Co-production of community managed operations and maintenance: taking a critical view on rural water schemes in Ethiopia

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Abstract/Summary
In this paper we take a critical view on community managed operations and maintenance of rural water schemes and examine the responsibilities and power relations produced within community management in the Ethiopian water sector. In particular, we focus on the ways in which the co-production of public services is practiced in community managed operations and maintenance processes. Through analyzing 53 interviews with district officials, community water committee members and local suppliers, and the recently drafted National Rural Water Supply Operation and Maintenance Management Strategic Framework we illustrate how the macro-level policies on community managed operations and maintenance and institutional co-production can be enacted in a more micro-level construction of power relations. In the study we identified several responsibilities that were shared by several organizational levels, and examined how they were embedded in the organizations' formal and informal hierarchies. By taking a critical approach to community managed operations and maintenance, we have also been able to explore some unwanted consequences of emphasizing community management in rural water supply.

Introduction

Community managed rural water supply has been a celebrated approach in global development policies for the past few decades. It has been underlined as a key determinant for sustainable rural water supplies and has gained widespread popularity among donors and governments. As part of the concept, community managed maintenance and operations (O&M) has been praised both for its efficiency and participatory approach as it aims at ensuring that end users who rely on the water scheme – and therefore have strongest motivation to keep it working – have the skills and funds to do the necessary maintenance and repairs themselves. The key mechanism is "ownership" creation, through which people are made to feel they have both the responsibility and the power to act (Chowns, 2015). Community management grew from the first International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade of the 1980s. During the decade, water schemes were constructed at rapid rates, but governments lacked the human capacity and financial resources to manage and maintain these new infrastructures. The solution became then to encourage community ownership of water schemes, including their long-term operations and maintenance (Schouten, 2006). Viewing community management as a panacea for sustainable rural water services has since then triggered an increasing amount of skepticism. Sustainability still remains a question mark as various water supplies continue to become non-functional before their design periods. It has been argued that in order to remain sustainable, community management systems require ongoing support from an overseeing institution to provide motivation, monitoring, participatory planning, capacity building, and technical assistance (see e.g. Carter et al., 1999; Harvey and Reed, 2006).

In this paper, we take a critical view on community managed operations and maintenance (O&M) of rural water supply. The term "critical" is used to question the current beliefs and assumptions (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000) and not to find fault in the ways in which practices manifest themselves. Instead of asking what community management is and how it can be improved for the benefit of end users or

governments, we are interested in community managed O&M as an overarching means of co-producing a public service, and in the consequences of the embedded power relations for the responsibilities of people working with O&M in practice. The following research questions are posited: How is community managed O&M co-produced along the various actors? What kind of roles can be distinguished in the discourses surrounding community managed O&M?

In investigating these questions, we take the theoretical lens of institutional co-production to analyze the power relations that result in sharing responsibilities between different groups of people. In order to provide conceptual clarity for this paper, we have defined the key concepts in the text box below.

Co-production	Co-production describes "processes through which diverse inputs are contributed by individuals and organizations that are not part of an official government agency primarily responsible for producing a particular public good or service" (Ostrom, 2013, p. x)
Empowerment	Empowerment is defined as an increase in access to the eight bases of social power as identified by Reed and Reed (2009): defensible life space, skills and knowledge, surplus time, appropriate information, social networks, social organization, instruments of work and livelihood, and financial resources.
Discourse	Discourses constitute social practices, speech and texts through which meaning is constructed. Discourses can be viewed as social boundaries that define what can and cannot be said about a topic. From epistemological and ontological perspectives, knowledge is constructed both in saying and in doing, and can be thought of as 'sets of socially and historically constructed rules designating 'what is' and 'what is not' (Carabine, 2001). In other words, discourse can be seen as 'a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall, 1992, p. 291)

Institutional co-production is characterized by a mix of activities that both public agents and citizens contribute to in the provision of public services. The former are involved as professionals or "regular producers", while "citizen production" is based on efforts of individuals or groups to enhance the quality and/or quantity of services they receive (Parks, et al., 1981; Brudney and England, 1983; Ostrom, 1999). The topic of institutional co-production will be further discussed in the following sections.

The aim of our paper is twofold: First, through qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee (WASHCO) members, district officials, and other actors as well as the recently drafted National Rural Water Supply Operation and Maintenance Management Strategic Framework (O&M Strategic Framework from here onwards), we have aimed at mapping the discursive power relations prevailing in community managed O&M processes in Ethiopia. Secondly, through this lens we have come to illustrate five different distinctive roles within the co-production of O&M of rural water supply in Ethiopia. These roles highlight the interesting tensions between social empowerment and decentralization of responsibilities which will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Context, aims and activities undertaken

Theory

In this section we discuss the theoretical underpinnings of our paper. Moving from co-production of public services to the theoretical lenses around power relations, we wish to create an understanding on the discourses that surround community managed O&M in rural water supply provision.

Institutional co-production of public services

In order to view power relations surrounding community managed O&M in rural water supply, we have

chosen institutional co-production as our theoretical lens. Institutional co-production can be seen as a continuation of a new governmental order that is characterized with a "fragmentation of authority, the increasing ambiguity of borders and jurisdictions; and the blurring of lines between the public and private sphere" (Kobrin, 2009 p. 350). The concept provides an abstract perspective through which the production of public services can be separated between governmental actors and citizens. Through such a division of production activities, also responsibilities come under change. Typically, and according to the social contract theory, citizens and the government are in a reciprocal relationship: government is trusted to provide public services such as education, health care and water supply against the citizen's labour and tax payments. In the context of many countries in the global South, however, this social contract is breaking as many services are either privatized or under-funded. Thus responsibilities are being reorganized and citizens have been encouraged to take on new roles in public service provision. Such new roles may include monitoring of public services through participatory observation (Wehn and Evers, 2015), or active participation in producing public services, such as cooperative child care (Pestoff, 1998).

Typically, co-production is seen as a dyadic relationship between the citizen and the state (see e.g. Hilton and Hughes, 2013). What researchers of co-production have been recognising is that public services rely as much upon the unacknowledged knowledge, assets and efforts of service 'users' as the expertise of professional providers. The Nobel prize winner Elinor Ostrom studied the polycentricity of police functions in the U.S., showing how the public service was co-produced jointly by citizen producers and professionals. Ostrom and Baugh (1973) concluded that in order to function properly, police needed the community as much as the community needed the police to fulfill the public service. The informal understanding of local communities and the on the ground relationships they had developed with police officers helped to keep crime levels down.

Joshi and Moore (2004) suggest two different sets of motivating forces for institutional co-production: inefficient provision of services by the state; and the complexity and variability of the context for which the public service is targeted. These sets of drivers lead to the continuous re-negotiation of production activities of public goods among the different actors. The technologies that are utilized in delivering the public good play a crucial role whether production activities of a service can be shared among both regular and citizen producers (Pestoff, 2013). In the dominant discourse, institutional co-production is viewed as a positive development in the provision of public services (Voorberg et al., 2014). Such studies argue for institutional co-production promoting participative democracy (Ostrom, 2000; Fung, 2004); contributing to greater satisfaction of users to services (Brandsen et al., 2013); and ensuring the development of service quality in public services (e.g. Parks et al., 1981). This positive portrayal of institutional co-production sees people as active agents, growing their capacity and confidence through active participation in service provision. We label the positive aspects associated with co-production as empowerment of citizens. Empowerment is a wide-ranging area of research and practice that can be approached from a multitude of perspectives.

In contrast to this literature, there is a growing criticism towards the celebrated forms of institutional co-production. With a shift towards institutional co-production it is suggested that new space is created for private market-based solutions to fill the role of the governmental production (Annala et al., 2016). Vancoppenolle and Verschuere (2013) suggest the involvement of private organizations in public service provision through co-production threatens public accountability. Moreover, institutional co-production seems to encourage heterogeneity due to its possibilities for customization, according to Brandsen et al. (2013). Heterogeneous services may then risk public services becoming dependent on social class or geographical area. Paradoxically, such heterogeneity may also be a source of innovation in public services (Adner and Levinthal, 2001). In particular, it has been argued that institutional co-production increases fragmentation in the provision of public services (Brandsen et al., 2013) and blurs the roles and responsibilities of the different actors. Such fragmentation is regarded a consequence of shifting the responsibilities towards end users who possess heterogeneous means to co-produce the public services. Harrison and Waite (2015) further conclude institutional co-production to be a double-edged sword: for some it can be value-enhancing and empowering, whereas for others it can be value-destructing and disempowering. Further criticism notes how co-production places additional demands for people using the services, and contributing to citizen burden, and decentralization of responsibilities to citizens (O'Malley, 2008).

Literature on co-production rarely emphasizes the power relations among the co-producers, and what it means for the different roles and individuals to be part of institutional co-production. Our paper aims to extend the view through analyzing discourses in the institutional co-production of operations and maintenance of rural water schemes.

Methodology

The study is based on a discourse analysis methodology. Discourse analysis is a competent way to understand power relationships in the institutional co-production of O&M of rural water supply.

Discourse, subjects and roles

In public policy studies, the discursive view has often been used to reveal more critical aspects of political life and the governance of citizens. In this paper, we apply the concept of discourse to explore subject positions as embedded in power relations in the context of community managed O&M in rural water supply. We define a discourse as 'a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall, 1992, p. 291). We understand the discourse on community managed O&M valuing the type of social empowerment of communities that is needed for long-term operational sustainability of water schemes in the absence of government resources. We use the singular term of discourse even though we acknowledge there are several discourses.

Discourses produce knowledge on phenomena (both objects and subjects), and thus form the ways in which social phenomena are understood within a specific historical context. Discourses constitute social practices, speech and texts through which meaning is constructed. Discourses can be viewed as social boundaries that define what can and cannot be said about a topic. From epistemological (referring to philosophy of science that studies the nature of 'knowledge') and ontological (referring to philosophy of science that studies the nature of 'being' and 'reality') perspectives, knowledge is constructed both in saying and in doing, and can be thought of as 'sets of socially and historically constructed rules designating 'what is' and 'what is not' (Carabine, 2001). In other words, discourse can be seen as 'a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall, 1992, p. 291)

The discourse on community managed O&M can be seen as formed through practices in which particular objects, i.e., water schemes are acted upon through agreed-upon practices. In a similar manner, particular subjects, i.e., users of water schemes, are identified and articulated in public organizations. Discourses are closely entwined with power relations, meaning that individuals as subjects are constructed and governed through discourses (Foucault, 2000). The types of discourses, on the other hand, reflect wider power relations on how a subject can and cannot act. Discourses construct subjects in two different ways: first, by creating 'figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourses produce' (Hall, 2001, p. 80) and, second, by providing a 'place for the subject…from which its particular knowledge and meaning most make sense' (Hall, 2001, p. 80). This means that people locate themselves in the position where the discourse appears most sensible and become produced as a subject within the discourse, its meanings, power and regulation (Hall, 2001). Thus, discourses produce subject positions, i.e. positions within a discourse from which individuals understand themselves and act. These positions define the structure of social rights for the actors involved (not legal but social rights); what they are expected, can, or cannot do (e.g., Davies and Harré 1990). However, people are not passively positioned by discourses but actively produce their own subjectivities by making use of them as resources in the construction of themselves (e.g., Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

In order to better address the vocabulary of the audience of this paper, we have made a tactical decision to consolidate subjectivities in terms of roles. For the rest of the paper, we will focus on roles instead of subjectivities. This consolidation places the analysis on a more abstract but concrete level, but enables us to focus on the discourses that produce such roles.

Context

Universal access to safe water supply continues to remain a challenge in rural Ethiopia. According to the National WaSH Inventory (2011), the average national non-functionality of the rural water supply schemes was 25.5%, varying between 20% and 35% depending on the region. The dominant discourses around reasons for non-functionality of community-managed water supply point towards insufficient attention to capacity building (e.g. Koryang, 2011), lack of community ownership (e.g. Chowns, 2015) and a focus on project delivery which does not allow time for adequate training and follow up of post implementation (Carter et al., 1999). In the context of Ethiopia, the implementation and overall management of rural water schemes has been traditionally carried out by governmental bodies, donor and charity projects. Many of centralized top-down approaches, however, arguably fail to recognize the under-utilized local potential resources that could accelerate the implementation and management of water schemes (Asthana, 2003; CMP, 2015). This discourse shifted the emphasis towards rural communities during the last few decades, and currently - in line with the global trend of community managed water supplies - Ethiopia has included a community managed approach into its National Water Resource Management Policy (2001) and National WASH Implementation Framework (2011). The focus of this paper, however, is on the O&M Strategic Framework and the discourses surrounding community managed operations and maintenance.

Empirical material

The interview data collection took place in April and May 2013 in the Amhara region as well as in the city of Addis Ababa. In all of the nine districts, community managed O&M was being practiced, with more or less successful results. Altogether we interviewed 9 district water offices, 24 community organizations (WASHCOs, i.e. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committees), 10 spare part suppliers, and 5 NGOs. The rest of the interviews were done on the regional and federal level (see Table 1). In line with qualitative inquiry, sampling size was dependent on the saturation of the data. 11 of the interviews were conducted in groups of 1-13 individuals, with further 42 individual interviews. The interviews were conducted both in Amharic and English languages, supported by consecutive translation during the Amharic interviews. The interview guides were focused on the following themes: long-term sustainability of water points, maintenance and operations, availability of spare parts and capacity building. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed through thematic textual analysis. The interview guide was designed around questions pertaining to long-term sustainability of water points, and the management and maintenance of water points. We started by analyzing the practices of the different actors within the community managed O&M processes, through which roles and responsibilities were further abstracted. Adding to the interviews, we also analyzed the recently drafted National Rural Water Supply Operation and Maintenance Management Strategic Framework. Combining these two lines of empirical material we identified five different roles in the institutional co-production of O&M. These positions are essential to understanding the agency of specific actors in O&M processes. Furthermore, they helped us in analyzing the power relations among the roles identified in the data.

Table 1. List of Respondents

Code	Name of the *Woreda*	Type of organization	Respondent position	Interview date
District / Village				
[1]	Bahir Dar Zuria	WWO	Head of WWO	23.4.2013
[2]		WASHCO 1	Cashier	23.4.2013
[3]		WASHCO 2	Storekeeper	23.4.2013
[4]		WASHCO 3	Cashier	23.4.2013
[5]	Bure	WWO	Head of WWO, WaSH Coordinator	25.4.2013
[6]		WASHCO 1	Chairman	26.4.2013
[7]		WASHCO 2	Chairman	26.4.2013
[8]		WASHCO 3	Caretaker	10.5.2013
[9]		WASHCO 4	Secretary, WASHCO member	10.5.2013
[10]		Supplier	Shop owner	26.4.2013
[11]	Dembecha	WWO	Head of WWO	2.5.2013
[12]		WASHCO 1	2 WASHCO members	9.5.2013
[13]		WASHCO 2	2 WASHCO members and cashier	9.5.2013
[14]	Derra	WWO	Head of WWO	14.5.2013
[15]	Farta	WWO	Water Supply Process Owner	13.5.2013

[16]		NGO	CARE North Gondar Zone Program Office, Construction Supervisor	13.5.2013
[17]		WASHCO 1	Chairman's wife, caretaker & storekeeper, WASHCO member, user	13.5.2013
[18]		WASHCO 2	Chairman	13.5.2013
[19]	Fenote Selam	WWO	Head of WWO	10.5.2013
[20]		Supplier	Shop owner	10.5.2013
[21]	Fogera	WWO	CMP Supervisor	14.5.2013
[22]		WASHCO 1	Cashier	14.5.2013
[23]		Supplier	Shop owner	14.5.2013
[24]		Artisan association	3 members of the artisan association	14.5.2013
[25]	Guangua	WWO	Head of WWO	24.4.2013
[26]		WASHCO 1	Storekeeper	25.4.2013
[27]		WASHCO 2	Secretary, 2 storekeepers, guard	25.4.2013
[28]		Supplier 1	Shop owner	24.4.2013
[29]		Supplier 2	Shop owner	24.4.2013
[30]		Supplier 3	Employee of the shop	24.4.2013
[31]	Mecha	WWO	Head of WWO	2.5.2013
[32]		WASHCO 1	Chairman, guard, 11 users	11.5.2013
[33]		WASHCO 2	Chairman, husband of a WASHCO member	11.5.2013
[34]	Yilmana Densa	WWO	Head of WWO	29.4.2013
[35]		WASHCO 1	Guard, 8 users	29.4.2013
[36]		WASHCO 2	Secretary, user/community elder	29.4.2013
[37]		WASHCO 3	Storekeeper, previous cashier, current cashier	29.4.2013
[38]		WASHCO 4	Chairman, secretary	29.4.2013
[39]		WASHCO 5	Document keeper	30.4.2013
[40]		WASHCO 6	Chairman	30.4.2013
[41]		WASHCO 7	Cashier	30.4.2013
[42]		Amhara Credit & Savings Institution ACSI	Branch manager	30.4.2013
[43]		NGO 1	KfW/GIZ Focal person	30.4.2013
[44]		NGO 2	World Vision *woreda* office, Development facilitator	30.4.2013
[45]		Supplier	Shop owner	29.4.2013
Regional				
[46]	Bahir Dar	Water Bureau	Amhara National Regional State Water Resources Development Bureau, CMP Coordinator & Water Supply Process Owner	16.5.2013
[47]		Supplier / importer 1	Owner	11.5.2013
[48]		Supplier / importer 2	Regional office manager	16.5.2013
[49]		NGO 1	Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara / Executive Director	15.5.2013
[50]		NGO 2	Glimmer of Hope / Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara, WaSH Project Advisor	15.5.2013
Federal				
[51]	Addis Ababa	Ministry 1	Ministry of Water and Energy, Director of Water Supply and Sanitation Directorate	9.8.2013
[52]		Ministry 2	Ministry of Water and Energy, Procurement Specialist & Team Leader on One WASH National Program Procurement	9.8.2013
[53]		Supplier / importer	Marketing manager	13.8.2013

Main results and lessons learnt

We present our findings on the level of organizational roles related to the discourse on community managed O&M. In our analysis we have distinguished between five different roles, each describing the different responsibilities and meanings attached to community managed O&M. These roles reflect how the different actors describe their role in relation to the discourse on community managed O&M.

The first role of "enablers" encompasses higher governmental bodies, donors and NGOs that provide the financing for the infrastructure and trainings, and thus set a framework and an overall discourse for governing community managed O&M. The new O&M Strategic Framework, for instance, is a joint effort of multi-stakeholder meetings, drafted under the bi-lateral COWASH project. Several NGOs have their

own implementation guidelines which have slightly different approaches to community-managed O&M. They are responsible for formulating the policies and processes, deciding on the most suitable approach to provide access to drinking water, and making sure the policies trickle down to the level of implementation. The global discourses on rural water supply management naturally influence the enablers as financing is drawn from multiple international sources. Through joint stakeholder fora and consultative processes, enablers decide upon the responsibilities and activities within institutional co-production, assigning roles for the different actors. Ultimately, these roles have to be accepted by the government.

"But of course, in order to make them able to do the O&M, the most important thing we have to do is to have a capacity building for the communities. The communities should be able, should be in a position to conduct O&M. And the need to have local service providers, so that they can hire people and professionals, and they can maintain and repair things, you know. So, these are, the O&M is totally the burden of the community. But we have to capacitate them to do the operation and maintenance." – Director of Water Supply and Sanitation Directorate, Ministry of Water and Energy of Ethiopia

Interestingly, this view somewhat contradicts with recent literature on community managed O&M which emphasizes the external support required by the community.

The second role, the "supporters", includes the governmental district officials and NGO field staff members that are responsible for a variety of activities: the monitoring of the implementation of water schemes, training of WASHCOs, conducting awareness raising activities in the communities, monitoring the usage and quality of water, and conducting major maintenance of water schemes. Their work is much about governing, e.g. setting the structures for community management, and mobilizing the communities, but also about strengthening and empowering the rural dwellers for their stated responsibilities. Politically (or 'ideally' in fact, since the accountability structures remain outside the scope of this paper.) they remain accountable to citizens, and they have access to skills and resources that are required for the functioning of water schemes.

"We give two types of trainings. The first training is given at the construction phase. This training is for WASHCOs and it capacitates them on how to mobilize the community to assist in the construction process. The second training is a care taker training provided for two persons from each scheme. Therefore, in general, we give training to a total of seven persons per scheme, management training for five persons and technical training for two persons." – District Water Office Head, Mecha district

In the context of Ethiopia, NGOs serve a similar role as demonstrated by the quote above and thus serve the role of "supporters" as indicated above.

Thirdly we have the private providers that benefit from the decentralization of responsibilities. Institutional co-production, according to the discourse, creates more space for private actors, as procurement is not undertaken in a centralized manner. Their role is to sell and provide for the members of the community, with the support of an enabling environment provided by the *enablers* and *supporters*. They remain under the control of *supporters* who are able to influence the buying behavior of WASHCOs, and who sometimes develop their own mechanisms for selling spare parts.

The fourth role, "empowered leaders" deals with WASHCO members that hold the role of change agents for the organizing of community contribution. Their role is to convince the rest of the community about the necessity of clean water, and the usefulness of regular tariff collection. Currently, the "empowered leaders" are responsible for deciding upon the tariffs and they receive support from the "supporters" in setting up the ideal tariffs. However, they do not hold the responsibility for ensuring the inclusiveness of tariffs, i.e. making sure that disadvantaged groups (e.g. widows, women-headed households, people with disabilities) are taken into consideration. This absence of social tariffs is supported by Wilbur et al. (2016) who documented the lack of inclusiveness and transparency in the current practices of tariff governance. The new Strategic Framework for O&M, however, is addressing tariff collection in a detailed manner, emphasizing the support required from local government, provision of subsidies for disadvantaged communities, and inclusion of life-cycle cost.

For these responsibilities they receive training on how to technically manage the water scheme as well as to raise awareness among community members. In performing their role, the "empowered leaders"

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implement the visions of *enablers* and *supporters:*

"Previously, when this water point was constructed, we did not really think about taking care of the scheme. We only enjoyed the free water we got from the scheme. But now we have understood the problem of not having clean and potable water. So, in the future we will even make the required financial contributions if a new scheme is provided for us." – WASHCO member, Guangua district

Lastly, "uncompliant citizens" are the objectified community members that contribute to the institutional co-production of community managed O&M water schemes through tariffs. They are constructed as people that need to become aware of the benefits of clean drinking water, as otherwise they would not be willing to contribute money. In the current discourses, their space in community managed O&M is limited to financial contribution. They do hold the WASHCO accountable for managing the maintenance and overall service, but simultaneously they are constructed as problematic, "uncompliant citizens" who do not pay enough for the O&M.

"It is very hard to get money from this community. You don't know how much we suffered last time to collect the 500 birr from the community. This 500 birr was 10 birr per household. But nobody was willing to pay the 10 birr." – WASHCO member, Mecha district

Table 2. An Overview of the Roles Identified in the Community Managed O&M

	Enablers	**Supporters**	**Private providers**	**Empowered leaders**	**Uncompliant citizens**
Actors	Higher governmental bodies, donors, NGOs	District officials	Local suppliers of spare parts, artisans	WASHCO members	Community members who use the water scheme
Relation to community managed O&M	Financing the rehabilitation of water schemes, providing access to water	Training, monitoring, undertaking major maintenance	Selling of spare parts for WASHCO members	Tariff collection, minor maintenance, setting up rules for the usage of water schemes	Community contribution i.e. tariff payment

The discourse on community managed O&M influences power relations among the different roles. As creators of the policy*, enablers* are in the position to assign responsibilities to all actors involved. However, in theory they are also responsible for a variety of issues, such as creating awareness among the political leaders in order to ensure the adequate budget allocation to the implementation of O&M, strengthening private sector support for the O&M, taking the leading role in bulk procurement of spare parts for pumps, and education of professionals for the major O&M activities. These responsibilities, however, remain outside of the upward accountability structures and leave the other actors depending on the enablers. *Supporters* do voice out several issues that call for improvement, but do not hold the power to change things.
"Before the construction phase, there is a preparatory phase, from July to October, where the communities need to be capacitated. However, both the capacity building and investment budgets are usually released at the same time. And we are forced to give capacity building trainings after construction has started. This creates a time constraint for us with regard to delivering the capacity building trainings." – District Water Office Hear, Guangua district
Supporters are also powerless in terms of assuring sufficient training for the WASHCOs, making the implementation of community managed O&M unattainable. In most cases the trainings are not seen as adequate.
"In addition, the caretaker training should equip the WASHCOs with minimal skills which should be enough to conduct only minor maintenance. However, this is also insufficient. How come the WASHCOs conduct maintenances after a one to

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two days training." – District Water Office Head / Dembecha

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through our analysis we came to identify five roles that characterize the institutional co-production of community managed O&M in rural Ethiopia and how responsibilities are shared among the actors. We tried to show how the optimistic calls for community management also reproduce power relations among the various actors. Clearly the creation of a policy, assigning responsibilities to different groups, and dominant narratives reflect power, and the roles that people can accommodate. We do not want to suggest that community managed O&M and empowerment are simply misplaced ideals. However, comprehension of the relationship between policy and implementation needs to be rooted in a more detailed understanding of the power relations than is often the case. This should entail examination not only of individual agency and roles of empowerment, but also of how this is constrained and influenced by broader discourses and potential roles assigned for the actors (Cornwall, 2000).

In our study, the ideals of participative democracy that are embedded in the positive portrayal of institutional co-production (Ostrom, 2000; Fung, 2004), were lacking in the interviews with WASHCO members. Participatory democracy was reduced into financial tariff collection which was problematic amongst most water schemes. Thus in order for co-production to achieve its participative democratic ideals, more focus should be directed towards the expanding the discursive roles that can be assigned to end users. Especially the role of the "uncompliant citizen" is very limiting and creates an unproductive power relationship with end users. Including more members of the community in participatory capacity building efforts could be one way of addressing this issue. Discourses, roles and power relations, however, are not stable and keep on changing. With the new O&M Strategic Framework in place, it would be an interesting avenue for research to investigate how the legalization of WASHCOs will affect the discourses around O&M processes.

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