



Farmers' participation in the development of land use policies for the Central Rift Valley of Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Farmers in Ethiopia are elementary for the implementation of land use policies. However, in order to effectively implement these policies, they need to be aware of them, and accept them accordingly. In this study we assess to what extent farmers in the Central Rift Valley are aware of prevailing land use policies in their area, to what extent they participated in the development of these policies, and how they perceive the impacts of these policies, using interviews with local farmers as well as stakeholders from governmental institutions at various levels. Farmers and local governments indicated that there was very little participation in the development of land use policies. Contrary, government informants at higher level indicated the opposite, suggesting a gap between farmers and local governmental institutions on the one side and higher governmental institutions on the other side. The perceived lack of participation of farmers led to a lack of ownership, involuntary participation, and failure to use the local knowledge, all hampering the effective implementation of these policies. The recently introduced land registration and certification process was identified as an exception, as it was the result of a participatory process, generally leading to acceptance upon implementation. Despite their low policy awareness, farmers could identify the impacts of land use policies on land use and land cover change, as well as its impacts on their. Further improvement farmer participation in the development of land use policies could increase ownership and thus yield more effective implementation and avoid social unrest.

1. Introduction

Studies have demonstrated that benefits from public participation in policy development accrue to all parties (Booth and Halseth, 2011; Fraser et al., 2006; Mitchell, 2005). This literature indicates that participation leads to more legitimate and fair decisions by offering a chance for those who are likely to be impacted by the decision to expose their preferences and needs. Specifically, participation improves the quality of policies by complementing expert knowledge with lay and local knowledge, and thus increases trust and acceptability of the final decision (Adger et al., 2003; Blackstock and Richards, 2007; Wesselink et al., 2011). Authors have argued that participation adds value to policy making (in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, impact and pertinence) and empower citizens in such a way that people realize they can solve the problems they face and have the right to contest unjust conditions (Adger et al., 2003; OECD, 2005; Wesselink et al., 2011). In addition, participation can improve trust by avoiding providentialism, corruption, and vigilantism, as it allows citizens to have sufficient representation (OECD, 2005). Yet, despite the large numbers of advocates

in favor of participation (Chirenje et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2005; Wesselink et al., 2011), some skepticism remains about the extent to which benefits of participation are actually achieved (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Koontz and Thomas, 2006; Singleton, 2000; Walker and Hurley, 2004).

Participation relates to the involvement of non-state actors throughout the policy cycle (Bewket and Sterk, 2002; Newig and Fritsch, 2009; Wesselink et al., 2011). In the context of land use policies in Ethiopia, including policies for natural resource management, soil and water conservation, land use plans, and the establishment of national parks, the most relevant non-state actors are smallholder farmers managing the land. Such participation could range from little influence, such as providing information, to a strong influence, such as consultation and negotiation (Maier et al., 2014). A number of studies have been conducted with regard to stakeholders' participation in the context of land use policies across the world, including Latin America (Booth and Halseth, 2011), North America (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004), Africa (Chirenje et al., 2013), Asia (Mauerhofer, 2016) and Europe (Neef, 2008). These analyses typically assess the perception of those

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people that are directly involved in a particular policy (Booth and Halseh, 2011) or project (Diduck et al., 2013). However, such assessment could give a biased result, as it does not include the perspectives of people that are not involved, neither does it typically compare perspectives, i.e. from government institutions and from farmers.

The federal constitution of Ethiopia stimulates active participation of local citizens in the development of land use policies. Specifically, articles 43(2) and 92(3) of the constitution give citizens the rights for full consultation and the expression of views in the planning and implementation of such policies that affect their livelihood. At the same time, several studies show that there is little participation of farmers in the development of land use policies in Ethiopia (De Graaff et al., 2013; Herweg and Ludi, 1999). This has been related to a lack of awareness among farmers (Bulkeley and Mol, 2003; Kilewo and Frumence, 2015), and increasing this awareness may increase the participation of farmers in policy development (Wesselink et al., 2011). However, we don't know how local farmers as well as their governmental institutions at various levels perceive the level of farmers' participation in the development of land use policies, and whether they are aware of their possibilities to do so.

The objective of this paper is to assess the participation of farmers in the development of land use policies in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia. To that effect we explore their awareness of existing land use policies, the level of participation in different phases of the policy cycle, and the perceived impact of these policies on land use, land cover, and their livelihoods. In addition, we explore what factors could explain these results. Based on previous research (Adhikari, 2009; Muneer et al., 2013) we expect that age, education, livelihood, tenure security, gender, marital status, and location could affect farmer's awareness of land use policies. Specifically, we hypothesize that younger people with a higher education are more aware of land use policies because they have more access to information. Moreover, we expect that farmers with a higher tenure security, and with a livelihood that is at least partly based on cropland have a higher awareness, as their relation with the land provide more incentive than pastoralists. We also hypothesize that men are more aware of land use policies than women, because men are normally in charge of the business, while women are more often in charge of the family. We have no reasons to assume that family size, or locations of the farm have any influence on policy awareness (Adhikari, 2009; McBride and Daberkow, 2003; Muneer et al., 2013; Obayelu et al., 2014).

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study area

Ethiopia is a Federal State with decentralized power, distributed over five administrative levels: national (federal), regional, zonal, wereda, and kebele. The federal government is responsible for enacting federal laws which are applicable across the country, while regional states are responsible for the implementation of these federal laws as well as enacting laws which are applicable only to their specific region. The regional governments have established different land administration offices at zonal and wereda level. At kebele level the land administration committee is responsible for handling land issues. Each kebele is further subdivided into three kebele zones and each kebele zone, in turn, is divided into geres, consisting of five farmers each. Most of the time, farmers communicate any land-use related issues with the government through their geres.

The study area, covering 271 118 ha, is located in the Central Rift Valley of Ethiopia, roughly 225 km south of the capital Addis Ababa. The study area comprises of two weredas both of which are in the Oromia regional state: Arsi-Negele wereda, which is found in the West Arsi zone, and Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha wereda, which is found in East Shoa zone (Fig. 1). In 2017, the study area had a total population of 535 501 (CSA, 2014), 78% of which lives in rural areas. Most of the

rural population is subsistence farmers, based on mixed livestock and cropland farming (Ariti et al., 2015).

In the 1970s, the region was dominated by forests, woodlands and grasslands. However, over the past four decades, most of the land has been converted into cropland, mainly to support the growing population (Ariti et al., 2015; Garedew et al., 2012; Meshesha et al., 2012). As a result, an increasing share of the farmers shifted from pastoralism to a livelihood of mixed cropland livestock. In addition, the region has experienced severe land degradation due to unsustainable land management practices. At the same time, farmers are constrained by lack of capacity, lack of information and lack of knowledge to make the necessary adaptive measures (Ariti et al., 2015).

2.2. Data acquisition and data analysis

We base our study on a total of 100 interviews with farmers from the study region, which we use to quantitatively analyze the research questions posed above. These farmers are selected from 20 kebeles, 5 from each kebele, using random sampling. In addition to these farmers, we have interviewed 52 key informants from governmental institutions at regional (9), zonal (12), wereda (12), and kebele (19) level, to qualitatively and quantitatively compare the perception of farmers with the perception of staff of governmental institutions. The key informants at institutional level were selected using purposive sampling, to ensure that we cover the institutions that are directly related to the development or implementation of land use policies at different administrative levels. A complete list of these institutions is included in the supplementary material (SM1).

The semi-structured questionnaire was divided into four sections, related to 1) the awareness of farmers of existing land use policies, 2) the participation of farmers in land use policies, 3) the impacts of land use policies on land use, land cover, and livelihoods of farmers. Based on Lambin et al. (2003) and Jakobson et al. (2007), we expect land policies to have an impact on land use, land cover and farmers' livelihood. and 4) factors hampering the effective implementation of land use policies (see also Fig. 2). Land use policies in this paper include governmental laws, regulations, ruling, decisions, orders, or a combination of these which directly affect the usage of the land by smallholder farmers (Birkland 2005). These relate for example to land and water conservation, afforestation, and national parks. In consultation with local experts and government offices, we identified a list of ten land use policies that we provided to the farmers to measure the level of their awareness (SM2). Participation in land use policies was assessed for the four phases that normally comprise the policy cycle: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Barkenbus, 1998; St-Laurent et al., 2017). Participation in this study was interpreted as any type of inclusion of smallholder farmers in any stage of the policy cycle (Wesselink et al., 2011). We further characterized participation along the gradient from no influence to high influence, based on the activity that characterized the participation (presence, providing information, consultation, co-decision, and negotiation). Participation of other non-state actors was outside the scope of this research. As we interviewed farmers as well as stakeholders from governmental institutes, we compared their perception on these issues for all questions. Moreover, we recorded various farmer characteristics to assess our hypotheses on the relation between these characteristics and their awareness of land use policies.

3. Results

3.1. Farmer's awareness of land use policies

Only few farmers indicated that they were aware of any land use policies, land use plans, restrictions on the use of their land, and institutional actors that are involved in land use policies. Specifically, 24%, 5%, 4%, and 27%, of all farmers, were aware of the existence of at

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