Key messages from the WIDE evidence

- The WIDE research documents an exceptionally energetic state-led trajectory of rural transformation: it also suggests outcomes could be improved by **closer attention to qualitative process** alongside quantitative targets at the *kebele* and sub-*kebele* levels.

- **Over-concentration of responsibility** and **heavy workloads** amongst *kebele* and "development team" leaders are patterns that regularly seem to compromise the quality of development interventions in WIDE study sites: this sometimes also seems to have the effect of undermining community confidence in equity or inclusion.

- To improve outcomes*, kebele* authorities should be further supported to design plans and packages that increasingly closely **target the specific needs** of each community.

- GoE might usefully review relations between the three branches of government at *wereda* and *kebele* levels, and consider ways to boost the autonomy of **judicial and representative structures**, their local accessibility, and practical utility for citizens.

- Relations between *kebele* **managers and executives** represent another important entry point for boosting **accountability and oversight** for quality service delivery.

- The efficacy *in practice* of the **system of "models,"** their roles and relations with DAs/HEWs, and how the activities, skills, leadership and technologies they show impact on their wider communities, all need close monitoring: WIDE data tend to show a recurrent disconnect between administrative and community perceptions.

- They also suggest fostering **female involvement** in executive and political as well as development structures would pay dividends; as would a closer focus on **rural youth**.

- Whilst strong and co-ordinated political leadership has been central to pro-poor economic change, WIDE data also indicate that *kebele* and *wereda* leaders could be supported to **deepen** their **learning/collaboration with non-state/-political agents**.

- GoE could usefully consider establishing a **thinktank** for testing and experimenting with **models of local governance and policy practice**: as the economy diversifies, and constraints on communications and local institutional capacity change, this might help communities **retain, extend or develop new best practice** that is **locally owned**.

Introduction: harnessing the potential of the micro

In December 2010, Meles Zenawi gave an interview in which he commented on the government's determination to create a system where

> *"every group, every village is able to design its own plan [… thus making] it possible for people to release their own energies, maximize the impact of their own assets in the overall framework of our plan."[i]*

The very great value of the dataset generated by WIDE is that it **advances understanding of fundamental ongoing change precisely at this level of the village microcosm**, where it is experienced by citizens: illuminating what works and what doesn't; how the processes are understood, and sometimes misunderstood; and how perceptions of neighbours can vary dramatically about the pros and cons of "development" as undertaken by themselves, other groups of their peers and families, or their local administrators, representatives, politicians, and elders, whether individually or working together.

The WIDE 3 community profiles document an energetic state-led trajectory of rural transformation since 2010, and the rapid and profound processes of change which are resulting from it: many remarkably productive, rewarding, or profitable for many – usually most - of those involved. The research naturally also provides rich and useful evidence of the range of frustrations, anxieties, tensions and grievances that come with change.

Intended as a resource for ongoing thinking about how to improve outcomes from Ethiopia's model of transformation, this Discussion Brief reviews some of the more problematic aspects of practice that seem to recur across all or several of the 20 WIDE communities, focusing on **patterns that transcend anecdote**. Short of policy prescription, it identifies a number of issues and considerations which policy makers in the Ethiopian Government (GoE) and their development partners (DPs) might have in mind as they continue to collaborate to unleash the potential, energy and resources of Ethiopia's rural citizens.

"Packages" that work for each community

As the late PM's observation notes, a strength of Ethiopia's development vision is its recognition and empowerment of diversity. A key message of WIDE 3 is that this heterogeneity extends beyond the Regional State or *wereda* to the micro level: within the *kebele*, and sub-*kebele got* or zone, to development teams, 1-to-5 networks, families and individuals. This means that **"one size" very clearly does not "fit all"** in terms of development interventions (cf. also Brief No.1).

WIDE 3 data document a national context in which the scope of these interventions at sub-*kebele* level is broad and ambitious, and often highly effective. Their design and implementation is regularly driven by those at *wereda* or higher levels: in line with research that suggests strong "supply side" leadership may be key to accelerated socio-economic change in certain transitional circumstances,[ii] this has generated positive outcomes (e.g. re MDGs) at the macro level. Nevertheless WIDE 3 data also show how – in practice - insufficient understanding of the micro-dynamics and needs of individual *kebeles* or *gots* / sub-*kebele* zones can lead to inappropriate or poorly implemented "packages," generating frustrations between individuals, communities and their government leaders.

Despite recent government moves to address these problems, several WIDE sites demonstrate ongoing weaknesses in **helping communities innovate to exploit emerging linkages or opportunities**, for instance re local urbanisation and new markets: members of a peri-urban community complained of being set standard extension production targets, rather than objectives better related to exploiting (productive and 'value adding') benefits and opportunities in a neighbouring town (Gurage/Girar); individuals in a rural but integrated site were keen to take up unrecognised market opportunities for craftwork learned from a neighbouring *kebele*, but found it difficult to win support (Jimma/Somodo); a coffee producing area wanted a better road to export its crop (Gedeo/Adado), whilst a community growing vegetables on irrigated land sought a bridge over the Awash to improve its market access (East Shewa / Korodegaga) – both without success. Similarly the data illuminate **differences regarding the prioritisation of investment in infrastructure**, with urgent local priorities delayed in favour of priorities defined elsewhere: the construction of buildings, for instance, elicited resistance in several cases. Other examples include the lack of provision of drinking water in East Shewa / Gelcha and in one inaccessible part of East Tigray / Harresaw (even where the community had collected money for water supply pipes); and local demands for investment in irrigation which faced competing *wereda* budget priorities for health and education (North Wello / Shumsheha).

Policy makers should not underestimate the potentially corrosive impact of resulting community frustration on the sustainability of Ethiopia's intensive development model going forward. This recurrent problem seems to indicate **weaknesses in *kebele* mechanisms for feedback and evaluation of interventions (both identifying and reporting problems)**, which tend to focus more on quantitative targets for activities and outputs, than quality of outcomes and processes; as well as some **weaknesses in *wereda* follow-up**. The WIDE 3 data do document a limited number of examples of instances of *kebele*-based personnel taking initiatives to design or modify interventions to reflect local preferences or conditions (experimentation at FTCs in West Shewa / Oda Haro and Jimma/Somodo in 2013; locally appropriate porridge ceremonies at health centres in East Shewa / Sirba). Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the more common pattern they illuminate is one in which local authorities modify interventions in accordance with national directives (instances in North Shewa / Kormargefia, East Shewa / Sirba, Arsi/Odadawata and West Shewa / Oda Haro amongst many others); whilst citizens tend to resort to informal indirect ways to pursue their own priorities in tandem with this. As their capacity strengthens and consolidates, *wereda* and *kebele* authorities should ideally be **supported in their collaboration with communities to develop packages that are increasingly well tailored to the specific needs and priorities** of each: designing them more locally, and monitoring impact more precisely.

As the economy grows and diversifies, desirable trajectories of value addition will become increasingly diverse, complex, and non-standard: WIDE 3 provides extensive evidence of an ongoing national process of **socio-economic stratification,** perhaps more pronounced in wealthier areas of cash crop production (Jimma/Somodo, Gedeo/Adado) but visible across the research and apparently intensifying over the period 2010-13. The sociological and socio-political (as well as economic) implications of this stratification could usefully form the focus of one or several additional WIDE 3 Discussion Briefs. Attention to the socio-economic potential of local **processes and networks around small-centre urbanisation** – especially productive opportunities occupying niches beyond wage labour – should become an integral element of local design and consultation processes. WIDE 3 provides evidence of the important role, positive impact, and new challenges of policy focus on **small**

emergent (sub-wereda) urban centres, although it is noteworthy that the strong national focus on vocational training and the establishment of MSEs is less visible beyond *wereda* and larger urban centres (cf. Brief No.3). **Improving the tailoring of local development initiatives** will be a key "entry point," and should become a realistic prospect as *kebele* and sub-*kebele* structures continue to strengthen over the forthcoming period; success is also contingent on many of the other issues of "quality of process" discussed below, which taken together have the potential to drive mutually reinforcing "virtuous cycles." (cf. also Brief No.1)

"Drivers of change"? Coercion, persuasion, pressure and consensus

In the context of a national policy discourse which privileges consensus building, demonstration and farmer choice over pressure, there is some **interestingly complicated evidence about "coercion"** for developmental ends in the WIDE 3 data. The introduction of the government's "good governance package" in 2006/7 saw an end to formal sanctioning, including fining, of citizens for non-participation (in meetings, community labour, contributions): whilst this more voluntaristic approach has been evident and generally welcomed in WIDE sites, two issues remain. First, sources in several Amhara sites, including those outside local government circles, commented (with disapproval!) that government services and authority were "less capable of getting things done" as a result (East Gojjam / Yetmen; North Shewa / Dinki). It is important for DPs in particular not to underestimate **how difficult it is to engineer rapid and desirable social change**, other than where visible economic incentives make it immediately attractive. Some of the most important – and positive – social changes of recent years (the rapid expansion of women's engagement in local political and governmental positions in Tigray is a good example) have been pushed through in the face of controversy and opposition.

On the other hand, the WIDE 3 dataset is replete with evidence of the **negative social, developmental, and even political implications of local government bodies in practice applying strong pressure** – often perceived on the ground as coercion – to advance initiatives seen locally as undesirable: especially where it later turns out that they were not widely beneficial, or where benefits were seen locally as offset by other disadvantages, as with a locally unpopular decision to site a new secondary school on valuable grazing land (East Gojjam / Yetmen). Initiatives involving encroaching on land regularly prove controversial, as they tend to shift benefits between groups. They provoked resistance when land was gazetted to a national park (Gamo Gofa / Do'oma); or when, in several sites, communal grazing land or woodlots were allocated for exploitation by youth co-operatives or MSEs (cf. Brief No.3).

Many of these instances may well reflect problems with the **quality and capacity of local leadership** not a formal policy approach, with communities where leadership and mobilisation are more effective and inclusive often reflecting (and conducive of) a better balance between "listening and telling." WIDE 3 data document an increase since 2010 in the capacity of the leaders of local government to mobilise and organise their constituents through four tiers of local government structure: *kebele*, sub-*kebele got*/zone, development team, and 1-to-5 network. The **importance of processes that are inclusive, responsive and locally driven** can be expected to intensify as these structures evolve and are consolidated. An approach premised on lengthy face-to-face trainings and easily quantifiable concrete targets may arguably have facilitated rapid transitional institution building in a context of widespread illiteracy, weak communications infrastructure, and low capacity for management and leadership (the devolution of service delivery to *wereda* level is not much more

than a decade old). Each of these constraints is now eroding, and WIDE 3 findings suggest that the **model could and should evolve** better to prioritise local ownership and protect local preferences – releasing energies and capitalising on assets at village level.

A further six potential "entry points" suggested by WIDE 3 data for improving processes are briefly identified in what follows:

- redressing an apparent over-concentration of responsibilities in a few hands;
- strengthening mechanisms for decision-making engagement of women and youth;
- examining the key roles and relationships involving the *kebele* manager;
- revisiting the efficacy of the system of "models" in reaching the wider community;
- rebalancing relations between the three branches of government locally; and
- paying close attention to diverse citizens' perceptions of the relationship between development and politics.

Overburdening the few? Extending & consolidating sustainable inclusion

In all WIDE sites, very many leaders at *kebele* and sub-*kebele* levels – salaried and unpaid - complained of the **doubling up of multiple roles, extremely heavy workloads, and the economic or social sacrifices** inherent in their local administrative responsibilities. Instances in one site, but typical of all, saw a busy *kebele* chairman and his wife lose *khat* revenues along with the time to be able to trade; a well-qualified, successful man refuse to engage because the time taken would damage his business interests; and a politically active woman party and militia member report arguments with her husband over her onerous obligations (East Harerghe / Adele Keke). Tax collection is regularly described as particularly burdensome for the *kebele* chair or other leaders, not least in peri-urban environments with more non-farm activity (Gurage/Girar). A government policy shift in 2008 to expand the membership of *kebele* representative councils was (amongst several objectives) also intended to address this problem of concentration of workloads between those in the local executive, by broadening community engagement. Nevertheless the relative weaknesses, both of the local council system, and of individual council members to date (see below) have constrained its impact.

In the meantime, WIDE 3 data indicate that the **concentration of multiple responsibilities amongst a small group of *wereda/kebele* leaders is a ubiquitous pattern with systemic consequences that have a serious deleterious effect on Ethiopia's development outcomes**. There are two aspects to this: the impact on those leading the process; and on those they seek to lead. Their heavy burdens often mean that **motivation is low, and frustration and exhaustion high** amongst the leaders of local government, and local civil servants. In several sites, unpaid *kebele* leaders wanted to leave their positions, but felt unable to do so because of institutional pressure or political expectations; in others the system evidently acts to deter the most able or productive from taking on the responsibilities of leadership, something likely to promote less altruistic community members, and compromise the quality and equity of interventions.

Interpretation of the WIDE 3 data suggests that a further effect of this situation may be to **alter patterns of community interaction at the micro-level**: in some instances even reinforcing the isolation of those members of the local executive involved in politics and development; and potentially undermining rather than enhancing links to the strong informal social networks that could broaden consensus around development and local state processes. Where local leaders are

overburdened by meetings, they spend less time with their constituents: it is hardly surprising if those constituents (rightly or not) become suspicious that their leaders' lack of visibility, rather than commitment or sacrifice, reveals their preoccupation with their own interests, at the community's expense. Critical or cynical perceptions of the **nepotism, corruption, or greed of local leaders** are reported in all sites, with stronger problems in a number (Kambatta Tembaro / Aze Debo'a; Gedeo/Adado; Jimma/Somodo; South Omo / Luqa), and the existence of **clan dynamics** complicating several others (particularly East Shewa / Koro Degaga; Arsi / Oda Dawata). Over and above perceptions of corruption or clanism, **weaknesses around the provision of credit, and establishment and utility of co-operatives** attract notably strong criticism in several sites (cf. Brief No.2).

Policy makers might wish to consider whether there are **systemic factors around workloads and weak or distorted patterns of interaction that drive a mutual lowering of expectation** between citizens and their leaders in a cycle that risks undermining the development model and impacting on equity (cf. Brief No.4). The potential for the strengthening of local representative councils to help alleviate this problem should be given close attention.

Making decision-makers of all of Ethiopia's citizens

WIDE 3 data across all communities (arguably with the exception of Eastern Tigray / Geblen and Harresaw) indicate that the **involvement of women** in local political, administrative, and development leadership and decision-making is very limited: in practice, the preserve of exceptional individuals. WIDE 3 data document the critical role undertaken by ruling party members in shaping and populating local government and development leadership: this being so, greater women's involvement in local affairs is unlikely to be achieved, unless the ruling party adopts a pro-active strategy of recruiting equal numbers of women and men across the country, increasingly promoting women to foster their involvement in core executive and political structures, in addition to their involvement in female development teams and 1-to-5 networks. The weakness of **organisational structures for youth interests in rural areas** is also a pattern reported across most of the 20 WIDE 3 communities, and may contribute to the relative paucity of MSE or job creation schemes mentioned, as compared with government initiatives in larger urban centres (cf. Brief No.3).

"Kebele managers are like salt: they go everywhere"

WIDE 3 reveals the **salience of the *kebele* manager** as a lynchpin of the government development model, often in the later 2013 data (Stage 3) co-ordinating the work of frontline development workers (DAs and HEWs). WIDE provides evidence both of the positive impact of a good *kebele* manager, who is seen as both effective and impartial (something which in practice often seems to be interpreted to mean "non-political"); and also of the damage that can be done to community confidence in government initiatives where trust in the position is compromised. The health of the relationship between the *kebele* manager and *kebele* chairman (often understandably complicated by differences in their age, education, and especially remuneration) also emerges from the data as an influential touchstone, either boosting or jeopardising **accountability and oversight**, with strong knock on effects on **community perceptions of legitimacy and competence.** These are difficult dynamics to get right, in the interests of the wider community: research and evaluation might usefully focus on identifying and understanding the **drivers and dynamics of desirable (and undesirable) practices** amongst this key group. Understanding their relationships with those at *wereda* level, whilst not a primary focus of WIDE 3 study, would also be an important component of

the overall picture. GoE has done very substantive work to delineate, demarcate and institutionalise the formal mandates of individuals and institutions at each level of government. WIDE 3 data suggest that policymakers would benefit from a much more detailed understanding of the sociology and practices associated with this formal mapping in different locations: in order to understand how best to design, sustain and evolve the key roles, relationships and responsibilities (for instance around the *kebele* chairman, and between *wereda* and *kebele* governments) that will continue to expedite inclusive real world change.

Demonstration, models, and "kulakisation"[iii]

Policy makers might wish to take note of the prominent recurrence in the WIDE 3 data - across communities - of **doubts about the breadth of benefit of the system of working with and through "models"**: processes of learning, technology transfer, and replicating success between models and the wider community need attention and investigation. Government thinking sees its model-based approach as key to raising the prospects and prosperity of all social strata, distinguishing it from policies designed to work either by "trickle down," or primarily with wealthier or more able farmers. Nevertheless government identifies important weaknesses in the systematic scaling up of its model-based approach. WIDE 3 data, meanwhile, indicates that the arrangement of DAs broadly working primarily with and through models in practice seems often to be *seen* by "non-elites" as (either potentially or in concrete terms) excluding their interests, and undermining equity of provision.

WIDE provides evidence of an **important disconnect** between the perceptions of kebele executives, those who are politically/developmentally engaged, or models themselves (who generally see the arrangement positively); and the views of (some) other community members who are more critical. This may be connected with the notion of polarisation in weak interaction patterns noted above. The dynamic is particularly visible in (some) Stage 1 communities, notably Arsi / Turufe Kechema, and Gurage/Girar where HEWs (who "work with everyone") were favourably compared with DAs (who "only work with models"); and in Stage 2 communities, many of which are food insecure: emerging economic stratification may carry greater risks here for those "at the bottom." Evidence is apparently more mixed in the (often) wealthier Stage 3 communities with higher agricultural growth potential. It is unclear whether this is because institutional arrangements for working with models improved over the period of the three stages of WIDE 3 research; or because what may be a downside to the system of working through models tends to be seen as worse in areas of (or by individuals with) lesser economic potential; or for some other reasons.

The shift after 2001 to focus on mobilisation of the wider community through models is such an influential pillar of the Ethiopian development model that these aspects of its management, implementation and impact will need careful monitoring as the economy grows. Figures during the WIDE 3 period of 203 "models" amongst 835 households in East Shewa / Sirba, and 283 in North Shewa / Kormargefia, seem to be relatively typical of the sites studied although numbers are fluid (and note that the WIDE communities are very much smaller than *kebele* units): the system has been designed to engage a very significant proportion of the population. Nevertheless, the replication of success across social strata cannot be taken for granted, and studies in the sociology of learning demonstrate the formidable barriers that can face those with fewer resources as a result of culture, lack of information and opportunity, and the micro patterns of social interaction. To optimise outcomes, it will be important continually to **review and adjust the relationship between increasingly wealthy or otherwise successful official "models" in the community and others**: with

their poorer or less successful neighbours; with other successful individuals who (may choose to) remain outside the system (skilled incomer farmers in Gamo Gofa / Do'oma); and with the civil servants (*kebele* managers, DAs, HEWs) who nominally support them, but whose roles, needs and incentives are shifting in unaccustomed ways as the economic status as well as the expertise of (some) rural producers outstrip those of the salariat (cf. also Brief No.1).

Balancing executive power: justice and representation

WIDE 3 research documents a model in which the local government executive has strong scope to influence many aspects of rural life. This contrasts with the picture that emerges of **relatively weaker local judicial and representative structures**. Formal court structures at *wereda* level are often inaccessible, apart from some important positive cases of mobile provision: the **stronger institutionalisation of the system of wereda "circuit courts"** regularly visiting a number of locations within a *wereda*, could be expected to have a strongly beneficial effect in broadening access to justice – and not just in pastoral or agro-pastoral areas (as East Shewa / Gelcha, South Omo / Luqa), where the integration or interaction of modern and customary institutions of justice is perhaps particularly important. WIDE 3 evidence indicates that the role of social courts seems in some instances gradually to have reduced, in both scope and capacity; perhaps losing out in practice to other increasingly influential actors: elders' committees, land administration committees, or the development teams and 1-to-5 networks which have seen strong political investment. Social court members express concern that their voluntary contribution is onerous and undervalued, and several other respondents (social court members and members of the wider communities) lack confidence in judicial processes, also at wereda level where access compounds the problem (cf. Brief No.5). **Any erosion of formal systems of local access to justice could create additional challenges as economic diversification and growth stimulate demand for the protection of new non-land-related property rights in rural areas**. The impact on key informal institutions of social justice is potentially also highly significant.

References to the *kebele* level elected representative councils are also relatively sparse in the WIDE 3 dataset, and this is perhaps surprising given that, since 2008, these structures have involved between 200 and 300 individuals per *kebele,* as well as one or two others from each *kebele* to participate at *wereda* level*.* This finding tends to reinforce the conclusions of other research that **representative councils (especially at *kebele* level, but also at *wereda* level) remain exceptionally weak**. Their potential to fulfil community-level oversight or accountability functions, or to support a heavily burdened local executive, is still woefully under-developed (South Omo / Luqa *kebele* council is an extreme example, not meeting for two years!).

Ethiopia's representative councils present a potentially powerful but under-exploited resource for inclusive social transformation, with 3.5 million MPs elected across the country offering strong scope to expand the popular discussion of development priorities. WIDE 3 gives evidence of the significant albeit not necessarily strongly proactive, independent or oppositional role of councils in addressing complaints: there are several instances where councils have voted to replace individuals (it is less clear whether they initiated these cases or reacted to reinforce executive concerns), but none where they have directly challenged executive policy, or local development strategies. Rather, there is evidence of communities using alternative social structures for such mobilisation (East Gojjam /

Yetmen saw *iddir* used to lobby against land expropriation for a school), indicating that **kebele representative councils have yet to become central to the articulation of citizens' interests**. Where people use *iddir*, elders' committees, or informal networks to seek to oppose *kebele* decisions, rather than invoking the representative councils, there is a risk that what is developmental mobilisation may be interpreted in (party) political terms, escalating tensions and rhetoric, where management "within the system" might have eased them. Whilst Stage 3 data also provide some instances of local executives co-operating with *iddir*, there is no evidence of a relationship between local representative councils and wider social networks.

Willingness to engage with or invest in local councils may currently be undermined by the fact that the overwhelming majority of their elected MPs are either EPRDF members or fielded by the ruling party – with the effect that councils are sometimes perceived by outsiders as "political" rather than "representative". A continuation of this reluctance is likely only to perpetuate the peripheral status and weaknesses of local councils, and will not help address their ability to represent communities. This would be a shame, not least because (with a norm of 50% of MPs women, albeit often with weaker attendance records, and with lower proportions in some places) *kebele* and *wereda* councils constitute Ethiopia's only existing gender-representative institution. Policy makers and their DPs might wish to focus on what seems to be a **neglected potential resource further to rebalance the tendency towards executive-dominant government**, which has been a longstanding historical feature of the Ethiopian state.

The relationships between politics and development: learning what works

The notion that **socio-economic development is contingent upon strong political leadership** is central to GoE and EPRDF thinking,[iv] and to Ethiopia's development model. There are many advantages of a highly co-ordinated approach, and it is one that is valued by many respondents, across the WIDE sites. The data also document local views about a key drawback: the tendency to **conflate or confuse local perceptions of developmental and party political interests**; and in some instances also to reinforce the perception of their own marginalisation amongst those outside – or antipathetic to - politics. Examples of what party leaders might view as "misunderstandings" are scattered across the community testimony presented: confusion about the difference between (party) leagues and (non-party) associations; about whether 1-to-5 networks – even party cells - are party, state, or community structures. **Senior party leaders may be relatively clear about the distinction between party and state, but** a key message of the WIDE 3 data is **that citizens (including many members) often do not share this clarity**.

Local political leaders often also have many other non-formal roles within the community, immersed in customary and social as well as political networks of authority or collaboration. The literature suggests that such institutions sometimes draw on more inclusive, collaborative or accountable social norms than is the case in the formal sphere.[v] WIDE analysis echoes this view, indicating that the target-driven norms of local government practice are often at variance with community ways of doing things (WIDE Stage 2 Summary Report). Policy makers might wish to explore ways of supporting *kebele* and *wereda* leaders to **extend their learning beyond governmental/political spheres, to draw on the resources and practices of other social institutions, and foster greater collaboration.** The Ethiopian model is designed to be most successful where it harnesses the resources both of political leadership and of wider social participation.
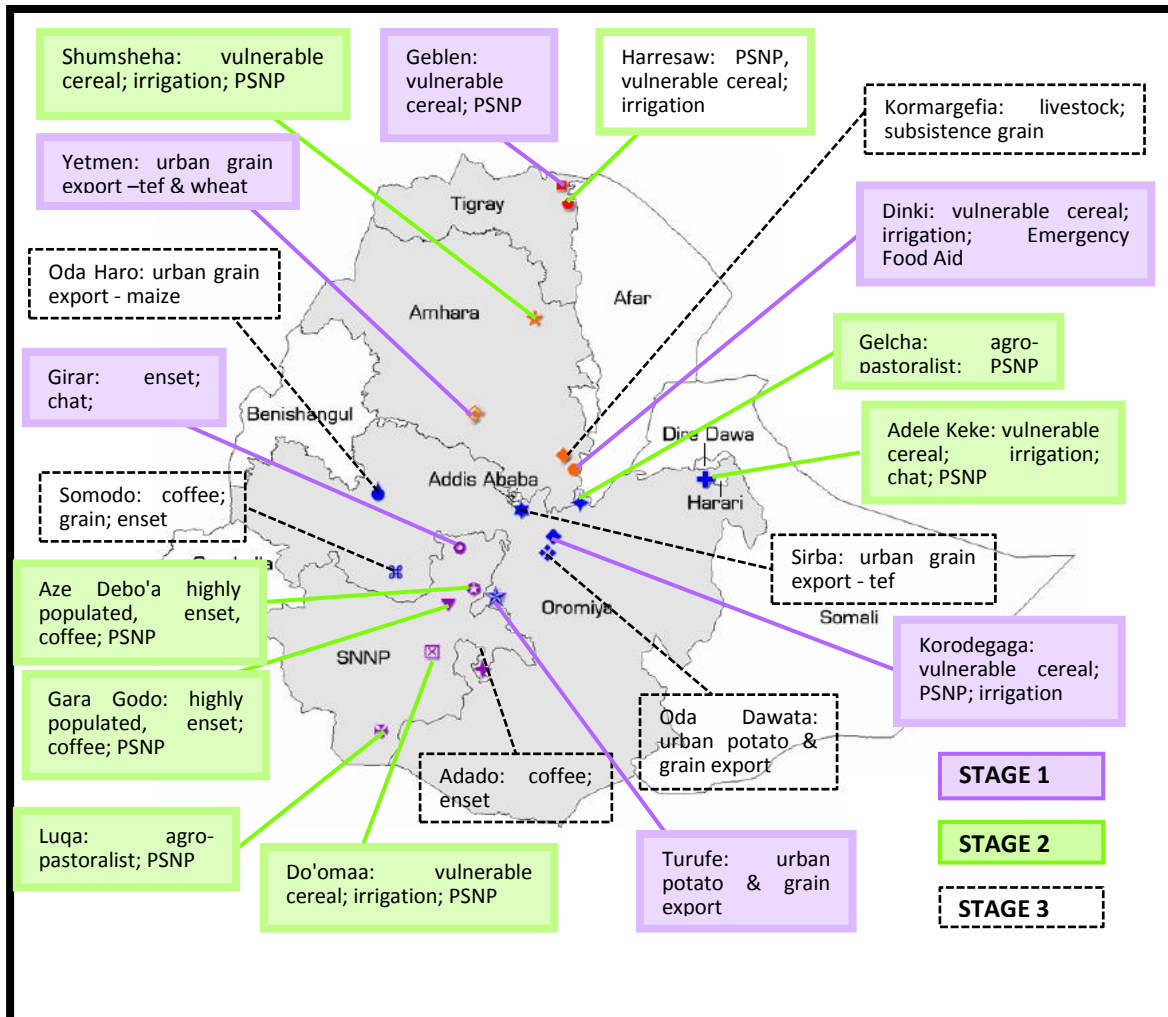
There is no reason in principle why a development model which is shaped by a strong central vision of transformation cannot also be responsive to the micro: but it requires an **approach to local problem-solving which is open, adaptive and oriented to learning**, with strong mechanisms for experimentation, evidence collection, feedback, analysis and learning about policy and practice at the micro level.[vi] GoE might consider establishing a **think tank or research unit** devoted to **studying and experimenting with different models of community governance and policy practice associated with effective collective action**: neglect of the micro-sociology and patterns of shared understanding underpinning processes of developmental change, community practice, and the replication of success, has been a prevalent problem globally and historically. This reading of WIDE 3 findings suggests that bringing the processes by which citizens learn and adapt into focus (what works, and what doesn't; and when and why) might have just as great a contribution to Ethiopia's transformation as experimentation with agricultural techniques and value chains, or processes of industrial technology transfer.

Conclusion: process that works with and for each community

A key message of WIDE research – and a key challenge for GoE policy makers and their DPs – is that "the devil is in the detail" at the micro-level. Just as Ethiopia's development model is an idiosyncratic one, which is not necessarily best analysed with neoliberal assumptions from elsewhere, so similarly each of Ethiopia's sub-*kebele* communities has its idiosyncratic dynamics and challenges, which are less likely to be tractable to judgements made by leaders from above or afar. James Scott's classic work "*Seeing Like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*" (Yale, 1998) placed respect for the locally crafted expertise of peasant communities (so often dismissed as backwardness, narrowness, or conservatism) at the centre of successful socio-economic change. The outcomes of Ethiopia's development model are likely to be determined by how much it does the same.

Reference map: The 20 WIDE communities

The 20 WIDE communities are examples of the major types of agro-ecological systems found in the four central regions of the country.

Research and Publication Information:

Research:

WIDE is a longitudinal study of 20 rural communities in Ethiopia over 20 years. WIDE1 produced 15 village profiles from 15 communities, selected by Addis Ababa University Economics Department and the International Food Policy Research Institute in the early 1990s, representing different agro-ecological types. (See: the Centre for the Study of African Economies, 1994: www.csae.ox.ac.uk/evstudies).

Three cash crop communities were added and in 2003 WIDE2 added two pastoralist sites during the Wellbeing in Developing Countries/University of Bath study (www.welldev.org.uk).

WIDE3 returned to the 20 communities in three stages. Stage 1 in 2010 involved six communities that had been studied in-depth in WIDE2; stage 2 in 2011-12 included eight drought prone communities; stage 3 in 2013 studied the remaining six growth potential sites.

Community situation reports have been produced for all 20 sites over three research stages. Rapid briefing notes have been shared with an electronic work net of interested organisations and individuals. Key findings have been presented to key government stakeholders through the support of the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) at workshops and through meetings with ministers, as well as to donors and international organisations.

Publication Information:

This is one of five briefs produced based on the WIDE3 data and commissioned by the World Bank. This brief has been written by Sarah Vaughan, who is an independent researcher on Ethiopia and the Horn, and an Honorary Fellow of the School of Social & Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK.

Three of these briefs have been produced by the Economic Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) of the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) on:

- • Unlocking agricultural growth
- • Farming and value chains
- • Job creation for the rural youth

Two briefs have been produced by independent consultants on:

- • Equitable service delivery
- • Models and realities of transformation.

Disclaimer:

These five briefs, drawing on the WIDE 3 evidence, have been produced to bring policy and implementation questions and possible implications to the attention of policymakers, with the aim of contributing to current debates on the key issues addressed through engaging in discussions with government and the donors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank, the financing donors or the WIDE research team.

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[i] *Meles Zenawi interviewed by Shawn Houlihan on the occasion of the 5th International Conference on Federalism* (4 December 2010), video retrieved from Ethiopian Federalism: http://www.ethiopianfederalism.org/

[ii] Booth, David (2011) 'Working with the Grain and Swimming Against the Tide: Barriers to Uptake of Research Findings on Governance and Public Services in Low-Income Countries', *APPP Working Paper* no.18, April 2011

[iii] kulaks are richer peasants, often (not always) a similar stratum to Ethiopia's "models"; kulakisation refers to a process of agricultural growth achieved by boosting individual incomes, and in tandem with a degree of economic stratification.

[iv] see for instance Meles Zenawi (2012) 'States and Markets: Neoliberal Limitations and the Case for the Developmental State' in Noman, Akbar, Kwesi Botchwey, Howard Stein and Joseph Stiglitz (eds) *Good Growth and Governance in Africa: Rethinking Development Strategies*, OUP, 140-174

[v] see Pankhurst, Alula (2008) *Community-Initiated Association and Customary Institutions in Ethiopia: Categorisation, Characeristics, Comparisons and Potential for Involvement in Development and Social Accountability*, unpublished paper

[vi] Booth, David (2012) *Development as a collective action problem: Addressing the real challenges of African governance*, ODI for Africa Power and Politics Programme, October 2012