

# The recent impact of globalisation on a rural community in Amhara Region: Yetmen, Enemay Wereda, East Gojjam

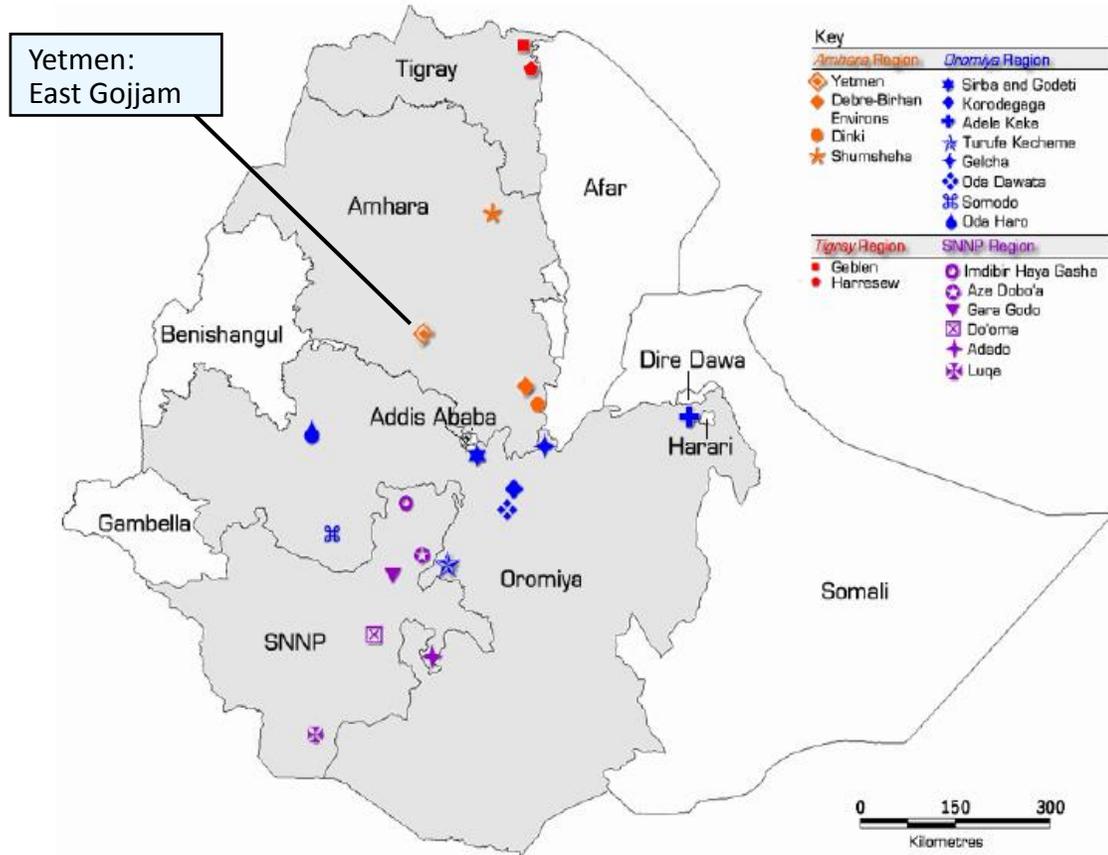
Ethiopia WIDE:

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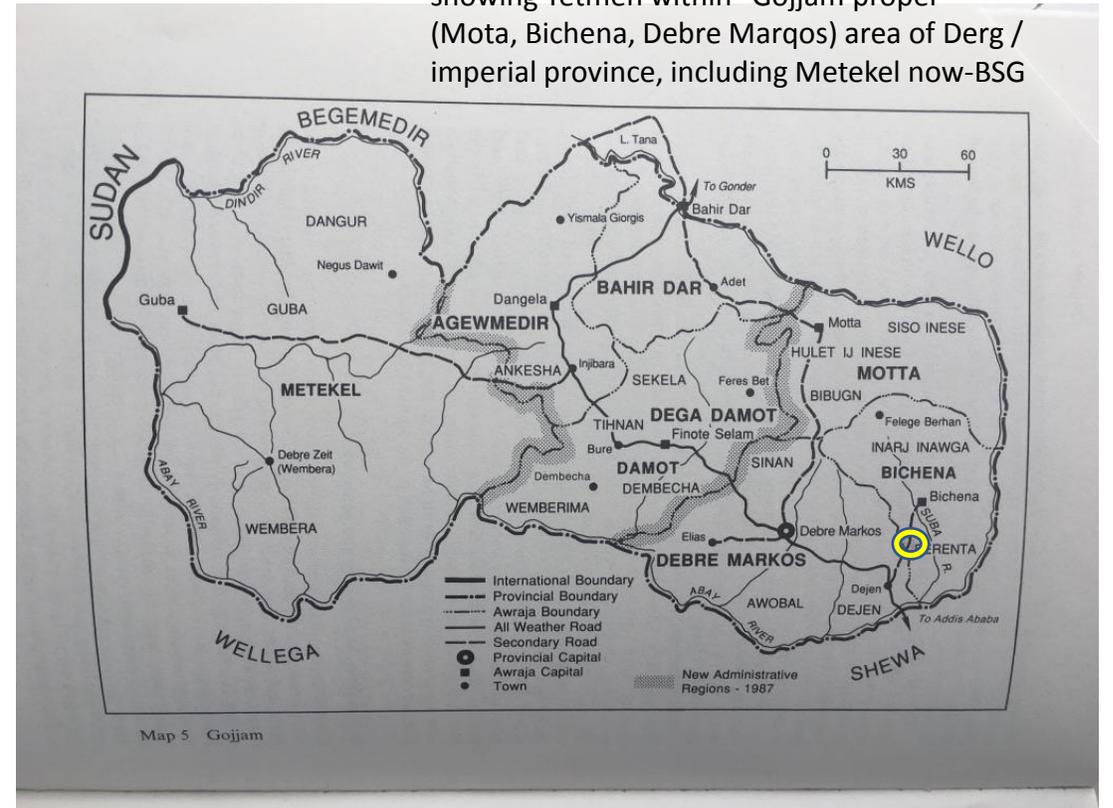
*Paper presented at a panel on Globalisation & Rural Ethiopia*

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# Yetmen: amongst WIDE sites & within Gojjam



from Gebru Tareke (1991) *Power and Protest*, showing Yetmen within "Gojjam proper" (Mota, Bichena, Debre Marqos) area of Derg / imperial province, including Metekel now-BSG



# hypothesis: it's (still) all about trade-teff-land

- Globalisation in Yetmen isn't (only) recent: strongly non-linear change
- Globalisation in Yetmen isn't (yet very) global: strong national drivers
- New changes in connectivity are having an impact in many ways...
- ...but all profoundly shaped by AA "hinterland" status (Tekalign WM, 1985)
- ➤ reflects and exacerbates national unbalanced growth?
- ➤ raises acute questions about future sustainability? vulnerability?
- ➤ reinforces value of land *qua* farmland – and generational conflict?
- ➤ undermines ability to flourish as a community *in situ*?
- ➤ driving "existential conflict" re "what – and whose - is Yetmen"?

# Outline

- Introduction to Yetmen, East Gojjam ('Gojjam proper' Temesgen GB, 2015)
  - trade & land tenure over the *longue durée*
- I/ Globalisation as effects, connections, networks, linkages:
  - National & international trade, investment
  - Climate change & agriculture
  - Government & imported technologies, information & communication networks
  - National & international migration & diaspora linkages
- II/ Globalisation as ideology, norms, values & beliefs:
  - Social norms & religious ideologies
  - Politics & political ideologies & linkages (developmental state, neo-liberal, etc.)
- Tentative conclusions.... implications for policy?

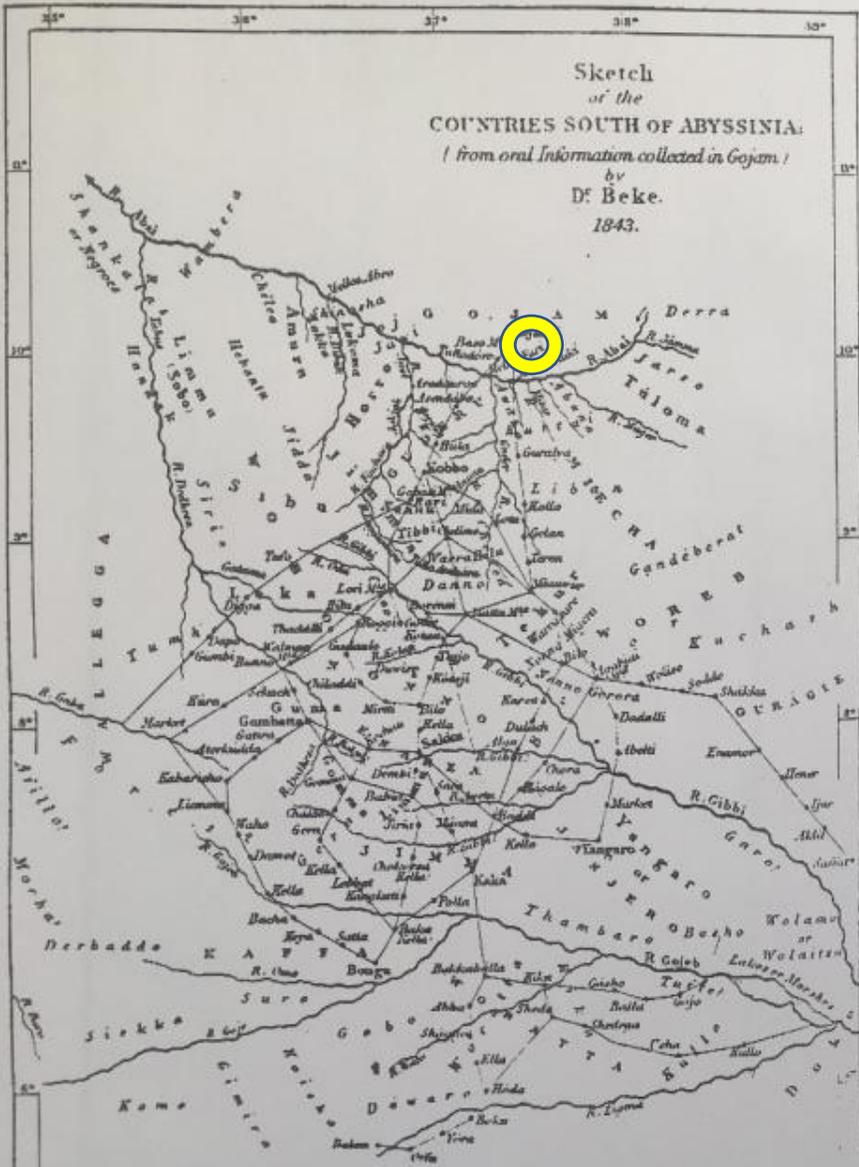
# Trade routes over the *longue durée*

- Importance of “Gojjam proper” in pre-Addis Ababa global economy trade routes in slaves, salt, etc. (CT Beke, 1848, 1852):
- But: establishment of AA & completion of railway (1917) (70%) abruptly diminished “globalized” Gojjam
- Reinvention of Gojjam and “early trader capital” (Abdussamad, 1986)
- Italians (1936-41) construct road (modern bridge) across Blue Nile
- Ras “Birru” Haylu perpetuates pattern of AA investment/attachment
- High levels of monetization of Gojjami economy early on

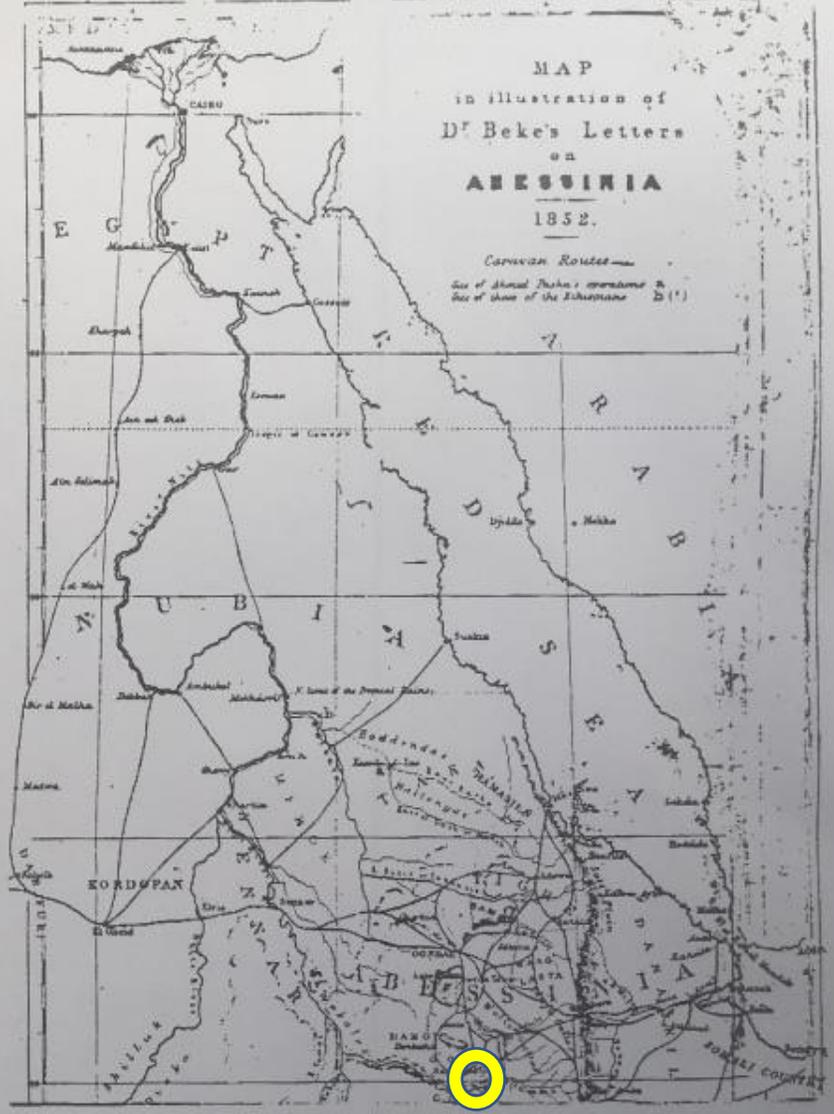
Taken from Pankhurst, R. "History of Ethiopian Towns from mid-19th century to 1935" showing Basso where important market "overshadowed" that at Debre Marqos up to 1930 (1985: 148)



Abdussamad (1986) taken from Beke 1843 and 1852



Map 2: Beke's Map of caravan routes to the south of Gojjām 1843.  
Taken from Charles T. Beke, "On the countries South of Abyssinia"  
R.G.S. London: 23 Nov. 1843, from his informant Omar Ibn Nejat.



Map 3: Beke's map of caravan routes to the north of Gojjām 1852.  
Taken from Charles T. Beke, Letters on the Commerce and Politics of  
Abyssinia and Other Parts of Eastern Africa. London: 1852.

# Land –and resistance- over the *longue durée*

- Debate re ‘feudalism’ as driver/constraint on capitalism (Merid, Donham, etc..)
- Landlordism, landless ‘zega,’ 19C land sales in Gojjam (Habtamu M)
- Patriot resistance, *shifawinet* - legislative assaults on *rist*: 1942-44, 1950, 1967
- 1968 3<sup>rd</sup> “Vendée revolt” (Gebru T) widespread, 16 months: war on *rist* (Hoben)
- 1975 land reform “Land to the Tiller” - no resistance? beginning of diaspora links?
- 1983 “villagized” Yetmen’s 25x40m plots: triumph of globalized USSR ideology?
- 1997: inequality? land redistribution: insecurity under ANRS politics?
- Growing wealth: teff, prices, access, informal value chains good (Minten 2018)
- 2016: Yetmen formally becomes “nus mazegaj” – with concomitant threat to land
- Now: looming battle over urbanization: Yetmen as community? Or *entrepôt*?

# Connections: cash crop trade vs investment

- Remarkable growth in teff values – particularly at the “luxury” end
  - Needs more data: suggestive of Minten *et al* (2018) “favourite cash crop” analysis
- Evidence of very strong articulation of the economy with AA
  - Sixty traders; all youth perceptions of economic opportunities skewed to trade
- Is the teff trade driving out (local) investment?
  - ‘let alone land for investors, we can’t give land for our children’; gas station idea
  - ‘it is simply impossible to allocate land – even with money for compensation’
  - wide range of applications for investment rejected: associations of Yetmen descendants, veterans, etc.; fuel station, construction, etc., all rejected - but houses
- Sharp difference in perspective between “rural” and “urban” Yetmen
  - Neighbours interested to move in to trade (in teff); residents scared to lose land



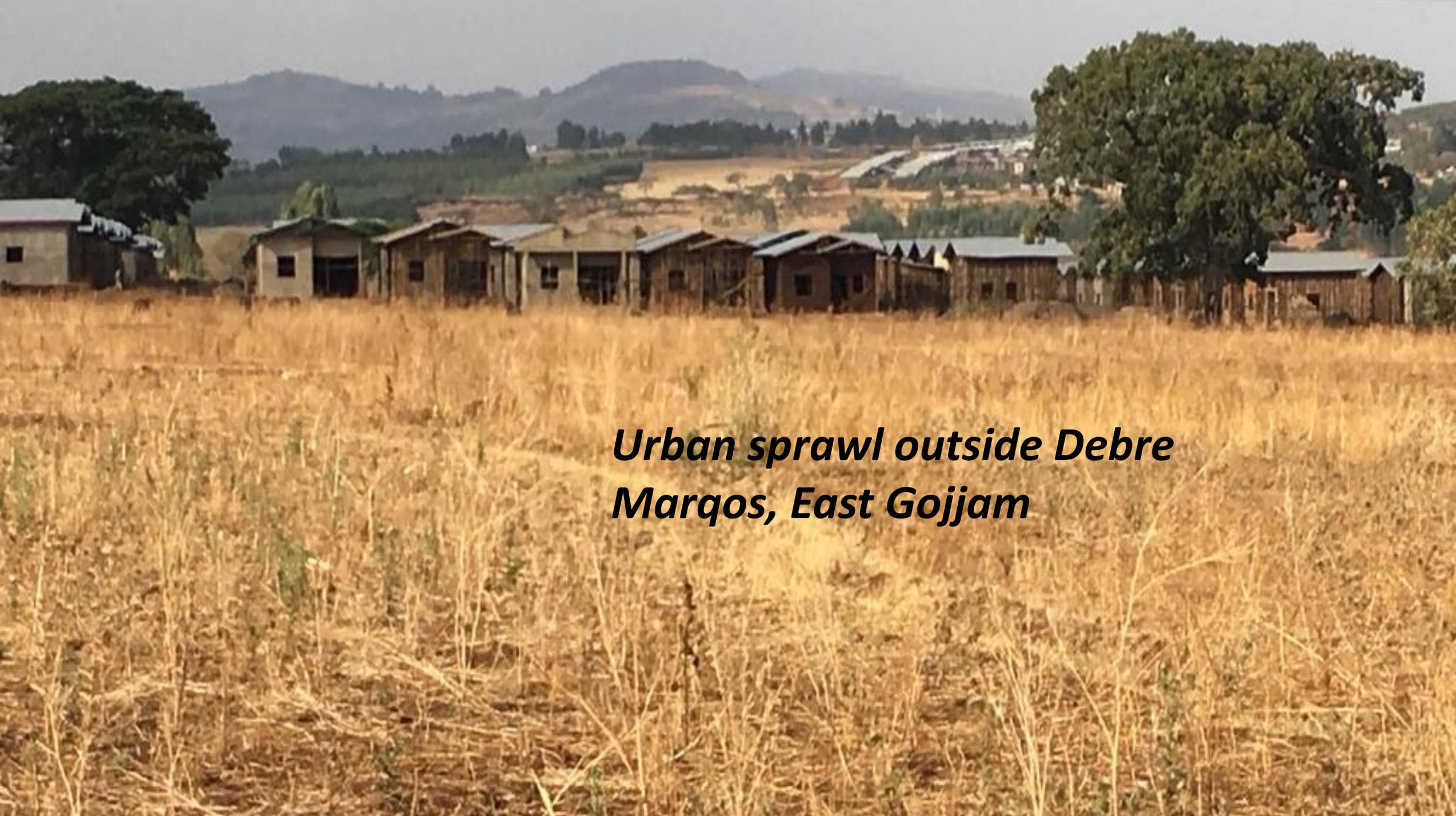
*Plots sold at auction*

# Impact: climate change and agriculture

- AGP area: wealth disguises vulnerability? Over-reliance on single crop
  - Increased interest in improved (white) seeds – but much selection from own crops
  - Irrigation for high-value vegetables (cf.2010): but youth co-ops reverted to teff
  - Vetch, chickpea production – though proportion/value needs investigation
- Apparently limited climate change impact – although frost for the first time
  - Some other kebeles of Enemay wereda affected with drought
- Anxiety re increasing competition for water access with neighbours
  - Sustainability of multiple neighbouring irrigation projects?
- Sense of under-estimation of the value of “what we have”?
  - “I sometimes wonder whether future generations will forgive us for what we have done allowing this fantastic national wealth [teff land] to be swallowed into towns”
- Compatibility with GoE development model of DMarqos “urban corridor”?



***Yetmen communal grazing  
land & threshing floors –  
part of the town plan***



***Urban sprawl outside Debre  
Marqos, East Gojjam***

# Networks: government systems

- Irony of urbanization dissolving/diluting kebele-wereda connections?
- "*nus mazegaja*" distancing farmers from DAs, land registration service
- Strong sense of opposition to change; something lost; impending crisis
- Coexisting with strong sense of decline of LG probity, discipline
- ➤ "Deglobalisation"? Vulnerability? Disconnect?
- = local resistance to globalization? Modernisation?
  - LG critical narrative parallels discourse about 1960s Gojjami peasant revolt?
- or = robust local defence of (i) basis of subsistence (land); (ii) effective (but invisible) "trader capitalism" *status quo*; (iii) informal *teff* value chain?

# Impact: imported (govt) technologies, communications, infrastructure, services

- +ve: asphalt road: focus on link to AA, Dejen (& Bichena) > BDar, DMarqos
- +ve: mobile phone use important and (still) strongly appreciated...
- -ve: internet access had been very limited for some months (March 2018)
- -ve: electricity connectivity: source of frustration, perceived discrimination
- Ambivalent: school, health post – ambivalence because of history of school
  - Problems of corruption in Bichena school construction; CBHI payments escalating
- Ambivalent? Utility of producer co-operatives for marketing (cf. Minten)
- Missing? banking facilities!!
- -ve (urban): high rates of taxation - reinforcing departure of traders & potential investors to AA? –ve (rural): risk to homesteads, farmlands

# Networks: migration & diaspora

- Almost no direct international migration to neighbouring/Gulf countries
  - max. 8-9 women in total; 4-5 returned; very mixed experiences, local status
- Large population movement to Addis Ababa: but not seen as migration
  - Very high volume of family connections in Addis Ababa, Suluta, Metahara etc..
  - Association of those born in Yetmen living in Addis Ababa – wanting to invest
- Bichena & (less) Debre Marqos of interest, Bahr Dar relatively less interest
  - Only one “volleyball-playing kebele official” interested to settle/move there
  - Relatively limited concern re failure to complete the BDar “shorter route” asphalt
- Male youth aspirations markedly shaped by aspiration to get driving licence, become a driver, engage in the teff trade: very gendered
- Some impact from diaspora family members in west – Germany, USA
  - Philanthropy, financial support – and particularly support for schooling

# Social ideology, norms, values, beliefs, aspirations

- Still relatively conservative? EOC dominated, “undiluted” belief system?
- Strongly gendered social norms; conservative attitude to young women
  - Long skirts, dresses; criticism of “inappropriately dressed” non-EOC HEW
  - Absence of rich FHH: “if they have money they will be married”
  - Young women who do leave are not often enthusiastic to come back...
- Rise of individualism, decline of social support mechanisms?
  - Yetmen described as “tight knit” in 2010 – but now?
- But still very strong evidence of collective threshing, teff trade networks embedded in informal/familial ties rather than the formal economy
- Driving generational differences, inequalities [‘fedala’] youth frustration, wanting to get away...

# Political ideology, norms, values, beliefs, aspirations

- Developmental state “economic transformation” narrative limited purchase
  - Economic support / networking is from familial trade networks, AA & beyond
  - Incompetence, corruption of (govt) BDar vs efficiency of (private sector)AA
- Govt structures seen as “external to”-even inhibiting- primary economic driver
  - Urbanisation, taxation, introduction of co-operatives – competing with teff value chain
- Economic interests/trade networks reinforce political antipathies
  - Negative experiences 2005 election, 2006 “birokrasi” rehabilitation, taxation rates
- Reinforced by long-standing anxieties about land
  - 1997 redistribution, 2009 violent dispute over school building, 2016 urbanization
  - above all, threat to 40x25m “gwara ersha” plots posed by suspended urbanization plans
- Provide fertile seed bed for tacit –and active– opposition
- global narratives “writ small”: Individualism/collectivization/indigeneity

# Conclusions and policy implications

- Greater connectedness/globalisation doesn't necessarily lead to local prosperity or modernity: it may block diversity/growth/inward investment
- Inadequate problematisation of alleged processes by which wealthy farmers become (local) urban entrepreneurs (dev state narrative)
- Inadequate management & planning of escalating urban sprawl
- Yetmen as an economically distorted dependent “*entrepôt*” of extractive national (global?) “rentier” capitalism > thriving, inclusive, locally value-adding, emerging-town growth pole?
- Resilience to/risk of global/distant events: potential impact of shocks in AA teff prices, market access;
- ...or local events: crop failures/disease?