

# The Role of Local Institutions in Adaptive Processes to Climate Variability:

The cases of southern Ethiopia and southern Mali

Todd A. Crane  
Wageningen University

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# Adaptation and Local Social Institutions

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- “Adaptation to climate is inevitably local . . . .”
- Local Social Institutions
  - “a) they structure impacts and vulnerability,
  - b) they mediate between individual and collective responses to climate impacts and thereby shape outcomes of adaptation, and
  - c) they act as the means of delivery of external resources to facilitate adaptation, and thus govern access to such resources.”

Agrawal 2008:2

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- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation research call on institutions and climate adaptation
- Oxfam America
  - Development NGOs want to engage in adaptation efforts
    - Creatively
    - Respectfully
    - Effectively
  - What is there to know about local adaptive dynamics?

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## ■ Research approaches

- 1 International research coordinator
- 2 National research consultants, and teams
- 2 Wageningen MSc students
- Long term Oxfam sites
  - Southern Ethiopia
    - Borana pastoral zone
    - On-going drought and famine
  - Southeastern Mali
    - Cotton belt
    - Old/recent integration of cotton
- Spring to summer 2011



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## ■ Research questions

- 1. What role do local social institutions have in long-term adaptation to environmental change?
- 2. How have extra-local actors interacted with local social institutions in development and adaptation efforts?
- 3. How is the production and use of weather and climate information organized?

# Adaptation and Local Social Institutions

## ■ Institutions (?)

- Formal organization
  - Village councils
  - Trade associations
- Informal custom
  - Land tenure practices
  - Gender division of labor

## ■ Local (?)

- Legitimacy
- Accountability



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## ■ Research approaches

### ● Shared frameworks

- Research questions
- Social mechanisms of change
- Local perspectives and dynamics
- Qualitative methods

### ● Mixed methods

- Life histories
- Household surveys
- Case studies
- Key informant interviews
- Focus groups

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## ■ Findings

- Production strategies
- Land and water governance
- Social support systems
- Households, gender and adaptive capacity
- Weather and climate information



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## ■ Production strategies

### ● Ethiopia

- Borena cattle herding → camel and goat herding

### ● Mali

- Dual seed system



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## ■ Land and water governance

### ● Ethiopia

- Customary local institutions
- State (“modern”) local institutions

### ● Mali

- Land tenure
- Decentralization



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- Social support systems
  - Ethiopia
    - *Buusa gonnofa*
  - Mali
    - Reciprocity, kinship and gifting
    - Market integration



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## ■ Households, gender and adaptive capacity

- Ethiopia

- Shifting workload

- Mali

- Land access



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- Weather and climate information
  - Low access to and trust in scientific climatology
  - Active local practice of forecast
    - Mundane observation
    - Arcane specialization



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# Recommendations

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- ↑ Adaptive capacities, ↓ adaptive technologies
- Start with local practices, institutions, dynamics
- Engage both customary and state institutions
- Integrate with markets selectively
- Increasing women's access to educational, political and financial opportunities aids adaptive capacity
- Diversify livelihoods, inc. urban/foreign migration
- Synergize local/scientific climate info production

# Discussion points

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- ↑ Adaptive capacities, ↓ adaptive technologies
- Start with local practices, institutions, dynamics

# Works Cited

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- Agrawal, A., (2008) The role of local institutions in adaptation to climate change. World Bank, Washington DC, p. 65.
- Crane, T.A., (2013) Adaptive processes to climate change and variability in community-based social institutions in southern Ethiopia and southern Mali. Oxfam America, Washington DC.



# Questions?

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