

The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Politics of Public Silence:
Civil Society – State Relations Under the EPRDF Regime

Camille Louise Pellerin

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Development of the London School of Economics for the
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Declaration

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Abstract

Contributing to a larger canon of work that investigates how the presence of civil society organisations in authoritarian settings influences the durability of regimes in power, this thesis sets out to explain how the relationship between the Ethiopian state, under the rule of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and civil society organisations, affected regime stability.

I demonstrate that the EPRDF tried to use civil society organisations to bolster its rule through: (1) curbing the power of civil society organisations to prevent challenges to its rule; and (2) mobilising civil society organisations as part of its developmental state programme. However, I argue that the EPRDF prioritised control at times at the expense of developmental objectives. While this prevented open contestation from civil society organisations, it indirectly weakened the EPRDF's rule in two ways. First, the oppression of civil society organisations reduced their ability to function as a bridge between the Ethiopian people and the state, creating a vacuum between the state and citizens. Second, the control established over civil society organisations decreased the EPRDF's ability to mobilise them behind its developmental state programme on which it tried to build political legitimacy.

Drawing on 14 months of fieldwork, this thesis renders the micro-politics of civil society - state relations visible. The analysis goes beyond the publicly observable "silence", characterised by the absence of open contestation by civil society organisations, and demonstrates the existence of negotiation and conflicts between actors and organisations operating in both spheres. Instead of taking the concepts of civil society and the state for granted, the thesis explores their empirical manifestations in Ethiopia. The contribution of this thesis lies in the nuance of the analysis, shedding light on how different state and civil society organisations, and the actors working within them, are linked and engage with each other.

“How do we study power relations when the powerless are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful and when the powerful may have an interest in overdramatizing their reputation and mastery? If we take all of this at face value we risk mistaking what may be a tactic for the whole story. Instead, I try to make out a case for a different study of power that uncovers contradictions, tensions, and immanent possibilities. Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of both hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination” (Scott, 1990: xii).

To Beza, Bini and Abdi

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Table of Acronyms

Table 1: Acronyms

AACCSA	Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association
AALC	African American Labour Congress
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AETU	All Ethiopian Trade Union
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labour Congress of Industrial Organisations
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
APAP	Action Professionals' Association for People
BMO	Business Membership Organisation
BoLSA	Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs
BPR	Business Process Reengineering
BTU	Basic Trade Union
CAB	Communication Affairs Bureau
CBE	Commercial Bank of Ethiopia
CCRDA	Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association
CELU	Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions
CETU	Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions
ChSA	Charities and Societies Agency
ChSP	Charities and Societies Proclamation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
CSF	Civil Society Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
DA	Development Agent
EBA	Ethiopian Bar Association
ECCSA	Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association
ECSF	Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum

EEA	Ethiopian Economics Association
EHRCO	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
EIC	Ethiopian Investment Commission
ELA	Ethiopian Lawyers Association
ELAMA	Ethiopian Workers Revolutionary Union (Amharic acronym)
EPDM	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ERIS	Electoral Reform International Services
EWLA	Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GNI	Gross National Income
GONGO	Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisation
HRCO	Human Rights Council
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practices
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IUF	International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
MeTEC	Metal and Engineering Corporation
MoFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoWCYA	Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OATUU	Organisation of African Trade Union Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation
OSJE	Organisation for Social Justice in Ethiopia
PDO	People's Democratic Organisation
PM	Prime Minister
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PPCF	Public Private Consultative Forum
PSRC	Policy Study and Research Centre
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
SNNP	Southern Nations Nationalities and People
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TPDM	Tigray People's Democratic Movement
TPLF	Tigrayan People Liberation Front
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Programme
UEWCA	Union of Ethiopian Women Charitable Associations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

Prologue

Addis Ababa, 24.10.2016 [local date: Tekemt 14 2009]

7 o'clock [1 o'clock local time] in Kasanchis [central district in Addis Ababa]. I get off the 'taxi'¹[minibus], together with the 18 other passengers that have been crammed into a 10 seater with the driver and the 'weyala' [conductor]. I pass the lines of beggars, sitting or standing at the 'taxi' stops, many blind or with other handicaps. I give the change from my 'taxi' fare to one of them, as I do every morning; the degree of their hardship doesn't cease to touch me. Kasanchis is buzzing with people on their way to work. It has been two weeks since the state of emergency was declared, but life in the capital carries on. After some initial disruptions, relative calm has been re-established and the narrative of political crisis in the regions has become the new normal. The protests are primarily led by youth in Oromia [central region in Ethiopia] and Amhara [north-central highlands]; chanting 'Down down woyane'², they question the government's developmental state narrative, denouncing the regime's ethnic bias in favour of Tigrayans and demanding the end of political repression. They demand participation and fair distribution of wealth, economic resources and political power.

Heading to Meskel square, I pass the construction site for a new multi-storey building just next to the Intercontinental Hotel. On the other side of the existing Intercontinental, they are building a new Intercontinental, close to the Elilly hotel, the Jupiter, the Radison and the Hilton. As I pass the Lime Tree cafe close to the UNECA compound, a small crowd is watching police officers dragging a beggar and her children into their car. Public begging is outlawed, it does not fit with the EPRDF's [ruling coalition] developmental image. Before President Obama's visit in 2015, the government collected beggars by the truck load and drove them out of the capital. I cross under the new light railway that resembles the tram in Stockholm in its design. The Chinese have built it, just like the Tekeze Dam, the Addis Ababa Ring Road, the

¹ Minibuses in Ethiopia are called taxis, while normal taxis are called contracts or contract taxis.

² The term 'woyane' means rebel and used to have a positive connotation, alluding to the victory against the Derg as well as an earlier peasant rebellion in Tigray (in 1943) against the regime of Haile Selassie. However, later it got associated with the ethnic favouritism of Tigrayans under the EPRDF rule (Lefort, 2017; Prunier, 2010: 191f).

Addis Ababa-Adama Express Way and the Addis-Djibuti railway. The whole capital city is a construction site with hotels, office buildings and malls being erected everywhere. The billboards on Meskel square are featuring Ethiopian Airlines' new destinations. I catch another 'taxi' in front of the Red Terror Martyr's Memorial Museum, featuring the grand failures of Ethiopia's two previous regimes: the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie and the terror under the Derg regime. 'Hulet ke hamsa' (2.50 birr) states the 'weyala' when I squeeze into the taxi heading to Bole. I cannot but wonder: Is Ethiopia on its way to becoming a middle-income country as the ruling party promises? Who benefits from the development and what about all the people who are being left out? What differentiates the EPRDF regime from its predecessors who also had grand development plans but failed?

My first interview of the day is with a high-ranking public official. He is part of the inner circle around the Prime Minister and has worked on several of the EPRDF's mega infrastructure projects. Massive black leather sofas and a large wooden desk occupy the centre of his office and a picture of former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is hanging on the wall. My interview partner tells me about the EPRDF's developmental endeavours. He draws parallels between the Asian Developmental States and the EPRDF's development programme. While he appears genuinely well informed about the history and theory of developmental states, he also repeats key phrases from the party pamphlets. He doesn't fail to label NGOs as 'rent-seekers' and 'neoliberal foreign agents', whose leaders are 'chauvinists' and 'narrow-nationalists'. When I ask him about the current political situation, he tells me that the protests are already under control and that social media are exaggerating their extent. He states that the protests are 'developmental', led by youths that have yet to benefit from the EPRDF's programme. The answer, he suggests, is more development. While he brushes aside the protests, he spends a lot of time explaining the importance of control and stability. His words convey a genuine concern about the ongoing public protests, which is perplexing: Why the fear? Why the focus on control, if the party benefits from the support it claims to have? After all, it won 100% of the votes in the national elections in 2015. And what about the developmental narrative: Does development really bring regime legitimacy as the EPRDF claims? Are the two compatible or is there a tension

between the kind of policies needed for development and those that ensure regime survival?

I spend the rest of the day with three different civil society organisations. While the first one lauds the EPRDF's developmental endeavours and downplays the protests, the second one denounces its human rights violations and the third one expresses its worry about the political instability. The first organisation explains that it has been working with the youth in Oromia to help the government calm the protests, the second one recounts the problems it has had while investigating the military response to the protests, while the third organisation states that it's impossible to join the protests without suffering repression. Two out of three of today's interviewees did not want to schedule appointments via email because they feared that the government was reading emails. Although I have been working with all three organisations for months, interviewees are still cautious about sharing politically sensitive information. Like the other civil society organisations I have met so far, none of the organisations interviewed today participates in the protests, if it is not on behalf of the government to calm the citizens. While many civil society organisations are critical of the EPRDF regime, few directly question it. After months of fieldwork I am still not sure I know the answers to many of my questions: What is civil society in Ethiopia and how are organisations linked to the EPRDF? Why are the civil society organisations not joining the anti-government protests? How does the government's discourse on participation go together with the accounts of political control and (self-)censorship?

Before heading home, I meet friends in Kasanchis. We exchange the latest information and rumours on the protests and the political situation in Ethiopia. The protests have escalated in the regions despite the heavy military intervention and curfews. Stay-at-home protests are being staged across Amhara and Oromia regional states and protesters are being put into 'retraining camps'. A friend's seventy-two-year-old father has been imprisoned under dubious allegations. Some of our friends and contacts have disappeared and we haven't been able to reach them. But it's not only citizens anymore who are questioning the EPRDF regime; the dynamics are changing. The protests have made the split in the ruling coalition visible and coalition members use the protests to advance political demands within it. Especially in Oromia

and Amhara, local politicians have started to question federal politics, to disclose short comings in public services and to demand devolution of power. Given the extent of the protests, one has to ask: Is the EPRDF really the coherent and disciplined coalition that everyone assumes it to be? Will the crisis in the EPRDF lead to a crisis in the state?

I look at my watch, 5pm [11 o'clock local time], time to head home. When I get off the 'taxi', I can already see the queue for the 'kebele³ souk⁴'. Sugar has arrived after weeks of shortage. We have no gas for cooking either and many petrol stations are closed: 'gas ena fuel yellem' [there is no gas and fuel]. Since the state of emergency, supply is even more erratic than usual. The neighbours say hello and I engage in the usual exchange of greeting phrases. Joining the queue, I observe my environment and try to catch snatches of people's conversations. Participating in this collective ritual is a continuous learning process about society and politics in this country. My flatmate has informed the 'kebele' officer that I'll pick up the sugar for our household. As he knows us he doesn't ask for the 'kebele' card. When it's my turn the woman behind me tells me to get the sugar weighed as she is worried that the 'kebele' employee will try to fool me. It's not often that Ethiopians see 'farenjis' [foreigners] using public services but when they do most worry we don't know the rules and prices. The 'kebele' employee smiles at me and weighs the sugar, 5kg. The woman behind me checks the scale and nods approvingly. I walk home with the bag full of sugar in my arms, carefully holding it to avoid the plastic from tearing. It's pitch black, the third evening in a row with power outage. It is still unclear to me how the rapid visible infrastructure development goes together with the constant shortages of some basic goods and services. How is the narrative of development compatible with lack in basic service provision and the visible poverty and destitution of so many citizens?

³ The *kebele* is often referred to as peasant or neighbourhood association and constitutes a low-level administrative unit in Ethiopia. For more information on the country's administrative structures see pages 124f.

⁴ *Souk* is a small shop and its wooden frames are often covered by corrugated iron and tarps. The *kebele souk* is the shop where inhabitants of the *kebele* who hold *kebele* cards can buy subsidised food staples like sugar, rice, flour and cooking oil.

Sitting on the terrace at home we eat 'kollo' [roasted barley, chickpeas and peanuts], hoping that the power will come back soon. I think about my day and I cannot but wonder how all the tiny puzzle pieces are fitting together: Is the EPRDF really building a developmental state or is it just another authoritarian regime? Why are people protesting? Where do civil society organisations fit in the picture? And where is the country heading?

Chapter 1: Civil Society, The State and Stability of Authoritarian Rule in Ethiopia

Introduction

"You have been told to go grubbing in the library thereby accumulating a mass of notes and a liberal coating of grime. You have been told to choose problems wherever you find musty stacks of routine records. This is called 'getting your hands dirty in real research'. Those who counsel you thus are wise and honourable men. But one thing more is needful: first hand observation. Go sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and the slum shakedowns; sit in the orchestra hall and in the Star and Garter Burlesque. In short [ladies and⁵] gentlemen, go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research." (Park quoted in Prus, 1996)

How does the presence of civil society organisations in authoritarian settings affect regime stability? For a long time, Tocquevillian (Tocqueville de, 1835a, 1835b) approaches to civil society dominated in political science and stipulated that, especially in non-democratic settings, the principal role of civil society organisations was to check state power and provide space for resistance to repressive regimes (Fung, 2003: 516). A strong civil society, measured by associational density, was said to be necessary for countries' ability to embark on democratic transition processes and hence civil society was perceived as a danger to authoritarian rule (Fukuyama, 2001: 11). However, the normative assumption linking civil society to democracy has increasingly been challenged, not least because most 21st century authoritarian regimes coexist with a variety of different organisations labelled as members of civil society and only few prohibit almost all types of civil society organisations to operate (Cavatorta, 2013a). This has raised questions regarding the character of contemporary authoritarian regimes and civil society in these settings, as well as about the relationship between authoritarian regimes and civil society organisations.

A quickly expanding canon of work has explored the coexistence of contemporary authoritarian states with civil society organisations and contributed

⁵ Words inserted by the author.

insights into why the presence of civil society organisations has not systematically favoured democratisation processes. The majority of case studies undertaken comprised countries in Asia (Hildebrandt, 2013; Lewis, 2011; Read and Pekkanen, 2009; Teets, 2014), the Middle East (Aarts and Cavatorta, 2013; Clark, 2013; Kawakibi, 2013) and North Africa (Chomiak and Entelis, 2013; Liverani, 2008), but to a lesser degree Sub-Saharan Africa (Helliker, 2012; LeVan, 2011). While differing in their approaches, a common denominator of many studies lay in their questioning of Tocquevillian approaches to civil society. Studies challenged the idea that civil society was independent from the state and called into question the assumption that civil society promoted democracy (Cavatorta, 2013b; Clarke, 2012; Hildebrandt, 2013). Research demonstrated that, civil society organisations often reproduced and reinforced non-democratic structures and discourses within their own organisations, reflecting the larger political structures and tradition within the country (Jamal, 2009; Khatib, 2013; LeVan, 2011). Moreover, studies found that both state and civil society organisations built mutually beneficial forms of interactions based on an overlap of agendas (Hildebrandt, 2013). In exchange for compliance to political power structures and to accepted forms of expressing demands, many civil society organisations specialised in service provision, filling gaps where the state did not reach. States often tolerated, if not supported, such activities, as they decreased the likelihood of grievances among the population that could possibly threaten regime stability (Haddad, 2013; Hsu, 2010; Kawakibi, 2013).

Case studies often focused on explaining why civil society organisations did not promote democratisation, emphasising the strict control that states exercised over civil society activism and demonstrating how civil society organisations fit their work within state-sanctioned parameters (Kawakibi, 2013; Khatib, 2013; Teets, 2014). Rather than exploring the multiplicity of different relationships existing between state and civil society organisations, studies focused on those explaining regime durability. While they acknowledged the strategic behaviour of civil society organisations in negotiating more space for action, they held that the strong power imbalance in favour of the state severely constrained the ability of civil society organisations to push an agenda independent from the state (Durac, 2013; Hildebrandt, 2013; Rivetti, 2013). This state-centric approach, while well suited to

explain control and co-optation of civil society organisations, failed to adequately reflect that states were not completely autonomous from civil society and that control was never complete.

Ethnographies of civil society – state relations in non-democratic settings contributed to a more nuanced analysis than many state centric approaches. They demonstrated that neither the state nor civil society were homogenous entities and that there existed linkages between actors operating in both spheres (Harriss, 2006: 455f). Some state organisations were more susceptible to influence from specific civil society organisations than others and vice-versa (Fu, 2017a: 446; Koppelman, 2017: 52f). Research revealed extant differences regarding the degree of repression that state offices exercised on civil society organisations, both between (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 988ff) and within (Fu, 2017a: 453f) different administrative levels. Moreover, although large-scale open contestation was a rare occurrence in authoritarian regimes, this did not signify the absence of bargaining and conflict between civil society and state actors (Gready, 2010: 644ff; Lee and Zhang, 2013: 1487ff). Instead, negotiations between state and civil society organisations were often carried out behind closed doors rather than in public spaces (Barkan et al., 1991: 476ff; Spires, 2011: 13ff). The inability of authoritarian states to supervise all civil society organisations at all times and to coordinate control between and within different administrative levels created spaces for their operation (Fu, 2017a: 453ff). Finally, a high degree of state repression in some cases provoked more open forms of contestation, threatening regime stability. Consequently, allowing contained forms of contestation was found to be beneficial for regime stability (Lorentzen, 2013: 129). Taken together, insights from ethnographies showed that despite high degrees of state control over civil society in authoritarian settings, civil society organisations could both support and weaken regime stability and that it was necessary to go beyond the absence of public protests to understand the politics of domination and resistance between civil society and state organisations (Ito, 2011: 426).

Studies on civil society - state relations in authoritarian settings found that civil society organisations affected regime stability through two main channels: (1) presence/absence of contestations of the regime and (2) (in)ability of regimes to use

civil society organisations to bolster their rule (Hsu, 2010; Khatib, 2013; Yerkes, 2012). The absence of contestation by civil society organisations can be termed “negative stability”, the non-existence of a direct threat. While historically, the capacity of regimes to prevent public contention proved important for their immediate stability, it often failed to ensure stability in the longer term. Excessive repression often fuelled rather than prevented contestation (Mann, 1984: 211). The “safety valve”⁶ function that civil society organisations fulfilled in democratic settings, the expression of demands in society and the provision of services to improve the lives of citizens, was compromised in authoritarian settings by the exercise of strict state control (Evans, 2006: 156; Radon and Pecharroman, 2016). However, to avoid the build-up of tensions to a point where it could cause protests, authoritarian regimes in several cases tried to manufacture “safety valves” and allowed, for example, contained contestation, institutionalised mechanisms to express demands in certain areas and encouraged civil society organisations to meet some of the citizens’ social demands (Fu, 2017b; Hassid, 2012; Wiktorowicz, 2000: 47). In contrast to negative stability, “positive stability” was found to bolster governments’ rule, through creating links with the population and/or catering to their needs, instead of simply preventing challenges to regimes in power (Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Ziegler, 2010). Consequently, when analysing the effect of civil society organisations on regime stability, both components – negative and positive stability – have to be taken into account.

Taking the existing literature as a starting point, this thesis explores the empirical manifestations of civil society organisations in Ethiopia and analyses their relationship to the state. The main question it sets out to answer is:

⁶ According to Radon and Pecharroman (2016: 43), in democratic countries, “Civil society also acts as a safety valve to ease tensions that invariably arise throughout a society’s natural evolution, and to be the eyes and ears for improving a society. A civil society that is not threatened and not repressed can serve as a barometer for policymakers, since it provides continuous feedback about how citizens feel about government initiatives. It can express citizens’ needs, aspirations, and desires. Furthermore, civil society is the perfect platform for innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives that are focused on improving citizens’ lives and the economies of their countries. In fact, investing in and supporting civil society can minimize, and perhaps even prevent, future social conflict”. The absence of such a “safety valve” posed risks to authoritarian regimes, that lacked information about demands in society and the capacity to meet them.

“How have the relationships between the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF rule and different types of civil society organisations affected regime stability?”

To explore the question, I study the relationships between state organisations and three different types of civil society organisations, including both membership and non-membership-based organisations representing different social classes, namely (1) trade unions, (2) chambers of commerce and (3) charities and societies⁷.

Contrary to many previous studies on civil society – state relations in authoritarian settings, the thesis does not set out to inquire if the growth of civil society organisations in Ethiopia will lead to democratisation, nor does it primarily aim at explaining why civil society organisations coexist with the authoritarian state. While both questions are interesting, they require as a first step an empirically grounded analysis of existing civil society - state relations and an understanding of how they influence regime stability, both positively and negatively. Based on insights from previous studies, the approach I take is designed to capture the relationships between different state and civil society organisations, the continuous negotiations and the changes in relationships over time. Instead of taking the concepts of civil society and the state for granted, the thesis explores their empirical manifestations in Ethiopia. The contribution of this thesis lies in the nuance of its analysis, shedding light on how different state and civil society organisations and the respective actors working within them are linked and engage with each other. Rather than focusing on the macro-level, I provide a close-up view of different types of interactions between state and civil society organisations and reflect on how these affect regime stability.

The following sections of the chapter are structured as follows. The first part briefly explains the case selection and outlines the research context, describing the political and socioeconomic environment in which the research took place. The second section describes the approach taken and details how the thesis builds on prior research, explains the methods used, the theoretical anchorage of the thesis and the analytical framework built to guide the analysis. The third section outlines

⁷ The third category includes all types of actors falling under the Charities and Societies Proclamation from 2009. Organisations in this category are diverse and range from NGOs and professional associations to mass organisations.

the contribution of the research, in terms of empirical findings, methodological and theoretical innovation. The final part of the chapter provides an overview over the structure of the thesis.

The Case and the Research Context

Contrary to many other authoritarian countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Spring 2015 when I selected Ethiopia as a case study, the country had a strong and centralised state apparatus and was not afflicted by large-scale armed conflict (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). The ERPDF (ruling coalition of four ethnic-based parties) was said to be cohesive and able to fend off contestation of its rule, with little indication of regime instability (Abbink, 2017a; Arriola and Lyons, 2016; Vaughan, 2011). Preparatory interviews conducted during the research design phase confirmed that the patterns of interaction between civil society and the state in Ethiopia featured similarities to those observed in many other stable authoritarian settings, indicating that Ethiopia could be considered as part of a larger group of cases with respect to civil society - state relations⁸. Moreover, existing research often portrayed civil society organisations as co-opted and the “public silence”, the absence of open contention, was taken as a sign that civil society organisations did not threaten regime stability in Ethiopia (Brechenmacher, 2017: 65ff; Dupuy et al., 2015; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8).

Since the EPRDF came into power in 1991, Ethiopia has become known for two trends: sustained and accelerated socio-economic development and increasingly authoritarian rule. The country’s GDP growth rates between 2005 and 2016 were

⁸ Similar to findings from studies conducted in China (Hildebrandt, 2013), Russia (Mikrova et al., 2013), Syria pre-2012 (Kawakibi, 2013) and Jordan (Clark, 2013), the EPRDF was for example said to have devised a system that differentially regulated civil society actors with the aim of eliminating threats to the regime and using civil society to address some of the pressing socioeconomic issues that arose from the country’s recent rapid development and that the state could not address (International NGO, Director, 2015; International NGO, Project Manager, 2015). Interviewees also explained that interactions between state and civil society differed between various types of state and civil society organisations, as did the individual space and negotiating power that CSOs had (International NGO, Country Analyst, 2015; Researcher, Ethiopian, 2015a; Researcher, International, 2015). Civil society in Ethiopia was said to be closely linked to the state (Researcher, Ethiopian, 2015b, 2015c) and cooperating with the state was often perceived as the only way of pushing agendas in different subject areas, leading an interviewee to conclude that “*Sometimes getting closer to the state means gaining more influence*” (Consultant, International, 2015).

positive at around 10%, and Ethiopia ranked second among African countries in terms of poverty reduction over the same time period (The World Bank, 2016). Between 2000 and 2015, life expectancy increased from 51.9 to 64.6 years, mean years of schooling rose from 1.5 to 2.6 years and the GNI per capita (in \$ PPP in 2011) grew from \$617 to \$1523 according to the 2016 Human Development Report⁹. At the same time, both statistical indices and qualitative studies unanimously labelled Ethiopia unfree in terms of civil and political rights and media freedom and classified it as authoritarian¹⁰, noting a worsening tendency over the past decade (Abbink and Hagmann, 2016). Ethiopia ranked 129th out of 167 countries world-wide and 30th out of 44 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa on the 2017 Democracy Index (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018: 8, 33). Ethiopia was also listed as one of the worst offenders with respect to media freedom (Gagliardone, 2014), ranking in the same category as China, North Korea and Eritrea (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018: 42).

Although the EPRDF has often been described as a cohesive organisation (Abbink, 2017a; Arriola and Lyons, 2016), the political settlement on which its rule was built was fragile. The ruling coalition was led by the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), a party representing a small ethnic minority from the country's northernmost region, which raised questions about the regime's ability to generate political legitimacy through representation. Although the EPRDF was formally a coalition of equals, embodying a power sharing agreement between the country's four central regions, according to Tadesse and Young (2003: 398) "*it never lost its minority identification*". To compensate for the lack of representativeness, the EPRDF tried to generate legitimacy over performance in development and since the early 2000s it has pursued the self-proclaimed 'Democratic Developmental State' model (Meles, 2011: 169). Emulating development policies used by the Asian Tigers, the EPRDF has focused on promoting industrialisation through investment in labour intensive sectors such as agroindustry and light manufacturing (Meles, 2006), earning it the nickname 'African Lion' (Yared et al., 2016). While Ethiopia was said to be one of the clearest examples

⁹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

¹⁰ See for example the 2018 Freedom House Index: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/ethiopia> (last accessed 13.12.2018) or the World Bank's World Wide Governance Indicators: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#reports> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

of an aspiring developmental state in Africa (Clapham, 2018: 1151), studies found that, like its Asian role models, it was based on authoritarian, not liberal democratic politics (Eyob, 2017; Hauge and Chang, Forthcoming; Weis, 2016).

After an initial decade of relative political opening in the 1990s, the space for civil society in Ethiopia has shrunk significantly since the early 2000s, partly as a result of CSO engagement in the 2005 elections and the ensuing political crisis (Lefort, 2007; Melakou, 2008). The 2005 elections were the freest elections that took place under the EPRDF regime. However, the ruling coalition closed the political space soon after the elections as it lost many seats in the federal parliament and in the Addis Ababa City Council. In the aftermath of the 2005 elections the EPRDF further focused on the promotion of accelerated and sustained development to engender legitimacy (Abbink, 2006; Smith, 2007). To prevent open contention, it adopted laws restricting freedom of speech and civic activism such as the Anti-terrorism Proclamation, the Charities and Societies Proclamation and the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation (Proclamation No. 590, 2008; Proclamation No. 621, 2009; Proclamation No. 652, 2009). Civic activism was countered with repression (Smith, 2007; Weis, 2016: 261f) and although the number of registered civil society organisations in Ethiopia grew between 1991 to 2014 (Gebre, 2016), the EPRDF rule became more authoritarian. The EPRDF's approach towards civil society has been commonly characterised as focused on preventing contestation and securing its rule, with no indication of a potential opening of the associational space (Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Yitayehu, 2010). However, evidence also suggests that the EPRDF went beyond repression and manufactured civil society with the aim of using it to legitimise its rule (Di Nunzio, 2015; Eyob, 2017).

While studies found that the EPRDF's repressive rule caused grievances and subversive behaviour among citizens (Di Nunzio, 2014; Emmenegger, 2016; Emmenegger et al., 2011; Lefort, 2013; Planel, 2014), since the upheavals around the 2005 elections (Smith, 2007), popular discontent, for a long time, did not translate into public contestation. The EPRDF's high degree of penetration of society was often said to generate regime stability and the outbreak of large-scale anti-government protests in 2015, which plunged the EPRDF into the biggest political crisis since the beginning of its rule in 1991 came as a surprise to many. The protests that denounced

the regime's ethnic politics, its repressive character and the unfair distribution of resources and wealth between regions, ethnicities and individuals, clearly revealed that the EPRDF had failed in its attempt to build legitimacy on developmental outputs. It also showed that previous research that had taken the "public silence" of civil society organisations and citizens as a sign of regime stability had actually failed to capture the extent to which the EPRDF rule had caused grievances.

The protests in 2015/18 were primarily led by youth in Oromia and later also Amhara regional states but quickly gained support among other demographics and other social and professional groups. Formal civil society organisations did not participate in the large-scale regime contestation, which provided an interesting angle to reflect on the effect of civil society – state relations on regime stability. While it was tempting to take the non-involvement of civil society organisations as a sign that they did not threaten regime stability, it was important to go beyond this preliminary analysis for at least three reasons. First, excessive repression of civic activism is known to have fuelled public protests in other contexts (Lee and Zhang, 2013: 1476f; Mann, 1984: 211; Slater and Fenner, 2011: 20) and thus the policing of civil society organisations might indirectly have threatened regime stability. Second, research on civil society - state relations in authoritarian contexts has shown that a lot of the interactions between civil society and state organisations did not take place in the realm of formal politics, rendering negotiations and conflicts often invisible to the public eye (Fu, 2017c; Richter and Hatch, 2013). Consequently, "the public silence" of civil society organisations in Ethiopia had possibly hidden existing conflicts and supported a false sense of regime stability. Third, given that the regime tried to engender legitimacy through developmental performance, it was necessary to inquire in how far its relationship to different civil society actors helped or hindered the operationalisation of its developmental state programme. Studies on the Asian developmental states found that the relationship between states and civil society organisations had been influenced by their economic doctrine (Read and Pekkanen, 2009: 10f) and that it was an important part of their success, marked both by repression to prevent contestation, as well mobilisation to support the implementation of developmental policies (Deyo, 1987a; Evans, 1995; Kim, 1997).

The Empirical, Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Building on Extant Literature: Civil Society, Authoritarian Rule and Development in Ethiopia

While the literature on the contemporary Ethiopian state has grown considerably over the past decade, scholarship so far has focused on ethnic federalism (Abbink, 2011; Asnake, 2013; Assefa, 2012), electoral authoritarianism (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009a; Abbink, 2017a; Di Nunzio, 2014; Tronvoll, 2009; Tronvoll and Hagmann, 2012) and the ideological bases of the EPRDF regime (Bach, 2011; Hagmann and Abbink, 2011; Merera, 2011; Vaughan, 2011). Only a few studies have explored the relationship between the EPRDF and civil society organisations, and the majority of those have studied NGOs (Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Sisay, 2012; Yitayehu, 2010). While several have made notes on trade unions in passing (Fei et al., 2017: 0469; Hauge, 2017: 195), only a few have analysed the relationships between organised labour and the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF regime (Admasie, 2018a; Assefa, 2003; Mehari, 2013; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). Aside from passing remarks (Altenburg, 2010: 14; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 23; Weis, 2014: 274f), there have been even fewer academic studies on chambers of commerce. Some studies analysed community based organisations and other informal/non-registered types of civil society organisations, however the focus of these studies has been on organisational functioning rather than civil society – state relations (Dejene, 2010; Pankhurst, 2008; Pankhurst and Mariam, 2000).

A significant portion of the extant literature on civil society and the state, has focused on explaining why the country has not yet democratised. Reflecting Tocquevillian ideas on democracy and civil society, in Ethiopia, the weakness of civil society has been said to hinder a transition towards democracy in the country. Scholars often stated that civil society in Ethiopia lacked strength and was co-opted and the state was portrayed as quasi omnipotent in its ability to control civil society and make it work in its favour (Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Hyden and Hailemariam, 2003; Sisay, 2012). While referring to the bigger legal and political framework in Ethiopia to explain the lack of activism among civil society organisations (Gagliardone, 2014; Jalale and Wolff, 2017), little was actually known about concrete

mechanisms of control established and tools used to sustain control over longer periods of time. Moreover, assuming that civil society organisations were handmaidens of the state, studies failed to inquire in how far they were able to represent the interests of their members and beneficiaries in their interactions with state organisations. Focusing on the absence of public contestation, studies failed to capture the bargaining between civil society and state actors that did not take place in the public sphere and the formal political realm.

Despite the scarcity of literature on civil society and the state under the EPRDF regime, there exists a growing canon of work on the EPRDF's development model, and state-society relations under it, that indirectly reflects on state-society relations and regime stability. Scholarly debates have been characterised by competing discourses and a clear split revolved around the question of whether the EPRDF was truly committed to building a developmental state modelled after its Asian predecessors (Arkebe, 2015; Mulu, 2013; Weis, 2016), or whether the discourse of developmentalism was primarily a smokescreen for authoritarian rule (Emmenegger, 2016; Lefort, 2012; Planel, 2014). Was the EPRDF's undemocratic rule a means to an end, serving as a tool to achieve sustained and accelerated development? Or was it an end in itself insofar as it ensured the EPRDF's rule at all costs? These questions were important to reflect on regime stability, given that the EPRDF tried to build legitimacy on developmental outputs.

Several scholars studying industrial policies, growth and development in Ethiopia have been cautiously optimistic about the operationalisation of a developmental state and the EPRDF's ability to build legitimacy on developmental performance (Arkebe, 2015; Brautigam et al., 2016; Hauge and Chang, Forthcoming: 13f; Mulu, 2013). The stability of the EPRDF rule, the coalition's organisational cohesiveness and its ability to prevent large-scale contention were seen as key for its ability to implement its ambitious development plans (de Waal, 2013a; Weis, 2016).

However, other studies found that the regime's repressive character and ethnic politics posed problems regarding its ability to implement developmental policies and to foster legitimacy and gain popular support (Aalen, 2014; Chinigò and Fantini, 2015; Clapham, 2018). Ethnographies of development interventions in rural and urban areas found that the control and coercion exercised by local public officials on

citizens, produced paradoxical outcomes, both reaffirming state power and provoking subversive behaviour due to excessive control (Di Nunzio, 2015; Emmenegger, 2016; Segers et al., 2008). Several studies also recorded that the regime's focus on political control took primacy over the EPRDF's developmental agenda, hindering rather than promoting development (Lefort, 2012; Planel, 2014; Smit et al., 2017).

Taking the above-mentioned findings into account, it is evident that to study how civil society – state relations under the EPRDF affected regime stability, it was not enough to analyse the EPRDF's capacity to exercise control over civil society to prevent contestation, as previous studies had done. To understand domination and resistance and their impact on regime stability, it was important to capture hidden practices of every-day control over civil society organisations, as well as hidden bargaining, conflicts and contestation between civil society and state actors and analyse those in relationship to what Scott has termed *“public transcript of power relations”* - *“[...] the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate* (Scott, 1990: 2). Moreover, the analysis also had to reflect on the ability of the EPRDF to mobilise civil society organisations behind its developmental state programme on which it tried to build legitimacy.

Embracing Ethnography in Political Sciences

Following a larger trend in qualitative political sciences towards context-sensitive analyses of political phenomena (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: xvi), I opted for an ethnographic approach to fieldwork and data gathering. Ethnography –

“social research based on the close-up, on the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do” (Wacquant 2003, 5)

- is uniquely suited to explore the grey zones of politics in which large parts of civil society - state relations fall (Auyero and Joseph, 2007: 5). To understand how civil society - state relations affected regime stability, it was necessary to observe their day-to-day interactions in real life. Moreover, to explore the empirical realities

of civil society - state relations in Ethiopia, it was important to uncover the hidden links and interactions between them, rather than solely focusing on their formal and publicly observable relationships. Studying the politics of public silence required understanding why civil society organisations did not engage in open public contestation, how they bargained with and contested state power outside of the public realm, as well as how the state ensured every-day policing of civil society organisations.

In contrast to many traditional ethnographies of state-society relations in Ethiopia conducted by anthropologists and sociologists that have explored the interactions between individuals in society and local public officials (Di Nunzio, 2015; Emmenegger, 2016; Lefort, 2012; Planel, 2014; Smit et al., 2017), I took a meso¹¹, and not micro, level approach. While I disaggregated the state and civil society, I looked at how organisations in the state and civil society, through their leaders and staff, and the existing social and political framework were linked to each other and interacted. I used the macro-level context – information on the EPRDF rule, the political settlement and the developmental state programme - and insights into micro-level interactions between state and civil society actors, to explain interactions between organisations in state and civil society.

In total, I spent 14 months in Ethiopia and conducted over two hundred semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The interviews were complemented by countless informal conversations and observations within civil society organisations, at public meetings and events. I started my fieldwork in October 2015 with a scoping trip (1.5 months), around the time when large-scale public protests broke out in Oromia. I conducted the majority of my fieldwork in 2016 (10 months), but I also undertook shorter field visits in 2017 and 2018 (2.5 months). My fieldwork covered two states of emergency declared in 2016 and 2018, respectively, including field visits

¹¹ For the purpose of this research, I define the levels of analysis as follows: Macro-level analyses study the structures and institutions of different spheres in society, the state, the market, civil society etc., whereas micro-level analyses focus on individuals in the respective spheres. Meso-level analyses study organisations, groups of people, in the different spheres.

to “red-zones” in Oromia administered by the Command Post¹² in 2017. I was in the field when former Prime Minister Hailemariam Deselegn resigned as a result of the unceasing anti-government protests in February 2018 and I also participated in workshops between state officials, politicians, scholars and social activists discussing the future of Ethiopian political and economic development in May 2018. My fieldwork has therefore spanned a period of three years of political crisis, from the outset of the anti-government protests in 2015 until the announcement of political changes in 2018, which provided a unique opportunity to reflect on questions of civil society and regime stability in Ethiopia.

Finding Anchorage in Sociological Theories of the State and Civil Society

To capture the relational character of civil society and the state, I draw on sociological theories of the state and civil society (Chandhoke, 1995; Mann, 1984; Migdal, 1994), not neo-Toquevillian approaches that defined them as separate spheres (Fukuyama, 2001; Gellner, 1994; Putnam et al., 1994). This allows for exploring the nature and degree of the respective independence or autonomy of civil society and the state and also for studying the consequences that such independence produces in terms of interactions between organisations in both spheres. Moreover, the approach is suited for disaggregating both the macro-spheres of state and civil society, to capture the heterogeneity of different organisations populating them. Given that the aim of the thesis is to explore how the relationship between the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF rule and civil society organisations affected regime stability both positively and negatively, the analytical framework proposed is of heuristic, not predictive, character. Instead it focuses on the links, interactions, negotiations and struggle for power between different organisations and actors in civil society and the state.

I introduce four ideal types of interactions between civil society and state actors: 1) co-optation, 2) cooperation, 3) coexistence and 4) contestation, based on findings from research on the voluntary sector in developing countries in the 1980s and 1990s (Bebbington, 1997; Bratton, 1989; Clark, 1995; Fowler, 2000). The idea that the

¹² The state of emergency proclamation (Proclamation No. 984, 2016) stipulated that the Prime Minister in Office led the Command post. Siraj Feyissa, Ethiopian Defence Minister acted as the Command Post Secretariat.

relationship between states and civil societies is characterised by a multitude of different interactions, is anchored in the insight that civil society can be both the arena where state hegemony is stabilised or where it is challenged and overthrown (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 489–495). Civil society organisations and their actions can support or contest the state hegemonic project and they signify both the promise of legitimising the state, as well as the danger of overthrowing it. Civil society and the state are simultaneously constrained and enabled by each other, the relationship being co-dependent, not simply oppositional (Chandhoke, 1995, pp. 65–69). Historically, states have had to consult, debate and bargain with actors in civil society and the respective power and resources influenced outcomes of interactions.

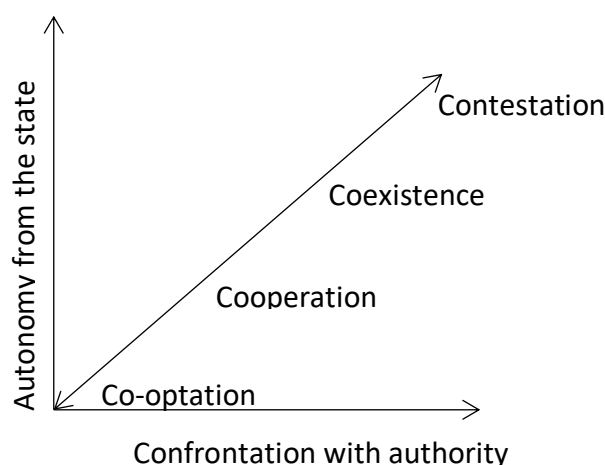


Figure 1: Classification of Interactions Between Civil Society and State Actors

Figure 1 displays the proposed framework that categorises interactions between organisations in the state and in civil society reaching from co-optation - state controls the activities of a civil society organisation - to contestation - a civil society organisation challenges the state and/or its policies - over various forms of cooperation and coexistence.¹³ The interactions between civil society organisations and the state can vary, for example depending on the specific organisations in the state and civil society involved and the issue area concerned. As such, civil society organisations can simultaneously contest an organisation/actor within the state and

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the analytical framework, see chapter 2.

cooperate with another. Moreover, patterns of interaction can also change over time. An organisation that has contested the state can be forcefully realigned or an organisation that has previously been controlled can become more independent. Interactions are driven by the overlap of the respective agendas, the power constellation within and between the state and civil society and the costs and benefits associated to taking decisions contradicting the distribution of power. Moreover, organisations can contest policies, without necessarily contesting the polity as such and the specific nature of the contestation will also determine the state response. Although agendas of state and civil society can overlap, they do so to differing degrees: the bigger the difference between state priorities and the agenda of civil society organisations, the smaller the avenues for cooperation, and the higher the chances of contestation and confrontation with authority.

Relevance and Contributions of the Thesis

Advancing Knowledge on Civil Society – State Relations in Ethiopia

The thesis contributes to the study of civil society - state relations in authoritarian countries, and offers an empirically-grounded study of the Ethiopian case. Specific to Ethiopian studies, it fills a research gap with respect to the relationship between the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF regime and formal civil society organisations. Moreover, it bridges the gap between two different strands of research, the first one focusing on the developmental state and the country's economy, the second one studying the system of government and the politics of the EPRDF rule.

The thesis systematically captures the relations between state organisations and three different types of civil society organisations, namely (1) trade unions, (2) chambers of commerce and (3) charities and societies. Disaggregating both the state and civil society, this research shows how different parts of the state are connected to distinct civil society organisations and maps the variety of interactions existing between organisations operating in both spheres.

The findings of the research challenge previous work that portrayed Ethiopian civil society organisations as docile and co-opted (Brechenmacher, 2017; Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). Although the EPRDF regime

exercised strong control over civil society organisations, the latter did not just function as an extended arm of the state, but engaged in continuous negotiations with state organisations and tried in many cases to push the agendas of their members and/or beneficiaries. Trade unions for example advocated for the introduction of a minimum salary, chambers of commerce tried to influence the country's development plans and charities demanded state offices to provide public services and enforce laws. Moreover, contrary to assumptions in previous research, I found that the absence of public contestation was not only the result of state domination over civil society but also, in several cases, it reflected strategic choices by civil society organisations. Refraining from open contention was used to improve relationships with state organisations and increase space for action, as well as to avoid attracting the state's attention and operate at a distance from it.

The thesis questions the idea that civil society organisations are always most effective when independent from the state. I demonstrate that in all three civil society sectors under study, organisations with close political ties to the ruling coalition were better able to influence political decision makers and civil servants than those that were more independent. Consequently, I find that co-optation can bear seeds for subversion of power structures and even more open contestation. The integration of civil society organisations into state structures, while significantly changing them, often did not lead to a complete transformation of organisations concerned, nor did it just affect the civil society organisations, instead state structures also became altered.

Another important contribution of this thesis lies in providing insights into the grey zones of politics between civil society and state organisations. My research reveals that much of the bargaining between civil society and state organisations happened behind closed doors. Civil society organisations used their personal contacts in state offices to influence political decision-making, often subverting rather than publicly contesting power. Instead of staging protests against the EPRDF's failure to enforce workers' rights to organisation, the trade unions, for example, managed to gain support from the Ministry of Labour for a national unionisation campaign in 2015/16, by repeatedly visiting the office and setting up formal and informal meetings with their contacts in the ministry. The chambers of commerce

were able to solve problems regarding registration of business membership organisations in 2015/16, thanks to their close contacts with the Ministry of Trade and high-ranking EPRDF cadres in other state offices. Similar to the case of the trade unions, instead of publicly protesting, representatives from the chambers visited state offices and negotiated with their contacts. Charities and societies, especially at the local level, bargained with state officials for more space to work on politically sensitive issues, anything related to people's rights, in exchange for providing social services to citizens for which state offices lacked resources and capacities for.

My analysis further reveals that the macro-level framework, such as restrictive legislation hindering the work of civil society organisation, was not sufficient to explain the lack of activism among civil society organisations. To sustain control over civil society organisations over time, the EPRDF in all three civil society sectors under study established mechanisms of every-day control. However, in interviews, party cadres, state officials and EPRDF-affiliated CSOs mostly denied the existence of such practices. In the case of the trade unions a dedicated party body oversaw their daily work, but it was not part of the official state structures and did not formally exist. Control over the chambers of commerce was less institutionalised than in the case of the trade unions, with chamber leaders and staff receiving instructions through phone calls from, or personal meetings with, state officials and EPRDF cadres. The oversight body for charities and societies was directly linked to the security apparatus and relied on continuous monitoring and its ability to deny or revoke licences to keep civil society organisations falling under its mandate in line.

A final empirical contribution of this thesis lies in demonstrating that the EPRDF regime did not just clamp down on civil society organisations. Rather, like its Asian role models (Evans, 1995; Rhee, 2002; Unger and Chan, 2015), it tried to mobilise them as part of its developmental state project. My findings show that the EPRDF had clear plans of how to use different types of civil society organisations to ensure resources and support for its developmental endeavours. It tried for example to use trade unions to control the growing claims of workers that emerged as the country's industrialisation process picked up speed, whereas it pushed the chambers of commerce to align the business sector with the EPRDF's developmental priorities. The EPRDF attempted to use charities to secure international funding for

development interventions and mass societies to mobilise their members behind the EPRDF's development project. Despite the EPRDF's intentions, I find that the ruling coalition in many cases did not succeed in its attempt to use civil society for development, as security concerns and attempts to prevent possible contestation hindered a coherent mobilisation of civil society organisations. Control was the core priority when it came to the EPRDF's approach to civil society.

One of this thesis' main contributions lies in demonstrating that the relationship between civil society organisations and the state in Ethiopia both strengthened and weakened regime stability. While it prevented public contestation, the strict control exercised by state over civil society organisations created a vacuum between the state and society and led to a lack of embeddedness of the EPRDF. The EPRDF's repressive rule created grievances among the population that could not be aired and eventually led to public protests in 2015/18. Moreover, the focus on control over mobilisation for development also indirectly posed problems for regime stability, as the EPRDF tried to build legitimacy on developmental outputs. Ironically, the focus on regime survival and preventing contestation ultimately fuelled contestation, hindered development and decreased regime stability.

A Heuristic, not Predictive Analytical Approach

Studies have noted that neither state-centric nor society-centric approaches to analysing civil society - state relations can adequately capture the complexity of their relationship (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: Chapter 8; Fu, 2017c; Lee and Zhang, 2013; Spires, 2011). Rooted in corporatism theories, the first one had the tendency to *overemphasize* the role of the state in the control over civil society, whereas the second, anchored in Tocquevillian approaches to civil society, *lay too much emphasis* on its democratising potential. Several scholars have called for empirically-grounded theory building to provide new insights into civil society - state relations (Howell, 2012; Spires, 2011). My research sets out to contribute to filling this theoretical gap

through adopting an abductive approach¹⁴ to analysing civil society - state relations in Ethiopia. Building on pre-existing theories and previous research on state - civil society relations and refining them through empirical observations, I offer an approach focusing on the conceptual linkages rather than conceptual differences. Contrary to classical grounded theory that constructs theories entirely inductively (Charmaz, 1996), I aim at *“generating novel theoretical insights that reframe empirical findings in contrast to existing theories”* (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012: 174).

The analytical innovation lies in proposing a framework that captures interactions reaching from co-optation to contestation, spanning the possible range of interactions between civil society and state organisations, rather than primarily focusing on one, as both state-centric and society-centric approaches have done. Moreover, it allows for breaking down the relationship between civil society and state organisations to the level of interactions, rather than reasoning at the organisational level. Approaches that have tried to categorise civil society organisations according to whether they were for example co-opted (Khatib, 2013; Rivetti, 2013) or contesting (Chomiak and Entelis, 2013; Simpson, 2013), often have failed to acknowledge that despite the existence of larger patterns, civil society and state organisations engaged in a variety of different interactions. Simply because a state organisation controlled the selection of leaders of a civil society organisation, it did not mean that the organisation never contested the state or was not able to enter into cooperative agreements with state organisations that benefitted its members, or never tried to distance itself from the state through seeking coexistence (Howell, 2003, 2008). At the same time, an organisation that primarily contested the state was not necessarily immune to state influence and might on some occasions decide to cooperate with state organisations or opt for coexistence where contestation was too costly (Dupuy et al., 2015; Hemment, 2004).

¹⁴ *“Abductive analysis constitutes a qualitative data analysis approach aimed at theory construction. This approach rests on the cultivation of anomalous and surprising empirical findings against a background of multiple existing sociological theories and through systematic methodological analysis”* (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012: 169).

This thesis contributes to an ongoing discussion on research methods and ethics in relation to exploring politically sensitive questions in policed environments (Armbruster and Lærke, 2010; Huggins and Glebbeek, 2009a; Li, 2008)¹⁵. Questions of access, fear of informants, surveillance and threats have often rendered the use of traditional research methods and designs impracticable and posed demands for the development of methodically rigorous and ethically sound procedures customised to these contexts.

Previous attempts to study informal or sensitive political practices in Ethiopia, such as corruption or political rule, through traditional methods like surveys have often failed. A case in point was the attempt to include Ethiopia in the Afro-Barometer in 2013. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents in the survey indicated that they thought the interviewer had been sent to them by the government, testifying to the constant fear of surveillance in the country. Eighty-one percent of citizens surveyed reported that they were satisfied with “how democracy works” in Ethiopia. And, only eight percent of people interviewed reported that opposition parties and their supporters were regularly silenced by the government. Asked about corruption, a large proportion of Ethiopians surveyed said they “didn’t know” about the level of corruption in the country and less than three percent of people indicated that they had paid bribes to access public services. A large proportion of surveyors reported that respondents were suspicious and ill at ease (Mattes and Mulu, 2016). The survey results stand in stark contrast to other measurements of democracy and freedom of speech and corruption in the country¹⁶ (Fund for Peace, 2017; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018) and raise questions as to how free people felt to answer survey questions.

Using an ethnographic approach based on long-term and in-depth fieldwork allowed me to deal with people’s fear and over time create safe spaces for exchange of information. This was especially important as the political situation in the country deteriorated because of the political protests in 2015/16. While ethnographic

¹⁵ For more information on researching restricted political settings in chapter 3.

¹⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/ethiopia> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

approaches in the research on state-society relations in Ethiopia are no novelty, most have focused on micro-level interactions between individuals in society and the local state (Di Nunzio, 2015; Emmenegger, 2016; Planel, 2014). Previous research on civil society and the state at higher administrative levels has mostly focused on formal politics and relied on secondary literature and written documentation, supplemented by key informant interviews with elites in both sectors. Studies did not explore the politics of civil society - state relations through long term observations and repeated interactions with different actors in state and civil society, nor did they sufficiently cover the grey zone of politics (Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Yitayehu, 2010). While research captured bigger trends, it failed to adequately disaggregate the state and civil society and to capture the details of their relationships and interactions. The contribution of this thesis lies in applying an ethnographic approach to researching the relationship between state and civil society and the grey zones of Ethiopian politics, focusing on organisations rather than individuals and enhancing the understanding of the politics of civil society - state relations in the country.

Structure of the Thesis

The chapters in the thesis are structured as follows:

Chapter **two** lays out the theoretical and analytical foundations for the study. The chapter begins by briefly reviewing the state of civil society research, tracing how theoretical and methodological approaches have changed over the past decades. Next, it sets out the theoretical foundation for the study of civil society - state relations, defining key terms and addressing some of the relevant scholarly debates. The last part of the chapter develops an analytical framework for the study of civil society and the state in Ethiopia, drawing on sociological theories and empirical studies of state and civil society.

Chapter **three** reflects on the methodological and ethical challenges that I encountered doing research on civil society - state relations in Ethiopia and discusses the use of ethnographic research methods in the study of politics. The chapter first describes the research design and implementation, explaining the case selection, data collection strategies and sampling, as well as discussing access to the field and interview strategies. The chapter then focuses on fieldwork practices and ethics,

reflecting on the nature of the research project and questions relating to anonymity, confidentiality and data protection and explains the use of research assistants, my positionality and risks related to the project.

Chapter four reviews the literature on state and society in Ethiopia under the EPRDF regime and sets the foundational background for the subsequent analysis of civil society - state relations in Ethiopia. The chapter reflects on the nature of the state, its autonomous power from society and its relationships to other spheres in society (the market, the family and civil society). The chapter first discusses the origins of the EPRDF regime, the character of its rule and its chosen economic development model. Next, it discusses the interactions between the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF, citizens, the private sector and civil society organisations. Finally, the chapter describes the relationship between international donors and the EPRDF regime and briefly explains the origins and development of the 2015-18 political crisis.

Chapters five to seven present the empirical findings, all following a similar structure. Chapters five and six provide, where compatible with protection of informants' anonymity, detailed examples of different trade unions and chambers of commerce. Given the relatively recent history of conflict between charities, societies and the EPRDF regime and ensuing problems for anonymity and confidentiality, chapter seven contains few references to specific organisations. After discussions with colleagues at Addis Ababa University, I decided to structure the analysis around the different categories of civil society organisations falling under the ChSP, rather than individual stories of civil society organisations.

Chapter **five** investigates the relationships and patterns of interaction between the state and trade unions in Ethiopia since 1991. It studies the functioning of trade unions under the EPRDF regime and analyses how the operationalisation of the EPRDF's developmental state project since the early 2000s has affected the development of trade unions and shaped their role within the state. To contextualise the analysis, the chapter first provides a brief historical overview on the labour movement in Ethiopia. Next, it explores the mechanisms used by the EPRDF to establish control over trade unions. The chapter concludes by looking at the patterns

of interaction between state organisations and trade unions during the period of my fieldwork.

Chapter **six** explores how the existing social and political structures shaped the relationship between the state and chambers of commerce in Ethiopia. In the first part of the chapter, I provide a brief historical overview of the development of the chamber system in Ethiopia to contextualise the analysis. The second part of the chapter explores how the state and organisations in the chambers system relate to each other and identifies the mechanisms used by different public offices to establish and maintain control over the chambers. In the last part, I analyse the patterns of interaction between state representatives and representatives of the chambers system observed during my fieldwork, studying how different parts of the state related to different parts of the chamber system.

Chapter **seven** studies the relationships and interactions between state organisations and charities and societies in Ethiopia. It explores the roots of the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation (ChSP), as well as its application, to analyse how it structured the relationship between the state and charities and societies in Ethiopia. To contextualise the ChSP, the chapter begins by briefly outlining the development of the relationship between the EPRDF government and charities and societies since 1991. The second part then explores the legal provisions of the ChSP, its drafting process, application and impact. Lastly, the chapter maps and analyses interactions between state organisations and charities and societies, ranging from co-optation to contestation.

Chapter **eight** draws the conclusions from the previous chapters. It compares the empirical evidence presented in chapters five to seven. The chapter also relates empirical findings back to the theoretical and analytical propositions in chapter 2. Next, it evaluates the implications of the findings for the study of politics in Ethiopia. Finally, it reflects on future avenues for research.

Chapter 2: One State, Many Bargains: Co-optation, Cooperation, Co-existence, Contestation

Introduction

“That civil society may be considered a normative necessity in political philosophy does not by any means imply that its existence is inevitable empirically” (Harbeson, 1994: 295).

This chapter lays the theoretical and analytical foundations for the study. The first part of the chapter briefly describes the state of civil society research, while the main part of the chapter lays out the theoretical foundation for the study of civil society - state relations and develops an analytical framework for the study at hand.

Much qualitative research on civil society has confirmed Harbeson’s statement and exposed the fact that normative liberal civil society theories, that stipulate a causal link between civil society and democracy, do not withstand empirical testing (Hann and Dunn, 1996; Harbeson et al., 1994; Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Teets, 2014). Not even in the West where liberal theories originated has civil society always fulfilled the ideals stipulated by prominent normative interpretations (Berman, 1997a; Brandsen et al., 2014; Putzel, 1997: 943ff; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999: 1). These findings led some scholars to dismiss liberal civil society theories as valid analytical frameworks for empirical investigations, either due to their ethnocentric character (Hann, Chris, 1996; White, 1996b) or their lack of explanatory power (Hildebrandt, 2013; Unger and Chan, 2015).

Although liberal approaches to civil society are just one of many existing theoretical frames, studies revealed that they have often been treated as the sole valid reference point (Hildebrandt, 2013: 7f; Spires, 2011: 3f). This is partly due to the fact that civil society has become a corner stone in the ideological project for liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 2001) and partly because its liberal interpretation has shown the “*capacity to inspire action*” (Lewis, 2002: 569)¹⁷. Unfortunately, this means that

¹⁷ People living under authoritarian rule have found the concept both emotionally and intellectually appealing and referred to it in their struggles for political and democratic rights (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: 201).

the concept of civil society has often been relegated to a political ideal, its definition remaining linked to a regime type (democracy) and a specific geographical context (the Western world).

Drawing on sociological theories and empirical studies of the state and civil society, I propose a theoretical approach that goes beyond democratic theory and links society to the state, not a specific regime type or geographic context. The framework is dualistic and understands civil society and the state as relational concepts. Although it sees them as analytically and empirically separate, the proposed framework explores the nature and degree of the respective independence/autonomy of civil society and the state and the consequences such independence produces in terms of observable interactions between states and their civil societies. The framework proposed is of heuristic, not predictive, character and focuses on the links, interactions, negotiations and struggle for power between states and their civil societies.

Theoretical Framework

Civil Society and Democratic Theory

Although the concept of civil society has a long and contested epistemological history¹⁸, the dominant paradigm in civil society theory is constituted of liberal neo-Tocquevillian approaches (Hildebrandt, 2013: 7f; Obadare, 2011). Neo-Tocquevillian definitions - while differing on specifics - assume that civil society is a

“community of associations [...] characterised by non-violence, discourse, self-organisation, recognition of plurality and oriented towards general goals and civility (Keane, 2006: VII)”. Civil society is seen as “a necessary condition for modern liberal democracy” as it “serves to balance the power of the state and to protect individuals from the state’s power” (Fukuyama, 2001: 11).

Michael Walzer has termed this line of reasoning “*the civil society argument*” (Walzer, 1991). Civil society and the state according to this tradition have been defined in

¹⁸ The epistemological history of the term civil society has been well summarised in previous research and scholars have carefully traced how the concept’s meaning and definition have evolved (Adloff, 2005; Chambers and Kymlicka, 2002; Chandhoke, 1995).

opposition, not in relation, to each other (Anheier, 2004, 2009). Scholars have further bestowed the state with a negative connotation - potentially repressive - and civil society with a positive one -democratic agent (Diamond, 2012: 140; Gellner, 1994: Chapter 1; Tocqueville de, 1835b: Chapter 4). Anticipating the abuse of power by the state, such theories have assigned the responsibility to curb state power to civil society (Anheier, 2007; Powell, 2011; Smith, 1776: Book 1) and interactions between the state and civil society have been conceived as a zero sum game (Clarke, 2012: Chapter 1).

The “third wave of democratisation” (Huntington, 1993; Shin, 1994) sparked much enthusiasm about the potential of civil society to promote democracy, and research initially focused on empirically delineating the concept and on exploring the presupposed causal link between civil society and democracy (Anheier, 2007: 5; Heinrich, 2005: 212; Salamon, 2010). This approach led to a focus on measuring and mapping in civil society research, as studies analysed the organisational density and diversity of civil society in different contexts (Anheier, 2004; Heinrich, 2005, 2007; Putnam, 1995; Putnam et al., 1994; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999). In the Tocquevillian tradition, associationalism was often taken as a proxy to measure the presence of civil society (Biekart, 2008; Fukuyama, 2001: 13; Keane, 2003: 4f): the number and size of associations were used as indicators of a flourishing (high numbers and large economic size) or poor (low numbers and little economic size) civil society. Moreover, the presence or absence of civil society was used as an indicator to predict and measure the quality of democracy (Heinrich, 2007; Marshall et al., 2014; Putnam, 1995; Putnam et al., 1994; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999).

Despite the large amount of research done, scholars have not yet been able to reach a consensus regarding what to include in the measurement of civil society (Appel, 2013: 63; Obadare, 2011: 427). Critics have questioned the operationalisation of the concept of civil society, as statistical measurements have largely been limited to the economic size of the non-profit sector and have failed to reflect the political meaning of the concept (Biekart, 2008; Katz, 2006; Obadare, 2011). The focus on measuring the presence of formal organisations has excluded informal and non-registered actors in civil society, providing a skewed picture of the actors inhabiting the realm of civil society. Finally, the recent growth of civil society organisations in

stable authoritarian settings has further challenged the hypotheses that the number and size of civil society organisations are valid independent variables when it comes to predicting democratisation or measuring democracy (Lewis, 2013).

Although they have been more cautious about concluding the existence of a direct causal link between civil society and democracy, many qualitative studies have also stressed that the presence of civil society is a necessary condition for democratisation and institutionalisation of democracy (Bernhard, 1993; Ekiert and Kubik, 2004; Gold, 1990; Weigle and Butterfield, 1992).

From Civil Society to Corporatism

The failure of the “third wave of democratisation” to bring about sustainable democratic transitions in many countries (Hagopian and Mainwaring, 2005; Lynch and Crawford, 2011; Rose and Shin, 2001), and the increasing co-existence of formal civil society organisations and non-democratic regimes, has stimulated a critical engagement with the concept of civil society. Qualitative research has shown that the local manifestations of civil society are much more complex than suggested by liberal political thought. Contrary to stipulations of liberal theories, empirical studies found that the delineation between civil society and the state is not clear cut, meaning that civil society has to be analysed in relation, rather than in opposition, to the state (Helliker, 2012; LeVan, 2011). Moreover, studies challenged the teleological reading of civil society as a promoter of democracy and questioned its normative conceptualisation (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: Chapter 8; Nord, 2000). Scholars revealed that civil society can be fractionalised and a terrain for conflict, rather than pluralistic and “civil” (Clarke, 2012; Jamal, 2012), and that organisations operating in its realm can feature undemocratic internal structures and/or advance undemocratic and particularistic agendas (Mohan, 2002; Skocpol, 2016). Studies also discovered that a strong but “uncivil” civil society can weaken the state, causing political turmoil (Jamal, 2009), and that a dense associational landscape can be used to mobilise populations behind undemocratic movements that threaten democracy (Berman, 1997a, 1997b). As a result, scholars argued that civil society can be both a promoter of democracy as well as of authoritarianism and that it is not the quantity, but the character of the actors inhabiting civil society that play a role with respect to civil

society's democratising potential (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: 210; Bermeo, 2000: 238). Finally, studies showed that the focus on formal civil society organisations has diverted attention away from informal actors, such as unregistered or underground organisations, their role in civil society and their strategies of hidden resistance and subversion of repressive state structures (Fu, 2017c; Scott, 1985; Spires, 2011). Despite the conceptual relevance of civil society in debates around democratic theory and the transition paradigm, qualitative enquiries into the concept portrayed it as empirically largely meaningless.

The recent growth of formal civil society organisations in non-democratic settings encouraged an enquiry into the role and function of civil society in persistent authoritarian contexts, beginning with the question of why democratic transitions were not taking place. Many studies abandoned civil society theories in favour of a more state centric analytical framework, suggesting that omnipotent authoritarian states prevented the development of independent civil society organisations and hence democracy (Balzer, 2003: 203ff; Doyle, 2016; Heurlin, 2010; Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Wiktorowicz, 2000). Although such studies moved away from the civil society centred approach, rather than deconstructing it, they deemed it as non-applicable in non-democratic contexts. Hence, the civil society argument implicitly remained a point of reference, even if it was not used as a frame of analysis. Corporatism¹⁹, replaced civil society theory in the analysis of state - civil society relationships in non-democratic settings (Hildebrandt, 2013; Lam and Lam, 2013; Unger and Chan, 2015). Studies showed that what looked like civil society at first, was in fact quasi-governmental organisations, with very limited ability to act independently from the state. Such research focused primarily on co-optation of CSOs, government organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs) and cooperation between the government and CSOs in service provision. They argued that rather than helping democratic transitions, government organised civil society organisations stabilised

¹⁹ Corporatism according to Schmitter can be defined as *"a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports"* (Schmitter, 1974: 93f).

and legitimised authoritarian regimes (Khatib, 2013; Richter and Hatch, 2013; Rivetti, 2013).

Towards an Integrated State – Civil Society Framework

The prime failure of the approaches described above, was their attempt to link civil society to regime types (democracy or authoritarianism) rather than to the concept of the state. While the former research revealed linkages between civil society and democracy, the latter cast light on the emergence and working of government authorised associations in non-democratic settings. Nevertheless, none was truly able to capture the diverse links and interactions between civil society and state actors (Howell, 2012; Spires, 2011). More ethnographic studies on civil society have shown that neither the neo-Tocquevillian nor the corporatism approach are appropriate and, instead of reasoning in terms of regime types, ethnographies revealed the intricate links that exist between states and their civil societies. These studies showed how civil societies are constituted by their states as well as how civil societies constitute their states (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: Chapter 8; Fu, 2017c; Lee and Zhang, 2013; Spires, 2011). The fact that studies found common elements in local manifestations of civil society and that they hinted at the importance of understanding civil societies and states as co-dependent, indicates the importance of developing an alternative framework to the state-centric or civil society-centric ones.

The State as Political Organisation of Society

As described above, the dominant civil society theories have linked the concept of civil society to a specific regime type (democracy) and many did not sufficiently engage with state theory (Gellner, 1994; Keane, 1998; Putnam, 1995; Salamon and Anheier, 1998). Rather than by its institutional characteristics, the state in the liberal tradition has often been defined by its functions: provision of security for the individual and an adequate legislative framework for the capitalist economy to thrive (Nozick, 1974: Chapter 5; Romani, 2015: 261f). According to Slater and Fenner (2011), through equating the state with the governments that run them, such approaches have turned the state into a technocratic rather than a political entity, reducing it to a specific mode of governing and concealing the political struggles within the state.

This conception of the state is not only ahistorical, but it is also of no help to explain the links between civil society and the state.

As there is no single function that has always exclusively been exercised by the state (Weber, 1946: 3), an institutional definition of the state is more helpful than a functional one. At its very base, *“the state is a relation of men dominating men”* (Weber, 1946: 5). Borrowing from Weber (1946) and Mann (1984, 187f), I define the state as a set of separate organisations and personnel, organised in a centralised power structure which commands over a defined territory, and which, in its consolidated form, possesses the monopoly of both binding rule making and the means of physical violence.

To clearly separate the state from the government or the regime and to understand its relation to civil society, we have to go back to processes of state formation, in which diverse social actors and organisations struggle for power over society (Migdal, 1994: 8; Slater and Fenner, 2011). One possible way of theorising the state on the basis of its formation, is to define it as *“based on a political settlement that embodies the distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes”* (Putzel and Di John, 2012: 1). This means that states represent the formal codification of power blocks in a society at the point of the consolidation of the political settlement. The state can thus be understood as *“the political organisation of society”* (Chandhoke, 1995: 65–7) and although it is an organisation with distinctive characteristics, an aspiration to the monopoly over binding rule-making and coercive power (Chandhoke, 1995: 67; Mann, 1984: 187f), it is only one of many organisations of society (Migdal, 1994). Both the state and civil society are rooted in society and are therefore co-dependent, not independent from each other. Major changes in the power constellations in society are likely to affect the constellation of civil society and also to lead to questioning of the existing political settlement. While the state and civil society are two analytically distinct concepts, the boundaries between the two spheres are porous (Kohli and Shue, 1994: 294).

Although the state is only one of many organisations of society and derives its power from the society it is founded on, it possesses a certain degree of autonomous power over civil society (Chandhoke, 1995: 67). Such autonomy lies in the ability of the state to *“[...] formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the*

demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society" (Skocpol, 1985: 9). This means that states are more than the apparatus for class rule (Mann, 1984: 201). While the state does not possess means of power that differ from those found in society, the source of its autonomous power lies in its territorial centralisation, whereas the reach and power of civil society organisations is more decentralised and diffuse (Mann, 1984: 199f; Migdal, 1988: 24f). This does not mean that the autonomous power of the state is the same at different administrative levels and that its territorial reach is complete (Migdal, 1994), but its power is more centralised than the power of civil society. Therefore, while autonomous power is real, it is not absolute.

To conceptualise the states' autonomous power vis-à-vis civil society, it is useful to draw on Michael Mann's definitions of 'infrastructural power' - the capacity to penetrate civil society and enforce political decisions in its realm - and 'despotic power' - the capacity to undertake actions without consulting with civil society (Mann, 1984: 185, 206). While despotic power describes the coercive capabilities of a state - the power over civil society - infrastructural power describes its "penetrative" and "persuasive" administrative power - the power in civil society. Consequently, despotic power can be understood as negative power, as it is primarily repressive and aimed at preventing challenges to the state as well as to forcefully implementing goals/policies, while infrastructural power can be understood as positive power, as it describes the capacity of a state to implement goals/policies through administrative and other non-coercive means (Lucas, 1998: 91).

To implement political decisions in the realm of civil society, states have established channels and mechanisms of institutional control that go beyond violent coercion, such as collection of taxes, registration of citizens and organisations (census, birth, marriage, licences etc.), schooling and socialisation of the citizenry, creation of dependence on public services and many more (vom Hau, 2008: 335f; Slater and Fenner, 2011: 20). However, infrastructural power looks different within and between states and can be summarised in the ability of the state to demand compliance from civil society for the realisation of state goals and policies (Soifer, 2008: 238). This can for example be guaranteed through mobilisation of financial resources, manpower or other resources from civil society. Infrastructural power

cannot simply be measured by the degree of penetration of the state in civil society, but has to include reflections regarding the state's capacity to mobilise resources and demand compliance. Infrastructural power is a two-way tool, allowing both the state to influence, and eventually control civil society, and civil society to influence the state. Historically, the more states have intervened in civil society, the more they have exposed themselves to the influence of the latter (Evans et al., 1985: 354; Kohli and Shue, 1994: 294; Mann, 2008: 356). Consequently, power autonomy has oscillated dialectically between civil societies, and states and states have never been entirely independent from the dominant power blocks in civil society (Evans et al., 1985: 354ff; Mann, 1984: 185 & 206).

States differ in the degree of autonomous power vis-à-vis their civil societies, both with respect to their despotic and their infrastructural power (Lee and Zhang, 2013; Slater and Fenner, 2011). While large degrees of despotic power have historically been linked more to authoritarian than to democratic states, high degrees of infrastructural power have marked both democracies and autocracies (Mann, 2008: 356f). Within the same regime type (democracy or autocracy), there can be large differences regarding the state's capacity to penetrate civil society or to coerce it (Slater and Fenner, 2011: 16), which means that to understand the relationships between states and their civil society it is more helpful to reason according to dimensions of state power (weak or strong) than according to regime types.

Although states' despotic and infrastructural powers are linked, they can evolve both symmetrically or in opposition. It seems that despotic power can sometimes erode the social support necessary for high infrastructural power of states and that the cooperation and interaction between states and their civil societies needed for high infrastructural power can contradict despotic power (Lucas, 1998: 92; Velásquez Ospina, 2010: 56). However, some states achieved relatively high levels of despotic and infrastructural power, despite the fact that the two can contradict each other at times (Mann, 1984: 191). States with high despotic but little infrastructural power have historically proven not to be well equipped to deal with contention. Being unable to implement political decisions in the realm of civil society has often pushed states towards increased repression of civil society, which in some cases fuelled rather than calmed contestation of the state in question (Lee and Zhang, 2013: 1476f;

Mann, 1984: 211; Slater and Fenner, 2011: 20). In contrast, where a state has exhibited strong infrastructural power, the government which ran it had a large *“capacity to penetrate civil society and enforce political decisions in its realm”* (Mann, 1984: 185) and as a result proven more stable and better able to deal with contention (Slater and Fenner, 2011: 18f).

Infrastructural power has allowed states to deploy coercion within boundaries rather than unleashing unrestricted violence and mechanisms of control, and policing has been more subtle, but not less efficient, than open coercion. Infrastructurally strong states, have often used violent coercion as a tool of last resort, where mechanisms of infrastructural power failed to pre-empt open challenges to the regime. Such interventions have often been undertaken in a swift and efficient manner to restore order, rather than unleashing prolonged open violence. Close monitoring and creation of dependence on the state, have made withholding of public services and denying access to relevant permits, efficient tools to prevent contestation in case of non-compliance with government policies (Slater and Fenner, 2011: 20f). A combination of high infrastructural and high despotic power in some states can explain their ability to manufacture and organise civil society according to their goals and policies, while avoiding and containing large-scale public contention (Lee and Zhang, 2013).

The analysis above demonstrates the usefulness of focusing on the concept of the state and its autonomous power, rather than on regime types, to analyse its relation to, and interaction with, civil society. However, to capture civil society - state relations fully, it is important, contrary to Mann’s approach, not to focus only on *“those centralised institutions generally called ‘states’, and [on] the powers of the personnel who staff them, at the higher levels generally termed the ‘state elite’”* (Mann, 1984: 188). Focusing only on the infrastructural power of the central state apparatus does not fully utilise the concept of infrastructural power, which, due to its spatial dimension - degree of territorial reach - and relational dimension - the state in civil society - invites the study of the variations of states’ infrastructural power at different administrative and geographical levels (Soifer and vom Hau, 2008: 222). Both the breadth (territorial reach) and the depth of infrastructural power (degree of penetration) are likely to differ within states and also change over time.

Civil Society – an institutional and functional definition

Tying into sociological approaches to the state, civil society can be understood as the sphere for social organisation and as one of many organisational sites in society (the state, the family, the market etc.). It reflects existing power relations and socioeconomic, cultural and historical characteristics of the society it rests on (Chandhoke, 1995: 65ff; Gramsci, 1971: 490ff). The sphere of civil society is not static and the organisations inhabiting it differ between countries, within countries and change over time. This renders it challenging to find a universal definition of civil society and to meaningfully delineate it from other organisational spheres in society (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: Chapter 8; Bermeo and Nord, 2000).

Combining sociological theories about the state and civil society (Gramsci, 1971; Mann, 1984; Migdal, 1994) with findings from qualitative studies on civil society in developed and developing countries (Bermeo and Nord, 2000; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Hann and Dunn, 1996; Harbeson et al., 1994; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999), I define civil society as follows:

Civil society is the associational space between the family, the market and the state - overlapping with all three spheres - where formal and informal organisations interact and compete with each other and the state to pursue their interests. This sphere of collective action links society to the state.

According to this definition, civil society includes a variety of different actors, differing in their degree of formality, independence from the state, the market and the family and their political and economic power. Professional associations and business associations, community based organisations and self-help groups, charities and NGOs, faith based organisations, advocacy coalitions and social movements are but some examples. While in capitalist countries civil society actors are often closely related to the market, and labour might be particularly strong, in developing countries traditional community based organisations linked to family and clan structures might be predominant. Within countries, there are likely to be differences between urban and rural areas and between different regions (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: Chapter 8; Bermeo and Nord, 2000; Hann, Chris, 1996; Harbeson et al., 1994; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999). The sphere of civil society is not static but constantly

evolving and its shape and the actors inhabiting it are influenced by developments in society and changes in the spheres surrounding it (Nord, 2000: XV). Contrary to neo-Tocquevillian definitions that focus on associations, this definition includes informal organisations, such as social movements, non-registered entities and other loose groupings and allows for studying how actors in formal and informal organisations relate to each other and the state and how their form of organising influences their action.

The definition proposed above does not define civil society as an arena separate from other arenas in society, but considers the overlaps between civil society, the state, the family and the market. It acknowledges that there are links between actors from all three spheres and that civil society actors can move, and over time become either more independent from, or more integrated into, other spheres. Changing power relations between spheres in society and also between different actors in society are likely to trigger such developments (Mann, 1984: 193ff; Migdal, 1994: 9). Empirical studies have shown that due to changes in power constellations, civil society organisations that were set up by states can over time become more independent (Unger and Chan, 1995: 32ff; White, 1996a) and organisations that were initially independent can be integrated into state structures (Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). The reduction of the sphere for civil society, due to increasing despotic state power, does not only lead to a shrinking of civil society, but to a displacement of civil society actors into other spheres in society. Studies found that civil society actors in some cases moved into the family, the market and even the state itself, when their original sphere of action was reduced. In Poland and Eastern Germany the church played an important role in organising resistance against communist rule (Aronoff and Kubik, 2012: 225; Buchowski, 1996), whereas in Nazi Germany the family became a refuge for civil society actors (Spulbeck, 1996). Business associations in some Asian countries proved crucial for democratisation (Unger and Chan, 1995, 2015) and state run universities in 19th century Europe became centres for civic activism (Nord, 2000: XXII). Where the official space for civil society was reduced by non-democratic governments, informal and non-registered actors in civil society became important sources of collective action (Fu, 2017c; Spires, 2011).

The above definition, in contrast to liberal approaches is non-normative and primarily descriptive, not suggesting any causal link between civil society and democracy. It acknowledges that civil society can be both the arena where state hegemony is stabilised or where it is challenged and overthrown (Gramsci, 1971: 489–95; Mann, 1984: 201ff). As long as the power relations in the state reflect the power relations in civil society, the latter, in its majority, is unlikely to contest the former (Mann, 1984: 204). Contrary to normative approaches to civil society, the question of whether civil society contests the state is not linked to the (un)democratic character of the state, but is attributable to the distribution of power within and between the state and civil society. Just as much as civil society can support a democratic regime or stimulate democratisation by contesting an authoritarian one, civil society can back authoritarian regimes or overthrow democratic ones, as case studies of 19th century Portugal, Italy and Germany revealed (Bermeo, 2000: 238; Nord, 2000: XVI). The aim of civil society organisations and actors is primarily to represent their interests and the interests of their members vis-à-vis the state and other organisations in society, which can, but does not have to, mean pushing for democratisation (Gramsci, 1971: 2; Mann, 1984).

Although the representation of interests involves a struggle for power and resources through engaging with the state and other civil society actors, it also includes the provision of services to members (Kalinowski, 2008: 343f). Sometimes transferring power to the state, rather than struggling for more power, has proven the best way to represent interests (Mann, 1984: 201ff). The forms of interest representation can be categorised as self-organisation and public engagement (Habermas, 1993: Chapter 1; Young, 2000: Chapter 5). The first one is directed internally to the organisation and its members and includes, among others, provision of non-market goods and services (Young, 2000: 164–7). The second one has an external direction and describes activities by which organisations make claims on the state (Habermas, 1993: 231–5). There is often an overlap between the self-organisation and the public sphere function, and civil society organisations usually fulfil both to differing degrees. Especially in repressive settings, where public engagement is very limited, self-organisation activities have historically been used to prepare activities that are ultimately expressed in the public sphere. While many

authoritarian states limit public engagement more heavily than self-organisation activities (Lewis, 2013), this does not mean that organisations focusing on the latter entirely ignore the former (Clark, 2013). A potential danger for authoritarian states lies precisely in the fact that it is very difficult to selectively suppress the public sphere function and allow only self-organisation activities.

Although it is true, that states delineate civil society through laws and political action and hence define the sphere and its operational space, civil society activism seldom remains confined to this arena. Where civil society mobilised against repressive regimes and struggled for power, actors have often left the legally delineated sphere of civil society (Flower and Leonard, 1996; Hann, Chris, 1996; Nord, 2000: XVX).

Analytical Framework

As described above, states are embedded in social ties and linked to society through institutionalised and informal channels (Evans et al., 2006: 3f). Interactions between states and their civil societies differ, depending on the degree of autonomous power that each of the actors possess vis-à-vis the others and can reach from co-optation – state controls civil society – to contestation – civil society threatens state hegemony – over various forms of cooperation and coexistence. Rather than a system of checks and balances, the interactions between state and civil society actors are characterised by negotiation, bargaining and sometimes conflict. The power constellation within and between the spheres and the costs and benefits associated to taking decisions contradicting the distribution of powers, determines the interactions between state and civil society actors.

Neither the state nor civil society are monolithic or unitary actors. Focusing solely on the central state and formal civil society organisations may convey a skewed picture of the actual reach of the respective power of state and civil society (Kohli and Shue, 1994: 308). Power struggles between the state and civil society take place in different arenas and in some cases the outcomes of such struggles can be cumulative and impact on struggles in other arenas. Parts of the state may respond much more to pressure from certain parts of civil society than others (Lee and Zhang, 2013; Skocpol, 1985: 12ff). Therefore we cannot measure the autonomous power of

states as a binary variable, but may need to embrace the concept of “*dispersed domination*” (Migdal, 1994: 9) where the state does not achieve the establishment of domination country wide and has to give in to pressures from civil society in certain locations and instances.

A stance that a civil society organisation takes vis-à-vis the state can vary, for example, depending on the topic or the interlocutor. This means that organisations can simultaneously contest the state and cooperate with it (He and Huang, 2015; Lee and Zhang, 2013). The strategies that civil society organisations adopt towards the state can shift on the continuum between co-optation and contestation and change over time (Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8; Unger and Chan, 2015). Because we are likely to see patterns of interaction (e.g. a civil society actor may cooperate more than it contests), only a disaggregation of the different strategies adopted by different actors in civil society can shed light on the negotiations, bargaining and conflict taking place between civil society and the state.

Drawing on the theoretical framework proposed above and empirical studies on civil society and states, we can identify four ideal types of interaction between the state and actors in civil society: co-optation, cooperation, coexistence and contestation (see Figure 2). The larger the discrepancy between the agenda of the state and the agenda of a civil society actor, the higher the probability that the latter will contest the former. The further a civil society actor approaches open contestation, the higher the probability that it will enter into confrontation with state authority. The higher the degree of despotic power of a state, the less likely it will be to tolerate public contestation and the more likely it is to respond with violent repression. The higher the degree of infrastructural power, the larger the probability that a state can co-opt civil society actors into its structures. However, co-optation will differ depending on whether high infrastructural power is combined with high or low despotic power. Where despotic power is high, states can forcefully co-opt dissident civil society actors. Where despotic power is low, due to the dual character of infrastructural power, dominant civil society actors (e.g. important economic lobbies) can in some instances co-opt the state rather than the other way around (Mann, 1984, 2008). Few observed interactions between state and civil society actors

will neatly fall into one category, but they can be interpreted and analysed in relation to the ideal types.

The proposed framework has its genealogy in previous research on the voluntary sector in developing countries in the 1980s and 90s, that explored how NGOs and governments in developing countries interacted (Ottaway and Carothers, 2000; Rooy, 2013). While not proposing a coherent framework for analysing NGO-state relations, studies documented the existence of the four types of interactions named above. Research showed that governments in non-democratic settings, while welcoming the contribution of NGOs in terms of human and financial resources to development initiatives, tried to prevent them from pushing independent agendas from the state to avert contestation (Bebbington, 1997: 124f). They also documented that states on several occasions managed to establish control over NGOs and their resources, all the while showing that sometimes NGOs could function as vocal opposition to states (Backer and Carroll, 2001: 3f). Rather than finding harmonious relationships, scholars showed the existence of conflicts, all the while demonstrating that, where agendas of states and NGOs overlapped, they engaged in cooperative exchanges. Some NGOs were shown to prefer to operate at a distance from the state, implementing their projects in parallel, to prevent state influence on their organisation, whereas other NGOs were found to approach state actors to build trust to be able to operate (Bratton, 1989: 577ff; Clark, 1995: 593ff; Fowler, 2000: 640ff).

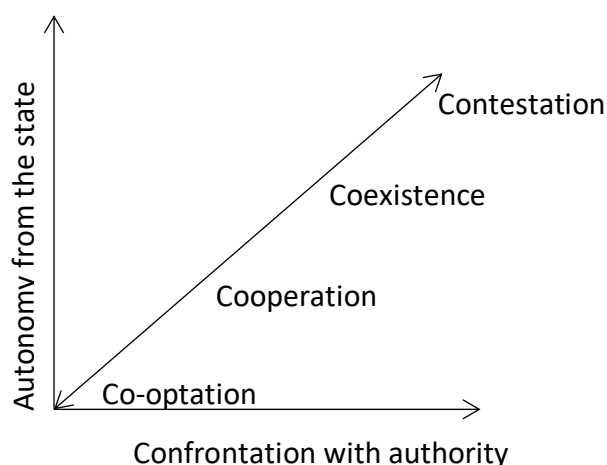


Figure 2: Classification of Interactions between State and Civil Society Organisations

Co-optation

At an organisational level, co-optation can be defined as *“the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy - determining structure of an organisation as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence”* (Selznick, 1948: 34). While this strategy helps states to establish domination over civil society, it might also cause internal changes in the state because of the need to accommodate the newly integrated actors. Co-optation seldom leads to total transformation of the organisation concerned and opens the possibility for struggle and contestation (Migdal, 1994: 25f)²⁰, as research on mass-organisations in China has shown (Howell, 2003, 2008). As co-optation reflects a state of tension between formal authority and social power, it is by definition a conflictual situation (Selznick, 1948: 35). To co-opt civil society organisations, infrastructural power is needed. While despotic power and repression is often used at the initial stages of co-optation and restructuring, to ensure compliance over time, states cannot simply rely on repression, as it has in many cases provoked resistance and contestation (Lucas, 1998; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). To determine whether interactions between the state and an actor in civil society testify to co-optation it is important to enquire how far the organisation can voice disagreements with the state, how far it possesses an independent agenda and how far it manages to represent the interests of its members and pursues its own goals. Co-optation is not always easy to differentiate from cooperation, however there is a sound basis to argue that cooperation indicates a degree of mutual benefit in the interaction, while in the case of co-optation the state is the primary beneficiary. Interactions categorised as co-optation include, for example: an organisation collecting politically sensitive information from members and transmitting it to state officials; an organisation informing state officials about strikes or protests planned by its members; an organisation supporting policies harming its members; or an organisation collecting resources for the state.

²⁰ Co-optation reflects the loss of independence of civil society actors vis-à-vis state organisations, but it cannot be measured in binary terms. Co-optation is seldom total and even if the top of an organisation is co-opted, this does not mean that the rest of the organisation is co-opted as well. Especially for mass-based organisations in authoritarian regimes, there exists a struggle of co-opted leadership to respond to political demands of the state and simultaneously accommodate the interests of their members as Buchowski's (1996: 84) study on communist Poland described.

Co-operation between different state organisations and civil society actors is likely to occur where their respective agendas overlap, as for example, numerous studies on China show. This might be a shared goal, but it might also be the agreement of a trade-off, a tit-for-tat, by which both partners compromise to achieve their respective goals. Especially where state despotic power is high, cooperation with the state can be a strategy to foster trust among relevant public entities to expand the space of action of the organisation concerned, as a study of grassroots labour NGOs in Southern China revealed (He and Huang, 2015: 488f). Moreover, according to research on local protests in China, cooperation is the proof that the relationship between the state and civil society is not a zero-sum game, but can be mutually beneficial and bears mutually empowering elements (Lee and Zhang, 2013: 1484f). Studies have often emphasized the autonomy of the state to set the terms for cooperation, however this has somewhat neglected the dual character of infrastructural power and the fact that the state depends on civil society actors both for support as well as for provision of services (Lee and Zhang, 2013: 1485). Cooperation might in some cases be a trade-off, where an organisation decides to give into state demands in exchange for political access, resources or more space for action in the future (Hildebrandt, 2013; Lee and Zhang, 2013). Combining cooperation with contestation has sometimes been sought as a means of avoiding co-optation, as illustrated by a study of participatory budgeting in Argentina (Holdo, 2016: 380). Interactions falling under co-operation are wide-ranging and can include, for example, joint implementation of activities or support for the activities of both sides. Co-operation is marked by the fact that it can be seen as mutually beneficial, even if one part might benefit more than the other, or the benefits from cooperation are not immediate but to be reaped in the future.

Co-existence in its most extreme form translates into complete disengagement from state structures as studies on civil society in China, Russia and Poland found. Underground labour organisations in China were for example found to choose this strategy, especially in their initial stages of organisation (Fu, 2017c: 500), whereas social networks in Russia focused on linking individual citizens but operated informally, to avoid directly engaging with the state (Gibson, 2001: 65f). Choosing to operate outside of the legal framework is often a strategy to avoid regulation and

control by the state (Spires, 2011). As disengagement from state structures and hidden organisation has in the past often been used as a strategy to organise open contestation against despotic states, these states have tried to reduce the opportunity of co-existence to avoid anti-regime plotting, e.g. in communist Poland (Wiktorowicz, 2000: 57). In a few instances civil society actors in authoritarian states, have been able to establish relationships of trust, through showing that they did not operate outside of the state permitted boundaries, which has allowed them to operate not far from, but at close distance to, the official state apparatus (He and Huang, 2015). A lot of the service provision activities that are not directly supported by, or implemented in cooperation with, states can fall under this category. Co-existence can also be expressed in non-participation and disengagement from official processes and public organisations, favouring subversion of state structures and thus approaching contestation (Scott, 1985).

Contestation

Although contestation is often associated with public dissent, contestation can take very different forms, as case studies on countries in Asia, Europe and Latin America revealed. It is important to distinguish between challenges made on the policy level - most membership-based civil society organisations try to influence state policy to accommodate their interests - and those made to the polity - in politically restrictive environments a push for regime change is more rare because of the high costs associated with such activities, according to findings from the Philippines and Russia (Clark, 2013; Mikirova et al., 2013). Authoritarian states often set clear limits on what form of contestation is allowed (Ortmann, 2012: 19), however, several studies on civil society in China suggest that this is directed more towards group collective action than individual action (Gallagher, 2014: 82f; King et al., 2013). As part of infrastructural power mechanisms, small scale and contained contestation is sometimes allowed as a tool of information gathering (Lorentzen, 2013) and in some cases civil society actors have used the ability to contest at an individual level as a strategy to reduce the costs of contestation (Fu, 2017c: 518). Contestation can mean as well the construction of an alternative discourse (verbal criticism) and various overt and covert forms of subversion of power structures (Johnston, 2006). Especially

covert forms of contestation are not always easy to distinguish from co-existence and the more despotic a state, the more dangerous and costly open contestation is, as studies on contemporary China and post-totalitarian Germany concluded (Fu, 2017c: 508; Spulbeck, 1996: 77). A few interactions falling under contestation can include opposing laws that hurt members of civil society organisations as well as open and hidden protest events. Contestation can be cumulative if the struggles in one arena have an impact on the outcomes of struggles in another arena.

Conclusion

As states are embedded in civil society while at the same time benefitting from autonomous power vis-à-vis the latter, civil society - state relations have to be conceptualised in a dual-theoretical framework. Although this insight is not new (Migdal, 1994; Skocpol, 1985), a great deal of empirical work on civil society and the state in social sciences has fallen into the one-angle trap (society-centric or state-centric). Choosing either a society-centric or a state-centric approach has led to making an unhelpful distinction between civil society in democracies (society-centric) and civil society in authoritarian settings (state-centric). Both have analysed civil society in relation to regime types rather than to states, even if the name of the second approach mistakenly suggests the opposite. An exception to this rule can be found in many anthropological approaches with a long tradition of research confirming the need for a relational approach to civil society and the state (Hann and Dunn, 1996; Lee and Zhang, 2013; Scott, 1985). This chapter has combined relevant sociological theories with evidence from empirical studies to develop a theoretically and empirically grounded framework for analysing civil society - state relations.

Although I propose abandoning the normative liberal framework, this does not mean that I negate the potential of civil society to promote democratisation and democracy. It simply means that I consider the pursuit of democracy as a possibility (Gramsci, 1971: 494, 532f,) rather than a necessity, or a defining characteristic of civil society (Tocqueville de, 1835b: 307). Opting for a sociological approach and tying it closely to empirical findings, I have aimed at constructing a “real type” definition of civil society, in contrast to an ideal type definition. In short, I have tried to distinguish

between civil society as a normative concept in political theory and an empirical concept in social sciences research without negating their connection.

In the following chapters, these theoretical and analytical frameworks will be used to operationalise the concepts of civil society and the state in Ethiopia and to analyse the interactions existing between state and civil society actors. This includes an analysis of the political settlement reached in 1991 and the resulting levels of despotic and infrastructural powers of the Ethiopian state by 2018. The analysis of power structures will be disaggregated both within and between central and local state organisations. The interactions between the state and civil society will be studied comparatively, including case studies of three different types of civil society actors (trade unions, chambers of commerce and charities) and also disaggregated at different administrative levels. Interactions will be categorised in relation to the ideal types developed above.

Chapter 3: Studying Restricted Political Spaces – Reflections on Research Design, Methods and Ethics

“If methodological problems question the reliability and validity of one’s data, then ethical dilemmas question the validity of the researcher’s actual presence” (Kellehear, 2002: 65).

Introduction

Addis Ababa, 24th of June 2016 [Säne 17 2008]

The room was dark and hot. There were four of us sitting around a table: the former union president Awoll, the acting union president Yosef, the finance officer Girma and me²¹. Yosef and Girma had informed Awoll about my research and he had agreed to an interview. They had chosen the clinic where Awoll worked for our meeting, telling me that it was safe to talk here. Awoll sat across from me, he looked hunched and much older than his actual age. His suit was too big, which made him look even thinner. Apart from his vivid eyes, there was not much left of the charismatic union leader Girma and Yosef had described to me. Before I could properly start to introduce myself and my research, Awoll took the lead in the conversation. He asked me where I lived and about my family. He told me he didn’t like Kasanchis (where I lived): too many people, not safe enough. He also felt that as I was approaching thirty, it was time to think about a family, but he agreed that my research was important too. When he was satisfied with the information he received, Awoll started telling his story. I managed to interrupt him briefly to formally get his consent, but he didn’t seem the slightest bit interested. “It’s fine Camille” was all he said, “You can use whatever I say, I don’t care anymore”. Whether this was informed consent or not remains debatable. The interview took over three hours. Sometimes I would ask a question for clarification or follow up and Girma and Yosef occasionally filled in details, but mainly we listened. While Awoll told his story, tears ran down his cheeks. I asked him whether he wanted to stop or take a break, but he just continued.

²¹ I changed all names to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.

Sometimes he became silent for a few seconds to compose himself or wipe away the tears, but he went on. Nearly twenty years had passed since his active time as a union president and still he remembered everything as if it had been yesterday. He talked about the big strike in the 1990s, detailing how security forces had closed the union's office, and how trade unionists had been imprisoned. He talked about the threats and the physical violence the government had used to silence them, but he also remembered the solidarity of the workers and the collective resistance. He seemed most upset when talking about the people he hadn't been able to save: those who had been exiled, those who had been killed and those who had disappeared. More tears came as he listed their names. Throughout the interview, I increasingly felt like a fraud, realising that I was a civil society researcher, who couldn't imagine sacrificing her own wellbeing to fight against the system. I just couldn't see myself doing what Awoll had done. I felt unprepared and cowardly, not sure how to handle the situation, but neither Awoll nor the two others questioned my integrity or work. On the contrary, Awoll told me to meet him next day at the union's office to go through the archives and collect written proof for his story. He told me he wanted me to write the story of his trade union. Just like Girma and Yosef, that's why they brought me to Awoll in the first place. The three of them were radically different from most trade unionists I had met before. They had a different story to tell and they wanted it heard.

* * *

In this chapter, I reflect on the methodological and ethical challenges that I encountered doing research on civil society - state relations in Ethiopia and discuss the use of ethnographic research methods in the study of politics. I also discuss the politics of carrying out ethnographic fieldwork on a sensitive topic in a climate of growing anti-government protests. The first part of the chapter discusses the research design and implementation, while the second part focuses on fieldwork practices and ethics.

Research Design and Research Execution

Scholars have long acknowledged the need for more qualitative studies in civil society research and the weakness of normative civil society theories and quantitative approaches in exploring the presupposed causal link between civil society and democracy (Biekart, 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Hann and Dunn, 1996; Katz, 2006). The recent growth of civil society organisations in authoritarian settings has spurred research evaluating why the growth of civil society has not systematically brought about democratisation, why authoritarian states have allowed CSOs to multiply and how civil society and state actors are related to each other in non-democratic settings. As noted in Chapter 2, many of those studies used corporatism theories to explain the relationships between CSOs and states in non-democratic states (Hildebrandt, 2013; Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Unger and Chan, 2015). However, dominant theoretical framings of civil society - state relations that favoured a classification according to regime types - civil society theories for democratic contexts and corporatism models for undemocratic contexts - have been questioned due to their rather simplistic categorisation of links and interactions between civil society and state actors (Spires, 2011).

My thesis responds to the need for more empirically grounded theory building on civil society - state relations and contributes to existing research by going beyond the dominant approaches. While exploratory in nature, I followed Clifford Geertz's advice who wrote:

"Although one starts any effort at thick description, beyond the obvious and superficial, from a state of general bewilderment as to what the devil is going on - trying to find one's feet - one does not start (or ought not) intellectually empty-handed" (Geertz, 1994: 228f).

Consequently, I opted for an abductive approach (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), building on pre-existing theory, particularly sociological theories of the state and civil society. While going beyond the dominant civil society-corporatism debate, both my theoretical and analytical framework are anchored in existing theories and my research design is built on previous approaches to the topic.

Consistent with the *“growing consensus that the strongest means of drawing inferences from case studies is the use of a combination of within-case analysis and cross-case comparisons”* (Bennet and Bennett 2005, 18), I decided for a comparative case study of three different types of civil society organisations in Ethiopia. The actual units of analysis in my study consist of civil society organisations in each sector, which constituted embedded units in my cases. Hence I was able to undertake within, between and across comparisons of the sector and the organisational levels, which provided for a rich set of observations (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

I opted for a most similar case design, selecting cases on the dependent variable of interest – the dominant pattern of interaction between civil society organisations and the state – using process tracing to explain the divergent outcomes (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006: 239–40). Despite well-known reservations (King et al., 1994: 1), for hypothesis generating studies, the case selection on the dependent variable is common and in a most-similar case design it allows for tracing back the outcomes to a small set of explanatory variables (Gerring, 2006: 131). I chose the cases to reflect the largest possible variation in the dependent variable, hence including interactions reaching from co-optation to contestation. However, choosing most similar cases for understudied topics is not self-evident, because of the lack of an established set of control variables and a large-N dataset from which to choose (Gerring, 2006: 131). Given the scarcity of information on civil society - state relations in Ethiopia, I undertook a six-week long pilot study in October/November 2015 to select the cases. Based on desk research and the preparatory interviews I had pre-selected three possible sectors: (1) charities and societies, (2) professional associations, and (3) community-based organisations. However, once in the field, I realised that the first two categories were overlapping in terms of legal registration and that the last one posed significant access issues due to language barriers, leading me to choose (1) trade unions, (2) chambers of commerce and (3) charities and societies.

The sectors chosen were constituted by formal organisations that were registered, or tried to get registered, and operated according to specific laws and

²² For information on the country case selection and the research context please see Chapter 1.

regulations (Proclamation No. 341, 2003; Proclamation No. 377, 2004; Proclamation No. 621, 2009). The formation of chambers of commerce, trade unions and charities and societies all date back to the second half of the twentieth century and the three civil society sectors represented organisations that at least formally operated independently from state structures and could, in theory, challenge state policies and, in some cases, even the state itself (Beyene, 2009; Dessalegn, 2002).

The extant literature also provides reason to believe that these actors that I selected to study have the potential to challenge governments and promote political change (Akwetey and Kraus, 2007; Conaghan and Espinal, 1990; Rakner, 1992). In the Ethiopian context, these three types of organisations had been in major conflicts with the EPRDF regime, the trade unions in the 1990s, the chambers of commerce in the late 1990s and early 2000s and the charities and societies between 2005 and 2010. Subsequently, all three sectors saw significant organisational restructuring and changes in the regulatory framework governing their activity (Dupuy et al., 2015; Hagmann and Abbink, 2011: 584; International Labour Office, 1997a; Praeg, 2006: 185f). As I discuss in more detail below, the three sectors in civil society differed in the degree of contentiousness in their individual relationships to the EPRDF regime. The case studies on trade unions and chambers of commerce, especially, spoke to the literature on the importance of state-business and state-labour relations in developmental states, which provided an additional theoretical justification for choosing these sectors.

Trade unions in Ethiopia constitute the first case and were to a large extent directly controlled by the EPRDF. Since the restructuring of the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) in the 1990s, the alignment of the unions' work to state policies was ensured through numerous mechanisms, not least through infiltration (Docherty and Velden, 2012: 97; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8; Shinn and Ofcansky, 2013: 256f). Although there was variation as to the proximity between individual unions and the EPRDF regime, at least at confederation and federation level, unions were closely linked to the EPRDF structures. Unionisation was encouraged by the EPRDF government to control workers through party-affiliated unions and avoid a radicalisation of the labour movement. The EPRDF had a clear approach to trade unions marked by its chosen development model. Moreover,

unions were mobilised to legitimise and support the EPRDF rule, turning them into proponents of the regime. Although control of unions was far reaching, evidence suggests that there existed some modest conflict between unions and the EPRDF government (Hailu, 2010; Tamrat, 2014).

The Chambers of Commerce in Ethiopia constituted the second case. Although to a lesser extent than the trade unions, chambers of commerce were closely linked to both EPRDF and state structures. The EPRDF was wary of the chambers of commerce and other business membership organisations (BMOs), as many had supported opposition parties in the past, especially around the 2000 and 2005 national elections. To avoid contestation and align chambers and other BMOs with the EPRDF's developmental state programme, the EPRDF government restructured the chamber system in 2003, introducing many new bodies controlled by party-affiliated businesses and changing the set-up of existing ones to weaken vocal organisations (Teshome, 2014). Although the chambers were less vocal than in the past and did not engage in open contestation of the regime, some chambers struggled for more independence from the state and regularly pushed for policy change regarding private sector issues. The EPRDF tried to use the chambers to align the private sector with its developmental priorities.

The last case featured all organisations falling under the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation. This sector included a wide array of different types of actors, such as NGOs, professional associations and mass-based organisations (Proclamation No. 621, 2009). NGOs and some professional associations used to receive foreign money for democracy promotion and other rights-based activities and many of them were very vocal during the 2005 election (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009b: 202; Dupuy et al., 2015). Although the 2009 proclamation cut foreign funding for any form of political activities, weakening and even eliminating many of the organisations that used to work on these topics, the relationship between the EPRDF government and most organisations operating in this sector, the exception being mass based organisations linked to EPRDF structures, remained contentious. Even organisations working on development activities inscribed in the country's development plans ran into problems with the regulatory body for this sector. While the EPRDF tried to

mobilise charities and societies as part of its developmental state programme, security concerns often took primacy over developmental concerns.

I excluded informal civil society organisations for both practical and theoretical reasons. Ethiopia has a longstanding tradition of community-based organisations that each fulfil specific functions and have their particular institutional set-up. Some examples are *iddirs*, funerary associations, *equb*, credit groups and *debo*, agricultural labour groups. These associations have fulfilled important functions for their members encompassing, among others, social integration and economic safety nets (Pankhurst, 2008: 147). In their original format, such organisations have become known for their inward-looking character (Clapham, 2004: 80), although especially *iddirs* have historically been known for evolving and adopting functions such as labour representation and community development. However, when *iddirs* changed their mandate they were often forced to change their status into formally registered organisations such as trade unions and charities. Given that the research question aims to look at how civil society - state relations affected regime stability, I was particularly interested in those engaging in regular interactions with state organisations, rather than those operating in parallel to the state. Moreover, more informal organisations have historically not encountered major conflicts with the state, which was one of the selection criteria as I described above. Another group of informal civil society actors would have been activists. However, given the restrictive political climate in the country, those most active were often either imprisoned or working underground, which made the group difficult to access. A final reason for choosing formal civil society organisations was that I wanted to position my research within the larger canon of civil society organisations in authoritarian settings that often focused on registered rather than informal organisations or actors.

While the focus of my study is on formal civil society organisations, the beginning of my fieldwork coincided with the onset of public protests and ended a few months after the acting Prime Minister resigned in February 2018, as a result of the incessant anti-EPRDF demonstrations. Public protests were very insightful for the research as they constituted an extreme case when it came to civil society - state relations in Ethiopia. The ethnic-based social movements, which spread from Oromia to Amhara and to other regions between 2015 and 2018, displayed large-scale public

contestation against the regime, though none of the organisations in the three sectors under study participated in the protests. While demanding more political freedom and participation, the ethno-regional character of the protest movements also spurred ethnic conflicts, posing doubts regarding their democratic essence. Despite their unforeseen character, the protests added an interesting component to my research enabling me to ask additional questions such as: Why did formal civil society not participate in the protests? And what did the protests tell us about perceived and actual regime stability?

While my research design was informed by similar studies in other countries, I opted for introducing several important changes to address shortcomings of previous approaches. First, many past studies focused on one particular type of civil society actor, rather than comparing different organisational types (Clark, 2013; Haddad, 2013; Hemment, 2004; Hsu, 2010; Spires, 2011). While the study of a type of CSO provided in-depth insights regarding its relationship to the state, the designs employed in these studies did not account for differences among different types of civil society actors and their relationships to states. However, comparing previous case studies, there was sound reason to believe that authoritarian regimes differentiated between various civil society organisations and targeted membership-based organisations, especially mass associations, differently than non-membership-based organisations, due the former's ability to mobilise a large number of people (Aarts and Cavatorta, 2013; Evans et al., 2006; White, 1996a). Scholars who engaged in comparative case studies often compared the same type of organisation working across different policy issue areas (e.g. environment, health, human rights and others). This suggests that where state and CSO agendas overlapped and where issue areas were not contentious, CSOs had more freedom to operate (Hildebrandt, 2013; Yerkes, 2012). While providing interesting insights, such an approach is not well suited to explain within-sector differences and lingering questions remain: Why did CSOs working on the same issues have more/less success depending on their location in the country and why were some CSOs allowed to work on sensitive topics while others were not? (Mikirova et al., 2013). Drawing lessons learned from previous research designs, I opted for a comparative case study of different types of civil society actors, including both membership and non-membership-based actors

representing different social classes. Second, previous studies focused on explaining one particular type of interaction, such as co-optation (Khatib, 2013; Rivetti, 2013), cooperation (Hildebrandt, 2013; Park, 2009) or coexistence (Haddad, 2013) and categorised CSOs on a continuum between co-optation and contestation. In contrast, I opted for a more flexible approach. To account for the fact that the relationship between CSOs and state organisations was marked by different types of interactions and changed over time, I categorised interactions, rather than actors, to capture how CSOs engaged in different types interactions of with state representatives to push their agendas.

Data Collection and Sampling

As is common for qualitative research projects with an extensive fieldwork component, my research methods were influenced both by the research question, as well as the research environment and the changes taking place within it (Huggins and Glebbeek, 2009a). I opted for an ethnographic approach to data collection, embedding myself close to the phenomenon I wanted to study. I used in-depth interviews (semi-structured and unstructured), informal conversations, focus groups and participant and passive observation in combination. In a few instances, I also drew on covert observation of interaction and I used archival studies to complete and triangulate the data collected during my interviews and observations.

In total, I conducted fourteen months of fieldwork between October 2015 and June 2018. The majority of data collected consists of in-depth interviews with 156 individuals. I primarily interviewed leaders, staff and members of Ethiopian civil society organisations, politicians and civil servants, but also representatives from international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral donor organisations and experts in the field (see Table 2 below). Most interviews lasted between 30 and 240 minutes and I met several of my interview partners at least twice, adding up to a total of 217 interviews.

Table 2: Number of Interviewees per Stakeholder Group

Type of Actor ²³	Number of Interviewees	Number of women among the interviewees
Politicians and Civil Servants ²⁴	34	4
Charities and Societies ²⁵	34	10
Trade Unions ²⁶	29	1
Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations ²⁷	28	5
Experts ²⁸	17	0
International Donors ²⁹	14	7

Out of the 156 individuals interviewed, only 27 were women (5 at the chambers, 4 civil servants, 7 working for donors, 10 working at charities and societies, 1 working at the trade unions). The participants of the focus groups that I conducted with beneficiaries from charities and societies were difficult to count. While I started each focus group with at least six participants, during the focus group discussions some of the initial participants left and new ones joined. From my field notes I concluded that at least 63 individuals participated in six different focus groups conducted in Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Sheshemene and Wonji in February and March 2017.

Initially, I chose organisations and interviewees through snowball sampling. While this method is prone to selection bias (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) it offered a fruitful approach for my research because it allowed me to locate the most important organisations and interviewees for my study. For every sector, I wanted to access the widest possible number of perspectives on my topic. This was important to capture emerging themes and explore the features of my cases. My aim was to map out different discourses on civil society - state relations and to compare them,

²³ Interviewees were classified according to the position they were interviewed in, meaning that both current and former employees/representatives/leaders were counted together.

²⁴ Includes politicians from the rank of Ministers, down to civil servants working as experts in kebele offices. It also includes civil servants employed at public universities in Ethiopia.

²⁵ Includes international charities and resident and Ethiopian charities and societies, as well as consortia of charities and societies.

²⁶ Includes employees and leaders of trade unions from basic trade unions up to confederation level, as well as two interviews with company management to follow up on an industrial conflict studied.

²⁷ Includes chambers of commerce and sectoral associations from municipal up to national level, as well as four business membership organisations that are members of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations.

²⁸ Primarily includes consultants working on development cooperation projects and researchers.

²⁹ Includes international and Ethiopian employees working at international donor organisations, both bilateral and multilateral.

leading me to differentiate between the official EPRDF discourse on civil society - state relations and other discourses among (1) CSOs that were closely linked to the ruling coalition; (2) more autonomous CSOs; (3) and finally international and national experts and donors. While not directly relevant to civil society - state relations, I included the last group to capture the perspective of educated observers.

The data collection was shaped by the tense political climate in Ethiopia and the sensitivity of the research topic. Moreover, as different groups of interview partners had different alliances and agendas, this influenced the type of information they shared, as well as their narratives, similar to experiences reported by other scholars (Fredriksson, 2009: 160f; Söderström, 2016: 86f). Interviewees tried to shape my interpretations and convince me of the rightness of their story, which made triangulation beyond closed networks particularly important to establish facts and capture narratives from different groups explaining or interpreting facts. Although in many cases, facts could be established unambiguously through careful triangulation, I aimed to collect the widest possible array of narratives to inform my analysis rather than try to discover the truth of their interpretation. Moreover, despite the general narrative trends, there were interesting narrative variations in all groups, which helped broaden the analysis and allowed me to reflect on dominant group narratives. Once I had mapped out the different discourses on civil society - state relations, as well as the different categories of interactions, I increasingly shifted to theoretical sampling to develop my emerging theories, simultaneously collecting, coding and analysing data.

I used multiple referral chains for my data collection, which reduced the risk of sampling from specific networks and decreased the influence of an initial informant on the overall sample. The initial informants were diverse and included CSOs, civil servants, INGOs, international donor representatives and experts both from Ethiopia and from abroad. Within state and civil society organisations, I made contacts with different employees and leaders to capture intra-organisational differences. Representativeness was not possible to reach in a small N qualitative study and therefore I reasoned in terms of theoretical saturation (Small, 2009). I collected data for my analytical and theoretical categories until saturation of information was reached. For example, saturation was met when I no longer received any new

relevant information and instead discovered the same patterns and interactions again and had verified the information obtained through triangulation.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, I also used participant observation in civil society organisations, especially trade unions and chambers of commerce, and at meetings and conferences that brought together state representatives and CSOs. I entered the settings as a researcher and secured official permission beforehand. I also undertook more passive observations, for example at the Addis chamber's annual meeting and board elections or the Ethiopian chamber's workshop on manufacturing. At some public events, like the Addis Trade Fair or the Prime Minister's Forum on Agro-Industrial Parks, I undertook covert observations. Although I did not undertake any observation at protest events for security reasons, I collected information on these through interviewees who had participated. As the fieldwork progressed I gained important insights through conversations and informal meetings with interviewees. Moreover, participating in daily life in Ethiopia provided important background information for the study.

To complete the data from my interviews and observations and to triangulate information, I carried out archival studies. I primarily analysed newspaper articles from public and private English-speaking newspapers, especially from *Addis Fortune*, *Addis Standard*, *the Reporter*, *Capital Newspaper* and the *Ethiopian Herald*. While the first four newspapers listed offer some critical reflections on Ethiopian politics to diverging degrees, the last one is the official EPRDF newspaper. I also studied newspapers published by the chambers of commerce (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, *Nigdina Limat*, *Addis Business*) and the trade unions. Further, I collected written documents on conflicts between civil society and state organisations, e.g. letters, court rulings and photos, at trade unions and chambers of commerce. Although I focused primarily on the timeframe between 1991 and 2018, I went back until the early 1960s in some instances, to triangulate information obtained during interviews. The archival studies allowed me to trace the evolution of CSOs in the sectors under study and to understand how the relation between CSOs and the state had evolved over time during the EPRDF regime.

Given the quickly growing amount of data, I switched from coding by hand to using Nvivo after my pilot in autumn 2015. The software helped me to organise and

code my data. While I started with identifying bigger themes, I progressively refined my categories to develop my theories. I used thick description to analyse my findings, going beyond the mere description of facts (what happened) and providing tentative explanations as to how and why incidents unfolded. Process tracing allowed me to establish chains of incidents and to reveal causal mechanisms explaining observations.

Accessing the Field

I conducted most of my field work in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa since the regional states in Ethiopia had to implement centrally-decided policies without much space to deviate from those or plan and design their own policies (Assefa, 2012: 464). Moreover, especially for the chambers of commerce and trade unions their apex bodies and strongest members were located in and around Addis Ababa, as were the majority of charities and societies registered. Nevertheless, I still wanted to explore the regional dynamics of civil society - state relations in Ethiopia and capture the relative distance to the EPRDF government geographically but also ideologically/politically. The regions in Ethiopia featured diverging institutional ties to the EPRDF regime; some were closer and more supportive than others³⁰. The intensifying waves of protests that spread from Oromia to Amhara and then to other regions in Ethiopia between November 2015 and June 2018 rendered fieldwork outside of Addis Ababa more complicated. Nevertheless, I undertook short trips (totalling roughly 1 month of fieldwork) to field sites in Oromia Regional State, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) Regional State, and Amhara Regional State. Also, I had the opportunity to meet representatives from regional chambers and trade unions at sector wide events in and around Addis Ababa and many of the charities and societies I interviewed had regional offices and/or projects, providing important information regarding civil society - state relations beyond the federal level.

Accessing the field required different strategies in the three sectors under study and due to the diverging channels of access, I had to separately and individually

³⁰ See Chapter 4 for more details.

reflect on the potential biases that my form of “entrance into the field” could pose for my research.

The trade unions turned out to be the most difficult to access and it took me three attempts to enter the sector. First, I was referred by an expert working for an international donor project that had cooperated with the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU). Although the interviewee at CETU was open in the conversation, he did not want to refer me further to others in the organisation. It seemed to me that he preferred not to be associated officially with my research. In my second attempt, I reached out to the international cooperation and communication department of CETU. I got some further help, but the head of the department insisted on sitting in on the interviews that he scheduled for me. Before abandoning I decided to make a last attempt through a friend who worked at the ILO in Geneva. I obtained the contact details of the president of CETU who met me because I was referred to him through the ILO. From the president, I obtained the official consent for carrying out interviews in the confederation and the federations. This facilitated my research tremendously, as I could come and go without having to schedule official meetings and my presence became increasingly normalised. People started greeting me in the corridor. One of the junior staff interested in my research approached me after a while and volunteered to support me regarding access to unions and documentation. We agreed that he could become my research assistant³¹. I eventually attained access to CETU’s planning and monitoring department to get reports and data and was even offered a desk at which to work. While some executive committee members and employees remained distant and uncooperative, others approached me because they wanted to talk about their work and offer their perspective on trade unions in Ethiopia. Several came with concrete suggestion of issues to consider or to avoid, and I selected carefully which to follow. However, people’s attempt to influence my research project provided interesting information on internal politics in the unions and the union’s role in the bigger political framework in Ethiopia. Among basic trade unions at enterprise level, it was not easy to identify and get access to unions that were less state controlled and were

³¹ See discussion on research assistants below.

or had been in conflict with the state. Such information was protected, not readily available through the newspapers and was known only to a small network. Eventually I was referred through one federation and from there, together with support from my research assistant, I was able to access more. Through CETU I got access to interviewees working at the Ministry and Bureau of Labour in Addis Ababa, who referred me to new interviewees within the same organisation, and further to other state organisations.

For the chambers of commerce, I got access through one of my interview partners from the charities and societies sector. I first attained access to the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce, where I was referred to an important gatekeeper. He was widely respected by his colleagues and regularly published articles in private newspapers exposing shortcomings of the EPRDF regime. From the Addis Chamber, I got access to the Oromia, Tigray, the national (Ethiopian) chambers and to other business membership organisations (e.g. in the coffee and construction sector). The Addis Chamber also facilitated my meeting with high level government officials at the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Industry. I established contact directly with several of the other regional chambers and sectoral associations. As I was welcomed by the Addis Chamber and even took part in internal meetings and conferences they organised, through these I was also able to establish contact with representatives from both the state and the chambers. Access to the chambers seemed natural, to a point where I was told by one of my interview partners *"You are good at sneaking in. You seem to belong here. No one asks questions anymore what you are doing"* (Fieldnotes, 2016a). As the initial access had been relatively easy, for the chambers I had to reflect closely on whom I had to consciously include to get all possible perspectives. The 2003 chamber proclamation which restructured the whole sector helped me to identify new bodies introduced by the EPRDF government and allowed me to start identifying alliances in the sector. Although my first key informant in the sector reflected on the existence of different perspectives and actors, I had to specifically ask him to refer me to people and organisations in the state apparatus and more EPRDF affiliated chambers. Due to his previous work as a civil servant and his family relations, he had important links, and when asked, also established the contact for me. However, he considered the perspectives of the EPRDF government

and party-affiliated chambers as invalid and non-interesting and did not suggest my meeting them directly. Hence, I thought, initially, that the chamber sector was more independent than it actually was, as he referred me primarily to people in the same group as himself. Nevertheless, my first key informant was of tremendous importance for my research, both in terms of facilitating access, as well as offering reflections during our many informal conversations and meetings.

For the charities and societies sector, I obtained access almost by accident. At a conference in London in 2015, I met an individual involved in the drafting of the controversial 2009 charities proclamation, who provided access to other relevant key stakeholders involved in the drafting process. Accessing the current regulatory body for charities and societies was not easy and I had to use three referral chains to enter it: a former employee of the Ministry of Justice, an employee of the French Embassy and a contact at the Addis Ababa University. To identify and access other government bodies who worked with charities and societies I relied on both civil servants as well as charities and societies I had interviewed. For the charities and societies, I used multiple referral chains, but access was comparatively easy. I identified organisations through reports in the newspapers and on the internet, through talking to colleagues at the Addis Ababa University and the French Centre of Ethiopian Studies. I also used an INGO and some of the international donors and their CSO support projects. Contrary to the trade union sector, in the case of the charities and societies, getting access to state affiliated CSOs was more difficult than to those that were more independent. Many were suspicious about my intentions and hence less willing to meet and discuss. Given the relative openness of the sector, I was less reliant on specific gatekeepers and facilitators than in the other two sectors.

For all sectors under study, I contacted relevant international donors working with the CSOs and international organisations that worked in the three thematic areas under study. Getting access to the international community was easy and many referred me further to national and international experts.

Interview Strategies

I had to adapt the strategy chosen for interviews over the course of the fieldwork, partly due to the changing political circumstances and because my research

questions developed, but also because the different actors I wanted to access required different types of interview techniques. While I am neither an anthropologist nor a sociologist by training, an ethnographic approach to data collection was most suitable to answer my research questions, as it allowed for observing civil society - state relations in real time and for uncovering how and why civil society and state organisations interacted in certain ways (Wacquant, 2003: 5). I combined semi-structured interviews with unstructured interviews, informal conversations, different types of observation and analysis of documents I collected during fieldwork. This allowed me to write the “thickest” possible description of civil society - state relations, moving from documenting the “what” (the type of relationship I was observing) to explaining the “how” (the details of the different interactions) and “why” (the factors driving/influencing the patterns of interaction).

For the scoping trip in autumn 2015, I developed guiding questions for the interviews, which I structured under broad categories (see Table 3). The main aim was to preliminarily document the existing relationships and links between the CSOs in the sectors under study and different state organisations. Further I was interested in testing the analytical framework, verifying the typology of interactions between the CSOs and the state and identifying strategies of CSOs to pursue their goals within the restricted political environment. Finally, I aimed at mapping out the agenda of the EPRDF government vis-à-vis the different types of civil society actors under study and document the tools used for regulating CSOs and framing their work. I formulated broad questions to capture initial answers to my questions, aiming at delimiting my research questions later in the process. I opted for creating formal interview settings for the first meeting with every interviewee, where I explained the research project, obtained their oral consent and used the guiding questions to collect the first information.

Table 3: Initial Categories of Questions for the Research Scoping

CSOs	History of the organisation, its structure, registration and finances
	Work and activities of the organisation
	Relationship to the state, interaction with state bodies and strategies adopted to reach organisational goals
Civil servants, EPRDF officials	History of civil society - state relations, definition of civil society and CSOs, state agenda for civil society
	State - civil society interactions, joined/cooperative work
	Strategies/regulations to manage CSOs
Donors/experts	Civil society - state relations in Ethiopia
	The impact of the Charities Proclamation and Chamber Proclamation on the civil society landscape
	International involvement in civil society in Ethiopia

As this initial fieldwork progressed I realized I was not obtaining the answers I was seeking. While I was able to establish dominant narratives of different actors, the EPRDF government, state-affiliated CSOs, more independent CSOs, donors and experts, it was difficult to clearly establish and explain different patterns of interactions. Initially, a lot of the data collected did not make sense. For example, I documented repression of CSOs that were working on relatively uncontested issues, such as education or health, while some CSOs working on politically sensitive topics could operate relatively freely, which led me to suspect that political connections and ethnicity played an important role for CSOs' ability to operate. While I was told that the EPRDF government had established control over CSOs, it was difficult to identify the exact mechanisms. Within the state apparatus some organisations seemed to possess particular power to regulate and reprimand CSOs and did so against the interests of other state bodies which worked with these CSOs. However, this power often did not map onto the official structure of the state apparatus, leading me again to suspect the influence of party structures on official politics. When the protests unfolded, none of the organisations I was studying joined the movements, leading me to question whether I was studying civil society or just state organised civil society organisations. For the CSOs under study, I documented co-optation, cooperation and different forms of co-existence, but could not find contestation that went beyond criticising government policies to a moderate degree or subversion of state power through silent resistance.

I continued semi-structured interviews with state officials and state affiliated CSOs and refined my interview questions to get more detailed answers to specific

puzzles. These interview partners preferred formal interview settings. Especially among staff in mid- and lower ranking positions, a concern was to provide me with potentially contentious information that could portray the EPRDF government in an unfavourable light. Hence many asked for meetings to be scheduled formally and copying in/informing their supervisors and interview questions to be submitted beforehand. The higher up in the EPRDF hierarchy, the less concerned people were about meeting me and answering my questions. In at least one of the state agencies I interviewed, the emails of the civil servants were checked by the agency's information and communication department, which was reading all emails sent, and notified the concerned person about the receipt of the emails.

In parallel to the semi-structured interviews I started in-depth unstructured interviews with more independent civil society actors and less aligned organisations, as well as with civil servants working at public universities. I focused on CSOs that in the past had experienced major conflicts with the EPRDF government, were still perceived as mostly independent, but had become silent over time. I captured the organisational histories and I included many people who had previously worked for these CSOs but had already left the organisation before my study. I started focusing on past conflicts between CSOs and the state, understanding that these moments had a large impact on the present interactions at play and were often also moments where direct control had been established. I also collected people's life histories related to their work in the organisations, documenting state and EPRDF control mechanisms from the perspective of the individual, recording threats, torture, imprisonment, bribery and shedding light on who and which organisations in the state were involved. Some civil servants, mainly from public universities, were willing in informal conversations to shed light on intra-party and intra-state politics. From the unstructured interviews, I got new questions for the semi-structured interviews. Also, findings in one organisation or sector gave me ideas for questions for other CSOs and other sectors. My research questions became more detailed and refined during my fieldwork, often rendering it necessary for me to go back to interview partners I had already met. In parallel to the interviews, I negotiated access to be able to work at the trade unions and chambers of commerce and observe meetings among

charities and societies, which allowed me to increasingly collect data through observations, to complement that collected through the interviews.

As our relationship progressed, many of the CSO representatives I met opted for more informal settings, and meetings continued in informal conversations past the initial and more formal interview. Emotional intelligence and openness became key for the project's success. Similar to the experience of other researchers, I noted that how I formulated my questions and when and where I asked sensitive questions was crucial (Sehgal, 2009: 365). To obtain sensitive information, I often had to share personal experiences and some of my findings as well. Mostly, this meant showing that I knew what Skidmore termed the "open secrets" (Skidmore, 2009: 321) - detailed information known to my wider group of interviewees - to prove my knowledge and trustworthiness. For the more independent CSO community, this could mean for example knowing which organisation had recently been attacked by the EPRDF government.

For a summary of dominant narratives of groups interviewed and examples of information provided, please refer to table four.

Table 4: Dominant Narratives Per Stakeholder Group

Type of Actor	Narrative	Type of Interaction described	Information on history of conflict provided	Mechanisms of control described
EPRDF Officials and Civil Servant (excluding employees of public Universities)	CSOs in Ethiopia are important to check and balance state power and they have an important function to fulfil within the developmental state programme. Membership-based CSOs are important for democracy promotion, NGOs should focus on socioeconomic development issues only. International influence on Ethiopian politics through CSO finance must be avoided to guarantee the country's autonomy.	Civil servants focused on cooperation and joint activities. They emphasized the independence of CSOs (negating co-optation) and stated that conflict between CSOs and government was not frequent. Even in cases where EPRDF documentation suggested infiltration of CSOs, e.g. in the case of mass associations, interviewees did not acknowledge the facts. Conflicts were often downplayed when I brought up specific examples. Focusing on examples regarding the oversight function of the state over CSOs could deliver clues with respect to conflict and co-optation.	There was little willingness to provide information on conflict with CSOs, especially on the unions and the chambers of commerce. Conflict was presented in terms of past events that were long solved. The current relationship was described as harmonious. Regarding charities/societies, internationally financed NGOs were blamed for being belligerent. "Rent-seekers" and "neo-liberalists" were terms used to describe the "foreign agents". The protestors in 2015/18 were labelled anti-peace elements, not civil society.	No information on control mechanisms was provided directly as co-optation was denied and independence of CSOs stressed. However, I could triangulate information obtained from CSOs if questions targeted specific mechanisms, e.g. the existence of a dedicated state or party oversight body for CSOs or intervention of state organisations in CSO internal activities. In more informal settings, outside of the office, and off-record, some state officials provided more critical reflection and evidence with respect to state control over CSOs. In contrast to the federal level, at the local level many state officials described CSOs as gap fillers working on behalf of the state.
EPRDF Organised Civil Society Organisations	The discourse of EPRDF affiliated CSOs mirrored the official government discourse: the government is very cooperative and listens to civil society organisations. CSOs are independent and not controlled. There is little conflict and the	Interviewees focused on cooperative and joint activities and emphasized the impact they had on policy making and how they influenced the EPRDF government. Interviewees listed the regular meetings with officials as proof of their influence and held that	There was little willingness to provide information about conflict. However, it was stated that CSOs criticised the government where policies were not good and that the government then (mostly) listened. Co-optation was generally denied, although some CSOs openly	Little information was provided and usually only by certain individuals in informal conversations. Focus was both on formal control mechanisms, laws and regulations and informal mechanisms such as disciplinary mechanisms to ensure alignment of employees with government policies.

Type of Actor	Narrative	Type of Interaction described	Information on history of conflict provided	Mechanisms of control described
	government tries its best to work together with CSOs. Sometimes interests can be conflicting, still the government is obliged to listen.	conflicts of interests between CSOs and the government were solved in these forums. Interviewees also stressed that the government supported them.	admitted their link to the EPRDF, still holding that they could and did question state policies.	However, as for civil servants, I could triangulate information obtained from other interviews, if questions targeted specific mechanisms.
(Relatively) Independent CSOs	The EPRDF government keeps civil society from functioning. There is no space for civic action and any independent action will be reprimanded. No open contestation is feasible. Close mechanisms of control have been established over key actors. Most CSOs have been co-opted and those that have not still cannot work.	They provided details about co-optation of EPRDF organised CSOs. Co-operation was presented as sole means of survival, as co-existence was difficult to establish because of the EPRDF government suspecting independent action. Contestation had to be reduced to criticising policies and should be neither too vocal, nor too public or outspoken.	Detailed information about past and ongoing conflicts was provided. Interviewees shared both their own experiences with such conflict, as well as described conflicts they had seen or heard about.	Information about control mechanisms that ensured CSO alignment with government policies was provided. This included formal as well as informal mechanisms. Detailed information on means of co-optation of government organised CSOs was also shared.
Donors and experts	The discourse of donors and experts mirrored the one of more independent CSOs: the Ethiopian government keeps civil society from functioning. There is no space for civic action and any independent action will be reprimanded. Close mechanisms of control have been established over key actors. Trade Unions and Chambers of Commerce are not civil society, only a few human rights NGOs still represent civil society in Ethiopia.	They provided information about whom they thought was co-opted. They emphasized that co-operation was the sole means to survival and denied any form of meaningful contestation of either policies or the polity as such.	Information about publicly known past and ongoing conflicts	Although the existence of government control over CSOs was emphasised, little information on actual mechanisms of control was provided.

My Amharic was not sufficiently good to conduct interviews by myself, although I could follow basic conversations. This was helpful for scheduling interviews, carrying out participant observations and on the few occasions I worked with translators. In Addis Ababa, I conducted most of my interviews in English. Although many of my informants felt their English was not sufficiently good, they understood and answered my questions³². At the trade unions, a few interviewees preferred that my research assistant was present for translation. Most of them understood my questions, but preferred not to speak English. Moreover, for them, the presence of my research assistant who worked at CETU conveyed the legitimacy of my research. Only few of the charities and societies interviewed in Addis had no English speaking staff, but where this was the case I brought my research assistant from the university. Although, I did not get the impression that conducting my research in English was a large obstacle to the success of the research project, I believe that my observations would have been richer had I conducted the interviews in Amharic.

During my fieldwork in more rural areas, I needed to work more with translators, both in CSOs and state organisations. I was able to organise translations through contacts at Addis Ababa University. I only once attempted carrying out a focus group in Amharic, because my translator for the day called in sick. I met a group of female members of a local CSO and wanted to talk to them about their work on trafficking of girls, a joint project with the local Bureau of Women and Children. I was not able to formulate the questions clearly and created a misunderstanding, which led to me being informed about traffic accidents, the absence of traffic signs and the need for more traffic policing, not trafficking of girls. I realised quickly the limits of my Amharic language skills and instead we spent the morning in the CSOs garden, discussing the vegetables the organisation was growing, a conversation I could master in Amharic.

³² In the chamber of commerce and charities and societies sector the level of English was much better than in the trade unions and state organisations. However, in the trade unions and chamber system there were interesting variations with those organisations closer to the EPRDF usually featuring less educated and qualified staff than those who were more independent.

Fieldwork Practices and Research Ethics

(C)overt Research?

My research was neither entirely overt nor primarily covert in nature. Like other scholars carrying out research on sensitive topics have noted, the degree of overtness or covertness was situational and depended on the interview partner and the specific setting (Sehgal, 2009: 336). I followed the official visa procedure for research, applying for research permission and a business visa, which the French Embassy in Addis Ababa facilitated. I assumed the position of the researcher in front of all my interview partners. My institutional partner in Addis Ababa advised me to choose neutral vocabulary and wording when preparing the description of my research project to be submitted to the Bureau of Immigration as part of my application for a residence permit.

The research support letter I got from the university only stated:

“PELLERIN, Camille is a French PhD Student at London School of Economics. She is affiliated to Addis Ababa University. We kindly request all concerned Ethiopian government institutions to support this student wherever she looks for data collection”.

Despite the vague phrasing, I was never asked for further clarification, but I needed the letter to get access to all state organisations and EPRDF affiliated CSOs I visited. I realised quickly that interviewees asking for the research support letter implicitly revealed their association to the EPRDF and that the function of the letter was not to inform about the content of my research, but to prove that I was officially allowed to collect data. More independent CSOs, experts and donors never asked me for the letter as they were less concerned about sharing contentious information. In discussion with other researchers I learned that those working on politically sensitive topics (e.g. land rights, resettlement programmes and ethnicity) also needed research support letters to access state offices. However, several researchers working on industrial policy or the developmental state more broadly, especially those whose visit was supported through high level EPRDF cadres, often did not need such documents, as they were referred through EPRDF channels.

Studying the relationship between the Ethiopian state and different types of civil society actors in the country, I often had to interview people who perceived each other to be in opposing camps. Although being an outsider had advantages, since I was not directly affiliated to pro- or anti-EPRDF camps, similar to observations made by other scholars working in politically tense environments, assuming the role of the “*scientifically detached observer*” (Fredriksson, 2009: 148) was not a feasible research strategy for my project (Huggins and Glebbeek, 2009b: 22f; Schwander-Sievers, 2009: 177f). Whether I wanted it or not, interviewees placed me according to what they thought were my political affiliations. Neutrality was not an accepted concept in the climate of political conflict, mistrust and fear.

It was important that interviewees did not associate me with their opponents in order for me to obtain the information necessary for my research. This meant adapting the framing of the project, presenting an acceptable and meaningful description while trying to be as concrete as possible about it. Thus, I used vocabulary and perspective that made sense for my interviewees depending upon whether I was with state representatives and EPRDF affiliated CSOs, more independent CSOs or international/national experts.

When I met state organisations and EPRDF affiliated CSOs, I framed my research in terms of the operationalisation of the EPRDF’s developmental state programme, asking about the role of CSOs in the implementation of developmental policies, the patterns of interactions they could identify and the achievements as well as problems with respect to state-CSO cooperation. Acknowledging the EPRDF’s developmental effort and refraining from asking direct questions about state control of CSOs, avoided putting interviewees in a defensive position and ensured collaboration. This allowed me to get the EPRDF’s perspective on the relationship between state and CSOs beyond the attempt of ensuring control. To reveal control mechanisms, I asked questions about specific party and state oversight bodies or the use of CSOs in terms of implementing state policies.

In the beginning of my research, many of my interviewees who worked for more independent CSOs or were experts in the field, informed me that my search for civil society was futile, as CSOs were extinct. I was told on several occasions that operational CSOs were EPRDF affiliated, “*civil society doesn’t exist in Ethiopia*” and

“the state controls all civil society”. I realised I had to show both more knowledge about the political situation to get relevant answers, as well as demonstrate more empathy for the cause of civil society activists. Hence, I started framing my research more clearly in terms of the study of (un)available spaces for civil society, political repression and resistance.

To avoid abstract discussion and allow for a deeper understanding of the three sectors, I also framed my research of civil society - state relations thematically for the different sectors under study. With the chambers of commerce, I approached my topic linked to the participation of business membership organisations in private sector development and their interactions with the state and EPRDF structures. For the trade unions, I presented my subject through the lens of labour relations, industrial conflicts, workers' rights and their relationship with the relevant state and EPRDF structures. In the charities and societies sector, I framed my research as a study of the 2009 charities proclamation and the impact on state - civil society relations.

Due to the tense political climate, during my interviews I had to prove my alliances to obtain the information I needed, which, as others have noted, meant not always being honest about my own opinion (Goldstein, 2009: 268). This did not involve direct deception, but could for example mean not questioning/criticising interviewees' positions or at least being careful when doing so. Proving alliances, often meant demonstrating understanding of the interviewees' positions, but could also mean criticising the opposite camp or showing my knowledge of secrets kept by a group of interviewees (without violating confidentiality). How people understood my role and the research project was important for their cooperation and I negotiated my field-identities on a continuous basis (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2009: 35; Subramaniam, 2009: 221).

My fieldwork identities were multi-layered and I had multiple - and at times, conflicting - actual and perceived roles in the field; part of them I chose, many of them my interviewees attributed. Concurring other findings, field identities, of me and my interviewees were constantly negotiated and changed also over the course of the project (Bickham Mendez, 2009: 84f; Sultana, 2007: 383). “Researcher” was the primary and unifying trait of all my many field personas. However, in two

successive interviews, I might be placed by my interviewees as being on the side of the EPRDF government in the first and then, on the side of an EPRDF critical civil society organisation in the second. Framing my research for different groups/interviewees to ensure their participation in the project posed obvious ethical questions, as it possibly limited their ability to provide informed consent. However, it also enabled me to get different perspectives on civil society - state relations, ensuring that the voices of many different groups were heard.

Anonymity, Confidentiality and Data Protection

The LSE provided me with a tailored one day training course on data security in October 2015, setting up safe data storing devices, a professional VPN and separate internet accounts for my research to avoid any cross contamination and data leaks. I stored no data on my laptop and cleared my browsing history at least once every day. Handwritten field notes and physical documents were stored in the offices of the French Centre for Ethiopian studies and were never out of my control, being brought back to the UK in my hand luggage at the end of each trip. When I felt that physical material could be too easily traced back to its source, I destroyed it. I developed codes to avoid writing down sensitive information in my interview notes and I never included names, contact details or other personal information. I did not record interviews, primarily because people did not feel comfortable and secondly because it would have posed additional questions for data protection. This meant that I had to transcribe my interviews every day, and usually directly after the interview to reconstruct the conversations from my notes. I numbered my interviewees and only one protected file linked numbers to names and interview transcriptions. During the state of emergency, I avoided places where other researchers had been searched, like the campus and the university library. Data and informant protection had to be ensured beyond the field, which in some instances impacted on how I could use and present specific pieces of information in my research. Where information was particularly sensitive and could potentially be traced back to one or very few persons, informant safety took precedence over absolute research transparency.

As with other scholars working in policed environments, I decided that written consent would have posed too big of a risk for informant anonymity and data

protection, as it would have provided written proof linking informants to my research project (Wood, 2006: 380). Instead, explaining the research project and the use of the data prior to the interviews, I opted for oral consent. Obtaining informed consent from my interviewees was not self-evident, as for many the concept of PhD research and international scientific publications was difficult to comprehend. While this was particularly true of low educated and illiterate interviewees, many of those with a university degree also found the concept of research and publications remained abstract. While the consent procedure was approved by the LSE, the adherence to research ethics guidelines was not sufficient to guarantee ethical research. Applying a “do-no-harm” approach not only during the fieldwork, but also in the writing up process, meant that I carefully had to make judgement calls regarding what information I could use without exposing my interviewees’ identities.

I let my interviewees decide where and when they wanted to meet, to choose settings and timings they considered safe. Many of them suggested their offices or cafes and hotels close to their offices, although some people felt that being seen with me by their colleagues and superiors could potentially have negative consequences. In a few cases, where I felt that it was too easy to overhear the conversation, I suggested changes to the venue for a second meeting. As also described by other researchers, “*hiding in the open*” (Skidmore, 2009: 319) – carrying out interviews in crowded public places – was an efficient way to reduce the risk of being identified and listened in on. Reaching absolute confidentiality was not always possible. When I carried out interviews at offices, colleagues and superiors knew whom I interviewed. In several instances, I was allocated “dedicated translators” in EPRDF affiliated CSOs, who followed me around and even sat in on interviews. In these cases, I kept the interviews short and focused on uncontentious and widely available facts to avoid putting my interview partners in potentially difficult positions.

Ethiopians and international residents and experts were often concerned about the EPRDF government intercepting electronic communication channels. Whether the EPRDF government monitored email and telephone conversations on a large scale was hard to judge, but the behaviour of my informants suggested the possibility. I therefore acted as if any digital conversation could be intercepted and made sure not to include any confidential information.

Beyond the data collection and storage, informant safety had to be guaranteed in the use and communication of the research outputs. My interviewees invested resources and some took personal risks to provide me with information, as they wanted the findings of my research to be communicated to a larger audience. I had a responsibility to disseminate the findings without violating confidentiality, which was not always easy as specific pieces of information, often very valuable ones, could only have been known and communicated by a limited number of people. Hence, I invested considerable time to decide on framing and phrasing of the findings and communicated with interviewees and other scholars where I was unsure. Comparable to findings of scholars working in restricted spaces, communicating back the findings from my research project was particularly important, as information was scarce and sharing of information hindered through (self)censorship, (Scheyvens and Leslie, 2000: 127). I tried to follow up with most civil society organisations I had interviewed, communicating findings verbally and answering their questions, without violating confidentiality. Although I did not exclude the EPRDF government as potential beneficiaries of the research, I did not feedback information which could be used to enhance control over CSOs or which could expose strategies adopted by CSOs to operate in the repressive environment.

Research Assistants

During the course of my fieldwork, I recruited two research assistants.

I recruited the first research assistant, an affiliated researcher at the Addis Ababa University, in November 2015. She was recommended to me by a friend and senior fellow at the University who had supervised her thesis and worked with her. She did research on women's organisations and gender questions in labour relations and I provided support to her thesis writing before she started on my research project. She helped me with locating and translating official government documents, as well getting contact details for interviewees. In two instances, she carried out interviews on my behalf. Thanks to her, I was able to map out the EPRDF discourse on civil society from the original party documents. We became close friends and in our many informal meetings she provided invaluable information and reflections with respect to my research, the political environment in the country and fieldwork logistics. While

I remunerated her financially for part of the time spent on translations, the money covered only a fraction of the work she did over the course of my research. Instead, I compensated for this by providing support for her academic and professional work.

My second research assistant was an employee of the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) and he recruited me, not vice versa. Initially, he was asked by his supervisor to support me with contact and data access at CETU and the federations. He was interested in my research and offered to assist me. He had worked with other researchers previously and advised me on how to approach my research topic and interviewees, to ensure the participation of trade unionists. His superiors knew about our collaboration but not the exact terms of it. My research assistant helped me with locating documents, setting up interviews and translating interviews where necessary. He also became an important informant and provided in depth reflection on the data we collected and important insights on the interactions that he observed between me and the interviewees. Over time we built a relationship of mutual trust and friendship and in exchange for his help, I supported him in his (successful) applications for research Master Programmes in Europe. Without him, I would probably not have been able to access information to the degree that I did and his reflections on my analysis and conclusions were invaluable for my research.

Although my second research assistant in some way functioned as a gatekeeper, neither of my assistants had a large influence on the interview sample. Although I discussed ideas of possible interview partners with both my assistants, apart from very few instances, neither of them directly suggested someone specific to meet. However, both helped me to establish contact with organisations that I had heard or read about and tried to access. Both also offered important reflections on my analysis and read parts of the dissertation, thus accompanying the research project from the beginning to its end.

Race, Class, Gender and Positionality in Interviews

As a white European researcher from the London School of Economics, I was in a privileged position compared to most of my interviewees, both male and female, elite and non-elite, which sometimes facilitated, and sometimes hampered, my research.

Being an outsider in a politically polarised environment meant that I could move between state and civil society actors without major problems, as people did not usually suspect me to act as a spy for the opposite camp. However, because of my outsider status people often did not trust my understanding of the political context and were hence reluctant to share politically sensitive information.

With respect to economic and political elites, my positioning as a privileged outsider often facilitated access. I could for example get documentation and schedule interviews that many of my Ethiopian colleagues at the Addis Ababa University reported they had difficulty to obtain. Elites often wanted to share their perspective on the country's political and economic environment and many treated me as a student of Ethiopian politics and economy with whom they shared their knowledge. As an outsider, I was seldom perceived as a threat, despite the political nature of my research, and was not taken seriously by most informants. Almost no one expected me to understand the politics of civil society - state relations or the hidden political tensions and ethnic cleavages and competition within the political regime and the society at large. I was able to ask political questions, which people usually assumed I asked because of ignorance, rather than genuine interest. On quite a few occasions people lied to me, assuming that I did not know the actual answer to my question.

Non-elites in civil society and the state often remained suspicious of me because of my visible "outsider" status. While many agreed to meet me, often they wrongly assumed that as a foreigner, I lived in hotels, had a driver and was not able to understand or relate to the lives of normal Ethiopians. They doubted my capacity to understand the country's politics, which made them reluctant to share sensitive information. Interestingly, to overcome the image of the clueless outsider, it was often already helpful for them to know that I lived in a flat-share with mostly Ethiopians in an Ethiopian neighbourhood and used public transport. However, in some instances, especially with civil society activists, I had to become what Monique Skidmore has termed an "*activist by proxy*". For people to trust me with their "*dangerous knowledge*"³³, I had to prove that I could share the burden of protecting

³³ I label pieces of information dangerous that could have a negative impact on the informant if they fell into the hands of a third party.

such pieces of information from the state. Until I was trusted, many of my interview partners withheld such knowledge (Skidmore, 2009: 321). Many tested my knowledge of Ethiopian politics, asking for answers to questions about the regime's ethnic foundations or about the history of conflicts between CSOs and the state before sharing sensitive information.

Despite purposefully including women in my research plan, most of my interviewees were men due to women's relative under-representation in public life, and this structured the interview relations. Like other female researchers, I experienced both advantages and disadvantages related to my sex and gender (Scheyvens and Leslie 2000, 124; Huggins and Glebbeek 2009, Li 2008). Eventually, however, I was able to build research strategies, using gender stereotypes to create field personas that allowed better and safer access to the field. For many of my male informants, being a woman made me appear approachable, although I was thought to be somewhat naïve. I was able to use the perceived naivety to obtain information on issues of a political nature that often, I was not able to ask about directly. My interview partners usually asked me about my upbringing, my family, my civil status and I reciprocated their questions, collecting information on their place of birth, their schooling and work, their family, their ethnicity, their different employments and their political connections. While this information is not cited directly in my thesis, it has informed the analysis, helping me to place interviewees beyond the function in which they were recruited and helping me to map power relations - ethnic, political and economic.

The fact that I was a white woman meant that I could to a larger degree than my Ethiopian counterparts enter "male dominated spaces" like politics and business, sit in on meetings and workshops and participate in discussions. My white identity was a more important characteristic in these instances than my gender identity. However, in contrast to my white and Ethiopian male colleagues, I had a privileged access to female spaces, both within the household and at workplaces, but also in terms of women's associations and workshops/meetings of female entrepreneurs and scholars. In these cases, my gender was more important than my race. While my race made me a visible outsider, my "insider-outsider" status was not static and changed between encounters as well as over time. While I remained a "*farenj*" (a foreigner),

especially as relationships with friends, interviewees and neighbours evolved, race was often not the most important characteristic when it came to my positionality. I realised that Ethiopians often defined my “insiderness” not necessarily by my race, but things we had in common - educational background, knowledge, experiences, gender and attitudes.

Risks

Before every fieldtrip, I submitted a risk assessment form, which was signed by me, my supervisor, the head of department and the LSE’s Health and Safety Department. While the LSE risk assessment captured some risks well, and offered an adequate format to deal with them, I discovered that several risks fell outside of the school’s risk assessment and mitigation framework. Also, what made sense from a UK perspective, sometimes was not the best advice in Ethiopia. Moreover, given budget restraints and the nature of my research, it was neither feasible, nor advisable to live in international housing, to employ a driver or to avoid risks at all costs. The success of my research project relied on my ability to bridge the gap between me and my informants as much as possible, to go beyond the perspective of an outsider, to study the grey-zones of Ethiopian politics and civil society - state relations. Hence, instead of generic risk mitigation, strategies had to be tailored specifically to my research project and the context of the field work. For example, while possibly more prone to traffic accidents, from a personal safety point of view, it was much safer to travel by minibus where I was surrounded by many people, than to take a taxi whose driver I did not know. Living in an Ethiopian neighbourhood, even though I lived without guards, generator or water tank, meant I was better informed about the political situation during the state of emergency than most foreigners and was able to make informed choices about travel and work. Moreover, I was well looked after. For example, a cab driver friend called me several times when he saw the federal police setting up road controls in Addis and, to ensure I got home safely, arranged to meet me.

Although some risks could be identified objectively and mitigated, the perception and mitigation of risks in the field was partly subjective. The evaluation of risks and strategies to adopt had to involve my interview partners and was thus a dynamic

process, as has been noted by others (Demovic, 2009: 97; Huggins and Glebbeek, 2009b: 3). Carrying out research in a climate of increasing political violence influenced the perception of risk of both my informants and myself (Sanford, 2009: 137; Skidmore, 2009: 304). Contrary to that of many of my informants, my personal security did not decrease proportionate to the worsening of the political situation, as I did not fall into any target category for either the EPRDF government or the protestors. The lack of reliable information on the actual development of the political situation in Ethiopia made “*field diplomacy*” (Schwander-Sievers, 2009: 173f) - the creation of trusted networks and safe-spaces - a crucial tool to mitigate risks. I relied heavily on my interview partners and Ethiopian friends and flatmates to identify and mitigate risks.

Some risks for my interviewees emerged due to the content of the research project. Our discussions had the potential to bring up difficult or even traumatic memories, inflicting emotional pain on the interviewees. Many of those who worked or had worked in more independent CSOs, had experienced negative personal consequences because of their work. People’s experiences ranged from torture to threats of denying public services and blocking career development. Although it did not happen frequently, some informants experienced strong emotional reactions when talking about their experiences with state repression. In these cases, I tried to stop the interviews, but some people wanted to talk about their experiences. Many people who decided to share their personal stories wanted their voices to be heard, but I left it up to my informants to decide what they wanted to share and also what information was or was not to be shared publicly.

The public protests led to rapidly decreasing political stability and on the 2017 Fragile State Index published by the Fund for Peace, Ethiopia ranked 15th out of 178 countries, classified in the category “high alert”, together with countries such as Zimbabwe, Haiti and Chad (Fund for Peace, 2017). A large increase in public protests was noted, as well as a growing number of conflict related fatalities, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP)³⁴ and the Armed Conflict Location & Event

³⁴ <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/exploratory> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

Data Project (ACLED)³⁵. A US researcher was killed in the protests south of Addis in 2016. However, her death was an accident, as the protesters were targeting the vehicle in which she was travelling and not her directly (Whitcomb, 2016).

While posing challenges for the research, the political situation also had its advantages. For example, it uncovered the weaknesses of the EPRDF and the Ethiopian state, and revealed factions within them, thus questioning their monolithic character. The conflict made alliances and divisions between civil society and state actors more visible and with the increasing erosion of central state power and the growing cracks in the ruling coalition, interviewees became more open to talk about politics and civil society - state relations in Ethiopia.

The repression of civic activism by the EPRDF government that I witnessed first-hand during my research, influenced my personal perception of state - civil society relations in Ethiopia. To avoid bias and ensure that I captured the perspectives of state and state aligned CSOs and more independent CSOs, I practised “*reflexive introspection*” (Huggins and Glebbeek, 2009b: 370f) and continuously questioned my impartiality. To contextualise the findings, I aimed at including the largest number possible of perspectives on the topic. While this allowed me to practise what Fredriksson (2009: 169) termed “*dispassionate and rigorous science*”, already the choice of the research topic, that reflected progressive social and political values, questioned the neutrality of the research project. Given that the stated objectivity of much social science work has been called into question and its political nature exposed (Fredriksson, 2009: 165; Sanford, 2009: 137; Subramaniam, 2009: 203), rather than claiming detachment, I opted for creating full transparency in the research practice and analysis of my data, to allow the informed reader to judge the research.

Conclusion

As detailed in this chapter, reflexivity was a key to practice scientific and ethically sound research. Reflexivity helped me analyse the impact of my own research persona on the research process and outcomes and it allowed me to contextualise

³⁵ <https://www.acleddata.com/tag/ethiopia/> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

my findings and interpret them in relation to the existing political, economic and social power relationships. Given the research topic and context, assuming the “detached observer” position was not an option, as I had to get close and earn the trust of my interviewees to collect the data needed for my analysis. However, I did not become an activist, nor did I abandon the scientific approach during my fieldwork and, to avoid partiality, I made a large effort to listen to all possible voices on my topic. While introducing reflexivity led me to abandon the search for absolute objectivity, acknowledging the importance of my research persona ensured greater transparency in the research process and outcomes. Through reflexivity I was able to gain objective distance in the analysis of my data, taking into account the impact of myself and my methodological and ethical choices on the data collection process.

The chosen research design and ethnographic approach to data collection allowed me to answer my research question. Using thick description (Gerring, 2012), I moved from documenting the type of relationship I was observing between state and civil society organisations, to explaining the details of the different interactions and to identifying the factors driving/influencing the patterns of interaction and reflecting on how they affected regime stability (Katz, 2001; Mahoney and Goertz, 2006). The small-N design I chose was well suited to produce internally valid theories, but the representativeness of the findings was limited, even for out-of-sample organisations in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, given that the research design and methodology, as well as the analytical framework build on existing empirical and theoretical work, they provide valuable contributions to research on civil society - state relations in authoritarian settings and can inform methodological and analytical approaches for similar studies on other cases.

Chapter 4: State and Society under the (Un-)‘Democratic Developmental State’ Model

Introduction

Addis Ababa, 27th of May 2016 [Ginbot 19 2008]

A participant from Somali in a workshop on federalism raises his hand - Ethiopia is like the United Nations.

Moderator - Yes? Why?

Participant – “Kilil and” [Region One, Tigray] is the United states. They control everything and everyone. They can choose who governs other countries and how other heads of states should manage their internal political affairs. “Kilil and” dictates the world order, they decide how things are done. “Kilil hulet” [Region Two, Affar] is like Colombia. There is no rule of law. People disappear and get killed. Anarchy rules and no one really wants to travel there. “Kilil sost” [Region Three, Amhara] is France. The French don’t like the United States, but they don’t openly contest its rule. They forge alliances with Africa and Latin America in the form of French speaking, but they follow the global directives. They would like to be bigger, but they know that they are not the US. “Kilil arat” [Region Four, Oromia] is China. China is big. It has a big population and resources. China is rising, it wants influence and it wants to get where the United States are, but they are not there yet. China is known for bold moves and is closely watched by the US. “Kilil amst” [Region Five, Somali] is like North Korea. The United States are unsure how to handle it. After all, North Korea may have nuclear weapons. Its rulers don’t act like politicians but terrorists. Sometimes the US go with the military, sometimes they try to negotiate. Harari is like Taiwan, squeezed between China and North Korea but with extremely strong ties to the United States. They wheel their power through connection to “Kilil and”. Whenever China threatens them, they call for the US. Deboub [the South] is like the Soviet Union. So many nations and nationalities and many who are not happy to live with each other. The United States don’t really know what to do with it. Too many different ethnicities and systems of government. The South is large and chaotic, it doesn’t fit the United States’ system of governance. Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz are Africa. The United States talk about capacity building and support, but Africa has no influence and no one is really interested in it. Africa is poor, underdeveloped.

This chapter reviews the literature on state and society in Ethiopia under the EPRDF regime, and addresses the following questions: What are the political foundations of the EPRDF regime? What are the key features of the contemporary Ethiopian state? How are modern-day society-state relations structured in Ethiopia? And, how has the developmental state model (pursued by the EPRDF) influenced the country's socioeconomic and political development? In addressing these questions, this chapter sets the foundational background for the subsequent analysis of civil society - state relations in Ethiopia and reflects on the nature of the state, its autonomous power from society (both in terms of infrastructural and despotic power) and its relationships to other spheres in society (the market, the family and civil society).

Scholarship on state and society in Ethiopia under the EPRDF regime is not unified. Recent literature often either studied the EPRDF's development model, the self-proclaimed "democratic developmental state", focusing on the country's structural transformation over the past two decades (Arkebe, 2015; Brautigam et al., 2016; Hauge, 2017; Mulu, 2013), or explored the political nature of the EPRDF regime, revealing its increasingly undemocratic character (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009b; Abbink and Hagmann, 2016; Pausewang et al., 2002). While the former drew attention to the country's impressive achievements with respect to socioeconomic development and growth, the latter shed light on the mechanisms of state control over society and the authoritarian traits of the EPRDF regime. The former often did not sufficiently unpack the politics of the operationalisation of the developmental state, failing to study effects produced by the regime's ethnic bias and party politics, while the latter did not take the EPRDF's commitment to development seriously enough, sometimes dismissing the developmental state narrative as a pretext for authoritarian rule (Lefort, 2013; de Waal, 2013b, 2013a).

A slowly growing body of research focused on the political realities produced by the aspiring Ethiopian developmental state and shed light on its double objective - promoting economic development and ensuring regime survival (Di Nunzio, 2015; Smit et al., 2017). Evidence indicated that the twin objectives were sometimes mutually exclusive, as the focus on control and increased use of despotic power

reduced the EPRDF's infrastructural power necessary to implement its developmental programme within society (Kassahun and Colin, 2014; Planel, 2014). The literature also suggested, that the fragility of the EPRDF's political settlement led to a focus on control, at times at the expense of developmental objectives (Emmenegger, 2016; Lefort, 2013).

While this thesis is centred around the exploration of state - civil society relations, it reflects on the interplay between the EPRDF's economic development model and its relation to different civil society organisations. As the EPRDF has presented its understanding and handling of civil society organisations studied for this PhD as part of its developmental state project, this has invited reflections on the theory and practices of the developmental state in this specific subject area.

The State under the EPRDF rule

The Political Settlement

After the overthrow of emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 by a popular movement that brought together students, teachers, workers and eventually even the armed forces (Lefort, 1981: 81ff; Markakis, 2011: 164f), the Derg³⁶, a military dictatorship, took over power. Due to its unwillingness to transition to civilian rule, its failure to respond to claims of the country's different nationalities³⁷ (ethnic groups) for self-rule, and the terror it unleashed on (suspected) regime opponents, the Derg encountered opposition from the beginning of its rule (Lefort, 1981: 104ff; Young, 2006: 16). After sixteen years of armed struggle, the Derg was ousted in 1991 by a coalition of ethnic-based regional insurgent movements, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

³⁶ Derg means "council" in Amharic. While initially the military councils jointly ruled Ethiopia, Mengistu Hailemariam led the Derg regime from 1978 onwards.

³⁷ Adhering to Stalin's terminology (Markakis, 2011: 234f), rather than referring to Ethiopia's different groups as "ethnicities", they have been called "nations, nationalities and people" (Proclamation No. 1, 1995: Preamble). Nearly following Stalin's definition in verbatim (Stalin, 1953: 307), the 1995 constitution defined a "Nation, Nationality or People" [...] (as) a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory" (Proclamation No. 1, 1995: Art. 39.5).

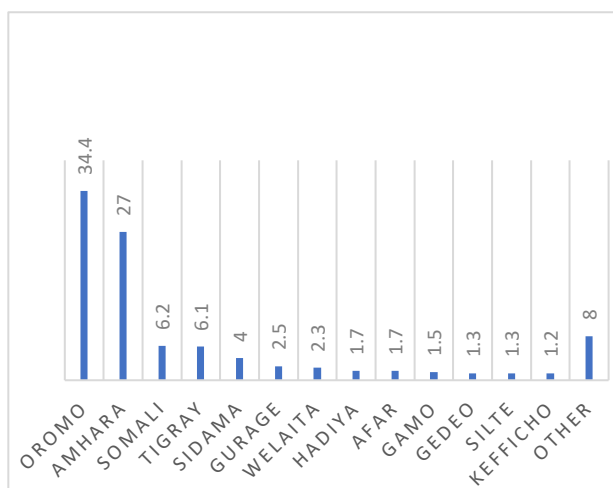


Figure 3: Ethnic Distribution in Ethiopian Society

Source: CIA World Fact Book January 2018³⁸

Before the EPRDF came into power in 1991, political rule and economic resources in Ethiopia had been monopolised by Shewa Amhara for centuries³⁹. Over time this inequality between the country's different ethnic groups created grievances⁴⁰ and already, during the time of Haile Selassie, armed movements in Tigray, Bale and Gojjam contested centralised state rule and Amhara domination (Aregawi, 2009: 4). Later on, the politicisation of ethnicity and the call for the liberation of oppressed ethnicities became an efficient tool for mobilisation during the struggle against the Derg (Aregawi, 2009: 24). However, the principle of organisation of liberation movements, transnational (multi-ethnic) or national (ethnic-based), was not uncontested. Instead, it became a bone of contention between the numerous and diverse opposition movements that fought the Derg, leading to fighting between them (Aregawi, 2009: 40; Markakis, 2011: 189). Consequently, the struggle against the Derg also involved a fight over the design of the new political settlement, that

³⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

³⁹ During the Ethiopian Empire, Shewa Amhara controlled large parts of the country's political and economic resources and even during the Derg regime many elites were of Amhara origin. Autonomous rights were granted to five regions under the Derg constitution, however decentralisation was never implemented. The Derg also established the Institute for Ethiopian Nationalities that provided the first anthropological study of ethnic groups and led to the establishment of a classification (Nations, Nationalities and Peoples) that has been used since (Abbink, 2015).

⁴⁰ For a distribution of ethnic groups in Ethiopian society see Figure 3.

was won by the TPLF/EPRDF advocating for ethnic-federalism and devolution of powers rather than a pan-Ethiopian solution under centralised state rule.

The TPLF was founded in 1975 by Tigrayan students, who launched an armed opposition against the Derg in the name of the national liberation of Tigray from Amhara rule. The TPLF was inspired by Marxist political thought (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 389), but it adopted what Aregawi called a “*hybrid ideology*”, in which ethnicity not class became the main organising principle (Aregawi, 2009: 5). The TPLF’s call for “solving the national question”, guaranteeing equality and the right to self-rule to the country’s different ethnic groups, was grounded in Stalin’s writings (Stalin, 1953: 300ff). However, Stalin had cautioned that a focus on nationality over class -

“[...] favours the destruction of the unity of the labour movement, fosters the segregation of the workers according to nationality and intensifies friction among them” (Stalin, 1953: 343f). For Stalin (1953: 381), “[...] the principle of international solidarity of the workers is an essential element in the solution of the national question”.

Nevertheless, the TPLF rejected the idea of “transnational” (multi-ethnic organisation), both during the armed struggle and later during the institutionalisation of the EPRDF regime (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 394). The reason for the TPLF’s position was grounded in two practical needs: first, it was necessary to address existing grievances among the country’s numerous ethnic groups that had emerged due to the Amhara domination. Second, centralised state rule under Tigrayan leadership was impracticable, as Tigrayans constituted a small ethnic minority (see Figure 3) and hence guaranteeing the right to self-rule to the country’s different ethnic groups was seen as the better option.

Following Leninist traditions, the TPLF constructed itself as a vanguard party representing peasants. Its military success lay in its ability to mobilise the peasantry in Tigray for the revolutionary struggle (Markakis, 2011: 248), using a mixture of persuasion, political indoctrination and direct and indirect coercion (Aregawi, 2009: 226ff). It built administrations in the liberated territories effectively merging structures of the state and the front, and while peasants formally administered themselves through *baitos* (local councils), the TPLF controlled those. (Aregawi, 2009: 250ff; Tadesse and Young, 2003: 396). In 1989, the TPLF took over power in Tigray,

having defeated the Derg forces and competing liberation movements, e.g. the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)⁴¹ (Aregawi, 2009: 225; Markakis, 2011: 190). To expand its reach beyond Tigray and liberate the other parts of the country from the Derg rule, the TPLF called for other ethnic-based liberation groups, e.g. the OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) in Oromia and the ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front) in the Somali region, to join the struggle under the TPLF's lead. However existing groups did not want to subordinate themselves to the TPLF and questioned both the TPLF's intention to, and mandate for, liberating Ethiopia's other ethnic groups (Markakis, 2011: 192f).

Due to the lack of allies, the TPLF supported the founding of coalition partners. A splinter group from the EPRP in Amhara regional state established the EPDM (Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement) with the support of the TPLF, and together they formed the EPRDF (Aregawi, 2009: 187ff; Young, 1996: 535). Progressively liberating Ethiopia from the Derg, the EPRDF used Derg soldiers captured during the war to found PDOs (People's Democratic Organisations), following the principle of regional ethnic representation. Those prisoners of war who were willing to join the EPRDF received training in the nationalities question, formation of political parties and mobilisation of the citizenry in EPRDF political schools and were sent back to their homelands to set up the new administrations (Markakis, 2011: 193; Milkias, 2003). For example, the OPDO (Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organisation) was formed by former Derg soldiers of Oromo origin in 1991 (Markakis, 2011: 193) and 14 different factions established by former Derg soldiers in the South became merged in the SEPDM (Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement) in 1992 (Markakis, 2011: 245). The OPDO and SEPDM⁴² joined the TPLF and ANDM (former EPDM⁴³), turning the EPRDF into a coalition of

⁴¹ Both the EDU and the EPRDF promoted a pan-Ethiopian agenda, however while the first one was an association of conservative forces advocating for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, the second one adhered to communist ideas and promoted the founding of a democratic republic.

⁴² In contrast to the EPRDF's other members the SEPDM represented an ethnically heterogeneous region.

⁴³ The EPDM was the precursor of the ANDM (Amhara National Democratic Movement). While active in the Amhara region and constituted of ethnic Amhara, the EPDM officially pursued a pan-Ethiopian agenda. It changed its name in 1994 when it transitioned from an aspiring pan-Ethiopian movement to a party representing the interests of ethnic Amhara, on the demand of the TPLF.

four member parties representing the country's central regions. While formally independent, the PDOs in the country's other five regions were de-facto satellite parties of the ruling coalition (Clapham, 2009: 185; Yeshtila et al., 2016: 8). Through its setup, the EPRDF incorporated the political settlement it advocated country wide, indicating a close link between the design of coalition and state structures.

To staff the new administrations, the PDOs targeted rural elites - primary school teachers, nurses, health and agricultural extension workers. The higher educated urban elites, e.g. lawyers, secondary school teachers, businessmen etc., were not included in the recruitment on EPRDF orders, who held that *"the upper stratum of the intelligentsia is vacillator and could align itself with enemy forces. Members of this sector do not stand for the rights of the people"* (EPRDF document on the revolutionary democratic goals and the next steps from June 1996, cited in Markakis (2011: 233)). Former Amhara elites in regional and local administrations were replaced by natives from the regions and although many of the new leaders were young and inexperienced, they were loyal to the EPRDF (Aalen and Muriaas, 2017: Chapter 4). While rural elites bought into the concept of ethnic federalism, as it redressed the monopolisation of economic and political power by ethnic Amharas, many representatives of the urban elite favoured the concept of pan-Ethiopianism. Most major cities in Ethiopia were multi-ethnic in character, partly because the state administration and military had been dominated by Amharic speaking highlanders, but also because businessmen and merchants from all over the country had settled in urban areas (Milkessa, 2015, 2017: 280). While the urban elites contested the idea of an ethnic-based political settlement and portrayed ethno-nationalism as backwards and dangerous for political unity, the EPRDF questioned the concept of pan-Ethiopianism and civic-nationalism on the grounds of historical Amhara domination (Yeshtila et al., 2016: 7f).

The Ethiopian constitution from 1995 fixed the federal state structure and created nine regions based on ethnic criteria⁴⁴ (Proclamation No. 1, 1995: Art. 45-48). All regions were in reality multi-ethnic in composition, even if most featured one

⁴⁴ The design of the federal state preceded the adoption of the new constitution (Markakis, 2011: 234ff). The exercise was carried out in a hasty manner and lacked a solid empirical base.

ethnic majority (Berouk, 2017: 169). Linking ethnicity to claims for defined territories created conflicts, and, according to Markakis (2011: 234ff), 550 out of 660 established woredas had minorities inhabiting them. The constitution guaranteed extensive rights to the regional states, including the right to secession (Art. 39) and the right of any Nation, Nationalities and Peoples to form their own state (Art. 47.2). All member states according to the constitution had equal rights and powers, but the political practice suggested otherwise. First, local government officials, even if chiefly natives from the regions, were actually representatives of the TPLF/EPRDF rather than the people. Moreover, at the federal level Amhara remained dominant, occupying over half of the government posts, as the choice of Amharic as the official state language guaranteed them preferential access to federal state organisations (see Table 5). Compared to the actual percentage living in Ethiopia (see Figure 3), Oromo were especially under-represented in federal state organisations (Milkessa, 2015, 2017). Tigrayans controlled key positions in the EPRDF and the state apparatus⁴⁵ (Aregawi, 2009: 303) and most importantly, they monopolised state organs representing the despotic power of the state, e.g. the military, the police and the security (van Veen, 2016).

⁴⁵ During my fieldwork, I regularly observed that Tigrayans controlled decision-making both in state organisations and civil society organisations affiliated to the EPRDF. An interviewee explained that Tigrayans held the power in state organisations, irrespective of their actual role in the state - *"There is always a Tigrayan pulling the strings. They hold the power even if their official position suggests otherwise. This is because the TPLF holds more power than all the other coalition partners"* (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018). Moreover, Tigrayans were overrepresented in communications departments in the public offices (Interviewee Nr. 31, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 45, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 148, 2018). These positions involved the interface with the national and foreign public, effectively controlling the official political discourse and information. I learned that a reform of the government communication structure in 2009 centralised public relations under the newly established Communication Affairs Bureau (CAB). Public relations officers were trained for other ministries and state offices, but worked for the CAB to *"connect the dots"* and centralise communication (Yamamoto, 2009a).

Table 5: Federal Government Permanent Employees by Ethnic Group (in %) ⁴⁶

Ethnic groups	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008
Amhara	52.65	54.44	46.85	50.15	50.29
Oromo	17.9	18.88	17.42	17.75	18.3
Tigrayan	7.52	6.43	6.69	8.7	7.79
Gurage	4.75	4.56	4.21	4.26	4.27
Wolaita	1.02	1.15	1.3	1.37	1.45
Sidama	0.38	0.36	0.39	0.39	0.41
Somali	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.09	0.12
Not stated	11.73	9.95	19.22	13.52	13.05
Others	3.96	4.07	3.83	3.77	4.33

Source: (Milkessa, 2015: 20)

A clear problem of the EPRDF was the weak political legitimacy of the youngest EPRDF members and other PDOs, as they lacked a political base and were perceived as puppets of the TPLF (Clapham, 2009: 185; Young, 1996: 539). Liberation movements from the Derg era, e.g. the OLF and ONLF, denounced the monopolisation of political power in the hands of the TPLF/EPRDF and remobilised on several occasions, engaging in armed fighting with the EPRDF regime (Markakis, 2011: 244). While the TPLF indeed dominated the EPRDF, this did not prevent conflict within the EPRDF from emerging, nor did it hinder coalition partners from pushing for a more equitable distribution of power within the EPRDF (Milkias, 2003: 26ff). On several occasions, the TPLF had to initiate changes in the coalition partners' and the PDOs' leadership to prevent them from becoming independent, ensure loyalty and discard opposition (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 389ff). While TPLF involvement was necessary to ensure its dominance, such interventions further foreclosed the ability of EPRDF member parties and PDOs to be perceived as legitimate political leaders by the population, inevitably weakening the EPRDF regime. Ethnic federalism did not result in local representation and self-rule, as the EPRDF only recognised and cooperated with PDOs it controlled. Any attempt at local representation outside of the EPRDF-sanctioned structures was countered with violence, indicating the fragility of the political settlement and the EPRDF itself (Clapham, 2009: 187f).

⁴⁶ For the years 2003, 2004 and 2008, the cumulative percentages add up to 100.03, 99.98 and 100.01 percent respectively likely due to rounding errors and for 2005 no data was available.

Ethiopia has a history of a strong central state, dating back to the time of the empire under Haile Selassie, a tradition which the EPRDF inherited when it came to power in 1991 (Bach, 2011: 653; de Waal, 2013b: 150). Similar to the rule of its predecessors (Aregawi, 2009: 252), the EPRDF progressively took over state structures, merging the state and the ruling coalition (Arriola and Lyons, 2016; Lefort, 2013: 461; van Veen, 2016). The term “*mengist*”, that translates into state, government or party, reflects the blurring of the distinction between the three concepts in Ethiopian politics (Vaughan, 2011: 624), and rendered the differentiation of their empirical manifestations challenging. However, disaggregation in the analysis remained important, as both the state and the EPRDF were heterogeneous organisations - the former containing organisations with different mandates/objectives and the latter uniting four different parties with at times diverging interests. There existed different agendas within the EPRDF and the state, and EPRDF priorities did not simply map on priorities of different state organisations, even if the latter were staffed with EPRDF cadres⁴⁸.

The TPLF had a strong influence on the EPRDF’s and its members’ organisational and ideological orientation (Aregawi, 2009: 187f), and under the TPLF’s lead, the EPRDF also embraced the Leninist concept of the “vanguard party”. The EPRDF understood its mandate, as ruling on behalf of the masses to implement revolutionary politics necessary to free Ethiopia’s different ethnic groups from previous repression and promote social and economic transformation (Aregawi, 2009: 308). Instead of liberal democracy, the EPRDF claimed to adopt the concept of “revolutionary democracy”, in which the EPRDF as the vanguard monopolised political decision-making (Aregawi, 2009: 190f). An interviewee explained “*The problem with the EPRDF is the vanguard aspect of the government. They think they know better*” (Interviewee Nr. 85, 2016). Decision-making in the EPRDF followed the Leninist principle of democratic centralism and consensus was forged through discussion by the vanguard. Similar to experiences of other regimes following Leninist

⁴⁷ *Mengist* means state, government or party in Amharic.

⁴⁸ See chapters 5-7.

prescriptions (Szajkowski, 1981), once a decision had been taken by the EPRDF central committee, it had to be executed and factionalism was not permitted (Aregawi, 2009: 252f; Milkias, 2003: 13). Until a TPLF internal conflict in 2001, leadership both in the TPLF and the EPRDF was a collegiate affair. However, collegial leadership was abandoned and the centre of power moved to the office of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi after the resolution of the conflict (Markakis, 2011: 245; Tadesse and Young, 2003: 392).

To enforce democratic centralism, regular evaluation of EPRDF cadres, and later the whole civil service, was undertaken on the basis of “*gimgema*”, a tool adapted from the Maoist principle of “criticism and self-criticism”. Initially *gimgema* was used by the TPLF during the armed struggle to evaluate fighters, peasants and party members (Berouk, 2017: 178). However, later on it helped to monitor the activity of cadres and civil servants, by forcing them to admit their mistakes publicly and identify and remove those who did not behave in line with EPRDF priorities (Asnake, 2011: 157; Vaughan, 2011: 628). *Gimgema* was said to ensure the detection of corruption and underperformance of cadres and civil servants, however there existed evidence that it was also used to eliminate critical voices rather than just evaluating performance (Milkias, 2003: 20).

From 1991, the EPRDF controlled political office at all levels, either through its member parties (TPLF, ANDM, OPDO, SEPDM) or satellite parties (the regional PDOs) (Abbink, 2017a: 304). Although the EPRDF held key positions in state organisations, party membership was not a requirement for entering the civil service. The establishment of a comprehensive civil service reform programme in 2001 and the launching of BPR (Business Process Reengineering) to improve state institutions, testified to the EPRDF’s commitment to build an efficient bureaucratic apparatus. Apart from training civil servants and updating legislative and bureaucratic procedures, it also included the introduction of modern management techniques and digital technology. While implemented large-scale at the federal level, the degree to which the programme reached lower administrative levels has been questioned (Brautigam et al., 2016: 160; Mulu, 2013: 21). Moreover, there existed some indications that the civil service reform also had a political component and was used to discard cadres that had proven too critical (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 391f).

The push for a technocratic civil service somewhat declined after the 2005 elections⁴⁹, as party membership in the EPRDF member parties became a quasi-requirement for employment in the public sector. Bureaucrats had become increasingly critical of the EPRDF because of the primacy that the ruling coalition was giving to structures of party over state, and politicians over technocrats (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 402). Moreover, the EPRDF wanted to address the defection of civil servants that had joined the post-election protests in 2005 or supported them indirectly through passive endorsement. Former civil servants referred to the party recruitment in the civil service as “cadrization” and recounted the pressure that was exercised to coerce them to join the EPRDF⁵⁰. Some evidence indicated that the BPR processes in the civil service were used for party recruitment after 2005, questioning their technocratic character (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018). Only very few people managed to circumvent party membership, but those who did remained in technical positions (Fana, 2014: 70f). An interviewee stated that *“If you are not ambitious, you can work in the civil service without being in the party”* (Interviewee Nr. 17, 2016), meaning that as a technocrat without membership in EPRDF member parties, individuals were excluded from promotion and unable to reach positions with decision-making power. Recruitment to the EPRDF member parties through EPRDF affiliated mass based societies (women, youth, disabled etc.), also contributed to a dramatic increase in the EPRDF’s membership base⁵¹ (Arriola and Lyons, 2016).

Although the EPRDF officially established a process for recruiting and training new leaders that favoured skills development (EPRDF, 2009; Meles, 2007), in practice the promotion structures in the coalition and the civil service often favoured party

⁴⁹ The 2005 elections were the freest elections to take place under the EPRDF regime. The ruling coalition was sure about its political stronghold and opened the political space around the 2005 national elections. Opposition parties campaigned relatively unhindered and many CSOs engaged in voters’ education and election monitoring. However, the EPRDF closed the political space soon after the elections and even increased its control, as it lost many seats in the federal parliament and almost all in the Addis Ababa City Council, testifying to its lack of popularity especially among the urban constituency (Abbink, 2006; Smith, 2007).

⁵⁰ An interviewee explained that – *“In 2005 the government realised that not only did it not control the civic space, but also it didn’t control the civil service. Civil servants didn’t show up to work. This was when the process of cadrization began. In our Ministry, a new minister was appointed and mandated with the EPRDFisation or “cadrization”. We were told join the party or leave the ministry. We were pressured more and more. In the end we were told on a daily basis”* (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2015a).

⁵¹ According to the 2013 EPRDF Congress Report, the membership reached 6.16 million (EPRDF, 2013a: 14).

loyalty over technocratic competence. A study conducted by the Federal Policy Study and Research Centre, a state organisation, found that recruitment and appointment of leadership was not primarily based on qualification and merit but loyalty and political connections (PSRC, 2017). Research on agricultural extension programmes in Ethiopia discovered that “political allegiance and loyalty” were criteria considered in the recruitment process, resulting in several cases of underqualified people filling important positions in the state (Kassahun and Colin, 2014: 206; Planel, 2014: 426). In the state apparatus, bureaucrats were controlled by party officials (Dejen, 2015: 483), and rank in the EPRDF, not position in the state, defined people’s decision-making power⁵². Especially at the local level, the fusion of EPRDF and state structures was evident, as local EPRDF structures were often headed by the same people that populated the local state administration. Hence, it became impossible for citizens to distinguish between state and EPRDF structure and studies revealed that even for the local state/EPRDF officials their mandates were not perceived as distinct (Emmenegger, 2016: 278f; Emmenegger et al., 2011: 742). The primacy of EPRDF structures over state structures was ultimately expressed through the fact that the executive was accountable to the EPRDF, not the parliament (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 396).

Evidence indicated that the fusion of state and EPRDF structures and the extension of the EPRDF into the market, civil society and the family posed problems on numerous levels. It resulted in reduced perception of legitimacy in the eyes of many citizens, who criticised the corruption, favouritism and authoritarianism which resulted from this (PSRC, 2017). Obligatory recruitment into the EPRDF member parties among civil servants and exchange of party membership for services meant that party membership did not necessarily translate into ideological support, but in many cases did signify self-interest (Lefort, 2013: 467). Several party members used

⁵² According to an interviewee *“There are two kinds of public officers Technocrats: they are interested in a dialogue and listen, and appreciate the information but they have very little say in political decisions. Those who are in power because they have participated in the armed struggle and those who call the shots, they echo the party line and do not really communicate”* (Interviewee Nr. 16, 2015). Another interviewee remembered an instance where an adviser to a Minister controlled his political boss – *“I am not sure why the minister’s hands were tied. There was a legal adviser at that time. He was an embassy. He tried to please his political bosses. He didn’t read or analyse, he was just against it”* (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016).

their position to accumulate economic and political resources (Emmenegger et al., 2011: 745). Despite its strict hierarchical structure, the fact that it prioritised loyalty to the regime, meant that the EPRDF lost some of its ability to discipline those using party structures to their own benefit and to fill positions in the state with the most qualified personnel⁵³. The EPRDF formally admitted that there existed a vast “good governance” problem in the ruling coalition and that corruption remained a problem despite two rounds of “Renewal Movements” - trainings to instil discipline and EPRDF ideology to reform the civil service⁵⁴ (EPRDF, 2013a; PSRC, 2017). Corruption perception indices revealed that although corruption in Ethiopia was below the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) average, the problem was growing⁵⁵ (Lefort, 2013: 467). Regular news reports on corruption scandals supported the perception of Ethiopian citizens that their government was corrupt (Samuel, 2017).

The Ethiopian Democratic Developmental State Model

From the early 2000s and onwards, the EPRDF pursued the self-proclaimed “democratic developmental state model”. Based on the Asian developmental state experience, the EPRDF emulated development strategies used by these states and adjusted them to the Ethiopian context. The late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was the architect, and his writings analysed commonalities and differences between the original Asian model and the Ethiopian model. According to Meles, as was the case in Asia, *“The motive and source of legitimacy of developmental states is the single-minded pursuit of accelerated development”* (Meles, 2011: 169). However, he also noted that *“In Africa, the external circumstances are such that a developmentalist state will also have to be a democratic one”* (Meles, 2006), contrary to the Asian experience. While scholars found that Ethiopia was one of the clearest examples of

⁵³ An interviewee explained, *“For Meles most important factor for getting an appointment in the civil service was loyalty, not competence of people. He said competence you can learn. Now the civil service is filled with loyal but incompetent people. This is difficult for the current Prime Minister”* (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016).

⁵⁴ An interviewee, after having missed the first scheduled meeting, explained the following upon our encounter. *“You know, yesterday I had to go and meet a public servant. They are all in trainings you know. The deep renewal. It’s all about good governance and anti-corruption. I had to meet him at the training and he came out to see me. I had to pay him for my land certification. Can you imagine? He took the money and went back to his training* (Fieldnotes, 2016b).”

⁵⁵ <https://www.transparency.org/country/ETH> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

an aspiring developmental state in Africa, there was a large consensus that like its Asian role models it was based on authoritarian, not democratic, politics (Clapham, 2018: 1151ff; Fesseha Mulu and Abtewold, 2017: 24f). Similar to the developmental states in Asia, the EPRDF focused on promoting industrialisation through state led development and a high degree of state intervention in the country's economy (Hauge, 2017: 21f; de Waal, 2013b: 152; Weis, 2016: 21). The ruling coalition adopted five-year development plans (MoFED, 2002, 2006, 2010; NPC, 2016) and state organisations at all administrative levels were given individual targets to contribute towards the achievement of the country's development programme (Abbink, 2017a: 306).

The design and operationalisation of the Ethiopian developmental state coincided with a split in the TPLF in 2001, that was among others due to a disagreement about the military strategy in the Ethio-Eritrean war (Weis, 2016: 220ff). To counter accusations from his adversaries in the party that held that Meles denied the seriousness of the threat that Eritrea posed, Meles argued that the main security threat Ethiopia was facing was not external (Eritrea), but internal (underdevelopment). Consequently, accelerated economic growth was presented as a priority for national security and EPRDF documents stated for example that *“Rapid development is therefore not merely an economic necessity but also a matter of national security and indeed, survival”* (EPRDF, 6th Congress, 2006: 2). Military terms were integrated into the EPRDF's developmental state discourse, such as the “development armies” (*lemat serawit*), the “anti-poverty struggle” (*tsere-dehenet tegel*) and the “development patriots” (*ye lemat arbegna*) (Fana, 2014: 70). According to Segers et al. (2009: 101), the EPRDF tapped into the collective memory of the armed struggle against the Derg and the vocabulary used to mobilise peasants, arguing that *“today's struggle for development, [...] is equivalent to yesterday's struggle for liberation”*.

The operationalisation of the Ethiopian developmental state project was tightly linked to the EPRDF, whose centralised power structures provided the frame for its implementation in the absence of a strong and professionalised bureaucracy (Weis, 2016: 87ff). As the self-proclaimed vanguard, the EPRDF focused on the mobilisation of the population behind the project. However, many citizens felt that the

developmental state project did not equally benefit the population and favoured Tigrayans, especially their political and economic elites (Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 147, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 157, 2015; Lefort, 2016). The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), i.e. the Prime Minister and senior policy advisers, was in charge both of the project's design and implementation. The setup of specialised agencies and training institutes to promote industrialisation and agricultural transformation, as well as the reorganisation of ministries to create for example a separate Ministry of Industry, indicated the EPRDF's commitment to operationalising development policies. The PMO coordinated the work of diverse state organisations to realise the country's development strategy plans and the party structure was used to communicate decisions down to local state levels and ensure their implementation (Brautigam et al., 2016: 160; de Waal, 2013a; Weis, 2016: 252). However, the fact that the developmental state was led by a small intellectual elite, mainly constituted of TPLF cadres, posed problems for rendering the developmental state discourse hegemonic in the EPRDF and for the project's perceived legitimacy.

The EPRDF's commitment to the developmental ideology and its capacity to design sound industrial policies and development programmes have repeatedly been cited as reasons for optimism. Data confirmed that the country's GDP growth rates were positive at around 10% and sustained for over a decade, meaning that Ethiopia outperformed other LDCs (Least Developed Countries) in terms of growth. Although the GDP per capita in Ethiopia remained below the LDC average, its growth rates have been higher than the LDC-average for the past decade, indicating that the EPRDF's commitment to accelerated development showed positive results (see Table 6). Although the share of manufacturing in the GDP remained below the LDC-average (5.6% in Ethiopia compared to 12.8% LDC average), annual growth in the sector was consistently higher amounting to 18.4% in 2016 compared to the LDC-average of 8.3%. Services surpassed agriculture in terms of contributions to the GDP (39.55% compared to 36.06% in 2016) and the share of industry in the GDP grew from 9.66% in 2011 to 22.10% in 2016, indicating a change in the structure of the economy. However, construction, not manufacturing, accounted for the large majority of the growth in industrial sector (68.5 % during the GDP I period), mainly thanks to the EPRDF's flagship projects such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)

(Mesfin et al., 2018: 3; Wakiaga and Haile, 2017: 15). Despite the EPRDF's promotion of light manufacturing in Ethiopia, the share of textiles and clothing in manufacturing stagnated at around 10% without sign of significant growth. Due to low export performance and large imports of manufacturing inputs and capital goods, the external trade deficit posed foreign exchange problems (Geiger and Moller, 2015; The World Bank, 2017). Although data testified to the partial success of the EPRDF developmental state programme, structural transformation of the economy remained slow and the developmental performance remained mixed (UNECA, 2016: 102f). For more details on disaggregated figures of economic growth as well as other socio-economic development indicators, see table 6 and Annex II.

Table 6: Data on Economic Growth and Development in Ethiopia⁵⁶

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP Growth in Ethiopia and Other LDCs												
GDP growth at factor costs in Ethiopia (annual %)		11.5	11.8	11.2	10.0	10.6	11.4	8.7	9.8	10.3	10.4	8.0
GDP growth at factor costs in LDCs (annual %)		8.4	9.5	7.5	4.8	5.9	4.2	5.6	5.9	5.4	3.8	3.6
GDP per capita growth in Ethiopia (annual %)				7.88	5.96	9.62	8.28	5.83	7.73	7.45	7.62	4.90
GDP per capita growth LDCs (annual %)				4.96	2.39	3.46	1.74	3.12	3.39	2.94	1.34	1.20
GDP per capita in Ethiopia in current USD				325.38	379.76	341.31	354.85	468.51	502.15	571.16	645.47	712.88
GDP per capita in LDCs in current USD				705.75	703.2	779.38	871.92	904.20	958.90	1011.21	970.42	949.24
Growth of Manufacturing Sector in Ethiopia and other LDCs												
Manufacturing value added in Ethiopia (% of GDP)				4.1	3.9	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.4	5.6
Manufacturing value added in LDCs (% of GDP)				10.9	11.2	10.9	11.1	11.6	11.5	11.5	11.9	12.8
Manufacturing value added in Ethiopia (annual % growth)				9.3	8.6	9.2	9.2	11.8	16.9	16.6	18.2	18.4

⁵⁶ The Data presented in the table below was compiled using the following sources (last accessed 13.12.2018):

World Development Indicators, downloaded from <https://knoema.com/WBWDI2018Jul/world-development-indicators-wdi> and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

Human Development Indicators, downloaded from <http://hdr.undp.org/>

Open Data for Africa, downloaded from <http://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/>

Manufacturing value added LDCs (annual % growth)				6.1	5.2	10.1	8.1	7.4	8.0	7.5	7.9	8.3
Desegregated Data on Growth in Ethiopia												
Industry value added annual percentage growth⁵⁷	9.43	10.16	9.52	10.13	9.67	10.82	15.01	19.64	24.10	17.04	19.85	20.56
Industry, value added (% of GDP)	11.79	11.60	11.59	10.21	9.68	9.44	9.66	9.48	10.94	13.47	16.30	22.10
Share of construction in real GDP growth⁵⁸							14.94	19.19	14.56	21.15	26.25	32.11
Services value added annual % growth	12.32	12.84	15.76	16.4	14.68	16.74	13.00	9.91	9.05	12.87	11.11	8.59
Services, value added (% of GDP)	39.14	38.57	39.11	37.90	38.77	41.76	41.43	38.58	39.67	39.89	39.55	36.48
Agriculture value added annual % growth	13.54	10.91	9.45	7.50	6.36	5.13	9.01	4.92	7.10	5.45	6.38	2.33
Agriculture value added as % of GDP	41.17	42.52	42.27	45.18	45.88	41.45	41.25	44.33	41.24	38.52	36.06	34.84
Food, beverage and tobacco % value added in manufacturing	48.4	46.6	41.2	46	45.4	46.4	59.5	35.2	38.1	36.6		
Chemicals % value added in manufacturing	5.2	4.4	4.9	5.8	8	8.1	8.9	8.5	11	10.6		
Industry % value added in manufacturing	12.8	12.5	12.5	10.9	10.3	10.2	10.5	10.3	11.9	14.7	17.7	21.3
Machinery and transport equipment % value added in manufacturing	1.1	2.4	4.7	1.9	1.4	2.8	1.5	2.9	5.7	5.5		

⁵⁷ During the GDP I period, construction accounted for 68.5 % of the growth in the industrial sector and 17.7% in the overall GDP growth (Wakiaga and Haile, 2017: 15).

⁵⁸ Adapted from Mesfin et al.(2018: 3).

Textiles and clothing % value added in manufacturing	10	8.8	9.2	7.4	8	10.3	10.7	8.4	10.4	10		
Data on Imports and Exports in Ethiopia												
Exports of goods and services as % of GDP							16.7	13.8	12.5	11.6	9.4	7.9
Imports of goods and services as % of GDP							31.5	31.6	29.0	29.1	30.3	27.6
Agricultural raw materials exports (% of merchandise exports)	15.3	17.3	20.4	14.1	11.9	9.0	8.6	8.0	15.9	16.3	18.9	1.8
Manufactures exports (% of merchandise exports)	4.6	5.4	13.8	9.0	8.7	8.9	10.4	8.8	8.6	6.8	7.3	12.5
Food exports (% of merchandise exports)	78.7	76.5	62.1	75.3	77.5	78.5	78.4	80.3	66.9	74.0	71.7	83.8
Current account balance in %	-12.64	-11.69	-4.20	-6.67	-6.75	-1.42	-2.45	-6.89	-6.29	-10.30	-11.65	-11.33

According to the EPRDF, the developmental coalition in charge of operationalising the developmental state consisted of the different wings - the party wing (*derjetawi kinf*), the government wing (*ye mengist kinf*) and the people's wing (*ye hizib kinf*). The party wing, as suggested by its name, grouped EPRDF members together, whereas the government wing was composed of all civil servants and organised them by state organisation for which they worked. The people's wing grouped different types of associations together, but mass-based and professional associations constituted the majority of its members. The wings were supposed to participate in the operationalisation of the developmental state and to disseminate the developmental ideology among the larger population of the country. Together the wings acted as social control mechanisms of the population and increased the state's infrastructural power by reinforcing the state's penetration of society down to the household level (Yeshtila et al., 2016: 9). The three wings overlapped, as nearly every individual in these wings was a party member and several were active in two or even all three wings.

Society under the EPRDF rule

Every-day encounters with the Ethiopian State

Recent studies of state-society relations in Ethiopia found that the EPRDF managed to penetrate much deeper into society than its predecessors, enabling it to mobilise the population for the implementation of its development programmes (Emmenegger, 2016; Planel, 2014). The state became more present in people's lives, both as a physical structure, through local state offices and their staff, and a political reality, through the increased interaction with and penetration by the local state (Aalen and Muriaas, 2017: Chapter 4). While the extension of the state apparatus was used for developmental purposes, it also effected a recentralisation of power in the hands of the EPRDF. Local structures were key for operationalising the EPRDF's agricultural transformation policies, but decentralisation measures also became tools for ensuring regime survival, co-opting citizens into the state and preventing opposition from emerging.

When the EPRDF came to power, it designed a federal structure consisting of five levels, the federal state, regional states, zonal/provincial administrations, *woreda*/district administrations and *kebeles*/neighbourhood or peasant associations⁵⁹. While the *woreda* level was officially in charge of provision of public services to citizens, the *kebele* carried out the everyday administration. The *kebele* administration consisted of a legislative (council), executive (cabinet) and judiciary (social court) and was staffed with elected local peasants. The cabinet members, representatives of the EPRDF, oversaw the work of local civil servants (teachers, health workers etc.), meaning that often low educated political representatives controlled more technocratic state employees (Emmenegger et al., 2011: 737f; Lefort, 2010: 443). The *kebele* was among others in charge of collecting local taxes, distributing land, issuing ID-cards and holding official registers about the population in its administration. Each *kebele* had its own militia, court and prison and it was in charge of distributing state-subsidised food items, food aid and resources under the food for work programme (Markakis, 2011: 247). Together, these functions provided the *kebele* with significant power over citizens.

More decentralisation reforms were conducted later. The district level decentralisation programme in 2001 promoted devolution in favour of the *woreda* administrations. The last round of decentralisation was conducted around 2005⁶⁰ and targeted the *kebele*, introducing sub-*kebele* organisations and bringing the state even closer to the citizens (Aalen and Muriaas, 2017: Chapter 4). While the naming and setup of the sub-*kebele* structures differed slightly between and even within different regions in Ethiopia⁶¹ (Emmenegger, 2016: 270; Yeshtila et al., 2016: 9f), essentially they constituted structures to organise households into development teams (“development armies”) in order to mobilise resources for the developmental state

⁵⁹ The EPRDF inherited the *kebele* structure from the Derg regime (Harbeson, 2005: 147), but it was reformed over time to break the state down into even smaller administrative units.

⁶⁰ There exists some doubt regarding the exact dating of the process. While some scholars found that the process started before the 2005 political crisis and was sped up as a result of it (Emmenegger, 2016: 269), others understood it as a result of the 2005 political crisis and an attempt of the EPRDF to strengthen its control in rural areas (Aalen and Muriaas, 2017: Chapter 4).

⁶¹ The imposition of the sub-*kebele* structures was also meant to undermine traditional local governance structures, like the *Gada* system in Oromia, and was modelled on existing structures from Tigray (Schaefer, 2011: 206).

project (see Table 7). Organised in “*garee misoma*” (development teams), citizens provided manual labour, e.g. for building roads or other forms of infrastructure (Emmenegger et al., 2011: 739f). A third decentralisation reform consisted in the increase of seats on the local *kebele* councils in 2008. In the name of “good governance” and “participatory democracy” it was used to staff the councils with party members and model farmers⁶², as no opposition party was able to present sufficient candidates to control the councils (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009a: 116).

Table 7: Local Government Structures in Ethiopia

Kebele	Gote	Garee ⁶³	Cell (one to five)	Household
Kebeles were local peasant associations grouping five to seven Gote	Gotes were sub-kebele units grouping ten development units	Garees were development units composed of six cells, led by a garee committee and organised garee misoma (development teams) for community labour	Cells grouped five households led by one party member, they were used to disseminate EPRDF party messages and collect information on citizens	Members of one family

Source: (Emmenegger, 2016: 270; Yeshtila et al., 2016: 10)

In parallel to the official decentralisation and devolution, the EPRDF established mechanisms to recentralise power and ensure that federal policies were implemented at the local level. After the 2005 political crisis, salaried *kebele* managers appointed by the *woredas*, were put in charge of the secretarial tasks of the local administration. The *kebele* managers participated in all meetings of the *kebele* councils and cabinets, but they also promoted the local development groups (*gotes*), prepared the *kebele* plans setting development targets and signed reports addressed to the *woreda* administration. De facto, the appointment of *kebele* managers meant that the EPRDF directly controlled the peasant associations, ensuring that party orders were heeded (Emmenegger et al., 2011: 738; Lefort, 2010:

⁶² Model farmers were nominated by the government on the basis of their adoption of the agricultural extension programmes (Emmenegger et al., 2011: 737). They held party cards and were used to lead farmers in their development groups (Segers et al., 2009: 106).

⁶³ Actual number of households and individuals grouped in the cells, *gotes* and *garees* differed between *kebeles*, depending on their actual number of inhabitants and its topography (Emmenegger, 2016: 269; Yeshtila et al., 2016: 10).

446f). Power was recentralised, as representatives of the federal state had more decision-making power than local state representatives (Lavers, 2016: 1092). The development agents⁶⁴ (DAs), officials under the Ministry of Agriculture, who were sent to the *kebeles* to implement the EPRDF's agricultural extension packages, were another example of the domination of the federal state over local state organisations (Kassahun and Colin, 2014; Planel, 2014). Development agents were often tasked with the management of the sub-kebele (development) groups (Markakis, 2011: 247). As the developmental state required strong and centralised state structures, there was an inherent contradiction between the state design - defined in the constitution (federalism) - and the precondition for a successful developmental state (Fana, 2014: 72; Lefort, 2013: 463). Evidence indicated that federalism was sacrificed to advance a more centralised state system, dominated and controlled by the EPRDF, to facilitate the implementation of the EPRDF's development programme (Smit et al., 2017: 231).

The penetration of society in the name of developmentalism had many authoritarian traits, like the *and-ena-amst* (one-to-five) system that grouped five households led by one party member. Its leader regularly called for meetings to ensure compliance with EPRDF directives and to collect information on potential political dissidents (Interviewee Nr. 4, 2016). Such practices/structures bore many resemblances with other Marxist/Leninist inspired systems, e.g. ex-Yugoslavia (Dyker and Vejvoda, 2014; Szajkowski, 1981) and China (Howell, 2016), and following the idea of the vanguard party, the EPRDF focused on mobilisation not participation⁶⁵. Membership in the *sub-kebele* structures was obligatory and non-involvement was punished with withdrawal of public services, fines and brief periods of imprisonment in some cases. Studies found that local security officers were involved in the

⁶⁴ DAs were chosen by woredas and sent for biannual postings – however many stayed for shorter periods of time. Many did not speak the local language and the idea was that their external positioning avoided potential influence from the local population (Planel, 2014: 424). This was an indication that the EPRDF was well aware of the dualist character of infrastructural power, understanding that increased exposure of state officials to society ensured policy implementation but also increased the influence of society over the state.

⁶⁵ For the purpose of this research, I define mobilisation as the process of persuading people to support a cause or programme. This can be done by force or be based on voluntary commitment. Mobilisation, in contrast to genuine participation does not allow for influencing the cause or programme and is limited to mobilising resources (human, financial or political) to achieve it.

mobilisation of people in the development teams, increasing the threat of punishment in case of non-compliance. The use of actual violence was rare, but the presence of security officers posed a constant threat that was enough to enforce compliance. People refusing to participate in public works programmes were often labelled as anti-developmental and anti-government and accused of supporting armed opposition groups (Di Nunzio, 2014: 420f; Emmenegger, 2016: 271f; Planel, 2014: 426ff).

Since citizens depended on services provided by the state, some feared that contestation could lead to withdrawal of public services (Abbink, 2017a: 305). Nevertheless, several scholars reported that, in interviews, citizens criticised forced mobilisation for community development, even if they did not revert to open contestation. Participation in the “developmental armies” and public endorsement of EPRDF policies could not be equated with approval, especially since citizens sometimes secretly resisted state power. Examples of such resistance included complying with some but not all EPRDF directives, subverting power structures and using the proximity to state officials to exercise influence over them, secretly voting for the opposition and in some cases even hiding from the state (Di Nunzio, 2014; Emmenegger, 2016; Emmenegger et al., 2011; Hagberg et al., 2010; Lefort, 2013; Planel, 2014). Hidden contestation was used to avoid repression by the state, making it necessary to distinguish between what Scott (1990) terms public transcript⁶⁶ – compliance with EPRDF directives – and hidden transcript⁶⁷ – subversion of power structures and hidden non-compliance. According to Lefort (2013: 464) “*resigned acceptance*” rather than “*active endorsement*” characterised the support to the EPRDF rule.

Studies found that several interventions in the name of the developmental state failed to promote development and in some cases even had adverse effects (Dereje, 2011a; Planel, 2014; Smit et al., 2017). The twin targets of interventions in the name of the developmental state, economic growth and political control, were not always

⁶⁶ According to Scott public transcript describes “[...] *the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate. The public transcript, where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations*” (Scott, 1990: 2).

⁶⁷ According to Scott, “*Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a “hidden transcript” that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant*” (Scott, 1990: xii).

compatible, and at times, the establishment of political control mechanisms prevented the emergence of flexible and more demand driven initiatives for development (Kassahun and Colin, 2014: 209). The allocation of state resources in a political manner - to reward allies and discipline dissidents – decreased the possible developmental impact of EPRDF policies (Segers et al., 2008: 178f, 2009: 100). Land certificates were for example exchanged against party membership, favouring loyalty over developmental impact (Chinigò and Fantini, 2015: 182f). Moreover, as mentioned above, recruitment to the civil service was often driven by party politics rather than primarily qualification, which also affected the operationalisation of policies (Kassahun and Colin, 2014; PSRC, 2017). To fulfil their personal development targets, local civil servants were in several cases found to force development packages on the population, e.g. fertiliser and seed packages in rural areas, irrespective of the packages' suitability in specific local conditions. Moreover, given the EPRDF's practice of democratic centralism, there existed little possibility for civil servants to question centrally designed development interventions, instead they had incentives to over-report achievements to receive promotions, rendering it nearly impossible to follow up on actual progress attained (Emmenegger, 2016; Planel, 2014; Smit et al., 2017).

The expansion of the state apparatus down to the *kebele* level increased the state's infrastructural power, improving its capacity to mobilise the population behind the EPRDF's developmental project. However, as many of the developmental interventions were enforced through threat of the use of despotic power and by representatives of despotic power (local security officers) in the *sub-kebele* structures, this counteracted the expansion of infrastructural power. Moreover, while it averted large-scale contestation, it also increased grievances among the population that felt pressured into participating in the "developmental armies". Despite impressive growth rates sustained over the previous decade (Hauge, 2017), the EPRDF failed to translate developmental achievements into legitimacy (Emmenegger, 2016: 264; Lefort, 2013: 463).

The country's development plans and the EPRDF documents suggested that the ruling coalition had clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the private sector in the developmental state project (EPRDF, 2013a: 64ff; NPC, 2016: 18ff). According to the EPRDF, and in line with the experience of Asian developmental states:

“One of the defining characteristics of a developmental state is that it must be autonomous from the private sector. It must have the ability and will to reward and punish the private sector actors depending on whether their activities are developmental or rent seeking⁶⁸” (Meles, 2006).

Consequently, the EPRDF invested in the promotion of manufacturing, establishing specialised agencies delivering training programmes and credits to manufacturers and passing policies to limit the export of raw materials, to promote production of manufactured products (Brautigam et al., 2016: 166f; Mulu, 2013: 29ff). Despite such visible commitment, studies concluded that the private sector in Ethiopia remained underdeveloped, posing limits to the operationalisation of the EPRDF's developmental state project. Instead of enabling and guiding the private sector, the EPRDF was in many cases found to focus on control rather than mobilisation, reducing the effectiveness of its policies (Clapham, 2018; Lefort, 2013). While constituting an under-researched area, it seemed that party and ethnic politics often guided the EPRDF's approach to the private sector and reduced the ruling coalition's capacity to choose and support competitive private sector actors (Mulu, 2013: 25; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 28f).

As noted earlier, the EPRDF built its political settlement on an integration of rural elites and exclusion of urban elites, including the existing business class. In the 2000 and 2005 national elections, the business class in urban areas challenged the EPRDF regime, supporting opposition parties that represented more free market policies instead of the EPRDF's state led development model (Clapham, 2018: 1159f; Weis, 2016: 260f). The EPRDF often labelled established private sector businesses as “rent-

⁶⁸ The term “rent seekers” has been employed by the EPRDF to describe anti-developmental political and economic activities, instead of following technical definitions of the term. Accusations of “rent-seeking” have been used to get rid of regime critics in the state, the EPRDF, civil society and the private sector.

seeking” and “unproductive”⁶⁹. The reasons were twofold, first the EPRDF wanted to discredit regime critics and secondly, the existing private sector was dominated by trade and services, not manufacturing. Many businessmen were traders specialising in import and export, and became the EPRDF’s prime target, due to their “un-developmental” activities (Interviewee Nr. 39, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016). But even those working in manufacturing, a sector clearly prioritised in the developmental state project, were attacked in case they were perceived as too independent by the EPRDF regime (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016a). Studies found that the EPRDF’s negative attitude to the local private sector, especially traders, posed problems (Brautigam et al., 2016: 167), and that “*erratic regulations alleging to curb the ‘rent-seeking’ and discipline the ‘rouge’ private sector*” (Mulu, 2013: 21) actually worsened the investment climate. In 2018, Ethiopia’s “Doing Business Ranking” was still below the sub-Saharan average and had actually declined over the previous years. Successful investment still depended very much on personal contacts rather than primarily qualification and sound business plans (World Bank Group, 2018).

To prevent opposition to its policies among businessmen, the EPRDF focused on creating a party aligned private sector. According to Weis, the fight against corruption in the early 2000s was among others used to get rid of powerful regime critics in the private sector and establish state dominance in key sectors, e.g. in the sugar industry, fertiliser sector and banking. Strong private businesses were targeted under false allegations of corruption and/or malpractice (Weis, 2016: 245ff). While officially privatisation of public companies was pushed, there existed qualified doubts regarding the nature of the privatisation that was found in many cases to prioritise EPRDF affiliated investors (Berhanu and Vogel, 2009; Young, 1996: 539). Many denationalised companies were bought by endowment funds owned by the EPRDF’s coalition members, particularly EFFORT held by the TPLF (Markakis, 2011: 263). An EPRDF document from 1993 cited by Markakis (2011: 256) stated:

⁶⁹ According to an interviewee, “*Today all those working in the service sector are seen as rent seekers. Only the producers are seen as good. In the end everyone becomes a rent seeker*” (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016).

“Key industrial and agricultural enterprises could still be controlled by the state, while other important sectors could be taken over by various revolutionary democratic associations, organisations and individuals who can be involved in investment”.

Moreover, studies also found, that the EPRDF-supported creation of small and micro-enterprises in the manufacturing sector, favoured loyalty to the ruling coalition among business owners. Most of the successful medium-sized and big businesses were closely linked to the EPRDF and state owned enterprises, party endowment funds and party-affiliated businesses dominated the market (Berhanu, 2013; Lefort, 2013; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011; Weis, 2014). The private sector’s party loyalty was fostered through the creation of business dependence on public services, e.g. in terms of capital and other resources and licensing and legal matters (Altenburg, 2010: 10). Business membership organisations that represented the old economic elite were co-opted, forcefully restructured or closed, denying the business community independent representation (Weis, 2016: 261). The EPRDF’s fear of an independent private sector meant that in several cases it chose loyalty over performance and lacked the capacity to discipline party-affiliated businessmen. Corruption scandals in party owned endowment companies and party-affiliated enterprises testified to this (Kebour, 2017; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011), questioning the EPRDF discourse accusing the private sector of rent seeking and leading Lefort (2013: 467) to conclude, “[...] *today one of the most promising tracks to becoming a rent seeker is to join the party and climb the ladder within it*”.

It is important to note that among the EPRDF cadres some attempted to push a more technocratic approach to the operationalisation of the developmental state programme. In the TPLF for example, a split emerged between technocrats in Addis assembled around Arkebe Oqubay and the old guard in Mekele. Some attempts were made to decouple party politics and private sector development and to push more strategically for FDI, such as the reform of the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) in 2016. Thanks to its direct link to the PMO, the EIC was able to bypass traditional EPRDF and state decision-making structures. The employment of, at least officially, non-party cadres as deputy commissioners of the EIC and the hire of highly-educated graduates instead of cadres, indicated a focus on technocratic decision-making. However, the EIC reported problems in its interactions with other state organisations,

e.g. the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Trade, which did not appreciate the power acquired by technocrats at the commission. Moreover, staff at the EIC also reported that it struggled with the party and ethnic politics in the private sector among Ethiopian investors. While some Ethiopian investors accused the EIC of favouring party-affiliated investors, the commission also received many applications specifically referring to investors' political affiliation and contacts, as well as their ethnic origin, as investors believed that, as it did in most cases, this would help to receive permits and credits (Interviewee Nr. 153, 2018).

While the focus on FDI in the manufacturing sector made sense from the point of view of developmental state policies, it also testified to the fact that the EPRDF had an ambiguous relationship to the domestic private sector. International businesses were perceived as less threatening for regime survival, as FDI companies were unlikely to challenge the EPRDF's internal policies as the independent Ethiopian business community had done in the early 2000s (Clapham, 2018: 1159f). The PMO was involved in recruiting international investors, testifying to the importance given to FDI in the Ethiopian developmental state strategy. International investors held that the investment conditions in Ethiopia were lucrative due to various tax exemptions and trade schemes although infrastructural issues posed problems for production and transport (Fieldnotes, 2016c). Ethiopia's industrial parks attracted foreign investors from Asia, Europe and North America. Despite a significant growth in number, local manufacturers, unlike FDI firms, were struggling to produce competitive products. Despite continuous state support, performance remained significantly below targets, posing limits to the country's industrial take-off (Mulu, 2013). While contributing to the country's economic growth, large-scale FDI projects sometimes led to resettlement and displacement of the population (Dessalegn, 2014) and FDI firms were targeted in the 2016 riots, as the local population denounced these practices.

The Role of Civil Society Organisations in the EPRDF's Developmental State Project

The EPRDF regime encountered several major conflicts with civil society actors that involved both disagreements with the EPRDF's economic policies as well as its political practices. The first civil society organisations to challenge the EPRDF's regime

and its economic policies were the trade unions in the 1990s, protesting against the application of structural adjustment packages due to their detrimental impact on public sector workers (Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). The second major conflict involved the EPRDF government and the chambers of commerce and other business associations in the early 2000s, because the latter criticised the EPRDF's state led development programme and its undemocratic political practices, demanding both political and economic liberalisation (Weis, 2016: 260). The last major conflict with organised civil society arose around the 2005 national elections, during which NGOs, think tanks and some professional associations engaged in voters' education, election monitoring and some functioned as platforms for opposition parties. Pushing for regime change and democratic transition, civil society organisations threatened the EPRDF rule (Yitayehu, 2010: 206ff). While slightly differing in approaches, the EPRDF reacted to challenges from organised civil society in a similar manner: organisations were temporarily closed, their licenses were cancelled, their bank accounts blocked and their leaders imprisoned or sent into exile. In some cases, organisations were forcefully restructured and staffed with EPRDF affiliates (Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016).

According to the EPRDF, its relationship with civil society organisations was guided by developmental concerns and policy documents suggested a clear understanding of the role of different civil society organisations in the developmental state (MoCB, 2004; MoFED, 2002, 2006, 2010; NPC, 2016). The EPRDF increasingly distinguished between membership-based organisations, supposed to participate in the country's social and political development, and non-membership-based organisations, supposed to mobilise funding and implement socioeconomic development projects (EPRDF, 2008a). As a result of the 2005 election crisis, the ruling coalition also increasingly focused on mobilising the population in the name of "participatory" governance and democracy, which further emphasised the role of mass-based associations in comparison to NGOs and think tanks (EPRDF, 2006, 2008b).

Membership-based organisations like mass associations⁷⁰ and professional associations, according to the EPRDF, were said to promote both democracy (revolutionary, not liberal) and development in cooperation with the state (EPRDF, 2008b). While the EPRDF officially promoted the independence of mass organisations and professional associations, similar to practices in other countries following Marxist/Leninist traditions (Howell, 2003, 2008; Szajkowski, 1981: 618f), EPRDF documents revealed that these CSOs were tightly linked to the ruling coalition (EPRDF, 2011a). There existed even a conscious strategy which encouraged members of party leagues to take on leadership positions in mass-based associations (EPRDF, 2008c). Interestingly, the Federal Policy Studies and Research Centre (a state organisation) found that this strategy led to a “[...] *mix-up of roles, for example between youth associations, youth league and youth federation*” and that the organisations lacked capacity to represent their member’s interests. Moreover, the state executive was said to exert pressure on mass organisations, to influence leadership selection and to exert control through threats and labelling independent individuals within the organisations as anti-peace elements or opposition supporters⁷¹ (PSRC, 2017). As mass organisations were used to tie citizens to the EPRDF and guarantee support, they were perceived as controlled by the EPRDF, both by non-members and members (Di Nunzio, 2014: 420ff; Interviewee Nr. 19, 2015). Many members also admitted that thanks to their membership they got preferential access to state services, confirming the close link between EPRDF structures and mass organisations and suggesting a political distribution of resources (PSRC, 2017). Members of the Women’s Associations in Addis Ababa reported for example that

⁷⁰ Mass based associations were CSOs organised by common markers (women, youth, disabled etc.). Many dated back to the time of the armed struggle during which these associations had been used to mobilise the population behind the rebels fighting the Derg regime (Vaughan, 2011: 625).

⁷¹ “The executive uses different forms of pressure to ensure that the mass based and professional organizations do their bidding only which cripples them from fulfilling their role in implementing good governance. [...] (In) mass based and professional associations those individuals who raise strong ideas and fight unlawful practices face threats, shaming and labelling from the executive. Those individuals who speak against unfair practices are forced out of participation and retaliated against. The youth who participate and raise strong ideas are labelled as representing the opposition or as anti-democratic and anti-peace. [...] The leadership of mass based and professional associations are also individuals who do not understand the purpose of the organizations they are leading and even have less knowledge of the country’s policies and strategies than the members they represent. This makes them unable to be the voice for the public’s concerns” (PSRC, 2017).

they had been granted preferential access to public housing schemes and that their membership card could be used to obtain *Kebele* services such as receipt of subsidised cooking oil and food items, meaning that the membership card effectively replaced the state *Kebele* ID (Ghetenet, 2015: 51f).

While development plans recognised the importance of NGOs for mobilising funding for socioeconomic development, the EPRDF discourse suggested that the focus lay on control rather than support of NGOs' work. The relationship between the EPRDF and NGOs had already been tense before the 2005 elections, but the mutual suspicion and dislike increased as a result of NGO engagement in the election process and the ensuing repression (Yitayehu, 2010). Among the EPRDF cadres, there existed a clear sense that NGOs were corrupt, posed dangers for the state and needed to be controlled rather than enabled. Civil servants interviewed held for example that *"Most of the NGOs were very corrupt. There were even NGO leaders who had cars registered in their own names but purchased by the NGOs money"* (Interviewee Nr. 106, 2016).

Given the importance of ethnic politics in Ethiopia, civil society organisations were not immune to their influence. On EPRDF demand, the majority of mass associations followed the principle of ethnic federalism, copying the ruling coalition's model of ethnic-based representation (Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 83, 2016). Each national mass association had offices in the country's different regions, including professional associations such as the Ethiopian Teachers and the Ethiopian Women Entrepreneurs Associations, and ethnic representation trumped issue based interest representation in the organisational set-up. There existed few exceptions, like the trade unions, that did not follow the prescribed model and opted for a pan-Ethiopian issue based interest representation (Interviewee Nr 61, 2016). Apart from the structures of civil society organisations, especially for those operating at the federal level, ethnicity often played a role in their daily operations. They regularly used ethnic networks to influence actors working within the federal administration and, where possible, addressed state officials from the same ethnicity (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 17, 2018).

Formally, civil society was part of the developmental coalition, represented through the people's wing (*hizib kinf*), but given the wing's link to the EPRDF, it

included primarily regime affiliated CSOs. Through the people's wing, civil society organisations were supposed to get access to state structures, to input into policies and development plans (EPRDF, 2008b, 2011a) and to participate in monitoring of government performance (MoFED, 2002: 151, 2006: 219). Interviewees working at EPRDF affiliated CSOs held that these structures provided for meaningful consultation (Interviewee Nr. 137, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 138, 2017), while the few CSOs that were independent but that received invitations to the meetings felt that the meetings were primarily used by state offices to communicate state policies and programmes and collect information (Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a). The EPRDF also set up GO-NGO (Government-NGO) forums at federal, regional, zonal and *woreda* level, that facilitated meetings between specialised state organisations and NGOs, e.g. regarding environmental protection, health or education (Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017). The establishment of consultative structures after the 2005 election crisis indicated the EPRDF's understanding that it lacked information from society and that it had failed to mobilise the population behind its rule (Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016a). However, a study carried out by the Federal Policy Study and Research Centre indicated that public participation structures were mostly not operational, that civil servants had a negative attitude towards civil society organisations and failed to consider their input (PSRC, 2017).

Due to the history of conflict between formal CSOs and the EPRDF regime, security concerns often guided the ruling coalition's approach to civil society. The focus on control of CSOs reduced the regime's ability to mobilise them as part of the developmental state programme, both because it failed to promote strong and capable organisations and because the permanent threat of use of despotic power reduced the state's infrastructural power (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). As the EPRDF forcefully aligned nearly all formal civil society organisations with its rule, this reduced their perceived legitimacy among large segments of the population. Moreover, the regime's undemocratic political practices created grievances among large segments of the population and led to another round of confrontation with civil society as large-scale protests erupted in several regions at the end of 2015. Despite extensive military interventions, the EPRDF was not able to

control the protests, indicating that the unorganised part of civil society was more difficult to control than formal organisations.

International Donors and the EPRDF

The relationship between the EPRDF government and international organisations working in Ethiopia did not resemble the typical recipient-donor model in Sub-Saharan Africa. The EPRDF government, while relying on international finance for the implementation of its developmental state project, fended off international attempts to influence internal politics in Ethiopia (Dereje, 2011b). Documents from the American Embassy in Addis Ababa revealed that the EPRDF government pursued political decisions even where they encountered strong international opposition, e.g. in the case of the Charities and Societies Proclamation and expelled international organisations it considered hostile to its rule (Yamamoto, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). In private meetings (Yamamoto, 2008d, 2008e), but also publicly, the EPRDF criticised international attempts to influence Ethiopian politics through support of civil society and opposition parties. For example, former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, in an interview with the Financial Times in 2007, stated *“I think it would be wrong for people in the west to assume that they can buy good governance in Africa. Good governance can only come from inside”* (Meles, 2007).

Despite evidence that the EPRDF rule became more authoritarian over the past two decades, international support to Ethiopia increased (OECD, 2017). International actors were reluctant to criticise the regime for its undemocratic political practices, possibly because of the EPRDF's strong rejection of foreign influence in these matters. President Obama for example stated in a joint press conference with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in 2015, that the Ethiopian government had been democratically elected (Obama, 2015) and World Bank documents referred to Ethiopia as a *“relatively new democracy”* (The World Bank, 2017: 5). One substantial reason for the international backing of the EPRDF regime was its commitment to socioeconomic development in Ethiopia. The EPRDF's ability to sustain high economic growth rates, raised the regime's reputation internationally despite its undemocratic practices (Tadesse and Young, 2003: 400). Ethiopia's geopolitical importance also worked in its favour, as the country played a stabilising

role in the unstable region that is the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia participated in international peace keeping operations and the war on terror, which led many international organisations to see the EPRDF as reliable partners and allies (Clapham, 2018: 1156f).

International donors continuously tried to encourage the regime to transition towards a more democratic government and to adopt more liberal economic policies, but with little success. For example, they financed civil society support programmes hoping that the strengthening of CSOs would lead to democratisation in Ethiopia. The establishment of programmes for public private partnership dialogue was an international attempt to give more voice to the private sector. While the EPRDF allowed donors to push their agendas for democratisation and private sector development to a certain degree, the ruling coalition kept close control over such programmes. Civil society support programmes were directed towards financing of social service provision, rather than towards promoting democracy and human rights, and private sector development programmes targeted EPRDF priority sectors (Dereje, 2011b; Jalale and Wolff, 2017). By directing donor programmes to EPRDF sanctioned activities, these programmes often targeted regime affiliated CSOs, often without the donors' knowledge. Moreover, state organisations often hampered the implementation of such initiatives although they had officially been approved. The cooperation with donors and investors from the East, such as China and India, reduced the effectiveness of aid conditionality linked to democracy and human rights from Western donors, as the EPRDF regularly threatened to turn further to China (Brechenmacher, 2017: 83ff; Meles, 2007, 2009).

The 2015/18 political crisis: Mengist yellem⁷²?

When former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi died in 2012, observers were initially impressed by the subsequent smooth political succession and understood it as a positive sign for the country's political development. The new Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, a politician from SNNPR, represented a change from Tigrayan dominated politics under the EPRDF regime. His lack of "fighter credentials"

⁷² Mengist yellem translates into authority (state/government/party) has disappeared.

(participation in the armed struggle against the Derg) was perceived as a transition towards technocratic selection criteria for political office, rather than primarily party loyalty (Clapham, 2018: 1160f). According to Weis, “[...] *the relative stability of post-Meles Ethiopia also implied that the ruling party had been more effective at building institutions than many had given it credit for*” (Weis, 2016: 329f). However, it quickly became clear that the new Prime Minister did not command the same power as Meles, revealing cracks in the ruling coalition whose cohesion had depended on Meles’ authority. Given that the EPRDF had progressively taken over state structures, problems within the EPRDF affected the functioning of the state.

Public protests broke out in October 2015 and continued, resurging despite military interventions. Several activists in Ethiopia and the diaspora provided international visibility for the local events through their activity on social media⁷³. Lasting public mobilisation indicated that the EPRDF’s attempt to build its rule on “performance legitimacy” lacked credibility among large parts of the country’s population. Protests started in Ethiopia’s largest region, Oromia, and spread to other regions in 2016, with Oromia and Amhara becoming the hotspots of the conflict. While the protests were initially triggered by the Addis Ababa Master Plan for the extension of the capital further into the Oromia region, their persistence and spread to other regions revealed deep grievances about the EPRDF’s authoritarian rule and its excessive control of citizens, the Tigrayan dominance in politics, the absence of federalism in political practice and the operationalisation of the developmental state that had centralised political and economic power and resources in the hands of a small Tigrayan elite (Lefort, 2016; Samson, 2017a; Staff Reporter, 2017a). Protesters in Oromia and Amhara also questioned the legitimacy and political representativeness of the OPDO and ANDM, denouncing the TPLF’s involvement in and control of party internal affairs in the two organisations.

On the protestors side, the protests remained largely peaceful initially, although significant financial damage was caused (Abbink, 2017b: 5). Government property (cars, buildings, investment etc.), property of Tigrayan and international investors⁷⁴

⁷³ <https://twitter.com/hashtag/oromoprotests?lang=en> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

⁷⁴ Numerous international companies that operated in Ethiopia set up their business on land expropriated from the local population (Dessalegn, 2014; Tsegaye, 2017).

and regime affiliates were destroyed and roadblocks were used to interrupt travel and to cut provision of goods to Addis. The Prime Minister Hailemariam Desselegn declared a state of emergency (SOE) in October 2016, which was extended later, lasting eventually for 10 months. It became clear to the public that the Prime Minister was not in charge, as decisions taken by the command post were controlled by military representatives (Proclamation No. 984, 2016). His rare appearances on public broadcast media led citizens to conclude *“Now we know that the prime minister doesn’t decide”* (Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). While the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had commanded the EPRDF, the EPRDF was commanding Hailemariam Desselegn. Despite the heavy military intervention, the duration of the protests indicated that the EPRDF lost its control over parts of society. Although military interventions cleared the streets of protesters, people responded by staging stay-at-home strikes to express their dissent. During later stages of the protests, the *Querro* (youth movement in Oromia), enforced stay at home protests in Oromia, threatening businessmen and torching businesses of those who continued to work (Yonas, 2016). According to government sources, over 20,000 people were arrested and put into “retraining camps” (AFP TV, 2017). The silencing of the protests gave a false sense of order, as conversations and interviews revealed that the military intervention and the lack of addressing people’s grievances led to increasing criticism among the population⁷⁵.

The protests rendered the growing split in the EPRDF more visible, indicating the end of the acceptance of TPLF rule within the coalition. Challenged by the citizens in their regions, the OPDO and ANDM began questioning the TPLF dominance, trying to use the protest movements to advance political demands within the coalition and to gain political legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents. The presidents of the regions and other high-ranking officials made statements on the regional news

⁷⁵ An interviewee stated for example *“We get negative peace. Security is high and there are no protests. But the resentment remains and it will take time to work on it. The government has to work with the grassroots level. There is a danger for large-scale violence later on. People will start taking measures if their grievances are not addressed. The emergency for a temporary period is a deterrent. Parents tell their children not to protest and it calms the situation for a bit. But we are worried that there are no actual things happening. At the moment only security forces are deployed. But there are not enough security forces to check everyone”* (Interviewee Nr. 116, 2016).

broadcasts, print media and social media, contradicting and questioning the authority of the federal government. Even at the federal level, high level politicians from Oromia and Amhara regional states questioned the crack-down on the protests (Fasika, 2017; Staff Reporter, 2017b), de-facto starting to function as political opposition within the EPRDF. Especially the OPDO emerged as a major player, managing to gain trust from the population and eventually even the diaspora and opposition politicians. The TPLF split between its power base in Mekele and technocrats around Arkebe in Addis Ababa. Its party congress in November 2017 led to the suspension of Azeb Mesfin (Meles Zenawi's widow) and the election of a new chairperson, in an attempt to deal with the rising pressure on its rule (Daniel, 2017, 2018a, 2018b).

In the beginning, it looked like the EPRDF was not willing to deal with the protests further than reshuffling some government positions (Staff Reporter, 2016). In interviews, civil servants downplayed the severity of the situation, stating that the protests were a reaction to the lack of good governance among some public offices and had already been brought under control (Interviewee Nr. 52, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 93, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016)⁷⁶. The "deep renewal" announced by the EPRDF to address corruption and misconduct in public office, was perceived by many as an attempt to get rid of political dissidents. A former president of the chambers summarised the feelings of many Ethiopians, stating:

"Meanwhile, the government launches its customary crackdowns on corrupt officials to divert the public's attention. As of this writing, the recent crackdown boasts the arrest of some fifty plus 'high' level officials and business operators. We doubt this newest move can impress the public, who still want to see big name politicians fall. We doubt this will have an impact on the fight against corruption. We doubt our government serves us well" (Kebour, 2017).

However, over time, the EPRDF began to deal with some of the criticisms expressed in the protests. While not signifying a turn towards democratic

⁷⁶ An interviewee stated for example that - "Addis is safe. Also the problems in the regions are much less than the media make you think. Staying in Bole is good then because it is safe. The problems aren't big. In good governance a lot is happening, but much is still at planning stage. The draft bill for a good governance council will be voted next month. The council will bring together the government, media, the opposition and civil society" (Interviewee Nr. 105, 2016).

government, the EPRDF initiated a dialogue with opposition parties and debated some of the legal provisions perceived as hindering fair political competition and civic activism. The EPRDF was criticised for its tight control over potential reform processes and its unwillingness to engage meaningfully with the protest movements, but in February 2018 political events started accelerating. In a surprise move, the acting Prime Minister Hailemariam announced the release of opposition politicians, and resigned from his post only one week later (Schemm, 2018a). A new state of emergency was declared and while formally voted upon in parliament, it encountered a record number of no votes and abstentions. The TPLF's dominance over the security and military indicated its de-facto rule under the state of emergency, but its repressive actions were publicly criticised especially in Oromia and Amhara regional states. Within the EPRDF the struggle among the member parties but also the old guard and the young generation of leaders seemed to escalate and it took over a month to decide on a replacement for Hailemariam Dessalegn (Schemm, 2018b). Some of the released prisoners were rearrested, the SOE reversed the political opening, spurring new rounds of strikes even reaching the peripheral regions of the country. The election of Abiy Ahmed, an Oromo politician as the new chair of the EPRDF indicated a possible change of political course, however the political situation remained volatile. The political crisis revealed the fragility of the political settlement, which was both questioned from within the ruling coalition and by the population (Planel and Lefort, 2018).

Conclusion

Evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the political settlement built by the EPRDF fundamentally changed power structures underpinning Ethiopia's previous regimes (van Veen, 2016: 13ff). Dominance of rural instead of urban elites and ethnic regionalism rather than pan-Ethiopianism provided the foundations for state building (Yeshtila et al., 2016: 7f). The TPLF controlled the state building process and carried out a recentralisation of power, despite the constitutionally ensured principle of ethnic federalism, both through consolidating its power within the ruling coalition and through extending the reach of the state apparatus in rural areas (Dejen, 2015: 483). TPLF officials monopolised political power in the EPRDF and state organisations,

particularly those representing despotic power (police, security and military) (van Veen, 2016).

To legitimise its rule and compensate for its lack of political representativeness, the EPRDF embarked on the self-proclaimed “democratic developmental state” project, seeking to gain “performance legitimacy” through the provision of accelerated and sustained economic growth (Clapham, 2018: 1154). While Ethiopia was said to be one of the clearest examples of an aspiring developmental state in sub-Saharan Africa, its developmental record remained mixed (Hauge, 2017: 4; Weis, 2016: 4 and 5). Although development strategies and policies testified to the EPRDF’s capacity to design sound industrial policies, their implementation was negatively influenced and slowed down by both party and ethnic politics and according to Clapham (2018: 1162), the possible success of the developmental state in Ethiopia hinged on the EPRDF’s ability to become “[...] *liable to a level of accountability that no Ethiopian regime has yet been able to tolerate*”.

The priority given to control of civil society organisations, while preventing public contestation, foreclosed the possibility to mobilise them as part of the EPRDF’s developmental state agenda. Moreover, the extension of the state and party apparatus down to the household level was widely perceived as a means of control rather than a “developmental” measure by the population, leading to resigned acceptance in the absence of an alternative rather than political endorsement (Emmenegger, 2016; Planel, 2014). The excessive use of control and coercion in the implementation of the developmental state project and the ethnic favouritism the regime displayed towards Tigrayans posed severe limitations on the EPRDF’s ability to engender legitimacy through development. The eruption of public protests in different regional states in 2015/16, the EPRDF’s supposed core constituency, revealed the fragility of the political settlement that had favoured a monopolisation of economic and political resources by the TPLF and its collaborators.

For a detailed description of the different phases of the EPRDF rule and developments in Ethiopian society please see Annex III.

Chapter 5: The Politics of State – Trade Union Relations in Contemporary Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, 23.02.2016 [Yekatit 15 2008]

“The industry grows and there are now more workers. We see road construction and building. But the paradox is that this is growth, it is not development. We are now roughly 94 million people with only 1 million having a good life. There is food scarcity, inflation and water shortage. Eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas and many still live on subsistence farming. The Chinese and other investors and those with relations live a good life. Ethiopia is not highly developed. You have to look at how the masses live. In foreign firms there is high resistivity. Indians, Turkey and the Chinese run investments, they are not interested in trade unions. The government won’t finger at them. It says they create employment. But the workers’ rights have to be respected. CETU intervenes with higher officials, but things are not good. The mass media of the government do not comment. We need researchers who comment, people like you who ask questions. The problem in Ethiopia is that we don’t say a spoon is a spoon, but a spoon is a shovel. People say it’s a democracy but they aren’t democrats. Most [public] officials are from the war front and their attitude is militaristic. If they say one plus one is three, it’s three ” (Interviewee Nr. 51, 2016).

* * *

Introduction

“We were the first bad experience of the new regime. The first unexpected incident of resistance. It was we who first indicated shortcomings with the current government. Less than a year after they had come into power we already understood their motive. They wanted to divide the employees and the congress members into their ethnic politics. They wanted to bring their ethnic politics into us. They were ready, they harassed us and brought the military forces” (Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016).

This chapter investigates the relationships and patterns of interaction between the state and trade unions in Ethiopia since 1991. It studies the functioning of trade unions under the EPRDF regime and investigates how the operationalisation of the

EPRDF's developmental state project since the early 2000s has influenced the development of trade unions and shaped their role within the state. To contextualise the analysis, a brief historical overview of the labour movement in Ethiopia is provided in the first part of the chapter. The second part explores the mechanisms used by the EPRDF to establish control over trade unions, while the last part of the chapter looks at the patterns of interaction between state organisations and trade unions during the period of my fieldwork.

Given the tradition of state-led development since the reign of Haile Selassie, the organisation of workers in Ethiopia was predominantly marked by the relationship between labour and the state rather than labour and private capital. The formal Ethiopian economy was dominated by public sector enterprises and enterprises owned by or affiliated to the political elite and the existing private sector was closely associated with and overseen by the regimes in power. Many trade unions were established in public enterprises but civil servants had yet to gain the right to unionise. State control over unions was a common feature of the past three regimes in power and although unions often linked labour to the state, at times unions also moved away from the orbit of the state and pitted workers against the regimes in power.

There exists little contemporary literature on labour in Ethiopia and even less on trade unionism. Given that the EPRDF's developmental state programme rested on the promotion of labour intensive sectors like agroindustry and light manufacturing, the scarcity of academic research is all the more surprising. Existing literature often focused on industrial employment and the structures of the labour market, rather than studying the organisation of workers. Research explored for example how Ethiopian and Chinese workers influenced and were influenced by labour structures and processes in Chinese FDI firms (Fei et al., 2017), studied workers' choices with respect to different employment types (industrial labour or entrepreneurship) (Blattman and Dercon, 2016), investigated labour market structures and recruitment procedures in industrial sectors (Girum et al., 2017; Mano et al., 2011) and shed light on TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programmes and employment in Ethiopia (Yamada et al., 2018). References to trade unions were made in passing, noting that unions were weak and lacked organisational capacity and that

employers often either opposed unionisation or co-opted unions (Fei et al., 2017: 0469; Hauge, 2017: 195).

My research revealed that, in the 1990s, the EPRDF already had institutionalised control over unions to prevent them from pursuing an independent agenda. However, going beyond just control, from the early 2000s onwards, as part of the operationalisation of the EPRDF's developmental state programme and the expanding industrialisation, the EPRDF increasingly used unions to deal with emerging labour issues. To prevent the development of an independent labour movement and to deal with growing industrial conflicts, the EPRDF encouraged unionisation under EPRDF affiliated unions.

Trade-unions were to a large extent controlled by the EPRDF, but they were also membership-based organisations receiving pressure from their constituents. In many cases, unions were wedged between the interests of the state and those of workers and while unions often had to give into pressures from the EPRDF and state organisations, they also negotiated on behalf of their members. Unions' political capital and ability to assert themselves vis-à-vis state organisations depended on their ability to mobilise their members and hence they could not simply ignore pressures received from workers. The interactions between state organisations, especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the Bureaus of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSAs), were marked by constant negotiation rather than just co-optation of trade unions.

Brief History of the Ethiopian Labour Movement – 1960s to 1990s

Formally registered Ethiopian trade unions only emerged during the second half of the 20th century⁷⁷, partly because of the country's tardy industrialisation process, but also because of the absence of a legal framework for unionisation until the 1960s. However, already during the first half of the 20th century, employees in the newly emerging industrial sectors assembled in traditional self-help groups, such as *iddir* and *equb*, that evolved from funerary and credit associations to provide support for

⁷⁷ Some of the international employees of foreign enterprises like the Franco-Ethiopian railway were members in European and international trade unions (Killion, 1985: Chapter 5).

work related problems (Killion, 1985: 145; Lefort, 1981: 45; Syoam, 1969: 56). Because of the precarious working conditions, wildcat strikes became more frequent and demands for labour rights and protection of workers were addressed to the emperor on an increasing scale during the 1940s and 50s (Killion, 1985: Chapter 8). The first workers to try and form a formal trade union were the Franco-Ethiopian railway workers in the 1940s⁷⁸, but in the absence of a labour law they could not get official recognition (Lefort, 1981: 44). The pressure on the government to deal with labour related issues intensified during the 1950s and the formation of the first underground unions coincided with the elaboration and promulgation of the labour law in 1963 (Beyene, 2009: 9 & 10; Syoam, 1969: 2 & 4). The emperor involved international advisors in the drafting of the law (Paradis, 1969) and the creation of a labour department in the Ministry of Community Development and Social Affairs in 1962, facilitated its implementation (Syoam, 1969: 86f).

After the official registration of the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) in 1963, it became the motor for the emerging Ethiopian labour movement. Supported by some state bureaucrats, CELU organised basic trade unions (BTUs) at enterprise level and provided training for the new labour leaders with the help of the African American Labour Congress (AALC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) (Killion, 1985: Chapter 9; Souchy, 1964; Syoam, 1969: 51–67). Despite the legal recognition of the right to unionisation, resistance of the management in public and private enterprises was high and caused numerous conflicts between employees and employers. CELU used its connection to the imperial bureaucracy to facilitate meetings with senior politicians - such as the Prime Minister Aklilu Habtewold - to garner state support for its unionisation campaign and effectively implement the workers' rights stipulated in the labour proclamation (Interviewee Nr. 99, 2016).

While beneficial when it came to ensuring political support, CELU's close links to the imperial bureaucracy meant that it favoured "*cooperation over confrontation and dialogue over unilateral action*" (Beyene, 2009: 118). As the anti-imperial movement

⁷⁸ Initially workers' organisation on the Franco-Ethiopian railway was driven by the European workers. Especially French workers who were organised in the National Confederation of Workers in France, drove the process, including for example a strike in 1919 (Killion, 1985: Chapter 5).

in the 1960s and early 1970s grew, several members of the union council questioned CELU's cooperative approach (Admasie, 2018a: 94ff). The white collar unions in public enterprises like Ethiopian Airlines, the Commercial Bank and the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority were among the most politicised and radical⁷⁹ (Killion 1985, chaps. 8 & 9), but blue colour unions in public enterprises as well as various unions in private enterprises also joined the struggle (Admasie, 2018a: 99). Pressured by critical voices within CELU, the confederation progressively called for work stoppage where negotiation with management did not lead to results (Beyene, 2009: 108ff; Interviewee Nr. 99, 2016). On the 7th of March 1974, CELU called a national work stoppage which brought the country's economy to a standstill, until the government agreed to modifications of the Labour Relations Decree (Mulatu, 1991: 160; Taffara, 2006: 8). Although CELU officially reached 73,000 members in 1973, it remained a loose assembly of basic trade unions. The conflict between state-loyalist and more radical trade unionists hampered CELU's operations, reducing its role in the anti-imperial struggle. Moreover, election fraud, corruption, embezzlement and mismanagement also prevented CELU from becoming more important (Beyene, 2009: 76f; Kiflu, 1998: 14ff; Syoam, 1969: 66–7)

Several radicalised labour leaders expressed support for the programme of the EPRP (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party) that called for the removal of the monarchy and the establishment of a democratic republic⁸⁰. As the monarchy did not allow the establishment of political parties, the EPRP operated underground between April 1972 and August 1975 (Mamo and Bayou, 1976). After the fall of the Emperor, the EPRP became the main opposition to the Derg regime, promoting a civil government and criticising the military reign of Mengistu (Beyene, 2009: 271; Kiflu, 1998: Chapter 1). Although there did not exist an official agreement, the EPRP and

⁷⁹ While comparatively well-educated and paid, their privileged position made them more, not less radical. Given the relative scarcity of skilled workers, white-collar workers were de-facto in a better bargaining position, as industrial workers could easily be replaced by individuals in the large and growing pool of unskilled urban labour. Nevertheless, the dominance of white colour unions among radicalised labour has subsequently been questioned on the basis of new available data (Admasie, 2018a: 99f).

⁸⁰ In the literature there exists a disagreement between those that denounce the infiltration of CELU by the EPRP (Beyene, 2009: 271) and portray CELU as one of the party's organisations (Kiflu, 1998: Chapter 1) and those that stress that CELU remained an actor in its own right despite the affinity some of its leaders expressed for the EPRP programme (Admasie, 2018a: 130ff).

CELU established a cooperation and unions joined the EPRP in the civil war against the Derg (Admasie, 2018a: 109). The confederation called strikes and the EPRP used its widely distributed newspaper *Democracia*⁸¹ and *Labader* to disseminate information about the Derg's rule and mobilise the population against the regime (Mamo and Bayou, 1976). The Derg retaliated, killing and imprisoning a significant number of labour leaders, forcing CELU and its members to go underground (Kiflu, 1998: Chapters 1 & 4; Lefort, 1981: 188ff). ELAMA – the Ethiopian Workers Revolutionary Union – was formed by key leaders of the EPRP and CELU. Closely affiliated to the EPRP, ELAMA participated in the armed struggle against the Derg (Admasie, 2018a: 113ff; Kiflu, 1998: 22ff, 145ff). Although both opposing the military regime, the EPRP and the TPLF eventually fought against each other. They disagreed on principles of political organisation, the TPLF called for national (ethnicity based) rebellions of Ethiopia's different nationalities, while the EPRP demanded a pan-Ethiopian organisation of the rebellion (Kiflu, 1998: Chapter 9).

To replace CELU, the Derg established AETU (All Ethiopian Trade Union), staffing it with political affiliates and making sure no independent labour movement could evolve (Mulatu, 1991: 160f; Turner, 1991: 113). The Derg successfully co-opted trade unions, controlling all levels, from the national confederation to the basic trade unions in enterprises and making sure unions reflected the Derg's ideology and political interests (Beyene, 2009: 147ff; Killion, 1985: Chapter 10; Mulatu, 1991: 161, 229). Due to the nationalisation under the command economy, existing unions were de-facto public-sector-unions. Ties were cut with international labour organisations representing the West, such as the AALC and the ICFTU, and new ones were forged with those representing the Soviet front such as WFTU (Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016).

When the EPRDF came into power in 1991 after it had overthrown the Derg, restructuring labour relations was a priority. Given AETU's close link to the Derg, existing trade unions were perceived as a potential danger for the new regime (Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). Moreover, the link forged between trade unions and the EPRP during the anti-imperial and then anti-Derg struggle, also troubled the EPRDF's

⁸¹ The newspaper *Democracia* reached a large audience, and was said to cover more households than the government owned newspapers at the time (Kiflu, 1998: 34ff).

leaders (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016; Kiflu, 1998: Chapter 1). Another issue for the EPRDF was that trade unions did not fit the principle of ethnic federalism promoted by the ruling coalition both for the organisation of the state as well as civil society (Markakis, 2011: 232). Trade unions were based on a pan-Ethiopian organisation of workers and favoured issue-based over ethnic-based representation⁸². Finally, during the very early days of the EPRDF regime, some veteran public-sector labour unions from the pre-Derg era re-opened and demanded, among other things, job security, salary increase and improvement of working conditions (Assefa, 2003: 20; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016).

The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) union, for example, went on strike in 1991 for twelve days, demanding a salary increase and in doing so, unknowingly started what became a three-year long feud between the EPRDF and the union. Given CBE's importance for the Ethiopian economy, the new government became painfully aware of the potential force of independent labour unions. Former trade unionists shared:

"The strike was a consensus of all employees. We knew we were a critical sector and that they would respond soon if we went on strike. We could paralyse all financial transactions. There were no private banks at that time" (Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016). "All CBE offices at the time, 55 or 60 closed" (Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016). "The prime minister gave a message to the employees and asked them to come back. The employees refused. Then they [public officials] started arresting employees. The police and the military came to their houses. They were brought to underground arrest places. People feared that their children and family would be killed. Special forces broke the vaults" (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a).

The union was accused of destabilising peace and security as well as the national economy and false allegations were used to persecute union leaders and members (CBE Labour Union, 1992). Initially all 4,800 employees on strike were dismissed by the Prime Minister of the transitional government. The union asked the OATUU and other international trade unions for support in their struggle (Etana Geleta, 1991a, 1991b) and tried to directly negotiate with the Prime Minister (Etana Geleta, 1991c). After unsuccessful attempts to recruit 4,800 new employees, the government

⁸² In the Democratic and Peaceful Transition Conference of Ethiopia in July 1991, the trade unions together with the University of Addis Ababa were the only pan-Ethiopian organisations participating (Markakis, 2011: 232).

resorted to only dismissing the union council and the executive committee of the union. The CBE union president Etana Geleta had to go into exile, his vice president was imprisoned and the union dissolved (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016).

Although the government froze the accounts of the CBE union, harassed and imprisoned leaders, raided their offices and occupied the union building with security personnel, the labour union continued its fight. Members of the union provided cash contributions, financing council and executive members (98 persons) for 27 months after the end of the official strike (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016). Only in 1994, could the EPRDF government and the union settle their disagreement. Despite several attempts, the EPRDF failed to take over the control of the union because the union council refused to elect the union leaders the party had chosen for the executive committee. Although the EPRDF successfully prevented any of the old executive committee leaders who had called the strike to become re-elected, they were not able to introduce their appointees (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016). After the dispute had been settled, all but six former union employees were allowed back to work at the CBE and with the help of the CBE union president of the time, all got employment at private banks instead (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016).

This incident and other parallel strikes in the early 1990s (Assefa, 2003: 20) made the EPRDF aware of the potential danger that unions could pose to its political rule. It intervened to prevent other unions, like the Ethiopian Electricity Cooperation, the National Telecom and Ethiopian Airlines, from joining the ongoing strikes (Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016).

Realigning EPRDF and Labour Union Priorities

To avoid any similar challenges, the EPRDF made sure it appropriated and then monopolised trade unions and trade union activism. It did so through several interlinked mechanisms: restructuring of labour unions and including them in the

EPRDF apparatus and reducing the space for independent trade union activism through criminalisation, threat and repression.

EPRDF Supervised Restructuring of Trade Unions

Through its labour wing⁸³, the EPRDF influenced the constitutive elections of the new CETU. It mobilised its political supporters in the confederation council and exerted pressure on trade unionists to vote for the party-proposed candidates. Dawi Ibrahim, a member of the forum 84⁸⁴ that sided with the new regime in 1991, was elected the first president of the new CETU. However, contrary to the EPRDF's hopes, Dawi quickly opposed the EPRDF, because of their approval of the World Bank's structural adjustment package (Praeg, 2006: 186).

Dawi overtly opposed the SAPs because of their negative effect on public sector workers who constituted the large majority of CETU's members. He also questioned the foundations of the EPRDF proclaimed *aboyotawi* (revolutionary) democracy, that he considered too prescriptive and not open enough to independent voices. To silence Dawi, the EPRDF used its influence to create an internal conflict between CETU leaders to weaken the organisation (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). Eventually six of the eight industrial federations composing CETU were turned by the EPRDF and opposed Dawi. Some federation presidents were allegedly bribed with false promises of study and working visas to the US, which they never received (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016). CETU was closed by order of the MoLSA, its offices sealed off, its property confiscated and accounts frozen (Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, 1994a, 1994b).

The two remaining loyal federations – the Federation of Commerce, Technical and Printing Industry Trade Unions and the Federation of Banking and Insurance – were harassed by the police and military officials, their offices were occupied by

⁸³ The labour wing had been formed during the armed struggle to mobilise workers to join and support the front.

⁸⁴ The Forum 84 was a splinter group from the EPRP, that joined forces with the new regime in 1991 and was integrated into the new leadership structure, among others in the trade union apparatus (Praeg, 2006: 186).

security personnel and their leaders physically assaulted (International Labour Office, 1997b, 1997a, 1999). The EPRDF tried to force restructuring of the federations through appointing EPRDF chosen individuals to form new executive committees. A former trade unionist recounted:

“On the fourth of November two police officers and the three allegedly elected people came to my office. They had a letter from the MoLSA stating that the new leadership had been elected. I took the letter and told them: We will challenge this. The police kicked and boxed me. They beat me. They acted like robbers in the building. They told me not to get back into the compound. I took papers to the police. I knew they wouldn’t listen. But I lodged my complaints. No one here reacted but others took my case to the ILO. Most people from this time left the country” (Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016).

Despite the attempt to intimidate the labour leaders loyal to Dawi, the CBE labour union accommodated Dawi and also paid the salaries of CETU staff affected by the government action (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016). This caused the union significant trouble:

“The CBE union office was closed but then opened by the workers by force. It was Dawi’s temporary office. We paid some of the CETU employees. As a result, we were targeted by the government. We were told that we were sheltering the opposition. My salary was frozen for ten months” (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a).



Figure 4: Photograph, Meeting of Trade Unionists, 1994

Photo: left to right: Hailu Orgessa, President Federation of Commerce, Technique and Printing Trade unions, Abyi Meles, President Federation of Banking and Insurance, Dawi Ibrahim, President of CETU, Getachew Mengiste, Secretary General of CETU, Ahmedin Hussein, President CBE Trade Union, Nasser Hassen, Vice President of CBE

Source: CBE trade union

Dawi turned towards international labour organisations for support, documenting how the EPRDF government had instigated a split in CETU leadership and taken this as a reason to close the confederation. The ILO, ICFTU and OATUU took on CETU's case, asking the Ethiopian government to refrain from interfering in CETU affairs, reverse CETU's closure and open an investigation into the harassment and assault of union leaders (ICFTU, 1997; International Labour Office, 1997b; Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, 1994a). However, over the course of the conflict, the international organisations sided with the EPRDF government, accepting the new CETU and withdrawing support to the former leaders, even if the ICFTU and OATTUU did so at a later stage than the AALC (Admasie, 2018a: 158ff; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016). The American Federation of Labour⁸⁵ even actively supported the

⁸⁵ Two interviewees held that the AFL-CIO was used by the US government to get involved in Ethiopia's internal affairs and strengthen the new regime after 1991 (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016c). *"We didn't know their intention. Many thought they were the labour wing of the CIA. They supported us but then they were involved in the dismantling of CETU"* (Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016).

government during the restructuring of CETU, to tame the political conflict (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016). In 1997, a new CETU was set up by the EPRDF led federations. In the end only the Banking and Insurance Federation contested the new CETU, but eventually it was also forcefully reorganised by the EPRDF (Praeg 2006, 188ff; Human Rights Watch 1998; Interviewee Nr. 100 2016b).

The restructuring of trade unions included also BTUs at enterprise level, as they formed the federation and through the federation the confederation (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016). An interviewee explained:

“The reorganisation process in the unions was backed by the labader committee. The government. You couldn’t see them but they would give instructions. The labader had someone in all enterprises. They were at the back everywhere when the unions were established” (Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016).

The EPRDF Labader Committee as Tool for Continuous Control

The body in charge of controlling the trade unions was called the *labader*⁸⁶ committee and was part of the EPRDF’s labour wing⁸⁷. This wing had been formed by the TPLF during the armed struggle against the Derg and was part of the EPRDF, though not the official state structure (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016b). Moreover, contrary to other party wings, like the women’s or youth wings, the labour wing did not appear in official communications or documents of the EPRDF, which made it difficult to detect (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016). An internal EPRDF document from 1993 cited in Markakis hinted at the labour wing, stating that *“We [the EPRDF] should encourage trade unions, but without compromising their organisation, we should try to control and lead them through indirect organisational links”* (Markakis, 2011: 251). However, only high party officials and long term labour activists could uncover the

⁸⁶ The literal translation of *labader* is “proletarian”, however most interviewees used the English word “labour” rather than proletarian calling it the “labour committee”.

⁸⁷ Some interviewees referred to the labour wing, while others called it the labour league. However, as their description of the leadership was congruent it is safe to assume that wing and league were used to describe the same organisation. Moreover, the equation of the words league and wing also concerned other party structures as the EPRDF youth league/wing and the EPRDF women’s league/wing.

labader committee's existence and interviewees independently confirmed the location of the office and its staffing⁸⁸ (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016c; Interviewee Nr. 105, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016). The labour wing was headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and hence directly linked to the PMO. For a long time the committee was led by former TPLF fighter *Tagay*⁸⁹ Berhani and his deputy *Tagay* Guosh. While leadership changed, control over the *labader* committee remained in the hands of the TPLF (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018). The TPLF's control over the trade unions in Ethiopia, was an indicator for the regime's ethnic politics and showed the importance accorded to the control over trade unions by the regime.

The *labader* committee oversaw and controlled unions from enterprise level to the national confederation. It influenced and policed election processes of trade unions, especially at CETU and the nine industrial federations, and controlled trade union activities. While trade unionists active in the 1990s stated that the *labader* committee had been involved in killings and torturing of trade unionists, after the restructuring of CETU it reverted to threatening labour leaders (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016). While in theory, the MoLSA and BoLSAs were the regulatory bodies of trade unions, in practice the *labader* committee provided instructions regarding oversight over unions

⁸⁸ Given the *labader* committee's unofficial character and its repressive nature, I was told by several of my interviewees working at the trade unions that it was not safe to approach them. To avoid exposing my contacts and avert raising suspicion by paying an unannounced visit to an officially non-existent organisation, I tried to use my contacts working for the state to put me in touch. Most interviewees either held they had not heard about the committee or told me that this was not relevant for my research. Surprisingly, one of my TPLF contacts during one of our meetings suggested he might help me in the matter.

Excerpts of an interview conducted on the 14th of July 2016 (Interviewee Nr. 105, 2016):

- *Can you tell me something about the labour committee? I wanted to talk to them regarding the trade unions' role in the developmental state.*
- *You mean the labader? They have their office around Meskel Square. You mean them?*
- *Exactly. I thought they would be very relevant to meet for my research.*
- *Sure. The deputy prime minister oversees their work. And their chairman is a good friend of mine. I know him very well. I will ask him.*

However, the interviewee backtracked on the promise during our next meeting and went as far as stating that he did not know of the committee's existence.

⁸⁹ *Tagay* translates into "fighter" and interviewees used the prefix to underline Ato Berhani's and Ato Guosh's past as former TPLF fighters.

(Interviewee Nr. 95, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2018). A former trade unionist explained:

“The instruction come directly from the labour committee, not the MoLSA. The MoLSA registers those organisations it is told to register and denies registration of those that it is told to deny. Having a MoLSA is an ILO requirement. No one understands its role. It is in fact useless” (Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016).

The *labader* committee organised an annual *gimgema*⁹⁰ for the executive committee members of CETU. This performance evaluation was used to ensure discipline and alignment of CETU leaders to EPRDF directives (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a). Given that this tool was developed and owned by the TPLF/EPRDF and officially reserved to civil servants and party cadres, its use within CETU testified to the degree of penetration of the ruling coalition into the confederation.

Contrary to women’s and youth associations (EPRDF, 2008c), the EPRDF did not officially acknowledge that unions were led by party members and integrated into the extended party apparatus. Such control mechanisms of labour unions constituted hidden transcripts of the EPRDF. In fact, state officials rejected any allegations of control (Interviewee Nr. 93, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 105, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 118, 2016). Moreover, most CETU leaders and employees during interviews emphasized CETU’s independence from the EPRDF government and its politics (Interviewee Nr. 31, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 64, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 67, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 73, 2016). One interviewee went as far as stating:

“All department heads are elected by the general council and approved by congress. Me included. You can contact everyone here at CETU. We are not the government. We are democratic. Everything is open here. We have no secrets” (Interviewee Nr 61, 2016).

Infiltration of Trade Unions Through Control Over Election of Union Leaders

An important tool for controlling trade unions in Ethiopia consisted in the *labader* committee’s influence on the selection process of trade union leaders. At CETU, the

⁹⁰ For a description of *gimgema* see page 113.

appropriation of the election process involved three consecutive steps (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 99, 2016):

First, the EPRDF labour committee selected the candidates for the CETU executive committee positions, the prerequisites were party membership and loyalty to the EPRDF line. Trade unionists claimed:

“The labour wing from the party determines the election” (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a). “The government nominates the executive committee and the President at CETU” (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a). “Especially in the confederation, elections are predetermined. You have to be from the party” (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). “Today all leaders at CETU are members of the EPRDF. There is no civil society these days” (Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016).

Second, state officials from the *labader* committee, the MoLSA and the BoLSA visited basic trade unions and federations to tell them for whom to vote. They threatened and pressured union leaders to vote as they were told. Closer to the elections, the *labader* committee called the CETU congress and instructed the federations about the vote. The results of the elections were disseminated to CETU staff in the morning of the election day, prior to the elections themselves. Trade unionists explained:

“Someone will come to the union office, or your workplace or even your home. He will tell you, ‘This person is good. He has good connections to the government and can influence. You should vote for him’. It’s government representatives who come to us. It’s difficult to say no to this. They can block your promotion at work or make sure you won’t get any services at government offices” (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). “The federations are called by the EPRDF labour committee. They are told whom to vote for. Then all federations are called together in the main assembly. The same directions are given again” (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a). “The day before the congress held its [2015] election, they [the congress members] stayed until midnight. In the morning we knew who would become head of which department” (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a).

Third, the elections confirmed the nominations of the *labader* committee. Direct control during the elections was exercised to make sure congress members voted as they are told. Trade unionists revealed:

"[...] The vote is not anonymous. It's no secret ballot so they know who you vote for. You can't deviate, they'll know" (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a: 79). "I was there during the last election. They came over and asked us to vote for Kassahun" (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). "We were directly asked to raise our hands for Kassahun" (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016). "The [labader] committee chairman is always invited to CETU elections. It is compulsory that he should be there" (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a). "Last time it was the lady, not the guy" (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a). "They are two people. One of them is always there" (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016).

The elections at federation level happened in the same way as the elections at confederation level (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016), which made sense since the federations constituted the CETU council from which the executive committee for the confederation was elected. Representatives from the *labader* committee and the CETU executive committee controlled the nomination and election process, and, while there existed anecdotal accounts of federation members refusing to obey directions, by and large federation councils voted as instructed. Pressure was exercised to ensure that only EPRDF supporters were voted into federation councils and the few exceptions of EPRDF-independent trade unionists confirmed the rule rather than to question it (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 95, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018).

Interviewees claimed that union leaders in public and private enterprises were often chosen by the management (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). As the management was linked to the EPRDF, especially in public enterprises, they often ensured party affiliation of union leaders. Management controlled "unionisation" happened for example at the Dashen bank – one of the private commercial banks in Ethiopia. Interviewees shared:

"At Dashen bank employees started a union. When the management heard about this, it transferred the involved employees to remote areas. Then the management set up a union" (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). "The management hijacked the movement and put in its own puppets" (Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016). "What we do here in Ethiopia is we dissolve and then we set up a new organisation with 'fresh and energetic people'" (Interviewee Nr. 110, 2016).

The EPRDF government backed the management of public and private enterprises and it was difficult for unions to fight such practices, as courts were

biased in favour of the management (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016).

None of the control exercised by the *labader* committee and state organisations was publicly visible or reported on, but it explained why trade unions seldom took an openly confrontative approach to the EPRDF and the state.

Repression and Threat as Tools to Prevent Contestation

The EPRDF government in collaboration with CETU and the management of enterprises used a range of tools to discourage trade union leaders from becoming independent and giving into workers' demands. Moreover, workers and aspiring leaders were prevented from forming and running independent unions.

Although almost all trade union leaders from the 1990s reported torture by the police or the security apparatus (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 123, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 127, 2016), none of the current ones did. However, the current generation of union leaders stated that they believed that the EPRDF would use torture if unions became too vocal and confrontational (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). The memories and the threat of torture were an effective enough tool to keep union activism at bay. Some union leaders that had pushed too strongly for workers' rights and questioned EPRDF policies, reported that visits by the police and short periods of detention on unclear grounds were used to make them back down on claims and actions (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016). Threats both to trade unionists as well as their families were commonly used to force them to obey instructions by the *labader* committee, the MoLSA or BoLSA and the enterprise management (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016).

Labelling trade union leaders as terrorists and members of unlawful opposition groups had been used since the 1990s to proceed with repression both at organisational and at individual level. Documentation from international labour organisations provided ample examples for this tactic (ICFTU, 1997; International Labour Office, 2007, 2009). Even within CETU, executive committee members and

representatives from the *labader* committee used this approach to prevent critical voices from emerging within the organisation. An interviewee explained:

“If you are Oromo they say you are OLF. If you are Amhara they say you are Ginbot 7. If you are Tigrayan they say you are TPDM. This is unwanted and people keep quiet. You might be in chains in the morning” (Interviewee Nr. 51, 2016).

The important strikes that happened in the 1990s during the constitutive phase of the EPRDF regime were met with violence. This left an important institutional memory in many unions, keeping them from striking even now (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). Moreover, the 1993 labour proclamation interdicted striking to those sectors that had been crucially involved in the initial wave of strikes, like the banking sector (Proclamation No. 42, 1993). Although there was a considerable number of wildcat strikes during the past two decades, these actions were precisely characterised by the absence of official union leadership approval and authorisation. Moreover, they were concentrated in the private sector, as nearly all public enterprises were unionised and unions discouraged work stoppage (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016). Despite the existence of wild cat strikes, most union leaders interviewed were persuaded that formal striking was impossible in today’s Ethiopia (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a) and an interviewee held that *“It’s almost impossible to strike today. If they heard anything they will kill you. There is no prison anymore, you will be killed directly”* (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a).

Trade Unions and the EPRDF’s Aspiring Developmental State

The control established over trade unions predated the EPRDF’s adoption of its “developmental state programme” and initially it was aimed at managing the unions’ opposition to the adoption of SAPs and privatisation in the public sector. In the beginning, the EPRDF’s aim was controlling trade unions to prevent opposition to its rule. However, with the operationalisation of the developmental state programme, the ruling coalition increasingly tried to mobilise trade unions to deal with labour issues on behalf of the EPRDF. One of the EPRDF’s senior cadres stated:

“With industrialisation this [the relative weakness of labour] will change. Labour will become stronger. Labour will start to negotiate. We have to prepare for the political activity that will come from that. We have seen this in other developmental states” (Interviewee Nr. 93, 2016).

Similar to strategies deployed by the Asian developmental states (Deyo, 1989), the EPRDF aimed at using unions to contain claims from workers, rather than accommodating them (Deyo, 1987b: 182ff).

In its quest to achieve rapid industrialisation, and with practices resembling those of the Asian developmental states, the EPRDF often ranked workers’ rights, decent working conditions and workplace health and safety as secondary, and instead focused on creating attractive investment conditions. Alongside a variety of favourable tax and credit schemes, the EPRDF used cheap labour costs in Ethiopia to attract FDI and to promote local investment (Hauge, 2017: 167). Studies found that industrial employment negatively affected workers’ health status, in many cases failed to pay living wages and that workers preferred self-employment (entrepreneurship) as an alternative to industrial jobs (Blattman and Dercon, 2016; Girum et al., 2017). Moreover, Admasie (2018: Chapter 6) found that real wages have effectively declined during the EPRDF rule. The precarious working conditions posed problems for industrial peace, leading to an increasing number of wildcat strikes, and employers faced challenges with respect to retaining their workforce (Admasie, 2018b).

To deal with the increasing demands from labour and the emergence of informal workers’ organisation, the EPRDF sometimes used CETU and the industrial federations to solve industrial conflicts and to unionise workers in EPRDF affiliated unions. Although the EPRDF demanded that CETU contained the claims of workers when intervening in industrial conflicts on behalf of the ruling coalition, unionisation by definition also lay in CETU’s corporate interest. Moreover, CETU used the existence of wildcat strikes to advocate for a unionisation campaign and convinced the MoLSA about the benefits of unionisation for industrial peace (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 79, 2018). The MoLSA and Addis BoLSA supported CETU in unionising workers in private sector enterprises, primarily in Ethiopian ones, in 2015. While unions at public sector enterprise still constituted the majority of CETU’s

members, the unionisation campaign resulted in a 59.2% increase of unionised workers in private sector enterprises (Interviewee Nr. 80, 2016) (see Table 9).

Table 8: Number of Trade Union Members per Sector and Percentage Growth of Membership per year, 2009-2016

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total number of union members	320,142	351,846	376,459	391,246	408,018	415,515	450,929	473,626
Growth of membership in % per year		9.9%	7%	3.93%	4.29%	1.84%	8.52%	5.03%
Union members by sex								
Male	185,849	200,949	223,029	259,148	269,672	274,093	294,948	305,203
Female	134,293	150,897	153,430	132,098	138,346	141,422	155,981	168,423
Union members by sector								
Public	295,642	325,681	346,146	358,070	369,257	374,575	385,747	398,416
Private	24,500	26,165	30,313	33,176	38,761	40,940	65,182	75,210
Growth of public sector unionisation in % per year		10.16	6.28	3.44	3.12	1.44	2.98	3.28
Growth of private sector unionization in % per year		6.8	15.85	9.44	16.83	5.62	59.21	15.38
Total number of urban wage workers**	2,338,650	2,438,402	2,544,615	2,867,785	2,872,884	3,277,085	3,442,585	3,645,896

**National level data was only available for 2013 indicating 42,403,879 as the total national employment.

Source: adapted from Biniyam (2017)

CETU became increasingly wedged between its members and the EPRDF, as industrialisation led to growing demands from labour. However, the EPRDF demanded full compliance of unions with developmental state policies and criticised CETU for being too vocal. The former Prime Minister Hailemariam and his minister of industry Ahmed Abtew held that *“the premises of organised labour had to be redefined”* and the mind-set of unions had to change to increase productivity and profitability (Tamrat, 2014). Civil servants working on labour issues felt that unions remained too confrontational (Interviewee Nr. 122, 2016). An interviewee explained for example:

“Some federations and CETU fuel disputes and don’t solve them. They are not pushing for a solution but they take extreme positions where you cannot negotiate. CETU and the federations have to show more diplomacy. They have to show support and contribution. They challenge the management all the time and they seek confrontation” (Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016).

Although such statements presented an exaggerated picture of union activism in Ethiopia, evidence suggested that union leaders were not immune to the pressure exercised by workers, nor simply the handmaidens of the EPRDF regime.

To reduce accountability of union leaders to workers and prevent them from giving into workers’ demands, the management often handpicked individuals lacking previous experience within the union (Interviewee Nr. 108, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 128, 2016). Indeed, interviews with many BTU leaders revealed the alignment of union and management interests. Trade union leaders explained for example:

“We [the union and the management] have the same objective. We want to increase the company’s profit and progress. This also benefits the workers” (Interviewee Nr. 108, 2016). “There is no difference between the management and the union in terms of our goals. We want profit and growth for the company and happy employees” (Interviewee Nr. 128, 2016).

Nevertheless, as union members pushed unions to represent their interests, several union leaders eventually responded to at least parts of the demands. Consequently, the management regularly replaced union leaders to ensure control over them (Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016; Interviewee Nr 61, 2016).

Although industrial conflicts grew in number over the past decade, the EPRDF disregarded labour concerns and pushed for investment friendly labour regulations. The ruling coalition argued, that revisions of the labour proclamation were necessary to align the country's law with its development policies, encourage FDI, increase productivity and profitability and prevent industrial conflict. Suggested revisions included the extension of probation periods for workers, the possibility of terminating without notice workers who arrive late, the increase of notice for workers, the cancellation of severance pay, the reduction of annual leave and the increase of legal overtime. The MoLSA justified the suggested legal changes referring to labour regulations in the Asian developmental states (MoLSA, 2016; Staff Reporter, 2017c).

Taking everyone by surprise, CETU reacted to the latest draft revisions by threatening a general strike for the first time since the 1970s (Addis Fortune, 2017; Dawit, 2017a, 2017b). It stated that the proposed revisions did not reflect the outcomes of the extensive consultation process undertaken, nor did they honour the agreements made within the labour advisory board. Moreover, CETU questioned the suitability of taking the Asian developmental states as blueprints for Ethiopian policies and accused the EPRDF of violating workers' rights and of breaching international labour conventions (CETU, 2017; Dawit, 2017c; Samson, 2017b). Prior to this decision, CETU had sent its executive committee members to its regional offices and organised consultation meetings with its member unions to seek their approval for calling a general strike (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 147, 2018). The threat was taken seriously and CETU was able to stall the passing of the proclamation and forced re-negotiations (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018). This episode demonstrated that the EPRDF had miscalculated its ability to control CETU and underestimated the pressures unions were receiving from their members and due to the increasing number of wildcat strikes (Admasie, 2018b). Interviews at CETU suggested that confederation still saw its main role in guaranteeing industrial peace and supported EPRDF affiliation among its member unions, all the while opposing the changes in the labour proclamation that would negatively affect workers' rights (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018).

While the content of the proposed revisions provided one piece of explanation for CETU's move, another one was to be found in the regime's ethnic politics and the prevailing political climate. Although the confederation was not organised according to the principle of ethnic federalism⁹¹ and its representatives held that only interest-based, not ethnic-based representation could ensure the strength of organised labour (Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016b), the overlap between EPRDF and union structures suggested that ethnic politics influenced decision-making. The TPLF's control over unions was ensured through the *labader* committee and the strategic appointment of TPLF members as executive committee members. For example, in the external relations department at CETU, the TPLF controlled the federation's official communication and thereby its discourse. However, according to data on union leadership (CETU, 2016), the majority of the executive committee members at the confederation and the federations were Amhara (51%), while only twenty-one percent were Oromo and fourteen percent were Tigrayan. Fourteen percent came from other ethnic groups: Gurage (10%), Kaffa, Kambatta, Gamo and Hadiya (1% each). As of March 2018, the CETU executive committee was composed of four Amhara, three Oromo, two Tigrayans and one Kambatta, meaning that the ANDM and OPDO together were able to outweigh the TPLF members by far. As the TPLF hegemony in the EPRDF became increasingly questioned in the 2015/18 political crisis, the power of the *labader* committee diminished. Particularly the OPDO members in CETU got involved in the renegotiations of power in the EPRDF, pushing for a larger role for labour in the ruling coalition.

From Co-optation to Contestation – The EPRDF Government and Trade Unions

The above analysis confirms that trade unions have been strictly controlled by the EPRDF from the early 1990s onwards. However, it also shows that the ruling coalition

⁹¹ CETUs branch offices were located in Hawassa, Diredawa, Adama, Jimma, Kolbolcha, Bahir Dar, Mekelle to represent and cover the country's most industrialised zones. In many cases branch offices covered unions in more than one region. The Jimma office (Oromia) covered unions in Gambella and Benishangul, while the Kombolcha office (Amhara) also covered unions in Affar, the Diredawa office unions in Oromia and Somali and the Hawassa (SNNP) office unions in Oromia. Trade unions clearly differed from other mass based organisation, in the fact that they did not follow the structure of ethnic federalism and promoted a pan-Ethiopian organisation of workers.

increasingly tried to use unions to deal with labour issues emerging due to the country's industrialisation process rather than simply focusing on repression of labour. However, as unions received pressure from their members to represent workers' interests, unions' loyalty to the EPRDF was not infinite. Hence there was a need to disaggregate the patterns of interactions between trade unions, state organisations and party structures, to account for the fact that interactions reached from co-optation to contestation over various forms of cooperation and coexistence, changed over time and depended on the respective interlocutors.

Co-optation

Co-optation took different forms, but was expressed through the fact that the EPRDF government through the *labader* committee, the MoLSA and the BoLSAs controlled agenda setting at CETU and other unions, ensuring their compliance with developmental state policies. The EPRDF used both infrastructural power – its direct links to the trade unions – as well as threat of use of despotic power, to demand trade unions to carry out activities in the name of the developmental state, that benefited public- and private investors rather than workers.

The participation of trade unions in government affiliated civil society structures discredited the unions in the eyes of many people, who felt that unions were a handmaiden of the EPRDF, unable to represent the interests of workers. CETU for example participated in the Ethiopian civil society coalition that was strategically deployed by the EPRDF to provide legitimacy to its rule (Interviewee Nr. 2, 2015a; Interviewee Nr 12, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015). For example, the coalition was mobilised to monitor the federal elections and despite the EPRDF taking every single seat in parliament in 2015, the acting CETU president commended the elections as 100% democratic (Leulseged, 2015; Staff Reporter, 2015). Unions were also part of the EPRDF established people's wing (*hzb knf*), which grouped civil society organisations considered crucial by the EPRDF for the success of its developmental state project (EPRDF, 2011a: 9–10).

Unions played an important role in mobilising funds from their members for projects carried out under the EPRDF's developmental state programme, often at the expense of workers and without being able to unionise workers on the projects. For

example, regarding the GERD (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam), workers in public enterprises were asked to “*contribute two salaries to the dam*” (Interviewee Nr. 147, 2018) and unions were tasked with mobilising their members behind the campaign. As contributions were automatically deducted from the salary, workers stated they had no choice but to contribute and felt that unions tried to legitimise the actions of the EPRDF government rather than representing workers’ interests. BTUs and industrial federations also bought bonds to finance the GERD (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2018) and according to government media reports, the support from CETU and its members was crucial for the project’s success (Mehari, 2016). Some trade unionists held that unions had to, rather than want to, participate in resource mobilisation for the GERD (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 147, 2018). Moreover, the EPRDF government resisted the attempts of the Federation of Construction, Wood, Metal, Cement, to unionise workers on the dam and failed to address concerns regarding the working conditions on site (Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016).

The EPRDF government used CETU and the federations to deal with industrial conflict on its behalf, unionise the workers in concerned enterprises and negotiate an agreement between workers and the management (Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016). The MoLSA and BoLSAs asked CETU to unionise unruly workers where conflict had broken out. Through assembling workers in EPRDF aligned unions, the EPRDF tried to prevent an independent labour movement from emerging and to contain workers’ demands to the highest degree possible (Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016). Where large international and national enterprises were concerned, the President of CETU often went in person to mediate between the workers and employers, even where this involved travel to other regions (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018). A well-known example concerned unionisation at Ayka Addis, a Turkish textile firm. An interviewee shared:

“Two years ago there was no union at Ayka Addis. Workers striked to get higher salaries. Representatives of the MoLSA and the Ministry of Industry came to us and asked us to go with them to Ayka and solve the problem” (Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016).

However, there was no guarantee that unions would persist beyond the immediate conflict resolution and the MoLSA and BoLSAs did not intervene where management illegally fired union leaders and dissolved unions (Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016). While unionisation lay in CETU's corporate interest, the fact that it was perceived by workers as being ordered by the EPRDF government and failed to adequately address workers' concerns, reduced its legitimacy in the eyes of many (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018).

At international enterprises, the EPRDF only supported unionisation as a means to solve industrial conflict, not to pre-empt such incidences (Interviewee Nr. 87, 2016). Leaders of the confederation and the federations stated that they were interdicted to push for unionisation at international enterprises and that disobedience would be punished, as the EPRDF feared a reduction in FDI if unionisation was to become a requirement. Interviewees explained:

*"In foreign firms there is high resistivity. Indians, Turkey and the Chinese run investments, they are not interested in trade unions. The government won't finger at them" (Interviewee Nr. 51, 2016).
"If we kick them [the international firms], the government kicks us" (Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016).*

Further than refraining from organising workers at international enterprises, CETU was also accused of preventing unionisation in international enterprises where workers organised themselves. A former trade unionist at an international enterprise in Addis reported:

"We had had bad experience before with all stakeholder, CETU, the federation and the government. The federation leaked the information about union formation to the government once before. It was a senior employee who at that time tried to organise the workers. They fired him" (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016).

Many interviewees at the confederation and the federations expressed support for the EPRDF's developmental state policies, stressing the benefits for employment creation that an investment friendly climate created (Interviewee Nr. 41, 2016; Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 96, 2016). A federation employee stated:

"The government wants workers to compromise for technological transfer. It sees the bigger picture. Workers just want everything. But this is not because the government hates its citizens. The

government wants to strike a balance. It wants to attract investment and respect the workers' rights. Investors, local and international, are profit oriented and the government understands that" (Interviewee Nr. 96, 2016).

Rather than expressing support for the workers' cause, many trade union leaders at confederation and federation level blamed workers for being greedy, unwilling to work and confrontational. Moreover, CETU staff explained that the workers needed to be educated, stating for example:

"There is an awareness problem of labour union leaders. This discourages the management to get the workers organised. They establish a union and then without considering the company's capacity they ask for an annual increment and boni" (Interviewee Nr. 108, 2016). "We help our workers to be good and productive workers. We train them and we advise them and after that the workers will be good" (Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016).

Indications exist that EPRDF members within CETU collected information on union members on behalf of the EPRDF (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018). For example, details on the members' political affiliation and known political activities were assembled and the Addis Rye - the EPRDF's publication for its members - was disseminated within CETU by a senior executive committee member (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a). Moreover, the CETU newspaper was used to disseminate political messages to workers, requesting them to contribute to the country's development. The confederation's internal editing board censored articles written by junior staff that were considered too critical ("anti-EPRDF") (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 147, 2018).

Cooperation

Cooperation between trade unions and state organisations emerged where agendas between the two overlapped. Given the large influence the EPRDF and different state organisations such as the MoLSA had on the agenda of trade unions, cooperation was not always easy to distinguish from co-optation. One possible way of distinguishing cooperation from co-optation was to see how far trade unions served workers interests rather than primarily executing EPRDF orders.

The tri-partite labour advisory board is an example of a formal mechanism of co-operation (Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Negarit Gazeta, 2004: 10). The board provided a forum for CETU to discuss unsolved industrial conflicts with representatives of the MoLSA and BoLSAs and the representatives of employers, as well as to provide input into labour related legislation (Interviewee Nr. 31, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 67, 2016; MoLSA, 2016). In 2016, discussions focused more generally on the new labour law and particularly on illegal termination of union leaders, working hours and holidays (Interviewee Nr. 41, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016; Interviewee Nr 61, 2016). This forum allowed CETU to voice concerns of workers and CETU management held that they had been able to improve legislation to reflect workers' interests. For example, CETU used the forum to lobby for the obligatory social and health insurance bill (Hilina, 2009; Interviewee Nr. 31, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 65, 2016; Neamin, 2015) and the amendment of the tax bill, which increased the amount of income exempt from taxation to benefit low income earners (Interviewee Nr. 67, 2016; Proclamation No. 979, 2016). Apart from the tripartite forum, CETU and the Prime Minister established a bi-annual forum, which allowed CETU to bring up pressing issues and discuss problems encountered regarding labour questions (Interviewee Nr. 51, 2016; Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 63, 2016). While not taking place as regularly as initially proposed, the meetings received large media attention and CETU used the opportunity to voice concerns publicly about labour issues in Ethiopia (Tamrat, 2014).

Being aware of how industrialisation is usually accompanied by the emergence of a labour movement, the EPRDF decided to prepare for this eventuality. One strategy was to support a unionisation campaign under CETU in 2015 (Misak, 2016; Yosef, 2018), to make sure that it took the form of EPRDF aligned unions. The MoLSA and BoLSAs used labour inspection visits to inform employers about the benefits of unions, encouraging them to get their workers organised and formalise collective bargaining (Interviewee Nr. 67, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 122, 2016). Civil servants explained:

"The regional bureaus support CETU branches in their unionisation campaign. If enterprises say no to unionisation, the regional bureaus follow up" (Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016). "We tell them (the

employers) about the use and advantage of labour unions. We talk to enterprises and clear misunderstandings about social dialogue and collective bargaining” (Interviewee Nr. 122, 2016).

While the EPRDF’s intention was to promote EPRDF affiliated unionisation to control workers, CETU significantly increased its membership and thereby leverage for negotiation in the future (Abiy, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 31, 2015: 31; Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Misak, 2016).

Although unionisation was usually carried out with the consent of the employers, in cases of resistance at Ethiopian private sector enterprises, often CETU and the federations still unionised workers. They obtained the registration certificate for the BTU from the BoLSAs and sent it to the management to inform it about the process (Interviewee Nr. 67, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 96, 2016). Civil servants explained:

“Sometimes they [the workers] may face resistance from the companies. We still give registration to unions” (Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016). “We don’t ask employers for their agreement as long as unions follow the right procedures for unionisation. We certify the unions and the certification is also sent to the employers” (Interviewee Nr. 122, 2016).

Despite providing certification against the employers interests, the MoLSA and BoLSAs did not provide support when unions were forcefully dissolved by the management. Moreover, there existed evidence that in a few cases they stalled registration procedures or denied registration for reasons that were not clear (Interviewee Nr. 96, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018).

The unions received also technical support from government bodies. The BoLSAs for example provided trainings to unions (Interviewee Nr. 122, 2016) and the MoLSA offered advice on legal questions, such as drafting of model bylaws for unions to facilitate their set-up (Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016). CETU also engaged in technical collaborations with government offices and its gender department for example jointly carried out consultations among female workers with the Ministry for Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA). As part of this cooperation CETU was allocated funds by the ministry to improve working conditions for women (Interviewee Nr. 73, 2016).

Co-existence

The control exercised by the *labader* committee, the MoLSA and the BoLSAs forced unions to operate within the EPRDF set parameters and rendered coexistence nearly impossible. However, some union leaders tried to keep their independence by subverting power structures, disobeying orders without publicly contesting EPRDF directives and policies. I only met one basic trade union that managed to adopt co-existence as a survival strategy for an extended period of time, thanks to the capacity of its leaders and its historical role in the Ethiopian labour movement.

Despite several attempts to co-opt the labour union in question the council of the union did not give in to the pressure from management and high EPRDF officials. Trade unionists explained that the majority council members did not vote for party members:

“From the very beginning the sons of our employees were the same. Of course some come from the TPLF and the EPRDF, they are also there. Our employees don’t elect them. They identify them through the name and through their behaviour. No one nominates them or votes for them. This is a true labour union. It’s not for the government” (Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a). “The union is strong because of its history and the culture in the company. In Addis Ababa people elect rationally [no EPRDF members]. In the council, the representatives from Addis dominate⁹²” (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). “The [union] council has the upper hand when it comes to election. The management pushes to elect these people [EPRDF members]. But the council members know who is who and they don’t give them any chances” (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a). “Our employees are strong and educated. They don’t vote for party members” (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016b).

In 2013, the union in question got into conflict with the company’s management over a disagreement about working hours in the new collective agreement (Interviewee Nr. 113, 2016). The union refused to sign the collective agreement, stating that the management’s demands to increase working hours without compensation were against the law. The union did not go to court, fearing that the

⁹² The union in question was a white collar union. As described in chapter four, the EPRDF had less political support in urban areas, due to the fact that it excluded the urban elites and middle class from the political settlement, which explained the voting behaviour of the union council members from Addis Ababa.

EPRDF cadres in the enterprise management would manipulate the court ruling to the company's advantage. A public media campaign or striking were also excluded as viable solutions, because of the expected repression such actions would trigger (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). Although the union and the management met on a regular basis to discuss the new collective agreement, a form of co-existence without agreement marked these occasions (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). The enterprise management considered bringing the case to the tri-partite meetings, to expedite an agreement, stating:

"We have been negotiating the last collective agreement for two years. This time it's the first time it has taken such a long time. There were extraordinary demands from the union and some major changes. We try to manage within ourselves. But if this isn't possible we will have a tri-partite mediation with the MoLSA" (Interviewee Nr. 114, 2016).

In the end, the union and the management agreed on re-signing the old collective agreement due to the inability to find a compromise (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2018).

Representatives from the basic trade union in question that worked at federation level were perceived as more vocal than other union leaders and a CETU employee noted:

"You can see that in their interventions in the council meetings. When they speak, they speak their mind freely" (Interviewee Nr. 79, 2016a).

However, the union representatives felt:

"Today we cannot differ from other federations. We try to give our opinion freely but we are dominated by the others. We cannot do nothing. We are sitting here as a symbol. But CETU and the other unions know that we are independent" (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a).

Coexistence did not increase the union's ability to influence decision-making at confederation level, as its resistance to EPRDF infiltration led to it being frozen out (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). Moreover, the *labader* committee and CETU repeatedly tried to influence elections at enterprise and federation level to ensure that party members were elected into executive committee positions. Although they often failed to achieve their goal, in

2017 a union leader from the BTU in question traded party support for federation presidency (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 100, 2018), indicating that the strategy of coexistence could be undermined.

Resisting pressure without publicly questioning EPRDF directions was in a few cases used by trade union leaders to subvert power structures. Some trade union leaders for example left the CETU election in 2015, after being asked during the election to vote for Kassahun Follo as president (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016). Union representatives reported that *“Then they [CETU employees] came over and asked us to vote for Kassahun. Not one of us voted. We all left the elections”* (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016). While voting against the instruction was not perceived as a viable strategy, leaving the election before the vote was a way to avoid the EPRDF directives. Moreover, one of the industrial federations blocked the admission of a union set up collectively by the management and a BoLSA at a private company (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 98, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016). A trade unionist explained:

“The federation rejected the union because of the transfer of the executive members to the countryside. There was no independence. The federation was worried about the impact on other management if we would have allowed the union in” (Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016).

Contestation

Contestation in the case of trade unions was often limited to verbal criticism and was delivered in person and behind closed doors rather than in public. However, organised and unorganised labour became increasingly vocal in 2017/18. A major point of conflict revolved around the operationalisation of the EPRDF’s development programme and the negative impact of industrialisation on workers. While supporting the EPRDF’s push for industrialisation, labour leaders held that the EPRDF favoured employers over employees with detrimental effects for workers’ wellbeing. CETU publicly criticised the EPRDF government for failing to prioritise the respect of workers’ rights, which was picked up by broadcast and print media.

A major point of disagreement revolved around the EPRDF’s approach to FDI. Union leaders stated in interviews that the EPRDF government failed to force

international investors to abide by the Ethiopian labour law and denounced the fact that state organisations forbade unions to organise workers at international enterprises (Interviewee Nr. 41, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 51, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 53, 2016). A federation employee explained:

“The government likes the Chinese. The Chinese bring money. So, we cannot organise workers in Chinese companies. The Ethiopian road authority gives projects to foreign companies. The companies sign a contract to respect the constitution and the law. And then they don’t. They are autonomous the government tells us” (Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016).

Another critique addressed to the EPRDF government concerned its failure to intervene in the firing and harassment of labour leaders by the management (Giorgis, 2014; Interviewee Nr. 41, 2016; Interviewee Nr 61, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 102, 2016). Rather than protecting union leaders from illegal contract termination, the EPRDF proposed changes to the labour proclamation which would allow companies to compensate financially illegally terminated union leaders rather than re-employing them (CETU, 2017; Interviewee Nr 61, 2018). CETU and federation employees claimed:

“Illegal firing and transfer of BTU leaders is another problem” (Interviewee Nr. 97, 2016). “There are problems such as illegal contract termination even in government enterprises. It is a paradox that the government who makes the rules doesn’t want to adhere to them” (Interviewee Nr. 51, 2016).

The question of the unionisation of the civil service marked a visible disagreement between CETU and the EPRDF, and CETU had implicated the ILO in this matter to increase the pressure on the government. CETU employees explained the following:

“Government enterprises are well organised but the public sector is not. We pledged to the government to amend the local law to be able to unionise public servants. The government answers always ‘after I finish the civil service reform’. The government tells us ‘the idea is a good idea but I am not ready now. I have to change the attitude of the civil servants first’. I think it’s the fear of strike which puts them off” (Interviewee Nr. 67, 2016). “According to the labour law workers have the right to unionise except for civil servants. At the moment, it’s on the ILO table. Two years ago, we asked the

government why and said that according to the constitution it was a right. The government said that according to the constitution yes, but not to the labour law” (Interviewee Nr 61, 2016).

Although attempts at independent unionisation in Ethiopia were usually quickly co-opted and hence seldom became known to a larger public, in a few cases labour leaders continued fighting for trade union rights despite attempted intimidation. The case of the workers at the Sheraton Hotel in Addis Ababa got pushed to the IUF (International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations) in 2016, necessitating an intervention of the US National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (USNCP, 2016). The union needed two attempts to set up, as the first union was dissolved and leaders let go. The second attempt at unionisation was made completely clandestine and in the wake of the 2010 national elections. CETU was informed only when the executive committee of the BTU was already elected. Despite official registration of the union, the management failed to engage in collective bargaining, pushing the union leaders to go to court. While being made redundant for this move, the union leaders went as far as the federal court level to fight their case, contesting the decisions of two lower courts that had ruled in favour of the management. The IUF lobbied internationally⁹³, which put pressure on the EPRDF government and the Sheraton’s management. Although the settlement which was reached in the end did not lead to the reinstatement of the trade unionists, some continued fighting their case as a union in exile together with the IUF (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2016). The IUF pressured CETU to support the unions case, however the confederation remained reluctant (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018).

Over the course of my research both unorganised and organised labour became more vocal. Wildcat strikes accompanied the political protests, making *“for the greatest wave of labour unrest in Ethiopia since the mid-1970s”* (Admasie, 2018b: 432). Both Ethiopian private and public sector enterprises were affected, as were international companies, such as the Dutch owned Sher Ethiopia horticulture farm, the French owned Castell winery and companies at the Bole Lemi Industrial Park

⁹³ <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/3992> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

(Admasie, 2018b: 431f). Increasingly, wildcat strikes also concerned unionised enterprises and although trade unions did not officially call the strikes, they expressed support to the workers and negotiated with the employers on behalf of the workers. For example, workers of the light railway in Addis Ababa (Yonas, 2018) and workers of the Ethiopian Aviation Authority (Etenesh, 2018) called strikes, blocking traffic in the capital and at Bole International Airport, until agreements could be reached with the respective management. The increasing number of wildcat strikes put pressure on CETU, as workers denounced the unacceptable working conditions and salaries in Ethiopia. CETU reacted to the latest draft revisions of the labour proclamation threatening a general strike (Addis Fortune, 2017; Dawit, 2017a, 2017b) and CETU's executive committee members also vocally advocated for example for minimum salaries and unionisation in industrial parks (Addis Fortune, 2018; Birhanu, 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the EPRDF government established an elaborate system of control over trade unions already in the 1990s, to prevent them from adopting an independent agenda. However, the analysis also demonstrated that the EPRDF's approach to trade unions shifted as a result of the ruling coalition's attempt to pursue the developmental state model. Instead of solely focusing on control, the EPRDF tried to selectively use trade unions to deal with labour issues emerging as part of the country's recent industrialisation process and to prevent an independent labour movement from emerging.

The majority of interactions between trade unions and state organisations fell into the categories co-optation and cooperation, as the EPRDF had established a high level of control over trade unions and their agenda. While interactions testifying to co-optation often negatively affected workers and decreased the legitimacy of trade unions in the eyes of their members, cooperation yielded mutual benefits. Few interactions testified to coexistence, as the direct oversight exercised by the EPRDF over trade unions forced the latter to operate within the parameters set by the ruling coalition. However, subversion of power structures and secret disobedience were used in a few cases to create distance to the state and operate in parallel.

Contestation for a long time took the form of verbal and written contestation of EPRDF policies negatively affecting labour. While public contestation was often refrained from to avoid repression, trade unionists used their direct connections to state and party structures to negotiate on behalf of labour. Negotiations often took place behind closed doors rather in public forums, concealing a lot of the existing conflict and bargaining between trade unionists and state officials. Moreover, as much of the control exercised by the EPRDF over trade unions was also hidden from the public eye, the focus on formal interactions often provided a misleading picture regarding state - trade union relations.

While trade unions, especially the confederation and the federations, in many cases legitimised the EPRDF regime and mobilised workers to support the ruling coalition's development programme, their loyalty was neither infinite nor unconditional. With growing industrialisation, employees increasingly posed demands for better working conditions, leading to a multiplication of wildcat strikes both in enterprises with and without unions. High unemployment rates, especially among the youth, and decreasing real wages fuelled contention among workers and put pressure on unions to address workers' grievances (Admasie, 2018b; Interviewee Nr. 88, 2016). The EPRDF ignored the growing pressure on trade unions and continued promoting investment at the expense of workers, which eventually led unions to oppose the EPRDF's attempt to formally align the labour proclamation with its developmental state programme (CETU, 2017). Coinciding with the political crisis and the growing conflict within the ruling coalition, some executive committee members in CETU from OPDO and ANDM opposed directions given by the TPLF led *labader* committee. Although the confederation and the federations continued to check labour on behalf of the EPRDF, they also used their growing membership to assert their power, indicating a potential shift in the patterns of interactions.

Chapter 6: Chambers of Commerce and State-Led Development in Ethiopia – From Contestation to Political Alignment?

Addis Ababa, 5th and 6th of October 2016 (Meskerem 25 and 26 2009)

I went to the Prime Minister's First International Agro-Industry Investment Forum held at the UNECA compound. No one talked about the ongoing protests; instead participants praised the EPRDF's achievements with respect to promoting business and development. On the second day of the forum, the organisers brought us to the Eastern Industrial Zone, the country's first industrial park. The fact that we went in a convoy protected by the federal police and the presence of armed security at the park betrayed information about the actual political situation in the country. However, the Chinese owner of the park who greeted us reiterated that the investment conditions in Ethiopia were outstanding and glorified political stability. Walking around the park, I met Tesfaye⁹⁴, employee at a regional chamber of commerce, but who, according to his name badge, participated in the forum on behalf of the Ministry of Trade. He told me he worked at the chamber and the ministry.

The Addis Chamber held its annual meeting in parallel to the Prime Minister's forum, some 300 meters from the UNECA compound. Everyone was surprised by how many members came and they had to open a second room to accommodate everyone. People were queuing outside of the building to get in. Several thousand members attended and all people wanted to talk about, were the protests. The meeting took several hours. I learned that a lot of businesses had been destroyed, including attacks on banks and ATMs. People were talking about big financial losses and the problems they encountered due to the general internet shutdown. The outgoing chamber president didn't seem to know how to react. He didn't respond to the members' demands for more active chamber involvement to solve the political crisis; instead he advocated for cooperation and against creating conflict with the government.

The general secretary of the Ethiopian chamber gave a talk at the Prime Minister's forum, but his English was incomprehensible. The representative of the

⁹⁴ The name was changed to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.

business association formally mandated to represent the Ethiopian private sector lacked the language skills to promote the association's members in front of international investors. The sectoral associations attended the forum as well, exhibiting their products in the main hall. I didn't meet anyone from the Addis Chamber at the forum and when I asked people at the chambers' annual meeting, no one I talked to was informed about the event at the UNECA. Going back and forth between the meetings, the picture of who stood where became clearer and clearer.

* * *

Introduction

"Chambers were an exception in terms of independence and people looked towards them for inspiration. Now in the chamber leadership, there are party affiliates. The Addis Chamber is not in the opposition and not in the camp. But it is docile. They have to watch what they are doing" (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a).

This chapter studies the relationships between state organisations and chambers of commerce in Ethiopia under the EPRDF's developmental state model and explores how the existing economic and political framework structured their interactions. In the first part of the chapter, I provide a brief historical overview of the development of the chamber system in Ethiopia, to contextualise the analysis. The second part of the chapter explores how organisations in the state and organisations in the chambers system relate to each other and identifies the mechanisms used by different public offices to establish and maintain control over the chambers. Lastly, I analyse the patterns of interaction between state representatives and representatives of the chambers system at the timing of my fieldwork.

During the formative period of the EPRDF regime, the chambers of commerce in Ethiopia commanded "[...] respect and projected considerable influence in the economic and political life of the country. [...] chambers in Ethiopia were seen as formidable members of the civil society and a strong lobbying group for the private sector" (Asrat, 2016). The chambers became increasingly active during the late 1990s and early 2000s, questioning the EPRDF's state-led development agenda and pushing for democratisation. After failed attempts to realign the chambers with the EPRDF's

agenda, the government forcefully restructured the chamber system in 2003. Since then, chambers of commerce in Ethiopia have largely been perceived as co-opted and integrated into state structures (Interviewee Nr. 17, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 77, 2016).

Although very little academic work referred to the chamber system in Ethiopia, scholars confirmed the hypothesis of weak and co-opted chambers (Altenburg, 2010: 14; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 23; Weis, 2016: 261f). According to Altenburg, *“the Chamber is mainly seen as an instrument to disseminate government policies and mobilise support for them, rather than a politically neutral representation of business interests”* (Altenburg, 2010: 8). While co-optation has been assumed, little is known about the process of establishing and sustaining state control over the chambers and about the EPRDF’s rationale behind this move. Moreover, virtually no one has looked into state - chamber relations to analyse the chambers’ ability and willingness to represent the interest of the private sector vis-à-vis the Ethiopian state.

This chapter aims at filling this gap and explores the relationship and patterns of interaction between the EPRDF government and chambers of commerce in Ethiopia since 1991. While evidence presented in this chapter confirms that the restructuring of the chamber system in 2003 was used to curb the power of the chambers of commerce, it also shows that the EPRDF tried to mobilise the chambers as part of its state-led economic development project. The EPRDF’s inability to enforce its political decisions among the business community in a coherent manner meant it failed, especially with the urban business elite which was devoted to liberal economic and political values as opposed to the ruling coalition’s state-led development agenda. While the threat of the use of despotic power prevented independent chamber activism, the EPRDF was unable consistently to mobilise the urban business elite behind the developmental state project. Although the EPRDF created state-affiliated chamber organisations, many of those new and loyal entities lacked capacity, foreclosing the possibility of making them effective participants in the EPRDF’s developmental state project.

A Brief History of Chambers of Commerce in Ethiopia: 1947 - 2003

Business associations - like chambers of commerce, employers' federations and other business membership organisations - are civil society organisations representing the interests of actors in the private sector. The emergence of business associations worldwide was linked to the global development of markets and in many countries these associations were part of the first modern civil society organisations (Chen, 2011: 1; Glass and Kark, 2018: 270f). While the main role of business associations has been to protect the interests of their members, they have, in several cases, played important roles in political transition processes, using their economic weight to mobilise resources and exert political pressure (Kim, 1993; McMenamin, 2002; Mikamo, 2013; Rhee, 2002).

In Ethiopia, Chambers of Commerce were among the first modern civil society organisations that emerged in the 1940s, alongside professional associations and trade unions (Clark, 2000: 4; Dessalegn, 2002: 101f). The first chamber, the Chamber of Commerce of Addis Ababa, was given legal personality through the promulgation of the General Notice 90/47. The law stipulated the functions of the chamber, as well as its administrative structure (General Notice 90, 1947: Art. 4 & 7). While the Minister of Commerce and Industry was granted an oversight function to ensure the chamber's adherence to the law, the general notice granted the chamber the right to provide input into regulations affecting commercial practices, and to suggest political measures to promote commerce (General Notice 90, 1947: Art. 13 & 14). The law established a tax on business permits in favour of the chamber (General Notice 90, 1947: Art. 16) and the money from the tax was later used to construct the chamber's headquarters (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 94, 2016).

In line with the rights outlined in the General Notice 90 (1947: Art. 14b), the Addis Chamber progressively opened branch offices in other urban areas, to expand its services to the business community nationwide⁹⁵. While representing the business

⁹⁵ Given its national mandate, the Addis Chamber changed its name to Ethiopian chamber during the 1960s, however this change was never officially recorded and both names were used interchangeably, even in its own publications (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1965; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1966b; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1967c; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1968a).

community in Addis Ababa, the Addis Chamber also functioned as an apex organisation, coordinating the work of other city chambers. It provided diverse services to its members, e.g. support in dealing with government agencies, issuing certificates of origin and of inspection, holding business luncheons, organising trainings, as well as providing arbitration services (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1966a: 9ff; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1967a: 9ff; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1969: 7ff). The chamber also received international business delegations and organised and participated in international trade fairs (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1967b: 9ff; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1968b: 7ff).

During the reign of Haile Selassie, cooperation with the private sector was promoted (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1969: 24; Taffara, 2006: 242) and the growing business class was closely connected to Imperial circles (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 17). The relationship between the chambers and the Imperial government remained mostly cordial and high public officials regularly joined the chamber's events (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1965: 10; *Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1968a: 8f; Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 1974; Taffara, 2006: 242f). While being close to the emperor, chambers lobbied for improvements of the investment climate and the existing legal and fiscal framework (*Ethiopian Trade Journal*, 1970: 7ff; Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, February 17, 1972).



Figure 5: Cover and First Page, Ethiopian Trade Journal Vol. IV No. 2 January 1966

Source: Archive Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce

After the toppling of Selassie, the Derg restructured the chamber system in 1978, to align it to socialist central planning policies (Proclamation No. 148, 1978). The office building and the exhibition centre of the former Addis Chamber were confiscated. The relationship between the business community and the Derg regime was tense, business people were portrayed as counter-revolutionaries and many endured defamation, physical violence and even death ('Addis Business Vol X. No 1', 2007: 3f; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 18).

The chamber proclamation from 1978 established the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, which, in cooperation with the Minister of Commerce and Tourism, set up municipal chambers in other urban centres ('Nigdina Limat No. 53', 1988; Proclamation No. 148, 1978: Art. 5 & 6). The operation of the Ethiopian chamber was overseen by the Minister of Commerce and Tourism, who had representatives in the chamber's council and on the board (Private Sector Development Hub, 2013: 15ff; Proclamation No. 148, 1978: Art. 8-11, 18). Government subsidies were granted to the Ethiopian chamber for its operation (Proclamation No. 148, 1978: Art. 25). Progressively, thanks to the establishment of mandatory membership, the Derg-controlled chambers ensured the alignment of the business community to the economic policy of the regime ('Nigdina Limat No. 61', 1989: 8; 'Nigdina Limat No. 65', 1989: 5–18; Proclamation No. 148, 1978). The politburo even used the chambers to mobilise resources from the business community for the Revolutionary Army that fought the rebel movements during the late 1980s ('Nigdina Limat No. 53', 1988: 8; 'Nigdina Limat No. 55', 1988: 8).

The Addis Chamber lost most of its former influence to the newly established Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce (Yusuf et al., 2009: 52f). In the early Derg period, it tried to keep its independence through adapting to the Derg's private sector policies. Although the Addis Chamber focused on the few areas reserved for the private sector in the Derg's development plans, its proactive work quickly created suspicion among government officials leading to accusations of counter revolutionary activity (Taffara, 2006: 457f). Over the course of the Derg rule, the Addis Chamber became progressively integrated into the state structures and the *Nigdina Limat*, the Addis Chamber's official newspaper, helped to disseminate messages about the regime's

political and economic success ('Nigdina Limat', 1990; 'Nigdina Limat', 1991; 'Nigdina Limat No. 59', 1989; 'Nigdina Limat No. 54', 1988).

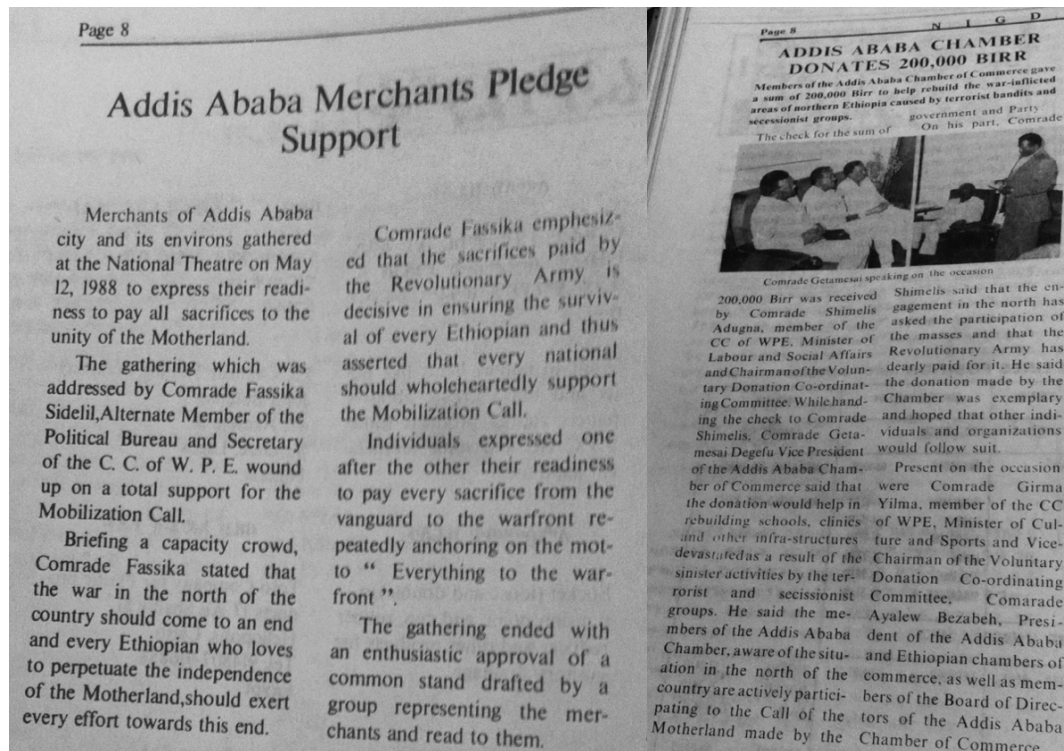


Figure 6: Excerpts from Nigdina Limat November 1988 (left) and Nigdina Limat June 1988 (right)

Source: Archive Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce

Despite the oppression during the Derg era, the business community was quick to reorganise after the EPRDF's victory over the Derg in 1991. Many businessmen felt excluded from the EPRDF regime, that, contrary to prior political settlements based on urban elites and central rule led by ethnic Amhara (see Chapter 4), promoted a political settlement based on rural elites and ethnic-federalism (Vaughan, 2011: 631f). Moreover, the business community questioned the EPRDF's state-led development agenda, that contradicted its desire for economic liberalisation. Through the chamber system, old economic elites and the growing business class that benefitted from the relative economic liberalisation in the post-Derg era, expressed their interests both in terms of the country's economic and political organisation. Businessmen working in the service sector and on import/export made up the majority of the chambers' members and thanks to their highly-educated leaders and financial capital, chambers became powerful interest organisations.

The Addis Chamber regained its role as prime representative organ of the private sector and its presidents often simultaneously headed the Ethiopian Chamber, the apex organ representing the country's different municipal chambers. During the transition period, the chambers of commerce tried to influence the reorganisation of the country's administrative and political structure ('Nigdina Limat', 1993a: 7; 'Nigdina Limat', 1994a: 6–8; 'Nigdina Limat', 1994b: 6ff). They arranged seminars and workshops to discuss and provide feedback on the policies proposed by the transitional government that affected the private sector ('Nigdina Limat', 1992a: 7; 'Nigdina Limat', 1992b: 8; 'Nigdina Limat', 1993b: 8f; 'Nigdina Limat', 1993c: 6f). Moreover, chambers also discussed national politics beyond immediate private sector interests, for example famine relief ('Nigdina Limat', 1994c: 7f), media and freedom of expression ('Nigdina Limat Vol. XVII No. 5', 1996: 12), corruption in public offices ('Addis Business Vol. 1 No. 1', 1997: 4) and the Ethio-Eritrean war in 1998 ('Addis Business Vol. 1 No. 5', 1998: 1). Given the relative resistance of the EPRDF government to take into account the chambers' inputs, the Addis Chamber arranged work stoppage and peaceful demonstrations to exert pressure ('Nigdina Limat Vol XVII No. 8', 1996: 12; Young, 1996: 538).



Figure 7: Excerpts from Nigdina Limat December 1996 (left) and March 1997 (right)

Source: Archive Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce

The 1990s were described by several interviewees as the “honeymoon period” of the private sector (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016). Although few of the chambers' attempts to influence politics led to actual changes, they were relatively free in their activism. This changed when the private sector in Ethiopia

stood behind the more liberal opposition parties during the 2000 and 2005 elections (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 20 & 51). The EPRDF government increasingly suspected the chambers of conspiring with political opposition parties (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016). Around the 2000 national elections, the Addis Chamber organised a campaign called “Addis vote”, telling the business community that their vote *“can and will make a difference”*, urging people to *“vote or forget liberty”*. Despite the non-partisan character of the campaign, rumours spread about the then Addis Chamber president running for office (‘Addis Business Vol. 2 No. 12’, 1999: 1f; ‘Addis Business Vol. 3 No. 2’, 2000: 2; ‘Addis Business Vol. 3 No. 11’, 2000: 9). The Addis chamber organised platforms for candidates from different parties to discuss business issues, held discussion forums for business people on the election and published numerous articles on the election (‘Addis Business Vol. 2 No. 11’, 1999; ‘Addis Business Vol. 3 No. 1’, 2000: 2; ‘Addis Business Vol. 3 No. 4’, 2000: 1f). While focusing on private sector issues, the chambers’ increasing political activism led to confrontation with state organisations.

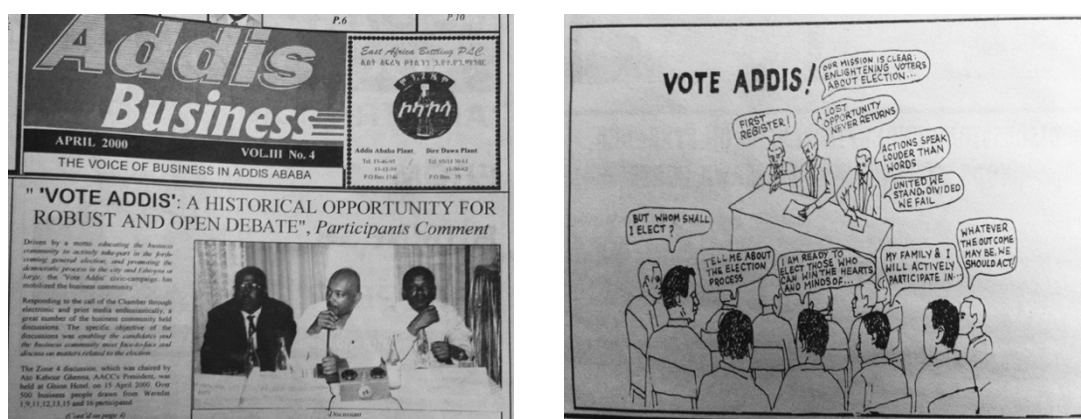


Figure 8: Excerpts from Addis Business January (left) and April 2000 (right)

Source: Archive Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce

Realigning the Chambers to the EPRDF’s Developmental Agenda

The antipathy that the EPRDF government showed towards the chambers of commerce had historical roots - the EPRDF mistrusted the chambers due to their engagement in national politics beyond private sector development (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b) – as well as ideological roots. Ideologically, the development trajectory chosen by the EPRDF contradicted free market principles and unregulated private

sector development that the chambers were striving for (Meles, 2011). Moreover, the chambers primarily represented businessmen in trade and services, while the EPRDF aimed at supporting manufacturing for industrialisation.

Following the example of the Asian Tigers (Meles, 2006), the EPRDF established control over the private sector to re-orientate it towards industry rather than trade and services. However, studies found that the EPRDF often failed to enable and guide the private sector to mobilise it effectively behind the developmental state operation. Instead of promoting Ethiopian private sector development, the EPRDF built its development operations on state owned enterprises, party endowment funds and party-affiliated businesses, as well as the attraction of foreign direct investment (Clapham, 2018: 1158f; Lefort, 2013; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011).

The close connection between politics and business led to the perception that party loyalty and ethnic origin were key determinants for people's ability to set up and operate businesses. This in turn led to frustration among large parts of the country's urban economic elites that did not identify with the regime and felt left out (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). The chambers, as representatives of the urban economic elites in general and of those in commerce and trade particularly, became targets of the EPRDF regime and were restructured to align them with the ruling coalition's economic and political priorities and prevent them from contesting the regime.

Proclamation No. 341/2003: Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association Establishment Proclamation

Given the chambers' increasing activism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the EPRDF government tried to silence them through intervening in the chambers' internal affairs. An attempt that became publicly known was the initiative in 1998/99 to get rid of the president of the Addis and the Ethiopian chambers of commerce at the time ('Addis Business Vol. 1 No. 6', 1998: 2). First, Kebur Ghenna, the chamber president in office was removed from the presidency of the Ethiopian Chamber under unsubstantiated allegations of corruption (Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016; Staff Reporter, 1999). Then the EPRDF tried to influence the Addis Chamber elections through party affiliates in the chamber council, who proposed

alternative candidates for the board and the presidency. Although the outgoing president did not want to run for office again, given the conflicts with different public offices during his first term, he was elected by a large majority ('Addis Business Vol. 2 No. 4', 1999: 11; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). An interviewee who had participated in the 1999 Addis chamber election explained:

"The government didn't want him [Kebur Ghenna], they wanted to put their own people. He changed and innovated the chamber and they didn't like it. The self-initiated committee that was set up and contained government supporters, we stopped them. The house was to burn. We voted our people, took them and went" (Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016).

Newspapers praised the elections as democratic, lauding the chamber leaders as exemplary ('Addis Business Vol. 2 No. 4', 1999: 11; Yemisrach, 1999). The government's attempt to influence the outcome of the chamber elections was futile and reflected badly on it, as details of the failed coup became publicly known. Moreover, Kebur Ghenna's successor, Berhane Mewa, was even more outspoken, pushing the EPRDF to listen to the chambers and their members. Given its inability to take control over the chambers through infiltration, the EPRDF government finally imprisoned and then exiled Berhane Mewa in 2003 (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016), and passed the proclamation 341/2003 to restructure the chamber system from the ground-up.

Concerning this proclamation, it is important to note that the chambers had lobbied for a new legal framework since 1992. Although the Ministry of Trade and Industry started an official drafting process for the new chamber law in 1992, it took eleven years for the law to materialise ('Nigdina Limat', 1992c: 7; Proclamation No. 341, 2003). In the meantime, the chambers operated in a legal vacuum, as the Derg Proclamation had been invalidated by the country's new constitution (ECCSA, 2014; Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016; Private Sector Development Hub, 2013: 17). The chambers prepared drafts for a new chamber law, trying to expedite and influence the process (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016a; 'Nigdina Limat', 1994a: 6), but they did not succeed ('Addis Business Vol. 6 No. 2', 2003: 1; 'Addis Business Vol. 6 No. 5', 2003: 1f).

Despite the eleven years of consultative drafting, the final chamber proclamation did not take into account the position of the chambers. The chambers worked closely with the state ministers⁹⁶ and technical personnel in the Ministry of Trade and Industry to influence the drafting process, however the final decision on the 2003 proclamation was taken by the council of ministers. The Minister of Trade and Industry at that time, was one of the architects of the law (Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a), and together with the council of Ministers he took the decision to align the chambers to the system of ethnic federalism and to introduce sectoral associations representing the manufacturing sector to reflect developmental state priorities⁹⁷. The fact that the draft was altered by the council of ministers suggests that broader political concerns, not only technocratic deliberations, influenced the outcome of the drafting process (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). An interviewee at the chambers shared:

“The draft proclamation was totally different. It was a brilliant document. The chambers worked with some technical people at the ministry. They submitted the draft to the council of ministers. But the government enacted its own proclamation. The mischief was done at the council of ministers”⁹⁸ (Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018).

The official justification provided by state officials for passing the proclamation 341/2003 was technical: aligning the chambers with the new administrative structures of ethnic federalism and making it reflect the importance given to the manufacturing sector within the developmental state project. Politicians and public servants explained:

“The chambers’ structural administration should follow the new structure. Regions should have regional chambers and sectoral associations. So we needed a new chamber proclamation” (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a). “Before it was only the chambers. Why did we insert the sectoral associations? The chamber only focused on trade. Since the direction in Ethiopia is the developmental state

⁹⁶ Each Ministry is headed by a minister who has state ministers working under him, responsible for the technical management of the ministry (Proclamation No. 916, 2015: Art. 12).

⁹⁷ Although the Ministry of Trade and Industry was formally entrusted with the responsibility to oversee the chambers, many other state and party structures became involved in the process which contributed to its delay (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a).

⁹⁸ Unfortunately, I haven’t been able to get hold of the draft prepared by the chamber and was therefore not able to compare the two versions.

strategy it is important to improve the role of manufacturing. We therefore changed the chambers” (Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016).

My findings suggest that, besides the technical concerns, regime survival concerns also influenced the 2003 proclamation. Given the chambers’ political activism in the 1990s and early 2000s, interviews revealed that the EPRDF government wanted to prevent chambers from challenging its rule. A former civil servant remembered for example:

“I heard the corridor talks in the Bureau of Trade. They said that the chamber system was captured by chauvinists. The government was concerned that the chambers were anti-government and wanted to clean them. The Ministry of Trade was assigned the role to keep the house in order. Together with others it came up with a complex proclamation to undercut the chamber system” (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a).

And an adviser to one of the then state Ministers recalled being told:

“We [the government] have to increase the heat in the private sector to melt it down completely. We are not interested in cooperating with the chambers. We want to eliminate existing structures and build the sector to fit our priorities” (Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017).

On the Creation of a Dysfunctional Chamber System

The main changes introduced by the Proclamation 341/2003 were the integration of sectoral associations to the chamber system and its alignment to federal structures, creating new chambers of commerce and sectoral associations at regional and *woreda* levels (See Figure 9) (Directive to Proclamation 341, 2004: Art. 3). Existing municipal chambers were restructured to fit the new law and had to integrate sectoral associations, becoming Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. Sectoral associations were business associations representing the manufacturing sector, rather than the service sector and traders that had traditionally made up most of the chambers’ members. Examples of important sectoral associations established through the 2003 proclamation were the Ethiopian Chamber of Sectoral Associations, the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer and Exporters Association, the Ethiopian Textile and Garment Manufacturer’s Association, the Ethiopian Meat Producer-Exporters Association, the Ethiopian Pulses Oil Seeds and Spices Processors Association, the

Ethiopian Leather Industries Associations and the Ethiopian Sugar and Suits Producers Association⁹⁹. The majority of sectoral associations were newly established, rather than restructured organisations and there existed some evidence that the EPRDF influenced their set-up and staffing to guarantee loyalty to the ruling coalition (Interviewee Nr. 78, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016).

⁹⁹ <http://ethiopianchamber.com/eccsa%E2%80%99s-members.aspx> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

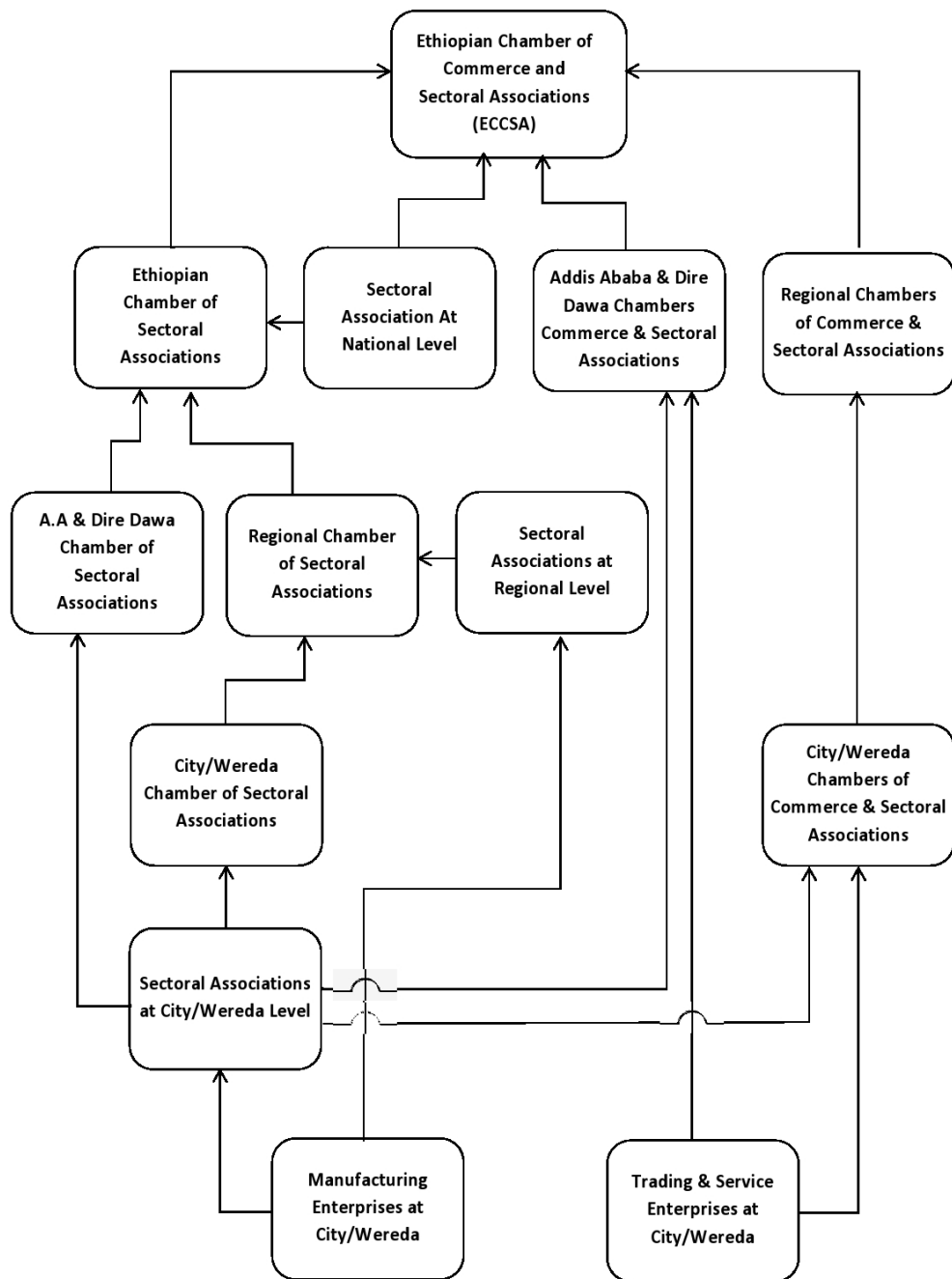


Figure 9: Structure of the Chamber System in Ethiopia¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ <http://ethiopianchamber.com/structure-of-the-chamber-system-in-ethiopia.aspx> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

Evidence revealed that many of the newly created sectoral associations, especially those operating at lower administrative levels, and regional chambers lacked the capacity to recruit members and collect membership fees, were understaffed and had ill-equipped offices. Presidents of sectoral associations reported that they lacked support staff and had to run the associations in parallel to their own business activities, while several regional chambers of commerce and sectoral associations had to use office space in public trade bureaus due to lack of financial capital to pay rent (ECCSA, 2014: 42; Interviewee Nr. 55, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a). There existed a clear mismatch between the new organisations' mandates and their organisational capacities, which was partly due to their young age and partly due to their lack of resources (Bewket, 2013; Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016c; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016).

Apart from the technical restructuring, the new chamber proclamation was also used to weaken and eliminate regime critical business associations. The Ethiopian Manufacturing Industries Association, whose structure did not correspond to the sectoral classification stipulated by the new law and its directive, was forcefully restructured (Altenburg, 2010: 8; Directive to Proclamation 341, 2004; Schleberger, 2011). An interviewee shared:

"The Ethiopian manufacturing association for example was shut down because it didn't fit the proclamation. The government felt that the manufacturers association didn't play a positive role. They had their own agenda and offices and they tried to influence elections" (Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016b).

Closing of regime critical organisations and replacing them with regime affiliated organisations was a strategy used to ensure alignment between business associations and the EPRDF regime.

The process of restructuring met high resistance among the existing chambers of commerce, but eventually between 2005 and 2007 it was implemented ('Addis Business Vol. 7 No 20', 2005: 1ff; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016). The most visible outcome of the restructuring was the disintegration of the once strong chamber system, as it tried to absorb the sectoral associations and adapt to the federal structures. New organisations had to be founded and old ones restructured, and instead of serving the business community, chamber and sectoral association leaders fought for control

over the chamber system (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 104, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016). Subsequently, many reputable businessmen and former chamber leaders left to avoid damage to their reputation and escape the increasing state control exercised over the chambers (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016; Schleberger, 2011).

The struggle for the mandate of national representation

The publicly most visible struggle developed between the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (AACCSA), and the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (ECCSA), around the question of which one was the rightful representative of the private sector in Ethiopia. The AACCSA was constituted of the original Addis Chamber and newly formed sectoral associations, while the ECCSA was a newly created organisation. It was composed of representatives from the regional chambers of commerce and sectoral associations, seven sectoral associations, the AACCSA and the Dire Dawa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The conflict between the AACCSA and the ECCSA was reported on by national media and contributed to the chamber system discrediting itself (Addis Fortune, 2009; Birhanu, 2016). Rather than cooperating, the two chambers competed for the representation of the private sector and the ECCSA often presented work done or services provided by the AACCSA as its own, further fuelling the conflict (Interviewee Nr. 47, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016).

While the AACCSA undeniably had the larger capacity, the ECCSA had been bestowed with the representative mandate through the 2003 proclamation (Proclamation No. 341, 2003). The government partnered with the ECCSA, rather than with the AACCSA¹⁰¹, as it had designed the voting procedures in the 2003 proclamation to guarantee over-representation of EPRDF affiliated associations at national level (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr.

¹⁰¹ As mentioned above, the urban economic elite, had historically kept a distance from the EPRDF regime and this included the constituency of the former Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce. Many chamber leaders and business men expressed criticism towards the ethnic identity politics of the EPRDF and criticised its state-led development programme.

132, 2017; Private Sector Development Hub, 2013). The AACCSA remained associated to the urban business elite that did not support the EPRDF. After the restructuring of the chamber system, international donors were told by government representatives to redirect their support aimed at national level private sector development from the AACCSA to the ECCSA, exacerbating the conflict even further (Addis Fortune, 2009; Interviewee Nr. 56, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 66, 2016).

A core discord between the two chambers emerged over which chamber, the AACCSA or the ECCSA, was the original chamber. All evidence indicated that the AACCSA was the successor of the first chamber inaugurated in 1948 (General Notice 90, 1947), however this fact remained contested by some high-ranking state officials and representatives from the ECCSA (Interviewee Nr. 47, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 55, 2016). Linked to this dispute, lay the question of the rightful ownership of the chamber building. Despite evidence that it had been constructed by the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce during the time of Emperor Haile Selassie, it had been handed to the ECCSA by the Ministry of Trade after the restructuring (Interviewee Nr. 104 2016; Addis Fortune 2009; Interviewee Nr. 92 2016).

Ethnic federalism and struggle in the chamber system

The alignment of the chamber system with the administrative structures of ethnic federalism led to its fractionalisation and the creation of numerous weak chambers.

Especially in regions characterised by high shares of agrarian rather than industrial production and low levels of trade and commerce, like Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali and Afar, regional chambers lacked financial and human capital, due to their low number of paying members and shortage of qualified staff. To support manufacturing, sectoral associations were established all the way down to the *woreda* level, however the decentralised structure led to a multiplication of sectoral associations representing a very small number of manufacturing businesses and lacking the capacity to represent the interests of their members in an effective manner (Interviewee Nr. 46, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 55, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 57, 2016). Many of the newly created chambers and sectoral associations remained much weaker than city chambers like the AACCSA and the Dire Dawa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association, whose original constituency was still made up

of wealthy urban economic elites and whose history and institutional memory dated back to the first half of the 20th century (Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018).

The establishment of chambers according to the principle of ethnic federalism contradicted the chambers' original mandate, which was to represent the interests of the business community, not ethnic interests¹⁰². Moreover, it led to campaigning and voting according to ethnic lines in the ECCSA elections (Addis Fortune, 2009; Bewket, 2013; Mikiyas, 2016; Teshome, 2014). Rather than revolving around the representation of different business interests, interviewees recounted the following about chamber elections:

"People support where they come from, not capacity" (Interviewee Nr. 57, 2016). "The election process in the chamber is manipulated. People's background counts a lot. Associations and regions push certain candidates" (Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016b).

In some cases, interviewees also expressed negative views about representatives from other ethnicities, leading for example an interviewee to state *"They tried to do all possible stupid things in the Tigray chamber. Because they are Tigrayans they think you are afraid of them"* (Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016). Moreover, ethnicization of conflicts even played out at regional level, pitting different ethnicities within one region against each other. During a meeting of two city chambers in Adama, I was told:

"The last elections for the regional chamber [in Oromia], they were wrong. The ballot was open, you just had to raise the hand. He [the current vice-president] won. We all saw he had won. But then the elders in the election committee asked him to be just vice president. They nominated someone from the biggest ethnic group [an Oromo] in the region as President" (Fieldnotes, 2016d).

¹⁰² While it could be argued that, since ethnic Amhara were over-represented among the urban business elite, the previous system had represented interests of Amharas, urban business men often came from mixed ethnic backgrounds and interest representation had been framed in terms of business, not ethnic interests.

Struggle among the traders and manufacturers

While the conflicts between chambers were more visible for the public, the conflicts within the chamber system were at the core of its disintegration. The proclamation and its directive favoured the representation of the sectoral associations – the manufacturers – over the representation of businessmen working in trade and services – who had originally constituted the core of the chambers. The proclamation created double membership for sectoral associations, as their members were represented both individually and as associations. This led to voting disadvantages for the traders (Proclamation No. 341, 2003: Art. 7(1), 16(1), 24(1)). Moreover, a directive issued to detail the implementation of the new chamber proclamation granted direct membership in the ECCSA to one national and six sectoral associations organised at national level (Directive to Proclamation 341, 2004: Art. 5), to ensure the representation of prioritised manufacturing sectors in the chamber system.

While sectoral associations complained about the traders' dominance in the chambers (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016), evidence suggested that members from sectoral associations outweighed members from the traditional chamber structures working in trade and services (Fieldnotes, 2016a, 2016c; Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a). A journalist observing elections at the Addis Chamber in 2013 reported:

“Unlike the individual members of the metropolitan Chamber, the sectoral associations are entities created by thousands of micro and small-scale businesses in the craft and services industries. The difference between the two surfaced at the meeting. Their numbers far outweigh the individual members of the Chamber, thus they have the power to be kingmakers” (Bewket, 2013).

However, despite the high number of manufacturers in the chamber system, they often lacked the capacity to compete with representatives from trade and services for leadership positions in the chambers, and the percentage of leadership positions occupied by representatives from sectoral associations remained lower compared to representatives from trade and services (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018).

Leaders from sectoral association held that their interests differed substantially from those of the traders in the chambers system, creating problems for advancing a

coherent agenda (Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016). Moreover, they claimed that the interests of the manufacturers were not represented by the chambers (Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016) although chambers provided a lot of services targeted at manufacturers (Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 104, 2016). Sectoral associations and chamber structures representing trade and services, were linked to different state organisations and, since 2010, at ministerial level, the former were linked to the Ministry of Industry and the latter to the Ministry of Trade¹⁰³. The Ministry of Industry had specialised development institutes providing training and support in six different areas in manufacturing that members of sectoral associations could access (Leather Industry, Textile Industry, Metal Industry, Chemical & Construction input Industry, Food, Beverage & Pharmaceuticals Industry, Meat and Dairy Industry¹⁰⁴). The Ministry of Trade did not offer similar services to the chamber structures representing trade and services (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016).

The split between sectoral associations and the chamber structures representing trade and services became for example visible in 2016/17 over the re-drafting of chamber proclamation, where the Ministry of Industry sided with the former and the Ministry of Trade sided with the latter (Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018). While sectoral associations reported good access to state structures, they emphasised that apart from the Ministry of Industry, most other state organisations lacked technical capacity and understanding of their sectors and industry more generally (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016).

Rather than taking over the chamber system, the introduction of sectoral associations caused its disintegration. As described above, interviews revealed that sectoral associations benefitted from direct connections to state representatives tasked with promoting manufacturing and industrialisation more broadly, and did not need the chamber structures as intermediaries for negotiation. Hence, rather than

¹⁰³ In 2010, the Ministry of Trade and Industry was split into two. While the Ministry of Industry was put in charge of encouraging *“the establishment of sectoral and professional associations, and strengthen those already established”*, the Ministry of trade was responsible for *“the establishment of chambers of commerce and sectoral associations, including, consumers’ associations, and strengthen those already established”* (Proclamation No. 691, 2010: Art. 20,21).

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.moin.gov.et/> - (last accessed 13.12.2018)

using the chambers and strengthening their negotiation position, sectoral associations directly interacted and negotiated with relevant state organisations, including the PMO (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016). An interviewee even reported that – *“The Minister of Industry, Ato Ahmed, I call him every day. I can meet him whenever I want to”* (Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016). While the statement portrayed an exaggerated picture, field observations confirmed high level politicians calling sectoral associations and vice-versa, confirming the close working relationship. The overlap between sectoral associations and state structures was most clearly expressed by an interviewee who stated – *“There is an invisible hand which links the government and us. We have the same interest”* (Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016).

As a result of the disintegration of the chamber system, it became marred with corruption scandals. Rather than businessmen, the chamber system attracted people interested in advancing personal careers (Birhanu, 2016). A typical problem was chamber presidents disregarding limitation of terms, or moving back and forth between the presidencies of different chambers (municipal, regional, national) (Dawit, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 91, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016; Samson, 2017c). Given the exacerbating scandals in the chamber system, its public perception changed. The newspaper *Addis Fortune* commented for example that, *“These days, whenever chambers are in limelight it appears that controversy and intense bickering follows”* (Asrat, 2016). In 2016, the Ministry of Trade needed to investigate several complaints from city chambers about irregularities at regional chamber elections (Dawit, 2016; Samson, 2017c).

Pre-empting Contestation – State Control and Obsolete Chambers

To avoid contestation from members of the business community, the EPRDF did not only restructure their associational system, but established a system of domination over the private sector, *“[...] making it dependent on, or at least supportive of, the incumbent regime”* (Weis, 2014: 270). The private sector remained weak, as primarily the growth of regime-loyal businesses was supported and chambers became obsolete as personal connections were perceived as more useful by businessmen than using chambers as intermediaries to represent their interests. The EPRDF

government established mechanisms to foster party affiliation among all levels of private sector actors.

Micro and small enterprises working in manufacturing were, particularly, linked to the EPRDF through the provision of inputs for their operations. State organisations like the small and micro-enterprises agency, the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) agency and the cooperatives agency provided trainings, material inputs and finance for small-scale entrepreneurs (Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). Alternative private service providers had been crowded out, leaving the monopoly to the state (Berhanu, 2013: 1481; Spielman, 2008: 2008). This favoured the emergence of an EPRDF-loyal SME sector and, according to an article in Addis Business, *“Under the camouflage of the enterprises the government went on utilizing its members as significant input to build political muscle of the ruling party [...]”* (Shitahun, 2015: 7). The identification between business and party structures went as far as the establishment of the Forum for EPRDF Business Supporters, that in contrast to the chambers was officially affiliated to the EPRDF (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016).

To be able to operate successfully in Ethiopia, medium and large-sized enterprises reported the need for party patrons. Without such a patron, it was difficult, if not impossible to renew licenses, acquire permits for operation or receive support for credits and access foreign currency. Direct personal connections to the ruling elite were key, reducing the need of businessmen to use business associations as intermediaries and thereby making organisations like the chambers somewhat redundant (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). An interviewee explained:

“Here in Ethiopia you have to rub shoulders if you work in business. You don’t have to be a party member but you need a Godfather to bring up your issues and mentor you. The higher you go in business, the closer you have to be to the political machinery” (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016b).

As the goodwill and support of public offices and civil servants was of key importance for businessmen, they made sure to attend meetings and other gatherings whenever they were called. For the chambers, this meant that businessmen prioritised government meetings over chamber meetings, whenever

these coincided (Fieldnotes, 2016d). Given their previous history of conflict with the EPRDF government, some interviewees even held that affiliation to the chambers could be detrimental for businessmen. Interviewees shared:

“People laugh at the chambers. They go directly to the corridors of power and bypass the chambers. Only those with connections get things done. Going via the chamber could even be a disadvantage depending on whom you want to meet” (Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). “The big businesses are not part of the chamber. They don’t want to be affiliated. For them the doors to government are open anyway” (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a).

Lasting Impact of the Chambers’ Political Activism: Mistrust and Control

The chambers’ political activism in the 1990s and early 2000s led to mistrust, although the chambers invested substantial energy and resources in proving that they were not involved in political campaigning on behalf of the opposition (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 56, 2016). Even after the restructuring, many interviewees felt that politicians and civil servants remained suspicious and interviewees thought that *“The government expects the chambers to be in the opposition”* (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016b). *“There is a lot of mistrust because the government thinks that the private sector has a political agenda”* (Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a). State representatives explained that the relationship with the chambers was good and that chambers were no longer engaged in political activism (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016). However, the interactions between the chambers and the state confirmed that the latter still feared the chambers’ potential power and tried to keep them in place.

For example, this became visible around the naming of the first public private partnership forum. Although, from the outside, the disagreement about the naming of the forum looked like quibbling, it testified to the mistrust that the EPRDF government still exhibited towards the chambers. While the ECCSA wanted to name the forum ‘dialogue forum,’ state representatives insisted on ‘consultation forum’ (Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a). The former ECCSA president involved in the negotiation shared:

“I wanted the forum to be called dialogue, not consultative forum. Consultation means you consult but that’s it. The Minister of Trade and the State Minister were open about this suggestion. But the Ministers’ hands were tied. There was a legal adviser at that time. He tried to please his political bosses. He said no” (Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016).

In an interview with the former legal adviser, he explained:

“Dialogue means that one party wants to snatch something forcefully. Dialogue doesn’t correspond to the normal procedure. People talk without permission of the chairman” (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b).

While not directly confirming the allegations made by the former ECCSA president, the wording chosen by the legal adviser indicated his fear that the chambers could try to dominate the forum and impose their vision of private sector development.

Although interviewees felt that since the restructuring the EPRDF government reverted to indirect means of control rather than open repression, imprisonment and exiling as in the early 2000s, they did not doubt that state representatives would intervene if the chambers became too independent. This underlying threat discouraged chamber activism (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a). The mechanisms with which the state controlled the chambers’ internal affairs were informal and difficult to trace. According to interviewees, interventions consisted of direct orders from relevant state officials to specific people in the chambers. Interviewees shared:

“No one wants to talk about the government influence. But it happens usually through a phone call. Then no one wants to admit to have received such a call and even less that they acted upon it” (Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). “The chambers today are practically a branch of government. They [the government] just give the chambers a phone call to make sure the chambers work in the interest of the government. They are regulated through direct order” (Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016).

Sectoral associations, according to their leaders, were not eyed with suspicion by the EPRDF government (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016). Partly this was because most were new organisations that had no history of conflict with state organisations. Another reason was that their

core constituency was composed of manufacturers, whom the EPRDF supported as part of its strive for industrialisation (Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016). The relationship between manufacturers and the EPRDF was strong, in contrast to its relationship to traders and business men working in services, who were regularly portrayed as rent seekers and in need of being checked (Brautigam et al., 2016: 167; Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b). While the EPRDF exerted control over sectoral associations, the focus remained on mobilisation as part of the developmental state programme. However, their relative organisational weakness posed limits to their contribution to development policies.

From Co-optation to Contestation – The EPRDF and Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations

The above analysis portrays a complex picture of state – chamber relations, characterised both by the wish of the EPRDF to mobilise the chambers for its developmental state project and its attempt to prevent chambers from contesting EPRDF policies. Moreover, it suggests that the restructuring failed to create a coherent chamber system leading to discord, not unity, and a split between organisations representing the interests of manufacturers and those representing the interests of traders and businessmen working in services. While the former benefitted from closer ties and better relationships with state organisations than the latter, their relative low capacity – with the exception of some sectoral associations operating at national level – somewhat reduced their ability to influence policy making. The parts of the chamber system pre-dating the 2003 proclamation and representing the interests of businessmen working in trade and services, while still comparatively strong, were often side-lined by the EPRDF regime and had limited access to political decision-making structures. These insights suggest a need to shift the level of analysis from an organisational level down to individual interactions, to shed light on how different parts of the state related to different parts of the chamber system and to investigate in how far chambers of commerce and sectoral associations were able to operate as representatives for the private sector, rather than solely functioning as an extended arm of the EPRDF.

Co-optation

Co-optation manifested itself through the fact that large parts of the chamber system became supporters of the regime, providing services for the state rather than representing the interests of their members. However, contrary to the common perception, co-optation was not a uniform phenomenon, but it represented a strategic choice where business associations played an important role for the realisation of the developmental state project. The ECCSA and the sectoral associations for example were key in organising the manufacturing sector and were closely linked to the Ministry of Industry.

In public, the chambers of commerce and sectoral associations, particularly the ECCSA and sectoral associations, often appeared as supporters of the EPRDF government. Public display of support to the EPRDF government went as far as the ECCSA appointing Ethiopia's president as its patron in 2016¹⁰⁵. An interviewee at the ECCSA explained:

"The President of the country oversees the chamber. We have a permanent forum with the President Mulatu Teshome. The government wants to work closely with the private sector and the private sector wants to work with the government" (Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016).

The close collaboration between the ECCSA and the EPRDF government harmed the chamber system, as several citizens and businessmen felt that the chambers were working for the state, rather than their members. Interviewees shared:

"Nowadays there is almost a complete merger between the government and the chambers" (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016b). "They made the Ethiopian President the patron of the chamber. I mean now they prove that they are not different from the government. They are the government, not the private sector" (Fieldnotes, 2016d).

Chamber leaders and employees explained that they could not freely decide which topics to bring up in their communication with government representatives, as it risked eliciting repression. Examples of topics that were named as taboo include: land rights, political ideology of the EPRDF, the party endowment funds and

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.fanabc.com/english/index.php/component/k2/item/4131> (accessed 12.07.2018)

corruption in public procurement (Interviewee Nr. 57, 2016). Moreover, chambers were told to stay clear of politics and not engage in issues labelled as political by the EPRDF. Interviewees shared:

“There are issues that you don’t touch upon, they just never change. For example land policy, democracy, liberalism and their [the EPRDF’s] ideology” (Interviewee Nr. 38, 2016). “We focus on feasible issues. We avoid contentious policy issues. We know the red line and we don’t cross it. We shouldn’t engage in politics, it’s not our mandate” (Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a).

A senior civil servant confirmed, that there existed “red issues” banned from discussions:

“There are red areas. I say red areas, not grey areas; they are red. According to the Ethiopian constitution land is not like other properties. It is owned collectively by the people and the government. Those who want to use land, lease it. The private sector wants land privatisation. We will not allow discussion on the issue” (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a).

The state monopoly over broadcasting media further reduced the chambers’ ability to push their own agendas. Censorship was exercised by the public broadcasting agencies, preventing chambers from pushing an agenda critical of EPRDF policies. The attempt of the AACCSA to set up their own TV and radio channel had not been granted, as it would have given the chamber a public outlet to air its grievances. Interviewees claimed:

“They censor us in our programmes. When we are too critical they tell us we need to be more balanced and even if we present it in a more balanced way they still reject it” (Interviewee Nr. 38, 2016). “We planned to have our own FM channel. But the government doesn’t agree. They want us to use their channels so they can control what we say” (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016b).

Consequently, rather than pushing an agenda separate from the state, chambers of commerce and sectoral associations often gave primacy to EPRDF prioritised sectors. This meant serving the interests of small and micro enterprises and focusing on manufacturing and agro-industry (Interviewee Nr. 55, 2016) and leading to a neglect of the interests of the chambers’ members working in trade and services (Interviewee Nr. 39, 2016). State representatives did not give in to chamber

demands, where the respective agendas deviated (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016) and ordered the chambers to express support to EPRDF policies, even where this harmed the relationship between the chambers and parts of their members (Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016).

The inability of the chambers to clearly push the agenda of the private sector beyond the sectors prioritised by the government was perceived as weakness by several of their members working in trade and services. Moreover, at the AACCSA's annual meeting in 2016, members questioned the chamber's capacity to improve the political and institutional framework for private sector development in Ethiopia and also challenged the chamber's lack of engagement regarding the then ongoing political protests (Fieldnotes, 2016e). In the public discussion, members stated for example:

"The government situation in the country causes problems. The chamber should set up a committee to review what has happened. Then it should discuss with the government". "The issue of unrests should be at the attention of the government and individuals. Investors are destroyed. Cars, shops, workshops and premises are destroyed. Chambers should talk to the government".

It was not uncommon that former public servants got employed by the chambers and sectoral associations after they left the civil service. Many came from relevant state ministries, agencies and bureaus, for example the Bureau of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 60, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016). In a few cases, chamber staff were simultaneously employed at the chambers and state offices (Fieldnotes, 2016d, 2016c, 2016a). These practices created a climate of surveillance and insecurity and multiple interviewees expressed the feeling that some of the (former) civil servants working at the chambers had strategically been placed there to oversee the chambers' work and report to the EPRDF government (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016e; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). Staff with a long employment history in the public sector or a double employment often did not clearly distinguish between the agenda of the chambers and the agenda of the EPRDF, but saw their role in organising the business community according to state policies. Interviewees stated for example:

“I have been working at the ministry [of trade] for ten years. But I also work at the chamber” (Interviewee Nr. 91, 2016). “I worked in government offices before for many years. I still have to get used to the chamber system. No one wants to come when you call them to activities. I am not used to that. They don’t participate. We have to organise them. They are not good” (Fieldnotes, 2016a).

Co-optation testified to the state’s infrastructural power, as it aligned large parts of the chamber system to the developmental state policies. The threat of using despotic power was used to bring in line those parts of the chamber system that represented trade and services and were less closely linked to the EPRDF. Co-optation led to a tension between chambers of commerce and sectoral associations and parts of the business community, especially businessmen working in trade and services, who demanded that the chambers pushed for the interests of the private sector beyond the EPRDF sanctioned policies.

Cooperation

For a long time, cooperation between chambers and sectoral associations and state organisations remained informal and took place on an ad-hoc, issue specific basis. After long negotiations, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the ECCSA signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of public private consultative forums at the country's different administrative levels in 2010 (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016). Sectoral meetings took place four times a year, while general public private consultative forums took place twice a year, testifying to the prioritisation of the manufacturing sectors and sectoral associations over services and trade and chambers of commerce. Topics as well as participants for the meetings were jointly chosen by relevant bureaus/ministries and the chambers of commerce and sectoral associations, rendering participation in the forums partly dependent on good political connections and allowing state offices to control agenda setting (Interviewee Nr. 89 2016; Interviewee Nr. 62 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 76 2016a; MoT and ECCSA 2010). Nevertheless, businessmen attending pushed for improved conditions for private sector development and good political connections allowed them to speak up critically without being mistaken for

anti-government activists (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016).

Many interviewees at the ECCSA and the sectoral associations held that the cooperation with the EPRDF government was positive and had continuously improved over the past decade (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016). Interviewees reported that many of the forums led to agreements between state representatives and chamber/sectoral association representatives regarding private sector development issues. Although the implementation of agreed action points often lagged behind, interviewees from the chambers and sectoral associations as well as state representatives felt that this depended on the relative lack of capacity of state bureaus/ministries, rather than their lack of willingness (Interviewee Nr. 56, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a). Interviewees explained:

“The government agrees with 60 or 70% of the issues we present, but implementation is difficult. Our success rate is only 40%” (Interviewee Nr. 57, 2016). They held that this was because “Even simple recommendations are not easy to implement. One issue brought up in the tax forum was that if there is a dispute on tax, to be able to appeal you have to pay 50% of the tax upfront, a penalty and interest before accessing the court. The government agreed to reduce the 50% and to remove the penalty and the interest. But this requires the revision of the tax law. This takes time despite the good will from the government” (Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016b).

While interviewees suggested that state agencies participating in the PPCFs were willing to listen to the private sector, they were not able to efficiently respond to claims made by business community, meaning that grievances were not addressed systematically.

Apart from the public private consultation forums, the chambers of commerce and sectoral associations also co-organised workshops and meetings with relevant public offices. They presented themselves as a “bridge” (ECCSA, 2014: 79; Interviewee Nr. 59, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 94, 2016) between the state and the private sector. While state representatives often wanted to set up such meetings to disseminate information about new policies or administrative procedures, the chambers used them to communicate the position of the private sector regarding the

information presented. Chambers also invited state officials to discuss problems encountered in the private sector and to suggest potential solutions to the problems they had identified (Interviewee Nr. 39, 2016). Interviewees explained:

“We collect topics from our members, for example this can be tax issues, policies and bureaucratic issues. We invite government officials to discuss” (Interviewee Nr. 38, 2016). “We jointly organise workshops. For example, with the revenue authority on taxes. In this way, we can settle some issues amicably. They count on us because they want their taxes paid and we want their support and them to listen to our concerns” (Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016).

Given the relative inefficiency of formal channels to yield concrete outputs, chambers of commerce and sectoral associations used informal channels to directly influence state representatives (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016c; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016). Interviewees reported using their personal connections to state officials to push the agenda of the private sector, and, while not the sole channel, ethnic-based networks were used on many occasions¹⁰⁶. Issues brought up by chamber and sectoral association representatives included, for example, suggestions for policy change and input into EPRDF government plans, but also requests for technical and/or material support and reporting of market failures and misconduct in public offices (Fieldnotes, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016). While interviewees expressed that their input into laws and other public documents was integrated, they also acknowledged that state representatives primarily integrated recommendations that were in line with EPRDF strategies (Interviewee Nr. 47, 2016). A chamber employee reported:

“We also submitted a 60 pages document for the GTP [Growth and Transformation Plan]. We submitted our report to the planning commission. On agribusiness, our recommendations were broadly taken on board, in the other sectors less. Whether the changes were made due to our contribution or because of our earlier lobbying or because of other factors, we don’t know” (Interviewee Nr. 46, 2016).

¹⁰⁶ Where possible chamber officials would contact a state representative from the same ethnicity, stating that chances for collaboration and likelihood of problem solving were higher than if they contacted someone from a different ethnicity.

As the interests of sectoral associations and state organisations were more aligned due to their mutual focus on manufacturing, chambers of commerce structures reported more problems pushing the interests of traders and businessmen working in services than sectoral associations reported (Interviewee Nr. 104, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016).

Sectoral associations operating at national level, more than even the ECCSA, claimed that they received support from state organisations such as the Ministry of Industry and cooperated closely. Examples included consultations around relevant policies or revision of existing legal documents, as well as joint activities for the promotion of Ethiopian manufactured goods and training for manufacturers. Given their low capacity sectoral associations at lower administrative levels were less engaged in such activities (Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 120, 2016).

Cooperation between state organisations and chambers of commerce was promoted and supported by international donors. The public private consultation forums were for example financed by the World Bank and the Swedish Development Cooperation¹⁰⁷ (Interviewee Nr. 56, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016a). While allowing international donors to support the chambers, the EPRDF made sure that funds primarily targeted government-prioritised sectors, organisations and actors. Although state organisations particularly partnered with the ECCSA, the AACCSA used their international partners as leverage to induce cooperation. An interviewee at the AACCSA explained:

“They [state officials] have to work with us. We are an international brand and sometimes donor agencies even force them to work with us. They make their loans and projects dependent on the government working with us. So the government approaches us” (Interviewee Nr. 38, 2016). “We [the AACCSA] have power also because often international delegates want to see the chamber. Therefore, we have good relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It sends delegates to the Addis Chamber to request it to organise business to business meetings with foreign delegates” (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ The dependence on international support for the initiative posed questions regarding its local ownership and its sustainability, particularly because the EPRDF government held that the chambers should bear the costs for organisation and logistics after the project closure (Interviewee Nr. 46, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 57, 2016).

While the EPRDF government benefitted from a large degree of autonomous power vis-à-vis the chambers of commerce and sectoral associations, the close link between chamber and state structures, e.g. between the Ministry of Industry to sectoral associations and the Ministry of Trade to the chambers, allowed parts of the chambers system to influence state organisations and actors through formal and informal channels (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 39, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 60, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016). While framing demands and suggestions within the EPRDF plans and policies, chambers of commerce and sectoral associations communicated the interests of their members to the state and at times managed to influence state officials in favour of their members. Consequently, this exemplifies the reciprocal nature of infrastructural power, testifying to the fact that increased presence of the state in the chamber system and the creation of close links on the one hand facilitated state control, on the other hand also exposed the state to influences from the chambers and sectoral associations and their members.

Coexistence

Rather than primarily being a chosen strategy of organisations in the chambers system, coexistence was a result of its dismantling. The EPRDF government excluded parts of the chamber system representing trade and services from structures of political decision-making, to prevent them from influencing policy makers. While the AACCSA was the clearest case of an organisation being forced into coexistence, other city and regional chambers also complained of a lack of access to state structures (Fieldnotes, 2016f; Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016). Nevertheless, the ECCSA and sectoral associations often posed an exception to the rule (Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 129, 2016). Chambers were not able to use their forced “independence”, as coexistence meant carrying out activities without directly interacting with state structures, but keeping the state informed.

Co-existence often took the form of service provision to members (Interviewee Nr. 42, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 55, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 92, 2016), including for example publishing the trade directory; organising networking and businesses in

business events; issuing certificates of origin and authentication of documents; providing capacity building; running the arbitration institute and organising trade fairs and bazars. The AACCSA, particularly, provided a large number of services to promote private sector development in Ethiopia. It extended its work beyond the capital city, cooperating with city chambers in other regions (Fieldnotes, 2016d), although this was formally the mandate of the ECCSA. Access to services for members was mainly free of charge and non-members could access the services against payment. Some activities, like the trade fairs and the advocacy of the chambers, benefitted not only the members but the private sector at large (Interviewee Nr. 39, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 42, 2016).

Given the reluctance of some state representatives to cooperate with the chambers, several chambers started piloting initiatives for private sector development. Such initiatives were wide ranging and included, for example, the establishment of the Ethiopian Institute of Corporate Governance¹⁰⁸ by the AACCSA and the promotion of a Code of Ethics for businesses by the ECCSA. The aim was to anticipate new developments in the private sector, to influence their implementation and to convince state representatives of the usefulness of certain activities. While the chambers were able to carry out the above described activities independently, the disadvantage was that they were not able to work directly with the relevant EPRDF campaigns, e.g. on good governance, and felt that they were left out (Fieldnotes, 2016f; Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016). Interviewees shared for example:

“Good corporate governance became a global issue during the 2008 economic crisis. We felt that it was better to embrace it at a voluntary basis, rather than having it imposed by the government. We developed an Ethiopian code of corporate governance and organised a grand meeting with prominent entrepreneurs. They voted on a resolution to embrace the code and set up the institute” (Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016). “There was no code of conduct before. I told everyone that before we can ask the government to behave ethically we had to work on ourselves. So we published a code of ethics and conduct for businesses in Ethiopia” (Interviewee Nr. 121, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ <http://eicg.addischamber.com/> (accessed 08.03.2017)

The presence of forced coexistence exemplified the limits of the state's infrastructural power and testified to the fact that co-optation required significant resources. Co-optation of chamber organisations representing trade and services was considered too costly, instead the threat of use of despotic power was used to prevent public contestation. However, this meant that the EPRDF was unable to enforce its policies throughout the whole chamber system and isolation was used to prevent regime critical actors in the chambers from influencing state policies.

Contestation

Since their reorganisation in 2003, and given the repressive political climate, chambers have not engaged in public protests. Instead of publicly contesting the regime or supporting opposition parties, the chambers and sectoral associations contested policies and government strategies that negatively influenced private sector development (Interviewee Nr. 56, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 75, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016a). Interviewees stressed that the chambers were non-partisan organisations that did not engage in politics and many criticised the chambers' previous engagement in politics (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 94, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 104, 2016). Most interviewees held that as long as they focused on private sector issues, they did not have to fear negative repercussions from their criticism (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016c; Interviewee Nr. 103, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 104, 2016). However, field observations indicated reluctance of the chambers to criticise the EPRDF's private sector development policies and revealed defensiveness on the side of state representatives when such criticism was brought up in public forums (Fieldnotes, 2016f, 2016g, 2016a).

Contestation primarily took the form of verbal or written criticism, rather than campaigns, petitions or even strikes and it was often delivered behind closed doors rather than in public. The AACCSA was more vocal than any other chambers or sectoral associations, using media to make its criticism public. While state control over the media posed limits to this strategy, the chamber newspaper, available online and distributed in print to the AACCSA's members, was an important tool to sustain it. An interviewee claimed:

“We have more freedom in our newspaper than on radio or TV. Some printing houses, especially the big ones that are government controlled, refuse to print critical things. But we don’t use them” (Interviewee Nr. 38, 2016).

As contestation on an individual level was more tolerated than contestation from organisations, some employees at the AACCSA published in private journals in their own names (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015). Policies described as particularly harmful for private sector development were the land lease legislation, taxation policies and the registration of businesses (ECCSA, 2014: 35ff; Mesfin, 2015a; Private Sector Development Hub, 2013: 10). The chambers also exposed the state’s practical shortcomings, naming corruption and the failure to operate according to the existing legal framework as key issues (Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 59, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017).

While remaining moderate, criticism went beyond questioning legislation and policy practice and included concrete actions to address problems in the private sector. An example was the AACCSA contesting the decision of the Charities and Societies Agency (ChSA) to revoke and refuse renewal of licenses to business membership organisations that it had previously licensed. The AACCSA put pressure on the Ministry of Trade to solve the problem, visited the Ministry of Federal Affairs responsible for overseeing the ChSA to contest the decision and published information about the issue to raise public awareness (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 39, 2016; Yohannes, 2013a, 2014). Chamber staff also brought the issue up in meetings attended by government representatives, publicly accusing them of misconduct and anti-constitutional activities (Fieldnotes, 2016f). The AACCSA reported on the fact that state organisations used the legal limbo of business associations to reorganise those that were not sufficiently regime-conform. While the Ethiopian coffee exporter association¹⁰⁹, thanks to the support from the Ministry of Trade, was able to operate when it had no official license (Fieldnotes, 2016f; Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016b), organising for example the World Coffee Conference 2016, at which the Ethiopian Prime Minister held a speech (Hailemariam, 2016),

¹⁰⁹ Coffee export has long been one of the country’s largest sources of foreign currency, rendering it key for the national economy (Interviewee Nr. 60, 2016).

many business associations faced serious problems. Citing members from the transitors associations, the AACCSA stated in its newspaper:

“The claim that transitors requested the Authority [ERCA] to organize them is not accurate.[...] They lost their legal personality under questionable circumstances” (Mesfin, 2015b).

The existence of contestation indicated that state control over the chamber system was not absolute and that organisations tried to represent the interests of their members. Especially in the case of the AACCSA, the EPRDF government was not able to control all its activities. Receiving pressure from its members, the AACCSA, but also other chambers and sectoral associations at times went against the state agenda. However, rather than contesting the EPRDF regime in general, chambers and sectoral associations often sought allies within the state, to solve problems encountered with specific civil servants or state offices. The AACCSA together with the Ministry of Trade ensured for example that the new Commercial Registration and Licensing Proclamation from 2016 provided for the registration of business associations at the Ministry of Trade, solving the registration issues created by the ChSA (Proclamation No. 980, 2016).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the EPRDF government passed the chamber proclamation in 2003 to prevent chambers from challenging its rule, all the while trying to align them to the EPRDF's development policies and the country's administrative structures of ethnic federalism. While it achieved the first objective, the focus on controlling the chambers negatively affected the EPRDF's ability to mobilise them as part of the operationalisation of its developmental state project. The fact that many of the new chamber structures represented manufacturing sectors, testified to the EPRDF's commitment to building a developmental state. However, many of the new organisations were weak, especially those operating at lower administrative levels, which posed limits to their ability to mobilise the business community behind the EPRDF's developmental state project and to contribute to the EPRDF's efforts to stimulate industrialisation. While their close connections to the EPRDF and the priority given to manufacturing in the ruling

coalition's policy put them in a favourable position to advocate on behalf of their members, they were not fully able to use these advantages.

Co-optation and cooperation were dominant features of state–chamber relations among the chamber organisations created through the 2003 proclamation. However, co-existence marked the relationship between the state and chamber organisations that predated the 2003 proclamation. Contrary to the common perception, co-optation of chambers of commerce by state organisations was not a uniform phenomenon, but it represented a strategic choice where chambers and sectoral associations played an important role in the realisation of the EPRDF's developmental state project. Where co-optation was costly and did not come with direct benefits, e.g. in the case of the AACCSA, the EPRDF was more likely to isolate the association rather than co-opt it. Following the reciprocal logic of infrastructural power meant that the parts of the chamber system that were closely linked to state structures were also those potentially yielding the biggest influence on politics, whereas those kept in a relation of co-existence were not able to push the agenda of the private sector effectively.

Despite existing trends in interactions, all chambers recounted examples of interactions testifying to co-optation, cooperation, coexistence and contestation. Interactions depended on the interlocutor - the specific state organisation in question - the topic and the timing. Hence state - chamber relations were characterised by all four types of interactions at the same time, despite differences in their frequency – organisations differed regarding the prevalence of a certain type of interaction - and timing – the types of interactions changed over time.

Although the 2003 chamber proclamation ended the chambers' political activism and prevented challenges to the EPRDF regime and its developmental state project, it created problems for the state. Weakening of the chamber system and the fighting between old and newly created organisations did not only discredit the chamber system, but it required state intervention. Courts and the Ministry of Trade needed to deal with complaints of corruption and intervene on several occasions as scandals became publicly known (Dawit, 2016; Mikiyas, 2016; Samson, 2017c). An attempt to draft a new chamber proclamation in 2016/17 to improve its structure and address internal conflicts led to a split between the Ministry of Industry and Sectoral

Associations on the one hand, and the Ministry of Trade and Chambers of Commerce on the other hand (Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018). This revealed that the discord between manufacturers and businessmen working in services and trade was also present in the state, and questioned the hegemony of the developmental state discourse within the Ethiopian state apparatus. It also showed that state organisations differed in their (in)dependence from specific chamber organisations, revealing that neither the state nor the chambers were unitary actors.

Chapter 7: Charities and Societies and the Securitisation of Civic Activism

Addis Ababa, 1st of March 2016 (Yekatit 22 2008)

The meeting was held at the Kaleb Hotel, a four-star hotel close to the airport: “Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum – Resource Challenge Workshop”. An ironic title given the location. The workshop was attended by civil society organisations and international donor representatives and the whole discussion consisted of accusations and counter-accusations: CSO representatives complained that donors had reduced funding as a result of the 2009 Charities Proclamation, while donors countered that funding to the sector had actually increased.

The director of the Federal Charities and Societies Agency attended as well: Ato Meseret Gebremariam, former head the Regional Security and Administration Bureau in Tigray. Before the meeting was adjourned, he addressed the floor in Amharic. The entire meeting had been held in English to ensure donors’ participation, but Ato Meseret didn’t seem interested in communicating. His tone was aggressive when he told the attendants that a) donors had to orient their funding towards governments prioritised sectors so they wouldn’t encounter any problems with the 2009 proclamation and b) that CSOs had to be accountable not corrupt and rent-seeking. He finished with the sentence “We don’t accept neoliberal agents in Ethiopia, no external influence on our politics. Donors can fund development not rights”.

I had heard much about Ato Meseret before, but not met him in person until today. Donor representatives had described him as intimidating and unwilling to cooperate. CSOs had stated that there were no limits to his power and that he did everything to hinder their work.

Hawassa, 15th of March 2017 (Mekawit 6 2009)

We were sitting on the ground below the trees in the backyard. Azeb¹¹⁰ [the director of a local NGO] got up and left, so I could talk to the organisation’s members alone.

¹¹⁰ The name was changed to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.

Miheret [my translator] looked at me to start. I asked the women to share reflections on how the NGO worked with state offices to fight violence in their community:

“If there is any case of rape or abuse, the community reports here [to the NGO]. Azeb links to the women's and children's office and other legal sectors. Nothing happens if you go there directly. If Azeb handles it, no one can stop her. Until the end result, she fights for the rights of women and children”.

We listened to this and similar stories for two hours. They confirmed what we had heard from Azeb and representatives at the women's and children and the justice bureaus. The NGO was working on women's and children's rights and had become a pillar in the local community. Azeb had worked at the women's bureau before she founded the NGO and used her contacts at various state offices to facilitate her work. The fact that the NGO got international funding and therefore wasn't allowed to work on rights based issues didn't seem to hinder Azeb to do so anyway.

* * *

Introduction

“The [charities and societies] agency is filled with party people who are hostile towards civil society. The director is a core TPLF member. This is telling. Even ordinary employees have a negative attitude towards civil society. Look, even to dispose property like an old chair, you need the approval of the agency. The level of intrusion and interference is immense. The agency is there to control and cripple civil society” (Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016).

This chapter studies the relationships and interactions between state organisations and charities and societies in Ethiopia. It explores the roots of the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation (ChSP) as well as its application, to analyse how it structured the relationship between the state and charities and societies in Ethiopia. To contextualise the ChSP, the first part of the chapter briefly outlines the development of the relationship between the EPRDF government and charities and societies since 1991. The second part explores the legal provisions of the ChSP, its drafting process, application and impact. The third part of the chapter maps and analyses interactions between state organisations and charities and societies, ranging from co-optation to contestation.

Since the adoption of the ChSP in 2009, the EPRDF has categorised civil society organisations falling under the proclamation into charities (third party-serving organisations) and societies (membership-based organisations). The first category includes NGOs and think tanks, for example, while the second comprises, among others, professional associations and mass organisations. To discuss developments after the passing of the ChSP, I will adhere to the EPRDF terminology to avoid imprecisions that can derive from using the term civil society organisation, as it includes both categories. Given the relatively recent history of conflict between charities, societies and the EPRDF regime and ensuing problems for anonymity and confidentiality, this chapter contains few references to specific organisations. After discussions with colleagues at Addis Ababa University, I decided to structure the analysis around the different categories of civil society organisations falling under the ChSP, rather than individual stories.

In 2009, the Ethiopian government passed the ChSP restructuring large parts of organised civil society in Ethiopia. The proclamation prohibited the use of international donor funding for activities related to democracy promotion and other rights-based activities and redirected the operations of charities and societies towards development and relief activities. Research portrayed the law as a reaction to the involvement of a few NGOs in the 2005 election¹¹¹ and an attempt to close the associational space for civil society to prevent organisations from promoting democracy (Asnake, 2011: 689f; Burgess, 2012: 166f; Sisay, 2012: 380). Dupuy et al. (2015: 426) went as far as to state that *“The ERPDF’s real intention, after all, was to shut down political opposition, rather than to create a more vibrant civil society”*. While echoing the views of many charities and societies and donor representatives in Ethiopia, most research failed to study the design of the ChSP and its long-term effects beyond the immediate political crisis of 2005 (Yitayehu, 2010: 234ff).

My findings revealed that the definition of civil society organisations enshrined in the ChSP testified to years of conceptualising civil society as part of the EPRDF’s developmental state project. Judging by its content, the ChSP provided a legal

¹¹¹ Around the 2005 national elections, several donor-financed NGOs were involved in voters’ education, carried out election monitoring, supported opposition candidates and participated in the post-election protests.

framework that coerced charities and societies to align themselves with the EPRDF developmental state agenda, hence expressing the infrastructural power of the state. In practice, however, the ChSP was used to restrict the operations of charities and societies. The state body put in charge of implementing the law was, through its staff and ministerial association, directly linked to the Ethiopian security apparatus, and, therefore, the despotic power of the state. It exercised repression, prioritising the prevention of contestation over the mobilisation of charities and societies for the developmental state project. This created conflict between the regulatory body of charities and societies and different state organisations who wanted to cooperate with these organisations to implement the state's development plans. Moreover, differences existed between the application of the ChSP at the national and local levels, providing interesting insights into the reach of the Ethiopian state, its ability to penetrate civil society at different administrative levels and the divergence in power relations between state organisations and specific charities and societies.

A Brief History of Charities and Societies under the EPRDF Regime

While Ethiopia has a long history of traditional community-based organisations (*iddir*, *equb*, *debo*¹¹² etc.), formal civil society organisations primarily emerged from the 1930s onwards. The country's late industrialisation process and the absence of an enabling legal framework for setting up associations until the 1960s, explain this relatively late development (Clark, 2000: 4f; Proclamation No. 165, 1960: Book 1, Title III). The small progress made with respect to the development of civil society organisations during the last years of Haile Selassie's reign was reversed by the military regime that overthrew the emperor in 1974. Only the initial period of the EPRDF's rule was marked by a significant growth of formal civil society organisations, as the 1995 constitution guaranteed extensive citizens' rights, such as the Right of Assembly, Demonstration and Petition (Art. 30), Freedom of Association (Art. 31), and the Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression (Art. 29) (Proclamation No. 1, 1995). Reports on civil society in Ethiopia recorded this positive development,

¹¹² In Ethiopia there exist different types of community-based organisations that each fulfil specific functions and have their particular institutional set-up. *Iddirs* are funerary associations, *equb* are credit groups and *debo* are agricultural labour groups (Pankhurst, 2008: 147).

predicting further improvements in the sector (Campbell, 1996: 14ff; Clark et al., 2000; CRDA, 2006: 41f). The number of formal civil society organisations, particularly NGOs, grew, and their activities progressively broadened from humanitarian work to also encompass economic and political development agendas (Clark, 2000; Dupuy et al., 2015; Sisay, 2012). It is important to note that the growth of CSOs primarily took place in urban areas, representing the urban middle class and urban intellectual elites (Yitayehu, 2010: 208). As the EPRDF built its rule primarily on its rural constituency, this indicated the potential for conflict between state actors and CSO representatives.

International donors increasingly funded civil society support programmes¹¹³, primarily targeting NGOs in urban areas, which had the capacity to fulfil donors' administrative requirements. Instead of supporting different types of civil society organisations, such programmes actually stimulated a boom in the NGO sector. NGOs were set up as a response to the increasing volume of available funding, posing valid questions regarding their accountability and legitimacy (Dessalegn, 2002: 103–9). CSO support programmes created attractive employment opportunities, as salaries were high compared to other sectors, and numerous cases of corruption and nepotism became known, negatively affecting the image of civil society organisations (Butler, 1995: 68; Interviewee Nr. 7, 2015). The 1990s also saw the rise of a small number of human rights NGOs in Ethiopia that gained considerable capacity to lobby and influence policy-making (CRDA 2006, 6f; Interviewee Nr. 27 2015; Interviewee Nr. 29 2015). Their increasing activism led the Ministry of Justice in several instances to deny or cancel their licences (Brechenmacher, 2017: 67; Interviewee Nr. 115, 2016). Interestingly, many human rights NGOs were set up by lawyers working in the civil service, who felt that the EPRDF was compromising the independence of the justice system and failing to enforce the rights of citizens¹¹⁴.

¹¹³ While the programmes were formally called “civil society support”, the more appropriate name would have been “NGO support” programmes, as NGOs constituted the prime beneficiary group of such initiatives.

¹¹⁴ Although key positions in the ministry and courts from the beginning of the EPRDF rule were staffed with party affiliates, many civil servants working in the justice sector did not follow the EPRDF's ideological agenda in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The relationship between the EPRDF and civil society organisations, especially NGOs, became increasingly strained. On the one hand, NGOs mobilised growing amounts of money for socioeconomic development projects, and the EPRDF approved of this trend as it contributed to the ruling coalition's development objectives. On the other hand, the fact that some NGOs tried to influence political decision-making and questioned the EPRDF's democratic character was eyed with suspicion. In its government plans, the EPRDF started defining NGOs as externally financed development agents that should not be involved in politics, whereas mass-based and professional associations, because of their membership base, were portrayed as bearers of democracy and public participation (MoCB, 2004; MoFED, 2002, 2006). While the distinction made sense on a conceptual level, it is important to note that many membership-based associations were closely tied to EPRDF structures, hence suggesting also a political reason for the categorisation.

Given the growth and diversification of civil society organisations, state representatives and civil society actors judged the provisions of the civil code of 1960 as outdated and agreed on the need for a new legal framework (Clark et al., 2000: 18; Interviewee Nr 72, 2016; MoCB, 2004: 177). Discussions about a new civil society law officially started in 2000, and the Ministry of Justice set up a joint working group, primarily with NGOs, to discuss the new legal framework. At least three different draft laws were produced, including one proposed by civil society organisations, but the mutual mistrust foreclosed a consensus¹¹⁵ (Interviewee Nr. 8, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 32, 2015; Yitayehu, 2010: 205). State representatives felt that civil society organisations were unwilling to accept regulations of their operations, and civil society organisations in turn, feared that the EPRDF government wanted to use the new law to gain more control over civil society (Interviewee Nr. 23, 2015; MoCB, 2004: 17).

¹¹⁵ I was not able to access earlier drafts for a new civil society proclamation and could thus not compare the earlier versions with the 2009 charities and societies proclamation.

The conflict between the EPRDF government and donor financed civil society organisations culminated in the 2005 election crisis¹¹⁶. Several civil society organisations, especially human rights NGOs but also professional associations representing lawyers, provided training for opposition politicians, ran voter education programmes, and observed the elections.¹¹⁷ Many of these activities were financed through international donors (Interviewee Nr. 30, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 158, 2015). Moreover, several NGO leaders ran as political candidates for the opposition and used NGOs as platforms for their election campaigns (Interviewee Nr. 16, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 19, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 26, 2015). Berhanu Nega¹¹⁸, former chairman of the Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA), was one of the founders of the Movement for Democracy and Social Justice and Deputy Chairman of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)¹¹⁹. He was elected mayor of Addis Ababa in 2005. Berhanu's co-chair at EEA, Befekadu Degefe, and Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, founder and chairman of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), also ran for office under CUD. They were imprisoned together with other opposition members, NGO leaders, civil society and human rights activists and journalists, as part of the post-2005 election allegations and were later released and pardoned (Asnake, 2011: 696; Stremlau, 2011).

The EPRDF publicly accused the opposition of trying to remove the EPRDF through inciting a revolution and using NGOs for their political campaigns. The former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated on several occasions that NGOs were neoliberal

¹¹⁶ The 2005 elections are widely considered the most democratic elections held by the EPRDF. Contrary to the EPRDF's expectation, it lost many votes, especially in urban areas, but even among its rural constituency considered the bedrock of the regime. The opposition won the majority of seats in Addis Ababa. The opposition and national and international election observers contested the counting of votes and the EPRDF government clamped down on the opposition, imprisoning numerous politicians, journalists and civil society activists under alleged anti-terrorism charges (Schmidt, 2005).

¹¹⁷ The majority were human rights NGOs, however some professional associations participated as well.

¹¹⁸ Berhanu Nega left Ethiopia after the 2005 election crisis and co-founded Ginbot 7, an armed opposition movement to the EPRDF. In 2015, he took the post as a commander in chief and led the fight against the EPRDF government from Eritrea (Hammer, 2016).

¹¹⁹ Founded in 2004, the CUD was a coalition of four opposition parties, the All Ethiopia Unity Party, the Ethiopian Democratic League, the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party-Medhin, and the Rainbow Alliance/Movement for Democracy and Social Justice. The CUD represented the country's urban middle class and some of its key differences with the EPRDF included the rejection of ethnic federalism on the grounds of its divisive character, the promotion of economic liberalism and the criticism of the EPRDF's undemocratic rule (Berhanu, 2007).

agents and that his government would no longer tolerate international involvement in Ethiopian national politics (EPRDF, 2008b: 23; Meles, 2007; Tilahun, 2007: 24). According to one of the EPRDF's official publications:

"From the beginning, the leaders of the CUD have decreed that the election will follow the path of the Orange Revolution¹²⁰ whereby they will overthrow EPRDF if possible through election and if that is not possible through popular revolutions on the streets. [...] To achieve this goal, the international actors have provided material and technical support for the CUD leaders and created a conducive environment by putting a lot pressure on the government [...]" (Tadesse, 2006).

Realigning Charities and Societies to EPRDF Politics: A New Legal Framework

To understand the character of the ChSP, it is important to note that it was developed during the period starting the operationalisation of the EPRDF's self-proclaimed "democratic developmental state" programme that followed the legitimacy crisis revealed in the 2005 elections. Rather than on representation, the EPRDF aimed to build legitimacy over developmental achievements (Meles, 2006). Within the developmental state, NGOs, according to the EPRDF, should mobilise capital for development interventions (Meles, 2007), whereas mass-based associations were supposed to mobilise the population for economic and political development (EPRDF, 2008c, 2008b).

The Provisions of the Charities and Societies Proclamation

The ChSP was passed in 2009 (Proclamation No. 621, 2009) and replaced provisions from the 1960 legal code that had regulated licensing and operation of civil society organisations since the reign of Haile Selassie (Proclamation No. 165 1960). The ChSP excluded only CSOs regulated by other laws (e.g. trade unions and chambers of commerce), religious associations and community-based associations (e.g. iddirs) and international/foreign organisations operating under specific bilateral agreements with the Ethiopian government (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 3.2.).

¹²⁰ The EPRDF referred to the 2004/5 political protests in Ukraine, which erupted as a result of corruption and electoral fraud during the presidential elections.

Complying with the definition of civil society put forward in the EPRDF's development plans (MoCB, 2004; MoFED, 2002, 2006), the ChSP categorised and regulated CSOs according to their (1) source of funding (foreign or local) and (2) their organisational structure (membership-based or not) (EPRDF, 2008a). CSOs were divided into *charities* – organisations that benefit the community/public as a whole (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 14) – and *societies* – membership-based organisations that work for the benefit of their members (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 55). Furthermore, the proclamation differentiated between “Ethiopian” – charities and societies, whose members were Ethiopian nationals and who did not receive more than 10% of funds from foreign sources; “Resident” – charities and societies, whose members were Ethiopian nationals and received more than 10% of funds from foreign sources; and “Foreign” – charities, whose members were foreign nationals and who received funding from foreign sources (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 2).

According to the ChSP, the source of funding determined the type of activities that charities and societies could engage in. Only Ethiopian charities and societies were allowed to work on rights-related issues, such as:

“The advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of equality of nations, nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion, the promotion of the rights of the disabled and children’s rights, the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation and the promotion and the efficiency of justice and law enforcement service” (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 14.2 j-n).

Resident and foreign charities and societies were limited to work on socioeconomic development issues, such as:

“Poverty alleviation, disaster prevention, economic and social development, environmental protection, animal welfare, education, health, arts, culture heritage and science, sport and welfare of youth, relief work and capacity building” (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 14.2 a-i).

The justification provided by the EPRDF for the respective allocation of activities was:

“[...] If it is an organization whose leaders and members are Ethiopian but run by foreign finance, it will still be controlled by foreign forces. [...] The proclamation is drafted in a way that the organizations that have an important role in our political activities are free from rent-seeking networks and requires that their source of income should be only their members and other Ethiopians and their internal organization should be democratic. [...] (EPRDF, 2008a).”

The former Prime Minister explained that civic activism did not require funds, but primarily commitment, and that external finance posed a danger to locally driven political agendas (Meles, 2007).

While the source of funding was the prime criterion for regulating the activities of charities and societies, even their organisational status had some impact. Contrary to Ethiopian charities, Ethiopian mass societies, such as professional and women's and youth associations, were mandated to participate in the *“process of strengthening democratisation and election[s]”* (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 57.7), including educating voters and election monitoring. Moreover, administrative requirements for mass societies were lower than for all other types of organisations regulated under the ChSP to facilitate their operations. The official reasoning for enabling mass societies to take on the responsibility of democracy promotion was that they represented their members' interests. However, given that they were formally tied to EPRDF structures, there existed a political motive for this decision (EPRDF, 2008c, 2008a, 2011a, 2015).

Contradicting the provisions of the Ethiopian constitution, that stipulated that *“every person has the right to freedom of association for any cause or purpose”* (Proclamation No. 1, 1995: Art. 31), the ChSP understood freedom of association as a right reserved for citizens. All charities and societies (Ethiopian, resident and foreign) could appeal to the agency's board regarding a decision taken by the agency, but only Ethiopian charities and societies *“aggrieved by a decision of the board”* could appeal to the Federal High Court (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 104). The measure was justified by the EPRDF in the following way:

“On the occasion that the association is dissolved, they cannot sue the government in court for a violation of their right. This is because these foreign organizations have an opportunity to associate given

by the government rather than a constitutionally provided freedom of association” (EPRDF, 2008a).

Apart from the 90/10 directive (described above), another directive steering the operations of charities and societies was the 70/30 directive (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 88), which regulated the ratio of administrative cost to overall budget. Charities and societies were not allowed to allocate more than 30% of their overall funds for administrative costs, to make sure that 70% of the funds were transferred to the community. While the official reasoning was that the provision prevented rent seeking (EPRDF 2008c; Interviewee Nr. 45 2016; Interviewee Nr. 44 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 18 2015), it posed an obstacle to the operations of charities and societies. Rather than enabling them to participate in the country’s development and work with hard to reach populations, as foreseen in the EPRDF development plans, the accounting discouraged such work. Expenses related to working in remote areas (vehicles, staff relocation etc.) were counted as administrative costs not operational costs, as were training, monitoring of activities and project infrastructure¹²¹.

The Drafting Process of the Proclamation

The drafting process for a new CSO law was launched anew in 2007 and it was integrated into the business process reengineering (BPR)¹²² at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)¹²³. While the whole process seemingly started out technocratic, in reality the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was not only the “*architect of the EPRDF’s civil society discourse*” (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2015a) that differentiated between different types of civil society organisations and their respective roles and responsibilities in the developmental state project, but also the “*mastermind behind the law*” (Interviewee Nr. 8, 2016).

As part of the BPR, a group of three lawyers was appointed to review the CSO registration process and to provide recommendations regarding how to improve the law. A lawyer representing CSOs was also allocated, but without substantially being

¹²¹ A resident charity reported for example not being able to remodel its office to ensure accessibility for handicapped persons, as the financial costs would have exceeded 30% of administrative costs in the budget.

¹²² BPR was ongoing on a large scale in the Ethiopian civil service (Tesfaye and Atkilt, 2011).

¹²³ The MoJ was in charge of registering CSOs between 1991 and 2010.

able to influence the outcome of the drafting process. The working group was assigned two advisors from the civil service university, indicating that the EPRDF wanted to keep control over the process¹²⁴, as well as several senior lawyers and young civil service graduates as support. Staff turnover was high because of tensions in the working group (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 8, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 10, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 23, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 50, 2016).

The ChSP was not based on earlier drafts for a new CSO regulation and the initial idea according to the BPR was to revise existing legislation based on international best practices. The team undertook several country visits in 2007, to study CSO legislation in, among others, Singapore, France and Canada¹²⁵. Officially, the Singaporean law provided the blueprint for the ChSP (Mihret, 2010: 2) and a high level state representative stated that “*the fundamentals of the law are solid, based on the NGO law of Singapore*” (Yamamoto, 2008f). A review of the Singaporean Charities Act and Societies Act suggested that, although the ChSP provided for a country specific approach to civil society, the Singaporean laws had inspired some provisions. For example, the terminology “Charities and Societies”, the stipulation of penalties such as fines and imprisonment for failure to comply with the law, large discretionary state powers with respect to licencing, as well as the confinement of membership in political associations to citizens, were borrowed from the Singaporean laws (Singapore Charities Act (Chapter 37), 1995; Singapore Societies Act (Chapter 311), 1966). Moreover, the travel to Singapore and the official reference to the country’s CSO laws indicated that the EPRDF government looked towards the Asian developmental states in the initial phase of operationalising its own.

The drafting process itself was controlled by the Prime Minister’s Office. The head of the working group together with another group member and the Minister of Justice, Aseffa Kessito, had to present the drafts regularly at the Prime Minister’s office. The Prime Minister and his chief of staff, Berhanu Adelo, were directly involved in the drafting process, providing instructions for revisions and adding provisions like

¹²⁴ The civil service university was through its leadership closely linked to the EPRDF (Interviewee Nr. 156, 2015). In 2017, the civil service university was headed by a professor in biology, brother of the Prime Minister Hailemariam Desselegn.

¹²⁵ Both France and Canada were involved in the reform process at the Ministry of Justice and were therefore chosen as locations (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2016; Yamamoto, 2008d).

the 70/30 and 90/10 directive to the drafts submitted. Some of the excessive provisions with respect to oversight and penalties were added by the PM's chief of staff, and documentation from the US embassy confirmed that the original draft of the ChSP did not include "*the definition and restriction of NGOs receiving foreign funding*", nor the excessive penalties added in later drafts (Yamamoto, 2008f). While officially in charge of the drafting process, the working group and the Minister lacked clear instructions with respect to their task and had not enough political weight to influence the outcome of the drafting.

The late Prime Minister did not only control the internal processes of the drafting, but also the external communications both with charities and societies and international actors. Meles Zenawi summoned representatives from charities and societies on several occasions to discuss the draft law, but these meetings increased animosity between state officials and representatives from civil society instead of fostering dialogue (Yamamoto, 2008d, 2008f, 2008b). According to an interviewee present at the meeting, "*They [the CSOs] didn't ask legal questions. They just wanted to remove the 70/30 and 90/10*" (Interviewee Nr. 149, 2018). International actors tried to influence the drafting process through bilateral and multilateral meetings with the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and other high level state officials. The US, UK and French ambassadors for example met Meles on four occasions in May, June, July and October 2008 to discuss the drafts of the ChSP (Yamamoto, 2008b, 2008c). The international community tried to "*kill or delay the bill*", but they also attempted to influence its technicalities to make it less prohibitive (Yamamoto, 2008g). While delaying the passing of the proclamation, international actors did not manage to fundamentally influence the proclamation's content (for a timeline of the drafting process see Table 9) (Yamamoto, 2008d, 2008e).

Civil society organisations had little influence on the drafting process, but the few exceptions provided interesting insights into the power relationships between civil society and the state under the EPRDF regime. The EPRDF avoided conflicts with organisations and actors that had the capacity to mobilise large numbers of people and played an important role in ensuring peace and stability in the country. Although the EPRDF had firmly established itself as the dominant ruler in Ethiopia, alternative power centres like churches and customary organisations existed. While they had

often been weakened and closely tied to the ruling coalition, they remained potentially influential (Aregawi, 2009; Markakis, 2011).

Religious organisations were initially supposed to fall under the proclamation but they opposed this provision vehemently, and the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi himself decided to exclude religious organisations from the ChSP (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 3.2 a)). As religion played an important role in the lives of most Ethiopians, unsettling religious organisations had the potential to vex the citizenry (Interviewee Nr. 1 2015a; Interviewee Nr. 8 2015; Interviewee Nr. 19 2015; Interviewee Nr. 10 2015)¹²⁶. Moreover, a clause providing for individual exemptions was introduced, sometimes referred to as the “Pastor Daniel exemption”. The rumour was that Pastor Daniel Gebreselassie, director of the NGO Prison Fellowship, had obtained it thanks to his personal connections to Meles and his political weight as a member of the council of elders¹²⁷ (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2015b). Given the importance of elders (*shimagles*) in promoting social peace and their influence on local communities, the EPRDF, while often trying to side-line these alternative power centres, avoided direct conflict with them (Gebreyesus, 2014; Getachew, 1998). Documents from the US embassy indicated moreover, that Meles referred to the exemption clause in his meeting with international representatives to resolve their opposition to the ChSP. He stated that INGOS could work on political issues,

“if there is a contract between the foreign NGO and a government entity for a specific time period and [...] the NGO would not become a permanent fixture or part of the political reform or advocacy issue” (Yamamoto, 2008d).

¹²⁶ Although the TPLF had tried to deprive the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of power during the armed struggle, it realised later that such a strategy risked “*upsetting religious-minded peasants*” (Young, 1997: 97). Instead it forged close bonds with churches and religious organisations to prevent contestation and ensure their support. During the 2015/17 political crisis, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church played an important role in discouraging political protests. In public prayers, it disseminated messages condemning protesters as sinners and praised socioeconomic development successes of the EPRDF government.

¹²⁷ The councils of elders (*shimaglewoch*) in Ethiopia are customary institutions that act as mediators between two parties in conflict and their decisions are recognised by formal courts. They exist in different regions and have significant social and political influence on communities (Gebreyesus, 2014; Getachew, 1998). Despite the centralisation of state power under the EPRDF rule, elders have remained important political figures, especially in rural areas, and their support to the regime has proven crucial (Aregawi, 2009: 227). After the 2005 political crisis, a council of elders, including personalities like the former Harvard scholar Ephraim Isaac and Pastor Daniel, mediated between the imprisoned opposition politicians and the EPRDF (Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016; Yonas, 2014: 36).

Despite repeated attempts of the international donor community and charities and societies in Ethiopia to influence the provisions of the proclamation, the Ethiopian parliament (House of Federation) passed the bill in January 2009 (Yamamoto, 2008h, 2009b; Yitayehu, 2010: 223f). According to documentation from the US embassy in Addis Ababa, the EPRDF government exercised pressure to ensure the passing of the bill. Documents stated:

“The ruling party has recently convened its parliamentarians to indoctrinate them on the party’s version of reality in which civil society groups are ‘neo-liberal rent seekers’ doing the bidding of the west to undermine the ruling party’s democratic and development agenda. [...] Speaker of Parliament Teshome Toga asserted that ‘there is no doubt that the law will pass because there is already consensus within the ruling party’” (Yamamoto, 2008i).

Table 9: Timeline of the Drafting Process of the ChSP

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Establishment of working group to review existing CSO legislation	Re-drafting of the ChSP according to PMO requirements (Revised Drafts in May, September, November)	ChSP passed by the parliament after parliamentary hearings	Council of Ministers passed regulation 168/2010 further developing the ChSP	8 directives for the application of the ChSP approved by the ChSA board
Travel abroad to study international best practices	Meetings with Charities/Societies to discuss the draft	Guidelines and templates for registration prepared	The agency became operational	
1st Draft of the ChSP developed by working group	Meetings between the donor community (esp. US, UK and France) and Meles and other high level officials	Drafting of directives for the application of the ChSP		
	ChSP final draft submitted to the Council of Ministers	Setting up of the agency		

The Establishment and Operation of the Charities and Societies Agency

The state body put in charge of implementing the ChSP was called the Charities and Societies Agency (ChSA) and was established in 2009. The ChSA was bestowed with

substantial powers, including a quasi-judicial status deriving from its mandate to charge penalties. The agency acted as an investigator and prosecutor at the same time and, apart from the courts, it was the only state organisation allowed to freeze financial assets (Fieldnotes, 2016h; Interviewee Nr. 106, 2016). The ChSA had the power to interfere in charities' and societies' internal affairs, for example through participation in their general assembly meetings (Regulation No. 168, 2009: 3, Art. 24). Moreover, charities and societies were not allowed to dispose of any property or asset, and the ChSA could at any time demand them to submit written documentation on their work (Directive No. 6, 2011).

The PMO oversaw the establishment of the agency and validated directives and regulations produced as part of the operationalisation of the ChSP (Directive No. 3, 2011; Directive No. 4, 2011; Directive No. 5, 2011; Directive No. 6, 2011; Directive No. 7, 2011; Directive No. 8, 2011; Proclamation No. 621, 2009). The ChSA's first director Ali Siraj and his deputy Atkilt Gidey, together with other high officials, were responsible for the staffing of the agency. The core team members left the working group between June and August 2009 and eventually also the civil service. Primarily, the junior team members helped with the set-up of the agency, the preparation of documentation, directives and regulations and the training of agency staff. They also supervised the initial re-registration process (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 8, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 50, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 149, 2018).

Several interviewees held that the agency was affiliated to the Ethiopian security apparatus (Interviewee Nr. 32, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 58, 2016). While difficult to corroborate with certainty, some of the interviewees who had been or were working at the ChSA held that after its establishment, the ChSA was partly staffed with recruits from the police, the national security service and the EPRDF politburo (Interviewee Nr. 106, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 149, 2018). The affiliation of the ChSA was transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Federal Affairs in 2010 (Proclamation No. 691, 2010), also indicating a link to the Ethiopian security apparatus¹²⁸ (Interviewee Nr. 10, 2015; Yohannes, 2013a, 2013b). Since 2012 it was led by Meseret

¹²⁸ The Ministry of Federal and Pastoralist Affairs was responsible for internal security questions, overseeing the police and prisons and being tightly linked to the security agency.

Gebremariam, a former TPLF and EPRDF council member, former head of the Regional Security and Administration Bureau in Tigray and board member of the Tigrayan veterans association (Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). The change of ChSA directors was a clear indication that the handling of civil society was considered a security issue and a move away from addressing civil society concerns as part of the developmental state project. While Ali Siraj was said to have operationalised the ChSP and executed Meles' instructions regarding human rights NGOs and others active during the 2005 elections, Meseret Gebremariam went much further targeting charities and societies irrespective of their history, mandate and political activity (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 149, 2018).

Given the increasing securitisation of civil society, research on the topic was perceived as very sensitive. Three out of four interviewees working at the ChSA in 2015/16 preferred not to be interviewed at the office. They held that research on the proclamation and the agency was seen as political and that their participation in interviews could potentially pose problems for them. A ChSA board member abruptly ended an interview asking not to be quoted on any information shared. During the only interview carried out at the agency, the interviewee asked his two assistants to join, who took notes on the conversation. The interviewee stated false facts and was unwilling to provide the documentation I requested (Interviewee Nr. 45 2016; Interviewee Nr. 44 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 18 2015; Interviewee Nr. 106 2016; Interviewee Nr. 152 2018).

According to civil servants working at and with the ChSA, the agency provided reliable services to charities and societies. Registration was said to be quick and regular services like monitoring of organisations' activities were provided to help them improve their operations. All ChSA employees stated that no charity or society was discriminated against and that they interpreted the law in favour of them, not against them. While the interviewees stated that the law had improved the operations of charities and societies, their attitudes, especially towards foreign and resident charities, were very negative and they expressed a need for control over organisations' operations. Interviewees held that most foreign and resident charities were rent seekers and many tried to illegally work on political issues with international donor finance. They recited the EPRDF discourse on "neoliberal and

rent seeking” organisations (EPRDF, 2008a; Meles, 2007), rather than reflecting on the role of charities and societies in the developmental state project that was detailed in development plans and the ChSP. Some suggested the need for even stricter legislation and higher punishments. None of the employees interviewed had a background in law and they lacked knowledge and understanding about the law, all providing differing interpretations of its provisions (Interviewee Nr. 44 2016d, 2016c, 2016b, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 45 2016; Interviewee Nr. 18 2015; Interviewee Nr. 106 2016; Interviewee Nr. 50 2016).

According to most charities and societies interviewed, the agency did not apply the law but ruled by exception. Granting of licences and accepting charities’ and societies’ annual reporting depended on personal connections and organisations’ history rather than on the organisations’ adherence to the law (Interviewee Nr. 5, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016). Staff at the agency lacked competence and high staff turnover meant that charities and societies needed to deal with different officers on a regular basis (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 58, 2016). Desk officers interpreted the ChSP in different ways, rendering reporting cumbersome¹²⁹ (Interviewee Nr. 69, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 71, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 86, 2016). Although a history of political activism in many cases explained difficulties in obtaining and renewing licences, with the exception of Ethiopian societies, most charities and societies reported problems in their dealings with the agency.

While the agency’s vice-director was perceived as more open towards civil society than the director, she lacked influence on the organisation’s decision-making process (Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017). In 2016, the agency ranked charities and societies according to their performance from A to C and out of 2191 organisations only 191 charities and societies scored A, 673 scored B, and the rest 1327 scored C (Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum, 2016a). No information about the criteria used for the ranking was shared with the charities and societies and many expressed their concern that the agency could use the ranking to take actions against them whenever it felt fit (Fieldnotes, 2016h; Interviewee Nr. 25, 2016;

¹²⁹ For example, some desk officers calculated the 70/30 directives over the lifetime of a project, others per year and they differed regarding the accounting of costs under operational and administrative budget lines.

Interviewee Nr. 109, 2016). Some charities and societies made attempts to improve the relationship with the agency, by inviting officers to visit their projects, but without resulting in tangible improvements. An interviewee working at a resident charity explained:

“We are demonstrating the contribution of CSOs to the agency. We took the agency to the field to see them what is happening. Nothing is changing although the middle management see the positive times. We initiated the parliamentarians to go and see. The parliamentarians say a lot. The politics is handling them. They cannot do much” (Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017).

Observations and interviews corroborated the narrative provided by charities and societies. The federal auditor general's report 2010/2013 on the ChSA provided further insights into the administrative capacity of the agency. The report stated that the agency did not coherently apply the law and that high staff turnover led to lack of skills among agency staff. It further revealed that roughly fifty percent of the staff at the agency had never undergone university training, and only 2.8% of the employees had obtained a Master's Degree and 47.7% a first degree. Contrary to its duties, the agency did not provide regular feedback to charities and societies on their reporting, nor did it offer adequate training in these matters. It failed to communicate with other state organisations in charge of overseeing the work of charities and societies. Documentation and knowledge management were found to be insufficient and in many instances the ChSA did not enforce the law (Federal Auditor General, 2014).

According to the ChSP, charities and societies could appeal the decisions of employees at the ChSA through contacting its board. However, few of such cases were known and, according to the interviews conducted, none had led to the reversal of a decision taken by the agency staff (Interviewee Nr. 25, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 58, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 116, 2016). Only two of the seven board members were from charities and societies (Proclamation No. 621, 2009: Art. 8) and the directors of the organisations were closely affiliated to the EPRDF. One was a former civil servant in a high-level position in a regional state, the other one used to be a board member of a key national public organisation and a regional development association. The second of the civil society representatives seldom

attended board meetings, however on request of the ChSA director the charities and societies representatives were re-appointed after their first term (Interviewee Nr. 43, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 69, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 109, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 152, 2018).

The Impact of the Proclamation on Civil Society, Donors and the State

The most visible impact of the ChSP was the sharp decline in the number of organisations in the category of Ethiopian charities, primarily human rights NGOs. Unable to substitute international funding with local funding, some closed down their activities, others changed their mandate to development activities and registered as resident charities in order to apply for international grants (Interviewee Nr. 24, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 29, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 154, 2015).

Ethiopian societies, were somewhat better able to deal with the ChSP, than Ethiopian charities. However, within the category there existed differences, especially between Ethiopian societies and Ethiopian mass societies. The latter benefitted from preferential treatment by the ChSA due to their direct link to state and EPRDF structures (EPRDF, 2008c). However, the capacity of many mass societies remained very low due to lack of financial and human resources and most were unable to use their extensive mandate granted by the ChSP and detailed in the EPRDF documents. Ethiopian mass societies were sometimes able to negotiate exemptions for foreign funding of parts of their activities, but such practices were not institutionalised, meaning that they depended on a case-by-case negotiation and that privileges could easily be revoked (Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 137, 2017).

The large majority of organisations in the agency's register in 2016 were resident charities, followed by foreign charities, primarily constituted of NGOs and some think tanks focused on socioeconomic development activities (Interviewee Nr. 69, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 155, 2015). While foreign and resident charities were working in areas of the developmental state project sanctioned by the EPRDF, they reported significant problems regarding their operation due to mistrust from state offices (Interviewee Nr. 68, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 152, 2018). This suggested that security concerns took primacy over developmental concerns.

Activities of several human rights NGOs and professional associations engaged in the 2005 elections, the impact of the ChSP on them and their strategies adopted to deal with the 2009 proclamation are outlined in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Organisations Particularly Affected by the Implementation of the ChSP

	Work before 2009	Activities/role during the 2005 elections and the post-election crisis	Work after 2009
EWLA (1995) The Ethiopian Women's lawyers Association	EWLA was founded by a former High Court judge as part of a project financed by the Swedish Development Cooperation. As a women's rights organisation it provided legal aid services and counselling to women. EWLA became known for its influence on the revision of the Ethiopian family code and its women's rights activism. The Ministry of Justice in the early 2000s tried to close EWLA, however the decision was annulled by a court ruling. EWLA used to have branch offices in eight regions.	EWLA promoted women's political participation in the elections. It provided trainings to female politicians, lobbied parties to increase the number of female candidates, carried out voters' education for women and organised debates with political candidates to discuss women's rights. Its former executive director went into exile in 2009, fearing repercussions for her activism.	EWLA registered as an Ethiopian charity and has been carrying out the same functions as before the proclamation, although at reduced capacity. Its work has focused on provision of legal aid rather than women's rights activism. EWLA had to close several of its branch offices and reduce staff drastically. It had its accounts frozen and international donor money confiscated in the course of the enforcement of the ChSP ¹³⁰ .
APAP (1993) Action Professionals' Association for People	APAP was formed and driven by lawyers, many of whom were (former) civil servants. It used to provide legal aid, human rights education, conduct research and carry out trainings in rights related matters.	During the 2005 elections, APAP together with ERIS (Electoral Reform International Services) ¹³¹ , ran the federal secretariat for voter education. Its members were engaged in providing training and awareness raising and APAP disseminated information about the elections country-wide. APAP also participated in the complaint tracking from the opposition party after the elections.	APAP registered as a resident charity working on education and health issues. Given its resident status it has not been allowed to work on rights related issues anymore. APAP has struggled financially and also in terms of human resource capacity.
OSJE (2003) Organisation for Social	OSJE was founded by lawyers, many of whom were (former) civil servants, and used to work on civic and legal empowerment, human rights	OSJE carried out election observation during the 2005 elections and released reports in the aftermath of the elections on election fraud and	When OSJE heard about the freezing of EWLA's and HRCO's funds, it decided to register as a resident charity to guarantee its income. It

¹³⁰ The freezing of EWLA's funds testified to a retroactive application of the ChSP, as the international donor funds in question had been obtained before the enforcement of the proclamation. EWLA was allowed to withdraw money from the frozen account, as long as it did not exceed 10% of its overall budget. The high level of inflation contributed to a continuing decrease of real value of the funds.

¹³¹ <http://www.eods.eu/posts/electoral-reform-international-services-eris> (last accessed 13.12.2018)

Justice in Ethiopia	advocacy, capacity building and research in rights related areas.	post-election violence. OSJE, in collaboration with other NGOs, filed a complaint against the national election board (NEBE) at the Ethiopian High Court, against NEBE's banning of NGOs as election observers. The high court decided in the NGOs' favour. The former director was imprisoned for 2 years and left Ethiopia upon his release.	consequently had to change its name, as the word "justice" referred to rights related activities. OSJE was called OSD (Organisation for Social Development) and has since 2009 been working on private sector related matters such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
EHRCO (1991) Ethiopian Human Rights Council	EHRCO was founded to report on and monitor the human rights situation in Ethiopia. Apart from monitoring and conducting studies, EHRCO also provided trainings on human rights related issues both to the citizenry as well as government employees.	During the 2005 elections, EHRCO deployed several hundred election observers all over the country. Its former chairman ran for an opposition party and was imprisoned as part of the post-2005 election crack-down.	EHRCO had to change its name to HRCO (Human Rights Council) due to the ChSP provision stipulating that only organisations operating in five of the country's 9 regions were allowed to use "Ethiopian" in their name. It registered as an Ethiopian charity and continued its human rights advocacy post-ChSP and published reports on human rights violations in Ethiopia. Like EWLA it had funds frozen that it had received from international donors before the passing of the ChSP. HRCO's capacity was reduced and it had to close branch offices and let staff go. The government attempted several times to infiltrate the organisation to align it to the state agenda, however until 2017 without success.
EBA (1965) Ethiopian Bar Association	The EBA was a professional association, established to represent the interests of lawyers in Ethiopia. Progressively it also provided free legal aid to people in need and engaged in advocacy on rights related questions.	Several of EBA's members worked as election observers and represented the opposition leaders that were imprisoned in the aftermath of the 2005 elections.	EBA had to change its name to ELA (Ethiopian Lawyers Association) post-2009. It was informed that another organisation – EPRDF affiliated lawyers – had already claimed the name bar association. It is registered as an Ethiopian society and continued to function both as a representative for lawyers and as a

			CSO engaged in legal aid and the promotion of people's rights.
CCRDA (1973) Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association	The CCRDA was established as an NGO umbrella organisation. Initially coordinating humanitarian relief work during the famines, CCRDA acquired a pivotal role in the Ethiopian civil society landscape, actively engaging for the rights of its members and on political issues.	CRDA organised a NGO taskforce to monitor the elections. The former chairman of CCRDA ran for the CUD and was imprisoned as part of the post-2005 election crack-down.	Since its change in leadership after the elections, CCRDA has been closely affiliated to the EPRDF. It was elected as member of the ChSA board and has still been playing a pivotal role in coordinating the NGO landscape, however in a way that aligned CSO activities with EPRDF priorities. The organisation has grown considerably and has focused on development related issues given its status as a consortium for resident and international charities.
EEA (1991) Ethiopian Economics Association	EEA was founded to represent the profession of economists in Ethiopia. It used to produce independent research on socioeconomic development issues in Ethiopia and was known for its critical analysis of EPRDF policies. It organised televised debates discussing government plans, reaching a large audience in urban areas.	During the 2005 elections, EEA as an organisation was not active. However, EEA's chairman and vice-chairman ran for political office. Its chairman became mayor of Addis Ababa, but was imprisoned as part of the post-2005 election crack-down. After his release, the former chairman became professor at Bucknell University in the US. He was cofounder of Ginbot 7, an armed rebel movement operating from Eritrea, and became its head in 2015.	EEA registered as a resident society still producing research on socioeconomic development in Ethiopia. However, EEA's work became less outspokenly critical of the EPRDF. Despite its focus on socioeconomic development and clear distance from political activism, EEA has been struggling to operate due to problems obtaining its licence.

Sources: (Interviewee Nr. 23, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 30, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 35, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 37, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 117, 2016)

The ability of international donors to fund democracy promotion and human rights advocacy for charities and societies diminished significantly because of the ChSP (Interviewee Nr. 21, 2015), but according to donor representatives, the total amount of aid channelled through charities and societies continued increasing (Fieldnotes, 2016i). Moreover, the EU and the World Bank managed to negotiate exemptions from the ChSP and were allowed to finance Ethiopian charities and societies working on democracy promotion and other rights based activities¹³² (Brechenmacher, 2017: 84f; Gebre, 2016). While funding exemptions saved organisations like EWLA (Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association), ELA (Ethiopian Lawyers Association) and HRCO (Human Rights Council), the ChSA and other state organisations were involved in overseeing the implementation of the programmes, limiting the donors ability to work on issues or with organisations perceived as sensitive and/or political by the EPRDF (Interviewee Nr. 2, 2015a; Interviewee Nr. 10, 2015).

The human rights NGOs and professional associations active during the 2005 elections were hit particularly hard by the ChSP. However, despite Meles' suggestion, that *"[...] over 90 percent of NGOs will not be affected, only those NGOs/CSOs involved in domestic political activities"* (Yamamoto, 2008c), my research revealed that the operational environment became difficult for most charities and societies, with the exception of Ethiopian mass societies (see Table 11). The majority of resident, Ethiopian and foreign charities reported problems regarding the ChSP and its directives (Interviewee Nr. 69, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017). In the eyes of ChSA, most resident and foreign charities and societies became potential suspects of illegally working on rights related issues and the use of words like "advocacy" or "empowerment" by these organisations sufficed to raise suspicion and trigger reprimand (Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 134, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017). Moreover, the ChSA suspected Ethiopian charities of illegally using international funding (Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90,

¹³² Officially the EU's civil society fund, the CSF II, was granted an exemption on the grounds of the Cotonou agreement, according to which EU funded projects were considered 3rd country money (hence local money not international funding). However, it seemed that, rather than technical justifications, the amount of financial support provided by the World Bank and the European Union, equipped them with a leverage during the negotiations for the exemption of their civil society funds.

2016). Instead of effectively reducing financial mismanagement, the interpretation of the 70/30 directive meant that most charities and societies found it difficult, for example, to invest in construction of accessible office spaces, in training of staff and monitoring of their activities. Moreover, it restricted their ability to work in remote areas, because most costs associated with travel, communication and project infrastructure had to be accounted for on the 30% operational budget.

Table 11: Mandate and funding sources of charities and societies according to the ChSP and relationship to ChSA

	Source of funding	Type of organisation	Mandate/activities	Relationship with the ChSA
Ethiopian society	At least 90% local funding, with some informal exceptions for mass societies	Professional associations, interest based associations and mass-based organisations	Political and development activities, election monitoring & voter education for mass societies	Relatively unproblematic, especially for mass societies, however, some professional societies were suspected of illegally using international resources to work on rights related issues
Ethiopian charity	At least 90% local funding	Human rights NGOs and think tanks	Political and development activities	ChSA suspected/feared illegal use of international resources, problems with the 70/30 directive and recurring problems with licensing
Resident charity	More than 10% international funding	Development NGOs and think tanks	Development activities	ChSA feared/suspected clandestine pursuit of rights based/political activities, problems with the 70/30 directive, frequent problems with licencing and reporting
Resident society	More than 10% international funding	NGOs serving the interests of their members only (not 3 rd party)	Development activities	ChSA feared/suspected clandestine pursuit of rights based/political activities, problems with the 70/30 directive, frequent problems with licencing and reporting
Foreign charity	International funding	NGOs and think tanks	Development activities	ChSA feared/suspected clandestine pursuit of rights based/political activities, problems with the 70/30 directive, frequent problems with licencing and reporting

Some resident and some foreign charities managed to negotiate an exemption from the ChSP (Interviewee Nr. 11, 2015). While the exemption allowed these organisations to work on rights related topics with foreign funding, in exchange they had to renounce from publicly criticising the EPRDF. This meant that an organisation could for example work on conflict resolution and justice issues, but without questioning the EPRDF's rule (Interviewee Nr. 19, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 26, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 131, 2016). Resident and foreign charities that had received an exemption tried to use their contacts to influence state organisations, but many people held that the organisations in question were in fact co-opted by the EPRDF (Interviewee Nr. 9 2015; Interviewee Nr. 29 2015). To receive an exemption, resident and foreign charities needed to sign an agreement with a state organisation, which in practice meant the Ministries of Federal Affairs and of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's office. The process of receiving an exemption differed between organisations and involved long negotiations. Several resident charities working on questions related to peace and justice obtained an exemption because their board members were also members of councils of elders and therefore respected traditional leaders¹³³. Foreign charities relied on high level EPRDF contacts for this matter (Interviewee Nr. 6, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 19, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 116, 2016). The agency was not mandated to oversee the work of organisations that had received an exemption, meaning that they were operating in a legal vacuum, in which privileges could be revoked and organisations had no legal means to contest such decisions (Interviewee Nr. 124, 2016).

The fact that the ChSA used the proclamation and its directive to restrict the work of charities and societies, with the exception of mass societies, rather than mobilising them for developmental efforts, caused conflict with other state organisations that relied on charities and societies in their operations (Interviewee Nr. 13, 2015). However, given the head's position in the EPRDF and the agency's link to the security apparatus, it exercised more power than many ministries¹³⁴ (Interviewee Nr. 48,

¹³³ For a discussion on council of elders see footnote 128.

¹³⁴ The power of public officials, and related to that of the state organisations they were leading, depended on an individual's position within the EPRDF. The higher the ranking in the EPRDF hierarchy, the larger the power it could exercise vis-à-vis other public organisations.

2016a; Interviewee Nr. 68, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 109, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). Many civil servants in ministerial positions and advisers to the Prime Minister were not able to force the agency to change its decisions (Fieldnotes, 2016h; Interviewee Nr. 28, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 71, 2016). Two interviewees working at resident charities explained:

“No one dares to touch Meseret, he can do whatever he wants. You need to look at the party hierarchy, this is what determines who decides, not your position in the government. You see, someone like Meseret, even a minister cannot tell him what to do” (Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). “Two of our senior members are advisers to the prime minister. They are trying their best to help us, but they cannot. They got our accounts reopened when the agency blocked them. But Meseret doesn’t give us our licence and they can’t help with that” (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a).

Multiple cases existed where the agency restricted the operations of resident and foreign charities, but also Ethiopian societies that worked jointly with state organisations. A well-known example concerned a key partner of the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Ministry for Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC). The agency wanted to force the organisation to switch its status from resident charity (foreign funded and third party serving) to Ethiopian society (locally funded and membership serving), although the organisation was working on development research, not rights related/political issues. Even high level government officials were unable to solve the problem in favour of the resident charity in question (Interviewee Nr. 48 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 72 2016; Interviewee Nr. 35 2016). A foreign charity partnering with the MoFEC and providing substantial funds for development projects had to leave the country as the agency revoked its licence and despite attempts, the MoFEC was not able to reverse the agency's decision (Interviewee Nr. 28, 2015). The Ministry of Health (MoH) was told off for channelling foreign funds to an Ethiopian society in an attempt to circumvent the 90/10 provision and had to withdraw the funds it had transferred to the organisation in question (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a). Moreover, another of the MoH’s partners, a consortium of resident and foreign charities, was unable to receive its project funding from a foreign charity, as the ChSA prohibited sub-granting between charities/societies (Interviewee Nr. 152, 2018). The Ministry of Justice struggled to provide legal aid to

poor people, as many of its key civil society partners in this work had been heavily affected by the ChSP. Those that were registered as Ethiopian charities and societies lacked financial resources and many had registered as resident charities and were not allowed to work on the issue any longer (Interviewee Nr. 30, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 37, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016).

The agency exercised much power at the federal level, ensuring that state organisations did not help charities and societies to circumvent the ChSP. It prohibited federal state bureaus for example to work on rights related issues together with resident charities and societies, even where state offices were interested in such cooperation (Interviewee Nr. 74, 2016). An interviewee working for a resident charity explained:

“During the first years we designed projects with human rights components and collaborated with government bodies to implement the projects. They did the human rights components, for example human rights trainings. Now the government bureaus don’t want to do that anymore. The bureaus said that they have been given a warning by the agency. They are not allowed to do human rights activities with NGO money” (Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016).

Given its limited capacity to oversee the work of the over 3000 organisations registered by it, the agency had less influence on the work of charities and societies at the local level. Many state organisations at the local level depended on charities and societies for meeting their development targets assigned as part of the operationalisation of the developmental state¹³⁵. They cooperated particularly with resident charities in the provision of public services, but also in addressing selected rights based issues, such as domestic violence and female genital mutilation that were officially reserved for Ethiopian charities and societies only (Interviewee Nr. 141, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 142, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 143, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 155, 2015). The ability of resident charities and societies to bring in international

¹³⁵ A problem of decentralisation in Ethiopia was that although the provision of public services such as health and education had been delegated to the *woreda* level, the majority of the domestic revenue, foreign aid and FDI was collected and spent at the federal level (Markakis, 2011: 241). This created a mismatch between obligations and financial capacity of local state organisations, leading them to turn to civil society organisations for support in the implementation of development plans.

donor money provided them with negotiation power vis-à-vis state officials and led to a more flexible interpretation of the 70/30 and 90/10 directive at the local level, to ensure that they could operate and jointly address development challenges with state organisations (Interviewee Nr. 138, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017). Conflicts among state organisations indicated the existence of disagreements over the role of charities and societies in the operationalisation of the developmental state programme. While almost all state officials held that charities and societies should not work on political issues with donor money, many agreed on the need to work jointly with these organisations in the implementation of development initiatives.

From Co-optation to Contestation – The EPRDF and Charities and Societies

As described above, the EPRDF government established tight control over charities and societies licensed through the ChSP. While Ethiopian charities were most heavily affected, most resident and foreign charities and societies encountered problems in their operations and only Ethiopian societies, particularly Ethiopian mass societies, operated relatively unaffected but still at low capacity. Security concerns took precedence over development concerns and rather than mobilising charities and societies effectively as part of the developmental state project, most organisations were struggling with the new legal provisions. However, despite the general perception that civil society had been entirely silenced by the ChSP, interactions between charities and societies and state organisations reached from co-optation to contestation over various forms of cooperation and coexistence. Bargaining and conflict between representatives from civil society and state organisations often took place in the grey zone of politics and were thus not easily observable.

Co-optation

Interviews revealed, that co-optation was assumed by default and many charities and societies were said to help the EPRDF government control the citizens of Ethiopia. This had negative consequences for the perceived legitimacy and credibility of these

organisations, leading to weakened linkages with their constituents (Gebre, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 116, 2016). An interviewee claimed:

“The government supports only civil society organisation that are in line with government policies. Moreover, it creates parallel civil society organisations. Youth and women’s organisations, the one to five and many more. These organisations are not voluntary organised. They are created by the government for the government. They respond to party interests. Some are detrimental for the social fabric of society. They are used as means of control” (Interviewee Nr. 85, 2016).

Evidence confirmed that state organisations had in many cases infiltrated existing charities and societies - sometimes through forceful restructuring - as well as set up EPRDF controlled associations. This was particularly true for Ethiopian societies, but also resident charities and societies and to a lesser degree Ethiopian and foreign charities (Interviewee Nr. 30, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 117, 2016). EPRDF documents detailed how the leadership of women and youth organisations was controlled by representatives from the EPRDF women and youth leagues and acknowledged that these mass organisations were used for party recruitment (EPRDF, 2006, 2008b, 2011b, 2013b). A document stated:

“In the same manner that EPRDF uses leagues as schools for recruiting members and future leadership for the party, mass organizations are stages which leagues use for recruiting members and prepare them for membership. [...] they [members of the leagues] will be the ones who lead the mass organisations” (EPRDF, 2008c).

Oftentimes leadership positions of charities and societies were filled with individuals affiliated to the EPRDF and/or former civil servants¹³⁶. Moreover, several organisations also had acting state and EPRDF officials on their boards and steering committees¹³⁷ (Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 135, 2017; Interviewee

¹³⁶ Some well-known examples were the ECSF (Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum), UEWCA (Union of Ethiopian Women Charitable Associations), CCRDA (Consortium of Christian Relief & Development Associations), NEWA (Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations), AEMFI (Association of Ethiopian Microfinance Institutions) and PHE-Ethiopia (Ethiopia Population, Health, and Environment Consortium).

¹³⁷ Azeb Mesfin (widow of Meles Zenawi and TPLF central committee member) and Aster Mamo (former deputy Prime Minister and OPDO central committee member) sat on the board of the National Coalition for Women Against HIV/Aids.

Nr. 138, 2017). Citizens repeatedly expressed doubts regarding the independence of charities and societies and provided detailed information on the political background of organisations' leaders (Interviewee Nr. 43, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 116, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). Although an open secret to many Ethiopians, interviewees working in charities and societies often denied their connection to EPRDF structures and/or state organisations.

The overlap of state and civil society structures favoured an alignment of the agendas of charities and societies to the EPRDF agenda. Organisations often acted as gap-fillers in service provision where government resources were not sufficient (Interviewee Nr. 30, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016) and, in several cases, state offices used charities and societies to control the population. For example, one of the resident charities interviewed provided information about their members to state offices and linked them to EPRDF controlled societies like the scouts or other mass associations (Interviewee Nr. 134, 2017). During the 2015/18 protests, some state offices mobilised resident charities and Ethiopian mass societies for diffusing political tension and to calm the protests (Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017). Especially at the local level, many resident charities interviewed expressed support for the EPRDF agenda, instead of questioning their mobilisation for EPRDF purposes (Fieldnotes, 2016i; Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 135, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 136, 2017).

Several resident charities interviewed reported that the state organisations had the power to influence their internal decisions (Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016) and demand services that benefitted the state rather than the organisations' constituents (Fieldnotes, 2017). Refusing demands from state offices was not an option given the potential negative repercussions from such actions. Examples ranged from financing government meetings (Interviewee Nr. 136, 2017) and disseminating messages for the government (Interviewee Nr. 144, 2017) to participating in government events (Interviewee Nr. 34, 2015). In some cases - through their participation in beneficiary selection - state officials diverted the resources of charities to target certain social groups for political purposes (Fieldnotes 2017; Interviewee Nr. 142 2017; Interviewee Nr. 138 2017) or demanded organisations to help raise resources from their constituents for state projects (Ghetenet, 2015). Ethiopian societies that were tied

into EPRDF structures negated allegations of state influence, participating in concealing the EPRDF's hidden transcripts of control. While most state officials working at federal level denied control over charities and societies (Interviewee Nr. 50, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 84, 2016), local civil servants were more open to acknowledging such practices (Interviewee Nr. 142, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 144, 2017). One interviewee even stated “[...] *we consider CSOs as a department of our office*” (Interviewee Nr. 143, 2017).

After the 2005 elections that revealed the existence of grievances among citizens, the EPRDF government established official consultation structures with charities and societies it considered important for the realisation of the developmental state programme, the so-called people's wing (*ye hizib kinf*). Participation was not public, instead state offices chose the organisations that would be included. According to civil servants, the “peoples' wings” allowed charities and societies to participate in monitoring of government performance, to provide input into policies and strategic documents and to get access to decision-making structures and processes (Interviewee Nr 18 2015; Interviewee Nr. 105 2016; EPRDF 2006b). While Ethiopian mass societies held that such meetings granted them influence on policy making, many resident and some Ethiopian charities reported that the meetings were used to disseminate political messages and enforce EPRDF directives. Instead of constituting safety valves through which demands in society could be expressed, the people's wings meetings served to exercise control (Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 137, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 138, 2017).

While interactions testifying to co-optation were more frequent for those organisations directly controlled through the EPRDF, especially Ethiopian mass societies and EPRDF-affiliated resident charities and societies, even more independent Ethiopian and resident charities and societies often had to give in to state demands. Thanks to the exercise of infrastructural power, the EPRDF was able to influence the activities of charities and societies affiliated to the ruling coalition, whereas it relied on the threat to use despotic power to force more independent organisations to obey. While allowing state actors to control actions of charities and societies, the increased presence of the state in civil society led to a blurring of

boundaries between the two spheres and rendered state structures accessible for charities/societies.

Cooperation

Interactions testifying to cooperation took diverse forms. While often the state had more power to influence the terms of interactions than charities and societies, this did not mean that organisations had to consent with terms set by the state. Instead they often identified areas of common interest, or “created” areas of shared interest - phrasing their work as part of the EPRDF developmental state discourse – to negotiate with state actors. The mutually beneficial character of cooperation did not mean that both parties had to benefit to the same degree, or at the same time. Often charities and societies agreed to terms for cooperation set by the state, to foster trust that would eventually allow them to operate more freely.

While cooperation with state officials was described as difficult by many charities and societies operating at the federal level, especially resident and foreign ones (Interviewee Nr. 68, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 86, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016), cooperation was often perceived as mutually beneficial at *woreda* and *kebele* level (Interviewee Nr. 124, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 138, 2017). Local state officials often appreciated the work of charities and societies (Interviewee Nr. 141, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 142, 2017) whereas federal state officials were more likely to express criticism towards the work of such organisations (Interviewee Nr. 50, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 84, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 105, 2016). Especially at *kebele* level, state organisations lacked resources for providing public services and often relied on charities and societies, particularly resident ones, in these matters. Consequently, many *kebele* officials interviewed wanted to see charities and societies more active (Interviewee Nr. 143, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 144, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 145, 2017) and organisations used the state’s need for funds to negotiate more space for their work (Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017).

Although many charities and societies operating at the local level were led by former civil servants, their members did not perceive them as part of the state machinery, but as organisations representing their members (‘Focus Group, 9 adults, Asella’, 2017). According to interviews and focus group discussions conducted with

members of Ethiopian and resident charities and societies, organisations successfully worked with state offices to address the citizens' concerns. Thanks to associations facilitating meetings between state officials and communities, state officials had become more responsive to their constituents and the provision of public services had improved due to the involvement of charities and societies ('Focus Group, 9 adults, Asella', 2017; 'Focus Group, 14 adults, Wonji', 2017). Interviewees reported for example:

"In one of the training against HTPs [harmful traditional practices], police was trained together with us, we got access to them and they got improved knowledge about HTPs and help fighting against it now" ('Focus Group, 7 adults, Sheshemane', 2017). "People report here [at the CSO], not at state offices. Only when they [the CSO] follow up with the government the cases are handled. Otherwise there is corruption and perpetrators don't get punished" ('Focus Group, 9 adults, Hawassa', 2017).

Almost all charities and societies interviewed participated in GO-NGO forums (government – NGO forums), meetings organised with charities and societies working in thematic areas, e.g. environmental protection, reproductive health, universal education etc. (Interviewee Nr. 34, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 35, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 43, 2016). Many charities and societies interviewed, held that the forums provided them with access to state structures and were useful public venues to discuss with the government and share concerns. As many of the forums were attended by the media, issues discussed became public knowledge. The problem was that agenda setting was controlled by state offices and that the forums seldom led to concrete legal or political change (Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017). Leaders from two resident charities claimed:

"We engage in different forums. At least the engagement means they listen to us even if not much changes" (Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017). "We share ideas and report to the government at the forums. They use it differently. They tell us what they want us to do" (Interviewee Nr. 136, 2017).

Therefore, similar to the *hizib kinf* meetings, the GO-NGO forums did not constitute effective channels to communicate demands of citizens and nor did they produce satisfactory state response.

Given the relative inefficiency of formal structures to bring about concrete results, many charities and societies used personal contacts with state officials to influence political decision-making (Interviewee Nr. 2, 2015a; Interviewee Nr. 22, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 26, 2015). The fact that many of their leaders had previously worked in state offices (Interviewee Nr. 117 2016; Interviewee Nr. 133 2017; Interviewee Nr. 82 2016) and the close cooperation between state officials and charities and societies favoured such practices. Especially at the federal level, ethnic-based networks were used by charities and societies to influence political decision-making, singling out entry points by contacting state officials from the same ethnicity¹³⁸. In many instances, organisations were able to obtain land and offices for their work, help constituents access state services, and demand state officials to enforce the law (Interviewee Nr. 37, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017). In some cases, charities and societies were able to negotiate accounting under the 70/30 and 90/10 directives (Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum, 2016b; Fieldnotes, 2017). At the local level, for example, many resident charities worked on prevention of harmful traditional practices (HTPs)¹³⁹, female genital mutilation (FGM) and gender based violence (GBV), although these topics officially fell into the category of activities reserved for Ethiopian charities and societies. Local state offices often cooperated with resident charities in these areas to meet goals set out in their development plans. While such work contributed towards the EPRDF development targets, resident charities helped their members and constituents to put pressure on state offices for improved performance (Interviewee Nr. 34, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 138, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 141, 2017).

While more difficult, even at the federal level there existed examples where cooperation between state actors and charities and societies led to concrete improvements for organisations and their members. After extensive lobbying from

¹³⁸ According to the principle of ethnic federalism, contrary to the federal level, regional, woreda and kebele administration were primarily staffed with civil servants coming from the region. Therefore, civil society and state representatives were often from the same ethnicity and the use of ethnic-based networks for influencing political decision-making did not reflect a strategic approach to the same degree as at the federal level.

¹³⁹ HTPs in Ethiopia include a variety of different practices, such as uvulectomy – cutting of the uvula and sometimes nearby structures such as the tonsils, milk teeth extraction and marriage by abduction.

charities and societies to improve the availability of local funding for Ethiopian charities and societies, the Ministry of Finance included the possibility to deduct charitable donations to such organisations amounting to up to 10% of the taxable income in the revised tax legislation¹⁴⁰ (Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum, 2016a; Proclamation No. 979, 2016: Article 24). Although far from being sufficient, the ChSA revised some of its interpretations of the 70/30 directive, after charities and societies had repeatedly brought up the issue in joint meetings (Fieldnotes, 2016i; Gebre, 2016: 17; Interviewee Nr. 12, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 32, 2015). The best strategy to persuade state officials to cooperate, according to charities and societies, was to conduct research on a specific issue and approach the government with well documented proof of a problem. “Evidence-based claims” were more likely to persuade state officials to act upon them (Interviewee Nr. 16, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 43, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017).

Although the tight cooperation facilitated state control over the activities of charities and societies, it simultaneously provided organisations with access to political decision makers and state resources, testifying to the reciprocal character of infrastructural power. Increased presence of the state in civil society exposed the former to influence from the latter, however the majority of negotiations and bargaining between civil society and state actors took place behind closed doors and was thus not visible to the public eye. Charities and societies often directly provided services to the government, while at the same time negotiating space for action. Relinquishing some autonomy in many cases was seen necessary to gain space for action (Interviewee Nr. 3, 2015). Charities and societies that were well politically networked had an advantage compared to those that were more independent but lacked political contacts.

Co-existence

Many of the provisions of the ChSP aimed at rendering the work of charities and societies “readable” for the EPRDF government, e.g. through the annual reporting,

¹⁴⁰ This did not address the concern that charitable donations were discouraged due to people’s fear to fund charities and societies that worked on rights related issues and questioned the EPRDF’s respect of citizens’ democratic rights.

ad-hoc and planned field visits, monitoring of internal meetings etc. (Proclamation No. 621, 2009). The aim was to avoid co-existence and keep relevant state offices informed about the work of organisations, to prevent the secret formation of oppositional movements. Many charities and societies held that transparency in their work was important to avoid repression from state offices (Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 117, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017). Although co-existence was much less frequent than cooperation, several charities and societies attempted to operate at the margins of the state. In a few cases, resident charities secretly pursued activities that the ChSP forbade them, subverting power structures without directly contesting the state or its policies.

Examples of coexistence included resident charities working with and producing research both on socioeconomic topics and rights related topics, Ethiopian charities practising human rights monitoring and Ethiopian, resident and foreign charities and societies providing targeted services to their members, e.g. counselling to victims of domestic violence (Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). Avoiding interactions with state offices was meant to prevent them from taking control over the activities of organisations, e.g. determining content of reports or selecting beneficiaries for services provided by them. Co-existence was more practiced at the federal level, given that the tight links between charities and societies and state offices at the local level rendered this strategy nearly impossible.

Although few in number, some resident charities operating at the federal level used the blind spots of the ChSA to carry out activities that they were not officially allowed to do. They did not report on certain activities to the agency and implemented them secretly. The institutional capacity of the ChSA was not sufficient to attain control over all charities and societies continuously. However, the danger for the resident charities in question was that they could be closed if the agency found proof of such illegal activities. Where it suspected secret activism, the agency sent warning letters and followed up over the phone and in person, but it was not able to reprimand all organisations concerned (Federal Auditor General 2014; Interviewee Nr. 44 2016d; Interviewee Nr. 18 2015; Interviewee Nr. 45 2016). An interviewee explained:

“One of our projects was blocked for five months. They told us we should do service delivery and work on child care. We implemented the project without their approval. They called us to check, but then they stopped. They forgot about it. They don’t have the capacity to monitor all the projects” (Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016).

Several resident charities started working with organisations that did not fall under the ChSP (Interviewee Nr. 14, 2015), like *iddirs* (funerary associations) or the chambers of commerce, to avoid the 90/10 directive and work on rights related questions. Resident charities provided technical and financial support e.g. for advocacy campaigns, without officially appearing in their implementation. Examples involved working on labour rights for women, advocating against FGM and providing support for victims of domestic violence. Organisations admitted that the strategy could potentially backfire if the agency or other state offices picked up on their engagement in rights related work (Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017). The existence of such subversive actions testified to the fact that while the state’s infrastructural power was high, it was not absolute. The threat of using despotic power discouraged open contestation, but it also increased defiance among some charities and societies, that opted for hidden subversive practices

In some instances, forcing charities and societies, particular Ethiopian and resident charities and resident societies, into co-existence, denying access to state structures and hence decision-making processes, was a strategy chosen by state offices. Some charities and societies tried to establish cooperative agreements with state offices, but without success (Interviewee Nr. 30, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 86, 2016). Denying organisations access to state structures was meant to “starve them out” and prevent them from gaining public influence (Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 131, 2016). As infrastructural power was reciprocal, state actors opted against establishing close links to charities and societies where they expected unwanted influence from the latter.

Contestation

Given the high costs associated with public contestation, it often took the form of verbal criticism or subversion of power structures. The more critical charities and

societies were, the more problems they encountered with the ChSA and other state offices (Interviewee Nr. 69, 2016). Repression ranged from threat, to denial or withdrawal of the licence, to imprisonment and torture of organisations' leaders and staff (Breckenmacher, 2017: 65ff; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 115, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). Nevertheless, charities and societies developed different ways to question state power and their strategies often depended on their respective political network and existing power relations. Contesting state policy was not an activity reserved to organisations led by EPRDF critics (Interviewee Nr. 2 2015b; Interviewee Nr. 29 2015). Well networked resident and Ethiopian charities and societies used their contacts in the EPRDF and the state to influence political decision-making (Interviewee Nr. 25, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017) and even charities and societies whose leaders were closely affiliated with the EPRDF, sometimes criticised political measures where they harmed their organisational goals (Interviewee Nr. 33, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 43, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 137, 2017).

To avoid negative repercussions from questioning state organisations, criticism was often targeted towards specific policies, not the EPRDF government as such. Accusations were backed with as much documentary proof as possible, delivered in person and behind closed doors rather than in public. Moreover, charities and societies often carefully chose the individual to deliver criticism, to ensure best use of networks and prevent escalation of conflict (Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). Many charities and societies applied self-censorship to avoid confrontation (Interviewee Nr. 27, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 37, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 54, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016). Interviewees explained:

"We apply international research standards in our work. The government is waiting for us to make a mistake. They wait for us to report opinions. You'd end up in jail for that. So, we are careful and back all our arguments by evidence. If we are not sure about evidence it stays pending" (Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016). "Everything has to be evidence based and backed by hard facts because in the worst case scenario it would have to hold in court" (Interviewee Nr. 16, 2015).

When encountering problems with one specific state organisation or civil servant, charities and societies tried to use their political contacts to solve the issues

(Interviewee Nr. 35, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 68, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016). Rather than openly contesting state organisations, charities and societies often tried to circumvent them, encouraging resolving the difficulties within the state. Where a problem occurred with one particular civil servant, organisations often focused on finding an ally within the same state office. Where problems occurred with the leadership of a state office, alliances had to be built with other state offices. The hierarchy between civil servants and state offices played a significant role regarding the outcome (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 109, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). Alliances relied on personal connections, e.g. family/ethnicity/work connections between civil servants and the leaders/staff of charities and societies, mutual interests, and/or the dependence of state organisations on the services of charities and societies. While also subversive in character, in contrast to subversive interactions under co-existence that involved secretly working on censored areas, alliance building by definition relied on approaching state actors.

Sometimes charities and societies contested decisions of state organisations or civil servants directly, instead of using state or EPRDF channels. However, rather than engaging in public protests, often such instances were confined to direct interactions between civil servants and charities and societies. Avoiding public dissemination of information about conflict with state organisations or public criticism of the EPRDF was seen as key to avoid repression, given that *“the government takes it personal if you go on the media”* (Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016). Examples of more direct contestation included charities and societies setting limits to the interference of the ChSA in their internal affairs. Two resident charities reported that they had prevented agency officers from interfering in their meetings (Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). An interviewee remembered:

“The agency did want to observe and use its power. We told them thank you for coming. We told them as well that they could observe but not speak out as they are no member. The agency representative was very furious” (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016b).

Some charities and societies operating at the local level successfully used their potential to mobilise significant numbers of people to put pressure on state offices (Interviewee Nr. 138, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 139, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 146, 2017).

Two resident charities visited, threatened, for example, to stage strikes to get their licences or force the government to revise an official decision. The importance of community based organisations for socio-economic life in Ethiopia favoured such practices. Interviewees shared:

“The government blocked the CSO’s licence. The CSO said they intended to go on the street. The government was afraid and gave them their licence” (Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017). “They [a local resident charity] went to the government and made it change its decision. The government didn’t want them to operate bajaj [moto-taxi]. But the CSO told the government. They forced it” (Fieldnotes, 2017).

Nearly all charities and societies interviewed (including mass societies that were directly tied into EPRDF structures) contested specific decisions of state organisations. Only few organisations contested the EPRDF regime as such and they were under constant surveillance of the ChSA and other state offices. Politically well-networked charities and societies had an advantage over those lacking connections to the EPRDF structures, as they could use their contacts to push for their criticism to be heard and possibly even addressed in their favour. Contestation on one hand testified to the limits of state power, on the other hand, the form it took, exemplified that the high degree of infrastructural power and the presence of the state in civil society provided the latter with access to state structures and allowed charities and societies to question state policies and decisions at times.

Conclusion

While the preamble of the ChSP suggested that the law was passed to ensure the contribution of charities and societies to Ethiopia’s development and to guarantee citizens’ right to association, the findings in this chapter suggest that the ChSA primarily used the proclamation to control charities and societies rather than to mobilise them as part of the EPRDF’s developmental state programme. In theory, the new legal framework coerced charities and societies to align themselves to the EPRDF developmental state agenda and contribute to its fulfilment: resident and foreign charities and societies through securing external finance for socioeconomic development interventions and Ethiopian societies (professional- and mass

associations) through mobilising the population behind the EPRDF. Ethiopian charities, essentially human rights NGOs, were also officially allowed to work on political issues, but their role was not further detailed. In practice, nearly all charities and societies interviewed, with the exception of mass societies, reported problems regarding their operations under the ChSP. While foreign and resident charities and societies and many Ethiopian charities were under higher scrutiny by the ChSA than Ethiopian societies, the latter could seldom make use of this due to their low human and financial capacity.

Security concerns took primacy over developmental concerns in the regulation of charities and societies, but more so at the federal than the local level. The securitisation of civil society created conflict within state structures, between the ChSA and other state organisations, as the latter wanted to mobilise organisations, especially resident charities and societies, to reach the EPRDF's development targets. This was the case both at the federal level (between the ChSA and other federal state offices), as well as between the federal and local level (between the ChSA and local state offices). Given that the ChSA's influence at the local level was smaller than at the federal level, local state officials and charities and societies developed cooperative agreements that somewhat circumvented the ChSA imposed rules.

Due to the tight grip that the EPRDF had established over charities and societies, many interactions between state and civil society actors testified to co-optation. However, charities and societies tried to negotiate and bargain with state actors to increase their space for action, sometimes cooperating with them, sometimes contesting them. Charities and societies that were politically well-connected, were often better able to influence political decision-making than those that lacked links to state structures. In several cases charities and societies were able to push for the rights of their members and improve service provisions to them, testifying to the fact that their members' interests were not at all times subordinated to the state's interests. Contestation did not take the form of public protests, due to the high costs associated with public dissent. Where possible, charities and societies often tried to build alliances with specific state officials to solve problems encountered with public structures. In theory, the ChSP ruled out coexistence through making the activities of charities and societies readable to the state (reporting, monitoring visits etc.). While

some organisations were able to operate at a distance from the state and exploit the blind spots of a state agency, others were forced into coexistence by the state that denied them access to political decision-making structures. Charities and societies had greater influence on state policy and political decision-making at the local, than at the federal level, partly because of the close links between state and charities and societies at the local level and partly because of the limited reach of the ChSA. The ChSA's incorporation and exercise of despotic power in many cases hindered cooperation between charities and societies and state actors. This reduced the state's infrastructural power that specifically relied on collaborative interactions. Moreover, due to the visibility of state control over charities and societies, the latter in many cases lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the population, creating a vacuum between state and society.

Chapter 8: The Politics of “Public Silence” - Civil Society, Authoritarianism and Regime Stability in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, 15th of February 2018 (Yekatit 8 2010)

Sitting at the campus café in Sidist Kilo, my friend and I are shocked by the news we just received by text. I look at Debebe¹⁴¹ whose disbelief is written all over his face. He tries to load the website of Fana broadcasting. After several failed attempts, there it is, in black and white: Prime Minister Hailemariam Deselegn resigned. After over two years of unrest and political turmoil, things seem to change and events are picking up speed. People have barely had time to digest the news regarding the release of political prisoners last week.

‘Mengist yellem’ [There is no government] I think to myself. I have heard this phrase numerous times in the past two years, but it’s the first time I think I understand the feeling of disquiet that comes with it. What will happen next? What are the rules now? Who is in charge? As we walk down to Arat kilo to catch our ‘taxis’, I look at other people wondering whether they already know. People queue and wait as if nothing had happened. Crisis has long become the new normal and in Addis life has gone on despite the upheavals in the regions. Will this change?

‘Worej ale’ [I want to get off]. The minibus stops in front of Jonny’s where our neighbours sit and drink beer. I say hello before heading home. We exchange the usual greetings, but no mention of the latest political news. As I walk home, everything looks as usual. The atmosphere in Addis is deceptive; the resignation of the Prime Minister indicates that the political situation is more dire than many people think. What forced the changes? Will the regime collapse? Or will it open up from within? In which direction is Ethiopia heading?

* * *

¹⁴¹ The name was changed to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.

Introduction

“Authoritarian regimes try to be responsive in a smart way. They don’t have a safety valve for expression and they risk that a little thing can become existential. There is no way to express frustration. Ethiopia is not a free country and the government knows that its legitimacy depends on growth. For system survival, it tries to promote growth. But it tries to do this alone and it doesn’t work. The government cannot be insular and survive, but it hasn’t understood this yet. It doesn’t allow civil society to express itself and it doesn’t listen. There is no safety valve to air frustration. This can be dangerous.” (Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016a)

The final chapter is divided into five main parts. The first section of the chapter answers the research question and summarises the empirical contributions. Drawing on the findings from chapters 5 to 7, it compares civil society - state relations in the three civil society sectors under study and reflects on how the existing relationships have affected regime stability. The second and third sections of the chapter outline two further areas in which the study has made contributions to the existing literature: theoretical and methodological contributions. The fourth part of the chapter outlines avenues for future research. The last part of the chapter reflects on the latest political developments and sources of regime instability beyond civil society - state relations.

Answering the Research Question- The Empirical Contribution

Contributing to a larger canon of work that investigates how the presence of civil society organisations in authoritarian settings influences the durability of regimes in power, this thesis set out to explain how the relationship between the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF rule and different types of civil society organisations have affected regime stability.

The analysis demonstrates that the relationship between civil society organisations and the state under the EPRDF regime both strengthened and weakened regime stability: (1) The strict control established over formal civil society organisations protected the regime from large-scale public contestation by CSOs and thus strengthened regime stability. Although civil society organisations tried, sometimes successfully, to represent their members’ and beneficiaries’ interests and to influence state policies, they stayed clear of open conflict to avoid repression. (2)

The domination established by the EPRDF over civil society organisations prevented them from functioning as a bridge between citizens and the state and created a vacuum between them. This weakened regime stability, as grievances in the population could not be communicated to the state through institutionalised channels and state officials were often unwilling and unable to listen to demands in society. (3) The EPRDF's focus on control over cooperation reduced the ruling coalition's ability to work with civil society organisations to achieve its ambitious development goals. This weakened regime stability, as the EPRDF sought to build legitimacy on developmental outputs, but was unable to mobilise CSOs effectively behind the developmental state programme.

The EPRDF managed to ensure "negative stability" through preventing public contestation by civil society organisations. However, it failed to interact with civil society organisations proactively, to create links with society and cater to some of its demands, thus failing to generate "positive stability". The EPRDF tried to institutionalise cooperation with civil society organisations through establishing platforms, for example, the GO-NGO forums with charities and societies, the PPCFs with the chambers of commerce and sectoral associations, and the tri-partite forums with CETU and the employers federation. However, the strict control exercised by the EPRDF over such forums meant that they could not function as "safety valves" through which claims in society could be communicated to the government or joint activities planned and executed (PSRC, 2017). While negative stability ensured regime survival for a long time, the failure of the EPRDF to embed itself more in society contributed to regime fragility. The EPRDF lacked 'embedded autonomy' – *"an autonomy embedded in a concrete set of social ties that bind the state to society and provide institutionalized channels for the continual negotiation and renegotiation of goals and policies"* (Evans, 1995: 59).

Due to the absence of public contestation, civil society organisations in Ethiopia have often been portrayed as weak and co-opted in scholarship and were said to stabilise the EPRDF regime (Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Sisay, 2012). However, this thesis challenges previous findings in several ways. First, the analysis demonstrates that the "public silence" of civil society organisations was not sufficient proof of co-optation, as negotiations and conflicts between state and civil society

organisations took place, but not often in the formal political realm. Second, the findings show that the “public silence” concealed existing grievances among civil society organisations and in the population, providing a false sense of regime stability. Third, the thesis questions the idea that civil society organisations are always most effective when independent from the state, demonstrating that organisations with close political ties to the EPRDF were better able to influence political decision-making and that co-optation could bear seeds for concealed and even more open contestation. Finally, the analysis demonstrates that the macro-political environment was not enough to explain the absence of widespread public dissent among formal civil society organisations and uncovers hidden mechanisms established to control civil society organisations.

Following Scott’s (1990: xii, 2) approach to the study of power relations and resistance to state control, the analysis uncovers the hidden transcripts of civil society organisations¹⁴² – the “[...] *critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant*” and of state organisations “[...] *the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed*” - and compares them with the formal interactions between civil society and state actors, the public transcripts.

The Politics of Repression: From Public Dissent to State Control

In all three civil society sectors under study, organisations at different points in time had proven that they could challenge the EPRDF regime and threaten regime stability. Similar to experiences in authoritarian countries in the Middle-East and Asia (Cavatorta, 2013b; Deyo, 1987b; Fu, 2017c; Rivetti, 2013), periods of open confrontation between state and civil society organisations in Ethiopia, were followed by repression and forced restructuring to prevent future contestation (Dupuy et al., 2015; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8; Weis, 2016: 260ff). In the case of the trade unions, the restructuring was carried out through the direct intervention of an

¹⁴² I included contestation of power addressed to specific organisations and individuals in the state, that took place in the grey zone of politics, in the hidden transcripts of civil society organisations. While not hidden from the dominant, the state, in general, such subversion of power structures was not visible to all parts of the state and was often used to question central state power. Disaggregating the state, the dominant, I showed that hiding critique from some parts of the state, while targeting others was used by civil society organisations to contest state domination.

EPRDF internal organisation, the *labader* committee, that connected EPRDF and trade union structures (Admasie, 2018a: 153). In the case of the chambers of commerce and charities and societies, the restructuring was carried out through establishing new legal frameworks that forcefully altered the formal structure of the sectors¹⁴³ (Weis, 2016: 260ff; Yitayehu, 2010: Chapter 4).

After the restructuring, control was established through direct oversight. In the case of the unions and the charities and societies, the oversight bodies were controlled by the TPLF and more specifically former fighters, indicating that handling of civil society was considered an issue of national security. The *labader* committee was part of the EPRDF's labour wing and directly linked to the Prime Minister's Office (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018) and the charities and societies agency was connected to the Ethiopian security apparatus, both through its leadership and its ministerial affiliation (Interviewee Nr. 119, 2016). The chambers of commerce and sectoral associations constituted somewhat of an exception, as oversight was shared between the Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Industry (Proclamation No. 691, 2010: Art. 20, 21) and there did not exist a specialised organisation in charge of monitoring their work (Interviewee Nr. 62, 2016a). However, interviews suggested that control was exercised through EPRDF internal channels but more informally than the other two sectors (Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017).

The tools used to ensure compliance of civil society organisations with EPRDF policies and prevent contestation bore many resemblances across the civil society sectors studied. Moreover, they reflected practices used by other authoritarian regimes, such as China (Hsu and Hasmath, 2014; Teets, 2014) and Russia (Breckenmacher, 2017; Evans et al., 2006). Dissolution of existing civil society organisations and setting up EPRDF affiliated organisations under the same name was a common tool used to bring civil society organisations in line with the EPRDF programme. Examples included basic trade unions, for example at the Sheraton and Dashen Bank (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 125, 2016), Ethiopian

¹⁴³ In both cases, official legal drafting processes had begun nearly a decade before the actual restructuring, but bills were only passed after open conflict had emerged. While drafting processes had been formally participatory, the legislation passed to restructure the sectors did not reflect the concerns of civil society organisations ('Addis Business Vol. 6 No. 2', 2003: 1; Interviewee Nr. 8, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 32, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018).

societies such as the Ethiopian teachers' association and the Ethiopian Bar Association (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 49, 2016), and business membership organisations such as the Ethiopian Manufacturers Association and the Ethiopian Transitors Association (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016c; Interviewee Nr. 76, 2016a). Interviewees at the chambers of commerce, trade unions and charities and societies reported that infiltration through forced change of leadership, closing of bank accounts, revoking of licenses and imprisoning of leaders were used to deter contestation. Memories of past clashes and violent repression of civil society organisations also functioned as an effective deterrence (Interviewee Nr. 82, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 101, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 152, 2018).

Despite the high level of control established over civil society organisations, similar to experiences in Syria pre-2011 (Kawakibi, 2013), Russia (Kulmala, 2011; Mikirova et al., 2013) and China (He and Huang, 2015; Hildebrandt, 2013; Teets, 2013), interactions between state and civil society organisations in Ethiopia, ranged from co-optation to contestation over various forms of cooperation and coexistence. While the majority of civil society organisations exhibited all types of interactions, both at sector as well as at organisational level there existed patterns of interaction.

In the case of the trade unions, the majority of interactions observed fell in the categories of co-optation and cooperation. CETU and its members helped control the demands of workers and mobilised workers to support the EPRDF's development projects (Interviewee Nr. 98, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 108, 2016). CETU in return got access to state structures and resources for its work and support in unionisation (Interviewee Nr. 96, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 97, 2016). Despite this trend of political alignment, CETU and some of its members became more vocal over the course of my fieldwork. CETU threatened a general strike over the EPRDFs suggestions for redrafting the labour law, as the EPRDF was unwilling to listen to workers claims (Addis Fortune, 2017). Nearly no co-existence of trade unions with the state was observed, mainly due to the direct control exercised over the unions through the EPRDF. The relationship between trade unions and the MoLSA and BoLSAs was mostly marked by co-optation and cooperation (Interviewee Nr. 107, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 118, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 122, 2016), but unions were more in conflict for example with the Ethiopian Investment Commission or the Industrial Park

Corporation, organisations that were in charge of implementing the EPRDF's development programme (Interviewee Nr. 153, 2018).

In the case of the chambers of commerce sector, interactions testifying to co-optation were primarily observed in the case of the new chamber structures established through the 2003 proclamation, especially the sectoral associations representing manufacturing and the ECCSA, rather than the original chambers of commerce structures representing trade and services (Interviewee Nr. 40, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 70, 2016). The same patterns in terms of actors held true for cooperation, as state organisations cooperated less willingly with the old chamber structures (Interviewee Nr. 104, 2016). However, the relative weakness of many of the newly established organisations prevented them from becoming efficient partners for the EPRDF. Large parts of the chambers sector that represented the interests of trade and services and predated the 2003 proclamation were forced into coexistence, to prevent them from influencing policy-making and the work of state organisations. Contestation, although less pronounced than in the case of trade unions (AACCSA somewhat of an exception), remained at policy level and was primarily verbal and directed against specific state organisations and their policies (Interviewee Nr. 94, 2016). While the sectoral associations worked closely with the Ministry of Industry and often complained about the Ministry of Trade and its favouritism for the chamber structures representing traders (Interviewee Nr. 126, 2016), the latter worked more closely with the Ministry of Trade and reported more problems with the Ministry of Industry (Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018).

Regarding charities and societies, interactions testifying to co-optation were observed primarily in the case of societies, especially those with large numbers of members like mass associations (Interviewee Nr. 137, 2017). Moreover, interactions testifying to co-optation among charities and societies were more predominant at the local than at the federal level, with charities and societies at *woreda* and *kebele* level being closely linked to state offices (Interviewee Nr. 135, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 144, 2017). At the federal level, there existed more coexistence than at the local level, mainly to prevent Ethiopian and resident charities from accessing decision-making structures and state officials (Interviewee Nr. 36, 2016). Consequently, I observed more cooperation at the local level than at the federal level ('Focus Group, 9 adults,

Hawassa', 2017; Interviewee Nr. 15, 2015). Contestation often took the form of subverting power structures as charities and societies partnered up with specific state actors to question political decisions and policies (Interviewee Nr. 133, 2017). With the exception of Ethiopian societies, most Ethiopian, resident and foreign charities reported problems with the Charities and Societies Agency. However, within their specific sectors of expertise, e.g. health, environment, gender, labour or law, the majority reported that they had established relatively fruitful collaboration with relevant state organisations.

Within the three sectors under study, the history of conflict was an important driver to understand the state's stance towards particular civil society organisations. Regarding the chamber system for example, AACCSA was a clear example of how its past political activism, e.g. the 'Addis Vote' campaign around the 2000 elections, meant that it was still viewed with more suspicion than other chambers and sectoral associations (Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). This negatively affected AACCSA's ability to access state actors and influence policy making. In the case of the trade unions, unions that had in the past been very vocal and that the state had failed to restructure comprehensively, such as the CBE union, often remained side-lined in CETU (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2016a). Forced coexistence, was chosen by the EPRDF to prevent the union from influencing state organisations. In the case of the charities and societies, the Human Rights Council, Action Professionals' Association for the People and the Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA) were also examples showing how their involvement in the 2005 elections still affected their ability to operate despite their efforts to improve their working relationships with state organisations. EEA for example was not able to change the negative attitude of ChSA staff that still suspected the organisation of being affiliated to opposition forces, although some of its board members worked in different ministries and even the PMO (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a).

Corroborating the findings of studies on civil society - state relations in other authoritarian countries (Hildebrandt, 2013; Khatib, 2013; Liverani, 2008; Unger and Chan, 2015), the patterns of interaction observed between state and civil society organisations in Ethiopia indicated that the latter did not directly challenge the EPRDF regime and threaten its stability through contestation. The majority of interactions

fell into the categories of co-optation and cooperation, and less so coexistence and contestation, indicating that civil society organisations stabilised rather than threatened the EPRDF's authoritarian rule. Although the patterns of interactions between civil society and state organisations testified to the fact that the relationships between civil society and state organisations were complex and marked by continuous negotiations, the EPRDF successfully managed to prevent large-scale open contestation of its rule. Civil society organisations were often stuck between demands received from their members and beneficiaries and those from state organisations, however state organisations were commonly unwilling to listen and react to claims made by civil society organisations that did not overlap with the state agenda. This demonstrated that civil society organisations were not able to function as safety-valves through which grievances in the population could be expressed and addressed effectively.

Removed Despotism not Embedded Autonomy: Civil Society and Developmentalism

As already mentioned, the EPRDF's rule was characterised by a high degree of despotic power and a lesser, though varying, proportion of infrastructural power, which translated into reduced embeddedness in society. While the independence of the EPRDF from formal civil society organisations enabled the ruling coalition to push its development programme without having to take into account claims for example for redistribution, equality and rights, it prevented it from successfully mobilising civil society organisations behind its developmental endeavours and in some cases fuelled contestation. Moreover, the weakness of institutionalised channels for negotiations prevented civil society organisations from participating in negotiations of policies and targets under the developmental state programme, and meant that the EPRDF lacked information about demands in society.

For a long while, the EPRDF's approach to trade unions was characterised by control, rather than an attempt to mobilise them as part of the developmentalist policies. Memories of the strikes in the 1990s and the mobilisation of CETU against the regime guided the EPRDF's way of dealing with the unions and the original restructuring and establishment of control pre-dated the EPRDF's developmental state programme (Admasie, 2018a: Chapter 5; Praeg, 2006: Chapter 8). However,

evidence presented in this thesis indicates that the EPRDF increasingly tried to use unionisation to control workers, keep their claims in check and favour industrial peace, necessary for its ambitious development targets (EPRDF, 2011b, 2013b; Interviewee Nr. 93, 2016). Following the practices of the Asian Tigers (Deyo, 1989: 154), the EPRDF exploited cheap labour for industrialisation and looked towards Asian labour regimes to adjust its national labour legislation to this strategy (CETU, 2017; MoLSA, 2016). Moreover, the EPRDF's approach to CETU and other unions in some instances resembled experiences of the Asian Tigers. As in Singapore (Deyo, 1989: 160), the EPRDF demanded that CETU and the industrial federations handle the demands of workers for social redistribution and prevent an independent labour movement from forming (Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018). However, similar to experiences in South Korea (Deyo, 1987b: 189), the EPRDF often prevented unionisation in international enterprises to please the investors and reverted, for example, to establishing non-union labour-management councils in the industrial parks that reduced the organisational backing of labour (Interviewee Nr. 153, 2018). Labour regimes differed between the different Asian developmental states and some were more repressive than others, but in all cases labour was not able to make substantial gains for workers for an extended period of time (Deyo, 1987b). Repression of labour was feasible, partly, and in contrast to Ethiopia, because unemployment decreased and real wages increased over time (Deyo, 1987b: 196f). In Ethiopia unemployment rates remained high, youth-unemployment rose and real wages declined (Admasie, 2018a: 197f), questioning the EPRDF's ability to forge a social contract based on developmental performance. However, the EPRDF remained unwilling to listen to labour and respond to the growing grievances. While the relationship between trade unions and the EPRDF in some cases resembled the experiences of its Asian role models, the increasing number of wildcat strikes and the opposition of CETU to EPRDF policies in 2017 (Addis Fortune, 2017) showed that the ability of the EPRDF to control labour was lower in Ethiopia than in the Asian cases. Unions in Ethiopia received increasing pressure from workers and needed to gain legitimacy among their constituency, at the same time as, due to the EPRDF internal conflict, the influence of the *labader* committee on the confederation decreased.

As mentioned by several scholars, the relationship between the EPRDF and the Ethiopian private sector differed substantially from its Asian role models and posed limits to the EPRDF's ability to engender rapid and sustained development. The Asian Tigers developed close links between the state and the local private sector, however there existed differences for example with respect to the structure of the private sectors and the states' reliance on FDI for industrialisation (Unger and Chan, 2015). Instead of comprehensively developing the Ethiopian private sector, the EPRDF built its development operations on state-owned enterprises, party endowment funds and party-affiliated businesses, as well as the attraction of foreign direct investment (Clapham, 2018: 1158f; Lefort, 2013; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011). The restructuring of the chambers of commerce system in Ethiopia and its ensuing disintegration testified to the fact that regime survival concerns took primacy over developmental concerns when it came to the Ethiopian private sector (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 132, 2017). While, to a large degree, this prevented contestation of the EPRDF rule and its policies, the failure to institutionalise state-business relations through the intermediary of strong business associations and the reliance on personalised relationships between individual entrepreneurs and state officials fuelled corruption (Young, 1997: 99). Moreover, it prevented collective approaches to problem solving in the private sector, differing significantly from the experiences of the Asian Tigers (Lucas, 1997: 74). Contrary to the Ethiopian experience, in the Asian developmental states, several business associations became partners, though junior partners, of the regimes in power (Kim, 1997; Park, 2009). In South Korea for example several business associations coordinated strategies and activities of their members, ensuring the implementation of development plans, participated in policy elaboration and provided state offices with information about their members to monitor policy implementation (Park, 2009: 842f). While fulfilling important functions for the states, business associations in the Asian Tiger states exercised significant pressure on state offices to take concerns of private entrepreneurs into account. In Taiwan and South Korea, business associations were much less restricted than, for example, trade unions and other civil society organisations, as states needed private sector capital to implement their ambitious development plans (Park, 2009: 837; Unger and Chan, 2015: 182). While business

associations in the Asian developmental states functioned as social ties to the business community, in Ethiopia the focus often lay on control rather than institutionalised negotiation, which decreased the associations' legitimacy in the eyes of their members.

Evidence from the Asian developmental states indicated that strict control over NGOs, other charitable organisations, professional organisations and mass organisations was established to prevent contestation (Douglass, 2005; Evans, 2010; Hirata, 2002). While the approach of the EPRDF to charities and societies could therefore be interpreted as a copy of the Asian approach, evidence presented in this thesis indicates that the focus on control and repression was sometimes counterproductive to achieving the EPRDF's developmental goals. Several Ethiopian state organisations wanted to cooperate with charities and societies, but repeatedly reported problems with their oversight body, that, because of its affiliation to the security apparatus, prioritised security and regime survival over development (Interviewee Nr. 28, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 152, 2018). Due to resource constraints state organisations wanted to collaborate with charities and societies to help them in meeting their development targets, but encountered problems due to the ChSA blocking the work of their CSO partners (Interviewee Nr. 142, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 143, 2017).

There exists considerable evidence that the EPRDF looked towards the Asian developmental states when it came to regulating civil society organisation in Ethiopia, testifying to the coalition's ideological commitment to the developmental state model. For the drafting of the ChSP and the latest labour law, the Prime Minister's office was directly involved and pushed for the integration of the East Asian experience (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2018; MoLSA, 2016; Yamamoto, 2008b). Rumours suggested that this was also the case for the chambers proclamation but evidence was more scarce (Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 89, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 151, 2018). The PMO's involvement in all three cases indicated not only that the regulation of civil society organisations was treated as a matter of national priority, but, as the PMO was the centre of the developmental state programming (Brautigam et al., 2016), that it was part of a wider political agenda.

Despite the ideological commitment to using civil society organisations for the developmental state, a recent research report by the Federal Policy Studies and Research Centre indicated that civil servants and politicians exhibited negative attitudes towards different civil society actors and failed to meaningfully engage with them in policy design and implementation (PSRC, 2017). My interviewees corroborated these findings; many civil servants and politicians held that civil society organisations needed to be strictly regulated and disciplined (Interviewee Nr. 44, 2016b; Interviewee Nr. 45, 2016). As the analysis in this thesis shows, the overall approach of the EPRDF towards civil society was largely focused on averting contestation through control and repression. This negatively affected the perceived legitimacy of CSOs among the population and reduced the potential of the EPRDF to engage with them meaningfully in the design and implementation of its development programme. While civil society organisations pushed to influence state organisations and engaged in bargaining and negotiations, the EPRDF tried as much as possible to reduce the influence of civil society organisations on politicians and civil servants. The resulting lack of embeddedness increased regime fragility, despite the absence of public protests, as the EPRDF was not able to use civil society organisations to bolster its rule, either through institutionalising exchange with society or through mobilising CSOs to operationalise the developmental state programme.

Revisiting the Analytical Framework: Co-optation, Cooperation, Coexistence, Contestation - The Theoretical Contribution

Drawing on sociological theories of state and civil society, the analytical framework I propose in this thesis, is dualistic and understands civil society and the state as relational concepts. Although it sees them as analytically and empirically separate, the proposed framework explores the nature and degree of the respective independence/autonomy of civil society and the state and the consequences such independence produces in terms of observable interactions between states and their civil societies. The strength of the analytical approach lies in the disaggregation of the state and civil society, capturing the heterogeneity among state and civil society actors and the diversity of existing links and interactions taking place between the

two spheres. Drawing on Michal Mann's conceptions of infrastructural and despotic power helps in understanding how interactions between states and their civil societies are driven and shaped by the respective power autonomy of states and civil society and the type of power exercised (see Table 11) (Mann, 1984: 185, 206).

Using the data collected through my fieldwork, I refined the analytical framework, through linking the categorisation of interactions between civil society and state organisations with Mann's conceptions of power. Moreover, I added reflections on factors beyond power that affected patterns of interactions. While the categorisation of interactions reflects ideal types, the empirical data collected helps shed light on the overlaps between categories of interactions and created nuance in their differentiation.

Studies of civil society – state relations in non-democratic settings have demonstrated that co-optation at the initial stages has often required high despotic power to force change (Khatib, 2013; Rivetti, 2013). Civil society organisations have often contested states' attempts to influence the organisations' work (Praeg, 2006: chapter 8). In the case of the trade unions in Ethiopia, the EPRDF had to use security forces and the police to close the old CETU and force the election of new and party-affiliated leaders, before being able to control the confederation's work (Interviewee Nr. 112, 2016). Attempts at co-optation through infiltration, like in the case of the chambers of commerce or the Human Rights Council, failed and provoked opposition (Interviewee Nr. 90, 2016; Interviewee Nr. 111, 2016). While coercion in authoritarian contexts has proven important to establish co-optation, it has also often provoked resistance over time. Hence, to exercise long-term control, states have needed infrastructural power to ensure alignment between the agendas of civil society organisations and state offices (Lee and Zhang, 2013: 1476f; Slater and Fenner, 2011: 20). The trade unions in Ethiopia were a case in point, as obligatory party membership for union leaders and the oversight over unions by the *labader* committee, rather than continued force and repression, allowed for institutionalisation of control and co-optation over time (Interviewee Nr. 95, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 130, 2018). Although in the literature co-optation has often been portrayed as something finite, indicating the inability of civil society organisations to represent their members, evidence presented in this thesis shows that co-optation

bore seeds for subversion of power structures and even more open contestation thanks to the dualistic character of infrastructural power.

Cooperation testifies to the co-dependency of states and their civil societies and exemplifies the dualistic character of infrastructural power. States have never been completely independent of civil society and relied on human, economic and political resources of organisations both to provide services and/or to organise and control society (Cavatorta, 2013a; Hildebrandt, 2013). To ensure implementation of policies throughout civil society, penetrating it, states have exposed themselves to influence of the latter. Registration, monitoring of civil society organisations, tax collection and execution of joint projects for example, have increased the interactions between state and civil society organisations and provided both state and civil society actors with access to the other sphere, opening the possibility for negotiation and bargaining (Hsu, 2010; Teets, 2014). In the case of resident charities in Ethiopia for example, state organisations collaborated with civil society organisations to meet their development targets and civil society organisations used their ability to access foreign funding to push state organisations that were in need of their help to increase their space for work (Interviewee Nr. 134, 2017; Interviewee Nr. 136, 2017). The threat of use of despotic power was applied to prevent civil society organisations from crossing the EPRDF's red-lines and transition from cooperation to contestation in the negotiations with state offices.

Coexistence can both show the limits of states' infrastructural power and/or the reticence to exercise it to avoid influence from civil society organisations that can result due to its dualistic character. Studies have shown that while the threat of use of despotic power can prevent civil society organisations from using coexistence for open and direct contestation, it cannot necessarily prevent subversion of power structures (Fu, 2017c; Spires, 2011). In the Ethiopian case, this was exemplified by the fact that resident charities used the blind spots of the charities agency to work on issues and projects they were not officially allowed to. Organisations did not report on such activities to the ChSA (Interviewee Nr. 35, 2015; Interviewee Nr. 140, 2017) and as the state's infrastructural power was not limitless, civil society organisations operated at its margin. Forcing civil society organisations into coexistence, like in the case of parts of the chambers system, limited both the

influence of the state on civil society organisations as well as the latter's access and potential influence on state structures (Interviewee Nr. 20, 2016e; Interviewee Nr. 81, 2016a).

Contestation, rather than simply reflecting the lack of state power, can result from both the use of infrastructural and of despotic power (Lee and Zhang, 2013). Due to the dualistic character of infrastructural power, contestation can be an outcome of the penetration of civil society by the state (Mann, 1984). In Ethiopia, charities and societies, for example, used their contacts within state offices, often forged as a result of the continuous oversight exercised over them, to contest decisions taken by politicians and public officials (Interviewee Nr. 48, 2016a; Interviewee Nr. 135, 2017). Open contestation directed at regimes rather than policies, has historically often been the outcome of excessive use of despotic power. Force and coercion have created grievances that undermined states' infrastructural power and their ability to enforce their policies throughout civil society by alternative means (Slater and Fenner, 2011). In the Ethiopian case, the EPRDF's repressive rule led to the eruption of social movements especially in Oromia and Amhara regional states in 2015/16. Open contestation was initially countered with more use of despotic power, which fuelled the protests even further and uncovered the fragility of the EPRDF regime. After the election of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in March 2018, the EPRDF has invested considerable resources in building bridges to the Ethiopian population and reducing the use of despotic power.

Table 12: Simplified presentation of the existing links between types/sources of power and interactions between state and civil society organisations

		Exercise of Infrastructural Power	
		<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Exercise of Despotic Power	<i>High</i>	Co-optation ¹⁴⁴	Contestation
	<i>Low</i>	Cooperation	Coexistence

Apart from the state's exercise of despotic and infrastructural power, I found that resources and strategies of both state and civil society organisations influenced the patterns of interactions observed.

An important finding from this analysis is that state organisations reverted to co-optation when they had something to gain from civil society organisations. Otherwise, many opted for forcing organisations into coexistence, preventing them from accessing state structures and influencing political decision-making. As co-optation was costly and the state had finite resources, it did not constitute the default approach to civil society organisations, but represented a strategic decision to use a civil society organisation, rather than rendering it harmless. Resembling research findings on civil society - state relations in China, Malaysia and Syria pre-2011 (Clark, 2013; Haddad, 2013; Miles and Croucher, 2013; Unger and Chan, 2015), state organisations in Ethiopia were more likely to co-opt membership-based organisations rather than non-membership-based organisations, because of the former's potential to mobilise larger number of people. Apart from aiming at preventing contestation, the EPRDF government used membership-based organisations to mobilise resources (financial and human) from the organisations' members and to disseminate political messages.

¹⁴⁴ During initial stages of co-optation non-democratic states have needed to exercise substantial degrees of despotic power to enforce co-optation. To ensure alignment of civil society organisations over time states have needed to employ infrastructural power.

Corroborating findings from studies on civil society - state relations in other authoritarian contexts (Cavatorta, 2013b; Hildebrandt, 2013; Liverani, 2008), cooperation in the Ethiopian case was often driven by an overlap of agendas, as well as the respective attempts to gain access to the other party's resources (human, financial and political). Moreover, civil society organisations used it to reduce suspicion among state officials and increase their space of action. In many cases, cooperation was driven by resource needs among state organisations, as they relied on civil society organisations to provide services to citizens, where public resources were not sufficient to meet the needs of communities. Hence for state actors, cooperation was primarily driven by the objective to access supplementary human and financial resources, especially at the local level. Many civil society organisations strategically used the needs of the government to push their agendas without risking confrontation.

Several studies on civil society - state relations in authoritarian settings found that CSOs used coexistence to prevent state actors from influencing their work and using their resources (Fu, 2017c; Gibson, 2001). However, in the Ethiopian case, state organisations often forced civil society organisations into coexistence to stop them from exercising political influence or accessing state resources. While constituting a strategy also used by civil society organisations, I found that CSOs were more often pushed into coexistence than actively choosing it. Although the EPRDF government invested significant resources to render civil society organisations' actions legible for the state and prevent independent civic action, it often minimised direct interactions to ensure its independence from CSOs. State organisations were less likely to push membership-based organisations into coexistence or to allow them to coexist, given their potential of mobilising large numbers of people.

Similar to experiences of civil society organisations in other authoritarian settings (Cavatorta, 2013a; Lewis, 2013), CSOs in Ethiopia mostly refrained from open public contestations due to the high costs associated with such actions. However, contestation in the form of construction of an alternative discourse (verbal criticism) and various covert, and sometimes overt, forms of subversion of power structures existed, where the agendas of state and civil society organisations diverged significantly and where CSOs were able to bear or mitigate the costs for contestation.

Similar to research findings on Chinese civil society - state relations (Fu, 2017c), state organisations in Ethiopia were more likely to tolerate contestation by individuals rather than organisations. Civil society organisations thus often decided to deliver criticism and bargain with state actors behind closed doors and used personal contacts of their leaders and/or employees, instead of organising campaigns at organisational level.

The Politics of Civil Society – State Relations under the Microscope – A methodological contribution

Ethnography, is uniquely suited to explore the everyday practices of politics, capturing what and why actors do that is not publicly observable (Auyero and Joseph, 2007: 1). Studying civil society - state relations using ethnographic methods for data collection allowed me to explore the grey zone of politics and go beyond the publicly observable “silence” of civil society organisations, revealing the ongoing negotiations and conflicts between actors and organisations operating in both spheres, as well as the hidden mechanisms of control established by the EPRDF over civil society organisations.

In the political sciences literature, previous studies have often adopted a top-down approach, focussing on elites and formal politics and have failed to capture civil society - state relations beyond this realm (Burgess, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015; Jalale and Wolff, 2017; Sisay, 2012; Yitayehu, 2010). Relying on key informant interviews, document reviews and secondary literature, has not allowed them to render the micro-politics of civil society – state relations visible and research has often limited itself to noting the absence of contestation and the existence of control, concluding that civil society organisations did not threaten regime stability. This thesis challenges previous literature, revealing the existence of negotiations and conflict between state and civil society organisations, the limitations of reach of central state power when it came to regulating civil society organisations at the local level and the disputes between different state organisations revolving around their preferred approach to civil society. Carefully disaggregating state and civil society and analysing

their interactions, this thesis demonstrates that the control established over formal civil society organisations had both strengthened and weakened regime stability.

While several previous studies on civil society in Ethiopia stated that the EPRDF regime had established a tight control over civil society, they did not identify the mechanisms of control established beyond the visible repressive legal frameworks and threats used to deter dissident actions (Dupuy et al., 2015; Jalale and Wolff, 2017; Yitayehu, 2010). Their focus on formal politics did not enable them to capture the tools used to establish control in the everyday activities of civil society organisations or explain why some state actors decide to co-opt certain civil society organisations but not others. To gain such insights it was necessary to explore informal politics, combining semi-structured and unstructured interviews with more informal conversations and observation, both participatory and passive. I learned for example about the *labader* committee, that did not officially exist, when I was using office space at a trade union to go through their internal archives. Only after having spent several months with trade unionists did people feel confident they could share such pieces of information with me. Another example on the importance of observations was that it took participation in meetings between state and chamber officials to confirm that state representatives were critical, sometimes even aggressive, when interacting with representatives from the AACCSA. While this kind of observation corroborated what chamber representatives had claimed, it falsified the information provided by public officials in interviews.

Only thanks to the ethnographic approach was I able to go beyond the dominant narratives of different groups presented in Chapter 2 and through triangulating oral information with observations I gained a more complex picture of civil society - state relations in Ethiopia. Spending time with civil society organisations allowed me to understand which state organisations they regularly interacted with, uncovering hidden links that existed between civil society and state actors. Observing, for example, that leaders of sectoral associations could directly call high level politicians on their personal phones and direct office lines to arrange meetings, while representatives from the chambers of commerce mostly had to go through formal processes of arranging appointments through secretaries, indicated differences regarding their access to political decision makers.

As ethnicity in Ethiopia was a taboo topic in conversations, it took observations and informal conversations to understand how ethnic politics influenced civil society - state relations. A trade unionist for example, during one of our coffee breaks, complained about his colleague's unwillingness to embrace political changes in the ruling coalition, making direct references to ethnic origin. *"He is against change. His people, they don't like it. He comes from Mekelle [capital of Tigray]"* (Interviewee Nr 61, 2018). Only through spending time with different civil society organisations, did I realise that they used ethnic networks when interacting with state actors. Civil society leaders and employees would for example, if possible, contact a public official from the same, rather than someone from another, ethnic group. Moreover, working with the same civil servants over extended periods of time allowed me to build trust, and some were willing to admit that political and ethnic connections played a role in receiving licences, permits and accessing financial support.

While ethnographic approaches to studying society-state relations in Ethiopia are no novelty, previous research has often been conducted at a micro-level, for example, studying the link between peasants and the local state apparatus (Di Nunzio, 2015; Emmenegger, 2016; Lefort, 2007; Planel, 2014). Instead, I adopted a meso-level approach, focusing on links between civil society and state organisations and covered different types of civil society and state organisations, as well as different geographical locations. While limiting the depth of the analysis compared to the traditional micro-level, single-sighted ethnographies, I was able to capture how different state and civil society organisations operating at different administrative levels were linked to, and interacted with each other, disaggregating both the state and civil society.

Avenues for Future Research

Fifty years ago, James Billington warned that *"We are producing a generation of scholars who prefer to provide definitive answers to small questions rather than tentative answers to important ones"* (Billington, 1968: 32). In this research project I opted for the opposite and attempted to contribute tentative answers to some of the most fundamental questions in social sciences revolving around civil society, the state, development and democracy. Choosing an under-researched empirical case

only amplified this tendency. While this empirically grounded case study contributes many important insights on the relationships between civil society and the state in Ethiopia, the attempts of the EPRDF to build a developmental state and reflections on regime stability, much more remains to be explored.

One avenue to further analyse regime stability in Ethiopia under the EPRDF rule would be to explore citizen – state relations more closely. While there exist some ethnographic studies on the subject (Di Nunzio, 2014; Emmenegger et al., 2011; Lefort, 2012; Planel, 2014), this canon of work needs to be expanded to better capture every-day forms of interactions between state actors and citizens and record control by the state, as well as resistance and subversion of state power by citizens. Although the 2015/18 political crisis and the public protests came as a surprise to many, there is evidence that it had been long in the making and its trajectory merits exploration. Grievances among citizens had been growing long before the outbreak of the protests and despite its best efforts to control and discipline citizens, the EPRDF did not manage to prevent all opposition from below. Just as much as the public silence of formal civil society organisations has been interpreted widely as a sign of the EPRDF's ability to exert control and prevent contestation of its rule, the long-time absence of public dissent among citizens has frequently been understood as proof of the subjugation of citizens to the regime. However, as recent political developments in Ethiopia suggest, the failure to study the politics of “public silence” and go beyond the formally visible absence of resistance constitutes a blind spot of scholarship on contemporary Ethiopia.

Another important area for future research includes the regional, ethnic-based social movements that emerged in 2015/16 and forced the ruling coalition to implement radical changes in its way of governing during the course of 2018. It would be important to explore the differences between formal civil society organisations studied in this thesis and the social movements that emerged, to understand why the latter were better able to contest the EPRDF regime and to affect political change. There exists some evidence that the analytical framework developed in this thesis could possibly be used to analyse the relationship between the Ethiopian state under the EPRDF and the social movements between 2015 and 2018. In Oromia regional state, for example, the OPDO used the *querro* (youth movement) to advance its

claims within the EPRDF. Whether it managed to (partly) co-opt the *querro* remains yet to be answered. While the social movement contested parts of the Oromia regional state, there also exists some evidence of collaboration. Moreover, the OPDO allowed the *querro* to coexist with state organisations despite the ongoing contestation, in order to put pressure on the EPRDF and federal level state organisations.

To go beyond state-society relations and their relationship to regime stability, it is also important to further study the EPRDF. Previous research often described the coalition as cohesive and disciplined (de Waal, 2013b; Weis, 2016), but recent political developments indicate deep fissures and conflict within it. Studies often found that the TPLF de facto controlled the EPRDF (Bach, 2011; Hagmann and Abbink, 2011). However, although scholars acknowledged that the fact that the TPLF represented an ethnic minority rendered its position in the EPRDF fragile (Asnake, 2013; Semahagn, 2014), this insight did not engender comprehensive research into the political realities of the TPLF rule. Several studies included an analysis of the TPLF's history (Aregawi, 2009; Young, 2006), however little is known about the functioning of the TPLF after 1991. Moreover, the other coalition members have remained understudied, and politics within the ruling coalition and its parties have yet to be systematically explored.

Most previous studies on the EPRDF's developmental state focused on development policies and outputs (Brautigam et al., 2016; Hauge, 2017; Mulu, 2013), treating it as a technocratic project, without sufficiently discussing the politics underpinning its design and operationalisation. However, analysing its politics is important for understanding the effect of the developmental state programme on regime stability. Some questions that need to be answered in order to analyse the commitment of the EPRDF to the programme and the possibility to engender legitimacy through it are: Which organisations/individuals in the EPRDF and which organisations in the state pushed the programme? Who got access to resources distributed under it and what were the criteria for selection? How did the operationalisation of the developmental state programme affect the country's different regions and its citizens? I found some evidence during my research that resource distribution followed both ethnic and party politics and decreased the

legitimacy of the project in the eyes of the citizens as well as the ability of the EPRDF to implement its ambitious development policies.

To further build on the findings of this thesis and go beyond research on Ethiopia, it would be interesting to test the analytical framework in other geographical contexts, both in Africa and elsewhere, to see how far it can capture civil society - state relations on a broader level and in different regime types. Given that the framework is built on existing theoretical and empirical literature capturing both democratic and non-democratic regimes, it is likely to yield explanatory power in both contexts. Based on a review of previous literature, I would expect the patterns of interaction to be different in democratic and non-democratic contexts and to see more contestation and co-existence between state and civil society actors in democracies than in authoritarian states and less co-optation. However, it is likely that the typology of interaction still holds.

The Roots of Fragility: Ethnic Politics, Despotic and Infrastructural Power

The non-participation of formal civil society organisations in the political protests from 2015 to 2018, and in power re-negotiations after the progressive political opening in 2018, indicated that they did not pose a direct threat to regime stability through contestation. Instead, the political crisis revealed that the roots of regime fragility lay in the EPRDF's inability to overcome the image of an ethnic minority government and the ensuing failure to build legitimacy. Moreover, it became clear that the fragility of the political settlement had led the EPRDF to prioritise loyalty over merit, reducing state capacity and hampering its ability to operationalise the developmental state programme on which it tried to build legitimacy.

The fact that the TPLF had monopolised key positions in the ruling coalition and the state since 1991, including the control over organisations representing despotic power, such as police, security and the army, has been widely known (Aregawi, 2009; Markakis, 2011; van Veen, 2016). Although there existed less information on the TPLF domination of the economy, according to Lefort, *"Tigrayan leaders control around*

*two-thirds of the country's economy, excluding traditional agriculture*¹⁴⁵” (Lefort, 2013: 463). Despite the evidence of inequalities within the ruling coalition, previous research often described the EPRDF as a cohesive organisation, able to ensure central execution of political decisions from federal down to the lowest administrative level (Arriola and Lyons, 2016; Weis, 2016). While there existed some information on the grievances that the EPRDF's ethnic and party politics had caused among the population (Lefort, 2013; Planel, 2014), the degree to which it had caused internal disagreements in the EPRDF and the state constitute an under-researched area. Apart from information on more open conflicts like for example the TPLF split in 2001 and the ensuing reshuffling in the EPRDF (Milkias, 2003; Tadesse and Young, 2003), little has been known about how the EPRDF's ethnic politics affected its functioning.

The smooth leadership transition after Meles Zenawi's death had generally been interpreted as a sign of the stability of the EPRDF regime and, according to Arriola and Lyons, *“the fact that the EPRDF has held together in the wake of Meles' death speaks to its institutionalization as a strong political organization with links running from the capital to the smallest villages”* (Arriola and Lyons, 2016: 79). However, political developments in the years following Meles' death have profoundly questioned such assumptions and revealed that the monopolisation of political and economic power by the TPLF created conflicts in the ruling coalition and the state (Interviewee Nr. 17, 2018; Interviewee Nr 61, 2018; Interviewee Nr. 150, 2018). Leaders of the EPRDF coalition members and different state offices, especially in Oromia regional state, used the 2015/18 crisis to air their grievances publicly. Several accused the TPLF of unfair distribution of political and economic resources among the country's different ethnic groups and denounced the lack of decentralisation. Over the course of the winter and spring of 2017/18, the split in the ruling coalition became increasingly visible and OPDO and ANDM leaders also criticised the response of the federal government to the protests, sometimes siding with the social

¹⁴⁵ In the early 1990s, many TPLF cadres had to leave their positions in the state to allow for more equal representation of the other coalition members, many of whom got preferential treatment in acquiring enterprises in the formal privatisation process and/or were employed in enterprises owned by EFFORT – the TPLF's endowment fund (Young, 1996: 539).

movements to gain legitimacy among their constituents (Aaron, 2018; AfricaNews, 2017; Deutsche Welle, 2018).

Protesters criticised the EPRDF for having failed to deliver on developmental promises and for the political allocation of resources distributed under the development programme. Public discussions after the election of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed revealed that the priority given to loyalty over merit in public offices and the dominance of party over state structures had fostered corruption and underperformance. Merera Gudina, opposition politician, and Solome Tadesse, a social activist, stated at a public meeting:

“Cadres have been collected from the streets, they are incompetent but loyal. They steal the voice of the people in the 21st century. How can we teach thieves not to steal goods and other things?”. “The criteria for recruitment are not high, it’s not meritocratic recruitment or excellence. I met a student half Amhara half Tigrayan and she asked me which party she should join to realise her dream. The universities become little Ethiopia. The students are grouped according to their origin and language. The same is true for the civil service. There is no meritocracy. Institutions don’t produce professionals, because to enter you need to be a party member” (Fieldnotes, 2018).

Milkessa Midega, a civil servant in Oromia, added:

“The recruitment is wrong. They are wrongly assigned. They don’t deserve to be in the position. The state and the party structure are competing. The party structure is the strongest. From my office if I call the zonal office, they won’t listen. They only listen if the party office calls. The system we built is wrong” (Fieldnotes, 2018).

Corroborating findings from previous studies (Segers et al., 2008; Smit et al., 2017), such allegations cast serious doubts on the ability of the EPRDF to implement its ambitious development policies and hence to engender legitimacy over developmental performance.

Protesters also denounced the EPRDF’s excessive use of despotic power, both in the implementation of developmental policies as well as in its rule more broadly. Interestingly, Getachew Reda, the former Minister of Information, admitted publicly:

“We used short cuts to achieve development. Kebele officials forced farmers to buy fertilisers. We didn’t do it to force them but to put positive pressures. But we understand now, the farmers are not

using the fertiliser not because of illiteracy but because it is imposed and they are not convinced to do so. People don't want to use it".

Milkessa Midega went even further in his criticism, claiming:

"The leaders at the kebele level, they don't have to force farmers. It's not positive pressure. They beat and force farmers. In Ethiopia, the police is the state. What does government mean for someone in the rural area? It means the police. It's the person who holds arms. The government is the military. Who is the state? Who is the government? The government if you ask people are those who hold guns. People are in fear" (Fieldnotes, 2018).

While the extension of the state and party apparatus down to the household level had allowed for increased penetration of society, despotic, rather than infrastructural power, remained the main vehicle through which power was exerted. Although the excessive (threat of) use of despotic power, testified to the EPRDF's fear of contestation and reflected the fragility of the political settlement, the practices in turn created grievances among the population, fuelled protests and weakened the regime.

Epilogue

Uppsala, 20th of September 2018

When I arrived in Addis in October 2015, just at the beginning of the anti-EPRDF protests, none of the people I met and talked to predicted the coming political crisis and the profound changes in state and EPRDF's structures we would witness two and a half years later. The first months of my fieldwork were marked by accounts of the increasing authoritarian character of the EPRDF regime and a mounting fear among interviewees, and friends, due to growing control and repression. Although some scattered warnings were expressed about the potential political consequences of the uprisings and the EPRDF's oppressive response to them, most observers and citizens did not believe in an end to the EPRDF's authoritarian rule.

The state of emergency declared in October 2016 and the following military, federal police and security interventions to calm the protests, seemed to prove that the EPRDF was not going to go down easily. Even when the split in the ruling coalition became increasingly visible over the course of the year 2017 and the EPRDF's member organisations in Oromia and Amhara started using the public protests to question the existing power sharing agreement within the EPRDF, few believed that the EPRDF's politics would become more democratic. Instead conversations with friends and interviewees were marked by the question of possible regime collapse. News about growing ethnic conflict in the regions started to reach Addis, questioning the democratic character of the growing social movements in Oromia and Amhara regional states and added to the worry. Where was the country heading? As most of the events were happening away from the capital city, in Addis the narrative of crisis became the new normal. It was hard to tell how dire the situation was apart from the insights we got travelling to the regions or talking to our friends and contacts outside of the capital. What we saw and heard worried us but it was still difficult to judge the extent of the crisis.

When Prime Minister Hailemariam announced the release of political prisoners in January 2018, it came as a surprise to most of us. We hadn't seen it coming. While our Facebook feeds filled with messages of joy and hope they also contained warnings

about the resilient character of authoritarian regimes, cautioning people against becoming too optimistic. A Facebook post read for example:

“History has shown that authoritarian regimes are, sadly, resilient. The power they hold serves them for longer than we would deem acceptable. Specially those willing to kill for it. They don’t change/reform, if they ever truly do, without putting up a “fight”. As much as I would like to believe something good can happen now, I see no reason to believe that those in “real power” will quietly step aside without letting things spiral out of control” [Blen Sahilu, 16th of February 2018].

We didn’t foresee the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam in February 2018. We had heard rumours about his resignation, but it was too early. Resignation wasn’t due before the next EPRDF congress to make sure his replacement was decided on. We had heard that the planned change had been instigated by high level EPRDF officials to re-tighten control. We tried to find out what was going on from our contacts in the EPRDF, but we received contradictory information; no one really seemed to know. When Abiy Ahmed was elected as the new Prime Minister, there was a sense of exhilaration because of the potential for change, still we stayed cautious. His inauguration speech gave hope, the changes he ordered seemed unprecedented and nearly impossible. Against all odds, politics in Ethiopia suddenly seemed to take a turn towards more democratic government. The speed of events accelerated until it seemed impossible to keep up with the details of the change we were witnessing: a peace agreement signed with Eritrea, an amnesty law passed to lift the status “terror organisation” from organisations such as Ginbot 7, the ONLF and the OLF, the release of political prisoners, promises for revision of laws such as the anti-terrorism law and the charities and societies proclamation and promises for economic reforms. Abiymania started to break out, among citizens, diaspora Ethiopians and international observers. Prime Minister Abiy was winning the hearts of the people, with pro-Abiy rallies being staged across the country. T-shirt printing businesses reported an increase in their activity due to people ordering Abiy supporter T-shirts.

The old guard of EPRDF politicians was blamed for the country’s political and economic problems and Abiy publicly admitted the existence of “state terrorism”, torture, corruption and mismanagement of the country’s politics and economy. While people celebrated Abiy’s messages, admission of past wrongs also fuelled hatred

against the TPLF, and in several cases against Tigrayans as a people, who had been at the helm of EPRDF politics for the past three decades. Adding to the disquiet, news about inter- and intra-regional ethnic conflicts in SNNP, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz and Amhara regional states called into question the narrative of democratic transition, as did news about lynching of civilians by protesters, mob violence and the 'querro' hindering state offices in their operations. The number of IDPs in Ethiopia in 2018 exceeded 1.4 million people, outpacing Syria and constituting an actual humanitarian crisis. However, amidst the celebrations that befell large parts of the country, little reflection has so far been given to the, at times, devastating impacts that the changes of federal politics brought at the local level due to a shift in power balances. There exists a lack of objective analysis of ongoing political events. Abiy's main critics are still to be found among the former ruling elite trying to discredit the new Prime Minister, which reduces the credibility of their claims. Only a few other observers have dared to question the Abiy-folly and the "Ethiopia is democratising" narrative, drawing attention to the undemocratic nature of ethnic-based social movements, regional conflicts, political problems and reminding people that it is not clear which direction Ethiopia is heading. Is the Abiy-era an interlude or a transition? And if it is a transition, a transition to what?

* * *

The Party and the Afterparty

*Don't ruin the party
It is ordered!
From inside and the outside
Don't ruin the party
And ruin it for everybody.
It is a long time coming
For people who have long endured repression and atrocities
In the hands of the Party with no parties.
Now with the Party in tatters
And brand-new hosts at the helm
The people are finally released from the jail
And enjoying their freedoms
It is time for the people to rejoice
The Party is gone
And the Party has arrived!
It is a music of "love" and "unity" now playing.
Don't bother people on stage and on the dance floor talking about the millions.
Those whose lives are shattered by hatred and ethnic cleansing.
And those who are said to deserve their suffering.
Because it is inflicted by a party within the Party.
Which parties are responsible for the mayhem requires attention and discernment.
But who is there to attend to the victims' plight?
Don't ruin the party
It is ordered!
Don't ruin the party for the new host
And the artists
Don't ruin the party for the Party
Don't ruin it for the newly recruited avid partygoers.
For once allow them to dance to the rhythm.
The repeated injunction not to ruin the Party!
And then... the disturbing realization that perhaps the party is already ruined.
Albeit the partygoers are too drugged to notice.
With their hosts catering to their favorite addictions.
So that they can forget their misery
And the country in shambles.
(Kalkidan, 2018)*

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Interviewee Nr. 36 (2016, October 2) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director'.

Interviewee Nr. 37 (2016, October 2) 'Ethiopian Society, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 38 (2016, December 2) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 39 (2016, December 2) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 40 (2016, December 2) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 41 (2016, December 2) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 42 (2016, February 15) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 43 (2016, February 16) 'Consortium Resident and International Charities and Societies, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 44 (2016a, March 23) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 44 (2016b, June 15) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 44 (2016c, May 19) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 44 (2016d, February 17) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 45 (2016, February 17) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 46 (2016, February 17) 'Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 47 (2016, February 17) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 48 (2016a, October 17) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Secretary General'.

Interviewee Nr. 48 (2016b, February 18) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Secretary General'.

Interviewee Nr. 49 (2016, February 19) 'Ethiopian Society, Director General'.

Interviewee Nr. 50 (2016, February 22) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 51 (2016, February 23) 'Trade Union, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 52 (2016, February 3) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 53 (2016, February 24) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 54 (2016, March 3) 'Ethiopian Charity, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 55 (2016, April 3) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 56 (2016, April 3) 'Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 57 (2016, April 3) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 58 (2016, August 3) 'Donor Representative, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 59 (2016, July 3) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member'.

Interviewee Nr. 60 (2016, September 3) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member'.

Interviewee Nr 61 (2016, September 3) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr 61 (2018, February 21) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 62 (2016a, May 26) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 62 (2016b, October 3) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 63 (2016, November 3) 'Donor Representative, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 64 (2016, March 14) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 65 (2016, March 14) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 66 (2016, March 22) 'Donor Representative, International'.

Interviewee Nr. 67 (2016, March 15) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 68 (2016, March 16) 'International Charity, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 69 (2016, March 16) 'International Charity, Director'.

Interviewee Nr. 70 (2016, March 17) 'Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 71 (2016, March 17) 'Consultant, Charities and Societies, International'.

Interviewee Nr 72 (2016, January 18) 'International Foundation, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 73 (2016, January 18) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 74 (2016, March 21) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 75 (2016a, March 22) 'Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 75 (2016b, July 6) 'Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 76 (2016a, March 22) 'Donor Representative, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 76 (2016b, May 25) 'Donor Representative, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 77 (2016, March 23) 'International Foundation Director, International'.

Interviewee Nr. 78 (2016, May 19) 'Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 79 (2016a, May 23) 'Employee Trade Union'.

Interviewee Nr. 79 (2016b, June 29) 'Employee Trade Union'.

Interviewee Nr. 79 (2018, June 18) 'Employee Trade Union'.

Interviewee Nr. 80 (2016, May 23) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 81 (2016a, October 13) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 81 (2016b, May 26) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 82 (2016, May 30) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member'.

Interviewee Nr. 83 (2016, May 30) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member'.

Interviewee Nr. 84 (2016, June 20) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 85 (2016, January 6) 'Civil Servant Public University'.

Interviewee Nr. 86 (2016, March 6) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 87 (2016, June 6) 'Representative, International Enterprise'.

Interviewee Nr. 88 (2016, June 6) 'Researcher, International'.

Interviewee Nr. 89 (2016, July 6) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 90 (2016, June 13) 'Ethiopian Charity, Director'.

Interviewee Nr. 91 (2016, June 16) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee and Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 92 (2016, June 16) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Secretary General'.

Interviewee Nr. 93 (2016, June 17) 'Politician'.

Interviewee Nr. 94 (2016, June 17) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 95 (2016a, September 10) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 95 (2016b, June 20) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 95 (2018, February 3) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 96 (2016, June 20) 'Trade Union, President', (Binyam Aterse, trans.).

Interviewee Nr. 97 (2016, June 20) 'Trade Union, President', (Binyam Aterse, trans.).

Interviewee Nr. 98 (2016a, June 21) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 98 (2016b, June 27) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 98 (2018, February 19) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 99 (2016, June 23) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 100 (2016a, June 24) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 100 (2016b, January 7) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 100 (2016c, October 14) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 100 (2016d, October 31) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 100 (2018, February 3) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 101 (2016, June 24) 'Trade Union, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 102 (2016, June 29) 'Trade Union, President', (Biniyam Aterse, trans.).

Interviewee Nr. 103 (2016, May 30) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Secretary General'.

Interviewee Nr. 104 (2016, June 30) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 105 (2016, July 14) 'Politician'.

Interviewee Nr. 106 (2016, July 18) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 107 (2016, October 13) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 108 (2016, October 13) 'Trade Union Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 109 (2016, October 13) 'Donor Representative, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 110 (2016, October 14) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member'.

Interviewee Nr. 111 (2016, October 14) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 112 (2016, October 19) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 113 (2016, October 21) 'Employer Representative/Enterprise Management'.

Interviewee Nr. 114 (2016, October 21) 'Employer Representative/Enterprise Management'.

Interviewee Nr. 115 (2016, October 21) 'Ethiopian Charity, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 116 (2016, October 24) 'Consultant, Civil Service, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 117 (2016, October 25) 'Ethiopian Charity, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 118 (2016, October 20) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 119 (2016, October 26) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 120 (2016, October 26) 'Politician'.

Interviewee Nr. 121 (2016, October 25) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 122 (2016, October 26) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 123 (2016, October 27) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 124 (2016, October 27) 'NGO, Executive Director'.

Interviewee Nr. 125 (2016, October 31) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 126 (2016, January 11) 'Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 127 (2016, February 11) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 128 (2016, February 11) 'Trade Union, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 129 (2016, March 11) 'Sectoral Association, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 130 (2016, March 11) 'Trade Union, Leadership'.

Interviewee Nr. 130 (2018, February 21) 'Former President Trade Union'.

Interviewee Nr. 131 (2016, May 12) 'NGO, Project Manager'.

Interviewee Nr. 132 (2017, February 21) 'Consultant, Private Sector, International'.

Interviewee Nr. 133 (2017, March 15) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director'.

Interviewee Nr. 134 (2017, March 14) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director'.

Interviewee Nr. 135 (2017, March 16) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director', (Abdulatif Kedir, trans.).

Interviewee Nr. 136 (2017, March 13) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 137 (2017, September 3) 'Ethiopian Society, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 138 (2017, December 3) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 139 (2017, September 3) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 140 (2017, August 3) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 141 (2017, March 17) 'Civil Servant', (Abdulatif Kedir, trans.).

Interviewee Nr. 142 (2017, October 3) 'Civil Servant', (Bezawit Bekele, trans.).

Interviewee Nr. 143 (2017, March 14) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 144 (2017, March 16) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 145 (2017, March 17) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 146 (2017, July 3) 'Consortium Resident and International Charities, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 147 (2018, February 19) 'Trade Unions, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 148 (2018, February 20) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 149 (2018, February 20) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 150 (2018, February 23) 'Researcher, Ethiopian'.

Interviewee Nr. 151 (2018, February 26) 'Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee'.

Interviewee Nr. 152 (2018, February 26) 'Consortium Resident and International Charities, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 153 (2018, February 27) 'Civil Servant'.

Interviewee Nr. 154 (2015, November 20) 'Researcher, International'.

Interviewee Nr. 155 (2015, November 20) 'Ethiopian Resident Charity, President'.

Interviewee Nr. 156 (2015, November 28) 'Civil Servant, Public University'.

Interviewee Nr. 157 (2015, September 11) 'Researcher, International'.

Interviewee Nr. 158 (2015, November 13) 'Donor Representative, International'.

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Annex I

List of Interviews

Below a list of interviewees. To guarantee anonymity to the informants of the research project, names and positions have been omitted. Given the sensitive nature of the research, it was deemed necessary to guarantee sources anonymity and confidentiality. Interviewees have been sorted into relevant analytical categories and their rank and nationality indicated where relevant and possible without revealing the identity of the person. The list only contains formal interviews, not informal conversations with informants.

Table : List of Interviewees

Number	Sector	Date(s) of Interview
1	Civil Servant ¹⁴⁶	24.10.2015, 13.11.2015, 27.01.2016, 22.08.2017, 30.10.2017, 15.03.2018
2	Consultant Charities and Societies, Ethiopian	10.07.2015 ¹⁴⁷ , 11.11.2015
3	Donor Representative, International	10.11.2015
4	Civil Servant Public University	08.02.2016
5	Researcher, International	09.11.2015
6	Civil Servant Public University	06.11.2015
7	Consultant Charities and Societies, International	10.11.2015, 09.02.2018
8	Civil Servant	12.11.2015, 29.02.2016
9	Consultant Charities and Societies, Ethiopian	11.11.2015
10	Civil Servant	12.11.2015, 24.05.2016, 30.10.2016
11	International Foundation, Director	12.11.2015
12	Donor Representative, International	13.11.2015
13	Civil Service Consultant, International	10.11.2015
14	Researcher, Ethiopian	15.11.2015
15	Donor Representative, International	16.11.2015
16	President, Ethiopian Resident Charity	16.11.2015
17	Civil Servant Public University	22.11.2015, 08.02.2016,

¹⁴⁶ All interviews with informant Nr. 1 were conducted via Skype.

¹⁴⁷ Interview conducted via Skype.

		15.03.2017, 28.06.2018
18	Civil Servant	17.11.2015
19	NGO	17.11.2015
20	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	18.11.2015, 04.02.2016, 16.05.2016, 25.05.2016, 11.07.2016, 03.10.2016, 19.02.2018
21	Donor Representative, International	18.11.2015
22	Civil Service Consultant, Ethiopian	18.11.2015
23	Consultant, Charities and Societies, Ethiopian	19.11.2015
24	Consultant, Charities and Societies, Ethiopian	19.11.2015
25	NGO, Head of the Secretariat	20.11.2015, 09.06.2016, 01.11.2016
26	Civil Servant Public University	22.11.2015
27	Civil Servant Public University	23.11.2015, 17.05.2016
28	Donor Representative, International	23.11.2015
29	Donor Representative, Ethiopian	23.11.2015
30	Ethiopian Resident Charity, President	24.11.2015
31	Trade Union, Leadership	24.11.2015, 23.05.2016
32	Civil Servant	25.11.2015
33	Consortium of Resident and International Charities and Societies, President	25.11.2015
34	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee	26.11.2015
35	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee	27.11.2015
36	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director	10.02.2016
37	Ethiopian Society, Employee	10.02.2016
38	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	12.02.2016
39	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	12.02.2016
40	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	12.02.2016
41	Trade Union, Leadership	12.02.2016
42	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	15.02.2016
43	Consortium Resident and International Charities and Societies, Employee	16.02.2016
44	Civil Servant	17.02.2016, 23.03.2016, 19.05.2016, 15.06.2016
45	Civil Servant	17.02.2016
46	Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian	17.02.2016
47	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	17.02.2016
48	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Secretary General	18.02.2016, 17.10.2016
49	Ethiopian Society, Director General	19.02.2016
50	Civil Servant	22.02.2016
51	Trade Union, Employee	23.02.2016
52	Civil Servant	02.03.2016
53	Trade Union, Leadership	24.02.2016
54	Ethiopian Charity, Employee	03.03.2016

55	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	04.03.2016
56	Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian	04.03.2016
57	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	04.03.2016
58	Donor Representative, Ethiopian	08.03.2016
59	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member	07.03.2016, 08.03.2016
60	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member	09.03.2016
61	Trade Union, President	09.03.2016, 21.02.2018
62	Civil Servant	10.03.2016, 26.05.2016
63	Donor Representative, Ethiopian	11.03.2016
64	Trade Union, Leadership	14.03.2016
65	Trade Union, Leadership	14.03.2016
66	Donor Representative, International ¹⁴⁸	14.03.2016
67	Trade Union, Leadership	15.03.2016
68	International Charity, Employee	16.03.2016
69	International Charity, Director	16.03.2016
70	Sectoral Association, President	17.03.2016
71	Consultant, Charities and Societies, International	17.03.2016
72	International Foundation, Ethiopian	18.03.2016, 24.05.2016
73	Trade Union, Leadership	18.03.2016
74	Civil Servant	21.03.2016
75	Consultant, Chambers of Commerce, Ethiopian	22.03.2016, 07.06.2016
76	Donor Representative, Ethiopian	22.03.2016, 25.05.2016
77	International Foundation, International	23.03.2016,
78	Sectoral Association, President ¹⁴⁹	19.05.2016
79	Trade Union, Employee	23.05.2016, 30.05.2016, 29.06.2016, 02.07.2016 ¹⁵⁰ , 11.03.2017, 19.10.2017, 05.01.2018, 18.06.2018
80	Trade Union, Leadership	23.05.2016
81	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President	26.05.2016, 13.10.2016, 15.03.2017, 22.02.2018
82	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member	30.05.2016
83	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member	30.05.2016
84	Civil Servant	20.06.2016
85	Civil Servant Public University	01.06.2016, 28.06.2016, 23.02.2018
86	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee	03.06.2016

¹⁴⁸ The informant responded to questions via email.

¹⁴⁹ The informant responded to questions via email.

¹⁵⁰ Interviews between July 2016 and June 2018 were conducted via Whatsapp.

87	Representative, International Enterprise	06.06.2016
88	Researcher, International	06.06.2016
89	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President	07.06.2016, 26.02.2018
90	Ethiopian Charity, Director	13.06.2016
91	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee and Civil Servant	16.06.2016
92	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Secretary General	16.06.2016
93	Politician	17.06.2016
94	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President	17.06.2016
95	Trade Union, President	20.06.2016, 09.10.2016, 02.03.2016
96	Trade Union, President	20.06.2016
97	Trade Union, President	20.06.2016
98	Trade Union, President	21.06.2016, 23.06.2016, 24.06.2016, 27.06.2016, 14.10.2016, 19.02.2018
99	Trade Union, President	23.06.2016
100	Trade Union, President	24.06.2016, 01.07.2016, 14.10.2016, 31.10.2016, 28.02.2016, 02.03.2016
101	Trade Union, Employee	24.06.2016
102	Trade Union, President	29.06.2016
103	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President, Secretary General	30.05.2016
104	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President	30.06.2016
105	Politician	14.07.2016, 10.10.2016
106	Civil Servant ¹⁵¹	18.07.2016
107	Civil Servant	13.10.2016
108	Trade Union, Leadership	13.10.2016
109	Donor Representative, Ethiopian	13.10.2016
110	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Member	14.10.2016
111	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President	14.10.2016
112	Trade Union, Leadership	19.10.2016
113	Employer Representative/enterprise management	21.10.2016
114	Employer Representative/enterprise management	21.10.2016
115	Ethiopian Charity, President	21.10.2016
116	Consultant, Civil Service, Ethiopian	24.10.2016
117	Ethiopian Charity, President	25.10.2016
118	Civil Servant	20.10.2016, 25.10.2016
119	Ethiopian Resident Charity, President	26.10.2016
120	Politician	26.10.2016

¹⁵¹ Interview carried out by research assistant.

121	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, President	25.10.2016
122	Civil Servant	26.10.2016
123	Trade Union, Leadership	27.10.2016
124	NGO, Executive Director	27.10.2016
125	Trade Union, Leadership	31.10.2016
126	Sectoral Association, President	01.11.2016
127	Trade Union, Leadership	02.11.2016
128	Trade Union, President	02.11.2016
129	Sectoral Association, President	03.11.2016
130	Trade Union, Leadership	03.11.2016, 21.02.2018
131	NGO, Project Manager	05.12.2016
132	Consultant, Private Sector, International	21.02.2017
133	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director	15.03.2017
134	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director	14.03.2017
135	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Executive Director	16.03.2017
136	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee	13.03.2017
137	Ethiopian Society, President	09.03.2017
138	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee	12.03.2017
139	Ethiopian Resident Charity, Employee	09.03.2017
140	Ethiopian Resident Charity, President	08.03.2017
141	Civil Servant	17.03.2017
142	Civil Servant	10.03.2017
143	Civil Servant	14.03.2017
144	Civil Servant	16.03.2017
145	Civil Servant	17.03.2017
146	Consortium Resident and International Charities, President	07.03.2017
147	Trade Unions, Employee	19.02.2018
148	Civil Servant	20.02.2018
149	Civil Servant	20.02.2018
150	Journalist, Ethiopian	23.02.2018
151	Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Association, Employee	26.02.2018
152	Consortium Resident and International Charities, President	27.02.2018
153	Civil Servant	27.02.2018
154	Researcher, International	20.11.2015
155	Ethiopian Resident Charity, President	20.11.2015
156	Civil Servant, Public University	18.11.2015
157	Researcher, International	09.11.2015
158	Donor Representative, International	13.11.2015
Total Number of Interviews conducted		217

Interviews by Sector/Category

The table below lists number of interviewees per sector and category.

Table 13: Number of Interviewees per Stakeholder Group

Sector/Category	Number of Interviewees
Civil Servants and Politicians	34
Charities and Societies ¹⁵²	33
Chambers of Commerce	27
Trade Unions ¹⁵³	30
Experts ¹⁵⁴	19
International Donors ¹⁵⁵	15

List of Workshops and Events Attended

The table below contains a list of relevant workshops and conferences attended during the fieldwork. It only contains information about public meetings, not internal and informal meetings attended within trade unions and chambers of commerce, to guarantee anonymity to organisations and people who hosted me during my research. Information collected during those events has been referenced in the thesis as part of the field notes.

Table 14: Observation at Public Events

Date	Title of Event	Summary
18.11.2015	Good Corporate Governance Institute Annual Meeting – Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce	Selected Participants: Mr. Ayanew Ferede, Legal Advisor, Ministry of Trade Mr. Elias Geneti, President, Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce
25.02.2016	Opening of the 20 th Edition of the Addis Ababa Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations International Trade Fair	Selected Participants: H.E. Mr. Tadesse Haile, State Minister of the Ministry of Industry Mr. Elias Geneti, President of Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association H.E. Mr. Getachew Reda, Minister of Communication
01.03.2016	Closing of the 20 th Edition of the Addis Ababa Chambers	The presenter, Bayisa Tesfaye, PhD candidate AAU presents on “Prospects, Challenges and

¹⁵² This category includes civil society organisations that have obtained an exemption from the Charities and Societies Proclamation (International NGOs and local NGOs).

¹⁵³ The category includes representatives from employers (management of enterprises etc.).

¹⁵⁴ The category includes researchers and consultants.

¹⁵⁵ The category includes bi- and multilateral development cooperation partners as well as international foundations.

	of Commerce and Sectoral Associations International Trade Fair	Opportunities of Industry Zones Development for Industrialisation in Ethiopia". Discussion chaired by Dr Teshome Adugna from the civil service university The State minister for Industry Tadesse Haile attended the meeting
01.03.2016	Charities and Societies: The Resource Challenge Workshop	Organised by the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum, selected speakers: Tigabu Haile, ECSF, Head of the Secretariat Negash Teklu, Director of PHE Meseret Gebremariam, Director Charities and Societies Agency Bezuwork Ketete, Irish Aid
24.05.2016	"Agenda Building Workshop on Common Concerns and Challenges of Ethiopian Charities and Societies"	Organised by the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Forum Speakers: Ato Tigabu Haile, ECSF Head of the Secretariat W/ro Yetneberish Nigussie, ECSF Vice Chairperson
27.05.2016	Ethiopia Federalism and Minority Rights Workshop	Organised by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, selected Participants Sebat Nega Dr. Dereje Feyissa, adjunct professor at Addis Ababa University Dr. Sisay Mengiste, lecturer and researcher of Human Rights and Federalism at Addis Ababa University Dr. Aseffa Fisseha, Associate Professor, Centre for Federal Studies, Addis Ababa University
04/5.06.2016	Workshop with the Addis and Adama Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations on Corporate Social Responsibility	Held at the Adama Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations
04.07.2016	Developmental State of Ethiopia: A Political and Economic Order in the Making	Selected participants of talks/panels attended: H.E Dr Debretsion Gebremichael, Deputy Prime Minister for Finance and Economic Cluster Dr Negasso Gidgidda, Former President of Ethiopia (1995-2001) H. E. Ato Zadig Abreha, Deputy Minister of Communication Affairs Office Sebhat Nega, Ethiopian Foreign Relations Strategic Studies Institute H.E. Mr Neway Gebreab, Prime Minister's Chief Economic Advisor Professor Andreas Eshete, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister
05.10.2016	First International Agro-industry Investment Forum – Ethiopia	Selected participants of talks/panels attended: H.E. Ahmed Shide, State Minister, Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation H.E. Ahmed Abteu, Minister of Industry H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister Mr. Fitsum Arega, Commissioner, Ethiopian Investment Commission Endalkachew Sime, Secretary General Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations

		<p>Professor Tekalign Mamo, Senior Director, Agricultural Transformation Agency,</p> <p>H.E. Dr. Mehbratu Meles, State Minister, Ministry of Industry</p> <p>H.E. Dr. Gebregziabher Gebreyohannes, State Minister, Ministry of Livestock and Fishery Resources</p> <p>H.E. Wondirat Mandefro, State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources</p> <p>Mr. Fasil Tadesse, Managing Director, Textile and Garment Manufacturers Association</p> <p>Mr. Yigzaw Aseffa, President, Leather and Leather Products Industry Association</p>
06.10.2016	AACCSA Annual Meeting and Chamber elections	Held at the New Intercontinental Hotel
18.10.2016	Sustainable Manufacturing Matters for Ethiopia and Africa	<p>Selected participants of talks/panels attended: Endalkachew Sime, Secretary General Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations</p> <p>H.E. Tadesse Haile, State Minister, Ministry of Industry</p> <p>Kebour Ghenna, Executive Director, Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry</p> <p>Solomon Afwork, President, Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations</p> <p>H.E. Dr. Mulatu Teshome, President, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</p> <p>Tilahun Gemechu, Director, Industrial Park Cooperation</p> <p>H.E. Belete Tafere, Minister of Environment and Forestry</p>
24 th of May 2018	Ethiopia's Promise to the Next Generation: Challenges and Prospects for Governance in Ethiopia	<p>Organised by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation</p> <p>Keynote speech H.E. Getachew Reda, TPLF executive committee member</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <p>Dr. Elisabeth Woldegiorgis, Addis Ababa University</p> <p>Dr. Milkessa Midega, Oromia Youth and Sports Bureau Head</p> <p>Ms. Selome Tadesse, social activist</p> <p>Dr. Gedion Timothewos, lawyer and constitutional expert</p> <p>Dr. Merera Gudina, scholar and politician</p> <p>Mr. Tsedeke Yihune, business owner and political commentator</p> <p>Closing speech Professor Ephrem Issac</p>
25 th of May 2018	A Country at a Political Crossroad: Dialogue on institutional reforms in the context of recent political dynamics	<p>Organised by the Hanns Seidel Stiftung and Addis Ababa University, selected speakers and participants</p> <p>H.E. Ato Awol Wogris, State Minister of Federal and Pastoralist</p> <p>Dr Negasso Gidgidda, Former President of Ethiopia (1995-2001)</p>

		Dr. Aseffa Fisseha, Associate Professor, Centre for Federal Studies, Addis Ababa University Dr Solomon Negussie, Dean, College of Law and Governance Studies, Addis Ababa University Dr Asnake Kefale, Assistant Professor, Addis Ababa University
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List of Focus Groups

Below a list of focus groups conducted with beneficiaries of resident charities in Addis Ababa, Sheshemene, Hawassa, Asella and Wonji.

Table 15: Focus Groups with members and beneficiaries of Ethiopian Resident Charities

Date	Location	Number of Participants
10.03.2017	Addis Ketema	13
13.03.2017	Sheshemane	11
14.03.2017	Sheshemane	7
15.03.2017	Hawassa	9
16.03.2017	Asella	9
17.03.2017	Wonji	14

List of Preparatory Interviews

Below the list of preparatory interviews conducted with experts in London and Addis Ababa (via Skype) for research design purposes before the first scoping trip.

Table 16: List of Preparatory Interviews

Number	Sector	Date of Interview
Preparatory Interview 1	International NGO, Director	13.03.2015
Preparatory Interview 2	Consultant, International	01.04.2015
Preparatory Interview 3	International NGO, Project Manager	17.04.2015
Preparatory Interview 4	International NGO, Country Analyst	08.05.2017
Preparatory Interview 5	Researcher, International	02.06.2015
Preparatory Interview 6	Researcher, Ethiopian	12.06.2015
Preparatory Interview 7	Researcher, Ethiopian	19.06.2015
Preparatory Interview 8	Diaspora citizen	22.06.2015
Preparatory Interview 9	Researcher, Ethiopian	27.06.2015
Preparatory Interview 10	Consultant, International	16.07.2015
Preparatory Interview 11	Consultant, Ethiopian	27.07.2015

Annex II

Data on Economic Growth and Development in Ethiopia

Table 17: Data on Economic Growth and Development in Ethiopia¹⁵⁶

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP Growth in Ethiopia and Other LDCs												
GDP growth at factor costs in Ethiopia (annual %)		11.5	11.8	11.2	10.0	10.6	11.4	8.7	9.8	10.3	10.4	8.0
GDP growth at factor costs in LDCs (annual %)		8.4	9.5	7.5	4.8	5.9	4.2	5.6	5.9	5.4	3.8	3.6
GDP per capita in Ethiopia in current USD				325.38	379.76	341.31	354.85	468.51	502.15	571.16	645.47	712.88
GDP per capita in current USD				705.75	703.25	779.38	871.92	904.20	958.90	1011.20	970.42	949.24
Growth of Manufacturing Sector in Ethiopia and other LDCs												
Manufacturing value added in Ethiopia (% of GDP)				4.1	3.9	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.4	5.6
Manufacturing value added in LDCs (% of GDP)				10.9	11.2	10.9	11.1	11.6	11.5	11.5	11.9	12.8

¹⁵⁶ The Data presented in the table below was compiled using the following sources (last accessed 13.12.2018):

World Development Indicators, downloaded from <https://knoema.com/WBWDI2018Jul/world-development-indicators-wdi> and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

Human Development Indicators, downloaded from <http://hdr.undp.org/>

Open Data for Africa, downloaded from <http://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/>

Manufacturing value added in Ethiopia (annual % growth)				9.3	8.6	9.2	9.2	11.8	16.9	16.6	18.2	18.4
Manufacturing value added LDCs (annual % growth)				6.1	5.2	10.1	8.1	7.4	8.0	7.5	7.9	8.3
Manufacturing value added in Ethiopia (constant 2010 \$)						1,189,540,726.1	1,299,435,173.6	1,452,826,633.0	1,698,842,152.2	1,981,479,101.6	2,342,556,986.1	2,773,357,931.2
Disaggregated Data on Growth in Ethiopia												
Industry value added current \$	1,461,949,685.6	1,771,405,798.9	2,284,013,588.8	2,762,680,333.2	3,141,068,231.1	2,824,291,474.7	3,088,120,223.3	4,104,183,714.9	5,214,885,622.9	7,491,703,730.5	10,506,278,740.8	14,224,945,770.2
Industry value added annual percentage growth ¹⁵⁷	9.43	10.16	9.52	10.13	9.67	10.82	15.01	19.64	24.10	17.04	19.85	20.56
Industry, value added (% of GDP)	11.79	11.60	11.59	10.21	9.68	9.44	9.66	9.48	10.94	13.47	16.30	22.10
Share of construction in real GDP growth ¹⁵⁸							14.94	19.19	14.56	21.15	26.25	32.11
Services value added current \$	4,854,419,876.1	5,894,231,082.0	7,708,459,006.1	10,258,394,969.7	12,576,240,282.2	12,498,876,340.1	13,238,047,828.8	16,709,934,859.5	18,902,092,040.3	22,184,834,811.7	25,492,913,494.5	27,678,358,064.5
Services value added annual %growth	12.32	12.84	15.76	16.4	14.68	16.74	13.00	9.91	9.05	12.87	11.11	8.59
Services, value added (% of GDP)	39.14	38.57	39.11	37.90	38.77	41.76	41.43	38.58	39.67	39.89	39.55	36.48
Agriculture value added annual % growth	13.54	10.91	9.45	7.50	6.36	5.13	9.01	4.92	7.10	5.45	6.38	2.33

¹⁵⁷ During the GDP I period, construction accounted for 68.5 % of the growth in the industrial sector and 17.7% in the overall GDP growth (Wakiaga and Haile, 2017: 15).

¹⁵⁸ Adapted from Mesfin et al.(2018: 3).

Agriculture value added as % of GDP	41.17	42.52	42.27	45.18	45.88	41.45	41.25	44.33	41.24	38.52	36.06	34.84
Food, beverage and tobacco % value added in manufacturing	48.4	46.6	41.2	46	45.4	46.4	59.5	35.2	38.1	36.6		
Chemicals % value added in manufacturing	5.2	4.4	4.9	5.8	8	8.1	8.9	8.5	11	10.6		
Industry % value added in manufacturing	12.8	12.5	12.5	10.9	10.3	10.2	10.5	10.3	11.9	14.7	17.7	21.3
Machinery and transport equipment % value added in manufacturing	1.1	2.4	4.7	1.9	1.4	2.8	1.5	2.9	5.7	5.5		
Textiles and clothing % value added in manufacturing	10	8.8	9.2	7.4	8	10.3	10.7	8.4	10.4	10		
Employment Structures in Ethiopia												
Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate)	80.0	79.5	79.2	78.7	77.2	75.5	74.9	72.7	71.4	69.9	69.0	
Employment in industry (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate)	6.6	6.5	6.3	6.3	6.3	7.1	7.3	7.4	8.0	8.6	9.0	
Employment in services (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate)	13.4	14.0	14.5	15.0	16.6	17.4	17.8	19.9	20.7	21.5	22.0	
Self-employed, total (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate)	92.0	91.7	91.7	91.4	90.6	90.3	90.5	89.9	89.4	89.0	88.8	
Wage and salaried workers, total (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate)	8.0	8.3	8.3	8.6	9.4	9.7	9.5	10.1	10.6	11.0	11.2	

Unemployment, total (% of total labour force) (national estimate)	5.4	17.0			20.5	19.1	18.1	17.8	5.0	17.6	17.0	17.1
Unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15-24) (national estimate)	7.7	24.9			29	27.1	27.5	26.3	7.3	26.7	27.1	25.2
Data on Imports and Exports in Ethiopia												
Exports of goods and services as % of GDP							16.7	13.8	12.5	11.6	9.4	7.9
Imports of goods and services as % of GDP							31.5	31.6	29.0	29.1	30.3	27.6
Agricultural raw materials exports (% of merchandise exports)	15.3	17.3	20.4	14.1	11.9	9.0	8.6	8.0	15.9	16.3	18.9	1.8
Manufactures exports (% of merchandise exports)	4.6	5.4	13.8	9.0	8.7	8.9	10.4	8.8	8.6	6.8	7.3	12.5
Food exports (% of merchandise exports)	78.7	76.5	62.1	75.3	77.5	78.5	78.4	80.3	66.9	74.0	71.7	83.8
Current account balance in %	-12.64	-11.69	-4.201	-6.67	-6.75	-1.42	-2.45	-6.89	-6.29	-10.30	-11.65	-11.33
Business Environment in Ethiopia												
Doing Business Ranking		101	97	102	116	107	104	111	124	148	146	
Firms experiencing electrical outages (% of firms)							89				80	
Number of power outages experienced by firms per month		1.7					5.6				8.2	
% of firms reporting at least one bribe payment request per year		6.8					6.5				26.8	

Logistics performance index: Competence and quality of logistics services (1=low to 5=high)			2			2.14		2.16		2.62		2.37
Logistics performance index: Efficiency of customs clearance process (1=low to 5=high)			2.14			2.13		2.03		2.42		2.60
FDI, net inflows as % of GDP						1.0	2.0	0.6	2.0	3.8	3.5	
Data on ODA Flows to Ethiopia												
Net ODA received per capita in current \$	25.14	25.80	31.5	39.87	44.77	39.40	38.79	34.88	40.95	36.82	32.38	
Net official development assistance and official aid received (constant 2013 US\$)	2.310.17 0.000	2.355.72 0.000	2.714.69 0.000	3.415.62 0.000	4.067.24 0.000	3.660.88 0.000	3.506.91 0.000	3.286.44 0.000	3.922.55 0.000	3.584.72 0.000	3.528.51 0.000	
Net ODA received % of GNI	15.6	13.3	13.2	12.2	11.8	11.6	11.0	7.5	8.2	6.5	5.0	5.6

Selected Human Development Indicators

Table 18: Selected Human Development Indicators¹⁵⁹

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Annual HDI ranking			170	169	169	171	157	174	172	173	173	175	
Life Expectancy													
Life expectancy at birth					59.6	60.6	61.6	62.5	63.3	64	64.5	65	65.5
Life expectancy at birth, female (years)		57.64	58.80	59.98	61.15	62.27	63.31	64.24	65.05	65.77	66.38	66.91	
Life expectancy at birth, male (years)		54.85	55.91	56.99	58.05	59.05	59.98	60.80	61.53	62.17	62.72	63.2	
Population and Health Data													
Fertility rate, total (births per woman)		5.69	5.52	5.36	5.20	5.06	4.92	4.80	4.68	4.56	4.44	4.32	
Population growth (annual %)		2.78	2.73	2.69	2.66	2.65	2.64	2.64	2.63	2.61	2.58	2.54	2.50
Mortality rate infant per 1000 birth		70.2	66.4	62.9	59.5	56.5	53.7	51.1	48.6	46.4	44.4	42.6	41

¹⁵⁹ The Data presented in the table below was compiled using the following sources (last accessed 13.12.2018):

World Development Indicators, downloaded from <https://knoema.com/WBWDI2018Jul/world-development-indicators-wdi> and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

Human Development Indicators, downloaded from <http://hdr.undp.org/>

Open Data for Africa, downloaded from <http://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/>

Maternal mortality ratio (modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births)		743	698	654	608	566	523	482	447	410	378	353	
Births attended by skilled health staff (% of total)		5.7						10		23.1	15.5		27.7
Prevalence of stunting, height for age (% of children under 5)		50.70						44.20			40.40		
Prevalence of underweight, weight for age (% of children under 5)		34.60						29.20			25.20		
Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)		45.9	43.8	42.4	41.1	39.5	37.6	36	34.9	33.9	33.1	32	
Education													
Adjusted net enrollment rate, primary (% of primary school age children)		61.22	65.92	71.13	76.79	76.36	74.45	78.42	79.68		86.49	86.17	
School enrollment, primary (gross), gender parity index (GPI)		0.83	0.87	0.89	0.90	0.93	0.92	0.92	0.93		0.92	0.91	
Mean years of schooling	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5		

Persistence to last grade of primary school total (% of cohort)					38	36.7	40.7	36.6			38.2		
Poverty and Income Data													
Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)	36.4						33.6		32.4	29.6	28.3	27.1	26.4
Consumer Price Index for Ethiopia, Index 2010=100, Annual	40.7	45.9	53.8	63.7	88.8	95.1	108.9	146.4	168.2	181.3	194.1	213.6	
GINI coefficient ¹⁶⁰	29.8						33.2					39.1	
Rural population as % of total population		84.3	84.1	83.9	83.5	83.1	82.7	82.3	81.8	81.4	81.0	80.5	80.1
Urban population growth (annual %)		4.03	3.99	4.045	5.08	5.04	5.03	5.01	5.00	4.95	4.91	4.85	
Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population)		85.7	91.72	93.29	93.82	94.29	94.70	85.2	95.41	95.73	91.98		
Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population)		1.9	3.50	4.25	5.018	5.80	6.61	4.8	8.24	9.06	12.2		
People using safely managed drinking		0.50	0.71	0.95	1.22	1.52	1.85	2.20	2.59	3.01	3.46	3.93	

¹⁶⁰ The Gini coefficient is significantly higher in urban than in rural areas, in 2014 for example it was at 37 in urban and 27 in rural areas.

water services, rural (% of rural population)													
People using safely managed drinking water services, urban (% of urban population)		36.04	36.22	36.40	36.58	36.76	36.94	37.12	37.31	37.49	37.67	37.85	
Communication													
Internet users % of population							0.8	1.1	2.9	4.6	7.7	11.6	
Mobile phone subscriptions (per 100 people)		0.5					7.9	15.8	22.4	27.3	31.6	42.8	

Annex III

Phases of the EPRDF Rule, 1991-2018

Table 19: Phases of EPRDF Rule, Developments in the State, The EPRDF, The Family, The Market and Civil Society

	State		The Family	The Market	Civil Society		
Time	The State	The Ruling Coalition	The Family	The Market	Charities and Societies	Chambers	Unions
1991 – 2001 Economic and political liberalisation	Adoption of constitution establishing a federal state with multiparty system, “aboyotawi” (revolutionary) democracy - not liberal democracy - became the ruling paradigm, state organisations led by party cadres but partly staffed with technocrats	TPLF took lead in the establishment of the EPRDF and its members, officially state and party structures were separated, the EPRDF as vanguard party was said to rule on behalf of the population	Urban elites were side-lined in the political settlement, focus on ethnic identity and self-rule rather than pan-Ethiopianism, rallying of the rural population behind the EPRDF regime	Adoption of SAPs, privatisation of many SOEs (but many were bought by EPRDF affiliates), establishment of party endowment funds ensured the EPRDF’s involvement in the private sector	Number of CSOs grew and organisations diversified away from humanitarian aid to socioeconomic development and political issues, the EPRDF government initially tried to hamper the establishment of human rights NGOs like HRCO, some civil servants (technocrats) established and worked in NGOs to	Chambers re-established, lobbying for private sector interests, but also broader political issues (democracy, elections etc.), Addis Vote campaign tried to influence the federal elections in the year 2000	Unions re-established and challenged the EPRDF government, unions at public enterprises demanded better pay and working conditions, unions opposed SAPs and privatisation, forced restructuring of the unions and alignment with the EPRDF, control of unions through EPRDF

					check the EPRDF's power		structures, unions remain weak
2001 – 2005 Origins of the Developmental State	Meles conceptualised the developmental state, reform of the civil service (institutions and personnel), “democratic developmental state” discourse replaced aboyotawi-democracy, large-scale capacity building programme for civil servants started	Split in the TPLF and Meles won by small margin, recentralisation of power in the hands of Meles, Tehdadso (renewal): cleaning party of opponents, increased control over cadres	Urban population dissatisfied with the EPRDF tended to vote for the opposition in 2000 and 2005, promoted liberal economic and political ideals, even among the rural population some who were dissatisfied with the results of EPRDF policies and its tight grip voted for the opposition	State led development policies replaced SAPs, adoption of ADLI (Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation) strategy, EPRDF government fended off attempts of the business community to influence its policies	Some human rights NGOs like EWLA and HRCO gained influence, CSOs were active during the 2005 election, supporting the opposition, carrying out voters’ education and election monitoring	Restructuring of the chamber system in 2003 aligning it with the developmental state paradigm and ethnic federalism led to its disintegration, restructuring of other independent business associations, president of the national chamber had to leave into exile	Weak unions lacked organisational skills and were left with small membership base, unions perceived as pro-government
2005 – 2012 Operationalisation of the Developmental State	Operationalisation of the developmental state: industrial policies, agro-industrialisation, promotion of manufacturing	Mass-recruitment to the EPRDF member parties, cadrisation process encouraged fusion of state and EPRDF structures, attempt to make developmental state ideology	The household became a unit in state structures through the introduction of sub-kebele organisations, penetration of state was far reaching, however	Promotion of micro and small scale enterprises, focus on manufacturing, agrarian reform (agricultural extension programmes etc.), attraction of FDI	Imprisonment of many CSO leaders as part of the post-election clamp down, ChSP redirected CSOs towards “developmental” activities, decrease of CSOs working on	Chambers continuously disintegrated, establishment of dialogue forum (PPCF) was supposed to foster dialogue between the EPRDF and the	Unions became members of the CSO coalition and were tasked with election monitoring on behalf of the government, unions were used to foster

	Prime Minister's Office led the process Mobilisation of the population in "development armies"	hegemonic among cadres	forceful mobilisation and control created resistance	in agriculture and manufacturing	rights related issues but increase in total number of CSOs, establishment of "peoples' wings" in state organisations linked CSOs to state structures	private sector, however the EPRDF controlled the forum, chambers integrated into the hizb kinf and linked to state structures, dispute between the Ethiopian and the Addis Chamber over who was the rightful representative of the private sector	industrial peace, sometimes against workers' interests, unions afraid to pose demands on the state, perceived as pro-government
2012 – 2018 Fragmentation of the Developmental State	Intra-party conflicts fostered conflicts between state organisations, questioning of the state-led developmental policies,	Meles' death led to questioning of intra-party hierarchy, Deep renewal: attempt to deal with corruption and rent seeking in the party and improve service delivery (also used to get rid of dissidents within the EPRDF), new PM lacked capacity to enforce	The regime's ethnic bias, its authoritarian practices and forced mobilisation increased grievances and led to protests, persisting after November 2015 and forcing political change	Construction of industrial parks and refurbishment of the Addis-Djibuti railway and other mega – development projects (Grand Renaissance Dam, Light Rail system in Addis etc.)	CSOs tried to stay clear of the protests, the federal police stopped one of HRCOs fundraisers, some community based organisations supported the government and asked their members to refrain from public anti-	Corruption scandals and election fraud in chamber elections weakened the system further, members expressed criticism over chambers failure to engage with the government on the protests, process to redraft chamber	State supported unionisation campaign, contention over the new labour law, CETU threatened general strike and forced the government to backtrack on some proposed changes for the labour law

		cohesion (ANDM and OPDO questioned TPLF leadership), split in the TPLF, PM resigned indicating the seriousness of the political crisis, restructuring of the EPRDF and its member parties and renegotiation of power within the coalition			government activism	proclamation officially launched	
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