



Multiple dimensions of pastoral conflict over land and territory within the Afar region of Ethiopia





The events of summer 2010

- Killing of Woreda administrator of Gewane
 - Violent clashes between Afar clans Oloytok-Seka and Maheisara
 - Violent clashes between clans of Ebeedo and Dabito
 - Clashes with Issa-Somali?
-
- To what extent is this 'just' a local resource conflict between clans over economic benefits in a context of increasing land scarcity?
 - What is the relevance of the political-territorial dimension?



Outline

1. **Violent conflicts within a changing context of insecurity**
Embedding of conflicts into wider riskscape and actors involved
2. **The relevance of conflict within pastoral risk discourses**
Shifting pastoral interpretations of land and conflicts
3. **Dealing with conflict**
Local and external strategies to deal with conflicts
4. **Conclusion**



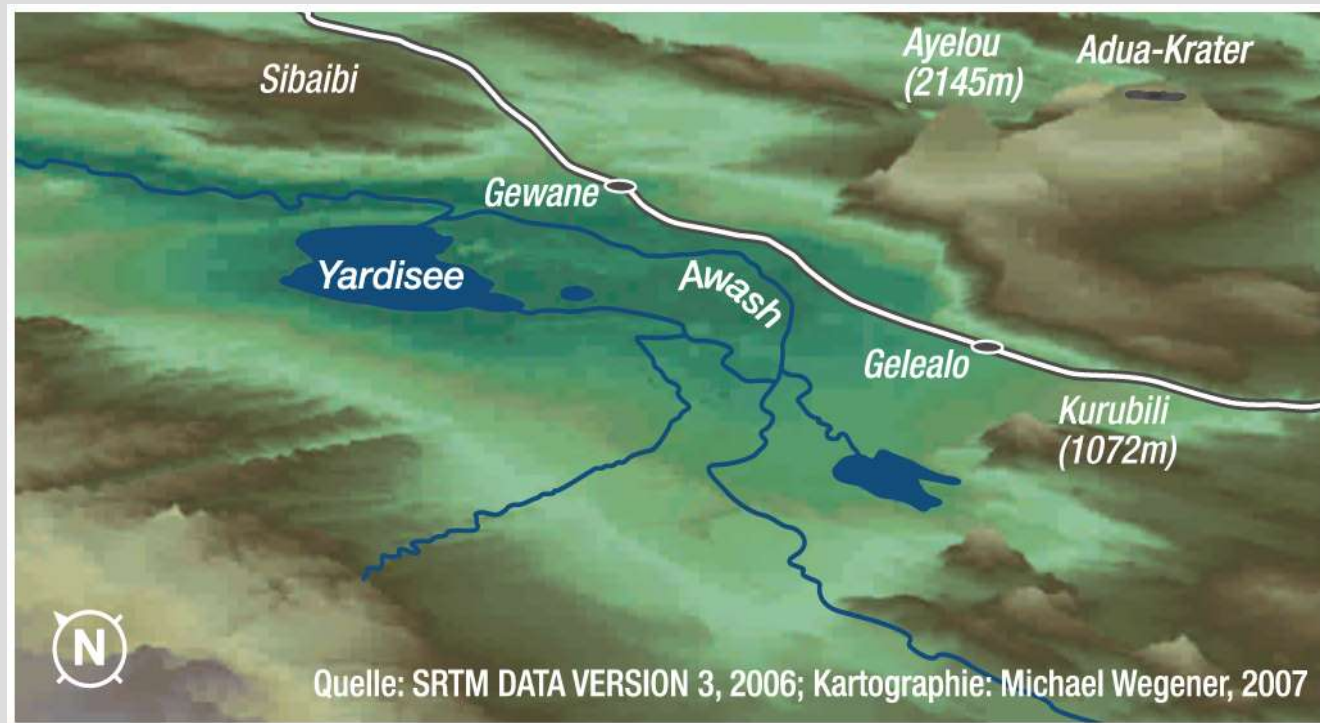
The conflict scenario within the Afar region



- Territory: Geostrategical important location for Ethiopia and Somalis in Somalia and Djibouti
- Land: Natural resources along Awash river: grazing, irrigation potential



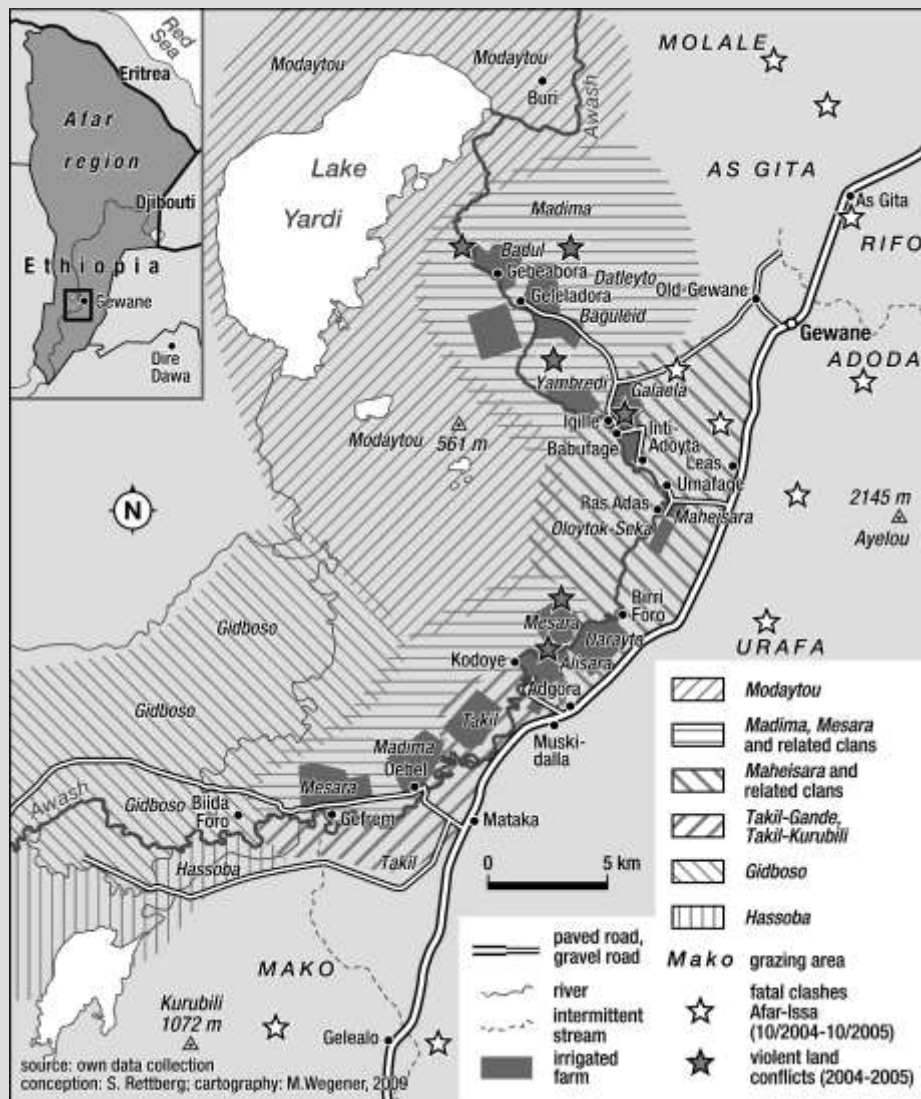
Baadu: Critical transformation of a prime grazing area



- Conflicts + Invasive species + irrigation agriculture
- ⇒ Land scarcity, increased vulnerability and chronic food insecurity of pastoralists



Case study area Baadu as a conflict zone

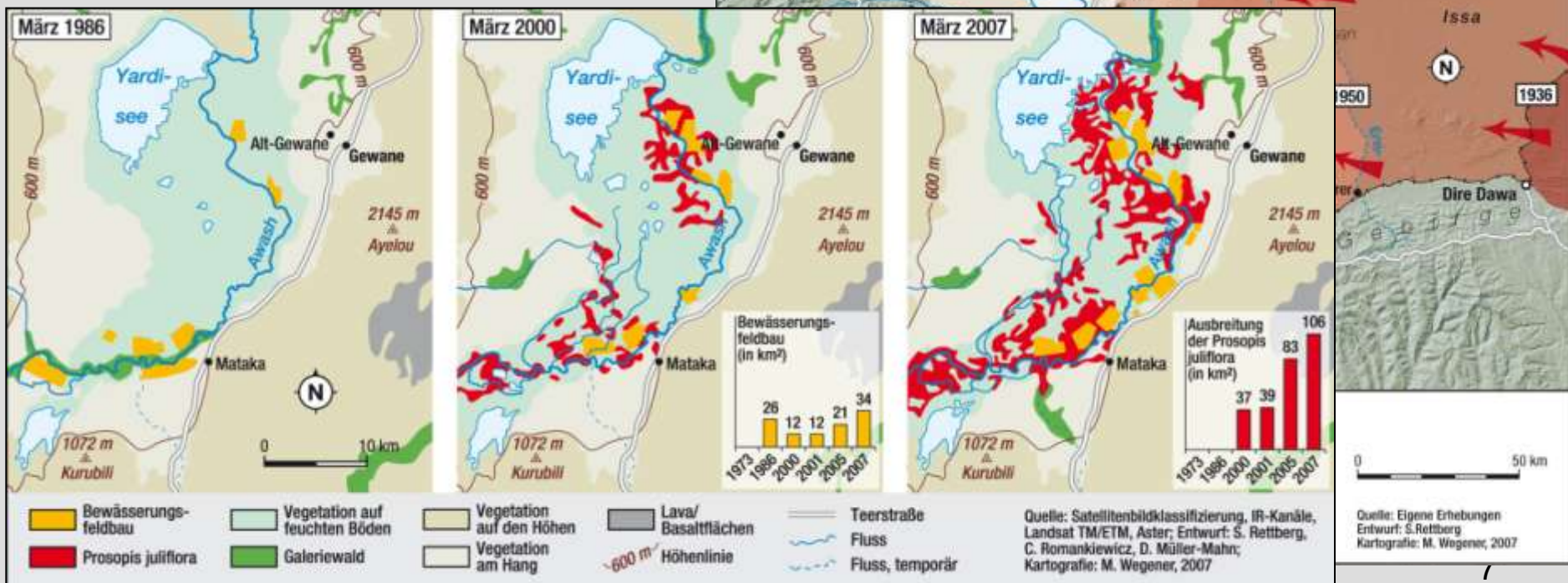


- Recurrent clashes with Issa-Somali: territorial claims
- Clashes with government troops and federal police: authority
- Conflicts among Afar clans: land rights
- ⇒ Mutual linkages
- ⇒ Myth of pastoral resource conflicts

Main storyline: Surrounded by external enemies

Loss of grazing areas due to:

- Territorial expansion of Issa-Somali pastoralists
- Invasion of *Prosopis Juliflora*
- Governmental (non-) interventions





The internal discourse: Social fragmentation

Increase in violent land conflicts as indicator for:

- Weakness of clan leaders
- Erosion of 'traditional' values
- Loss of unity between clans and within clans



- ⇒ Destabilization of frameworks of interpretation
- ⇒ Weakening of collective defense capacity: social conflicts on local level feed back into territorial conflict with Issa



The object of conflict: shifting pastoral perceptions of land and territory

- Land as gift of Allah: unlimited, belongs to all, base of collective identity
- Land as a strategic and political resource: entails rights and authority
- Land as a commodity: limited, with monetary value

Driving factors:

- Interests of national governments of Ethiopia, Somali, Djibouti
- State-building process, nationalist ideologies and ethnic federalism: territorialization and quest for exclusive authority and rights
- Commodification of land along the Awash river: monetarization and quest for exclusive benefits



Diversification of livelihood pathways after 2003



Livelihood security geared towards protection of:



Food



Income

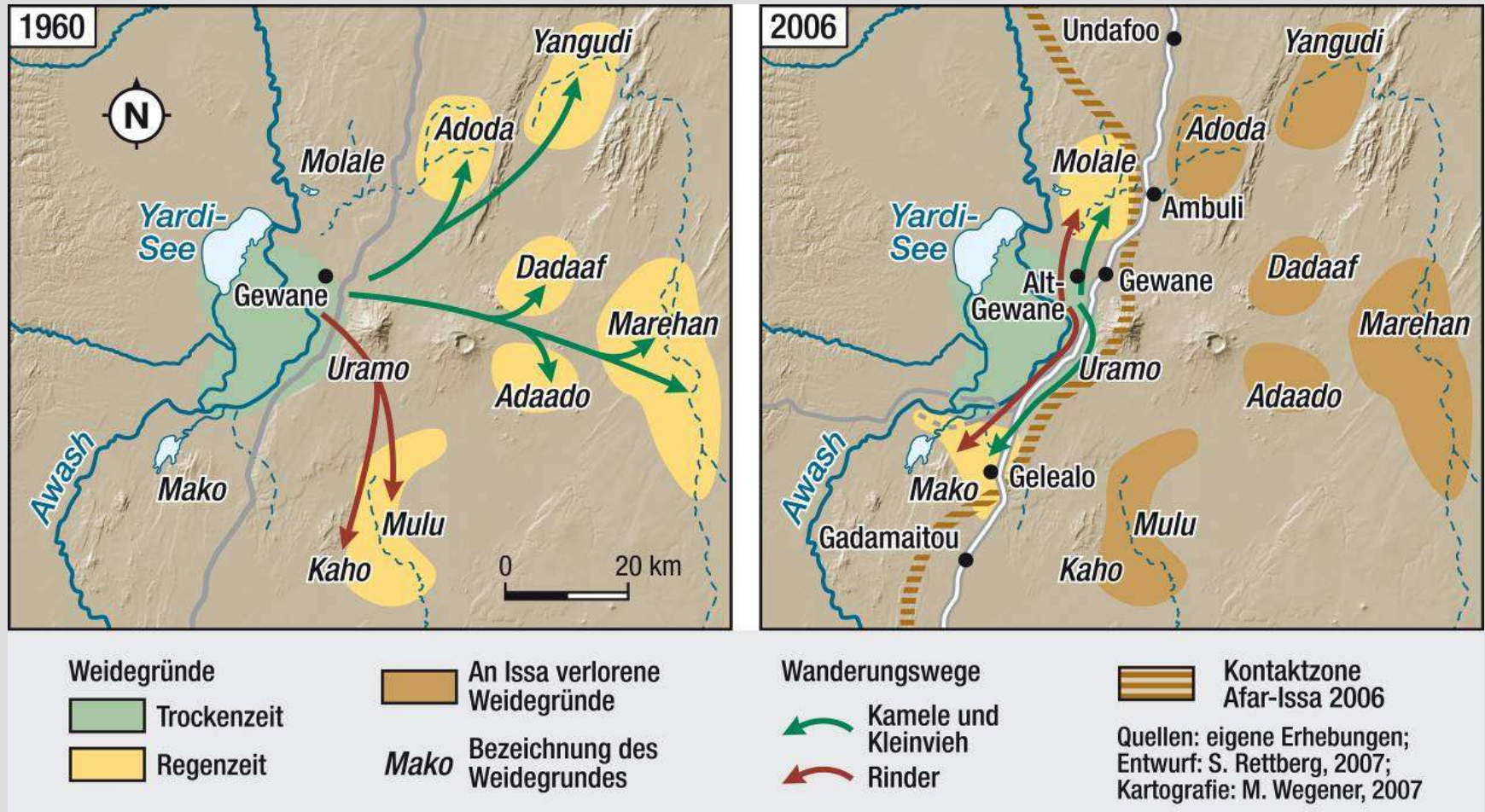


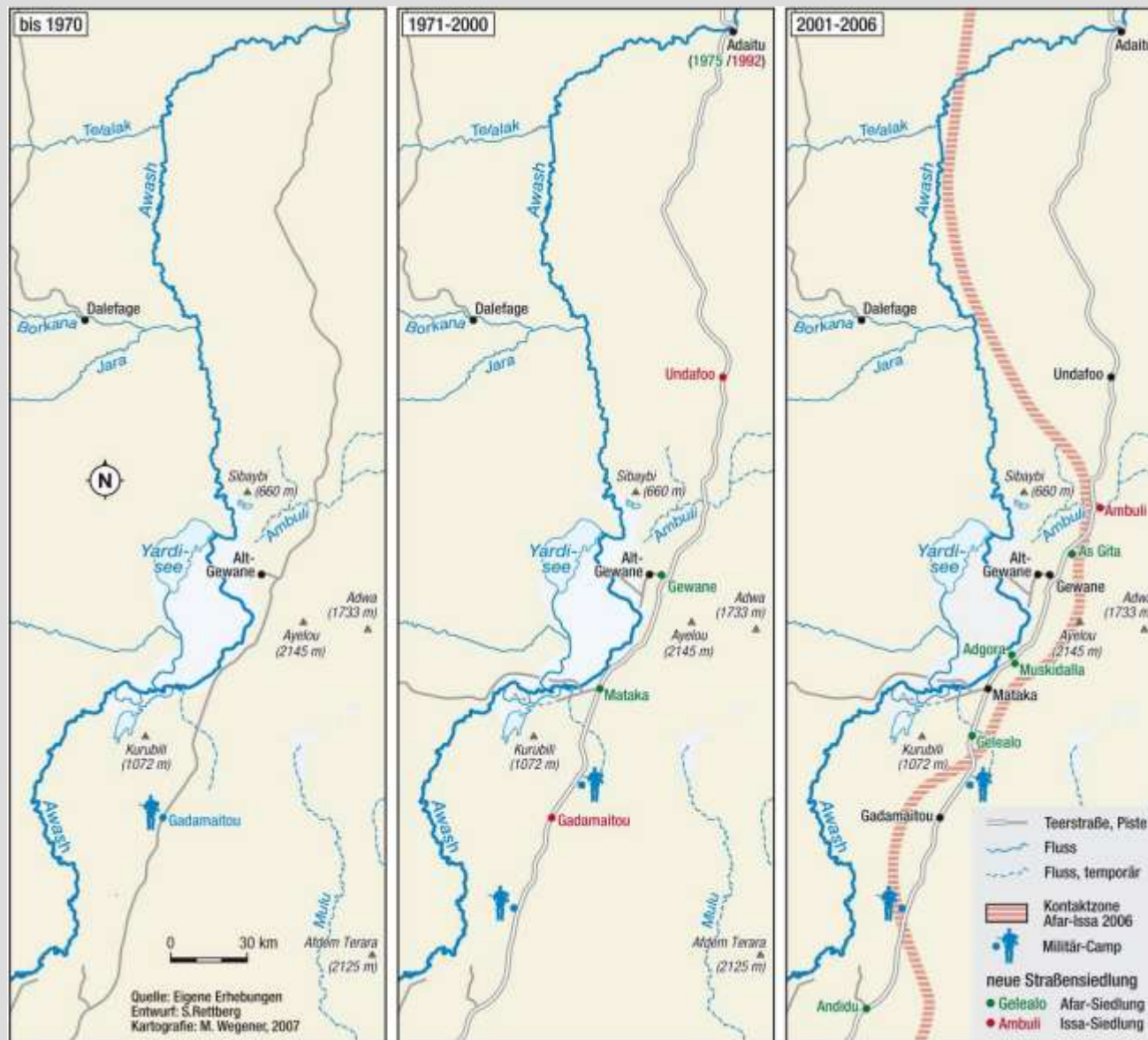
Land



Institutions/Identity

Territorial reorganization: Change of migration routes



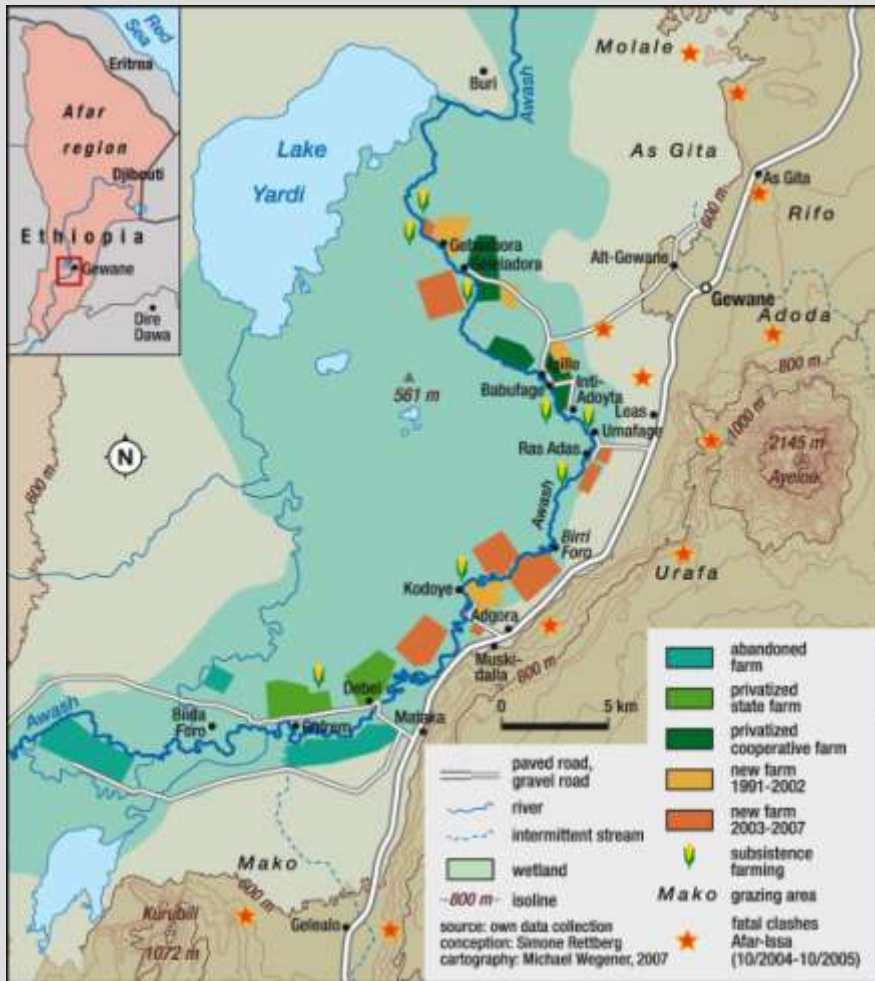


Territorial reorganization:

Establishment of permanent settlements as political-territorial strategy among Afar and Issa



Territorial reorganisation: Change of land tenure regimes



- Commodification of land in a context of conflict-induced land scarcity: leasing of communal clan land to private investors



- ⇒ Male clan authorities and relatives as exclusive beneficiaries
- ⇒ Contested land rights between autochthon and allochthon clans
- ➡ Land conflicts



Failure of conflict resolution: Land conflicts

- **Failure of local institutions** for conflict resolution due to politicization of conflicts
- *Mablo*: not able to solve land conflicts due to involvement of clan elders and politicians in conflicts



“It is the clans along the river who have investors; they have also their young men working in the regional government. I am talking about people who are in the position of power here who also have investors.... You can’t expect these people to speak the truth. This is on the side of the government. Now you come to the Elders. The investors pay the Elders monthly salary. Because of that these Elders can’t be expected to speak the truth.” (Habib Mohammed Yayo, Semera).



Failure of conflict resolution: Afar-Issa

- Failure of local and governmental initiatives
 - Haile Selassie: Erer river as border demarcation, stationing of military in contested area
 - DERG: military enforcement of border 30 km east of road Awash-Mille, governmental destruction of Issa-settlement along the road
 - Nevertheless: recognition of territorial dimension but lack of enforcement in remote lowlands
- DERG: Afar-Issa-peace-committees, focus on economic issues on local level, geopolitical dimension untouched



Conclusions

Context of insecurity

- Violent conflict as constitutive part of pastoral societies and embedded in wider scenario of uncertainty
- New quality of conflicts: relevance of territorial expansion and exclusion

Shifting pastoral interpretations of risk

- Conflict as central element of risk discourses: surrounded by enemies
- New internal conflicts among Afar most threatening than conflict with Issa
- Politicization of conflicts

Dealing with conflict

- Expansion of Issa increases efforts for territorialization among Afar: increased potential for land conflicts
- Interventions for conflict resolution have to go beyond the economic and the local to consider
 - a) the (geo-)political and strategic dimension of conflicts and
 - b) the role of regional, national and international actors



Thanks for your attention!

