

Mark är som barn Genus, fattigdom och försörjning i Södra Wollo, Etiopien

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GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
INST FÖR GLOBALA STUDIER

Abstract

Our land is like our children. Gendered livelihood strategies in South Wollo, Ethiopia

Swedish text with English summary. Swedish title: Mark är som barn. Genus, fattigdom och försörjning i Södra Wollo, Etiopien. By Kristina Nässén
Doctoral dissertation in Social Anthropology 2009, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Box 700, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.
ISBN 978-91-628-7865-8

This anthropological study examines the complexity and importance of gender relations for livelihood activities and it looks at the way in which female-headed agricultural households in the Ethiopian highlands cope in an area renowned for livelihood vulnerability, drought and famine. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork which was carried out in South Wollo for a year. The thesis explores the many ideas, notions and values that underlie people's subsistence behaviour and investigates how this is embedded in the context of land policy, economic systems and, importantly, relationships and morality. Relating to others means observing shared norms and values, and the gender order makes particular, morally charged expectations of how women and men of various ages and positions should behave. Gender has important implications for experience, knowledge and cultural conceptions and it is an organizing principle. This thesis shows however that the greatest difference in terms of poverty and vulnerability is not simply that between female-headed households and male-headed households.

The ethnography presented demonstrates that it is relevant in understanding people's livelihood strategies to consider how several factors work in a complex synergy. It stresses the importance to understand how people acquire resources and which ones they have access to but also to examine the way labour and economic transactions are embedded in social relations. Finally, there are also significant structural factors, such as the state, that nourish or constrain local spheres of action. The thesis shows that it is important to take note of gender differences in relations to key economic resources in local society, particularly in relation to rural development planning.

Key words: anthropology, gender, everyday practice, livelihood, exchange, female-headed households, subsistence farming, rural development, Ethiopian highlands, East Africa