‘What agricultural technologies are currently used and how well do they work with the *place*?’ The third question is about *livelihood diversification*: ‘What off-farm work opportunities are there and how do they fit with the *place*?’

Local political settlements

The first aspect is *community fault-lines*: ‘Considering identity group differences²¹, gender relations, adult-youth relations, and rich-poor relations how integrated is the community?’ The question related to *society-government relations* is ‘How strong is the political settlement between the community and the government and what is it based on?’

Wider context

Here we introduce three aspects of the wider contexts of the communities. Considering *relations with neighbours* the questions are ‘What is the state of relations with wider identity groups (friends and enemies) in the neighbourhood? How dangerous are potential or existing resource conflicts?’ The question about *cultural imports* is ‘What are the consequences of incoming religious and political ideologies and new ideas from diasporas, towns, and elsewhere?’ Finally in relation to *strategic location* we ask ‘What economic plans does the government have for the wider area?’

This new theory was developed towards the end of the Stage 2 analysis and has not yet been brought into dialogue with the existing data; we plan to do this for all twenty sites at the end of Stage 3.

²¹ For example ethnic, clan, lineage, and/or religious differences

Revisions to research methods

While we have been concerned to maintain comparability across WIDE1, WIDE2 and WIDE3, and the three WIDE3 stages by focusing on the same topics we have revised the research protocols before each new project to take account of learning from previous projects. WIDE3 Stage 1 built on WIDE1 and WIDE2 but was still exploratory in many areas. We learned a lot about the communities, the usefulness of theoretical frameworks, and some things that were right and wrong about our fieldwork planning, research instruments, analysis process, and write-up plan. Nevertheless Stage 2 was also somewhat exploratory while generating notably better data, a deeper understanding of how Ethiopia's rural communities were working and where they might be heading, and a number of new ideas.

In both Stages 1 and 2 fieldwork Phases 1 and 2 were of equal length with Phase 1 seen partially as an initial 'recce' of the communities to be used to inform the design of Phase 2. The write-ups of the community reports followed the completion of all fieldwork. In Stage 3 using our improved understanding some of our modules and questions are more focused and most of the fieldwork is being conducted in one long Phase, following which we will use the data to write draft community reports. We will then return for a shorter fieldwork phase to fill gaps and follow-up on community-specific issues.

Following completion of Stage 3 we will be exploring the use of new case-based modes of analysis for synchronic and diachronic comparisons of all twenty WIDE communities.

New directions

Until the closing stages of the Stage 2 analysis the cases our research focused on were complex systems: the communities, and their key sub-systems of households and people. The first attempt to compare important features of the fourteen Stage 1 and Stage 2 communities suggested it would be interesting and useful for policymakers to consider some of these as cases to be compared. In this new enterprise we started with six important constituents of three of the parameters in Table 4:

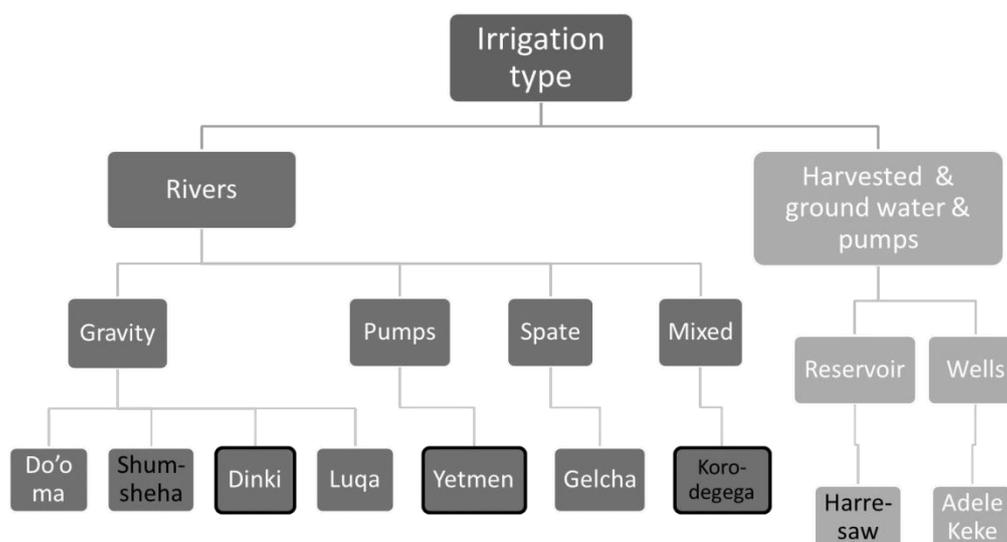
Under *Place* → *Remoteness* we selected (1) the case of **roads and bridges** and (2) the case of **urbanisation**.

Under *The state of the local economy* → *Agri-technologies* we selected (3) the case of **irrigation** and under *The state of the local economy* (4) the case of **livelihood diversification**.

Under *Wider context* → *Cultural imports* we selected (5) the case of **migration links** and under *Wider context* → *Strategic location* the case of **loss of community land**.

The case of irrigation is given as an example here. Nine communities had notable irrigation. As Figure 12 shows water sources and technologies varied considerably though there had been no studies of water potential and government was only involved in some promotion of irrigation in two of the communities.

Figure 12: The case of irrigation – communities with potential



Black font communities have drip irrigation; outlined communities researched in 2010

9. Rhetoric and praxis

From the beginning of WIDE3 we have tried to engage with donors based in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian government, academics and NGOs in Ethiopia, non-resident academics with an interest in Ethiopia, and UK-based academics with an interest in methods for development-related research. Our main vehicles have been regular small workshops and meetings with Addis-based donors and government officials, Rapid Briefing Notes emerging during the project, the Final Report and academic papers and presentations. We have also regularly sent workshop powerpoints, briefing notes, the Final Report and academic papers to the WIDE3 ‘worknet’ which in 2013 had around 100 members including donor and NGO employees, academics and consultants. We invented the term ‘worknet’ in the hope that members would get involved in the project and contribute comments and ideas in workshops and via email and this has increasingly been happening. However we face three major problems: very high turnover of overworked donor and NGO employees; a dearth of academics with time and/or inclination to get involved in this kind of research; and a disconnect between donor and government mental models which has made dialogue between them very difficult. All these can be seen as symptoms of a dysfunctional ‘dynamic open complex international development system’.

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