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The politics of sub-national constitutions and local government in Ethiopia

by

Zemelak Ayitenew Ayele*

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Abstract

The federal Constitution of Ethiopia provides the regional states - the constituent unit of the federation –with the power to draft, adopt and amend their own constitutions, thereby allowing each of the regional states to use its constitution, among others, to design and adopt a system and structure of local government fitting to its circumstances. This is particularly important since the regional states differ from each other in terms of territorial size, ethnic composition and economic and social circumstances, making a one-size-fits-all approach inappropriate to the design of local government. Nevertheless, all levels of government in Ethiopia are controlled, directly or indirectly, by one party; the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF). Not only does it control all levels of government, the party has a highly centralised decision-making system founded on the principle of ‘democratic centralism’. Under this system, the party’s regional and local structures, which also control government institutions at those levels, are involved only in the execution of decisions passed by the centre. Given such a context, the establishment and empowerment of local government – which took place in two phases – were driven from the centre. The process of establishing local government was influenced by the political exigencies the ruling party faced at particular times and the choices it made in reaction to them. This has undermined the role of the regional states and the relevance of their constitutions in creating local government systems appropriate to their circumstances.

Key-words

Ethiopia, ethnic federalism, local government



1. Introduction

Local government, which in many federal states is an exclusive competence of sub-national units (states, cantons or provinces), is barely mentioned in the national constitutions of most federal countries, let alone recognised as an autonomous level of government.^I Local government units play a critical social and economic role in many such countries,^{II} and in Germany, India and South Africa,^{III} for example, their institutional integrity is constitutionally protected and their role recognised. Yet, even so, only a few national constitutions – such as that of South Africa – go so far as to specify the number of tiers of local government and define their institutional organisation and financial sources.^{IV} In the main, therefore, the task of defining the structure, powers, functional competences and resources of local government is left to the sub-national units, which often use their constitutions for doing so.^V

The same is also true of Ethiopia, a formerly centralised unitary state that became a federal state about two decades ago. Having created nine sub-national units^{VI} (commonly referred to as regional states) and a federal city,^{VII} the country's 1995 Constitution makes a passing reference to local government, only to instruct and authorise the regional states to establish local government and determine its tiers, powers and functions.^{VIII} To this and other effects, the Constitution also authorises them to draft, adopt and amend their own constitutions, thereby allowing each of the regional states to use its constitution to design and adopt a system and structure of local government fitting to its circumstances.^{IX} This is particularly important since the regional states differ from each other in terms of territorial size, ethnic composition and economic and social circumstances, making a one-size-fits-all approach inappropriate to the design of local government.

Nevertheless, all levels of government in Ethiopia are controlled, directly or indirectly, by one party; the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF). Not only does it control all levels of government, it has a highly centralised decision-making system founded on the principle of 'democratic centralism'.^X Under this system, the party's regional and local structures, which also control government institutions at those levels, are involved only in the execution of decisions passed by the centre.



This paper argues that, given such a context, the establishment and empowerment of local government – which took place in two phases – were driven from the centre. The process of establishing local government was influenced by the political exigencies the ruling party faced at particular times and the choices it made in reaction to them. This has undermined the role of the regional states and the relevance of their constitutions in creating local government systems appropriate to their circumstances. The Ethiopian case is relevant since it shows that deprived of adequate recognition in a national constitution, local government in a federal system may fall victim of changes in political weather at national level.

The paper first describes the institutional structures, powers and functions of Ethiopia's federal and state governments. This is followed by a brief discussion of the ethnic, social, and economic contexts of the regional states, after which an overview is provided of the structure, functions and powers of local government in Ethiopia. The paper then discusses the political circumstances that led to the involvement of the EPRDF-dominated federal government in the process of establishing local government, the role that the government played and the consequences thereof.

2. Federal and state government in Ethiopia

The FDRE Constitution, true to Ethiopia's federal dispensation, provides for the establishment of two orders of government structured at federal and state level.^{XI} The federal government has two federal houses: the House of Peoples Representatives (HoPR) and House of Federation (HoF).^{XII} The HoPR, the lower house, is composed of elected parliamentarians and exercises legislative power.^{XIII} The HoF, the upper house, consists of representatives of the country's ethnic communities and deals with non-legislative matters pertaining to, among other things, self-determination of ethnic communities, inter-state disputes, the division of revenue, and resolution of disputes involving the interpretation of the federal Constitution.^{XIV} The federal government also has a parliamentary executive as well as a judiciary.^{XV}

In a similar fashion, a state government is established in each of the nine regional states. Each of them, except Hareri and the SNNPR (Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region), has a unicameral legislative house, called State/Regional Council, with



the power to adopt a state constitution and enact proclamations on state matters.^{xxvi} In the SNNPR an upper house known as the Council of Nationalities (CoN) has similar structural organisation and functions to that of the HoF.^{xxvii} In addition, each regional state has a parliamentary executive council^{xxviii} led by a regional chief administrator or president.^{xxix}

3. Political parties and elections

Ethiopia has more than 79 registered political parties, most of which are organised along ethnic lines.^{xxx} The ruling party, the EPRDF, is a coalition of four ethnic-based political parties: the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), Oromo People Democratic Organisation (OPDO) and Southern Ethiopia Democratic Movement (SEPDM);^{xxxi} the latter, in turn, is a coalition of 20 small ethnic-based political parties.^{xxxii} The EPRDF is the ruling party at federal level, while the ANDM, OPDO, SEPDM and TPLF control the Amhara, Oromia, the SNNPR and Tigray regions, respectively.

The country also has a number of other ethnic-based political parties which are affiliated to the EPRDF without formally being member organisations.^{xxxiii} They are the Somali People Democratic Party (SPDP), Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), Benishangul-Gumuz Peoples Democratic Unity Front (BPDUF), Gambella Peoples' Unity Democratic Movement (GPUDM) and Hareri National League; these parties control the Somali, Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella regions, respectively.

The remainders of Ethiopia's political parties are opposition groups claiming to have policies and programmes different to those of the EPRDF and its affiliates.^{xxxiv} Most are ethnic-based, operate either alone or in coalition with each other, and almost every ethnic-based party belonging or affiliated to the EPRDF seems to have a counterpart in the opposition camp.^{xxxv}

4. The regional states and their ethnic, social and economic contexts

Given that Ethiopia's federation is a 'federation of ethnic groups', the boundaries of the regional states are demarcated along ethnic lines.^{xxxvi} None of these states is ethnically homogenous, however, even though the level of ethnic heterogeneity varies from one



region to another.^{xxvii} The states of Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, Afar and Somali each bear the name of its dominant ethnic community, but in the other states no group has a majority; this is especially true of the SNNPR, Ethiopia's most diverse state, which has approximately 56 ethnic communities. In addition, urban areas in the regional states usually have populations of ethnic migrants that run into the hundreds of thousands, if not higher. In Oromia, for example, more than three million ethnic migrants inhabit the region's many cities.^{xxviii}

Regional states also exhibit wide variation in territorial and population size. Oromia is the largest region both in territorial and population terms, followed by the Amhara regional state;^{xxix} at the other end of the spectrum is Hareri, a small city-state with a little more than 150,000 inhabitants^{xxx}. The states differ, too, in their degree of social and economic development.^{xxxi} The communities in the highland regions, which include, Amhara, Tigray, Oromia and much of the SNNPR, have a sedentary agrarian economy, while those in the lowland regions eke out a pastoralist livelihood.^{xxxii} Compared to other parts of the country, the latter areas are characterised by extremely poor economic and infrastructural development, having been marginalised by previous national regimes.^{xxxiii}

5. Local government under Ethiopia's federal Constitution

As can be gathered from the above discussion, there are immense territorial, social, and economic differences among the nine regional states constituting the Ethiopian federation. In view of these factors, no single system of local governance is likely to suit all nine of Ethiopia's regional states. The FDRE Constitution thus duly envisages that each regional state establishes a system appropriate to it by means of its constitution. The Constitution envisages the establishment of two categories of local government; ethnic and regular local governments.^{xxxiv}

The ethnic local government, or more appropriately sub-regional government, is envisaged under Article 39 (3) of the FDRE Constitution. This provision recognises the right of each ethnic community in the country to territorial autonomy, without however implying that every ethnic community can have its own regional state. Implicitly the Constitution provides that the territorial autonomy envisaged under Article 39 (3) can be exercised through the establishment of ethnic-based sub-regional territorial and political



units.^{xxxv} The regular local government is envisaged under Article 50 (4) of the FDRE Constitution. The objective for the establishment this category of local government is enhancing the democratic participation of the public and the provision of service delivery. The Constitution envisages that all of the nine regional states would establish the regular local government on wall-to-wall basis, unlike the ethnic local government, which is to be established where territorially concentrated sub-regional ethnic minorities are found.^{xxxvi}

The Constitution leaves to the regional states the determination of the number of tiers and units of local government.^{xxxvii} The question, then, is whether the states have actually done so: Have they acted autonomously and effectively in exercising their power to draft and adopt constitutionally-designed systems of local government tailored to their individual circumstances? Before engaging with this issue, though, it is necessary to obtain a synoptic view of the structure, powers, and functions of local government in Ethiopia.

6. Local government under sub-national constitutions: A brief overview

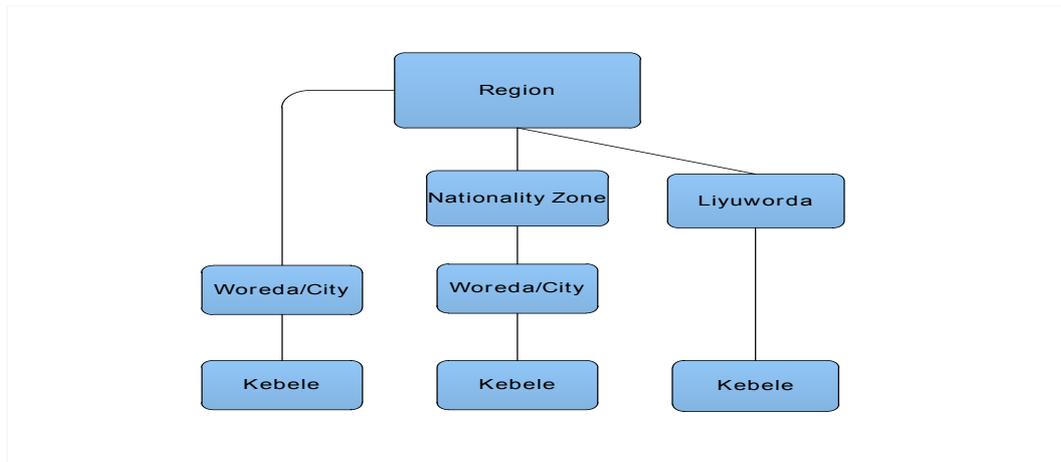
Each of the regional states has its own constitution. The regional constitutions were adopted soon after the promulgation of the federal Constitution in 1995 and underwent revision starting in 2000. They are supreme regional laws that, as discussed below, can be amended only in a special procedure, and each defines, inter alia, the structures of the local government units within the state's jurisdiction. These constitutions have established the regular or both the regular and the ethnic local governments.

6.1. The regular and ethnic local governments under the sub-national constitutions

The regular local government is made up of some 670 *woreda* and 98 city administrations.^{xxxviii} Only the *woreda* is created through the regional constitutions; cities are the creatures of ordinary regional statute. A *woreda* administration (or a *woreda*) – that is, a territorial area equivalent to a district with approximately 100,000 residents – is established in rural areas;^{xxxix} a city administration, as the term implies, is established in urban areas. *Woreda* and cities are established on a wall-to-wall basis and, as per Article 50 (4) of the FDRE Constitution, with a view to enhancing public participation and ensuring the provision of basic services.^{xl}



Fig. 2 Organisational structure of local government



Ethnic local government, made up of *liyu woredas* and nationality zones, is established as per Article 39 of the federal Constitution with the purpose of allowing intra-regional minority ethnic communities to exercise some form self-government.^{XLI} A *liyu woreda* is made up of a single *woreda*. It is called a *liyu* ('special') *woreda*, as opposed simply to a *woreda*, because its boundaries are demarcated along ethnic lines and it is meant to serve as a territorial area wherein the relevant ethnic community exercises self-government. A nationality zone is established to serve the same purpose as the *liyu woreda*, even though it is larger than *liyu woreda* as it covers two or more *woredas* inhabited by a particular ethnic community.^{XLII} A nationality zone or *liyu woreda* is not only an autonomous local unit; should the ethnic community for which it is established so prefer, it may also secede from the region where it is located to become a separate regional state.^{XLIII}

As Table 1 shows, *liyu woredas* are established in five regional states. The SNNPR (as stated, the most ethnically diverse regional state) has the largest number of nationality zones and *liyu woredas*. Amhara and Gambella have three nationality zones each. The constitution of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state provides for the establishment of nationality zones, presumably for the region's five ethnic communities:^{XLIV} Berta, Gumuz, Mao, Komo and Shinasha. However, to date the settlement pattern of these communities has not allowed the actual establishment of nationality zones.^{XLV}



Table 1: Ethnic local government units in five regional states

Region	Nationality zones	<i>Liyu woredas</i>
Afar		Argoba
Amahara	Oromo, Himra, Awi	Argoba
Benishangul		Pawe, Mao-Komo
Gambella	Anywaa, Nuer, Majenger	Itang
SNNP	Hadiya, Gurage, Keffa, Sheka, Sidama, Silte, Wolayita, Dawro, Gedeo, Bench-Maji, Debub (South) Omo, Gamo-Gofa, and Kemabat-Tembaro	Alaba, Basketo, Konta, and Yem

Source: Regional constitutions and proclamations

6.2. Political and administrative institutions of local government

Local government units of both categories have a local council, referred to as a nationality zone council, *woreda* council, *liyu woreda* council or city council, depending on the designation of the specific local government unit. Members of the local council (save for members of the nationality zone council who, other than those in the SNNPR, are selected in a special procedure) are directly elected by the people.^{XLVI} In addition, each *woreda*, *liyu woreda* and nationality zone has an executive council, which is chaired by a ‘chief administrator’ elected by, and from among, members of the local council. A city administration has a mayor – elected by, and from among, members of the city council – and, as its executive organ, a mayoral committee.^{XLVII}

6.3. Functional competences and powers of local government

Under the regional constitutions, local government has no clearly defined competences except that the *woreda* is authorised, in general terms, to adopt and implement its own plans on matters relating to social and economic development.^{XLVIII} In practice, *woredas* exercise functions relating to the delivery of basic ‘state services’ such as education, water, agriculture and so on. Cities also provide what are referred to as municipal services – sewerage, garbage collection, urban roads – over and above providing state services



including water and education.^{XLIX} *Liyu woredas* and nationality zones are responsible for promoting the language and culture of the relevant ethnic communities. However, the specific competences they can exercise for achieving these purposes are not defined. What is clear is that, under the regional constitutions, they are authorised to choose their own working language and the language of instruction in primary schools.^L

Presumably to symbolise their special status, *liyu woredas* and nationality zones are consulted in the appointment of regional judges presiding within their territorial jurisdictions;^{LII} they also elect individuals representing the ethnic community or communities in the House of Federation (HoF).^{LII}

7. The establishment of local government and the role of the federal government

From the overview above, it is evident that there are different categories of local government in Ethiopia, each of which exists for a specific purpose. The local government units exercise powers and functions that apparently fit the purposes for which they are established. Depending on whether they are rural *woredas* or cities, the regular local government units take different forms and structures and exercise appropriate powers and functions. Moreover, only the regional constitutions of Amhara, Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and the SNNPR have provided for the establishment of ethnic local government; the others have not, clearly because they, the SNNPR in particular, are characterised by ethnic heterogeneity. At the same time this should not be taken to mean that other regions are ethnically homogenous. Ethnic heterogeneity in Oromia and Somali is most pronounced in their urban areas; since the latter cannot be managed through territorial schemes, no ethnic local government has been established in these regional states.

One may be tempted, therefore, to assume that each regional state has used its power effectively in adopting a sub-national constitution that delineates a system of local government suitable for managing the ethnic diversity of its people and ensuring efficient service delivery for local communities. While such a conclusion is not entirely unwarranted, it ignores the fact that the establishment of local government was driven by the central state and hence was not *per se* a regional response to regional challenges. The EPRDF-



controlled federal government drove the agenda for establishing local government, and did so in two phases. In the first, it focused on managing ethnic diversity through regional and local structures; in the second, guided by the declared aim of increasing the efficiency of service delivery and the undeclared one of settling political scores, the federal government often chose to empower regular local government at the expense of ethnic local government.

7.1. The first phase of decentralisation: Establishing ethnic local government

Decentralisation in Ethiopia began in the transitional four-year period between the EPRDF's accession to power in 1991 and the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution, a period that some scholars refer to as the 'first phase' of decentralisation and which culminated in the establishment of the federal system in 1995.^{LIII} Most of the current ethnic regional and local units were created in this phase, brought into existence by a national law at a time when the regional states did not yet have constitution-making power and regional constitutions had thus not been adopted.^{LIV}

The main political issue facing the EPRDF then was the 'nationality question', one it chose to address principally, if not exclusively, through territorial measures.^{LIV} The organisation of sub-national and local territorial and political units was thus linked primarily to the need to respond to the ethnic question. As far as local government was concerned, efficiency in service delivery, administrative convenience and the like hardly featured in national policy documents until about 2000 – understandably so, because in the aftermath of 17 years of civil war, the 'nationality question' was the most pressing one of the time.^{LVI}

The constitutional principle for the creation of ethnically organised regional and local units was entrenched in the Transitional Period Charter (TPC), a constitutional document adopted at a conference hosted by the EPRDF and attended mainly by ethnic-based political movements.^{LVII} In addition, the Representative Council, the national legislative body in the transitional period, issued Proclamation 7/1992 which identified 63 territorially concentrated ethnic communities.^{LVIII} The Proclamation declared 47 of these 63 recognised communities capable of establishing their own self-government, starting at *woreda* (district) level,^{LIX} and authorised them to form self-governing areas at *woreda*, zonal, or regional level, depending on the size of each community.^{LX}



Accordingly, 14 ethnic-based self-governing regions and several other sub-regional units were established. Under Proclamation 7 (1992), minority communities in regional states with dominant ethnic communities could establish self-government at sub-regional level, beginning at *woreda* level. In accordance with this principle, the Himra, Awi and Oromo zones were established in the early 1990s in Amhara regional states. Moreover, smaller ethnic communities could join together by agreement to create a larger unit. Five of the 14 multiethnic regions opted to unite and form such a region, known today as the SNNPR.^{LXI} These formerly multiethnic regions were further divided into smaller units which have increased ethnic homogeneity and became ethnic-based sub-regional political units in the form of nationality zones and *liyu woredas*.^{LXII} *Woredas* (other than *liyu woredas*) and cities were established as deconcentrated units of the ethnic-based regions and nationality zones, without any autonomy. In this way the national transitional government, which was dominated by EPRDF, created ethnically structured territorial and political units at three levels: regional, zonal and *woreda* level.

Ethnicity continued to be a central, politically mobilising concern within the process that led to the adoption of the 1995 Constitution and the introduction of Ethiopia's current federal system.^{LXIII} The regions that were created in the transitional period were subsumed as constituent units of this system, with the exception of Addis Ababa, which became an autonomous federal city.^{LXIV} Moreover, the principle that allowed the continued existence of ethnic-based sub-regional units was entrenched in the federal Constitution.^{LXV} The FDRE Constitution, that is to say, formalised an ethnic federal system that in fact had been created during the transitional period.

Soon after the Constitution's promulgation, the regional states adopted their first sub-national constitutions, given that (as mentioned) the federal Constitution authorised them to do so. The highland regions, which are directly controlled by the EPRDF, were the first to adopt regional constitutions, followed by the lowland regional states. Some of the 1995 regional constitutions, most notably that of the SNNPR, provided that ethnic-based local units would be established at zonal and *liyu woreda* level.^{LXVI} The provisions in the regional constitutions dealing with nationality zones and *liyu woredas* purported to have created the ethnic-local units for the first time; however, most of the nationality zones or *liyu woredas* had already been established at the point when the regional constitutions were adopted. The regional constitutions therefore simply recognised the existing ethnic local



governments rather than brought them into being.

During the period under consideration, the EPRDF was willing not only to deal with the ethnic question in constitutional terms but to implement the constitutional principles by actually allowing the establishment of *liyu woredas* and nationality zones. A demand for an own nationality zone or *liyu woreda* was hence more likely to receive a positive response than be declined by regional and federal governments. Indeed, as Vaughn states, ethnic communities of ‘all sizes, claims, and credibility’ were ‘encouraged by the [EPRDF] to organise and mobilise ... for self-determination’.^{LXVII} Thus, having established political parties along ethnic lines (often prompted or assisted by the EPRDF itself), the elites of every ethnic community (or ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’) demanded their own nationality zones or *liyu woredas*.^{LXVIII} A further motive for doing so was to access the increased regional and federal funding that the establishment of such units was perceived to allow.^{LXIX} In the main, the EPRDF responded positively to such demands.

The EPRDF also used the establishment of ethnic local government units as its preferred way of settling inter-ethnic disputes in this period. For instance, the Wolayita, Gamo-Gofa and Dawro ethnic communities had been lumped together initially in one multiethnic entity known as the North Omo Nationality Zone, but violent conflict broke out in it when the Wolayitas demanded a separate nationality zone for themselves.^{LXX} The regional government acceded to the demand, with the result that the zone was divided into three nationality zones (Daro, Gamo-Gofa and Wolayita) and two *liyu woredas* (Basketo and Konta). In another case, the former Keffa-Sheka Nationality Zone was divided into the Keffa and Sheka nationality zones to resolve conflict between the Kefficho and Shekich communities.^{LXXI}

From the year 2000, however, the federal government’s ‘core agenda’ shifted from the ethnic question to ensuring ‘efficient service delivery’ and ‘equitable development’.^{LXXII} With this change in outlook, ethnic local government units came to be seen as impediments to achieving equitable development and efficient service delivery,^{LXXIII} and, having previously encouraged their creation, the EPRDF now undertook a volte-face on the matter. At first, it began to show hesitance about permitting new nationality zones and *liyu woredas*. Thus, the Silte ethnic community’s demand, based on the constitution of the SNNPR, for recognition as a distinct ethnic community and their own nationality zone was initially rejected,^{LXXIV} receiving acceptance only after lengthy litigation that involved the



HoF.^{LXXXV} Later, though, the EPRDF decided to curtail altogether any further establishment of ethnic-based territorial units. As Aalen writes:

[The Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM)] made a principled decision to separate 'identity issues' from 'administrative issues', stating that the request for new zone or special *woreda* administrations should from now on be considered from a purely administrative perspective, which was clearly separated from the right of nationalities to self-determination. It was decided that groups which before could argue that recognition of a separate ethnic identity should automatically give them the right to a separate administration would not be heard anymore.^{LXXXVI}

Hence, as will be discussed below, a process was initiated at the federal level to revise the regional constitutions. This revision, however, was not meant to abolish the existing ethnic local government units or formally proscribe the establishment of new ones as that would have been in clear violation of the federal Constitution. In fact, it was under the revised constitution of the Amhara region that the latter's three ethnic local units were recognised and their institutional organisation elaborately defined.^{LXXXVII} The revised constitution of the SNNPR also created the CoN in which the nationality zones and *liyu woredas* are represented, albeit indirectly.^{LXXXVIII}

Nevertheless, the sub-national constitutional principles allowing ethnic communities either to establish their own nationality and *liyu woredas* or to secede and form regional states became a 'dead letter' because the party decided not to implement them. So, instead of creating new ethnic local units, it began amalgamating some of the existing ones; for instance, initially the SNNPR had eight *liyu woredas*, including those for the Amaro, Burji, Derashe and Konso, but the latter were merged into one, the Segen zone.^{LXXXIX} The party has also snubbed several communities' demands merely to be recognised as distinct ethnic communities, with demands to this effect by the Raya, Qimmant, Wolene and other communities not been having granted thus far.^{LXXX} In the same vein, petitions by ethnic communities for regional states are met with swift rejection. For example, when the Berta community made such a petition, it was dismissed 'as an unpopular wish of the Berta political elite, not a genuine demand of the people'.^{LXXXI} The EPRDF has even intervened to prevent the Sidama Nationality Zone Council from going ahead with its decision to secede from the SNNPR.^{LXXXII}

Moreover, the process of revising the regional constitutions was used to weaken



nationality zones by transferring more powers and resources to regular local government units, this in order to discourage ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ from demanding any more ethnic-based local units.^{LXXXIII} As mentioned, prior to the revision of these constitutions, the regular *woredas* and cities in each nationality zone were regarded merely as administrative units of the zones without any autonomy; thanks to the revision, they were established as local government units with a modicum of political and financial autonomy. In addition, before the second phase of decentralisation, regional financial grants intended for *woredas* were first transferred to the nationality zones, which retained for themselves whatever amount they pleased before transferred the balance to the *woredas* under their jurisdiction. Now the nationality zones are not allowed to retain more than five per cent of the regional block grants for themselves even if the grant is first transferred to them.^{LXXXIV}

The fact that most of the ethnic-based local units were created before the adoption of regional constitutions does not mean that these constitutions did not add value to them. The constitutions defined the structure of their political organs more clearly. Similarly, they defined the powers of nationality zones and *liyu woredas* to adopt their own working languages as well as the languages of instruction in primary schools. Regional constitutions also provide for the role that these local units play in the appointment of judges presiding in state courts within their territorial jurisdiction. It remains the case, however, that nationality zones and *liyu woredas* were not established originally at the initiative of the regional states themselves but were driven from the centre, leaving regional states with no choice but to recognise them constitutionally and keep them in operation. Now that the ruling party has decided not only to diminish the powers of these local units but to curtail any further establishment of them, the states once again have no option but to accede to the will of the centre and reject demands for own nationality zones and *liyu woreda*, notwithstanding that the demands are made on the basis of their own constitutions.

7.2. The second phase of decentralisation: Establishing regular local government

As described, during the transitional period *woreda* were established as the ‘basic’ unit of regular local administration within ethnically organised regional states and nationality zones.^{LXXXV} The 1995 regional constitutions created at regional level what Tsegaye calls ‘a unitary structure’ within which *woredas*, but *liyu woredas*, were merely deconcentrated units of the regional states and nationality zones, not autonomous local government units.^{LXXXVI}



This was maintained for several years even after the promulgation of the federal Constitution. Moreover, in all nine regional states the regular local administration had an almost identical structure consisting of three tiers: *kebele* (neighbourhood), *woreda* and zonal administrations. Cities remained as sub-units of *woreda* administrations, not autonomous units in their own right.^{LXXXVII}

The second phase of decentralisation sought to give *woredas* a degree of autonomy and was initiated at federal level when the Ethiopian government launched the District Level Decentralisation Programme (DLDP).^{LXXXVIII} At this stage, the official position was that empowering local government had become imperative because poverty reduction was now on the federal government's 'core agenda' and the ethnic issue, a secondary affair. The official explanation, again, was that the shift in priorities had been prompted by the country's extreme poverty and its commitment to the Millennium Declaration (also known as the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs), which required poverty to be reduced by half in its various forms by 2015.^{LXXXIX} To achieve the goal, it was supposedly vital to enhance democratic participation by the people; this would be achieved in turn by decentralising more powers and resources from regional governments to *woredas* in order to empower the latter more fully.^{XC}

There were other, unofficial reasons for this second phase of decentralisation. The first, as mentioned, was to disempower ethnic-based local units and discourage the demand for them by 'ethnic entrepreneurs'. The second has to do with the internal power struggle in the EPRDF, more specifically within the TPLF, the most influential member of the EPRDF coalition. The political scuffle was between Meles Zenawi (the late Prime Minister and the Chair Person of both the EPRDF and TPLF) and some of the top brass of the TPL. Although the underlying reasons remain unclear, the dispute came to the fore in 2001,^{XCI} the same year that the EPRDF-led regional states began revising their constitutions with the alleged purpose of decentralising powers to *woredas*.^{XCII} Meles Zenawi apparently faced strong resistance from senior party members, including Gebru Asrat, the then president of Tigray region.^{XCIII} Furthermore, certain leaders of the other members of the EPRDF coalition and affiliate parties, including some regional presidents and senior regional politicians, sided with the dissenters following the split in the TPLF. This led to an extensive political 'purge' in the TPLF, the other EPRDF member, and affiliate parties. Dissenters were expelled from the TPLF and the EPRDF,^{XCIV} and those among them who



had been elected to represent the EPRDF at national and regional councils were 'recalled'.^{XCV}

The scuffle, it seems, also led to the structural reforms that were subsequently introduced, especially to those at regional and local government level, because the latter were aimed principally at diminishing the power of the regional government; in particular, the reforms targeted the regional presidents, who presented the most serious challenge of all to Meles Zenawi's authority.^{XCVI} These aims were served, inter alia, by empowering the regular local government units, in particular the *woredas*. Under the old regional constitutions, regional state presidents (also called chief administrators) were immensely powerful. Not only were they the head of a regional executive council but the speaker of the regional council, which gave them considerable influence over both branches of a regional government.^{XCVII} Moreover, the regional president had direct control over *woredas* and municipalities since, as explained previously, these were simply administrative units at the time – as opposed to local government units – and as such structurally subordinate to the regional government.^{XCVIII}

It would appear that it was thus decided that more powers would be transferred to *woredas* in order to diminish the power of the regional government.^{XCIX} To this effect, a process was initiated in 2000 to revise the regional constitutions of the four highland regional states. It should be noted that this revision took place in Meles' office, on his order, and without involving the regional authorities; indeed, it took place without their knowledge.^C Separation of powers was introduced in the revised regional constitutions between regional councils and regional executives; the regional chief administrator was thus no longer a speaker of the regional council. Furthermore, autonomous *woredas* were created over which the regional president ceased to have absolute control.^{CI} In short, it was not only the case that the central level determined how the regions should revise their constitutions; it literally made those revisions for them. This has had several consequences.

The first is that local government was designed on the basis of what the federal government prioritises. This can be seen in the manner that *woredas* and cities are treated under the regional constitutions. Until recently the development policies of the EPRDF were centred primarily on the rural areas. Agricultural Development-Led Industrialisation (ADLI) was the mainstay of the EPRDF's development policy.^{CII} Cities and municipalities were considered important in this policy only inasmuch as they contributed to the



development of agriculture and agriculture-based industrialisation.^{CIII} As a result, only *woredas* have been recognised by, and established through, regional constitutions; the nine regional constitutions barely mention cities, which are therefore the creation of ordinary regional statutes rather than the regional constitutions. This constitutional non-recognition of cities is not a mere oversight, however. It reflects both the developmental priorities of the EPRDF and the extent to which it controlled the processes leading to the adoption of the regional constitutions.

Moreover, the recognition of the *woreda* in the regional constitutions does not necessarily guarantee its continued existence as an autonomous local government unit. As mentioned above, the regional constitutions are supposedly supreme regional laws that may be amended only through a stringent procedure which requires an amending bill to be approved by a two-thirds majority in a regional council and by a simple majority (in some cases, a two-thirds majority) in the majority of the *woreda* councils in a particular region.^{CIV} The amendment of a regional constitution also requires the assent of the councils of nationality zones in the regions where they are found.^{CV} One may thus be inclined to assume that the regional constitutions not only guarantee the continued existence of *woredas* as autonomous local government units but also put *woredas* in a position where they can safeguard themselves from arbitrary abolition. However, as has been shown vividly above, in practice the regional constitutions are amended without strict heed being paid to the procedures they set out for this.^{CVI}

Another consequence and expression of the fact that Ethiopia's second phase of decentralisation was centrally driven is evident in the uniformity with which all of the regional constitutions structure the *woreda*. *Woreda* boundaries were defined, as per the federal policy papers, by taking population size as the principal, if not exclusive, consideration.^{CVII} The same criteria were used hence for the demarcation of the boundaries of the *woredas* both in the densely populated highland regions and in the sparsely populated lowlands; geographical factors were scarcely taken into account. Thus there are more than 105 *woredas* in the Amhara regional state, whereas there are less than 50 in the Somali region, which is almost twice its territorial size.^{CVIII} What is more, the differences in the economic activities of the highland and lowland regions were not taken into any serious consideration. The *woreda* system is therefore established both in the highland areas, where there is a sedentary agrarian economy, and in the lowland region, where the people are



mainly pastoralists constantly on the go from one place to another in search of pasture and water for their cattle.^{CIX}

Furthermore, the federal government determines the functions that *woredas* may exercise using various instruments, since the functional competences of the *woreda* are left undefined under the regional constitutions. The regional constitutions simply provide that a *woreda* may plan and implement ‘economic development and social services’ within its territorial jurisdiction, without actually defining the specific economic and social matters with respect to which *woredas* may exercise those powers.^{CX} It is hence in the federal policies, sectoral proclamations and the guidelines of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) – rather than the regional constitutions – that the specific functional competences of the *woredas* are more clearly defined. The Sustainable Poverty Reduction and Development Programme (SPRDP) and the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) state that a *woreda* exercises certain functions in the area of primary education, primary health care, rural water supply, rural roads and agriculture extension services;^{CXI} even so, this is not specifically indicated in the regional constitutions. Moreover, the now-defunct Ministry of Capacity Building (MoCB) had prepared a draft legislative document on the basis of which regional governments were supposed to enact their own legislation defining local government competences.^{CXII}

In its policy papers the federal government also determines the financial sources of *woredas*, given that the specific taxes *woredas* may impose, and the intergovernmental grants they are entitled to receive, are left undefined in the regional constitutions. In fact, all nine regional constitutions authorise *woredas* to collect, but not to decide on the rate of, land use fees and agricultural income tax, including royalties on the use of forests are designated as regional taxes.^{CXIII} However, the involvement of the *woredas* in connection with these taxes and fees is limited to assessing and collecting the taxes and fees on the regions’ behalf, since these are regional taxes under both the federal and regional constitutions.^{CXIV} Moreover, in terms of the regional constitutions, *woredas* are entitled neither to conditional nor unconditional intergovernmental grants.^{CXV} It is at the federal, not the regional, level that the policy was adopted requiring regional governments to transfer not less than 50 per cent of their annual revenue as unconditional block grants to *woredas*.^{CXVI} The four EPRDF-controlled highland regions first introduced a scheme of block grants and the other regions followed suit.^{CXVII}



The fact that regional states have no constitutional obligation to transfer block grants to *woredas* means that the transfer may stop at any time when there is a change in government or policy at the federal level. Such vagueness also allows regional states to deny block grants to *woredas* that fall under the control of an opposition party. This was precisely the case in the Sheko-Mejenger *woreda* of the SNNPR after the 2000 local elections, in which an ethnic-based opposition party, the Shako-Mejenger Democratic Unity Party (SMDUP), had won the majority of seats. The SEPDM, the ruling party at regional level, refused to transfer block grants to this *woreda* so that it would face ‘extreme budget allocation problems’ while under the control of the SMDUP.^{CXVIII}

7.3. A third phase of decentralisation?

In the past five years the EPRDF seems to have shifted its focus from rural to urban areas. It is a new and visible policy direction which is likely to impact on local government and hence the relevance of sub-national constitutions in regulating local governance. Some link this shift to the 2005 elections,^{CXIX} arguably the most contested in Ethiopia’s history, in which opposition parties achieved major success by winning more than 170 seats in the HoPRs. By its own admission, the EPRDF suffered harsh defeat in a number of cities, losing, for instance, all the seats in the Addis Ababa City Council to the opposition.^{CXX} Post-electoral disputes arose when opposition parties accused the EPRDF of vote-rigging and refused to join parliament. Violence broke out across the country, and opposition leaders were accused of, and jailed for, allegedly inciting it, though they were released later after a presidential pardon.

In what seems an attempt to regain the confidence of urban voters, the EPRDF began working soon after the 2005 elections on a new economic and development policy, one which was adopted by HoPRs as the ‘Growth and Transformation Plan’ (GTP) in the wake of the 2010 elections^{CXXI} in which the EPRDF and its affiliates claimed victory with 99.6 per cent of the seats in HoPRs under their control.^{CXXII} The GTP aims to transform the country’s largely agriculturally-based economy to an industrially-based one. Thus, in the past five or so years the federal government has paid special attention to cities, as evidenced by the massive infrastructural projects in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and regional capitals to do with roads, industrial zones, housing and the like. The colourful celebrations of ‘Cities’ Day’ (there is no such a thing as a ‘*woredas*’ day’) that recently have been held



every year are sponsored by the Ministry of Urban Development, Housing and Construction (MoUDHC) and are a further sign of the attention the federal government is now lavishing on the country's urbanites.^{CXXIII}

With this transformation, however, it also seems to be showing ever less interest in rural *woredas*, and it is perhaps no coincidence that around the time the GTP was adopted, the MoCB – the Ministry responsible for spearheading the decentralisation programme and capacity-building at *woreda* level – was abolished. Nowadays a small office in the Ministry of Civil Service, staffed by a handful of people, deals with matters relating to *woredas*.^{CXXIV} Despite being recognised in the regional constitutions, the *woreda* is slowly but surely losing its position as the principal unit of local government; as its fortunes decline, so the relevance of these constitutions weakens as well – at any rate, as far as local governance is concerned.

8. Conclusion

The federal Constitution of Ethiopia empowers regional states to use their constitutions to design systems of local government appropriate to their unique circumstances. This is a critical necessity for them because their differences in ethnic composition and socioeconomic circumstances cannot be managed through a one-size-fits-all approach to local government structure. However, practice shows that the regional states play a diminished role in the establishment of local government units due to the fact that federal and regional governments alike are controlled by the EPRDF through its centralised decision-making system; the result is that the establishment of local government is instead pushed from the centre and used for implementing federal policies.

In the 1990s the EPRDF encouraged the establishment of local government units along ethnic lines, since managing ethnic diversity was considered the most serious challenge at the time. Ten years later, though, the party found that the overemphasis on ethnicity in the creation of regional and sub-regional political territorial units was leading to inefficiency in ensuring development and equitable service delivery. As such, it set out not only to disempower ethnic local governments and curtail their further creation but to amalgamate certain of the existing ones. In order to drive its agenda of achieving development, the federal government closely controlled the revision of the regional



constitutions and thwarted the implementation of the provisions of the regional constitutions dealing with ethnic local government units. In effect, the regional states are unable to decide autonomously on the system of local government they should to establish; by implication, the relevance of their constitutions to the task creating local systems is also diminished.

* LL.B (Addis Ababa University), LL.M and LL.D (University of the Western Cape (UWC); currently a National Research Fund (NRF) post-doctoral fellow at the Multi-Level Government Initiative (MLGI), Community Law Centre (CLC), UWC, South Africa. The author can be contacted at zemelak.a@gmail.com. This paper has benefited from comments the author received from Prof Nico Steytler, Prof Yonatan Fessha and Prof Christophe Van der Baken. The work is based on research supported by the South African Research Chair Initiative of the Department of Science and Technology and National Research Foundation of South Africa. Any opinion, finding and conclusion or recommendation expressed in this material is that of the author, and the NRF does not accept any liability in this regard.

^I In the classical federal systems of the USA, Canada, and Australia, local government is established as an institution of service delivery rather than a level of government with democratic pertinence. In the USA and Australia, local government is not even mentioned in their constitutions. In federal countries, such as Canada, where local government is mentioned in the national constitution, it is unambiguously stated that it is within the provinces' competence (Steytler 2005: 2; Young 2009: 113; Steytler 2009: 406).

^{II} Watts 2000.

^{III} Steytler 2009: 407; Watts 2000: 947.

^{IV} Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

^V Federal systems do differ, of course, from one to the next in the manner that sub-national constitutions deal with the local government. For instance, many state constitutions in the US define in detail the powers, functions, and finances of local government; by contrast, in Australia, for instance, state constitutions simply recognise the existence of local government without actually devolving any function to it (Steytler, 2009: 406-9).

^{VI} The constituent units are Afar Regional State (AfRS), Amhara Regional State (ARS), Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State (BGRS), Gambella Regional State (GRS), Hareri Regional State (HRS), Oromia Regional State (ORS), Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Somali Regional State (SRS) and Tigray Regional State (TRS).

^{VII} In fact, there are two federal cities, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. However, only Addis Ababa is constitutionally recognised as a federal city. The Oromia and Somali regions have both claimed ownership of Dire Dawa. The federal state assumed power over this city because its residents are so ethnically diverse that it was considered inappropriate to place them under any of the two ethnic-based regional states.

^{VIII} The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (hereafter FDRE Constitution) 1995, Art 50 (4).

^{IX} FDRE Constitution, Art 50 (5).

^X See Vaughan 2005: 17.

^{XI} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 50 (1).

^{XII} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 53.

^{XIII} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 54 (1 & 2).

^{XIV} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 62.

^{XV} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Arts 72-79.

^{XVI} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 50 (3) & 52 (2).

^{XVII} See the SNNPR Constitution, 2001, Art 58 & 59.

^{XVIII} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 50 (6).

^{XIX} This is regulated in the regional constitutions.

^{XX} The website of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia <http://www.electionethiopia.org/en/> (last visited on 19 March 2013).

^{XXI} Teshome 2008: 790.

^{XXII} South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM)



<http://www.eprdf.org.et/EPRDFE/faces/ssi/member.jsp?type=SEPDM> (last accessed on 28 January 2012).

xxiii Teshome 2009: 62-65.

xxiv Vaughan 2004: 17; Teshome 2009: 66.

xxv For instance, the Ethiopia Federal Democratic Unity Forum (FORUM) is composed of several ethnic-based opposition political parties. One of its members, the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), is a coalition of ethnic-based parties claiming to represent certain communities in SNNPR. As such, the SEPDC may be regarded as the opposition's equivalent of the SEPDM. See Wondwosen Teshome, 2009.

xxvi Herther-Spiro 2007.

xxvii See Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Population Census Commission (PCC) *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census Results, 2008*.

xxviii FDRE Census Commission, 2008; 93.

xxix More than 30 per cent of Ethiopia's population lives in Oromia. See FDRE Population Census Commission (2008).

xxx FDRE Census Commission, 2008.

xxxi Young 1999: 328.

xxxii Young 1999: 322-25.

xxxiii Young 1999: 322-25.

xxxiv See for Ayele and Fessha 2012: 92-95. Also see Ayele 2014: 128-131.

xxxv Ayele and Fessha 2012: 93.

xxxvi Ayele 2014: 153.

xxxvii Negussie 2006: 79.

xxxviii There are some 820 other urban centres, commonly referred to as 'municipalities', are not autonomous local government units but merely administrative units of the *woredas* and meant for providing municipal services. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE): Ministry of Works and Urban Development: *Plan for accelerated and sustained development to end poverty (2005/06-2009/10): Plan for Urban Development and Urban Good Governance, 2007*: 6.

xxxix Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE): Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2000/01- 2002/03, 2000*, 13. There are, however, many *woredas* with far less than 100,000 residents.

xl Ayele 2014: 152-153.

xli AfRS Constitution, 2002, Art 43 (2); SNNPR Constitution, 2001, Art 45(2); ARS Constitution, 2001, Art 45(2); BGRS Constitution, 2002, Art 45(2); GRS Constitution, 2002, Art 46(2).

xlII See for instance ARS Constitution, 2001, Art 73 (1); BGRS Constitution, 2002, Art 45(2); GRS Constitution, 2002, Art 46(2).

xlIII FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 47 (2) recognises the right to secession from a region. It provides that ethnic communities within the existing regions have the right to establish their own regional states.

xlIV BGRS Constitution (2002) 74(1).

xlV Van der Beken 2007: 126.

xlVI ARS Constitution, 2001, Art 74(1); BGRS Constitution, 2002, Art 75(1); GRS Constitution, 2002) Art 76(1).

xlVII In Oromia, a mayor is appointed by the regional president. See Magalata Oromia: A proclamation to amend Proclamation No. 65/2003 the urban local government of Oromia National Regional State Proclamation No. 116/ 2006.

xlVIII ARS Constitution, 2001, Art 84(1) AfRS Constitution, 2001, Art 74(1); GRS Constitution, 2001, Art 98 (1); SNNPR Constitution, 2001, Art 91(1); BGRS Constitution, 2002, Art 85(1); TRS Constitution, 2001, Art 72(1); ORS Constitution, 2001, Art 79(2) (a); SRA Constitution, 2002, Art 77(2) (a).

xlIX Ayele 2014: 163-168.

I ARS Constitution, 2001, Art 74(3)(a); GRS Constitution, 2002, Arts 78(3) (a); SNNPR Constitution, 2001, Art 81(3)(a).

II ARS Constitution, 2001, 74(3)(g); BGRS Constitution, 2002, Art 75(3)(g); GRS Constitution, 2001, Art 78(3)(g); SNNPR Constitution, 2001, 76(3).

III Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia: Consolidation of the House of Federation and the definition of its powers and responsibilities Proclamation 251/2001: Art 47 (6).

IIII Gebre-Egziabher 2007: 1.



^{LIV} The TPC does not state anything that authorises regions to adopt their own constitutions. However, Regassa 2009 notes that the Tigray and Oromia regional states had adopted regional constitutions during the Transitional Period. It is unclear on what constitutional basis these regional constitutions were adopted.

^{LV} Fiseha 2007.

^{LVI} The Interim Poverty Reduction Programme, which articulated for the first time the role that local government may play in poverty reduction, was adopted in 1998. See MoFED, 2000.

^{LVII} The Charter recognised the right to self-determination of each ethnic community in Ethiopia as the country's 'governing political principle', a right that was to find expression in one or another form of territorial autonomy at regional or local level. The Charter also provided that the boundaries of the regional and local units were to be demarcated on the basis of these communities' geographical settlement patterns. The TPC thus laid the foundation for the establishment of ethnic local units. Negarit Gazeta Peaceful and Democratic Transitional Conference of Ethiopia: Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia (TPC): Proclamation No. 1/1991; Preamble.

^{LVIII} Negarit Gazeta of the Ethiopian Transitional Government: A Proclamation to provide for the establishment of national regional self-governments No. 7/1992, Art 3 (1).

^{LIX} Proclamation 7/1992, Art 3 (1).

^{LX} The regions were named by number as 'region one', 'region two', etc. Regions one, two, three and four – each with a dominant ethnic community – later became the Tigray, Amhara, Oromo and Somali regional states, respectively. Regions six, seven, eight, nine, ten eleven and twelve were multiethnic regions with no particularly dominant community. Region 13 was the City of Harar (for the Harari community), while region 14 was Addis Ababa. The other 17 ethnic communities (also called 'minority nationalities') were found to be too small to exercise self-governance even at the lowest level, i.e. at *woreda* level. Proclamation 7/1992, Arts 3-5. See also Kinfu 1994: 26.

^{LXI} Vaughn argues that the amalgamation of these regions took place at the behest of the EPRDF. See Vaughn 2003.

^{LXII} For instance, the former Region 11 (also known as Keffa region), which had ten ethnic communities within it, was divided into four nationality zones when it joined the SNNPR (Keffa, Sheka, Bench and Maji) before it was re-amalgamated (see discussion below). Vaughn 2003: 269.

^{LXIII} See Fessha 2010.

^{LXIV} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Arts 47 & 49.

^{LXV} FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art 39 (3).

^{LXVI} See for instance the SNNPR Constitution, 1995, Art 68.

^{LXVII} Vaughn 2003: 249.

^{LXVIII} Vaughn 2003.

^{LXIX} Vaughn 2003.

^{LXX} The immediate cause of the conflict was the regional government's decision to combine the Wolayita, Daro, Gamo and Goffa languages to create what Smith calls an 'Esperanto-style language', *wogagoda*, named by mixing together the Amharic initial letters of the four languages. The new language was intended as a medium of instruction in primary schools. This infuriated the Wolayitas and led to a conflict in which dozens of people died. Smith 2008: 208.

^{LXXI} Vaughn 2003: 270.

^{LXXII} The tell-tale signs of the EPRDF's change of heart about establishing ethnic-based local units can be traced back to the late 1990s. For instance, when the Bench, Maji Keffa and Sheka nationality zones were amalgamated in 1996, it was done so in the name of that key word, 'efficiency'. Vaughn 2003: 269.

^{LXXIII} Aalen 2008: 128; Vaughn 2003: 249; Fiseha 2007: 347.

^{LXXIV} Previously the Silte ethnic community was viewed as a sub-unit of the Gurage ethnic community. The *woredas* in the present day Silte Nationality Zone also formed part of the Gurage Nationality Zone. It was only in a referendum held in April 2000 that the Silte were recognised as an ethnic community distinct from the Gurage. After the referendum the *woredas*, which were predominantly Silte, were incorporated into a new nationality zone.

^{LXXV} Vaughn 2003.

^{LXXVI} Aalen 2008: 128.

^{LXXVII} Regassa 2009: 61.

^{LXXVIII} The CoN has a similar structure and purpose to that of the HoF at federal level. Hence, it is not that the nationality zones and *liyu woredas* themselves are represented therein but rather the ethnic communities



- within these local units. However, members of the CoN are elected by the nationality zones and *liyu woredas*.
- LXXXIX Official website of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State <http://www.snnprs.gov.et> (last visited on 19 March 2013).
- LXXX It was reported on 16 March 2014 that the Amhara regional government decided not to recognise the Qimmant community as a distinct ethnic community. It also resolved that, even were it to recognise this community, it would not permit the establishment of ethnic self-government. Protesting at the decision, about 300 people held a demonstration during which some 50 of them were arrested by the police. See www.ethiopianreporter.com (accessed on 10 March 2014). See also Goshu 2005 (Ethiopian Calendar).
- LXXXI Adegehe 2009: 164.
- LXXXII Aalen 2008: 164.
- LXXXIII Fiseha Habbib, 2010: 156.
- LXXXIV Garcia & Rajkumar 2008: 91-95.
- LXXXV Proclamation 7/1992, Art 5 (1).
- LXXXVI Regassa 2009: 55. See also Proclamation 7/1992, Art 3 (3).
- LXXXVII Regassa 2009.
- LXXXVIII Gebre-Egziabher 2002: 2.
- LXXXIX See Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE): Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) *Ethiopia: Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP)*, 2002; United Nations General Assembly Millennium Declaration Resolution 55/2, 2000, Para 19.
- XC MoEFD, 2002.
- XC I The dispute allegedly dates back to 1998 when Ethiopia was still at war with Eritrea (Tadesse & Young 2003: 390).
- XC II Tadesse & Young 2003: 391.
- XC III Those who opposed the prime minister allege that the disagreement was about how best to handle the Ethio-Eritrean war. Members of the dissenting groups claim they were in favour of a forceful regime change in Asmara, which Meles allegedly rejected. Meles and his supporters, on the other hand, maintain that the dispute related to corruption and lack of discipline in the party (Tadesse & Young 2003; Assefa 2007: 388).
- XC IV Tadesse & Young 2003; Assefa, 2007: 388.
- XC V Tadesse & Young 2003; Assefa 2007: 388.
- XC VI Fiseha 2007.
- XC VII Regassa 2003: 10.
- XC VIII Regassa 2009: 55.
- XC IX Ayele & Fesha 2012.
- C Regassa 2009: 55; Negussie 2006; 239.
- C I Medhane Tadesse & Young; 2003; Negussie 2006: 239.
- C II See MoFED (2002) and Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE): Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) *Ethiopia Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP)* (2005).
- C III Heymans & Mussa 2004.
- C IV ARS Constitution, 2001: Art 118 (2); BGRS Constitution, 2002: Art 119 (2); GRS Constitution, 2002: Art 123 (2) TRS Constitution, 2001: Art 107 (2); ORS Constitution, 2001: Art 112 (2); AfRS Constitution, 2002: 110 (2); SRS Constitution, 2001: (108).
- C V See, for instance, ARS Constitution, 2001: Art 118 (2); the SNNPR Constitution, 2001: 123 (3) (b).
- C VI Negussie 2006: 239.
- C VII MoFED (2002).
- C VIII See The official website of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia <http://www.ethiopia.gov.et> (last accessed on 28 March 2014).
- C IX To the credit of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, which is in charge of administering elections at all levels, local elections in the Somali regional state are held at a different time to the rest of the country in order to coincide with when pastoralists return from their search for pasture.
- C X See Zemelak Ayele & Yonatan Fesha, 2011: 99.
- C XI See MoFED, 2002).
- C XII See Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE): Ministry of Capacity Building (MoCB) *Draft Woreda (Local Government) proclamation for Development by the Regional Government Public Sector Capacity Building Programme: District Level Decentralisation Programme*, 2007.



CXIII ARS Constitution, 2001 : Art 86 (2) (f); AfRS Constitution, 2001 : Art 77 (2) (f); SRS Constitution, 2001 : Art 77 (2) (h); GRS Constitution, 2001 : Art 90 (2) (f); ORS Constitution, 2001: Art 79 (2) (g); the SNNPR Constitution, 2001: Art 93 (2) (f); BGRS Constitution, 2002 : Art 87 (2) (f); TRS Constitution, 2001: Art 74 (2) (f).

CXIV See FDRE Constitution, 1995: Art 97. See also Solomon Negussie, 2006: 145.

CXV The regional constitutions vaguely hint that the regional governments may (but not necessarily must) allocate a certain portion from their annual budgets to *woredas*. ORS Constitution, 2001: Art 79 (2) (h); GRS Constitution, 2001 : Art 90 (2) (g); the SNNPR Constitution, 2001 : Art 93 (2) (g); BGRS Constitution, 2002 : Art 87 (2) (g); ARS Constitution, 2001 : Art 86 (2) (g); AfRS Constitution, 2001 : Art 77 (2) (g); SRS Constitution, 2002 : Art 77 (2) (i); TRS Constitution, 2001 : Art 74 (2) (g). Certain regional proclamations also provide that regional states may extend financial assistance to *woredas* (see BGRS Proclamation 86/2010: Art 93 (1); TGR Proclamation 99/2006: Art 56 (1)). However, it is not clear what form this 'financial assistance' takes and whether the regional states are legally enjoined to provide it. Put differently, constitutionally speaking, *woredas* may not as of right demand regional block grants.

CXVI See MoFED, 2002.

CXVII Garcia & Rajkumar, 2008: 22-23.

CXVIII Yilmaz S & Venugopal V *Local government accountability and discretion in Ethiopia* Georgia State University Andrew Young School of Policy Studies International Studies Program Working Paper 08-38 8, 2008.

CXIX See Lidetu Ayalew *Medlot* Addis Ababa, 2002 (Ethiopian calendar).

CXX See also Teshome 2009.

CXXI See Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE): Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) *Growth and transformation plan*, 2010.

CXXII National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) (NEBE) *Official results of the 23rd may 2010 general election* <http://www.electionethiopia.org/en/> (last accessed on 27 May 2012).

CXXIII The 2013 'Cities' Day' was celebrated in Bahir Dar, the capital of Amhara region.

CXXIV In one of my visits to the building, previously occupied by the MoCB and now taken over by the Ministry of Civil Service, I noticed that reports, studies and other documents dealing with *woredas* were unceremoniously piled up in one corner of a small office. I was also told that many more such documents stored in digital format were inaccessible because the computers had been infected by viruses. In addition, most of the MoCB staff who worked on the decentralisation programme had transferred to other positions without handing over documents to their successors or storing them properly.

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