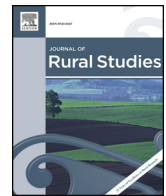




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Gender relations in changing agroforestry homegardens in rural Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Agroforestry homegardens have been the dominant farming practice in the southern part of Ethiopia, delivering multiple products important for food security and livelihoods of rural households. This traditional farming is based on the labour force of both men and women in the household, however, with unequal rights to access and control over land and farm products. Since the 1990s the traditional agroforestry homegardens have been gradually changing from self-subsistence farming towards mainly commodity production of cash crops, dominantly khat. This study examines how the formal and customary institutions address the gender relations in the changing agroforestry homegardens. Based on a review of 22 legal documents, 24 key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews in 40 households and eight focus group discussions in the Sidama zone we identified that customary institutions restrict women's access to land, market and trading, decision-making process at the household and community levels. We conclude that while international and national legal documents recognize women's contribution, and their human/civil rights, in practice rural women are still disadvantaged.

1. Introduction

Many scholars emphasize the importance of smallholder agriculture for broad based development efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Anderson et al., 2011; Gessesse, 2013). In Ethiopia, smallholder farming practices, including agroforestry homegardens, have been recognized as the basis for the national economic development (Adenew, 2004; Yegremew, 2006). However, few studies have problematized the gender relations in agroforestry homegardens, which typically is a small-scale agriculture in the southern part of Ethiopia, and involving women to a large extent (Tadesse, 2002, 2005). Agroforestry homegardens are characterized by high diversity of annual and perennial crops, medicinal plants, vegetables, fruit trees and trees for wood, spatially integrated on a relatively small farm plot using multilayer structures. Livestock is also an integral component of this farming. This type of small-scale agriculture is based on traditional knowledge and experiences of local communities, gained over long period of time, and adapted to the local biophysical environment, and social-economic context (Tesfaye, 2013). The essential role of this traditional farming has been underlined by many scholars due to its continuous and sustainable supply of food ensuring food security at the household and rural community levels in the southern part of Ethiopia (Admasu and Struik, 2001, 2002; Almaz et al., 2002; Almaz and Niehof, 2004;

Gessesse and Kinlund, 2008; Tadesse, 2002; Gebrehiwot et al., 2016; Tesfaye, 2005; Tesfaye et al., 2006; Kumar and Naira, 2004; Wiersum, 2004; Tesfaye 2005). The possibilities of harvesting multiple products (enset, maize, vegetables, fruits, roots, dairy products, coffee etc.) continuously all year around for household food and nutrition, and for getting permanent financial income from marketing farm products contribute to sustaining livelihoods of rural households even with relatively small farm plots - less than a half of hectare. For example, Motuma et al. (2008) showed that the average size of homegardens that support the livelihood of smallholders in the south-central highlands of Ethiopia was 0.35, 0.27 and 0.12 hectare for rich, medium and poor households, respectively.

The traditional agroforestry homegardens are based on the labour force of both men and women in the household, however, with unequal rights to access to the land and to control over farm products (Admasu and Struik, 2001, 2002; Tadesse, 2002; Almaz and Nieho, 2004). In general, only men have rights to the farmland and to control financial family resources (Howard, 2006; Kiptot and Franzel, 2011; Kiptot et al., 2014), while women are responsible for the production and processing of food. Since the 1990s the traditional agroforestry homegardens have been gradually changing from self-subsistence farming towards mainly commodity production of new cash crops' monocultures, dominantly khat (*Catha edulis*) (Admasu and Struik, 2001; Almaz and Nieho, 2004;

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Tesfaye, 2005; Gessesse and Kinlund, 2008). Changes in agriculture profoundly affect the structure and identity of a rural society (see Brandth, 2002; Deere and Doss, 2006; Shortall, 2009; Fischer and Qaim, 2012). Yet, the further implications of this gendered farming practices are poorly understood, and even less regarding how it plays out in the current situation of change.

This study examines how the formal and customary institutions address the gender relations in the changing agroforestry homegardens. This paper seeks to increase the understanding of the change as such and reveal conflicting differences between formal and customary institutions. Thus, it is assumed that latter findings will inform on tensions that may constrain the implementation of policies as well as resistance or adaptations to a changing situation. Institutions are the legal administrative and customary arrangements for repeated human interactions (Pejovich, 1999). The institutional framework in a society consists of formal and informal institutions that interplay with each other at different societal levels and scales. Broadly speaking, formal institutions are governmental regulations that determine the political, economic and the enforcement systems in a society (Pejovich, 1999). Informal, or – in our case – customary institutions, are defined as norms and customs that regulate socio-economic life (Casson et al., 2010). According to Fenrich et al. (2011), “customary laws are derived from the moral, values, and traditions of indigenous ethnic groups; it includes customs and traditions of the people, which play a crucial role in shaping their culture” (pp. 448). The effectiveness of formal institutions in rural development is dominantly constrained by customary institutions. For example, Casson et al. (2010) demonstrate how customary institutions in developing countries play a significant role in shaping formal institutions. The customary arrangements in many countries pose a serious threat to women's equal rights by legitimizing and enforcing gender discriminatory rules (Williams, 2011); thus, constraining the effectiveness of formal institutions, for example, regarding the implementation of women's rights and gender equality policies. Many scholars show that institutions have a strong impact on economic growth and sustainable development at different levels (Rodrik, 2005; Savoia et al., 2010); however, much of the literature focuses at the macroeconomic level. Many scholars acknowledged the importance of institutional analysis at the micro-level for efficient policy intervention (Catherine, 2007; Mastewal et al., 2009; Teshale, 2011; Habtu, 2012).

This study focuses on the two main research questions: Have the gender relations in agroforestry homegardens in Ethiopia changed due to the on-going transition towards monoculture production of new cash crops? How do the existing formal and informal institutions define gender rights? We applied what is called the ‘fit/misfit’ approach (Knill and Lenshow, 2001) to analyse the correspondence between formal and customary institutions at the local level. ‘Fit/misfit’ hypothesis is based on the assumption that effectiveness of policy implementation depends on the level of correspondence between regulatory patterns at international, national and local levels. If there is a high degree of ‘fit,’ policy implementation may be expected to be smooth. A considerable ‘misfit’ or ‘mismatch’ between, for example, customary institutions at the local level and existing formal institutions at the national level could create tensions that constrain effectiveness of policy implementation that may potentially lead to social conflicts among diverse groups of stakeholders. The assumption of ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ is based on the central hypothesis of historical institutionalism that institutions tend to resist change, even in a changing situation (Thelen, 1999).

Presently, national legal documents promote women rights (e.g., Women's Policy, 1993; Ethiopian Constitution, 2005). Furthermore, Ethiopia has ratified the UN charter on Human Rights (OAU, 1981) that have been accepted as a framework for measuring development progress, and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1997, 2003), which outlines a variety of political, social, economic, and legislative issues that are supposed to create equality between men and women (Pitamber, 2004). Although women are given equality in national legislation, rural

women are still the most disadvantaged and vulnerable group in society, and their role in rural development is invisible (Desalgne and Taye, 2006; Torkelsson, 2008).

2. Methods

We analyses the correspondence between formal and customary institutions related to gender relations, using the Sidama zone in the Southern Nations', Nationalities' and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS) as a study area. The descriptive case study research (Yin, 2003) was applied to provide an exhaustive analysis of gender relations in changing agroforestry homegardens as a phenomenon. Case study research as a scientific method is widely applied in different fields of social, political, business and natural resource use (Yin, 2013), where a contemporary phenomenon is to be studied in its context (Yin, 2003). Our case study research is based on qualitative data collection, using a literature review, key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

2.1. Study area

The Sidama zone (5° 45' - 6° 45' N; 38° 15' - 39° E) in the Southern Nations', Nationalities' and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS) has been chose as a study area. It covers 6538 km² with a population of 3.4 million people (Fig. 1). It is one of Ethiopia's most densely populated regions with 521 persons per km² (Admasu and Struik, 2002; Tesfaye, 2005; CSA, 2011). In the SNNPRS, approximately 93% of the population is rural; for a comparison, overall Ethiopian rural population is approximately 86% (CSA, 2011). Agroforestry homegardens are practised on 30% of cultivated land, and provide diverse tangible (food, fodder, fire wood, wild medicine etc.) and intangible (cultural identity, sense of place etc.) services to sustain livelihoods of more than 15 million people (Admasu and Struik, 2002; Tesfaye et al., 2010).

Christianity is the dominant religion in the Sidama zone, among which Protestants form the majority. There are also Muslims and a few traditional beliefs (Tefsaye, 2005). Patriarchal kin and family relationship dominate in the Sidama zone, especially in rural areas. Descent is traced dominantly through the father's families; thus, it is a tradition for a child to take the father's first name as his or her last name. Kebele Administrations (KAs) (the lowest administrative units in Ethiopia) are often composed of kin groups that offer support during difficult times. The kin groups are responsible for settling disputes within a kin group or clan. Elders, who are only men, are respected, and are regarded as the source of a lineage (Ellison, 2009).

In the Sidama zone agroforestry homegardens are characterized by the two ‘keystone’ species, enset (*Ensete ventricosum* (Welw.) and coffee (*Coffea arabica*), which have been traditionally important for household's food security (Admasu and Struik, 2002; Almaz and Nieho, 2004) and for generating financial income (Tefsaye, 2005; Tesfaye et al., 2006). Since the 1990s agroforestry homegardens have been transitioning towards monoculture production of khat (Tefsaye et al., 2006; Gessesse and Kinlund, 2008; Gessesse, 2013; Gebrehiwot et al., 2016). Chewing khat was a traditional practice among men in the eastern part of the country. Since the 1990s many farmers had begun growing khat as a dominant crop on their farm plots due to the increasing market demand and prices of khat in comparison with the decreasing relative market value of the traditional cash crop, such as coffee and food crops (Gebrehiwot et al., 2016; Tesfaye, 2013; Gessesse and Kinlund, 2008). Thus, farmers consider the production of khat as a livelihood strategy to compensate the declining households' income from food crops and coffee (Gebrehiwot et al., 2016).

Two weredas (sub-districts) (Wondo Genet and Shebedino) with four KAs, Hawella Wondo, Gemetto Gemetto Galle, Cheffa Cenni and Arenfema, were chosen for an in-depth study. The selected KAs represent the existing diversity of agroforestry homegardens in the study region as well as the current changes in this traditional farming towards

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