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**NATURAL RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT IN ETHIOPIA**

*Proceedings of the Workshop
organised by Forum for Social Studies
in collaboration with the
University of Sussex
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*Edited by
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Preface

Alula Pankhurst

These proceedings bring together findings of a research project on natural resource management carried out under the auspices of *Forum for Social Studies* by researchers affiliated with the Universities of Sussex, School of African and Asian Studies, and Cambridge, Geography Department, and Addis Ababa University, Department of Sociology and Social Administration.

The overall research project, entitled MARENA was financed by the British Government Department for International Development, and carried from mid-1999 to the end of the year 2000. The focus of the research was on the role of institutions responsible for managing natural resources in contexts of return from displacement and post-conflict reconstruction. The research project in Ethiopia has been carried out in parallel with similar research in Mozambique.

In Ethiopia the research was carried out in Amhara Region, in North and South Wello Zones, and in Borana Zone of Oromia Region. Principal fieldwork was undertaken by Tarekegn Yibabie (in North and South Wello), supplemented by shorter visits by Elizabeth Watson, Alula Pankhurst, Yeraswork Admassie and Elizabeth Harrison.

A series of 18 *Thematic Briefings* under the heading INFORM-Ethiopia, (Institutions for Resource Management) were produced on various relevant issues by members of the team. These have been published separately and are also available on the MARENA project web-site.

The workshop took place at the Semien Hotel in Addis Ababa on 9th February 2001. It was attended by 74 academics and policy-makers from government, NGOs and donors. The workshop served as a forum to present the findings of the Ethiopian component of the 'Marena' Project, which has also been operating in Mozambique.

Following an introductory address by Dessalegn Rahmato, Manager of the Forum for Social Studies, the workshop took place in three stages. First, presentations of findings were made by members of the research team. Second, working groups discussed central questions arising from the research findings. The key areas for discussion were: issues of tenure, issues of community and representation, stakeholder relationships, and the nature of the conflict/post conflict transition. Thirdly, the results of the discussions were presented back to the plenary discussion session.

Opening Address

Dessalegn Rahmato

On behalf of the Forum for Social Studies, I would like to welcome you all to this workshop. It has been over two years since the Forum for Social Studies entered into an agreement with the University of Sussex to sponsor a research project on natural resource management. I am happy to inform you that the research work has been completed and some of the papers to be presented today are based on the findings of that research.

The main aim of the research was to look into the question of resource management and examine the roles of resource management institutions in post-stress situations. The researchers included staff from both Addis Ababa University and the University of Sussex. The fieldwork was undertaken mainly in south and north Wollo but also in Borana in southern Ethiopia.

In this country, sufficient attention has not been paid to the question of natural resource management, much less resource management institutions, and there is a dearth of policy initiatives on the subject. In the past, i.e. both under the Imperial and Derg regimes, the state claimed custodianship over such major natural resources as forests, pastureland, and water points, which it brought under its control and over which it established a form of management which was based on exclusion and authoritarianism. The institutions that assumed responsibility for managing the resources were bureaucratic, non-participatory and patronising. There was no attempt to encourage benefit sharing and to accommodate the needs of communities and stakeholders. Moreover, over the years, most of the existing institutions were considerably weakened due to civil conflict, environmental stress and the return of large numbers of landless peasants from resettlement schemes.

It is now recognised that state custodianship has been a dismal failure and has in many cases led to mismanagement and loss of natural resources. Customary management systems and institutions, which previously had served communities relatively well, have broken down under pressure from political and administrative modernization, and they have not been successfully replaced. The high rate of resource loss that the country continues to experience is in part a result of the disappearance of customary institutions on the one hand and the inadequacy of introduced ones on the other. The absence of sound management policy

has led, both in this country and elsewhere, to social conflict, political unrest, and of course wastage of resources on a large-scale.

There are a number of management options that have been tried with varying degrees of success in a number of countries. These include community management, individual, state and joint management. But the choice of management options should not be based on technical criteria, for embedded in all systems and institutions of management are social and power relations, as well as memory and history. Managing a resource means much more than caring for it and includes resolving conflicts and meeting expectations.

This workshop will be discussing a broad range of issues that will contribute significantly to the emerging debate on resource management and policy in this country. FSS is keen to promote public debate on policy issues and the subject of resource management and management institutions is timely and pressing. I very much hope that your deliberations will be available to the wider public and there will soon be other occasions for discussion and exchange of experiences.

The distribution of the *Thematic Briefings* to participants and others is a good initiative; the publication and dissemination of the proceedings of the workshop will encourage further debate, and hopefully, further research.

I wish you a very successful workshop and a fruitful dialogue. Thank you and good luck.

Overview of Natural Resources Management in Ethiopia and Policy Implications

Yeraswork Admassie

The purpose of this short paper is to give a very general overview of natural resource management in Ethiopia, and also to indicate some of the implications for policy. My presentation will not address any of the issues at depth, as this is the task of the presentations that follow.

I shall therefore quickly go through the main points on:

- 1) the traditional management of natural resources,
- 2) the demise of traditional NRM and the Legacy of the Derg, and
- 3) the challenges and opportunities of the post-Derg period, and their policy implications.

Traditional management of natural resources

The survival of the few remnant forests is inseparably intertwined with the way they were traditionally managed as common goods. The same holds true for other types of common resources such as the *guassa* (afro-alpine grass-land) and common grazing areas that are usually situated at valley bottoms.

Some three groups of factors, that are themselves interdependent, were behind the traditional NRM: attributes of the common goods, the very nature of the rules by which the goods were managed, and features of the communities.

The common forests, grazing, and *guassa* were effectively protected and managed as common property resources, primarily because of their own attributes which fall under either of the following two categories:

- The nature of the lands on which the resources are located, which make them unsuited for crop production:
 - Forest lands are inaccessible,
 - Grazing lands are waterlogged during the main cropping season, or
 - *Guassa* lands are above the tree and crop growing altitude
- The qualities of the resources themselves:

- Trees provided the wood for the construction of the traditional farm implements
- Hay from the grazing lands provided much needed fodder during the dry season
- *Guassa* was essential as thatching material, and even as a source of cash income in these cash-hungry areas.

The very features of the rules constituting the traditional management of the natural resources contributed their share to the sustainable utilization, and hence to the preservation of the common resources:

- The rules were simple, as what was regulated was access to the forest resources and not anything else requiring complicated arrangements, as would, for instance, be the case for a policing/guarding scheme
- The rules of exclusion and utilization used to be part and parcel of the tenure system. This made the traditional management not only valid and legitimate, but also as flexible and as lasting as the tenure system itself
- The rules constituting the management of the natural forests in general, and the rules on enforcement in particular, were propped up by the local judicial-administrative apparatus, as was the entire tenure system
- The rules as well as their enforcement were locally and traditionally evolved practices, and therefore were perceived as legitimate regulations to be complied with in the same way as other community norms.

Additional community attributes have made crucial contributions to the enforcement and maintenance of the rules constituting the management of the common property forests. These community traits are:

- Cohesiveness of communities (engendered by history/myth as to the common origin, the existence of venerated community symbols, and fairly small size)
- Homogeneity of communities, in terms of occupation and wealth
- Insulation from external forces such as commercial interests

The demise of traditional NRM and the legacy of the Derg

The traditional management common resources has virtually collapsed as the aforementioned factors became progressively weakened or invalidated due to:

- The nationalization of land and the reorganization of rural communities in Peasant Associations, which allowed various actors to treat the common forests as virtual open-access resources. Having become legally state-owned, decisions on the protection and use of natural resources were made by state functionaries such as Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) staff.
- The MoA used common resources as bases from which it expanded its control over common resources. Natural forests, in particular, were used as springboards for plantations that outwardly expanded at the expense of peasant holdings. The line separating state forests from community forests became progressively and intentionally blurred. And this, in the course of time, turned community members against the resources.

The government of the day introduced its trademark approach to NRM that was decidedly top-down or *dirigiste* in style. This approach, despite its initial success in terms of the kilometers of terraces constructed or numbers of seedlings planted, proved counterproductive in the long run. Yet, we ought to underline the fact that the so-called top-down work style was not the root cause of the failure of NRM during the Derg, but itself a function of other factors.

Without 1) state ownership of land, 2) that was reinforced by the repressive nature of the state, as well as, 3) food-for-work, the emergence of the top-down approach at the scale it did would be unimaginable. It was the above three factors which, appearing in tandem, permitted government staff to hold absolute sway over rural communities and introduce a *dirigiste* approach that took whole catchment and sub-catchment areas as its planning and implementation unit to the detriment of the interests and priorities of individual farms and common resources.

State ownership of land contributed further to the failure of NRM during this period since it engendered recurrent distribution of land that in turn undermined the feeling of secure access to land and natural resources among farmers.

Post-Derg developments: concerns, challenges and opportunities

In the aftermath of the fall of the Derg, the pressing task faced by the newly established Government in the field of natural resource management was that of bringing to an end the widespread destruction of forests and soil conservation structures.

This was a matter of saving the assets that had been spared the destructive activities of the very communities in the surrounding areas. The Government wisely recognized the balance of power that was definitely not in its favor, and the futility of attempts at bypassing the local communities. Thus it officially sanctioned the transfer of the management of natural resources, other than the officially declared state forests, to peasant associations or *Kebeles*, and held them responsible for the protection of the resources.

Whereas, the restoration or newly acquired control of communities over natural resources within the areas of their jurisdiction is a positive development, it only raised new questions and led to new challenges. How, for instance, could the common resources be best managed and developed? Should they be managed through some community-level structure or should they be divided up and assigned to individual members of the community or even to specific groups?

Partly by design, and partly through spontaneous developments encouraged by the demand of the landless, a novel arrangement under which both individuals and groups are allotted parcels of land on the once commonly held hillsides or closures, is gaining currency. According to this experimental practice the recipient groups and individuals commit themselves to restrict their use of land that they so acquire to tree plantation. However, whether the recipients will abide by the agreement or use it a stratagem to gain farmland is a matter to be evaluated in the near future.

Moreover, the practice of parcelling out common lands for individuals and groups of plantation developers can be a source of worry, since it involves the exclusion of a large majority of the residents of the communities from the once commonly enjoyed resources, their alienation, and a practice whose legitimacy can be questioned.

An alternative solution to the above is to keep the natural resources intact and under the management and access right of the whole community. In this case, a participatory management according to which all members of the community shall have meaningful say and play significant roles, can be expected to provide a morally acceptable and pragmatically sound arrangement.

In spite of the ample attention given to the theme of participation, watchword of the day among the development community, attempts at building community-level mechanisms and institutionalizing them are few and far in between. In most cases, the realization of the participatory approach is left to formal structures such as Kebele Administrative Councils (KACs). Only, in a minority of cases, such as Sidama

Development Corporation of Sidama Zone and Gurage Development Programme, have alternative structures been put in place. These two area-based development programmes have so far organized what are called Kebele Development Committees (KDCs) in 120 and 37 *Kebeles* respectively. These KDCs are outside of the formal *Kebele* administration and endeavor to conduct their development-specific activities in a participatory model in which its members are trained for a period of five weeks.

In Tigray, beneficiaries of various small and large scale projects have been encouraged to set up grass-roots level organizations, such as water/irrigation committees, watershed committees, and the like. These committees overlap with and supplement the more formal *tabia* and *qushet*-level development committees; and are well supervised by the dominant politico-administrative structure in the region. However, they have come to serve as fora of peoples' involvement in the management of developmental processes affecting their lives.

Another development of the period was the pressure created by returnees on land and on the institutions that were responsible for land administration. This was particularly a major problem in the Amhara National Regional State, where it was only partially resolved at the expense of common lands and common natural resources. But, in spite of these encroachments on commons, and the general land redistribution drive that was carried out in the Region in 1997, landlessness still prevails among certain groups such as returnees.

The land redistribution of 1997 has not resolved the problem of landlessness and that of land fragmentation. In fact, it appears that the major lesson that has been learnt from this redistribution drive is the impossibility of further redistributions. In a few *Weredas* of the Region, at least, the campaign was called off when it was found technically impossible to further sub-divide land.

Obviously, this tacit recognition of the impossibility of future land redistributions has very clear policy implications. Policy makers must come to terms with the reality of the country and the regions. While it would be proper to follow several trial routes, identifying their respective merits and the demerits in the process, these experiments need to be conducted systematically and their results must contribute towards the formulation of better policies.

The border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea has proved that in the Horn of Africa peace is not at all lasting and post-conflict situation is a recurring state of affairs. This conflict has resulted in the destruction of large amounts of natural resources, particularly forests, all along the

border. Trees were felled in order to provide fortification material and fuel wood for the armies. Mines decimated both flora and fauna.

What is worrying is that the post-conflict situation that is now emerging following the recently concluded peace, is likely to promote further destruction of natural resources if appropriate measures are not taken promptly. Whether components of the Ethiopian Defense Forces are encamped closer to the border or at different sites deep inside the country, choice of camp sites is likely to be guided by proximity to dependable sources of fuel and construction wood. Opinions on lessons from the Derg era on this matter are more or less unanimous. Exploitation of forest resources by nearby encamped troops often opens the door for their competitive and wholesale destruction, including by the surrounding populations.

Such a possibility is real since ownership and access rights to forests and forest resources as well as other natural resources remain unclear. The pronouncements of the Environmental Policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia adopted in April 1997 on the matter are too general to lead to a clear distribution of rights and responsibilities between the state, communities, and individuals. Moreover, as enforceable laws do not back the provisions of the policy, they remain mere declarations of intent.

In sum, I believe that natural resources management in Ethiopia is still at a crossroads and calls for clear policy-cum-legal direction. The current situation is characterized by deficiency of traditional management systems that have long become eroded, on the one hand, and the failure of new ones to emerge, on the other. Recent developments in the realm of natural resources management, too, have been spontaneous and sporadic events whose broad impacts are as yet not fully known. The latest post-conflict natural resources challenge that has emerged in the wake of the border war has only highlighted an already existing dearth of clear policy and enforceable legislation for natural resources protection and development.

Participation and Partnership in Resource Management

Elizabeth Harrison

Introduction

This paper takes as its starting point the proliferation of donor discourses about partnership and participation. First, I argue that there are many unexamined assumptions behind optimistic calls for partnership. Among these, a tendency to treat the generation of policy as a value-free process is common. However, clearly the creation of policy and dominant narratives reflects power – a power that is scarcely acknowledged within the world of development. Development ‘partnerships’ obscure a wide range of inequalities, but the ability to define the terms of the debate is one of the more subtle.

The possibly contradictory relationship between avowals of partnership and the imposition of neo-liberal political and economic policies on poorer countries is an obvious case of donor-defined agendas. For example, debates about the relative merits of state control or privatisation are highly contentious. In contrast, the encouragement of participatory approaches to planned development is a generally a less contentious policy area. In an ideal manifestation, presumably nobody with a sense of justice would disagree with as much participation and consultation as possible. If development is about alleviating poverty and addressing injustices in access to resources, it seems obvious that as broad a range of people as possible should participate in formulating development policy. Yet, as is increasingly being documented, there is a big difference between the ideals of participation and the proliferation of a development orthodoxy (Stirrat 1997). Well-intentioned and egalitarian ideals can become no more than standardised rituals. Even if not simply ritualised, calls for participation may involve a naivety about the nature of that participation. Importantly, conflicts in interests and power differentials may be glossed over rather than addressed. The focus of much of this critique is on the implementation of participatory approaches at the ‘local’ level; the way that communities may be treated as homogeneous (Guijt and Shah 1998), or that factors such as gender may

strongly influence the ability (or lack of it) to 'participate' (Mosse 1994). In response to these critiques, academic and donor advocates of participation have sought ways to 'get participation right', by adapting and improving participatory techniques. There is rather less attention paid to the way that participatory agendas are generated or what they can tell us about development partnerships.

In this paper, I explore the relationship between participatory agendas and development partnerships in Ethiopia, where the widespread use of the language of participation glosses over a series of linked complexities. Among these, the history of hierarchical and non-participatory government is among the most important. This influences the current context of 'post-Derg'¹ rebuilding and decentralisation, resulting in considerable tensions between actors at different institutional levels. The relationships between the state and donors and between donors themselves are similarly contested and negotiated. However, none of these institutions is monolithic. In particular, the agency and positioning of those individuals charged with implementing participatory policy influences both practice and interpretation and can help explain the frequent gaps between policy and practice.

In the following section, I outline in greater detail the international discourse of partnership and participation and its critique. I then go on to explore the development of a participatory policy agenda in Ethiopia and its links to donor agendas in the north. While participatory agendas have been influential in a wide range of sectors (health, education etc), in this paper I focus in particular on participation in 'community based' natural resources management (CBNRM), which is officially an important priority for both donors and the government of Ethiopia.

In the final section, I provide an account of the realities of policy implementation in North Wollo. This region in northern Ethiopia illustrates the complexity of institutional interests and the contested nature of policy formulation especially well.

I do not want to suggest that participation and partnership are simply misplaced ideals. However, comprehension of the relationship between policy and implementation needs to be rooted in a more detailed

¹ The term 'post-Derg' is used to describe Ethiopia since the fall of the Derg government in 1991. The research on which this paper is based was initially formulated around the notion of 'post-conflict' Ethiopia, but this is clearly problematic. On the one hand, border conflict with Eritrea has continued on and off over the last three years. On the other, conflicts did not simply cease with the formal end of the civil war. However, many of the challenges with have faced the country since 1991 are also similar to those in other 'post conflict' countries.

understanding of the political context than is often the case. This should entail examination not only of individual agency, but also of how this is constrained and influenced by broader structural considerations.

Partnership and participation in international discourse

'Partnership' is one of the most over-used and under-scrutinised words in the development lexicon. It is used to describe the relationships between international donors and recipient governments, between NGOs and their funders, and between northern and southern NGOs. Partnership is also an idea that refers to a diverse range of activities from giving grants, technical assistance or equipment, sharing information, managing projects jointly, and joining forces to lobby decision-makers. These are clearly very different kinds of relationship and activity and the nature and degree of partnership contained in them are equally variable.

The British Government's 1997 White Paper, 'Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century' (DFID 1997) espoused the ideal of partnership. In return for a commitment to poverty alleviation and good governance on the part of its 'partners', it promised greater and longer-term commitment of resources. But the notion of partnership in development has been around for a long time. As far back as 1969, the Pearson Commission on Aid and Development called for '*a new partnership based on an informal understanding expressing the reciprocal rights and obligations of donors and recipients*' (1969: 127). The Brandt Commission in 1980 also emphasised the importance of joint decision making. The European Union's Lome Conventions were set up to enshrine an unusually strong notion of partnership with contractual obligations on the part of both donors and recipients. However, Maxwell and Riddell (1998) suggest that the history of Lome has been one of retreat from these ideals. More recently, the OECD strategy document on 'Shaping the 21st Century: the Contribution of Development Co-operation' (OECD 1996), is formulated around the centrality of development partnerships. The World Bank was described by its president in 1994 as a '*global partnership in which more than 175 countries have joined together for a common purpose*' (World Bank 1994).

The Bank pledged itself to work increasingly in partnership with NGOs too, apparently to take advantage of their closer links with 'the poor' and better meet their objective of fighting poverty. It has even encouraged NGOs to lobby against it, claiming that it has decided to consult local NGOs about projects because '*the most successful examples*

of Bank-NGO collaboration are those in which NGOs have worked as partners' (World Bank 1994: 20).

For international NGOs generally, partnership is also a popular, if not obligatory, strategy. As Fowler argues; *The ultimate legitimacy of development NGOs, south and Northern (sic), can only be derived from what they achieve in their relationship with the intended beneficiaries of their existence and efforts - the poor. Southern NGOs can obtain this legitimacy directly in the Third World, most Northern NGOs that are not operational can only obtain this via their partnerships* (1992:21).

The shared discourse of partnership between government and NGOs is at least in part attributable to the fact that most NGOs rely on financial support from governments. This dependence has deepened as governments have increasingly seen NGOs as essential components of civil society and as suitable conduits for funds. Edwards and Hulme (1997) argue that the high dependency of NGOs (both southern and northern) on official donor funds undermines their relationship with those they ultimately intend to help. A southern perspective presented by Muchunguzi and Milne (1995) raises a different view of this problem. In a study to which 170 southern NGOs provided information, they argue that a focus on financial contributions undermines the importance of those who contribute knowledge, labour and other goods.

The motivation behind the emphasis on partnerships may have both instrumental and ethical dimensions. At its most insidious level, it can reflect the advancement of particular perspectives and hegemonic worldviews. For example, a report of the US Foreign Policy Project entitled 'The Partnership Imperative: Maintaining American Leadership in a New Era', (Blechmann et.al 1997) suggests that American policy needs to adapt to advance the country's stake in '*a world hospitable to American values*' (1997: 1). More commonly, the notion of partnership has evolved to address the perceived failure of development intervention and aid. Aid agencies have often been accused of failing to transfer skills or responsibilities to 'local' agencies, with the result that projects collapse when the funding ceases. One of the solutions proposed to cure this problem has been to improve partnerships. The partners of aid agencies are expected to achieve self-reliance through capacity building. Most aid agencies aim, in theory at least, to become redundant within the partnership. For example, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD calls for partnership as a central aspect of its strategy for the 21st Century and argues that

Acceptance of the partnership model, with greater clarity of the roles of partners, is one of the most positive changes we are proposing in the framework for development co-operation. In a partnership, development co-operation does not try to do things for developing countries and their people, but with them. It must be seen as a collaborative effort to help them increase their capacities to do things for themselves. Paternalistic approaches have no place in this framework. In a true partnership, local actors should progressively take the lead, while external partners back their efforts to assume greater responsibility for their own development (OECD 1996: 13).

It is not easy to pinpoint what is meant by partnership. While the use of a language of 'partnership' pervades most donor and agency policy documentation, close analysis of its meaning is less common. Indeed it is arguable that, like other loosely used terms such as empowerment and participation, part of the attractiveness of the term lies in its slipperiness. As Stirrat and Henkel have argued, partnership is an ambiguous concept: *'on the one hand, it can involve a denial of individual identity: we share everything...For the donors the great advantage of this model of partnership is legitimation in that it allows them to claim a certain authenticity...'* (1997: 75). In some ways therefore, the language of partnership helps with the problems of legitimacy and accountability that plague all development donors.

The idea of partnership is often closely linked with that of participation, particularly in its more ethically-based manifestations. Thus, the notion of partnership is not only about donors manipulating their position on the world stage or finding new ways of dressing up past failures. Many of the calls for better partnership reflect the same motivation behind those for participation: frustration with top-down and technocratic approaches, a wish to understand and promote the interests of those most often marginalised by development processes, and a genuine commitment to redressing inequality.

The ideal of partnership may thus be laudable in many ways. But this ideal emerges in a context of inequality. Despite the swelling orthodoxy advocating understanding different stakeholders, participation, and partnership, the political processes surrounding these objectives are rarely analysed. In a similar fashion to the debates around gender, partnership is converted into a technical issue to improve management. In most representations of partnership, there is little acknowledgement of the inequalities which make much partnership more rhetorical than real.

Better communication between partners might provide a sense of equality but it does not alter the unequal relationship of donor and recipient. Compliance may be more appearance than reality. One might argue that there is a certain equality because the donor needs the recipient as much as the other way round; even so, the exchange is inherently unequal and, at times, coercive. For example, there is an odd lack of congruence between the nominal equality of 'partnership' and the more obviously one-way streets of the governance and anti-corruption agendas and aid conditionality.

Informally, donor or agency representations also often include derogatory claims about the inadequacy of their partners. 'They are not ready to take charge yet', 'they couldn't organise a picnic let alone a development project', 'they could not manage without us', are all comments that do not enter public representations, but will be familiar to anyone who has spent time in international aid agencies. The aid industry continues to rest on an assumption of inadequacy on the part of the institutional recipients in 'poorer' countries. While this is rarely debated in international circles, it may be the subject of considerable resentment among recipient 'partners'. Thus, Muchunguzi and Milne (1995) report that southern NGOs feel themselves to be the subjects of changing and imposed agendas. In addition, accountability is seen as a one-way street; southern NGOs spend inordinate amounts of time trying to meet the accountability requirements of diverse donors. There are suspicions that donor supported projects are job creation schemes for experts and volunteers when there are equally qualified southerners available. Lastly, the major concerns raised by southern NGOs are not demands for increased funding, but for increased transparency and respect. All this seems a far cry from bland pronouncements on partnership.

In addition to inequalities in resources and negative representations of recipients, the partnership and participation orthodoxy often disguises another important aspect of power: the power to define the terms of the debate. For example, the recent interest in democratisation, the promotion of privatisation and the reduction of the role of the state, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is predicated on a particular notion of the relationship between state and civil society. Civil society is seen as the key to democratic change, not only as separate from the state, but often in opposition to it (Dessalegn 2000). Much analysis critical of donor perspectives takes exception to the use of a strict dichotomy between state and civil society on the basis that there is a lack of separation between public and private spheres in Africa (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Harsch

1993; Olivier de Sardan 1999). Nonetheless, these agendas continue to dominate development partnerships.

Policy narratives gain force in particular contexts, but their origins and their tendency to simplify the messiness of social organisation are generally glossed over. Policies of participation and partnership are an example of this. This point is made effectively by Keeley and Scoones (2000) in their discussion of the evolution of the environmental policy-making process in Ethiopia. They identify three core policy discourses that have evolved to address Ethiopia's problems of food production, natural resource degradation, and low levels of community participation in natural resource management. These are a 'Green Revolution discourse', an 'environmental rehabilitation discourse' and a 'participatory natural resource management' discourse. The theoretical lenses through which they analyse these discourses are those of 'actor networks', derived largely from the work of Latour (1987) and Callon (1986), and 'policy space' (Grindle and Thomas 1991). Keeley and Scoones describe actor networks as the 'mechanisms through which knowledge becomes practice' (2000: 91). What joins actors together in these networks is a sharing of common values and outlooks, plus a tendency to strategise to promote these values. Actor networks succeed in establishing actual policy by taking advantage of 'policy space', which is influenced by context, circumstances and personal influences.

Keeley and Scoones make a number of important observations with regard to the development of policy in Ethiopia. Among these, one of the most interesting is the fact that policy is often based on a few sources (one or two research documents). These may be of limited scope and sometimes even inaccurate. In addition, the role of key political figures is important – for example, the influence of visits by the Green Revolution advocate Norman Borlaug and ex-president of the United States, Jimmy Carter. In 1994, they accompanied Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to a demonstration site of the SG-2000 programme of improved seeds and inputs. After this, SG-2000 became incorporated into the official National Extension Policy and became an inviolable policy priority. Thus relatively narrow and easily identifiable events can have profound ramifications.

This analysis of the policy process is useful. It illustrates that policy does not develop in a vacuum, but is highly influenced by the context of the policy makers. As Keeley and Scoones put it,

'Our analysis sees policy making as a diverse, diffuse, complicated activity, where sometimes competing, something overlapping policy positions are presented by a range of different groupings of actors,

including scientists, administrators, NGO personnel, government officials, rural people and politicians' (2000: 90).

However, while they note the importance of a wide range of actors in the policy process, and criticise Grindle and Thomas's theoretical focus solely on elites, Keeley and Scoones leave certain questions unanswered. Actor-network theory tends to prioritise individual agency over structural considerations. A more complete analysis would try to delineate the relationship between the two. Meanwhile, because the focus is principally on those who apparently have the power to shape policy, much of the relationship between policy development and implementation is left unexplained. To attempt such an explanation, a more diverse range of individuals has to be considered, tracing the policy process from its genesis to its interpretation and reformulation by those at the bottom of the hierarchy.

In what follows therefore, I take Keeley and Scoones' work as important background and context for analysis. However, I hope to go further by examining how participation discourses are developed and played out in a range of different sites, not just among those who most obviously create policy. In particular, I am interested in the perspectives of those who are apparently at the bottom of the policy process; the lower level bureaucrats and extension workers who face everyday dilemmas in 'implementing' participation. Such an examination confirms the, perhaps obvious, point about the inequality of nominal development partnerships. It also illustrates that the meaning of both partnership and participation is not only contested, but reflects the position of the interpreter.

Participation and the policy process in Ethiopia: setting agendas

Context

The research on which this paper is based is part of a broader project funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK. It involves the Universities of Sussex and Addis Ababa and the Centro de Experimentação Florestal (CEF), in Mozambique. The broader project examines the way different institutions have been involved in CBNRM in post conflict countries. Research has taken place in both Ethiopia and Mozambique and has examined, among other things, the issues of displacement and refugee return, the construction of 'communities', and the role of policy in institutional rebuilding.

In Ethiopia, detailed fieldwork has been undertaken near Dessie, in south Wollo zone, Amhara Region, and in Meket *Wereda*², in north Wollo zone³. Both areas are part of the Northern highlands and chronically food insecure, but between them there are considerable variations in topography and economic well being. In Wollo as a whole a wide range of international donors and NGOs have been active. This area was one of the worst affected by the famine of 1984-5 and partly as a result became a focus for externally funded development activity. Thus, among others, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Swedish agency SIDA, and the German GTZ have been especially active. International NGOs working in Wollo include SCF, Concern, SNV and SOS Sahel. In addition, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), Amhara Development Association (ALMA), and Ethiopian Relief Organisation (ERO) have all undertaken development work in the area. High levels of natural resource degradation, pockets of very high population density, and overall continuing food insecurity, mean that much of the activity of these development organisations has focused on natural resources management. This is in line with the stated priorities of the Government, which has recently adopted a National Conservation Strategy (NCS). Most donors and the government see population pressure as the principal root of environmental crisis in the Northern Highlands. However, it is also acknowledged that this is compounded by tenure insecurity, poorly developed infrastructure, and the vagaries of climate. Holt and Dessalegn (1999) agree that increasing population density and reduction in the size of landholdings is undeniable, pointing out that Wollo has seen an overall population increase of 102% in the last 30 years. Nonetheless, they also point out that the fact that farmers still farm in the area after 1000 years is evidence that there are considerable resources in terms of knowledge about natural resources management. All of the international donors work through and with representatives of the government at the various administrative levels. These are ministries (federal level), bureaux (regional level), departments (zonal level), and offices (*Wereda* level).

In South Wollo, we have been examining the allocation of land to returnees and the management of forest reserves. In Meket, we have been working with both the Ethiopian government and a Dutch Government-funded programme managed by SOS Sahel, a British NGO. This

² . A *Wereda* is the lowest level of administrative unit in which representatives of government ministries are employed. Meket *Wereda* has a population of a little under 200,000 people.

³ Fieldwork has been carried out by Mr Tarakegn Yibabie.

programme has, since 1994, pioneered the use of participatory methodologies in a number of its activities. These have included agronomy, horticulture, livestock, forestry, and soil and water conservation. The programme's funding proposal outlines its philosophy clearly:

'The MDP aims to equip local implementing partners – both government and grass-roots - with the practical means of using real participatory approaches to strengthen community self reliance...The partners in the MDP agree that the term 'participation' requires careful definition. They agree that participation must imply a partnership, in which communities will take responsibility for their own development and other stakeholders take responsibility for equipping them to do so'. (MDP 1997). The Meket programme is discussed in more detail below.

The fieldwork for this paper was conducted during January and February 2000. It entailed interviews with donor and government personnel in London and Addis Ababa, and interviews in Meket, Dessie and Bahir Dar, the regional capital. Outside of Addis, we spoke to representatives of various government departments and donor agencies. Particular attention was paid to the activities and perceptions of Development Agents (DAs), the lowest level of the government hierarchy. DAs are principally charged with carrying out agricultural extension work, but may have a range of other responsibilities, including the promotion and implementation of donor-supported development intervention. They work at the level of the *Kebele*, which is often approximated to a 'village', although this is not quite accurate. *Kebeles* may contain upwards of 1,000 households, and there is a range of further sub-divisions, defined according to location, kinship and religious affiliation. The *Kebele* Administration (KA) answers directly to the government, and is most people's immediate point of reference for legal and other administrative matters.

The proliferation of participatory paradigms: the Ethiopian state and its donors

It is not just the Meket Development Programme that works with a participatory agenda (although few others are quite so clearly articulated). What is very striking, in even a brief visit to Ethiopia, is the ubiquity of participatory approaches to development. The acronyms confirm this picture - PADETES, PLUPI, PAPI, LLPPA, PEP, PRA, MAP, PADIS – all are approaches or methodologies currently or recently favoured by development agencies or the state. In each of them, the 'P' stands for

participation⁴. As is discussed below, the substantive differences between the various approaches are often hard to identify, although the originators of each may be particularly attached to the merits of 'their' system. In this section however, I want to look more closely at the proliferation itself.

Keeley and Scoones identify significant shifts in policy language over the decade from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. Despite the continued favouring of Green Revolution approaches to environment and agriculture, campaign style methods were apparently abandoned in favour of those involving farmer consultation and planning. The Ethiopian Highlands Reclamation Study (EHRS) supported by FAO in 1986, thus called for large-scale resettlement and tree planting as a cure for environmental problems, but by 1995, the National Conservation strategy had a very different tone. *'Given the reported reluctance of some farmers to construct physical conservation works in some areas, through a programme of farmer participatory research, determine for specific agroecological zones the relative efficiencies and economic advantages of physical and biological soil conservation systems to determine the biological or physical measures most suitable for conservation'* (NCS, cited in Keeley and Scoones 2000: 28). This shift in language is explained as arising from a number of factors. Among these, the overthrow of the Derg and the consequent opening up of policy space in the immediate post Derg period is seen as important. Keeley and Scoones also note that changing patterns of aid curtailed much of the policy space which was previously associated with more top-down approaches, and that with the increasing emphasis on participation in the international development literature, there has been a need to couch applications to donors in participatory language.

This last point is potentially very important. On the one hand, if 'participatory partnerships' arise largely from responses to funding needs, the content of the participation itself may be questionable. Is the shift to participation really any more than lip service? On the other hand, does an explanation primarily in terms of donor agendas obscure the different meanings of participation for those who adopt the terminology? There are more complex processes than the simple adoption of terminology taking

⁴ PADETES is participatory development training and extension system, PLUPI is participatory land use planning and implementation, PAPI is participatory action planning and implementation, LLPPA is local level participatory planning approach, PEP is participatory extension planning, PRA is participatory rural appraisal, MAP is method for active participation, PADIS is participatory approach to development and information systems.

place here. Crucially, the blanket use of participatory language may hide the complex interaction of history and individual positioning which make the meanings of participation extremely variable.

There has been considerable documentation of the fact that the relationship between the government and NGOs (both international and national) has not been an easy one. The famines in the 1980s that precipitated the influx of NGOs and donors also exposed fundamental flaws in state policy. Dessalegn suggests that this has left a residue of resentment in government circles, a reminder of governmental inadequacy and failure to deliver for the needs of the population: *'It is as if Ethiopians, or rather the urban elite, never forgave these organizations for forcing their way into the country at a time when both state and society were overwhelmed by tragedy'* (Dessalegn 2000: 6). The relationship between government and both donors and international NGOs has remained uncomfortable even after the fall of the Derg. There are currently close to 300 registered national and international NGOs in the country, a rise from only 65-70 in the late 1980s. The majority (23.4%) of NGO investment has gone to region three (Amhara) (CRDA 1997). In 1993/4 there were 43 NGOs working in region Amhara, employing about 800 people (Johannson 1995). The overall increase partly reflects the current government's more open policy. However, there are still considerable controls on NGO activity. The donor wish to support the institutions of civil society as part of the governance agenda is seen as undermining the state's controlling function and is resented by some of those in government. Currently, tensions revolve around donor reluctance to fund essential programmes of famine relief while Ethiopia continues its border conflict with Eritrea.

Despite these tensions, there is little doubt that external donors have played an important part in the adoption of participatory approaches in Ethiopia. This was already taking place prior to the fall of the Derg in 1991 and its expansion has followed the popularity of participatory approaches more generally. A 'participatory rapid rural appraisal' was carried out in Wollo in 1988, with the support of the IIED (UK) and the Red Cross society (Scoones and McCracken 1989). The earliest indication of participatory approaches was in fact in the EHRS which, despite its generally top-down approach, still contained recommendations for 'community participation'. The findings of the EHRS formed the basis for subsequent SIDA support to the Amhara Region. Initial plans were drawn up in 1987 but not implemented due to conflict with the government over policy (SIDA 1994). However, from 1993, there have been a series of 'community participation workshops'

and widespread training in participatory planning with government agents. This has formed the basis for a current programme of participatory development support.

Also in the 1980s, the WFP, which had been operational in the country since 1971, began to shift its approach away from 'top down' towards 'participatory' food for work (FFW) and employment generating schemes (EGS). In 1990, it introduced LLPP (local level participatory planning) as the methodology through which food aid would be distributed and income generation schemes devised. In some accounts (e.g. Johannson 1995), the LLPP approach is described by its advocates as originating from the Ministry of Natural Resources. However, documentation and manuals for its implementation show that 'experts' from Rome (headquarters of WFP) played an instrumental role in developing the methodology. Thus, those in the Ministry may or may not have adhered to the policy, but they certainly had less ownership of it than is publicly presented.

A similar pattern seems to exist in the case of the MDP. The programme documentation stresses strongly that the programme is 'owned' by those involved in it. In the programme design a key requirement is that *'the proposal should not be the product or property of SOS Sahel'* (MDP 1997: 6). A wide range of consultative mechanisms has been put in place to promote and ensure ownership. The programme plan stresses that it is important to avoid the creation of 'NGO dependency syndrome' in which local structures are undermined by the temporary wealth of resources offered by the NGO. As with WFP though, the genesis of the participatory ideas can be traced to a combination of the philosophy of SOS Sahel in London, and the motivations and experience of the expatriate advisor to the project.

In the specific field of NRM, SOS Sahel has pioneered participatory and consultative approaches since its inception in 1983. In Ethiopia, participatory methods were already in place in a development project in North Omo district, in the south of the country since the early 1990s. Staff in London conceded however that the NGO's own agendas have been influential in defining the content of the participation. For example, in Meket, expressed needs connected to health and education have recently emerged, but these are not really within the expertise of the organisation, which has always focused on soil and water conservation, forestry, and other aspects of NRM. As one advisor put it, 'it is true that we still have to define what it is that people participate in'. The role of the expatriate advisor has also been critical. A 1996 evaluation notes that the arrival of the advisor in April of that year was a key moment for the project (SOS

Sahel 1996). Prior to this, relations with government representatives had been bad as they saw the project being too focused on trials and experimentation with no obvious commitment of resources. Without an advisor, the project was accused of lacking direction and focus. The advisor who arrived in 1996 had developed and refined participatory approaches and 'horizontal management' techniques while working in Mozambique. He was able to bring these innovations with him to Meket.

In the above account, I am not criticising the approach itself. Later, I will discuss the problems and issues in moving from such an ideal approach to practice. Here, I am simply noting the genesis of participatory agendas in donor and NGO priorities which hardly rests on partnership. But how does this really intersect with the thinking of the state and its representatives? It is not enough to imply that more the powerful partners in the partnership simply dictate an agenda to which others respond. To answer this question it is necessary to document the historical processes associated with participatory policies, and their influence on the form and functioning of the Ethiopian State.

The Ethiopian State is widely seen as hierarchical and controlling. In the past, some commentators have attributed this to the supposed 'psychological characteristics' of the dominant Abyssinian (Amhara/Tigrayan) people. Levine (1965), for example, suggests that deference to hierarchy and equivocation are hallmarks of Abyssinian culture. Korten (1972), in explaining the 'psychological problems of modernization in Ethiopia', argues that a rationalised relationship between superiors and subordinates is particularly important; negotiation between men (*sic*) of unequal rank is unthinkable, and the acquiring of 'office' is seen as a reward rather than as a personal responsibility. At the same time, while there is complete deference and acquiescence to superiors, covert spreading of unrest and dissent are also important.

Both Korten and Levine's analyses are products of the time in which they were writing and are influenced by the more discredited aspects of modernisation theory. They essentialise 'Abyssinian culture' and do not root their analyses in the wider historical and social context shaping the supposed psychological characteristics. A focus on Abyssinian characteristics also diverts attention from the relationship between these and other ethnic groupings. Aspects of their analyses are however repeated in more recent discussions of the Ethiopian State (Tsegaye 1997), and find support in current debates about the relationship between the Amharan and Tigrayan-dominated government and the rest of the population. Policies of federalism and decentralisation partly reflect the

tensions between pressures for nation building on the one hand, and a strong desire to minimise Amharan/Tigrayan control.

There is an extensive literature documenting the evolution of the Ethiopian State. In the state's more recent manifestation, one thing is certain: that all adult Ethiopians will have lived with at least one extremely coercive government; either the communist military rule of the Derg or both this and the imperial regime of Haile Selassie. The memory of this, as well as the nature of the present state may be relevant to current practices with regard to the interpretation and development of policy. Haile Selassie ruled between 1917 and 1935, and between 1941 and 1974. During this time, a great number of agricultural reforms were implemented, commercial and economic development encouraged, and the foundations of the current state established. According to Pausewang (1997) most people in the rural areas experienced this as a period of centralised and uncontrollable power.

The Derg sought to transform rural life with radical land reform, the establishment of rural co-operatives and state farms, and a programme of mass resettlement and villagisation following the 1984-5 famine. Much of this was done with extreme coercion. Bruce et.al (1994) argue that the Derg went from being popular to being a 'force against the peasantry'. After the civil war and a period of transition, the government, led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), has attempted to redress the centralising tendencies of the Derg through the introduction of a process of 'ethnic federalism' and decentralisation. Nonetheless, this has been on the basis of socialist principles of state control that remain at odds with more liberal donor agendas. While the more coercive aspects of the state may have changed, its continuing ubiquity and importance in the lives of the population is important for comprehending the construction of, and response to, policies of participation. Pausewang (1997: 187) maintains that the legacy of the Derg is important. *'Peasants are adjusted to administrative and political structures which foster authority, not democratic debate'*. He suggests that peasants interpret authority as the ability to impose one's will on others; that they expect to obey, not challenge, authority.

In addition, several commentators argue that the present government has not relinquished the dictatorial tendencies of the Derg, and continues to stifle free expression (Vestal 1997). Hoben (1996) suggests that there are still a number of contradictions in government policy objectives (in this instance with regard to land tenure). For example, there is a disparity between a desire to give peasants more secure tenure and the need for the party to maintain control. In Amhara region, where there was extensive

land reform in 1997 (Ege 1997), many local officials foster the belief that this will be repeated in order to confirm their control. Hoben argues that the cumulative effect of 'top-down' attitudes towards peasants 'does not support the adoption of a participatory, error embracing approach to agricultural development' (Hoben 1996:iv).

Dessalegn (2000) also argues that the Ethiopian State has greatly expanded since the 1960s, and this trend shows no sign of reversing. '*Both during the Derg and the present government, the ability of the state to intervene at the local and household level, and in every part of the country, has been greatly enhanced*' (Dessalegn 2000: 8). For example, while the *Kebele* Administration is the lowest official level of the government hierarchy, a network of *mengastawi buden* or 'development teams' operates below this. These less formally recognised groupings of 50 or fewer households serve as important interpreters of government policy. It is in this context, that the relationship between different articulations of participatory policy should be understood. Of particular importance is the fact that ideas about participation are not solely the province of international development organisations.

Representatives of the Ethiopian government would argue that 'participation' has been a central pillar of policy independently of donor influence and ideas. Key manifestations of this are the concepts of *tesatfo* (mass mobilisation) and *limatt* (development). Ethiopia has, over the last two decades, been highly dependent on food aid. However, government strategy is that no able bodied person should receive food aid without working on a community project in return (WFP 1998). Thus, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee (DPPC), working closely with the WFP, has encouraged food for work (FFW) and employment generation schemes (EGS). Many of these have centred on environmental rehabilitation activities such as soil and water conservation. Under *tesatfo*, people in rural areas have been obliged to take part in such work for a specified number of days in a year (accounts of the number vary, but 20 days a year seems about average). A number of informants within *Wereda* councils, described this mass mobilisation as 'participation', as people were 'working together to help their community'. Nonetheless, whereas in the past, there had been little consultation about the optimum time for mass mobilisation activities, now considerable efforts are made to listen to the wishes of the farmers.

Penalties for failure to participate in development activities include fines and even the threat of the loss of land. This is not seen as being at odds with a participatory ideology. Clearly underlying it is a very different conception of the agency and power of the individuals involved

in participation to that of SOS Sahel and SIDA. However, while apparently being in opposition to the voluntary participation ethos promoted by international donors, this government induced 'participation' nevertheless has certain characteristics in common with it. The ideal of working for the betterment of 'the community' is one of these. In the government interpretation, this priority takes precedence over individual needs. Such a prioritisation is less acceptable to international donors who have a less clear stance on the balance between the needs of the individual and those of the community. Arguably therefore, among representatives of the State, there is an internalisation and adoption of certain donor discourses about participation, combined with a pre-existing interpretation about what participation is (and should be) about.

However, as I have argued above, it is important not to see the Ethiopian State as a monolithic entity. The combination of ethnic diversity and policies of decentralisation have led to considerable struggle among both groups and individuals. The uncertainty caused during the war and the subsequent hiatus, during which many people were striving to (re)establish their own positions, caused further contestation. In the couple of years following the downfall of the Derg in 1991, there was a gap in administrative control, during which individuals sought to read and react to the new balance of power. This was followed by the widespread 'purging' of those known to be closely associated with the Derg regime (known as *birokrasi* at the *Kebele* level). One result is that most current government representatives, especially those at zonal level and below, are very young – most being under thirty years old. On the other hand, there is a considerable group of people who have experienced demotions and harbour resentment against the current regime.

Decentralisation policy has also had significant effects on both personal positioning and the establishment of policy. Importantly, those previously wielding power at a federal level have seen greater responsibility and influence going to the regions. In natural resources management, some departments have been downgraded to 'teams' and all have shifted to an 'advisory' role, but without much ability to influence decisions in the regions. So, for example, with conservation and land use planning strategies, although there is a central strategy, each region is free to develop its own version. Some individuals in Addis Ababa feel disenchanted and powerless, yet they are still the primary points of negotiation for many donors. As one informant put it 'I am the head of my sector in the country and I can't even write a letter!'

The blend of personal disillusionment in some individuals and newly-found responsibility for others is likely to influence the evolution of policy itself. In particular, there is significant room for individual interpretation. This is particularly true when it comes to participatory natural resources management. For example, some of those people previously in positions of considerable influence also have strong backgrounds in more technical aspects of NRM. While paying lip-service to participation, they show impatience with the undermining of 'expertise' implied in such approaches. Moving down the hierarchy, individual interpretation of policy becomes even more salient as it begins to influence actual practices. Hoben (1996) argues that land tenure policy is largely formulated in workshops at the regional level. Recommendations are translated into formal rules as they filter downwards through the hierarchy. A similar process arguably takes place with the evolution of participatory NRM policies. Thus, while progressive participatory ideas may be articulated at workshops (and there are plenty of workshop proceedings available as evidence of this), their interpretation at the local level is influenced by the factors described above. Insecurity of personnel and the need to demarcate clear boundaries mean that flexible suggestions made at workshops become translated into dogma by their interpreters further away from the formulation process. Thus, while the development of participatory paradigms by some advocates may be iterative, and approaches are modified in dialogue between some levels in the hierarchy, they lose this quality in implementation. It is these processes which are the subject of the next section.

Realities of implementation: from discursive ideals to everyday dilemmas in Wollo

Thus far, this paper has outlined the evolution of policy and the context of competing agendas rather than either genuine partnership or the negation of partnership through imposition by powerful outsiders. All of this is interesting in its own right, but also important because of an obvious gap between participatory policies and actual practice. This gap continues to perplex donors advocating partnership, but is seldom explored beyond off-stage mutterings about the 'problems with the locals'. Participation, it is said, will work better if only we could get the people doing it to better understand the message.

A central tenet of participatory approaches is the need for attitudinal change in those individuals implementing policy, a shedding of

'professional expertise' for greater willingness to listen. In some ways this is portrayed as akin to a conquering of individual perceptions, priorities and biases. However, this transformation is often treated as being a voluntary matter for individuals, rather than as something whose likelihood is also influenced by a whole range of factors beyond individual personality. Participatory practitioners are treated as anonymous and faceless people, particularly when compared to the 'beneficiaries' with whom they are expected to participate. 'The people' are meant to analyse their own situation, and the participatory practitioner is no more than a funnel for this.

The implementation of participatory policy in North Wollo gives reason to question these assumptions. Individuals at lower levels of the policy process may be both unwilling and unable to implement participatory policy in the way it is imagined by those farther away. But the situation is also more complex than this; a range of dilemmas and contradictions influence the interpretation of policy. Participation cannot simply be 'implemented'. What it means in practice reflects the institutional relationships between a range of external actors as well as between them and 'the community'. Importantly, while the state may be seen as powerful and all-pervasive by both farmers and external analysts, the reality is one of contestation within the state as well as between it and 'civil society'. The power, preferences, and position of individuals influence participatory analysis much more than is usually discussed.

A first general point with regard to participatory policy implementation in Ethiopia follows from some of the observations made in the section above. There is a vast gap between policy makers in Addis Ababa and the realities of implementation. This is not to say that the people in Addis do not care, just that they feel very disconnected from what participation might mean in practice. A number of informants in Addis implied that in some sense policy making and implementation are mutually exclusive: 'We generate policy, so implementation is not our business'. One manifestation of this belief is the widespread use of the term 'community' to describe the entity with which participatory efforts are engaged, but with little sense of what this community might be comprised. Korten (1972) has argued that the concept of community scarcely exists in Ethiopia, and that the word itself has no direct Amharic translation. Although this statement is lacking in ethnographic support in Korten's work, it is nevertheless true that use of concepts such as 'community' or even 'village' is particularly problematic in Ethiopia. People are members of different communities according to different reasons: by kinship, religion or residence for example. It is a fact with

which the direct implementers of policy have to contend and work every day, but it scarcely influences the generation of policy.

Contested agendas?

Both government and international development organisations espouse participatory approaches, but how these are interpreted in practice is subject to considerable variation. In some cases, participatory approaches developed in one context are adopted and replicated in another context, and so mutate into something else. In others, there is open conflict over who should represent the ‘community’ that is being encouraged to participate.

In Meket, farmers are exposed to the government extension methodology PADETES (see below), to LLPPA (World Food Programme), and to the various participatory methodologies developed by the SOS Sahel Project. Of these, Participatory Land Use Planning and Implementation (PLUPI), has been widely acclaimed as a great success. The idea behind this is that farmers are more likely to sustainably manage land if they have guarantees about their rights over the product of that land. This is particularly important in North Wollo, where tenure insecurity is entrenched in the population’s memory. Through PLUPI, groups of farmers have gained user rights certificates for areas of land which they have then used for tree planting. Evaluations of PLUPI (Tenna 1998; Tenna and Dagnachew 1997) suggest that the impact has been very positive; farmers feel confident of their rights and are successfully managing their plots. In particular, plans and achievements are consistently higher than those set as part of government *limatt* activities. The origins of the PLUPI methodology are the subject of some debate; an NGO in South Wollo claims that it was the first to think of having user rights certificates. What is relevant here though is the fact that the methodology has been taken up and adopted as part of government policy beyond Meket *Wereda* itself. In the process of this replication, certain basic tenets of the approach seem to have evaporated. For example, SOS Sahel’s notions of collective responsibility are not central to the approach. Instead, it is seen as a way of getting land to the landless, and of helping individuals. Where groups are used, this tends to mean those that are formally constituted, such as youth associations.

This last point, about the appropriate community representatives with which to work, reflects a broader problem besetting donor-state relations. Meket Development Project, SIDA, and other externally funded projects, have tended to favour working with existing informal associations. Of

these, *kires*, or burial associations, have been particularly popular. MDP allows that *kires* are not necessarily more desirable or democratic than other forms of organisation. SIDA has taken a more romantic view in the past, seeing *kires* as in some ways more legitimate representatives of the people than the government, although '*steps should be taken to protect them from the potentially corrupting influences of modern/outside inputs*' (SIDA 1996: 7). In 1994, SIDA attempts to work with *kires* in 'community participation workshops' provoked considerable resentment among government officials. This has been abandoned for the latest phase of SIDA intervention. But a tension persists; representatives of the government strongly believe that CBOs are inappropriate vehicles for development activity. They have no properly elected officials, they operate without rules, and they are embedded in 'traditional' ('backward') belief systems. *Kires* were not originally NRM institutions and some analysts suggest that their increased formalisation is inappropriate. These debates are not easily resolved, but they undercut euphemistic pictures of 'community participation'.

Dilemmas for participatory implementers

One particular group of individuals is key for implementation of all the participatory approaches outlined above. This is the Development Agents (DAs) - the lowest level of the government hierarchy. Participatory land use planning, SIDA community development programmes, participatory extension with farmers and participatory FFW schemes, all ultimately rely on the motivation, willingness and ability of the DAs. As a result these individuals often face conflicting demands on their time and mixed messages about how to go about their work. In the filtering through of participatory policy, flexible suggestions become prescription.

The government's participatory extension methodology, PADETES, illustrates this problem well. Until the mid 1990s, agricultural extension had followed the Training and Visit (T&V) method. As with elsewhere on the continent, this was replaced with an ostensibly more participatory and less top down approach to extension. As a senior informant at the regional level told us: '*In PADETES farmers suggest solutions. There are exhaustive discussions with the community planning team and all people participate. Plans are then sent up to the regional and national levels*'. However, this picture is at odds with the fact that PADETES was adapted from the Sasakawa 2000 Green Revolution approach, itself not known for its participatory nature. In practice, many aspects of this approach remain,

in particular a focus on quantification and the need to meet quotas. Extensionists are encouraged to develop as many demonstration plots with model farmers as possible and to distribute 'inputs'. Their incentive system (vital in the context of extremely low wages) revolves around the number of farmers adopting 'packages'. The words 'uniformity' and 'standards' pepper any discussion of these packages. In a study of the extension system based on discussion with 103 DAs (Belay 1999), 73.8% gave 'input distribution' as their principal activity. This was closely followed by the collection of loans.

This adoption of 'packages' is the antithesis of the kind of participation espoused by donors, but it is nevertheless understandable that this is how messages become interpreted. Extensionists are happy to talk about the need to 'participate' the community. But their superiors at *Wereda* level, the Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) have an expertise in terms of input delivery, soil science, forestry, or whatever. So participatory ideals have to squeeze into these agendas- not the other way round.

In places where there is no development project operating, DAs concentrate on agricultural extension with supplementary activities, which may include tax collection and 'mobilisation'. However, DAs are also increasingly expected to carry out the participatory plans of development organisations. Of these, perhaps the largest is the WFPs LLPPA approach, for which DAs are currently being trained throughout the country. In this method, DAs are responsible for filling in the forms that go to represent the 'community plan' for FFW. This is the implementation end of a policy initially developed in Rome. Farmers' representatives are expected to prioritise both who needs food and what sort of development activities should be carried out. Again, DAs are assumed to be merely filters. They are later responsible for checking the work norms, and filling in attendance sheets.

But DAs are in a very difficult situation. They reside in the community where they work, but are representative of a historically coercive government. Their work involves not only participatory FFW activities but also the fulfilment of quotas and the collection of money from creditors who often cannot afford it. Most have only nine months of training to distinguish them from the farmers they are expected to teach and are relatively young. In Belay's (1999) study, 90% of respondents were below 36 years of age. They are thus in a potentially vulnerable position and in need of allies. Although the government has plans to reduce the DA: household ratio to 1:700, most cover well over a thousand households. Salaries start at 285 birr/month (about (£24). Unlike

elsewhere in Africa, extensionists are not allowed to own land, so a vital means of supplementing their salaries is not available.

In this context, rather than fulfil participatory ideals, DAs are under considerable pressure to accommodate demands from powerful or influential people within the community. WFP policy that principal beneficiaries should be the 'poorest of the poor', may seem particularly unworkable. On the one hand, this can be because of pressure from within the community. On the other, it may be that the DAs' assessment of the best way to address food insecurity is actually at odds with that of the WFP. A great many of the DAs we spoke to acknowledged that informal 'redistribution' of food aid took place and argued that it is sensible and inevitable. They said that the WFP do not understand that for poor farmers it makes sense to look after the slightly better off; they are important when chronic food shortages become acute. Without judging between these different perspectives, there is clearly more shaping the DA's actions than the demands of participation.

Concluding comments

One crucial missing layer in this examination of participatory policy processes is that of the interpretation of participation by the 'beneficiaries' – the farmers of North Wollo. To be able to discuss this with any confidence would require detailed ethnography. However, a few points can be made. A glance at a report of a participatory needs assessment carried out by the SOS Sahel project (Tenna and Dagnachew 1997) illustrates many of the more common weaknesses of nominally participatory approaches, noted in the introduction. The assumption of a homogeneous community is the most glaring of these. The report refers to a particular village, but there is little sense of how this is bounded or selected. Figures are given on the requirements 'per family' of various resources. 'Average' livestock holdings are noted. There is no sense of differentiation, either within or between households. Elsewhere however, it is noted that the greatest opposition to PLUPI seems to come from women who have lost their ability to collect firewood in the protected areas. Likewise, WFP and others acknowledge that men are generally much more successful in the scramble for FFW (Tadella 1997). The indications are that the translation of participatory policy into benefit for farmers is as problematic as anywhere.

In moving from London or Rome to Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Meket, participatory partnerships mean very different things. This is often obscured by a common language. But the different interpretations reflect

the position and power of the interpreter. Thus, a good idea generated in London can be articulated in far-away Meket. But for those who live in Meket, participation means something very different from what its originator intended. Interpretation varies according to whether the interpreter is a lowly DA, a *Wereda* official, or an MDP employee. There is also not a strict dichotomy between the donors and the state as opposite sides of the partnership. There are clear manifestations of the greater wealth of the donors (illustrated particularly well by the different standards of décor in government and donor offices). But differences among donors and within the government hierarchy itself mean that partnerships are much more complex and negotiable than this. This is not to suggest that attempts to induce more democratic and fair development intervention are doomed to failure. Rather, that their effectiveness is closely related to a nuanced understanding of both social and political context – which is still rare in discourses about participatory partnership.

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Natural Resources Management In Post Conflict Situation: The Case Of Manica Province- Mozambique

Antonio Serra

Background

Since the end of civil war in 1992 and the first multiparty elections in 1994, Mozambique has been involved in the re-formulation of legal instruments and policies concerned with use and conservation of natural resources and decentralization process. The Municipality Law (1997), Land Law (1997), Environmental Law (1997), Forest and Wildlife Law (1999), and more recently the Decree Law n° 15/2000 (which recognised traditional 'chiefs' as representing communities¹) are some examples of this new legal framework.

One of the most relevant and "innovative" issues in all these laws and legal instruments is the participation of rural communities. This means that the community is viewed as a potential partner in the management of natural resources and the promotion of rural development. In other words, the role of rural communities and local institutions are recognized as crucial in the new sustainable development approach.

In Mozambique, as in a number of other southern African countries, community participation in natural resource management is viewed as an alternative to the failed conservation policies adopted since colonial times, which were based on protected areas (reserves and parks), commercial exploitation of timber and wildlife, and strong state management. The first experience of community participation in natural resource management began in 1994 in the north-western corner of Tete province. The 'Tchumo Tchato' initiative, implemented by the Provincial Forest and Wildlife Service (SPFFB), supported by the International

¹ 'Traditional chiefs' have existed in Mozambique since pre-colonial times, but were formalized as community leaders under Portuguese rule, acting as intermediaries between the colonial state and rural people. Formally abolished at independence, chiefs often continued to hold the respect of rural communities, and were again used as an instrument of indirect rule in areas controlled by Renamo during the civil war.

Union for the Conservation of Nature and the University of Zimbabwe, and financed by the Ford Foundation, was established to solve or minimize the conflict between the local community and a hunting safari company (Mozambique Safaris) operating in Bawa (Foloma, 1998:1). The project also sought to control poaching.

Currently, more than 41 Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) projects are being coordinated by either the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development or the Ministry of the Environment, and implemented and supported by different government and non-governmental institutions (Nhantumbo, 2000:12).

In Manica province, three CBNRM projects are being implemented by the Provincial Forest and Wildlife Service and the Forest Research Centre, in collaboration with national and international NGOs and supported by the Ford Foundation. These projects are the Chimanimani Transfrontier Conservation Area Project, and CBNRM projects in the Moribane Forest Reserve and the Pindanganga area.

The 'Marena' project

The 'Marena' research project was developed as a collaborative research endeavour between the University of Sussex and the Centro de Experimentação Florestal (Forest Research Centre, henceforth CEF), Maputo to study the development of CBNRM in Mozambique. As part of this research in Manica province, Mozambique, three study areas were selected: Chimanimani and Moribane were already areas in which CBNRM projects were on-going, whilst Pindanganga was then an area proposed for a CBNRM scheme by the provincial government. There were a number of reasons behind the choice of these three case studies, including:

- Each area was the site of a CBNRM project, or was about to become one;
- Comparison of the three sites would allow comparison of how local institutions had changed in the face of relatively strong, and relatively weak external influence (including the influence of formal institutions, and of population displacement);
- The three sites involve different Natural Resource concerns.

Thus the site of Pindanganga, in Gondola District, is close to the Beira corridor and has easy access to Beira and Chimoio towns, where forest products such as charcoal and building material find a market. During the war, most of the inhabitants of the area were displaced to the villages along the corridor that were protected by the government and

Zimbabwean armies. Currently, around 40 percent of the households are newcomers, whilst 60 percent of the total households have charcoal production as their main source of income. This area is subject to strong external influences.

In contrast, the area of M'Punga is located in Sussundenga district, and part of this area (Moribane) has been a Forest Reserve since 1950. During colonial times, the area had forest guards whose role was to enforce Forest laws and protect the area. The law restricted the use of resources by the community. During the war, the forest reserve, which had been abandoned after independence, took in large numbers of displaced people. Most of these moved to the closed forest for protection, and many stayed there after the war and began to cut the forest to farm. However in 1996, CEF began to implement a CBNRM project in the area, whilst in 1997, a conflict emerged between the community and elephants in the reserve area. Both of these issues strengthened ties with the outside that had previously been weak.

Finally, the zone of Chimanimani is also located in Sussundenga district, but is the most isolated of the areas under study. Compared to the previous two, it has poor communications by road and a low population. The area has been subject to very low external influence. Since 1997, however, the Provincial Forest and Wildlife Service has been implementing a CBNRM project in the area.

This paper concentrates on the first two cases. After outlining in more detail the physical characteristics of each area, key issues are explored in relation to natural resource management institutions and the implementation of CBNRM projects. It is argued that a top-down approach to CBNRM in these two case study sites has undermined successful implementation, and has by-passed changes envisaged in the new legislative framework for CBNRM.

Case study 1: Pindanganga

A survey carried out as part of the Marena project has estimated the total number of households² in Pindanganga at approximately 800 with around 4,500 people. According to this survey, 452 households (56 percent of the total) are originally from Pindanganga. Of these, around 75 percent reported being displaced during the civil war³ to villages along

² In this study, households are defined on the basis of co-location, and no assumptions are made about intra-household relations.

³ The civil war in Pindanganga began in 1982 and ended in 1992.

the Beira corridor, whether voluntarily or through government coercion. The remaining 44 percent of the total number of households currently in Pindanganga have moved there from other parts of the country and the majority of them came after the war. Some of these households (16 percent) were already living in Pindanganga before the war, whilst a further 10 percent came during the war, mainly as Renamo⁴ soldiers.

The natural forest of Pindanganga is the Miombo woodland with its dominant species of *Brachystegia* and *Jubernardia*. There is a medium to high tree density, and trees have an average height of 10-15 m, typical of land over 500m and annual rainfall between 90 to 1,400mm (Costa, 1996). There is also bamboo covering about 10 percent of the total area of Pindanganga. The area is relatively rich in wild animals such as antelopes, crocodiles, hippopotamus, possibly lion and leopard, and different species of rodents, mainly in the northeast where the human population is low.

Subsistence agriculture, based on maize and sorghum production using traditional methods, is the main economic activity, providing a major part of the livelihoods of the residents of Pindanganga. Most of the original households have two fields, one around their houses and another along the rivers where bananas, sugarcane, maize and vegetables are cultivated. The crops cultivated along the rivers play an important role in generating income for the households. These crops and their by-products are used to encourage neighbours to work on the farm, through a traditional system of mutual help. Access to this labour gives these households the opportunity to have bigger fields than others and consequently a better income than households who do not have fields along the river.

One particular commercial activity that has been introduced to Pindanganga since the civil war is the production of charcoal. Around 60 percent of the total number of households in Pindanganga were found to be involved in charcoal production for sale at the time of this research, and most of these households were newcomers to the area. According to many respondents, charcoal production represents an important source of income, given that revenues from the sale of agricultural products are negatively influenced by the weak market for agricultural crops, low prices and lack of access to land along the rivers. In particular, people

⁴ Renamo, or the Mozambican National Resistance, was the rebel force which fought against the government during the war. After the peace agreement in 1992, it was transformed into a political party, and is now the main opposition to the government.

who do not have access to land at the river's edge, and do not have any other source of income, have opted to produce charcoal as a survival alternative.

Moves towards community management in Pindanganga

It is important to stress that, according to the recent Forest Law (art. 15), although the local community can harvest forest and wildlife products for their own use according to community norms and customs, to sell these products a license is required. Therefore, charcoal production and marketing in Pindanganga is illegal according to the Forest Law because most of the producers do not have licenses from the Provincial Forest and Wildlife Service (SPFFB) for commercial harvesting of trees. Previous attempts to enforce the law failed in 1990/91 when the SPFFB tried to stop 'illegal' charcoal production, forbidding production and transportation without a license. The community response manifested itself with a roadblock on the Beira corridor. Since that time the SPFFB action has centered on charcoal transport control at some points along corridors (Beira and Tete corridors) and some sporadic control of produced and transported quantities from licensed producers.

According to the head of SPFFB, to minimize the problem of uncontrolled production of charcoal, a strategy is emerging to organize producer involvement in the control of production. The aim is to test this strategy in an area of high potential such as Pindanganga – a zone suggested by the Governor of Manica Province when he visited the area in 1998. Thus, Pindanganga has become one of several CBNRM pilot areas in Manica. According to the head of SPFFB, the new Forest Law facilitates this strategy, since it promotes community participation in natural resource management.

To develop this idea, a new strategy was introduced at local level in collaboration with other institutions such as CEF and the German technical cooperation agency GTZ. The process started with an exercise to delimit the area of Pindanganga, based on an approach that involved community participation. The delimitation and demarcation of the land are seen as one of the pre-conditions for a community request to acquire a title to the land and other natural resources included in the Land Law (art. 10, 3) and land regulation (art. 9, 3).

The second step involved identification of potentialities and constraints through a participatory rural appraisal and forest inventory. At the same time, the community was mobilized, either through direct contact with people in meetings, or through the encouragement of

traditional chiefs to participate in the programme. Traditional leaders were seen as playing an important role in encouraging people to come to attend meetings; it is for this reason that they were contacted by SPFFB and GTZ at the beginning of the programme and asked to work with SPFFB and GTZ in community mobilization.

To advance this process of community mobilization, a visit was arranged by SPFFB to a CBNRM project in the north of the country (the Tchuma-Tchato project⁵) with the aim to 'learn from that community/project and appreciate the advantages and benefits of community natural resources management programmes'. Then, a community meeting was organized by GTZ to discuss 'environmental problems in Pindanganga'.

Problems with community management

These initiatives revealed a number of tensions. First, there was a tension between the stated aim of community participation, and the way in which the visit and meeting were organized, which appeared to tend towards a pre-arranged agenda. Second, in the meeting discussion, a conflict of interest between hunters (most of them original inhabitants of the area) and charcoal producers (most of them newcomers) emerged, although this was largely ignored by the GTZ officer's summary of the meeting. In addition, negative past experiences, whereby people questioned the likelihood of community benefits, and the role of traditional leaders, came to the fore.

Subsequently, a natural resource management committee was created and six members were 'elected' in another community meeting. A model process and constitution for the committee was put forward by GTZ, including the pre-condition of six people, each one with a specific role/position and the inclusion of a minimum of one woman to be a vice-president. A list of candidates was also proposed by GTZ itself. However the chief, supported by other members of the community, refused the previous list and decided to propose alternatives according to the consensus of all present. Each member was proposed by someone and according to general comments was approved or refused.

According to one GTZ officer, the model for the creation of this committee was taken from the experience of Tchuma-Tchato and other

⁵ Tchuma-Tchato was the first community natural resource management project in Mozambique, where implementation began in 1995 by the government through SPFFB Tete, with the financial support of the Ford Foundation.

similar projects, and was seen as conforming to the pattern expected by the new Land Law. As in the first meeting, however, the extent of community representation, discussion and participation was limited. An important lesson from this meeting was that despite 'participatory' rhetoric, the meeting displayed much more the features of a top-down approach, which in turn was 'accepted' by the community.

For many of the people of Pindanganga,, the SPFFB is still seen primarily as a group of forest guards who control (control for the people means to forbid, and/or insist on a license) charcoal production and forest fires and protect some tree species for timber exploitation. For example, most of the charcoal producers interviewed viewed the project as another way for the government to control charcoal production. Meanwhile, from the point of view of some of the original inhabitants of Pindanganga who do not produce charcoal, this control by the project is seen as minimizing deforestation, although they have no idea about how this could benefit the community.

According to this group, experience shows that timber companies are the only beneficiary of forest protection. For example one of those interviewed said 'the government control our forest activities to benefit timber companies who come here to exploit timber without any benefit for us...' A similar point of view was expressed by another resident, who said 'many companies come and exploit timber, but we have no hospital, nothing...'

Some people are afraid that they will be removed from their land or forced to live in a fenced area. On the one hand, this reflects the fact that the SPFFB and GTZ officials often use the word 'reserve', whilst people are aware of the experience of the Gorongosa National Park, where people were obliged to leave the area during colonial times. On the other hand, the experience of Tchuma Tchato, where the main village in the project is protected by a fence, was viewed by some of those who visited the area as restrictive and, for some reminded them of communal villages (*aldeias comunais*) from the time before the war.

The process is not clear also for some members of the committee who expected to have salaries and a uniform from the government. Several reasons could justify this point of view. For example, their experience from other projects is that those people involved in implementation were paid; at the same time, many appear not to have been clear about the purpose of this project, or their role in it. This also shows that it is important to find out about the different motivations of people involved in CBNRM projects, and avoid creating false expectations.

Case study 2: M’Punga

According to the survey carried out in M’Punga, it is estimated that the total number of households in M’punga is 321, of which 231 (72 percent) are originally from the area and the remaining 90 (28 percent) are newcomers. From this total number of households, around 76 percent have a man as head of the household and 24 percent are headed by a woman (including co-wives, widowed, and divorced). According to this survey, the total population is around 1,900 inhabitants, of whom 55 percent are women. The average household size is approximately 6 people. Some 60 percent (193) of the households are living within the boundaries of the forest reserve, most of them in the more mountainous area.

During the war, just 21 percent of the original households reported being displaced to other areas, with the remainder staying in the mountains and closed forest in the area 'protected' by the Renamo army. Out of those that are not originally from M’Punga, 28 percent came before the war, 21 percent came as soldiers or looking for protection and the remaining 44 percent came after the war. The majority of the latter group were looking for productive land close to the road.

The natural woodland in M’Punga is more complex than in Pindanganga, comprising a mosaic characterized by:

- rain forest in the top of the mountains called by Sousa (1968), *mufomote forest* with an average height of 20-30m;
- forest galleries along the rivers dominated by *Millettia sthulmannii* (panga-panga) and *Khaya nyasica* (umbaua); and
- mixed tree species on the slopes with a predominance of panga-panga, *Milicia excelsa* (tule), umbaua, *Erythrophleum suaveolens* (missanda) and *Albizia spp.* (mugerenge).

Partly for this reason, much of the area is designated as the Moribane Forest Reserve, in which CEF has been working on an action research programme on natural resources management since 1996.

Moves towards community management in M’Punga

The general goals of the CEF programme were primarily to develop strategies on community involvement in natural resources management and to inform policy-makers accordingly. In addition, it was hoped to develop staff capacity in related subject areas such as social sciences, participatory methodologies, ecology and extension in order to strengthen CEF in the area of community-based natural resources management. The

present research has built on work carried out under this initial action research programme.

According to CEF, the expected outputs from the programme included:

- to evolve a sustainable development approach where local communities could manage their natural resource base and enhance their well-being;
- to learn and understand local knowledge and people; and
- to enable CEF to formulate proposals that would assist in updating policies, laws and regulations related to community land tenure and access to natural resources (CEF: 1994: 8-9).

The programme began in 1995 with the identification of the study area in Sussundenga according to the following criteria: easy access, high potential of forest resources, rich ecological diversity, apparent community organization and community willingness to get involved. According to Serra and Claver (1997), the area selected was located between Rotanda and Dombe where communities and government officials were highly receptive to the idea. Government and community contacts made in Rotanda and Dombe led to a further selection of the M'Punga community in Moribane Forest Reserve for future work.

Although there was no commitment from the community at the beginning, this has been established as a result of mutual trust between the community and CEF built over a period of time. At the beginning, when the community was under Renamo control, members were suspicious of any government initiative in the area. Their experiences with previous policies such as communal villages (see below) made it difficult for them to accept any new government programmes. After the first democratic elections, the traditional leaders demanded to know from the Renamo Party leadership the true results of the elections. They did not believe news on the radio that Renamo had lost the elections since they believed the news media were controlled by the government. The presence of police in the area complicated the situation as they were construed as Frelimo police⁶. They were also expecting official recognition from the elected government, in particular, of their benefits and responsibilities enjoyed under the previous (colonial) government. On the other hand, they saw the CEF project as an economic opportunity for their community but also recognized that the success of the project depended on satisfying both their political and social aspirations.

⁶ Frelimo has been the party of government since independence.

However, they understood that the project was new, with a new approach and without a past background.

In order to build trust and involve people in the project, later in 1996, a preliminary social and ecological survey was carried out in the area in order to identify the main problems. CEF believed that the solution of some basic problems would motivate people to be involved in natural resources management. The lack of a grinding mill, school and health clinic, the presence of landmines, and the absence of a market for agricultural crops were some of the problems identified by the local community during the initial research exercises conducted by CEF (Serra and Claver, 1997: 4-5). Contacts were made with NGOs, government institutions and donors in order to address some of these community needs. In particular, a grinding mill was provided, and other alternative income generation activities such as beekeeping, fish farming, and horticulture were identified and established in collaboration with the Ford Foundation and other NGOs such as AMRU⁷, a national women's NGO, and ORAM⁸.

In order to produce immediate benefits, validate the role of CEF, strengthen mutual relationships and build trust between CEF staff and members of the local community, a grinding mill was purchased for the community. CEF began to play the role of a link between the community and other governmental and non-governmental agencies in identifying viable income-generating activities and in mediating disputes with such agencies. CEF also began to work with other research institutions in order to produce more data that could be used in drawing up realistic action plans. A Participatory Rural Appraisal was conducted in late 1997 followed by a planning workshop in January 1998, to identify development goals and develop a framework for the programme activities. The workshop also highlighted strategies for involving all major stakeholders and mechanisms for protecting the natural resource base.

Problems with community management

One problematic issue for this policy intervention has been the relationship between CEF and the local chief. Several times he refused to

⁷ Associação Mocambicana da mulher rural [Mozambican rural women's association]

⁸ ORAM (Organizacao Rural de Ajuda Mutua) [Rural Organization to Mutual Help]. It is a Mozambican (national) NGO.

meet CEF staff to discuss the project and used different arguments such as consultation of the spirits to avoid implementation of the project. This attitude was viewed by project staff as reflecting resistance to all initiatives from any governmental institutions on the part of the chief. However, at the same time, the CEF project was almost certainly seen by locals as an attempt by Frelimo to gain influence and political support of local people. In other words, government/state employees were seen as members of Frelimo rather than as civil servants. In this sense, the resistance of the chief was also a reflection of community perceptions. They were suspicious and afraid that CEF was trying to re-impose the forest guard system as in the olden days of colonialism, and expropriate their land in favour of white farmers from South Africa and Zimbabwe, as was seen to be happening in other districts of Manica Province. According to some community members, the role of forest guards at the time was to restrict access to natural resources in the forest reserve, reinforce the law and punish those breaking the law. Although the M'Punga community had never experienced land expropriation in favour of outsiders, members were concerned that it could happen to them. For instance, they knew and heard of stories that in certain parts of Manica Province, some outsiders, supported by government documentation such as land concession licenses, were expropriating land from local people and displacing them.

Moreover, there was also the belief that CEF came in to protect the forest for timber exploitation. This could be attributed to the use by some staff of the term 'conservation' of certain timber species. For instance, the expression 'It is forbidden to cut *Umbila and Panga-Panga*, these timber species have high commercial value" is commonly used by forest officers. Cutting of those tree species is legally forbidden even in areas set aside for agriculture. The political situation and memories of past experience exacerbated this general distrust.

The introduction and implementation of the new initiatives introduced by the project were problematic and conflicting. For instance the grinding mill, which was bought in 1997, was installed only in the middle of 1998, and revealed considerable tensions between CEF, the chief, and local people (Serra, 2001). Another example of conflict arose when AMRU tried to introduce beekeeping as an alternative income-generating activity. As in the other areas where it had worked, AMRU asked for women volunteers to be involved in the programme, but the idea was immediately refused by men, who argued (with some basis in reality) that beekeeping is a male activity.

For many of those who are living inside the reserve boundaries, these programmes are seen as a strategy to win trust from people prior to removing them from the reserve. As one respondent said, 'this looks like when you go to ask to marry a woman. You have to look like a good person to convince her parents, even if you are not good. But after you are married, you show your true face...'. The most critical situation arose when, at the end of 1997 and the beginning of 1998, elephants started to destroy some of the banana and maize crop fields in the north-west of M'punga area. This conflict between the community and elephants highlighted contradictions even between the community and the chief (who some community members came to view as illegitimate because he was unable to resolve the problem), and increased the community's distrust of the real aims of the project (since the project staff's suggested solution was to move people out of the elephant-affected area).

As with SPFFB and GTZ in Pindanganga, CEF expected to work with existing local institutions in M'Punga in the implementation of a sustainable forest development programme. According to CBNRM philosophy, the creation of local committees and/or other local institutions as part of local development should be a consequence of community decision. However, the process in M'Punga again shows how this strategy was changed and again the outsiders imposed their idealized model of 'community' development.

Due to the resistance of the chief to collaborate with the project, the CEF local team and the Sussundenga District Administrator suggested the creation of a community committee to facilitate contacts between project staff and local leaders and the community and also to operate the grinding mill. This was seen as the most effective way to disseminate the ideas of the project among community members and to create a community body that would be responsible for operating the grinding mill that had not been operational for some time.

For some community members, the community committee was perceived as a tactic by CEF to recruit young people, both boys and girls, to compulsory military service with the government⁹. When it was finally created, community leaders refused the criteria for representation on the committee that the project first suggested. The criteria were that the members of the committee should be elected in a general meeting, and that some women should be appointed to the committee to have some gender representation.

⁹ See also Lucas, 1999: 14 and MARENA Briefing MZ 09 00

Instead, the local resource management committee was initially constituted of 10 people appointed by local people in their own *sagutas*¹⁰. One of the first requirements – proposed by CEF -- was that those appointed should be able to speak Portuguese. In practice, and perhaps because of this Portuguese language requirement, they were also all quite young. It appeared that the leaders too valued more the ability to communicate than the capacity to make decisions. Once appointed, the committee became very passive, mostly playing the role of messenger between chief, the *sagutas* and project staff, participating in some fire control programmes, serving as local guides and translators for visiting researchers, and managing the grinding mill - rather than managing natural resources. One reason is that the committee members are generally subordinate to, and take instructions from the chief, *sagutas* and other local elders. In general meetings, the committee members do not play an active role, mostly remaining quiet. The committee has no terms of reference, and in practice, it refers every important decision to the Chief, or to the project's technical staff.

The committee is also seen by most of the community members as solely responsible for controlling and punishing people who cut and burn down the forest and thus contravening government rules. They are also seen as grinding mill employees rather than representing the community¹¹.

Some preliminary conclusions

Based on the legal framework provided by the new Land Law of 1997, the project implementers in these two case study areas are promoting and creating new institutions in form of committees. In Pindanganga (and also in Chimanimani), committee members were chosen in a community meeting, whereas in Moribane they were chosen by traditional leaders. However, in all these areas the committee was:

- Created with weak community participation, since in the case of Pindanganga the members of the committee was elected from only the 50 people present at the meeting, whilst in Moribane the traditional leaders chose only younger people who spoke Portuguese, excluding those who were old and did not speak Portuguese.

¹⁰ The *saguta* is the local name for the chief's deputy, controlling a sub-area of the chiefdom.

¹¹ See also in MARENA Briefing MZ 09 00

- Viewed by many in the community as simply an extension of the government or an NGO. This is a result of past experiences. For instance in colonial times, traditional institutions were used by the colonial government to control local people and to collect tax; whilst after independence political institutions were created to mobilize people and for political propaganda. In other words, these institutions were used (and seen) as an extension of either the government or a political party, created by these for their own benefit rather than for the community;
- Characterized by a top-down approach. In the implementation of the CBNRM projects and creation of the committees, as these two case studies reveal, project staff effectively brought a 'menu' of possible institutional structures, which were then imposed to local community; and
- Lacking legitimacy within the community, as a result of this past experience and their lack of representation.

Subsequently, the situation has been changed somewhat by Decree Law 15/2000, which recognized traditional leaders as representing their community, as was the case in colonial times. However many of these traditional leaders have also lost their legitimacy over time as result of the abolition of their formal status 25 years ago, as well as through displacement and changing political alliances. Meanwhile, their priority is often perceived as being to empower themselves rather than primarily to manage natural resources.

There is insufficient space in this paper to explore the issue of legitimacy of local leaders, but clearly their role in cooperating with CBNRM projects has not been straightforwardly helpful – both because they have mistrusted outside interventions, but also because their local support was mixed. However, more generally, the experience of the two CBNRM schemes reviewed here is that there is a long way to go before these schemes either match up to the 'model' of community management promoted elsewhere in southern Africa, or the spirit of the new legislative framework developed in Mozambique.

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Enclosing or 'Individualising' the 'Commons'? The Implementation of two User-rights Approaches to 'Communal' Areas Management in Post-Derg Northern Ethiopia

Tarekegn Yibabie

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This paper discusses current policy and institutional initiatives to promote decentralised governance of natural resources, particularly common property regimes in the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) of Ethiopia. Based on fieldwork conducted between 1999-2000 in two case-study districts, the paper examines recent experiences of two parallel but different processes in the promotion and implementation of user-rights-based rehabilitation and management of communal areas in the Region. One of these is implemented by SOS-Sahel, a British Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Meket District (*Wereda*) in North Wollo, and the other by the Regional Government in Tehuledere District in South Wollo. While the former focuses on the 'community' and 'community-based' institutions as a strategy to counteract the processes of environmental degradation, in the latter the intervention is based on a preference for the introduction of 'individual-based' forest management, with perhaps group protection.

The formulation and implementation of user-rights based NRM approaches in ANRS are interesting for the following reasons. First, they were initiated and implemented at a time when there was no legislation or policy on land use and forestry either at the regional or the federal levels. Second, the idea behind user-rights seems to be the redistribution of resource ownership; hence, redistribution of power, which the government hitherto jealously protected for itself as the source of its legitimacy and authority. The issue of land tenure, and tenure security in particular, has for long been a principal source of disagreement between the government and NGOs in the context of NRM and rural development in the region.

While the formulation and implementation of user-rights represents a potential step forward with respect to land and other natural resources, its

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While the formulation and implementation of user-rights represents a potential step forward with respect to land and other natural resources, its

different applications by SOS-Sahel and the government raises complicated questions. The following issues were found to be central: the nature and forms of use-rights; the rights and responsibilities of user-beneficiaries; the authority and legitimacy of both 'formal' and 'informal' institutions and their role in NRM government.

A characteristic of the policy formulation and implementation processes was the involvement of multiple actors. These included government politicians and administrators, agricultural experts, NGOs, and user-managers at different levels. Each of these categories of actors, depending on their different understandings of the nature of the problem and varied concerns, held sometimes overlapping and sometimes contrasting perspectives on how user-rights procedures should be administered and how communal lands should be managed.

One objective of the paper is, therefore, to highlight the influence of these different actors in shaping the trajectory of user-based environmental rehabilitation in the region. I attempt to examine this in two ways: First, it is my intention to examine how and why the actors and institutions involved in the formulation and implementation of user-rights act and operate. Second, I try to demonstrate, through case-study illustrations, the different applications of user-rights, both by SOS-Sahel in Meketi, and the government in Tehuledere. I do this by way of demonstrating the ecological, social, political and institutional contexts in which communal lands have been developed. This helps to explain the contested nature of environmental policy-making in the region in which different interest groups advocate different strategies in the context of common property resources management.

The other objective is to demonstrate differential effects of these two approaches on households' and communities' relationships over access and use of common property resources, and their implications for NRM. I try to examine this by way of reflecting on the tensions involved between the government, SOS-Sahel and local resource users in terms of property rights, resource use and management.

The questions raised and discussed in this paper touch on overlapping and complex themes. It does not, therefore, claim to offer definitive answers to these questions. Nor shall it attempt to make premature assertions about whether or not these approaches have failed or succeeded. This is mainly because the two approaches have been implemented very recently, making any firm conclusions about their outcomes impossible. Yet, the lessons drawn from these experiences may contribute to current efforts by the government, NGOs and researchers to find better policy options to address the problem of environmental

degradation in a region where institutional arrangements in land tenure and NRM are complex.

The paper is divided into five parts. It starts with a brief overview of the theoretical debate. This is followed by an introduction to the case-study areas. Then follows an account of how and why the policy on communal land allocation came about. In this respect, particular attention is given to the different views of institutions and stakeholders over the administration of user-rights procedures and the management of communal lands. I then proceed to examine in separate sections the experiences in the application and implementation of user-rights by the regional government and by SOS-Sahel on the basis of findings derived from case-study areas. This forms the basis for the conclusion.

Overview of the theoretical debate

There has been considerable concern at the alarming rate of natural resource degradation and agricultural production decline in Africa, including Ethiopia. Various arguments have, therefore, been made in academic and policy circles about the need for appropriate policy and institutional reforms. Much of the debate centres on the following overlapping and cross-cutting themes: issues of land tenure and property rights, of the state and governance, environmental degradation/conservation and sustainability, and agricultural production and livelihoods (Berry, 1993; Lund 1998; Woodhouse, *et al.*, 2000; Leach *et al.*, 1997; Baland and Platteau, 1996; Bruce 1993)¹.

One line of argument is that property rights have a determining impact on resource allocation, use and management. This position is mainly based on Hardin's article on 'The tragedy of the commons' (1968). Misinterpreting complex and dynamic tenure rights for 'open access' and understanding individuals and communities as 'resource degraders', led Hardin to advocate for complete private or state property rights in land and natural resource conservation (Lund, 1994). This line of argument has gained wide currency with influential policy making institutions and policy advisors to African governments as a theoretical backing for land privatisation. International consultants and some donor agencies have

¹ Constraints of space allow only a brief summary of theoretical approaches which have become influential in attempt to theorise natural resource use and management. These extremely brief theoretical inferences are, therefore, made to reflect on current perspectives and discuss them in their specific contexts in Ethiopia.

argued in favour of private ownership of land. The World Bank and IMF have spearheaded this, arguing that the privatisation of land rights should be a precondition for investments in improving land and sustainable NRM². In the early days of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), private ownership of land, including the privatisation of common property regimes, was suggested by Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) experts. The main justification in support of private tenure is stated as:

Private ownership of land, as under freehold tenure system provides the most secure tenure and enables the development of markets for land transactions. On both counts, moving the present tenurial system toward freehold would improve efficiency in the use of the 'country's land resources and result in increased agricultural and forestry production (EFAP 1993, quoted in Dessalegn 1994: 8).

Maintaining that security of tenure is a pre-requisite for sound NRM, a second line of argument focuses on the institutional aspect of resource management. Accordingly, it is argued that the major impediment to environmental management and agricultural sustainability is the absence of meaningful legal and institutional mechanisms that affirm, hence recognise, the competence of African resource users as managers of environmental resources. In response, decentralised management of natural resources, particularly the devolution of resource control to 'effective' community-based institutions is put forward as a principal solution for land rights and NRM (Ostrom 1990; Bromley and Cernea 1989; Bruce 1993; Hesselings, 1996).

Bruce, for instance, argued that a 'state-facilitated' evolution of 'indigenous' land tenure and NRM systems approaches would help solve the problem of tenure insecurity and natural resource degradation (1993: 51). This means a more decentralised lawmaking process with more legally based authority for local communities or informal institutions. This argument has been based on the assumption that communities can generate self-governing institutions for regulating local natural resource use and management.

The approach is shared by other academics in Ethiopia. For example, Dessalegn (1994; 1999), a noted figure on the subject, has urged the need to look beyond the economic and developmental impact of land policy. Instead, he argues it is necessary to examine whether or not a given

² Recent policy of donors, however, indicates in move away from this, mainly due to mounting evidence of the pitfalls of 'free market' models, in particular negative consequences for the poor, which led donors and African governments alike to re-examine such approaches (Quan, 2000).

system of rights to land will 'promote the autonomy' of the landholder and the 'empowerment' of local communities. He thus proposes an alternative system of land tenure, which he refers as *associative ownership*. The underlying premise of associative ownership is:

[L]and belongs to the community and the land users in it; it does not belong to the state or some distant authority. Rights of use and transfer therefore reside in the individual user, and of management and regulation in the community. Individual land is to be held in freehold, with all the rights it involves; land not in individual hands is to be managed by the community...The community is made of co-residents with equal rights and obligations; in our case this will be the rural *kebbelle*, with PA [Peasants' Association], democratically constituted, as its effective agency. The *kebbelle* has a defined boundary, a stable population, basic though limited resources, and is, in most localities, ethnically homogeneous. The community, through the PA, serves as guarantor of rights of individual ownership; in addition it administers land and settles land disputes (Dessalegn, 1994: 14).

However, others are more sceptical on the devolution of natural resource control and management responsibility to community-based institutions. (Lawry, 1989; Baland and Plateau 1996: 199). Whilst the regulation of natural resources, common property resources in particular, through self-regulating community-based institutions is necessary, this alone is not enough for effective NRM. This is because, they argue, local resource users and their indigenous institutions are error-prone, partially informed, culturally blinkered to varying degrees, and more particularly lack the capacity to generate enforceable rules in NRM. They also argue that effective NRM would be possible not by privileging a single institution (e.g. 'community' or 'state'), but mainly by constructing a 'synergy' (Robinson and White 1997) or 'partnership' (Carney and Farrington 1998) between different types of social institutions and organisations. They therefore proposed the promotion of a *co-management* approach both by the community, the state and other relevant institutions such as NGOs in the management of natural resources, particularly forests.

The foregoing theoretical perspectives are derived from and applied to research and debate on environmental change and natural resource governance in Africa with particular intensity. They influence the selection of policy and institutional reforms. In this respect, current initiatives in the promotion of user-based management of 'communal lands both by SOS-Sahel and the government in the Amhara Region

provide a means of interrogating these discourses and assessing their relevance for policy and practice in the context of Ethiopia.

The case studies: Meket and Tehuledere

The study material for this paper is based on a comparative case study of two *Kebele* Administrations (KAs) in Meket and Tehuledere districts, in North and South Wollo Administrative Zones, respectively. Both have been categorised as food insecure because of their low productivity generated from different ecological and manmade calamities.

Their different experiences during the *Derg* and post-*Derg* periods have resulted in both similar and different land and NRM features. After the fall of the *Derg* there was something of a power vacuum of formal government. There was widespread deforestation of forest areas, which were seen by the local population as state forests. For the local population in both districts, tenure insecurity and memories of coercive government for over two decades have made them suspicious of government controls in land and NRM.

An important difference between Meket and Tehuledere involves access to land. In Meket the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which has now formed the post-*Derg* government, entered the district in 1989 and implemented land redistribution in 1990. In Tehuledere, however, EPRDF took control in April 1991, just a month before it assumed political power. Since then there has been no general land redistribution.

Processes of policy formulation: actors, concerns and conflicts

In October 1998, the ANRS approved a Regulation to implement *Yewel Meret Kiffifil'*, or 'Communal Land Allocation' in the region. The official objective is to promote user-based rehabilitation of degraded natural resources in the region (ANRS-BoA 1998).

It is difficult to determine who initiated the idea of user-rights as different institutions, and those working in the region make different claims³. Most government officials and agricultural experts, particularly

³ CONCERN, an NGO, working in community-based rural development programmes in Qallu Wereda, in South Wollo Administrative Zone and SNV-Bugna, a Netherlands NGO, working in Lasta Wereda, in North Wollo, also made claims that they initiated the idea of user-based management of natural

in North Wollo and in the Region, stated that the policy tools for the formulation and implementation of user rights was based on the pilot efforts of SOS-Sahel. SOS-Sahel has been working on food security and an environmental rehabilitation programme in Meket since 1994.

The explicit factor in the initiation of user-rights based rehabilitation of hillsides is said to be the increasing recognition of the government and NGOs about the ineffectiveness of previous and existing policies and strategies used to address environmental degradation in the Region. The initiation of user rights is partly attributable to the increasing global discourse, particularly among multilateral donors such as the World Bank and bilateral donors such as the SIDA, which advocate decentralised and participatory management of natural resources, including land.

A characteristic of post-*Derg* environmental policy making in Ethiopia, both at the Federal and regional levels has been a trend toward lessening protectionist policies of the state and to promoting participatory approaches to avert the increasing rate of natural resources degradation in the country. In a policy paper issued in January 1994, by the Regional Affairs Sector of the Prime Minister's Office of the TGE, it is stated:

Although regional development *per se* has been entertained in Ethiopia by planners for over 30 years, its implementation had been ineffective if not non-existent. The weakness of the policies adopted for local and regional development could be attributed to ... unrealistic sets of objectives ... that resulted in lack of genuine participation at the grass-root level. Unlike in the past, TGE's responsibility today constitute mapping out strategies and policies of national growth and development through continuous and dynamic contacts which have to be established at the grass-root level to tackle real-life problems (pp. 4-5).

In the Amhara Region too, this apparent commitment to participatory approaches to NRM is visible. The Regional BoA appears increasingly receptive to NGOs' ideas in recent years. NGOs have had particular influence in promoting participatory approaches and in advocating

resources in the region. The DoA in South Wollo maintained it started user-based area enclosures in Ambassel Wereda but decided to suspend them awaiting the regional government's decision on the issue. The North Wollo Administrative Council, on the other hand, argued that it started the approach first in Mersa Wereda. Some others, particularly agricultural experts in DoA, and in Sirinka Agricultural Research Institute in North Wollo considered that user-based environmental rehabilitation had already been introduced in Tigray.

governance alternatives, particularly the need for devolution of management powers to communities⁴.

Presumably, therefore, the initiation and implementation of user-rights may be partly viewed as a result of common concerns both by SOS-Sahel (and other NGOs) and the government that the provision of legal and institutional incentives for the local populations could lead to improved NRM. There seem to be, however, two parallel but different processes on how these were to be achieved, particularly in the context of common property regimes. While SOS-Sahel advocates for and works with community-based groups, in contrast, at zonal and regional levels there is a preference for establishing individual ownership, with perhaps some group protection. The different application of user-rights based rehabilitation/ conservation of communal lands seems to have both ideological and practical underpinnings.

In this respect, I want to focus discussion on what I consider as essential backbones in explaining the reasons for the different applications of the user-rights approach in the region. These are the processes by which different stakeholders participated in the development of packages of policy tools on the 'hows' of implementing the user-rights regulation in the region. These included: SOS-Sahel, government agricultural experts, politicians and administrators, and user-managers at different levels. The results from these discussions from the regional to the *Kebele* level are important since they raise many issues, particularly about the administration of user-rights procedure and the management of the commons.

Community, co-management, or individual user-rights? Different views on the governance of hillside enclosures

Once the decision to implement the allocation was made, a workshop was held in Bahr Dar, the Amhara Regional Capital, in January 1997. Agricultural experts from the region and zonal levels participated in the preparation of the draft plan. SOS-Sahel was also entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the Draft Operational Manual of the 'Regional Guideline for Implementing the User Rights Procedure'. Then, a draft guideline, prepared in Amharic, titled 'A Regulation to the Implementation of *Yewel Maret* (Communal land) Allocation to Forestry,

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the discourse and practice of participation and partnership in the relationship between the government and NGOs, see Harrison (2001).

Perennials and Fodder Production' (ANRS-BoA 1998) was sent to all 105 *Weredas* to be discussed and commented on by lower level government officials, agricultural experts and the actual user-managers. Each of the actors concerned, depending on their varied perceptions of the nature of the problem and priorities, held different perspectives. They accordingly suggested different actions to promote their interests in the new policy context⁵. This resulted in conflicts of priorities between the parties involved.

One principal source of difference, leading to the different application of user-rights by SOS-Sahel and the government in particular, was the issue of governance, which involves how communal areas should be administered.

SOS-Sahel, like many other NGOs working in the region, encourages community-based over individual-based NRM. Beginning in 1996, and continuing through the present, SOS-Sahel has been working on a decentralised and participatory environmental rehabilitation programme in Meket.

SOS-Sahel's focus on collective governance of hillside closures may be explained in terms of its perception and views of what should be the priorities in addressing problems of NRM, particularly in communal lands in marginal areas. These can be traced in the following overlapping three issues: the nature of property rights, environmental degradation and rehabilitation, and the governance of communal lands in hillside areas. With regard to the type of property rights regime, SOS-Sahel considered communal lands in hillsides as open-access regimes, with no clearly defined user-rights and management structure, which, in turn, was seen as a key cause to the destruction of natural resources, particularly forests. SOS-Sahel, therefore, saw the promotion of community-based over individual user rights as a better alternative in terms of both solving land use conflicts arising from undefined user-rights, as well as in slowing down the process of ecological degradation (Tenna, 1998).

SOS-Sahel's focus on community-based user rights enclosure could be also understood in terms of its practical concern with addressing the problem of environmental degradation in fragile ecologies such as Meket. In this respect, SOS-Sahel takes catchment-based protection as a

⁵ These conflicting perspectives surrounding the types of user rights and the structure of managing 'communal lands' were by and large influenced by and constituted within contemporary policy debates surrounding land tenure, production and the environment in the country (See: Harrison 2001; Holt and Dessalegn 1999; Hoben 1997).

principal strategy for reversing the alarming process of soil degradation and deforestation on hillsides. This, it was argued, could only be achieved if user-rights and hillside enclosure were seen not as isolated activities but as integral parts of watershed-based land use and management practice. This in turn is a practice that would be effectively addressed if the management unit were the community.

Underneath SOS-Sahel's practical-physical concern with community-based user rights enclosure seem to lie structural-institutional considerations. The project sought to reform past NRM approaches in the region. It was argued that one key problem in the sustainability of environmental rehabilitation measures in more degraded areas of the region was the absence of a practical initiative to devolve natural resource governance to the lowest level; to those who are close to the problems of natural resource management. In this respect, SOS-Sahel viewed the government's politico-legal and administrative structure as too large to be effective. Moreover, it was argued that local communities accord greater priority to environmental rehabilitation than the government. This has resulted in conflicts of priorities between environmental policy makers and actual resource user-managers. Most notably there was little or no input from local communities who were seen by the government political and technical experts as passive recipients of packages (Tenna and Danachew, 1997).

To address these weaknesses, SOS-Sahel has, therefore, been working for more decentralised, participatory resource management. One initiative has been the development of a new *technical-structural* approach, known as Participatory Land Use Planning and Implementation (PLUPI) since 1996. Although the origin of PLUPI is debatable, it seems to have been greatly influenced by the experience of the *Gestion de Terroir* (GT) approach. This has become a very popular model of decentralised management among donors, governments and NGOs since the last decade, especially in Francophone West Africa (see: Woodhouse *et al.*, 2000; Toulmin 1994).

PLUPI focuses on the village (*got*) as the core level of resource governance, as well as for undertaking community-based participatory NRM. The village, defined as a fixed geographical area and social entity, was assumed to be in charge of the use and management of natural resources within its boundaries. The approach was in the main designed to replace top-down approaches, and assist rural communities in different agro-ecologies in designing and implementing their own village management plans in the use and management of natural resources within

their own territories⁶. The advantages of decentralising NRM governance to the village-level were explained in terms of the following: it would take the regulation and management of natural resources closer to communities. It would also make it possible to use indigenous knowledges of communities in terms of traditional soil and water conservation practices and afforestation measures. Above all, however, it was stressed that this would create confidence in their ability to regulate natural resources among community members.

Management was to be through self-regulating institutions. This leads us to a key aspect of current debates on the state/community/NGOs relationship in the context of NRM governance. This has been the role of informal institutions in NRM. Like many other NGOs and donors, SOS-Sahel maintained a strong view that customary/traditional institutions, were better at the organisation of resource use and management than distant and ineffective formal government institutions. One SOS-Sahel initiative, particularly in terms of the governance of user-right hillside enclosure, has been its attempt to facilitate a gradual transfer of resource control and management from the state and state institutions to locally based institutions. Though a sapling with weak roots, SOS-Sahel has therefore invigorated the *kire*, a 'traditional' burial institution/association in the management of enclosed communal hillsides.

However, this perspective of SOS-Sahel's neglects the fact that the *kire* is actually very recent in terms of its formalisation. According to elderly informants, the *kire* was only introduced in the case-study area, as well as in most parts of Meket *Wereda* following the 1984-1985 famine. This does not, however, mean that this or other institutions had been absent. There had instead been such institutions as *iddir* or *izen*, common also elsewhere in rural and urban Ethiopia.

SOS-Sahel has intended its approaches and activities to have a multiplier effect. As one advisor to the project put it: 'It is a waste of time and resource unless we get our ideas and approaches institutionalised'. When the idea of user-rights was adopted first by North Wollo Administrative Zone, and finally by the regional government, SOS-Sahel pushed vociferously to incorporate its approach to NRM governance. In particular, it insisted that the government's user-rights regulation should be formulated in a way which ascertained the rights of the 'locals' in identifying their own user-based groups, as well as in deciding how they want communal lands to be administered (SOS-Sahel, 1998: 2).

⁶ The opportunities and constraints in SOS-Sahel' initiative to formalise village level resource management is discussed in Section 5 below.

In practice, SOS-Sahel had some success in scaling-up PLUPI and group-based user rights approaches in other districts of North Wollo Administrative Zone, other than Meket. It should, however, be emphasised that the 'group' for government officials and experts is often used to refer to those that are formal, and constituted within the government's local structure of governance, such as associations of 'youth', 'fathers', and 'women'.

For government agricultural officials/experts, the main concern was how to bring about environmental rehabilitation, particularly of forestry in the region. During the years between 1995-1998 alone, an estimated 61,178 hectares of denuded hillsides were enclosed by BoA to protect them from human and animal encroachment (ANRS-BoEPD, 1999). The management of such areas was left to the population in each KA. Such initiatives, however, proved to be a failure. As a result, previously enclosed areas often took on the characteristics of open access land since the local people, either on a group or individual basis, used such areas and their resources as they pleased. The main cause to this was said to be the absence of land and forestry use policy. (ANRS-BoEPD, 2000). In this respect, therefore, the initiation of user rights based hillside enclosure was seen as a step forward addressing the problem of environmental rehabilitation programmes in the region.

In contrast to SOS-Sahel, however, the advantage of a user rights approach was interpreted by agricultural experts and policy makers primarily in terms of its advantage in reducing the financial and administrative burden on the government by passing the costs of management to communities. Amongst technocrats in the BoA in particular, user-rights based hillside enclosure has mainly been portrayed as a 'co-management' or a 'joint forest management' (JFM) strategy involving both local communities and government. In a speech made by the Head of ANRS-BoA during a regional-level workshop, held at the Regional Capital, Bahr Dar, the advantage of JFM was stated in the following way:

Joint Forest Management provides a shift of responsibility and management from administration to people, from the central government to local community. It represents a strategy for NRM that is participatory, effective cheap and sustainable. It empowers involved communities and prepares them to go forward in other undertakings as well (quoted in Amare & Hakan 2000: 17-18).

In this respect, therefore, user rights hillside rehabilitation is understood as a pattern of deconcentration of NRM responsibility, rather than a devolution of power and resource control to local communities and

their indigenous institutions. Accordingly, individuals constituted as groups in hillside enclosures, including SOS-Sahel initiated *kire*-based user rights groups, were seen by the government as not legally recognised user-right holding entities. This is discussed separately below, particularly in the context of the formal vs. informal debate with particular reference to *kire*-based user-rights enclosures in Meket.

The wider institutionalisation of group/community-based hillside enclosure, nevertheless, evaporated further when the ultimate decision-makers in policy, usually politicians and administrators, opted for another tenure and management option that stressed primarily individual rather than collective responsibility. According to a higher official in North Wollo Administrative Council⁷, the government's decision to individualise communal lands was based upon the evaluation of progress in areas where group-based allocation of hillside areas had been made. It was argued that the government initiative to promote group-based rehabilitation of hillside areas, had not been successful. This was mainly because the majority of farmers who had been allocated hillside areas on a group-basis had divided the land amongst themselves. Although whether the government's decision to individualise communal hillsides was made in response to farmers' demands is debatable, the preference of the latter for individual-based user rights was by and large true.

The preference for individual rather than community-based user rights by farmers can partly be attributed to memories of past experience and their perceptions of land tenure, conservation and development in general. The majority of the rural population in the Amhara Region, as elsewhere, have had a negative experience of *limat*, a generic term for 'development', particularly the government-led reforestation programmes implemented through mass mobilisation. Interventions carried out by the government in the name of *limat* had often had negative effects on the locals. In this respect, the *Derg's* rural policy had profound impacts. Collectivisation, villagisation and resettlement approaches to environmental policies were implemented with devastating effects on the property rights and livelihoods of the rural population. Interventions done in the name of environmental rehabilitation and rural development had left the local population impoverished. This makes both *limat and ye-wel* (communal/collective) salient forms of political rhetoric in an on-going and conflictual debate between the government and the rural population. As one farmer put it, 'We all have seen what has happened to forests

⁷ Interview with the ex--Head of the Economic Department and now Vice-Chairman of North Wollo Administrative Council, 29 August 1999.

which had been reforested through *limat*. If you ask or order farmers to work on community forests no one will be willing to volunteer as usual'.⁸

An isolated treatment of the individualisation of communal hillside areas as the government's strategy to overcome natural resource degradation through the provision of user rights may hide the politics underpinning its formulation. The issue appeared to have ideological and practical ramifications. The individualisation of communal hillsides was also used to demonstrate to donors, particularly the World Bank (which favours individual, rather than collective responsibility) that the government is shifting towards private property in land and other natural resources. This was clear in the government's plan for extensive mapping of *ye-wel meret*, which was being developed as a project for financing by the World Bank.

Considering the contents of the policy document and actual practices, the main reason behind the regional government's formulation of *ye-wel meret* regulation appears to be the concerns of politicians and administrators about land redistribution, rather than natural resource management *per se*. This is clear if one considers the contexts and circumstances that surround the formulation of the government's *ye-wel meret* regulation.

As part of its political, social and economic reform programme, the EPRDF had implemented a land redistribution programme in what it called 'liberated areas' before it assumed political power in 1991. The redistribution in Meket happened during this period. After the war, however, land redistribution activity in South and North Wollo has subsided. Even if some land readjustment measures had been taken after 1991, these were mainly designed to ameliorate the land demand of returnees and de-mobilised soldiers returned to their areas of origin after the formal end of the war.

In late 1997 the regional government issued a proclamation to implement a general 'Household Land Holding Redistribution' in areas where there had not been any land redistribution before or after the change of government (ANRS 1996). There was therefore a great expectation amongst the landless households, both in North and South Wollo, that this would take place in their areas. However, the redistribution did not happen in many areas. The official reason was that there was not enough left to redistribute.

The regional government had, in fact, attempted to address the demand for land in other ways. One principal source was *yemota qedda*

⁸ Interviewed at Godegoadit in Tehuledere, 29 September 1999.

meret, which has often been used to denote 'land of a deceased person with no offspring'. This category of land was, however, hardly enough to satisfy the increasing demand of the landless. Caught in this difficult situation, the individualisation of communal hillsides, therefore, provided the government a means of getting land to the landless, particularly in areas that had been liberated from the *Derg* before 1991.

Dissonance between government motivations and 'local' preferences

One typical feature of the regional government's *ye-wel meret* regulation was the apparent dissonance between government policy and actual practices, and differing preferences of local people. This was clear when the policy was taken from the region to *Wereda*, and more particularly to *Kebele* level.

Despite the government rhetoric about 'community participation' in policy development, the involvement of the 'locals' in the process of policy formulation seems more of 'co-option' than 'participation'. The first draft, issued in September 1999, was prepared and discussed by government administrative officials and agricultural experts mainly at zonal and regional levels; hence, without public consultation. In Tehuledere, the final version of the regulation was publicised only in April 2000; and it became public mainly because the government had decided to implement it. In my particular case-study area-015 KA, in Tehuledere, a general gathering was held at Godigoadit, its Headquarters, in which the KA Council - the lower level political-legal structure of the government - presided over the discussion. One source of debate between *Wereda* and *Kebele* level agricultural workers, administrative officials and different categories of resource users was the issue of who should be entitled to communal land allocation.

For agricultural experts the main concern was how it would be possible to achieve environmental rehabilitation. Given the apparent shortage of farmland in relation to high population in the *Wereda*, the individualisation of communal land would lead to the allocation of communal land to every one; hence it would mean very small and insufficient plots for forestry activity. They therefore suggested that if the individualisation of communal areas was designed to encourage individual farmers to be engaged in forestry, the primarily beneficiaries should be 'enterprising' farmers who could use the land properly and sustainably. Their comments did not seem to be included and what

actually happened, as we shall see, was what they had feared and attempted to stop.

A key source of debate at the level of resource users was not the individualisation of communal areas but the prioritisation of the landless. A strong opposition came from those who felt their endowments and entitlements to grazing and pasture areas in communal areas were threatened by the new government regulation. Such groups therefore demanded that they should be also entitled to communal area allocation together with the landless. However, their views did not appear to be considered by those implementing government decisions.

Central to the regional government's decision to convert communal lands to individual user-rights holdings seemed to be the contention that it was possible to ameliorate the increasing demand for land from the land hungry by allocating what it referred to as 'under-utilised' communal lands. In the words of one high official in the North Wollo DoA:

The administrative objective is two-fold, to 'kill two birds with one stone'. Its aim is conservation, but in the same vein it also aims to partly solve the problem of land shortage and/or the peasants' demand for land.

One of the key sources of debate, and hence a major challenge in promoting individualised user rights on communal lands, was how would it be possible to confront both land redistribution and conservation in areas such as Tehuledere where land shortage is an acute problem.

There is much discussion about rights in the government regulation. The user-beneficiary is, for example, entitled to transfer rights by rent or inheritance. Though rarely implemented in practice, the individual beneficiary is also entitled to a certificate of deed to his/her user rights in land. This has led some to interpret the individualisation of communal hillsides as an experiment in bringing in 'private property' by the back door (see Pankhurst 2001). Looking to the contents of the regulation, however, the central motive of the government does not seem to create entirely new rules in the promotion of radical and concrete changes to private property ownership of land and natural resources.

There are still considerable restrictions on how individuals can use the land. According to the regulation, individual beneficiaries were given 'the right to use', i.e., undefined use rights, and not 'ownership' of land. Even within this, the rights are conditional, transitory and dependent, that the individual beneficiary may keep the land as far as the government wishes him/her to use the land. The right to use communal hillsides is also dependent upon the compliance of the user-beneficiary with the rules governing access and use to such category of land. One of these rules has

been that the user-beneficiary is under the obligation to put it to use within a year starting from the day of allotment. If this is neglected, the land can be taken away and allocated for others. This entails, therefore, the loss of user-rights. The other and perhaps more important was that *ye-wel meret* is to be used only for multi-year crops such as trees, vegetables and forestry development. In many cases, this does not match the expectations of those whose needs it was designed to address. As one landless farmer in Tehuledere district put it: 'Do you say that you have given us land? We do not eat *bahr zaf* [eucalyptus]. What we need is farmland'

For the majority of user-beneficiary households the government regulation has, therefore, been interpreted as another strategy to shift the responsibility of development back to the rural population. In the words of another landless farmer, '*Mengist* [i.e., the state] gave us this land because we are landless. If it does not allow us to use it for farming it is but another *limat*.'

As the next section makes clear, the way in which user rights approaches have been applied in practice, by both SOS-Sahel and the government, is a key factor in explaining their effects on NRM.

User-based area closures and challenges of community-based NRM: SOS-Sahel and the kires of Meket

As has been highlighted in the section above, SOS-Sahel has been working on environmental rehabilitation in Meket. The approach can be summarised as comprising two interdependent elements. An *institutional* element - establishing *kire*-based user-rights groups to build hillside closures *within* the rules laid by themselves; and a *technical-structural* element - PLUPI - to undertake community-led catchment protection. Of particular concern here is to consider the results of efforts by SOS-Sahel to promote user-based closures and governance of communal areas through the *kire*. An institutional analysis of the *kire*, particularly its role in NRM may, therefore, be relevant to examine the opportunities and constraints of decentralised NRM.

The *kire* is an informal burial association found in many parts of the North and South Wollo Administrative Zones. There is hardly any single local area that has no *kire*. Neither is there a single household that is not a member of the *kire*. To remain outside would mean a total exclusion from the milieu of social life.

SOS-Sahel has used the *kire* since 1995, first as a channel for the distribution of seeds for farmers in Meket (Pratten 1997). Since 1997, the

kire has also been used as a 'community-based organisation' (CBO) in user-rights area closures. To date, a total of 523 hectares of hillside areas, referred to by the locals as *ye-kire terarra*, has been enclosed, representing fifty *kires* in eight KAs in Meket *Wereda*. There have been some positive indicators of long-term environmental regeneration in *kire*-based user-rights hillside enclosures. Particular positive outcomes often mentioned by local resource users have been the regeneration of indigenous trees and grasses, compared to areas that have not been enclosed. In the lowland areas in particular, *kire*-based enclosure has had success in partially solving the critical shortage of animal fodder, which had, in some cases, been a cause of inter-community conflict.

A number of reasons can be suggested for SOS-Sahel's preference for working with the *kire*. The first reason seemed to be SOS-Sahel's ambition to decentralise NRM to the village (*got*) level, since the KA was considered too large for effective regulation and management of natural resources. In terms of its size, therefore, the *kire* was assumed to be a village level social and geographical entity.

While one may not disagree with the significance of devolving NRM to the lowest level, SOS-Sahel's endeavour to promote village-level natural resource governance seems to rest on a number of false assumptions. First, the approach either misreads or omits attention to the nature of present-day rural governance and administration. There is now a bottom-tier government administrative and political structure at the lowest level, known as *Mengestawi Buden* (MB) or 'government team'. The MB exists down to the level of no more than 30-50 households, thus contradicting SOS-Sahel's assumption. Second, the designation of the *kire* as a village-level institution might have been crafted to integrate it with the PLUPI, which sees the village as a bounded entity for effective local-level management of natural resources. However, SOS-Sahel's attempt to define and identify the *kire* with the village misreads the dynamic social space in which the *kire* is organised and operates in different localities. In contrast to SOS-Sahel's rigid and closed model, the organisational boundary of the *kire* is often varied, crosscutting both geographical and administrative boundaries. Depending on social and cultural relations of its members, a *kire* could be organised between different villages, or between two different *Kebeles*, or between two *Weredas*. This apparent discrepancy between SOS-Sahel's wish to promote village-level resource management and the levels of *kire* organisation, therefore, indicates one of the difficulties in promoting user-based environmental rehabilitation and/or rural development tasks through such indigenous institutions as the *kire*.

Legitimacy, authority and autonomy

The invigoration of the *kire* may be explained in terms of SOS-Sahel's opting for semi-autonomous, self-regulating non-state institutions for locally responsive NRM and/or development activities. This is related with contemporary global development discourse, which emphasises the decentralisation of NRM to non-state 'indigenous' institutions. (Woodhouse *et al.*, 2000).

SOS-Sahel considered the *kire* as a key institutional entry point in establishing the trust and sense of ownership amongst local communities; hence, in mobilising them for collective action towards their own development. In this respect, the pitfalls of the environmental rehabilitation and conservation strategies of the *Derg* and the present government were used to justify SOS-Sahel's use of the *kire* as an alternative institutional arrangement in NRM.

SOS-Sahel's experience with the *kire* during the seed distribution programme in 1995 served as encouragement to transform it into a community-based NRM institution. In 1995, seed shortage was identified as the major problem of the food crisis in Meket. SOS-Sahel began a credit-based seed distribution programme to needy households. The *kire* leaders were given standard criteria, which were in the main based on the system of 'collective beneficiary ranking' of households who most needed seeds and who could make most productive use of it. During this, *kire* leaders were said to have played an important role in the successful implementation of the programme. As Pratten (1997) has stated, the seed distribution programme was an important event in the transformation of the *kire* into an NRM institution.

The *kire's* involvement in the process of NRM depends upon on the autonomy, authority and power the *kire* exercises in decision-making in relation to local government structures. In this respect, the picture on the ground seems somewhat blurred. This is mainly due to the lack of clarity about its mandate and legitimacy to participate in NRM vis-à-vis government structures. The relationship between the *kire* and KA is a case in point. When *kire*-based user rights groups were first initiated it was not, for example, made clear which of these institutions would take on which role, and by which means and resources. This seems to have had practical implications in the way institutions and communities interact over the issue of NRM.

Kire-based user rights groups seem to have been operating in a legal vacuum. The involvement of the *kire* in community-based hillside

enclosure is still shrouded with confusion. SOS-Sahel viewed the approval by the government of a 'community management plan' produced by *kire*-based user-rights groups for enclosed sites as recognition of the *kire*. This is clear in the effort SOS-Sahel put into publicising their success in institutionalising a non-state institution in NRM (see for example: Tenna 1998; Pratten 1997).

The view from Meket *Wereda* Administrative Council, on the other, hand, is quite different. Thus, the administration's recognition and agreement to grant user-rights to *kire*-based area closure was vested to the people who were holders of user rights, not to the institution of the *kire*. In the words of an ex-Chairman of the Administrative Council:

During the initiation of the programme SOS-Sahel's insisted on recognising the *kire* as a NRM institution. Our position was clear. We told them [i.e., SOS-Sahel] that it was the KA Council - as a local government structure recognised by the Constitution - that should continue serving its development functions in decision-making related to the administration, use and management of natural resources within its area jurisdiction. If the KA Council wished to include the *kires* as partners in (development) work, it could; we did not however, recognise the *kire* as a separate NRM institution.

For government politicians, administrators and agricultural experts from *Wereda* to regional levels, SOS-Sahel's initiative in *kire* based user-rights groups is seen mainly as a 'joint forest management' (JFM) scheme in which both the government and the locals work together in NRM. The *kire* is seen as one partner, rather than as an autonomous institution, in implementing a form of joint management that should be done within broader attempts to achieve decentralised NRM activities. In contrast to what is often depicted by SOS-Sahel, the *kire* in no case represents a shift in attitude by the government to decentralise management to informal institutions.

In this respect, the other relevant question may be what is the nature of legitimacy of the *kire* as understood by local people themselves in terms of its power and authority, co-operation and conflict that govern decision making?

SOS-Sahel viewed the *kire* as a legitimate and accountable institution at the local level. Such a view once again was influenced by SOS-Sahel experience in working with the *kires* during the 1995 seed distribution. One positive achievement from this programme was said to be the diminishing rate of defaulters (Pratten 1997). This seemed to have been seen by SOS-Sahel as a demonstration of the power of the *kire* by-laws in enforcing community collective action decisions and in exerting pressure

on members which was believed to be inherent feature of its tradition of authority. In this respect, one form of these social rules, *imbidadie*, seemed to have also contributed to SOS-Sahel's privileged view on the *kire*⁹. *Imbidadie* is a form of social sanction or social exclusion in *kire* by-laws imposed on individual members for transgressing or committing serious offences.

The point, however, is that the power and authority of the *kire* and its rules of social sanction to enforce collective action and decision should be addressed through examination of their relevance in specific contexts and situations. It is, for example, important to understand what kinds of collective action *kire* members are committed to or obliged to commit, and why.

It is true that local people see the *kire* as a powerful institution and its by-laws are also highly respected. But, this legitimacy accorded to the *kire* and the power of its by-laws and rules of social sanction is exercised mainly in the sphere of social/cultural organisation in which it was originally designed to serve. The importance attached to the *kire* is due to the nature of its function - the crisis of death. In such a situation the *kire* provides a decent burial for members and the provision of expenses to the deceased families. Failure to attend the burial ceremony, or to make the necessary contribution, are situations when *kire* by-laws would be typically activated. Even here the observable collective action of *kire* members in times of death is related to reciprocal rights members could claim to the provision of support on similar occasions rather than a symbol of community collective action.

An important, but often unnoticed, aspect of the *kire* is also its role as a community safety net in the organisation of production. Besides its function as a burial association, the *kire* also serves as an occasional communal community insurance institution, to which each individual farmer can resort whenever he/she faces a farming problem due to the death of livestock. Again, the presence of collective action of *kire* members in such circumstances is much less a leap to an idealized unity, than a tacit mutual acceptance of practical circumstances. Farming among the rural population in Meket, as well as in many highland areas of northern Ethiopia, is by and large undertaken either on steep hills or deep gorges. The death of plough-oxen in the study area is a common outcome of the rugged topography on which most of the ploughing takes place. Presumably, therefore, the role of the *kire* as a communal pooling of oxen is mainly related to the environmental aspect of the organization

⁹ Interview with SOS-Sahel-Meket PLUPI Officer

of production, of the unavoidable environmental risk of losing the main 'engines of agriculture' (Holt and Lawrence 1993: 40). Outside this, one cannot look upon the property of members of the *kire* as a pool of assets where the members have the right to claim material help from another.

In the context of natural resource governance, however, the locals do not see the *kire* as institution with legitimacy. An attempt to interpret the *kire's* lack of legitimacy in exercising authority and control over natural resources, such as hillside enclosures, primarily as a result of the state's entrenchment against customary institutions may be misleading. First, the *kire* has been also neither a 'customary' tenurial nor a 'traditional' NRM institution. Second, when SOS-Sahel decided to transform the *kire* from its traditional role to NRM, not much emphasis was placed on strengthening their capacity in tandem with their new role.

On the contrary, the dualistic nature of SOS-Sahel's intervention at the local level itself seemed to contribute to the weak position of the *kire* in NRM. As has been already stated, user rights based area closures have been established, of which the *kire* is expected to take the management responsibility. In the same vein, we have PLUPI, which is designed and carried out within the framework of government structures. As a result, village level land use committees known as Village Development Committees (VDCs) have been established in different villages (*gots*) and their accountability is to the *Kebele* Land Use Committee (KLUC), and through this to the *Wereda* Rural Development Committee (RDC). The VDCs are also responsible for all aspects of land management at the village level. Despite claims to integrate the PLUPI and the *kire* approaches, the relationship between these formal and informal local level organisational structures in practice does not seem to be well defined.

In practice, the *kire* seems to rest on an unclear mandate and legitimacy. Most importantly, they have no autonomous status. An important indicator of the contribution of the *kire* as an effective NRM structure may be its power and influence in resource-related conflicts. In this respect, the enforcement of the *kire* by-laws is weak since few conflicts that occurred within *kire*-based hillside enclosures have been resolved endogenously. The by-laws to regulate use and manage enclosed areas, or to resolve conflicts when they appear, are by and large formulated and regulated in line with the formal rules of the government. This is partly because the traditional by-laws of the *kire* have never been related to property issues. In practice also, the local population consider the KA - the local government structure - as the legitimate agent in the

exercise of control and power through which the rules to govern the use and management of enclosed areas would be enforced.

The differential impact of kire-based hillside enclosures

SOS-Sahel's initiative to reinforce self-governing and informal institutions may be seen as a potential step forward with respect to local level resource management. However, *kire*-based user-rights and enclosure have raised complicated issues in the way SOS-Sahel, the government, and local resource users themselves interact.

As has been highlighted above, one problem of the approach has been its idealised vision of the *kire* as a representative and homogenous group of people. In so doing, the approach neglects social, economic and cultural differences within the community. The other is the apparent mismatch between the *kire* and PLUPI which, in turn, has led to a different articulation of the community. As has already been mentioned, the *kire* is not a *got* or village-level institution. The third limitation of SOS-Sahel's *kire*-based enclosure has been a failure to recognise, or to practically resolve, the discrepancies apparent in the boundaries of the *kire*, PLUPI and the physical boundaries of 'communal' hillside areas. Much of SOS-Sahel's activity in environmental rehabilitation focuses in the promotion of the PLUPI approach, which in turn focuses exclusively on the 'village' level. Hence, the approach does not take into account the fact that both the *kire* and local resource users operate within a much broader and more complex context than that of a single village. There are many supra-community factors such as secondary or tertiary rights of access in a single *kire*-based enclosure shared by several communities. This is a fact that SOS-Sahel does not seem to recognise. This in many cases has led to the generation of intra-and-inter-community conflicts during and after the implementation of *kire*-based enclosures.

The 'community management plan' is illustrative of this. On *kire*-based enclosures, a 'Community Woodlot Management Plan' has to be developed, and approved by the *Wereda* Administration. Marked poles with bright red and white stripes, locally known as *jallo* or *ya-salam meleket*, are planted to see if there are any disagreeing groups. As we have seen, the management plan of *kire* user rights is seen by government officials and agricultural experts primarily as a technical issue. For different resource users at the community level, the management plan, particularly its approval by the government had a different signal. It was perceived as a legal property right document. The *kire*-based area closures have often led to inter-and intra-community conflicts, or have

exacerbated latent conflicts particularly in areas where the issue of land is highly contested.

The following case may illustrate this. The conflict, though triggered by the management plan, went beyond it to include social, institutional and land tenure issues. The conflict revealed that the political, social and tenure implications of planting trees were all at stake. The outcome of the conflict was determined by power relationships between the two social groups involved.

The story happened in 020 KA in the communities of Jirelie and Megenagna. While households in Jirelie are exclusively Christian, those in Megenagna are largely Muslim. Despite being some distance apart, one *kire* covers both *gots*.

The conflict happened in 1997, when the SOS-Sahel's extension worker, the government development agent, the VDC Chairman, and two KA representatives decided to enclose Maryam Wuha as a community woodlot. This area was located between the up-stream *got* of Jirelie, and the down-stream *got* of Megenagna. Specific problems emerged in Maryam-Wuha over who signed locally to approve the enclosure. Jirelie villagers accused the VDC Chairman of signing the Community Woodlot Management Plan by falsely claiming to be leader of the *kire*. They subjected him to an *imbedaddie*. Yet, the VDC Chairman claimed he signed in this capacity, not on behalf of the *kire*. Within its boundaries the village is expected to be in charge of the management of land, water, trees and pastures.

Major problems were caused because the scope of the *kire* organisation was misunderstood. SOS-Sahel has specifically targeted the *kires* because of their assumption that the *kire* is a *got* or village-level institution. In fact, it is primarily a Christian institution, based on a parish church (*dabir*). In some cases, a *dabir* can cover more than one *got*. In the case of Megenagna and Jirelie, it is the *Christians* in these two villages that belong to the same *kire*, as the church covers both villages. They mobilised the *kire* to help enclose the uncontested area in Jirelie. However, they viewed the enclosure of Maryam-Wuha as having been done without the authority of the *kire*.

In practice, the Muslims in Megenagna have their own self-help religious association, known as a *tertim*. They share this *tertim* with fellow Muslims in Waqeta, another KA. They were also able to gain the support of the powerful VDC Chairman in their efforts to enclose Maryam-Wuha.

Land tenure conflicts over the enclosed area underlie a good part of the conflict that emerged. These were not, however, considered by

extension agents. Villagers in Jirelie opposed the enclosure viewing it as an illegal encroachment into an area to which they had been entitled. The immediate resistance came from individual farmers in Jirelie who live adjacent to the contested woodlot and who saw the enclosure as a direct threat to their traditional access rights to grazing land.

One factor that led the Christians and Muslims to come into conflict over Maryam Wuha community woodlot was a highly valued agricultural area known as Adbawuha. The contested area, located between Jirelie and Meganagna villages, is seen by many farmers as the best quality land anywhere in the KA. It is a wetter and is considered more stable and productive in times of severe drought.

The contested woodlot is located next to Adbawuha. Beneath the conflict was the fear of up-stream Christians that the enclosed woodlot would in the future serve as a natural boundary between them and the down-stream Muslims. If there were to be another redistribution, it would mean, therefore, the take-over of their land ownership rights over Adbawuha by the Muslims in Meganagna. The Christians therefore felt that it had to be resisted. The tree seedlings planted by Meganagna villagers in 1997 are now either dry or have been up-rooted; and the enclosure has now become almost an open access area.

Local land tenure history, social and cultural differences, in whatever form they may be invoked, appear to have roles in the ways Christian and Muslim households interact over land and other natural resources. This is not, however, to say that land tenure conflicts between the two social groups were caused by, and hence followed religious lines. They are mainly caused by pressures on and competition over local natural resources, particularly land.

The Christians often refer to *rist*, a pre-Derg tenure system based on descent from a hereditary ancestor, as an ideological instrument corroborating how the natural resources particularly belonged to them. The Muslims who were prevented from owning land and who specialised in weaving were considered as special categories. They had maintained temporary access rights over land either through land contact arrangement (*megezo*) or through grants from local landlords (*balabats*) for their services, and had to pay one third of their agricultural produce to the landlords.

The Derg's 1975 Land Reform and its later redistribution enabled the minority Moslems to gain equal rights in land. Some of them were even able to get access to the most sought-after fertile land in Adbawuha. Consequently, Christian households who had seen their plots in the area taken away and given to the Muslims were and are still resentful of the

Derg. The following statement by an old Christian woman may explain this:

Before the *Derg*, the Muslims had owned no land. They used to get land by arranging *megazo* [sharecropping/land rent] with the Amhara [In this particular context the term Amhara means a Christian]. By then land was not a problem as it is these days. They were also very few. Now they have multiplied and expanded. The *Derg* made them equal. It gave them the land, which had been ours. They are now the *balabats* [landlords].

Government allocation and the 'individualisation' of communal lands: a case from Tehuledere

In the years between 1998-2001, an estimated 9,600 hectares of communal land has been allocated to 55,000 households in the Amhara region. Out of these, only 857 hectares are reported to have been planted. In Tehuledere *Wereda* the regulation was executed in only eight KAs out of twenty. Hence, an estimated 308,974 hectares of such land has been distributed to 4,116 households. Table 1 shows the distribution of *ye-wel meret* in Tehuledere.

Table 1: Redistributed communal land and number of beneficiaries in eight KAs in Tehuledere, South Wollo

Name of KA	Communal land redistributed (ha)	Number of beneficiaries	Area planted (ha)	Area already reforested & held as community forest (ha)
Godogoadit	73.8	820	30.6	43.2
Wahelo	294	294	36.7	-
Qete	47.1	377	47.1	30
Welde-Lulo	59.0	324	29.0	-
Gobeya	25.8	51	5.1	20.7
Ardibo	115.6	963	115.6	-
Pasomile	38.8	439	27.0	11.8
Hara	16.10	828	16.10	-
Total	413.8	4116	308.	105.7

Source: Tehuledere *Wereda* Office of Agriculture, 2000

A number of practical problems surfaced during the implementation of the government regulation. One of these was in the definition and identification of areas, which are classified in the regulation as *ye-wel meret* or 'communal lands'. The issue is important in illuminating the persistent tension anchored in state-peasant interaction in the context of land tenure and NRM in particular and Ethiopian rural development in

general. It also highlights some theoretical questions on conventional assumptions about common property regimes and management.

Part of the problem in defining *ye-wel meret* was posed by the regulation itself. The Regional Regulation, under Article 1 defines *ye-wel meret* as: 'A marginal or hillside land/or an area within a ... (KA) that is neither owned by individuals as a private farmland, nor is used by the community as a grazing land. It refers to an area where community members in a KA discuss and decide to use the land for forestry, perennials and fodder production' (ANRS-BoA, 1998: 1). In this respect, the Constitution itself does not seem to provide support for the new regulation. In Article 40(3) of the Constitution it is stated: 'The right to ownership of rural and urban land; as well as of all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the public. Land is a common property of the Nations, Nationalities and the Peoples of Ethiopia' (FDRE 1995).

For district and KA level administrative officials, agricultural experts and the locals, the government definition of *ye-wel meret* was not clear. When commenting on the draft regulation, the *Wereda* Administrative Council, for instance, wrote: 'Much of the area, except the ones reforested and held by the KA as *mahbarat den* [community forests], has already been held by households as grazing land. The regulation is not clear whether or not community forests could also be included in *ye-wel meret* allocation'.

This lack of clarity in the government regulation caused confusion. There were varied and conflicting interpretations by lower level officials, agricultural experts and different categories of farmers as each of these attempted to define and identify areas that might or might not be allocated as *ye-wel meret*. A lack of recording of tenure regimes made it difficult to verify where and to which category of tenure and to whom resource regimes formerly belonged. Consequently, the process of identifying areas classified as *ye-wel meret* led to what Dessalegn has recently referred as a 'landscape of interpretation' (2001:71), but to a struggle over property rights, power and control *between* the state and the community, and between different categories of farmers *within* the community.

For agricultural experts, *ye-wel meret* refers to a physical landscape that has a slope of 30 percent or above. For the majority of the local population, *ye-wel meret* was often used to refer to community forests that had been reforested during the *Derg* through *limat* or development work. For them the areas referred to in the regulation as *ye-wel meret* were these areas which were until now were held by the KA, in other

words, by the state. During the process of implementation, the locals, particularly those who felt their rights to grazing areas were threatened by the new regulation, reacted to protect marginal areas outside community forests saying that they had been using them for animal grazing.

Among district and zonal level agricultural experts such action of local people, interpreted as the 'hiding of land' (*meret medebeq*), was reported to be one of the most important obstacles to the successful implementation of the government regulation. However, this action could better be seen as a 'soft opposition' or a 'strategy of disengagement' to a policy which might further erode their rights of access to and control of very scarce resources in the name of 'environmental rehabilitation'.

Beyond this, local people in Tehuledere seemed to have some success in re-claiming their 'lost rights' to resources, which the state, particularly the *Derg* had taken away from them and yet controlled as community forests. They were able to achieve this through a strategic exploitation of the ambiguities in the government regulation, and lower-level administrative officials' and agricultural workers' rush for quick execution of the government's policy package. What finally occurred was some way from the rules and objectives stated in the government *ye-wel meret* regulation. That is to say, most of the area allocated in Godegoadit (in Tehuledere) was not what the government had classified as a degraded hillside area, because it was physically in the poorest condition. Rather, this land had already been reforested under the *Derg's* environmental rehabilitation programme and then afterwards nominally held by the KA as '*ye-mahbarat den*', or 'community forest'. As shown in Table 1, over half of the area allocated as *ye-wel meret* in this KA was '*ye-mahbarat den*'

The allocation of community forests as *ye-wel meret* was not without problems, leading to the generation of both latent and new resource-related conflicts. Over the years, what has officially been classified as 'community forest' has undergone considerable changes, and there are now what Maxwell and Wiebe have called, 'tenure niches' (1998: 23), where different and overlapping property rights regimes have become a typical characteristic. This was created mainly by the government itself during the years following the post-*Derg* period.

The period following the end of conflict was characterised in many areas by continued disorder and the absence of a recognisable authority to enforce official rules on NRM. The institutional transition further compounded this problem by allocating land to returnees and demobilised soldiers inside community forests. It is

now common to find a farmer expressing the view that: 'land is mine, the trees and the grasses are of the KA'. There are tax-paying households with their residences, plots and even access rights to grazing within community forests. The KA Council has had also a *de jure*, if not *de facto* ownership over the trees and grasses inside such categories of areas. As the scarcity and demand for grazing has intensified, parts of community forests have also been transformed into *mastinfisha* or *chichisa*, i.e., a place of rest for animals, mainly by those households with livestock with no or small grazing land of their own. There is, therefore, another category of resource users and tenure, involving user rights on grazing land. Some land within community forests has been also held by individuals as *ye-gel den* (private forest).

Since 1998 the regional government has put into operation a Forestry Investment Guideline for private investors which included some tax incentives (SIDA-BoA 2000). Hence, in Tehuledere, perhaps in other Districts too, the *Wereda* Agricultural Office has given areas to individuals whom it thought to be 'enterprising farmers' capable of engaging in private forestry development. According to the Forestry Investment Guideline, areas to be granted were those 'which had never been developed or reforested either by the government or the community in mass mobilisation'. In this context, community forests were therefore not to be touched. What had actually happened, particularly in Godegoadit was, however, that previously enclosed and reforested areas, which until then were held as 'community forests' were handed over to individuals for private forestry investment, thus defying the government's guidelines. The local politics underpinning the allocation of community forests to individuals is complex, involving cases of corruption and 'capture'. It has brought about tension between the community and government agents.

What I want to emphasise here is that the allocation of areas to private investors has further complicated the nature and types of property rights regimes in community forests. The government *ye-wel meret* regulation was implemented without considering the overlapping and conflicting rights prevailing in community forests. What has been illustrated from the actual implementation of the *ye-wel meret* regulation is the absence of any institutional mechanism to resolve conflicts that emerged from the variety and complexity of arrangements. The whole process was carried out in a centralised manner over which the KA Council presided as principal executive agent.

The screening and prioritisation of beneficiary households, identification of sites as well as the practical on-the-spot allocation of land in each village was in the hands of the MB. The community elders had no greater role than observer status in the allocation.

The role of government Development Agents (DAs) was only technical, assisting the MB members in the identification of sites to be allocated. Some saw this as an activity that should be completed as fast as possible. Hence, much of their focus was on the immediate execution of the allocation process, leading to the neglect of long-term impacts.

In Tehuledere, and perhaps in other Districts both in North and South Wollo, landless households especially the young were prioritised. Hence, 'flat lands' suitable for farming were primarily allocated to such categories of farmers. In some cases, the government user rights regulation was also used for other ends by the government. For instance, in one KA in Tehuledere, families of recruited army members (*ye-zematch betesebotch*) were prioritised. In other KAs both in North and South Wollo, the stress has been on allocating land to whoever is capable of managing it.

Women, particularly female-headed households, generally appear to be losers in *ye-wel maret* allocation. The KA Chairman¹⁰ in Godegoadit noted: 'In principle, the KA has not attempted to make women heading households alone beneficiaries of *ye-wel maret* allocation. Many of them did apply. But, we persuaded them that it would be difficult for them to work on forestry development activities since they do not have the *aqem* [physical energy]'. The other categories of losers from the regulation were households who had previously used community forests for animal grazing.

Fieldwork in Tehuledere also revealed that the government *ye-wel meret* regulation has had very little relationship to what happens on the ground. This is most apparent in a gap between policy prescription on the rights and obligations of user-beneficiaries and actual practice. User-beneficiaries, including those whom the government assigned to oversee the effective implementation of the regulation, have used communal land for farming purposes. The practices of beneficiary households became less and less concerned with the initial content of the rules set out in the government regulation, and increasingly a mere enactment, a formal condition for gaining access to a farmland in communal areas.

¹⁰ Interviewed on 2 December 1999 in Godegoadit.

Conclusion

Through a comparative discussion of case materials in Meket and Tehuledere, this paper has attempted to understand whether or not community or individual based user rights provide the rural population with greater security of tenure and greater control over and management of communal areas. In this respect the paper has argued that although the two approaches are innovative and hence potential steps forward, the effects of the two approaches in practice have been limited.

In the case of SOS-Sahel the simplified view of the *kire* as representative of a homogenous population fails to understand social and economic differentiation, and deep-seated land tenure and social conflicts among resource users. In this respect, the provision of user-rights to a single *kire* or to a single village appeared to exclude many secondary or tertiary users of these resources.

The 'individualisation' of communal areas allocation by the government, on the other hand, appeared to be complicated by other political and administrative concerns about land redistribution, particularly in areas that had been liberated from the *Derg* before 1991, rather than by natural resource management concerns *per se*. Therefore, practical difficulties remain between conservation and land redistribution. The prioritisation of households without land in communal areas allocation alone is a step to nowhere in addressing the wish of beneficiary farmers for more agricultural land or as incentives for conservation.

The other concern of the paper was to demonstrate the differential effects of these two approaches on households' and communities' relationships over access and use of common property resources, and their implications for NRM. In this regard, it is argued that although the two user-rights approaches do not, *per se* lead to new social and land tenure conflicts, they have tended to exacerbate existing or latent conflicts. SOS-Sahel's view of the *kire* as representative of a homogeneous population, and the government's prioritisation of the landless, have both failed to understand the nature of social and economic differentiation. This has led therefore to the exclusion of many previous users from these resources.

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Resource Management Institutions in Post-conflict Situations: Lessons from Yegof State Forest, South Wello Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia¹

Alula Pankhurst

"From above there was the forest development, from below was the town, and in between Mr Drought"². Quoted in Pankhurst (1989:164; 1992:69).

"The forest from above and the town from below are pressing hard on us" Quoted in Bahru (1998: 87)

The case of Yegof Mountain, situated West of Kombolcha town in South Wello Zone, provides an interesting example of the key issues with which this research project has been concerned: the questions of understanding the implications of conflict, post conflict and transition for Natural Resource Management (NRM); the effects of migration, displacement and return, and the issue of community and state institutions responsible for NRM.

In this paper I begin by considering issues relating to narratives of deforestation, moving from global perspectives to the Ethiopian case and

¹ The findings of this paper are derived from reviewing the literature and short field trips in July 1999, February 2000 and March 2001. Interviews were carried out mainly in Amharic and some of the original expressions quoted have been transliterated in the notes. I should like to thank Dr Yeraswork Admassie, Chairman Sociology Department, Addis Ababa University and Mekonen Aklog of the Dessie Zurya Forestry Department who accompanied him during a field trip; Professor Bahru from Addis Ababa University History Department who gave access to important documents, Ato Dessalegn Rahmato of the Forum for Social Studies for his constant help with logistics and useful comments; Marc Wilks and the staff of the Istituto Agronomico d'Oltermare of Florence who e-mailed scanned images of photographs taken during the Italian Occupation; participants of the Addis Ababa workshop who made comments on an earlier oral presentation, and members of the MARENA team who gave constructive comments on the drafts including Dr Richard Black, Dr Elizabeth Harrison, Dr Elizabeth Watson, and Tarekegn Yibabie.

² The Amharic expression was: *kelay limatu, ketach fabrikaw, mehal Ato Dirq.*

Wello in particular. The rest of the paper focuses on Yegof. The first part considers the imperial period and growing state interest in the forest leading to peasant resistance, which reached a climax at the period of the transition from imperial to military rule. The second part considers the Derg period and in particular the context of famine and resettlement, and the dynamics of simultaneous voluntary and forced displacement. The third section focuses on the transition between the Derg and Ethiopian peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) rule, and the question of displaced returnees.

Finally, I review the question of appropriation of local institutions by the state and resistance by those institutions to this process. I conclude with remarks on the findings of the paper regarding the consequences for NRM in post-conflict situations, return from displacement, and the nature of local institutions.

Competing global narratives of deforestation

The dominant global paradigm of alarming deforestation in which local people are seen as destroying forests has been challenged by academics, notably at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex. Through careful historical research, particularly in West Africa, Fairhead and Leach (1996, 1998) have shown evidence of appropriate management of the natural environment by farmers and of reforestation rather than deforestation.

This perspective has led to the search for local 'traditional' institutions managing natural resources, and a new discourse has emerged tending to suggest that traditional resource management institutions existed in harmony with nature, managed by homogenous communities. However, on the ground local organisations for resource management are often not clearly visible, although institutions in the form of rules of inclusion and exclusion are quite common (Uphoff 1996). This has led to the assumption that previously existing organisations and institutions came under pressure from, and were destroyed by, processes of incorporation by state and market forces. In practical terms some agencies and academics have therefore advocated reviving traditional resource management institutions as appropriate vehicles for NRM. As Leach *et al.* (1997:5) suggest, the emerging consensus makes simplistic assumptions that homogenous community level organisations regulate the use of undifferentiated environments and that the solution to environmental degradation is to "reconstitute community-based natural

resource management institutions". Hence a number of NGOs have sought to promote the revival of indigenous institutions (Hogg 1992).

There are two major reasons why such assumptions about Resource Management Institutions (RMIs) are problematic simplifications. Firstly, in cultural terms, resource management is not a discrete field with its own organisations separate from other social institutions; rather it is part and parcel of the rest of social organisation within which it is embedded. Hence resource management organisations often do not exist; or rather resource management is generally carried out by existing social institutions. To use Leach's formulation about not essentialising kinship in his study of an irrigation system (1961), it may be argued that resource management does not exist 'as a thing in itself', but rather is part of social, economic and political institutions and discourses.

Secondly, this view of traditional resource management institutions rests on a somewhat romantic, naïve image of indigenous institutions as pristine, isolated, pre-existing entities in harmony with nature (Adams 1996). It may therefore be more meaningful to consider how such institutions were transformed and may even have emerged in a context of wider political and economic processes, as the need for controlled resource usage becomes more salient with greater external threats and opportunities.

The argument that RMIs are often shaped by state and market interactions and discourses, and that they have sometimes even become defined and institutionalised in interaction with external interests may seem controversial. RMIs are clearly localised in rural areas and the link between people, place and environment seems obvious. Yet the interpretation and appropriation of nature is mediated by culture, and human relations with the environment are understood through cultural and symbolic constructions. Moreover, it has long been recognised that local cultures cannot be understood in isolation from regional, national and even global interactions. Therefore, the management of natural resources can be shaped by the way in which local cultures relate to wider processes, and may even emerge through this interaction.

The Ethiopian context and the case of Wello

In the Ethiopian context too, the dominant paradigm, which is still prevalent in policy discourses, assumes that the highlands were forested and have become increasingly deforested. The idea that forest cover in the country was reduced from 40 percent to just 3 percent became quoted

so often that it came to be considered as fact. This dogma has been challenged by a number of researchers, notably by McCann (1995).

In the case of Wello an environmental history research team has challenged these views (Crummey 1998, Bahru 1998 and Dessalegn 1998). Although the team does not speak with one voice and there are differences among them, the results of their studies suggest that the Northern highlands may never have been as forested as has been claimed and that deforestation may not be all that recent. Comparing photographs taken in 1937 under the Italian Occupation with recent ones in selected sites, Crummey shows that there was more forest cover in 1997 than there was 60 years earlier. However, as Crummey recognises, the photographer was seeking to impress the Italian colonial administration about the potential for colonial settlement and may therefore have taken pictures that show areas suitable for settlement. In addition it is important to note that Wello has had a history of considerable migration and warfare, which is likely to have taken its toll on forest resources.³

Dessalegn (1998) documents an indigenous tradition of environmental concern and conservation notably in the 1960s on the part of intellectuals, governors who promoted afforestation schemes, and individuals requesting state permission to act as wardens of forests in the environs in which they live. He also emphasises the importance of what he terms “religious forestry”: the role of Orthodox Christian and Muslim religion in protecting sites of plantations around churches (*Atsed*), holy springs (*tsebel*), burial grounds (*wijib* in the Muslim tradition), and sacred mountain summits.

Bahru documents the growth of state interest in forestry in imperial times from the 1950s when the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) forestry department began taking control of forests, especially after the proclamation of 1965. He notes that there were conflicts between the MoA and individuals who had been allocated land by the government (*balewileta*) and the nobility and royalty who also laid claims to land (*madbet* or *ristegult*).

Although not all the team members share this view, the findings of the Wello environmental history team have been presented as challenging the earlier paradigm of increasing deforestation, and clearly show that there has been reforestation notably near settlements, both through peasant and state initiatives.

³ This point was made by Dessalegn at the workshop.

However, interpretations of these findings require caution, notably about traditional forest management. The reforestation is generally of eucalyptus by farmers on their own plots near settlements during the past half century, and by the massive government hillside reforestation programmes using food-for work under the Derg. The failures of the latter approach which emphasised quantity over consideration of ownership and use rights have been amply documented (Yeraswork 2000). These so-called 'community forests' were in fact viewed by peasants as state forests. As Bahru concluded (1998:116): "The community forest is a good example of an idea that was probably brilliant in conception but flawed in implementation. Characteristically it stopped short of trusting the peasants themselves".

The majority of these 'community forests' were destroyed during the conflict and transition after the downfall of the Derg. Interestingly, the few cases where such forests were preserved by local communities seem to have been where they had been able to derive benefits for them, often with backing of Christian or Muslim religious leaders and institutions⁴. In the case of individual peasants, we are not dealing with traditional communal resource conservation, but rather with innovation in the past two or three generations by peasants becoming aware of the benefits of planting trees.

The "religious forestry" discussed by Dessalegn is an important aspect of preserving sacred groves. However, on the whole these are fairly limited and seem to rely on denying access to small sacred sites - except for ecclesiastical purposes - rather than managing forests for use by the community. Are we then faced with a situation where traditional management of forests existed and has been destroyed by state and/or market penetration, or did such management simply not exist in Wello?

The evidence from the Wello environmental history team would suggest that many areas of South Wello did not have forests by the time of the Italian occupation. However, to this day a few pockets of Juniper and *Podocarpus* forest exist. For instance, Anabe forest in South Wello has a venerated *Podocarpus*, called *Awliyaw*, reputed to be the largest and oldest tree in Ethiopia. But forest pockets such as Anabe seem to have survived more because they are isolated by rivers, cliffs and ravines, than because of traditional management, or because of the stationing of guards

⁴ See Thematic Briefing *Conservation and participation in community forests*

by the state.⁵ As Bahru's informants pointed out, guards do not have torches, and tend to patrol only nearby areas by day - whereas those cutting trees tend to operate by night.

In general peasant priorities in terms of NRM seem to be geared towards guaranteeing access to pasture for livestock, which are such a crucial part of the household economy. In many parts of Wello the interest in forest resources and their management does not seem to be prominent, and state interventionism which has been concerned with 'clothing the hillsides with green', has often been seen as a threat to pasture resources. Peasants have resisted plantations and impositions of state forests largely on the grounds that this restricts grazing areas. Although limited management of forest areas may exist, it would seem that these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

The case of Yegof

Historical origins

The historical origins of the forest, as Bahru⁶ points out, are somewhat nebulous, but informants made claims to early intervention by royal leaders (Bahru 1998:107-8). One of Bahru's informants alleged that the ramparts on the summit were the enclosure of Emperor Lebna Dengel's sixteenth century palace. Others claimed that Queen Werqit of Wello, an opponent of Emperor Tewodros in the mid nineteenth century, used the summit as her stronghold. One of Bahru's informants suggested that *Dejazmach* Birru Lubo probably under Werqit, prevented peasants even from grazing livestock on the mountain. Italian reports mentioned fines of up to fifty Maria Theresa thalers for unauthorised cuttings by guards posted there from the time of Emperor Menelik. These accounts fit with the theme illustrated in Bahru's paper of royal control over forests, and an antagonism between interests of the peasants and the state already in imperial times.

Bahru also stresses the connection between political and religious authority, noting that there were annual sacrifices (*wedaja*) of a red bull

⁵ The Wello environmental history team was unable to visit the forest owing to its inaccessibility and a road has only recently reached the forest (Pankhurst 2000)

⁶ I should like to thank Professor Bahru for kindly allowing our team members to make use of the photocopied files from the Ministry of Agriculture in his possession.

on the summit, which was believed to induce rainfall. In addition there are graves of holy men (*adbar*),⁷ on the slopes. The summit was apparently considered sacred. Bahru notes that informants referred to the forest using terms such as *Ifur* and *kebriya* attesting “to its protected and hallowed nature” (1998:108). According to one of our informants⁸ on the summit there is a large clay incense burner (*gach'a*) allegedly one metre high by which the sacrifices were performed.

The Italian period

The photographic comparison provided by Crummey shows that many areas of south Wello have a greater tree cover in 1997 than when Maugini photographed them in 1937. From the photographs of the environs of the Kombolcha plain seem to be fairly denuded with some bushes and euphorbia. Although Maugini took photographs from Kombolcha airport and one is in the direction of Yegof, it is too far away to ascertain the extent of forest cover. Despite the inconclusive photographic evidence Yegof can be assumed to be an exception which must have been forested. Crummey notes that the Forestry Commission for Italian East Africa which was looking for woods to use for bridges, housing and furniture was “extremely disappointed and note only two ‘real’ forests of consequence Yegof and Albuko” (1998:14). Moreover, As Bahru points out the Italians set up a saw mill to exploit Yegof, which must have meant that there was sufficient potential. One of his informants performed “a vivid re-enactment of the process by which big trunks were pulled by a dozen people and oxen and then made to roll sown straight to the site of the sawmill” (1998:109). One of our informants even claimed that the Italians planted a pole on top of the mountain and used a pulley system to bring logs down”.

We can therefore conclude that the Yegof forest must have been heavily exploited during Italian occupation, and presumably increasingly thereafter due to the growth of Kombolcha town. To this day the impact of the town can be clearly seen.

⁷ Referred to as *Hujub* by our informants, who mentioned in particular those of *Sheh Yassin Durih* and *Sheh Mejele* at Atirshign.

⁸ Mekonen Aklog of the Dessie Zurya Forestry Department.

The imperial period and the imposition of the state forest

Discussions with informants in Bekimos Kebele Administration (KA)⁹ on the eastern slope of Mount Yegof suggest that there was no clear traditional communal forest management in Yegof in imperial times. There were a number of officials acknowledged or established by the state,¹⁰ notably the local esquires (*Chiqa shum*), and some landlords paying tribute in kind and later tax in cash (*Gebbar*).¹¹ The state also assigned functionaries such as the *Abba bidra* who collected payments in kind and labour from peasants and the *Atbiya dagna* responsible for local judicial matters. However, though the later was supposed to have nominal jurisdiction over the forest area, in fact no rules for forest use or sanction against abuse seem to have been instituted apart from people having to ask permission to take wood for graves (*lahid*), and at times the authorities trying to prevent livestock grazing. Although the summit was considered sacred, and sacrifices were performed there, these seem to have been mainly about invocations for rain rather than forest management.

Yegof was declared a State forest in 1965 and some limited planting occurred prior to the 1974 revolution. Indeed Bahru notes that it is one of only two out of 39 state forests in Wello that had plantations before the revolution. Bahru also points out the 1972-3 drought raised official consciousness about the need for conservation. Afforestation began in earnest that year, particularly under the Governor, Dejazmach Mamo Seyoum, who visited the nursery regularly. Up to a thousand workers were said to have been employed on the Yegof site.

Conflicts between the state forest and the local people arose with the afforestation programmes, and the delimitation of the forest area. As the MoA files discussed by Bahru show, this involved establishing which areas were considered *beni*, or common land, which areas were considered *gebbar*, land on which taxes had been paid and what should be considered *mengist*, or state land. Local elders were involved in the process, which resulted in much conflict with local people.

From the perspective of understanding the implications of transition situations it is probably no coincidence that the conflict became most

⁹ This discussion was held with a group of elders who were requested to come and meet us on 1-02-2000.

¹⁰ For details see Yeraswork (2000:101-2).

¹¹ Informants mentioned the names of *Chiqa shum* Reta Hussein, *Gebbar* Ali Adera, *Atbiya dagna* Said Ali, and *Aba Bidra* Asfaw.

heated at the time of the transition between imperial and Derg rule. Bahru quotes MoA records showing that farmers argued that it was doubly unjust that they should be detained for farming and grazing cattle on *rist* land to which they had claims on the basis of descent and on which they had paid tax. The high point of the conflict, was in the months of April-July 1974. A clear resistance to state authority emerged. Farmers uprooted seedlings, destroying roads and chasing away labourers. Interestingly Bahru notes that after the 1974 drought which was blamed on intrusive officials, one of these was expected to provide a red bull to slaughter on the mountain to propitiate the spirits. This was quite a remarkable concession to the power of local institutions. In August 1975 farmers were even threatening to go Addis Ababa despite the rains to appeal to the Emperor against the appropriation of their *rist* land.

During the Derg period, too, it was at the time of the 1985 famine that the concern for afforestation and the conflict with local people became most salient. A number of factors were at work. The expansion of the town and especially the textile factory from below, the delimitation of the forest from above in 1986, and the removal of people living on the slopes, taken to resettlement, and villagised in the lowlands were the most salient.

The similar statements quoted at the beginning of this paper which informants mentioned to me in 1987 and to Bahru in 1997 express the sense of being "hemmed in" (Bahru 1998:111). The case of Yegof shows some of the complexities of community-state relations, when it came to the villagisation and resettlement. The villagisation sites were in the lowlands, and at the southern foot of the mountain people were settled on a communal grazing area where malaria was rife and a Producers' Cooperative took over the grazing area. As soon as they were able people abandoned the villagisation sites.¹²

¹² Information kindly provided by Elizabeth Watson from her fieldnotes 20/05/99.

The Derg period & the dynamics of resettlement differentiation

Resettlement from the Yegof area was already carried out in 1978 by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Bale. Men were taken forcibly, some even at night, many of whom were not suffering from famine, apparently through victimisation, and their families were allowed to join them only two year later. For instance informants from Bekimos Kebele Administration claimed that 42 households were taken, 40 of whom have returned. In 1977 there were also some young men taken forcibly to work on state farms in the Setit Humera area.

The 1985 resettlement from the Yegof area included *both* people who wanted to leave because they were famine victims and had no food left and households taken against their will. One of the former, Said Hussen, made this clear: "I wanted to save my children, the authorities did not touch me".¹³ Others mentioned that once they had sold their oxen they did not see how they could remain independent farmers. However, even among the famine victims not all really wanted to go. As one man pointed out "I would have preferred the hyena and the kite of my country to eat me, but there was the propaganda (*qisqesa*)", suggesting that there would be renewed famine.

The coercion was ruthless, a salient example of how the idea of a harmonious community can be myth. Some mentioned that they had left ripening crops in the fields, and one woman recalled that she was seized from a grain store where her brother had been hiding her to be taken with her husband; others mentioned that their children were kidnapped from the marketplace to ensure that the parents left.

At first sight it seems strange that from the same area there was both voluntary and coerced resettlement almost simultaneously. Three factors account for the difference. First there was a difference between the earlier and later periods. Those who left in late 1984 and early 1985 (from November 1984 to April 1985), most of whom were taken to Assosa, Wellega and to Illubabor generally left voluntarily, or with little pressure. However, in 1985 the rains seemed promising and peasants did not want to leave. In May 1985 with a long way off before the harvest and many of the poorer people starving there were volunteers as well as coercion. By October with the harvest in sight the resettlement was entirely forced (mainly to Gojjam).

A second factor relates to the kind of land peasants had. Those with irrigated land had managed to grow crops despite the failure of the rains

¹³ *Lij awet'alehu biye, dagna alnekagnim.*

(Pankhurst 1992: 69). Bahru presents figures of resettlement from four Peasant Associations around Yegof. A total of 714 peasants (households) were resettled out of 3,749 (19 percent). Of these 255 (35 percent) were living in the forest and had a plot there, 137 (19 percent) lived in the forest and had a plot on the slope, and 375 (52 percent) were living in the forest and had a plot on the plain. It seems likely that the middle category were those who were more prone to victimisation as they are more likely to have had irrigated land. In one area of former PA leader was able to obtain a fairly large area of irrigated land which he still retains.

A third factor was bitter conflict within the community and score settling through which those in leadership positions used their power to send their rivals and enemies to resettlement. Those in power could then give the land of the resettled to their own relatives and allies. In other words the resettlement was used as a means of premeditated victimisation. One informant made this point very evocatively: “they had [already] distributed the land among themselves in their heads”¹⁴ There were also allegations that land was given to those able to bribe officials. Although officially the resettlement was used to remove people from the state forest area, not all of those who were resettled lived or had land in the forest area, and many compounds and fields from which settlers were taken were then reoccupied or redistributed, which confirms this interpretation.

The transition period and the issue of returnees

Bahru notes that although worries about deforestation appear in the MoA files earlier during the Derg period, large scale deforestation was associated with the breakdown of political order in what he terms ‘the period of retreat’ at the end of the Derg period. The declaration of the mixed economic policy in 1990 “emboldened peasants to cut trees with impunity and utilise forest reserves for farm and pasture” (Bahru 1998:106). More significantly, Bahru notes, the escalation of the civil war and the stationing of large military units “wrecked havoc on the forests. Notorious culprits in this regard were the *Zendo* (Serpent) and *Azo* (crocodile) units camped at Sulula”. They were cutting trees indiscriminately not only for firewood but for sale, but also, as the narrative goes, “for the benefits of their mistresses”. In the last stage before its downfall the Derg did attempt to hand over forests to

¹⁴ *Meretun bechinqilatachew tekefalewit neber*

communities but this generally did not have the effect of preserving them.¹⁵

In the period of uncertain conditions until the EPRDF consolidated its power, there was apparently serious destruction of forests. Like the Derg the EPRDF at first attempted to hand over forests to communities, again seemingly with little success in terms of preserving them. However, gradually the need to reestablish forests and forest guarding was recognised by the MoA under the new government. There was a clear awareness that extensive destruction had taken place. The blame was often put on returnees and ex-soldiers, although they were no doubt not the only culprits. In fact another category that has been accused was the armed forest guards themselves, who found themselves without salaries, and whose food rations were often seriously delayed. In one case a guard supervisor was even accused of collusion with officials, and the matter was taken so seriously by the administration, that it went beyond the zonal level to the Region.

However, as Bahru suggests, the fuelwood and construction interests of Kombolcha town and the commercial saw mills are undoubtedly the driving force behind the logging and abuse of the state forest. With prices of wood at 2,500 *birr* per cubic metre in the year 2,000 and having reached 4,000 *birr* in 1991 the incentives are high. Some of the plantation areas that are considered mature for harvesting have recently been auctioned off to businessmen with the capacity to exploit them.

Returnees include those who came back from resettlement, Derg soldiers, wage-labourers returning from work on state farms and in Asseb, and refugees from the Eritrean conflict. The exact numbers and proportions are unknown.¹⁶ However, the following data obtained from officials of three Kebele Administrations (KAs)¹⁷ on the slopes of Yegof, if accurate, would suggest that returned settlers may represent a little over ten percent and ex-soldiers less than one percent of the households.

¹⁵ see Thematic Briefing *Conservation and participation in community forests*.

¹⁶ Nationwide the figures for displaced returnees exceed 2 million (see MARENA Briefing ET04 *Returnees and Natural Resource Management*).

¹⁷ Two or three of the former Peasant Associations (PAs) under the Derg were regrouped into one *Kebele* Administration (KA).

Table 1: Numbers of total households, returnees and ex-soldiers

PA	Bekimos	Metene	Atari Mesk	Total	%
Total households (tax paying land holding)	1,418	1,306	953	3677	
Returnees	250	102	88	440	12
Ex-soldiers	20	34	25	79	0.2

Generally, returnees are amongst the poorest section of the population and suffer from shortage of land and livestock. Returnees in Yegof as elsewhere found that their land had been redistributed. In some cases relatives had obtained the land, but more often it had been given to strangers (*ba'da*). Returnees were generally able to obtain join a relative and obtain land to build a house. One settler referred to this as "A seat for my bottom"¹⁸ But even where relatives had kept or obtained their land, that did not necessarily mean that the relatives were willing to hand land back to returnees, as they too suffered from land shortage. Some returnees bitterly complained about being let down by even very close relatives. On the whole returnees were able to get small backyard plots of 20 x 30 to grow a little maize (*ishet*). Some were provided *yemote kedda* "land of the deceased".¹⁹ However such land was often of poor quality. Some returnees complained about the label '*sefari*' settler being still applied to them

In a group discussion in Bekimos Kebele Administration, out of 36 returnees only 4 had more than two *t'imad* (half a hectare),²⁰ (more than half) had simply a *bota*, the house and backyard plot, and a third (12) had no land at all and were relying on relatives (*tet'egiten*).

Returnees have therefore been among those arguing for land redistribution. In Dessie Zurya *Wereda* land redistribution was carried out in 1997 in 15 *Kebele* Administrations (22 of the previous Peasant Associations), apparently selected on the basis of average land holdings being greater than half a hectare in these PAs. A total of 7,254 households obtained 6,314 hectares, i.e. 0.8 ha per household.²⁰ Data does not seem to have been collected on how many of these households were returnees or settlers, as opposed to other categories of landless, notably newly established households, which suggests that returnees have

¹⁸ *Yeqit'e meqemech'a.*

¹⁹ See MARENA Briefing ET05 *Struggles over the land of the deceased.*

²⁰ Data obtained by Ato Mekonnen Aklog from the Wereda Council.

not had much political impact and that the issue is not considered important, and part of the agenda.

However, it seems that where redistribution did take place settlers were beneficiaries. In two KAs within the Yegof area where redistribution did occur settlers gained about half a hectare of land and therefore in a better position than in neighbouring KAs where distribution was not carried out. Data for Atari Mesk suggests that 88 out of 200 people (44 percent) who gained land in the redistribution were former settlers, and apparently all settler households gained some land.²¹ In some areas returnees who came back early in the transition period were given positions of authority in KAs since they were not considered to be tarnished by involvement in the Derg administration. This in turn led to their having better access to land.

Returnees not only suffered from smaller land holdings, but also own less livestock, than before they were resettled. In a group discussion with 30 returnees in Bekimos KA, half claim that they did not have any cattle now, whereas only 20 percent did not have any before they left, and only a third now have one ox or more, whereas half had an ox or more previously.

Table 2 : Returnees current and earlier livestock holdings

No cattle	Now	Previously
Two oxen or more	3	8
1 ox	7	6
Other cattle	4	10
No cattle	16	6
Total	30	30

Given survival difficulties returnees resort to selling and charcoal of survival. Some of the women collect dung for sale as fuel and grass to sell as fodder. Other options include wage-labour notably in peak agricultural seasons (weeding at a rate of 3 *birr* a day), wage labour in Kombolcha town, and sharecropping and livestock share-rearing on

²¹ 25 of the 200 who gained land were former soldiers.

unfavourable terms. A few are involved in crafts such as a weaver, and some women spin. Those with some land produce vegetables for sale in Kombolcha. One exceptional returnee was able to gain employment in the textile factory owing to literacy skills he had gained in the resettlement.

Returnees and ex-soldiers have also been seen to be returning to hillside areas within the state forest from which they were removed and even of encroaching further into the forest. Data was obtained from 3 Kebele Administration officials and a field visit was made to a fourth. In Bekimos KA on the eastern side of the mountain KA officials claim that there are no people living or cultivating within the forest boundary, whereas in Metene KA the officials claim that there are two persons with houses in the forest. In Atari Mesk, a KA on the northern side of the mountain officials gave the figure of 11 households out of whom 7 were former settlers. It may be that since the information was officially requested, the numbers have been underestimated. Visits to the southern part of the mountain by members of our team in July 1999 and in February 2000 and March 2001 suggest that there may be more 'illegal' settlement there.

Appropriation and resistance of local institutions

The relations between the state and the communities have been marked by the attempt of successive governments to coopt local leaders and institutions. We have seen how already in imperial times the state sought to impose its control on the forest especially through the demarcation and plantation. Local elders were involved in the demarcation process that resulted in much conflict. However, in the transition between the imperial and the Derg rule peasant resistance became stronger. There was also the case of an official providing a bull to be sacrificed by spiritual leaders.

During the Derg period the penetration of the state to the local level through the formation of Peasant Associations enabled the state to impose its will to a greater degree. It seems that the only involvement of indigenous institutions was when culprits responsible for wood cutting could not be found. Since the number of guards was limited (65) each of whom had to patrol large areas (90 ha) and illegal cutting often occurred at night the chances of a guard catching the culprit were limited. Then the state officials expected local institutions to play a role. This included the *qire dagna*, the burial association leader who was expected to bring members together for an oath taking ceremony *mehalla*, and people had

to walk over the *bele* stick of a sheik swearing they were not involved. If caught a culprit could be excommunicated through ostracism (*semona*). Some grave disputes could be taken to the *Abegar* spiritual leaders who are called *dem adraqi* “blood-dryers” to be solved by their ‘court’ (*berekebot, yifetta*) but this does not seem to have been common for resource management issues.

During the period of transition in addition to infringements and tree cutting by farmers, returnees, soldiers and later ex-soldiers, the forest guards whose salaries were suspended themselves were accused of involvement in tree cutting. With the reassertion of control by the Ministry of Agriculture guards began their work once again. Culprits could be taken to court by the MoA and could be imprisoned for 3 months plus 300 *birr* convertible into time in prison for tree cutting and could be fined 5 to 10 *birr* if caught grazing cattle, and had their sickles and ropes confiscated if found cutting grass.

Perhaps the most interesting example of an attempt to involve local institutions in forest management occurred just after the transition in July 1991. In connection with a “international tree day” Ministry of Agriculture officials invited religious leaders including the powerful Muslim leader of the shrine at Geta, and a Christian monk by the name Aba Mefqere-seb to join them on an outing on Mount Yegof where sacrifices were made and prayers for rain and forest conservation. A video of the whole outing was produced.²² Like the case mentioned earlier during the transition from imperial to Derg rule, this suggests that it is at the time when state authority is weakest that an attempt to coopt the authority of local religious leaders.

Concluding comments

The Yegof case provides us with some insights pertinent to the main concerns of the MARENA/ Inform-Ethiopia research project with regard to our understanding of post conflict situations, the consequences of displacement, the nature of resource management institutions, the notions of community and relations between communities and external agents.

²² However, a similar event took place in 2000.

Post-conflict situations

The study has suggested that periods of transition are characterised by a power vacuum resulting in a loss of state authority and challenges to State interventionism and control of Renewable Natural Resources. Both the transition period between the imperial and Derg governments and the transition between the Derg and EPRDF rule were moments when peasant resistance against the state forest became pronounced. Claims which had been suppressed came to the fore.

In the Ethiopian context it is also important to understand the linkage between the context of famine and state interventionism in NRM.²³ It was immediately after the 1972-3 famine and after the 1984-5 famine that state intervention reached its climax, because of government concern to be purposive. In 1973 the large-scale plantation raised the dormant issue of where the state forest boundary was, where the boundary between taxed and common land was, and what rights local people had. In 1984 the RMI intervention was used to dislocate and resettle peasants living on the mountain to and relocated them in villagisation and resettlement schemes and in producers cooperatives.

In terms of the state forest the two transitions were marked in 1973 by peasants showing their opposition by uprooting seedlings and attempting to stop plantation work, and in late 1990s by large-scale deforestation and renewed 'encroachment' of settlement and even farming in the forest area, partly by settler returnees and ex-soldiers. This has demonstrated that no real sense of local responsibility for managing the state forest had been generated and that the forest was only 'protected' through the forceful but generally ineffective guarding by the government.

The study also suggests that the end of the conflict does not necessarily mean that issues become resolved. There is often 'fall-out' from the end of the conflict which may even generate new tensions and conflicts. Thus the fall of the Derg coincided with and precipitated the return of large numbers of settlers and of former soldiers. The issues of moving from relief to sustainable livelihoods for the settlers and ex-soldiers became salient issues in the post conflict period in the early 1990s. Similar problems were faced with the Eritrean war as a result of refugees and demobilisation of soldiers. Settlers and ex-soldiers were in some senses 'uprooted' and disconnected from existing institutions, to

²³ See MARENA Briefing ET 02 *An overview of natural resource management under the Derg.*

whom they did not have allegiances. In the face of lack of access to land and livestock many resorted to cutting trees and selling fuel wood and charcoal with serious environmental consequences.

Consequences of return from displacement

The Yegof study shows that returnees from resettlement were among the most dispossessed and marginalised groups. On return they found that their former land holdings had been redistributed and they most did not have the capital to purchase livestock. Many received minimal assistance from relatives, and most only a plot for a house and sometimes a small plot of land of 20 x 30 metres. Survival options for them once food aid stopped included selling wood and charcoal, wage-labour and sharecropping on unfavourable terms.

Those returned earlier fared somewhat better than those who returned later, in part because they have had more time to find ways of establishing themselves. In areas where redistribution of land took place returnees who came before the redistributions fared best. Some even obtained positions of authority in Kebele Administrations since they were not considered tainted by involvement in the Derg bureaucracy.

Nonetheless almost a decade after they have returned especially in areas where redistributions did not take place large numbers of returnees are landless or have holdings those are too small to enable them to achieve self-reliance. Though formers settlers have been among those arguing for land redistribution, their voice does not seem to have counted, since whether redistribution occurred seems to have been related to average land-holding sizes and the politics of perceived differentiation resulting from the policies of the previous regimes.

Returnees remain a marginalised category with limited integration in local institutions. Their landlessness and powerlessness have forced them to become some of the poorest who rely on cutting wood for sale, and encroaching on the state forest. However, it should be stressed that they are not the only ones, that other farmers and forest guards have also been accused, and that they are simply agents for the main pressure on forest resources which comes from urban interests for fuel, construction and furniture.

Understanding institutions

The study suggests that local indigenous institutions have had very limited roles in NRM, particularly in forestry. Peasant concerns are more focused on grazing areas and forests, especially those established through state intervention are often seen as a threat to pasture resources. Moreover, the role of local institutions has been mainly one of conflict resolution and mediation of community and State interests. The history of forest management has been characterised by state imposition and resistance by local communities to limitations on their use of forestland, particularly for grazing. At times when the state is not able to impose its will as during transition periods local people have been able to assert their rights, but the state eventually reimposes its will.

The State has at times attempted to coopt local institutions to locate and hand over culprits of tree cutting for deeds which occur without witnesses, and to make use of spiritual leaders to promote conservation but with limited success. This is arguably since their involvement with intrusive state measures tarnishes their legitimacy, and they seek minimal involvement with state structures.

State conservation measures at a local level have been used by leaders in positions of authority to victimise their rivals and enemies and benefit their relatives and allies making it clear that interventions have heightened divisions within differentiated communities, especially over the questions of resettlement, villagisation, land reallocation and returnees.

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Developing Institutions in Post-conflict Situations: Preliminary Research Findings from Borana, Ethiopia

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Introduction: development and theoretical context

This paper presents the findings of research into the role of institutions in fostering community-based renewable natural resource management in post-conflict societies. The multiple terms in this research objective are significant: they are a consequence of the way in which, in real everyday situations, many different aspects of society and development are contingent on each other. Instead of studying each of these aspects in isolation, this research attempts to understand the way in which the different conditions and processes overlap, interact, and determine people's lives. This approach is particularly necessary in the context of attempts to work with communities and their environments, in post-conflict situations, in which communities may have experienced disruption of various kinds.

This research forms part of a DFID-funded project comparing the institutional dimension of community-based natural resource management in post-conflict Ethiopia and Mozambique. The part presented here focuses on the case of Borana, a mainly pastoralist area in southern Ethiopia. The local people there depend heavily on the local renewable natural resources of grazing land, forests and water. It is an area which has experienced intermittent conflict in the past, and a recent return of refugees.

The broad rationale for the research is that institutions are the key to successful, sustainable and appropriate development. They provide a tool through which the joint development goals of improved environments and human well-being can be achieved. But there is a need for a greater understanding of the nature of institutions and the role they can play in the construction of sustainable livelihoods and development. Development agents need to know better how to go about 'doing development' using institutions.

There are two more specific reasons for the focus on post-conflict areas: The first is that these areas are considered to be in particular need of development assistance. The people are thought to be vulnerable

because of conflict or displacement, and without assistance, it is possible that tensions could quickly escalate and conflict could resume. This is particularly the case in pastoral areas; Scoones summarises the situation:

Conflict and civil strife dominate many pastoral areas today at great social cost... Such costs are borne most heavily by the residents of the pastoral areas, but also by national governments and the international community, who in a variety of ways bear the costs of insecurity and famine. Without a recognition of the problems of pastoral areas and support for development needs, problems of insecurity are likely to increase (Scoones, 1994: 3-4).

Development agents need to rise to the challenge of working in the conflict and post-conflict situations, to mitigate the immediate impacts of disruption and to assist people to reconstruct their livelihoods. The second reason for considering post-conflict areas is that in situations where the institutions governing people-environment relations are under duress, processes can be seen in action more clearly, and thus can elicit insights which improve our understanding of institutions more generally.

The research is situated therefore at the interface between three contexts of work in development studies. As it is concerned with the interaction between these principles and contexts, it is first important to discuss what is meant by each one in more detail. In the following I briefly examine what is understood by i) institutions; ii) conflict and post-conflict societies, and; iii) participation and community-based development.

Theorising institutions

It has long been accepted that development has not just experienced difficulties because of technical problems, or a lack of know-how, but because of a lack of institutional capacity, and problems of organising who should participate in, contribute to, and benefit from, development projects (Crewe and Harrison, 1998; Chambers, 1997). The term social capital has been coined in order to draw attention to the importance of local organisational capacity, and has been portrayed as the missing link in development (Hariss, 1997). More recently, development thinkers have pointed to the need to understand the way in which institutions at different levels inter-link and impact on each other (Leach, *et al.* 1997; 1999); and in the current climate of decentralisation, with an increased awareness of the role played by local level institutions, and their inter-

relations with regional and national institutions, this has become even more important.

Institutions are organisations, but they also include the rules and regulations that determine access to natural resources. They define the access that a group has to natural resources, and they also define who has rights within that group. Institutions determine who makes use of which resources. Individuals, groups and organisations are not all situated equally in relation to resource use, and institutions define their differentiated access and use. Above all, therefore, institutions are about power. They define who is using the resource (and who is not) and the extent of that use. Throughout Africa for example, men have more institutionalised rights (formal and informal) to natural resources, particularly land, than women.

In addition, institutions define the way in which the resource is used. Institutions are established practices, for example environmental management practices. Thus, institutions may be formal or informal. For example, in Ethiopia, formal institutions could include state-organised Peasants' Associations and Service Cooperatives, and state legislature determining access to land and water (and here I include the state-drawn boundaries to different areas). They are institutions backed up by official legislature. Informal institutions include kin networks, local cultural administrative structures (such as the Borana 'traditional' organisation that is described below), customary rights to resources, and indigenous practices of grazing and use of forests. Research (such as that of Richards, (1985); Fairhead (1992); Ostrom (1990); Chambers (1997); Warren *et al.* (1995); and others) have argued conclusively that informal institutions, particularly the body of indigenous practice and rights and regulations governing those practices, represent good environmental practice. They should not be given any less priority in development planning and practice than formal institutions.

Institutions are potential powerful tools of development because they are multifaceted, and because they act on both society and the environment. They change with society and also in response to changes in the environment. But the breadth, fluidity and power of institutions makes them difficult to understand. Other authors have struggled with this, and have developed complex and broad definitions of institutions. This research has employed the definitions and understandings from the 'entitlements framework' developed by Leach *et al.* (1997; 1999), and also drawn on insights from work on institutions and people-environment relations in a western or global context. For example, there is O'Riordan and Jordan's use of institution:

The notion of institution applies both to structures of power and relationships as made manifest by organisations with leaders, members or clients, resources and knowledge; and also socialised ways of looking at the world as shaped by communication, information transfer, and the pattern of status and association ... [T]he notion of institution extends beyond organizational form, rules and relationships into more fundamental social and political factors that determine how people think, behave and devise rules through which they expect everyone else to play (1996:65).

Institutions are 'patterns of routinized behaviour' (O'Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 68) or 'regularised patterns of behaviour' (Leach *et al.* 1997). Institutions are not immutable: they shape behaviour, but are also shaped by the actions of individuals and groups. The institutions into which a person is born and through which he or she lives and understands the world constitute that person, but at the same time the person is able to work and change the nature of these institutions (Leach *et al.* 1997). Using Lukes' conceptualisation of power (Lukes 1986), institutions are both constraining and enabling structures; limiting, but also making possible different forms of social action and organisation.

The mechanics of institutions as structures of power can be examined more closely to illustrate how they are applicable to a context which is changing rapidly, such as a conflict or post-conflict situation. Here, institutions are not seen as existing in any a priori form, but as forms of discourse which have become institutionalised. There are discourses for each 'realm of social action', but there will also be different discourses held by different (and often competing) social groups, as these different groups relate differently to different discourses. Social actors do not exist outside of discourses, but it is through discourses that they practice and experience reality. Thus the different groups which Leach *et al.* (1997) describe as cross-cutting any 'community' differentiated by their different culture, racial, gender, class or regional identities and interests are likely to have different discourses, though some may be muted (Blaikie, 1995).

It is through the domination of different discourses and the control of these different discourses that social groups can become dominant over others - and legitimate their desired use of different resources. Applying this framework to institutions shows that there are multiple institutions overlapping and at work in any one setting. The way in which the institutions interact depends on their relative dominance, which varies from place to place, and also over time.

The conflict and post-conflict context

These second context of the research is that of conflict and post-conflict societies. In the developing world, and particularly in Africa, many societies are experiencing, or recovering from, conflict of one kind or another. Conflict used to be viewed by development agents and governments alike as a temporary anomaly, and it was thought sufficient to supply relief to a society until the perceived temporary emergency was over. After this time, development projects could be resumed. As conflicts have become more protracted in developing countries this thinking has been revised. The conflict and post-conflict situations are no longer simply seen as temporary emergencies needing short-term relief assistance. Many development groups have started programmes such as the 'war-torn societies project' (UNRISD), in order to give more long-term development assistance in times of conflict. Academic institutions have also responded to this new context: the number of Master's Programmes in conflict resolution has increased, and many development agencies are beginning to train their staff in conflict resolution skills (albeit for use on a small-scale). For development studies, conflict has put itself firmly on the agenda.

Related to this is the work on post-conflict reconstruction. Again in recent years, the approaches to dealing with refugees and understanding the social and environmental impacts of displacement have become more sophisticated, partly in response to the failure of more traditional and simplistic approaches. Conflict and post-conflict are stages separated in the mind for classificatory purposes, but on the ground they are linked. Post-conflict only exists by definition in relation to conflict, and the problems associated with a post-conflict situation are generally related to the experiences and conditions resulting from that conflict (displacement, trauma, fragmented societies, and so on). In a post-conflict situation, if the problems resulting from the conflict are not overcome, then the situation can easily deteriorate and return to a conflict situation.

The premise of this research is that conflict changes the institutional relations between people and the environment, and this change is usually, but not exclusively, negative. Displacement by war and conflict-related social transformations can disrupt established natural resource management patterns. They may be directly overridden by force: forests burnt, grazing lands and farms strafed or bombed, wells poisoned. Forests may be cut for building or fuelwood to meet the needs of the protagonists of war. Conflict can also lead to a power vacuum on the ground: enforcement of the regulations and rules controlling the use of resources

enclosure is still shrouded with confusion. SOS-Sahel viewed the approval by the government of a 'community management plan' produced by *kire*-based user-rights groups for enclosed sites as recognition of the *kire*. This is clear in the effort SOS-Sahel put into publicising their success in institutionalising a non-state institution in NRM (see for example: Tenna 1998; Pratten 1997).

The view from Meket *Wereda* Administrative Council, on the other, hand, is quite different. Thus, the administration's recognition and agreement to grant user-rights to *kire*-based area closure was vested to the people who were holders of user rights, not to the institution of the *kire*. In the words of an ex-Chairman of the Administrative Council:

During the initiation of the programme SOS-Sahel's insisted on recognising the *kire* as a NRM institution. Our position was clear. We told them [i.e., SOS-Sahel] that it was the KA Council - as a local government structure recognised by the Constitution - that should continue serving its development functions in decision-making related to the administration, use and management of natural resources within its area jurisdiction. If the KA Council wished to include the *kires* as partners in (development) work, it could; we did not however, recognise the *kire* as a separate NRM institution.

For government politicians, administrators and agricultural experts from *Wereda* to regional levels, SOS-Sahel's initiative in *kire* based user-rights groups is seen mainly as a 'joint forest management' (JFM) scheme in which both the government and the locals work together in NRM. The *kire* is seen as one partner, rather than as an autonomous institution, in implementing a form of joint management that should be done within broader attempts to achieve decentralised NRM activities. In contrast to what is often depicted by SOS-Sahel, the *kire* in no case represents a shift in attitude by the government to decentralise management to informal institutions.

In this respect, the other relevant question may be what is the nature of legitimacy of the *kire* as understood by local people themselves in terms of its power and authority, co-operation and conflict that govern decision making?

SOS-Sahel viewed the *kire* as a legitimate and accountable institution at the local level. Such a view once again was influenced by SOS-Sahel experience in working with the *kires* during the 1995 seed distribution. One positive achievement from this programme was said to be the diminishing rate of defaulters (Pratten 1997). This seemed to have been seen by SOS-Sahel as a demonstration of the power of the *kire* by-laws in enforcing community collective action decisions and in exerting pressure

on members which was believed to be inherent feature of its tradition of authority. In this respect, one form of these social rules, *imbidadie*, seemed to have also contributed to SOS-Sahel's privileged view on the *kire*⁹. *Imbidadie* is a form of social sanction or social exclusion in *kire* by-laws imposed on individual members for transgressing or committing serious offences.

The point, however, is that the power and authority of the *kire* and its rules of social sanction to enforce collective action and decision should be addressed through examination of their relevance in specific contexts and situations. It is, for example, important to understand what kinds of collective action *kire* members are committed to or obliged to commit, and why.

It is true that local people see the *kire* as a powerful institution and its by-laws are also highly respected. But, this legitimacy accorded to the *kire* and the power of its by-laws and rules of social sanction is exercised mainly in the sphere of social/cultural organisation in which it was originally designed to serve. The importance attached to the *kire* is due to the nature of its function - the crisis of death. In such a situation the *kire* provides a decent burial for members and the provision of expenses to the deceased families. Failure to attend the burial ceremony, or to make the necessary contribution, are situations when *kire* by-laws would be typically activated. Even here the observable collective action of *kire* members in times of death is related to reciprocal rights members could claim to the provision of support on similar occasions rather than a symbol of community collective action.

An important, but often unnoticed, aspect of the *kire* is also its role as a community safety net in the organisation of production. Besides its function as a burial association, the *kire* also serves as an occasional communal community insurance institution, to which each individual farmer can resort whenever he/she faces a farming problem due to the death of livestock. Again, the presence of collective action of *kire* members in such circumstances is much less a leap to an idealized unity, than a tacit mutual acceptance of practical circumstances. Farming among the rural population in Meket, as well as in many highland areas of northern Ethiopia, is by and large undertaken either on steep hills or deep gorges. The death of plough-oxen in the study area is a common outcome of the rugged topography on which most of the ploughing takes place. Presumably, therefore, the role of the *kire* as a communal pooling of oxen is mainly related to the environmental aspect of the organization

⁹ Interview with SOS-Sahel-Meket PLUPI Officer

of production, of the unavoidable environmental risk of losing the main 'engines of agriculture' (Holt and Lawrence 1993: 40). Outside this, one cannot look upon the property of members of the *kire* as a pool of assets where the members have the right to claim material help from another.

In the context of natural resource governance, however, the locals do not see the *kire* as institution with legitimacy. An attempt to interpret the *kire's* lack of legitimacy in exercising authority and control over natural resources, such as hillside enclosures, primarily as a result of the state's entrenchment against customary institutions may be misleading. First, the *kire* has been also neither a 'customary' tenurial nor a 'traditional' NRM institution. Second, when SOS-Sahel decided to transform the *kire* from its traditional role to NRM, not much emphasis was placed on strengthening their capacity in tandem with their new role.

On the contrary, the dualistic nature of SOS-Sahel's intervention at the local level itself seemed to contribute to the weak position of the *kire* in NRM. As has been already stated, user rights based area closures have been established, of which the *kire* is expected to take the management responsibility. In the same vein, we have PLUPI, which is designed and carried out within the framework of government structures. As a result, village level land use committees known as Village Development Committees (VDCs) have been established in different villages (*gots*) and their accountability is to the *Kebele* Land Use Committee (KLUC), and through this to the *Wereda* Rural Development Committee (RDC). The VDCs are also responsible for all aspects of land management at the village level. Despite claims to integrate the PLUPI and the *kire* approaches, the relationship between these formal and informal local level organisational structures in practice does not seem to be well defined.

In practice, the *kire* seems to rest on an unclear mandate and legitimacy. Most importantly, they have no autonomous status. An important indicator of the contribution of the *kire* as an effective NRM structure may be its power and influence in resource-related conflicts. In this respect, the enforcement of the *kire* by-laws is weak since few conflicts that occurred within *kire*-based hillside enclosures have been resolved endogenously. The by-laws to regulate use and manage enclosed areas, or to resolve conflicts when they appear, are by and large formulated and regulated in line with the formal rules of the government. This is partly because the traditional by-laws of the *kire* have never been related to property issues. In practice also, the local population consider the KA - the local government structure - as the legitimate agent in the

exercise of control and power through which the rules to govern the use and management of enclosed areas would be enforced.

The differential impact of kire-based hillside enclosures

SOS-Sahel's initiative to reinforce self-governing and informal institutions may be seen as a potential step forward with respect to local level resource management. However, *kire*-based user-rights and enclosure have raised complicated issues in the way SOS-Sahel, the government, and local resource users themselves interact.

As has been highlighted above, one problem of the approach has been its idealised vision of the *kire* as a representative and homogenous group of people. In so doing, the approach neglects social, economic and cultural differences within the community. The other is the apparent mismatch between the *kire* and PLUPI which, in turn, has led to a different articulation of the community. As has already been mentioned, the *kire* is not a *got* or village-level institution. The third limitation of SOS-Sahel's *kire*-based enclosure has been a failure to recognise, or to practically resolve, the discrepancies apparent in the boundaries of the *kire*, PLUPI and the physical boundaries of 'communal' hillside areas. Much of SOS-Sahel's activity in environmental rehabilitation focuses in the promotion of the PLUPI approach, which in turn focuses exclusively on the 'village' level. Hence, the approach does not take into account the fact that both the *kire* and local resource users operate within a much broader and more complex context than that of a single village. There are many supra-community factors such as secondary or tertiary rights of access in a single *kire*-based enclosure shared by several communities. This is a fact that SOS-Sahel does not seem to recognise. This in many cases has led to the generation of intra-and-inter-community conflicts during and after the implementation of *kire*-based enclosures.

The 'community management plan' is illustrative of this. On *kire*-based enclosures, a 'Community Woodlot Management Plan' has to be developed, and approved by the *Wereda* Administration. Marked poles with bright red and white stripes, locally known as *jallo* or *ya-salam meleket*, are planted to see if there are any disagreeing groups. As we have seen, the management plan of *kire* user rights is seen by government officials and agricultural experts primarily as a technical issue. For different resource users at the community level, the management plan, particularly its approval by the government had a different signal. It was perceived as a legal property right document. The *kire*-based area closures have often led to inter-and intra-community conflicts, or have

exacerbated latent conflicts particularly in areas where the issue of land is highly contested.

The following case may illustrate this. The conflict, though triggered by the management plan, went beyond it to include social, institutional and land tenure issues. The conflict revealed that the political, social and tenure implications of planting trees were all at stake. The outcome of the conflict was determined by power relationships between the two social groups involved.

The story happened in 020 KA in the communities of Jirelie and Megenagna. While households in Jirelie are exclusively Christian, those in Megenagna are largely Muslim. Despite being some distance apart, one *kire* covers both *gots*.

The conflict happened in 1997, when the SOS-Sahel's extension worker, the government development agent, the VDC Chairman, and two KA representatives decided to enclose Maryam Wuha as a community woodlot. This area was located between the up-stream *got* of Jirelie, and the down-stream *got* of Megenagna. Specific problems emerged in Maryam-Wuha over who signed locally to approve the enclosure. Jirelie villagers accused the VDC Chairman of signing the Community Woodlot Management Plan by falsely claiming to be leader of the *kire*. They subjected him to an *imbedaddie*. Yet, the VDC Chairman claimed he signed in this capacity, not on behalf of the *kire*. Within its boundaries the village is expected to be in charge of the management of land, water, trees and pastures.

Major problems were caused because the scope of the *kire* organisation was misunderstood. SOS-Sahel has specifically targeted the *kires* because of their assumption that the *kire* is a *got* or village-level institution. In fact, it is primarily a Christian institution, based on a parish church (*dabir*). In some cases, a *dabir* can cover more than one *got*. In the case of Megenagna and Jirelie, it is the *Christians* in these two villages that belong to the same *kire*, as the church covers both villages. They mobilised the *kire* to help enclose the uncontested area in Jirelie. However, they viewed the enclosure of Maryam-Wuha as having been done without the authority of the *kire*.

In practice, the Muslims in Megenagna have their own self-help religious association, known as a *tertim*. They share this *tertim* with fellow Muslims in Waqeta, another KA. They were also able to gain the support of the powerful VDC Chairman in their efforts to enclose Maryam-Wuha.

Land tenure conflicts over the enclosed area underlie a good part of the conflict that emerged. These were not, however, considered by

extension agents. Villagers in Jirelie opposed the enclosure viewing it as an illegal encroachment into an area to which they had been entitled. The immediate resistance came from individual farmers in Jirelie who live adjacent to the contested woodlot and who saw the enclosure as a direct threat to their traditional access rights to grazing land.

One factor that led the Christians and Muslims to come into conflict over Maryam Wuha community woodlot was a highly valued agricultural area known as Adbawuha. The contested area, located between Jirelie and Meganagna villages, is seen by many farmers as the best quality land anywhere in the KA. It is a wetter and is considered more stable and productive in times of severe drought.

The contested woodlot is located next to Adbawuha. Beneath the conflict was the fear of up-stream Christians that the enclosed woodlot would in the future serve as a natural boundary between them and the down-stream Muslims. If there were to be another redistribution, it would mean, therefore, the take-over of their land ownership rights over Adbawuha by the Muslims in Megenagna. The Christians therefore felt that it had to be resisted. The tree seedlings planted by Megenagna villagers in 1997 are now either dry or have been up-rooted; and the enclosure has now become almost an open access area.

Local land tenure history, social and cultural differences, in whatever form they may be invoked, appear to have roles in the ways Christian and Muslim households interact over land and other natural resources. This is not, however, to say that land tenure conflicts between the two social groups were caused by, and hence followed religious lines. They are mainly caused by pressures on and competition over local natural resources, particularly land.

The Christians often refer to *rist*, a pre-*Derg* tenure system based on descent from a hereditary ancestor, as an ideological instrument corroborating how the natural resources particularly belonged to them. The Muslims who were prevented from owning land and who specialised in weaving were considered as special categories. They had maintained temporary access rights over land either through land contact arrangement (*megezo*) or through grants from local landlords (*balabats*) for their services, and had to pay one third of their agricultural produce to the landlords.

The *Derg's* 1975 Land Reform and its later redistribution enabled the minority Moslems to gain equal rights in land. Some of them were even able to get access to the most sought-after fertile land in Adbawuha. Consequently, Christian households who had seen their plots in the area taken away and given to the Muslims were and are still resentful of the

Derg. The following statement by an old Christian woman may explain this:

Before the *Derg*, the Muslims had owned no land. They used to get land by arranging *megazo* [sharecropping/land rent] with the Amhara [In this particular context the term Amhara means a Christian]. By then land was not a problem as it is these days. They were also very few. Now they have multiplied and expanded. The *Derg* made them equal. It gave them the land, which had been ours. They are now the *balabats* [landlords].

Government allocation and the 'individualisation' of communal lands: a case from Tehuledere

In the years between 1998-2001, an estimated 9,600 hectares of communal land has been allocated to 55,000 households in the Amhara region. Out of these, only 857 hectares are reported to have been planted. In Tehuledere *Wereda* the regulation was executed in only eight KAs out of twenty. Hence, an estimated 308,974 hectares of such land has been distributed to 4,116 households. Table 1 shows the distribution of *ye-wel meret* in Tehuledere.

Table 1: Redistributed communal land and number of beneficiaries in eight KAs in Tehuledere, South Wollo

Name of KA	Communal land redistributed (ha)	Number of beneficiaries	Area planted (ha)	Area already reforested & held as community forest (ha)
Godogoadit	73.8	820	30.6	43.2
Wahelo	294	294	36.7	-
Qete	47.1	377	47.1	30
Welde-Lulo	59.0	324	29.0	-
Gobeya	25.8	51	5.1	20.7
Ardibo	115.6	963	115.6	-
Pasomile	38.8	439	27.0	11.8
Hara	16.10	828	16.10	-
Total	413.8	4116	308.	105.7

Source: Tehuledere *Wereda* Office of Agriculture, 2000

A number of practical problems surfaced during the implementation of the government regulation. One of these was in the definition and identification of areas, which are classified in the regulation as *ye-wel meret* or 'communal lands'. The issue is important in illuminating the persistent tension anchored in state-peasant interaction in the context of land tenure and NRM in particular and Ethiopian rural development in

general. It also highlights some theoretical questions on conventional assumptions about common property regimes and management.

Part of the problem in defining *ye-wel meret* was posed by the regulation itself. The Regional Regulation, under Article 1 defines *ye-wel meret* as: 'A marginal or hillside land/or an area within a ... (KA) that is neither owned by individuals as a private farmland, nor is used by the community as a grazing land. It refers to an area where community members in a KA discuss and decide to use the land for forestry, perennials and fodder production' (ANRS-BoA, 1998: 1). In this respect, the Constitution itself does not seem to provide support for the new regulation. In Article 40(3) of the Constitution it is stated: 'The right to ownership of rural and urban land; as well as of all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the public. Land is a common property of the Nations, Nationalities and the Peoples of Ethiopia' (FDRE 1995).

For district and KA level administrative officials, agricultural experts and the locals, the government definition of *ye-wel meret* was not clear. When commenting on the draft regulation, the *Wereda* Administrative Council, for instance, wrote: 'Much of the area, except the ones reforested and held by the KA as *mahbarat den* [community forests], has already been held by households as grazing land. The regulation is not clear whether or not community forests could also be included in *ye-wel meret* allocation'.

This lack of clarity in the government regulation caused confusion. There were varied and conflicting interpretations by lower level officials, agricultural experts and different categories of farmers as each of these attempted to define and identify areas that might or might not be allocated as *ye-wel meret*. A lack of recording of tenure regimes made it difficult to verify where and to which category of tenure and to whom resource regimes formerly belonged. Consequently, the process of identifying areas classified as *ye-wel meret* led to what Dessalegn has recently referred as a 'landscape of interpretation' (2001:71), but to a struggle over property rights, power and control *between* the state and the community, and between different categories of farmers *within* the community.

For agricultural experts, *ye-wel meret* refers to a physical landscape that has a slope of 30 percent or above. For the majority of the local population, *ye-wel meret* was often used to refer to community forests that had been reforested during the *Derg* through *limat* or development work. For them the areas referred to in the regulation as *ye-wel meret* were these areas which were until now were held by the KA, in other

words, by the state. During the process of implementation, the locals, particularly those who felt their rights to grazing areas were threatened by the new regulation, reacted to protect marginal areas outside community forests saying that they had been using them for animal grazing.

Among district and zonal level agricultural experts such action of local people, interpreted as the 'hiding of land' (*meret medebeg*), was reported to be one of the most important obstacles to the successful implementation of the government regulation. However, this action could better be seen as a 'soft opposition' or a 'strategy of disengagement' to a policy which might further erode their rights of access to and control of very scarce resources in the name of 'environmental rehabilitation'.

Beyond this, local people in Tehuledere seemed to have some success in re-claiming their 'lost rights' to resources, which the state, particularly the *Derg* had taken away from them and yet controlled as community forests. They were able to achieve this through a strategic exploitation of the ambiguities in the government regulation, and lower-level administrative officials' and agricultural workers' rush for quick execution of the government's policy package. What finally occurred was some way from the rules and objectives stated in the government *ye-wel meret* regulation. That is to say, most of the area allocated in Godegoadit (in Tehuledere) was not what the government had classified as a degraded hillside area, because it was physically in the poorest condition. Rather, this land had already been reforested under the *Derg's* environmental rehabilitation programme and then afterwards nominally held by the KA as '*ye-mahbarat den*', or 'community forest'. As shown in Table 1, over half of the area allocated as *ye-wel meret* in this KA was '*ye-mahbarat den*'

The allocation of community forests as *ye-wel meret* was not without problems, leading to the generation of both latent and new resource-related conflicts. Over the years, what has officially been classified as 'community forest' has undergone considerable changes, and there are now what Maxwell and Wiebe have called, 'tenure niches' (1998: 23), where different and overlapping property rights regimes have become a typical characteristic. This was created mainly by the government itself during the years following the post-*Derg* period.

The period following the end of conflict was characterised in many areas by continued disorder and the absence of a recognisable authority to enforce official rules on NRM. The institutional transition further compounded this problem by allocating land to returnees and demobilised soldiers inside community forests. It is

now common to find a farmer expressing the view that: 'land is mine, the trees and the grasses are of the KA'. There are tax-paying households with their residences, plots and even access rights to grazing within community forests. The KA Council has had also a *de jure*, if not *de facto* ownership over the trees and grasses inside such categories of areas. As the scarcity and demand for grazing has intensified, parts of community forests have also been transformed into *mastinfisha* or *chichisa*, i.e., a place of rest for animals, mainly by those households with livestock with no or small grazing land of their own. There is, therefore, another category of resource users and tenure, involving user rights on grazing land. Some land within community forests has been also held by individuals as *ye-gel den* (private forest).

Since 1998 the regional government has put into operation a Forestry Investment Guideline for private investors which included some tax incentives (SIDA-BoA 2000). Hence, in Tehuledere, perhaps in other Districts too, the *Wereda* Agricultural Office has given areas to individuals whom it thought to be 'enterprising farmers' capable of engaging in private forestry development. According to the Forestry Investment Guideline, areas to be granted were those 'which had never been developed or reforested either by the government or the community in mass mobilisation'. In this context, community forests were therefore not to be touched. What had actually happened, particularly in Godegoadit was, however, that previously enclosed and reforested areas, which until then were held as 'community forests' were handed over to individuals for private forestry investment, thus defying the government's guidelines. The local politics underpinning the allocation of community forests to individuals is complex, involving cases of corruption and 'capture'. It has brought about tension between the community and government agents.

What I want to emphasise here is that the allocation of areas to private investors has further complicated the nature and types of property rights regimes in community forests. The government *ye-wel meret* regulation was implemented without considering the overlapping and conflicting rights prevailing in community forests. What has been illustrated from the actual implementation of the *ye-wel meret* regulation is the absence of any institutional mechanism to resolve conflicts that emerged from the variety and complexity of arrangements. The whole process was carried out in a centralised manner over which the KA Council presided as principal executive agent.

The screening and prioritisation of beneficiary households, identification of sites as well as the practical on-the-spot allocation of land in each village was in the hands of the MB. The community elders had no greater role than observer status in the allocation.

The role of government Development Agents (DAs) was only technical, assisting the MB members in the identification of sites to be allocated. Some saw this as an activity that should be completed as fast as possible. Hence, much of their focus was on the immediate execution of the allocation process, leading to the neglect of long-term impacts.

In Tehuledere, and perhaps in other Districts both in North and South Wollo, landless households especially the young were prioritised. Hence, 'flat lands' suitable for farming were primarily allocated to such categories of farmers. In some cases, the government user rights regulation was also used for other ends by the government. For instance, in one KA in Tehuledere, families of recruited army members (*ye-zematch betesebotch*) were prioritised. In other KAs both in North and South Wollo, the stress has been on allocating land to whoever is capable of managing it.

Women, particularly female-headed households, generally appear to be losers in *ye-wel maret* allocation. The KA Chairman¹⁰ in Godegoadit noted: 'In principle, the KA has not attempted to make women heading households alone beneficiaries of *ye-wel maret* allocation. Many of them did apply. But, we persuaded them that it would be difficult for them to work on forestry development activities since they do not have the *aqem* [physical energy]'. The other categories of losers from the regulation were households who had previously used community forests for animal grazing.

Fieldwork in Tehuledere also revealed that the government *ye-wel meret* regulation has had very little relationship to what happens on the ground. This is most apparent in a gap between policy prescription on the rights and obligations of user-beneficiaries and actual practice. User-beneficiaries, including those whom the government assigned to oversee the effective implementation of the regulation, have used communal land for farming purposes. The practices of beneficiary households became less and less concerned with the initial content of the rules set out in the government regulation, and increasingly a mere enactment, a formal condition for gaining access to a farmland in communal areas.

¹⁰ Interviewed on 2 December 1999 in Godegoadit.

Conclusion

Through a comparative discussion of case materials in Meket and Tehuledere, this paper has attempted to understand whether or not community or individual based user rights provide the rural population with greater security of tenure and greater control over and management of communal areas. In this respect the paper has argued that although the two approaches are innovative and hence potential steps forward, the effects of the two approaches in practice have been limited.

In the case of SOS-Sahel the simplified view of the *kire* as representative of a homogenous population fails to understand social and economic differentiation, and deep-seated land tenure and social conflicts among resource users. In this respect, the provision of user-rights to a single *kire* or to a single village appeared to exclude many secondary or tertiary users of these resources.

The 'individualisation' of communal areas allocation by the government, on the other hand, appeared to be complicated by other political and administrative concerns about land redistribution, particularly in areas that had been liberated from the *Derg* before 1991, rather than by natural resource management concerns *per se*. Therefore, practical difficulties remain between conservation and land redistribution. The prioritisation of households without land in communal areas allocation alone is a step to nowhere in addressing the wish of beneficiary farmers for more agricultural land or as incentives for conservation.

The other concern of the paper was to demonstrate the differential effects of these two approaches on households' and communities' relationships over access and use of common property resources, and their implications for NRM. In this regard, it is argued that although the two user-rights approaches do not, *per se* lead to new social and land tenure conflicts, they have tended to exacerbate existing or latent conflicts. SOS-Sahel's view of the *kire* as representative of a homogeneous population, and the government's prioritisation of the landless, have both failed to understand the nature of social and economic differentiation. This has led therefore to the exclusion of many previous users from these resources.

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Resource Management Institutions in Post-conflict Situations: Lessons from Yegof State Forest, South Wello Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia¹

Alula Pankhurst

“From above there was the forest development, from below was the town, and in between Mr Drought”². Quoted in Pankhurst (1989:164; 1992:69).

“The forest from above and the town from below are pressing hard on us” Quoted in Bahru (1998: 87)

The case of Yegof Mountain, situated West of Kombolcha town in South Wello Zone, provides an interesting example of the key issues with which this research project has been concerned: the questions of understanding the implications of conflict, post conflict and transition for Natural Resource Management (NRM); the effects of migration, displacement and return, and the issue of community and state institutions responsible for NRM.

In this paper I begin by considering issues relating to narratives of deforestation, moving from global perspectives to the Ethiopian case and

¹ The findings of this paper are derived from reviewing the literature and short field trips in July 1999, February 2000 and March 2001. Interviews were carried out mainly in Amharic and some of the original expressions quoted have been transliterated in the notes. I should like to thank Dr Yeraswork Admassie, Chairman Sociology Department, Addis Ababa University and Mekonen Aklog of the Dessie Zurya Forestry Department who accompanied him during a field trip; Professor Bahru from Addis Ababa University History Department who gave access to important documents, Ato Dessalegn Rahmato of the Forum for Social Studies for his constant help with logistics and useful comments; Marc Wilks and the staff of the Istituto Agronomico d’Oltremare of Florence who e-mailed scanned images of photographs taken during the Italian Occupation; participants of the Addis Ababa workshop who made comments on an earlier oral presentation, and members of the MARENA team who gave constructive comments on the drafts including Dr Richard Black, Dr Elizabeth Harrison, Dr Elizabeth Watson, and Tarekegn Yibabie.

² The Amharic expression was: *kelay limatu, ketach fabrikaw, mehal Ato Dirq.*

Wello in particular. The rest of the paper focuses on Yegof. The first part considers the imperial period and growing state interest in the forest leading to peasant resistance, which reached a climax at the period of the transition from imperial to military rule. The second part considers the Derg period and in particular the context of famine and resettlement, and the dynamics of simultaneous voluntary and forced displacement. The third section focuses on the transition between the Derg and Ethiopian peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) rule, and the question of displaced returnees.

Finally, I review the question of appropriation of local institutions by the state and resistance by those institutions to this process. I conclude with remarks on the findings of the paper regarding the consequences for NRM in post-conflict situations, return from displacement, and the nature of local institutions.

Competing global narratives of deforestation

The dominant global paradigm of alarming deforestation in which local people are seen as destroying forests has been challenged by academics, notably at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex. Through careful historical research, particularly in West Africa, Fairhead and Leach (1996, 1998) have shown evidence of appropriate management of the natural environment by farmers and of reforestation rather than deforestation.

This perspective has led to the search for local 'traditional' institutions managing natural resources, and a new discourse has emerged tending to suggest that traditional resource management institutions existed in harmony with nature, managed by homogenous communities. However, on the ground local organisations for resource management are often not clearly visible, although institutions in the form of rules of inclusion and exclusion are quite common (Uphoff 1996). This has led to the assumption that previously existing organisations and institutions came under pressure from, and were destroyed by, processes of incorporation by state and market forces. In practical terms some agencies and academics have therefore advocated reviving traditional resource management institutions as appropriate vehicles for NRM. As Leach *et al.* (1997:5) suggest, the emerging consensus makes simplistic assumptions that homogenous community level organisations regulate the use of undifferentiated environments and that the solution to environmental degradation is to "reconstitute community-based natural

resource management institutions". Hence a number of NGOs have sought to promote the revival of indigenous institutions (Hogg 1992).

There are two major reasons why such assumptions about Resource Management Institutions (RMIs) are problematic simplifications. Firstly, in cultural terms, resource management is not a discrete field with its own organisations separate from other social institutions; rather it is part and parcel of the rest of social organisation within which it is embedded. Hence resource management organisations often do not exist; or rather resource management is generally carried out by existing social institutions. To use Leach's formulation about not essentialising kinship in his study of an irrigation system (1961), it may be argued that resource management does not exist 'as a thing in itself', but rather is part of social, economic and political institutions and discourses.

Secondly, this view of traditional resource management institutions rests on a somewhat romantic, naïve image of indigenous institutions as pristine, isolated, pre-existing entities in harmony with nature (Adams 1996). It may therefore be more meaningful to consider how such institutions were transformed and may even have emerged in a context of wider political and economic processes, as the need for controlled resource usage becomes more salient with greater external threats and opportunities.

The argument that RMIs are often shaped by state and market interactions and discourses, and that they have sometimes even become defined and institutionalised in interaction with external interests may seem controversial. RMIs are clearly localised in rural areas and the link between people, place and environment seems obvious. Yet the interpretation and appropriation of nature is mediated by culture, and human relations with the environment are understood through cultural and symbolic constructions. Moreover, it has long been recognised that local cultures cannot be understood in isolation from regional, national and even global interactions. Therefore, the management of natural resources can be shaped by the way in which local cultures relate to wider processes, and may even emerge through this interaction.

The Ethiopian context and the case of Wello

In the Ethiopian context too, the dominant paradigm, which is still prevalent in policy discourses, assumes that the highlands were forested and have become increasingly deforested. The idea that forest cover in the country was reduced from 40 percent to just 3 percent became quoted

so often that it came to be considered as fact. This dogma has been challenged by a number of researchers, notably by McCann (1995).

In the case of Wello an environmental history research team has challenged these views (Crummey 1998, Bahru 1998 and Dessalegn 1998). Although the team does not speak with one voice and there are differences among them, the results of their studies suggest that the Northern highlands may never have been as forested as has been claimed and that deforestation may not be all that recent. Comparing photographs taken in 1937 under the Italian Occupation with recent ones in selected sites, Crummey shows that there was more forest cover in 1997 than there was 60 years earlier. However, as Crummey recognises, the photographer was seeking to impress the Italian colonial administration about the potential for colonial settlement and may therefore have taken pictures that show areas suitable for settlement. In addition it is important to note that Wello has had a history of considerable migration and warfare, which is likely to have taken its toll on forest resources.³

Dessalegn (1998) documents an indigenous tradition of environmental concern and conservation notably in the 1960s on the part of intellectuals, governors who promoted afforestation schemes, and individuals requesting state permission to act as wardens of forests in the environs in which they live. He also emphasises the importance of what he terms “religious forestry”: the role of Orthodox Christian and Muslim religion in protecting sites of plantations around churches (*Atsed*), holy springs (*tsebel*), burial grounds (*wijib* in the Muslim tradition), and sacred mountain summits.

Bahru documents the growth of state interest in forestry in imperial times from the 1950s when the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) forestry department began taking control of forests, especially after the proclamation of 1965. He notes that there were conflicts between the MoA and individuals who had been allocated land by the government (*balewileta*) and the nobility and royalty who also laid claims to land (*madbet* or *ristegult*).

Although not all the team members share this view, the findings of the Wello environmental history team have been presented as challenging the earlier paradigm of increasing deforestation, and clearly show that there has been reafforestation notably near settlements, both through peasant and state initiatives.

³ This point was made by Dessalegn at the workshop.

However, interpretations of these findings require caution, notably about traditional forest management. The reforestation is generally of eucalyptus by farmers on their own plots near settlements during the past half century, and by the massive government hillside reforestation programmes using food-for-work under the Derg. The failures of the latter approach which emphasised quantity over consideration of ownership and use rights have been amply documented (Yeraswork 2000). These so-called 'community forests' were in fact viewed by peasants as state forests. As Bahru concluded (1998:116): "The community forest is a good example of an idea that was probably brilliant in conception but flawed in implementation. Characteristically it stopped short of trusting the peasants themselves".

The majority of these 'community forests' were destroyed during the conflict and transition after the downfall of the Derg. Interestingly, the few cases where such forests were preserved by local communities seem to have been where they had been able to derive benefits for them, often with backing of Christian or Muslim religious leaders and institutions⁴. In the case of individual peasants, we are not dealing with traditional communal resource conservation, but rather with innovation in the past two or three generations by peasants becoming aware of the benefits of planting trees.

The "religious forestry" discussed by Dessalegn is an important aspect of preserving sacred groves. However, on the whole these are fairly limited and seem to rely on denying access to small sacred sites - except for ecclesiastical purposes - rather than managing forests for use by the community. Are we then faced with a situation where traditional management of forests existed and has been destroyed by state and/or market penetration, or did such management simply not exist in Wello?

The evidence from the Wello environmental history team would suggest that many areas of South Wello did not have forests by the time of the Italian occupation. However, to this day a few pockets of Juniper and *Podocarpus* forest exist. For instance, Anabe forest in South Wello has a venerated *Podocarpus*, called *Awliyaw*, reputed to be the largest and oldest tree in Ethiopia. But forest pockets such as Anabe seem to have survived more because they are isolated by rivers, cliffs and ravines, than because of traditional management, or because of the stationing of guards

⁴ See Thematic Briefing *Conservation and participation in community forests*

by the state.⁵ As Bahru's informants pointed out, guards do not have torches, and tend to patrol only nearby areas by day - whereas those cutting trees tend to operate by night.

In general peasant priorities in terms of NRM seem to be geared towards guaranteeing access to pasture for livestock, which are such a crucial part of the household economy. In many parts of Wello the interest in forest resources and their management does not seem to be prominent, and state interventionism which has been concerned with 'clothing the hillsides with green', has often been seen as a threat to pasture resources. Peasants have resisted plantations and impositions of state forests largely on the grounds that this restricts grazing areas. Although limited management of forest areas may exist, it would seem that these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

The case of Yegof

Historical origins

The historical origins of the forest, as Bahru⁶ points out, are somewhat nebulous, but informants made claims to early intervention by royal leaders (Bahru 1998:107-8). One of Bahru's informants alleged that the ramparts on the summit were the enclosure of Emperor Lebna Dengel's sixteenth century palace. Others claimed that Queen Werqit of Wello, an opponent of Emperor Tewodros in the mid nineteenth century, used the summit as her stronghold. One of Bahru's informants suggested that *Dejazmach* Birru Lubo probably under Werqit, prevented peasants even from grazing livestock on the mountain. Italian reports mentioned fines of up to fifty Maria Theresa thalers for unauthorised cuttings by guards posted there from the time of Emperor Menelik. These accounts fit with the theme illustrated in Bahru's paper of royal control over forests, and an antagonism between interests of the peasants and the state already in imperial times.

Bahru also stresses the connection between political and religious authority, noting that there were annual sacrifices (*wedaja*) of a red bull

⁵ The Wello environmental history team was unable to visit the forest owing to its inaccessibility and a road has only recently reached the forest (Pankhurst 2000)

⁶ I should like to thank Professor Bahru for kindly allowing our team members to make use of the photocopied files from the Ministry of Agriculture in his possession.

on the summit, which was believed to induce rainfall. In addition there are graves of holy men (*adbar*),⁷ on the slopes. The summit was apparently considered sacred. Bahru notes that informants referred to the forest using terms such as *Ifur* and *kebriya* attesting “to its protected and hallowed nature” (1998:108). According to one of our informants⁸ on the summit there is a large clay incense burner (*gach'a*) allegedly one metre high by which the sacrifices were performed.

The Italian period

The photographic comparison provided by Crummey shows that many areas of south Wello have a greater tree cover in 1997 than when Maugini photographed them in 1937. From the photographs of the environs of the Kombolcha plain seem to be fairly denuded with some bushes and euphorbia. Although Maugini took photographs from Kombolcha airport and one is in the direction of Yegof, it is too far away to ascertain the extent of forest cover. Despite the inconclusive photographic evidence Yegof can be assumed to be an exception which must have been forested. Crummey notes that the Forestry Commission for Italian East Africa which was looking for woods to use for bridges, housing and furniture was “extremely disappointed and note only two ‘real’ forests of consequence Yegof and Albuko” (1998:14). Moreover, As Bahru points out the Italians set up a saw mill to exploit Yegof, which must have meant that there was sufficient potential. One of his informants performed “a vivid re-enactment of the process by which big trunks were pulled by a dozen people and oxen and then made to roll sown straight to the site of the sawmill” (1998:109). One of our informants even claimed that the Italians planted a pole on top of the mountain and used a pulley system to bring logs down”.

We can therefore conclude that the Yegof forest must have been heavily exploited during Italian occupation, and presumably increasingly thereafter due to the growth of Kombolcha town. To this day the impact of the town can be clearly seen.

⁷ Referred to as *Hujub* by our informants, who mentioned in particular those of *Sheh Yassin Durih* and *Sheh Mejele* at Atirshign.

⁸ Mekonen Aklog of the Dessie Zuria Forestry Department.

The imperial period and the imposition of the state forest

Discussions with informants in Bekimos Kebele Administration (KA)⁹ on the eastern slope of Mount Yegof suggest that there was no clear traditional communal forest management in Yegof in imperial times. There were a number of officials acknowledged or established by the state,¹⁰ notably the local esquires (*Chiqa shum*), and some landlords paying tribute in kind and later tax in cash (*Gebbar*).¹¹ The state also assigned functionaries such as the *Abba bidra* who collected payments in kind and labour from peasants and the *Atbiya dagna* responsible for local judicial matters. However, though the later was supposed to have nominal jurisdiction over the forest area, in fact no rules for forest use or sanction against abuse seem to have been instituted apart from people having to ask permission to take wood for graves (*lahid*), and at times the authorities trying to prevent livestock grazing. Although the summit was considered sacred, and sacrifices were performed there, these seem to have been mainly about invocations for rain rather than forest management.

Yegof was declared a State forest in 1965 and some limited planting occurred prior to the 1974 revolution. Indeed Bahru notes that it is one of only two out of 39 state forests in Wello that had plantations before the revolution. Bahru also points out the 1972-3 drought raised official consciousness about the need for conservation. Afforestation began in earnest that year, particularly under the Governor, Dejazmach Mamo Seyoum, who visited the nursery regularly. Up to a thousand workers were said to have been employed on the Yegof site.

Conflicts between the state forest and the local people arose with the afforestation programmes, and the delimitation of the forest area. As the MoA files discussed by Bahru show, this involved establishing which areas were considered *beni*, or common land, which areas were considered *gebbar*, land on which taxes had been paid and what should be considered *mengist*, or state land. Local elders were involved in the process, which resulted in much conflict with local people.

From the perspective of understanding the implications of transition situations it is probably no coincidence that the conflict became most

⁹ This discussion was held with a group of elders who were requested to come and meet us on 1-02-2000.

¹⁰ For details see Yeraswork (2000:101-2).

¹¹ Informants mentioned the names of *Chiqa shum* Reta Hussein, *Gebbar* Ali Adera, *Atbiya dagna* Said Ali, and *Aba Bidra* Asfaw.

heated at the time of the transition between imperial and Derg rule. Bahru quotes MoA records showing that farmers argued that it was doubly unjust that they should be detained for farming and grazing cattle on *rist* land to which they had claims on the basis of descent and on which they had paid tax. The high point of the conflict, was in the months of April-July 1974. A clear resistance to state authority emerged. Farmers uprooted seedlings, destroying roads and chasing away labourers. Interestingly Bahru notes that after the 1974 drought which was blamed on intrusive officials, one of these was expected to provide a red bull to slaughter on the mountain to propitiate the spirits. This was quite a remarkable concession to the power of local institutions. In August 1975 farmers were even threatening to go Addis Ababa despite the rains to appeal to the Emperor against the appropriation of their *rist* land.

During the Derg period, too, it was at the time of the 1985 famine that the concern for afforestation and the conflict with local people became most salient. A number of factors were at work. The expansion of the town and especially the textile factory from below, the delimitation of the forest from above in 1986, and the removal of people living on the slopes, taken to resettlement, and villagised in the lowlands were the most salient.

The similar statements quoted at the beginning of this paper which informants mentioned to me in 1987 and to Bahru in 1997 express the sense of being "hemmed in" (Bahru 1998:111). The case of Yegof shows some of the complexities of community-state relations, when it came to the villagisation and resettlement. The villagisation sites were in the lowlands, and at the southern foot of the mountain people were settled on a communal grazing area where malaria was rife and a Producers' Cooperative took over the grazing area. As soon as they were able people abandoned the villagisation sites.¹²

¹² Information kindly provided by Elizabeth Watson from her fieldnotes 20/05/99.

The Derg period & the dynamics of resettlement differentiation

Resettlement from the Yegof area was already carried out in 1978 by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Bale. Men were taken forcibly, some even at night, many of whom were not suffering from famine, apparently through victimisation, and their families were allowed to join them only two year later. For instance informants from Bekimos Kebele Administration claimed that 42 households were taken, 40 of whom have returned. In 1977 there were also some young men taken forcibly to work on state farms in the Setit Humera area.

The 1985 resettlement from the Yegof area included *both* people who wanted to leave because they were famine victims and had no food left and households taken against their will. One of the former, Said Hussien, made this clear: "I wanted to save my children, the authorities did not touch me".¹³ Others mentioned that once they had sold their oxen they did not see how they could remain independent farmers. However, even among the famine victims not all really wanted to go. As one man pointed out "I would have preferred the hyena and the kite of my country to eat me, but there was the propaganda (*qisqesa*)", suggesting that there would be renewed famine.

The coercion was ruthless, a salient example of how the idea of a harmonious community can be myth. Some mentioned that they had left ripening crops in the fields, and one woman recalled that she was seized from a grain store where her brother had been hiding her to be taken with her husband; others mentioned that their children were kidnapped from the marketplace to ensure that the parents left.

At first sight it seems strange that from the same area there was both voluntary and coerced resettlement almost simultaneously. Three factors account for the difference. First there was a difference between the earlier and later periods. Those who left in late 1984 and early 1985 (from November 1984 to April 1985), most of whom were taken to Assosa, Wellega and to Illubabor generally left voluntarily, or with little pressure. However, in 1985 the rains seemed promising and peasants did not want to leave. In May 1985 with a long way off before the harvest and many of the poorer people starving there were volunteers as well as coercion. By October with the harvest in sight the resettlement was entirely forced (mainly to Gojjam).

A second factor relates to the kind of land peasants had. Those with irrigated land had managed to grow crops despite the failure of the rains

¹³ *Lij awet'alehu biye, dagna alnekagnim.*

(Pankhurst 1992: 69). Bahru presents figures of resettlement from four Peasant Associations around Yegof. A total of 714 peasants (households) were resettled out of 3,749 (19 percent). Of these 255 (35 percent) were living in the forest and had a plot there, 137 (19 percent) lived in the forest and had a plot on the slope, and 375 (52 percent) were living in the forest and had a plot on the plain. It seems likely that the middle category were those who were more prone to victimisation as they are more likely to have had irrigated land. In one area of former PA leader was able to obtain a fairly large area of irrigated land which he still retains.

A third factor was bitter conflict within the community and score settling through which those in leadership positions used their power to send their rivals and enemies to resettlement. Those in power could then give the land of the resettled to their own relatives and allies. In other words the resettlement was used as a means of premeditated victimisation. One informant made this point very evocatively: “they had [already] distributed the land among themselves in their heads”¹⁴ There were also allegations that land was given to those able to bribe officials. Although officially the resettlement was used to remove people from the state forest area, not all of those who were resettled lived or had land in the forest area, and many compounds and fields from which settlers were taken were then reoccupied or redistributed, which confirms this interpretation.

The transition period and the issue of returnees

Bahru notes that although worries about deforestation appear in the MoA files earlier during the Derg period, large scale deforestation was associated with the breakdown of political order in what he terms ‘the period of retreat’ at the end of the Derg period. The declaration of the mixed economic policy in 1990 “emboldened peasants to cut trees with impunity and utilise forest reserves for farm and pasture” (Bahru 1998:106). More significantly, Bahru notes, the escalation of the civil war and the stationing of large military units “wrecked havoc on the forests. Notorious culprits in this regard were the *Zendo* (Serpent) and *Azo* (crocodile) units camped at Sulula”. They were cutting trees indiscriminately not only for firewood but for sale, but also, as the narrative goes, “for the benefits of their mistresses”. In the last stage before its downfall the Derg did attempt to hand over forests to

¹⁴ *Meretun bechinqilatachew tekefalewit neber*

communities but this generally did not have the effect of preserving them.¹⁵

In the period of uncertain conditions until the EPRDF consolidated its power, there was apparently serious destruction of forests. Like the Derg the EPRDF at first attempted to hand over forests to communities, again seemingly with little success in terms of preserving them. However, gradually the need to reestablish forests and forest guarding was recognised by the MoA under the new government. There was a clear awareness that extensive destruction had taken place. The blame was often put on returnees and ex-soldiers, although they were no doubt not the only culprits. In fact another category that has been accused was the armed forest guards themselves, who found themselves without salaries, and whose food rations were often seriously delayed. In one case a guard supervisor was even accused of collusion with officials, and the matter was taken so seriously by the administration, that it went beyond the zonal level to the Region.

However, as Bahru suggests, the fuelwood and construction interests of Kombolcha town and the commercial saw mills are undoubtedly the driving force behind the logging and abuse of the state forest. With prices of wood at 2,500 *birr* per cubic metre in the year 2,000 and having reached 4,000 *birr* in 1991 the incentives are high. Some of the plantation areas that are considered mature for harvesting have recently been auctioned off to businessmen with the capacity to exploit them.

Returnees include those who came back from resettlement, Derg soldiers, wage-labourers returning from work on state farms and in Asseb, and refugees from the Eritrean conflict. The exact numbers and proportions are unknown.¹⁶ However, the following data obtained from officials of three Kebele Administrations (KAs)¹⁷ on the slopes of Yegof, if accurate, would suggest that returned settlers may represent a little over ten percent and ex-soldiers less than one percent of the households.

¹⁵ see Thematic Briefing *Conservation and participation in community forests*.

¹⁶ Nationwide the figures for displaced returnees exceed 2 million (see MARENA Briefing ET04 *Returnees and Natural Resource Management*).

¹⁷ Two or three of the former Peasant Associations (PAs) under the Derg where regrouped into one *Kebele* Administration (KA).

Table 1: Numbers of total households, returnees and ex-soldiers

PA	Bekimos	Metene	Atari Mesk	Total	%
Total households (tax paying land holding)	1,418	1,306	953	3677	
Returnees	250	102	88	440	12
Ex-soldiers	20	34	25	79	0.2

Generally, returnees are amongst the poorest section of the population and suffer from shortage of land and livestock. Returnees in Yegof as elsewhere found that their land had been redistributed. In some cases relatives had obtained the land, but more often it had been given to strangers (*ba'da*). Returnees were generally able to obtain join a relative and obtain land to build a house. One settler referred to this as "A seat for my bottom"¹⁸ But even where relatives had kept or obtained their land, that did not necessarily mean that the relatives were willing to hand land back to returnees, as they too suffered from land shortage. Some returnees bitterly complained about being let down by even very close relatives. On the whole returnees were able to get small backyard plots of 20 x 30 to grow a little maize (*ishet*). Some were provided *yemote kedda* "land of the deceased".¹⁹ However such land was often of poor quality. Some returnees complained about the label 'sefari' settler being still applied to them

In a group discussion in Bekimos Kebele Administration, out of 36 returnees only 4 had more than two *t'imad* (half a hectare),²⁰ (more than half) had simply a *bota*, the house and backyard plot, and a third (12) had no land at all and were relying on relatives (*tet'egiten*).

Returnees have therefore been among those arguing for land redistribution. In Dessie Zurya *Wereda* land redistribution was carried out in 1997 in 15 *Kebele* Administrations (22 of the previous Peasant Associations), apparently selected on the basis of average land holdings being greater than half a hectare in these PAs. A total of 7,254 households obtained 6,314 hectares, i.e. 0.8 ha per household.²⁰ Data does not seem to have been collected on how many of these households were returnees or settlers, as opposed to other categories of landless, notably newly established households, which suggests that returnees have

¹⁸ *Yeqit'e meqemech'a.*

¹⁹ See MARENA Briefing ET05 *Struggles over the land of the deceased.*

²⁰ Data obtained by Ato Mekonnen Aklog from the *Wereda* Council.

not had much political impact and that the issue is not considered important, and part of the agenda.

However, it seems that where redistribution did take place settlers were beneficiaries. In two KAs within the Yegof area where redistribution did occur settlers gained about half a hectare of land and therefore in a better position than in neighbouring KAs where distribution was not carried out. Data for Atari Mesk suggests that 88 out of 200 people (44 percent) who gained land in the redistribution were former settlers, and apparently all settler households gained some land.²¹ In some areas returnees who came back early in the transition period were given positions of authority in KAs since they were not considered to be tarnished by involvement in the Derg administration. This in turn led to their having better access to land.

Returnees not only suffered from smaller land holdings, but also own less livestock, than before they were resettled. In a group discussion with 30 returnees in Bekimos KA, half claim that they did not have any cattle now, whereas only 20 percent did not have any before they left, and only a third now have one ox or more, whereas half had an ox or more previously.

Table 2 : Returnees current and earlier livestock holdings

No cattle	Now	Previously
Two oxen or more	3	8
1 ox	7	6
Other cattle	4	10
No cattle	16	6
Total	30	30

Given survival difficulties returnees resort to selling and charcoal of survival. Some of the women collect dung for sale as fuel and grass to sell as fodder. Other options include wage-labour notably in peak agricultural seasons (weeding at a rate of 3 *birr* a day), wage labour in Kombolcha town, and sharecropping and livestock share-rearing on

²¹ 25 of the 200 who gained land were former soldiers.

unfavourable terms. A few are involved in crafts such as a weaver, and some women spin. Those with some land produce vegetables for sale in Kombolcha. One exceptional returnee was able to gain employment in the textile factory owing to literacy skills he had gained in the resettlement.

Returnees and ex-soldiers have also been seen to be returning to hillside areas within the state forest from which they were removed and even of encroaching further into the forest. Data was obtained from 3 Kebele Administration officials and a field visit was made to a fourth. In Bekimos KA on the eastern side of the mountain KA officials claim that there are no people living or cultivating within the forest boundary, whereas in Metene KA the officials claim that there are two persons with houses in the forest. In Atari Mesk, a KA on the northern side of the mountain officials gave the figure of 11 households out of whom 7 were former settlers. It may be that since the information was officially requested, the numbers have been underestimated. Visits to the southern part of the mountain by members of our team in July 1999 and in February 2000 and March 2001 suggest that there may be more 'illegal' settlement there.

Appropriation and resistance of local institutions

The relations between the state and the communities have been marked by the attempt of successive governments to coopt local leaders and institutions. We have seen how already in imperial times the state sought to impose its control on the forest especially through the demarcation and plantation. Local elders were involved in the demarcation process that resulted in much conflict. However, in the transition between the imperial and the Derg rule peasant resistance became stronger. There was also the case of an official providing a bull to be sacrificed by spiritual leaders.

During the Derg period the penetration of the state to the local level through the formation of Peasant Associations enabled the state to impose its will to a greater degree. It seems that the only involvement of indigenous institutions was when culprits responsible for wood cutting could not be found. Since the number of guards was limited (65) each of whom had to patrol large areas (90 ha) and illegal cutting often occurred at night the chances of a guard catching the culprit were limited. Then the state officials expected local institutions to play a role. This included the *qire dagna*, the burial association leader who was expected to bring members together for an oath taking ceremony *mehalla*, and people had

to walk over the *bele* stick of a sheik swearing they were not involved. If caught a culprit could be excommunicated through ostracism (*semona*). Some grave disputes could be taken to the *Abegar* spiritual leaders who are called *dem adraqi* “blood-dryers” to be solved by their ‘court’ (*berekebot, yifetta*) but this does not seem to have been common for resource management issues.

During the period of transition in addition to infringements and tree cutting by farmers, returnees, soldiers and later ex-soldiers, the forest guards whose salaries were suspended themselves were accused of involvement in tree cutting. With the reassertion of control by the Ministry of Agriculture guards began their work once again. Culprits could be taken to court by the MoA and could imprisoned for 3 months plus 300 *birr* convertible into time in prison for tree cutting and could be fined 5 to 10 *birr* if caught grazing cattle, and had their sickles and ropes confiscated if found cutting grass.

Perhaps the most interesting example of an attempt to involve local institutions in forest management occurred just after the transition in July 1991. In connection with a “international tree day” Ministry of Agriculture officials invited religious leaders including the powerful Muslim leader of the shrine at Geta, and a Christian monk by the name Aba Mefqere-seb to join them on an outing on Mount Yegof where sacrifices were made and prayers for rain and forest conservation. A video of the whole outing was produced.²² Like the case mentioned earlier during the transition from imperial to Derg rule, this suggests that it is at the time when state authority is weakest that an attempt to coopt the authority of local religious leaders.

Concluding comments

The Yegof case provides us with some insights pertinent to the main concerns of the MARENA/ Inform-Ethiopia research project with regard to our understanding of post conflict situations, the consequences of displacement, the nature of resource management institutions, the notions of community and relations between communities and external agents.

²² However, a similar event took place in 2000.

Post-conflict situations

The study has suggested that periods of transition are characterised by a power vacuum resulting in a loss of state authority and challenges to State interventionism and control of Renewable Natural Resources. Both the transition period between the imperial and Derg governments and the transition between the Derg and EPRDF rule were moments when peasant resistance against the state forest became pronounced. Claims which had been suppressed came to the fore.

In the Ethiopian context it is also important to understand the linkage between the context of famine and state interventionism in NRM.²³ It was immediately after the 1972-3 famine and after the 1984-5 famine that state intervention reached its climax, because of government concern to be purposive. In 1973 the large-scale plantation raised the dormant issue of where the state forest boundary was, where the boundary between taxed and common land was, and what rights local people had. In 1984 the RMI intervention was used to dislocate and resettle peasants living on the mountain to and relocated them in villagisation and resettlement schemes and in producers cooperatives.

In terms of the state forest the two transitions were marked in 1973 by peasants showing their opposition by uprooting seedlings and attempting to stop plantation work, and in late 1990s by large-scale deforestation and renewed 'encroachment' of settlement and even farming in the forest area, partly by settler returnees and ex-soldiers. This has demonstrated that no real sense of local responsibility for managing the state forest had been generated and that the forest was only 'protected' through the forceful but generally ineffective guarding by the government.

The study also suggests that the end of the conflict does not necessarily mean that issues become resolved. There is often 'fall-out' from the end of the conflict which may even generate new tensions and conflicts. Thus the fall of the Derg coincided with and precipitated the return of large numbers of settlers and of former soldiers. The issues of moving from relief to sustainable livelihoods for the settlers and ex-soldiers became salient issues in the post conflict period in the early 1990s. Similar problems were faced with the Eritrean war as a result of refugees and demobilisation of soldiers. Settlers and ex-soldiers were in some senses 'uprooted' and disconnected from existing institutions, to

²³ See MARENA Briefing ET 02 *An overview of natural resource management under the Derg*.

whom they did not have allegiances. In the face of lack of access to land and livestock many resorted to cutting trees and selling fuel wood and charcoal with serious environmental consequences.

Consequences of return from displacement

The Yegof study shows that returnees from resettlement were among the most dispossessed and marginalised groups. On return they found that their former land holdings had been redistributed and they most did not have the capital to purchase livestock. Many received minimal assistance from relatives, and most only a plot for a house and sometimes a small plot of land of 20 x 30 metres. Survival options for them once food aid stopped included selling wood and charcoal, wage-labour and sharecropping on unfavourable terms.

Those returned earlier fared somewhat better than those who returned later, in part because they have had more time to find ways of establishing themselves. In areas where redistribution of land took place returnees who came before the redistributions fared best. Some even obtained positions of authority in Kebele Administrations since they were not considered tainted by involvement in the Derg bureaucracy.

Nonetheless almost a decade after they have returned especially in areas where redistributions did not take place large numbers of returnees are landless or have holdings those are too small to enable them to achieve self-reliance. Though formers settlers have been among those arguing for land redistribution, their voice does not seem to have counted, since whether redistribution occurred seems to have been related to average land-holding sizes and the politics of perceived differentiation resulting from the policies of the previous regimes.

Returnees remain a marginalised category with limited integration in local institutions. Their landlessness and powerlessness have forced them to become some of the poorest who rely on cutting wood for sale, and encroaching on the state forest. However, it should be stressed that they are not the only ones, that other farmers and forest guards have also been accused, and that they are simply agents for the main pressure on forest resources which comes from urban interests for fuel, construction and furniture.

Understanding institutions

The study suggests that local indigenous institutions have had very limited roles in NRM, particularly in forestry. Peasant concerns are more focused on grazing areas and forests, especially those established through state intervention are often seen as a threat to pasture resources. Moreover, the role of local institutions has been mainly one of conflict resolution and mediation of community and State interests. The history of forest management has been characterised by state imposition and resistance by local communities to limitations on their use of forestland, particularly for grazing. At times when the state is not able to impose its will as during transition periods local people have been able to assert their rights, but the state eventually reimposes its will.

The State has at times attempted to coopt local institutions to locate and hand over culprits of tree cutting for deeds which occur without witnesses, and to make use of spiritual leaders to promote conservation but with limited success. This is arguably since their involvement with intrusive state measures tarnishes their legitimacy, and they seek minimal involvement with state structures.

State conservation measures at a local level have been used by leaders in positions of authority to victimise their rivals and enemies and benefit their relatives and allies making it clear that interventions have heightened divisions within differentiated communities, especially over the questions of resettlement, villagisation, land reallocation and returnees.

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Developing Institutions in Post-conflict Situations: Preliminary Research Findings from Borana, Ethiopia

Elizabeth Watson

Introduction: development and theoretical context

This paper presents the findings of research into the role of institutions in fostering community-based renewable natural resource management in post-conflict societies. The multiple terms in this research objective are significant: they are a consequence of the way in which, in real everyday situations, many different aspects of society and development are contingent on each other. Instead of studying each of these aspects in isolation, this research attempts to understand the way in which the different conditions and processes overlap, interact, and determine people's lives. This approach is particularly necessary in the context of attempts to work with communities and their environments, in post-conflict situations, in which communities may have experienced disruption of various kinds.

This research forms part of a DFID-funded project comparing the institutional dimension of community-based natural resource management in post-conflict Ethiopia and Mozambique. The part presented here focuses on the case of Borana, a mainly pastoralist area in southern Ethiopia. The local people there depend heavily on the local renewable natural resources of grazing land, forests and water. It is an area which has experienced intermittent conflict in the past, and a recent return of refugees.

The broad rationale for the research is that institutions are the key to successful, sustainable and appropriate development. They provide a tool through which the joint development goals of improved environments and human well-being can be achieved. But there is a need for a greater understanding of the nature of institutions and the role they can play in the construction of sustainable livelihoods and development. Development agents need to know better how to go about 'doing development' using institutions.

There are two more specific reasons for the focus on post-conflict areas: The first is that these areas are considered to be in particular need of development assistance. The people are thought to be vulnerable

because of conflict or displacement, and without assistance, it is possible that tensions could quickly escalate and conflict could resume. This is particularly the case in pastoral areas; Scoones summarises the situation:

Conflict and civil strife dominate many pastoral areas today at great social cost... Such costs are borne most heavily by the residents of the pastoral areas, but also by national governments and the international community, who in a variety of ways bear the costs of insecurity and famine. Without a recognition of the problems of pastoral areas and support for development needs, problems of insecurity are likely to increase (Scoones, 1994: 3-4).

Development agents need to rise to the challenge of working in the conflict and post-conflict situations, to mitigate the immediate impacts of disruption and to assist people to reconstruct their livelihoods. The second reason for considering post-conflict areas is that in situations where the institutions governing people-environment relations are under duress, processes can be seen in action more clearly, and thus can elicit insights which improve our understanding of institutions more generally.

The research is situated therefore at the interface between three contexts of work in development studies. As it is concerned with the interaction between these principles and contexts, it is first important to discuss what is meant by each one in more detail. In the following I briefly examine what is understood by i) institutions; ii) conflict and post-conflict societies, and; iii) participation and community-based development.

Theorising institutions

It has long been accepted that development has not just experienced difficulties because of technical problems, or a lack of know-how, but because of a lack of institutional capacity, and problems of organising who should participate in, contribute to, and benefit from, development projects (Crewe and Harrison, 1998; Chambers, 1997). The term social capital has been coined in order to draw attention to the importance of local organisational capacity, and has been portrayed as the missing link in development (Hariss, 1997). More recently, development thinkers have pointed to the need to understand the way in which institutions at different levels inter-link and impact on each other (Leach, *et al.* 1997; 1999); and in the current climate of decentralisation, with an increased awareness of the role played by local level institutions, and their inter-

relations with regional and national institutions, this has become even more important.

Institutions are organisations, but they also include the rules and regulations that determine access to natural resources. They define the access that a group has to natural resources, and they also define who has rights within that group. Institutions determine who makes use of which resources. Individuals, groups and organisations are not all situated equally in relation to resource use, and institutions define their differentiated access and use. Above all, therefore, institutions are about power. They define who is using the resource (and who is not) and the extent of that use. Throughout Africa for example, men have more institutionalised rights (formal and informal) to natural resources, particularly land, than women.

In addition, institutions define the way in which the resource is used. Institutions are established practices, for example environmental management practices. Thus, institutions may be formal or informal. For example, in Ethiopia, formal institutions could include state-organised Peasants' Associations and Service Cooperatives, and state legislature determining access to land and water (and here I include the state-drawn boundaries to different areas). They are institutions backed up by official legislature. Informal institutions include kin networks, local cultural administrative structures (such as the Borana 'traditional' organisation that is described below), customary rights to resources, and indigenous practices of grazing and use of forests. Research (such as that of Richards, (1985); Fairhead (1992); Ostrom (1990); Chambers (1997); Warren *et al.* (1995); and others) have argued conclusively that informal institutions, particularly the body of indigenous practice and rights and regulations governing those practices, represent good environmental practice. They should not be given any less priority in development planning and practice than formal institutions.

Institutions are potential powerful tools of development because they are multifaceted, and because they act on both society and the environment. They change with society and also in response to changes in the environment. But the breadth, fluidity and power of institutions makes them difficult to understand. Other authors have struggled with this, and have developed complex and broad definitions of institutions. This research has employed the definitions and understandings from the 'entitlements framework' developed by Leach *et al.* (1997; 1999), and also drawn on insights from work on institutions and people-environment relations in a western or global context. For example, there is O'Riordan and Jordan's use of institution:

The notion of institution applies both to structures of power and relationships as made manifest by organisations with leaders, members or clients, resources and knowledge; and also socialised ways of looking at the world as shaped by communication, information transfer, and the pattern of status and association ... [T]he notion of institution extends beyond organizational form, rules and relationships into more fundamental social and political factors that determine how people think, behave and devise rules through which they expect everyone else to play (1996:65).

Institutions are 'patterns of routinized behaviour' (O'Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 68) or 'regularised patterns of behaviour' (Leach *et al.* 1997). Institutions are not immutable: they shape behaviour, but are also shaped by the actions of individuals and groups. The institutions into which a person is born and through which he or she lives and understands the world constitute that person, but at the same time the person is able to work and change the nature of these institutions (Leach *et al.* 1997). Using Lukes' conceptualisation of power (Lukes 1986), institutions are both constraining and enabling structures; limiting, but also making possible different forms of social action and organisation.

The mechanics of institutions as structures of power can be examined more closely to illustrate how they are applicable to a context which is changing rapidly, such as a conflict or post-conflict situation. Here, institutions are not seen as existing in any a priori form, but as forms of discourse which have become institutionalised. There are discourses for each 'realm of social action', but there will also be different discourses held by different (and often competing) social groups, as these different groups relate differently to different discourses. Social actors do not exist outside of discourses, but it is through discourses that they practice and experience reality. Thus the different groups which Leach *et al.* (1997) describe as cross-cutting any 'community' differentiated by their different culture, racial, gender, class or regional identities and interests are likely to have different discourses, though some may be muted (Blaikie, 1995).

It is through the domination of different discourses and the control of these different discourses that social groups can become dominant over others - and legitimate their desired use of different resources. Applying this framework to institutions shows that there are multiple institutions overlapping and at work in any one setting. The way in which the institutions interact depends on their relative dominance, which varies from place to place, and also over time.

The conflict and post-conflict context

These second context of the research is that of conflict and post-conflict societies. In the developing world, and particularly in Africa, many societies are experiencing, or recovering from, conflict of one kind or another. Conflict used to be viewed by development agents and governments alike as a temporary anomaly, and it was thought sufficient to supply relief to a society until the perceived temporary emergency was over. After this time, development projects could be resumed. As conflicts have become more protracted in developing countries this thinking has been revised. The conflict and post-conflict situations are no longer simply seen as temporary emergencies needing short-term relief assistance. Many development groups have started programmes such as the 'war-torn societies project' (UNRISD), in order to give more long-term development assistance in times of conflict. Academic institutions have also responded to this new context: the number of Master's Programmes in conflict resolution has increased, and many development agencies are beginning to train their staff in conflict resolution skills (albeit for use on a small-scale). For development studies, conflict has put itself firmly on the agenda.

Related to this is the work on post-conflict reconstruction. Again in recent years, the approaches to dealing with refugees and understanding the social and environmental impacts of displacement have become more sophisticated, partly in response to the failure of more traditional and simplistic approaches. Conflict and post-conflict are stages separated in the mind for classificatory purposes, but on the ground they are linked. Post-conflict only exists by definition in relation to conflict, and the problems associated with a post-conflict situation are generally related to the experiences and conditions resulting from that conflict (displacement, trauma, fragmented societies, and so on). In a post-conflict situation, if the problems resulting from the conflict are not overcome, then the situation can easily deteriorate and return to a conflict situation.

The premise of this research is that conflict changes the institutional relations between people and the environment, and this change is usually, but not exclusively, negative. Displacement by war and conflict-related social transformations can disrupt established natural resource management patterns. They may be directly overridden by force: forests burnt, grazing lands and farms strafed or bombed, wells poisoned. Forests may be cut for building or fuelwood to meet the needs of the protagonists of war. Conflict can also lead to a power vacuum on the ground: enforcement of the regulations and rules controlling the use of resources

can break down, and local and other residents may seize the opportunity to exploit their environment unsustainably. Throughout Ethiopia this has been seen, as state-governed and other forests suffered serious depletion in the shadow of the chaos and conflict surrounding the change between different governments (in 1974 and 1991).

Participation and the community

The third context of this research is the need to think about and generate development which is more participatory. Participatory development is now *de rigueur* - at least in theory - in the sense of involving local people in the planning, decision-making, execution, and management of development projects. It is also becoming more common in the form of community-based development projects. At a broader scale, it is also part of the process of decentralisation of administration and politics that is taking place, particularly in Africa. This is particularly the case in Ethiopia, where the state has instigated an ambitious decentralisation programme, dividing the country into 14 semi-autonomous regional nations. There has been a general process through which attempts have been made to shift power - again at least in theory - from the central to the regional and then the local level. At present, the inclusion of participation in development is seen as a radical shift, improving development by making it more appropriate, sustainable, and locally empowering people. But there is a burgeoning literature on the pitfalls and paradoxes of participatory development (for example Cleaver, 1999; Mosse, 1994).

There is also an extensive body of work that looks at the difficulties of defining the community: on the ground, development agents (including those of the state) may rely on a rather simplistic notion of the community, as a geographically bounded and homogeneous group of people. Starting with such a notion means that sooner or later they are bound to experience difficulties. For example, in Mozambique, when interviewing government workers on their attempts at development with the community, one man said 'we wanted to work with the community, but when we went there, we found there was no community; the people were living all over the place' (Manica Province, 1999). Thus this attempt at community-based development fell at the first hurdle. The work of Agrawal *et al* (1999), and Leach *et al.*(1997;1999) has also illustrated how the 'community' is far from a unified group of similarly-minded individuals, but can be cross-cut by differences of gender, class, caste, race and ethnicity. A development initiative that does not take these

differing interests into account may result in empowering one group over another, and this may lead to conflict at a later stage.

These three foci represent important directions in development thought and practice. The present research does not look at any one of them in isolation, but at how they are inter-related - as they are also on the ground.

The post-conflict situation is extremely complicated, and the broad definition of institutions, make this research ground extremely wide. Compounding this is the number of different ethnic groups in the region in question, and the many differences within these groups: there are those who were displaced during conflict, and those who were not; those who depend solely on pastoralism for their livelihoods, those who combine this with some agricultural activity, and others who depend entirely on agriculture; there are those who have a subsistence lifestyle, and those who trade; those who live in the rural areas, and those who live in towns.

In order to narrow the research ground and therefore make it feasible, I decided to focus on indigenous institutions in the region, and the role they play in the processes described above. I focused on the nature of indigenous institutions, their role in environmental management, and the way in which they are used (or not) by different development agents in the region as building blocks for post-conflict reconstruction and community-based development.

Indigenous institutions as a bridge to the community?

Indigenous institutions, according to the definition above, are informal institutions. They include local cultural forms of organisation, for example locally elected, appointed, or hereditary leaders and elders, customary rules and regulations relating to access to resources, and indigenous practices and knowledge. All of these have been recently heralded as a valuable resource through which appropriate and sustainable development can be achieved. For example, Warren *et al.* (1995) have discussed how indigenous institutions provide a good administrative institution through which to achieve development. Customary rights to resources and tenure regimes were previously seen as rather chaotic and often leading to environmental degradation (Hardin, 1968). Now they have been seen to be flexible and facilitating environmental management (Ostrom, 1990; Bruce *et al.* 1994). Indigenous practices and indigenous technical knowledge have been seen as highly adaptive to precarious and changing micro-environments. They are risk-averse and hence are highly suitable for many environments in

developing countries (Richards, 1985; Fairhead, 1992). If these local resources can be harnessed, then it is thought that they can be the means through which local, empowering and sustainable development can be achieved.

It has already been seen how the idea of community-based development is attractive for development agents, but it is difficult to know how to go about this in practice. The alternatives are to create new institutions or strengthen existing ones. Attempts to create new institutions have been successful in many parts of Asia, especially with water-user's associations in irrigation development projects, but they do not seem to have been so successful in Africa. In Ethiopia, the communist government under Mengistu Haile Mariam created Peasants' Associations (PAs) and Service Co-operatives (SCs). These were grass-roots organisations with the aim of empowering the local people, but as participation was mandatory, these were not experienced by the participants as local empowering institutions, but institutions of control of the state. NGOs which have created institutions for administrative purposes have found it hard to escape from being tarnished with the associations of this history. One way to try to escape it, is to rely on the people themselves, and to turn to their own structures of organisation.

When I started work in Borana, I also encountered a strong rhetoric from the state and from the NGOs I interviewed, about the local Borana indigenous institutions. They praised the customary social organisation, regulations, and indigenous knowledge. They referred to the indigenous structures as institutions through which they could contact the community, and create a new, more positive development. This was partly a result of the uniqueness of Borana and its social organisation, and the history of development and intervention in the Borana region (see below). Given the body of literature (discussed above), the professed interest on the ground in working with indigenous institutions as a 'bridge' to accessing and enabling the community to help themselves, indigenous institutions seemed the most fruitful place to start the research.

The research in Borana also resonated with the research that was taking place in Mozambique. There, NGOs, and other agencies such as FAO, were encouraging the 'community' to carry out participatory mapping processes and employ new government legislation to convert customary land rights into formal land rights (communities could now register to be land-holders). These development initiatives involved identifying a community to work with and 'empower', and involved drawing a boundary around the unit which was to become the

'community' territory. Invariably, the starting point for this identification was the local traditional chief - the *regulo*. Thus here also indigenous institutions were also used as a bridge to the community, and the experience in Mozambique has already shown that this strategy for development, is far from unproblematic (West *et al.* 1999) but needs further research.

Other work on complex political emergencies, such as that of Harvey in Somalia (Harvey, 1997) has also illustrated how informal institutions can be more resilient than formal institutions in conflict situations, and hence may prove a more fertile ground to work with the community in the post-conflict situation.

In the remaining part of this paper I describe the region of Borana. First I introduce the people of the area and give some historical background to the intermittent conflict that has plagued the area. Then, I introduce the dominant indigenous institutions in the region, and look at why and in what way, when I first went to Borana in 1999, the state and the NGOs showed a strong commitment to working with indigenous institutions as a means to achieving development. Following this, I examine why, by the time I returned to Borana in 2000, the interest in indigenous institutions had waned, and why development agents and local people had become more sceptical about institutional partnerships of this kind. Finally, I will make some concluding remarks about what can be learnt about 'developing institutions' from this work in Ethiopia.

Borana Zone: location and people

Borana Zone is situated in the south of Ethiopia along the border with Kenya. The people of Borana are mainly part of the larger Oromo ethnic group, and since the decentralisation of Ethiopia along ethnic lines (post-1991), Borana Zone has been a sub-section of Oromiyya Region. This region is also known as Region 4 of Ethiopia. Borana Zone is divided into a relatively highland area, characterised mainly by forest and agriculture, and a relatively lowland pastoral area. This research focuses on the lowland area. These areas are made up of stretches of grass-land with pockets of bush and forest. Increasingly, however, the grass-lands have been encroached by bush and agriculture. There are different sources of water in the area that vary throughout the year: wells; rain-fed ponds and reservoirs; seasonal surface water and rivers; and also boreholes that have been built by NGOs or state bodies. Most important are nine deep wells, which contain water throughout the year. They are as old as the Borana's residence in this region (approximately 400 years) and

sacred to them. These nine wells are known as the *tulaani saglaani* (Helland, 1997).

There are several different ethnic groups living in Borana Zone. The relationships between them are complex and changing and influence natural resource management in various ways. Though reviewing the different groups present is complicated, it is worthwhile as it avoids oversimplifying the situation on the ground.

According to Getachew Kassa, who has written extensively on this region, there are at least fifteen ethnically different pastoral groups living in Borana Zone. The identities of these groups, and the relations between them, are dominated by two larger encompassing ethnic identities: the Oromo and the Somali. These identities have become even more important since the post-1991 decentralization programme. This process has redrawn the boundaries of the region, and the area to the west, which is mainly inhabited by Oromo groups, is Borana Zone and part of Oromiyya Nation (Region 4). The area to the east, which is mainly inhabited by Somali groups, is part of the Somali Nation (Region 5). Despite this, there are Oromo and Somali speakers and ethnicities resident in Borana Zone.

Of the Oromo groups in Borana, the Borana are by far the most dominant group. There are also Guji and Arsi, though these are located more in the highland areas, and will be of less concern to this paper. In the lowlands, another Oromo group important to this research is the Gabbra, who are a minority group. There are two Gabbra groups, the Gabbra Miigo and the Gabbra Malbe. The Gabbra Miigo are the main Gabbra group in Ethiopia (Schlee, 1989). They are found in pockets in the region between Yabello and Agara Maryam, around Arero, around Moyale, and around Negele Borana. There used to be a population in the area between Wachile and Web, but these people are currently displaced from that area, and are living around Arero, Moyale and Yabello (Surupa). Other groups in the region include the very small Waata Wondo, a marginalised group of craftspeople, who speak Oromo.

The Somali groups are also in a minority in terms of the numbers resident in Borana Zone, but they are significant and have a key influence on the natural resource management. The Garri are the most important group in relation to this research. They are resident in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. They are a Somali group, but they have many cultural links to the Borana (Schlee, 1989; Bassi, 1997; Getachew, 1996). The Garri who live in close proximity to other Somali groups speak Somali languages, and the Garri who live close to the Borana speak Oromo. Many of the Garri are bilingual, and their allegiance to Somali or Borana

groups can vary over time. Although, in the final analysis, therefore, they are classified as Somali, they could be placed at a point between the Oromo and Somali groups. Ethnicity is not something necessarily clear or immutable, but the meanings and statuses attached to different ethnicities, and the alliances between them, are continually negotiated and redefined (Schlee, 1989).

The other main Somali groups in Borana Zone include the Digodi, Marihan, and Gurre. Minority groups in the region include Duriante and Shabelle. There are also very small groups who provide different services for the pastoralists. They are smiths, or make different crafts, or provide boat services. These include the Warrdube and the Bonta (Getachew Kassa pers. comm). There are also other people from other groups living here, most of whom are settlers and who live in and around towns. Most of these people are either traders or farmers. These include the Amhara, Gedeo, Burji and Konso.

All of these pastoral groups use different animals including donkeys, goats and sheep, but they are differentiated in terms of lifestyle and identity by their emphasis on cattle or camels as their main source of livelihood. The Borana rely mainly on cattle¹. Recently they have started to keep more camels, but in the past and today, some Borana have been subject to ritual taboos which limits their camel keeping. The Gabbra, Garri and other Somali groups rely mainly on camels. The distinction is important, as the different groups can be described as being associated with cattle or camel-complexes respectively. This refers to the symbolic role that the animal plays in the group's sense of identity, social interaction, and the use of the animal in ritual exchange, for example for marriage payments.

Moreover, the reliance on these different animals has important practical implications because cattle need significantly more water and grass than camels. Cattle must be watered every two to three days, whereas camels can be watered after seven to fourteen days (Gufu, 1998a). Cattle also rely on grass, whereas camels, and other stock, forage leaves from bushes which are becoming more common.

The Borana reliance on cattle is made possible by their control over water sources in the area. Water sources are known as *mada*, and those who use the same *mada* form one organisational unit which is

¹ The Borana used to raise horses also and take great pride in this activity. Horse rearing was outlawed by Menelik, as they were seen literally as war-horses, enabling the Borana to wage war against their neighbours. There are horses in Borana, but they are not as common as they used to be.

administered by the *aba mada* ('father of the *mada*') Water is the limiting resource in Borana, and so rights to grazing lands, units known as *dheda*, depends largely on access to the *mada* which is situated there. In the main therefore, the Borana control access to water and grazing land. This control is legitimized by their claims to be the descendants of the people who dug the wells. This is despite the fact that they may agree that the nine most important deep wells in Borana were present before the Borana came to this area and are sometimes said to have been dug by the Wardai people (Bassi, 1997). The Borana continue to claim the rights to the wells using their claims to have been the original excavators. At times, contested claims cause conflict, between the Borana themselves, and also with other groups (Gufu, 1998a). The Borana institutions for regulating access and use of resources are dominant in the region. Schlee (1989) refers to their powerful position in the area as a hegemony or overlordship.

Conflict: inter-ethnic politics and natural resources

The dominance of Borana natural resource management institutions is related to their dominance as an ethnic group in the region. This dominance has not been unchallenged. It is beyond the scope of this paper to look at this in detail (Schlee, 1989, Bassi, 1997, and Getachew, 1996, provide thorough accounts), but since it relates to the conflicts that have taken place in the region, it is necessary to give a brief outline. Quotes have been used here from interviews, to illustrate how local people relate to this history today. When quotes have been used, the group of origin of the speaker is also indicated, as not unsurprisingly the different groups have different perspectives on the situation.

Over the last one hundred years, the Somali groups have encroached further west and into the lands of the Borana, and this has led to conflict over access to the wells and grazing lands (Bassi, 1997; Schlee, 1989; Hogg, 1997). At times there have been alliances between the Garri and the Borana, and as part of this alliance the Borana have allowed the Garri to use water and grazing lands, but their rights have always been secondary. Bassi describes the historical struggle over resources as the '*leit-motiv*' of relations between the Garri, Gabbra, and Borana, in this area (1997: 29).

Bassi also describes the way in which the historical competition between these groups was shaped by, and shaped, the nature of conflict between larger political powers: the Italians recruited Somalis (including Garri) to carry out their invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. Through this

collaboration, the Somali groups were able to benefit from the supply of arms they received from the Italians, and use this superior weaponry to consolidate their access to, and control over, areas which had until then been Borana (Bassi, 1997; Getachew, 1996; Helland, 1997; 1998; Hogg, 1997).

During this historical struggle the Gabbra have occupied a very ambiguous position. They have used the institutions that they have in common with both the Garri and the Borana to build alliances with both groups at different times. The majority of the Borana and Gabbra that I interviewed in this research said that the Borana and Gabbra have always lived together and share resources:

The Borana and Gabbra live together. They share difficulties and they share successes. They have disputes but it is not common (Liban Jaltesa, future Borana *aba gada*, 18.7.00).

In Borana's land, wherever there are Borana there are Gabbra. They don't have any other language other than Borana. They don't have a Gabbra vernacular. They know no other land than Borana. They own no other land other than the one we share. What differentiates them is their speciality in breeding camels, whereas the Borana breed cattle, horses, goats and sheep... Those who depend on cattle and other animals need water and grass, their animals are more thirsty. Camels are resistant and can go without water more than the others. The Borana therefore dig ponds to collect water, and the ponds are owned by the original digger. The Gabbra don't dig ponds or wells. They usually ask for permission from the Borana to use them and it is usually given automatically (Guyu Dida, Borana man, 24.7.00).

This is the dominant view: that the rights to water (and therefore grazing land) are legitimately in the hands of the Borana, and that the Borana share them with the Gabbra through generosity. This discourse portrays the two groups as living harmoniously together and sharing resources. This also explains and legitimises the larger share of the resources that the Borana claim. Narratives are also used to give support to this viewpoint, particularly stories of cases of mutual cooperation. One example of this is when the Gabbra helped the Borana to restock after a black-fly epidemic in the 1880s which wiped out most of their animals (Borbor Bulle, Borana, 26.7.00; Maleb, Moyale, Gabbra, 24.7.00). The Borana and Gabbra build alliances by emphasising the institutions that they share: the Gabbra speak Oromo and share many aspects of the Borana social organisation. Both the Gabbra and the Borana have *aada*

and *seera*- a sacred and profane set of laws governing behaviour and maintaining peace and order in society, and they also have *gada* - the generation grade system and its elected leader, the *aba gada*.

Despite the strength of this discourse it is clear that it is not accepted by all Gabbra, and that this has led to the disputes mentioned by the *aba gada* above. Quite a different account emerged in interviews with some Gabbra people, but only when there were no Borana people present. For example, a group of men in one Gabbra settlement explained in relation area known officially as Borana:

When you talk about the territory of the Borana and the Gabbra, you always say Gabbra-Borana. You first mention the Gabbra, then the Borana, which gives the Gabbra precedence, as they were entitled to the land before the Borana... When you talk about Gabbra and Borana, and when it comes to control of water wells, the Borana control all the wells, but they control them with the consent of the Gabbra (Surupa 1: 20.7.00)

This seemed to contradict the dominant viewpoint. Again, another group of Gabbra men in the same area said:

You have been told that the Borana and the Gabbra use the grazing land and the wells equally, but when you go to the centre of Borana you still find Borana that are hostile to the Gabbra. So we prefer to stay on the fringes of the area. If you are in the midst of Borana, if a Borana finds a little Gabbra child looking after young goats and lambs, the Borana will not hesitate to kill him, not even taking the animals! Even when there is peace he will kill the child and cut the penis, and take it home and wear it as a ring on his finger. He will grow his hair long [to show his status as a man who has killed] and show everyone his trophy. The Gabbra will also do this; in revenge they will do it. (Surupa 2, Gabbra, 29.7.00)

Such practices were traditional warring practices between groups (Schlee, 1989), and it is not surprising to hear hostile feelings about the Borana's 'hegemony' articulated along these lines. These comments were made in a group interview, and following them, the man responsible for them was berated. The others present did not deny what he had said, but they told him to be quiet because 'now he had said too much'. This suggests that they did not disagree with what had been said, but that they felt these things should not be discussed openly, at least not with a stranger.

It illustrates that the Borana control the resources in the region, and that there is some sharing of resources, but that this is not totally

amicable. There are many different discourses and institutions that come into dominance at different times and in different conditions. Joint resource access is managed through institutions in the context of an uneasy truce.

It is this uneasy truce that has flared up into conflict intermittently. Over the last 10 years, there has been a great deal of conflict. Here, the power of political struggles at different levels to impact on each other is evident, as it was at the time of the Italian invasion. For example, in 1991, Siad Barre's regime in Somalia fell and many Somali people, including Garri, were displaced to Ethiopia and Kenya. Some fled to refugee camps, others simply crossed the borders with or without animals, and tried to continue their lives in this new area. Many of them were heavily armed. This process brought a new wave of Somali people to the region, and pushed the existing ones further west into Borana territory (Helland, 1998). The Garri and other Somali groups gained new control over territory and wells, and this control has since been consolidated, partly by the redrawing of the boundaries of the new administrative regions (Getachew, 1996; Bassi, 1997). Resources that were shared between Borana, Gabbra and Garri (albeit on Borana terms, see later) are now only used by one or two of these groups. As a result, the Borana, the Garri and other Somali groups have been fighting over these resources. Most of this fighting has been concentrated in the areas where Region 4 and Region 5 meet.

With this regional political context in mind, I turn to the Borana indigenous NRM institutions. These have been dominant in the past, and still dominate in the main areas of Borana Zone where there are substantial numbers of Borana people.

Borana rangelands and indigenous NRM institutions

Borana has been viewed in the past as an extremely productive rangeland. For example, Scoones writes,

the pastoral Borana system has higher returns of both energy and protein per hectare compared to industrialized ranching systems in Australia. Australian Northern Territory ranches only realise 16% of the energy and 30% of the protein per hectare compared to the Borana system (1994: 12).

Such praise is commonplace when discussing Borana, for example, Huqqe Garse:

The rangeland belongs to reportedly the best, most productive rangelands in Eastern Africa, as well as in Ethiopia. This is due

to its high potential, the famous Borana cattle breed and the competence of the pastoral livestock keepers (1999:1).

There is a strong agreement in the academic and development literature, and the opinions of those interviewed, that the Borana rangelands represent a case of an exceptionally efficient and well-managed dry-land area. This is considered to be because of the richness of the natural resources, the skill (or indigenous knowledge) of the Borana, and the wealth of Borana institutions and their capacity to regulate access to the resources.

Rainfall in Borana varies from 450mm to 700mm per annum. It falls in two seasons, a long rainy season (*ganna* - March to May) and a short rainy season (*hagaya* - September to November). The water sources available vary in the seasonality of their water, and also in the rights and regulations which apply to the use of their water. These can be divided into different types (drawing on Huqqe Garse's summary for names and descriptions [1999:11]):

Most important sources which are highly regulated by indigenous institutions:

- Deep water wells, which supply water most consistently. These are divided into two kinds, *adadi* (shallow wells) and *tulla* (deep wells). The deep *tulla* wells are famous because they can reach a depth of 30m, and water is drawn by as many as 21 people standing one above another and passing containers of water. They sing as they carry out this hard and cooperative labour, and hence these wells are sometimes referred to as the singing wells.
- Hand-dug shallow ponds known as *harro*.

Additional sources, where access is mainly opportunistic:

- 'Natural' ponds containing water throughout the year known as *boke*.
- Surface water and river water.
- Temporary ponds
- Collections of rainwater

New water sources constructed by NGOs and state organisations. The access to these sources varies, but in the main they are characterised by poor institutional development and little regulation of access. In some cases, rights to the water has been privatised and is sold by individuals or groups. The increase in water sources has led to pressure on the surrounding grasslands and degradation (Boku, 2000; Gufu, 1998a):

- Machine-dug ponds
- Boreholes with diesel, hand or solar pumps.
- Underground water cisterns.

The first group of water sources is most important, and as it is regulated by indigenous institutions, it is what is of most concern here. Ponds (*harro*) are the property of the individuals who initially excavated them, or their direct descendants (Gufu, 1998a). This person is called *aba konfi*. Rights to use the pond are obtained by providing labour for the maintenance of the pond. Although the property of the *aba konfi*, the pond is administered by local elders (Gufu, 1998a).

The wells (generally referred to as *ella*) are highly regulated. At each water source (*mada*), there are several wells, often referred to as a cluster. Overall, there are about 75 well complexes throughout Borana (Gufu, 1998a). *Adadi* wells are shallow wells in sandy river beds. *Tulla* wells are deep wells cut through limestone rocks. The nine deep well complexes are at Dubluq, Melbana, Erdar, Gayo, Dh'aas, Borbor, Iggo, Goof and Lae. Wells are the property of the descendants of the person who initially started to dig that well - again the *aba konfi* - and each well is associated with the clan (*gosa*) of that *aba konfi*.

The well is the property of the *aba konfi*, but the day-to-day administration of the well is carried out by a person appointed by the *aba konfi* and his clan. This man is known as the *aba heryriga*. His job is to make sure there is no conflict over the use of the water and to take appeals from people who would wish to come and use the water. He is assisted in this work by *hayu* - individuals who hold ritual authority to judge.

There is a complex web of entitlements that enables an individual to gain access to water from any particular well and the turn that that person is given in the rota of watering animals. It depends on the membership of the clan (*gosa*) of the *aba konfi*, and contribution to the labour of constructing the well. Animals are watered according to a strict rota: the *aba konfi*, the *aba heryriga*, and then other clan members according to their seniority in the clan. A turn in the rota can also be obtained by someone who is not a member of the clan if he has good relations with the *aba konfi* and also if he provides a bull or bulls to slaughter when the well is being dug. This allows the elders to bless the well and also feeds the labourers.²

In addition to these entitlements, the Borana have a set of laws called the *aada seera*, in which it is forbidden to deny someone water, or to ask them to pay for it. The *aada seera* (Borana laws) are rehearsed at a

² Digging a well is a ritual process as well as hard labour.

meeting that is held every eight years in Borana. This meeting is known as the *Gumii Gaayo* ('meeting of the multitude'). In the last *Gumii Gaayo* Assembly that took place in 1996, Gollo Huqqa (a Borana man working for EECMY/NCA) wrote down and published some of the decisions and discussions that took place. On the 'Rules about Water Wells' he writes (his spelling of terms has been retained but should not cause difficulty):

The clans and *abba konfii* (the man who first scratched the ground there) have precedence over owning the *eelas* (water wells) and ponds. On the other hand, all the Booran have the right to water their livestock at any water wells, provided there is sufficient water in the water wells and agreements reached with *abba errege* (the 'overseer')' (Golloo Huqqa, 1996: 43).

This was confirmed for me by another Borana man in Moyale, who described the normative rules by which the Borana regulate water access:

There are *ellas* (wells) which were dug by Borana with their own hands. Every Borana clan (*gosa*) must have its own *ella*, and these *ellas* will have a clan in control of it. Although each *gosa* has its own *ella*, and the control is in its hands, every man - including Garri and Somali, even a white man - will be allowed to use that water. Even the trough cannot be left empty so that the hyenas and lions can come and drink there. But the control is with one person and there are regulations regarding water, and if you overstep this you will have to answer' (Guyu Dida, 1999).

These regulations give secondary rights to water to groups such as the Garri and the Gabbra. Those who have official access should have enough when they need water. Others who depend on what is often locally referred to as 'begging', cannot rely on this for regular or sufficient amounts of water.

The *aada seera* illustrate something of the nature of the indigenous institutions in Borana. They are rehearsed with both regularity and rigour, and this makes it inappropriate to describe them as informal: indeed the formal-informal dichotomy breaks down. For Borana people, the *aada seera* are formal institutions, supported by formal networks of kin, institutionalised in meetings and ritual. Cooperation and friendship are less prescribed and formal, but are also important in determining access to resources.

In addition to the *aada seera*, the Borana have an integrated set of organisations that regulate access to land, water and forests. As one interviewee who was part of local governmental organisation put it:

They [the Borana] have a strong institutional structure, with good

linkages from the President who is *aba gada*, so down to the grass roots. At every level they know what to do and what their duty is' (Atalaw, SORDU, 2000).

Each of these levels of organisation corresponds to a level of organisation: household, settlement, neighbourhood, watershed, grazing land, and Borana region. This structure from the micro to the macro of Borana organisation is sometimes represented as a set of concentric rings with the *aba warra* at the micro level, and the *aba gada* at the regional (see Huqqe Garse, SOS Sahel, 1999). At each level there is a designated decision-maker, or set of decision-makers. All of these decision-making offices are held by men. Here, each level of organisation is described, and then their spatial relationship is shown schematically, in diagram 1 below:

Warra - the *warra* is the household. It is administered by the male head of the household, the *aba warra*, which literally means the 'father of the house'. The *aba warra* takes decisions about when and where animals should be grazed, and when and to where the household should move.

Olla - the *olla* is the smallest level of settlement. It consists of between 30 and 100 *warras*. The head of the *olla* is called the *aba olla* ('father of the *olla*'), who is usually the first man to have founded that *olla* - or the senior descendant of the person who is considered to have done so. The *aba olla* is responsible for the well-being of those resident in that *olla*. He decides, in consultation with the other men in the *olla*, if and when and to where the *olla* should move. If someone comes from another area he may ask to join this *olla*, and the *aba olla* will decide whether or not this is possible.

Arada - this is a small group of *ollas* - usually two or three only, who may cooperate together in their grazing patterns. They may jointly delineate and fence-off an area called the *kalo*. The *kalo* is for grazing calves and must not be used except when grazing in other areas is extremely scarce.

Mada - is the area surrounding one water source. It refers to the area used for grazing by all those who use the water source, and all the people who use that water source. The *aba mada* is the authority at this scale of administration. He is the most senior male descendant of the man who originally found and excavated that water source. As he owns the water source, he has first rights to it. He can decide who can, and cannot use the water source. Related to this is the *aba konfi* (described above). The *mada* unit was used as a defining unit for Peasant Associations (PA) when they were set up following the 1974 revolution. This has had a great impact on Borana. Previously pastoralists were free to move around

Borana, and could join a new *mada* if they asked and the *aba mada* agreed. Now they are registered with a PA, and this limits their movement somewhat. The establishment of the PA committees has also been seen as challenging the authority of the indigenous structures and weakening them (see below).

Dheda - this is the wider unit of grazing which is used by different *ollas* and *aradas*. The satellite grazing camps of different *warra* (known as *fora*) may cut across the boundaries of different *dheda* in their pursuit of grass for their animals (Gufu, 1998). Opinion is divided as to whether the administrator of this unit of resource access is a council of elders (known as the *jarsa dheda*), as in Gufu Oba's analysis (1998), or one person (an *aba dheda*) as in the work of Sorra Adi (of GTZ). It is possible that this varies throughout Borana. Whether one person or a council, it is the level of administration that governs the use of grazing lands and protects from over-grazing. It also seems probable that this decision-making body has been badly hit by changes in grazing following the establishment of new water sources, and new PA committees, and it has become less important.

The size of the *mada* and *dheda* may vary and the boundaries may overlap. Thus the *dheda* may be the largest unit, or the *mada*.

The *yaa* and *aba gada* - the *yaa* and the *aba gada* can be summarised as the governing body of Borana. The *aba gada* is a man who is elected to lead the Borana, and the *yaa* are his councillors and messengers. Each *aba gada* and his *yaa* members are in power for eight years, then they hand over to the next incumbents. This corresponds to the length of a generation grade (*gada*) in Borana. When one generation grade passes through to the next, then the members of this Borana-wide 'governing body' changes also. The *aba gada* and the *yaa* are responsible for upholding the *aada* of Borana. Helland translates the *aada* as 'the Borana way', and as the 'peace and order' of the Borana. The *aada* is difficult to translate, as it contains moral ideas about good behaviour and specific prescriptions about mundanities like dress, grazing practice and water rights. The latter are embodied in the set of rules and regulations, the *aada* and *seera*, or *aada seera* discussed above. The *aba gada* and *yaa* are also sacred, however, and while they are in office their settlement (also known as the *yaa*), moves from one sacred place to another, following a pre-ordained path. At each sacred place they perform a ritual of sacrifice, singing and dancing. Through these rituals they also protect the *aada* and the *nagaya* Borana (peace of the Borana) and hence ensure the well-being of all Borana.

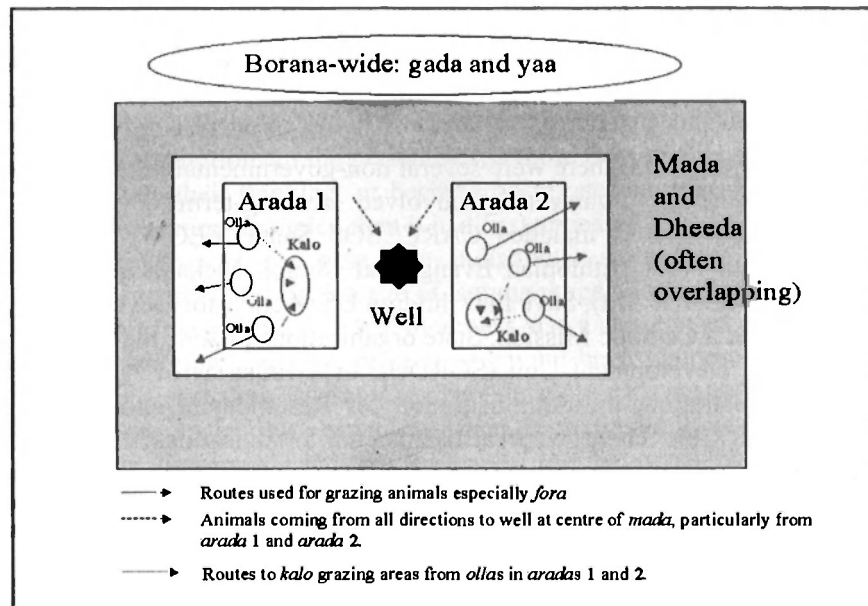
The *aba gada* and *yaa* are appointed at the *Gumii Gaayo* Assembly that takes place mid-way through the term of the *yaa*. At this meeting the

matters of concern to the Borana are discussed, the *auda seera* are rehearsed, and anyone who has violated the *aada* is punished.

The *aba gada* is seen as the figure-head of the whole of Borana, and is often described as the President. As well as performing rituals, matters are referred to him and his council when a decision cannot be reached at a lower level. When conflict breaks out between *ollas* or *aradas*, or *madas*, then the *aba gada* will rule on the case. If there is conflict between ethnic groups, then he will be called in to help make peace. As the *aba gada* is responsible for dealing with matters of concern to the Borana, and as matters of concern are often related to access to the resources of forests, land and water, the *aba gada* is the highest level of institution of natural resource management in Borana.

Diagram 1: Borana institutions from macro to micro

This diagram has been drawn from a summary of interviews with development workers of SOS Sahel (particularly Huqqa Garse) and SORDU (particularly Atalaw), from the project documents of GTZ Borana Pastoral Development Programme, and from participatory mapping processes that were carried out with Borana people in the field.



Natural resource access is governed by the combination of these different institutions in operation at different levels. Each of these natural resource management institutions, are also conflict resolution institutions. They are therefore uniquely placed to assist in tackling the inter-linked problems of the environment, welfare, and conflict.

All of these institutions are male institutions. Women cannot hold any of these positions. They therefore have no official influence over the decisions, but they have unofficial ways of influencing decisions or actions. Women are far from powerless in this society. They have full authority over all the food (meat, milk and grain) that is brought into the house (*warra*). After the food has crossed the threshold, a woman can decide what to do with the food, to feed her children, her husband or to sell the food. I was told that it is not uncommon for a husband to be refused food by a wife because she is unhappy with him for one reason or another. If a woman should persist in underfeeding her husband, then the husband will take his wife to the court of the elders, or to the *aba gada*, who will rule that she should feed him well in future. In addition, it is common practice among the Borana for women to take lovers after they have married, sometimes with the husband's permission. When discussing this with Borana women they said, 'it is good to take lovers, because whenever your husband refuses to give you what you want, then you can ask your lover for anything (Daabo Malicha, 2000).

Development organizations and the idealization and denigration of indigenous institutions

In 1999 and 2000 there were several non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations involved in long-term development projects. The NGOs included CARE, SOS Sahel, EECMY working together with NCA (Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekana Yesus and Norwegian Church Aid), Save the Children US, Action for Development, COOPE, and a Catholic Mission. State organisations include the Southern Rangelands Development Unit (SORDU), the Ministries of Agriculture and Administration, the Administration for Resettlement and Refugee Affairs (ARRA). There were also bilateral organisations: GTZ, the German Technical Cooperative Organisation, was working in partnership with the Oromiyya Regional Bureau for Agricultural Development. This joint programme, known as the GTZ/ Borana Lowland Pastoral Development Programme (GTZ/BLPDP) was prominent and influencing the direction of development in the area more broadly. UNHCR also had

an office in Moyale. All of these groups were interviewed at least once during the research.

The situation in 1999 differed markedly from that in 2000. This was because of the drought that began to result in food shortages towards the end of 1999, and which became severe in 2000. CARE, who were winding-up their operation in 1999, re-opened their offices in the region in order to run food distribution programmes. They combined this with the commencement of a new five-year development initiative, aimed at tackling the problems associated with long-term food shortages. In 1999, SOS Sahel were starting up a new 'collaborative forest management project' in the region. Many of their long-term development initiatives had to be shelved as they responded to the immediate food and relief needs of the local population. This was also the case for many of the other NGOs; new NGOs also came into the region simply to run famine-relief projects. This context of the research is not exceptional for Borana region, as droughts and the need for famine-relief are unfortunately not unusual.

In the first phase of the research (1999), interviews with state and NGO development agents, the majority expressed a keen interest in developing approaches to working with the community. When I asked how they were going to do this, several of them stated that the indigenous institutions were highly effective and valuable, and could be used to 'access' the community. There was a definite feeling of hope and positive identification with the institutions. On my return to Borana in 2000, I found that this positive attitude had given way to scepticism. I understood this as being either because the experience of working with indigenous institutions in the period between the field visits had led them to re-evaluate their thinking, or because on my second visit I found the situation to be more complex than it had first appeared.

Whichever was the case, the indigenous institutions were still discussed in terms of a golden age of Borana rangeland management. But in addition to this, in many cases, there was also a subsequent denigration of these institutions: they were seen as having been tampered with and having out-lived their usefulness. The development agents' discourse about indigenous institutions had two themes: the institutions were either idealised or denigrated, and this influenced the use to which they were put, and the alliances and partnerships that were formed in the name of development.

The idealisation of indigenous institutions was partly because of the history of development practices in the region. This was characterised by

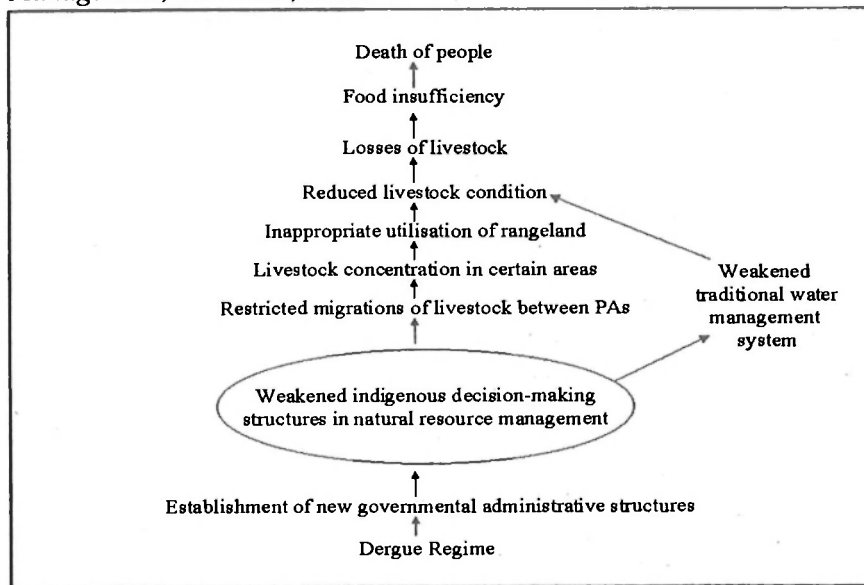
the failure of top-down development practices in the region, which were technology-centric and resulted in serious environmental degradation and the undermining of livelihoods (Gufu, 1998a). In reaction to this, the indigenous institutions began to be seen as a ready-made set of participatory structures, which if they could be integrated into development, would assist in the process. For example, one NGO officer comments:

The Borana resource management, social and economic systems must be appreciated and considered as a good example of intelligence, coordination, determination and coherence in achieving the maximum possible in pastoral productivity and ecological balance (Huqqe Garse, SOS Sahel, 1999: 4)

But, there was the notion that the top-down development practices had destroyed an effective set of management practices, and if they could be recovered and strengthened then it would lead to more efficient practices (Helland, 1998).

GTZ/BLPDP is a good example of this rhetoric and approach. For them, the indigenous institutions had been undermined by the establishment of Peasants' Associations (PAs) during the Derg times (Ethiopian government 1974-1991). According to one influential development worker at GTZ, this parallel set of organisation and administration had led directly to problems for the Borana. He drew this flow diagram:

Diagram 2: Flow diagram of Causes and Effects of the Problem of Weakened Indigenous Decision-Making Structure in Natural Resource Management, Sorra Adi, 1999.



In 1999, in a group meeting with GTZ and government agricultural officers, they told me that they aimed to work with the community. When I asked how they went about doing this, they said:

we support traditional institutions and organisations like the *gada*. Peasants' Associations were imposed during the Dergue regime (1974-1991) and bypass tradition and the elders. We do not work with the PAs or the PA chairman (GTZ, 4.6.99).

Around this time GTZ had also commissioned a consultant, Gufu Oba, who undertook an 'Assessment of Indigenous Range Management Knowledge of the Booran Pastoralists of Southern Ethiopia' (1998a). The first recommendation of this report was the promotion of indigenous natural resource management (1998: iv).

I was also lucky to be able to attend a meeting where GTZ consulted the elders about their programme. The in-coming *aba gada* was also present, and he was consulted in this meeting. At the same time as these overtures towards the indigenous institutions, many organisations (including SCF-US; SOS-Sahel; GTZ/BLPDP; SORDU) were carrying out participatory rural appraisal programmes, and working with elders and other indigenous institutions (such as *aba mada* and *aba olla*) in the process. There was a general feeling of a turning towards indigenous

institutions, improving knowledge about them, and integrating them into the development process. It was thought that this was a way in which people could be empowered, included in the development process, and environmental and human welfare could be improved.

In 2000, there was a significant change in approach: the hopes that had been linked to indigenous institutions had diminished. The narrative that had idealized indigenous institutions was replaced by a narrative that emphasised that the institutions had been interfered with and undermined to the extent that their potential as tools for community-based development in this context was low. This was expressed by workers of GTZ, SOS Sahel, CARE, and the government; agencies which had seemed to feel that they held so much promise before.

GTZ/BLPDP, in particular, seemed to have become more uneasy about directly approaching the indigenous institutions. In their development programme they were setting up natural resource management committees, but they now stated that they did not want to influence the membership of these committees to ensure that indigenous institutions had a place on them. In order to set up their NRM committees, they said that they were approaching everyone in each *mada* and asked them to elect representatives for the new committees. The result of this process was that the members tended to include the elders, but also the PA Chairperson and committee members. In the interview with the GTZ workers, one man explained how this was a positive development because the PA chairperson tended to be 'young and of good conduct' (S. 2.8.00):

Most of the PA officials are young, and they have much to say. The *aba ollas* are elders, and they don't have much to say on development issues (S. 2.8.00).

As the meeting continued, it became clear that they felt that the indigenous institution had been changed so much that it no longer had the same potential:

we don't try to bring back the traditional system. If the community thinks the traditional system is functioning then well and good, but if not then no. It is difficult to bring back the traditional system. Things have already turned 180° - it doesn't make sense to try and turn it back again (2.8.00).

In contrast to what they had said before, they commented that it was not desirable to by-pass the PA administration. GTZ, as a bilateral organisation, is working in partnership with the government, and they should therefore work with the local level of government, the PA.

In 2000, not all organisations had moved away from using indigenous institutions. The extent of the scepticism towards them varied: SOS Sahel agreed that the institutions had been weakened, but still hoped to 'catalyse the traditional institutions to work in the modern context' (B. Irwin, Borana Programme Director, 2000). This would involve working with both indigenous institutions and modern state structure such as the PA. SCF-US also set up NRM committees with a high component of indigenous institutions but also 'adding women'. SCF-US hoped to build on the potential of indigenous institutions, but also improve the position of women in the society by giving them a voice in the decision-making process. During the field research, this particular innovation could not be seen in action, but its outcome will be very interesting.

In 2000, the drought and conflict meant that many of the long-term, and more innovative, development practices were shelved. It is possible to identify that the scepticism that developed towards the potential of indigenous institutions was rooted in an assumption that strengthening indigenous institutions simultaneously involves undermining the PA and other local government structures. These feelings were particularly strong among bilateral and government organizations, who are by definition involved in maintaining and strengthening a functioning local governmental structure. There are some reasons to think, however, that this assumption should not be simply taken for granted.

These interpretations of the situation, hinged partly on viewing the PA structures at a local level, and the indigenous institutions as incompatible and involved in their own struggles over power and resources. This to some extent is true: there can be a conflict of interests for example when decisions must be made over various matters. For example, there are cases of individuals bringing a case for ruling to the elders. If that person does not like the decision that is made, then he may take it to the PA committee, in the hope that a different decision is made. This may undermine the authority and the position of both the elders and the committee, and may put them in conflict with each other. But there are also cases where the PA committees, and the indigenous institutions (elders, *aba olla*, *aba mada* and so on) cooperate and work together. This needs more research but the field visits in 1999 and 2000 indicated such a situation. During visits to different *olla*, informal focus group discussions were held, and frequently the *aba olla*, the elders, and also the PA Chairman were present. They discussed matters together and seemed to be able to reach agreement on different issues. In one *olla* I visited several times, the PA Chairman was the younger brother of the *aba olla*. They appeared to have a strong alliance and division of tasks which

worked to their mutual advantage. On two occasions I watched rulings being made in this community: on the first, a young boy was being tried for stealing a camel; on the second a man was being fined for grazing his animals on land that the *olla* had reserved and had not yet agreed to use. On both occasions the PA Chairperson made the ruling together with elders, but the *aba olla* presided more generally over the proceedings, and it was the *aba olla* I was directed to, to ask for permission to enter the *olla* and talk to the residents.

It seems that the indigenous institutions and the state institutions at a local level, rather like the different ethnic groups discussed in section 3, are quite capable of building alliances and working together. It should not be assumed that they are necessarily in opposition or incompatible. In addition, it should not be assumed that if the indigenous institutions change, then that means that they are eroding or becoming useless. They also have the ability to adapt and meet new challenges. An approach that sees the indigenous institutions and the local state institutions as being in opposition has to be careful of making this into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, development organizations have a role to play in making the relationship one that is more of cooperation than conflict.

Conclusion

This preliminary research has shown that a thinking that relies on a dichotomy between state and non-state organizations, or formal and informal institutions is unhelpful. According to theoretical models, the Borana indigenous institutions would be informal, yet the way in which they are made up of rules that are reinforced every eight years, elected councils, or people who have hereditary authority, shows that in many ways they are quite formal. Stressing the difference between state and non-state tends to imply with it certain other relative qualities: that they are in opposition, and that some institutions are 'of the past', whereas others are 'of the future'. Instead, it is important to look at the way in which institutions change, are re-invented, and create alliances between themselves. Development organizations have a role to play in fostering environments in which different institutions cooperate rather than conflict. If one kind of institution is left out of the process, then it is likely to lead to conflict of various kinds.

This research has also examined the way in which indigenous institutions are frequently thought of as traditional. With this label other associations are frequently applied. As well as being thought of as unchanging, they are thought to have legitimacy and to represent 'the

people'. The research has shown that the indigenous institutions are as likely to have changed in the past as much as they are changing today, and that they have their own political and historical context. The main indigenous institutions in Borana Zone are those of the dominant group in the area, the Borana. Other groups must cooperate with the Borana to gain access to resources. A development organization working in this context must make sure that all groups are included and represented in any development process. Otherwise they are likely to perpetuate, or worsen, the exclusion of minority groups. This also relates to groups who might not be represented in other ways by the institutions; approaches that rely on indigenous institutions may unwittingly exclude women from the development process.

Working with indigenous institutions is undoubtedly complex, but avoiding working with them because of this will not help to engender participation. Alliances that can be constructed between state and indigenous institutions can be a way in which partnerships can be formed and discussions can take place over different development initiatives. Indigenous institutions provide structures in which people are used to discussing matters and which have a degree of continuity. But the positive partnerships should be made at all levels, from the household up to the *aba gada*, and from the PA up to the administrative headquarters. And the discussions are not likely to be easy, but involve compromises being made on all sides.

Conflict is something that has been common historically in this region, and has been exacerbated by recent events. Indigenous institutions provide a useful tool for development in this context, because the Borana see the role of these institutions as being related to keeping the peace. In Borana minds, natural resource management and peace-keeping are combined, and this is something that the development organizations and the state could learn from. Unless all different groups involved are included in discussions about the future of Borana, and unless there is an emphasis on cooperation at all levels, there is unlikely to be a transition to a post-conflict situation.

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Questions, Comments and Answers

Yeraswork Admassie

You talk about both the community and the individual in terms of management. Should the community be managing resources, or the individual?

There is a problem that we need to address in relation to individual and communal management. When we choose between different kinds of management, how do we choose? First we have to look at what is possible in each particular case. It depends on the resource in question. For example, can individual management be made possible in valleys, where perhaps there is flooding of tens or hundreds of hectares? This has to be managed by communal management. In this context, it is possible to consider a mixture of the two, but if we leave it up to individuals, to parcel it up according to the dictates of their own interests, it will not work. In plantations and hillsides, perhaps parcelling can work, but with historic natural forests, for example like those near Woldiya, the natural forest was protected because of the church. For hundreds of years, the community identifies with this. Can we parcel up such a community symbol? I don't think individual management can be preferred in this situation. And there is also the question of practicalities that cannot be overlooked. There is a need for compromise and assessment on a case by case basis.

a) Local level participatory planning approach (LLPPA) – was not started by WFP but by the Ministry of Agriculture a long time ago. Later WFP worked together with the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen it.
b) On DAs - EH was too brief in her analysis of the role of DAs in deciding who should be the beneficiaries. There are DAs and there are also 'planning committees', and these committees comprise many people including the elders. The choice of beneficiaries is not just by DAs - it is a joint decision.

The point about LLPDA becomes clear in the context of the broader participatory model in the region, for example SIDA's Community Environmental Protection programme ('CEP'). LLPPA relies on indirect

participation: a number of community representatives represent the community and give information and participate in the planning process. Whereas CEP tried to make all members of the community participate. With LLPPA, these representatives participate in identifying the needs, priorities and what the community can contribute, but CEP didn't want the DA to be doing this, but rather the farmers. CEP is more participatory, but is it practically possible? We don't hear anything about CEP any more. Also they wanted to come through the *kires* and so on, but we don't hear anything anymore. EH is right, we need to be more critical in addressing this notion of development and the way in which it is worked out.

Elizabeth Harrison

Could you elaborate on your comments about participation in natural resource management being impeded by DAs and professionals

Some experts seemed to feel that when priority was given to the community views, it had the potential to undermine their own expertise.

One of the contexts of this work is the post-conflict situation. Can you comment in particular about what you have discussed in a post-conflict situation?

In relation to the post-conflict situation, it is complicated and we will be examining the issue in a later session. Some would argue that it is more appropriate to have more top-down policies in this context.

a) Local level participatory planning approach (LLPPA) – was not started by WFP but by the Ministry of Agriculture a long time ago. Later WFP worked together with the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen it. b) On DAs - EH was too brief in her analysis of the role of DAs in deciding who should be the beneficiaries. There are DAs and there are also 'planning committees', and these committees comprise many people including the elders. The choice of beneficiaries is not just by DAs - it is a joint decision.

On LLPPA, I take your point. There is a combination of donors and practitioners making decisions together. There are planning committees but there are questions still about who is on these committees. Despite aspirations for representativeness, it is still questionable at present.

Question: You say that participation is like a fashion, and that the donors are demanding this. Can you say how it really changes the lives of the people, and how can we measure this?

How to measure the success of participation? This is inherently difficult, but we can listen to as many diverse voices as possible. This should be in as least a political context as possible. Also it is necessary to be alert to those groups whose voices are not heard or who are silenced, for example, the old, young, and women. It is very important for the monitor or assessor to be as self-aware as possible, because he/she plays a role in the answers that are heard and generated.

Antonio Serra

In Ethiopia there is no environmental legislation only policy no law. What was the experience of implementing environmental legislation in Mozambique?

It is early days to judge the results, as the laws were only approved three years ago. They are still very much at a national level, known only by technicians, and only implemented at a local level through projects, and by NGOs. In practice at a local level, land and NRM are based on customary law and traditional leaders are important

What are the gender dimensions of NRM in Mozambique?

Gender is rather neglected in CBNRM projects. Committees tend to be all male. In some communities the involvement of women is looked down on for "cultural" reasons. NGOs have tried to promote a more gender-sensitive approach but with differential success. In areas where there is greater mobility because of the war there is a less closed attitude to gender and the participation of women than in more isolated areas.

What is the position of the traditional leaders and the basis of their authority?

The authority of traditional leaders goes back to before colonial rule. The Portuguese removed some leaders and put others in place to achieve indirect rule. After the 1975 revolution the Communists abolished the position of traditional leaders, as they were seen as collaborators with

the colonial regime and new party leaders became powerful. During the war Renamo prioritised the traditional leader. Since the war there has been some confusion as to their role

Tarekegn Yibabie

Please locate the area of the research more closely

The area of this research is close to Lake Hayk, near the main road from Dessie to Mekele and the North.

What is the genesis of yewel meret?

It is difficult to define as the concept is not clear and has been manipulated in the past. There are different interpretations by the Government, NGOs and local communities. Interpretations by technicians relate the term to the degree of slope of hillside (30%). In some cases it is used to refer to traditional tenure, and what that means (for example on *Beni* land). In some places it seems that Yewel Meret has been used to interpret traditional rules as open access. The regulations are rather broad and at present unclear.

The SOS experiment was taken on board as a result of careful discussions with Government, in workshops and through the production of technical papers etc. One problem is that the issue came to be taken as a package to be implemented by DAs like a quota (Tena SOS staff member)

Could you expand on gender and natural resource management in Ethiopia

Women are marginalised, especially in the Yewel Meret implementation where they were excluded on the grounds that they do not have the capacity to carry out hard physical labour.

Can you give more detail on the basis for the conflicts over Yewel Meret?

Allocations happened legally and illegally, through small-scale day-to-day distributions, and encroachments. In some cases areas had been given to individuals for private forestry through connections, even if this was not supposed to happen. All kinds of networks had been used to

gain access to land and develop it, for instance a DA allocating land to his father-confessor. This emphasises the importance of the power vacuum during the period of transition. At this time the EPRDF gave land to returnees and young landless. When people were asked to identify common areas they often tried to “hide” them, for fear of losing grazing lands. Farmers therefore have a different interpretation of Yewel Meret from officials.

The draft legislation of the Amhara region refers to Yewel Meret as communally held and administered land, that can be turned into private holdings if necessary, but not to privatisation. Where is the ambiguity? What is the essential nature of Yewel meret and what are the processes?

The article that allows for change to private holding for other purposes has been subject to abuse in some cases. Although it is meant only for trees, there are cases where this has been abused by DAs, and even where farming has taken place. This happened in Kebele 014 in Tehuledere until the administration intervened. This issue even led to the process being suspended in parts of South Wello.

Alula Pankhurst

How do you understand institutions? Is there a danger that we are all working with different understandings of institutions? What are the institutions involved in NRM and how have they fared?

I also view institutions as organisations and rules. But there is a danger of looking for institutions that are seen as homogeneous and unchanging. Therefore, while indigenous institutions might be seen as existing, it may not be right to talk of indigenous resource management institutions. Where indigenous institutions develop a resource management role, this may be the result of external intervention.

There has been an ongoing debate about the extent of deforestation in Wello. Deforestation is more than the destruction of trees; there are implications for ecosystems comprising a variety of species and animals. The plantation of Eucalyptus cannot replace such ecosystems. The area covered by plantation forests is very small (less than 0.1%). The area undergoing destruction is much larger. It is difficult to evaluate if we refer to the whole of Wollo, , but we can agree there is destruction of forests and ecosystems.

Who is using the forest in Yegof? What do you recommend?

There has been conflict over the forest in Yegof. The state has not worked with local institutions. When the state has been weak, then people have been able to press their claims. Where forests have survived, it has less to do with indigenous institutions, than the fact that they have been isolated.

The work by Crummey et.al., mentioned in the debate on deforestation above, has been criticised. Firstly because the photos used were taken by an Italian looking for settlement places for Italians. We can believe that he selected places that justified colonialism – i.e they were barren. Crummey interviewed people who said that there were more forests in the past, but he simply discounted their evidence. The fact of limited forests in Wollo arises from history: the activities of the Derg, also war and military movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Soldiers lived off the land. There is a lack of documentation of the effect of pre-modern wars. Also Wollo has been repeatedly devastated by famine. The response of farmers in these situations is to cut down trees.

What is the relationship between indigenous and traditional institutions? What happens when institutions are re-invented? Should we think of NRMs as old? It is also the case that they can be created. How are we to balance the relations between indigenous institutions and government?

We need to analyse the nature of institutions in more detail. They are the product of power struggles. Re-invention involves both individual creativity and the needs of a particular place. There are also problems with labels. We use the word indigenous to get away from the polarity between the perceptual categories of traditional and modern. People often use tradition as a legitimating practice, so we need to understand the way that traditional or customary rules are invented by people. Development organisations need to come to terms with the different cultural contexts with which they are working. In some ways calling things institutions may be a way of identifying different groups present and giving less powerful people a voice.

What is the relationship between indigenous and traditional institutions? What happens when institutions are re-invented? Should we think of NRMs as old? It is also the case that they can be created.

How are we to balance the relations between indigenous institutions and government?.

Tradition creates the idea of something unchanging. But 'indigenous' can also give the impression that these emerge in a context which is not influenced by external forces. *Kires* were created and formalised in the last 50 years. We seem to think they were around forever, but they were not. There is no reason that you can't create institutions. The important issue is that of legitimacy. It is necessary to find a balance between existing but non-representative institutions, and those new ones that may accommodate all interests, but are seen as being created from outside.

Elizabeth Watson

A description is given of various institutions involved in natural resource management in Borana. Where does GTZ fit in? Why did GTZ policy apparently change?

In many ways GTZ (the German bilateral organisation) is bracketed with the state as it is under the same constraints. The reversal of ideas that took place between 1999 and 2000 is not easy to explain; it may be attributable to the influence of the famine in 2000 and the increasing levels of conflict. These took over people's priorities. There was in the region a general disillusionment with participatory approaches too.

How do you understand institutions? Is there a danger that we are all working with different understandings of institutions? What are the institutions involved in NRM and how have they fared?

I have employed a very broad approach to institutions, from organisations to regularised practices and sets of ideas. There is a danger of course that the definition can become meaningless, but also, it becomes possible to use this to look at a whole range of situations. In Borana there is a range of institutions governing access to water, grazing and so on. But they do not separate their economic and environmental management functions from other aspects of life, for example social life and inter-ethnic relations. In these institutions, regular changes in personnel allows for flexibility and hence continuity with change.

Group Discussions

For the group discussions, 3 groups were formed for the 4 proposed topics, groups C and D were merged. The following points emerged from the group work

Group A: Issues of Tenure

Key question: Is there a link between tenure security and NRM?

Yes, but there is a need for caution.

What is tenure security?

The right to use/own a given tract of land without interference by a third party. This can be viewed as being comprised of three dimensions:

- 1) Bundle of rights
- 2) Durability of these rights
- 3) Land users' perception of these rights and duration

Linkage of tenure with improved NRM

The following are important

- confidence
- means of access to credit and service

Group versus individual tenure. Is there necessarily a conflict?

Not necessarily. It depends on

- the land use practices in place
- the agricultural calendar
- the technology used the two forms can co-exist

Group B: Issues of Community and Representation

Key Question: What local institutions have a role in NRM and whom do they represent?

The group agreed that it is difficult to generalise and better to start with case studies with which individuals were familiar. Four cases were presented:

Case 1: Southern Region, Gurage (Muhur area)

Serege pasture and forest resource

- Still managed by different levels of traditional institutions based on kinship and residence.
- Encroachment has so far been largely resisted using religion
- Some evidence of recent institutionalisation of resource management

Case 2: Oromia, Bale Zone, Adaba-dodola forest

- GTZ-supported project to set up forest dwellers associations (acronym WAJIB)
- Community defined as those dwelling within the forest
- Exclusive rights but also responsibilities

Case 3: Amhara Region, North Wello Zone, Meket and Kobo

- Irrigation run by committees with “*yewuha abbat*” water fathers, and role of NGOs
- Grazing areas with rules of seasonal use by defined user groups based on proximity
- Burial associations recently organised by SOS-Sahel to carry out hill-side enclosures.

Case 4: Southern Region, South Omo, Tsamako

- Pasture, trees and irrigation management rules
- Role of Council of Elders in resource management
- Conflict with investor irrigating land

Conclusions

- Though no clear generalisations emerged, it was suggested that local institutions may represent interests of the elders and men, and that women may be excluded.
- Defining the community was seen as problematic, and there are overlapping institutions. In some cases traditional institutions have more power in others they are more marginal and the state controls NRM
- The complexities of communities are compounded by the diversity of institutions, relationships between formal and informal ones, community and state institutions, and the changing nature of all

institutions in relation to changing political, economic, cultural and environmental contexts

Group C: Government, Donors, NGOs and Communities

Key Question: Do Government, donors, NGOs and communities have different positions with regard to NRM?

- NGOs and Donors have different ideas, approaches and experiences and roles. There is a need to appreciate the differences
- Can be positive
- Can be problematic (differences in interest)
- Potential differences can be overcome by identifying and prioritising needs and views of the community
- Transparent decision making and good communication
- Feedback into flexible policy

Group D: Conflict and post conflict

Key Question: Is the conflict/post conflict dichotomy useful in the Ethiopian context?

1. Conflict/ post Conflict seen as causing environmental degradation. So special needs for NRM?
2. Environmental degradation and conflict can be linked but not necessarily exclusively so or causally related in a linear way.
3. Conflict and environmental degradation are both products of, and symptoms of, wider problems and processes, as was illustrated by Dr Yeraswork's talk.
4. The impacts of conflict and environmental degradation may generate immediate needs for relief or intervention, but this should not be separated from tackling the broader, and long term, difficulties.
5. Such an approach does not therefore have to be any less 'bottom-up' or long term in focus.

Annex 1: Workshop Programme

Forum For Social Studies

Management Of Natural Resources

Semien Hotel, Friday 9 February 2001

- 8:30-9:00 Registration
- 9:00-9:30 Opening remarks on management of natural resources
Ato Dessalegn Rahmato,
Forum for Social Studies
- 9:30-10:00 Overview of resource management in Ethiopia and policy implications
Dr Yeraswork Admassie,
Department of Sociology and Social Administration,
Addis Ababa University
- 10:00-10:30 Participation and partnership in resource management
Dr Elizabeth Harrison,
School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee Break**
- 11:00-11:30 Research findings on management of natural resources in Mozambique
Antonio Serra
Centre for Forest Research, Mozambique
- 11:30-12:00 Land user rights and the question of *Yewel Meret* in Wello, Amhara Region
Tarekegn Yibabie,
School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex
- 12:00-12:30 Discussion

12:30-1:30	Lunch Break
1:30-2:00	State and community forests: Yegof, South Wello, Amhara Region <i>Dr Alula Pankhurst,</i> <i>Department of Sociology and Social Administration,</i> <i>Addis Ababa University</i>
2:00-2:30	Inter-institutional alliances and conflicts in Borana, Oromia Region <i>Dr Elisabeth Watson,</i> <i>Geography Department, Cambridge University</i>
2:30-3:00	Discussion
3:00-3:30	Tea Break
3:30-4:30	Group Discussion
4:30-5:30	Concluding Session
5:30-6:00	Reception

Annex 2: List of participants

No.	Participant's name	Organisation
1	Abay Kindie	ANRS-BOA
2	Abdurahiman Kubsa	GTZ
3	Abiye Alemu	FFE
4	Abraham Sewenet	WFP
5	Addis Tiruneh	CERTWD/AAU
6	Adi Huka	
7	Aklilu Kidanu	MIZ-Hasab
8	Aklog Laike	SIDA
9	Alula Pankhurst	AAU-Sociology
10	Antonio Serra	CEF-Mozambique
11	Bahru Zewde	AAU/FSS
12	Belay Tegene	CSS/AAU
13	Berhanu Fentaw	MOA
14	Beyene Doilicho	AAU-Geography
15	Birhanu Tateke	Concern
16	Debebe H/Wold	MEDAC
17	Demel Teketay	EARO
18	Dessalegn Rahmeto	FSS
19	Dessalgn Eyob	(AKERMA)
20	Dr. Eyasu Elias	SOS-Sahel
21	Elizabeth Harrison	University of Sussex
22	Ensermu Keldess	AAU
23	Ermias Tenkir	MEDAC
24	Eshetu Bekele	FSS
25	Etalem Mengeste	Consultant
26	Fantahun Haile	EHT
27	Fekade Azeze	AAU
28	Fisseha Amdu	DPPC
29	Gebeyehu Goshu	South Wollo DoA
30	Gebbru Mersha	AAU
31	Gedion Asfaw	SCSE/EPA
32	Getachew Olana	Private
33	Getachew Zewdie	Zegha Bussiness college
34	Gingo Giya	SOS-Sahel
35	Gizachew Abegaz	MOA
36	Habtamu Wondimu	AAU/FSS

37	Ingesohomi Tioflaat	
38	Kebede Ayele	GTZ-LUPO
39	Konjit Fekade	A.A.U
40	Leykun Berhanu	MoA
41	Liz Watson	Cambridge University
42	Meheret Ayenew	AAU-FSS
43	Melaku Bekele	Wondo Genet
44	Melese Getu	AAU
45	Melis Teka	EPA
46	Mengestu Dessalegn	A.A.U
47	Mogess Worku	Lem Ethiopia
48	Mulugeta Abebe	A.A.U
49	Mulumebet Zenebe	AAU
50	Mustafa Babiker	AAU
51	Nina Sardli	WFP
52	Nurhussen Taha (Dr.)	MoA
53	Original W. Giorgis	EWLA
54	Paola Heinonen	CERTWID
55	Shibru Tedla	ECO-Consult
56	Shiferaw Belila	AAU-Psy.
57	Shimeles Bonsa	AAU/FSS
58	Sintayehu M.	SOS-Sahel
59	Siseraw Dinku	EU
60	Solomon Abate	Agri-Service
61	Tarekegn Yibabie	Sussex
62	Tebebe Alemayehu	ERSHA
63	Teferi Abate	AAU
64	Tekahun Besha	MEDAC
65	Tenna Shitarek	SOS-Sahel
66	Workneh Negatu	IDR
67	Yared Amare	AAU
68	Yegzaw Ayalew	E.P.A.
69	Yeraswork Admassie	AAU/FSS
70	Yigremew Adal	AAU
71	Yonas Admassu	AAU
72	Zemedu Worku	FSS
73	Zenebeworke Tadesse	FSS
74	Zerihun Mohammed	A.A.U

FSS Publications

FSS Newsletter

Medrek (Quarterly since 1998. English and Amharic)

FSS Discussion Papers

- No. 1. *Water Resource Development in Ethiopia: Issues of Sustainability and Participation*. Dessalegn Rahmato. June 1999
- No. 2. *The City of Addis Ababa: Policy Options for the Governance and Management of a City with Multiple Identity*. Meheret Ayenew. December 1999
- No. 3. *Listening to the Poor: A Study Based on Selected Rural and Urban Sites in Ethiopia*. Aklilu Kidanu and Dessalegn Rahmato. May 2000
- No. 4. *Small-Scale Irrigation and Household Food Security. A Case Study from Central Ethiopia*. Fuad Adem. February 2001
- No. 5. *Environmental Impact of Development Policies in Peripheral Areas: The Case of Metekel, Northwest Ethiopia*. Wolde-Selassie Abbute. Forthcoming, July 2001
- No. 6. *The Environmental Impact of Small-scale Irrigation: A Case Study*. Fuad Adem. Forthcoming, July 2001

FSS Monograph Series

- No. 1. *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999*. Shimelis Bonsa. 2000
- No. 2. *Environmental Change and State Policy in Ethiopia: Lessons from Past Experience*. Dessalegn Rahmato. 2001

FSS Conference Proceedings

1. *Issues in Rural Development. Proceedings of the Inaugural Workshop of the Forum for Social Studies, 18 September 1998.* Edited by Zenebework Tadesse. 2000
2. *Development and Public Access to Information in Ethiopia.* Edited by Zenebework Tadesse. 2000
3. *Environment and Development in Ethiopia.* Edited by Zenebework Tadesse. 2001
4. *Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods in Ethiopia.* Edited by Yared Amare. June 2001
5. *Natural Resource Management in Ethiopia.* Edited by Alula Pankhurst. Addis Ababa, 2001

Consultation Papers on Poverty

- No. 1. *The Social Dimensions of Poverty.* Papers by Minas Hiruy, Abebe Kebede, and Zenebework Tadesse. Edited by Meheret Ayenew. June 2001
- No. 2. *Civil Society Groups and Poverty Reduction I.* Papers by Fassil W. Mariam, Abowork Haile, Berhanu Geleto, and Jemal Ahmed. Edited by Meheret Ayenew. July 2001
- No. 3. *Civil Society Groups and Poverty Reduction II.* Papers by Abonesh H. Mariam, Zena Berhanu, and Zewdie Shitie. Edited by Meheret Ayenew. Forthcoming 2001

Books

1. *The View from Below: Democratization and Governance in Ethiopia.* Edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang. Forthcoming (Co-published by FSS)

Special Publications

1. *Thematic Briefings on Natural Resource Management.* Edited by Alula Pankhurst. Published jointly by the Forum for Social Studies and the University of Sussex. January 2001