

The Making of the WeD Ethiopia Database: a Work in Progress

Pip Bevan

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Outline

- Introduction
- Research domain
- Researching small complex dynamic open systems
- Data making: design
- Data making: sites and fieldwork programme
- Data making: getting the protocol data into the computer
- Data making: data organisation phase 1
- Book making: iterations between theory and data
- Current Ethiopia WeD team
- Data interpretation and analysis: the programme
- Database and book making: what next?

The database picks up some traces of the lives of many men and women and boys and girls in six localities in Ethiopia, in one case going back to 1896 – the year in which Emperor Menilik and his army beat the Italians and dashed their colonial ambitions at the battle of Adwa. The making of the database has involved the mobilisation of many human and material resources

Research domain

- **The cultural construction of quality of life**
 - Three domains of cultural construction – all contested
 - Social science cultural constructions – disciplinary and other contestations
 - Local cultural constructions – political, religious and other contestations
 - Personal constructions – inner conflicts and historical change
- **The WeD cultural construction of quality of life**
 - Objective social science constructions – theory-based [many]
 - Objective locally defined constructions – empirical matter
 - Subjective personally defined constructions – empirical matter
- **The social construction of quality of life**
 - Takes place in nested open social systems structured by power relations and energised by agency

Researching small complex dynamic open systems

- Local communities are imagined as small open complex social systems with people as the basic unit
- Structured relationships and interactions between people constitute a variety of nested and overlapping open social sub-systems
- These generate dys/functions in relation to the larger community system
- 'Households' are key sub-systems
- People are also partially imagined as complex dynamic open human systems
- There are external players and the surrounding environment provides constraints and opportunities
- Systems should be studied synchronically and diachronically

Researching small complex dynamic open systems (continued)

- Synchronic approach to the social and cultural construction of (unequal) quality of life – looking for cross-sectional patterns
 - The anatomy of community power structures – power relations, social roles, cultural repertoires, institutions, organisations, networks, factions,
 - The physiology of community power structures – dys/functions of different sub-systems, linkages, inter-penetrations, and gaps among sub-systems
- Diachronic approach to the social and cultural construction of unequal quality of life – looking for longitudinal patterns
 - The dynamics of community power structures – actions, interactions, mechanisms and processes involved in the reproduction, elaboration and change of the social system
 - The histories and trajectories of community power structures – what actually happened? where might the system be going?

Data making: design

- Data as cross-sectional and longitudinal traces of the operation of social and human systems in time
- Levels of data making: community, household, person
- Levels of data interpretation and analysis: community, household, person

Data making	Data analysis		
	Person	Household	Community
Person			
Household			
Community			

Data making: sites and fieldwork programm

- **Six sites**

- Amhara Region Dinki and Yetmen
- Oromiya Region Korodegaga and Turufe Kecheme
- Urban Addis Ababa–Kolfe and Shashemene–Arada

Data making: sites and fieldwork programme (continued)

- **Twelve fieldworkers**

- 1 male and 1 female in each site researching males and females respectively

- The majority were MA graduates from Addis Ababa University, the majority of these in social anthropology

- [From mid-July 2004 until end-October 2005](#)

- Roughly 3 weeks in the field and a week+ in Addis Ababa for training and reporting back

Data making: sites and fieldwork programme (continued)

- Protocol-guided research (see handout) – each fieldwork module described:
 - The purpose of the research - sometimes including a conceptual framework
 - The different protocols (if more than 1)
 - The number and type of respondents
 - A list of topics / questions to be pursued
 - Advice on ways to proceed, including pursuing interesting leads not included in the protocol
 - Estimated time to be spent on the module
 - A list of the expected outputs
- Training – a draft protocol was used and often improved as a result of fieldworker inputs
- The WeD Ethiopia [Protocol research](#)
- An example – [Old Lives1](#)

Data making: getting the protocol data into the computer

- Field notes
- Typing the notes in Word
- Phases, Modules, Sites, Researchers
- Chaos
- Appointment of a Research Manager
- Issues
 - Missing reports
 - English
 - Spelling
 - Typing errors
 - Formatting

Data making: data organisation phase 1

- The need for a simple approach as the data came in
- The Raw Protocol Database: the folder system
- Easy access through hyperlinks in Word
- The [FrontPage](#)
- The Protocol Data
 - Made at [community](#) level
 - Made at [household](#) level
 - Made at [person](#) level

Other data

- WIDE1 Community Profiles 1996 – Village Studies 1
- WIDE2 2003 – ACCESS database
- Ethiopian Rural Panel Household and Community Surveys 1994-2004 6 rounds – SPSS and Stata
- Resources and Needs Survey 2004 – ACCESS database
- Income and Expenditure Diaries – ACCESS database
- WeD-QoL data – ACCESS database
- Community Profiles 2006 – Village Studies II, Urban Studies 1
- Photographs

Book making: iterations between theory and data

- An exploratory interpretation and analysis approach
 - Abduction – interpretation
 - Induction – thinking upwards
 - Retroduction – constructing frameworks and models in interaction with the data
 - Deduction – developing theories for a later confirmatory approach
- Interpretation and analysis for the book: current activities
 - People – the data and the first exploration
 - Households
 - Communities
 - Looking for emerging issues from three perspectives

Data interpretation and analysis: the programme

- **Immersion**
 - Database protocols
 - Reporting protocols
 - Analysis and interpretation protocols
- **The writing phase 1**
 - Writing overlaps with Phase 2 immersion
 - Responsibilities decided during Workshop 1
 - Further analysis
 - Qualitative exploration and constructive comparisons
 - Case statistics
 - Analysis framework
- **Further workshopping**

Database and book making: what next?

- **How computers have (potentially) revolutionised ‘qualitative’ research**
 - Data handling and storing including links to data in other database formats
 - Exploring data
 - Trying out frameworks and models
 - Keeping track of what you’ve done
- **Advantages of an NVivo database for individual researcher**
 - Storing data with easy access
 - Searching
 - Coding and pattern searching
 - Visualising the data
 - Recording thoughts, ideas, theories etc

Database and book making: what next? (continued)

- **Advantages of an NVivo database for a research team**
 - Allowing each member to see what the others have done
 - Allowing the work of different members to be merged
- **The perceived ideal**
 - Edit the protocol data and put it into NVivo with links to the other databases
 - This would be the ESRC database
 - It would also be the working database for the WeD team
 - Within-sites - each site researcher could work on their sites and record ideas, interpretations and analyses using NVivo and the links to other databases
 - Across-sites – cross-site comparisons and the work of researchers with interests in particular issues or domains would be facilitated and recorded

Database and book making: what next? (continued)

- **But...**
 - The book must be written by the end of the year
 - Time is needed for preparing poorly-typed, badly-Englished, awfully-formatted protocol data for an efficient NVivo database
 - No WeD Ethiopia resources for research assistance of the type required
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