

TRANSACT

Strengthening Rural Transformation Competences
of Higher Education and Research Institutions in the Amhara Region, Ethiopia



Rural Transformation

Ideas and concepts for improved outcomes

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- Why do we want to rethink and do things differently?
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Ato Assefa's innovative terraces,
Wojnie, Ambober, Ethiopia

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT RURAL TRANSFORMATION?



We give it a different name, but we repeat the same mistakes



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Understanding transformation

- system change
- macro- to micro level
- linkages
- positive / negative
- hard to predict and govern
- unexpected and uncontrollable
- dynamics, behavior, perceptions, resilience

(Gibson, Cahill et al. 2010)



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Transformation is slow and not for everyone

„We are no longer sleeping on animal skins, we have matrasses to sleep on.“

„Our roofs are no longer straw-thatched, we can buy corrugated iron sheets.“

Farmers in Galessa, Ethiopia, 2011



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Farm houses in Wojnie,
Ambober, Ethiopia

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Transformation can be disabled

“In many occasions, people come and talk about something and we did not get the technology. If we have to be changed, if we have to improve productivity, the rural development office is always telling us to increase production, while they lack monitoring and evaluation. The rural development agents come and tell us about something and they never come back unless the higher officials come to the area. The activity of agriculture is a time bound activity and if it is passed, no one can change it. “

Farmer during FGD, Ambober, Ethiopia, 2011



„Outsiders“ leaving the village again (Ambober-Wusaba, Ethiopia)

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Transformation is not always positive

“The problem in the time when our parents were living is not that difficult and they have lots of plots of land. If they have faced in an area, they will change their farmland and this village was a forest area and they can get what they want. With the expansion of farmland and increased population, we start to face problems and we have no option to change the place of farming. There was no that much problem that time since the soil was fertile. But this time, there is no forest are left, all the land becomes either grazing or farmland, and in this time we need the support of research to feed us and to sell to the market.”

Farmer during FGD, Ambober, Ethiopia, 2011



The Kebele town Ambober-Wusaba is extending into the neighbouring hills, previously grazing and forest land (Ethiopia)



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Ato Assefa, Wojnie, Ambober, explains his terraces to Habtamu and Birgit.

WHY DO WE WANT TO RETHINK AND DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY?



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Research for development?



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“Research is important. The problem is they come once and they will never return back to this village. They have to think about that and help us to change our life. If the people have changed to something which is good, it is not only for themselves and it is for the country and for the government workers too. “

Farmer during FGD, Ambober, Ethiopia, 2011



Ato Set'eng (Woglo, Ambober) explains to Habtamu (ARARI) about his Gesho plants.



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Change in thinking?

„Third World“ issues

Learning from success and „best practice“

Thinking forward

Problems/ solutions

Participation

Results

Creating awareness

Development

Global issues

Learning from failure and mistakes

Rethinking past

Opportunities/ options

Learning

Outcomes

Enabling change

Transformation

Old/new
Back/forth

Change our behaviour and action rather than words only!



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IDEAS FOR IMPROVED OUTCOMES



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Creating Capacities

- Move away from disciplinary education and training
- Comprehensive approaches, combining theory and practice
- Ensure transdisciplinarity and demand-driven training, research, dissemination,...it does not stop after one participatory exercise!
- University based training is not only for students, also for practitioners!
- Ensure that university education is sustainable and will flow into future work of participants: develop skills and capacities rather than awarding degrees only



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Moving to the right places

- Move out of toolboxes and closer to the people
- Spend more time with people in rural areas
- A sound understanding of social structures, context and people's lives is salient
- Question representatives' legitimacy: ensure you know who your contacts are and whom they really represent (and whose interests!)





From problems to opportunities

- Apply less rigid approaches (avoid blue-prints)
- Search for ideas that could work, and for things that are already working
- Researchers as partners rather than teachers
 - „it is our job to find out the problems and then develop solutions“
 - „we have to make the farmers aware that they are destroying their resources“



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For improved outcomes we need...

- Gender and disciplinary balance
- Informed and updated stakeholders
- Respect and competence, sound knowledge of methods
- A reasonable time span understood by farmers
- Continuous monitoring and information exchange
- Good relations, knowing people's interests, their possible fears and reservations
- To connect research with organisational learning



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May 2010



Community research centre at project end

July 2012



Community research centre 2 yrs after project end



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