

Contested narratives of pastoral vulnerability and risk in Ethiopia's Afar region

SIMONE RETTBERG

This paper emphasises the role of local knowledge, risk perceptions and decision patterns in analyzing changing pastoral livelihood strategies. Based on an intensive empirical case study within the Middle Awash Basin of Ethiopia's Afar region it is argued that the main concern for Afar pastoralists are political risks evolving from recurrent violent conflicts and increasing governmental development interventions, while drought plays only a minor role within local narratives of risk. Special attention is drawn to the strategic instrumentalization of heterogeneous governmental and pastoral risk narratives and the impact of conflicting narratives on the current pastoral livelihood crisis, shaped by an increasing vulnerability and an ongoing political and economic marginalization of pastoralists in Ethiopia.

Keywords: pastoralism, Ethiopia, risk, vulnerability

Introduction

Since the middle of the 20th century pastoralists in the drylands of Ethiopia have been faced with an increasing number of critical challenges that fuel the debate of the decline of pastoralism (Markakis, 1993, 2003; Scholz, 2008) and its potential for adaptation (Davies and Bennett, 2007; Mortimore 2009; UN OCHA 2007). In addition to high climate variability and recurrent droughts and floods, pastoral livelihood systems have been severely constrained by multiple violent conflicts over natural resources and contested political claims, as well as increasing governmental development interventions such as the expansion of irrigation agriculture and sedentarization projects (Ayalew, 2001; Gamaledin, 1993; Hogg, 1997; Said, 1997). Due to the massive loss of communally-held grazing areas and mobility under conditions of a generally growing population, processes of impoverishment and increasing vulnerability have become characteristic for large parts of the pastoral population who inhabit 60 per cent of the Ethiopian territory (Devereux, 2006; Müller-Mahn and Rettberg, 2007). Although a network of national and international aid and development organizations have developed, and early warning systems were refined in the aftermath of the severe droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, food insecurity and destitution increased, questioning the ability

Dr Simone Rettberg (e-mail: simone.rettberg@googlemail.com) is currently senior lecturer and research associate at the Department of Geography, Free University Berlin, Germany

© Practical Action Publishing, 2010, www.practicalactionpublishing.org
doi: 10.3362/2041-7136.2010.014, ISSN: 2041-7128 (print) ISSN 2041-7136 (online)

of the humanitarian system and its mainly technocratic solutions to protect livelihoods in a sustainable way (Devereux, 2009; Hammond and Maxwell, 2002). Over the last decades many communities moved from situations of temporary drought-triggered food insecurity to chronic livelihood insecurity and dependency on food aid, while this process was most extreme among pastoral and agropastoral communities (Lautze and Maxwell, 2007).

The structural changes destabilize traditional pastoral livelihood strategies and undermine the internalized collective patterns of interpretation within a rapidly changing social-ecological environment. Pastoralists are challenged to adapt their livelihood pathways in order to maintain their adaptive capacities and resilience to shocks and stresses. This also involves learning by a reconfiguration of local knowledge. So far local perceptions and knowledge systems have not been sufficiently considered in risk and vulnerability analyses. Although a lot of vulnerability studies have dealt with the question of how people cope with risks and crisis situations, little attention has been paid to the meanings and significance of risk to local actors (Heijmanns, 2001; Krüger and Macamo, 2003; Bankoff, 2004). This paper argues that changes in socio-spatial patterns of coping and adaptation need to be linked to underlying motivations, beliefs and perceptions in order to be fully understood. Further attention will be drawn to the importance of including the broader macro-level perspective in the analysis of local patterns of risk and vulnerability. Pastoralists and the state influence each other in their different activities of managing risk. The governmental risk discourse and state interventions are of utmost importance in reconfiguring pastoral risk scenarios. Therefore political-economic questions that define power relations in pastoral settings need to be considered.

Risk as a social and political construct

In contrast to realist conceptions of risk that see risks as objective, measurable and controllable threats, constructivist perspectives acknowledge that humans perceive risks in different ways based on particular knowledge systems that are bound to socio-cultural and historical contexts. This paper takes a weak constructionist position and conceptualizes risks as objective threats that are mediated through social and cultural processes (Lupton, 1999: 35). Risk perception is linked to processes of identity construction and group formation by the distinction between Self and Others (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Douglas, 1992). Douglas (1992) stresses the role of culturally shared notions of risk that are based on social expectations and responsibilities.

The discursive construction of risk refers to specific communicative practices of the (re-) production of collectively-held risk knowledge. A discourse represents a specific interpretation of reality in form of a narrative (Strydom, 2002: 110). It is 'a bounded body of knowledge and associated practices, a particular identifiable way of giving meaning to reality via words or imagery' (Lupton, 1999: 15). The discursive repertoire for the interpretation of the

surrounding natural and social environment is constituted by typical narrative patterns that derive their inner discursive coherence through a storyline, a plot that integrates elements of the repertoire of interpretation.

The selection of discursive contents depends on the available knowledge, interests and expectations towards the other, distrust and ignorance, socio-cultural rules and power relations. The interface between external and local risk discourses can be conceived as the arena where conflictive knowledge systems, values and interests meet (Long and Long, 1992; Long, 2000). Therefore, risk is a political concept, and risks are constantly contested concerning their nature, their control and who is to blame for their creation (Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Strydom, 2002).

This last point will be taken up in the paper while contrasting governmental and pastoral risk discourses. Three analytic categories will be distinguished: 1) Phenomena and causal relations: who defines what as a risk? What are the causal factors for the existence of these risks? How do power relations, trust and interests of the actors influence the selected risk phenomena?; 2) Responsibility and blame: Who is given the responsibility for the containment of risks and who is blamed for the existence of unacceptable risks?; 3) Evaluation and decisions: How are risks evaluated and how do they shape decisions for risk management (risk taking and/or risk prevention)?

Study area and methods

This analysis is based on an original empirical case study (Rettberg, 2009) conducted during several field trips from 2005–2007 among pastoral Afar clans of Baadu, a wetland area within the middle Awash basin with an approximate size of 50 x 30 km and home to more than 20 clans (Figure 1). The total period of field work amounted to 12 months in which mainly qualitative methods were applied. Narrative and biographical interviews, group discussions, selected tools of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and ethnographical methods of observation were combined in order to reveal the multiple realities of subjective risk perceptions as well as certain storylines within collective discourses. The selection of interviewees aimed at a comprehensive reconstruction of the social field and followed the methodological approach of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The decisive criterion for the selection of interviewees in this approach is the relevance for additional findings, not representativeness. Finally 53 interviews were transcribed and analysed in terms of discursive patterns. The interviewees involved men and women of different Afar clans as well as governmental representatives located in Addis Ababa. A quantitative survey complemented the qualitative methods in order to validate the qualitative findings and to come up with additional numeric information on the structural basic livelihood conditions.

Before heterogeneous risk narratives of Afar pastoralists and governmental actors are expounded, the following section gives an overview of structural changes in the Afar region of Ethiopia that threaten pastoral livelihoods.

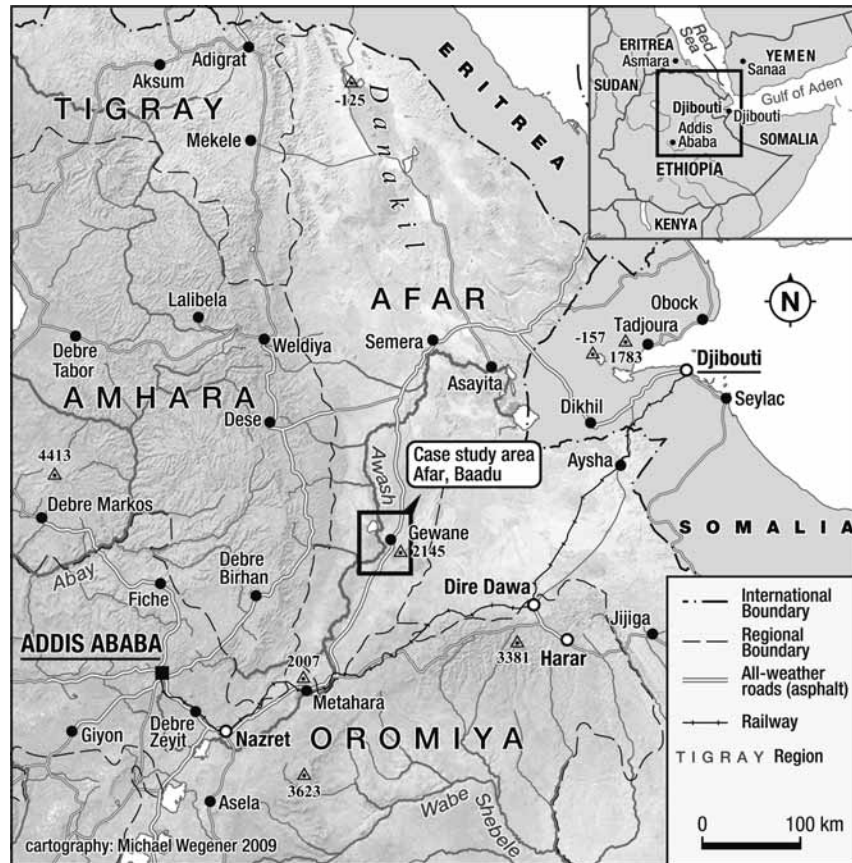


Figure 1. Location of the case study area

The Afar region: Changing context of insecurity

The Afar region is one of nine administrative regions of Ethiopia located within the north-eastern lowlands, bordering Djibouti to the east and Eritrea to the north (Figure 1). The area is characterized by a harsh climate with temperatures up to 40°C, highly variable average precipitation between 5 and 600 mm annually, and recurrent droughts and floods. Under these conditions mobile pastoralism is the dominant type of land use due to its high adaptive capacity which is based on spatial mobility and flexible use of dispersed pasture and water resources over space and time (Lewis, 1969; Kassa, 2001a). Most of the 1.4 million Afar who are the main inhabitants of the region (Central Statistical Authority, 2008) depend on mixed stocks of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. In the past only the Afar of the northern Aussa sultanate were involved in irrigated agriculture along the Awash river which

is one of the longest rivers of Ethiopia (1,200 km) originating in the humid Ethiopian Highlands.

Since the middle of the 20th century the Afar region has become an arena of diverse internal and international conflicts due to increasing interventions of external actors (Cossins, 1972; Bondestam, 1974; Said, 1997). These conflicts were mainly about the power to control land and water resources and to enforce (geo-) political claims. While the Afar of Ethiopia wanted to maintain their political autonomy, the state intended to consolidate its monopoly of power in integrating peripheral regions like Afar into its state-building process (Adou, 1993; Gebre-Mariam, 1994; Shehim, 1985). Taxes were levied and local elites were co-opted so that local institutions were increasingly weakened. In particular the fertile lands along the Awash became a bone of contention between Afar clans and the state. With the establishment of large-scale cotton farms by successive Ethiopian governments since the 1960s, traditional communal grazing areas were transformed for commercialized irrigation agriculture and pastoralists were increasingly displaced (Harbeson, 1978; Kassa, 2001a, b; Kloos, 1982a). At the same time roads were built, opening up the region, and migrants from drought-stricken highland regions moved to the lowland farms and road settlements in order to find labour (Kloos, 1982b). After the closing of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border in 2000 the main road between Addis Ababa and Djibouti port, which cuts across Afar region, became the lifeline for the Ethiopian economy. Since the export trade of Ethiopia depends almost exclusively on safe access to this road, military and police forces have been deployed along the road (Figure 2).

As a border region between Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia, Afar is also in the middle of contested geopolitics. Its southern territories were and are claimed by nationalists from Somalia to be part of the pan-Somalian state of a 'greater Somalia' (Lewis, 1989); part of the northern territory of Afar was claimed by Eritrea (Figure 2). These conflicts erupted in several wars that resulted in a massive influx of small arms and a militarization of regional conflicts. The geopolitical conflict with Somalia is reflected in the internal violent conflict between the Afar and the neighboring pastoral Issa-Somali clan group who evicted the Afar from a large part of their grazing lands with minor interference from the state (Hagmann and Mulugeta, 2008; Markakis, 2003).

In the past the study area of Baadu was an important agro-ecological area due to the constant availability of water and abundant fertile grasslands (Nesbitt, 1934; Thesiger, 1935; Buxton, 1967) which served as dry season pastures as well as drought retreats for pastoralists. The preferential resource base sustained large cattle and camel herds, and the Afar from Baadu were known to be among the wealthiest clans all over Afar. During the rainy season, when large parts of Baadu were flooded, the pastoralists used to move with their animals to the higher plateaus further east, the so called *Alta*-areas.

Since the 1970s several critical changes disturbed the traditional migration pattern and destabilized the socio-ecological system of Baadu. As the most recent drought of 2002/2003 proved, the pastoralists of Baadu

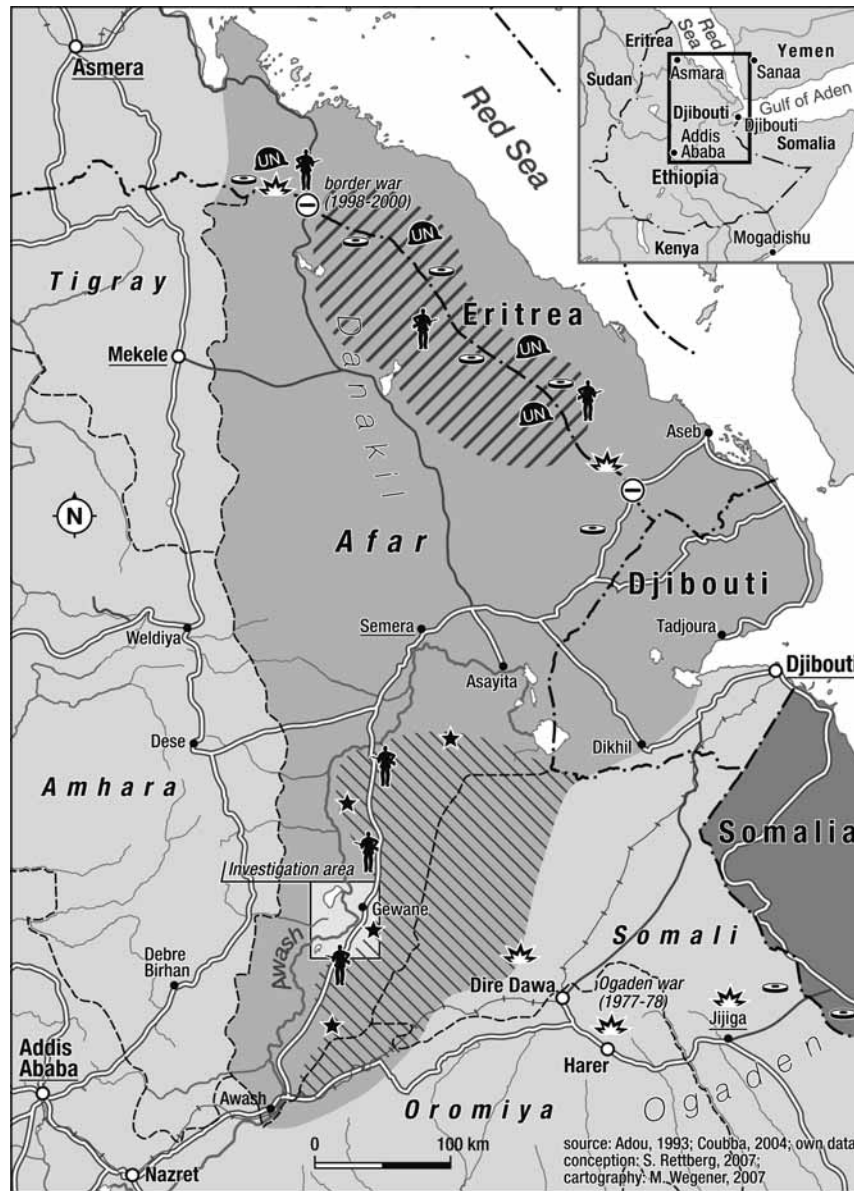


Figure 2. The Afar triangle as geopolitical hotspot

(Figure 3 and 4) have become extremely vulnerable to drought and the decimated herds of cattle and camels, the livelihood base of the Afar, lack currently the capacity to recover (Müller-Mahn and Rettberg, 2007). A survey in 2007 showed that only 9 per cent of all households in Baadu owned more than 10 cattle while in the past households with less than 40 cattle

were considered as poor (Rettberg, 2009). As to the internal wealth stratification, most pastoralists in Baadu now belong to the poor (*Tudagoyta*) or the destitute (*Maskintu*) who are affected by chronic food insecurity and impoverishment. Against this background they have to reinterpret the changing socioeconomic and ecological context in order to deal with the new risk scenario and to adapt their livelihood system.



Figure 3. Watering of cattle from shallow wells in Baadu



Figure 4. Camel pastoralists on rainy season pastures

Local risk discourse towards outsiders: 'surrounded by enemies'

The dominant narrative presented towards outsiders, that is towards people who are not Afar and who are not trusted by pastoral communities, focuses on multiple external enemies that substantially threaten their key resources, land and mobility. The following quotations represent the general storyline of massive impoverishment and create the image of a 'paradise lost':

If you had seen how beautiful Baadu looked like before, we never thought there were people who were better off than us. We were pouring milk into the river because there was too much. (Afar Elder, 2005)

Baadu is in problem.... There is no more Baadu. The Woyane tree is destroying Baadu. And now there is the flooding of Awash. We are being killed in all directions. The military kills us, the Issa kill us, and then there is the government. There is nowhere to turn to. Baadu is destroyed...There is no place to hide; there is no place to go. We can't go to the sky; we can't go into the ground, unless we die. (Afar woman, 2004)

The use of metaphors like killing and destruction stresses the severity of the livelihood crisis. During the last decades Afar clans have experienced an enormous loss of land which they attribute to three 'enemies': the Issa-Somali pastoralists, the invasive plant species *Prosopis juliflora* (*Woyane*) and the government.

Conflict and displacement

We are dying of hunger, we have no land. Old, wise men today, they are crying. Their heart is bleeding in pain when they know how far they have come from. (Elder, 2006)

Within the last 70 years the Afar clans from Baadu have been pushed about 150 km westwards by the Issa from their traditional rainy season pastures. Currently they move with their animals all year long within a small radius in and around their dry season rangelands in Baadu (Figure 5). Although the conflict with the Issa involves further risks like the loss of human life in clashes and the loss of animals in raids, the loss of land plays a prominent role in the local perception, due to its economic as well as symbolic function. Although all pastoralists lost family members in the conflict it is not names of killed people but of lost territories that pastoralists repeatedly named in interviews, places that symbolize their social identity.

The violent conflict with the Issa-Somali pastoralists has shaped the centuries-old collective memory and everyday life of Afar pastoralists. The narratives on the history of the conflict stress that, with the involvement of international actors, the conflict intensified and changed from a resource conflict towards a political-territorial conflict. The Afar elders perceive the

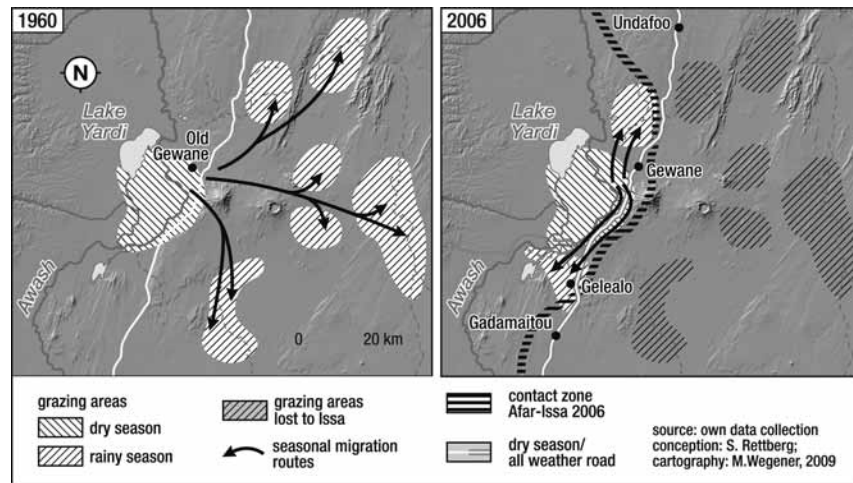


Figure 5. Change of migration patterns due to Issa-Somali expansion

invasion of Ethiopia by Italian colonial troops in 1936 as a first turning point in the history of the conflict which shifted the military power significantly towards the Issa. In order to invade into Ethiopian territory the Italians used the Issa as guides and foot soldiers and supported them with weapons and military training. At the same time the Italians started to attack the Afar who had refused to collaborate (Markakis, 2003). Elders of Baadu recount the execution of clan leaders, the bombing of settlements and confiscation of their weapons by the Italians. A further intensification of the conflict followed the independence of Somalia in 1960. With the intention to pursue their irredentist interests to establish a 'greater Somalia' the Somali government strengthened the military capacity of the Issa who again served as foot soldiers during the Ogaden war 1977/78. Around that time the Afar sustained massive territorial losses and towns like Mieso and important grazing areas like Mulu had to be given up. Afar elders argue that since the failure of the Somali state at the beginning of the 1990s Issa have received their main support from the Issa-governed Djibouti.

The discursive storyline focuses on the continuous support of the Issa by several international governments while the Afar lack international as well as national support. Elders contrast previous governmental border demarcation efforts like the Erid River treaty during the imperial regime of Haile Selassie, or the delineation and the enforcement of a border between Afar and Issa 30 km east of the main Addis Ababa-Djibouti road during the Derg military regime, with the current inactivity of the EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) regime. They are blamed for their indifference in recognizing the political dimension of the conflict.

Environmental destruction: 'Woyane' and the river

While most rainy season pastures have been lost to the Issa, the dry season rangelands around the Awash river in Baadu have been largely invaded by an exotic mimosa plant species, *Prosopis juliflora*, locally named *Woyane*. The thorny drought- and salt-tolerant plant was introduced by the Ethiopian government in the late 1980s around state farms and settlements in order to improve the microclimate and give shade. After the collapse of state farms at the beginning of the 1990s its spread grew totally out of control. From 2001–2005 the area in Baadu covered by dense *Prosopis juliflora* forests more than doubled and amounted to 83 km² (Romanciewicz, 2007). The infestation of large areas of land had a massive detrimental effect on pastoral livelihoods since *Prosopis juliflora* replaced native grass species, the main fodder resource for cattle. Pastoralists partly explain the collapse and failed recovery of cattle herds after the drought 2002/2003 by the expansion of *Prosopis*.

Local denominations of the plant are '*Woyane Harar*' or '*Deta Harar*'. While the latter is the Afar translation for 'black tree' due to its dark evergreen appearance, '*Woyane*' refers to the Tigrinean liberation movement during the Derg and members of the Tigrinean Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) who are nowadays largely absorbed in the governing party of EPRDF. This denomination might disclose the negative local perception of governmental interventions. Both the plant and the state are perceived as invaders into pastoral areas and threatening pastoral livelihood systems.

Next to the expansion of *Prosopis juliflora* pastoralists attribute the environmental destruction of dry season pastures in Baadu to hydrological changes (Figure 6). Seasonal floods are essential for pastoralists since they ensure the



Figure 6. Flooded Afar settlement surrounded by *Prosopis juliflora*

fertilization and regeneration of the grasslands along the Awash, but the establishment of irrigated state farms in Baadu in the 1970s accompanied by infrastructural interventions to control and regulate the water distribution disturbed the flood regime massively (Kloos, 1982a). Dams, dykes and irrigation channels changed temporal flooding patterns and reduced seasonal flooding in some areas, while in other areas flooding increased exceptionally. Local knowledge for dealing with floods became increasingly obsolete.

Currently, many of the dams and dykes are not maintained due to the abandonment of most state farms after the fall of the Derg regime in 1991. Due to recurrent dam breaks since the mid-1990s, the river changed its bed and branched out, threatening Afar and migrants who had settled down behind the dykes. The branching out was linked to a general decrease of water discharge in the main river course while the total wetland area increased. This increased the agricultural risk for Afar agro-pastoralists who had started to grow maize along the main river after the drought of 2002/2003 and who depend on irrigation by gravity. At the same time some areas are now permanently covered by flood waters, increasing the risk for water-borne diseases and malaria and hampering the access to edible wild fruits of the swamp like *Orge*, *Furra* and *Burre*, important drought foods in the past. Pastoralists argue that the cumulative impact of a changed flood regime and the expansion of 'Woyane' at the beginning of the 1990s marked a tipping point towards chronic food security and impoverishment (Rettberg 2009).

Every time there is a famine, at the end of the drought animals used to recover and we always had milk. But once this Deta Harar started covering the land things started getting worse and worse – some time ago there was this flood water which covered a large area. What remained and recovered after Matalea (drought 1983/84) started dying again with this flood water. The number of animals that died in Baadu, except for God, nobody could count the number. This flood water burned the vegetation, then Deta Harar started growing, covering the area even more. Since then animals never stopped dying and they stopped giving milk. (Afar woman, 2005)

Health risks for humans and animal herds have increased greatly due to the worsening of the water quality in combination with the loss of access to drier places further east during the rainy season. The environmental changes are discursively translated into images of destruction and death indicating the environmental collapse that is taking place.

The significance of drought risk

Droughts as such are not mentioned when pastoralists talk to outsiders about the reasons for their livelihood crises. Still, several observations of internal routines indicate that drought poses a serious risk for pastoralists. The availability of rains and pastures are a main topic of *Daagu*, the institutionalized

form of everyday communication between Afar from all over the region that serves as a fast and reliable informal early warning system. Furthermore traditional soothsayers (*Ginille*) and astrologers (*Hutuk-Beya*) predict the coming rains and conflicts with Issa based on reading the stars or their spiritual connection with ghosts. Although during a PRA risk ranking exercise drought was similarly ranked to the risk of Issa (Rettberg, 2009), Afar show no interest in including the obvious concern about the risk of drought in their communication when talking to outsiders. Droughts are perceived as the will of God, as an unavoidable part in the cycle of life from growth to death. For time immemorial there have always been droughts and suffering, followed by periods of recovery. But droughts never threatened the collective survival of the clan whereas the recent socio-ecological changes do. In narratives about the history of droughts, pastoralists emphasize that current droughts are neither more severe nor more frequent than in the past. Instead, they explain their impoverishment as due to the impact of external 'enemies' like *Prosopis juliflora* and Issa:

Today the Issas brought us here to the side of the river. Here, once you loose your animals, there is nothing to eat. You have nowhere to take your remaining animals. ... It is not because the famines in the past were less intense, it is just we had more land for pasture. ... There have always been famines in the past but there were places to go to for refuge. (Afar Elder, 2006)

Responsibility and blame: the state as enemy

Responsibility for the current livelihood crisis and increasing pastoral vulnerability is mainly directed at the state. Pastoralists construct an image of governments that misuse their power, ignore pastoral rights, disturb pastoral livelihoods and lack any form of legitimacy.

'The government is killing us' was a typical comment made by Afar pastoralists. This refers to recurrent violent clashes over political control and power between the governmental forces and pastoralists, as well as to the everyday experience of governmental violence that has shaped the collective memory of the Afar from Baadu during the 20th century. Combats and fatal casualties were mostly triggered by governmental efforts to confiscate weapons. A case in point is a fight during 1991 in and near Gewane town in which several soldiers and up to 30 Afar were killed. Due to repeated incidences of armed raids on trucks along the main road, a bill was passed in 2003 prohibiting the wearing of guns along both sides of the road, and military forces were stationed there to enforce the new law. This resulted in repeated clashes between soldiers and armed Afar herders who tried to cross the road with their animals in order to reach the *Alta*-pastures further east. The defence capacity of the herders is essential for the collective survival of the clan. Without machineguns they become an easy target for attacks by Issa pastoralists. While the government tried to contain the risk of raids and of disturbance of

foreign trade, new risks for Afar pastoralists were created. Now they take the risk of clashing with the soldiers when crossing the road in order to minimize the risk of fatal casualties and animal losses due to Issa.

Furthermore, the pastoralists perceive themselves as 'forgotten people' and distrust governmental interventions due to the past experiences of socio-political marginalization and expropriation of land. A mixture of disappointment and anger characterizes this discursive storyline which argues that governmental interventions have ignored and still ignore pastoral interests. Governmental interventions are perceived as unjust since they do not support but instead marginalize pastoral livelihoods. This point plays an increasingly big role in the local risk perception due to the experience of a growing powerlessness, vulnerability and dependence on external actors. The allegation of injustice refers especially to the government's general non-intervention into the Afar-Issa conflict which is interpreted as indirect support of the Issa:

Looking at the history of governments we feel they have always been on the side of the Issa. We have good reasons to say this. The government knows the Issa is killing us in our own territory. It is in our own homes that he comes and kills us, takes our animals. When the government sees this they could tell the Issa to stop killing us and stop raiding our animals in our own homes. So, the government seems to say whoever is powerful should win and the government just keeps quiet and does nothing to protect us. (Afar clan leader, 2005)

From the perspective of the Afar pastoralists the governmental establishment of Afar-Issa Peace committees only encourages corruption of the participating clan elders and *Woreda* (district) officials who receive per diems and the popular social drug *chat* on attending the committee meetings, without tackling the root causes of the conflict (Hagmann and Mulugeta, 2008). Government officials at local and regional levels are blamed for an illegitimate appropriation of funds and food aid, increasing the risk of food insecurity for large parts of the clans, while only some clan members, generally the clan leaders and some elders, profit due to patron-client networks.

It can be summarized that a two-sided image of governmental mismanagement is constructed: On the one hand the corrupt and violent interventions of governmental actors like the military are seen as posing significant direct risks to the livelihood security of Afar clans. On the other hand the government is made accountable for the existence and creation of risks like the territorial expansion of Issa. A storyline is created by the pastoralists in which irresponsible governments did not and do not support the Afar in their fight against their external enemies, instead they themselves turn out to be an enemy.

In the risk discourse towards outsiders a powerful image is created in which the livelihood system of pastoralism is threatened by a total collapse due to forces beyond their capacity:

Unless the Afar start growing something out of the ground, there is no hope for the people. There is a threat of extinction of these people due to hunger. We will probably only be found in history books in the future, saying, there used to exist people called Afar. ... Here, as you can see, everywhere is covered by *Woyane* tree, over there the area is occupied by the Issas, so, where can the livestock graze? They can't eat stones. Thousands upon thousands of livestock have perished three years ago. (Afar clan leader, 2006)

Socio-spatial differences in risk evaluation

Despite the strong collectivity of the risk discourse towards outsiders that stresses Issa, '*Woyane*', health risks and bad governance, risk evaluations are not always homogenous. These differences are mainly linked to factors like age, gender, livelihood strategies and geographical exposition. Wealth as a differentiating factor plays currently only a minor role due to the widespread impoverishment of pastoralists in Baadu.

The gendered formation of risk discourses results mainly out of differences in institutionalized division of labour, specific roles and responsibilities as well as different entitlements to access resources. Gender relations in Afar are highly asymmetric as can be seen for example in ownership rights, laws, and decision patterns which favour men. In this unequal context women generally depend on the economic support of husbands or male relatives. Since the main responsibility of women is the feeding of the family, they are much more concerned than men about the risk of food insecurity and health risks due to polluted water. Based on this different evaluation of risks, it is primarily women who are engaged in income-generating activities like picking cotton in order to substitute milk deficits through the sale of grain. Men tend to stress factors like the threat of Issa since their life is directly threatened in the conflicts. A specific risk factor for women is the increasing consumption of *chat*, a mild narcotic leaf, which became a common habit in Afar in the 1970s. Men are spending large amounts of money on its consumption, so that less money remains for the necessary purchase of food items:

For as long as we remember, it is always women who face more hardship and do more work. ... Men, all they worry about is where they are going to get the money to buy *chat*. ... Women on the other hand, everything they sell, they bring money for their family. (Afar woman, 2005)

A further physical threat results from the harmful practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) which is performed all over Afar region as part of Afar culture (*Afar Aada*). Although the mortality of women during childbirth is extremely high, while many suffer from infections and anaemia, women do not broach the issue of FGM in their narratives of risk and vulnerability. Instead they defend FGM due to the cultural embeddedness of this practice and its social benefit. Physical risks are evaluated as less threatening than the risk of social exclusion and dishonour.

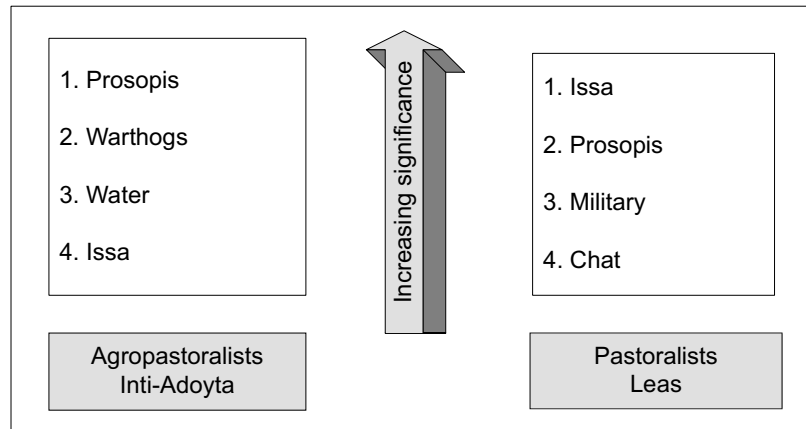


Figure 7. Socio-spatial differences in risk evaluation

While differences in risk evaluation at the household level arise especially from demographic factors like sex and age, different livelihood strategies are major reasons for differences in risk evaluation at the village level, as can be seen in a comparison between Maheisara clan members living as agropastoralists in a sedentary settlement along the Awash river (Inti-Adoyta) and mobile pastoralists living in a settlement 3 km distant from the river (Leas) (Figure 7).

The agro-pastoralists are not as directly exposed to the threat by Issa, compared to the mobile pastoralists who are in the frontline when they move with their camels and cattle to pastures in *Alta* areas. Agro-pastoralists instead are dominantly concerned with the expansion of *Prosopis juliflora* along the Awash which requires a constantly high input of human labour in order to clear the land and prevent a quick regrowth. The high dependency on regular seasonal floods makes them extremely vulnerable to changes in the flood regime. Another threat consists in warthogs that browse on the maize and destroy much of the yields. These factors are of no concern for pastoralists who are mainly concerned with strategies to access pastures, despite the risk of Issa and military forces.

The internal local risk discourse: erosion of local institutions

The prophet asked: Who will be the first to enter to paradise? The leaders and the judges. Then he asked: And who will be the first to go to hell? The leaders and the judges. (Afar Elder, 2005)

The way risks are conceptualized in casual conversations within the clan society shows additional discursive elements and different storylines which deal far more with processes of social fragmentation and loss of social resilience due to the weakening of local institutions.

After the collapse of the Derg military regime in the 1991, the state cotton farms and cooperative farms in Baadu were abandoned. A few years later some Afar clans claimed their traditional customary land rights and started to lease out their clan land to private agricultural investors, mostly from the Ethiopian highlands. This process was fuelled by the increased scarcity of pasture land along the Awash due to ecological changes and processes of impoverishment. While pastoralism became less feasible, the importance of non-pastoral income sources increased. Land was not only perceived as a common pasture resource anymore, but had acquired a monetary value. This process of land commodification and monetarization radically altered traditional common property regimes. Exclusive forms of land tenure appeared next to common grazing areas, and territorial claims became a highly contested topic among Afar clans (Kassa, 2001a, b; Rettberg, 2009) leading to a significant increase in violent clan conflicts over land along the river (Figure 8).

Clans legitimize exclusive lease contracts with investors through their traditional land rights and the differentiation between indigenous clans and newcomers:

In the old good days there was plenty for everybody and everybody lived and shared together. Today there seem to be divisions and differences between those who have and those who have not. Everyone wants his own clan to get something and doesn't care about the other clan. We didn't have such things before. It is a new phenomenon. ... And those clans who are remaining they ask: 'So, why aren't we included in this agreement? This is our land to which I am native. You came later than me, so how can you give the land without my knowledge?' Those things make conflict. (Clan leader, 2005)

These conflicts threaten the social cohesion of the pastoral clan society and play a major role within the internal risk discourse. New values and practices focusing on the exclusive acquisition of monetary profit are currently conflicting with the egalitarian 'culture of sharing' supported by traditional values like solidarity, cooperation, reciprocal arrangements and collective wealth. At the same time, wealth differences within the clans increase, since only the clan leaders and a few elders benefit. They make the lease contracts with the investors, and they receive monthly salaries (300–600 Ethiopian Birr, equivalent to USD \$27–55) from investors in order to prevent unrest within the clan which could threaten agricultural production. The increasing inflow of financial capital and the growth of profit-oriented behaviour give rise to a social differentiation between few winners and many losers. Therefore, the majority of impoverished pastoralists have a negative perception of the commodification process and the current change of values.

A further reduction of social capital, a key factor for collective coping capacity in order to buffer crisis situations, threatens not only their economic survival but also the symbolic-cultural basis of their collective clan identity. This situation of eroding values is especially troubling for the older generation

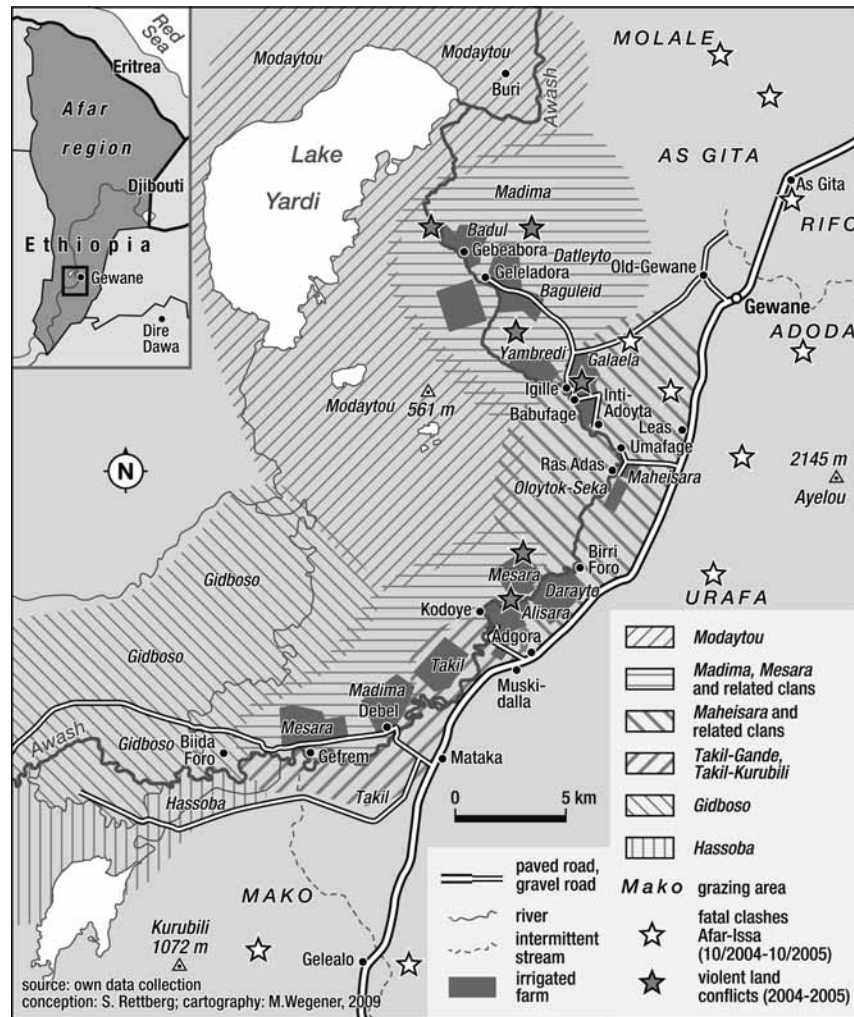


Figure 8. Violent conflicts within Baadu

who is unsettled by an increasing loss of orientation. The elders complain first of all about the ‘weakness and irresponsibility’ of the clan leaders who are blamed for the loss of social unity and solidarity, and secondly about the young herders who are not carrying out their traditional duties.

The clan leaders are considered to be selfish, greedy and co-opted since they are highly enmeshed with investors and the regional government of Afar from whom they receive salaries. Therefore, the clan questions the leaders’ capacity and willingness to act for their collective welfare and feels threatened that they are not being fairly represented anymore. In this context *Mablo*, the local institution for conflict resolution and jurisdiction based on customary

law (*Afar Maada*), becomes increasingly ineffective and incapable of solving the current land conflicts. *Mablo* judgements by clan leaders and elders of different clans are shaped by mutual distrust and suspiciousness among the judges who are themselves involved in the conflicts: 'Now *Mablo* is not done anymore in the same way it used to be. Some Makabans (clan leaders) are tied with some groups; the others are tied with interest with others. So they can't give justice, and in the middle people are suffering'. (Sheik, 2005)

A case in point is the land conflict between the Mesara and Galaela clans that peaked in March 2005 when heavily armed Mesara ambushed Igille (Figure 8), a Galaela settlement, early in the morning and killed and wounded more than 10 people. The pastoral interpretation of the conflict causes expounded the strong nexus between clan politics and economic interests. Pastoralists were convinced that powerful Afar politicians of the regional government had instrumentalized their rural clan relatives in Baadu in order to pursue their own economic interest, which was control over the valuable land resources. This incident resulted in massive uncertainty among pastoralists in Baadu, since it threatened the unity of the clans in Baadu, a unity that is essential to cooperate during pasture migrations and fights with the Issa. Distrust among the clan leaders led to protraction of the following *Mablo* negotiations over several weeks so that no final decision could be made. Finally the conflict could only be resolved through external interference of a highly respected Afar from the northern sultanate of Aussa, who was considered to be neutral. He resolved the conflict in replacing the some of the clan leaders in *Mablo* with clan leaders from the north of Afar. He states:

The reason the people before me could not solve this problem is because the person who was given this responsibility is also the beneficiary of the investors, and some of the elders who were in the *Mablo* get salary from the investors as well. So when I realized that those who were leading this *Mablo* had their hands up to this with the interest they get from the investors I decided a neutral group should look into these problems. ... To me, the Elders in Baadu have either tasted money or at least they smelled it, and so do the government officials who were in charge of this *Mablo*. (Elder, 2005)

Another aspect of the institutional destabilization refers to increasing incidences of young herders (Figure 9) not protecting the animals on distant pastures, steering a generational conflict between the elders and the young. The elders blame the young for breaking the rules and preferring individual pleasures like the consumption of *chat* in urban areas over the rough life on the pastures:

Today we are facing problems, not speaking with one voice, not respecting each other, disobeying each other. So, the Afars today are confused. They don't know why things are the way they are. Is it for fear of Issa, is it because of addiction to chewing *chat* by many? ... Today the Afars have become weak. We don't know whether they are scared of Issas or



Figure 9. Young Afar warriors

they no longer like their animals. They keep going to towns, leaving the animals on their own. The reason the Issa keeps taking our animals is because there are no young men protecting our animals. They are all in towns. (Leader of *Fiima*, 2006)

The leader of the *Fiima*, the local institution for the control and implementation of traditional Afar rules and the preservation of collective values and norms, stresses the erosion of traditional values like solidarity, mutual sharing and respect that prioritize the clan's collective welfare over individual interests. The absence of young herders decreases the clan's capacity to protect its collective wealth of animals against Issa and threatens the livelihood insecurity of the whole clan.

Governmental risk discourse: drought, degradation and backwardness

From the perspective of governmental institutions, pastoralists threaten national security and integrity since they question the governmental legitimacy and monopoly of power. Afar region is perceived as a political trouble spot, a perception which is rooted in the historic experiences of the Ethiopian state that was continuously challenged by the Afars' violent resistance against political subordination.

The current federal risk management is mainly influenced by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) as coordinator of the drought

early warning system and the distribution of food aid, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) responsible for the implementation of development activities and the Ministry of Federal Affairs (MoFA) as coordinator of development activities in the so-called emerging regions (Afar, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella). In the shared discourse of these governmental actors, Afar region is generally perceived as a culturally and economically backward region, characterized by an inefficient way of production and an archaic way of life, which needs to be developed:

The main problem is now in Afar in terms of development, the pastoral community is dependent on its livestock. I feel the production technology that our pastoral communities use is very backward, and when drought comes it doesn't have a secured amount of food at stock which came from the last year cropping season. And also the family size is not small ... a husband can marry some two or three, and maybe that also created the population size beyond the capacity of the household. So because of this the population is not able to withstand any drought. ... If you see Afar, most of the people they are not educated and because of that they are under the influence of their cultural way of living. They can't take new technologies, new improved ways of life, of production as easily as any educated population. ... A serious food shortage happens mainly because of sometimes drought and the effect of the production system by itself. It is backward production; we don't have improved varieties, improved technologies. So these are the main constraints in the region. (a State Minister MoFA, 2005)

The explanation of famine crises by the State Minister builds on neomalthusian chains of argumentation in which famines are traced back to droughts coupled with high population growth and maladapted pastoral land use systems, leading to overgrazing and hunger. In stressing natural factors like drought and soil degradation due to pastoral mismanagement of land, political causal factors and political responsibility are downplayed. The discursive emphasis on natural hazards like drought assures massive financial grants from international donors that account for a substantial part of the Ethiopian budget. It legitimizes food aid as well as climate change adaptation interventions like the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) that aims at strengthening adaptation capacities in order to deal with the projected increase of climate variability (droughts and floods) in pastoral areas (FDRE, 2007). In arguing that pastoralists are backward and lack autonomous adaptation capacities, due to low education and conservative attitudes, governmental actors claim the responsibility to take decisions for the benefit of the pastoralists. In this storyline, notions of modernity and civilization serve as positive opposite poles and development objectives. References to pastoral backwardness are tightly linked to the governmental technocratic development discourse that focuses on modernization and improved technologies. Against this background the

socio-spatial polarization between uncivilized pastoralists and modern, civilized highland citizens can be understood as a strategy to legitimize paternalistic interventions that enforce state control, consolidate state power and disempower pastoral groups. Eventually the discourse justifies policies that seek to transform nomadic pastoralists into civilized settled agro-pastoralists who are submissive to governmental law and order.

The analyses of papers that guide governmental development strategies like the Poverty Reduction Strategy (FDRE, 2006) or the Food Security Strategy (FDRE, 2002) indicate that the preservation of mobile pastoral livelihood systems is undesirable:

58. The goals of agricultural activities in pastoral areas are: increasing livestock farm productivity and improving the welfare of the people through voluntary and non-coercive settlement in consultation with local communities. This necessitates integrated intervention programs and setting up a culturally acceptable mechanism to oversee the utilization and management of resources ...

61. Though livestock is a primary focus for pastoral communities, diversification into sedentary agriculture and off-farm activities is necessary for sustainable livelihoods. Thus due consideration will be given to mobilize local communities to develop small-scale irrigation schemes in order to create a sedentary life and engage them in crop farming and hence ensure that the area is conducive enough to encourage settlement. (FDRE 2002: 18 f)

While current policy papers indicate the new attention given to pastoral areas and criticize the previous pastoral development approaches for their repressive top-down interventions, a strategic reorientation is missing. The overarching vision of the federal government is still a transformation of nomadic pastoral societies into settled agro-pastoralists through sedentarization along the banks of the rivers (FDRE, 2002; FDRE, 2006).

Narratives of risk and vulnerability: discursive strategies

Concerning selected risk phenomena and questions of responsibility and blame, a comparison between governmental and local narratives of risk and vulnerability shows significant differences as well as similarities. First of all, local and governmental perceptions and evaluations of risk differ a lot. The main governmental narrative stresses drought and pastoral backwardness, factors which are not perceived as key risks by locals. A tendency to naturalize the nature of risks by external actors is confronted with a strong political discourse by local actors. Discursive commonalities are limited to risk factors like the significance of health risks, problems of water provision and food scarcity. It can be assumed that this is not enough to find a common language that enables the development of adequate solutions for the current

problem scenario. Governmental actors rarely communicate the root causes of collective pastoral impoverishment and increased vulnerability to the outside. This does not mean that they are not aware of the significance of the Afar-Issa conflict or the expansion of *Prosopis juliflora*, but they omit these factors in order not to deal with their own responsibility for the generation and control of these risks. An intervention into the Afar-Issa conflict threatens the national security and unity since it would probably cause additional political conflicts with the Issa-governed state of Djibouti and the regional government of Somali. Instead, in defining certain risks which seem to be natural and unaccountable, the governmental stakeholders stabilize their power position and legitimize authoritarian development interventions in the pastoral lowlands.

A joint strategic element of local and external actors refers to the discursive externalization of risks, whereas the actors' own contribution to the generation and existence of pastoral livelihood risks is ignored. While the state holds the backwardness of Afar pastoralists responsible for the pastoral livelihood crisis, pastoralists blame the state for its ignorance and policy of marginalization. State and pastoralists use this discursive strategy of blaming external actors as a political instrument to gain social control. The pastoral discourse towards outsiders emphasizes the threat that the clan society will become extinct due to forces beyond their capacity. This strategy of constructing a common victimization and the strong dissociation from 'the others' serves to strengthen the collective identity and mutual loyalty, pastoral values which are severely endangered by recently experienced processes of social and institutional disintegration.

In this light, the risk discourse towards outsiders can also be seen as a communicative strategy to deal with internal risks. On the other hand, external actors blame the pastoralists in order to gain greater control over the pastoralists who 'mismanage and destroy their environment in an inefficient way' so that external interventions have greater legitimacy. Strategies of mutual blaming are connected to a discursive social polarization between highlanders and pastoralists that reproduces the existing asymmetric relations of power. While pastoralists are polarized between victims and perpetrators, governmental actors make the distinction between uncivilized savages and civilized citizens. The social polarization is supported by heterogeneous spatial representations. While pastoralists perceive Afar region as a 'region at risk', external actors create an image of a 'region of risk'. In a context of mutual blaming, stereotypes and distrust between the state and the pastoralists, the question of accountability and the implications for necessary agency are severely contested. In order to manage future livelihood risks and food insecurity, the governmental discourse stresses the necessity for the 'backward' pastoralists to change and adapt, while the pastoralists require a change in governmental interventions and attitude. Neither external nor local actors take responsibility for the creation of risk, its control and containment.

Narratives of risk and vulnerability are not simply representations of perceived threats, but they are also representations of asymmetric power relations between the agents of communication. Therefore, the local risk discourse towards outsiders and the internal discourse differ significantly. The pastoralists' emphasis of collective suffering and being at risk of multiple external enemies also is intended to attract support from more powerful outsiders. While factors of internal social destabilization like the increasing conflicts among clans, the widening social differentiation and the weakening of local institutions are not mentioned in this context, they are of major importance within the clan-internal discourse which is embedded in egalitarian structures of communication characterized by mutual trust and balanced power relations. The common interest of internal routine communication consists in social risk management, aimed at the reproduction of internal resources of livelihood security, especially the generation of social capital and collective knowledge.

Conclusion

This article has argued that local agency can only be understood against the background of a highly complex risk scenario, where pastoralists constantly interpret, evaluate and weigh multiple risks in order to take decisions that inform their social practices. In the process of coping and adaptation, risk trade-offs take place, some risks are avoided while others are taken. Local risk management is geared at securing access to pasture resources, income and food as well as to strengthen local institutions. In this respect, the conflicts with Issa and the state have proved to be of major significance for the local constitution of risk, while drought plays only a minor role in local discourses. In 2006 food aid was partly sold by responsible clan elders in order to buy weapons and increase the defense capacity of the young herders.

The fundamental discursive differences between the state and pastoralists are reflected in different risk management strategies that show no coherence and are even partly contradictory. The state's discursive risk construction of 'pastoral backwardness' in cultural and economic terms legitimizes authoritarian interventions that intend to transform mobile pastoralists into sedentarized and urbanized agro-pastoralists and wage-labourers. In 2009 two large dams (Tendaho and Kessem) were established by the government in order to grow sugarcane on 80,000 ha, evicting pastoralists from their prime grazing land along the Awash river. Furthermore, the governmental confiscation of weapons through military and police forces along the road to Djibouti originated from the objective to guarantee security and to reduce the risk of ambushes on trucks. Again, this intervention resulted in additional risks for pastoralists who depend on their weapons in order to protect their animals from attacks by Issa-Somali. It can be concluded that the general failure of governmental interventions for disaster prevention and poverty reduction can be attributed

to a lack of understanding of the current risk scenario complexity, especially its political dimension, and the socio-spatial differentiation of risks that Afar pastoralists face in their everyday life. Instead, as a side effect of governmental interventions, new risks are produced that gradually undermine pastoral coping capacities and resilience. The negative costs of modernization and national food security have to be paid by the pastoralists. Against this background the pastoralists in Baadu perceive the state as illegitimate and ignorant since its interventions do not reflect their needs and interests. Although the governmental promotion of small-scale irrigated agriculture, the provision of food aid or infrastructural measures like the establishment of schools and health posts may result in isolated improvements for some pastoralists, they are not adequate to tackle the root causes of pastoral vulnerability and marginalization. From this perspective also the current governmental climate change initiatives appear to be quite ambivalent.

References

- Adou, A.A. (1993) *Afar: A Nation on Trial*, A.A. Adou, Stockholm.
- Ayalew, G. (2001) *Pastoralism under Pressure, Land Alienation and Pastoral Transformation among the Karrayu of Eastern Ethiopia*. Shaker Publishing, Maastricht.
- Bankoff, G. (2004) 'The historical geography of disaster: 'vulnerability' and 'local knowledge' in western discourse', in G. Bankoff, G. Frerks and D. Hilhorst (eds), *Mapping Vulnerability-Disasters, Development and People*, pp. 25–36, Earthscan, London/Sterling.
- Bondestam, L. (1974) 'People and capitalism in the North-Eastern lowlands of Ethiopia', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 12(3): 423–39.
- Buxton, D. (1967) *Travels in Ethiopia*, Praeger, New York.
- Central Statistical Authority (2008) *Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census*, Addis Ababa.
- Cossins, N.J. (1972) *No Way to Live: A study of the Afar clans of the northeast rangelands of Ethiopia*, Ethiopian Government Meat and Livestock Board, Addis Ababa.
- Davies, J. and Bennett, R. (2007) 'Livelihood adaptations to risk: constraints and opportunities for pastoral development in Ethiopia's Afar region', *Journal of Development Studies* 43 (3): 490–511.
- Devereux, S. (2006) 'Vulnerable livelihoods in Somali Region', *IDS Research Report 57*, Brighton.
- Devereux, S. (2009) 'Why does famine persist in Africa?', *Food Security* 1:25–35.
- Douglas, M. (1992) *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*, Routledge, London.
- Douglas, M. and Wildavsky, A. (1982) *Risk and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) (2002) *Food Security Strategy*, Ministry of Federal Affairs, Addis Ababa.

FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) (2006) 'Ethiopia: building on progress: a plan for accelerated and sustainable development to end poverty five years national plan', Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Addis Ababa.

FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) (2007) 'Climate change national adaptation programme of action of Ethiopia', Ministry of Water Resources, Addis Ababa.

Gamaledin, M. (1993) 'The decline of Afar pastoralism', in J. Markakis (ed.), *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, pp. 45–62, Macmillan Press, London.

Gebre-Mariam, A. (1994) 'The alienation of land rights among the Afar in Ethiopia', *Nomadic Peoples* 34 (35):137–146.

Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine Publishing, Chicago.

Hagmann, T. and Mulugeta, A. (2008) 'Pastoral conflicts and state-building in the Ethiopian lowlands', *Afrika Spectrum* 43 (1): 19–37.

Hammond, L. and Maxwell, D. (2002) 'The Ethiopian crisis of 1999–2000: lesson learned, questions unanswered', *Disasters* 26 (3): 262–279.

Harbeson, J. (1978) 'Territorial and development politics in the Horn of Africa: the Afar of the Awash Valley', *Journal of African Affairs* 77 (309): 479–98.

Heijmans, A. (2001) *Vulnerability: A Matter of Perception*, Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre, Working Paper 4, London.

Hogg, R. (ed) (1997) *Pastoralists, Ethnicity and State in Ethiopia*, Haan Publishing, London.

Kassa, G. (2001a) *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia: Tradition, Continuity and Socio-economic Change*, International Book, Utrecht.

Kassa, G. (2001b) 'Resource conflicts among the Afar of North-East Ethiopia', in M.A. Salih, T. Dietz and A.G.M. Ahmad (eds.), *African Pastoralism: Conflict, Institutions and Government*, pp. 145–171, Pluto Press, London.

Kloos, H. (1982a) 'Development, drought, and famine in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia', *African Studies Review* 15 (4): 21–48.

Kloos, H. (1982b) 'Farm labor migrations in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia', *International Migration Review* 16 (1): 133–168.

Krüger, F. and Macamo, E. (2003) 'Existenzsicherung unter Risikobedingungen: Sozialwissenschaftliche Analyseansätze zum Umgang mit Krisen, Konflikten und Katastrophen', (Livelihood protection under conditions of risk: approaches of social sciences to analyse the coping with crisis, conflicts and disasters), *Geographica Helvetica* 58 (1): 47–55.

Lautze, S. and Maxwell, D. (2007) 'Why do famines persist in the Horn of Africa? Ethiopia, 1999–2003', in S. Devereux, (ed.), *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization*. pp. 222–244, London.

Lewis, I.M. (1969) 'The Afar', in I. M. Lewis (ed.), *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho*, pp. 155–173, International African Institute, London.

Lewis, I.M. (1989) 'The Ogaden and the fragility of Somali segmentary nationalism', *African Affairs* 88 (353): 573–579.

- Long, N. (2000) 'Exploring local/global transformations: a view from anthropology', in A. Arce and N. Long (eds.), *Anthropology, Development and Modernities. Exploring Discourses, Counter-tendencies and Violence*, pp. 184–201, Routledge, London.
- Long, N. and Long, N. (eds) (1992) *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*, Routledge, London.
- Lupton, D. (1999) *Risk*, Routledge, New York.
- Markakis, J. (ed.) (1993) *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, Macmillan Press, London.
- Markakis, J. (2003) 'Anatomy of a conflict: Afar and Ise Ethiopia', *Review of African Political Economy* 96: 445–453.
- Mortimore, M. (2009) *Dryland Opportunities – a New Paradigm for People, Ecosystems and Development*, IUCN, Gland; IIED, London and UNDP/DDC, Nairobi.
- Müller-Mahn, D. and Rettberg, S. (2007) 'Weizen oder waffen? Umgang mit risiken bei den Afar-nomaden in Äthiopien' (Wheat or weapons? Dealing with risks among the Afar pastoralists in Ethiopia)', *Geographische Rundschau* 59 (10): 40–47.
- Nesbitt L.M. (1934) *Desert and Forest: The Exploration of the Abyssinian Danakil*, Jonathan Cape, London.
- Rettberg, S. (2009) *Das Risiko der Afar: Existenzsicherung äthiopischer Nomaden im Kontext von Hungerkrisen, Konflikten und Entwicklungsinterventionen*, (The Risk of the Afar: Livelihood Protection of Ethiopian Pastoralists under Conditions of Famine Crises, Conflicts and Development Interventions), Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik, Saarbrücken.
- Romanciewicz, C. (2007) *Ökologische Veränderungen und Wandel der Lebenshaltungssysteme bei den Afar-Nomaden in Äthiopien*, (Changes of ecology and livelihood systems among the Afar pastoralists in Ethiopia), Lehrstuhl für Bevölkerungs- und Sozialgeographie, Universität Bayreuth.
- Scholz, F. (2008) *Nomadism: A Socioecological Mode of Culture*, International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations, Ulaanbaatar.
- Said, A. (1997) 'Resource use conflict in the middle Awash valley of Ethiopia: the crisis of Afar pastoralism', in R. Hogg, (ed.), *Pastoralists, Ethnicity and the State in Ethiopia*, pp. 123–141, Haan Publishing, London.
- Shehim, K. (1985) 'Ethiopia, revolution and the question of nationalities: the case of Afar', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23 (2): 331–48.
- Strydom P. (2002) *Risk, Environment and Society: Ongoing Debates, Current Issues and Future Prospects*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Thesiger, W. (1935) 'The Awash river and the Awsa Sultanate', *The Geographical Journal* 85(1): 1–23.
- Tulloch, J. and Lupton, D. (2003) *Risk and Everyday Life*, Sage Publications, London.
- UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) (2007) *The future of Pastoralism in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa.