Local Institutional Arrangements for Wetland Management in Ethiopia and Malawi

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Overview of Presentation

1. Wetlands and livelihoods
   - in Ethiopia
   - in Malawi
2. Balancing environment and development: local institutions
3. Research questions
4. Methods
5. Key findings: Ethiopia
6. Key findings: Malawi
7. Conclusions and lessons

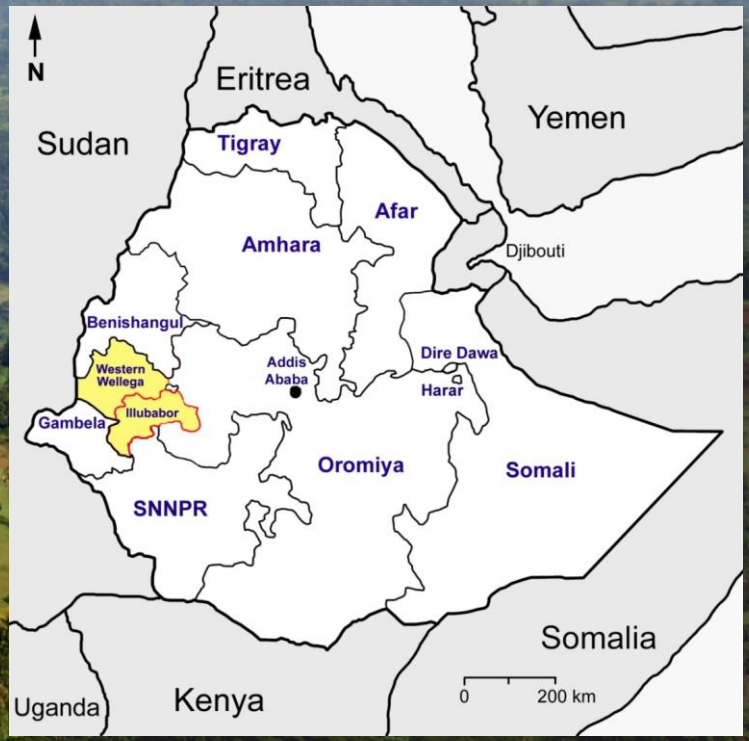
1. Wetlands and livelihoods in Africa

- WETLANDS and wetlands
- range of ecosystem services for people
- livelihood dependency / food security
- pressures
  - environmental
  - demographic
  - socio-economic
  - political
- need for **sustainable** wetland use

...in Ethiopia

Illubabor & Western Wellega

- 1000 - 2100 m asl
- 2000 mm rainfall
- 80 people/km^2
- subsistence agriculture
- food insecurity
- multi-functional wetlands
- pressures



… in Malawi

Simlemba district

- 1000m asl
- 800 - 1000 mm rainfall
- 118 people/km^2
- mostly subsistence
- food insecurity
- *dambos* and *dimbas*
- pressures

2. Balancing environment and development : local institutions

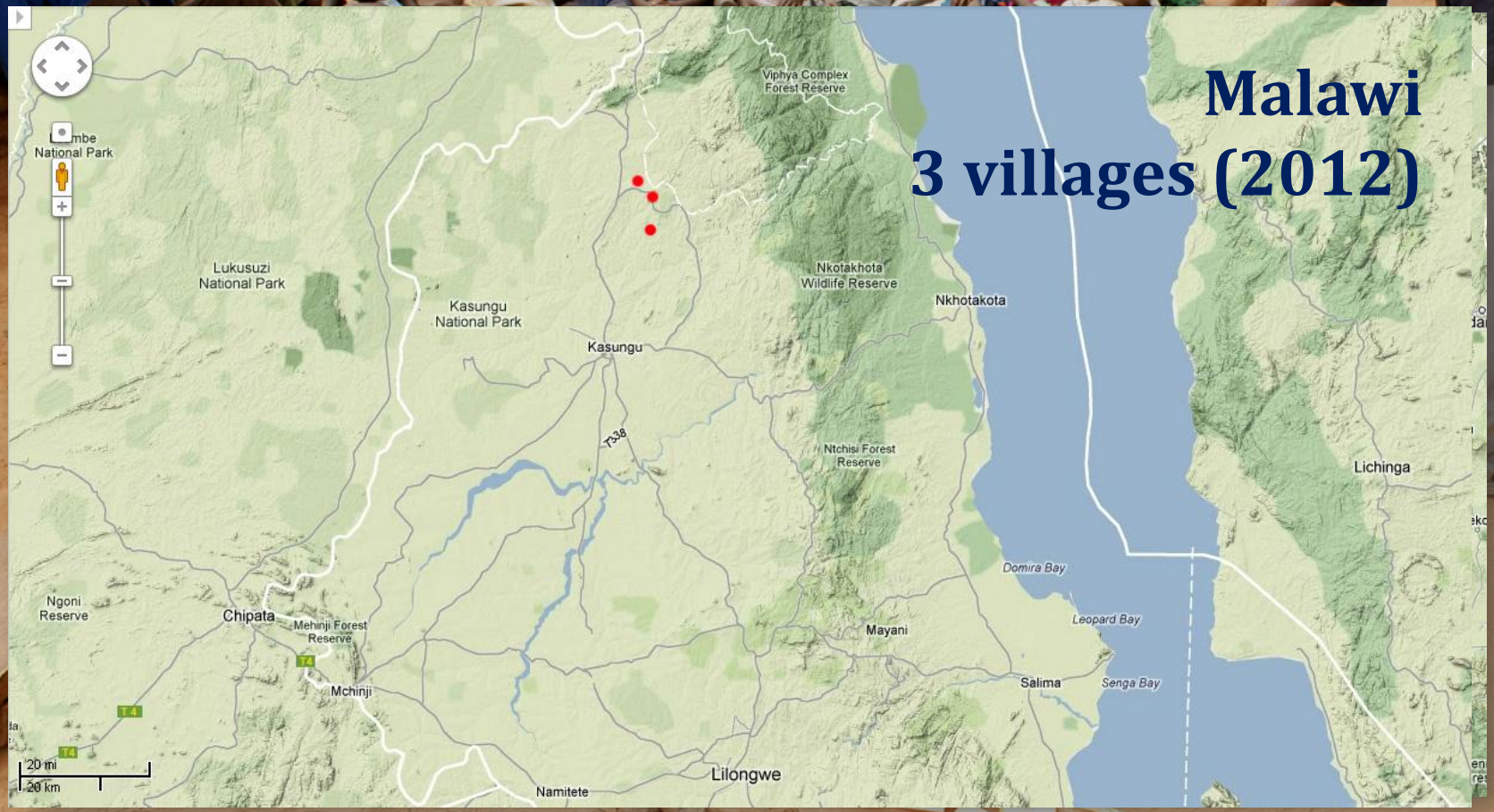
- community-based collective action
- adaptations for common pool resource management
- social capital – norms, trust, reciprocity, equity
- rules of engagement… to everyone's advantage
- sustainable development rooted in socially sustainable structures?
- empirical evidence
  (Ostrom, 1990; Uphoff, 1994; Pretty & Ward, 2001; Agrawal, 2001)
- enabling / facilitating conditions?
- self-organization (indigenous) vs external intervention?

3. Research questions

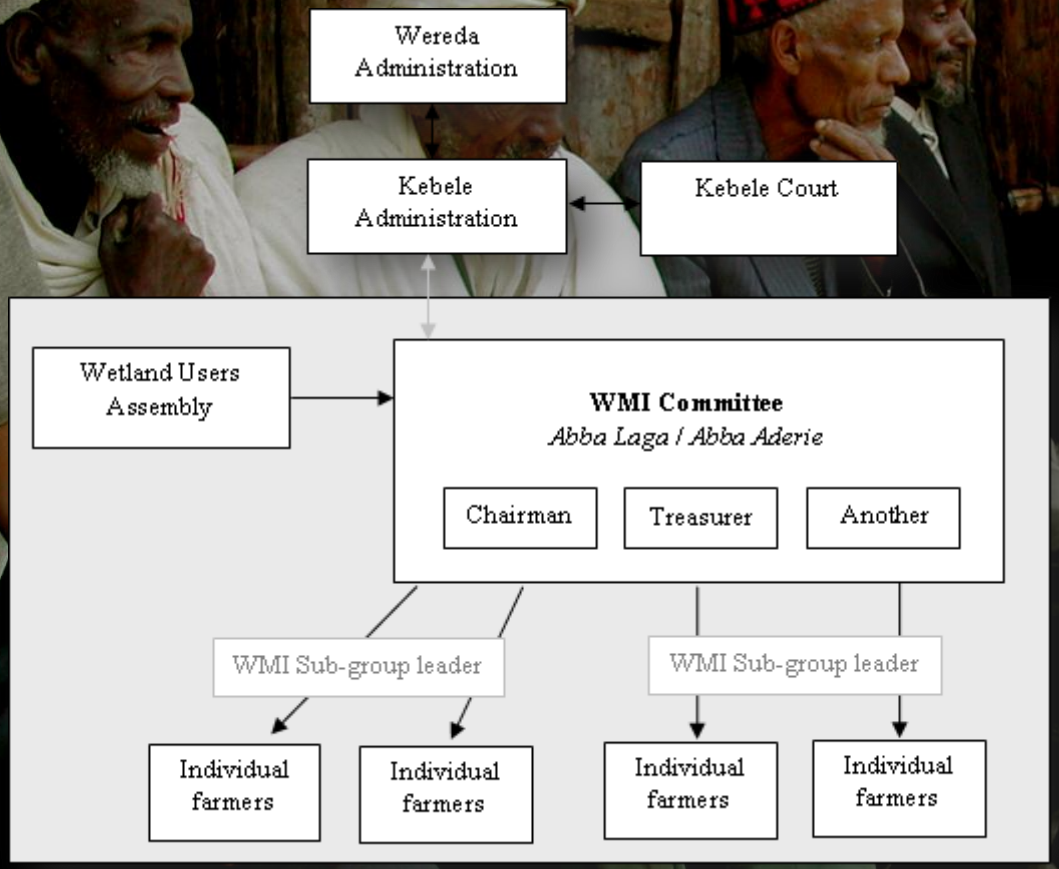
- how do local institutional arrangements for wetlands work?
- what factors influence the functioning of local institutional arrangements?
  - social capital?
  - self-organization?
  - wider 'enabling conditions'
- can local institutional arrangements facilitate **sustainable** wetland use?
- are there any entry points for the creation of local institutional arrangements?

4. Methods

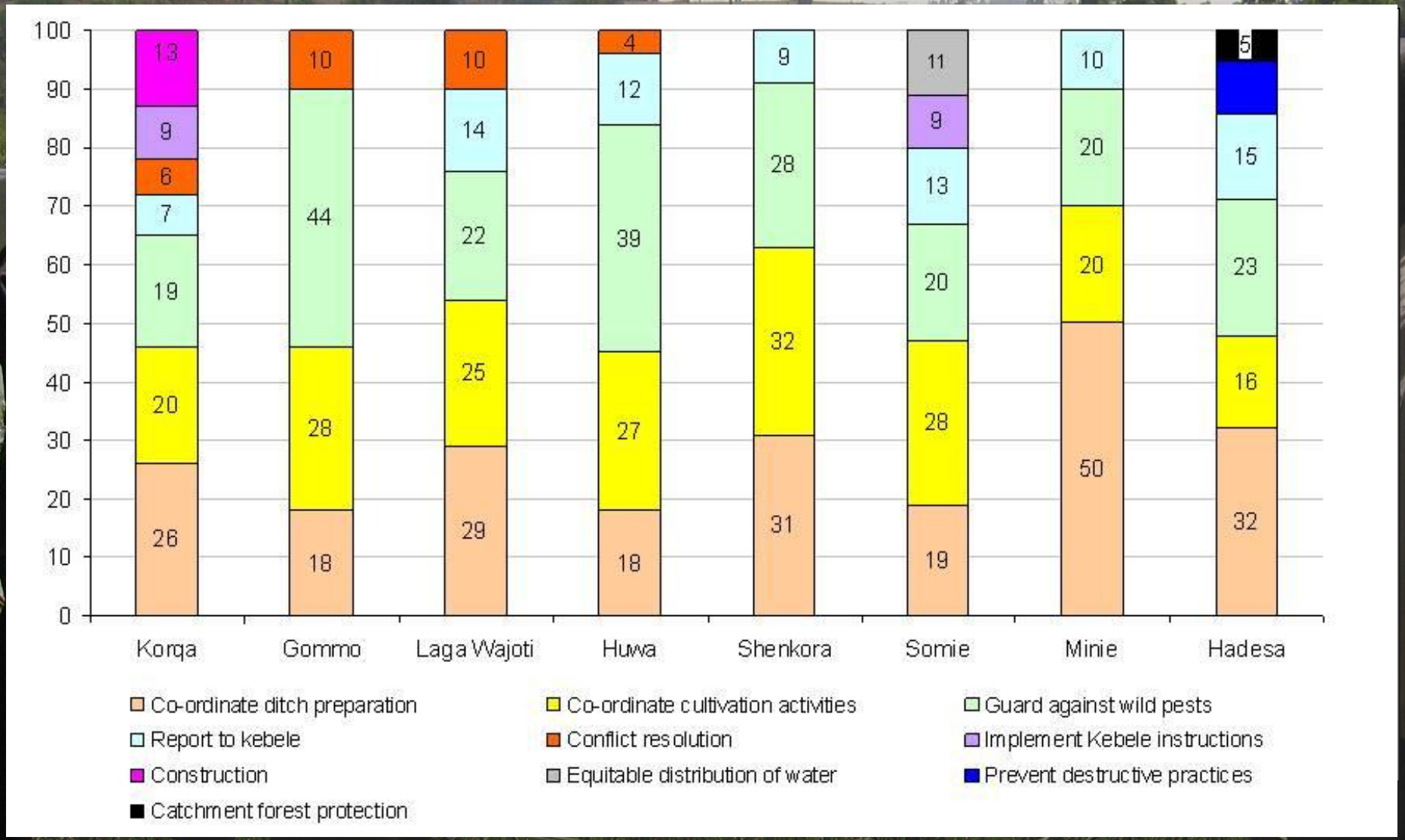
- Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques
- range of qualitative data



5. Key findings: Ethiopia



- traditional – indigenous
- modern – external
- spatially and temporally variable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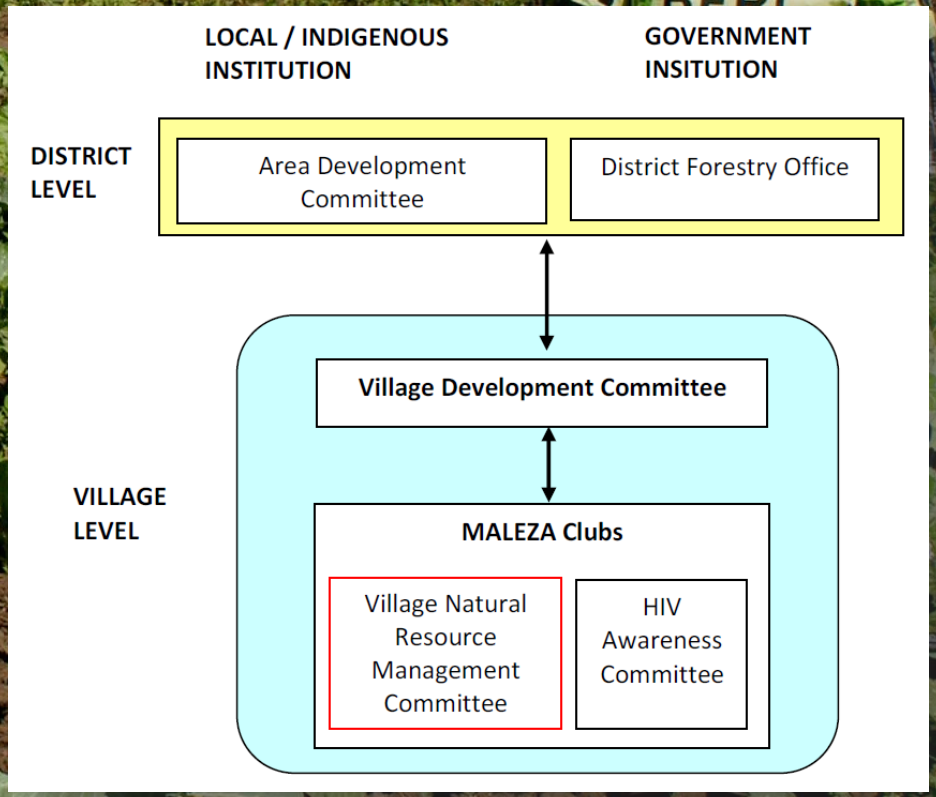
Korqa
Gommo
Laga Wajoti
Huwa
Shenkora
Somie
Minie
Hadesa
Co-ordinate ditch preparation
Co-ordinate cultivation activities
Guard against wild pests
Report to kebele
Conflict resolution
Implement Kebele instructions
Construction
Equitable distribution of water
Prevent destructive practices
Catchment forest protection

Sustainability?

- strong institutions = wetland benefits sustained
- weak institutions = degradation / abandonment
- institutional weakening?
  - ‘democracy’
  - poor support from local administration (culture of farmer dependency!)
- little difference between traditional & modern
- scope for NGO intervention… building local institutional capacity

6. Key findings: Malawi

- no institutional arrangements before 2005
- Village Natural Resource Management Committees
- 10 - 15 members
- byelaws:
  - buffer zones
  - water extraction
  - Eucalyptus
  - catchment measures
  - penalties



Sustainability?

- functional…but wetlands not used intensively

  "…we make sure that everyone can have access to water from the dambo. Sometimes the water is diverted in canals, so we have to make sure that those people downstream also get enough water."

- some farmers 'opting-out' of the institutions
- institutional weakening?

  "Since the introduction of the government subsidy for seed and fertiliser, fewer people are interested in participating in Maleza club activities. People think there is no point in contributing if you already have the benefits of seed and fertiliser."

- NGO support – a blessing or curse?

  "We need to get support from the village headman to make the byelaws stronger…"

7. Conclusions & Lessons

- links between institutions and wetland sustainability
- local institutional arrangements based on local knowledge
- institutional sustainability?
  - nature / level of wetland use is important
  - self-organization… only if it's economically beneficial
  - external backstopping to legitimise / enforce byelaws
  - … but not too much!
- entry points for wetland policy-makers
- sensitivity to different socio-ecological contexts