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Social Capital:
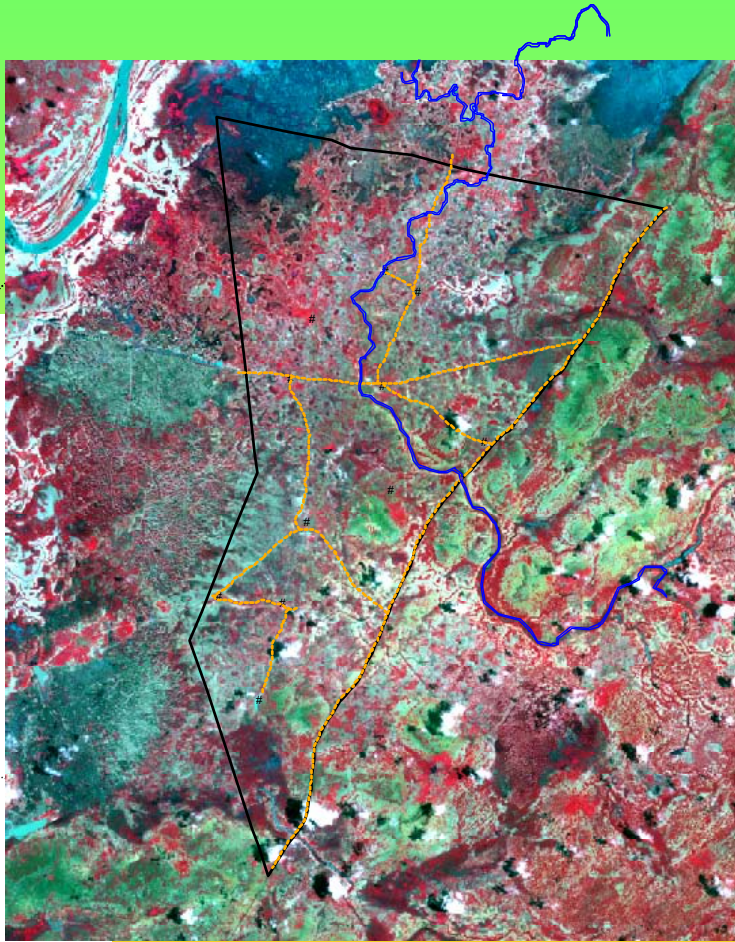
Lessons from West Africa

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Satellite View of the Commune of Madiama

How will the land be shared?

Land Use Change in Madiama: 1952 to 2002

Land Use	1952	2002	Percent Difference
	Percent	Percent	
Bare soil	10.3	12.3	2.0
Brush/brush land	**31.7**	**5.0**	**-26.7**
Cultivation	**17.1**	**56.7**	**39.6**
Park agroforestry	1.0	11.3	10.3
Riparian vegetation	1.0	1.3	0.3
Road/settlement	2.4	1.7	-.07
Pasture	**31.7**	**2.7**	**-29.0**
Denuded area	2.0	6.0	4.0
River/water	2.9	2.0	-0.9
Stone quarry	0.0	1.0	1.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	

Soil Nutrient Mining

- Over the past 20 years, agricultural productivity has stagnated or declined

- During 2002-04, 85% of African farmland had nutrient mining rates of more than 30 kg/hectare per year;
  - 40% had rates greater than 60 kg/hectare
  - the rate in Mali was 49 kg/hectare

- Two primary factors determine the extent of nutrient mining:
  - land tenure arrangements
  - access to and cost of mineral or organic fertilizers

Historically in West Africa there have been two sets of rules structures for resource tenure

Rural land is "owned" by the state. Usufruct is determined largely in terms of demonstrating productive use, i.e., cultivation.

However, village chiefs continue to manage village resources according to customary rules, local knowledge, and power relations.

This creates what is called "**legal pluralism**".

In principle, the coming of decentralization has served to assure that the responsible enforcers of land tenure laws and customary rules are all locals, more likely to be in routine contact.

How can secure and enduring natural resource tenure be established?

There are two broad possibilities:

1. The state forcibly removes customary land tenure relations and installs national law.

   In Mali, this occurred on highly valued land as in irrigated perimeters or urbanized areas.

2. Dialog among members of civil society develops a consensus over resource tenure rules which supplants customary and national systems.

   However, analysis suggests that civil society doesn't really exist for these rural populations.

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"A centralized, vertical approach . . . left no room for local people to participate in the decision-making process. On the contrary, the State acted as if it were alone capable of defining the needs of local communities and determining the measures required to satisfy them. This outlook naturally tended to shape the mentality and attitudes of both local communities and technicians responsible for implementing development policies. On the one hand, technicians acted in accordance with a conventional technology-transfer mode, whereby they presented themselves as providers of know-how to local people. On the other, local people, constantly seeing their own frame of reference, knowledge and know-how disregarded, came to suffer from a lack of self-esteem, and adopted in some places what might be referred to as a "welfare mentality". In other words, they tended to turn more and more to outside agencies for solutions to local problems."

Bara Guèye, 1999

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The development of civil society has been targeted by the international donor community as a means to democratic governance and a foundation for economic development.

civil society - an associational sphere intermediary between the individual/family/household and the state.

Put into practice, this generic definition often masks quite different perspectives on its existence and qualities.

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Various analysts have drawn a range of conclusions concerning civil society in Africa:

Mamdani (1996) argues that rural populations in Africa are not part of civil society, but rather reside within subordinate customary regimes where civil rights are not applied, giving rise to what he calls the bifurcated state.

Alternatively, in characterizing civil society in Africa, Guyer (1994) and Docking (1999) have noted the important role international non-governmental organizations are beginning to play.

CSOs should have the following characteristics:

1. They must be autonomous from the state and customary authorities.

2. Individuals must have the right of entry and exit on a voluntary basis.

3. Membership should be inclusive.

4. Decision-making processes democratic and transparent.

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The customary village associations so often used by development agents (both government and NGO) do not meet any of these standards.

Village associations are characterized by village and clan solidarities and serve as an interface with the village chieftaincy.

The chieftaincy is a local governance structure without distinction between legislative, executive, and judicial roles associated with civil society.

It is this authority, not free association, that has served to mediate relations between the State and villagers.

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The SANREM CRSP's working hypothesis was that the social infrastructure of CSOs increases the chances that previously unassociated people can:

- build mutual trust and respect
- stimulate open debate
- increase their networks of social relations
- expand the circulation of information
- bring about more considered decisions

The objective of this infrastructure development is to multiply the bonds and networks between different groups (i.e., social capital).

Social Capital is the dynamic element animating civil society

Portes (1998) notes, "the term social capital simply recaptures an insight present since the very beginnings of [Sociology]".

It is an attempt to restore the role of norms and institutions lost in the evolution of economic theory (Woolcock, 1998).

It is: (1)   used to characterize both individuals and groups,

(2)   conflates both sources and consequences, and

(3)   has both positive and negative effects

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Coleman (1988) defined social capital as the function of a set of resources within the social structure available to the actor.

Putnam (1993) emphasized the collective character of the concept. For him, it allows citizens to solve collective problems, cutting transaction costs, and improving social tolerance and public health.

It is often measured by three indicative characteristics focusing on the strength of social relations:

(1) associational membership,
(2) trust, and
(3) the expectation of reciprocity.

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While intuitively reasonable, both approaches have been criticized for their:

(1) tautological nature, conflating the sources and consequences of social capital,

(2) not taking into account the negative dynamics associated with too much internal solidarity, and

(3) not being applicable to non-Western societies.

In order to avoid tautological problems, Granovetter (1985) noted the need for balance between over-socialized (structural functional) conceptions and under-socialized (self-regulating market) conceptions.

"Actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead **embedded** in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations."
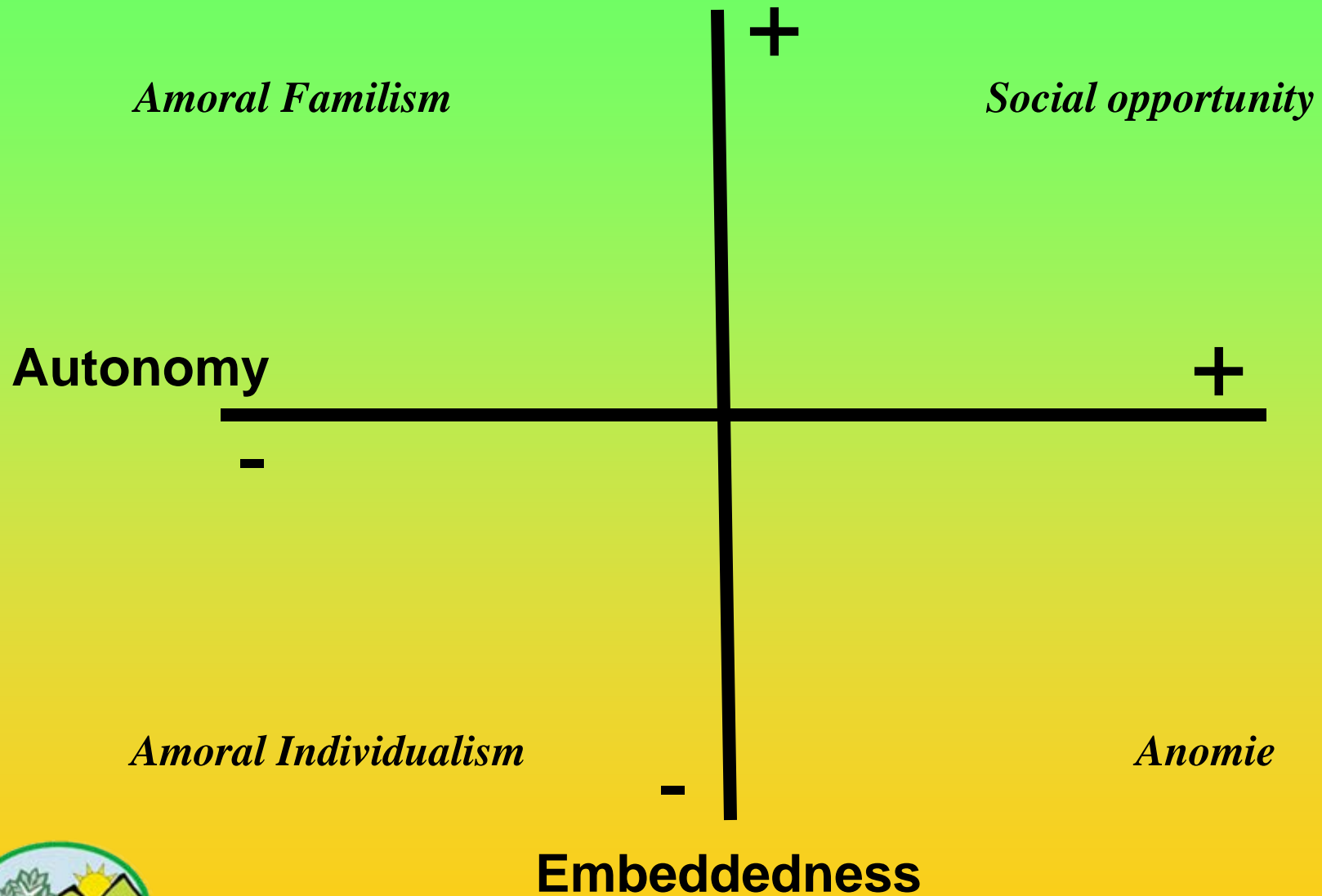
(Granovetter, 1985:487)

In order to account for the negative effects of social capital, Woolcock (1998) introduced the complementary concept of **autonomy**.

Autonomy refers to levels of exclusivity and universality, the capacity to reach out and access resources beyond the immediate group.

Amoral Familism   +   *Social opportunity*

Autonomy ——————————+—
                    -

Amoral Individualism   *Anomie*
                    -

Embeddedness

(adapted from Woolcock, 1998)

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In the SANREM CRSP–West Africa research and development program, we tested a methodology to **reduce NRM conflict and increase rational management** by building a new **network** of relations in the rural world, between:

- neighboring villages

- ethnic groups

- socio-professional groups

- population and technical services

- all elements of rural civil society

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We are not the only ones who have been exploring this frontier. Local NGOs have also been experimenting. Two types of approach have been used:

- One targeting the process for establishing conventions of co-management between various resource users

- The other targeting human capacity and social infrastructure development

Indeed, one cannot do one without the other.

Our approach has favored the latter.

Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee (NRMAC)

- a multi-village organization

- built from village level committees under the direction of village chiefs

- taking into account all production systems and socio-professional categories within a village

- recognized by the Commune Council as an auxilliary committee for NRM

- serving a valued purpose in the eyes of the local population and a mechanism to access technical services of the State

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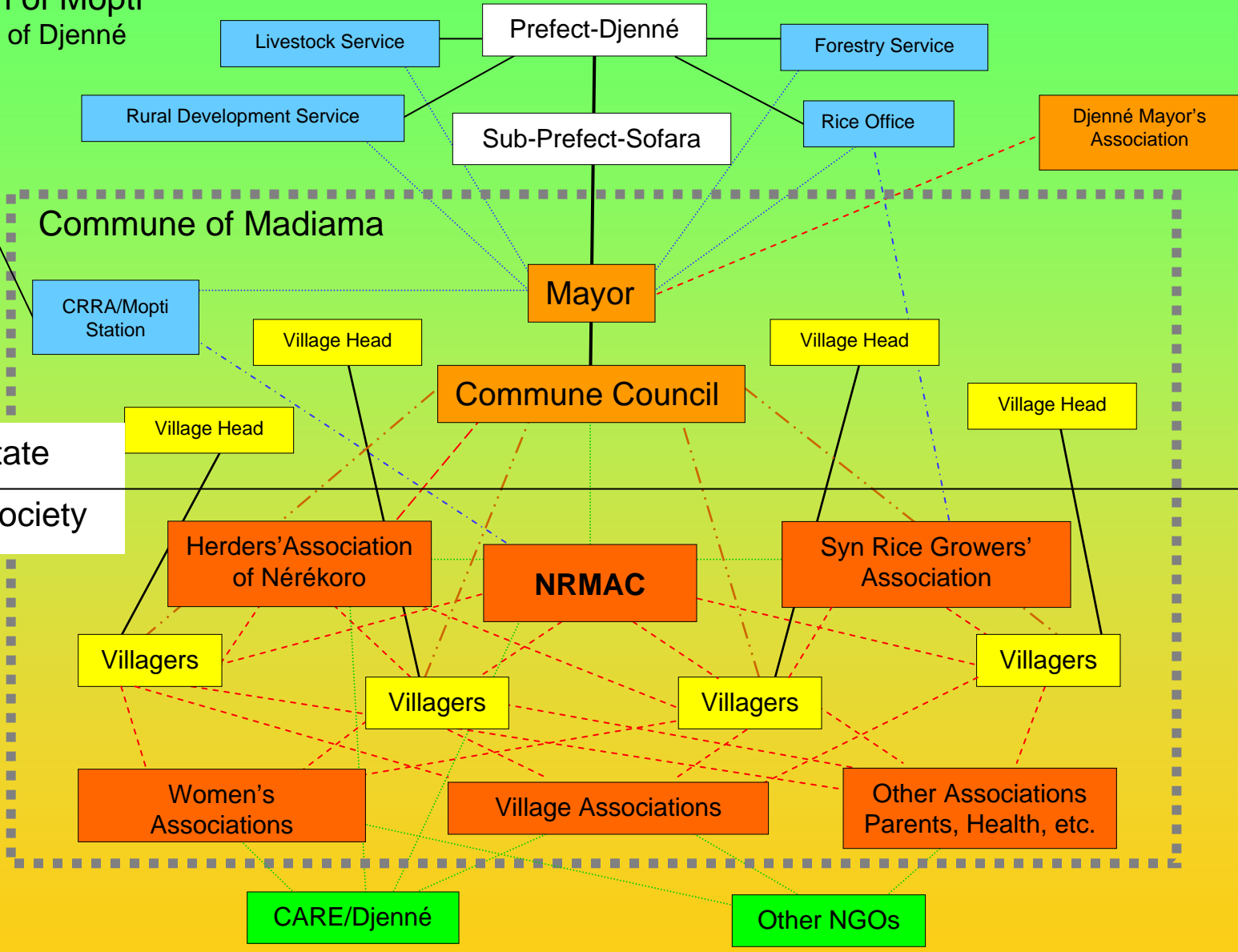
Legitimacy of the NRMAC

customary legitimacy: use of village chiefs in the transmission of messages and respect for traditional practices

state legitimacy and legality :   involvement of elected Commune officials in the creation of the committee

Commune Council resolutions implemented by the committee's actions

public legitimacy:

involvement of villagers in the selection and election of committee members

Training the committee received

Conflict management and consensus building

Holistic Management of pasturelands

Soil fertility management

Financial management

Lobbying

Training of Trainers

Major Accomplishments of the NRMAC

Mobilized the establishment of co-management agreements (still in progress)

Implemented a tree planting campaign

Organized two villages to conduct an experiment in holistic pasture management

Resolved conflicts between villages, and between villagers

Improved the climate for inter-village cooperation

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Table 1: Changes in Association Membership by Village

Village	Men's Average		Women's Average		Percent Marka
	1999	2003	1999	2003	
Madiama	**1.10**	**1.12**	**.30**	**1.06**	**97**
Tombonkan	**1.20**	**1.90**	**.50**	**1.60**	**60**
Promani	**.83**	**1.13**	**.39**	**.96**	**35**
Nérékoro	**1.12**	**1.04**	**.43**	**.70**	**0**
Tatia	**1.62**	**2.69**	**.62**	**2.00**	**92**
Nouna	**1.27**	**1.00**	**.09**	**.09**	**9**

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Table 2: Differences in Mean Scores for Confidence in Customary Society by Village

Village (n)	Confidence in Customary Society	
	Men	Women
Madiama (30)	-.545[ab]	-.457[e]
Tombonkan (10)	-.393[cd]	-.170[f]
Promani (23)	.473[ac]	.678[efg]
Nerekoro (23)	.279[bd]	-.028[g]
Tatia (13)	.633[h]	.679[i]
Nouna (11)	-.657[h]	-.572[i]

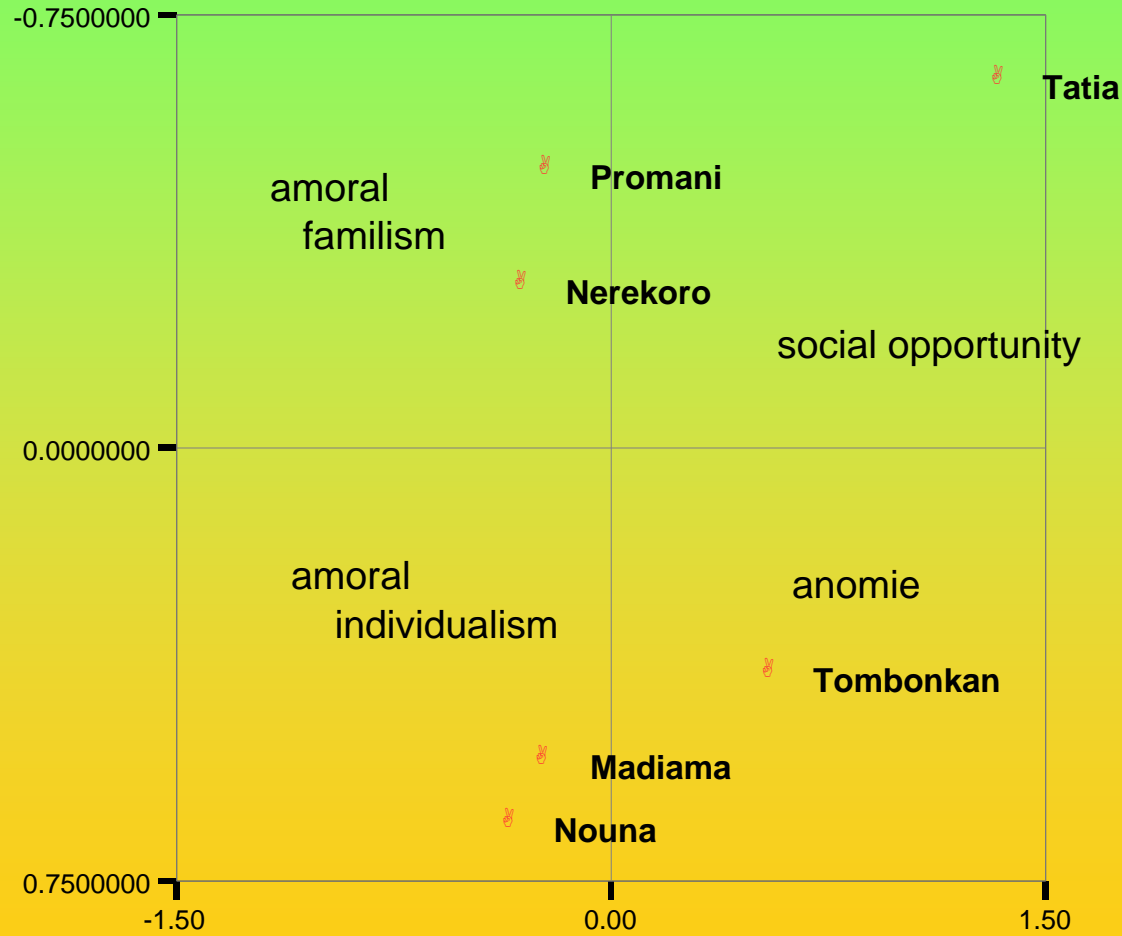a, b, c, d, e, f, h, and i are all significant at the .01 level.   g is significant at the .05 level.

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Figure 2: Men's Social Capital Characterizing Villages According to Indicators of *Embeddedness* and *Autonomy*

Table 3: Changes in Perceptions Concerning Farmer-Herder Conflict and Inter-Community Collaboration

		1999	2003
Conflict between farmers and herders	Men[a]	3.50	3.24
	Women	3.19	3.06
Inter-community cooperation	Men[a]	2.31	1.95
	Women[b]	2.33	1.83

a. Difference in means significant at the 0.05 level
b. Difference in means significant at the 0.01 level

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Lessons Learned

1. *Including all stakeholders is necessary, but difficult.*

   Assuring participation of women, youth, pastoralists, and other minorities in activities and decision making poses many challenges. Participation should also include customary authorities, government officials, technical service agents, local NGOs etc.

2. *There is no single model for building social capital and developing local management agreements.*

   The process must be iterative, allowing for adaptive learning over years to bring all stakeholders together in an informed and voluntary manner. Building trust between groups is a time-consuming process.

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Lessons Learned (con't.)

3. *Project and partner personnel need to be well-trained to encourage open debate, foster consensus, and guide without leading.*

    Respect for and recognition of local know-how is essential. This is as true for local leaders as for NGO and government agents. Training programs in conflict resolution and consensus building have made major contributions.

Lessons Learned (con't.)

4. *Power relations and stakeholder interests need to be carefully taken into account.*

> If the interests of any stakeholders are ignored, full implementation of collective endeavors will be compromised. Both the weak and the strong can subvert collective endeavors.

5. *Development agents must foster synergy between the public and private sectors at the local level.*

> Networks of local associations across communities supported by local officials can facilitate the mobilization of complementary resources for viable, locally defined initiatives.

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