workers. However, the community also notes that the workers are unable to improve their standard of living despite their work.

In conversations with relatives of textile workers, the hopes and wishes of the families become clear once again: an improvement in their standard of living through gainful employment and job opportunities that are compatible with family life. However, their experiences and observations suggest that working in a textile factory is hardly enough to ensure survival, let alone improve their standard of living over time. Work in the textile industry is seen as a temporary solution – because there are no alternatives, because better career and earning opportunities only arise after a university degree, and because the profession must first be learned before self-employment can be established on this basis. There is agreement that the high workload and difficult working conditions are out of proportion to the pay.

3.4 Ethiopia's Great Transformation: between community orientation and striving for modernization

The Ethiopian government is striving to transform the country's economy from an agrarian to an industrial one in order to create jobs for the younger generation. Against the backdrop of problematic developments such as those in Bangladesh's textile industry (where the Rana Plaza textile factory collapsed in 2013, bringing the precarious conditions there to public attention), the Ethiopian state presents itself as a model for positive development. However, the interviews show that there is still a long way to go before fair and humane working conditions are implemented in practice. Therefore, in this relatively early phase of Ethiopia's industrial development, it seems important to ask who actually benefits. The argument often put forward by stakeholders that the efforts will pay off in an advanced stage of industrial development is understandably unsatisfactory for workers in the current situation. In interviews, textile workers emphatically stress that they feel underpaid. However, social and cultural factors also play a role in the unstable work situation.

The question of social transformation (or social change) in newly emerging industrial economies has been researched in numerous studies and different disciplines. In the analysis of industrializing countries in the Global South, for example, the underlying assumption is often linked to the origins in Western models of industrialization and nation-state formation. Khondker & Schuerkens (2014) for example present various theoretical approaches to the study of social transformation and sociology of development since the emergence of this sub-field in sociology. By discussing different paradigms of social change and social transformation, they challenge eurocentric assumptions about a seemingly linear trajectory. However, while a linear trajectory can be questioned, there seems to be a clear relation-

ship between industrialization in the Global South and deindustrialization in the Global North in the wake of globalization.[10]

In general, the term transformation implies an idea of how society and culture change in response to factors such as modernization, economic growth, war, or political upheaval (cf. Castles, 2001). A classic in this context is Karl Polanyi's work "The Great Transformation" (1944) in which he describes how change in Western societies was forced by industrialization and modernization. More recent societal changes are for example associated with decolonization, the formation of nation states and industrial development in the Global South (c.f. Castles, 2001).

Industrialization, with the related goal of economic growth, is not limited to the economic sphere, but goes hand in hand with socio-cultural changes. As Thompson (1967: 97) writes, "there is no such thing as economic growth which is not, at the same time, growth or change of a culture; and the growth of social consciousness."

Francis Fukuyama (1992: 76f.) also points out that

> "[i]ndustrialization is not simply the intensive application of technology to the manufacturing process and the creation of new machines. […] Economic growth produced certain uniform social transformations in all societies, regardless of their prior social structure."

Fukuyama emphasizes the essential characteristics of industrialization. These are (ebd.: 77f.)

1. the need for a *rational organization of labor* (which dictates "certain consistent, large-scale changes in social structure"),
2. *urbanization* ("because it is only in cities that one finds an adequate supply of skilled labor required to run modern industries, and because cities have the infrastructure and services to support large, highly specialized enterprises"),
3. *mobilization* ("workers cannot remain permanently tied to a particular job, locale, or set of social relationships, but must become free to move about, learn new tasks and technologies, and sell their labor to the highest bidder").

10 Neoliberal globalization has shifted mass production to emerging industrial economies who are mostly part of the Global South. This has led to substantial changes in the situation of workers in the advanced industrial countries of the North. Deindustrialisation in the Global North is closely linked to indsutrialisation in the Global South. See for example "Deindustrialization and Reindustrialization Re-Connected. Comparing Developments in the Global South and the Global North from the 1970s to the Present Day," Conference from 31.5 to 2.6.2023, Research Center for the History of Transformations (Vienna, Austria), www.recet.at/event-news/events/detail/deindustrialization-and-reindustrialization-re-connected.

In the process of industrialization, traditional social groups such as tribes, clans and extended families are fundamentally eroded, Fukuyama claims. Since these groups are not organized according to the rational principles of economic efficiency they tend to lose out to those who are, and 'modern' bureaucratic forms of organization take their place. Instead of family ties or status, education and skills are the basis for hiring workers whose performance is measured according to fixed universal rules. Fukuyama describes the institutionalization of rational work organization as a characteristic feature of modern bureaucracies. Complex tasks are broken down into hierarchical, more simply structured tasks that can then be routinely processed. According to Fukuyama, this logic extends to all areas of society and follows the same pattern in all industrialising countries:

> "Rational bureaucratic organization is likely in the long run to pervade every aspect of society in an industrialized country, regardless of whether the organization in question is a government agency, labor union, corporation, political party, newspaper, charitable trust, university, or professional association. […] This 'unplanned revolution' has replicated itself in all industrialized countries, regardless of whether that country was capitalist or socialist, and inspite of differences in the religious and cultural backgrounds of the pre-industrial societies out of which they emerged." (Ibid.: 78)

In this sense, Fukuyama propagates a universal model of industrialization and the associated social transformation processes. A prerequisite for industrializing countries is the creation of a subject that meets the requirements of the industrial world of work and must therefore first be removed from its social ties. One example of this is that, for strategic reasons, textile companies in Ethiopia's industrial parks sometimes hire workers from other regions of the country. Experience shows that these workers have lower absentee rates and are more willing to work overtime and in a focused manner. As their families live further away, this group of workers is less available for family demands.[11]

While the early stages of European industrialization were associated with clear positive ideas about development, this has faded in late capitalism, where positive development goals (such as job creation and the promise of prosperity) must be defined in a much more ambivalent overall context. This process is reflected in the gradual replacement of the term 'development' by the term 'social change' or 'social transformation'. While 'development' is more teleological and based on Western ideas, the term 'change' is broader and referring to more pro-

11 These are statements and observations formulated by some HR managers in interviews conducted as part of the JLU study.

found transformations – it also tends to be more neutral and less focused than the term 'development'. Castle (2001: 1) attempts to specify the terminology:

> "[…] the idea of social transformation studies does imply a rejection of some central assumptions of development studies. The very notion of development often implies a teleological belief in progression towards a pre-fixed goal: the type of economy and society to be found in the 'highly-developed' western countries." (Ibid.)

However, this does not exclude the possibility that transformation can be associated with concrete goals and positive connotations. Yet social transformation implies neither a predetermined outcome nor that the process is fundamentally positive. (Ibid.)

Looking at Ethiopia, one could say that the social transformation with its positive development goals is taking place in a late capitalist phase in which the Western model of development still dominates, but the belief in its positive impact has been shattered. The global development project has not led to greater prosperity for all, but to a growing global gap between rich and poor and to impoverishment of masses. In addition, the textile sector is considered to be one that devours enormous resources and one that is based on exploitative working conditions.[12]

While state-directed development in Ethiopia encourages women to break away from their social ties and join a mobile, flexible, and individualized workforce in the textile and garment industry, informal social security systems are being weakened. Young women (and men) are flocking to the cities in search of education, careers, financial independence, and freedom from the social control of their families and communities. In their jobs, they learn that individual career goals and having their own savings account are more important than social responsibility. However, many of the women workers take jobs in the textile industry because as 'unskilled' workers they see no alternatives. Hardly any of the women workers achieve even modest prosperity through their work in the factories.

3.4.1 Farmers' perception

And what is the situation in rural areas? Perceptions of rural and urban dwellers have already been discussed in other parts of this book. Without creating a simplistic juxtaposition of urban and rural life, the interviews with peasants in the

12 Further information on the problematic consequences of the global textile industry can be found under "The global textile industry in focus", https://www.weltladen.de/aktuelles/2022-04/fashion-revolution (in German language).

Gurage Zone in Ethiopia[13] can once again provide exemplary insights into living conditions in rural areas and into how rural dwellers perceive the urban living and working environment. The respondents in several interviews conducted as part of the JLU study were Muslims and Orthodox Christians living in the villages of Agena and Wodiso in the Gurage Zone, a region in central Ethiopia.

Agena is a village, but also part of a small urban place, while Wodiso is a remote village near the small town of Gubre and the University of Wolkite. Wolkite is the zone's administrative center. The interviews show similarities, but also point to significant differences in terms of food security. Overall, the respondents know very little about the textile industry that is far removed from their lifeworld. However, they are connected with urban workers since most young people in their area have migrated to cities to find jobs in the informal or formal labor sector. In the interview, a woman farmer in Wodiso says:

> "Most of the youths of the Gurage ethnic group are working in the city and this has become a trend. The youths mostly do a quick (shop) business in the cities all over the country. Some are staying in the village pursuing their education and helping their families. In general, most youths prefer to go to the cities and aspire to help their families back home."

Her husband explains:

> "There are more opportunities to earn money in the city. This attracts many young people. The pressure on land plays another role in migration. At the same time, young people see that it is difficult to find work in rural areas, even if you have finished school. Many therefore drop out of school and set off for the city to find work there. And also because agriculture is not easy, many young people leave."

In the village of Agena, agriculture is particularly threatened by three factors: monkeys, land grabbing, and climate change. This is what three male farmers (aged 40, 45, and 50) say in an interview. Monkeys often eat the crops and destroy the chat trees in Agena. However, the sale of this local drug is very important for the farmers, as it provides them with a modest income. Monkeys are protected by the state, say the farmers, it is forbidden to kill them. This leaves the farmers helpless, as agriculture is their livelihood.

13 The interviews with farmers were conducted by Gifawosen Markos Mitta in December 2022 in the Gurage Zone of Ethiopia. Alltogether, six interviews were conducted with a total of 12 persons two villages (Agena and Wodiso). The interviews were carried out as part of the JLU study in order to reflect on rural life situations from which most of the textile workers come.

Another point of conflict for farmers are organized youth groups that "plunder their land." This conflict affects many local farmers, the interviewees say. This is linked to an administrative restructuring of land and borders imposed from above.[14] One of the farmers laments: "our farming and grazing land has become lower and we are not able to hold on to our properties due to the lawlessness of the organized young people in our village."

The peasants farm in the traditional way, using manual labor, oxen to plug, and cow dung as fertilizer. In Agena village, they mainly produce tomato, cabbage, enset, maize, coffee, teff and chat. Chat, coffee, enset and teff are grown all year round. The farmers report about a massive lack of manpower in agriculture. Since most of their young people are living in the city, they depend on day laborers from other regions.

The farmers interviewed report that they used to have enough land to feed themselves and even earn income from the surplus. However, this is no longer possible due to various factors. Above all, the loss of land means that they can no longer produce enough food for their own needs. The drastic loss of their grazing land has also forced them to reduce their livestock (goats, cows, oxen). Traditionally, farmers use the animals for milk and dairy products. Milk and corn porridge are staple foods for young children. Cow dung is needed to fertilize the soil. Now they are focusing more on growing avocados, mangoes, and oranges, which do not require much land. Life has become a struggle for survival, they say. They

14 The Gurage youth called 'Zerma' has been active since the 2018 transition, especially in the protest against the Governments cluster approach – an "administrative restructuring" that serves "to harden existing official borders and informal boundaries between groups, and invokes further claims of territorial control and entitlement." (Debelo and Hidoto, 2024: 10) Conflicts about land are of great importance in Ethiopia. The study by Debelo and Hodoto focusses on this field of tension in the context of the socalled post-2018 political transition. – According to an informant, organized youth groups in Ethiopia aim to secure their own interests that often differ from what they claim. The 'Zerma' officialy claim to fight for the rights of the Gurage people, but in fact got engaged in land grabbing activities within the Gurage territory (the communal lands that are located in the outskirts of the expanding towns). The informant explains that "due to prevailling lawlessness in the country, the youth groups act as if they are mini-goverments in their locality." On the conflict also see: Security forces arrest several senior gov't officials, youth, activists in Gurage zone following intensified crackdown on dissent. In: Addis Standard, 4 March 2023. These activities take place against the background of a comprehensive agricultural transition: the Ethiopian government expropriates communal land, however, this happens often without resistance of communities since they receive monetary compensation. The Ethiopian government has the constitutional right to carry out such expropriations, which are taking place on a large scale throughout the country. Ethiopia is awarding huge tracts of land to agricultural investors. The large-scale farms promise millions in profits from the export of food from one of the poorest countries in the world. For background information see also: Ethiopia's land policy gap worsens land grabbing problem, Ethiopian Business Review, 26 Dec 2024, https://ethiopianbusinessreview.net/ethiopias-land-policy-gap-worsens-land-grabbing-problem.

cannot afford to buy products from the market, "not even a bisquit." They often have to make do with their staple food, kocho, a flatbread made from the fibers of scraped leaf sheaths and powdered tubers of the enset plant. The farmers live from what they grow, but they are constantly on the brink of hunger.

Modernization is not a term that means much to farmers, and they say: "we haven't been modernized yet." Access to clean water and electricity is what they wish for their village, and that is what they primarily associate with the term modernization. Transportation is available locally, but it is unaffordable for them. Strong bonds still exist within the community, but these are under threat, as are their cultural ties:

> "We were not able to preserve our culture. If you look at our previous experience, we were plowing the land of a family together with neighbors and doing the same for the other the next day. However, as individualism is becoming dominant we lost that culture which formed strong bonds with one another. Many of the youths were migrating to the city and they are bringing back a different culture other than our own and this has also been making it difficult to preserve our culture."

The increasing monetization of small-scale farming livelihoods is fueling the desire to earn money in the city. So it is no surprise that many farmers would prefer to live in the city. Even urban shoe shiners or chewing gum sellers on the street can make more money we as farmers, they argue. A frequently heard statement is: "if we were young, we would try to move to the city ourselves." They do not believe that city life is inherently better than rural life, but rural life has increasingly become a struggle for survival. They understand why young people move to the city: they want a better life, independence, they want to support their families, but often the reason for their departure is simply the struggle to survive. One of the three interviewed farmers emphasizes: "we want to live like our fathers and grandfathers have lived. The only problem here in the rural area is the lack of enough production for our survival."

Although many younger people have moved away, farmers report that the village community remains very strong. This is illustrated by the example of funerals. Family members who live in the city are obliged to return home for a funeral. Those who do not comply lose respect within the community. "We live a communal life," they emphasize. "It is common for young people from the city to come home for the holidays. The families in the village miss their children in the city and vice versa." If relatives in the city do not have money for the trip, they borrow it from friends. And that is what the community expects.

At the same time, the farmers observe that their cultural identity is under threat. They experience that "the more young people come into contact with the outside world, the more they forget their culture." The traditional respect for el-

ders is also fading: "Today the youth have started to loot our lands. This shows how times have changed."

Other interviews with villagers in Agena confirm the aforementioned challenges. Regarding the problem with the monkeys, one farmer (a 50 years old man) says: "the land is fertile, but the monkeys are the problem. The whole village is full of them. They are the main consumers of what we are producing on our land." Rising costs in agriculture are linked to the demand for industrial fertilizers, rental costs for agricultural machinery, and also to increased living costs overall. For most respondents, renting a tractor is beyond what they can afford. According to the farmers, renting costs for tractors have risen enormously due to recent inflation. In addition, government support has also been withdrawn. In the past, the state supported farmers by providing tractors that were cheap to rent. At the same time, farmers received fertilizer on credit. But these benefits are no longer available, the farmers explain. Modern healthcare is only available to farmers in theory. Here too, the costs exceed what a simple farmer can manage. Only few farmers can afford health insurance, which costs ETB 500 per year. Not to mention the medicines that have to be purchased at the pharmacy. Access to clean drinking water alone would be an enormous improvement for the health of the villagers. This is what the farmers say in the interview. "We hope in the future many changes will come to our village," emphasizes one of the farmers. At the same time, this farmer recognizes with remarkable clarity the disadvantages to be expected from progress and the emergence of the modern world: the loss of presence, the disappearance of culture, the gap between generations. Even though modern life and its comforts are still far removed from his village, the changes it brings are already dramatically noticeable. The farmer succinctly summarizes his observations and experiences:

> "The current generation does not listen to what their families tell them. They have mobile phones and they follow football games played in Europe. The relationship between old and young is getting bad. The young people are going into a direction we have never seen before. They are focusing on technology and films. Our culture is being disregarded by our children. Modernization has been diluted our culture through the youths who have access to it."

One could dismiss this description as the familiar complaint of older people about young people. At the same time, however, residents of highly developed countries, for example, are experiencing more than ever the devastating effects of modern lifestyles on social cohesion. And again, the same farmer who describes the decline of culture in the course of modernization finds city life appealing:

> "I think life in the city is by far better than life in rural areas. Working in the city could change the living standard of the person who migrates to the city. I believe

> that a person living in the streets of the city is living a better life compared to one who lives in a rural area."

When asked what drives young people to the city, he cites the longing for independence as the main reason. The second reason he gives is the wish to support the family. This farmer also confirms that young people are expected to visit their families during vacations and on Muslim or Christian holidays. He also considers it natural that young people in the city should support their families financially. His words convey the hope that, despite all the separation, the bonds between family members in the city and in the countryside will remain intact to a certain extent and that families in the countryside will benefit from the support of their children who live and work in the city.

Overall, the often very clear statements in the interviews reveal the strong ambivalence of farmers toward the modern urban lifestyle. As for the description of peasant's life in Agena, similar statements were made in all four interviews with farmers: the farmers talk about the lack of electricity and water supply in their village, which they perceive as a major problem. For them, access to clean water and electricity is the epitome of modernization. Secondly, they associate modernization with communication, technology, education, democracy, and a modest level of comfort in their own homes. They mention the all-overshadowing problem with monkeys (e.g. "I could produce and sell a massive amount of fruits, but it is almost totally damaged by the monkeys."), and they lament about the youth who is taking their lands. They report about massive food insecurity. They explain that healthcare services are too expensive and therefore only used in very serious cases of sickness. They talk about their children who move to the city because they want to become independent, but also because they wish to support their families. They agree that children in the city should support the needs of their family. They mention chat and coffee as their major source of monetary income. Du to the crisis in agriculture, they long for a life in the city, but feel too old for such a departure, for which they also lack the starting capital. They mourn the loss of their culture (e.g. "The culture is still there, but since most people are experiencing city life, our culture is deterioring."). They value the importance of culture and religion for social cohesion (e.g. "It increases the togetherness of people and it helps to solve common problems in the village;" "Religion and culture is in the center of our life, it keeps us together and strengthens our moral values."). They clearly see the pros and cons of living in the city or in the countryside. There a statements like: "Life is better in rural areas as we do not have to pay house rent. If there would be access to electricity and water, I prefer to live in the village. If you life in the city, you pay for everything." On the other hand, they describe what they see as the benefits and disadvantages of modernized times: "We hear that technology is also advancing in our country and this brings modernization. The only drawback is that the cost

of living is getting higher and higher." They expect their children to be present at major social events, like funerals (e.g. "If somebody misses a funeral, the relationship becomes weak and their bond will break.") They emphasize that the families miss their children who moved away and vice versa. They agree that their children are supposed to come home during the holidays, even if they come empty-handed. However, attending a funeral is considered more important than visiting the family during holidays. The farmers talk about the loss of respect of the younger people towards their elders which they see as a deep cultural rift and a consequence of modernization processes.

The deterioration of livelihoods is evident in many statements of the farmers (e.g. "People in our village are becoming beggars;" "We can only pray to God. In the current situation, there is not enough food.") Their subsistence-based way of life is under threat. Modernity is present, but largely unattainable for ordinary people like the farmers. They lack the money to access health care services, mobility, agricultural machinery, etc. The promise of a better life in the city is in the air – but for them it remains theoretical. One of the farmers explains:

> "Working in the city could be profitable, but you need capital. Recently, the house rent is very high. And it is not uncommon for landlords to demand the annual rent in one go. So in general, it could be profitable, but it is impossible. (…) If it is possible to live in the city, I believe living in the city is better. You could have access to everything, keep yourself clean and live a better live."

For the farmers, modernity essentially means the gateway to a world that promises prosperity, a world to which they have no access, however. It is also a world in which everything is subject to the dependence on money. Modernity attracts and repels them at the same time. The elders see the young people staring at their smartphones, being no longer interested in the traditions they come from and that are fading out anyway. "Why talking about something that is gone already?" That was the rhetorical question posed by a farmer's son in an interview.

In the second village a similar yet different picture of agricultural life emerges. In conversations with the farmers in the village of Wodiso neither problems with monkeys nor the phenomenon of land grabbing come up. Access to land does not seem to be a problem. The land is fertile, like in the village of Agena. In Wodiso, subsistence agriculture yields enough for the farmers to sell surpluses at the market in Gubre. However, the interviewed farmers do not cultivate their whole land because they cannot afford the necessary amounts of fertilizer.

Amongst the interviewees were a father, a mother and a son (65, 55 and 19 years old, Orthodox Christians). Alltogether the family has nine children, five of them living with the parents in the same household. The father proudly reports that

one of his children has already graduaded from University, while the others are still studying or working in a government office or having their own business. He himself is a teacher by profession, but is now retired. From his salary alone he wasn't able to pay for the education of his children, that's why he was and still is active in farming. One of their sons who participated in the interview goes to school and in the afternoon he helps with the fieldwork. The son describes farming as something that is "challenging, but rewarding." "The good side of farming life is that we find our daily meals in our garden," he emphasizes. The costs of living have increased a lot, they explain. However, they are still able to sustain themselves with basic needs. "We have enough land to make a living."

The farmers grow enset, coffee and chat on a permanent basis. Seasonal ceral crops include teff and maize. If those seasonal crops would get damaged by diseases, the farmers are still able to sell parts of the permanent crops to earn some money. They also farm with livestock like cows, oxen, donkeys, goats, sheeps and chicken. However, they are challenged by expenses that small-scale subsistence agriculture is basically unable to cover. These costs primarily relate to the education of children (including contribuitions to building and maintainance of schools), the repayment of loans, or the purchase of clothing. They also have to pay for social groupings such as Idir[15], and they are expected to make church contributions. High expenditures also arise in connection with festivities: "in our culture, we incur a lot of costs during holidays," one of the farmers explains. "And our children are asking for money to watch football games," he adds. But this, he doesn't support as it would "kill most of the working times of the youths during weekends."

Due to the high living expenditures, the interviewed villagers at Wodiso primarily grow food for sale. However, since fertilizer has become very expensive (100 kg = ETB 5,000 in 2022[16]), they do not cultivate all of their land but lease parts of it to generate additional income. Furthermore, they receive financial support from familiy members who work in Addis Ababa and Wolkite (in the area of tele-

15 "Eder or *Idir* (Amharic: እድር), is a social institution in Ethiopia used for mutual aid and grants cooperative insurance within specific community," see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eder_(finance).

16 An article from July 2023 mentions prices of ETB 6,700 to ETB 10,000 per quintal (100 kg) of fertilizer. See Fedaku, B.: Fertilizer Shortages: Thwart Agricultural Hopes. In: Ethiopian Business Review, July 2023, https://ethiopianbusinessreview.net/fertiliser-shortages-thwart-agricultural-hopes; another article, published in April 2025, also reports on skyrocketing prices for farm inputs in the context of the violent conflict in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. See Endris, Y.: In-depth: Sowing Under Shadows of Violence: Amhara farmers face bleak harvest as conflict deepens fertilizer shortages, drives up input prices. In: Addis Standard, April 14, 2025, https://addisstandard.com/sowing-under-shadows-of-violence-amhara-farmers-face-bleak-harvest-as-conflict-deepens-fertilizer-shortages-drives-up-input-prices.

communication, at University, and self-employed). The family father states he does not want to get money from the daughter, who is working in a government office. "Her salary is not enough to make a living in the city," he says. Instead, he rather supports her with teff. He has no illusions about life in the city: "life has become very difficult in the city. Only those who are able to build up their own business are better off."

Decisions about daily expenses are made jointly by the family. But the woman has the final command in the house, says the farmer with a wink. In the village, different strategies in farming can be observed: some farmers keep their teff for home consumption and sell livestock, coffee and chat on the market. However, many are forced to even sell their teff to cover daily costs.

The farmers' statements range from "We have enough to get by" to claims that high inflation is leading to repeated supply shortages. This is particularly at times when books and other materials have to be bought for schooling or when loans need to be repaid. In those times of crisis, farmers use cabbage as the "major escaping food item." Cabbage is grown in summer when it rains. It grows faster than other vegetables. The cabbage is eaten together with corn dishes. To ensure their survival, farmers must coordinate their nutritional strategies effectively. Potatoes, for example, are cheap to buy in summer. ("In Ethiopia, potatoes, particularly Irish potatoes, are playing a significant role in mitigating food insecurity, especially in drought-prone areas."[17]) As for livestock, goats and chickens are kept for personal consumption during the holidays, while other animals are kept for sale. Cows provide milk and dairy products, oxen are used for cultivating the land. However, interviews indicate that farmers in Wodiso occasionally can afford to rent tractors for cultivation. Their oxen they usually sell on the market during holidays.

In terms of eating habits, dinner is of great importance: "in our culture, we eat whatever is available for breakfast, but we may not eat lunch. Only dinner is a must." The farmers' staple food is enset, which is used to make various foods.

Gebretsadik et. al (2018: 30) emphasize the importance of diversification of farming systems in Gurage. They authors also point out challenges, which correspond to those mentioned in the interviews:

> "Enset, coffee and chat based homestead agroforestry and crop raising are the dominant land uses in the area and the major sources of livelihood and income. Water shortage, coffee leaf/stem drying, enset stem/root decay and wild animals'raid are among most serious problems that are currently constraining the practice of homestead agroforestry. (…) Agroforestry provides a wider range of

17 Irish potato success in drought prone Ethiopia, https://www.concern.net/press-releases/irish-potato-success.

> products, more secure subsistence or more cash income from wood products to enable the farmer to buy food. (…) [T]he combination of several types of products which are both subsistence and income generating, helps farmers to meet their basic needs and minimizes the risk of the production system's total failure."

Tab. 12: Gurage small-holder farmers' livelihoods

cash-oriented crops	**crops for household consumption**
coffee and chat	enset products
teff (cereal) / (injera: sourdough bread made from teff flour)	
maize, cabbage, tomato mango, orange, avocado	
cash-oriented livestock	livestock and livestock products for household consumption
cows, oxen, donkeys, sheeps	goats, chicken
	milk and dairy products (yogurt, butter, cheese)

In Wodiso, the pros and cons of city life are perceived in a similar way to those in the village of Agena: "if there is the financial capacity, everbody likes to live in the city", the family father states. However, he stresses he would always prefer life in his village if the government would improve the infrastructure in the village. Last but not least, he sees fresh air, greater peace and quiet, and tranquility as further advantages of rural life. He considers the city to be the "more civilized place" in terms of greater comfort. Village life, on the other hand, means community and mutual support to him. "In our culture, we have what we call *debo*, which means *working together*." This cultural practice of mutual assistance comes into play, for example, at funerals, when plowing fields, or building houses. "We mainly support each other through work," he explains. The commitment and strength associated with such cultural traditions carries more weight for him than government regulations and laws.

He considers customs such as debo to be fundamental to community life. "People strictly adhere to them." In case, someone disregards the rules, the culture also provides for punishment: "people would not give fuel when the person is asking for it, or even not take part at the person's funeral." Culture and religion – and he talks of Christianity and Islam – "help us to keep our togetherness and let our children to grow in a good manner."

The interviews with farmers in Wodiso also address the significance of religious holidays. The farmers cite Epiphany, St. George's Day, Christmas, Easter,

Gabriel's Day, and Saint Mary's Day as the most important Christian holidays of the year. New Year's Day is also celebrated extensively. The most important holiday is Holy Cross Day (Meskel), a festival associated with considerable expenditure, as the family father expains:

> "For the holy cross day we have to buy new clothes, and new utensils, and we also welcome those living in the city. For this day, we often butcher oxen on individual base as our children will visit us and spend a view weeks of time in the village. Everything has to be new at the holy cross holiday."

At Easter, another highly celebrated day, "people often buy oxen together and share the meat; everyone is also supposed to have injera at home." (Ibid.)

In the course of modernization and in order to meet the requirements of gainful employment, funeral services in the village have changed significantly:

> "During mourning, based on our culture, those relatives of the person who has passed away should gather together, even if they are living in faraway places. Previously the mourning period was for more than a week and may last for 15 days. During those days, nobody does anything. These days are consoling days. But nowadays we agreed in our community that this is a bad culture and it should not be like that." (Ibid.)

The village community finally agreed that the deceased's close relatives should be present for the mourning for only three days. This is followed by the condolences of the neighbors and of more distant relatives. The shortening of the mourning ceremony to a total of five days was made primarily to cater for people who have a regular job in the formal labor market. The decision was made at the Gurage traditional court, called Yejoka and located around Imdibir town. (Ibid.)

It is not an exaggeration to say that the negotiation process over how to deal with funerals is symbolic for a complex transformation process that is shaping social life in Ethiopia. However, as the farmer points out, social ties are still very strong:

> "We live a communal life and we help each other in difficult times. This has created a strong bond between people living in the village. Coming and consoling those families who have lost a family member is a *must* for everyone who has been growing up in the village."

"We are living in the village as one family", he emphasizes, giving an example:

> "At the time, when there was no school in the village, the children lived in rented rooms in Wolkite town to go to school there. Now, when someone from the village met the children in Wolkite, that person supported the children with some money. This shows that the children belong to the whole village rather than to their family only."

The farmer describes social cohesion in his village as very strong and important. And he considers the relationship between the generations to be good. However, he notes that the younger generation is attracted by foreign cultures and is drifting away from their own cultural values. His analysis is as clear as it is sobering: culture is changing and disappearing. He observes that people in the village no longer spend as much time together as they used to, for example on holidays. The farmer does not believe in the survival of his culture, which he sees increasingly overshadowed by foreign influences. Young people claim that the old days are over and that now is the age of technology.

His view on the question "Life in the city or in the countryside" is also ambivalent, almost contradictory:

> "It is obvious that living in the cities is better than living in rural areas, but at this stage living in the cities is very difficult. There is access to electricity and pure water in the city. Yet, the costs of living are increasing in the cities. And life in the city is even more difficult when you have a family."

And once again it becomes clear: the promises of modernity seem unattainable for farmers. But they are there, as desires and hopes: a thorn in their side. Consequently, the farmer describes the comforts of modern life from a great distance in the subjunctive:

> "Living in the city could help people to live a modern life and unlike in rural areas, people can save their labor as people can use modern technology. There is access to water in the city while we have to fetch water from very far places or rivers. Living in the city is also prefarable as there is better access to health services. The focus of the government infrastructure lays also on the cities, including roads, schools and water supply."

However, he adds, life in the countryside is significantly cheaper than city life. It offers the advantage of being able to grow one's own food. Furthermore, people in the village help each other in difficult times, which, in his perception, is not the case in the city.

The better standard of living and the time and labor savings that farmers associate with modern city life are a concept that obviously does not apply to textile

workers (even if some may consider textile work a fundamental improvement over field work).

Furthermore, the farmer believes that life in the city provides a better nutrition than life in the village. He mentions the lack of balanced nutrition in rural areas where "people do not know the importance of vitamins." This is a surprising statement in view of the diverse food sources in small-scale agriculture in the Gurage zone. However, if a person's own diet is essentially limited to enset because all other products have to be sold to cover financial needs, the statement becomes clearer. The statement that the villagers lack knowledge about healthy nutrition (especially vitamins) could be seen against the backdrop of modern nutritional concepts that overlap with the local knowledge of the rural population.[18]

The farmer repeatedly emphasizes the benefits of modernization, even though hardly any of it has materialized in his own life. He merely mentions the road near his village, which did not exist in the past, meaning that his journey to school as a child used to take several hours. Although he considers the quality of school education to be questionable, he welcomes the fact that there are now schools near his village and even a university in the area. In the glow of modernization, life in his village seems "backward" to him. His ideal would be to combine the advantages of the city with those of rural life. All in all, he sees his world as lost. What he considers as the core of village life – the shared culture and community spirit – is gradually disappearing before his eyes and being replaced by a modernity that undermines people's way of life without delivering on its promise of modest prosperity.

Other interviewees in Wodiso were two young men, also Orthodox Christians, one full time farmer and one part-time farmer/student, who is in grade 12 and wants to study after graduating from school. Both farmers spend most of their time working on their fields, growing mainly red pepper, tomatoes, carrots, teff, sorghum, maize, avocados and mangoes. The farmers cultivate their land from February to April, the seeds are sown in May. Enset is usually buried in December and January. The harvest time is from end of October to end of December. "At least we have food for our own consumption, even if we are not able to produce for the market," one of the farmers (the student) says. He only sells chat three times a year at the market to buy some other products or to use the money for other needs. His friend, the full-time farmer produces avocado and mango for the market. As their main challenge both consider "the lack of fertilizers." This challenge is repeatedly emphasized in interviews with farmers. The whole village is suffering from the continuously increasing costs of fertilizer, they say. Their expectations of support from the agricultural authorities were disappointed. Previously they could pay off

18 Compare the study "Maize and Malnutrition in Malawi", in which the author participated: Gronemeyer, R. / Fink, M. / Metzger, J. (2015).

loans after selling their products. However, this option no longer exists, so the lack of fertilizers reduces production. Due to those capacity problems, the full-time farmer has rented out half of his land.

The two farmers further complain about the poor quality of the seeds they receive from the local government at inflated prices. If they are able to sell surpluses on the market, their profits are meager. "The income we could get from selling products on the market do not compensate the high costs of farming," they say. However, they are aware of the advantages of small-scale farming: "we do not bother a lot about our daily needs like people in urban areas." They know, there in the city, the currency's loss in value has led to a high cost of living.

In their village, even in times of scarcity the farmers can at least survive from the products they make from enset. It is noteworthy, however, that the (full-time) small-scale farmer cites an amount of up to ETB 80,000–100,000 that he and his family could earn in a year from cash crops, which is multiple times more than the average basic income of a simple textile worker. However, the cost of living – including taxes for land, expenses for fertilizers and seeds, other farm inputs such as pesticides, possible tractor rental costs, costs for day laborers, schooling for children, clothes, different daily costs and social costs – is about the same amount as their potential income.

As for the cost of events such as religious festivals, where families come together for several days or weeks, one farmer stated that "every poor person in the village has to spend between 10,000 and 50,000 birr on the holidays." These are, of course, high amounts in relation to the possible total income in small-scale farming. Nevertheless, such income opportunities in smallholder agriculture could explain why money tends to flow from rural to urban areas rather than the other way around.[19]

With regard to everyday consumer goods, one of the farmers interviewed in Wodiso said that inflation had been so high that he could no longer say how prices had risen in recent years. However, the farmers still benefit from the crops they grow for their own consumption. They also keep some livestock (chicken, goats and cows) for home consumption and for selling dairy products on the market.
A study by Teklu et al. (2024), carried out in the Sidama and Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) regions of Ethiopia, examined the income potential in smallholder farming in three woredas located in the Gurage, Sidama and Wolaita areas. Although the study identified significant living income gap for all three woredas, the results confirm the above information on the relatively high earning potential in smallholder agriculture. However, the annual income per farm household varied among the three woredas. While the

19 This is confirmed by both the results of the qualitative interviews and the quantitative surveys conducted as part of the JLU study on labor turnover. See in particular p. 86 in this book.

income from livestock and livestock products (subdivided into cattle, small ruminants, chicken, equine, cattle products, fish, honey) ranged in the three woredas between ca. ETB 12,000 and ETB 18,000 (for the 2022/23 cropping season), the income from crops (subdivided into cereals, pulses, root crops, root crops, fruits, vegetables, cash crops) ranged between ca. ETB 37,000 and ETB 103,000 (for the 2022/23 cropping season). (15f.)

The study also sheds light on various sources of income from off-farm activities such as petty trade, handicraft, land rent, house renting, and livestock rent programs. Also remittances from home and abroad play a role in the economy. Overall, the study concludes that

> "[f]armers in Hawassa Zuria [Sidama] and Gumer [Gurage] woredas earn more of their income from crops while that in Boloso Bombe [Wolaita] from off-farm activities. Remittance was thus found to be the major off-farm income contributor in Gumer and Boloso Bombe woredas. The contribution of livestock to total income did not vary among the three woredas." (Ibid.: 19)

The two young farmers point out very clearly that city life is no bed of roses for many. In the interview, the full-time farmer tells about a day laborer, who only eats once a day because he doesn't know when he will be able to earn money again. He says:

> "What I have learned from this day laborer is that instead of suffering in the city, it is better to work hard with your family in the village to improve your life there. It is better to live in the village and eat what the garden yields than to starve in the city."

The two farmers report to eat three times a day, mainly foods prepared from maize and kocho, the sourbread made from enset. The farmers consider the dry season between July and August, when there is nothing to harvest in the gardens, to be the most difficult time of the year. There are such seasonal bottlenecks when the farmers rely on food reserves and other sources of income. During periods of food scarcity, the people at Wodiso still have food from drought-resistant plants, especially from enset. Apart from these times of crisis, the garden provides a stable basis for survival. "In the city I cannot grow anything," the (full-time) farmer emphasizes. He makes a simple calculation: "I know that I could make money if I was a shoeshiner, but the cost of living is much higher in the city than in the village. I might need a big capital to live in the city." His friend the part-time farmer agrees to that:

> "Living in the cities is very difficult. People are suffering there. The most difficult thing in the city is paying the house rent. I prefer to change myself while living in the village. I could change my life if there would be support from the government."

The farmers wish support from the government in terms of artificial irrigation systems so that crops can be grown year-round. In the past, the government supported with food that was available at reduced prices, they tell, but these subsidies have long since ceased. At least the government is now building a clean drinking water source for the village, the say. For the young farmers, village culture is strongly associated with social cohesion: "we drink coffee together, we even eat together, we help each other in difficult times." Interestingly, the interviews draw a very positive picture of communal life. No mention is made about possible negative aspects of living in the village, such as social control, envy, quarrels, backbiting.

Social expectations about getting together on holidays focus on major Christian holydays. The farmers also mention the Islamic festival of Mawlid as an important event. Lower expectations are associated with the Christian New Year, especially since this takes place in the same month as the feast of the Holy Cross (September). The farmers also emphasize the importance of attending funerals:

> "It is socially not acceptable to miss funerals in our culture." (part-time farmer)

> "It will be difficult to come to previous terms with those families whose beloved ones have passed away unless you console them during their difficult times." (full-time farmer)

It is customary for bereaved families to be supported in their work in the fields by close members of the community during the mourning period. Although the close family ties are repeatedly emphasized in the interviews, the urge of young people to move to the cities is unmistakable. According to the part-time farmer

> "everybody is aspiring to live in the city. People work hard and try to move to the city. People believe life is better there, especially when it comes to the education of the children."

At the same time he makes it very clear that "nobody who has a family can move to the city if the person is not able to start a good business there." Without start-up capital (or sponsor), moving to the city is virtually impossible, they say. While the full-timer farmer believes that "life is better in the village," the part-time farmer says: "if there were not the high living costs, life would be better in the city." As

the main reason for this, he cites access to electricity and clean water in the city. If both was available in the village, he would not want to move to the city.

When asked what modern life means to them, both farmers respond by pointing out the positive aspects:

"Modern life is all about living a better life."

"Modern life means education and keeping up with modern technologies."

Some statements almost sound like religious promises of salvation:

"Education would bring a light on the darkness of people."

"An uneducated person would not even know the value of money."

"Education is the base for everything in a certain society."

In Wodisa, the modernization has at least brought some infrastructure: "as far as positive development is concerned, there was no road before and there was no access to clean water nearby," the part-time farmer concludes. Among the negative aspects of change, farmers mostly cite the ever-increasing cost of living, costs that cannot be covered on the basis of small-scale agriculture alone. Other critical comments relate to the change of the community: "the culture of togetherness and helping each other is eroding." "Previously people tried to help each other and share what they have with others. The current generation is aspiring to go to the cities and try to safe whatever they get." (The training of workers in urban textile factories is aimed precisely at such individual lifestyles and financial strategies.)

In the future, rural and urban living worlds could become even closer: "I think in the coming few years the village will get an asphalt road as the flow of people between this village and Addis Ababa is very high. There will be also access to electricity." That's what the part-time farmer says. One could conclude: the community is increasingly being abandoned, and hopes are pinned on the asphalt road.

This chapter has examined the living conditions of small farmers in order to better understand relationships between urban and rural dwellers and the labor migration of younger people. In conclusion, it can be said: for farmers, modernization primarily means access to clean water and electricity. If both were available in rural areas, village life would often be the preferred way of life, especially for older people. Advanced age and a lack of start-up capital make moving to the city impossible anyway. The departure of younger people has a negative impact on agriculture – the lack of labor in families has to be compensated for by paid day

laborers. Farmers have a very realistic view of the processes of social change. The local community is still perceived as very close-knit, but the threat of disintegration is very clearly felt. The villagers do not reject the departure of younger people to the cities, but rather link it to the hope of financial support. The increasing monetization of rural lifeworlds is creating financial needs that small-scale farming cannot cover. Beside lack of money and labor force, other factors are also making life for small farmers increasingly difficult: for example land grabbing or conflicts between humans and wild animals. At the same time, farmers are aware of how difficult it is to gain a foothold in the city, where everything from housing and transportation to food costs money and the cost of living has risen dramatically. Wages are often just enough to survive in the city, the farmers say. At least the family members who have jobs in the city relieve the household income by living independently. Among other characteristics of modernization, they mention communication technologies. Farmers appreciate the advantages of modern communication technologies such as mobile phones. At the same time, they see them as a threat to community cohesion. Older farmers observe a decline in the presence of young people and a dwindling interest in community traditions.

3.4.2 The promise of modernization

The central thesis of the book revolve around the question of whether the high labor turnover in the textile industry can be seen as a crystallization point for social transformtation in Ethiopia. While the chapter 2.5 formulates practical recommendations for stabilizing the workforce and creating more humane workplaces, the following section takes a critical look at the issue by linking empirical findings with approaches from modernization theory. Based on the empirical data, various interesting theoretical perspectives could be explored. Some of these will be briefly outlined below. The central question is to what extent the promises of modernization are actually being fulfilled in the lives of urban textile workers.

Modernization theory refers to a body of theory that became prominent in the 1950s and 1960s and that was shaped by the idea that developing countries could achieve progress by adopting Western values, economic models (like capitalism), and institutions. These theories envisioned a linear transformation from 'traditional' to 'modern' societies, primarily driven by internal factors like education and market economies. The transformation of traditional societies and their integration into global markets does not just mean removing social and cultural 'barriers' for larger markets and profits – modernization implies being an inevitable and desirable goal for everyone.

The term 'traditional society' does not refer to something static, but rather to subsistence-oriented ways of life. Social philosopher Ivan Illich (1972: 11) elucidates:

> "Traditional society was more like a set of concentric circles of meaningful structures, while modern man must learn how to find meaning in many structures to which he is only marginally related. In the village, language and architecture and work and religion and family customs were consistent with one another, mutually explanatory and reinforcing."

Illich believed that man posseses a "native capacity for healing, consoling, moving, learning, building their houses, and burying their dead" (Illich 1973: 54), which – according to him – is undermined in modern expertocratic societies.

Estey (2005: 65) described the ideological characteristics of modernization:

> "As a theory in international politics and development studies, modernization is guided by the assumption that underdevelopment is a primary condition out of which all states must evolve if they are to attain development. Inherent in this belief is that development, typified by the establishment of industrial urbanization, is the desired state."

As a very powerful idea, modernization can also be seen as a more subtle continuation of colonial aspirations. The missionaries' promises of salvation to the 'underdeveloped' are replaced by the promises of the modernists:

> "Under the guidance of this metanarrative, consciously induced policies were implemented when colonial interest in the postwar period moved from acquisition to control […]. The continued use of this approach in Africa involves the transformation of traditional tribal cultures into modern, urbanized environments characteristic of the Western World. The implied link with this type of linear progression is the promise of a better future, both economically and socially, for the developing country." (Ibid.)

One popular proponent of modernization theory was the American economist and economic historian Walt Whitman Rostow, who developed a stage model that describes a linear progression from a primarily agricultural, subsistence-based economy to a fully developed, industrialized, and consumer-driven society. According to Rostow (1960: 4),

> "[i]t is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimension, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption."

One of the precondictions for reaching that goal is that

> "[t]he population at large must be prepared to accept training for – and then to operate – an economic system whose methods are subject to regular change, and one which also increasingly confines the individual in large, disciplined organizations allocating to him specialized narrowed recurring tasks." (Ibid.)

Although Rostow's theory, which is based on a linear, capitalist model of development, has been criticized for being overly simplistic and Eurocentric, once can say that development policies around the world still largely follow these general ideas today.

In 1944, economic historian economist and social scientist Karl Polanyi coined the term "Great Transformation," when he analyzed the industrial revolution and saw political and social destabilization as a consequence of the unbridled independence of the market. (Büttner 2014: 56) Polanyi believed that the emergence of the liberal market economy led to the economy becoming detached from society as an independent sphere, which was historically a novelty and therefore distinguishes bourgeois society from all other forms of society. He analyzes this process of upheaval from 'integrated' societies, in which people's economic activities were still embedded in the overarching cultural context, to 'non-integrated' societies of the free market economy. Polanyi attempted to explain the collapse of the global economy at the beginning of the 20th century and the social upheavals that followed. His analysis begins in the 18th century, at the start of industrialization in Great Britain. Polanyi

> "reconstructs the intellectual transformations of this period, from the practical philosophy of the Scottish moral philosophers to the ideology of economic liberalism – a way of thinking that subordinates people and everything social to the mechanisms of the market economy and whose visions of social development and promises of salvation are focused solely on the complete enforcement of market forces." (Ibid.)

Polanyi's monumental work "The Great Transformation" is a fundamental critique of market liberalism and its devastating social effects. It is also an attempt to design an alternative model of economic life that is in harmony with its social foundations. According to Büttner, Polanyi's work can be seen as "a proposal for a social theory that recognizes the fundamental developmental dynamics of modern capitalist societies in the struggle between market forces and their counterforces."[20] (Ibid.)

20 Own translation of the German quote.

In the light of Polanyi's thesis, Pankhurst (2004) has examined traditional values in Ethiopia, particularly looking at land and labor, agricultural production, trade, and traditional structures, which restricted market forces – or represent an alternative to them. These included church holidays, compulsory hospitality, state banquets, alms giving, ascetism and resignation to the will of God. (Ibid.: 113) Pankhurst analyzes the economy and society of traditional, highland Ethiopia (i.e. the core of the medieval and post-medieval Christian state) and its values. His essay is an impressive proof that Polanyi's hypotheses can be fruitfully applied to understanding the historical development of Ethiopia. Pankhurst points out that economic conditions in Ethiopian history changed greatly over the centuries. In summary, however, it can be said that in ancient Ethiopia,

- work was usually unpaid;
- the economy was non-monetary and subsistence-based;
- land was not regarded as a factor of production;
- trade was of secondary importance and largely subordinated to ethical considerations;
- market requirements were generally subordinated to traditional religious values;
- any kind of work was strictly prohibited on Saints' Days, which made up a large part of the year.

According to Pankhurst, "the prohibition of working on Sabbath and Saints' Days continued into the 20th century, when it enjoyed strong support from the state" (ibid.: 88). Still in 1928–1929, during a research trip through Ethiopia, French ethnographer Marcel Griaule counted around 220 church holidays a year. (Ibid.: 89) Even today, beside numerous church holidays, the religious ban on working on weekends is still in effect, as a farmer in the Gurage Zone – he is an Orthodox Christian – reports in the interview:

> "In our religion, we are not allowed to work on weekends, especially on Sundays. Otherwise we spend most of our time working on our farms. We do not have free months."[21]

Given the absence of a significant market for agricultural products, sanctions against maximising production, and a ban on work on Sabbaths and Church holidays, the production of agricultural surpluses was rare in old-time Ethiopia. However, historical reports suggest that harvests could be very abundant. For ex-

21 Interview with a (part-time) farmer, conducted by Gifawosen Markos Mitta in December 2022 as part of the JLU study.

ample, in the early 16th century villigers in southern Tigray responded to an astonished Portugese traveller named Alvares:

> "Honoured guest, do not be amazed, because in the years we harvest little we gather enough for three years' plenty in the country; and if it were not for the multitude of locusts and the hail, which sometimes do great damage, we should not sow the half of what we sow, because the yield is incredibly great; so it is sowing wheat, or barley, lentils, pulse, or any other seed. And we sow so much with the hope that even if each of the said plagues should come, some would be spoiled and some would remain, and if all is spoiled the year before has been so plentyful that there would be no scarcity." (Beckingham / Huntingford 1961: 189, quoted in Pankhurst, 90)

According to Pankhurst, livestock numbers also often reached completely uneconomic levels due to the lack of a significant market. (Ibid.)

Considering the problems faced by Ethiopian farmers nowadays (like reported by villagers in the Gurage Zone, see chapter 3.4.1), it is obvious that today's production is no longer sufficient to adequately compensate for greater crop losses. The main causes of this crisis in small-scale farming are the lack of labor due to young people moving to cities, financial pressure on farmers, population growth, pressure on land (land grabbing, climate change), and human wildlife conflict. Increasing monetization in smallholder agriculture is forcing farmers to produce surpluses in order to earn an income. Sometimes farmers even have to sell parts of their staple foods to make ends meet.

Of course, modern Ethiopia has come a long way in terms of its understanding of work and the economy, given the historical cultural and socio-economic roots described by Pankhurst. Nevertheless, some of these roots still seem to shine through in the 'resistance' of Ethiopian textile workers to the primacy of the wage-labor over family and social ties, as well as in their observance of religious holidays. Experiences of foreign investors who have set up operations in Ethiopian industrial parks reveal a high level of dissatisfaction with the work ethic of textile workers. The conflicting perspectives between managers and workers have been described extensively in this book. Managers repetedly complain about the 'mindset' of the (mostly female) workers, reffering to a lack of discipline in terms of performance and punctuality. Xiaoyang and Eom (2018: 461) argue that differences of opinion regarding work attitudes should be seen against the backdrop of the transition from a pre-capitalist mode of production to industrial capitalism. The authors point out that the negative perception of factory workers in China at the beginning of industrialization is comparable to the Ethiopian situation (ibid.: 465). Thompson (1967) also examined the processes of early industrialization. He contrasts the task orientation of economic and social life in agrarian societies and

their seasonal and irregular rhythms with the precise time focus and discipline of industrial capitalistic societies.[22] With reference to Thompson, Oya (2019: 674f.) emphasizes:

> "The introduction to new work habits did not just take the form of workplace timesheets, timekeeping and sticks and carrots on time management. It was a complex and all-ecnompassing process spanning factory relations, ideology, schooling, and cultural habits."

It is remarkable that the role of global school education – probably the most important vehicle for the belief in Western ideas of progress and development – remains largely unquestioned in post-colonical discourse.[23] School education also played (and plays) a central role in the process of transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society. The documentary "Schooling the World," for example, impressively documents the role of global schooling in producing individuals who are ready for this transformation.[24] Illich (1972: 20–21) points out that the belief in the redemptive power of school education is perhaps the last universal religion – one that knows no heretics. And who would disagree that access to school education for girls in Ethiopia is important? It is nevertheless thought-provoking when Illich writes: "School has become the world religion of a modernized proletariat, and makes futile promises of salvation to the poor of the technological age" (ibid.: 6). Feichtinger and Malinowski (2014) address the intertwining of school education and colonization:

> "European colonial powers deployed a considerable arsenal of development programs in their struggle for hearts and minds. Particular attention was paid to women and children. Educational campaigns in colonial contexts were never an end in themselves. In the late-colonial phase, state-run schools and educational programs augmented missionary-run schools."

Part of the school curriculum was not only to combat local languages and dialects, but also to teach modern values and behaviors: "inculcating individualism, openness to technical innovations, and skepticism toward 'traditional' social structures and ways of life." (Ibid.) Consequently, education policy also had to include girls. Feichtinger and Malinowski (2014) refer to the example of the Algerian War,

22 See also Rifkin's brilliant analysis on "Time schedules and factory discipline" (Rifkin 1987: 89–97).

23 However, Illich provided a radical critique of the school system in his work "Deschooling Society" (1972).

24 "Schooling the World – The White man's lasts burdon" (documentary by Carol Black), https://carolblack.org/schooling-the-world.

where the French colonial authorities strategically implemented literacy training for girls "as a way to realign the *cellule familiale musulmane*, which in turn was regarded as the key to the 'modernization' of the entire Algerian society." According to the authors, the education of girls (under the heading of emancipation) should also help to curb population growth:

> "Military-civil directives unapologetically expressed the demographic and biopolitical goals of colonial emancipation politics: 'Educational policy must be directed toward girls as much as toward boys. Women's development is crucial. It is a condition for all true emancipation. It will contribute to reining in the galloping demographic growth of this land.'" (Ibid.)

Wherever societies undergo a transformation from an agrarian-based economy to an industrialized economy, this process is accompanied by entry into the global economy. Step by step, local economies and cultures are shifting into the service of the global economy, requiring a subject that abandons its orientation towards the community and its values. In his article "Structure of Social Change in Industrial Society," Umanailo (2019: 670) uses the example of a village in Central Java to describe how the previously rural community has transformed into a model of urban society as a result of industrialization:

> "The shifting of the Ngringo village community with an urban pattern has also changed the various social structures within the community. That habits that have been formed slowly disappear and are replaced by patterns of interaction and relationships that are adapted to the model of industrial society that is more on individualism and increasingly reduced levels of kinship."

With the decline in social cohesion, informal security systems are weakening and dependence on wage labor is growing. Those who migrate to urban areas often find themself in an inbetween situation: they move away from their local community and culture, but are unable to find a life of moderate prosperity in the city. This may result in what Ivan Illich called "modernized poverty" – a term that describes the life of many of the textile workers. The concept plays a central role in Illich's thinking:

> "Modernized poverty appears when the intensity of market dependence reaches a certain threshold. Subjectively, it is the experience of frustrating affluence that occurs in persons mutilated by their reliance on the riches of industrial productivity. It deprives those affected by it of their freedom and power to act autonomously, to live creatively; it confines them to survival through being plugged into market

> relations. And precisely because this new impotence is so deeply experienced, it is with difficulty expressed." (Illich 1978: 8)

The article from which this quote is taken is an postscript to one of Illich's earliest books titled "Tools for Conviviality" (1973), which contains the key concepts of Illich's thoughts on development and its discontents. According to this book of Illich,

> "elite professional groups have come to exert a 'radical monopoly' on such basic human activities as health, agriculture, home-building, and learning, leading to a 'war on subsistence' that robs peasant societies of their vital skills and know-how. The result of much economic development is very often not human flourishing but 'modernized poverty,' dependency, and an out-of-control system in which the humans become worn-down mechanical parts." (Madar 2010)

In his 1978 article, Illich discusses what he considers as the modern inability to control one's own life, a kind of "impotence" that extends to all areas of life. The possibility of experiencing personal and social satisfaction outside the market has been destroyed, so Illich. Illich distinguishes between modernized poverty and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor. For the latter takes place at the level of consumption and within the industrial system, in which basic human needs are increasingly to be satisfied by industrial goods and professional services. Illich argues that unequal access to consumption and the unequal distribution of wealth can be measured using economic indicators, while this does not apply to industrialized powerlessness. Where this type of modernized poverty prevails, life without access to addictive goods and services provided by industrial society is impossible or criminal – or both, so Illich. (Ibid.: 9) Modernized poverty means that the desire, competence, and prerequisites for a self-determined life are destroyed, affecting both rich and poor alike. (Ibid.: 11) However, where modernization or development reaches the poor – those who have survived on their own despite their exclusion from the market economy – they become systematically integrated into the market system, which offers only crumbs to them: Masses leave their modest, often meager peasant existence and become slum dwellers. For the poor, modernization usually raises unrealistic and ultimately frustrating expectations. Furthermore, it is a process that inevitably undermines people's confidence in their own ability to survive. (Ibid.: 32) Illich's main interest is in these "negative internalities of modernity," in "the process through which autonomy is undermined, satisfaction is dulled, experience is flattened out, needs are frustrated for nearly everyone." (Ibid.: 14)

Illich's work can be described as an attempt to deconstruct the counterproductive ideology of progress and the myths created by industrial society, and to

inspire social regeneration. (Ibid.: 14) However, what worries Illich most is that poor people today mostly see themselves as incapable, uneducated, and disadvantaged – in other words, their social devaluation has poisoned their self-perception. The desire for modernization is deeply rooted in people's minds and can hardly be questioned anymore. The small farmers in Ethiopia also believe that they are "backward," which is repeatedly expressed in the phrase: "I want to change myself." Young generations are flocking to cities, believing in the promises of institutional education, which apparently will pave the way to a better life for them. This hope keeps them going in the urban slums. Illich believes that the paralysis of autonomy and the weakening of confidence in one's own abilities affect the poor more dramatically than the rich, who can at least bask in complacency thanks to their wealth. (Ibid.: 31)

In their work on forced modernization during the Algerian War – the armed conflict for the independence from France between 1954 to 1962 – Malinowski and Feichtinger (2010: 107) pointed to the violence inherent in modernization:

> "The terms *modernisation* and *development* have been able to defend their good and peaceful sound with astonishing certainty against all historical evidence. Yet modernisation programmes in colonial spaces were always open declarations of war on traditions and their ‚retarding' influences."[25]

Malinowski (2008: 239) argued that modernization is always about "transforming the traditional 'milieu' and guiding the development of those who have freed themselves from it in order to alleviate their suffering."

In his book "Algerian Sketches" (2010) (orig. "Esquisses algériennes" 2008; first published in 1958 with the title "Sociologie de l'Algérie"[26]), social philosopher Pierre Bourdieu analysed the effects of a shock such as war on the process of social transformation in Algeria. It is interesting to take a closer look at this example, as the findings are also relevant to a certain extent for the situation in Ethiopia. From the 'colonial war' against the 'uncivilized' to the post-colonial 'fight against backwardness,' modernization processes exhibit similar logic, including with regard to the creation of an industrial labor force.

Between 1957 and 1960, Bourdieu himself served as a soldier in the Algerian War – an experience that shaped his entire work. Bourdieu's book is an early ethnographic work that is less well known but very impressive. French colonial rule over Algeria ended with this war that is considered the largest war of the decolonization era (Jansen 2016). During that time, the French colonial authorities car-

25 Own translation of the German quote.

26 Available also in Englisch ("The Algerians", 1962).

ried out a massive resettlement project in which rural communities were forcibly relocated to 'regrouping camps'. Diner (2010) writes:

> "Almost half of the Muslim rural population – around three million people – had been forced out of their traditional way of life for the sake of military 'pacification' and accelerated modernisation, and were sent to so-called 'camps de regroupement' – camps organised as village communities – in order to subject them to the dictates of rational economic management and other blessings of the Western way of life, a kind of 'social surgery' or 'social vivisection', as Bourdieu calls it in his work. […] In Algeria, Bourdieu had observed a veritable social experiment at close quarters – a social 'laboratory situation' in which violent relations accelerated the transformation from pre-capitalist to capitalist conditions."[27]

Feichtinger (2011a) described the Algerian War as a large-scale experiment of a military-flanked socioeconomic transformation. The relocation of the rural population to "strategic villages" aimed to cut off the population from their old territories and loyalties and thus open up society to development. At the same time, the relocation served the goal of literally isolating the population from the guerrillas in order to then destroy them.

In addition to better control of the population, the French military authorities hoped to win the loyalty of the Muslim population by granting them protection and, above all, through modernization programs such as the provision of education, medical care, and regional self-government.[28] Military counterinsurgency, resettlement policies, and re-education of the population ("social engineering"), as well as the ruthless destruction of traditional ways of life and culture, merged in Algeria and brought about radical social upheaval. (Feichtinger 2011b: 261–262) Malinowski draws attention to the intertwining of colonial wars and development aid.[29] A general decree from 1958 underlines that the purpose of the resettlements is "to lift these people out of the filth and poverty in which we have left them until now and to open them up to civilisation." (Malinowski/Feichtinger 2010: 113)[30] According to Malinowski (2008: 242f.), the necessary military force to overcome ob-

27 Own translation of the German quote.

28 "In its attempt to violently transform the rural population within a short period of time, French warfare in Algeria appears comparable to strategies employed by other Western armies in decolonisation and guerrilla wars after 1945, which relied on a combination of political and military means to combat insurgency and are still discussed today under the umbrella term counterinsurgency (COIN)." (Ibid.: 262; own translation of the German quote).

29 See the Web information "'Fighting Backwardness'. Kolonialkriege und Entwicklungshilfe in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren", https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/de/das-institut/archiv-frias/school-of-history/fellows/malinowski.

30 Own translation of the German quote.

stacles to modernization and the establishment of industrial discipline always go hand in hand. Malinowski points out that the Mau Mau War in Kenya showed parallels to the Algerian War in some respects. For example, the so-called "Carpenter Report on African Wages," written in this context in mid-1954, stated: "We cannot hope to produce an effective African labour force until we have first removed the African from the enervating and retarding influence of his economic and cultural background." (Ibid. 243)[31]

Malinowski (ibid.: 246) refers to the aforementioned economist Walt Rostow, who drew attention to the dangers of failed modernization in "images that are as simple as they are memorable." In 1956, Rostov explained to the US Senate that

> "launching a country into self-sustained growth is a little like getting an air plane off the ground. There is critical ground speed which must be passed before the craft can become airborne; to taxi up and down the runway at lower speeds is a waste of gasoline." (Ibid.)

Malinowski summarizes Rostow further: in the course of the acceleration phases ("drive-to-maturity" and "take-off"), lifestyles and value systems must change as radically as they do quickly; souls and societies in transition are now at risk. Rostow's theoretical model envisaged two tasks: "first, to accelerate the transition as much as possible; second, to wage military combat against insurgent forces that are holding back the transition." According to Malinowski, this strategy was "largely identical to the combination of a major military offensive and a simultaneously launched industrialization plan attempted in Algeria." (Ibid.)

Rempe (2007: 3–4) summarizes Malinowski's approach on the wars in Algeria and Kenya as follows:

> "He [Malinowski] argued that after 1945, 'development' brought together colonial warriors and Cold Warriors, modernisation theorists and colonial officials, and that the late colonial wars in Kenya and Algeria can be interpreted as an integral part of a struggle against backwardness waged by various means. He argued that even the theoretical foundations, such as Walt Whitman Rostow's modernisation theory, attributed an important function to the use of violence in development issues in overcoming indigenous resistance."[32]

In this context, Rempe speaks, among other things, of a reinterpretation of political resistance as a psycho-pathological rebellion, in which the colonial authorities attested to the subjugated people's inability to cope with the transition from

31 Own translation of the German quote.

32 Own translation of the German quote.

a traditional to a modern lifestyle. Malinowski emphasizes "that these attempts at modernization actually promoted what they claimed to be fighting: instability and new violence."[33] (Ibid.) Although the modernization of workers in the Ethiopian textile industry is not being forced by war, Malinowski's interpretation can certainly be applied to the debate about the 'mindset' of workers. Workforce turnover as well as the violent upheavals in the country can also be understood to a certain extent against this backdrop of modernization processes.

According to Malinowski and Feichtinger (2010: 133), Algeria's modernization was not an original goal of the war. "However, as the war progressed, it became increasingly important as a weapon, a means of legitimisation, and a large-scale project pursued with all available resources to secure Algeria's 'association' with France."[34] Although the humanitarian situation was catastrophic, a large part of the uprooted rural population remained in the established "model villages," even after Algeria gained independence. (Bange / Potempa 2009: 426)

An article from 1979 discusses how in Algeria "centuries-old structures were destroyed by the storm into the new age." At that time already half of the rural population had migrated and formed the "urban lumpenproletariat." (Der Spiegel 3/1979) Today, three quarters of Algeria's approximately 46 million inhabitants live in cities.[35]

Bourdieu's work delves into the pre-colonial society, particularly the Kabyle region, exploring its economic practices, agricultural techniques, and social organization. He examined the conditions leading to the collapse of the traditional peasant world:

> "The emergence of individuals separate from the family and tribe is linked to the dissolution of these units, which in turn cannot be separated from the development of Algerian society, wage labor, and the imperatives of the modern economy, contact with the Western value system, compulsory school education, generational conflict, emigration, urbanisation, the new status of property, etc."[36] (Bourdieu 2010: 80)

33 Own translation of the German quote.

34 Own translation of the German quote.

35 Algeria is the largest country on the African continent in terms of area with the second largest economy in North Africa after Egypt. However, the economy is heavily dependent on the production and export of oil and natural gas. For more information on Algeria's present economy see for example the web information from the German BMZ, GIZ, or GTAI.

36 Own translation of the German quote.

Adapting to the modern economic world requires new psychological prerequisites for individuals: a focus on regular work, money, saving, credit, etc. Overall, these are imperatives that contradict traditional community values. (Ibid.: 89)

In his work, Bourdieu describes the inner logic of traditional societies of Algeria, their attitudes toward time and economic behavior. His investigation covers various aspects, such as

- *precaution and foresight* (the stockpiling of fellah farmers differs fundamentally from the rational advance planning of capitalist entrepreneurs),
- *structure of time consciousness* (orientation toward "the coming, understood as the horizon of the perceived present" rather than the idea of an abstract 'future'),
- *logic of the traditional economy* (orientation toward economic fundamentals and satisfaction of primary needs),
- *spirit of traditional society* (giving and receiving).

Bourdieu's insights are extremely illuminating for a sound understanding of industrial change and its social upheavals. According to Bourdieu, to understand "traditional society," one must fundamentally set aside all prejudices shaped by the principle of rationalization in Western economic thinking. (Ibid.: 73–142)

There are two fundamental conclusions that Bourdieu draws from his investigation. Firstly: It is impossible to guide or advise a society "without having a thorough knowledge of its customs, its structures, and the spirit that animates it." Secondly: it is not enough to

> "simply strive for industrialisation; on the contrary, the establishment of industries in an economically underdeveloped country and a traditional society runs the risk of creating tensions and deepening signs of disintegration." (Ibid.: 91)

And most important: a social transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society must ensure that people can at least make a living under the changed circumstances:

> "It is certain, however, that access to a minimum standard of living that grants individuals the indispensable minimum access to the world is the necessary condition for the psycho-cultural change that enables individuals to take their destiny into their own hands." (Ibid.)

Looking at Ethiopia, there have been calls for the introduction of a minimum wage for years. An article published in May 2025 stresses that Ethiopia's textile and garment industry is still "grappling with critical policy shortcomings and an

urgent demand for the introduction of a national minimum wage" (Zekarias 2025). Stakeholders point to the government's delayed response in addressing the acute shortage of skilled workers in the sector. Apparently, the number of skilled workers entering the industry has dropped dramatically in recent years. The article points to research that "attributes this decline to the sector's eroding professional prestige and a widespread tendency among employers to hire low-skilled, lower-paid workers" (ibid.). As employers focus on cheap, unskilled labor for short-term savings, long-term productivity and the industry's reputation are under threat. This approach, the experts warn, "undermines efforts to build a competent workforce and threatens the sector's sustainable growth" (ibid.).

The theoretical perspectives brought together in this section aim to provide a deeper understanding of Ethiopia's labor force challenges in the textile industry within its complexities. It also may help overcoming the often one-sided debate on the 'mindset' of the textile workers. The interviews with workers have also shown that very rational considerations often lie behind their decision to leave their job. One farmer in Wodiso village (Gurage Zone) vehemently contradicts the negative assessment of factory managers that textile workers do not have a good work ethic, which they often attribute to their agricultural background. The farmer states clearly:

> "The interest of people to work or not depends on what they get from it. If the workers are not being paid well they might prefer to do a day labor work, which might help them to make more money."

The chapter further showed that colonial wars forcing modernization have an internal logic that can also be observed in present-day Ethiopia. The 'fight' against 'backwardness' as a prerequisite for modernization turns the rural-urban textile workers into an educational project. In order to become compatible with the industrial world of work, they must, on the one hand, internalize its rhythms and values and, on the other hand, to a certain extent disconnect from their ties to their locality, community, and culture.

Some of the theoretical theses – such as those of Illich, Bourdieu, or Polanyi – may provoke accusations of 'romanticism' or 'resistance to modernization.' However, it is not about turning back the clock. It is much more about sharpening our focus on what is. There is no doubt that industrialization goes hand in hand with a process of alienation. To put it bluntly, one could say that traditionally, people in Ethiopia lived and worked off their own resources – today, they process potentially toxic textiles from China and India. The majority of urban textile workers struggle to earn their daily bread and are still far from achieving even a modest standard of living.

Global monoculture has largely wiped out cultural diversity. German ethnologist Frobenius, whose research was partly a product of the colonial era, once wrote: "It goes without saying that a large part of this ancient cultural heritage must be destroyed under the onslaught of European culture, and unfortunately, in most cases, it is. The only question is what will replace it" (Frobenius 1907: 25).[37] In a way, this question is still very relevant today. The whole world is striving for modernization. But how do we imagine modernization in our time of multile crisis?

Even though the development paradigm has largely lost its persuasiveness, it is still very powerful – not least because it is supported by strong economic interests. "Progress, no matter if good or bad, is unstoppable" – that's a common narrative. One might wonder whether this is not basically an empty phrase designed to prevent curious minds from discovering the subjugation of our lives and bodies to the logic of the economy. Confrontation with ways of life that are still strongly oriented toward subsistence generally triggers associations of 'backwardness,' 'exoticism,' or 'romanticism.'

However, these reactions seem to prove one thing above all else: namely, the belief dominant in modern or postmodern societies in their own superiority over all of the past and everything that opposes the logic of growth, efficiency, and economic benefit.

Helena Norbgerg-Hodge, a pioneer of the new economy movement and the founder of "Local Futures," aptly describes the modernist view of those still lagging behind worldwide:

> "We might be interested in indigenous cultures, but we do not believe that they have anything essential to contribute to the modern world. There is that assumption that Western education, Western knowledge, is universally applicable, is something that *is* superior. […] There is a sense that *we* have evolved to a higher level of being, and that these other people, however lovely they are, they're going to benefit from this superior knowledge."[38]

In her (forthcoming) dissertation, Lüttich argues that such perspectives "should not be seen as romanticizing the local." Lüttich underscorses that indigenious knowledge sytems "are not immune to contradictions, exclusion, or change." Their value does not lie in their "purity," but rather in their "rootedness – their capacity to remain attuned to place, time, and relation." Lüttich links this to the concept of the "vernacular" (we will come to that later). It is not about a "binary choice between Western science and vernacular knowledge." Instead, Lüttich calls for a

37 Own translation of the German quote.

38 Quote taken from "Schooling the World" (documentary by Carol Black), https://carolblack.org/schooling-the-world.

"reflexive epistemic pluralism, a willingness to unlearn, re-learn, translate, and remain with the trouble" – to maintain an openness toward the unsolved, the contradictory, so to speak.

The idea of progress and development has given rise to a future-oriented way of thinking that goes hand in hand with a devaluation of the past. It is interesting to note what the well-known German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote in his "West-Eastern Divan" (1819: 7): "Those who cannot account for three thousand years remain in darkness, living from day to day."[39] A leap of thought: In traditional Ethiopia, identity and social order are strongly interwoven with genealogical categories – with lineages of clan and family. German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (1996) has written a profound essay on the significance of genealogical thinking for identity and intergenerational relationships. In the course of modernization in Ethiopia, this form of identity could sooner or later be wiped out by the primacy of individualization. The result – the dissolution of social ties – can be observed in the advanced countries of the Global North.

Given the extent of social and environmental destruction already evident in Ethiopia and around the world today, respect for a modest, subsistence-oriented way of life should be a matter of course. Subsistence is not just a relict of the past. In Ethiopia, subsistence farming is still the main source of livelihood for over 80 % of the population. But again: It is not about a static concepteptualization of traditional society. It is much more about the question of the possibilities of subsistence in our time, and about what is worth preserving. It is about what Illich called 'vernacular values.' In the broadest sense of the word, Illich's term 'vernacular' is associated with "those spaces that exist for self-determination." (Bollier, 2011). In other words, 'vernacular spheres' refer to the

> "realm of everyday life where people create and negotiate their own values, practices, and knowledge, often outside the formal structures of institutions like schools, or the market. It encompasses the informal, non-professional, and often unmeasured activities that sustain individuals and communities."[40]

In essence, the term 'vernacular' highlight the importance of ordinary people's lived experiences and the material and cultural[41] practices they create as a foundation of their society.

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39 Own translation of the German quote.

40 Summary by KI. – For further reading on Illich's understanding of the vernacular see for example: "Vernacular Values by Ivan Illich" on the website of David Tinapple, www.davidtinapple.com/illich; the chapter "Vernacular Values" in Illichs book "Shadow Work" (1981), or Hoinacki and Mitcham (2002).

41 The word 'culture' comes from the Latin word "cultura" and primarily means 'cultivation'.

Schroyer provided a brilliant analysis of Illich and his critique of modernity. In his book "Beyond Western Economics: Remembering Other Economic Cultures" (2009), he emphasizes that connecting to vernacular forces "is central to those places and spaces where people are struggling to achieve regeneration and social restorations against the forces of economic globalization."

Bollier emphasizes, "Illich was no reactionary" (ibid.). In his essay on "Development" (1979) Illich wrote:

> "I do not oppose growth oriented societies to others in which traditional subsistence is structured by immemorial cultural transmissions of patterns. Such a choice does not exist. Aspirations of this kind would be sentimental and destructive."

The point, however, as Schroyer writes, is that Illich wanted "to secure political or participatory space for forms of governance that enable exceptions to national-international forced development…. and the totalities of the left and right ideology." (Schroyer, cited in Bollier, ibid.)

Illich's idea of the vernacular forms, so to speak, a counterpoint to the idea of development as a universalistic concept determined from outside. The recognition of vernacular values require a "reversal of a colonialist and development policy patronising attitude that has always considered itself 'ethical'" (Hornbacher 1993: 47f.).[42] It requires a willingness and curiosity to allow ourselves to be alienated and irritated by ways of life and perspectives that are foreign to us – "instead of forcing them into the straitjacket of our familiar and comfortable forms of perception and thus 'explaining them away'" (Kellner 2006: 276)[43].

Kebede (2023) claims that in Ethiopia, "the integration of tradition with modernity did not take the course of positive sociocultural changes through mutual adaptation." In his thought-provoking article on "Ethiopia's Modernization Lag," he raised the question

> "of multiple modernities, i.e., the idea that each culture is unique due to the influences of a specific history, environment, and different fundamental decisions, and should find its own path to modernization."

In the case of the textile industry, the question is whether approaches are conceivable that are less exclusive and allow factory work, community life, and subsistence activities to be combined to a greater extent – for example, through a rotation system of skilled workers. A scientifically monitored pilot project would be worthwhile in this regard.

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42 Own translation of the German quote.

43 Own translation of the German quote.

Kothari et al. (2019) have compiled "pluriverse" approaches to counter a universal idea of development. In view of the manifold global challenges and the end of a universalist development project, coexistence of pluriverse approaches could pave the way for future development. Recognizing the extent of global social devastation and fragmentation, Estey (2005: 67) suggests to "believe in a 'messy' world, which can no longer be the subject of simplistic modernization studies and analyses of development." Research in a 'messy' world would mean to search "for new analytical tools to examine a complex world filled with fascinating and difficult processes." (Ibid.)

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