

**TOWARDS BUILDING PEACE INFRASTRUCTURES AT THE LOCAL
LEVEL IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA: ACTORS, THEIR POTENTIALS
AND LIMITS**

Yacob Cheka Hidoto

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies Presented in Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Peace and Security Studies**

Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

March 2020

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School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Yacob Cheka Hidoto, entitled: **Towards Building Peace Infrastructures at the Local Level in Southern Ethiopia: Actors, Their Potentials and Limits** and submitted to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Peace and Security Studies complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the contributions and limitations of local peace infrastructures in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia. The research is conceived and justified against the backdrop of the growing contemporary emphasis on the need to proactively rely on local peace infrastructures to mitigate and transform violent communal conflicts that ravage a plethora of grassroots communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Further justifications of the instrumental power of local peace infrastructures are based on the recognition that grassroots-based communal conflicts are essentially driven by local contents and actors, and therefore the most effective sustainable remedies for these conflicts would be achieved by having relevant local actors as key drivers of any conflict mediation, resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. Over the past 20 – 30 years, local peace infrastructures have proved quite effective in resolving varying levels of violent conflicts and building peace in many African countries. Some of the most outstanding success stories have been recorded by the Local Peace Committees (LPCs) known as ‘Local Peace Council’ in Ghana, and ‘Village Peace and Development Committees’ in Kenya. Many regional and international civil society organisations have mounted strong advocacy campaigns aimed at replicating the success stories of Ghana and Kenya elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa where violent communal conflicts are rife.

The fieldwork data collection was carried out in the profoundly multi-ethnic and heterogenous Ethiopia’s southern region (Southern Nations, Nationalities' and Peoples' Regional State – SNNPRS) which has seen series of violent communal conflicts in the past two decades and where leading initiatives have been taken to establish local peace infrastructures to prevent and resolve recurrent communal violence. The study was specifically initiated with a motivation to bridge the gaps between constructive potential of local peace infrastructures and risk of their manipulation by those who monopolize power. Hence, the familiar local peace infrastructures, namely, state initiated local peace committees and customary elders as well as their respective rival or critical local peace infrastructures were selected and empirically analyzed.

The study employed a mix of qualitative methods using a comparative case study strategy as a research design especially to facilitate collection of necessary data and conduct analyses. Relevant data therefore were collected from both primary and secondary sources using data collection methods such as interviews, focus groups discussion, observations and informal consultations.

Over 95 participants (key informants and FGDs members) comprising local authorities, elders, women, young people, members of various local peace actors offered information in face-to-face interviews and dialogues.

The study found that local peace infrastructures that were co-owned by the primary conflict parties delivered essential contributions to communal conflict transformation while at the same time indicating a potential for further impact if some of their limits were addressed. The councils of elders and state initiated peace committees specifically in the frontier areas between the Sidama and Oromo have been serving as essential platform for local peace-building even though they have limited potentials to deal with conflicts arising in the asymmetric contexts. In the asymmetric contexts where women and social and community groups have been exposed to violent attacks and discriminations by those who monopolize power, the use of critical engagement by the victims offered a better platform for non-violent change as evident in Wondo Genet and Konso. The study generally found that the prevailing violence, power asymmetry between conflict parties and ineffective organizational characteristics of local peace actors limit their peace potentials. Based on the findings and analyses thereof, the study suggests a necessity to adapt context-specific mechanisms, invest adequate time and financial resources and offer legal supports to enrich potentials of local peace actors to deal with actual and potentially violent communal conflicts.

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List of Acronyms

CoN	Council of Nationalities
CPS	Civil Peace Service
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HoF	House of Federation
IGAD	Inter-governmental Authority on Development
LPC	Local Peace Committee
NNP	Nations, Nationalities and People
MoFA	Ministry of Federal Affairs
MoP	Ministry of Peace
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
RCCSGA	Resource Center for Civil Society Group Association
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
SNNPRS	Southern Nations, Nationalities' and People's Regional State
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States of America International Development

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

More than ever current academic, practitioners and policy discourses in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding give utmost urgency to the establishment of peace infrastructures in order to deal with violent communal conflicts. The infrastructure approach to peacebuilding does not appeal to quality service provided by the conflict resolution experts or mediators from outside the society nor does it rely on largely ineffective, reactive, power based or state-centric approaches. Instead, the new approach is based on the notion that violent communal conflicts must be addressed through locally owned mechanisms of resolving conflicts. In particular, it puts local actors, processes, needs, identities and institutions first, while recognizing their relationships with state actors and processes (Richmond, 2013a). In other words, the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is believed to exist in local communities affected by conflicts (Lederach, 1997 & 2013).

The infrastructure approach to peacebuilding makes efforts not only to integrate the time-proven customary methods of conflict resolution which can be quite effective in preventing violence, resolving disputes and transforming negative relationships into peaceful co-existence but also appeals to empower women, young people and civil society actors in the peace infrastructures as well as to ensure their linkage with government authorities (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, pp. 24-25). In so doing, it promises inexpensive, cost-effective, inclusive, participatory, and transformative approaches to address challenges of communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Lederach, 2013; van Tongeren, 2011).

Attention accorded to the establishment of peace infrastructures appears nowhere apparent than in Sub-Saharan Africa where local peace infrastructures are widely used to mitigate and transform contemporary violent communal conflicts that are causing problems in everyday life. Immediately after the Cold War, for example, African countries such as South Africa, Ghana and Kenya took the first initiatives to develop localized peace infrastructures as indigenous response to encourage joint or inclusive peacebuilding in their societies (Odendaal, 2010 & 2012; van Tongeren, 2011 & 2013). Empirical studies on the local peace infrastructures in these countries have shown that they filled a void in dispute resolution in local governance by facilitating consensus between disputants and helped them to ensure peaceful coexistence at community levels. The peace committees of South Africa which was operating during the transition from Apartheid system (1991-1994) at local, regional and national levels helped the country to stop the escalation of violence (Gastrow, 1995, p. 83; Odendaal, 2010, p. 33; van Tongeren, 2011, p. 46). Likewise, in 2005, Ghana established peace councils which were credited for resolving communal conflicts in the north, ensuring peaceful election and transfer of power in the country in 2008 (Kotia & Kofi, 2011; Odendaal, 2010, p. 55; van Tongeren, 2011, p. 46). Furthermore, the peace committees of Kenya were credited for ending protracted communal conflicts in the Wajir District of the country (Adan & Pkalya, 2006; Odendaal, 2010, p. 40; van Tongeren, 2011).

Along with the growing interests to establish the peace infrastructures by different violence-affected countries, recent years also saw increased academic interests and literature on the peace infrastructures, although such efforts came with divergent perspectives. The nascent literature on

peace infrastructures include dozens of single and comparative case studies, research papers, government policy, planning and strategy papers, UN publications, and the like. Most of these publications present positive aspects of the peace infrastructures (Hedditch, 2016, p. 46). Besides, normative tone in the existing literature on peace infrastructures far exceeds empirical evidences which remain anecdotal (ibid.). Moreover, most positivist-oriented literature is least attentive to theoretical aspects of peace infrastructures (Hopp-Nishanka, 2016, p. 9).

Conversely, there are increasing number of authors who are critical about the concept's potential link to liberal peace agenda and the ruling elites of a state (Richmond, 2013a; Verzat, 2014). The critiques worry about peace intervention that starts with liberal-oriented state designs and blue prints at the expense of localized consensus, actors, interests and participations. In particular, critical authors mention the negative track records of the liberal peace agenda in the developing countries. They argue that the liberal reforms that focus on macro-level structural reform in favor of competitive multiparty system, open market and decentralized governance is not enough to reverse violent communal conflicts and severed relations between central state and dissatisfied and historically marginalized communities in the developing countries. They also contend that the macro-level state reform which does not appreciate capacities rooted in local communities is likely to exacerbate violence and cause development failures, local resistance and crisis of governance (Ogbaharya, 2008, pp. 397-98; Richmond, 2013b).

Critical authors mostly tend to relate the current efforts to establish peace infrastructures, especially in Africa south of Sahara as a top-down venture which suited interests of state elites and international community (Richmond, 2013a; Verzat, 2014). In particular, Oliver Richmond

(2013a) warned, such efforts do not just reinforce dominant elites but they are also vulnerable to being captured by local interest groups, including customary authorities who aspire to consolidate their power at community level. In short, critical authors call for agency of the 'local', i.e. those actors that rely on internal, domestic, traditional and cultural practices to rebuild peace of community (Richmond, 2013 & 2014).

Beyond the above positive-critical divide there are emerging constructive, empirical studies that explore in detail various aspect of peace infrastructures, their activities, relevance and limits. Authors such as Andiares Odendaal (2010 & 2012), Hopp-Nishanka (2012, 2013 & 2016), and Paul Van Tongeren (2010, 2011 & 2013) provided constructive insights about peace infrastructures. They assert that peace infrastructures have proven to be effective mechanisms for preventing violence in the last two decades, while at the same time being critical of their drawbacks. Despite such invaluable works, there is still little constructive academic research in communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding studies based on local peace infrastructures. Besides, the existing constructive, empirical-oriented literature on local peace infrastructures tends to ignore conflict settings with restricted political space for role of civil society actors.

This thesis aims to examine potential and limits of local peace infrastructures in the context of southern Ethiopia, where they have been deployed to deal with various types of violent communal conflicts (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). This study specifically investigates an extent to which selected community-based peace infrastructures, namely, customary authorities, state-initiated local peace committees and activist-oriented local actors help to moderate communal violence and redress structurally rooted injustices in southern Ethiopia. The study is based on

empirical evidences from communal conflicts in the frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring Guji and West Arsi Zones where jointly formed or co-owned state initiated local peace committees and customary authorities have been so helpful in preventing communal violence, bridging differences, transforming hostilities, healing wounds and strengthening burgeoning socio-economic bonds. The empirical evidences are also drawn from experiences of localized peace activism in the contexts of the Wondo Genet and Konso Districts. Empirical evidences gathered from all study sites are comparatively analyzed with the help of a ‘positive hybrid peace’ and sets of key factors for effective peace infrastructure developed on the basis of reviewing academic literature on conflict and peace studies. As will be clarified in the next chapter, this framework presumes that both conflict-contexts related factors and organizational characteristics determine effectiveness of local peace infrastructures.

The main argument of this thesis is that local or everyday peace infrastructures can provide reliable and inclusive spaces for meeting, facilitating dialogue and mediation, reconciliation, peace activism and building integrative ties. The potentials of local peace infrastructures are critical and irreplaceable as long as long as they are co-owned by the primary conflict parties and are supported by state and non-state actors, satisfy sets of conditions of effective peace infrastructures and executed appropriately.

1.2 Situating the Problem in Context of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is among African countries that have been developing local peace infrastructures to deal with ongoing and potentially violent communal conflicts. Since 2010, Ethiopia has established a National Peace Architecture that aims to support local peace actors which have been functioning

as a vital part of the country's conflict prevention and peacebuilding methods, tasked with prevention of conflicts, their resolution and promotion of culture of peace (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010). This measure came particularly after swiftly introduced ethnic-oriented federal system and decentralization reform in the country in 1991. Prior to this reform, dictatorship, elitism, poverty, lack of recognition to socio-cultural diversities of over 80 ethnic communities, as well as their political and economic marginalization, and external interferences were key factors for the wide spread grievances and civil wars, especially during the socialist-military regime of *Dergue* (Bahru, 2002; Meheret, 2002; Merara, 2007). The 1990s political reform of Ethiopia, therefore, has decentralized power from the center to regions as a solution to the prior existing problems, creating nine ethnic oriented regions with varying demographic and geographic sizes (Meheret, 2002). Most regions have a number of zonal, *wereda* (district) and *kebele* (villages) tiers of administration¹. Moreover, the political reform provided constitutional and other legal provisions, including the rights of the ethnic communities to manage and transform intra-and inter-communal conflicts using their customary systems of conflict resolution (Merara 2007; Tronvoll & Hagmann, 2012; Young, 1998).

Despite the fact ethnic-oriented federal and decentralization reform of Ethiopia has created condition favorable to ethnic and regional autonomy in language and culture and in administrative, fiscal, judicial and police decentralization (Alemu, 2003; Merera, 2007), attention given to achieve an overlap between administrative and ethnic boundaries has been a key factor in the rise and exacerbation of violent communal conflicts in the country (Abbink, 2006). Currently, Ethiopia is among African countries most affected by violent communal conflicts

¹ Zones, *weredas* and *kebeles* are assigned specific responsibilities, but devolution is mainly felt at the level of the *weredas*.

caused, especially by redrawing of administrative maps along ethnic identities, national political struggle and competition over scarce resources and boundaries at community levels (Abbink, 2006, p. 391; Brosché & Elfversson, 2012, p. 44). Communal violence has specifically been prevalent in southern Ethiopia and many lives have been lost (Abbink, 2006). Besides, activities of ruling EPRDF party has had its own contribution in production of communal violence in the Southern Nations, Nationalities' and People's Region (hereafter, the SNNPRS or the southern region) as they mostly interfere with the constitutionally granted rights and freedoms as well as with basic needs and interests of formerly marginalized ethnic communities in the region (Aalen, 2008; Abbink, 2006; Alemu, 2003; Merera, 2007).

The government of Ethiopia has a major responsibility to manage communal conflicts and facilitate mediation between the conflict parties or refer cases of conflicts to judicial courts. Nonetheless, its relation to communal conflicts has been complex owing partly to limited understanding among public officials of how to differentiate conflict and violence. Conflicts may exist for years or decades before the outbreak of violence and may continue after wars and violence has ended (Brand-Jacobsen, 2013). There are root causes, drivers and proximate factors that drives them towards violence. In most cases these factors can be identified long before the actual outbreak of violence. In many instances, even specific 'triggers' can also be identified. If these are not addressed by relevant authorities and other stakeholders, this may easily cause violence. The officials of Ethiopia, especially, in the community levels underestimate the nature and destructive potentials of violent communal conflicts associated with collective resources such as lands, pasture, water and borders. In extreme instances, the political leaders and the

police forces often exacerbate violence by siding with their respective ethnic groups (Abbink, 2006, p. 400; Hailemariam, 2004, p. 45).

Enormous amount of resources, time and energy have still been going to reactive methods to address communal conflicts in Ethiopia. The responses of the government have mainly been rooted in military-security approaches and are reactive, top-to-down and aimed more at containing violence than solving them. Conflict prevention has been initiated only after a conflict turned violent. The aim was to limit further escalation. Such methods often do not work, are not enough and often fail to effectively address and transform conflict dynamics, and in many cases may even deepen and worsen conflict and directly fuel violence. No serious attention has been given to address deep-rooted causes of conflicts in the country because of the means to tackle them were lacking, and therefore few of communal conflicts ever saw final and effective reconciliations (Abbink, 2006; Sehen, Fisseha & Chrysantus, 2012). Formal institutions that are usually expected to address issues of violent conflict have largely been suffering from overshadowing of the prevailing political practices as well as from the limited legal and practical capacity, wide spread perceptions of corruption and favoritism (Alula & Getachew, 2008; Abbink, 2009; van der Beken, 2013, pp. 9-12).

Conversely, the potentials of customary authorities, based in local communities, to mitigate insecurity has not been properly utilized in Ethiopia (Alula & Getachew, 2008). This is in spite of the fact that such structures are respected as having rich experience and are credited for legitimacy and regulating ordinary patterns of behavior in rural areas where there is no or little understanding of formal institutions (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003). Moreover, customary actors

fulfill vital functions of fostering dialogue in divided ethnic communities, managing conflicts and protecting communities from violence. In particular, customary authorities of various ethnic communities of Ethiopia are recognized for reducing communal conflict and offering much needed economic and social services during the time of the conflicts (ibid.). Customary elders play a supreme role as trustworthy mediator of disputes and their influence saw resurgence afterward the introduction of ethnic oriented federal and decentralization reform in the country in 1991 (Erk, 2014, pp. 9-11).

A key challenge for the effectiveness of customary authority in conflict resolution and communal peacebuilding, however, is their ability to devise and implement agreements that are not vulnerable to polarizing tendencies or to breach rights of members of minority groups. Customary actors are often criticized for the lack of enforcement mechanisms and serious gender and age discriminations in the participation, decision making and procedures as well as for negative attitudes towards persons from minority groups (Alula & Getachew, 2008). Despite these drawbacks, there are many voices who demonstrate that the influence of such informal peace infrastructure is real and their power over the everyday behavior of citizens is a fact of life in the country, remarking a need to closely investigate their potential and possible failures in communal conflict resolution (Peace & Development Centre, 2014).

In the meantime, Ethiopia saw an evolvement of state-initiated everyday peace infrastructures aimed to de-escalate and transform communal conflicts. Such peace infrastructures include among others local peace committees, community based peace radio programmes, early warning platforms and peace forums and clubs at the schools, colleges and universities of the country.

The state-initiated local peace committees particularly evolved from a pragmatic alliance of the state actors and customary elders, especially after the fall of socialist *Dergue* regime in 1991. The earliest form of state initiated local peace infrastructure was ‘peace and stability committees’ of transitional period that were credited for reducing threats posed by disbanded Dergue army (Dessalegn & Mehret, 2004). Likewise, in the late 1990s peace committees of Afar and Issa (Somali) involving state agents and customary elders was established as joint peace platform to reduce and contain violent conflicts over disputed boundaries between the two regional states (Michaelson, 2000, p. 12). Since 2003, state-initiated local peace committees have regularly been used to monitor pastoralist conflicts in the borders areas in the southern Ethiopia in the framework of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development's conflict Early Warning and Response Network (Hagmann & Alemmaya, 2008, p. 21). Currently, state-initiated local peace committees are being employed in conflict-affected regions, such as the SNNPRS and they are situated in the peace and security structures of the regions (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). In this regard, the MoFPDA (or currently MoP) and regional peace and security bureaus use them as procedural infrastructure to address communal conflicts within and between regional states.

There are, however, concern related to whether or not the state initiated local peace committees serve as credible and lasting capacity for community's internal dialogue, mediation and reconciliations. The critiques against the state initiated local peace infrastructures argue that they are used to co-opt elders as well as limits dissenting and opposition voices at community levels (Hagmann & Alemmaya, 2008). Besides, the relation between state-initiated local peace infrastructures and already existing local peace actors like customary actors have become complicated in the contexts where community members play role of localized peace activism in

promoting people's concerns and interests (Abbink, 2006, p. 401). In such settings, community leaders, elders and civil society actors converge in promoting community interests related to self-rule or self-determination as it was evident among Konso ethnic community in the SNNPRS. Such settings generally saw the emergence of people established committees or 'popular committees', that mobilize local people to counter unpopular policies of the government. These committees appeal to different sections of a community in order to enhance their legitimacy and garner strong and unified voices (Data, 2006). Such committees have been vigilant toward the ruling government. They also mounted non-violent peace activism to force the government to change its policy as it has been evident during the recurring quests for self-governing homelands in the SNNPRS (Abbink, 2006).

Nonetheless, very little attention has been accorded to empirically analyze relevance and possible limits of various local or everyday peace infrastructures and extent to which such infrastructures can coexist constructively to contribute for communal conflict transformation in the country. While academic studies, expert analyses and media attention, especially regarding the southern region of Ethiopia focus on macro level federalism and decentralization reform as well as the general institutional mechanisms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Aalen, 2008; Abbink, 2006; Vaughan, 2003), much less attention has been paid to analyze potentials and possible limits of everyday mechanisms of conflict resolution and peace-building in the region. There are of course many ethnographic studies on customary dispute settlements (Alula & Getachew, 2008), although much of them are context-specific with little comparative bearing. Literature on other everyday oriented peace infrastructures is regrettably scarce. Apart from a study carried out by the GIZ sponsored research team on various aspects of peace committees

initiated by civil society organizations in the districts adjacent to international borders in southern Ethiopia (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013), information on the potentials and possible limits of peace infrastructures are restricted to anecdotal and unreliable reports of the government. This knowledge gap is of course due to partly the dearth of studies and the fact that idea of the peace infrastructure itself, if not its practice, is new to the country.

1.3 Research Questions

The key research question of this study is: what are the contributions and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia?

The specific research questions that the study deals with are:

- What are sources and natures of violent communal conflicts in southern Ethiopia?
- What are general or formal approaches of communal conflict transformation and their limits in southern Ethiopia?
- How effective are everyday or local peace infrastructures initiated by state and non-state actors in resolving varying levels of violent conflicts and building peace in southern Ethiopia?
- What are the limitations and challenges of the key actors in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia?
- How important were supports of the state and outsiders on these local peace infrastructures of communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to critically investigate the contributions, potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Explain the sources and natures of contemporary communal violence in southern Ethiopia in conjunction with their historical origins
- Discuss the general or formal mechanisms, their limits as well as the origins of everyday mechanisms of communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia
- Examine the achievements of selected local peace infrastructures initiated by state and non-state actors in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia
- Analyze the limitations and challenges of those peace infrastructures in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes in southern Ethiopia
- Analyse supports of the state and outsiders to the local infrastructures in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia.
- Compare and contrast the contributions and possible limits of particularly local peace infrastructures in communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This research will have both theoretical and practical significances. Theoretically, in the last decade several academicians and practitioners have been investigating the potentials and limitations/challenges of peace infrastructures as a part of efforts to mitigate violent communal conflicts. Their efforts particularly target to address a long standing question of creating credible

and sustainable capacities at various levels of society in order to transform violent intra-state conflicts. There is a consensus on a need to enhancing peace infrastructure, because violent communal conflict is a wide spread global problem affecting many countries (UNDP, 2013; van Tongeren, 2011, p. 46). Many violenc-affected countries came to the conclusion that structural conflicts continue to pose threat to development, security and peace. Besides, experts expect an increase in violent communal conflicts, especially related to competition over scarce resources such as land and resources, ethnicity, exclusion and post-election violence, etc. create a severe threat to human security and kill thousands of people each year (van Tongeren, 2011, p. 46). In this regard, peace infrastructure approach could be useful strategy for those communities lacking the capacities, mechanisms, and structures to deal adequately with ongoing and potentially violent communal conflicts. Therefore, this research may contribute to a theoretical enrichment of peace infrastructures as the mechanism of communal conflict resolution and peace-building.

This research may also serve as a valuable input to the government policy framework that aims to create institutions for durable peace and human security in Ethiopia. The country has already been initiated various policies and strategies of peace and security, even though not comprehensive, in order to improve observed insecurities in the last two decades (Sehen et al., 2012). The country in recent years saw efforts to build local peace capacities to ensure durable peace, enhance local resilience, and promote tolerance, dialogue and reconciliation as responses to proliferating communal conflicts. The government of Ethiopia particularly has recently given consideration to establish peace infrastructures or architecture such as local peace committees, community peace radios, and peace clubs than relying on general mechanisms of conflict management which are often reactive, law and order-based, top-bottom and aimed more at

managing the conflict than solving it. This is because using local peace infrastructures that are already in place within a community can be far more effective and timely, allowing them to manage their own problems on their own terms, so promising an efficient and effective mechanism of preventing and addressing violent conflicts in everyday life. In this regard, the federal government of Ethiopia gained experiences of locally established peace councils of Kenya and Ghana that worked well and helped de-escalate the violence (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). As already mentioned above, in both countries the existence of these structures helped in preventing and reducing violent conflicts. Hence, this study may be valuable to our understanding of the potential and possible limits of various forms of peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia for promotion of inter- and intra-communal coexistence and harmony, which in turn contribute to the improvement of their everyday activities and effectiveness.

1.6 Methodology

This section presents about research design and methods and sources of data used to investigate the potential and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia. It also provides the author's reflection on the field experience. Thus, the first subsection provides the study's design and factors motivating the cases selection. The second subsection explicates methods used in data collection. The third subsection presents of methods of data analysis. Finally, the author's field experiences are described.

1.6.1 A Research Design: Comparative Case Study Strategy

A research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions or problems (Kumar, 2005, p. 84). As already mentioned above, the purpose of this

thesis is to explore and investigate potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in local peace process as well as in contributing to communal conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia. In order to achieve this purpose, the author used a comparative case study approach. This approach is particularly relevant for understanding and explaining how conflict-contexts influence the effectiveness and success of peacebuilding intervention and how better to adapt the intervention to the specific contexts comprising actors, their objectives and their actions, and power relations (Ragin, 1997; Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Likewise, as Bartlett and Vavrus (2017, p.905) remark, comparative case study is relevant with regard to comparison both at the surface level-for instance at horizontal, vertical and transversal axes, and at deeper level or process tracing oriented comparison which integrates the perceptions of various social actors and criticality toward power and inequality in order to explain the problem. As a qualitative research method, comparative case strategy relies on ethnographic oriented studies on multiple sites (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p.907). Therefore, this strategy allowed the author to explore or describe each case as well as to conduct cross-case comparison.

The research was carried out in southern Ethiopia, especially in the southern region which has seen series of violent communal conflicts in the past two decades. The southern region presented critical contexts to this study as it took a leading role in establishing local peace infrastructures to prevent and resolve violent communal conflicts (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). In line with the advice of Bartlett and Vavrus (2017, p.915, note 1), the selected cases are also to be critical with respect to the theory, conflict context, empirical relevance, strategic importance and importance of criticality towards those who monopolize power. In this regard, customary actors and state initiated local peace committees were selected from the frontier sites between Sidama and

adjacent Oromia zones-respectively from Wondo Genet and Hula sites-where they have helped in containing communal violence and transforming long existing hostilities between communal groups. Both local peace actors are an example of permanent peace infrastructure that serve as alternative forum for communal conflict transformation. These cases were selected as they have favorable conditions for ideally effective peace infrastructures.

The study also included two rival cases that exhibit the limits of customary and state-affiliated local peace committees and represent better infrastructures to address conflicts in the asymmetric conflict contexts. In this regard, the author decided to include activist-oriented peace actors, namely, the Popular Committee of Konso and women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District. The former rival case emerged in the site where state initiated local peace committees as well as the existing state and social structures were incapable to handle the concern of the community. It specifically shows how the popular committee attempted to deal with a dispute in the vertical relation between the Konso community and the regional government. The latter rival case emerged in the site where customary actors failed to provide an inclusive solution to a dispute over marriage issue triggering communal violence in the area. It particularly shows how women mobilized supports to reduce the prevailing social discriminations against them and the members of minority in the Wondo Genet *Wereda* of Sidama Zone. Both rival cases are taken in this study as activist oriented local peace infrastructures that are crucial to highlight the importance of using critical methods against those who monopolize power.

The decision to select all aforementioned cases was done on preliminary reviews on documents and interviews in the southern region. All selected cases are relevant to demonstrate that conflict

context matters when it comes to the success or failure of local peace infrastructures. The selected cases are understood to be representative of general pattern in southern Ethiopia and are critical to get insights about the potential and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in communal conflict transformation. In other words, the selected cases have strategic importance in relation to the research problem.

1.6.2 Data Collection Methods

Relevant data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources using data collection methods such as interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), observations, written document and informal consultation. The interviews and FGD data were collected from a number of informants with deep insights into activities of community-based peace infrastructures. Observations of the research settings were also conducted to get more reliable information related to the research topic. The written documents include primary sources produced by the government as well as secondary sources in the form of books, articles, thesis/dissertations, and web based materials. However, finding reliable sources on empirically oriented peace infrastructures was not smooth as already acknowledged by scholars in the field (Odendaal, 2010, p. 9; van Tongeren, 2013b, p. 51). The challenge is so strong when there is dearth of information on effectiveness of community-based peace infrastructures. In addition, the existing written sources in the country did not provide sufficient information with regard to communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Hence, in order to increase the reliability of the sources, the author focused on finding key informants from peace actors situated in the study sites. In fact, a study focusing on potentials and possible limits of various peace infrastructures risk to meet sources that desire to project only positive aspect of their actions. Besides, as

Anthony Robben (1996) rightly puts, it is often difficult to interview, for example, victims of communal violence on one occasion and perpetrators on another, while keeping significant distance (as cited in Bauman, 2007, p. 1). Hence, the author tried to balance different views and showed criticality to each source, which in turn is informed by values of peace study aiming to influence cultures in constructive, non-violent ways (Galtung, 1996, p. 15). In addition to interviews and observations, relevant written documents from the local government offices and other sources were used to supplement and/or answer the research questions. The use of multiple sources such as interviews, observations and written documents are relevant to improve the data reliability. Here below, each of these methods used in collecting data for this study are briefly described.

1.6.2.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are the key sources of information in this research. Interviews are commonly used method of collecting information from informants (Kumar, 2005; Creswell 2003). Interview can be used for different purposes, but they are usually used to get deeper insights of informants as well as different views of social actors about the phenomenon that is being studied. In order to get data on the potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures the author tried to find informants who are highly knowledgeable about activities of local peace infrastructures. A specific attention was given to interview purposively selected informants who were either directly involved with the local peace infrastructures or highly knowledgeable about their activities. This is because the activities of local peace infrastructure are not a day-to-day role of ordinary people. This study therefore carried out in-depth interviews with key members of peace committees in the frontiers between Sidama and adjacent Oromo groups, Popular Committee of

Konso, public officials and, practitioners in the study sites, customary elders, especially in Wondo Genet, NGOs agents, and pertinent members of community in the study sites. The chosen informants exemplified different backgrounds, gender and experience in order to get several views and perspectives as possible. Generally, the author engaged over ninety five participants in all study sites through the in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and informal consultations. Most of the interviews were conducted using Amharic language in a setting that chosen by the informants. However, in a few instance the author relied on field assistants who can speak the local language to translate interviews. Each interview data was written as a concise notes and narrative.

1.6.2.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

In addition to interview with individuals this study has undertaken focus group discussion with groups of informants. Focus group discussion or dialogue facilitates exploration of the perceptions, experiences and understandings of a group of people who have some experience in common with regard to a situation or event (Kumar, 2005, p. 124). The author found it relevant tool to get a shared view from members of various peace committees engaged in communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It made possible to empower participants to express their views, experiences and perceptions regarding the potential, activities and limits of each committees. The data collected through FGDs are so helpful to the author in order to triangulate with that of in-depth interviews. A total of four FGDs were conducted in this study. The participants of the FGDs were members of the councils of elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo in the Wondo Genet area, local peace committee in the Hula District of Sidama Zone and Popular Committee of Konso. The author mainly relied on field assistants to translate the interviews in

the former two FGDs, while members of Popular Committee of Konso communicated their perceptions using Amharic language. There were in fact no female FGD participants in the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo as well as in the Popular Committee of Konso. This is because women are not customarily allowed to participate in the councils of the elders, while in the case of the popular committee because of their lack of willingness. Nevertheless, women are separately interviewed in Wondo Genet.

1.6.2.3 Observation

This study gained some important data through observations. As Kumar (2005, p. 119) concisely states, observation is “a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomena as it takes place”. An observation of the research setting particularly may provide more reliable information related to the research topic than perceptions of the informants. This author therefore observed the collective peace forum held in the frontier area between Sidama and Guji Zones. The author also observed the *gondoro*/reconciliation ceremony carried out by the councils of the elders in Wondo Genet. The messages gained from the observation were relevant to this study since they enabled the author to gain various insights that would not be accessible through face-to-face interviews and dialogues. In each setting the author respected relevant local ethics and got informed consents to access the fields. .

1.6.2.4 Written Documents

In addition to using interviews and observation, the author used review of written document to gather information related to the research topic in general and the research questions in particular. Yin (2009, pp. 101-103) argues that documents have various advantages. For

example, they may include detailed information about a phenomenon under study. The author used the primary sources to understand what they say about activities of local peace infrastructures to add-on the data gained from interviews and observations. Furthermore, written documents have the potential to add depth to the research by focusing on the contexts and contribute to the analysis of the phenomenon (ibid.). In this regard, large part of written documents provided the data on the general settings, especially on communal violence, state-centric approaches of conflict management as well as information on activities of everyday peace infrastructures. In particular, written sources were used in answering the first two research questions of the study, even though access to primary sources was restricted partly due to their dearth and partly due to the prevailing political climate in the country. For this study, the author used primary sources such as official reports, guidelines, constitutions and legislative decrees. These documents were drawn from the MoP, the southern region, zonal and *wereda* offices linked with the study sites. Likewise, the secondary sources in the form of articles, books, theses, and web-based materials were used in the research. Each written source is judged whether or not they are fair to different views and provide significant answers to the research questions or supplement data obtained from interviews. Generally, the written document provided the key information on the sources and natures of communal violence and their resolution. They also demonstrated actions of everyday oriented peace infrastructures in the study sites.

1.6.3 Methods of Data Analysis

Generally, data analysis of this thesis focused on three phases. The first phase involved macro-level analysis on the sources and natures of violent communal conflicts in southern Ethiopia. It also tried to examine general legal and institutional as well as everyday mechanisms of conflict

resolution and peacebuilding in southern Ethiopia. This analysis gives bigger picture about communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the country in general and southern Ethiopia in particular. The second phase involved micro-level analysis on role of customary actors in the Wondo Genet area and state initiated local peace committees in the frontier area between Sidama and neighboring Oromia zones. It also included analysis on the cases of contending local peace infrastructures, namely, the Popular Committee of Konso and women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District. The micro-level analysis is better to understand localized effects of each local peace infrastructure. The final phase of the analysis involved cross-case comparison that links both macro- and micro-levels, focusing on the potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures. It particularly, brought together the cases which are separately examined and compared them on the bases of analytic framework of the study.

When conducting comparative case studies analysis, the author mostly relied on the prior developed theoretical framework, even if it was revised during the courses of data collection and analysis. As Yin (2009, pp. 130-131) notes, using a theory helps to focus the attention on a certain data and to ignore other data which is not relevant to answer research questions. As will be elucidated in detail in the next chapter, this author argues that a local peace infrastructure needs to embody a ‘positive hybrid peace’ platform which can be evident in terms of ensuring co-ownership of local peace-building, achieving just or positive outcomes as well as in the presence of the key organizational characteristics/qualities of the effective peace infrastructures (such as the origin, mandate, role, and composition, external supports) in order to help contain and transform violent conflicts. These key factors have primarily influenced specific questions for interviewees as well as the comparative case studies analysis. In addition, as Luc Reyckler

(2002, p. 29) recommends, each case study involved the analysis of conflict-context to be transformed focusing on key actors and issues, analysis of local peace processes focusing on organizational characteristics of each peace infrastructure, and finally analysis of the outcomes and impact of conflict resolution efforts of various local actors as well as their challenges. Furthermore, the comparative case studies analysis relied on analytic narrative as it is relevant to gain different views as well as to examine how informants justify their views (Kumar, 2005, p. 124). In short, the comparative case studies analysis focused to find generalized trends with regard to the source and nature of violent communal conflicts, mechanisms of their transformation, and most importantly, the potential and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia.

1.6.4 Field Experiences and Ethical Concerns

The author relied on empirical evidences collected from the research sites in two phases. The first phase of the fieldwork was conducted from October 2016 to June 2017. At this phase, being stationed at Hawassa, the capital of the southern region, the author conducted interviews with security officials and conflict resolution experts at Peace and Security Bureau and the Council of Nationalities of the southern region, studied documents at their bureaus and conducted fieldworks at the purposely selected field sites.

One of the field sites is Wondo Genet. It exists in the frontier area between Sidama and West Arsi Zone. Wondo Genet is about 272 kilometers south of the capital city, Addis Ababa, and 28 kilometers east of the city of Hawassa which serves as capital of the Sidama Zone and the SNNPRS (Abel, 2011, p. 3). The author concerned with two cases in this area, namely, cross-

cultural diplomacy led by customary authorities, especially the potentials of customary elders in bridging socio-spatial differences and women led peace activism, which is in turn associated with limits of the councils of elders. The key actors involved in data collection included peace and security officials and experts, elders, women and community members of both the Wondo Genet District of Sidama Zone and Wondo District of West Arsi Zone.

The data was also collected from the Hula District of Sidama, which is in turn adjacent to the Bore District of Guji Zone. Hula is 95 kilometers from the city of Hawassa (Hula District Administration, 2016). The concern of the author here was activities of state initiated local peace committees in the frontier villages. In this site, the author conducted interviews with peace and security officers, conflict prevention and resolution experts in the Hula *Wereda* of Sidama Zone and Bore *Wereda* of Guji Zone, as well as with members of local peace committees, especially, in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* of Hula District. The author also conducted interviews in Dore Bafana and Shamana towns in the Sidama Zone.

The fieldwork was also conducted in Konso which is 362 kilometers away from the city of Hawassa (Konso *Wereda* Finance & Economic Development, 2016). Here, the major interest of the author was the Popular Committee of Konso. The interviews were carried out in different areas such as Sagan, Karatte, Gidole, Jinka and Gewada towns. The fieldworks in all sites during this first phase was conducted at times of the wide spread protests against the government in various part of the country including in Konso. As a result, it was the time of State of Emergency all over the country.

The second phase of the fieldwork was conducted after change in leadership in the ruling party in April 2018. The author returned to each field sites to see the change in the context after the recent political reform and to find some key informants who were unwilling or unavailable during the first phase. As further elucidated below, data gathered during this phase were relevant to improve reliability of the data as it included some key informants who were inaccessible and/or unwilling during the first phase.

Before going into the field, the author had undertaken all important preconditions. The research design was one of critical steps done before the field work. As Scott Meyer (2007, p. 113) rightly stresses, prior developed research design is important for successful field work. It is particularly crucial to make a realistic calculation of potential risks associated with the field sites. It is also relevant with regard to a need to have alternative research plan and practical measures that should be taken before data collection (*ibid.*). In this regard, the initial research design of this research intended to conduct field study on communal violence and its resolution in the frontier areas between Konso and Dirashe. In particular, the author interested to investigate the potentials of state initiated local peace infrastructures in the area. This decision was partly influenced by the author's previous exposé to activities of the state initiated local peace committees in the frontiers between Konso and adjacent Dirashe during the fieldwork for his master thesis in 2009.

Nevertheless, the author met the violent conflict in Konso which forced him to revisit the initial research design. This conflict has had a high degree of personal and community insecurity. In addition, the state initiated local peace committees which were helpful in transforming inter-communal conflicts in the past decade in the frontier areas between Konso and Dirashe was no

longer credible local peace actor at the time of fieldwork. Instead, the newly emerged popular committee was a key local actor in the area, especially dealing with unpeaceful relation between the Konso community and the southern regional government. Hence, the author in consultation with his supervisor decided to add positive experiences of state initiated local peace committees and customary actors in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones, while shifting the attention to the newly emerged activist-oriented Popular Committee of Konso as well as women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet area.

Access to the field sites was generally difficult because of the State of Emergency declared after the country wide protests, including in Konso. Even when access to the fields was negotiated smoothly, some local officials and members of communities, especially, in Konso were unwilling to share some key data because of the fear of political repercussion. In addition, some key member of Popular Committee of Konso were either in prison or exiled after the intervention of the security forces to contain the protest movement in the area. So during this first phase of data collection in the Konso site the author relied on key informants who were willing to share their experiences and views.

Data collection in the field sites between Sidama and neighboring Oromia zones were relatively smooth as the author encountered fairly motivated informants comprising peace and security officials and experts in local governments, members of local peace committees and high level councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo, women, young people, and generally members of respective community and other stakeholders. The author was also freely allowed to observe the collective peace forum and reconciliation rituals conducted in the frontier areas between two

ethnic groups. Likewise, the author's negotiation with officials and experts of Peace and Security Bureau and the Council of Nationalities of the southern region was so helpful in order to get their views on the impacts and limits of various local peace infrastructures as well as to access their written documents.

Nonetheless, the political reform after the change in leadership in the ruling party-EPRDF had its own impact on data collection and analysis. The reform opened an opportunity to return to the field sites to find more data, especially, from key members of Popular Committee of Konso, who were released from the prison or returned from exile. Conversely, the reform increased politically motivated inter-communal violence in various part of the country. This in turn had its own effect on the author and his family located in the city of Hawassa, which was affected by the mob-violence, thereby delaying data analysis.

The ongoing reform in the country has also effects on the context of the study in general and local peace infrastructures in particular. After the reform, for example, the new administrative structures were created in the southern region, including the creation of Konso Zone. There is also an ongoing process to split the region itself following series of quests by major ethnic groups for a region of their own. Furthermore, the author observed that the state initiated local peace committees and customary elders, especially in the frontier areas between Sidama and West Arsi Zones (for example, in Balela town) have been struggling to de-escalate inter-communal violence erupted after the recent political reform in the area in the absence of the usual state supports to their everyday activities. By contrast, activist-oriented Popular Committee

of Konso which had suffered severe repression by the government before the reform appears to have gained more freedom to express their concerns after it.

Despite all the setbacks in the field sites and during analysis of the data, the author tried to display due care to ethical guidelines from the beginning to completion of this study. The author obtained all data based on consent of informants. Besides, the author explicitly clarified the purpose of the study and types of data wanted from them. The anonymity and privacy of the research participants was respected whenever necessary and the collected data is carefully kept. Moreover, due care has been given to avoid personal bias in analyses and reporting of the findings as much as possible through forwarding the draft thesis chapters and getting feedbacks from scholars who are native to each research site.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The texts of this study are organized into ten chapters. As already outlined above, *chapter one* presents the problem, purpose and argument of the study, statement of the problem, research questions and significances of the study, research methodology and the field experience of the author.

Chapter two reviews literature, clarifies key concepts, and outlines theoretical and analytical frames. It specifically shed lights on the key concept such as communal conflict, peace, ‘peace infrastructure’, and ‘local peace committees’ based on review of existing literature. In particular, it elucidates the importance of the peace infrastructure approach to the creation of durable peace relying on resources rooted in communities and emphasizing the inter-dependence between state

and non-state actors. Following that the chapter presents analytic framework that responds to both context related factors and organizational characteristics of local peace infrastructures to empirically analyze evidences on the potential, impacts and possible limits of the selected local peace infrastructures.

Chapter three presents general setting of southern Ethiopia, focusing on the sources and natures of communal violence in the southern region. It specifically explores how state policies, ideologies and constitutional provisions interact with un-codified factors such as social, cultural, historical, economic, geographic factors to produce communal violence related to the *quests for* self-governing homelands, issues *inside* the homelands and in the *frontier* areas of the homelands. It also highlights resilience of local communities to such violence largely due to the presence of already existing local peace infrastructures.

Chapter four reviews general legal and institutional mechanisms at federal and regional levels that were designed to address conflicts arising in the country. It clarifies challenges related to the adequacy of such legal and institutional mechanisms, especially the limits of reactive government intervention to manage violent communal conflicts. This chapter also traces the selected local peace infrastructures, their structures and functions paying attention to the southern regional state.

Chapters from five to eight presented empirical case studies analysis. *Chapter five* presents a case of cross-cultural diplomacy led by the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo in Wondo Genet. It specifically explores the activities of the elders being done to prevent any

disruption of communal peace and to restore inter-communal relations which were damaged as a result of conflict over ethnic identity and borders in the area. *Chapter six* examines a case of women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District, which emerged especially in reaction to their exclusion in customary systems of conflict resolution. It also traces the limits of customary elders to transform structurally rooted discrimination against members of minority including women in the area as well as reveals women's role in communal conflict transformation and associated challenges. *Chapter seven* explores and analyzes the potentials and possible limits of the state initiated local peace committee in traditionally hostile frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring Guji and West Arsi Zones. It precisely clarifies the roles that local peace committees played to contain inter-communal violence and transform long existed hostilities in their horizontal relations. *Chapter eight* analyzes the potentials and possible challenges of activist oriented Popular Committee of Konso which emerged in the asymmetric conflict context where there were no reliable mechanisms to address concerns of the community. It particularly elucidates the potential and challenges in their non-violent activism to reduce power asymmetry between the community and the regional government and to get response for concerns of the community.

Chapter nine presents cross-case comparative analysis on the potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures using analytic framework of the study. Drawing on empirical evidences, it demonstrates the potentials of everyday peace platforms in both symmetric and asymmetric conflict settings and identifies possible limits of local peace infrastructures in their endeavor to transform violent communal conflicts.

Finally, *chapter ten* summarizes the key findings of the study and concludes the study, especially, by revisiting their theoretical and practical repercussions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

This chapter provides literature reviews, elucidates key concepts and outlines theoretical and analytical frameworks, focusing on the idea of ‘peace infrastructure’ as the newly evolving mechanism of transformative peace-building. The key concepts such as peace, ‘peace infrastructure’, ‘local peace committee’ and communal violence are clarified. Major actors in communal conflict preventions and peacebuilding, especially those based on state-centric, civil society, customary as well as peace infrastructure approaches, are reviewed. The analytic importance of a ‘positive hybrid peace’ is also clarified. Besides, the study develops specific analytic benchmarks to be used in the comparative case studies analysis of empirical evidences on the potentials, impacts and possible limits of local peace infrastructures.

2.1 A Peace Infrastructure

2.1.1 The Rise of Peace Infrastructure

The root of the emerging concept of peace infrastructure is commonly described as going back to the 1990s, especially outlined in series of works of transformative scholars, critical theorists as well as in the United Nations’ document (van Tongeren, 2011). Peace scholars such as Johan Galtung and John Paul Lederach who are leading proponents of transformative approaches to peacebuilding² were greatly credited for the idea of peace infrastructure. For example, Galtung

² Peacebuilding is basically about the process of achieving peace. Nonetheless, nowadays the term and concept of peacebuilding are used in research and practice with varying understanding and definitions. Peace interventions differ significantly in terms of approaches, scope of activities and time frame (Paffenholz, 2009, p. 3).

(2007) in his numerous publications urged a need for the formation of peacebuilding structures to ensure positive and sustainable peace, which is characterized by absence of any form of violence. He articulated this idea since the 1960s, though it began to get an official support, especially after the end of the Cold War, as it has been recommended by the international actors, particularly by the United Nations.

John Lederach is particularly credited for pioneering of the idea of peace infrastructures. He formulated the concept based on his personal engagements in peace negotiations in Central America (e.g. Nicaragua) and Africa (e.g. Somalia). He stated that to be viable, peacebuilding required sustained and deeply transformative works over a long period of time through the participation of wider societal actors. He specifically suggested that the creation of peace infrastructure is necessary to ensure systemic transformation³ of violent conflicts using inter-dependent set of actors and resources rooted in violence-affected societies. In his book entitled “Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies” (1997), Lederach articulates:

I have a rather modest thesis. I believe that the nature and characteristics of contemporary conflict suggest the need for a set of concepts and approaches that go beyond traditional statist diplomacy. Building peace in today's conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of a society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources for reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside. In short, constructing the house of peace relies on a foundation of multiple actors and activities aimed at achieving and sustaining reconciliation (p. xvi).

³ Systemic transformation requires change in the wider context, in the relationship or structure between conflict parties, the issues as well as the actors themselves (Miall, 2004)

According to Lederach (2013), peace infrastructures must be able to address short term triggers of violence as well as long-term socio-economic structures, which often prompt violence, and the socio-cultural discourses, which often legitimize them. This is to say that a peace infrastructure has the potential role in violence prevention, as well as promoting reconciliation, especially by bridging various paradoxes in peacebuilding such as acknowledging the past mistakes versus readiness to live together in co-existence, discovering truth versus showing mercy, ensuring justice versus working for peace, and realizing need to address current crisis versus innovating mechanisms to prevent violence. As he remarks, a will to bridge such dichotomies goes beyond the statist diplomacy and real *politik* which have repeatedly failed to demonstrate a genuine interest to transform deep rooted unjust structures.

The evolution of peace infrastructure has also been influenced by the debate on the idea of 'local' in critical peacebuilding scholarship in the context of a counter-narrative to the liberal peace (Richmond, 2013b). The critical scholarship spearheaded by Richmond and MacGinty essentially recognizes contextually-situated local actors as a key driver of building sustainable peace and challenges liberal-oriented state building and peacebuilding initiatives arguing that they prioritize macro-level institutional and legal reform over local interests, social institutions and agencies (Kavács & Tobias, 2016). For instance, critical theorists introduced meta-physical considerations such as the discourse analyses (example, the state according to who) and renewed the debate around the ontologies and epistemologies of peace and conflict studies (ibid.).

Observably, the international discourse on peace infrastructure has been reinforced by the United Nations' document: *An Agenda for Peace* (1992) reported by the then Secretary General Boutros

B. Ghali. According to this document peacebuilding comprise a wide-range activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation and long-term societal transformation that occurs after violent conflict was slowed down or come to a halt (van Tongeren, 2010). This document particularly makes explicit call for the participation of local actors in peacebuilding which has eventually been echoed in repeated calls for more civil society participation and more 'local ownership' by other international actors such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and a range of donors, and local recipients alike (ibid.).

In the first decade of twenty first century a peace infrastructure appeared in policy circles implying a peace-building partnership between state and non-state actors. This is evident with reference to a decision taken by African head of states in the first standing conference on Stability, Security and Development held in Durban in 2002. In this conference the African leaders have shown willingness to establish national institutions that work in partnership with civil society to manage intra-state conflicts. As van Tongeren (2010) remarks, this decision was reinforced by the UN, especially when Secretary General Kofi Anan, in his 2006 progress report on the prevention of Armed Conflicts, stressed that states should commit themselves to "the creation of a sustainable, national infrastructure for peace that allow societies and their government to resolve conflicts internally and with their own skills, institutions and resources." During this time the UNDP emerged a leading international organization in promoting establishment of peace infrastructures in conflict-affected countries as a link between grassroots or customary institutions, local and national government institutions without necessarily undermining legitimacy of customary actors (Richmond, 2013b).

As a practice, elements of peace infrastructure have been around long before the concept came into usage in research studies. An earliest form of a national peace infrastructure was established in Nicaragua in 1987 with a purpose of monitoring ceasefires and overseeing the regional and local peace committees. Documented evidences show that peace infrastructure of Nicaragua or referred to as Peace Commission were able to facilitate reintegration of ex-fighters and reconciliation in the societies (Lederach, 1997, pp. 49-50).

During the early 1990s South Africa had a similar peace infrastructure or referred to as Peace Committee which was installed at national, regional and local levels with major purpose of creating trust and reconciliation between community leaders and preventing violence and resolve disputes. It was particularly a result of the National Peace Accord, signed in 1991 between the main protagonists in South Africa's conflict. Researchers agree that the establishment of peace infrastructure in South Africa contributed towards containing the spiral of violence which would have far more consequences (Gastrow, 1995, p. 83; Odendaal, 2012, p. 33; van Tongeren, 2011, p. 46). In successive years a number of countries across the world established similar peace infrastructures (Odendaal, 2010; van Tongeren, 2013).

Most of nationally-situated peace infrastructures such as Nicaragua, South Africa and others, were initially established by state actors, often as part of a peace accord or as a result of specific legislation. Such peace infrastructures sought to delegate mandates and responsibilities into local levels to work with communities (Odendaal, 2012). However, the most successful examples of peace infrastructures such as Kenya and Ghana were associated with experiences of conflict handling by local peace structures or committees that were self-initiated by peace actors at

grassroots (van Tongeren, 2013). In this regard, a well cited Wajir Peace and Development Committees of Kenya initially emerged as a result of efforts of women peace activist in the northeastern region in the early 1990s. In a conflict wrecked Wajir District women peace activists together local youths and elders were able mediate the local peace agreement between warring Kenyan Somali clans and restore calm to the region. In this process, they had worked with and involved representatives of formal authority, particularly the District Commissioner and members of the parliament. Its success in bringing and maintaining peace in the Wajir District served as a model to others districts, benchmark for the establishment of national steering committees and policy on peacebuilding and conflict management, as well as played its own role in reducing election related violence in the region (Adan & Pkalya, 2006; Odendaal, 2010, p. 40; van Tongeren, 2011)

Like Kenya, Ghana had successful experiences of addressing violent using the peace infrastructure. Between 1980s and 2003 Ghana were recorded over 23 communal conflicts in its three northern regions. Most of these conflicts were intractable because the justice system was not functioning well and many court cases were not resolved. A violent conflict concerning succession to the chieftain's throne after the slaying of the king of Dagbon in 2002 resulted in series of localized peace experiments of the District Peace Advisory Committees in the northern region which in turn led to the bipartisan acceptance of a bill in parliament in 2011, establishing the national, regional and local peace committees (Kotia & Kofi, 2011; Odendaal, 2010, p. 55; van Tongeren, 2011, p. 46). Hence, such locally-led and participatory peacebuilding practices which tended to yield effective results gave momentum to peace infrastructure as a new approach in peacebuilding.

Today countries as diverse as Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, Colombia, Bolivia, the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan are building peace infrastructure. To build the infrastructure nationally, there is the movement for department or ministries of peace promoted by an international NGO, the Global Alliance for Miniseries and Infrastructure for Peace. Currently the Solomon Island (2005), Nepal (2007), Cost Rica (2009), and most recently, Ethiopia (2018), have created such peace infrastructures. These structures tend to consolidate durable peace and advance a sense of confidence and wellness among local people as they promise proactive, cost-effective, participatory and inclusive solution.

Nonetheless, the academic debate on the concept of peace infrastructure is still evolving. Since Lederach first articulated the concept in the late 1990s, it has largely remained unexplored for over a decade. Renewed attention to the concept was given since the year 2010. In subsequent years, a significant body of literature has been produced by academicians, practitioners and international organizations. In particular, academic conferences, special edition of journal, issues specific books and website dedicated to peace infrastructures arose. Worth mentioning here are the University of New England Peace Studies Conference (2015) on questioning ‘Peace Infrastructure’ and alternative ‘Peace Formation’ approach and subsequent publication of articles drawn from this conference (Peace and Conflict Review, Volume 9, Issue 1, 2016), Peace Infrastructure International website, Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series No. 10, 2013 and a Journal of Peacebuilding and Development Special Edition in volume 7, Number 3, 2012.

Most of the existing literature on peace infrastructures comprise comparative and case studies based on experiences of countries such as South Africa, Ghana and Kenya. The overarching consensus of the existing literature is that they recognize local actors as a key driver of any conflict mediation, resolution and peace-building. They also focus on psychosocial and everyday life, as well as the importance of addressing negative attitudes and structurally rooted injustice. Besides, most literature recognizes the use of dialogue and negotiations as methods of transforming violent conflict (Kavács & Tobias, 2016). As Hopp-Nishanka (2016) clarifies, existing literature on peace infrastructure is informed by three broad groups of perspectives.

The first group of literature which comprises positivist-oriented perspective focuses on the description of the idea of peace infrastructure as a practical guide to peace intervention. This is often done without making explicit reference to theoretical underpinning of the concept. Much of this literature refers to a selected few empirical case studies cited in the works of authors such as Odendaal (2010) and van Tongeren (2011). This literature also includes donors' publications, factsheets and guidelines and practitioners' commentary (UNDP, 2013). The international actors particularly the UNDP has been a key player in sponsoring the actual establishment of peace infrastructures in over 40 violence-affected countries, as well as publications and propagation of the concept. The involvement of donors and liberal-oriented international actors in turn has fueled the emergence of the second group comprising critical voices.

The critical group is essentially concerned with the concept's potential link to liberal peacebuilding, especially the problematic realm of prescriptive or a "one-size-fits-all" approach that liberal peace advocates as a yardstick for all peacebuilding to meet. Critical authors such as

Vicent Verzat (2014) and Richmond (2012 & 2014) raise the concern that peace infrastructures are exposed to manipulation by state elites and international elites. In particular, Verzat argues that the creation of peace infrastructure in the case of Ghana was essentially a “top-down”, state and internationally led, with minimum participation from grassroots citing the considerable influence of UNDP in its establishment. Likewise, Richmond warns that peace infrastructures can easily become a vehicle for further consolidation of power of local elites. Generally, critical studies argue that external support for local or national peace infrastructures must first and foremost be guided by the peace needs in the given context, including factors such as culture, traditions, social organization, economic opportunities and the political situation.

The third group comprises literature that offers in-depth empirical studies on a specific aspects or elements of peace infrastructures and their actors and relevance. As Hopp-Nishanka (2016) argues, empirically oriented literature appears potentially numerous in publications than the other two groups by citing some authors who deal with elements of peace infrastructure without necessarily using the concept itself. Nonetheless, very few scholars offered detailed empirical accounts of key factors and conditions that practically determine effectiveness of peace infrastructure in a given context. Building on relatively well documented experience of peace committees of South Africa as well as reviews of other country’s peace infrastructures Andries Odendaal (2010, 2012 & 2013; Odendaal & Olivier, 2008) produced significant works on peace infrastructures and their effectiveness. Likewise, Hopp-Nishanka (2012, 2013 & 2016) drawing on her field experiences in Sri Lanka as well as reviewing literature on peace infrastructures identified some key factors, even though her works focus was on peace infrastructures that support Track I peace negotiations. Apart from such significant works, one can also draw

relevant empirical insights about peace infrastructures from other studies (Adan & Pkalya, 2006; Åkerdahl, 2013; Chivasa, 2013; Hedditch, 2016; Kotia & Aubyn, 2011; Reconciliation resource, 2016; van Tongeren, 2010, 2011 & 2013).

To-date there is limited dialogues across the three perspectives in order to critically examine empirical evidences and promote conceptual refinement of the concept. Besides, empirically-oriented literature tends to conclude that peace infrastructures are prone to suffer on political turmoil, rely on external funding and cannot do well under authoritarian regime foreclosing a potential to critically examine how peace infrastructures may serve as a viable mechanism for peacebuilding, for example, in the absence of external supports, as well as in an authoritarian context. Furthermore, existing empirical studies tend to focus on peace infrastructures that rely on soft approaches such as dialogue, negotiation and mediations at the expense of their potential in peace activism in order to deal with structurally rooted injustices. Next sections specifically review literature on definitions of peace infrastructure and local peace committees with a desire to develop working definitions for this study. Before offering reviews on definitions of the concepts of “peace infrastructure” and “local peace committees”, the author wants to review the notion of “peace” and “the local”.

2.1.2 Conceptualizing Peace

Much has been written and demonstrated about peace. Peace is something that every individual and culture claims to aspire and adore. Peace as a subject of study emerged after the end of the Second World War through pioneering works of peace scholars, namely, Kenneth and Elise Boulding, Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach and Adam Curle (Miall, 2004, p. 4). For much of

history the issue of peace has been a religious concern, reflected in the moral teachings of love and compassion in the religious doctrines (Johansen, 2007, pp. 146-47).

In recent decades there is much research and literature on peace. Despite that, least is still known about peace. The concept peace is still disputed and its meaning is far from clear. Many authors prefer to use peace without making their view of it clear even if they discuss at lengthy various strategies to achieve or make peace. To some authors its meanings are so obvious that it requires no further explanation (Richmond, 2008, p. 16). This is in spite of the fact that its meanings are disputed in the settings of violent communal conflicts where some see a conflict as threats to be contained at all cost, whereas others may see it as an opportunity for emancipation and a greater equality and justices (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012). In such settings analyst's attempt to define peace is likely to be perceived as an external imposition, and might be dismissed by the conflict parties regardless of one's good intention. Nor do views of a range of peace practitioners provide easy answers with regard to definition of peace, even though they have been making significant impacts in local peacebuilding and peace research. This is because they largely focus on short term outcomes, showing often uncritical stance toward power asymmetries, divisive ideologies and marginalization in conflict settings (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012).

Until the end of World War II much of the concern to know about peace was basically limited to the absence of overt violence between human groups such as nations, communal groups, class and so on. For instance, much of activities of peace societies and activists that emerged in the ninetieth century were concerned with absolute rejection of the use of forces. This view is evident in activities of the 18th century Quakers/peace societies/ who devoted themselves to

remove warfare altogether (Johansen, 2007, p. 145). It appears that much of concerns of peace activists and pacifists for the most part of the 20th century were to enhance our awareness to threat of warfare (ibid.).

However, with the end of the Second World War, a concern was given to address the root-causes of violent conflict like various forms of social inequalities and injustices. Emphasis was given to prevent violence in structures and culture of societies and ensure sustained peace through the use of non-violence, peace keeping, conflict resolution, and reconciliation (Miall, 2004; Reyhler, 2002). Such approaches have now been recognized as crucial to prevent violent communal conflicts, which are currently responsible for high number of civilian deaths and displacement.

Efforts to ensure social equalities and justice have largely been influenced by work of peace scholars who in the 1960s critically examined conflict and peace. Although many authors involved in this endeavors, perhaps work of Johan Galtung (1996) has been the most influential to date. Galtung provided basic conceptions of peace that have widely been accepted in contemporary peace-building literature. He differentiated between negative peace, which refers to the absence of personal violence and positive peace, which is the absence of structural violence or indirect violence through depriving basic needs satisfaction. According to Galtung, both personal violence and structural violence are primarily influenced by cultural violence that encourages polarization, dehumanization and discrimination of others who are perceived as blockers of one's goal (Galtung, 1996; Miall, 2004; Webel, 2007). This author agrees with commonly sought goal in post-conflict settings, that is, achievement of durable or positive peace,

which may begin with establishment of structures in order to ensure the presence of social and political justice, economic equity, and so on, and prevent violent conflicts.

Nevertheless, associating the notion of positive peace with 'justice' often opens a tricky problem of subjectivity in which everyone believe that they are victims of 'injustice' and hence deserve right to fight in order to undo it. This might also mean coercing others who are perceived unconscious of their deprived status so that they may resist the exploiters (Miall, Ramsbotham & Wodhouse, 1999, p. 12). Even though, as will be shown in chapters six and eight of this thesis, violent conflicts most of the times involve elements of inequality and injustice, much of which are institutionalized and also culturally and psychologically internalized, regardless of consciousness and motives of the exploiters/oppressors.

In recent literature peace has mostly been understood in two contradictory forms. In one sense, it is used to mean 'peace through order' even if such order is kept by the means of forces (Richmond, 2008, pp. 442-444). This view is referred to as state-centric approaches. It often associates peace with collective state security, which in turn tends to see some party as threat to be deterred or eliminated in order to restore stability or status quo in society (Galtung, 2007, p.14). Such form of peace is usually perceived as ideal, being detached from everyday life, expressed through grandiose ideologies (such as neoliberal, socialism, developmental, etcetera) and their affiliated governance systems, and is mainly prescribed from above by hegemonic or authoritarian actors (Richmond, 2008, p. 449).

In the last two decades state-centric view of peace appears mainly in the form of ‘liberal peace’ in which peacebuilding is closely linked with state-building activities concerned with institutional and legal designs as well as democratization, marketization and human rights that post-conflict societies should emulate and strive to achieve. Liberal peace specifically focuses on the establishment of democratic governance to address social conflicts and restore relationships between the state and its citizens (Ogbaharya, 2008; Richmond, 2013b). Despite its good intentions, liberal peace approaches have often been criticized for being externally driven, top-down and insensitive to local needs and interests or circumstances; liberal norms and standards are suited, causing potential serious failings in their design and weakness in their local legitimacy or fail to connect with target population (Richmond, 2012 & 2013).

Alternative conception of peace focuses on the historical and socio-political contexts. This perspective argues that creating durable peace in conflict settings primarily requires enhancing relationships between conflict parties through non-violent means such as dialogue and mediation. It also believes in fostering coexistence and a vision of shared future (Kavács & Tobias, 2016; Lederach, 1997). This voice has been matched with series of reforms in forms of decentralization, good governance, local ownership and participations in the past two decades. Even if this form of peace focuses on the individuals and relationships, it does not ignore structure of state or society which informs and allow for certain types of relationships. This is to say that state structures are left to emerge based on willingness of the people within disputed state (Richmond, 2014).

As will be further clarified later in this chapter, a more recent literature defines peace by integrating the governance approach of the liberal peace with the focus on coexistence and restoring relationship between conflicting parties. In this regard, Andries Odendaal (2013) argues that peace is “inextricably linked to the absence of violence, economic survival, the healing of family and community, the settlement of local disputes, and the reliability of government institutions” (p. 9). Such view of peace, used as a starting point for this author, comprises both rights and basic needs which are crucial for conflict-affected communities to able to deal with the past grievances, develop and move beyond current deadlock.

What become obvious from the above discussion is that the notion of peace and methods to achieve it depends on contexts. As Webel (2007, p. 7) succinctly puts, “peace is dialectical” which implies that it should not be conceived as “unchanging ideal substance nor a mere name without reference, a form without content.” In this sense, any peacebuilding venture needs to be open to criticism and resistance, engaging with not just only “pro-peace” actors but also the so-called “spoilers” and such tendencies should not be seen as disruptive but rather as part of peacebuilding endeavors (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012, p. 110).

2.1.3 Conceptualizing “the Local”

Like that of peace, the term ‘local’ has been used in multiple ways. In conventional sense the term ‘local’ is often used in reference to actors in a fixed geographic space like village chief or elders who usually deliberate justice in their specific local milieu. However, without losing its spatial reference in its current use the term ‘local’ represents more fluid and complex networks of peace actors and actions (Richmond, 2013b). As Richmond (2013b, p. 271) states, the local

might mean customary and modern, transversal (elites to grassroots), liberal and illiberal simultaneously. It might refer to individual or organized political mobilizations. It might also mean informally organized groups, or fragmented political mobilizations by certain critical voices. As demonstrated in recent peacebuilding literature the term 'local' is used to refer to a wide range of actors from village to transnational arenas such as sub-national governments, informal institutions or peace committees, non-state actors and the NGOs as well as the local political elites (Bernhard, 2013, p. 9). However, most of its use in existing literature privilege formally organized civil society actors and activities at the expense of less organized, everyday actors, or customary actors that administer and uphold social capital, as well as providing critical survival strategies during and after violent communal conflicts (Ogbaharya, 2008).

Anyhow lack of a clear view on the term 'local' not only leave readers in the confusion about who is referred to but also the term just may mean essentially genuine and benevolent actor and in so doing it might prior exclude the need to critically investigate its potential and limits in conflict resolution. Conversely, relying on a fixed reading of the term does not help us to enhance conceptualization and practices of peace and such trends may exclude better peacemakers. As used in this thesis, the term 'local' comprise not only civil society actors such as NGOs but also individuals, customary or indigenous actors and community associations/committees, as well as state-initiated peace committees, even though they may or not cooperate in conflict transformation.

2.1.4 Defining Peace Infrastructure

Peace infrastructure is still an evolving concept and there is not yet a consensus among scholars, practitioners and different interested international organizations on a definition. Indeed, defining peace infrastructure has proved to be a difficult task and some authors in the field are even against defining it, for example Kennedy (2016). As Kennedy contends, to define is to ‘entrap’ someone within bureaucratic cages created by those who monopolize power or by those who marginalize and victimize subaltern actors whose voices have not been heard or considered in the processes of definition (p.93). The key challenge in the process of definition is matter of whose interests are being served in the establishment of peace infrastructure. This in turn gives space to lack of consensus as a result of contrasting definitions by various actors and stakeholders. This author sees such lack of consensus as healthy, since it might serve the causes of peace by, for example, promoting dialogues across dividing lines or perspectives.

In existing literature phrases such as "peace infrastructure", "infrastructure for peace", and "peace architectures" are often used interchangeably (Suurmond & Sharma, 2013) and this author desires to use the former for the sake of uniformity. Hence, the author aims to review of some selected definitions of peace infrastructure and put forward a working definition for this thesis.

Lederach who pioneered the term used the concept in reference to some practical concerns in peacebuilding intervention. These concerns included, among others, a need for networks, or coordination for peace, reliance on capacities rooted in a society, attention to immediate crisis and long-term justice and peace, need for a mechanism to sustain peace, promote dialogue and

mediation, and the like. His original view places much emphasis on reconciliation and integration of conflict parties (Lederach, 2013).

As already mentioned, since Lederach first developed the concept in the late 1990s, it has mainly remained unexplored for over a decade. Renewed attention to the concept was given around the year 2010-2013 (van Tongeren, 2011). The most widely quoted definition was developed during the seminar organized by UNDP and civil society in Kenya in 2010. According their report peace infrastructure refers to "dynamic networking of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values and skills, which through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding" (ibid.). The participants in this seminar promoted the idea of networking of wide range of actors and stakeholders coming together for peacebuilding. This conception was criticized for being too permissive of engagement of wide range of actors in a peace process (Hopp-Nishanka, 2016, p.10).

In subsequent periods, a significant body of literature has been produced by academicians, who also sought to expand the definitions of peace infrastructures. The prevailing pattern that emerges from such literature is that peace infrastructure refers to various elements (especially, in the form of organizations) in a society that work to create durable peace. Elements or components that make up a peace infrastructure includes, among others, national, district and local peace councils/committees, national peace forum, a government unit on peace-building, a bill on peace infrastructures, early warning and response mechanism, customary perspective on conflict resolution, and truth and reconciliation commissions (van Tongeren, 2010 &2011). Some of these elements have been around long before the concept peace infrastructure came into

usage like customary elders (ibid.). Most authors recognize that ‘peace infrastructure’ refers to the sum of its elements as well as describes a single part of that system (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013a, p. 56; Suurmond & Sharma, 2013)⁴.

In most literature peace infrastructure appears refers to an organizational capacity to prevent and resolve conflict or build peace. Accordingly, Kai Brand-Jacobsen (2013) puts peace infrastructures are “about building effective capacity and institution for peacebuilding and prevention within communities, country, regionally and internationally.” Likewise, van Tongeren (2011) remarks that establishing the peace infrastructures require “developing institutional mechanism appropriate to each country’s culture, which promote and manage this approach at local, district and national levels” (p. 45).

Peace infrastructure is also seen in terms of its bridging role, for example, between the “liberal” versus “local” (Richmond, 2013b, p. 272), “traditional” versus “modern” (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p. vi), “international norms and practices” versus “existing internal mechanisms for conflict management” (Kumar & Haye, 2011, p.13), and so on. In this sense, the peace infrastructure refers to ‘in-betweenness’ that break with rigid dualism. Instead, it focuses on dialogue across such rigid dichotomies (Galtung, 1996, p. 15). According to Hopp-Nishanka (2013b) the peace infrastructure focuses on encounter or dialogue at the domestic levels, especially between state and non-state peace actors and institutions. The main aim of this encounter is to build a ‘positive hybrid peace’ in which underlying political and social injustices are addressed and marginalized voices are to be listened to and respected (Richmond, 2014, p. 2).

⁴ This is because the single elements tend to be complex units that can function more or less independently of the overall peace infrastructure and become an infrastructure in its own rights (Suurmond & Sharma, 2013)

A more comprehensive and flexible definition of peace infrastructure appears in the works of Hopp-Nishanka, who is one of pre-eminent proponents of it. In Berghof Dialogue Series that exclusively comprise articles on peace infrastructures, Hopp-Nishanka (2013b) defines it:

Peace infrastructures consist of diverse domestic, inter-connected forms of engagement between conflict parties and other stakeholders. Their organizational elements can be established at all stages of peace and dialogue processes, at all levels of society, and with varying degrees of inclusion. The objective of peace infrastructure is to assist the parties (e.g. through capacity building or advice), the process (e.g. through mediation between the conflict parties or facilitation of public participation), or the implementation of process results (e.g. through monitoring and coordination of agreement implementation) (p.4).

This definition combines concerns both for organizational capacity and bridging role of peace infrastructures. The peace infrastructures, as Hopp-Nishanka (2013b, pp.4-5) remarks, need to demonstrate sensitivity to both conflicts contexts and organizational characteristics such as the mandate, role and inclusivity. They can be established during any stage of peace and dialogue process, at all levels and tracks, and to bridge various fault-lines such as horizontal, vertical, lateral and so on; being inclusive of different actors and stakeholders; each serving various objectives and functions such as capacity building, facilitation, mediation, peace monitoring, peace activism, and so on. However, the above definition has been criticized for her focus on formal aspect of peace infrastructures (Kavács & Tobias, 2016, p. 4).

Other notion which is preferred by this author considers peace infrastructures as a hybrid phenomenon incorporating formal institutions, as well as informal settings, civil society as well as government actors, processes as well as cultures and norms, etc. as it is evident in the works of Andries Odendaal (2010) and Paul van Tongeren (2013). Paul Van Tongeren who is a leading scholar in promoting civil society led peace infrastructures argues that informal peace infrastructures might in some ways be superior to formal peace infrastructures. As the works of both authors demonstrate, a formal peace infrastructure refers to state initiated peace actors which have a mandate of national government⁵ and operate at different levels of society.

Conversely, other peace agencies that are not formally recognized by the state, such as civil society formed local peace committees and customary authorities, are referred to as informal peace infrastructures⁶. Informal peace infrastructures are driven by local communities, even though they may have a good working relationship with local or district governments, act in an independent way, without any government connection (van Tongeren, 2013). Some informal peace infrastructures are often hidden, challenge the power of elites and blur the lines between formal, informal, state and customary. Such agency may represent emerging or existing network such as religious organizations, village based elders' council, self-help groups, and

⁵ Even if they have the state mandate to handle conflicts, their intentions is to harness local informal practices of dispute management

⁶ J. Surmond and P. M. Sharma (2013, p. 3) associate formality in terms of presence of criteria such as physical structure, degree of organization, stability, mandate, resource, training, etcetera. Examples include community mediation committees, local peace committees, peace radio stations, peace agreement monitoring mechanisms, religious institutions, and zones of peace. It does not matter whether they are established by civil society or the state actors. By contrast, informal peace infrastructures are those that emerge on an ad hoc basis, do not require physical structure, and operate without funds, for instance the many customary dispute resolution mechanisms. Together, they comprise the peace infrastructures.

entrepreneurs, covering a wide range of issues (Richmond, 2013b). Nonetheless, there are at now many post conflict countries where informal and formal, peace infrastructures and other institutional frameworks have been drawn into the state and are serving as main vehicles for local peacebuilding agency (Odendaal, 2010; Richmond, 2013b; van Tongeren, 2013). The emerging partnership among multiple actors often occurred with explicit international supports to hybrid form of interventions to manage and resolve recurrent violent conflicts, especially in the Global South (Kumar & Haye, 2011; Richmond, 2013b).

2.1.5 Local Peace Committees (LPCs)

A peace committee structure which is a peace infrastructure at focus for this study exists at the national, regional and local levels in many conflict-affected countries. A national peace committee often refers to “an inclusive body at the national level composed of persons that represent either directly or by proxy the different section of a nation” (Odendaal, 2012, p. 43). Its main task is to ensure peace in conflict affected countries. It specifically coordinates and leads diversified peace initiatives as a whole.

Local peace Committees (LPCs) have existed since a long time in form of customary elders, unrecognized or unnoticed and perhaps appreciated with the *Agenda for Peace* and *local turn* in peacebuilding in their aspiration to include local actors in the creation of durable peace (Ghebremeskel & Smith, 2013). It appears that ideals of LPCs are derived from inside Africa and draws on or integrate customary conflict resolution mechanisms. Some authors even argue that the rationale behind the establishment of LPCs is to institutionalize already existing customary institutions of conflict resolution (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p.41). This is because LPCs aspire to

stand for the needs, culture, norms and aspiration of people in conflict settings when conducting its activities of creating peace and enhancing security. As van Tongeren (2013) describes, a need to institutionalize LPCs has had its origin in self-initiated community responses to increasingly violent communal violence and lack of justice by appropriate state agencies, which in turn forced indigenous communities to take the problem into their hands, by finding an inclusive and participatory methods of conflict resolution. As van Tongeren remarks in his works, such initiatives have a positive impact by keeping violent communal conflicts down and empowering local peace actors to become agent of peacebuilding in conflict affected countries (2013, p. 2). LPCs are thus emerged as a positive image in the field of communal conflict transformation.

Local peace committees can be found in many conflict-affected countries. They are often known by a variety of names in different countries. For example, the local peace committee in Ghana is referred as ‘Local Peace Council’, in Kenya as ‘Village Peace and Development Committees’, in Latin America ‘Local Peace Zones’, and so on (Odendaal, 2010). There is no a definitive definition on a local peace committees but widely shared meaning of a LPC considers it as a hybrid structure for peacebuilding, derived from ideals of customary conflict resolution and modern formal dispute resolution at the same time. These views were adopted and widely practiced both in Kenya and Ghana where LPCs have had better records of success. In this regard, a local peace committee, as it is recognized in Kenya, “are peace architectures bringing together traditional dispute resolution mechanisms involving traditional elders, women, religious leaders and NGO initiatives on the one hand and formal mechanisms for conflict resolution, including those by government administrative and security agencies on the other” (Republic of Kenya, 2011, p. 46). Likewise, District Peace Advisory Committees or Local Peace Council as it

is known in Ghana refers to “a group made up of representative of Christian and Muslim bodies, traditional chiefs, women and youth groups and security agencies” (Kotia & Aubyn 2011, p. 13).

Andires Odendaal (2010) who has his foundational works on a LPC recognizes it as an umbrella concept comprising different peace initiatives being at local levels. Based on experience in 13 countries Odendaal and Olivier (2008, pp. 9-10) describe LPCs as “committees or other structures formed at the level of a district, municipality, town or village with the aim to encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding processes within its own context”. This view, as agreed by this author, highlights hybrid nature of the LPCs, for example, in terms of their inclusiveness towards different sections of communities in conflict settings, as well as in its use of non-violent strategies such as joint action, dialogue, trust-building, constructive and inclusive solution in communal conflict resolution. It also sees a LPC as a ‘working group’ to facilitate negotiation or mediate disputes.

Literature on peace infrastructure clearly demonstrates that LPCs have rapidly made their marks in recent years either as preventive or as response mechanisms of addressing of conflict. In this regard, the main purpose of LPCs is to prevent the eruption or escalation of nascent micro-level conflict into violent and more widespread conflict (Chivasa, 2017). LPCs are often identified with a certain stated objectives, even if they carryout multifaceted activities to prevent conflict and resolve disputes. With regard to preventive work, LPCs have a key role in undertaking participatory conflict and context analysis in their respective communities to understand the underlying causes of conflicts, power relations and opportunities for peace in conflict affected areas (Conciliation Resources, 2016). Likewise, LPCs can play a key role in raising awareness

and sensitizing local people about sources of disputes within communities and up-date other external issues that influence them (ibid.). They have also a proven capacity to de-escalate rumors and violence as well as to foster calmness within conflict affected communities through joint consultation and the actions of multiple stakeholders (Odendaal, 2010).

In terms of curative capacity, nearly all LPCs have an explicit of purpose of creating dialogue and conflict mediation. They can pursue dialogue in order to uncover shared meaning and mutual accommodation and understanding, as well as to foster social cohesion by providing a space for multiple stakeholders within the community where vital issues are deliberated with the objective of diffusing tensions and creating consensus. Using dialogue LPCs could allow all stakeholders to express their ideas and concerns, inclusive and constructive solution, giving attention subaltern agencies (Reconciliation Resource, 2016). In fact, their use of dialogue platforms might not bring consensus on a disputed issue but it may help to build a relation between actors with diverging views, idea, interests, and etcetera (Bernhard, 2013). LPCs often provide a safe space to raise issues and promote dialogue or act as agent themselves for the facilitation of dialogue (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013b). LPCs can facilitate local peacemaking processes leading to local peace settlements. In particular, it can work as mediation and conflict resolution mechanism to foster trust among the factions and restore confidence as well as relations through joint problem-solving as it was observed in many cases of communal conflict resolution (Katia & Aubyn, 2011).

Many LPCs have role of reconciling different groups in conflict. As Lederach (1997) highlights reconciliation involves demands for not only dialogue and non-violence peacebuilding but also

justice, truth and mercy. Reconciliation only succeeds, develops or gains supports among conflict groups if it is not divorced from structural arrangements such as resolving substantive issues and compensating or supporting the victims. LPCs that are jointly or co-owned by communities in conflicts can be a genuine tool to facilitate reconciliation (Bernhard, 2013, pp.11-12). Nonetheless, the existing peace infrastructures literature presents various contradicting views towards LPCs. Four controversies are selected for their relevance for this study and are reviewed below.

Firstly, some authors have described LPCs as ‘ad hoc’ arrangement that aims at filling a weakness or fragility in local governance (Adan & Pkalya, 2006; Odendaal & Olivier 2008). In this sense, the LPCs may provide local peace and justice in the absence of reliable, capable and legitimate state institutions and may be dissolved when the legitimate local government is re-established. This goes with the theory of state weakness as a cause for communal violence as will be discussed in the next section. Likewise, some civil society actors who are interested in funding LPCs see them as interim methods for peacebuilding. As a result civil society actors mostly dissolve local peace committees once they finish their work or projects (van Leeuwen et al., 2016). Besides, many conflict countries have used peace committees during transitional periods. For example, in South Africa LPCs were active from 1991 to 1994 as what Odendaal (2010) calls an ‘imperfect bridge’ established to cross fault-lines during the transition from the Apartheid system to democracy (p.23).

Some others authors see peace committees as a standing capacity for conflict management and peacebuilding. It is argued that conflicts are seen as unavoidable and permanent features of

society and the existing state judicial institutions are limited to address complex communal violence. In contrast, LPCs are perceived to provide better platforms for peaceful dialogue and inclusive participations to deal with communal conflicts (van Tongeren, 2013). Experiences of peace committees of Kenya and Ghana show this trend. In Kenya, LPCs were established to deal with the high incidence of cattle rustling and inter-communal violence. The Ghanaian District Peace Advisory councils were developed as an alternative mechanism to address inter-communal violence. As will be shown in this study, LPCs could exist in various forms as far as their aim is to help the creation of durable and just peace.

Secondly, literature on peace infrastructure usually classifies LPCs into two categories, namely, formal LPCs and informal LPCs which have received a wider attention respectively in the works of Andries Odendaal and Paul van Tongeren. Formal LPCs have recognition of the state as they are established through national peace accords (for example, in South Africa, Macedonia and Northern Ireland), or by legislation in parliament (for example, in Ghana and Nepal), or by an executive body as part of its formal mandate (for example, peace committees of Ethiopia). Formally established LPCs tend to be part of a national peace infrastructure with a mandate given by the national government, even though there are context specific rationales for their establishment (Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, pp. 9-10)⁷.

Conversely, informal local peace committees are established by civil society actors as a part of localized efforts to prevent violence and ensure communal peace (van Tongeren, 2013, pp. 51-

⁷ Additionally, reasons for establishment vary from context to context; for instance, in South Africa the aim of peace committee aimed to prevent violence during unstable transition from the Apartheid system to democracy, in Ghana they were intended to mediate communal and inter-ethnic conflicts and in Nepal they were designed to sustain national peace efforts at local levels (Odendaal, 2012).

52). Such efforts reflect what is often referred to as ‘bottom up’ peace processes. Informal local peace committees might have generally defined objectives such as preventing violence and promoting peace or they are established to address specific issues. Most of informal local peace committees in the contexts of Africa have been dependent on NGOs which often facilitate their activities and provide training, logistic and financial supports. Likewise, a hundreds of informal local peace committees including customary elders’ councils were established in many conflict affected countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan (ibid.). As will be clarified in a greater depth in chapters six and eight, some local actors are often resistant to imposition and are more interested in getting involved in peace activism than partnering with state agencies to address localized disputes.

There is a consensus that both formal and informal LPCs have their own pros and cons. Formal LPCs are said to exist in a strong position to influence national priorities as they receives their mandates from national governments. Recognition of LPCs by the state also might contribute to their authority and power. Further, their linkages with state agencies provide them with access to public resources for mediation and reliable sanctions for enforcing their decisions as well as to help reduce communication gaps and political obstacles. However, many authors fear that reliance on state agencies might limits their neutrality, or loss of legitimacy, or acceptance among ordinary citizens, or even politicize LPCs (Odendaal, 2010, p. 8; Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, p. 9).

On the other hand, informal LPCs focus on local ownership or locally initiated peace processes. Recent studies have shown that local ownership is a crucial element in any peacebuilding

endeavors. Odendaal and Olivier (2008) argue that peacebuilding should not be imposed from outside and above. Rather, it should give opportunities to local actors to create their own form of peace as they are better situated to solve their problems. Furthermore, independence of LPCs will contribute to their legitimacy and neutrality. In this regard, informal local peace committees are less indebted to political and government actors, even though they may have a good working relations with them. Likewise, informal LPCs comprise volunteers with a high level of personal interests, commitment and creativity in peacebuilding than formal LPCs (Odendaal, 2010, p. 8; van Tongeren, 2013).

Nevertheless, there are concerns associated with the fact that in most informal peace committees NGOs play key roles in giving them with mandates, facilitating their activities and providing necessary logistical and financial supports which in turn may erode the local ownership, produce local power asymmetry, create dependence syndrome and influence local agenda (Ghebremeskel & Smith, 2013). Some critiques further argue that informal LPCs may lack the power to engage with government and political elites and can easily be ignored or manipulated by those actors who wield considerable power such as local government authorities or village chiefs (van Tongeren, 2013, pp. 51-53). Likewise, informally formed LPCs can be exposed to impacts of macro-political conflicts and are less likely to address deep rooted causes of violence, although they might have ambitions to address structurally rooted problems and political manipulation underlying specific disputes (Odendaal, 2010). Despite apparent differences between formal and informal LPCs, as argued in this research, key actors and institutions at different levels need to be linked to each other so that potentials of each infrastructure might be employed to deal with the problem.

Thirdly, in the existing peace infrastructure literature there is dispute as to whether local peace committees rely on power-based and rights-based approaches or ‘soft’ approach to address with disputes and conflicts. As pioneered by Ury, Brett and Golderge (1988 as cited in Odendaal, 2010, p. 21) the power-based/state-centric approach relies on using coercive instruments to solve a conflict, while rights based approach tends to rely on judicial instruments to resolve a dispute. By contrast, soft or interest-based approach relies on negotiating mutually acceptable solution to a dispute.

By drawing on empirical experience, Odendaal (2010) argues that LPCs operate in conflict contexts in which both power based and rights based approaches have limited chance of success. He specifically argues that the use of coercion in such settings is likely to further escalate communal violence. Likewise, in contexts of communal violence the existing judicial system which is normally expected to arbitrate rights is often compromised or ineffective instrument for conflict resolution. By contrast, the soft approach that uses instruments such as dialogues, negotiation, facilitation and mediation is better situated to offer mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts arising in unpeaceful relations, especially in symmetric conflict settings. The soft approach, however, have been criticized for its limited impact to a peaceful society at large, that is, to durably transform unjust social and political relations and overcomes divides within society at large (van Leeuwen et al., 2016).

As will be argued in this study, use of peace activism and promotion of political and social reforms appear better instruments in addressing unjust relations between conflict parties in

asymmetric power relations. In particular, LPCs can provide an avenue to expressing critical concerns of community via using peace activism. This implies local peace infrastructures might advocate a need to integrate conflict sensitive approach to local community development which helps to avert future violence and encourage integrative activities across social divisions. They might also represent a strong collective voice of local communities in different levels of governance by advocating communal interests as well as warning authorities about emergent communal conflicts (van Tongeren, 2013). In this regard, peace activism is usually expressed in the form of nonviolent protests, non-cooperation and civil disobedience (Johansen, 2007, pp. 149-150).

Fourthly, there is a debate whether or not LPCs should be institutionalized. As some authors argue much of the early impacts attributed to LPCs have occurred in non-institutionalized platform. In the other words, parts of their success may be because they have not been institutionalized and constrained by legal provisions (Hedditch, 2016). As further clarified in the third section of this chapter, over institutionalization of LPCs may reinforce interests of state elites at the expense of quality of conflict resolutions or justice of the resolution. Potential effects of institutionalization could also constrain the voluntary nature of LPCs through coercive requirements for participation and for reaching peace agreement (Kovács & Tobias, 2016; Lederach, 2013). As a result, they argue that it is important to look at the potential advantages of inclusivity, flexibility and adaptability of LPCs. Conversely, some other authors suggest that if LPCs are not institutionalized, they are likely to compromise basic rights of the citizens (Hopp-Nishanka, 2016, p. 11). Likewise, the use of non-institutionalized LPCs may not help to establish a set of rules of engagement and a space for dialogue, consultation and conflict resolution (ibid.)

As there is now a growing demand to institutionalize everyday peace infrastructures as means of communal conflict resolution and promoting social justice, as argued in this study, we must be ready to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of our choices. It is important to compare empirical evidences on local peace infrastructures with theoretical notions of how things should be. This implies that the potential effectiveness and failures of LPCs must be judged against the real costs of lack of communal conflict resolution and unjust outcomes on live of the citizens.

2.2 Communal Violence

Violent communal conflicts have recently grown significantly, especially in the Global South. Such violence is generally different from the conventional warfare which involves state and organized rebel groups aspiring to overthrow central government or to create an independent state (Boege, 2006, p. 2). Communal conflicts also differ from ‘pogroms’ which is used in reference to state-sanctioned killings of members of certain ethnic or religious groups (Varsheny & Gubler, 2013, p. 158). Instead, as Boege (2006) succinctly states, communal violence are “characterized by entanglement of hosts of actors, issues and motives” (p. 2). Communal violence is also characterized by the presence of brief but reoccurring outbreak of violence, which usually subsides within a month or even a few days. Moreover, it causes less deaths and destruction than inter-state conflicts, or civil wars and is often underreported and/or understudied (Sundberg, Eck & Kreutz, 2012). Even though, communal violence may transform into widespread civil wars causing civilian deaths, displacements, loss of property and livelihoods (Brosché & Elfversson, 2012).

Africa has experienced 90% of the world's communal violence (Sundberg et al., 2012; von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2013). Since 1989, African countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda have been most afflicted by communal violence (Brosché & Elfversson, 2012, p. 44). Increase in the communal violence in these countries not only undermined everyday life but also indirectly contributed to the resuscitation of customary practices and institutions that govern and sustain social ties as well as provide crucial survival strategies during and after violent conflicts (Smock, 1997, p. 17). Communal violence in the greater Horn of Africa have recognized as one of central concerns by academia, policy makers and donors, but, practically, little has been achieved in their transformation (Hagmann & Alemmaya, 2008, p. 20). As will be clarified in the next chapter, Ethiopia in particular continues to experience wide spread and severe communal violence in most parts of the country, and their causes are mostly intertwined with local and national political competitions.

There are various perspectives on communal violence. The view employed here is a working definition, adopted from the one given by Brosché and Elfveresson (2012). According to Brosché and Elfveresson, communal violence is a “violent conflict between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity.” (p. 35). As widely used in peace and conflict studies literature, the term ‘violent conflict’ refers to the fact that conflict parties use coercive or lethal force to gain control over some disputed and perceived indivisible resources, such as a piece of lands, or political power. It is widely agreed by peace and conflict scholars that in a plural society where each social group is freely allowed to express their political interests and demands, various sorts of conflicts are inevitable, and it appears natural and impossible to avoid

or eliminate conflicts (Tadjoeddin, 2004). Peace scholar Johan Galtung (1996, p. 70) even suggests that a conflict has life-affirming aspects as well. In the same token, Kriesberg (2015, p. 25) stated that conflicts can expand social welfare, freedom and autonomy. The key issue is whether a conflict is expressed in the form of violence or channeled through institutionalized or transformed through violent means⁸. This implies that what is practically needed is preventing violent aspects of a conflict so that it can be conducted constructively, and to bring a constructive change in a conflict-affected community, or in a broader context (Lederach & Maiese, 2009). In particular, preventing a violent conflict is pertinent to reduce its destructive impacts in terms of human suffering, psychological, spiritual, political, societal, ecological and cultural costs (Reychler, 2002, pp. 25-26).

As already mentioned above, communal violence is type of non-state conflicts that largely involve informally organized groups. Unlike armed rebel groups who use violence as a means to achieve their political aims, informally organized groups are loosely organized and mobilize along ethnic, clan, religious or tribal lines. These informally organized groups generally do not have resources needed to fight over long period of times. They possess more or less proportionate power to inflict violence on one another. As remarked in literature of communal violence, none of the parties possess the authority that a government has, or are control of national soldiers, even though local militia or police forces might informally assist primary conflict parties (Brosché & Elfversson, 2012; Sundberg et al., 2012).

⁸ Conflict will tend to be more freely allowed in a democracy, compared to an authoritarian system which tends to stifle conflict or use it to divide its adversaries. Violent conflicts are more possible in a plural society or state experiencing transition from an autocratic rule to democracy. In democratic societies conflict largely appear discursive and is channeled through parliamentary debates, elite negotiation, through bureaucratic corridors, or in form of non-violent demonstrations (Tadjoeddin, 2013).

As can be inferred from the above definition, groups in the conflict are usually organized along with communal identity which according to most sociologists community identity emphasizes on 'similarity', whether they are real or imagined (Jenkins, 2008). Communal identity does not entail either a local consensus of values, symbols or conformity in behavior. However, it exhibits a meaning of life that is relatively consensus and cooperative, as well as every-day interactions within and outside a community. Communal membership means sharing with other members of the community a similar 'sense of things', participation in a common symbolic domain-be it wearing style, eating habits, and the like. What bonds members of the community are largely imagined than real, and all kinds of differences between them are tolerated and coexist in the umbrella of solidarity or similarity (Jenkins, 2008, pp. 110-112). Furthermore, communal identity involves belongingness to multiple social identities such as villages, gender, citizenship, descent, language, class and so on, (Schlee, 2009, p. 2). Communal identity is not devoid of boundary that allows inclusion and exclusion with regard to members and non-members (Jenkins, 2008, p. 112). But its boundary is far from clear, less politicized and it is often situationally determined. Likewise, content of communal identity can differ across time and space. This is to say that what is actually held in common among members of a community is being 'form' than 'content' (ibid.).

Communal conflicts are often referred to as "ethnic conflicts" which is partly because of ethnic features such as descent or lineages and language frequently play a key role in identifying the conflict parties (Ropers, 1995, p. 1). As widely understood in the popular discourses, "ethnic" groups refer to "linguistic" differences between groups. Compared with communal identity,

ethnic identity essentially focuses on differences from 'self'. It sometimes also refers to a strategic inclusion of other groups as affiliated to self in order to minimize risks or costs to the self (Jenkins, 2008). Ethnic boundary between 'us' and the 'other' is constantly being renegotiated. However, that border is usually difficult to cross for less powerful actors if it is rigidified by those who monopolize power (ibid.). In addition, ethnicity can be an instrument of hostile mobilization by powerful elites. This in turn force individuals and groups to identify with a fixed identity which excludes significant others (Schlee, 2009, pp. 1-13). In most of the so-called ethnic conflicts, there are a lot of issues and motives that have little to do with ethnic features of the parties in conflict (Ropers, 1995, p. 1). This implies that ethnic differences per se do not necessarily cause violent conflicts, nor do sharing aspects of similar culture or descent guarantee a peaceful coexistence between their members. Generally, the concept of 'community' focuses on formal or symbolic links between disputants than their apparent linguistic or cultural differences, whereas the concept of ethnicity primarily focuses on differences between disputants content-wise.

This author prefers to use the term 'communal violence' to describe what is often referred to as ethnic conflicts. This is because focusing on ethnic identity would make the term less flexible and unable to capture other forms of relevant social identities. As will be further explained in chapter eight, for example, a violent conflict arose in Konso in 2016, especially between different villagers who share the same ethnic identity marks such as common descent or language. In this context, a communal identity appears as a subset to their shared ethnic identity. Conversely, in Wondo Genet members of Sidama and Guji Oromo who mainly share religion, aspect of common culture and widespread ties through marriage were involved in violent

conflict, as will be further clarified in chapter five. In such setting ethnic identity appears subset to communally shared identity which have been, nonetheless, de-emphasized during their recent violent encounters.

With regard to conflict issues, researchers identify several issues at the center of communal violence. A conflict issue refers to disputed point, or they are an object of fighting, and it is central element of any armed conflicts (Galung, 1996). As Galtung remarks, contested issues along with negative attitudes and aggressive behaviors of parties comprise a key element of conflict formation. In communal conflicts disputed issues are diverse and they usually involve material goods-rights to land and other forms of property, the right to make decisions, dispute over social relation (like a quarrel between married couples), disputes over meanings, and so on (Caplan, 1995, pp. 1-2). Nevertheless, as von Uexkull and Pettersson (2013, p. 8) argues about 68 percent of communal violence in the rural areas of Africa revolve around issues of territory, especially to control and/or use a piece of land. This category also includes disputes over territorial borders of administrative units.

As will be further discussed in chapter three, a majority of the communal violence in Ethiopia revolves around disputes over administrative boundaries of ethnically or linguistically defined regional states, zones and special *weredas* or districts (Abbink, 2006). Constitutional provisions and practices that attempt to achieve congruence between ethnic and administrative boundaries to address past conflicts in the country have fuelled 'boundary thinking'. This implies that they have encouraged not only delimitation of territorial borders of administrative regions, zones and districts but also rigidified mental borders in cultural, social, historical and political arenas in a

way that they exclude others who are perceived not belonging to oneself. Communal violence around socio-spatial borders in the country also includes struggle for owning a piece of land or territory. As Jon Abbink (2006, p. 396) remarks, any dispute on lands between individuals or households usually becomes a community issues, and pits community against each other.

Nonetheless, as argued in this study, communal disputes around borders are not merely about a certain territory or loss of piece of land, but also as David Turton (2005) puts, "...about the struggle to make a place in the world, where meaning of action and shared understanding is possible" (p. 258). That is to say that the focus is on the potentials of borders for reconciliation, cooperation and coexistence than their function as lines of separation between 'us' and 'them', the 'here' and 'there'. Scholars of border studies specifically give attention to 'bordering' process, rather than merely lines on geographic places, which affect our everyday lives on a daily basis from the global to the national level, most importantly at the village and micro scales of socio-spatial activity (Agnew, 2008; Newman, 2006). In other words, they suggest a need to investigate motives and interests of those who superimpose or erase the lines of separation, as well as moral justifications of their actions. Likewise, ethnographic studies on communal boundaries focus on importance of using the term 'frontier', that is considering socio-spatial borders as not an "empty space" but as living spaces or inter-cultural spaces where there are relative fluidity, hybridity and inter-cultural interactions, even though those who monopolize power may promote a fixed reading of such socio-spatial spaces (Girke, 2013; Turton, 2005).

Apart from territorial issues, communal disputes have been centered on issues of authority, lootable resources and cultural motives (von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2013). Authority issues

means “competing claim over who of the warring parties exert control over the other group through the state apparatus or informal power structures.”(p.7) For instance, conflicts between supporters of opposition parties, struggles for leadership within a political group and a conflict over customary authorities are example of authority issues. Communal disputes also involve lootable resources such as raiding cattle belonging to other communal groups. Likewise, issues of “honor”, “revenge killings” and religious practices were disputed among communal groups, even if they might not emerge as such dominant issues (ibid.).

Generally, issues of communal conflicts are not confined to material dimensions, but also include cultural and social motives, and in everyday life the line between them are blurred (Ropers, 1995, p. 19). Traditional actors and their motives are often mixed with that of political elites. As studies found, communal conflicts, if not transformed peacefully, may enlarge into other types of organized violence which is difficult to prevent and manage (Brosché & Elfversson, 2012). Besides, reliance on macro-level state reform or discrete one-time mediation or peace process does not help to sustain local peace (van Tongeren, 2011). As will be further elucidated below, prevention and management of communal violence requires integration of state and non-state actors and institutions.

2.3 Actors of Communal Peacebuilding

In existing local peacebuilding literature there are diverse actors of peacebuilding at community levels. With reference to Sub-Sahara Africa in particular, local peace actors comprise state authorities, civil society organizations, customary actors as well as the peace infrastructure approach that focuses on integration of local peace actors and institutions.

There are generally rich ethnographic and case studies and reports that focus on communal conflicts and related peace processes, especially on customary mechanisms of conflict resolution through elders, chiefs, or spiritual leaders. Some other literature discusses the roles of civil society organizations such as religious organizations and NGOs in transforming violent communal conflict. More recent literature emphasizes the importance of integration of efforts by the state actors, civil society actors, customary actors as well as external actors under an umbrella of peace infrastructures, even though, as this author argues, little has been done in identifying conditions for their effective partnerships in local peace-building. This section reviews the theoretical perspectives in communal conflicts transformation, emphasizing on the potentials and limits of each approach.

2.3.1 The State and Communal Conflicts

As literature on communal conflicts shows, communal violence take place within modern states, especially in areas or time periods of limited state-presence (von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2013). Von Uexkull and Pettersson (2013, p. 6) found that communal violence often emerges when a state is weak. State weakness is usually interpreted with reference to the absence of monopoly of the means of violence by a government (Boege, 2006, p. 7). It is also seen with reference to the presence of other strong actors that claims to provide public goods and frameworks for conflict regulation. In this sense, formal state is often contrasted with civil society associations and customary social structures. As Boege (2006, p. 2) puts, “weak statehood generally are places where in diverse and competing institutions and logics of orders and behaviors overlap and intertwine.” Furthermore, state weakness has been seen in reference to circumstance in which it

lacks adequate capacity to ensure control over its territory (*ibid.*). In these areas of limited state control, communal conflicts may emerge from minor clashes and actually resemble interstate conflicts where local actors like the militia forces fill void in governance and security that the state failed to deliver (von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2013). This view has widely been used by recent studies in Ethiopia to explain communal violence occurring in the frontier areas between the regional states (Abbink, 2006).

Some other literature associates communal conflicts with biased state actors. In particular, it is argued that the biased state is the biggest threat to its own citizens as it might induce communal violence through increasing rent-seeking behavior and violent competition for accessing scarce resources formerly used collectively. As Elfversson (2013) argues, political dynamics at national and local levels often tempt governmental actors to take side in communal conflicts. As Brosché (2015) argues in his study on Sudan's communal conflicts, biased state can affect interactions between local political elites which in turn affect mutual coexistence between their respective communal groups. As Elfversson (2015, pp. 7-8) remarks, state bias can generally be observed in the absence of equal treatment to all conflict parties, the presence of vague local boundaries, and from undue interference in the rights of local self-governance and taking coercive forces against citizens. In such conflict contexts, while a conflict party that has support of the government often engage in belligerent behaviors, a non-favored party resorts to violent self-help technique than seeking peaceful means of dealing with the conflicts (Elfversson, 2015; Tadjoeeddin, 2013). As will be clarified in depth in chapter three, the political system in Ethiopia is formally linked to ethnic identity, and many communal conflicts took place in connection to a quest for self-

administration, disputes over language, budget, border, and so on even if many of them have their own localized causes that reflect customary pattern of rivalry (Abbink, 2006).

Obviously, a government has duty to protect its citizens and deal with communal violence. Literature exploring the role of state actors described several ways that states can play to address communal conflicts (Elfverson, 2013, pp.7-8). For example, state actors can participate in containing violence by sending security forces to conflict-affected areas and keeping apart warring parties, disarming local militia, arresting the perpetrators, checking weapon circulation and monitoring the situations after the calm restored, conducting peace conferences, or encouraging local elders to mediate and conclude agreement on disputed issues, supporting efforts of reconstruction and rebuilding, persecuting the perpetrators in the courts or ad-hoc judicial panels, and so on. Such responses presumes individual citizens within the state are subject to the law and conflicts are kept with definite limits, set either by the law or by generally shared moral precepts or norms.

Nonetheless, as already mentioned above, state's relation to communal conflict is often very complex and awkward. State involvement to communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding may exacerbate communal violence than helping to de-escalate it. For example, security intervention than seeks to halt violence and suppress social change is more likely lead to human rights violation. Sometimes the state may not intervene on time or do so it after destruction of properties and loss of life. At extreme instances the state may be biased in favor of its own local affiliates at the expense of other local actors and durable peace in the area (Broché, 2015). In this

regard, As Elfverson (2013) argues, biased stance of state may make it difficult to play its role as a trusted and legitimate conflict transformer.

As will be clarified later in this section, compared with state, local civil society or customary institutions are more likely to be effective to deal with communal violence. Community members prefer to resolve their disputes through civil society alliance or through every day oriented customary institutions. Customary approaches of conflict resolution usually provide restorative justice and entail lower costs to the attendants. It is also often positive-sum rather than zero-sum. Moreover, customary conflict resolution has been based on local norms and values, and focus on sustaining peaceful relationships between neighbors (Penal Reform International, 2003).

In spite of its apparent bias, state actors have still a potential role to play in communal conflict resolution in terms of its influence and leverage. The government can, for example, support efforts of its local peace structures or customary actors, especially by providing required resources, security guarantees and monitoring the situation after the agreement (Elfverson, 2013). The government can ensure peace by applying on the rule of law and punishing those who seek to benefit by promoting communal violence as well as by establishing required infrastructures in areas affected by conflicts (Broché, 2015). Such roles of state of course entail avoidance of its active bias and enhancing its capacity to fully ensure security in all of its territories as well as showing extra sensitivity to conflict hotspots (ibid.).

Local government structures, with a better knowledge of its local context, may also be important during communal conflict transformation. Local government units play critical roles in many

aspects of public life, especially offering inclusive services, promoting rule of law, transparency and accountability and coexistence (Zemelak, 2016). Local governments can provide an effective support to communal conflict resolution by applying practices that are already part of the existing community's institutions of conflict resolution and resource management (Clever, 2001). Likewise, local government needs to focus on cooperation and compromise which are embedded in everyday relationships, networks of reciprocity and negotiation of cultural norms rather than imposing of external norms (ibid.).

2.3.2 Civil Society Actors

Since the end of Cold War, civil society actors have been playing a key role in communal conflict transformation (Cox, 2015, p. 30-36; Miall, 2004). Civil society all over the world is gaining recognition for their contributions to peace (Paffenholz, 2014). Literature that directly deals on a nexus between civil society and peace-building is few in number, or else there are numerous case studies that focus general or specific impacts of peace initiatives of different NGOs (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006).

Civil society usually refers to voluntarily organized groups, individuals and loose associations around shared interests, values and purposes (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). It comprise a wide array of diverse actors such as women, media, faith-based organizations, education institutions, civic groups, customary actors, diasporas and militia or vigilant groups (Cox, 2015). That is to say that civil society ranged from locally situated civic actors to those with a wider global scope and agendas. Globally-oriented civil society organizations like the INGOs is well placed to influence donors as well as to cooperate with the state for peace agendas, even though many of

them often sidestep state, or support antagonistic activities that degrade power sources of what they perceive as an 'authoritarian regime'. Instead, it has been recognized that if there are strong domestic civil society actors, they have a potential to put out tensions, rumors, clashes and inter-communal mistrust very effectively, not allowing them from easily disrupt peace of communities (Varshney, 2001& 2013). Conversely, the involvement of locally situated civil society associations is widely welcomed in communal conflict prevention and resolution, particularly due to their close relationship to communities affected by conflicts (Cox 2015; Paffenholz, 2014; van Tongeren, 2013).

Civil society organizations generally have various roles to play in enhancing social capital or bridging inter-communal differences. They carryout function such as protection of citizens and communities, for instance, through creation safe peace zone, human rights initiatives (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006, p.13). They can also involve in monitoring and early warning by giving suggestion to decision makers. They seek an in-depth view of the root causes of conflicts, and work closely with people both within and outside of the conflict parties (Miall, 2004, p. 14). Civil society actors are also engaged in advocacy and bringing relevant issues to the political agenda. They usually open spaces for dialogue, use of non-violent methods and often directly engage in creating durable relations and institutions. In this aspect, most civil society organizations promote socialization and culture of peace, as well as rebuilding social cohesion destroyed during conflicts through joint activities, facilitation, dialogue projects, mediation and reconciliation initiatives (Miall, 2004;Cox, 2015).

Conversely, civil society peace initiatives have been criticized for various downsides. As some authors argue, civil society actors' peace initiatives not only increased the involvement of NGOs in conflict affected countries but also led to the commercialization of peace work, ineffectiveness, corruption, or bias, which in turn affected communal peace movements and grassroots civil engagements (Hagmann & Alemmaya, 2008; Paffenholz, 2014). In particular, INGOs have been criticized for introducing cultural insensitive conflict resolution methods (Lederach, 2013). Likewise, the national NGOs that work with INGOs are criticized for lacking country wide and balanced political or ethnic representation. They are often linked to the political establishment through kin relationships (Paffenhold, 2014). Overall, donor-driven civil society peace initiatives are criticized for being accountable only to donors. They specifically lack capacity to create local ownership and use of existing social capital leaving various communal groups in a weak and subordinate position (ibid.).

Despite the above downsides, peacebuilding literature recognizes the potentials in locally owned peace actors, who rely on peacebuilding resources from within conflict settings (Lederach 2013). Civic actors at local levels can pay most attention to in-depth understanding of roots causes of conflicts, working closely with the people both within and outside conflict settings. Local mass-based civic organizations such as religious and women groups have a greater potential to provide socialization and social cohesion than urban-based NGOs which have weak membership and limited communal legitimacy (Cox, 2015; Paffenholz, 2014). Conversely, civic oriented mass-based associations at grassroots level can effectively influence their members at different stage of life-span. They are mostly effective in facilitation and mediation, provision of protection, peace activism, as well as bridging disputed social and political fault-lines (Paffenholz, 2014;

Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). As argued in this study, role of external peacebuilders must be limited to supporting and respecting local actors creating conditions for durable peace in conflict affected setting.

2.3.3 Customary Authorities

Numerous case studies have in recent years pointed out in many African countries traditional authorities are providing essential collective goods that elected local authorities failed to deliver (Wunsch, 2008). Traditional authorities play a supreme role as mediator of violent intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts at local levels (ibid.). Literature also witnessed resurgence in the influence of customary actors in many African countries, especially following the 1990s decentralist reform (Erk, 2014). As will be further explained in chapters four and five, customary actors have accorded high social status all over Ethiopia and play vital local peace-building role, for instance, by settling communal dispute over land or grazing rights and even cases of homicides in the country (Alula & Getachew, 2008; Donovan & Getachew, 2003).

The importance of customary law and authorities has not been appreciated in Africa until recent years. As most scholars argue, this in turn had its own contribution to governance crisis and violence in the continent (Erk, 2014; Ogbaharya, 2008). In this regard, the post-colonial regimes of Africa failed to appreciate the potential in customary authorities and customary law, considering them as illiberal and backward, thereby marginalizing large number of citizens that rely on them (Erk, 2014, p. 10). Instead, the ruling elites relied on imported institutions from the west. As a result most of centralized authoritarian regimes of Africa collapsed, especially towards the end of the Cold War, as they lost both external supports and internal legitimacy on

parts of the citizens and sub-national social forces such as ethnic groups, customary chiefs and elders (Bahru, 2002; Ogbaharya, 2008).

Widespread African decentralist reforms of the 1990s, however, did not undo the past failure towards customary or indigenous values. Swift and top-down decentralization reform of Africa that aimed to address crisis of governance in many African countries have placed much emphasis to liberalization of macro-level state structures at the expense of sub-national social structures and agencies. As a result after the end of the Cold War, African countries saw widespread violence and state failure. However, such decentralization reform has indirectly reinforced the 'resurgence' of customary authority structures and practices in many African countries (Erk, 2014).

Customary conflict resolution processes are usually described as participatory and focusing on consensus-building, reciprocity, restoration of relationships, and restorative rather than retributive justice (Boege, 2006, pp. 6-9). They are often effective in address intra-communal and even inter-communal conflicts, where relationships and shared values are part of the reconciliation (Myers & Shinn, 2010). Among local communities a dispute between individuals in real sense belongs to the community itself as members of the communities are tied to varying degree to each other. In this regard, the legal subject is not merely individual person in conflict but involve group of related people as a person inextricably linked to family, clan and culture in the customary system (Penal Reform International, 2000).

Accordingly, customary conflict resolution is concerned with not punishing a perpetrator for the wrongs done, but promotion of reconciliation and restoration of social harmony in general and social relationships between conflict parties in particular through ensuring their future cooperation. They highlight group unity, reconciliation of individuals or groups, and peaceful reintegration into the community. Survey of customary justice system of sub-Saharan African countries by Penal Reform International (2003, p. 22) distinguishes a number of overlapping features which are common to most customary systems in Africa:

- the problem is viewed as that of the whole community or group;
- an emphasis on reconciliation and restoring social harmony;
- traditional arbitrators are appointed from within the community on the basis of status or lineage;
- a high degree of public participation;
- customary law is merely one factor considered in reaching a compromise;
- the rules of evidence and procedure are flexible;
- there is no professional legal representation;
- the process is voluntary and the decision is based on agreement;
- an emphasis on restorative penalties;
- enforcement of decisions secured through social pressure;
- the decision is confirmed through rituals aiming at reintegration;
- like cases need not be treated alike.

Customary justice systems entail the perpetrator's family to acknowledge responsibility of wrong done, repent, ask forgiveness, pay compensation and be reconciled with victim's family. Likewise, it requires the victim's willingness to forgiveness and receives symbolic compensations or 'blood money'. The end of enmity and mediation involve rituals such as sacrifices to spirits, drinking and eating together, or singing and dancing together, and the like. Such customary processes are conducted in accordance with customary norms and values and practices that govern everyday life of the community and are often legitimized through prevailing religious practices (Brock-Ute, 2001; Malan, 1997; Myers & Shinn, 2010).

The key actors of customary systems of conflict resolution are the (male and female) leaders of communities such as traditional chiefs, priest, healers, and elders (Myers & Shinn, 2010). These actors serve as mediators, facilitators, negotiators, and peace makers and are highly respected for their rich knowledge of custom, myth and the history of the communities as well as specific relationships between parties in conflict. This knowledge and experience generated through time essentially enable traditional authorities to find an acceptable solution (ibid.).

Customary conflict resolution has been criticized for various shortcomings. Customary systems of conflict resolution will not be effective if they draw on institutions which people do not like or which have been eroded owing to externally imposed state structures, or have served as instrument of control by state actors. In this regard, role of customary chiefs and elders in post-colonial Africa have been discredited as they had been serving as instrument of control by the European colonial powers such as British and French (Erk, 2014). Likewise, customary elders of the diverse ethnic communities, especially in southern Ethiopia have been co-opted by state

actors at various times to establish the control over the local people (Data, 2006). Customary elders in the country were also blamed for excluding women and youth, as well as discriminating members from minority groups such as crafters, hunters and tanners (Tronvoll & Hagmann, 2012). In this sense, local communities are often differentiated along sharp social and political fault-lines making it difficult to multiple actors to share world views on what constitute legitimate practices. Moreover, customary authorities will not be effective if they have played a part in fuelling the communal violence. Furthermore, some authors caution that locally based, customary practices of conflict resolution simply cannot end political conflicts involving state actors as they could be more vulnerable to political manipulation (van Tongeren, 2013). They may also lack sanctions at their disposal to enforce their decision or ruling (Elfverson, 2013).

Despite the above mentioned limits, customary systems of conflict resolution continues to provide alternative arenas to majority of people who have no or little understanding of formal system (Alula & Getachew, 2008). The customary justice mechanisms are cost-effective, accessible at any time, proximate in local, familiar with the sources of disputes and disputants themselves as well as understand local norms and values which make them attractive to the people. Recognizing the potential in customary institutions and authorities, some African countries instituted 'legal pluralism' in their constitutions, that is, fostered a system that mix formal governance with informal social structures and including the insertion of constitutional provisions for traditional authorities (Erk, 2014, pp.9-13). In this aspect, countries such as Botswana, Namibia and Ghana have already recognized legal pluralism in their constitutions, thereby allowed traditional authorities to participate in debating public policies, managing rural lands, mediating conflict and so on (ibid.). Likewise, in South Africa, Sierra Leone and

Mozambique, post-conflict decentralization was coupled with a delegation of important state functions like community representation to traditional authorities (Tronvoll & Haggmann, 2012). As a result numerous case studies relating to sub-Saharan Africa in recent years highlighted advantages of using customary elders or spiritual leaders mediating in conflict situations or drawing upon customary mechanisms (Alula & Getachew, 2008; Boege, 2006; Brock-Utne 2001). As argued in this study, even if it is important to continue to try to solve conflicts that involve state actors using formally established institutions, it is equally important to identify those aspects that can be dealt with more successfully with customary approaches.

2.3.4 Peace Infrastructure Approach

The peace infrastructure approach promise to bridge differences and ensure partnerships not only between state and non-state actors but also between more organized civil society and customary authorities which are often rival sources of non-state authority. It just goes beyond the usual focus on external and state-centric intervention into violent conflicts towards appreciation and supporting of capacities and agency for peace rooted in the community such as civil society actors, customary practices and norms while maximizing supports from above or outside.

As already mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the peace infrastructure approach has its origin in peace activism and peace works that prioritize “bottom-up peacebuilding”, reconciliation and conflict transformation (Kovács & Tobias, 2016, p. 2). In particular, peace infrastructure approach emphasizes that the processes of peacebuilding should not be left to just politicians. Instead, it is argued that peacebuilding should be rooted in a community or in everyday life whereby indigenous social institutions and participation are vital for peace

(Richmond, 2013b). Moreover, the peace infrastructure approach urges local peace actors to be at the driving seat as well as the importance of relying on resources rooted in communities (Hopp-Nishanka, 2016).

The peace infrastructure approach had its theoretical original home in the school of conflict transformation, which represents a constructive approach to peacebuilding. As already mentioned above, John Lederach is credited for pioneering of the idea of peace infrastructures. I will return to his model later in this section, but in the meantime let me briefly trace the origin of peace infrastructure in the school of conflict transformation⁹. An overall concern of mainstream literature on peacebuilding is on the role of external actors in peace-building in conflict affected areas. Conversely, transformative approaches give priority to domestic and indigenous-led form of peacebuilding, local actors, domestic capacities, while maximizing supports from outside. The transformative approaches encourage peace services to be offered at all society levels by different sets of people. Moreover, transformative approaches embrace both transition from violence into non-violence and efforts to build sustainable peace after peace accords (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012; Lederach, 2013).

Conflict transformation is mostly seen as a revitalization of already existing approaches to peacebuilding, namely, conflict management and conflict resolution. According to Miall (2004, p. 3) transformative school emerged owing to failures in the pre-existing set of ideas and

⁹ Conflict transformation approaches along with conflict management and conflict resolution approaches are seen as "middle level theories" of peace-building (Paffenholz, 2009, p.3).

practices to address complex contemporary social conflicts, which are marked by power asymmetry and inequalities, protractedness, fluidity, and linkages with wider settings. According to Christopher Mitchell (2002), conflict transformation is seen as a deeper level of conflict resolution approach, which arguably lost its ideals through co-option with state-centric or conflict management approaches (pp. 1-2). In this regard, it can be argued that the peace infrastructure mechanism aspires to deal with an old puzzle in the field of peace and conflict studies. So, let me take a closer look at ideas of the other two schools of thought in peace-building, namely, state-centric or conflict management and conflict resolution approaches.

State-centric approaches generally refer to practices of conflict settlements through power-diplomacy, especially by the top political leadership. State-centric approaches place much focus on maintaining law and order, as well as balancing power between conflict parties. According to conflict management approaches, conflict is often seen in terms of lack of respect to the existing order and law. They therefore aim to bring the primary conflict parties into a negotiating table and ensure prevention and settlement of conflicts (Reimann, 2004, p. 8; Richmond, 2001).

The processes of state-centric approaches are often informed by theory of tactical bargaining for national self-interests and state security (Richmond, 2001 & 2008). The approaches assume that state is a key actor around which power, interests, resources and societies revolve. More so, they are based on a view that one side is responsible for the destruction and hence they presume defeating that side will end the problem. War in this sense can even be seen as enhancing the cause of peace by exhausting opponents and their resources (Galtung, 2007).

Overall, the state-centric approaches worry most to address explicit violence through using available capabilities, such as coercive framework of judicial systems, power balance, bargaining, or in a more liberal sense, through a spread of free market and institutionalization of democratic governance, without necessarily addressing the root causes of conflicts (Miall, 2004; Paffenholz, 2009; Reimann, 2004).

State-centric approaches saw series of criticisms not only for its reliance on top-leadership with little or no inputs from civil society organizations or civic actors at grassroots but also for its failure to address growing conflicts over ethnicity, language, religious or culture which tend to resist efforts towards tactical bargaining and compromise that characterize state-centric approaches. Furthermore, the growing interdependence between different states, quests for self-determination, the legal inequalities and power asymmetries between conflict parties and the increasing relevance of human security, in contrast to state-security have their own role for the rise of alternative school of conflict resolution (Richmond, 2001).

Conversely, conflict resolution approaches rose and then grew in its importance in response to the state-centric approaches' preoccupation with mere absence of overt violence as well as marginalization of citizen's diplomacy. The resolution approaches places much emphasis on non-state actors suggesting that conflict could be resolved with the consent of individual citizens. Conflict resolution specifically refers to various process-oriented activities that aim to address not only with overtly disputed matters, but also their root causes, as well as to restore destroyed relationships between disputants (Gawerc, 2006; Paffenholz, 2009).

Conflict resolution approaches prioritize persons over law and order. It is argued that inherent human needs to be satisfied if law and order are to be respected and communities are to be stable and non-violent (Richmond, 2001). In this aspect, the root causes of conflict are taken to be the suppression of human needs with regard to security, recognition and participation, as well as the desire for social change. The approaches also give focus to psychosocial elements, norms and images that are rooted in the collective memory and desires as well as historical injustice, traumas and fears that drive the conflict. It is argued that people cannot compromise on their basic needs or identity based conflict (Gawerc, 2006; Richmond, 2001).

According to conflict resolution approaches individuals, communities and organized civil society should have opportunities at all levels of societies to involve in non-coercive forums such as problem-solving workshops in order to mutually clarify their needs and misperceptions about the conflict and each other with the aid of third parties. The problem-solving workshops have widely been being used in many conflict affected countries since the 1970s, promoting citizen diplomacy, reduced stereotypes and contributed to the overall peace. However, conflict resolution approaches are often criticized for being detached from official diplomacy and political leadership, thereby isolating participants and practitioners from the very socio-political environments or settings that they are attempting to change (Paffenholz, 2009; Richmond, 2001).

In the early to mid-1990s, the idea of conflict transformation was developed as one of complementary approaches seeking to narrow the gaps between state-centric approaches and non-state approaches. Its proponents suggested a pressing demand to change deep-rooted violent conflict into peaceful one, not necessarily by addressing issues/problem of coordination from

above or below, but by revisiting understanding about peacebuilding. They argued that it was seen necessary that peacebuilding is needed from the top and from below, complementing the strength of each, and reducing their respective limits (Paffenholz, 2009).

As already mentioned above, conflict resolution approaches aim to transform conflict into peaceful non-violent social and political change rather than merely attempting to eliminate social and political conflict (Galtung, 1996). This means that conflict resolution is a never-ending or transformative task. In this regard, conflict transformation implies perpetual changing of disputed relations, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very structures of society that support the continuation of violent expression of a conflict (Miall, 2004). Conflict transformative approaches entail inter-subjectivity, network, harmony, reciprocity, dialogue, hybridity, reflections and explicitness in communication beyond dichotomous and fixed reading of meanings (Galtung, 1996, p. 15; Moore & Bruder, 2005, p. 35, 144, 566).

The transformative peacebuilding does not aim to remove conflicts. Indeed, as already argued, conflict is taken as inevitable in everyday lives and hence the school draws attention towards a pressing demand of addressing destructive aspect of a conflict (Kriesberg, 2015). In addressing violent aspect of the conflict, it combines efforts of people within the conflict parties, within the society, and at grassroots (Track III), as well as outsiders with relevant human and material resources. All domestic actors, from those in elite leadership position, to those at the grassroots levels, have a role to play building durable peace (Hopp-Nishanka, 2016). Moreover, the school appreciates potential in non-violent struggles to further social change in which hitherto suppressed or marginalized individuals or groups came to articulate their interests and challenge

existing norms and power structure. In other words, non-violence focuses on bringing into surface already existing but covered up contradictions so that marginalized groups free themselves from constraints, using methods such as protests, strike, non-compliance, civil disobedience, and so on (Johansen, 2007, pp. 149-150; Miall, 2004; Miall et al., 1999, p. 25).

Many scholars have contributed certain sets of idea to the emergence of the theory of conflict transformation¹⁰, even though John Paul Lederach has been a key figure in the field (Paffenholz, 2014). Lederach's key view is that sustainable peace emerges from processes that are significantly anchored in the conflict-affected society and interdependence between the various levels of society when it comes to peacebuilding. He specifically advocated an approach to transform violent conflict primarily aimed at improving relationships between conflict groups. This idea was based on his keen observation on experiences of failed externally-led peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected countries such as Somalia and Rwanda as well as his personal experience of successful locally owned peace processes during the 1990s.

Lederach (2013) states a successful strategy must not just focus on top-level political leadership but rather it needs to reach all sections of society. His goal is not only about finding a mechanism to bridge gaps between top-leadership and professionally oriented middle leadership but also about bringing into attention the importance of grassroots actors in peacebuilding. The concern with grassroots is to encourage interactions and mutual understanding between formerly hostile communities as well as raise awareness and empower those communities. As depicted in the

¹⁰ For instance, Galtung's works on 'dialectic nature of conflict', Curle's works on 'changing un-peaceful relation into peaceful one', Hebert's works on 'relation and trust building through problem-solving workshops', Friere's works on 'Pedagogy of oppressed or marginalized voices and need to empower them' and Azar's work on 'theory of protracted social conflicts' (as cited in Paffenholz, 2014).

following figure, the grassroots peace actors can engage in local peace commissions, prejudice reduction, psychosocial working, training, and so on. His focus is complementing activities conducted by various tracks as well as networking change agents within both conflict parties and at a wider society level to build durable peace.

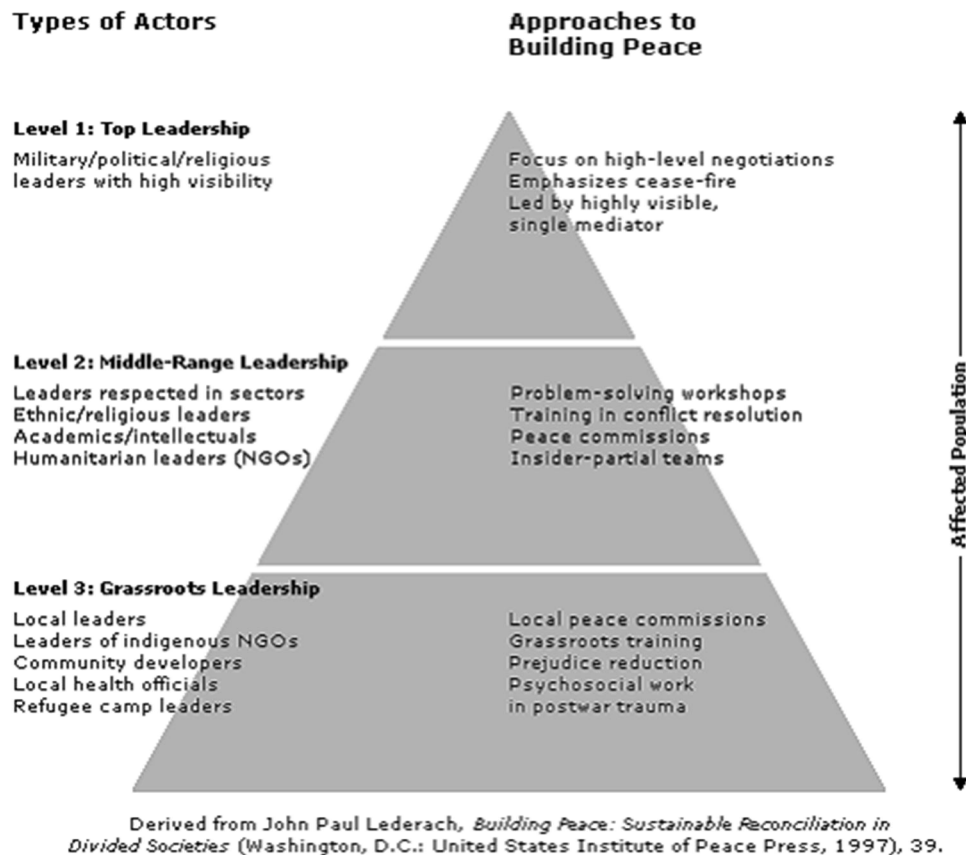


Figure 2.1: Peacebuilding pyramid (Lederach, 1997, p. 39).

Lederach's notion of resource rooted in the cultural setting include among others indigenous knowledge about how conflict emerges and develop in those communities and how people try to handle and manage it. It is also about awareness about rich understandings people have about

their settings or their preferred methods of peacebuilding beyond mere glorification of indigenous methods in and of itself. As reviewed in the previous section, indigenous values in the settings sub-Saharan African countries represent the lives, needs, rights and ambitions of its subjects, individuals and communities and they have much acceptability and legitimacy in the eyes of most people (Erk, 2014).

As proposed by Lederach, a peace infrastructure approach to peacebuilding is not about simply establishing rigid structures that are in style of formal bureaucracy. Instead, it entails creation of a transformative platform for peace-building that has “a capacity to adapt and generate ongoing desired change while at the same time responding creatively to immediate needs” (Lederach & Maiese, 2009, p. 9). As a transformative peacebuilding platform, the peace infrastructure specifically gives attention to the three interrelated, although distinct areas which are relevant for the efficacy and success of peace interventions (see the following gear model showing their interlocking relationship).

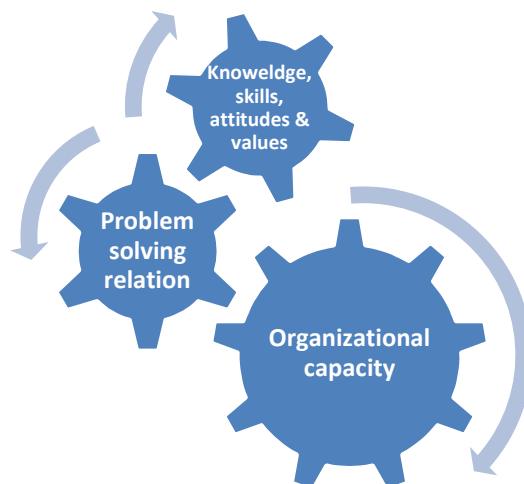


Figure 2.2: Gear showing interlocking ideas of peace infrastructure

Firstly, the peace infrastructure approach appeals to the attitudes, perception and feelings of individual persons. This implies that the peace infrastructure needs the attitudes that consider conflicts as an opportunity for improving interactions and ensuring peaceful coexistence (Lederach, 1997). In addition, it entails individuals, groups and collectives to replace their coercive attitudes, negative perceptions and approaches by a more cooperative one, thereby reducing their reliance upon actors from outside or above to resolve their disputes. Moreover, the peace infrastructure requires local peace actors who are not only trusted and respected but also who have the competence, knowledge and experience on matters relating to non-violent conflict resolution (Conciliation Resources, 2016).

As will be further elucidated in the next section, instilling positive attitudes and relevant skills could be supported by interested outsiders. Nonetheless, as Lederach (2013) cautiously puts, such supports must be “appreciative” of the existing potentials. This implies it requires a need to build on the existing potentials for peace in a given community. It also entails commitment to work in partnerships with actors already present in the society. In short, the outsiders need to provide relevant resources and training while letting subaltern or marginalized voices be heard as well as fostering autonomous learning and actions at the individuals, groups and societal levels in conflict settings (Scotto, 2012).

Secondly, the peace infrastructure approach acknowledges a need to have ongoing problem-solving relations. This implies that getting conflict parties and stakeholders to recognize each other as legitimate participants so that a positive or joint problem-solving relationship can be

established between them. As van Tongeren (2011, p. 45) states, establishing peace infrastructures requires “adopting a cooperative, problem-solving approach to conflict, based on dialogue and non-violence, which include all stakeholders”. Besides, it requires joint or hybrid responsibility, linking and networking within a wider a society to enable prevention of violence, building of peace and promotion of reconciliation (Odendaal, 2012). Odendaal (2012) specifically states that:

Peacebuilding is a deeply contested political process. It requires a joint effort whereby former protagonists collaborate in pursuing the peace objectives that have been agreed. It has to be inclusive not only of all relevant political actors but of the whole society (p. 46).

This implies that peace infrastructure links varied individuals, groups and institutions at all levels of society in order to enhance the peacebuilding capacity of that society (Kumar & Haye, 2011), even though there is always risk of power asymmetry and inequalities in violent conflict situations which can hinder smooth interactions between primary conflict parties (Odendaal, 2010, p. 12; Tongeren, 2011).

Thirdly, the peace infrastructure approach requires institutional or organizational structures that facilitate efforts of peacebuilding over long period of time, without which peacebuilding may be short-lived or ineffective (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012). It specifically signifies the building of the institutionalized capacities within a society to perform the intended tasks. Such structure establishes a framework for interactions among different individuals and stakeholders (Tongeren, 2011). As Hopp-Nishanka (2012) argues, this element is a new focus since processual conflict resolution methods such as gaining relevant skills and raising awareness, as well as problem-

solving relationships have already been recognized and applied in peacebuilding, even if they are not enough to sustain peacebuilding over long period of time. In this regard, in the existing peace infrastructure literature numerous institutional or organizational platforms have been suggested as a peace infrastructure (van Tongeren, 2011). Accordingly, Kai Brand-Jacobson (2013) suggests organizational structures at community, country, regional and global levels: peace ministries, civil society funded infrastructures, community-based peace committees, peace secretariats, national peace councils, regional security and peace architecture (for example, the African Union Peace Architecture) and so on, that function permanently or for a short period of time.

There are in fact concerns associated institutionalizing the peace infrastructure. Kovacs and Tobias (2016, pp. 4-5) argue that over institutionalization may reinforce state elites and its bureaucracy, feeding into the more market-centric approaches which are neoliberal in their manifestations. It may also generate vested interest in continuing work as it has been done than challenging established structures that sustain discriminations and injustice (ibid.). Lederach (2013) himself draws attention to risk institutionalization in his latest article on the peace infrastructure arguing that bureaucratization and professionalization "do not in and of themselves assure a higher quality of response in peacebuilding." He specifically states that:

bureaucracies tend to rigidify their roles, purpose and activities. Three descriptive views of bureaucracies suggest that they: 1) concern themselves with roles and functions, rules and regulations to deliver specified services to the diminishment of the creativity that gave birth to the institution; 2) isolate and compete with other bureaucracies, lowering a

vision of generative interdependency; and 3) once established, concern themselves mostly with their self-perpetuation (p. 12).

That appears a reason when he suggests a need to conceptualize peace infrastructure as a peace platform for inclusive and interactive relationships and network which would foster space for collective or acceptable hybrid peace actions, creativity and adaptive capacity in the wider system of change rather than focusing narrowly on institution building and bureaucratization (Lederach, 2013).

To sum, as a transformative peacebuilding platform, the peace infrastructure entails essential features such as constructive attitudes and skills, the problem-solving relations as well as organizational structures that sustainably support peacebuilding. As already mentioned above, it is possible for conflict parties and local peace actors to possess skills and attitude without having legitimate problem-solving relations. Conversely, the conflict parties and local peace actors can have joint-problem solving relationship without having corresponding organizational mechanism (for example, local peace committees) which together with the other two classic approaches represents the infrastructure to support peacebuilding. Thus, establishing the peace infrastructure involves creativity at the individual, intergroup and organizational levels that support peacebuilding.

2.4 Analytic Framework: A Peace Infrastructure as Hybrid Peace Platform

The existing literature attributes effectiveness and success of everyday peace infrastructures in terms of (1) their political legitimacy which is in turn associated with specific conflict contexts

that they are working in, and (2) the key factors which are relevant to the designing of effective peace infrastructures. As argued in this study, in order to effectively contribute to communal conflicts local peace infrastructures need to embody a hybrid peace platform. In this regard, local peace infrastructures can exhibit hybrid peace platform in term of, among others, co-ownership of peace initiatives by various actors, especially by both state and non-state actors, as well as in terms of achieving just outcomes as result of their actions. Additionally, local peace infrastructures can significantly contribute to communal conflict resolution and peace-building if there is necessary attention to key characteristics such as the origin, mandate, role, composition and external support in the designing of each peace infrastructure. The next subsections closely review analytic relevance and limits hybrid peace frame and selected key organizational qualities in order to investigate empirical evidences on the potential and limits of everyday peace infrastructure in communal conflict transformation.

2.4.1 Analytic Relevance and Limits of Hybrid Peace

As elucidated in the first section of this chapter, the peace infrastructures help to bridge various dichotomies such as the ‘liberal’ versus ‘illiberal’, ‘customary’ versus ‘modern’, ‘the state’ versus ‘local communities’, ‘us’ versus ‘them’, and so on, focusing on ‘in-betweenness’ that break with rigid dualism and promote explicit communication across rigid boundaries (MacGinty, 2010 & 2014; Richmond, 2008). As a result, the use of ‘hybrid peace’ framework could help us to illustrate among others the coexistence and interactions of state actors and various non-state actors, institutions and sources of legitimacy (Moe, 2011). In this regard, this study focuses on a hybrid peace encounter at the domestic levels, especially between state and non-state actors in order to ensure ‘positive hybrid peace’ outcomes by addressing underlying

structurally rooted political and social injustices and respective and listening marginalized voices (Richmond, 2014, p. 2). By contrast, ‘negative hybrid peace’ represents a tense process of hybrid politics whereby various parties, norms and interests remain opposed to each other and are characterized by direct, structural and cultural violence as well as clear power domination by one actor over other (Richmond, 2014, p. 5). Accordingly, a positive hybrid peace framework will help us to examine two interrelated issues, namely, political legitimacy related to co-ownership of peace platforms in the conflict contexts and outcomes of such peace efforts, even though these points have not received due accords in empirically oriented academic studies on local peace infrastructures (see the following illustration in figure). Let me further clarify both points.

Figure 2.3: Hybrid or joint peace relation & outcome



I. Co-ownership of Peace Interventions

A hybrid peace framework may serve as a benchmark to examine the political legitimacy of peace-building engagement of various actors that is whether or not it is co-owned and draws on

dialogues (Bernhard, 2013, p. 15). This is because peace initiatives sometimes is imposed from above and outside at the expense of needs and interests of weaker actors. As the existing literature on peacebuilding remarks, forming cross-cutting ties, direct contact, exchange, and cooperation between groups who are willing to co-own a peace initiative help to de-escalate conflict, reduce prejudice and bias (Lederach, 1997). Besides, the presence of constructive and cordial relationships based on mutual respect and trust can enhance collaboration and complementarity in actions. It is often assumed the involvement of various peace actors with different approaches and interests will increase the chance of community peace (MacGinty, 2010, p. 408). For example, in mediating a village based dispute the government actors might provide materials and security, while customary elders can bring cultural resources and legitimacy for peaceful coexistence in the area. The link between customary actors and state agencies in particular would bring to the former required recognition, local autonomy, and benefit of political supports as well as coordination. Such linkage also enables both actors to engage with one another proactively and in a non-adverbial manner. It enables customary actors in particular to carry out a range of activities which are normally the reserve of the state such as policing, judiciary, and so on (Hedditch, 2016, p. 49).

II. Promotion of Positive or Just Outcomes

As analytical tool, hybrid peace framework would also help us investigate whether or not relationships between different local peace actors help to contribute for the promotion of positive peace in the area. Literature on peacebuilding recognizes that effective peace intervention outcomes would integrate interests and needs of primary conflict parties (Odendaal, 2010). In this regard, promoting integrative bonds with communities, bridge with other communal groups

and links with wider state structures have greater impact on communal violence reduction and creation of just society (Gerwic, 2006). Positive hybrid peace outcomes can also be created when a peace intervention address concerns both to rights and interests as well as to justice and peace (Richmond, 2014). In short, hybrid peace framework helps us to analyze whether or not peace interventions help to transform unjust and structurally rooted social and political relations and divides within society at large.

Despite the above-mentioned merits, there are some concerns related to using hybrid peace as an analytic frame, including those associated with concerns of effectiveness of hybrid peace efforts in promotion of communal conflict transformation. Here below three selected limits which are considered relevant in the contexts of this study are briefly reviewed.

I. Insensitivity to Power Asymmetry

The first concern is related to the tendency of hybrid peace to ignore asymmetric power relationships between, especially conflicts parties. A hybrid relation usually assumes that various local actors are operating in symmetric settings (Bernhard, 2013). This implies that the processes of communal conflict resolution interactions should be performed in an equal and just manner, which is in turn necessary to achieve an ideal result of a positive hybrid form of peace. Nonetheless, the playing field is not always equal for all local actors as there are usually extreme power asymmetries, especially between conflict parties. As Hopp-Nishanka (2016) argues, local peace infrastructures are at greater risk of being manipulated and face substantive limitations when transformation processes are obstructed by those who monopolize power. If these blocking actors hold state offices, peace infrastructures with strong peace potentials appear mostly

vulnerable and weak. The same holds true if non-state actors like customary leaders who oppose constructive social change dominate peace infrastructures. As argued in this thesis, it may not be necessary to encourage hybrid peace relationships in a context where communal actors are struggling to remove structural constraints to their rights, interests and dignity.

II. Compromise Rule of Law

The second concern which is related to the previous one is that emphasis on hybrid peace may shift attention away from focus on justice and ‘rule of law’ towards pragmatic arrangements to ensure communal peace risking ethical and critical assessment of a hybrid peace-building relationship and its outcomes (Bernhard, 2013). For example, hybrid peace outcomes can be achieved by mixing modern justice with customary mediation and resolution practices, but such arrangements may obstruct the establishment of legal precedent or compromise rights of citizens, especially women and members of minority groups (Adan & Pkalya, 2006). As argued in this study, customary structures as well as approaches within societies should be drawn and learned from, however, with critical engagement.

III. Methodological Concerns

The third concern is related to methodology and analyzing a positive hybrid peace practices. It has been recognized in the existing peace and conflict studies literature that peace interveners find it difficult to demonstrate result of their activities or effectiveness (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013). Sometimes, presence of multiple actors and interests in hybrid peacebuilding relationships may not realize required cooperation. This means synergy between actors, institutions, and strategies may not always work or may increase problems of possible clashes between actors. Moreover,

there is limited knowhow as to how add up the efforts of different peace interveners on different tracks or level of society (Miall, 2004). It is even very difficult when one must take into account an uninterrupted transformative change or determine who is responsible for a certain outcome (Gawerc, 2006).

As Hopp-Nishanka (2012, pp. 124-26) elucidates, existing literature on peacebuilding often identifies between outcomes and impact. The outcomes refer to an immediate change as a result of the intervention whereas the impacts are results of assessment of a long term change that an intervention has resulted within the general contexts. In complex communal conflicts both the outcomes and the impacts are difficult to investigate. A related concept of effectiveness mainly asks for the extent to which an intervention has attained its objectives that are made measure in terms of indicators such as number of problem solving workshops and participants, while other effects might be less tangible or subjective (ibid.).

Some scholars argue that the term 'impacts' is not an appropriate concept for examining peacebuilding intervention and hence they offer an alternative methods. For example, David Hulme and Johan Good (2000 as cited in Gawerc, 2006, p. 451) suggest a need to analyze an extent to which activities by various peace actors in the hybrid peacebuilding relationships contribute to "increasing or decreasing the probabilities for peace or conflict". This can be inferred from self-perceptions of local peace actors who involved in peacebuilding as well as from observing whether or not their activities contribute to contain violence and create durable peace in conflict affected settings. Hence, without accepting hybrid conflict resolution and peace-building relationships as a prior knowledge, this study will look at both participants' own perceptions and

actual impact of their activities on violent communal conflict de-escalation and transformation of unjust relations in non-violent ways in the study areas.

2.4.2 Key Factors in Designing of Effective Local Peace Infrastructures

As already pointed out above, literature on the subject of empirically situated local peace infrastructures is still scarce. The existing literature on peace infrastructures focus on evaluation of external supports for peacebuilding such as training or capacity building to local peace actors. In particular, very few scholars offered detailed empirical accounts of key factors that determine effective designing and planning of local peace infrastructures. Besides, list of the most important factors varies from one author to another. Based on reviews of empirically informed literature, especially the works of Odendaal, van Tongeren and Hopp-Nishanka, this author wishes to focus on four sets of factors to be used as specific analytic framework for this study. These factors are presumed critical in the designing of effective and successful local peace infrastructures.

2.4.2.1 Origins and Mandates

As the existing literature remarks, the local peace infrastructures have their origin within community, or they are introduced from above by the state (for example, as part of a national peace pact), or from abroad, especially, by civil society actors like INGOs (Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, p. 9; van Tongeren, 2010). Most authors suggest that to be effective in communal conflict transformation, local peace infrastructures need to be organically grown and/or locally owned. As already mentioned in chapter one, community-based peace initiatives such as the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) of Kenya and District Peace Advisory Committee

Council (DPAC) of Ghana were initially established through periods of trial and error as an indigenous response to communal violence in the respective country. They were the results of community desire to restore peace in their communities. One of local peace practitioners from Kenya argued that the Wajir Peace and Development Committees ‘...emerged very organically from a felt and immediate needs’ (as quoted in Hedditch, 2016, p. 49). Likewise, the decision to establish the National Peace Council of Ghana was based on the experiences gathered from the locally grown District Peace Advisory Committees, a group made of religious leaders, traditional chiefs, women and youth groups and security agencies (Kotia & Aubyn, 2011). In both settings, local peace infrastructures were grown from people’s own self-initiatives and were culturally and contextually situated. The fact that these peace committees grew from within the communities was often cited reasons for their successes (Hedditch, 2016; Kotia & Aubyn, 2011).

If local peace infrastructures are introduced by a national government like that of South Africa or through partnership between local NGOs and INGOs, they need to have acceptance by local communities in which they are working in (Odendaal, 2010 & 2012). As empirical studies found, locally owned peace infrastructures usually enable timely and relevant interventions in response to local security concerns, provide a deep understanding of the social, cultural and political dynamics of community for effective peace intervention, enhance trust among the community members, and help to retain internal capacity, knowledge and motivation necessary for local peace actors to work effectively (Reconciliation Resource, 2016). Besides, local peace infrastructures owned by members of the communities and which are situated in the existing social networks such as councils of elders have potentials to contribute for peace of communities and social cohesion and peaceful co-existence (Chivasa, 2017; Lederach, 1997, p. 50). For

example, if a nationally designed peace initiative fails to involve local communities in its decision to establish local peace infrastructures, it is likely to contribute little for peace of a community (Odendaal, 2010). Likewise, local peace infrastructure that are imposed from outside for self-motivated agendas are likely to fail to restore trust, relationships and legitimacy among the community members (Ghebremeskel & Smith, 2013, p. 67; Kai-Jacobsen, 2013).

Mandate of local peace infrastructure is closely intertwined with its origin. As Odendaal (2012) describe, mandate refers to “the allocation of responsibility to a specific institution or group of people” (p. 45), even though it may differ from one context to another. The mandates of local peace infrastructures include, among others, facilitation of peace dialogues, prevention of conflict escalation, mediation, reconciliation, and so on (van Tongeren, 2013, p. 52). As already elucidated in the first section of this chapter, formally established peace infrastructures receive their mandate from governments, while those with informal mandates are usually independent of state structures and/or driven by the local community, although they may or may not have good working relations with local governments (Odendaal, 2010, p. 8; Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, p. 9; van Tongeren, 2013).

As already explicated above, having a formal mandate helps a local peace infrastructure to operate in a coordinated manner. Besides, it offers them with crucial leverage and access to state resources (Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, pp. 2-3). Nonetheless, local peace infrastructures with formal mandate are likely to suffer from government manipulation (Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, pp. 2-3; van Tongeren, 2013, pp. 56-57). Conversely, as van Tongeren argues, local peace infrastructures with an informal mandate might work in good working relations with local

government structures, or involve in an open competition with state actors. Having an informal mandate might benefit from being less indebted to powerful actors. However, they may have a weaker influence in relationship to powerful political and government actors. Moreover, they might suffer from prevailing political practices and policies (van Tongeren, 2013, pp. 51-53). When local peace structures initiated by both state and non-state actors go against their usual organizational mandates, they have limited impacts in communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Cox, 2015). In nutshell, in order to be effective local peace infrastructures need to be organically grown and/or locally owned.

2.4.2.2 Role and Government's Bias

Andries Odendaal associates a role with the mandate. He specifically defines role as “the manner and means with which the responsibilities are carried out.” He further suggests that the presence of clear role in relations to already existing institutions is vital for effectiveness of local peace infrastructures (Odendaal, 2012, p. 45). It is specifically critical that local peace infrastructures are not perceived as hostile to local governments but instead as a means of enabling dialogue and consensus, and the environment for providing collaborative and effective governance. For example, local peace infrastructure established for the creation of social cohesion may carry out their tasks in close collaboration with local governments, judiciary organs and police forces (Odendaal, 2010, pp. 23-24; Odendaal, 2012, p. 46).

As Åkerdahl (2013) elucidates, lack of clear role to local peace infrastructures may affect their working relations with other state or social structures as well their life span. While there is no uniformity in the way local peace infrastructures related to the local government, their lack of

clear role could obstruct effectiveness of their peace initiatives as they may recognition and supports of political leaders (Odendaal, 2012). This in turn may open ways for a government's bias, which affect not only activities of everyday peace infrastructures, but also peaceful relationship between local political elites and corresponding peaceful coexistence among their respective members. As Hopp-Nishanka (2013b) remarks, government's bias could restrict spaces for the participation of transformative actors from opposition voices in communal conflict resolution. As a result, local peace infrastructures usually fail to carry out their intended tasks as they entrap themselves within destructive conflict cycles. Additionally, lack of clear role for local or everyday peace infrastructures may impair their potential to serve as a permanent peace platform for peace-building (Odendaal, 2010, pp. 23-24; Odendaal, 2012, p. 46).

2.4.2.3 Composition and Problem-Solving Relationships

As observations from varied contexts show, to be legitimate and ensure the presence of effective problem-solving relationships, local peace infrastructures need to be inclusive of the many different groups and actors within conflict system. Even if compositions of local peace infrastructures differs with varying contexts and objectives, they are usually known for involving varied sections of society to work together for positive peace. For example, LPCs could be inclusive of customary elders, respected community leaders, youth, women, and representatives of local government and civil society (Odendaal, 2010, p. 19; van Tongeren, 2013, p. 52). However, the existing literature recognizes the importance of considering three key issues.

First, according to Odendaal (2010, p. 19) at least a local peace infrastructure “needs to be composed of local organizations or movements relevant to the local peace process”. This is

because communal conflict resolution and peace-building requires a problem solving relationships whereby former protagonists collaborate in pursuing the agreed peace objectives (Odendaal, 2012). Even if there are some authors who claim that LPCs need to be built without potentials spoilers, many authors suggest that their inclusion is better if the goal is to ensure durable peace and reconciliation in the society (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013a; Odendaal, 2010, p. 19; Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, p. 14; van Tongeren, 2013, p. 52).

Secondly, the quest for inclusive composition should include actors having different technical abilities, needs and interests to support the peace processes. In this regard, studies from conflict-affected areas such as South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Macedonia show, the presence of staff with different competence and interests in LPCs is asset in order to contribute for conflict resolution (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013; Odendaal & Olivier, 2008). For example, the presence of grassroots civil society actors who represent the middle groups are useful to add different needs, skills and resources to the process and helps coordination between peace initiatives (Odendaal, 2010, pp. 20-21). Besides, it is relevant to include ‘insider partials’ who are situated in the community and are respected and capable of bridging the social and political divide. Members of the insiders are not presumed to be impartial mediators, but local people who provide leadership in peace processes, or who can mediate because they belong to and, crucially, are trusted by the community (ibid.).

Thirdly, local peace infrastructures need to integrate usually marginalized groups such as women, youths and members of minority and victims of communal conflicts. Inclusion of those groups promises the promotion of social justice and equality as well as success of local peace

infrastructures. It also helps to tap peace potentials in marginalized actors such as women whose role in peace activism and practices is often unrecognized in policy and academic circles. Enhancing women's active participation in peace committees and their empowerment enable them to be effective agents for change in the communities (Reconciliation Resource, 2016). For example, it was women led peace activism that served as a catalyst for the emergence of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee in Kenya; women activists together with male youths and elders of peace were able to settle conflicts between quarreling clans in the Wajir County (Hedditch, 2016). Their peace activism was able to reach and impact the lives of women in the communities which are deeply patriarchal. It is therefore imperative to have gender and age balance not just amongst the membership as whole but also amongst the roles and duties.

As Åkerdahl (2013) clarifies, local peace infrastructures with formal mandates have their composition prescribed by a government. These structures are usually comprised of relevant government bodies, security forces, elders, leaders of community and civil society actors. Conversely, local peace infrastructures with informal mandates reflect a preference or interests of their initiators and usually comprise actors who have a strong passion, commitment and capacity to carry out their stated objectives (Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, pp. 9-10).

In fact, there are some authors who raise dilemma of pushing for inclusion of marginalized actors such women, youths and the members minority groups in local peace platforms in settings where the presence of those actors is not consistent with the cultural and traditional expectation of the community and hence likely affect their communal conflict resolution (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p. 31). Even though, in many other settings, communal conflicts are directly related to exclusion

and marginalization of those actors. This is to say that a peace accord without their involvement is not durable (Odendaal, 2010, p. 21). Additionally, even if local peace infrastructures are comprised of all relevant actors, they may still suffer from the lack of volunteerism and shifting of their peace-building status into political aspirations. These challenges are usually exacerbated by the lack of necessary rewards and supports to LPCs (van Tongeren, 2013, p. 53).

2.4.2.4 External Support and Sustainability

Most authors make the link between the success of local peace infrastructures and the quality of support that they receive from the outsiders. Even if literature on peace infrastructure recognizes the importance of relying resources rooted in communities, national and international actors usually play a key role in establishing as well as strengthening already existing peace infrastructures (Odendaal, 2010 & 2012). In this regard, appropriate external support in the form of technical and financial supports is crucial for the effectiveness and success of local peace infrastructures. For instance, it is argued that successful intervention of the Ghanaian Peace Councils was not possible without technical, material and financial support of donor agencies, especially from the UNDP (Kotia & Aubyn, 2011).

Odendaal and Olivier (2008, p. 22) have identified external actors can support local peace infrastructures, especially with basic orientation, facilitation support and access to national peace-building resources. They argue that in the post conflict contexts community members need to be oriented about the importance of inclusive problem-solving (Odendaal, 2010, p. 16). Besides, local peace infrastructures require members with relevant skills to act as peace makers, conciliator or mediation. This is to say that members in peace structures need to receive intense

training or be served by professional staffs with the required knowledge (Odendaal, 2012, p. 47; Odendaal & Olivier, 2008, p. 4). As Åkerdahl (2013) argues, local peace actors with informal mandates than formal mandate requires external supports since the latter has regular access to state resources. Even though, as Lederach (2013) cautiously argues, an outsider's support to must be "appreciative", that is, a need to build on existing potentials for peace in a given community. They also need to show the commitment to work in partnerships with actors already present in the society. Additionally, local peace structures need to be situated within national peace architectures in order to receive relevant administrative supports. As literature shows, such administrative supports can be offered in various forms such as via secretariat, or through Peacebuilding Support Unit or in the form of fully pledged Ministry of Peace. Both Odendaal and van Tongeren suggest that local peace infrastructures in their ideal form need to be controlled by multiple domestic stakeholders, and financially accountable to the state, which is its main funder (Odendaal, 2010, p. 16; van Tongeren, 2013, p. 52).

There is in fact concerns associated sustainability of externally supported local peace infrastructures. It is argued that when, for example, local peace committees are established as part of a donor project or NGO funded activities, it often ceases to exist when the founding ceases. Moreover, funders sometimes threaten local ownership as they might advance their own agenda (Ghebremeskel & Smith, 2013; Odendaal, 2010, p. 18). Sustainability is also problem with a government initiated peace committees as it may be shut down-as was done in South Africa-if there is a lack of understanding and recognition of why it is of value (Kai Jacobsen, 2013). Nonetheless, most local peace infrastructures are successful in maintaining their legitimacy and effectiveness during their needs regardless of funding, which is usually achieved

by relying on resources rooted within communities (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013; Odendaal, 2012; van Tongeren, 2013, pp. 52-54).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature, clarified key concepts and outlined theoretical and conceptual frameworks for the study. In particular, the study used peace infrastructure approach as a point of departure. Inspired, especially by John Lederach (1997) this study build on the assumption that durable peace from the peace processes that are sufficiently rooted in the violence-affected society and emphasis the interdependence between state and non-state actors in order to build sustainable peace. Further, this study is inspired by concept of a ‘positive hybrid peace’ that focuses on the importance of co-ownership of communal peace processes as well as the achievement of integrative outcomes. The study also elucidated sets of conditions identified in empirically oriented works of Odendaal, Hopp-Nishanka, van Tongeren and others, for designing of effective local peace infrastructures. As assumed in this study, the potentials of local peace infrastructures to contribute for communal conflict transformation depends on both context-related factors and organizational characteristics of effective local peace infrastructures. As a result, both factors are combined in this study in order to explore and analyze the potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia.

CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

Introduction

This chapter looks at sources and natures of communal violence in southern Ethiopia, focusing on the SNNPRS. Most of communal violence in the southern parts of the country started with the introduction of ethnic oriented decentralization reform in the early 1990s. The main aim of this chapter is to explore nature and trends of communal violence in southern Ethiopia, particularly in relation to the way such violence is conditioned by the major political reforms and underlying ideologies. As will be elucidated in this chapter, it is hardly possible to separate communal violence in southern Ethiopia from wider national policy and its underlying ideologies and practices.

It is not a desire of this author to present any original analysis of empirical evidences in this chapter. Instead, the author sees the task as summing up findings of existing studies and highlighting key issues that have come up in the scholarly debate so far and which are relevant to appreciate the potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia.

The chapter starts by describing the general settings of southern Ethiopia, focusing on the SNNPRS. The second section presents reviews on historical patterns in state-society as well as in society-society relationships in southern Ethiopia. The third section clarifies main categories of prevailing communal conflicts in southern Ethiopia. Finally, the conclusion is given.

3.1 General Setting

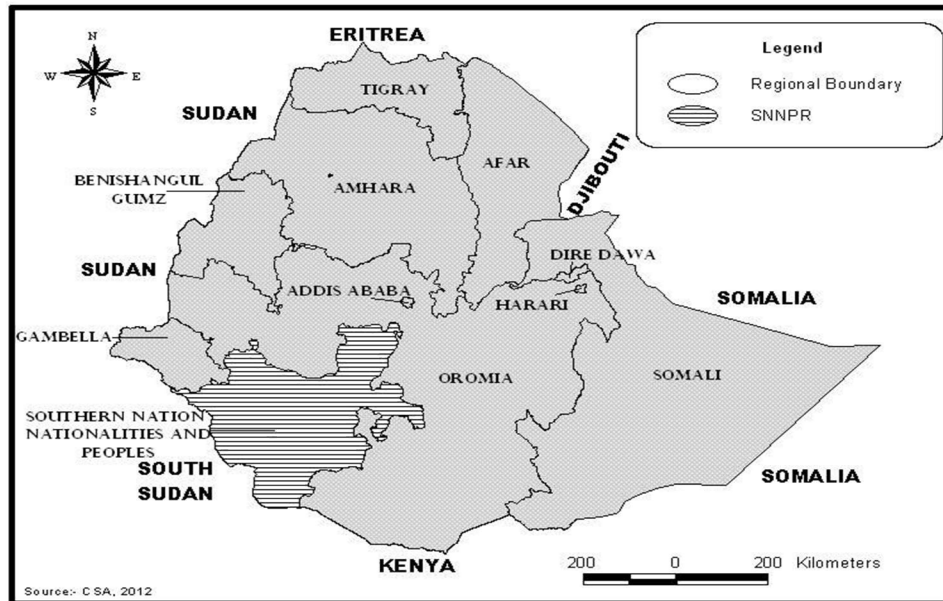
This study touches selected farming communities in southern Ethiopia. Hence, this section describes general setting of the study areas, focusing on the SNNPRS, while specific settings of the study sites are included within empirical chapters. The southern region is one of the nine regional states. According to the Central Statistical Authority, [CSA] (2008), Ethiopia is inhabited by a population size of about 84 million. Of this the SNNPRS share about 15 millions (about 20 percent of the country's total population), which makes it the third populous regional state in the federation. It has annual population growth rate of 2.9, which is above the national average 2.6. In terms of sex composition, 49.7 percents of the region's population are males while the rest 50.3 percent are females. Like other states of the federation, most of the people in the SNNPRS (about 90 percent) reside in rural areas. In terms of religious composition, fairly more than half of the people in the region are believers of various forms of Protestantism, followed by Orthodox Christianity (17 percent) and Islam (14 percent). There are also significant numbers of traditional religion followers (Tesfa, 2014, p. 21).

The SNNPRS is specifically marked by the presence of more than 56 officially recognized ethnic groups living in close proximity. Only five ethnic groups have more than one million whereas more than 30 ethnic groups have less than 100,000 members (van der Beken, 2013). During the transitional period (1991-1995) the region was divided into five different regions which were later merged into one SNNPRS just two months before the inauguration of the federation in August 1995. This makes the region the most diverse region of Ethiopia and indeed one of the most diverse regions of Africa (Data, 2006). Because of its abundant diversity in terms of the number of groups it hosts, languages and particular histories, the SNNPRS is rightly described as

“a federation within a federation” (van der Beken, 2013). As van der Beken (2013, p. 11) puts, “the southern regional administrative structure cannot simply be described as a decentralized structure”, as the regional constitution created conditions conducive to sub-regional autonomy.

The SNNPRS stretches over 15, 042, 531 square kilometers and this constitutes around ten percent of the country’s territory. The region shares international borders with Kenya in the south and South Sudan in the southwest. Internally, it is bounded by the Oromia regional state that surrounds much of the areas of the southern region (more than 2000 kilometers) in the eastern, north eastern and western directions, and is also bordered by Gambella regional state in the west. The region has varied livelihoods, climatic zones and population densities. The average population density of the region is 138 individuals per square kilometers. The highest densities of people exist among, for instance, the Gedeo, Wolaita, Kemebeta and Sidama, while the lowest (about 21 persons per square kilometers) among agro-pastoralists in the South Omo Zone (Tesfa, 2014, p. 22).

Figure 3.1: The Location of SNNPRS in Ethiopia



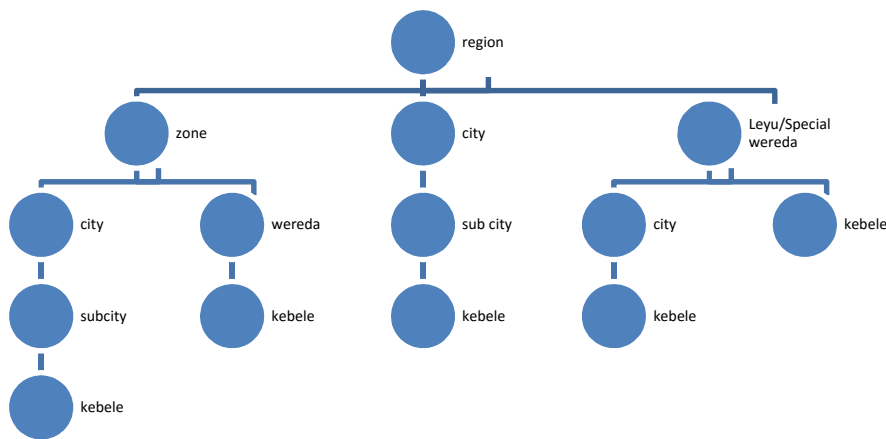
Source: CSA, 2012

Since the 1990s, the diverse ethnic communities of the SNNPRS have been administered under a hierarchical political construct referred to as “Nation, Nationalities and People”, even though it is not clear who is nation, who is nationality and who is people. In accordance with the 1995 federal constitution’s provision on rights of “Nation, Nationalities and People” to self-determination, including right to secede from the republic, the SNNPRS adopted its own regional constitution in 1995 to manage its intra-regional ethnic diversity and sub-regional autonomy (van der Beken, 2013). In this regard, the revised 2001 regional constitution of the SNNPRS provides a bicameral regional council, namely, the highest legislative council represented by elected individuals for a term of five years and the Council of Nationalities (CoN) represented by at least one member of an ethnic group. The Council of Nationalities which exists only in the SNNPRS and resembles the House of Federation (HoF) at the federal level both in its composition and

competence, is created by the revised constitution of the SNNPRS to deal with issues of group and administrative claims and conflicts within the region. The revised constitution of the southern region identifies four administrative tiers or hierarchies within the region, namely, the regional government, nationality zones/special *wereda*, *wereda* (district) and *kebeles* as demonstrated in the following figure. The regional government represents regional legislative council, executives and judiciary.

Unlike other regions of Ethiopia such as neighboring Oromia Regional State where one finds just regular administrative zones and *wereda*, local government structures such as zones and special *wereda* in the southern regional state are ethnic-based territorial administration aimed to enable ethnic groups to exercise the right to self-rule. Both zones and special *wereda* have identical structure and identical power and responsibilities (van der Beken, 2013). Each zone/special *wereda* has elected council, chief administrator, court and police. The zone/special *wereda* has power to protect identity, culture, language and to exercise a degree of self-rule, including legislative power. Nationality zones or a special *weredas* which are next tier in the region is not only an autonomous local unit; it may also secede from the region to become a separate regional state if a concerned group prefers to do so. *Weredas* and *kebeles* are assigned specific responsibilities and it is there that everyday activities are executed.

Figure 3.2: Organizational Structures of SNNPRS



Source: adopted from Ayele (2013, p. 6)

All major groups at the moment have a separate zonal or special *wereda*/district status within the SNNPRS. However, not every group is happy with the current administrative structure. While there are some who want a region of their “own”, there are still many others who demand a separate zonal or special *wereda* status. As a result the region saw series of quests for self-determination and internal administrative restructuring since the early 1990s. When the SNNPRS was first established in June 1995, it was divided into eleven zones and five special *weredas*. Since then, the region saw both contraction and creation in the number of its zones and special zones. At present, the region is divided into 17 zones, 7 special *wereda*, 161 *wereda*, over thirty ‘reform cities’, and 3999 *kebeles*, although there are still the quests for separate regions, zones/special *wereda*, and regular *wereda*¹¹. As will be further clarified in the next section, this author argues that communal violence must be understood within the context of the historic and

¹¹ The number includes the SNNPRS Council affirmed new zones for Konso, Halaba and Gofa and 44 new *wereda* in November 3, 2018, although the regional executive was allowed to create more administrative units. The regional council also affirmed the Sidama statehood request.

ongoing quests for local autonomy and series of redrawing of administrative units by the central state.

Ever since its formation, the SNNPRS has been governed by the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM), which is one of the four members of the ruling coalition, EPDRF¹². Unlike its partner in the ruling coalition which are organized along ethnic lines, SEPDM is a multiethnic party formed after merger of the various ethnic-based 'people's democratic organizations' during the early years of 1990s.

3.2 Historical Perspectives

This section sheds light on the historical patterns of interactions in southern Ethiopia, especially between historically marginalized ethnic communities and the centralized state on the one hand and among the diverse ethnic communities on the other hand. Such inquiry would be pertinent to appreciate historical processes that induced ethnic oriented federal reform and its repercussion upon everyday life and communal violence in southern Ethiopia.

3.2.1 Trends in State-Society Relations in Southern Ethiopia: An Overview

We have already seen above that southern Ethiopia¹³ comprises diverse people. It is now few years over a century since these people were conquered and incorporated into the Ethiopian

¹² EPDRF is a coalition of four ethnic based parties such as the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) or formerly Amhara National Democratic Movements (ANDM), Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) or the former the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). The EPDRF has been controlling all structures of the government from local to federal levels and decisions made at the center have been implemented with little local/regional variation (Aalen, 2008).

¹³ The term to southern Ethiopia is used in reference to diverse ethnic communities which were incorporated into the Ethiopia Empire in the late 19th century.

Empire under Emperor Menelik II at the same time as European colonial powers were ‘scrambling’ for control of Africa (Schlee & Watson, 2009, p. 24). Ethiopia as a county successfully fought back European colonialism. Nonetheless, the process of incorporation of diverse ethnic communities into the Ethiopian empire was violent and bloody and was disruptive of everyday existence (Adhana, 1994, p. 24). Since Menelik’s conquest, the prevailing feature of state-society relationships in southern Ethiopia have been top-down governance and “patronage” politics as well as centralizing ideologies and policies aimed to inculcate loyalty and obedience from the masses (Abbink, 2009). This author wants to emphasize that little has changed in the state-society relations and top-down governance even today, regardless of the existence of nicely articulated rights to individuals and ethnic communities in the current constitution.

Ever since the incorporation of diverse people into Ethiopia towards the end of the last quarter of nineteenth century, the pressing concern of the ruling elites has been how to ensure administrative control over them, often through administrative, political appointments and economic devices (Data, 2006). Administrative restructuring along ethnic identity of the early 1990s was only among series of administrative and political restructuring¹⁴ informed by narrow interests of the ruling elites and their associates.

One of far reaching consequences of the incorporation of the diverse ethnic communities into Ethiopia by Menelik II was loss of autonomy and political authority of the peoples such as the

¹⁴ There have been eight major redrawing of administrative boundaries of Ethiopia during the last 100 years. In this regard, the country was divided into about 15 administrative units towards the end of Menelik’s era, 32 units in the early 1930s, 12 in 1940s, 13 in the early 1960s, 14 in the early 1970s, 30 in late 1980s, 14 in early 1990s, and nine regional states at present, regardless of a series of intra-regional restructuring, especially in the SNNPRS since the early 1990s (Daniel, 1994 as cited in Data, 2006, p. 144).

Oromo, Gedeo, Sidama, Konso and Omotic kingdoms. The conquest was ideologically justified as a part of restoring old historical links between the Christian polity in the north and southern kingdoms and tributaries (Data, 2006; Schlee & Watson, 2009). However, independent observers who personally witnessed Menelik's conquest confirmed that the economic crisis of Shewa in the early 1890s made to the resources of the south as a pre-requisite for the survival of Shewan dominated Ethiopia Empire (Data, 2006). This also appears evident from the successive policies of the emperors.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the newly incorporated people in southern Ethiopia were divided into provinces. For instance, the ethnic groups which are under focus in this study, namely, the Sidama and Guji Oromo had been under the Sidamo Provinces; the Arsi Oromo was under the Shewa Province and Konso came under the Gamo-Gofa Province. The provinces were determined by logic of geographic settlements and administrated from garrison towns, although administrators comprised of mainly the Shewan Amhara ruling elites and their associates creating a precedent for inter-ethnic inequality and grievances in the country (Adhana, 1994; Merera, 2003a).

The imperial provinces were administrated by governors, usually the members of the nobility who had acquitted themselves well in the battle subjugating the areas in question. They had a great deal of local autonomy, honor and only had to give the emperor with a fixed amount of tribute from their provinces. Governors accumulated personal wealth through appropriating resources in these areas such as coffee, gold, ivory and slaves. They also collected tribute in the form of livestock or honey or through direct people's labor (also referred as *gabbar* labor) which

is estimated to be one-third of each person's time. The *gabbar* labors were provided to the governors and their associates such as court offices, tribute collectors, soldiers. When a person was doing *gabbar* labor, he/she would often leave his own family and fields and stayed with the administrators (Adhana, 1994; Schlee & Watson, 2009, pp. 24-25).

The imperial rule caused massive land alienations and (re)settlement schemes, which made most of people in southern Ethiopia landless and tenants for much of the 20th century (Adhana 1994). They were also denied spaces for cultural self-expressions because of imposition of values and customs from above (Merera, 2003a, p. 66). Along with politics of control and patronage that primarily served the royal families, governors and their associates, there were co-opting of the local agents such as formerly influential leaders, chiefs and customary elders to be assimilated into the religious-political culture of the ruling elites and to be in charge of lower positions in order ensure willingness of people to revere and obey the rulers (Alula, 2003). The appointed member of local people acted as inter-mediators and to assist the governors and their associates in collection of tax. In this way, the Ethiopian Empire built on the idea of local customary leaders could be used for their own administrative control, which obviously led to some form of change in these indigenous institutions of dispute resolution.

After a brief Italian colonial control of the country (1936-1941), the diverse ethnic communities in southern Ethiopia saw a new period of centralized control and modernization reform. Emperor Haile Sellasie, for instance, placed a high emphasis on Ethiopia as a united and centralized state, run by the emperor from centre than a loosely connected set of autonomous provinces prior to the Italian colonial occupation. The new tax system designed to cut the power of the provincial

governors and administrators gave for a more bureaucratic and accountable system. However, the local people suffered from double burdens of meeting desires of the old lords and their associates in communities and the new bureaucratic demands at the same time (Schlee & Watson, 2009). The reform also neglected the traditional sectors where most people still live and did not relate to their everyday life. A notable case in point was the establishment of a set of western civil and penal code which did not take into account the existing forms of customary laws of various ethnic communities (Levine, 1974).

Historically, the diverse ethnic communities in the south largely resisted the forceful interventions through confronting the forces of Menelik, non-compliance and often burning property of the landlords, though those resistances cost them dearly. The people who fiercely resisted the conquest, for instance, the Arsi and Wolaita suffered inhumane carnage, burning and disruption of everyday life (Data, 2006). Series of injustices, marginalization and repression incurred up the peasantry in southern Ethiopia, inducing wide spread rebellions as were evident in the Gedeo and Bale rebellions during the reign of Emperor Haileselassie I (1916-1974). The people had limited options to have their concerns be heard by local governors and often local representatives such as elders took a long tour to members of the royal family or the emperor himself in Addis Ababa to appeal or seek justices (Alula, 2003). Methods such as violent resistance or non-compliance used by grassroots actors against the ruling elites had limited impacts due to the prevailing power asymmetry and sophisticated state apparatus of control at the community levels.

It is crucial to note here that the state-society relationship after the end of the imperial system in 1974 demonstrated relevant change in the country as whole and in southern Ethiopia in particular. The force that brought an end to the imperial system through violent revolution was shaped by the massive influence of socialist and Marxist ideas, especially among the politically articulate students' movements of the 1970s and 1980s as they were evident in their "anti-feudalism" or "anti-imperialism" and "class struggles" (Abbink, 2009, p. 9). In the absence of any organized political parties in the country, a group of the imperial army, also identified to as *Dergue* ('council') emerged to assume the state power and introduced radical land reform. It defined problems of state-society relations in the country in terms of class, and hence officially adopted Marxist socialism as its guiding ideology in 1975. A decade after controlling the state power, the *Dergue* formally transformed itself into a governing body by forming the "Workers Party of Ethiopia" in 1984, and proceeded to create the first republic of Ethiopia, namely, "People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia", with a due constitution in 1987 (Abbink, 2009; Merera, 2003b, p. 151). In doing so the *Dergue* strived to become a regular communist "People's Republic" in the name of working class, and aimed to create a classless society. It also nationalized all lands, created a state economy, allied with socialist camps and used brute forces to rule; it did not allow any space for political freedom or an independent civil society (Abbink, 2009).

The diverse ethnic communities in the south saw the land reform as a significant step as they took away the lands from the landlords and given them back to the peasants, tenants and landless laborers. Studies found that the processes of land reform was participatory and created conditions for genuine democratic experiment for local autonomy as the peasants were allowed for the

redistribution of land and local self-administration (Pausewang, 1994 & 1997). Thousands of students were sent to various villages in order to assist the peasants' efforts to assume local autonomy and form self-administering and independent local bodies referred to as peasant associations which were also intended to solve cases of localized disputes. In short, the reform was welcomed by the peasants as they demonstrated heightened consciousness, sense of responsibility, enthusiasm and initiatives for local development and efficiency of peasant associations at the early years (Pausewang, 1994, p. 210).

Conversely, the subsequent excessive socialization measures such as state control of lands, collectivization, (re)settlement and villagization curtailed the peasants' revived hope for local autonomy (Pausewang, 1994). In the name of cooperatives, state farms, and poverty reduction, thousands of peasants were resettled into different rural areas and villages where they were decimated from diseases or found themselves contesting with earlier settlers who claimed customary rights for lands (ibid). In addition, the peasant associations which emerged as local administrative units (*kebeles*) at community level became executive organs of the state and were no longer democratic organs of the peasants (Pausewang, 1994, p. 216). Leadership of the peasant *kebeles* were filled by largely inexperienced youths and opportunists who got the post for their political commitment than their knowledge and skills. Indigenous and skills were out rightly judged as superstitious and sign of backwardness (Alula, 2003). Likewise, customary elders who were versed in communal conflict mediation and reconciliations were discouraged and were replaced by young cadres to handle every communal dispute. Genuine servants in the *kebele* administration found it difficult to serve the public while at the same time committing to unpopular policies from above. The state-society ties during the *Dergue* period were also

affected by growing population, decreasing size of individual farming plots, environmental degradation, deforestation, famine and drought and forced military recruitments (ibid.).

The *Dergue* also continued the policy of imperial system in terms of denying institutional recognition of pluralism and diversity, thereby contributing to the emergence of multiple regionally and ethnic based grievances, armed resistances and civil conflicts in the country. Its best effort in that regard was a mere discourse on ethno-regional rights for minorities, even though in reality it accorded them with little autonomy (Aalen, 2008, p. 67), In particular, its actions did not appease leaderships of ethnic based armed groups to cease rebellions, nor did they help to mobilize masses against the armed groups. Rather, such discourse appeared to have facilitated the down fall of the *Dergue* as the discourse on ethnicity emboldened the armed resistances and convinced many ordinary citizens to support the causes of armed rebels (Merera, 2003a, pp. 84-85).

Consequently, since the early 1990s the diverse ethnic communities in southern Ethiopia in particular and of the country in general were presented with a new solution to the crisis in state-society relations. It was provided by the TPLF/EPRDF, a former armed group fighting for a greater autonomy for the region of Tigray in a reformed Ethiopia. After its victory against the *Dergue* in 1991, the EPRDF went to institute an ethnic based political system or referred by academia as “ethnic federalism”. Ethnic oriented federalism was essentially designed to address ethno-regional grievances of various people, especially those who were conquered and incorporated in to the Ethiopian state in the late 19th century. The idea of ethnic federalism was

presented at the Transitional National Conference in July 1991 and agreed by most regionally and ethnic based political groups (Aalen, 2006 & 2008).

The new solution for state-society crisis sought an answer primarily by creating ethnolinguistically instituted homelands for various ethnic communities in the country. The idea thus was codified in the 1995 Constitution that established “Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia”, even if the core republican values such as having shared public space or homeland occupied secondary relevance and was de-emphasized in the process. As such, the constitution vests sovereignty in the “Nations, Nationalities and People” of Ethiopia, giving right to self-determination, and including right to secede from the republic (Art. 39). These and other articles affirmed that the ethnic groups in Ethiopia are equal, all the power belongs to them, their cultures and languages will be respected and developed and no discrimination will be made between them. The constitution in fact demonstrates a strong democratic character and affirmed its commitment to all major international treaties on human rights and public law. It also emphasized separation of state and religion, although allowed religious courts and customary practices for personal and family disputes.

The 1995 constitution established federal government comprising legislative, executive and judicial organs. A parliament comprises two chambers, namely, the elected House of the People’s Representatives (HoPR) and the House of Federation (HoF). The HoF (upper house) is the guardian and interpreter of the Ethiopian constitution. It is the chamber in which ethnic groups are represented. Federal executive comprised a ceremonial president and cabinet headed by a powerful prime minister. A judicial system as defined in the constitution is to be

independent body, and some reform was made on courts after 1995, yet they have often been criticized for lacks of independence, being corrupt and time consuming and inference from government (Abbink, 2009).

Regions have been formed more or less based on majority ethnicity, named as Afar, Amhara, Harari, Oromo, Somali, Tigray, the Beninshagul-Gumuz, SNNP, and Gambella People's regions, although the last three regions are multiethnic states. As per the Constitution, each of the nine regional states shall have its own constitution, flag, executive government, legislative, judiciary, and police. Each chooses its own working language and each ethnic group has the right to use the mother tongue to educate its children. Obviously, these are some of the major rights that almost all the armed movements have been demanding before 1991. With regard to the SNNPRS in particular, the regional constitution which was adopted in 1995 and revised in 2001 provide mechanisms to address sub-regional ethnic diversity through, for instance, establishing ethnolinguistically instituted homelands referred to as *zones/special wereda*. In this way ethnic linguistic identities were recognized and made basis of regional and local administration to be filled by local people. This was the new answer to the problem in the state-society relations, and it has been operating under the tutelage of EPRDF for over two decades.

3.2.2 People-to-People Relations in Southern Ethiopia: An Overview

The diverse ethnic communities in the south during the times of incorporation in the last quarter of the 19th century had complex and diverse political systems ranging from the egalitarian *gada* institutions among the Arsi, Guji, and Borana Oromo and much related governance system among other groups such as the Sidama, Gedeo and Konso to the highly centralized kingship of

Kaffa, Wolaita and Jimma (Data, 2006; Merera, 2003a). The supporters of Menelik II's conquest claimed that the early civilizations of the diverse ethnic communities in the south are result of northern impetus and not an outcome of indigenous culture and traditions (Levine, 1974, pp. 17-18). However, indigenous governance systems of various ethnic groups in the south have their own indigenous sources and institutions (Aaland, 2008).

Conversely, in contrast to the emphasis that current politics accorded to differences and rigidify socio-spatial borders in the country, various ethnic communities in the southern parts of the country were interconnected with each other and in the wider networks. As argued in this thesis, to see these groups in terms of only difference is to overlook many features they have in common and the numerous relations these groups have had with one another. Even if each group has its own language and self-image, they share many aspects of socio-cultural practices, which transcend ethnic boundaries. For instance, many ethnic communities share aspect of cultural practices inter alia belief in supreme sky God and spirits, ritual feasts at solar new year and annual calendar, rituals of animal sacrifice, sacred tress, culture of honor killing of traditional enemies or big wild animals, exclusion of women in traditional governance, rituals and hairstyles (Levine,1974, p. 40). They were also in frequent interactions through trade, religious activities, migration, intermarriage, warfare, bonds and shared rituals or specialized services and initiations (Freeman, 2000, p. 15). Such exchanged created inter-dependence among many of these groups that linked them into a wider networks within roughly current geographic scope of the country (Levine, 1974).

Historically, many ethnic communities in the current geographic scope of Ethiopia have moved from place to place seeking better place to settle, and their oral traditions have kept the stories of their treks alive. Others moved fleeing warfare or they were forcefully settled in the territories they now found themselves in, often creating a mixture of two or more groups at socio-racial frontiers (Erk, 2014). As will be elucidated in chapter five, still others created strong socio-economic symbiosis and ritual relations as they are evident between the Oromo subgroups and Sidama.

Post-Menelik histories of encounters and interactions between the diverse ethnic communities and cultures have their own roles in promoting inter-communal network and mixture in the country. In this regard, most of Menelik's soldiers comprising the Shewan Amhara and Oromo settled among various communities in southern Ethiopia, especially in the garrison towns, intermarried with members of the local communities (Yacob, 2010). The conquest of Menelik had reduced or prevented traditional hostilities between different communities (Levine, 1974).

The people in the southern parts of the country were also linked in sharing related memories of socio-economic burdens and political marginalization and repression under the imperial and *Dergue* regimes. For instance, as already mentioned, after the expansionist conquest of Menelik, several dozens of ethnic communities in the south came under system of *gabbar*, which implied that his soldiers in return for military service granted power to dominate over lands and the people, right to collect taxes, labors and parts of their product (Merera, 2003a). Likewise, various ethnic groups in the geographic region shared experiences of dreads of forced military

requirements and politically motivated killings during the *Dergue* regime (Data, 2006; Merera, 2003a).

Moreover, the spread of religions such as Christianity (both Orthodox and Protestantism) and Islam in southern Ethiopia had its own role in facilitating contacts, bonds and exchange among various ethnic groups as these religions emphasized cross cultural partnership across and above social hierarchies and ethno-linguistic boundaries (Data, 2005).

There were in fact traditional rivalries and socially sanctioned killings in inter-communal relations in southern Ethiopia. Issues at the heart of such rivalries were largely socio-cultural issues such as acquiring cattle for social prestige, carrying out ritual requirement or secure trophies to prove masculinity and gain territory (Mustefa, 2018; Tadesse, 2009). Nonetheless, such hostilities were not coterminous with ethno-linguistic features of concerned groups as it can be observed in traditional rivalries between sub-groups of Oromo such as the Arsi and Guji as well as between the Guji and Borana (Tadesse, 2009, pp. 193-194). Moreover, there have been culturally rooted hostilities against members of social minority, especially against artisans. Such hostilities appear to have contributed to intra-and inter-ethnic relations and bondage as they promoted alliances between groups with different languages as well as in facilitating mobility of, for example, artisans or craftsmen across ethnic boundaries. Additionally, traditional hostilities were based on mutual understanding regarding the beginning, regulation and end of the warfare. Communal groups in hostile relations allowed trade and mobility despite their enmity. For instance, in their traditional hostility encounter in the south central Rift Valley the Arsi Oromo and Sidama made market pacts which prevented hostilities from occurring in the market area and

ensure safe passages of travelers en route (Levine, 1974). There were and still are traditions of dialogues which have roots in local communities, but they have not been recognized by successive regimes in the country.

Generally, everyday life within and between communities in southern Ethiopia were, and still are, supported by strong bridging social capital and civic associations that help various people to respect one another and to build harmonious relationships. As will be further clarified in empirical chapters, grassroots civic associations and customary forms of bonds and alliance making and conflict resolution systems have been helping communities to handle their problems by themselves.

3.3 Contemporary Communal Violence: Generalized Trends

This section provides a generalized review on trends of communal violence in the federal system of Ethiopia in general and the SNNPRS in particular. Context specific descriptions with regard to communal violence between the Sidama and neighboring Arsi and Guji as well as those within Konso will be provided in chapters five, six, seven and eight along with analysis of empirical evidences on the potential and possible limits of local peace infrastructures in those areas.

For over two decades a notable increase of communal violence was recorded between and within various ethnic groups of Ethiopia, for instance, between the Gedeo and Guji, Sidama and Guji, to name but a few. Some of communal violence relates in part to traditional pattern of rivalries and hostilities, while others are quite new, often emerge among communal groups that had friendly ties. The army or police forces are rarely sent to contain the problem, so fighting escalates. In

other communal conflicts, as will be elucidated in the case of Konso, the security forces directly involve as a conflict party, although they appear to take a form of intra- and inter-communal violence in their courses.

The damages of violent communal conflicts, especially in the multiethnic SNNPRS in the past two decades were loss of huge human life and property. In particular, women, children and old men were the major victims of the conflict. The property damage included theft of cattle and grain, burning of hamlets, etc. Internal displacement of citizens and violation of human rights widely observed. Above all, communal violence weakened the unity of various ethnic communities that were living peacefully for many years (SNNPRS Conflict Resolution Strategy, 2011 & 2014).

Although it is not an intention of this author to delve into extremely polarized spaces forged by supporters and distracters of ethnic federalism, many scholars identify the very organizing idea behind ethnic federalism and the ruling party as a primary culprit for communal violence. In this regard, an organization idea of the TPLF/EPRDF party has mainly been influenced by Marxist ideas which have been visible in the government control of lands, strong control of political process and of civil society, the judiciary and the civil service, and in its focus on “democratic centralism”, with the party as sole arbiter and power factors, as well as in the rejection of ‘citizen democracy’ in favor of what is referred as ‘revolutionary democracy’. The organizing idea has also been noticeable in the party’s monopoly of state power and lack of genuine elections¹⁵ and

¹⁵ The 2005 election has often been reported as an only competitive election since the decentralization reform in 1991 as numbers of political parties had won the heart of majority of people, especially in urban areas and won numbers of parliament seats. However, the claims and counter-claims between the incumbent and oppositions had caused post-election violence, and over two hundred young people were killed by the security forces in the city of

multi-party politics, although it had allowed for some space for press freedoms, civil societies and courts reform during the 1990s (Aalen, 2006 & 2008; Abbink, 2006).

Above all, an organizing logic of the ruling party has been evident in its use of “politics of ethnicity” and focus accorded to promote rigidified reading of socio-spatial borders. This means “Nations, Nationalities and People’s” which is also understood as ethnic groups are to be ‘objectively’ identified from their ‘essential’ characteristics such as language and shared culture, although the ruling party has been manipulating its fluidity and internal divisions within ethnic communities to suppress legitimate concerns of various communities. At extreme cases, the ruling elites at the federal level and their regional partners have been considering only their local agents as legitimate voices and dismisses everyone else as “the few”, “anti-peace”, and “anti-democratic” elements and cracking down on community resistance, becoming a party to conflicts and not carrying out their essential task of protecting citizens (Aalen, 2006; Data, 2006, p. 147).

As emphasized by those scholars, obvious impact of dominance of the ruling party has been lack of clear check and balance of power at federal level and dependence of the regional states on the federal government for financial and various policies and decision, lack of clearly defined mechanisms to manage disputes arising in the intergovernmental relations (both at vertical and horizontal levels), regardless of the wide range of formal autonomy that the constitution accords to regions and ethnic groups. It also led to control of regions by the ruling party via its allied or affiliated parties, promotion of upward accountability and blurring usual boundary between party

Addis Ababa. Some of key opposition leaderships were charged and sentenced for life or death penalty through pardoned later. In subsequent two national elections, the parliamentary seats have been dominated by the EPRDF and its affiliates (Abbink, 2009).

and state bureaucracy, which was also part of governance tradition of the previous regimes. It has also been demonstrated in contradictions with regard to rights of every group to self-determination and lack of it in reality (Aalen, 2008, p. 25; Asnake, 2013; Assefa, 2006).

With regard to the SNNPRS in particular, those contradictions have been evident from constitution provision on the right to ethno-linguistic homelands such as regions, zones and special *weredas* for every group on the one hand and series of claims for such rights by some groups on the other hand. The existing administrative arrangements have not satisfied relatively larger groups who were allowed to form their “own” separate zones or special *wereda* nor did it demonstrate sensitivity to needs and interest of unrecognized ethnic minorities who were initially unaccounted and/or simply lumped together with others without their consent (Aalen 2008; Abbink, 2006). As a result many groups have been left hanging about recognition/or a special administration for “their” territory, which is in turn derived from a logic embodied in the Article 39 of constitution about the right of every group to self-determination up to secession. The region has been repeatedly troubled by this logic and so far relied mainly on administrative restructuring as a solution to address a critical quest for local self-rule by various corners of the region, despite the fact such measures proved unable to stop the problem and even served as a perquisite to new problems.

Generally, the sheer number of communal violence in the country induced many observers to argue that ethnic federalism and decentralization have failed to address not only deep-rooted problems in the state-society relations but also it is now perceived as perpetuating and politicizing the very division in state-society relations that it aims to manage (Abbink, 2006, p.

390; Asnake, 2004). It is also recognized that in its most basic form ethnic oriented federalism focuses on group rights, disenfranchises individuals of mixed ethnic background as well as individuals who values other identities higher than ethnic identity, often denying their basic rights to fair political representation and employment opportunities (Abbink, 2009; Asnake, 2013; Erk, 2014, p.12).

It is important to emphasize here that there are many scholars who argue that ethnic oriented federalism and decentralization of Ethiopia has created condition favorable to ethnic and regional autonomy in language and culture and in administrative, fiscal, judicial and police decentralization while simultaneously recognizing that its practices are largely detached from promises enshrined in the constitutions (Alemu, 2003; Assefa, 2006, p. 131, Pausewang, 2009). It is also recognized that the decentralization reform has expanded cultural freedom including reappearance or revival of traditional leaders and authorities in some local governments (Tronvoll & Hagmann, 2012, p. 9; Young 1998).

With regard to the SNNPRS in particular, the decentralization reform has given a greater visibility to historically marginalized ethnic groups, especially allowing them to use their languages and develop their culture as well as to administer themselves. In particular, the reform enabled various ethnic groups in the region to resuscitate aspects of their culture such as language, custom, food, music and dance, cultural feasts and calendar, traditional authority structures, customary law and so on, which are also seen as markers of identity by various groups. In terms of communal disputes resolution, in many local governments of the region

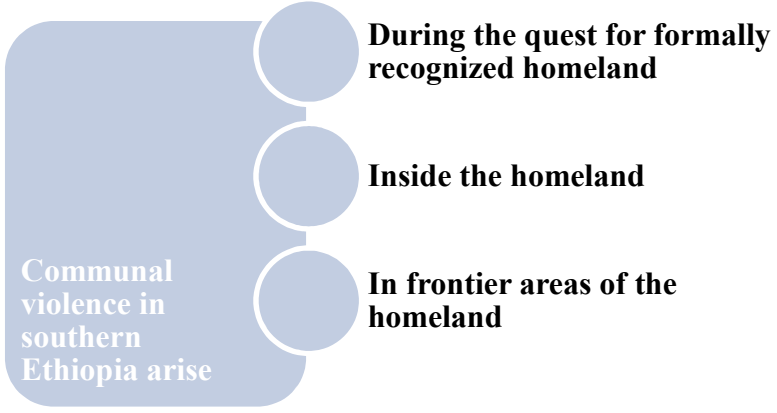
customary authorities such as elders, religious leaders, spirit mediums, and others have reclaimed their sphere of influence in the everyday life of their community members (Data, 2005 & 2006).

This author argues that communal violence and its prevention should not solely be seen on basis of macro-institutional reform-be it puts primacy on individual or group rights- but in their competence to build on, encourage and consolidate ties between the state and existing local, civic associations and actors which help to moderate tensions and preempt communal violence. As experiences of many African countries show, existing general, or formal and institutional norms and structures alone are rarely effective in dealing with violent communal conflicts regardless of types of state structure (Erk, 2014). In this aspect, federalism as a logic of governance is not only about decentralization of power and resources to a sub-nationally instituted units but also it is about shouldering of “responsibilities” to build a common and shared space (Tesfa, 2014). On its own macro-institutional blue prints or their underlying logic or ideas alone reveals little to understand and explain how communal violence emerges and be transformed as they interact with deep-rooted uncoded factors-be it societal, cultural, historical, economic, geographic, demographic, and so on, to generate violent conflicts (Erk, 2014, p.2).

Even if the national political trends and institutional reforms could essentially be conceptualized as perpetuating rigid socio-spatial borders or sparking violence, not all of such sparks become violent conflicts among every community. Conflict landscapes at community level are much more complex than often depicted in media and in some research reports. Multiple forms violent communal conflicts varying in their cause, intensity, scope and persistence emerged in the country since the 1990s. Issues in those conflicts are diverse and include disputes over matters of

identity, boundary, power/administrative control and natural resources. Likewise, as Hagmann and Alemmaya (2008) gently put, they are “sparked by competition over urban real estates, electoral campaigns or contested access to public budgets as much as competition over wells and pastures” (p. 31). For sake of analytic purpose, this author categorizes different communal violence that emerged since the 1990s in the country in general and in the SNNPRS in particular into three generalized sets, namely, communal violence that arising during the *quests for* formally recognized homelands, those that arising *inside* homelands and those that emerging in *frontier* areas of homelands, even though they are entangled each other.

Figure 3.3: Categories of Communal Violence



3.3.1 Communal Violence Related to the Quests for Homelands

Communal violence arising over a claim for homelands generally concerns having one’s ‘own’ constitutionally recognized homelands such as region, or autonomous zone/special *wereda* within a region. As already mentioned, the constitution of Ethiopia accords primacy to a group or well-known as “Nations, Nationalities and People” as the smallest unit, defined in the constitution as “... a group of people who have or share a large number of a common culture or

similar custom, mutual intelligibility of languages, beliefs in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up and who inhabit an identifiable, predominately continuous territory' (Art.39 (5)). Apart from a contentious right of secession accorded to "Nations, Nationality and People" in the constitution, they are also entitled to practically essential rights such as "the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language, to express, to develop and to promote its culture, and to preserve its history" (Art.39 (2)) as well as "the right to full measure of self-governments that include the rights to establish institution of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and federal governments" (Art.39 (3)).

In practice, bearers of those rights are demographically largest ethno-linguistic groups than socially or historically marginalized minorities. Even fulfilling criteria of aforementioned ethno-linguistic features alone do not guarantee an automatic right to have one's homeland. As empirical evidences demonstrate, access to collective rights by an ethno-linguistic minority is externally determined by powerful political leadership who may or may not allow such rights depending on its instrumental utility as well as reactions of concerned people (Yacob, 2010).

The quest for homelands is less of a problem to majority ethno-linguistic groups who were allowed to have their own regionally instituted homelands, namely, the Afar, Amhara, Harari, Oromo, Somali and Tigray. These states are designated on their respective names, administrated in their own languages, and governed by their own 'ethnic' parties, although each state comprises some forms of minorities whose sense of identity and belongingness to that homeland came under a "crisis", often resulting inter-communal violence between members of different

groups. Such minorities include indigenous titular groups as well as settlers who are believed to have their own homelands elsewhere in the country. With exception of the Oromia and Somali regional constitutions, other regions provide some form of local autonomy to ethnic minorities who were historically traced in that region allowing them to establish their own distinct homelands in that region, though in some instances following violent inter-communal conflicts (van der Beken, 2007).

The quests for homelands are much more complex in the SNNPRS where multiple ethno-linguistic groups varying in their demographic sizes coexist. In the southern region the quest for homeland as well as for recognition of ethno-linguistic identity¹⁶ was and still is, so acute to the extent of becoming a key source of series of inter-communal violence and fragmentation that the region saw in the last two decades. The quests for homelands in the region was also linked with loss of earlier experience of self-rule as it was evident seen in the cases of the Sidama¹⁷ and Konso. In the Transitional Charter, for instance, the Sidama along with the Gedeo people constituted one region for a brief period of time, whereas the Konso was constituted as special *wereda* for two decades before it was demoted to regular *wereda*/district under the Segen Area People's Zone without its consent. The latter case will be closely scrutinized in the relation to the merit and possible limits of various local peace infrastructures, particularly what this author refers as "popular committee" to deal with structurally rooted conflict between the SNNPR government and Konso ethnic community.

¹⁶ recognition of ethnic identity appears a prerequisite to entitlement of formally recognized homeland

¹⁷ The Sidama quest for statehood separate from the SNNPRS has been presented to the Council of Nationalities (CoN) of SNNPRS in an application/petition in 2005. The Sidama Zone has since dropped their request apparently after a long series of political negotiation until the recent decision to conduct referendum.

A logic behind series of quests for homelands is rights of the “Nations, Nationalities and People”-defined as “a group of people who have or share large measure of common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, who inhabit an identifiable, predominately a contiguous territory” (Art.39 (5))-such as rights to self-determination which are expressed in form establishing government institution and fair representation at regional and federal governments. While some “requirements” mentioned in the constitution (for instance, common language and contiguous territory) are arguably, ‘objective,’ are given attention in defining groups, others are largely subjective and are often left out in reality.

In fact, the regional Constitution of the SNNPRS provides mechanisms to address quests for own homeland by creating zones and special *wereda*, even though few of these arrangements are conterminous with ethno-linguistic features of the groups under question, inducing further claims. As a result, claims of ethnic groups for an ethnic-based zone or special *wereda* in the past were allowed, although mainly after violent conflict. For instance, following disagreement for language harmonization project the former Semien Omo Zone was divided into three zones (Dawro, Gamo-Gafa, and Walaita) and two special *wereda* (Basketo and Konta). The Silte people who were formerly administered under the Gurage Zone were also allowed to establish their own zone. There were other groups such as the Gofa¹⁸ and Kembatta who have claimed a separate zone. Yet, the ruling Southern Ethiopia People’s Movement (SEPDM) until recent years has rejected further quests for ethnic based zone or special *wereda*, focusing on the unity of the region (van der Beken, 2013). Indeed, it went on administrative integration as it was evident in the formation of the Segen Area People’s Zone. The former Segen Area People’s Zone was

¹⁸ Gofa people were allowed to establish their own zone in November 3, 2018.

created in the early 2011 by merging adjacent special *wereda* such as the Dirashe, Konso, Amaro and Burji as well as the newly established Ale *Wereda*.

The quests for homelands in the SNNPRS have seen serious of violent encounter between the government and local community led by spontaneously formed civic oriented associations. In most settings local community demonstrated a rare unity and resistance towards unpopular policies of the government (Data, 2006). Conversely, the government generally responded by undermining their quests as views of a “few” or “anti-peace” elements and often targeting leaders of the concerned community. This state-society encounters often takes a form of violent inter-/intra-communal violence. This pattern has repeatedly been observed since the early 1990s, especially in the quests associated with the quest for separate homelands. To mention few cases: In 2000 the elders or *chima* of Wolaita brought popular demand for using their own language at schools, even though this demand was allowed after the violent intervention by the security forces (Abbink, 2006; Data, 2006; Vaughan, 2006). In the same token, the Sidama elders and students’ peaceful march to request regional self-administration in 2002 ended up in security crackdown that led to deaths of more than 25 unarmed civilians and much more injuries (Abbink, 2006, see note 1). As will be elaborated in chapter eight, the demand for a zonal status led by the Popular Committee of Konso saw similar crackdown by the security forces. The engagement of customary actors and civic associations in the claims for homelands was clearly against the very intention of the regional ruling party, that is, to keep the unity of the region. But, the emergence of locally owned peace formations or platforms was largely due to the absence of any option or space to express their legitimate interests and concerns (Abbink, 2006; Data, 2006). As already mentioned, concern of this author with regard to the claim for homeland was to investigate the

potential and limits of activist oriented Popular Committee of Konso as part of local peace infrastructures in its dealing with a dispute in the asymmetric, authoritarian and politically closed space.

3.3.2 Communal Violence within Homelands

Communal violence arising inside homelands has diverse fault-lines, especially in the SNNPRS. The establishment of varied ethnic based homelands such as regions, zone with new competence engendered often ugly conflicts as to who are “genuine” members of the homelands and who is “outsiders” in the context of struggle over the control of local governments, and the potential benefit that accompanying such control. Communal violence arising within homelands occurred among others between earlier settlers and later settlers. As studies found, reference to the “sons-of-soil” has much to do with political disenfranchisement of later settlers and sometimes earlier settlers (Gezachew, 2015; van der Beken, 2013). In some cases, ‘non-indigenous’ members were evicted from the areas they had been living in for generations.

Communal violence inside homelands also includes conflict between traditionally powerful social groups and occupational minority like artisans. The marginalized minorities such as hunters and artisans or craft workers have been socially marginalized and increasingly deprived of access to economic and political resources as well as victims of frequent attacks by majority groups. The marginalized minorities are dispersed social categories existing in all regions of the country and have not been considered in “ethnic politics” since most of them are dispersed social categories rather than settled in a specific locality (Aalen, 2008).

Communal violence arising inside homelands also includes those violence that arise as result of competition over different political parties, often between the ruling parties and organized parties, especially in their endeavor to articulate popular grievances and requests and subsequent actions to realize it. The issues of such conflict often include a desire to preserve and homogenize identities, and secure a piece of land in their frontiers and ensure socio-political benefits, and hence mobilize people against perceived or real threat to those needs and interests (Tesfa, 2014). Likewise, elite competition within the ruling party over control of resource such as government subsidies and power of administration often engendered ugly communal violence. For some, this has been seen as an opportunity to establish exclusive control over land and local government using bogus reference to self-rule in a context of shared administration and failing their duty to provide inclusive public services which are essential for day-to-day life (Erk, 2014, p. 12).

The prevailing policy trend is that the idea of homeland was perceived in terms of homogenous space where one can easily find a group of people who share common culture, language, identity and psychology regardless of their internal diversity. This in practice implies concerted efforts to homogenize and control homelands by the ruling party via its allied or affiliated parties as critical asset for its political survival, promotion of upward accountability and control of every local governments as well as denying community they represent viable mechanisms to hold them accountable.

There is generally no reliable platform for people to engage in dialogue with each other and negotiate issues that matter within homelands. There are also marked inequalities in terms of

power and resource between the conflict parties. Popular reactions are often divided. Minority groups often suffer discriminations and attacks by dominant groups. Public institutions such as justice system that are expected to address disputed issues mainly suffer from overshadowing of prevailing political practice, limited legal and practical capacity as well as wide spread perception of corruption and favoritism (Abbink, 2009; Alula & Getachew, 2008; van der Beken, 2013, pp. 9-12).

This author is interested with two subcategories of communal violence associated with internal affairs of homelands in order to investigate the potential and possible limits of local peace infrastructures to deal with them. In this aspect, a dispute between the Konso ethnic community and the SNNPRS was selected to examine the potential peace activism by members of the community to deal with such dispute. Likewise, an intra-communal dispute over marriage issue between socially powerful clans and marginalized clans in the Wondo Genet District was selected to investigate the potential and challenges of women led peace activism in the asymmetric conflict settings. In particular, women led peace activism in the area was related to failure of customary elders to deal injustices and discriminations rooted in social structures regardless of their effectiveness in cross-cultural peacemaking and reconciliation in the area. Both cases of peace activism were selected to demonstrate limits of both existing general or formal and everyday peace infrastructures to contribute for communal conflict resolution and peace-building. They specifically show the limits of state initiated local peace committees in the absence of local ownership for such structures. They also show the limits of customary methods of conflict resolution with regard to the rights of marginalized groups such as women and craftsmen in the absence of formal checks on customary methods.

3.3.3 Communal Violence in Frontier Areas of Homelands

Communal violence arising in frontier areas of homelands refers to those that emerge in attempt to define socio-spatial border between different regional or local administrations and ethnic groups. Such conflicts have closely been associated with decentralist reform and subsequent territorial reconfiguration along with ethno-linguistic identities in the country since 1990s (Vaughan, 2003 & 2006). A Boundary Commission which was empowered to draw up ethnic regional maps in the early 1990s drew only the outlines of the regions, and left it to the regional governments to sort out their own internal boundaries (Vaughan, 2003, pp. 28-35). Problem arising in frontier areas between regional states were to be settled in future on bases of settlement patterns and the preference of the majority in local administrative units. The constitution enacted in 1995 also left border demarcations and delimitations mainly open and ought to be settled through negotiation between concerned states.

The processes of border reconfiguration in reality proved one of major source of protracted and painful communal violence between neighboring regional states, especially in ethnically mixed areas. Creation of border or a sharp dislocation and separation or cut off point in the ethnically and cultural mixture and non-segregated settlement marked by difficulties and caused endless hardships to everyday life in frontier areas (ibid.). As argued in this study, in the context of 'politics of difference' border demarcation is not only about creation of lines or territorial marks between different regional states but also between ethnic groups, and hence separating 'us' from 'them', the 'here' from 'there' and the 'insiders' from 'outsiders'. In addition, border demarcation is about competition to control natural resources (lands, pasture, water and forests) and decision over ethnically mixed people residing on frontiers.

Communal violence arising from dispute over border demarcation has been recorded among almost all bordering states of Ethiopia in the last two decades, even though the degrees of violence differ from one location to another across a border that links disputants. For instance, the protracted communal violence arose between the regional states of Oromia and Somali over a number of frontier *kebeles*; between the SNNP and Oromia regional states; between the SNNP and Gambella regional states; between the Benishagul and Oromia regional states; between the Amhara and Afar regional states; and the Afar and Somali regional states. In some frontiers of regional states attempt to define border has transformed what were originally customary rivalries and hostilities associated with control of resource or social prestige (Asnake, 2013; Assefa, 2006, p. 136).

With reference to the SNNPRS in particular, violent communal conflicts occurred between the Sidama and Guji/Arsi, Gedeo and Guji, and the Sheka and Majag. Different issues involved in these conflicts such as claim over piece of lands or pasture in frontier areas and their use rights; control of border town (for example; Wondo Genet and Balela in the frontier areas between Sidama and West Arsi Zones) and a desire to be included in nearby regional states. Intergovernmental relations between the SNNP and Oromia regional states have been marked by both symmetric and asymmetric features (Mustefa, 2018).

Communal violence arising in frontiers of homelands was not confined to regional borders. They also emerged between borders of zones/special *wereda* of especially the multiethnic SNNPRS. In the southern region local administrative borders were designed to reflect more or less ethno-

linguistic identity of the people. As a study by the Peace and Security Bureau of the SNNPRS reveals¹⁹, almost every zone and especial *wereda* of SNNPRS had some disputes regarding natural resources in their territorial frontiers, though few of them were emerged violent. Some of the violent communal conflicts in frontiers of zone/special *wereda* of the southern region include the Sidama versus Wolaita, Zeise versus Dirashe, and Konso versus Ale. However, many of them have been dormant owing to the prevailing political realities in the region.

The prevailing political perception with regard to borders which in turn has its own origin in the constitutional provision on self-rule was that it did not accept frontiers/borderlands as common and shared living spaces with all their potential to bridge differences and promote peaceful interactions across socio-spatial borders. Rather, the prevailing practices reinforce a view that consider borders as empty socio-spatial spaces where one can easily create barriers or mark separating ‘us’ from ‘them, ‘insiders’ from ‘outsiders’. The worst effect of such perception has been repeated attempts by ethno-nationalist, regional and local elites to create sharp borders in frontiers and homogenize frontier residents or cleanse them from their cultural or economic living spaces. As will be clarified in the next chapter, formal techniques intended to transform communal violence in frontiers often contribute to their escalation. The federal government often intervenes to contain violence in frontier areas but it has been reactive and ineffective.

The frontier communities usually react to communal violence by creating cross-border networks for peacebuilding and at times railing along their ethnic groups. As will be shown in this study, hybrid and everyday peace initiatives in frontier areas between regional states in southern

¹⁹ See annex 1

Ethiopia were exemplary in reducing suffering of communities and bridging differences. In this regard, the jointly formed or co-owned local peace committees and customary authorities have been very helpful in preventing communal violence, bridging differences, transforming hostilities, healing wounds and strengthening burgeoning socio-economic bonds in the frontier areas between the Sidama Zone in the SNNPRS and West Arsi and Guji Zones in neighboring Oromia regional state. A key lesson to be unearthed from such cases is a need to define a border in term of relationship-be it religious, ethnic, class, gender, political, and so on-focusing the importance of dialogue across sharp dividing lines or images in order to transcend past injustice, injuries, bad memories and to forge a common space regardless of social reality of differences.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, southern Ethiopia has been vulnerable to various forms of violent communal conflicts. These conflicts appear to have primarily been driven by the wider state policies, ideologies and constitutional provisions, although such policy-triggered logics interact with deep-rooted uncoded factors such as social, cultural, historical, economic, geographic and demographic factors to produce localized grievances and violence. In particular, a focus accorded to get congruence between administrative units and ethnic identity by the ruling government has been a driving force behind contemporary communal violence that arise during the *quests for* formally recognized homeland, *inside* homelands and in *frontier* areas of homelands. The redrawing of administrative units along ethnic identity in turn came against the historical background of the previous centralized state building policies that not only denied space for ethnic and cultural diversities but also suppressed localized patterns of behaviors,

norms and practices. These top-down, diametrically divergent governance approaches do not however go with everyday life at community levels in southern Ethiopia.

Everyday life at community levels in southern Ethiopia is characterized by the presence of strong bonding and bridging social capital, peaceful coexistence, alliance making and non-violent conflict regulation. Ethnic based governance approach in particular has been affecting such peaceful coexistence at community levels as it provides an open-ended logic to create or aspire for one's own homeland, homogenize it and secure its border by creating sharp dividing marks. This logic in turn is cemented in the constitution that presumes ethnic group as an objective entity with its distinguishable boundary notwithstanding its inherent fluidity. Although local community groups react to various categories of violence in different ways, most communities remain resilient to such violence largely owing to effective utilization of potential everyday peace infrastructures. Hence, the following chapter specifically identifies gaps in formal mechanisms of conflict management and stress the importance of using local peace infrastructures to supplement them.

CHAPTER FOUR: GENERAL AND EVERYDAY MECHANISMS OF PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

Introduction

The previous chapter explored major categories of communal conflicts occurring, especially in southern Ethiopia. As already mentioned in the earlier chapter, communal violence emerged in the historical, political and socio-economic settings which have their own established norms, ideologies, powers, agencies, morality and institutions. The author specifically identified three forms of violent communal conflicts, namely, the ones which arise during the *quests for own self-governing homelands*, *insides homelands* and in *frontier* areas of homelands.

The current chapter reviews the existing general and everyday mechanisms used to deal with violent conflict in southern Ethiopia. It explores various formal mechanisms of conflict management used by the federal, regional and local governments. It also clarifies everyday peace infrastructures such as customary institutions, state-initiated local peace committees and activist oriented local peace actors, especially, in the SNNPRS. The chapter gives a focus to show limits of relying on just formal mechanisms of conflict management and the potentials of everyday peace infrastructures so as to supplement the general mechanisms. The data for this chapter comes from reviews of written documents as well as from my own empirical studies in the southern region. Hence, the first section begins by explicating the general mechanisms of conflict management at various levels of government. The second section elucidates some selected local peace infrastructures, especially in the SNNPRS. Finally, the conclusion is given.

4.1 General Mechanisms of Conflict Management

In the context of Ethiopia the federal constitution requires different tiers of government to preserve peace and order and to cooperate in dispute resolution and policy formulation and enactment (Art. 51 (1) & 52 (2)). There are generalized normative and institutional provisions in the constitution designed to settle conflict that may arise in the federation. As already described in the previous chapter, the constitution of FDRE itself came as an answer to problem in the state-society relations. The constitution, however, contains no explicit reference to deal with disputes that arise in the vertical and horizontal inter-governmental relations, and it does not expressly stipulate the obligation of any one level of government with regard to that interface (Assefa, 2009; Nigusse, 2015). There are almost no independent institutions in charge of consolidating the inter-governmental relations and so far the party channels facilitated them (ibid.). This in turn led to gaps in the regularity, continuity and effectiveness of the interaction among the constituting members of the federation (Nigusse, 2015, p. 8). The federal constitution implicitly anticipates cooperative interactions among different tiers of governments to be evolved through negotiation and bargaining. In practice, nonetheless, the existing interactions are mostly ad hoc, spontaneous, irregular and usually fail to address communal violence (Mustefa, 2018). There are in fact relevant federal and regional institutions designed to address communal disputes, although in practice local peace infrastructures proved more relevant to transform violent inter-communal conflicts in frontier areas of the regional states. So this section deals with the federal and regional mechanisms of dispute resolution in general terms, focusing on the SNNPRS.

4.1.1 The Federal Government

With regard to formal mechanisms, there are some relevant institutions designed to settle conflict that may arise in the federation. Among such institutions, the HoF (upper house) is the highest body which is empowered to ensure not only the rights of “Nations, Nationalities and People”, resolve their disputes, but also promote equality, better relations and unity among various groups in the country based on their mutual consent (Art. 62 (4)). In this regard, each ‘Nations, Nationalities and People’ or ethnic group is represented in the HoF by at least one member (Art. 61 (1) & 61 (2)). The HoF thus acts as an arbiter in accordance with the constitution.

In view of that, the relevant competence of the HoF, as stated in the constitution include interpreting the constitution, deciding on issues relating to the right of “Nations, Nationalities and People” and identifying solution to disputes that may arise between the regional states (Art. 62 (1,3 &6)). The federal constitution provides a right to self-determination for every “Nations, Nationality and People” in the country which include, among others, a right to form self-administrative institutions or homelands at different tiers of government.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, claim and conflict that arise over recognition of ethnic identity and/or separate homelands/self-governing administrative units have been dominant in the SNNPR make the HoF an active player in the process of settling group claims and conflicts in the region. In practice, however, the HoF considers group claims and conflict over the exercise of the rights to recognition and/or a separate homelands such as zone/special *wereda* under condition that such claims have not been given due answer by the various organs in the administrative hierarchy of the state concerned. The HoF, as stated in its ordinary

proclamation (no. 251/2001), is to give final decision to group claim and conflict following the exhaustion of regional mechanisms and institutions. As will be further clarified below, a group's claim and conflict related to quests for a separate homeland in the SNNPR are to be resolved primarily by the Council of Nationalities (CoN), although it was unable to provide legal answer to such quests due to the prevailing political practices in the region (Tesfa, 2014).

With regard to communal violence arising in frontier areas of homelands, especially between the regional states, the HoF is distinctively empowered to identify solution to such disputes. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, administrative border maps were initially created by the Border Commission in the early 1990s without due participation of the people at grassroots. The issue of actual marking and delimitation on the ground had been left open and made to be decided through mutual negotiation and bargaining between concerned regional states (Vaughan, 2003, pp. 28-35). If states fail to resolve their border disputes, however, the issue is to be settled through the arbitration of the HoF. Since the members state usually fail to reach an agreement on some contentious frontiers, border disputes between the constituting states of the federation were chiefly 'settled' by the verdict of the HoF (Asebe, 2007; Tesfa, 2014; Vaughan, 2003). However, the frontier areas between various administrative units still remain disputed and source of communal violence (Girum, 2014).

In its actual intervention, the HoF seems highly rely on referenda as a dominant means to ascertain the interests of respective people in the frontier areas. For example, referendums were held in various contentious frontiers between the regional states, especially in the border areas that link the SNNPR with neighboring regional state of Oromia and Gambella. Good cases in

point are the conflict between the Gedeo of the SNNPR and Guji of the Oromia Regional State, the status of Wondo Genet between the Sidama and Guji Oromo (Tesfa, 2014, p. 50). In practice, however, the referendum in those and others contentious frontier areas did not help to end localized claims and conflicts. It rather generated violent communal conflicts over claims of vote manipulation, corruption and use of threats (Asebe, 2007, pp. 75-77). As studies found, the referendums were conducted by elites selected based on their loyalty to the government rather than their knowledge about cultural contexts or their technical competence (Asebe, 2007; Girum, 2014, p. 79). In view of this finding, the role being carried out by the HoF is clearly insufficient.

The federal government is entitled to intervene in the affairs of the regional state under condition of gross human rights violations, suspension of the regional state institutions from their normal functioning and endangerment of the constitutional order and peace. Under such circumstances, the federal government through the MoFA or currently Ministry of Peace may intervene in the constitutional autonomy of regional state, either after request from the member states themselves or by the order of the House of Federation. Besides, the federal police or troops intervene to help regional law enforcement organs to safeguard law and order through use of appropriate measure proportionate to contain the violence and insecurities and maintain law and order (Federal Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No. 359/2003). This government's direct role was necessitated by the frequency and intractability of communal violence in the country. When such intervention is implemented, the Ministry of Peace is entrusted to coordinate its activities, including undertaking of the federal police. As will be elucidated in the next section, the MoP has also relevant role of capacity building and assisting building of local peace infrastructures in areas of highly escalated and protracted communal conflicts.

As the policy-practice encounter shows, the government efforts to contain or resolve communal violence have largely been characterized by coercion techniques and short-term approach. In cases of violent communal conflicts arising from claim for ethnic identity and/or for the establishment of separate homelands or region/zone/special *wereda* in the SNNPRS, for example, a prime focus of the government's intervention has been to contain them by using the security forces. As will be clarified in chapter eight, the security forces, for example, targeted civilians and arrested representative of the Konso community in order to suppress their quests. The government intervention in Konso did not help to resolve the root causes that generated the conflict as the security forces lacked cultural sensitivity, mediation and negotiation skills. Accordingly, in many areas where people have legitimate quests, the federal government has to place rapid reaction security forces to suppress their claims, even though the order established is inherently unstable and superficial (Abbink, 2006, p. 405).

Even in a clearly inter-communal violence occurring in frontier areas between the regional states the federal government reaction was not very quick as needed in the view of the deteriorating security problem in those areas. The federal forces often intervene after loss of live, displacements and destruction of property in most cases. Even though, the security forces are often perceived as partial risking confrontations with armed members of the community as it was evident in the cases of conflicts between the Gedeo and Guji in the 1990s (Asebe, 2007; Girum, 2014).

The prevailing pattern that emerged from the federal government intervention is that the federal police or troops are frequently sent to contain violence and seek out perpetrators; then they gather disputants for a meeting and give warning; and appeals are made to the community elders to mediate, hand over perpetrators and conclude agreements under their supervision (Abbink, 2006, pp. 401-402). The federal police often help the displaced to be returned and rebuild houses, and often they arrest and persecute key perpetrators of the violence and they urge restore everyday interactions. In his work in south-western Maji areas, Abbink (2000b, p. 544) remarks party cadres approach to conflict mediation comprised of paternalism and conception of conflict resolution based on imposing externally invented way out upon disputants. No serious attention has been given to address issues of the deep-rooted causes of conflict using capacities rooted within societies because of lack of will and commitment by the government. Overall, the federal government's efforts to resolve communal violence arising in the country remain disorganized, irregular and reactive.

4.1.2 Regional States and Local Governments

There are institutions which directly involve in handling inter-communal violence within the regional states. Such institutions are structured at the regional, zonal, and district levels. Among them are the justice, peace and security bureaus, regional police commissions and militia offices. In practice, these formal institutions, especially, at lower levels play their own roles in exacerbating inter-communal violence in their frontiers through their politicized actions and decisions (Abbink, 2006, p. 400; Hailemariam, 2004, p. 45).

As already mentioned above, the interregional relations in the country mainly depend on willingness and cooperation between the concerned regions. This cooperation is important, especially to address violent inter-communal conflicts in their frontiers. In the absence of this cooperation aforementioned federal institutions remain salient to address cases of disputes involving different regions. However, the constituting states of the federation often engage in the horizontally cooperative activities, despite the absence of explicit constitutional framework to do so (Nigusse, 2015). For example, the SNNP and Oromia regional states often rely on local peace infrastructures, namely, customary authorities and the state initiated local peace committees to reduce tension, resolve conflicts and rebuild social relationships in their frontier areas, even though these mechanisms have been used on ad-hoc bases and irregularly in most of their frontiers (Mustefa, 2018).

With regard to inter-communal violence arising within the SNNPRS, ensuring peace and order and resolving violent conflicts involve organs and institutions at regional, zonal/special *wereda*, *wereda* and *kebele* levels. As per the revised 2001 constitution of the SNNPRS, the State Council has both explicit and implicit roles in ensuring peace. The Council is the legislative body of the region²⁰. The members of the State Council are directly elected on the basis of a plurality electoral system²¹. The regional state councilors are charged with establishing regional police forces and issues directives essential to keep peace and order in the region. The regional councilors have also power, among others, to establish additional administrative hierarchies in the region. In this regard, they are entitled to do considering settlement pattern, territorial size and width and socio-economic activities of people (Tesfa, 2014). In reality, the regional council

²⁰ Article 46(1) of the 2001 revised Southern constitution

²¹ Article 50(1) and (2) of the 2001 revised Southern Constitution

has been dominated by the ruling SEPDM which has been unwilling and/or unable to find durable solution for most communal violence (van der Beken, 2013, p. 7).

The revised 2001 constitution of the southern region in particular established the new Council of Nationalities (CoN) which is usually charged to “strive to find solution to disputes or misunderstanding that may arise between administrative hierarchies” (Polhemus, 2004, p. 188). Beyond the explicit arbiter role, the CoN has series of implicit ones, especially with regard to rights of ethnic groups in the region. The CoN is in fact linked to the House of Federation (HoF) at the federal level in terms of both its composition and competence. The very make-up of the CoN is designed to reflect the make-up of the state in term of ethnic groups in order to diffuse tension. Consequently, it is represented by every officially recognized ethnic group at least by one member. The CoN is empowered to “decide on issues relating to Nations and Nationalities right to zone, special *wereda* and *wereda* administration” based on “settlement pattern, language, identities and consent of people” (Art. 21(1 &2) of Proclamation No. 60/2003). The CoN is also empowered to arbitrate border disputes between zone/special *wereda* administration, using settlement pattern of the people in disputed area or the consent of the respective people. As per the 2001 revised constitution and the 2003 proclamation that details the competence of the CoN, any ethnic group who believes that its rights are enshrined in the federal and the regional constitutions are violated for any reason is entitled to file an appeal to the CoN (Art. 21(3)). The HoF will intervene in the situation if the CoN fails to render relevant decisions or the concern groups dissatisfied by the decision of the council files an appeal.

In practice, there exist inherent limitations on the role the CoN can and should be expected to play. There are problems of capacity. The council meets twice a year in ordinary session. Competence of council members and staff primarily reflect political commitment than skills in conflict management (Polhemus, 2004, p. 189; van der Beken, 2013, pp. 12-13). In particular, the council members themselves are usually suspected as instigators rather than managers of communal violence. In this aspect, some councilors have been implicated in suppressing voices of subsumed minorities who are seeking recognition to their ethnic identity (Yacob, 2010).

As already mentioned above, the HoF considers claims for recognition of ethnic identity to be settled primarily by concerned regional states. In reality, the CoN has disused its role of giving credible solution to quests of ethnic minorities for recognition and separate homelands as well as intra-regional boundary disputes. This is mainly owing to the dominant position of the SEPDM in the CoN and the party's emphasis on unity and administrative integration. Accordingly, both the revised 2001 regional constitution and proclamation detailing the constitutional powers and responsibilities of the council of nationalities issued in 2003 are silent how to deal with conflicts associated with claims for recognition and/or separate homelands (Tesfa, 2014). Indeed, the proclamation introduces some preconditions regarding the exercise of such rights²². The law elucidates that the right to establish a separate region/zone/special *wereda* is conditional, which means that its exercise is dependent upon the violation of the concerned ethnic group's individual and group rights²³. Article 20 of the Proclamation also provides the following

²² Proclamation No. 60/2003, "The consolidation of the House of Council of Nationalities and definition of its powers and responsibilities Proclamation", Dehub Negarit Gazeta, 29 June 2003

²³ Article 21(3) of Proclamation No. 60/2003 stipulates: "any Nations, Nationalities and People who believes that its self-administration is infringed, promotion of its culture, language and history are not respected, in general its rights enshrined in the constitution are not respected or violated for any reason, may present its application to the House...".

guideline for the Council of Nationalities in the exercise of this power: “Question of Administrative hierarchies shall consider the objective to build one common political and economic community...” which seems reflective of the political attitude of the SEPDM.

Consequently, every ethnic group that is not happy with the current administrative structure continues to express their grievances which often breed communal conflict. While there are some who want a region of their “own”, there are still many others who demand separate homelands within the region. The regional government in fact made series of administrative division of a zone and merging of special *wereda* hoping to contain communal violence, notwithstanding these arrangements themselves generated new conflicts. A notable case is merging of the formerly autonomous four adjacent special *wereda* of Dirashe, Konso, Amaro and Burje, together with the newly established Ale *Wereda*, to form the Segen Area People’s Zone in 2011, which in turn generated a new conflict in the area²⁴. This trend clearly demonstrates inherent limitation of relying on politico-administrative means to address conflicts in local governments.

The regional government executives at various levels of administrative hierarchies have key competences and responsibilities to manage communal conflicts. In reality, the leaderships especially at local levels have failed to their duty to protect citizens and sometimes become part of the problem. Local leaderships in the SNNPR, for instance, contributed to communal conflict escalation by motivating their members to continue the question or agitated the community to raise issues for conflict, becoming the owner of the conflict issues and lagging prompt decision

²⁴ This zone was legally dismembered following approval by the SNNPR council on November 3, 2018, especially after violent conflict between the regional government and the Konso; the Konso ethnic community was allowed to have its own separate zone comprising four *weredas* or districts.

to reduce the violence and giving biased decision that could escalate existing crisis (Abbink, 2006, p. 393, 403; Taye, 2004, pp. 78-80).

The same trend appears in communal conflicts in frontier areas between the regional states. As studies found, local leadership and ethno-nationalist elites in the frontier areas often emerge as key factors in pursuing a policy of referendum in order to create a sharp borders, even if their actions disrupt amicable social relations (Asebe, 2007, pp. 75-77; Girum, 2014, p. 79). As will be elucidated below, political leaderships seldom appreciate potential in local peace infrastructures to prevent communal conflicts and sustain communal peace. In most cases administrators at different tiers of government made efforts to find solutions for communal violence, yet such efforts occurred after disputes escalated into violent conflicts, and even so they lack commitment and in-depth knowledge of conflict resolution.

The security forces, especially the police at the *wereda* level and the local militia most of the time had a negative impact on the processes of communal conflicts. Such forces often directly participate in the conflict taking side even during the times of crisis, failing to take timely actions to reduce violence, becoming the owners of the conflict and taking biased measures or not taking due action to stop the violence (Taye, 2004, p. 79). The regional/federal police forces are usually deployed to contain violence, even though they manage to do in most instances after the damages are done (Abbink, 2006).

The other usual means of restoring communal peace that have been used by the politico-administrative organs (i.e. the ruling party and the regional executives) is conducting series of

confidence building and peace conferences in conflict affected areas. Such conferences are often organized by bringing together conflict parties and other stakeholders. Even if participants in such conferences produce some sorts of agreements, there have been shortages of reliable mechanisms to enforce their consensus in the continuous manner (Girum, 2014).

The judicial organs, that is, the courts at different levels (the regional, zonal, *wereda*) do not usually involve in the sphere of communal violence. This is because the legal instruments of conflict settlement, which are clearly provided in the constitution, do not adequately deal with such conflicts. While the criminal justice system of the country aim to prevent conflict through deterrence, communal conflict resolution through the criminal justice system have been made difficult by among others lack of awareness of most community members about their legal rights and responsibilities, inadequate staffing of the judiciary at local governments and the nature of conflict and the relationship between disputants (Sehen et al., 2012). As Abbink (2006, p. 396) succinctly puts, any dispute on lands or land use between individuals or households often becomes a community issue, and pits community against each other. In other words, the legal subject is not merely individual persons who are directly involved in conflicts but involve group of related people, family, clan and wider community. What is more, the outcomes of litigation might often reinforce animosity, mistrust, and more bloodshed if the courts pass politically motivated decisions (Asebe, 2007).

In sum, formal mechanisms could not address conflicts before they reach the level of violence. Government officials both at the regional and federal levels started to talk and take action on specific conflict cases when a violent conflict occurred and this resulted in reactive approach.

Whenever a conflict occurs, a team of officials assigned by the government is sent to that area and they use different mechanisms to calm the situation and then hold various discussion and meetings to settle the problems. Nonetheless, the policy-practice encounters reflect challenges relating to the adequacy of the normative frameworks, institutional constraints, the capacity to implement and limited coordination to deal adequately with conflicts that emerge between communal groups as well as in violent encounter between the state and society. Clearly, there are deficits in current approaches to conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution in the country. These in turns call for what Lederach (2013) terms as a “long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources of reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside.”(p.13). Hence, the next section traces local peace infrastructures and their potentials and possible limits, especially in the SNNPRS.

4.2 Local Peace Infrastructures

Local peace infrastructures aspire to support efforts of addressing the root causes of violent conflict and focus on dialogue, mutual understanding, joint problem-solving and reconciliation. Unlike the existing general approaches which are largely reactionary and focus on law and order, the peace infrastructure approach focuses on conflict prevention, management and resolution outcomes that lead to conflict transformation, social, political, cultural and religious reconciliation. This section describes some selected local peace infrastructures, namely, customary authorities, state initiated local peace committees and activist oriented local peace actors. It gives a particular attention to trace the origin and nature of state-initiated local peace committees as they are key pillars of the ‘Strategy for Conflict Resolution’ of the SNNPRS.

4.2.1 Customary Authorities

As already mentioned in chapter two, customary mechanisms for conflict resolution entail long-existing social practices, rooted in local cultural settings, aiming at reducing tensions, resolving disputes, and rebuilding relationships. Customary mechanisms are based on norms, traditions and unwritten customary laws of societies. A customary mechanism of conflict resolution in Ethiopia is being practiced since long times. Various ethnic groups have used this method to settle family disputes, matrimonial conflicts, warfare between communities and many other problems (Donovan & Getachew, 2003).

Customary actors have increasingly been playing an important role in conflict resolution and peace-building in Ethiopia in general and in southern Ethiopia in particular (Alula & Getachew, 2008; Data, 2005). Good cases to mention are *gondoro* among the Sidama, Guji, and Gedeo. As will be further clarified in the next chapter, the community members believe in the effectiveness of customary systems of conflict resolution and heavily rely on them as they are less costly and speedier, open and participatory. Customary systems of dispute resolution are deeply embedded in social norms, rituals and often involve the negotiation and payment of blood compensation. Studies have documented peacemaking mechanisms among the Afar and Somali states where roles of clan leaders and council of the elders were legally recognized (Donovan & Getachew, 2003; Hagmann, 2007). In these regions officials from the regional to *kebele* administrative tiers usually rely on advice of elders to deal with community disputes and grievances.

The consecutive Ethiopian regimes failed to use potentials in customary institutions of conflict resolution in favor of their narrow interests. Customary elders and leaders were, for instance, co-

opted as local agents of control under the imperial regime (Alula, 2008). The rural judges who were representatives of the landlords had taken the role and power of customary leaders to arbitrate conflicts and enforce decisions in the rural areas. The *Dergue* regime also significantly contributed for the decline of customary conflict resolution mechanisms by establishing *kebele* administrations in rural area. Community disputes were addressed through the *kebele* courts and its militia. The *kebele* peasant associations, party structures, women and youth associations under the *Dergue* undermined the power of the customary institutions in the rural areas. These institutions were highly politicized and primarily used to fulfill the interests of the government. The *kebele* court under the *Dergue* in particular was notorious for limited local accountability, power abuses and imposing leaders' view and repressive state policies upon members of the community (Alula, 2008; Pausewang, 1994, p. 216).

With the decentralization reform in the country in the 1990s, customary practices and institutions saw revival in the local governments. The 1995 federal constitution foresees the adjudication of personal and family disputes in accordance with religious and customary laws, although it does not recognize their role in settlement of criminal cases like homicide. Under the current EPRDF controlled government the former peasant associations were merged to form the *kebele* administration to deal with community disputes through its social courts, even though serious criminal cases such as homicides have been addressed at *wereda* or zonal/special *wereda* court and hardly left to be addressed at the social courts at the *kebele* level (Alula, 2003). Most of localized disputes in the rural villages are still arbitrated by customary elders and community leaders. In this regard, the informal recognition and use of customary laws is a lot more

widespread in the country even though the country's constitution did not explicitly recognize their role in dispute resolution (Erk, 2014, p.11).

The decentralization reform in the SNNPRS in particular has given a greater opportunity to various ethnic groups to resuscitate aspects of their culture such as customary authority structures, customary law and so on. In many local governments of the region traditional rainmakers, story tellers, spirit mediums, traditional healers, chiefs, elders and others have reclaimed their sphere of influence in the life of their community members (Data, 2005 & 2006). While traditional authorities are not formally recognized in the constitution of the SNNPR, local administrators usually mobilize pro-government elders to implement policy, promote and preserve culture and languages and help settle complex inter-communal violence (Markos, 2014). As will be further clarified in the next chapter, customary elders and community leaders have helped to restore peaceful and harmonious relations between previously conflicting groups such as between the Guji and Sidama in Wondo Genet, as well as in the frontier areas between the Guji and Gedeo, and so on (ibid.). In fact, the roles of elders in negotiation and mediation of disputes over land holding rights were legally recognized in the region as formal structures of governments cannot effectively deal with all cases of disputes that arise in the villages (SNNPR Proclamation No. 110/2007). This provision expressly entrusts customary elders and community leaders with the task of resolving localized disputes relating to the land and property rights and collective resources, such as forests and water management and uses in villages.

In reality, customary elders have been increasingly manipulated by authorities and oppositions elites to advance their interests. While some pro-government elders have used by the SNNPR

governments to suppress legitimate concerns of communities, most customary elders and community leaders have strongly been against undue government interventions. In the latter case, community leaders and elders have been active in localized and widespread civic oriented resistance against unpopular policies of the government. As will be clarified in the last subsection, this trend has repeatedly been observed in various forms of violent encounters between the southern regional government and certain ethnic groups within the region.

Recent studies in the SNNPRS have already expressed concerns related to abuses of women and members of minority group by customary institutions (Aalen, 2008; Abbink, 2006; Data, 2006; Markos, 2014). Discriminations against women in particular have been widespread throughout the country as most Ethiopian communities regard women as incapable and inferior to men in conflict resolution (Embet, 2005). This is against the critical role of women as peace makers at community level. In this regard, in many rural communities of Ethiopia women' role as facilitator of reconciliation between disputants have been common as in the case of the *siiqee*, 'stick of peace' of the Arsi women which they use to facilitate the settlement of community disputes as well as to protect their rights. Likewise, among the Sidama a stick known as a *siqqo* is also used by women especially to uphold and celebrate the female honor; the *siqqo* together with *yaka*, 'women's council' in the community have served as a powerful female conflict resolution tool or peace activism (International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, [IIRR], 2009).

Some scholars argue that customary form of conflict resolution mechanisms and reconciliations have increasingly come under crisis because of complexity of communal violence, weakening of the elders with regard to weapon carrying youths and lack of enforcement mechanisms of their

decisions (Abbink, 2000 & 2006). This author, however, argues for a need to identify conditions that determine their effective contributions to communal conflict transformation as part of local peace infrastructures.

4.2.2 Local Peace Committees

Ethiopia has a recent history of local peace committees, with many of the first peace committees established after 2004 (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). Until the adoption of conflict prevention and resolution strategy in 2009, the government had largely relied on a reactive approach to deal with inter-community violence. Civil society organizations were a step ahead in establishing local peace committees and introducing non-violent methods to communal conflict transformation. So this subsection starts by tracing historical experiences of local peace committees initiated by civil society actors, before exploring and analyzing national and regional strategies for conflict prevention, especially the state initiated local peace committees and its structures and functioning in the SNNPRS.

4.2.2.1 Local Peace Committees Initiated by Civil Society Actors

The early peace committees of Ethiopia were established by the civil society organizations. Civil society actors grew after the 1990s decentralization reform in the country (Dessalegn & Meheret, 2004, p. 65). Before this time, non-state actors had limited role in public space as they were viewed by successive regimes with suspicion or hostility. As a result their role in promoting peace and respect for rights of citizens was limited (ibid.). Even after the 1990s, role of civil society actors have mainly been limited to relief and development activities. There were only few legally recognized local CSOs that work in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding

in limited parts of the country (Gebre, 2006). Even though, they carried out their peace agenda in limited geographic spaces. For example, Peace and Development Committee (PDC) is among a national NGOs working in conflict prevention and resolution. It was set up comprising a team of elders centered in the capital Addis Ababa whose main duties and responsibilities are to indentify area of concerns such as political and religious conflicts and attempt to provide space for negotiation or mediating disputants. In this regard, it played its own role in non-violent political transition and mediation after the end of the *Dergue* regime. Moreover, it offered training to customary elders on inclusive local peacebuilding (Peace and Development Centre, 2014)²⁵.

There were in fact some international NGOs and bilateral organizations that played active and commendable role in the area of communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding. They focused on funding different projects of local CSOs and government institutions, although a few international NGOs were implementing their own projects. For example, since the 1990s the GIZ, Civil Peace Service programme of Germany deeply engaged in providing technical and financial supports for the creation of regional conflict resolution strategy, establishment of local peace committees and the peace radio programme in the SNNPRS (Civil Peace Service, [CPS], 2017; Glowacki & Gönc, 2013;). On the other hand, Mercy Corps, the US based NGO implemented its own conflict prevention and resolution projects in the SNNPRS, by taking the first initiative in the 1990s to form local peace committee structures among pastoralists in southern Ethiopia, building capacity of customary elders and facilitating collaboration between government and local CSOs (Gebre, 2006; Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). Later, Mercy Corps

²⁵ A coalition elders whose roots go back to around 1988, 1989, during the period of the civil war in Ethiopia played a key in releasing political prisoners sentenced to life in prison in connection to violence that erupted after the 2005 parliamentary elections (“Elders play”, 2009).

expanded its projects into conflict-affected farming communities such as the Konso and Dirashe by establishing local peace committee structures in their frontier areas (Asnake, Bayisa & Zelalem, 2013).

There were also some local civil society organizations that played key roles in establishing and/or supporting local peace committees, especially among pastoralists in southern Ethiopia (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013, p. 32). Among these one was Pastoralist Research and Development Association, a local NGO established in 1999 and worked in the area of conflict prevention and resolution among pastoralists in the SNNPRS. It had provided series of peacemaking activities such as training and organizing forums on conflict prevention and peacebuilding for community representatives from pastoralist communities in the SNNPRS. It specifically established and supported peace committees comprising customary elders (Gebre, 2006). Likewise, CSOs such as Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere and Oromia Pastoralist Association engaged in establishment of peace committees based on customary council of elders in the Borena Zone (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). Since 2003, most of peace committees established among pastoralists in southern Ethiopia were integrated into the IGAD early warning and early response system which empowers local peace committees as part of the regional initiatives to reduce cross border conflicts, improve the livelihoods of pastoralist and extract natural resources in their lands (Hagmann & Alemmaya, 2008, p. 21).

Even if there is inadequate empirical studies on civil society led peace committees in Ethiopia's pastoral areas, the critiques contend that flourishing of local and international NGOs working on local peace-building among pastoralists were associated with the overall commercialization of

peace-building at global level since the 1990s. As the critiques argue, customary elders of pastoral communities who engaged in mediation and reconciliation were either paid by the government or NGOs, making conflict resolution a lucrative agenda in return for per diem and other personal benefits (Hagmann, 2007; Hagmann & Alemmaya, 2008). This arguably has much to do with negative perception towards the elders and erosion of their legitimacy to enforce localized peace accords. Nonetheless, a study on local peace committees among pastoralists in southern Ethiopia has found that local peace committees based on existing community structures have a large underutilized potential to sustain peace at grassroots (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013, p. 5).

The role of civil society in communal conflict resolution and peace-building was, however, severely restricted in Ethiopia as a result of the adoption of the charities and societies proclamation (No. 621/2009). As per the proclamation (Art. 14), CSOs receiving more than ten per cent of their funding from foreign sources were forbidden to engage in promotion of human and democratic rights, the rights of NNP, genders, religion, children and conflict resolution or reconciliation. In fact, civil society organizations were allowed to receive external funds as far as their activities confined to only one region and if they did not have members from other regions of the country. Likewise, international or foreign organizations operating in Ethiopia on a bilateral agreement were allowed to involve in communal peacebuilding²⁶.

Restrictive policy against the civil society actors came mainly after the violent end of 2005 national election. It was the election of a number of local CSOs which involved educating voters, election observation and monitoring. Through their collaborated and coordinated efforts, CSOs

²⁶ After the appointment of the new Prime Minister a new CSO friendly proclamation (No. 1113/2019) entered into law in 12th March, 2019.

reached millions of people in various regions of the country using different methods such as print and electronic media, discussion forums, public debates, and so on, even though the government did not want such activities (Gebre, 2006). After this election, the government explicitly took series of repressive measures in order to restrict space for the civil society actors. As Abbink (2009) puts it, due to control of civil space by the government of Ethiopia “...no grassroots associations, no independent trade unions’ or media or teachers’ union, and no independent NGOs” allowed to operate without obstruction (p. 23).

After the adoption of the charities and societies proclamation in 2009, most civil actors working on conflict issues became virtually impossible as they used to depend fully or partially on external donors and struggled to find financial supports (Eyob, 2017). As CSOs agents who were dependent on foreign aid were ceased to exist, local peace committees established by them left without supports except among some pastoral areas in southern Ethiopia where such peace structures were integrated into the IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Early Response system.

With regard to the SNNPRS in particular, the Civil Peace Service Programme of Germany continued to work in peace-building in the region until 2016. It specifically worked in collaboration with a local NGO, Resource Center for Civil Society Group Association (RCCSGA) which was set up in 2007. As its director claims²⁷, the RCCSGA played a key role by offering capacity building trainings, conducting peace mappings and promoting peace culture for communal peace. As will be further clarified in the next chapters, the RCCSGA introduced peace radio programmes in various conflict-affected frontier areas, especially between the SNNP

²⁷ Mr. Kussia Bekele, the Director of the RCCSGA. (2018, November 21) (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

and Oromia regional states in order to promote contact and mutual understanding, and reduce prejudice, stereotypes and enmity. As its impact assessment shows, peace radio project helped to change negative attitude and reduce hostility and mistrust in those frontiers (CPS, 2017, p. 23). Despite the legal hurdles and lack of a conducive political environment, the RCCGA has been quite effective in its peace activities. Conversely, grassroots level civic associations such as customary women associations, self-help and burial societies and inter-faith associations have played a critical role in ensuring peace of communities.

4.2.2.2 Local Peace Committees Initiated by the Federal Government

After the 2009 legislation that restricts civil society organizations engagement in peace-building and democratization, the federal government reinforced earlier trend of forming peace committees at grassroots levels. In the SNNPRS in particular some of local peace committees initiated by the CSOs were integrated into local administrations and new ones were established among peasant *kebele*. They were integrated into local administrative structures because the farmers are perceived to have integrated into the state bureaucracy²⁸. In principle in the peasant *kebeles* customary elders are not allowed to handle serious cases like homicide, even though they are key player in communal conflict resolution at local level.

The federal government initiated local peace committee structures were mainly informed by its experiments in working with customary elders to manage insecurities at local level. For example, after the fall of the *Dergue* regime in the 1991, the ruling government established “Peace and Stability Committee” comprising mainly the newly arriving security forces of EPRDF and

²⁸ Conflict prevention and resolution experts of Peace and Security Bureau of the SNNPRS. (2016, November 23). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

community leaders with a mandate to reduce threats of the disbanded ex-soldiers (Dessaiegn & Mehret, 2004). This platform helped to disarm civilians who acquired weapons from the ex-soldiers and reduce incidents of sporadic violence in rural villages. However, it also served as an instrument to suppress dissenting voices and recruit individuals who had not served the *Dergue* regime to serve in local governments (ibid.).

In addition, the federal government had experience of a “joint peace and security committee”, which served as an inclusive forum for dialogue and handling communal violence arising in frontier areas between the regional states. The joint committee primarily composed officials of the government and security officers on the one hand and the community leaders and respected elders on the other hand. For example, the joint peace and security committee was established by the Afar and Somali regional administrators after violent inter-communal conflict in their frontiers in 1997. As Michaelson (2000) puts, the Afar-Issa (Somali) joint peace and security committee represented a fusion of the modern and traditional, or a new partnership between local elders and government authorities. In such frontiers customary elders conducted discussions and negotiation in tandem with the regional and local government leaders. In other words, the elders arranged the payment of blood price which have been common custom in the area whereas the especial court and police were established to handle the conflict and enforce peace. Judges for the court and members of police forces were recruited from ethnically neutral persons who were residents of the two regions and were familiar to the local residents. As Michaelson (2000, p. 12) argues, the Afar-Issa joint peace committee helped to restore stability and peace in their disputed frontier areas, by reducing long existing tensions and facilitating business and social

interactions. Nonetheless, it was unable to address underlying dispute over grazing lands and water points in their disputed frontier areas.

Likewise, the Borana-Digodi joint peace committee comprising local government officials and elders from both sides were established after the 1998 violent inter-communal conflict. It served as a platform to restore previous coexistence that existed before they found themselves on the opposite sides of the administrative boundary between the Oromia and the Somali regional states. As Mohammed Abdulahi (2005, p. 16) gently describes, the Borana-Digodi joint peace committees organized a series of meetings that eased their tense relations, although it was not made permanent and/or had limited mandates to promote interaction across disputed boundary. Besides, functions of this local peace structures mainly depended on continuous engagement of the federal government to persuade and/or pressurize the two regional and local government officials to commit themselves to dialogues and peaceful resolution of the conflicts. This was because the established local peace committees were not fully owned by respective community members and local governments. Hence, these early experiments with the joint peace committees clearly influenced the establishment of local peace committees in southern Ethiopia.

At the federal level the MoFA/MoP is a leading authority empowered to devise and implement durable solution to disputes that may arise within and between the regional states without restricting their constitutionally guaranteed autonomy. In 2010, the MoFA specifically authorized to give attention to prevention and transformation of conflict than relying on the usual

ineffective reactive approaches²⁹. Accordingly, it designed a ‘National Peace Architecture’ or national peace infrastructure that guides its intervention, the regional counterparts and its partners. The national peace infrastructure was designed as a permanent national and local mechanism, system, structures and capacities for prevention and resolution of violent conflict in the country (Pro-just Research & Training Centre, [PRTC], 2014). It appears that the establishment of the national peace infrastructure was in agreement with resolution that the country signed at the first Standing Conference on Stability, Security and Development in Africa held in Durban in 2002. As already mentioned in chapter two, it was resolved in this conference that each African country should endeavor to establish a national framework for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in December 2004. Although it came later than in some African countries, the drafting of the national peace infrastructure of Ethiopia was clearly facilitated by the UNDP that provided financial and technical supports in its designing, consultation and establishments of local peace committee in conflict-affected frontier districts (Sehen et al., 2012). The consultation on the draft national peace infrastructure involved regional peace and security officials, the HoF, the CoN from the SNNPRS as well as key international donors such as the UNDP, USAID and GIZ (PRTC, 2014, p. 24).

The national peace infrastructure of Ethiopia is based on the three conflict prevention and resolution strategic pillars recognized for creation of durable communal peace. The first pillar aims to develop a culture of peace, tolerance and non-violent communication through awareness raising training. The second pillar aims to establish a strong early warning and early response

²⁹ Proclamation No. 691/2010, a Proclamation to provide Definition of Powers and Duties of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation, 17th Year No. 1 ADDIS ABABA 27th, October, 2010

system that coordinate data collection, analyses and linkages with relevant authorities. The third pillar wishes to address conflict at the early stage, identify and deal with root causes as well as providing remedies to victims of communal violence (PRTC, 2014, pp. 13-14).

The aforementioned strategic pillars presume that lack of communication and coordination between various stakeholders as well as gaps in knowledge and skills of communal conflict prevention and resolution are key contributors of communal conflict escalation. Consequently, the national peace infrastructure aims to strength existing local peace committee structures and/or establish a new platforms such as local peace committees, peace clubs in schools, early warning and response units, promotion of dialogues and mediation and ensuring active participation of women and youths in communal peacebuilding. The *kebele* level peace infrastructures are specifically established to prevent conflict by probing and reporting worrying signs, promoting culture of peace and dialogue among community members and providing solution to issue that they can manage in collaboration with other government structures at the *kebele* or district levels such as reserve army and militia (PRTC, 2014).

Nonetheless, the national peace infrastructure of Ethiopia was not enacted by legislators in parliament to serve as a formally recognized mechanism of peace-building like that of Ghana and Kenya. Instead, the MoP has been using it as a procedural infrastructure to prevent and resolve communal conflicts. In addition, the drafting and consultation on the infrastructure did not include inputs of various political parties. As already mentioned above, CSOs were barred by the legislation that restricts their role in communal conflict resolution and peace-building. Most importantly, the processes of designing of national peace infrastructure of Ethiopia did not

engage local people in conflict-affected areas except local cadres of the ruling party (PRTC, 2014). Even if the national peace infrastructures aspires to enhance trust and build confidence between the federal or regional governments and ethnic communities at local levels, it does not offer reliable means to settle violent conflicts arising in the asymmetric conflict settings.

Apart from creating the national peace infrastructure framework, the MoP is also engaged in establishing and supporting local peace committee structures in conflict affected frontier areas between the regional states (UNDP, 2010). For example, the ministry established a joint peace committee project in 32 conflict affected frontier districts after receiving fund for this project from the UNDP in 2010. As the evaluation of the government sponsored team shows, the joint peace initiative project was perceived positively by participants in the committees since it empowered local peace committee members such as local officials, elders, women and religious leaders to reduce tensions in their locality and improve communication. However, the project saw challenges related to sustainability and coordination (PRTC, 2014).

As the author argues, the national peace infrastructure of Ethiopia is a critical way forward to sustain peace at grassroots, although it is only at an early stage of development and is currently overshadowed by the ongoing political crisis in the country. The regional states are yet to fully embark on the task of developing their own context specific communal conflict transformation framework except the SNNPRS that developed its own conflict resolution strategy.

4.2.2.3 Local Peace Committees Initiated by the SNNPRS

The southern regional state of Ethiopia developed its own conflict resolution strategy in 2011. The strategy offers several measures for communal conflict resolution and peace-building including working with youths, inclusion of women in peace bodies, peace education, strengthening social associations in peace-building and linking development and peace efforts. Besides, the strategy seeks to improve organizational structures, includes “to organize peace committees that support zonal, *wereda* and *kebele* levels” and to monitor their work by following up “...the tasks of peace committees in different hierarchies whether they act according to their functions” (SNNPR Strategy for Conflict Resolution, 2011, p. 47).

The conflict resolution strategy of the southern regional state specifically associates communal violence in the region with poverty, harmful traditional practices, lack of good governance and undeveloped peace culture. The strategic document identified political leadership, elites and religious and customary institutions engage in both alleviating and aggravating the conflicts. The strategy rightly pointed out lack of horizontal linkages between bordering ethnic based zones or special *wereda*, district and *kebele* as well as absence of recognition to civil society actors and customary elders in existing legal frameworks as major hindrance to communal conflict prevention and transformation in the region (SNNPR Strategy for Conflict Resolution, 2014, pp. 19-22).

Consequently, the SNNPRS conflict resolution strategic document aims to employ transformative approach to local peacebuilding by empowering local peace actors with required knowledge and skills, improving coordination between state and non-state actors, reducing legal

stabling blocks to conflict resolution as well as showing conflict sensitivity in development interventions. Besides, it aims to strengthen inter-communal relationship in the region through for example cultural exchange, peace education, building capacity of local peace actors, encouraging the participation of existing social actors and grassroots civil actors, youths and women, information network, and evidence based policy and research at various levels of government (SNNPR Conflict Resolution Strategy, 2011 & 2014). The conflict resolution strategy of the southern region arguably purports to include diverse local peace actors, although its practice diverges from the stated purposes.

The designing of the southern regional conflict resolution strategy was mainly guided by the CoN and financially and technically supported by GIZ, Civil Peace Service of Germany which has been supporting the CoN and its department of Common Values of Nationalities and Dispute Resolution in elaborating, publishing and dissemination of the strategy (Fuechtjohann, 2012). As already mentioned above, the CoN was constitutionally empowered to deals with disputes and claims arising between various groups of the region, as well as ensures equality and unity of the people in the region. Even if its formal arbitrary role has mainly been insignificant owing to the prevailing political practices, the CoN has been doing some crucial activities on preservation of culture and languages of various ethnic communities as well as improving inter-communal relations in the region³⁰. The CoN designed the strategy based on surveying of seven years' conflict trends in the region (SNNPR Conflict Resolution Strategy, 2011). Nonetheless, the CoN

³⁰ The experts in the SNNPRS Council of Nationalities. (2016, November 24). (Interviews with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

has not been even allowed to play an independent role in helping to address communal conflicts and overseeing everyday activities of local peace actors³¹.

Instead, the Peace and Security Bureau of the SNNPRS plays a key role in establishing local peace committee structures and supervising and monitoring their everyday activities. The bureau was specifically established in order to prevent violent conflict and resolve disputes that may arise in the region. On account of this it formed a directorate to facilitate conflict prevention and resolution, managing the conflict, and assisting resolution communal conflicts and improving inter-communal relationships. In this regard, the bureau adopted the local peace committee manual from the Ministry of Federal Affairs. This manual defines the structures and functions (joint) peace committee structures to be used at various levels of government. The bureau specifically serves as a link between the federal support unit and local peace committees and hence offers technical, financial and logistical supports needed at lower structures of government³². This implies that the Peace and Security Bureau of the southern region plays double roles, namely, containing communal violence usually by sending the security forces into conflict affected areas and engaging in local peace-building including overseeing everyday activities of local peace actors.

Accordingly, the Peace and Security Bureau of the SNNPRS has not yet established competence to address disputes non-politically, impartially and legally. Even if the regional conflict resolution strategy strives to engage non-state actors in communal conflict resolution, the bureau

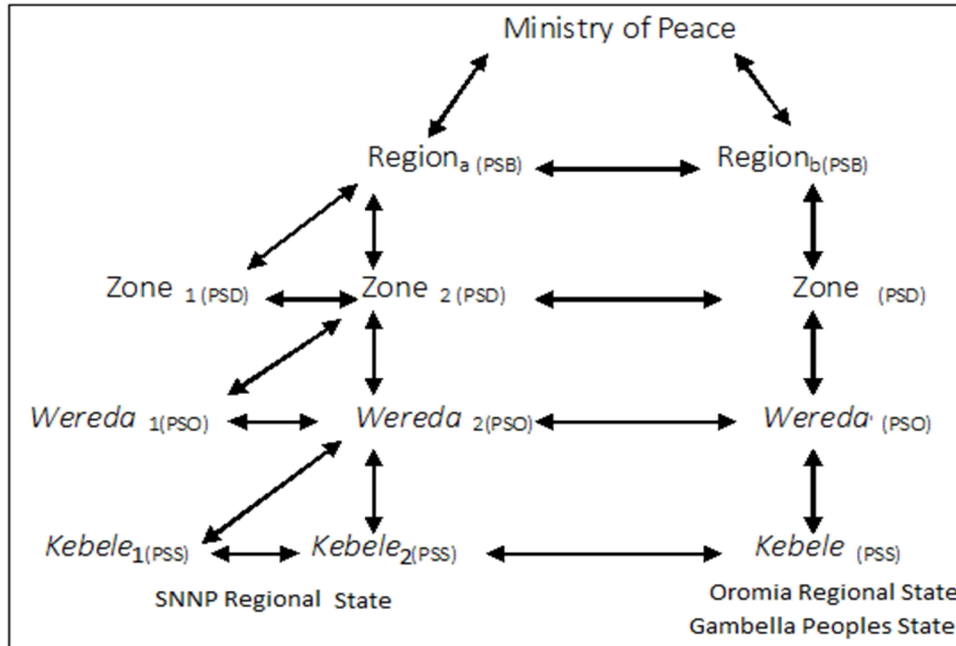
³¹ Ibid.

³² Conflict prevention and resolution experts in the Peace and Security Bureau of SNNPRS. (2016, November 23). (Interviews with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

has not yet demonstrated genuine will to engage with customary and civil society actors except in unpeaceful inter-communal conflict arising in frontier areas. Moreover, there are no clear legal frameworks that facilitate the involvement of non-state actors in communal conflict resolution. Furthermore, its intent to use capacities situated within communities largely depends on a conflict context. For example, if a local community tends to resist an unpopular state policy, the bureau usually work with only pro-government members of the community. In particular, in disputes arising between the government and various ethnic communities, the bureau regularly use local peace committee structures to access relevant intelligence information than serve as a genuine platform for peace dialogue and mediation.

Below the regional Peace and Security Bureau, there are zonal departments, *wereda* offices, and *kebele* sectors empowered to address communal conflicts. Except at the *kebele* level, peace committee structures comprise appointed local officials, experts on conflict prevention and resolution and security officers. In the other words, local peace committee structures at the regional, zonal/special *wereda* and to some extent at *wereda* levels resemble just a security committee that primarily aims to at managing violent conflicts. It is mainly at the *kebele* levels that a local peace committee gets its real appearance in its use of non-violent and inclusive conflict resolution techniques.

Figure 4.1: Structure of Peace Committee in SNNPRS



Source: Field work data, 2017.

As will be further discussed in chapter eight, the southern regional state conflict strategy has done little in relation to managing the state-society crisis since by its very design local peace infrastructures are better situated to address unpeaceful relationships in the symmetric conflict settings. In this regard, the strategic document presumes existing legal provisions are capable of dealing with conflicts in settings of power asymmetries, although such provisions have mainly been ineffective owing to the prevailing political and social practices in the region.

As already been mentioned in chapter two, local peace infrastructures need to have sufficient mandates, roles and compositions in order to contribute to communal conflict resolution and peace-building. As the informants in the SNNPR Peace and Security Bureau state, local peace committees initiated by the southern regional government were mostly established to prevent

escalation of nascent micro-level disputes into violent and more widespread inter-communal conflicts. This view resonates with an argument by van Tongeren (2013, p. 107) that the establishment of LPCs would help conflict-affected communities to deal with security challenges affecting their everyday life. At the time of the fieldwork to this research, peace committees initiated by the SNNPR government have been active, especially at conflict-affected *kebele* and districts in frontier areas than inside ethnic-based zones or special *wereda*.

As per the local peace committee guideline³³ district and *kebele* levels peace committee structures in the southern region are vested with broad variety of tasks. While the district is required to reply requests from the *kebele* levels, it is the *kebele* peace committee that is primarily tasked to inform about conflict early signs as well as facilitate peace dialogue, mediation and reconciliations. The *kebele* level peace committee is required to hold regular discussion on their common security concerns, prevent violence, identify suspects, assist the return of confiscated properties, educate their members about peace and conduct joint peace forum with neighboring *kebele* and implement its decisions using mainly resources situated within their community. The district peace committee structure reflects its security council mainly focuses on issues beyond the capacity of the *kebele* peace committee such as coordinating peace conferences, training and overseeing *kebele* level peace committees, promoting inter-communal dialogues with neighboring districts and helping to deal with the root causes of communal violence. Besides, districts replies to the *kebele* peace committees by offering training and logistic supports and providing allowance, especially during inter-community dialogues and peace conferences.

³³ It is similar to the Ethiopian Conflict Early Warning Response Units (2009) guideline (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013, pp. 29-30).

Even if the conflict resolution strategy of the SNNPRS strives to include diverse sections of societies, an inclusive composition of peace committees is apparent mainly at grassroots levels. Consequently, state initiated local peace committees at *kebele* levels comprise both state and non-state actors, especially chairman of the *kebele*, leader of the *kebele* militia, and representatives of customary leaders, self-help associations, youth and women's associations. This composition is arguably significant to gain legitimacy and trust all sections of the society. As will be further clarified in Chapter seven, state initiated local peace committees have been playing a positive role in transforming unpeaceful inter-communal relations in the symmetric conflict settings, especially in the frontier areas between the regional states, ethnic-based zones and special *wereda* than in the asymmetric social and political settings.

4.2.3 Localized Peace Activism

As already mentioned above, the potentials of every peace infrastructures in the asymmetric settings, especially to bridge difference between the government and a community as well as to deal with structurally rooted social discriminations and injustices have become increasingly difficult. This is because most members of local peace infrastructures in such asymmetric settings have been influenced by those who monopolize power to their own agenda. For example, while some pro-government members of customary elders and state-initiated local peace committees have been used by the government to suppress legitimate quests of a community, most members of local peace infrastructures have strongly been against undue government intervention in their everyday life. The latter usually mobilizes supports from wider sections of a community for peace activism against the government's misconduct (Data, 2006).

Activist-oriented community based peace movements emerged during various violent encounters between the government and a certain ethnic groups in the SNNPRS. To point a few cases: In 2000 the elders or *chima* of Wolaita led resistance against unpopular language project demanding for the use of their own language at schools, even though this demand was allowed after a violent intervention by the security forces (Abbink, 2006; Data, 2006). In the same token, the Sidama elders or *gudumale chemesa* and students' peaceful march demanding own regional self-administration in 2000 ended up in the security forces crackdown that led to deaths of more than 25 unarmed civilian and much more injuries (Abbink, 2006). As will be further clarified in chapter eight, customary authorities led civil disobedience of Konso have experienced violent security forces clampdown because of their firm resistance against the imposition of the Segen Area People's Zone. Compared with their usual roles such as negotiation and mediation of inter-personal and inter-group disputes within communities, peace activism of elders, community leaders and other grassroots civil society actors in these cases were modest and went against the very goal of the regional ruling party, that is, to keep the unity and administrative integration of the region. But, the use of peace activism in each asymmetric setting occurred primarily owing to narrowed chance to deal their concerns using existing general or formal and everyday associational mechanisms.

Conversely, there are a number of associations engaged in peace activism against structurally rooted injustices and discrimination against women and members of minority. Some of these associations are customarily formed to deal with social, economic and peace and security concerns of women and members of minority such as artisans, while others are formally

organized to deal with matters such as women's rights, gender based violence, conflict resolution and women's empowerment. For example, women led economic associations at grassroots enable women to improve their economic wellbeing by accessing micro-finance. Women all over the country have customarily formed financial associations which enable to save money, ensure harmony and peace among them, promote women network for communal conflict resolution (IIRR, 2009, p. 75). There are several formally organized associations which offer support and advocate for women and minority groups. For example, the Ethiopia women Lawyers Association which was formed in 1995 as an independent, non-profit organization is advocating for the legal, economic, social and political rights of Ethiopian women. Such associations mostly offer support services such as legal aids, health care, literacy training, alternative income generation, training, and so on. Besides, they conduct peace activism that will enable greater representation and participations of women and minority in decision making at various levels, especially at village, district, regional and national levels (IIRR, 2009, pp. 79-84).

As will be further elaborated in chapter six, women formed and led associations are arguably playing a critical role increasing public awareness on rights of women and minority, creating voices for marginalized groups and improving inter-communal relations. Unlike aforementioned peace activism by community members against injustices inbuilt in political practices, advocacy against discriminations and injustice inbuilt in the socio-cultural structures has strong support and endorsement of government at various levels. Even though, as this author argues, contributions of women and the members of minority groups especially in communal conflict transformation have not been recognized owing to limited public awareness as well as tendency to associate their peace potential with only marital dispute settlements.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, there are numerous legal and institutional mechanisms at federal and regional levels that were designed to address conflicts and disputes in the country. Embodied in these general mechanisms are challenges related to the adequacy of the normative frameworks, institutional constraints and the capacity to implement. In particular, key institutions such as the HoF, the CoN and courts at different levels that are normally expected to address conflicts have been suffering from the prevailing political practices as well as from limited capacities and widespread perceptions of favoritism.

The responses of the federal and regional executives to communal violence have been mainly rooted in military-security approaches. This implies that their responses are reactive, top-down and more at de-escalating violence than solving them. Additionally, the government's intervention in communal conflict is contingent up on issues of the conflict. Its intervention often initiated only after conflicts turned violent. Even though, its military-security oriented measures aims to limit further escalation. Such measure often do not work, are not enough and fail to effectively address local conflict dynamics and in many cases even deepen and worsen conflicts and directly fuel violence.

As it is argued in this chapter, the aforementioned limitations justify a need to build local peace infrastructures at community levels in order to ensure containing of violence as well as to give sustainable answer to the crisis through dialogues, mediation and civic participation. In this regard, there are numerous everyday peace instruments and actors such as customary authorities,

peace committees initiated by civil society and state actors and activist-oriented local peace actors. The potential of some of these local peace actors has already been recognized in the evolving national peace architecture and in conflict resolution strategy of the SNNPRS. Nonetheless, the country has limited empirically oriented knowledge about their potentials and possible limits in communal conflict transformation. As preliminary investigation shows, there has been limited focus on securing partnership between different instruments, institutions and actors. More importantly, by their very design the familiar local peace actors such as customary elders and local peace committees appear well situated to operate in the symmetric conflict settings. As clarified in the empirical chapters, in the asymmetric conflict setting the use of peace activism arguably presents a better infrastructure to transform communal conflicts. Accordingly, the next four chapters specifically present empirical evidences on the potentials and limits of selected local peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia.

CHAPTER FIVE: CROSS-CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN WONDO GENET

Introduction

Wondo Genet is an area where a cross-cultural diplomacy by the councils of elders of the Sidama and neighboring Oromo subgroups played a vital role in communal conflict transformation. A conflict in this area represents an example of violent communal conflict occurring in the frontier areas between the regional states where the reactive approaches had limited effects in their de-escalation. In particular, Wondo Genet represents the frontier area which was known for friendly relations between the Sidama and a section of the Guji Oromo residing in the area. In this area activities of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo have been very crucial to restore trust and social ties which were damaged as a result of violent inter-communal conflicts over issues of self-rule and demarcation of administrative borders. The elders played a key role in containing further escalation of the violence in the area. The joint forum of elders provided an inclusive space for informal inter-group conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconciliation in Wondo Genet.

The current chapter, therefore, focuses on explicating the cross-cultural diplomacy in Wondo Genet and its impact on the creation of durable peace in the area. Interview data and secondary sources were used in the following narratives and analyses. Hence, the first section starts by exploring the general settings of two ethnic communities. The second section presents the sources and nature of inter-group relations and conflicts in the Wondo Genet area. The third section analyzes in-depth the organizational characteristics such as the origin and mandate, role,

composition and external supports, impacts and challenges of the councils of elders in communal conflict transformation in Wondo Genet. Finally, the conclusion is given.

5.1 General Settings of Sidama and Neighboring Oromo Subgroups: An Overview

The Sidama homeland, its people and the current administrative area of Sidama Zone are located 250 kilometers south of the Capital Addis Ababa, in the central parts of southern Ethiopia (Markos, 2014, p.54). The Sidama is nearly encircled by the Oromo subgroups, namely, the Arsi in the north and Guji in the south, even though it also shares administrative boundary with Wolayta in the West and Gedeo in the south. In the earliest records traced back to the 16th century the name Sidama was used as a collective name for various Cushitic languages speaking people of Southern Ethiopia (Aalen, 2008). In the contemporary period the name Sidama applies to the people in the present Sidama Zone in the SNNPRS. It is generally believed that the Sidama people settled in the present homeland coming from neighboring areas, especially from the areas around the Dawa River in the eastern direction (Aalen, 2008; Kifle, 2007, p. 124). According to Kifle (2008), the Sidama population continued to grow steadily since the 16th century. Their neighbors, especially the Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the country occupying varied socio-geographic areas such as Shewa, Illubabora, Wollaga, the Gibe, Hararge, Wollo and Borana (Gumi, 2016; Jeylan, 2006; Tadesse, 2009). Within the Oromo, the Guji, the Arsi and the Borana areas are seen as the cradle of the Oromo culture, language and history (Gumi, 2016).

The Sidama and neighboring Oromo subgroups belong to the lowland East Cushitic languages. They share related social and economic, political institutions, ideologies, religious practices and rituals which were exchanged among them creating trans-group connections. For instance, they

share aspects of cultural practices such as marriage and child bearing and rearing practices, blood ties, famous *luwa* system (of the Sidama) and *gada* system (of the Oromo), modes of subsistence on animal rearing and crop production, customary and modern religions, worship sites, sacrifice of animals, customary justice or *seera* and conflict resolution institutions like the *gondoro or ficha*, mourning and funeral ceremonies, annual calendar and celebration of a new year (the “Fichche Chambalala” of the Sidama and the “Irrecha” of the Oromo), customs of dressing and beauty, music and arts, cultural sport feasts, views on status of traditional killers, customary or indigenous knowledge systems, and so forth (Mustefa, 2018, pp. 78-79; Seyoum, 2006, pp. 42-63).

Indigenous administrative structures of Sidama and Oromo in particular represent decentralized type of governance. There were numerous indigenously grown social institutions among the Sidama community. For instance, clan leaders or *moot*e are among the key communal conflict mediators. The Sidama society comprises clans and lineages which have been ruled by self-ruling clan leaders situated in their respective clan lands. The clan leaders’ power is usually counterchecked by the differentiated councils of elders or *songo* in each clan area (Aalen, 2008; Kifle, 2007). The *luwa* system is another key institution of Sidama which has been compared to the *gada* system of the Oromo. The *luwa* brings all men together across clan and lineage divides in local areas unifying the entire Sidama (Kifle, 2007, p. 281). The *luwa* system, as studied by Hamer (1976), is a generation system as it places men in classes on bases of time (as cited in Kifle, 2007, p. 282). There are five classes and one of them is active and in power at times, with seven years interval. The active class led by the *gadana* who has responsibility to provide labor, defense and peacekeeping. As will be further clarified in this chapter, the elders/*cimeessa/*

remain prominent local actors even today. The elders are perceived as repositories of cultural codes and systems. They apparently represent everyone in the community. Even though, there are social groups like the artisans who are hardly represented in customary institutions of Sidama (Markos, 2014, p. 132).

Just like the Sidama, the Oromo subgroups such as the Arsi and Guji Oromo are organized into moieties, clans and lineages that are coexisting in various neighborhoods. Each subgroup shares common language and culture, myths of origin, past memories and histories, even though there are also local variations among themselves. Clansmen of each sub group are agents of moral control over their members and play an indispensable role in everyday life (Asebe, 2007; Taddesse, 2009). Matters of group ritual, rite of passage and other vital religious and political ceremonies are reserve of senior men of the lineages, also referred to as the *Qallu* (Asebe, 2007, p. 61). The *gada* system plays a key role in cross-cutting the lineages unifying each subgroup as well as the entire Oromo. The *gada* system represents one of the most complex systems of socio-political organizations. The *gada* as demonstrated in seminal work of Asmerom Legesse (1973) is defined by, among others, *gada* classes in which the males in the society proceed over time through a cycle of eleven defined grades in which the transition from one grade to another takes place at every eight years (as cited in Jeylan, 2006, p. 258). The *qallu* and the *gada* councilors still play a noteworthy role in the lives of the ordinary people, especially among the Arsi, Guji and Borana. In the sites of this research, customary elders, especially those who are identified with the *qallu* and *gada* institutions deal with everyday moral and legal issues, ceremonies and religious life and carry out communal peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the Sidama and Oromo share the past experiences of the conquest by the Ethiopian Empire builders and they closely allied in the struggle against the imperial and the *Dergue* regimes (Aalen, 2008). As already mentioned in chapter three, the conquest was justified as attempt by the empire builders to restore old ties that allegedly exist between the Christian kingdom in the north and the diverse ethnic communities in southern Ethiopia. Although it was violently resisted by the Arsi and parts of Sidama and Guji, the conquest of Menelik clearly impacted their worldviews. The empire builders, for example, introduced the notorious *gabbar* system in which local residents were obliged to work to the occupiers or give away a part of their production. The introduction of modern court system in the second half of the 20th century also undermined the indigenous institutions, especially the elders' function as conflict mediators. Even though, access to modern education remained low among the conquered areas and members of various communities relied on their age old customary institutions to resolve their disputes (Aalen, 2008; Asebe, 2007; Kifle, 2007).

As the feudal lords were replaced by the *Dergue* officials after the revolution in 1974, the customary elders at grassroots saw their influence were reduced by the government policy of discrimination against traditional values and norms as well as by the spread of Protestantism, especially among Sidama and Guji Oromo. Under the *Dergue* the production system among the Sidama and neighboring Oromo which relied mainly on crop production and animal rearing was replaced/and supplemented by the production of cash crops like coffee (Aalen, 2008; Seyoum, 2006).

As the *Dergue's* control of state power was at the final juncture of breakdown, mainly owing to the armed struggles by among others the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM), local people took this opportunity to establish law and order through revitalizing of their customary institutions such as councils of the elders, the *luwa* and *gada* systems. The revitalization of customary systems has continued even today. In particular, the elders still play a key role in resolving disputed issues. In this regard, the local cadres of the ruling party have their own role in revitalizing the customary institutions as they use pro-government elders to mobilize their community members in order to implement the government policy (Markos, 2014, p. 152).

Even though Sidama and neighboring Oromo subgroups share related worldviews, rituals, shared identity, decent and symbols, there were also some incidents of periodic warfare between them due to competition over grazing lands and pastures in their frontier areas. The warfare was also derived by the cultural requirements of both ethnic communities, even if this practice did not go with ethnic identity. For instance, the Arsi had traditional hostility with the Sidama and Guji, even though both the Arsi and Guji share similar culture and language or subscribe to their common supra ethnic identity (Taddesse, 2009, pp. 193-194). With the introduction of ethnic oriented decentralization reform in 1991, some of their traditional hostilities ceased to exist, while others appear to have transformed into violent communal conflicts (Quinland, Dira, Caudell & Quinland, 2016). Hence, the current chapter aims to analyze the potential and limits of customary authorities in managing violent disputes in traditionally friendly frontier areas between the Sidama and neighboring Oromo subgroups, specifically in Wondo Genet which in fact saw violent communal conflict after the reform. The next section presents conflict contexts

of Wondo Genet before analyzing the potentials, impacts and limits of customary authorities in the area.

5.2 Nature of Relations and Inter-Communal Conflicts in Wondo Genet

As already mentioned above, Wondo Genet represents the frontier area between the Sidama and neighboring West Arsi Zones. The name Wondo Genet is specifically used to refer to the low laying areas below Mount Abaro which served as a traditional marker between the Sidama and Arsi Oromo. This area also marks eastern limits of the Great Rift Valley in south central Ethiopia. The Wondo Genet area is naturally endowed with fertile soil and rich water resources. There are also the forests and natural hot springs in the area (Constantinous & Zerihun, 1999). The lands are inhabited by the Sidama and Oromo sub groups, namely, the Guji and Arsi, as well as the members of other ethnic communities such as Hadiya, Wolaita and Kembetta who have come and settled in the area since the 1960s due to economic opportunities related to the growth of state institutions and agro-industries(*ibid.*). As a result, Wondo Genet is also an area of high population density, social-cultural diversity (over eight ethnic groups following mainly Protestantism, even though there are also Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the area), and competition over ownership of the control natural resources (Zerihun, 1999). Generally, the presence of vibrant economic activities related to trade on cash crops such as coffee, *chat*, and other natural resource in the area, growth of state institutions and agro-industries and private business in the past decades, coming of many laborers from other parts of the country, road access to the nearby bigger urban centers, namely, Hawassa and Shashemene have transformed Wondo Genet into a complex landscape. In particular, Wondo Genet has drawn wider national

attentions as it saw series of violent inter-communal conflicts after the introduction of ethnic-based administrative restructuring in 1991.

As recalled by informants³⁴ and indicated in previous studies, the Sidama and Guji Oromo who are the earliest settlers in the Wondo Genet area had a peaceful interactions for over the past several hundred years (Berihanu, 2012; Constantinous & Zerihun, 1999; Taddesse, 2009). According to Taddesse Berisso (2009), the contact between the Guji and Sidama started with the northward expansion of the Sidama to the Wondo Genet area from highlands. The Guji *abagada* in the Wondo District confirmed this interpretation and further claimed that Wondo Genet is part of their traditional grazing lands³⁵. The Sidama Gudumale elders did emphasize the fact that the Guji are their close neighbors and that they have strong blood ties with them. As Berihanu (2012) states, such ties reflected in everyday blessing of both ethnic communities. For instance, as Berihanu wrote, in the past, when Sidama slaughtered animals, they used to bless Guji saying “EliGuji”, meaning “Oh God! Bring good things to the Guji People”. The Guji also used to say the same to the Sidama People. Their ties were based on strong reciprocal exchanges in which the agriculturalist Sidama supplied the Guji with agriculture products, while receiving dairy products from the pastoralist Guji. Moreover, the Guji in Wondo Genet were cut off from the other major Guji group living in the southern frontier of Sidama and thus they were not affected by the traditional hostilities between the Sidama and Guji in that area as will be further discussed in chapter seven. Furthermore, the Sidama and Guji in the Wondo Genet area helped one another

³⁴ Members of the Sidama Gudumale elders. (2016, December 23). (In-depth interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District of Sidama Zone); Members of council of *Abagada*. (2016, December 27). (Dialogue with the author, Wondo District, West Arsi Zone).

³⁵ As the Guji elders claim, their lands initially covered wider areas between Heto Bokite (a tree in the Kofela District of West Arsi Zone), Bolo Helala (a cave in Shashmene district), Ejerssa Tula (a tree deep within the Sidama inhabited area) and Birbirs Kola (a tree on the hill above Basha town of the Wondo Genet District).

during difficult times and held a common hostility towards the Arsi. The Arsi did not differentiate between the Sidama and Guji in their traditional warfare (Tadesse, 2009).

As a result of long existing social interactions between the Sidama and Guji Oromo in Wondo Genet, there have wide scale intermingling. The latter has largely been assimilated into the Sidama culture and in some rural peasant *kebeles*, the Guji speaks only the Sidama language (Constantinous & Zerihun, 1999). There has been an extensive marriage between the two and their settlements are mixed. As the informants from both sides state, in everyday life they participate in funeral, wedding, churches, inter-marriage ceremonies and rituals performance. They share many aspects of cultural codes, for instance, rituals of customary conflict resolution or *gondoro or Ficha*. Hence, they lived together without major conflicts between them for several years, even though there were minor cases of conflicts over natural resources. The presence of amicable relations based on social and cultural ties helped them to solve their differences non-violently in the past.

Even if the Sidama and the Guji shared and exchanged many aspects of culture and were allies in times of the strife with their common rival that is the Arsi, such reciprocal relations were changed with the introduction of ethnic oriented federal reform which in turn induced a conflict between them. As one of the informants in the Wondo Genet area stated, “In the past the Sidama and Guji formed an alliance that would fight the Arsi. In recent years ,however, the nature of alliance have changed, such that the Sidama are allied with the settlers such as Kemebatta,

Hadiya and Wolaita in the area, while the Guji are allied to the Arsi. Our recent conflicts reflect this change.”³⁶

The earliest violent encounter in Wondo Genet broke out between the Sidama and Arsi in the area in 1992. A major source of this dispute was the question of where Wondo Genet should belong in the new administrative restructuring that goes in line with ethnic identity. Previously, majority of Wondo Genet³⁷ was administered under the Hawassa District of the Sidama Province, while a small part³⁸ was administered under the Shashemene District of the Shewa Province. In the new administrative restructuring in 1991, the Sidama and their new allies in the area, namely, Kemebetta, Hadiya and Wolaita, who are also part of the SNNPRS, wanted the whole area of Wondo Genet to be put under the Sidama Zone of the SNNPRS, while the Oromo groups, namely, the Guji and Arsi-who have ended their traditional hostility through conciliatory activities of Oromo nationalists-wanted a large part of Wondo Genet to be allocated to the Oromia Regional State (Tadesse 2009, p. 196). The government decided most of the Wondo Genet/Guji dominated *kebeles* to be administered under the Hawassa district, which triggered dispute between the groups. As a result, since 1993 the Guji Oromo signed a petition and submitted applications to the Prime Minister’s Office asking for the land to be allocated to Oromia. The Guji claimed that they were dominated by the Sidama and unfairly treated in accessing public goods and services as well as political authority. Their dispute became more

³⁶ Mr. Gabiso, a Sidama man living in Hawassa. (2016, December 24). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

³⁷ Those areas were commonly referred as Wondo Kela referring to among others ethnically mixed peasant *kebeles* such as Busa, Basha, Edo, Kela, and Borja (Constatinous & Zerihun, 1999)

³⁸ The area was also referred as Wondo-Wosha which includes four ethnically mixed peasant *kebeles* such as Gotu-Onoma, ShashaKekela, Wosha-Soyama and Wotera-Kechama (Constatinous & Zerihun, 1999).

heated with the introduction of Sidama language in elementary schools in the area, including area predominantly inhabited by the Guji. The resentment of both groups who had no choice but to use the other's language made the contestation of the regional demarcation of Wondo Genet more heated. The presence of such disputes between the two groups created conditions for a minor inter-personal clashes to be transformed into widespread inter-group violence in the area with serious repercussion in terms of loss of live, injuries and displacement of persons as well as destruction of properties in the area.

The most violent form of encounter between the Sidama and Guji Oromo in the Wondo Genet area occurred in April 2008 following the creation of Wondo Genet as a separate administrative district under the Sidama Zone. As the Guji *abagadas* claimed, after many years of quest for reunion with their kin in the Oromia Regional State, the new administrative reform by the SNNPRS denied them at least a 'special district' status within Sidama Zone. Instead, as they perceived, it empowered the Sidama. Conflict prevention and resolution experts in the Peace and Security Bureau of SNNPRS³⁹ argued that the claim of the Giji for self-rule was already existed among the members of the Guji Oromo, even though it took different shape by aggressive mobilizations by ethno-nationalists of both sides, especially to create sharp border in the area which was better known for its peace and cultural mixes. As the informants on both sides recalled, this violence involved many peasant *kebeles* in the district with loss of many lives, injuries, displacement and varying extent of property damages. It was particularly responsible for severing the cordial ties which had existed between the Sidama and Guji-Oromo as well as disruption of everyday life in the area.

³⁹ Conflict prevention and resolution experts of the Peace and Security Bureau of the SNNPRS. (2016, November 23). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS).

As the pattern of responses by official authorities show, after the renewed violence in the area a number of failed attempts were carried by the regional states of the SNNP and Oromia and the Ministry of Federal Affairs to deal with the dispute. In particular, the Special Forces of the SNNPRS which were firstly intervened to contain the violence were perceived by the Guji as biased and targeting mostly members of the Guji. As interviewed elders⁴⁰ from both sides remarked, a federal government played a crucial role in restoring calm and containing hostilities, even though it intervened after the damages done and mainly used coercive tactics to contain violence. Conversely, the Ministry of Federal Affairs held series of “Peace and Democracy Conferences” which involved the representative of both groups as well as the regional states of the SNNPR and Oromia. The participants came at decision to entertain some of the plight of the Guji Oromo. It was decided, for example, to adopt Oromifa and Sidama as medium of instruction for elementary schools in the predominantly Guji inhabited peasant *kebeles* and to share local administrative posts fairly (Tesfa, 2014, p. 56).

Nevertheless, as recalled by interviewed district peace and security officers⁴¹ of the both sides, the dispute did continue after those arrangements and the two regions finally decided that the case should be arbitrated by the House of Federation, which is constitutionally empowered to find the solution to dispute between regional states. As a result the House of Federation sent a task force to assess needs of inhabitants and ascertain relevance of referendum to resolve the dispute, which lasted for about twelve months. As the informants from both groups recalled, this

⁴⁰ Members of the Sidama Gudumale elders. (2016, December 23). (In-depth interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District of Sidama Zone); Members of council of *Abagada*. (2016, December 27). (Dialogue with the author, Wondo District, West Arsi Zone).

⁴¹ Peace and security officer of the Wondo Genet District (2016, November 22). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone); Peace and security officers the Wondo District. (2016, November 26). (Interview with the author, Wondo District, West Arsi Zone).

task force along with the joint committee comprising 13 representatives from each ethnic group held popular consultation in ethnically mixed villages. Accordingly, the HoF decided to hold the referendum in thirteen ethnically mixed peasant *kebeles* of Wondo Genet. As the official result of the referendum indicated, the Guji Oromo won majority votes in four *kebeles*⁴² out the thirteen peasant *kebeles* (Abel, 2011).

As the informants from both sides confirmed, this referendum, however, brought more serious problems than the previous disputes. In particular, in some peasant *kebeles* the margin of defeat in the referendum was very small and this in turn provoked a widespread violence in 2010, especially in the Edo where the Guji claimed Sidama cadres bribed ethnically mixed families and members of other ethnic groups. This violence further escalated into recurring tensions and mistrust between the two groups for over two years. It resulted in major casualties on both groups (over 40 fatalities on both sides) and hundreds displaced, with negative consequences for the socio-economic wellbeing of the society as well as damages of over 700 houses (Abel, 2011).

More importantly, after the referendum, collectively used social infrastructures and government institutions in the frontier areas between the Wondo Genet District of Sidama Zone and the newly created Wondo District of West Arsi Zone emerged as a new topic of dispute. For instance, social institutions such as secondary school and health station, market place, Forestry College, ELFORA Meat Processing Factory, hot spring and hotels existing in their frontier areas emerged as issues of competition and source of mistrust as they have still been being claimed exclusively by the two groups. Local authorities of Wondo Genet District claimed that these

⁴² Such as Busa, ShashaKekela, GutoOnoma, and Intaye.

institutions were decided to be under their control as the result of the referendum⁴³. By contrast, local officials in the newly formed Wondo District⁴⁴ claimed that those institutions are located in their territory and as they perceive it is not fair to give administrative control over them to the Sidama Zone. As a result of this dispute there has been mistrust between local officials of the two districts, which in turn minimized smooth communication between them. It also restricted involvement of state initiated local peace committees in the area. In particular, the local peace committees were not owned by both communities. In the other words, just after their establishment joint local peace committee structures failed to function effectively as it was not co-owned by local communities. Nevertheless, their dispute over collective resources did not escalate into wide scale violent inter-groups conflict due to mainly the presence of strong cross-cultural diplomacy led by high level councils of elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo, who have been supported by the respective local governments and civil society organizations.

5.3 Cross-Cultural Diplomacy by Customary Elders

The Wondo Genet area is well-known for using customary institutions in order to contain violence and transform unpeaceful relations. The councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo serve as permanent peace infrastructure in the area. The elders are active in transforming hostilities within their community and with their neighbors, restoring severed inter-group relations, promoting reconciliation and preventing conflict escalation in the area (Markos, 2014). Local governments' authorities of both districts usually use customary authorities to deal with contentious issues. The elders function just like the joint local peace committees discussed in the

⁴³ Peace and security officer of the Wondo Genet District (2016, November 22). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone)

⁴⁴ Peace and security officers the Wondo District. (2016, November 26). (Interview with the author, Wondo District, West Arsi Zone).

previous chapter. The Sidama and Oromo in the Wondo Genet area share many aspects of cultural and ritual codes related to communal conflict resolution. The next subsections try to analyze the potentials and limits of high level councils of elders in the Wondo Genet area, specifically, exploring their origin and mandates, role, composition and impacts and challenges/limits.

5.3.1 Origin and Mandate of the Councils of Elders

As it is true in most parts of sub Saharan African countries, customary systems of conflict resolution in the Wondo Genet area are long established among the communities. As already mentioned above, the Sidama and the Oromo are dominant groups in the area and their customary values exhibit democratic features. The councils of elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo have their origin and mandates respectively in the *luwa* system of Sidama and *gada* system of *Oromo* which predominately defines their worldviews. To become an elder, each community requires an intricate passage of rite in the past. Although many aspects of *luwa* and *gada* systems are now changed, customary elders have been effective in deliberating justice to members of their communities. Elders in the area are widely recognized as the protectors and promoters of social harmony.

According to the Sidama *Gudumale* elders, their main mandate is to restore social harmony. The council of the elders of Sidama has the highest authority in the society and they generally follow clan/*gosa* system⁴⁵. Each clan has its own settlement area or *ga're*, councils of the elder/*songo* at various levels, clan and lineages leaders *moote* who manage its own internal political, religious

⁴⁵ The Wondo Genet District is mainly settled by the Malga clan of Sidama.

and juridical affairs. Unless there was an external threat, there was limited interaction among different *ga're*. In fact, *luwa system* bring all men from different *ga're* together and its active class are led by Gadana. Conversely, the councils of the elders are powerful than clan leaders or *luwa* leaders.

The Sidama elders in the Wondo Genet District see their mandate in terms of keeping *halaale*, which mean 'the true way of life'. The *Halaale* is the Sidama code of human conduct and is part of everyday life in the society (Kifle, 2007, pp. 293-302). In the Sidama world view, unresolved conflict will result in rivalry, disharmony, and bloodshed in the future. As the *Gudumale* elders⁴⁶ describe, cases of bloodshed specifically motivate victims to take '*qege*' or revenge attack. *Qege*⁴⁷ never allow people eat and drink together as it transforms identity of the group (for example, lineage, clan or ethnic members to which perpetrators belong) to be vulnerable for revenge attacks. The elders or *cimeessa* are legitimate authorities who restitute truth and justice. As Kifle (2007) describes, *cimeessa* is 'father of *halaale*'. This assertion is echoed in a value that the elders attach to the *halaale* as one of *cimeessa* in the Wondo Genet District stated, "We identify truth; we work for truth; we do not go against it; God sees our work; we ask God to reveal to us the truth; we make oath not to go away from the truth."⁴⁸ *Cimeessa* who usually deal with major disputes and bloodsheds in the Wondo Genet District are referred to as *Gudumale*

⁴⁶ Focus group discussion with the *Gudumale* elders. (2016, December 23). (Dialogue with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone)

⁴⁷ *Qege* represent sanctions that forbid the relatives of the victim from having any interaction with anyone of the killer family. As the *Gudumale* elders reported, it is a proclamation of enmity and total separation between conflict parties, not to eat or drink together.

⁴⁸ Mr. Mawos Ligamo, a Sidama elder. (2016, December 24). (Interview with the author, Wosha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone)

*cimeessa*⁴⁹ or lineage based council of elders, whereas there are also *cimeessa* at hamlet and neighborhood levels dealing with various minor issues. Overall, *cimeessa* ensures *halaale* (truth-justice) in accordance with traditional law/*seera*/ of the Sidama (Aadland, 2008; Kifle, 2007).

Just like the Sidama, customary conflict resolution among the Guji Oromo in the Wondo District is based on culture, traditions, and beliefs systems of the Oromo. The elders or *jarsumma/jarsa biyyia* who are situated at every village are used to solve disputes that arise in everyday life. However, cases of inter-communal conflicts in the area are deliberated by a high level *jarsumma* which involves clan *aba-gada* (father of the *gada*) or clan leaders⁵⁰. There are elected *abagadas* who serve as the moral, spiritual and cultural guardian of the community. In clan level, the eight Guji clans⁵¹ in the Wondo District have their respective elders who are responsible to solve conflicts at village levels. Each clan has its own clan leaders but, as will be clarified below, six *aba gadas* form a ‘council of elders’ in which one of *aba-gadas* serves as a chairman and unrepresented clans will take power after eight years.

The Guji council of the elders in the Wondo District is culturally mandated to ensure peace or *nagaa*. According to the Guji elders in the District, *nagaa* has a special value in the society and it is expressed in their everyday greetings, songs, in rituals and ceremonial activities, prayers, proverbs, blessing, folklore and public speeches. For the Guji Oromo *nagaa* is foundation of an orderly universe, religion, politics, moral and social life (Gumi, 2016). Just like the Sidama, the

⁴⁹ The Sidama elders in the Wondo Genet District meet at the *Gudumale* hall in Basha town of Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone

⁵⁰ The council of *abagada* meet at the ritual center or galma at Busa kebele of Wondo District of West Arsi Zone

⁵¹ include Banotu, Uraga, Nira, Hubo/Bunea, Abbaye, Awaye, Mati and Kajotu as listed by the *abagada* of Guji in the Wondo district, West Arsi Zone

Guji in the Wondo District believe that violent conflict and bloodsheds destroy peace. They also believe bloodshed induce *mida* which never allow people to eat together, attend the same school, church, meeting, market and even to see each other. According to the tradition the perpetrator and often his/her entire family, is required to hide from the sight of the victims as their presence may intensify victims' grievance and may trigger retaliation from the victim's side. It is a task of customary elders to end this curse using relevant customary law (*adda*) of the society.

5.3.2 Role of the Councils of Elders

Interviewed members of the elders in the Wondo Genet area remark that they carryout wide range of tasks in relation to communal conflict transformation. The councils of the elders play a role in early warning and local preventive action. The elders consider every dispute brought to them and solve them. They believe that unresolved conflict that has not received proper hearing, treatment and reconciliation will result in disrupting the community's harmony in the future. The councils of the elders prevent youths from engaging in conflict through counseling and correcting offenders. The elders are customarily empowered to council and reprove the youths. They also promote peace within their villages by preaching about peace, reporting suspicious cases to local police of the respective districts. As will be further elucidated below, the elders act as the eyes and ears of the peace and security officers of the two districts. Overall, the councils of the elders in the area deal with everyday conflicts, and stop them from escalating into violent conflicts.

As members of the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji stated, at time of conflict they intervene to de-escalate warfare. In doing so, they collaborate with elderly women who are

generally accepted as legitimate deactivators of violent conflicts. Among the Sidama and Oromo women play an important role in peace making processes in their respective community (Constantinous & Zerihun, 1999; IIRR, 2009). Whenever violent conflict occurs between the groups, women in collaboration with councils of the elders intervene to stop warfare and open platform for peace process. Among the Oromo using their *sinqeas* (the peace sticks) the women actively separate those who are fighting as the men associate the peace sticks with necessity of talk for peace. The use of the *siqqo* (the peace stick) among the Sidama women like that of *sinqee* deliver powerful message in conflict containment. In both communities there is implicit norm that prevent killing of women and children at warfare.

The councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area also play a role in facilitating local dialogue and enhancing community relationships. The elders customarily act as community leaders, mediators and judges, with sole goal of maintaining community peace. They provide platform for dialogue and problem solving. The elders seek peace, build consensus, bring about a negotiated solution to a conflict, and restore, create, protect and defend community cause. They may also arbitrate and declare one side guilty and impose fines and compensation⁵².

Above all, the councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area customarily promote local reconciliation and truth findings. They aim to enhance local justice and peace after violent conflict. In particular, they perform reconciliation/*gondoro* or *ficha* ritual after cases of bloodsheds⁵³. The *gondoro* ritual is a common tradition among the Sidama and Guji Oromo in

⁵² Focus group interview with the Gudumale elders. (2016, December 23). (Dialogue with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone); Focus group interview with the Guji abagada. (2016, December 26). (Dialogue with the author, Busa, Wondo District of West Arsi Zone).

⁵³ Ibid.

the Wondo Genet with intent of a violent event not to happen again. The tradition has complex ritual procedures and associated symbols required for reconciling the disputants as it has been practiced among most Cushitic language speakers (Asebe, 2007). As the elders state, the *gondoro* tradition aims to restore social ties and harmony than punishing the wrongdoers. Through the ritual process, the perpetrators and his/her clans/groups would be reconciled with the relatives and clan of the victims. The *gondoro* is generally seen as a method of conflict resolution. Despite of the decline of its ritual aspect, the local people in the Wondo Genet area still recognize importance of *gondoro* in conflict resolution.

The *gondoro* tradition has powerful symbolic values for bridging conflict fault-lines. The *godoro* rituals, for instance, are usually done at boundary marks such as a river and roads between the conflict parties. It is in this dividing mark that the parties come to meet each other in the presence of mediating elders of both sides and sisters (one from the killed, another from the killers) of the conflict parties. Although women are not allowed to participate in the councils of elders in the Wondo Genet area, no reconciliation takes place without the presence of women. For example, on the last day of reconciliation the sisters coming from opposite sides of the dividing mark spray honey on the faces of the families in the reconciliation scene while petitioning God for forgiveness and when the eyes of a perpetrator are cleansed by lung of a lamb and had his hair cut by elders. The ritual also includes a ceremonial slaughter of the lamb. Moreover, it is at this mark that the mediating elders bring the conflict parties under a *seema* (traditional cloth), which symbolize their unity. Furthermore, it is under this dividing mark that mediating elders bless, pray, eat together and give of an ox as the “fine” exacted from perpetrator. At the end of the ceremony, the elders declare that the end of revenge the bloodshed and curse those who desire

for revenge on bases of custom or *seera*. The *gondoro* generally represents an informal pact making or covenant between former enemies and cements their friendship in future.

The councils of the elders of the Sidama and Guji in the Wondo Genet area meet at their traditional center every week and deliberate justice over any case brought to them. In particular, the *cimeesa* of Sidama meet at *gudumale* hall in Basha town every Saturday. Likewise, the Guji *abagada* meet at their hall or *galma* in Busa *kebele* of the Wondo District every Wednesday. Interviewed members of the elders from both sides stated that they frequently meet each other and deliberate justice on their common issues. As they further claimed, they carry out their work without any interference from local authorities, even though they recognized that the government interfered in their everyday activities during inter-communal violence.

The councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area usually use various ways in order to enforce their decisions. In the past they mainly relied on putting customary *seera* (fines) on those who breach their decisions. The deviants were, for example, denied relevant social supports like burial ceremonies in the time needs. The elders also curse those who break the *gondoro* covenant. The members of the communities generally fear the curses of the elders. In recent years, however, the councils of elders in the area rely on local police forces to enforce their decisions. In this regard, peace and security officers of the two districts in the area indicated that they support the elders by enforcing decisions of the elders⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ The security and administration officer and experts of the Wondo Genet District (2016, November 22). (Interviews with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District of Sidama Zone); the security and administration officer of the Wondo District. (2016, November 26). (Interview with the author, Wondo District, West Arsi Zone).

5.3.3 Composition of the Councils of Elders

The councils of elders of the Sidama and Guji Oromo in Wondo Genet are comprised of male members. In accordance with traditions in the area, only circumcised men were allowed to take part in the councils of elders, while the women and children were excluded. Eldershood in the area is enshrined within the *luwa* system of Sidama and the *gada* system of Oromo. Elders act as leaders, judges and mediators and perform rituals of harmony. Eldershood is associated with closeness to the spiritual world, wisdom and ability in solving the problem (Kifle, 2007; Mustefa, 2018). To become elders implies entering into as living a life of uprightness and impartiality, and defending only truth or peace. All community members participate in selecting the members of councils of elders representing their community. The selection to eldership considers not only age, family or economic background of the candidates, but also it is based on attributes such as respected elder, one who command attention of others, frankness, generous, wise, vocal, eloquent, good orator, one who does what is true, know other peace makers on the neighboring community, upright, truth worthy and a good community leaders. Elders are generally perceived as a reconciler, mediator and peacemaker, have knowledge of customs and traditions with relevant experience in handling cases of violent conflicts (Constantinous & Zerihun, 1999; Kifle, 2007).

Violent cases of communal conflicts always involve high level councils of elders of the Sidama and Guji Oromo and sometimes elders from other neighboring groups. The high level councils of elders in the Wondo Genet area are inclusive of various clans and lineages in the area. There are also councils of elders at villages or neighborhood levels which deal with minor disputes.

According to the tradition, what can be solved by the councils of the elders at neighborhoods has to be solved by it unless an appeal is made by unsatisfied persons to the higher councils of elders (Kifle, 2007). At the time of the field work, two high level councils of elders were highly influential in the Wondo Genet area, namely, the *gudumale cimeesa*⁵⁵ of the Sidama in the Wondo Genet District and *abagada* of the Guji in the Wondo District⁵⁶. They are situated at just at a kilometer from each other.

According to the informants, the deliberations of the elders in the area are open to all members of the community except women and artisans. The elders freely allow views and reflection of conflict parties and the procedures follow strict rules. One cannot speak as one wished but ask permission from a moderator. Although women are not allowed to participate in the councils of elders in the Wondo Genet area, they are active participant in conflict prevention, rituals of reconciliation and community-based peace activism. Elderly women were often allowed to participate in dispute deliberations led by the elders. Despite this, as it will be clarified in detail in the next chapter, customary conflict resolution systems in the Wondo Genet area do not encourage participation of women and artisans.

⁵⁵ The *gudumale cimeesa* of the Sidama comprised nine numbers who are above fifty years old, namely (1) Alemu Abiso (chairman), (2) Galfato Letamo, (3) Mathewos Hamera, (4) Nure Nuka, (5) Tumato Gurero (6) Laymo Agaro, (7) Mathewos Ligamo, (8) Dukamo Lankamo and (9) Sakato Duma. They represent different lineages/clans in the Wondo Genet areas; some of elders have direct blood ties with the Guji.

⁵⁶ The council of clan elders or *abagada* of the Guji who were above fifty years old, namely: (1) Bedaso Rike, (2) Aye Bo'esa, (3) Argo Kayamo, (4) Becho Yoga, (5) Denebo Elale (6) Kebada Garero (chairman). There are eight clans of the Guji Oromo in the Wondo district. The elders from two clans will be elected into the council of the elders after eight years

5.3.4 External Supports to the Councils of Elders

The customary systems of dispute resolution in the Wondo Genet area have been based on voluntarism. Except fines that are charged on offenders following customarily established mechanism, especially, after successful mediation, the elders are not paid for their peace works. This payment has been dictated by customary law or *seera* which determine community structure and everyday interactions. In particular, the *seera* obliges the members of the communities to comply with the majority, to seek peace and harmony and consensus and to cooperate, for example, when a house is built or a funeral is held. The elders fine those members who fail to carry out their duties of communities.

As interviewed members of the elders both sides remarked, in conducting their everyday activities, the elders collaborate with the respective district administrations and civil society organizations. They collaborate with the local government, for instance, in identifying criminal suspect. The elders also send report of their agreement on dispute settlement and early signs of conflict to the respective district peace and security officers. The elders usually get training from the government and civil society organizations to analyze conflict and find solution to disputes, to identify early signs of conflicts, as well as skills to resolve disputes and report it to the respective districts. As the elders stated, especially after the post-referendum violence in 2010, non-governmental organizations such as Plan Ethiopia and the Red Cross were active in providing reliefs aids to victims of the conflict, even though their direct supports to the elders were limited.

More importantly, the RCCSGA which worked in partnership with the Civil Peace Service of the government of Germany was active in supporting the elders in Wondo Genet area. In particular, the RCCSGA established a peace radio listener club comprising 20 members (10 from each adjacent *kebele*) after violent conflict in the area. In this way four listener clubs linking eight adjacent *kebeles* in the Wondo Genet area were established. Each listener club was inclusive of diverse social groups, especially, the councils of elders' members, women and youth people, even if two of the clubs were exclusively established for youths and women. Peace radio approach aimed to improve community relations, strength respect and sympathy, provided skills to members of the community for peacebuilding and reconciliation. As the impact assessment and member of the councils of the elders who participated in the peace radio project claimed, the peace radio programme played a key role in motivating the elders to engage in peace promoting actions such as negotiation, dialogue, mediation and reconciliation activities. Moreover, it promoted peace and coexistence, reduced stereotypes and prejudices, ensured linkage and partnership between the councils of elders and state institutions in the area (CPS, 2017).

5.3.5 Impacts and Challenges/limits of Cross-Cultural Diplomacy

The situation in the Wondo Genet area is rather different today in comparison to conflict, mistrust and tensions in the years from 2007 to 2014. It is primarily because of the activities of the councils of the elders of both sides. Since the outbreak of violent conflict in the area in 2008, the elders of Sidama and Guji spent a great time preaching about peace, reconciliation and coexistence. In the absence of autonomous and strong organized civil society organizations among two ethnic communities, the councils of the elders of the Sidama and Guji sides have been in front in taking peace initiative, which centered on inter-group dialogue and

reconciliation. Indeed, effective contributions of everyday oriented customary elders in Wondo Genet show that it does not necessarily require a strong form of associational engagement to contribute to communal conflict resolution as it has been stressed in civil society literature (Varshney, 2001& 2013).

As the interviewees confirmed, trust between the Sidama and the Guji in the Wondo Genet area began to restore after the 2010 post referendum violence. Since then, their relations have been characterized by the presence of collaborative activities led primarily by the elders of both sides. The elders engaged in serious cross cultural diplomacy that helped them to narrow differences and heal wounds in such complex conflict settings where political and ethno-nationalist elites compete for an exclusive control of collective resources in the area.

After the failure of the referendum to give a durable peace in the Wondo Genet area, the government took the first initiative to invite elders of Sidama and Guji to help restore peace and promote reconciliation. As the informants from both sides claim, the government preferred to use elders from areas which were not affected by the violence, especially, from the Habela and Arsi clans to help elders in the Wondo Genet area. Accordingly, the joint committee of elders comprising both Sidama and Oromo made an oath not to make favor on bases of clan or ethnic identity. The elders also urged the government to release prisoners in order to conduct meaningful reconciliation as well as to create suitable condition for durable peace in the area. As a result the joint committee of elders made a successful intervention to restore trust just after violent conflicts in areas, even though it was said to have experienced unnecessary interference from the government.

As already mentioned above, the Wondo Genet area is known for its socio-cultural intermixing. The local people have lived together sharing aspects of culture like religious practices and rituals. Both communities have well known indigenous conflict resolution institutions that they use to deal with disputes. As a result the councils of elders in the area are strategically situated to resolve conflicts. As the informants from both sides agreed, community members in the area prefer to resolve disputes through customary elders. Justices rendered by the elders are fast and incur lower costs than those provided by formal local courts. Moreover, conflict resolutions by the elders are perceived to have rooted in local culture and history, as more trusted and effective than state institutions, being based on consensus and aim to restore and sustain peaceful relation between neighbors, and promoting locally accepted solution. Even if the disputants are free to record their complaints in formal institutions like courts, poor access and bribe in local government institutions such as local police and courts motivates them to resort to customary dispute resolution system. Thus, the elders were able to manage conflict in the area, mediate and perform rituals exerting important influence in local peacebuilding.

As interviewed members of the elders in Wondo Genet stated, they frequently dealt with numerous cases of disputes related to water use, grazing lands, fights, slander, trade and local transport and boundary issues. As senior members of the councils of the elders in the area claimed, they rendered justices to most cases brought to them. In so doing, they played important role in resolving many day-to-day conflicts. They also helped communities resist any pressure to become involved in conflicts. The joint forum of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo has effectively been co-coordinating peace efforts across their borders. Since each council of elders

is inclusive of each clan or lineage in the area, it provides opportunity to pass a balance decision. In short, the elders appeared more accountable, legitimate and accessible provider of justice than formal institutions like the local courts or police forces in the area.

One of the informants claimed that the elders are effective in usual mediation and in restorative peace. As the informant said, “When it comes to reconciliation, customary authorities are the best peace actor. They mediate disputes by organizing common venues. The elders know procedures to get the best result or consensual decision which is acceptable to all disputants.”⁵⁷

The informants generally perceived that the elders provide sustainable solution, as they are part of the communities and live with the consequences of their decisions. The informants stressed that the elders are not affected by the lack of adequate external supports.

The councils of the elders have been effective in promoting reconciliation in the area. The councils of the elders from Sidama and Guji carried out the *gondoro* ritual for every person killed during the conflict on both sides. Interviews with the elders in the Wondo Genet area indicate that they performed the reconciliation rituals to end enmity between relatives of victims and perpetrators. In each case the elders identified suspects and established responsibility for a crime. Each council of elders takes fair share of responsibility to identify a killer on their side. This is usually done through series of internal dialogues. Once a killer is identified and take responsibility for the act, the mediating councils of elders from both sides arrange rituals to avoid cycles of revenge attacks. Performing the *gondoro* ritual has been part of everyday activity of the

⁵⁷ Mr. Butuna, a civil servant in the Wondo Genet district. (2016, December 25). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone)

councils of elders in the area. According to the informants, the *gondoro* ritual has regularly been conducted, especially after the inter-communal violence in the area.

At the time of field work for this study, the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji in the Wondo Genet area conducted a *gondoro* or *ficha* ritual to a member of ethnic Sidama who was killed by a Guji man in 2011. The author was allowed to observe the ritual and witnessed a very emotional moment for the participants, especially for relatives of the victim. As interviewed councils of elders confirmed, the case was one of series of rituals performed in the area since 2008. The last day of reconciliation ceremony was held in frontier area between the two communities on January 10, 2016. It took place near a river in their frontier area. The author witnessed incredible expression of forgiveness, especially when sisters of the victims and perpetrators sprayed honey on the families and relatives of perpetrator and victim coming from opposite directions into a meeting point, when a suspected young Guji man had his hair cut and his eyes was cleaned by blood of a sheep slaughtered on the scene. The families and relatives of the perpetrator had demonstrated their sense of guilt and demand for forgiveness and reconciliation as both of families came under a shed of a single *seema* (traditional cloth), as well as eating and drinking together within it. Meanwhile, the mediating elders prayed for peace and cursed those who desire for revenge and violence. The ceremony concluded with payment of symbolic fines to the relatives of the victim.

According to the informants, the *gondoro* ritual presents a moment of encounter with one's enemy and expression of grief with tears for loss of one's relative. Likewise, it is a moment of expression of remorse on the part of perpetrators. This ritual is generally perceived crucial to

transcend enmity created in the bloodshed as well as to promote peaceful coexistence among the communities across their differences. Its success lies on the fact that both groups co-own it. In the other words, it operates on bases of hybrid peace framework as discussed in chapter two. In addition, customary methods of conflict resolution in the area do not coercive perpetrators to confess the wrongdoing as they can still question or dispute it. For instance, the suspected killer of the Sidama man claimed that he was not the one who killed the victim. As he said, he complied with the decision of his clan and elders of his Guji community for the sake of restoring collective peace in the area.

Generally, the councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area are sitting once every week and deal with every conflict in their villages, ranging from marriage to performing rituals for murder under customary law. They opened dialogues in the communities, solved many of social disputes and responded rapidly to incipient violent conflicts. They sealed local pacts and arrived at reconciliation through customarily rituals. The elders have been effective in their activities because they operate within a value system that is clearly understood and approved by the communities. These contributions of customary elders echo the widespread fact in many African countries that customary authorities are providing essential collective goods that elected local authorities failed to deliver (Wunsch, 2008). Even though, the elders in the area cooperate with the respective district administrations in resolving difference and promoting reconciliation.

Despite their crucial peace potentials, the customary authorities in the Wondo Genet area suffer from numerous hurdles. First, the councils of the elders have been unable to transform deep-rooted structural cause of conflict that generates the conflict in the area. As already mentioned

the previous section, the underlying cause of communal conflict in the Wondo Genet area was related to ethnic identity and effort to draw sharp border in ethnically mixed area, even though such efforts seriously affected everyday life in the area. As will be further clarified in chapter seven, dispute over boundary between the Sidama and Guji Oromo in further south has been successfully negotiated by collaborative work of the local governments with the councils of elders of the two communities. There, the borders were demarcated on bases of compromise and good neighborhood without affecting everyday life in the frontier areas between the two ethnic communities. Everyday peace in those frontiers has been sustained by jointly owned local peace committees which were established in the frontier *kebeles* between the Sidama and Guji Zones. Conversely, as already discussed above, the regional states of SNNP and Oromia did not come to consensus on the status of Wondo Genet and agreed the case to be arbitrated by the HoF which conducted referendum in the area, provoking new violence in the area. After the referendum, it was practically difficult to create a sharp regional administrative border in the Wondo Genet area. In addition, many issues emerged at the center of dispute after the referendum. As the interviews with the respective district peace and security officers reveal, those disputes had its own effects on weak horizontal inter-government relations in the area. The councils of the elders of both sides did not attempt to deal with such structural issues. They have been playing a subordinate role in addressing those structural issues. Instead, as already explicated above, the councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area have been active in softer aspects communal conflict resolution and peace-building such as reconciliation, forgiveness and mediation across the dividing fault-lines.



Figure 5.1: Elders from the Oromo and Sidama ethnic groups during a traditional ceremony, the photo by the RCCSGA (CPS, 2017, p. 23)

The councils of the elders in Wondo Genet are perceived to receive money from the officials to make decision that are favorable to the government. It is, for instance, claimed that the pro-government councils of elders' members served as an entry point for community mobilization for implementation of unpopular state policies. This in turn appears part of a wider practice by the ruling party-EPRDF to organize and co-opt the rural population in the party structures so that a council of elders can be used to help them to get elected and support its policies (Tronvoll & Haggmann, 2012). Conversely, interviewed councils of elders' members in the Wondo Genet area claimed that unwanted interference of the government in their everyday role contributed to violent conflict escalation in the area. As they claimed, when inter-communal violence escalated in the area, as it did, for example, after the 2008 referendum, the government relied on coercive

tactics to contain the violence. Moreover, the government resorted to work with pro-government clans and elders in the area. This in turn induced non-represented clans and lineage to take revenge attacks. As the elders claimed, it also weakened peace potentials associated with the joint or hybrid peace efforts by the councils of elders, which had already contributed to violence de-escalation in the area during the early 1990s. This in turn has its own role in compromising trust, legitimacy and social cohesion associated with customary authorities.

The customary authorities have been used by the armed groups who were engaged in advocacy for the rights of their respective communities. In this regard, aspirations to local autonomy and self-determination have already been part of political goals of the ethnic based Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the area since 1980s. The former particularly continued to aspire for a separate regionally constituted homeland for Sidama and control of the SNNPRS capital, that is, Hawassa which also serves as seat of the Sidama Zone (Kifle, 2007). Local residents in the rural areas of Sidama and neighboring Oromo subgroups suffered much in the armed conflicts between the *Dergue* and these groups (Quinland et al., 2016). These conflicts continued even after the introduction of ethnic oriented decentralization reform in 1991. Until recent years, the ruling party held the asymmetric power. It has been less willing to resolve its differences with the armed groups in a more transformative ways. The ruling government usually used coercive tactics against the supporters of, for example, the quest for own region for the Sidama. As a result grassroots peace movements by a collaborative actor comprising mainly the elders and the students that aimed to force the state into negotiation met serious repression of the ruling party. For example, the Sidama elders and students' peaceful march to request regional self-administration 2000 ended up in the security

forces crackdown that led to deaths of more than 25 unarmed civilian and much more injuries (Abbink, 2006, see note 1). Accordingly, the engagement of Sidama elders to deal with asymmetric conflict between the Sidama ethnic community and the state in non-violent ways has not been effective because of coercive approach of the latter toward such demand. Hence, as will be further elucidated in the case of Konso in chapter eight, it appears unreasonable to expect much from customary elders to address conflicts in the asymmetric settings.

Above all, the potentials customary systems of conflict resolution to incorporate the rights of rural women and members of minority remains disputed. The limits of the councils of the elders in Wondo Genet are more explicit when one observes the power dynamics associated with the councils of elders in the area. As will be analyzed in the next chapter, the councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area are male-dominated and their compositions are clearly influenced by the gender dynamics, thus posing a challenge to representation of traditionally marginalized groups such as women and artisans.

Despite the aforementioned hurdles and limits, cross cultural diplomacy of the elders represent clearly more transformative way out from communal violence in Wondo Genet. If the existing limits in the system are properly addressed, communal conflict resolution and peace-building based on customary authorities would serve as a conduit for transforming even deep rooted structural and complex issues.

Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, communal conflict resolution and peace-building in the Wondo Genet areas largely relied on cross-cultural diplomacy by the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo. Customary elders on both sides of administrative border operate during conflict and peace times. They deliberate on wide range of issues including facilitating dialogues, mediating disputes and promoting reconciliation. They use both customary and legal-rational forms of legitimacy to promote good neighborhood and peaceful coexistence. In particular, they prevent any disruption of communal peace using socio-cultural solidarities and shared codes of conflict regulations as well as supports of local governments.

As shown in this chapter, joint efforts of the councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area have been so helpful in restoring inter-communal relations which were damaged as a result of conflict over ethnic identity and borders. The elders helped to curbs violent conflicts escalation and provided inclusive permanent platform for negotiation, dispute resolution and restorative justice, regardless of the competition by local political leadership and ethno-nationalist elites for exclusion control of collective resources existing in their common frontier areas. In spite of their contribution and challenges, the importance and influence of customary elders in communal peacebuilding has been understated in favor of the local governments and more organized civil society organizations. As will be elucidated in the next chapter, however, there is clear vertical inequality between the councils of elders and traditionally marginalized social groups in the area, especially women and the members of minority who are excluded from communal conflict resolution and peace-building.

CHAPTER SIX: WOMEN LED PEACE ACTIVISM IN WONDO GENET

Introduction

The previous chapter described the potentials and limits of the council of elders in the Wondo Genet area where the Sidama and Guji Oromo communities developed shared sets of laws, customs and institutions to manage disputes arising in everyday life. Customary conflict resolution systems in the area emphasized reconciliation of conflict parties and restoration of social harmony. As the analysis shows, the councils of elders have the potentials to meet needs of the people as they are legitimate and effective in the eyes of majority of people.

The current chapter analyzes the potentials of women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet area, especially with regard to the representation and empowerment of women and members of traditionally marginalized groups or artisans in communal conflict resolution. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the violent conflict in the area have placed tremendous burden on both women and men. Particularly, women from both ethnic communities suffered from loss of families and livelihoods, various forms of gender based violence and the duties to help their communities. These conflicts have shown that women experience as victims, perpetrators, and peace activists. In particular, women of the Wondo Genet area took part in peace activism to improve their live and to promote rights of others. They have used both customary and modern women led civic associations to promote their rights and peace of their communities. However, women's contribution to non-violent conflict resolution and to mobilize the community to challenge violent ways of managing conflicts has remained largely invisible in the society in general and in the political circles in particular. Women in the Wondo Genet area

like their counter-part in the other parts of country have still been vulnerable group in the conflict situations, even though they also have different experiences related to violent communal disputes and their resolutions.

This chapter therefore starts by exploring intra-communal violence in the Wondo Genet District of Sidama Zone. Then, it concisely analyzes the organizational characteristics of women led peace activism/associations in terms of their origins, structures and functions. The third section analyses the impacts and challenges of women led peace activism in transforming communal violence in the area and beyond. Finally, the conclusion is given.

6.1 Intra-Communal Violence in Wondo Genet District

As already mentioned in chapter five, the Sidama and Guji communities in the Wondo Genet area are male-dominated, composition of the councils of the elders are influenced by the gender dynamics, thus posing a challenge to the representation of traditionally marginalized groups such as women and the members of artisans. Males are generally perceived as superior to females. Male domination is highly pronounced ranging from the household up to the highest social level. Wrong though such a perception may be, it is further augmented by the stereotyping of male-female roles in all aspects of life. For instance, in the local custom males are perceived to be heroic and aggressive while women are to be peace loving and submissive. In particular, the marriage in the Wondo Genet District which is a particular concerns of this chapter, involves a payment of high amount of bride wealth (for example, rich individuals used to pay amount up to 60,000 ETH Birr) and it limits the girls' marriage choices. According to the informants, few girls

choose their own husband and many are still expected to agree to an “arranged” marriage which usually coercive girls and women⁵⁸.

The youth are traditionally not recognized as full members of the Sidama society until they pass through the age set system through which they transit to adulthood. According to Hammer (2005), older sibling always take precedence over the younger, while in adulthood older men must be recognized and deferred by the younger (as cited in Markos, 2014, p. 132). Nevertheless, the participation of young men in the Sidama customary institution is highly encouraged. For instance, as the author observed, the young men are allowed to observe the conflict resolution processes in order to gain relevant skills and wisdoms. Besides, they have a key role in *luwa* system, especially in keeping peace of their community (Markos, 2014).

The Sidama society, like many other ethnic communities in Ethiopia, is culturally divided into ritually “pure” or the Wolawa (free farmers) and “impure”. Purity is often symbolized by the possession of *angamana* which literarily means an authority or privilege to ‘own’ others. The *angamana* is an exclusive status of the non-artisan sub-tribes of Sidama⁵⁹. Those who do not possess *angamana*, especially the artisans were excluded from the key socio-political decisions and were victim of various forms of discriminations. The Wolawa or free farmers excluded artisans from, for instance, intermarriage and ritual activities. As Kifle (2008, p. 240) states, to

⁵⁸ Mrs. Elfe, 28 years old Sidama woman and grew up in the Wondo Genet area. (2016, November 27). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS); Mr. Buye, 34 years old Sidama man and grew up in the Wondo Genet area. (2016, November 28). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

⁵⁹ Tribes of Sidama includes Alatta, Haweela, Qeweena, Saawoola, Fagisa, Garbichcho, Yanase, Malga, and Holloo (Aadland, 2002)

justify their exclusion the Wolawa accuse the artisans having transgressed some food laws, reinforcing the negative stereotypes towards them.

The so-called impure groups of Sidama in the past were not given land and had thus little option but to make a living from work as tanners or potters or blacksmiths. The artisan groups, namely, the Haddicho (traditionally specialize in potters and carpentry) and Awacho (who specialized in smith and tannery) do not possess *angamana* and have been excluded from participation in key decision making. With the exception of their councils of elders within their clan in the Dara area of the Sidama Zone, the Hadicho, as well as the Awacho⁶⁰, had limited access to land resources and were excluded from traditional structures such as the *luwa* and councils of elders or *songo*. Outside Dara, these social groups have been segregated into settlements in the rural villages, even though they share basic feature of ethno-linguistic identity such as common descent and language with the rest of the society (Aalen 2008; Markos, 2014). As a result the artisans suffered psychological as well as structural injustices that denied them integration into the mainstream society.

The marginalized groups of Sidama deeply resent injustice towards the members of artisans and duly require their rights to be respected. Some educated artisans of Sidama showed their resentment to the issue by even establishing their own political party, namely, the “Sidama Hadicho People’s Democratic Organization”, which was established after the introduction of ethnic oriented decentralization reform in 1991 (Aalen, 2008). Ordinary members of artisans

⁶⁰ The Awacho has no territory of its own to control. They live dispersed in the territories of other Sidama clans

often make alliance with their relatives in the remote places of the zone in order to support one another⁶¹.

Conversely, educated elites, political parties and the younger generation of the *wolawa* group pay less attention to cultural myth of the ritual purity (Aadland, 2002; Kifle, 2008). The local political elites both in the government and oppositions in the Sidama areas explicitly oppose discriminatory practices in the society against the artisans (Kifle, 2008). In addition, the young people of Sidama generally perceive the separation between the *wolawa* and the non-*wolawa* as background. They believe in marriage based on free choice, love and consent among those interested couples. Moreover, they do not believe in the once widespread practices such as arranged marriages and polygamy (ibid.).

The older generations of the *wolawa*, however, want to preserve most cultural practices and hold the distinction between *wolawa* and the non-*wolawa* with religious duty. They specifically believe in the myth of ritual purity (Aadland, 2002; Kifle, 2008). Even if marriages in the Wondo Genet area have been used as a means to bond rival clans or tribes, heal the past wound and strengthen family ties, the older generation appears still intolerant of marriage ties between the *wolawa* and non-*wolawa*. In particular, marriage of sons and daughters in the area aim to get mutually beneficial alliances. As a result, fathers and mothers exert strong pressure on particularly couples to marry and discourage what they regard as inappropriate marriage. Most marriage is between local people whose families are already well-known to each other and undoubtedly related to the perception of purity and economic wellness. This particularly

⁶¹ Mr. Buye, 34 years old Sidama man and grew up in the Wondo Genet area. (2016, November 28). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

constrains girls' choice of marriage partners and creates the condition for displeasures, protests and sometimes violent conflicts between families and relatives of couples. Marriage into non-*wolawa* is perceived not legitimate and doing so is not without costs.

Let me elucidate a marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet District having violent consequences. It happened in the *Abbaye Kebele* of the district in 2015. The dispute arose as a result of marriage between a girl from the *wolawa* family and a boy from Hadicho. Without exception my informants⁶² said that this marriage was based on mutual consent of the couple. This implies that it genuinely involved choice of young couple who were marrying for the first time. But the disagreement arose as her parent and relatives did not want the marriage and insisted on its breakdown. They did not like the blood ties with the 'impure' group. As the Gudumale elders claimed, it is normal in the area that the parents of one or both of the pair often object the union, even though in most cases the marriage will be acceptable to both families as far as it goes with the idea of purity. However, in this specific case, her parent and relatives refused to bless the marriage, which is viewed as crucial to the fertility of the union and its happiness. This dispute was referred to the Women and Children Office and subsequently to the court of the district. Since their marriage was based on consent, the court did not allow divorce as it was desired by her parents and relatives. Then after, as my informants recalled, her parents socially ostracized her. They also threatened to attack the parent and relatives of the boy if they did not comply with their demand for divorce⁶³. This case was again referred to the high level Gudumale elders of the district by elders representing the family of the boy. After serious deliberation, the Gudumale

⁶² Focus group interview with the Sidama Gudumale elders. (2016, December 23). (Dialogue with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone)

⁶³ Mrs. Destayenesh, official in the Women, Children & Youth Affairs of the Wondo Genet *Wereda*. (2018, August 20). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet *Wereda*, Sidama)

elders decided to end this marriage. As the Gudumale elders who participated in the decision claimed, they decided to break the marriage as pre-emptive measure to avoid the worst evil, that is, the hostility between rival clans in the area.

Nonetheless, the decision of customary elders did not help to end the dispute. Instead, it triggered an intra-communal violence over the wider areas. This was because the parent and relatives of the girls did not stop by breaking the marriage and taking back the woman, but they went on further by burning and attacking the families and relatives of the boy. This in turn precipitated in widespread and similar attacks against the members of artisans in most rural *kebeles* in the Wondo Genet and nearby Malga Districts (SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau, 2015). This violence took a lot of time and resources from the zonal and the southern regional government in terms of containing the violence and restoring calm and normality in the districts. According to the report by the SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau (2015), this problem was considered as lack of good governance in the district. Consequently, the SNNPR government together with the Sidama Zone tried to arrest about the investigators numbering over 100 and attempted to create awareness through community based dialogue forums in the conflict affected *kebeles*.

Even if women's rights are granted legally in the federal constitution (Art. 35 (1) (4)), in the family law of FDRE (2000) as well as in the revised 2001 regional constitution of the SNNPRS (Art. 35), the weight of tradition militates against the full exercise of those rights. Observations confirmed that customary elders still have a very strong influence in the everyday life of ordinary people in Wondo Genet. The issues of traditionally marginalized group's rights and protection did not attract much attention of customary actors due to the fact issue of status and property are

based on descent through male-line (Markos, 2014, p. 130). As the lawyer⁶⁴ in the Wondo Genet District described, there have been widespread perception in the area that women are not allowed to inherit or own properties. Besides, women have been exposed to the harmful practices such as abduction, arranged marriage, sexual abuses, and polygamy. As the above mentioned case of intra-communal violence shows, there are legitimate concerns in the customary practices with regard to rights of women and artisans. This is because there is a clear social hierarchy that privileges the powerful social groups over marginalized groups. This means that many young women are married to men not of their choosing. Parents exercise incredible influence on their children backed up the power of the much feared repercussion of curse and exclusion (*bonga*) related to non-compliance. A parent or elder may curse a child of any age or socially isolate him or her if the latter defies the parents⁶⁵. It is such traditional practices that induce the elders to prioritize a need to preserve the status quo over marriage choices of couples. This in turn affects the very survival of socially marginalized groups like the artisans. In fact, after aforesaid violence, the Gudumale elders together with elders from the nearby Melga District conducted reconciliation between the two families.

Nonetheless, efforts are now being made by educated women and members of artisans in the zone to counter-balance cultural practices that constrain their choices. In this regard, various women led associations are mobilized to build the capacity of women. Among the Sidama and Guji Oromo of the Wondo Genet area, women have already played an important role of peace

⁶⁴ Mrs. Konjit, the lawyer in the Women, Children & Youth Affairs Office of the Wondo Genet *Wereda*. (2018, August 20). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet *Wereda*, Sidama)

⁶⁵ Mr. Buye, 34 years old Sidama man and grown up in Wondo Genet area. (2016, November 28). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS); Mr. Matewos Ligamo, a Sidama elder. (2016, December 24). (Interview with the author, Wosha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone)

activism at grassroots. Their traditions are full of stories that recounts women intervening into the midst of warring parties to contain inter-and intra-communal violence. The recent inter- and intra-communal violence specifically forced women to engage in peace activism for among others marriage based on consent in the area and beyond, even though their efforts came late to rescue the aforementioned case of marriage dispute since the woman quickly married another man from traditionally favored clan. The following sections try to briefly analyze women led peace activism among Sidama in the Wondo Genet *Wereda*, specifically exploring their origins, structures and functions as well as their impacts and challenges.

6.2 Origins, Structures and Functions of Women Led Peace Activism

As already mentioned in chapter five, Wondo Genet has been affected by violent communal conflicts started in the area since 1991. According to the informants, many persons died or internally displaced and their properties damaged. Women were the primary victims of the conflict. Women lost their husbands and children lost their fathers. Moreover, many women were forced to assume the role of nursing the injured, caring for the sick, mothering the orphans and protecting the elderly. The conflicts also forced some of them into the role of female ‘heads of households’, a role for which they are not well prepared. Conflicts also exposed women to various gender-abuses.

In response to the destructive effects of conflicts in the Wondo Genet area, women came to use various mechanisms, especially customary and modern platforms that they may use to protect themselves. The losses women suffered at the hands of communal violence made them to be

more aware or engage in associations or forums to restore peace. According to informants⁶⁶, in the times of these communal violence women found themselves at the center of conflicts between their sons, husbands and other male relatives. Some women were forced to make bread to provide food to their children leaving their traditional household chores. So women in different *kebeles* involved in various associations in order create peace at their villages. Women have opted to pursue their interests through such associations because they perceive existing male dominated systems are biased against them. As the horizon of their activities grew, some women became protector of the rights of women in their community. As the informants claimed, women's peace activism in the district is altering the life of many women and gaining the trust of the wider society.

As already discussed in chapter five, among Sidama society it is men, particularly the elders, who traditionally have the means to make peace through dialogues and mediation. The Sidama women like their counterparts among many ethnic communities in Ethiopia, are not allowed to participate in the key decision making. Moreover, respect and privileges in Sidama are allocated according to age, gender and clan, with older members of the clan retaining more power than younger members, men more power than women and 'pure' clans more privileges than artisans or craftsmen (Aadland, 2002; Markos, 2014).

While Sidama women in the Wondo Genet area have actually engaged in rebuilding their communities, clan based *gudumale* councils of elders excluded them from full participation in

⁶⁶ Mrs. Genet, a woman working in the Wondo Genet Wereda. (2016, November 25). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama Zone). Mrs. Soreti, a civil servant in the Women and Children Affairs Office of the Wondo District. (2016, November 28). (Interview with the author, Wondo District, West Arsi Zone).

everyday conflict resolution and peace making. However, women used their multiple clan affiliation and customary structures to ensure the existence of dialogue between the conflict parties and to exert pressure on the elders and local politicians to keep talking. In the Wondo Genet area, elderly women of Sidama and Guji Oromo mobilized clan elders and political leaders to intervene and ensure the conflicts in that area was peacefully resolved. They played key roles to end conflicts in the area, even though they were allowed only to observe series of peace resolution and reconciliation processes led by the elders and the local governments.

Excluded from the male-dominated councils of elders, women in the Wondo Genet area have led the way in mobilizing customary and modern oriented civic associations to engage in peace work. One of key customarily existing women led association in the Wondo Genet District of Sidama is *yaka* or women's council. The *yaka* has been quite effective, especially in the rural areas in promoting the rights of women. As the informants described, the *yaka* is exclusively organized and led by elderly women as unique institution with aim of protecting the rights of women. Thus, mandate of the *yaka* is solely for the sake of the 'female honor' or rights.

The *yaka* institution of Sidama is led by *qaricho* who has a role to ensure that the honor or rights of women of the community is protected (IIRR, 2009; Markos, 2014). The *yaka* has a role to draw the attention of the community towards situations that affecting women. Besides, the *yaka* brings together their members to carryout various tasks related to the rituals and fests that are perceived essential for the community. The *yaka* in particular has role of seeing cases of conflict like wife beating and maltreatment. Whatever the causes of the conflict, the *yaka* plays a key role by taking up their *siqqos* or 'peace sticks'. The *qaricho*, the leader of women's council, review

the case of disputes and lead the *yaka* in seeking for the offender who will find himself encircled by angry and mocking women. The women use their peace sticks to get the offence to be gone and not be repeated again. They force the offender to defend himself, often in front of men *songo*. The offender is also expected to pay compensation which is used to build the capacity of the women's council. The *qaricho* has also role of supporting the customary elders in protecting the rights of women (Markos, 2014).

All women of the community are required to be member of the *yaka* or women's council. To ensure the participation of all women, members took various measures to induce non-members to engage in it. For instance, they hid the newly bought clothes of non-members. The *yaka* members even fine a husband who denies the participation of his wife. This fine might take the form of an ox, which is very heavy fine in the rural area (IIRR, 2009, p. 13).

According to the informants, the *yaka* has been used to inspire the involvement of women in conflict resolution and protect their rights and privileges in the area. In this regard, apart from women led peace activities in tandem with the *yaka*, externally sponsored peace projects also used *yaka* platform to promote communal peace in the Wondo Genet area. For instance, in 2011, the RCCSGA which worked in collaboration with the Civil Peace Service of the government of Germany organized peace clubs of women in line with the *yaka* in order to highlight women peace potential and ensure further participation of women in communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding (see figure 6.1 below). The peace radio program which was established in line with existing *yaka* system is perceived to have increased the participation of women in the

communal conflict resolution (CPS, 2017, p. 24). As member of the Edo-Busa women's listeners club said,

Previously, nobody thought that we - women - could have a role in peacebuilding. There was also no room for us to contribute to traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and processes. [...] After the peace radio was launched in our *kebele* we had the opportunity to sit together and discuss peace with other community members. Now we actively participate in peacebuilding activities and processes (quoted in CPS, 2017, p. 12).



Figure 6.1: Edo Busa Women Peace Listener Club, the photo by the RCCSGA (CPS, 2016, p.12)

The Sidama women in the Wondo Genet District are also organized under the modern Women Association. The women association of the district was established and led by a group of educated women affiliated to the government as non-profit organization. It has a mandate of

empowering women and promoting peace of the community through awareness program, education and coexistence. The women association in particular works on issues which affect the lives of most women such as poverty, illiteracy, health and reproductive health, political participation and peace. It is chiefly concerned with improving the status quo and pushing the reform which improve the lives of majority of women. It encourages the women to take responsibilities to improve the lives of women by themselves or work on the customary associations or state programs which are allegedly set up for the benefit of women in each peasant *kebele*. Community based modern women associations in the Wondo Genet area strives to involve all rural women and mainly rely on state support in terms of capacity building, legal supports and loans from micro-financial organizations like Sidama Micro Finance. As a result women become agent of change in lives of many members of their community.

Young girls in the Wondo Genet area are encouraged to participate in clubs in school setting to deal with challenges arising in their everyday life. Girls in the area in particular suffer from experience related to the absence of support in their experience of gender abuses, discrimination, sexual harassment, abduction and early marriage within and outside the school settings. School girls, for example, usually drop school due to pregnancies. As my informants claimed, girls are encouraged to involve in a number of school based clubs like peace clubs and forums which are established in the school settings to offer support, friendship, guidance and a skill to deal with gender based abuses. Generally, women use various civic associations in order to promote peace of their community and to address structurally rooted injustices.

6.3 Impacts and Challenges of Women Led Peace Activism in Wondo Genet

Sidama women in the Wondo Genet District have contributed very much towards equality and empowerment for the society in general and for women in particular. Sidama women were active in political struggle in the past. For instance, Queen Furra was remembered as the most legendary women leader in Sidama's history. She was the only woman who ever assumed power in the society and women regarded her as their hero and role model whereas men regarded her as their bitter enemy (Markos, 2014, pp. 67-68). She was also remembered for favoring women and targeting some men.

Since the rise of inter-communal conflict in the Wondo Genet area in 1991, women in the area played active roles in mitigating conflicts between the disputants. As the informants remarked, women acted like a bridge between the conflict parties, they mitigated conflicts, prepared meeting venues and everything necessary to make that meeting of the elders successful. They also involved in peace dialogue and engaged in peace radio listeners clubs established to teach about peace. Moreover, they convinced youth to remove roadblocks, and provided assistance to needy people affected by the violence. As the informants described, women of both Sidama and Guji communities in the Wondo Genet area travelled the other side carrying their peace sticks and reconciliation messages to warring parties. Like other women in the country, women in the Wondo Genet area are credited for instilling crucial peace values up on their children. In this regard, women in rural areas use stories, riddles, saying and proverbs to instill required peace values such as tolerance and coexistence (Mehari, 2015, p. 34).

The Wondo Genet women led grassroots civic associations have generally achieved much in the past years. They played a role in reducing the significances of marriage based on purity, promoted women representation in peace and reconciliation processes and made progress on participation of women in the local government structures and politics. They particularly influenced the political leaders to take decision with regard to marriage based on consent, reproductive and property rights. According to the informants, women of Wondo Genet in particular played a key role in the society wide decisions with regard to a marriage based on consents of couples regardless of their social background and bride wealth payment not exceeding 2000 ETH Birr. Women were also empowered in the district to solve their problems using women led platforms. For example, as the record of Women and Children Affairs Office of the district shows, from 193 women who sought some forms of aids from the office in twelve months preceding August 2018, about 150 women's complaints against their husbands were solved using peace platform involving some senior women and elderly men whose personal view ally them to the women's concerns⁶⁷.

Despite their role in community peace, women in the Wondo Genet area still face severe challenges in breaking gender-based discriminations and cultural barriers to equal participation. An increase in communal conflicts in southern Ethiopia in recent years has deepened insecurity for everyone and undermined some gains of women's peace efforts in the wider region. Women in Ethiopia have traditionally suffered from socio-cultural, political and economic challenges and marginalization (IIRR, 2009). They lack access to productive and protective resources. They have limited access to vital resources; they suffer from burden of household chores and

⁶⁷ Mrs. Konjit, the lawyer in the Women & Children Affairs Office of the Wondo Genet District. (2018, August 20). (Interview with the author, Basha, Wondo Genet District, Sidama)

exceptionally limited decision making power. The Wondo Genet women believe that violent strategies to resolve disputes that arise in everyday life promise no good news for women's rights that they have managed to occupy since the 1991 political reform that delivered legally recognized rights to women.

As already mentioned in chapter five, customary system of conflict resolution in the Wondo Genet area often deprives women of a space where they could contribute to conflict resolution and peace-building in their communities. Women's peace activism has been playing significant roles for conflict resolution in different part of the region, even though it has largely been unrecognized. As the case of intra-communal violence in the Wondo Genet District reveals, women's peace activists aspire to get different aims such as cessation of violence, representation in peace process, promotion of women's rights and transforming the society to benefit all of its members.

Nonetheless, this author argues that the representation of women and members of minority group in official peace processes appears critical to ensure a sustainable peace. This is because representation of women in peace process is important to integrate their needs and perspective into communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In marriage disputes in the asymmetric setting like in the Wondo Genet District, it is crucial to move away from solely customary elders led approach and start relying on participatory, gender-inclusive, bottom-up approaches, which will heal the deep wounds of the conflicts and address the immediate needs of different sections of a community. It is crucial to recognize that encouraging advances being made with regard to women's participation in communal conflict resolution and peace-

building in the area in past two decades. But, there remain a lot of challenges that make women's peace activism invisible.

One of critical challenges that hinder women's participation in processes of communal conflict resolution and peace-building is social attitudes towards women and members of minority group. In most part of southern Ethiopia, women have been culturally considered as inferior to and subordinate to men (IIRR, 2009). Inequality between women and men appears in all aspects of everyday life. In particular, women in the area are not allowed to inherit or own properties. They have also been exposed to harmful practices such as abduction, arranged marriage, sexual abuses, and polygamy. As a result of their perceived inferiority, women are mostly excluded from decision making processes. As already mentioned in chapter five, women may not be directly allowed to participate in customary male led peace process. Women's voices are generally excluded from the councils of elders. This attitude to women is often reflected in everyday dispute resolution, especially women's involvement in mediation is generally seen by men as violating culture and tradition. As such outspoken women in the study contexts are usually harassed by cultural conservatives. The social attitudes also influence some women to undermine even their fellow women who commit themselves to fight gender-based discrimination. These predominant social attitudes therefore dissipate women's peace activism and involvement in communal conflict resolution that affect their needs and interests.

In conflict situations, there are violations of many forms that discourage many women not to commit themselves to peace activism. As El-Bushra (2007) remarks, "Violent conflict is indiscriminate in its capacity to kill, maim and destroy property and livelihood" (p.

136). Conflict also weakens the position of those who are already without power, whether they are women, men or children or minority. Communal conflicts exacerbate forced marriage, abduction, marital abuses, and unwanted pregnancies (IIRR, 2009). Moreover, violent communal conflicts put a great burden upon both men and women to provide for and protect family members in circumstances of extreme difficulty. However, as literature indicates that the direct physical impacts on women are serious in the violent communal conflicts (ibid.). As Embet (2005) remarks, women may face more problems attributed to biological, psychological and social causes. "... women often experience violence, forced pregnancy, abduction and sexual abuse and slavery" (p. 73). During communal conflicts women experience loss of their livelihood, the breakdown of health, education, financial and legal services, the loss of market, the physical and mental traumas of displacement and refugees (El-Bushra, 2007). Clearly, traumatizing experience of violent communal conflicts discourages women not to participate in any effort to restore peace to their community. When they commit themselves to promote peace, the absence of support to their efforts as well as lack of rule of law in conflict situations makes the works of women's peace activism difficult and dangerous.

As it is a common experience in Ethiopia, women in the Wondo Genet area are generally responsible for carrying out all the household and agricultural activities. Women are, for instance, responsible for child bearing and child rearing. They are also required to care the sick and elderly during both peace and war times. Besides, the presence of custom of providing an expensive bridal wealth in the Wondo Genet area is the source of challenge to women and intra-communal conflict in the area.

Lack of adequate financial resource is another challenge for women's peace activism. Most of the time women's peace activities in the Wondo Genet area lack the means to back up their actions. Women largely rely on financial support from NGOs, which are often associated with an acceptance of stereotypical assumptions that seek to portray women as merely vulnerable group (Mehari, 2015). Moreover, external financial assistance to conflict-affected communities like in Wondo Genet does not focus the drivers of conflict or provide durable supports to empower women. For instance, according to the informants supports of the government and NGOs in the Wondo Genet area went to conduct the referendum, support the security forces and short term peace dialogues and conferences than on long term tasks on education, reproductive health and awareness creation. During the fieldwork for this research there were handfuls of NGOs (like Plan Ethiopia) working in the district to improve the lives of women. This occurs in the social setting where discrimination against women and minority is rampant.

Access to decision-making and political power also remains as a key challenge for women in southern Ethiopia in general and in the Wondo Genet area in particular. Despite some prospect of transforming the hegemonic masculinity and embedded gender inequalities since the 1990s reform in the wider social setting of Sidama, the new power structures are slow to welcome them into the political arena in the local, regional and federal government structures. For example, women of Wondo Genet were marginalized by the men of their own clans, in spite of their role in community conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This is because women suffer from the lack experience to change their collective efforts into a powerful strategy. In this aspect, the critical challenge is that many women in the society are non-literate. Wide

spread illiteracy among women means that most of women lack experience and skills required for negotiation, advocacy and governance techniques. Girls are still hindered from attending school. The presence of gender related abuses like abduction and sexual violence in the Wondo Genet area mean that girls are insecure to travel to and from school. For instance, there are still a wide spread of practices of parent arranged marriage in the Wondo Genet area which specifically coerces girls. One of the recent victims of arranged marriage who came from the Wondo Genet area to live in Hawassa said, “I did not love the person I have married. I was forced to marry him by my aunt and my brother. Previously, I loved my fellow teacher. I do not like this custom.”⁶⁸Such obstacles in turn have kept women from the participation in education, governance and sphere of decision making as well as made their conflict mediation activities invisible. Those who are literate have to struggle with the delicate process of seeking the supports of husbands, family and friends and others. Besides, women’s associations have often been co-opted and controlled by the ruling party. This resulted in the tight control by the government over women’s access to power and agenda being pursued by them. According to the informants women’s associations in the Wondo Genet area are often used as vehicles to mobilize and to sustain agenda of the government.

Lastly, women led peace activism has been facing challenge associated with lack of common strategy among women. In communal conflict like in the Wondo Genet District, women are often divided by the same social divisions that generate conflicts in the first place as well as by differences of cultural ideology. Some women especially in rural areas promote the mothering roles as their common platform, while others especially educated women commit themselves to

⁶⁸ Mrs. Elfe, 28 years old Sidama woman and grown up in the Wondo Genet area. (2016, November 27). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

transform deep-rooted inequalities and discriminations against women. Some women aim to promote the needs and rights of only women, while others tend to promote the rights of all subordinated minority groups including artisans. Generally, such differences have their own effects on the effectiveness of women led peace activism in the area.

Aforementioned challenges encountering women and the members of minority groups in the Wondo Genet District clearly remind actual and potential risks of encouraging hybrid relations with non-state local actors who oppose constructive social changes. As experience of peace activism in the Wondo Genet District shows, it is necessary for women and the members of minority groups to constructively confront structural constraints to their rights, interests and dignity.

Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, women-led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District emerged in response to their exclusion in customary systems of conflict resolution that suffer from constraints to transform structurally rooted discrimination against members of the minority, including women. Women led peace activism sought not only gender equality but also recognition for their role in communal conflict transformation. In this regard, women in the Wondo Genet area carry out multiple roles in times of war and peace, even though there are still negative cultural attitudes holding them back. In conflict situations women increasingly engaged as activists and advocates for communal peace. Women peace activists mobilized people at the grassroots and carried out activities which paved the way for peace negotiations between the warring parties. Their activities are not yet recognized and their representation in peace process

has been restricted by discrimination, violence, lack of education and technical abilities, lack of a common strategy and lack of finance among other factors. Even if a lot of work has been done to advance the participation of women at different levels of communal peace processes in the Wondo Genet area, there is still resistance to recognize women's efforts and accept the participation of competent women in conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding. However, many interviewees highlighted the significance of unique contribution of women in local peacebuilding, especially in de-escalating violent inter-and intra-communal conflicts and promoting reconciliation in the wider society. Women's efforts to address their concerns and needs and that of the members of minority groups cannot be ignored anymore in any relevant communal peace process.

CHAPTER SEVEN: STATE INITIATED PEACE COMMITTEES IN SIDAMA-OROMO FRONTIERS

Introduction

The previous two chapters analyzed the potentials and challenges of the council of the elders and women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet area. Customary systems of conflict resolution of the Sidama and Guji Oromo in the area are based on shared sets of laws, customs and have been so helpful in containing inter-communal violence and transforming hostilities that existed in their horizontal relations. Women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District represented a rival local peace infrastructure that exhibits the limits of customary authorities on the one hand and highlight the potentials of such infrastructure to empower traditionally marginalized groups such as women and artisans on the other hand. In particular, women led peace activism emerged in the asymmetric conflict setting where customary elders offer culturally laden solution to disputes occurring in everyday life in the area.

This chapter analyzes the potentials and possible limits of alternative, a community-based peace structure which is situated between formal and customary conflict resolution systems. In particular, it analyzes the potentials and challenges of state initiated local peace committees in the frontiers between Sidama and neighboring Oromo subgroups namely the Guji and the Arsi Oromo. This chapter specifically turns attention into traditionally hostile frontiers between Sidama and neighboring Oromo groups which were also the scene of the violent communal conflicts, especially after the introduction of ethnic oriented federal reform in 1991. Here, the local peace committees were introduced after the reform as a permanent local peace

infrastructure to support transformation of violent communal conflicts in the frontier villages. The local peace committee structures in these traditionally hostile frontiers have been so critical in helping to contain inter-communal violence and transform long existing hostilities in their horizontal relations.

The analysis, therefore, starts by exploring sources and natures of the traditional hostilities between the Sidama and neighboring Guji and Arsi Oromo as well as that violence which arose in their frontier areas after the 1991 reform. The second section explores the origin of the state initiated local peace committees in the frontier areas between the Sidama and Guji Zones, focusing on the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* of the Hula District. In particular, it describes the structures and functions as well as impacts and challenges of local peace committees in the frontier villages between the Sidama and adjacent zones of Oromia Regional State. Finally, the conclusion is given.

7.1 The Sidama and Neighboring Oromo Subgroups

As already mentioned in chapter five, the Sidama and neighboring subgroups of Oromo share related worldviews, rituals and symbols. Besides, they speak related languages which belong to South East Cushitic languages. Furthermore, they had similar experiences of the conquest by the Ethiopian Empire builders and they closely allied in the struggle against the exploitative imperial and despotic *Dergue* regimes. In spite of these, there were periodic killings in their frontier areas which appear to have transformed into violent communal conflicts after the decentralization reform in 1991. For example, the Sidama had traditional hostility with the Guji Oromo in its

southern frontier and with the Arsi Oromo in its northern frontier with exception of the Guji Oromo residing in the Wondo Genet and Balela areas (Kifle, 2008; Tadesse, 2009).

According to scholars who are native to both ethnic groups, a key reason for animosities between two groups lies in the territorial expansion of the Sidama into traditional grazing lands of the Guji and Arsi Oromo. In this regard, Kifle (2008, p. 242) states that the Sidama's demands for farming and grazing lands increased from time to time as the population has continued to grow steadily since the 16th century, periodically causing bloodshed in their frontier areas. Likewise, Tadesse Berisso (2009, p. 195) linked the animosity between the Guji Oromo and Sidama with southward expansion of the Sidama into the Guji traditional grazing lands. My Sidama informants⁶⁹ in the Hula District confirmed that the Sidama farmers settled in the old frontiers as the Guji moved into lowlands ceding those frontier areas. This conflict over farming and grazing lands appear to have transformed into individual honor killings (a means to gaining a social status within one's community) of each other and retaliatory act (Kifle, 2008; Tadesse, 2009).

The traditional hostilities between the Sidama and the Arsi Oromo on the one hand and between the Sidama and the Guji on the other hand appear to have taken different trajectories after their incorporation into the Ethiopian Empire in the late 19th century. The administrative structures instituted by the imperial and *Dergue* regime brought the Sidama and Guji Oromo together under the former Sidama Province, whereas the Arsi Oromo became part of the former Shewa Province. The common administration for the Sidama and Guji seems to have facilitated the

⁶⁹ Geno, civil servant in the Hula District. (2017, January 04). (Interview with the author, Hager Selam, Hula District, Sidama Zone); Yetera, civil servant in the Hula District. (2017, January 04). (Interview with the author, Hager Selam, Hula District, Sidama Zone).

settlement of the Sidama in the traditional grazing lands of Guji, intermarriage and conversion of both groups into Protestantism, even though such shared experiences did not end their traditional antagonism altogether. By contrast, the Sidama's northern frontier with the Arsi Oromo saw recurrent hostilities, especially at the heart of south central Rift Valley of Ethiopia (CPS, 2017; Quinland et al., 2016). As one of informants from Sidama (quoted in Quinland et al., 2016) narrated warfare between the Sidama and the Arsi when he was a young boy around 1960:

There was a war, an ethnic conflict between the Sidama and the Oromo. People ran away from their farm. Men abandoned their farms to go become heroes in the war. No one was working the farms, and so there was no food. People had no food, and they ate grass. Many people died. The women and children had to move to escape the fighting (p. 639).

The fighting in the frontier areas between the Sidama and the Arsi continued after the *Dergue* regime came to power. As aforementioned informant further reported, men stayed away from home fighting for a week or sometimes over two months, their wives and children took care of the farm and armed guards protected the village in frontiers against the Arsi Oromo raiders (ibid.). Although the Sidama and Arsi differed in terms of their religious affiliation, as the former largely converted into Protestantism and the latter into Islam, the key drivers of their hostilities related to the issue of pasture land and traditional practices (Mustefa, 2018, pp. 74 & 79). As oral traditions of the Sidama, Arsi and Guji Oromo⁷⁰ confirm, killings of a person of an enemy group and or big wild animals such as lion, buffalo, tiger, etcetera, qualified a killer to social prestige and a lifelong recognition. Nonetheless, such traditional warfare did not target women and

⁷⁰ Within the Oromo, the Guji are closest to neighboring Borana and Arsi. These three subgroups speak a common dialect of the Oromo language and are also historically and culturally close. Despite this, in the past they fought each other in accordance with this tradition (Tadesse, 2009, p. 193)

children. Nor did traditional hostilities limit intermarriage and exchange of people between the Sidama and Arsi, particularly in their frontier areas outside of the Rift Valley (Girma, 2001). As informants⁷¹ and written sources confirmed, both the imperial and *Dergue* regimes strived to transform traditional hostilities, especially between the Sidama and the Arsi (CPS, 2017; Mustefa, 2018, p. 80). For instance, the regimes established buffer zones in conflict hotspots such as Shamana areas by resettling farmers from the densely populated areas (such as the Kembatta and Wolaita), enclosing the lands for commercial farming, publically hanging suspected violence investigators, and situating the security forces in disputed frontiers, although without success.

As an ethnic-oriented decentralization was introduced in the country in 1991, most of frontier areas between the Sidama and neighboring Oromo saw violent conflicts. Although such conflicts were gradually dwindled in the Sidama-Guji frontiers, they increased from time to time in the Sidama-Arsi frontiers, including the rise of the new conflict in the Wondo Genet area, which had previously been peaceful frontier. Violent encounters in both frontiers were induced by the ethno-nationalists' agenda of creating sharp borders, even though there were also context specific factors in each area. For example, warfare and insecurities between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones in the south central Rift Valley of Ethiopia were fuelled by drought and poverty which in turn gave birth to growing armed raids as well as cycles of retaliatory attacks (CPS, 2017; Mustefa, 2018). This situation was also aggravated by disputes over collectively used natural resources (example; grazing lands and water), demarcation of boundary, land deals and

⁷¹ Peace and security chief of Hawassa Zuria Wereda. (2017, January 18). (Interview with the author, Dore Bafana, Sidama Zone); Mr. Taye, peace and security expert in the Peace and Security Bureau of the SNNPRS. (2016, December 13). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

transactions, historical memories of hostilities and negative stereotypes (ibid.). In this frontier the ruling government made a three time's effort to bring the parties into a negotiation table, even though without success. And it was in its fourth attempt in 2013 that the government succeeded in bringing the two groups together for dialogues, forgiveness and reconciliation applying the lessons drawn from the grassroots peace initiative in the frontier areas between the Sidama and the Guji Oromo in the further south as it will be discussed below.

According to my informants⁷², the causes of violent inter-communal conflicts in the frontier areas between Hula District and Bore District where empirical evidences for this research come from, were related to disputes over land and pastures deals. As the informants claimed, most Sidama farmers acquired farming lands from the Guji Oromo through buying and contract cultivation. The land transactions in the frontier areas have often been carried out in form of contracts (as the lands legally belong to the state and thus not to be sold), even though in most cases it was reclaimed by sellers or by their family members via formal local courts. This in turn usually triggers violent inter-group conflicts. Like the Wondo Genet area, the rural settlement in the frontier areas between the Sidama and the Guji Zones are ethnically mixed. Unlike the Wondo Genet area, however, drawing border demarcations in the frontier areas between the Sidama and Guji Zones did not encounter any significant hurdle as it was done on bases of an informal peace accord and good neighborhood between two groups (Kifle, 2008, p. 318). Hence, the two communities managed to keep the problem from getting out of hands using their cultural peacebuilding mechanisms. Sometimes minor inter-personal disputes did arise between them and

⁷² Geno, civil servant in the Hula District. (2017, January 04). (Interview with the author, Hager Selam, Hula District, Sidama Zone); Yetera, civil servant in the Hula District. (2017, January 04). (Interview with the author, Hager Selam, Hula District, Sidama Zone); Focus group interview with members of Hanqo-Baya Peace Committee. (2017, January 13). (Dialogue with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone)

escalate into inter-group conflicts in the area. Nonetheless, there has been sustained everyday peace cooperation between two groups and local governments. As one of peace and security officers of the Sidama Zone said, “We cooperate on law and order, especially locating and exchanging suspected criminals and contrabandists as well as creating smooth everyday life for the people in frontier villages.”⁷³ Such peaceful interactions between local political leaders were augmented by everyday activities of the state initiated local peace committees which in turn work with customary elders and community leaders in the areas to ensure communal peace.

Hence, the next section explores and analyzes the potentials and impact of (joint) peace committees and peace forums in promoting communal peace, drawing empirical evidences from a case study from the Hula District of the Sidama Zone. It gives a particular consideration to investigate the Local Peace Committee of Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* in the district, and its distinct impacts over wider areas, including replication of its lessons in the frontier areas between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones.

7.2 State-Initiated Local Peace Committee in the Hanqo-Baya

Hanqo-Baya is one of peasant *kebeles* in the Hula District of the Sidama Zone. It is situated in the frontier areas linking the Hula District with neighboring Bore District of the Guji Zone. Like most peasants *kebeles* in two adjacent districts, Hanqo-Baya lies at attitude of about 2800m above sea level. The land is suitable for agricultural activities. Its inhabitants numbering about 504 households practice mixing economic activities producing mainly barely, bean, cabbage, *enset*, etcetera. Rearing animals such as cattle, sheep, goat, horses, mules and donkey are also

⁷³ Commander Teshome, Peace and security officer of the Sidama Zone. (2017, January 06). (Interview with the author, Abera, Dara District, Sidama Zone).

practiced in the area. All members of the community belong to ethnic Sidama and Guji Oromo, even though the former is a little higher. Most of the residents of the *kebele* are follower of Protestantism, and few individuals are followers of traditional beliefs (“Socio-economic profile”, 2016)⁷⁴.

The Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* is one of frontier settlements which was agreed to be in the Sidama Zone during the border demarcation. As the informants recalled, the boundary demarcation in the Sidama-Guji frontiers just considered simple majority (in terms of ethnic identity) in each frontier *kebele*. This means that the residents on both sides of the borders live in ethnically mixed villages, go to the same church, intermarry with each other and linked through various civic oriented grassroots associations like burial associations. This is even more evident in the Guji dominated *kebeles* in the Bore District⁷⁵.

The Hango-Baya *Kebele* has been acknowledged for its unique response to violent communal conflict that affected most frontier *kebeles* between the Sidama and Guji Zones in 1994. As the informants recalled, the violence had its origin in inter-personal dispute over land transaction in the nearby Gutereji *Kebele* in the Bore District. The dispute was centered on the decline of land selling agreement by a Guji man who claimed that he had only a contract farming agreement with his Sidama client. Their dispute turned into the violent inter-communal conflict, pitting members of Sidama and Guji Oromo against each other for a month. According to the informants, this conflict affected many ethnic Sidama who were living inside the Bore District,

⁷⁴ Focus group interview with the Hanqo-Baya Peace Committee members. (2017, January 13). (Dialogue with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone)

⁷⁵ Peace and security officers of the Bore District. (2017, January 13). (Interviews with the author, Bore, Bore District, Guji Zone)

including over forty cases of fatalities and destruction of properties. In ethnically mixed villages like the Hanqo-Baya the conflict has caused mistrust and tension, including feeling of lingering anger and a desire for revenge. This conflict de-escalated through joint peace efforts led by the respective local governments and community leaders. The community leaders consisting of clan chiefs, *Abagada* and respected elders in particular established an informal pact to reinforce their growing reciprocal ties, good neighborhood and peaceful coexistence. As narrated by the informants, this accord aimed to promote socio-cultural solidarities of two groups in order to reduce the effects of ethnic politics and disputes in their frontiers. The community leaders carried out the *gondoro* ritual like the one in the Wondo Genet area to cleanse the bloodsheds and restore peace in the area.

The residents of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* took the peace accord a further level, particularly by diffusing a challenge in ethnically mixed villages in the frontier area, that is, a problem of mother tongue education. Unlike the Wondo Genet area where the issue of mother tongue education was at the heart of the violent inter-communal conflicts, members of Hanqo-Baya built a primary school (grades 1 to 8) in their *kebele* creating inclusive space for children to learn in a language that they prefer. This measure also cut a long distance trip to a monolingual school in the adjacent areas like Bore town. In particular, local people provided all necessary materials for the construction of the school which has been functioning since 2008. Conversely, the Oromifa language teachers and text books for the school are provided by the neighboring Bore District, while monthly salaries of the teachers are paid by the Hula District. Besides, the villagers of Hanqo-Baya adopted a local peace committee structure which has played a key role in the

mother tongue initiative as well as in creating durable peace in the *kebele* and adjacent areas⁷⁶. Their exemplary peace initiative led to series of similar responses from ethnically mixed frontier *kebeles*, both in the Bore and Hula Districts, as well as in conflict-affected frontier areas between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones. The Local Peace Committee of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* is a key local actor which facilitates dialogues. It is credited for creating harmonious relations in the midst of inter-ethnic politics in the wider areas. Let me analyze the origin, structures and functions, impacts as well as limits of this local peace infrastructure.

7.2.1 The Origin and Mandate of the Local Peace Committee

Local peace committee structures were introduced into ethnically mixed rural *kebeles* in adjacent districts of Sidama and Guji Zones by the respective local governments. They serve as a permanent platform for dialogues and conflict resolution. As the informants recalled, the local peace committee structures were initiated as a response to numerous types of disputes in the frontier *kebeles* such as livestock raids, disputes over lands and pasture contracts and border. The lack of reliable and inclusive institutions of conflict resolution in those areas justified the establishment of the local peace committees. As recognized in LPCs literature, the decision to establish the peace committee in the area prioritized a need to create local ownership for local peace committee. In this regard, as discussed in chapter four, the creation of local peace committees in the frontier areas between the Sidama and Guji Zones benefited from the experience gathered from the experiment with the joint peace committees in other frontier areas.

⁷⁶ Focus group interview with the Hanqo-Baya Peace Committee members. (2017, January 13). (Dialogue with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone); Peace and security officers of the Bore District. (2017, January 13). (Interviews with the author, Bore, Bore District, Guji Zone); Peace and security officers of the Hula District. (2017, January 04). (Interviews with the author, Hager Selam, Hula District, Sidama Zone).

In fact, in the frontier areas like the one in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, there were already customary conflict resolution systems which rely on non-violent techniques to mediate disputes over different issues. Their procedures do not require villagers to go through formal legal procedures. Customary techniques of conflict resolution were perceived more efficient and capable of building a coherent relation among the disputants and to restore peace of the communities. As the informants remarked, before the creation of ethnic-based administrative border, customary authorities of the Sidama and Guji Oromo have cooperated with each other to transcend traditional hostilities between them and to prevent violence, and resolve disputes. Even though, with an increased awareness of ethnic identity in such traditionally hostile frontier areas, customary systems of conflict resolution did not provide reliable solution, especially in the absence of supports from local political leaders in the respective districts⁷⁷. In this regard, ethnic oriented decentralization has already been shaping the new layers violent communal conflicts where boundaries and collectively used resources are politicized and contested (Abbink, 2006, pp. 391-92). This situation in turn created difficulty for smooth running of everyday life in traditionally hostile frontiers like in the Hanqo-Baya *kebeles*. At this point in time, the local peace committee platform emerged as a key instrument in order to bring together members of both ethnic communities into dialogues and to restore peace and harmony in the midst of inter-ethnic politics in the areas. Since 2004, this peace platform has been continually operating in frontier areas between adjacent districts, even though they are confined to only bordering *kebeles*⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ Ibid.,

⁷⁸ Ibid.,

As Lederach (1997, p. 50) asserts, local peace committees are effective if they are owned by members of a community and are situated in the existing networks such as council of elders and other structures established by the community themselves. In line with this resolve, as the informants recalled, the decision to establish the local peace committees in the Hanqo-Baya and neighboring frontier *kebeles* considered already existing networks or contacts between the government and community leaders which give legitimacy to the new peace platform. The aim of the new peace structure is to provide inclusive space to locally discuss emerging concerns, resolve disputes and ensure their linkage with the local governments. In particular, it provided the spaces for resolving communal disputes through the application of local norms and values related to conflict resolutions.

As in-depth interviews with the informants in the Hula District indicate, the key mandate of *kebele* level peace committee is to prevent eruption of emerging petty disputes into violent and more widespread conflict. In this regard, the local peace committee members investigate and reports worrying early signs. They also promote culture of peace and dialogues among the community members and resolve issues that can be managed in collaboration with customary elders. As the coordinator of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee remarked, “As a peace committee, we work with respected customary elders to prevent, de-escalate violence and resolve conflicts, and to ensure reconciliation. We use legal means to calm tension; sometimes we briefly detain suspects in the *kebele* through using the aids of the *kebele* militia or the district police forces”⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ Mr. Yonas, the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee Coordinator. (2019, January 03). (Interview with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone)

As per local peace committee guideline, the state initiated *kebele* peace committees are meant to be answerable to district peace and security officers who usually involve in forming *kebele* peace committees. According to the informants, from the very beginning the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee has been facilitated by the district. The *kebele* peace committee has a mandate to promote peaceful coexistence and harmony, and to build peace in the *kebele*. It specifically provides a common forum to local people in order to resolve disputes relying on locally existing social capitals or resources. As the informants recalled, the district helps members of the local peace committee by giving mediation and conflict resolution skills. As members of peace committee of the *kebele*⁸⁰ confirmed, this kind of training helped them to take every minor dispute in a serious way, find the root causes of disputes and provide viable options for reconciliation. Besides, the district supports the *kebele* by responding to its requests for additional reinforcement of the police forces and sponsoring inter-community dialogues.

The Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee has been in contact with neighboring Jarota *Kebele* of Bore District through joint peace committee platform in order to prevent and/or resolve communal disputes in their frontier villages. Although the joint peace committee platforms are situated within respective local administrations and are reinforced by the local militias and police forces, they appear to have depended on non-coercive methods since they always make attempts to avoid an impression that exacerbate mistrust and tensions in those ethnically mixed villages. In particular, the Hanq-Baya and Jarota *Kebeles* joint peace committee cooperates with customary elders to prevent and resolve disputes arising in everyday life and help to establish mutually positive relationship among the local people. Its activities have been augmented by a

⁸⁰ Focus group interview with members of the Hanqo-Baya Peace Committee. (2017, January 13). (Dialogue with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone)

collective forum for peace and security that brings together members of local peace committees from three neighboring districts (Hula and Dara Districts of the Sidama Zone and Bore District of the Guji Zone), administrators and other stakeholders.

7.2.2 Role of the Local Peace Committee

As the informants remarked, the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee operates during both peace and conflict times. It has a key role of preventing any disruption of community peace. As part of its preventive measures, members of the peace committee give awareness creation education in order to inform communities what their role is, teaching the community about the effects of harmful practices and negative stereotypes. They also inform the community members about the benefits of relying on non-violent mechanisms like peace dialogues to deal with community-based disputes and crimes. Furthermore, they promote good neighborhood and peaceful coexistence in their frontier villages.

Members of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee deliberate on wide issues ranging from security to mobilization for community development. As they deal with every cases referred to them by an individual party to a dispute or those coming from the *kebele* militias. The committee members attempts to deal with various cases of disputes without making distinction between civil or criminal, even though they are not allowed to deal with cases of homicides. In particular, they deal with issues involving theft, drunkard fight, assaults, disputes over land and pasture contracts which usually trigger an inter-group tension in the area.

The local peace committee of Hanqo-Baya tries to establish the fact of each case. Its peace forum involves direct parties as well as other stakeholders who are affected by the conflict. The peace committee gives the opportunity to the disputants to express their views and encourages them to think for a better future. As informants⁸¹ claimed, the peace committee members do not take side in a dispute and aspire to reach a mutually acceptable solution which is watched by the community. Outcomes may include the imbursement of expenses to the victim, the return of goods and reconciliation. The practice of reconciliation involves participation of customary elders of both groups. As the informants claimed, these activities of LPC of Hanqo-Baya do not contradict with the existing institutions because as recognized in the literature (Odendaal, 2010 & 2012), they carry out their activities in collaboration with customary authorities, local governments, judiciary organs and police forces.

As already mentioned above, there is joint peace committee structure established by the Hanqo-Baya and neighboring Jarota *kebeles*. It is tasked with either dealing with disputes or passing the information on to government security agencies at the respective districts. As the informants claimed, it serves as a platform to prevent a conflict escalation as it deals with disputes involving members of the two *kebeles*. The joint peace committee members meet every fifteen days to discuss their common peace, security and development issues. They deliberate on wide ranges of issues such as disputes over land and pasture contracts, organized thefts, contraband trade, alcoholism, assaults and related issues. The joint peace committee also investigate the issue and urge those who are involved in the dispute to present their views including using the

⁸¹ Mr. Tole, Sidama elder in Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. (2017, January 14). (Interview with the author, Hanqo-Baya, Hula District, Sidama Zone); Mrs. Lalesho, a Sidama woman in Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. (2017, January 14). (Interview with the author, Hanqo-Baya, Hula District, Sidama Zone); Mr. Woyesa, a Guji man in Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. (2017, January 14). (Interview with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone).

eyewitnesses. Members of joint peace committee underscored that the peace platform provides an impartial avenue for parties to arrive at a negotiated solution and to restore harmony in the area. The members of joint peace committee mediate numerous cases of local disputes, correct injustice and compensate victims. Their everyday activities are augmented by the sustained peace cooperation of the Hula and Bore Districts.

There is a dialogue forum for all joint peace committees operating in the frontier *kebeles* of Hula, Dara and Bore Districts. It brings together members of local peace committees from all adjacent *kebeles* as well as conflict prevention and resolution experts and local officials of the SNNP and Oromia Regional States. It has a common plan, common resource mobilization mechanisms and information sharing platforms. As the informants claimed, this peace forum gives them opportunities to gain good practices and learn from failures, reinforces ties among communities, disseminates information from above and concerns from below. It also helps to formalize role of the *kebele* peace committee as it integrates them with the more formal conflict management structures. The dialogue forum gives opportunities to discuss different community issues such as the competition over natural resources (lands, water, grazing pasture, and forests), crime, unemployment, corruption, favoritism, and related issues.

This author had an opportunity to observe collective dialogue forum for joint LPCs that was held in the Abera High School of the Dara District in February 2017. It brought together members of joint local peace committees in the frontier *kebeles* of Hula, Bore and Dara Districts as well as local officials from the SNNP and Oromia Regions. As the participants⁸² stated, its aim was to

⁸² Participants in joint peace committee held in Abera High School. (2017, January 06). (Observation by the author, Abera, Dara District, Sidama Zone)

sustain peace in their frontier areas and discuss on critical issues that are beyond joint local peace committees. One of the peace and security officers of the Sidama Zone stated, “We discuss our common issues, celebrate togetherness, and resolve our differences peacefully.”⁸³ As the author observed, the participants deliberated on the wide ranges of issues such as deforestation, contraband trade, thefts, access to social services, disputes over land and pasture deals, rule of law and related issues. The participants reiterated the importance of using existing social, economic, and cultural ties between two groups in order to address actual and potentially violent communal conflicts in the frontier areas. As recognized in the literature, this type of forum is critical to link local political elites and their respective members to ensure the presence of peaceful interactions and to clear actual and potential confusions on role of joint LPCs so that it could not impair their potential to serve as a permanent peace platform for peace-building (Odendaal, 2010).

7.2.3 Composition of the Local Peace Committee

The existing literature recognize that to be legitimate and effective, local peace committees need to be composed of the many different groups and actors within a conflict setting (Odendaal, 2010). An inclusive composition has different dimensions such as specialized skills and integration of usually marginalized voices such as women and the members of minority groups. According to the informants, members of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* duly participated in the processes of designing and implementation of peace committee. The community held their own fair discussion on each candidate of the peace committee. As the informants underscored, the choice of members of the peace committee was fully done in transparent and innovates way to

⁸³ Commander Teshome, peace and security officer of the Sidama Zone (2017, January 06). (Interview with the author, Abera, Dara District, Sidama Zone).

ensure trust, inclusivity and transparency within the community. The Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee has eight members comprising of the representatives of women, customary elders, young people, religious organizations, self-help associations and representatives of the *kebele* administration. The diverse representation of local people is believed to offer space for each social section in the community. Table below shows the individual characteristics of peace committee members in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*.

Table 7.1: Composition of Local Peace Committee in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* of Hula District

no	Peace committee members	Sex	Age	ethnicity	Education level	Occupation
1	The <i>Kebele</i> Chairman (coordinator)	M	30	Sidama	Primary school	Farming and livestock
2	The <i>Kebele</i> Justice and Security officer	M	40	Oromo	Primary school	Farming and livestock
3	The <i>Kebele</i> militia commander	M	30	Sidama	Primary school	Farming and livestock
4	Representative of religious organizations	M	36	Oromo	Primary school	Farming and livestock
5	Representative of women	W	28	Sidama	Non literate	Farming and livestock
6	Customary elder	M	50	Sidama	Non literate	Farming and livestock
7	Representative of self-help associations	M	35	Oromo	Primary school	Farming and livestock
8	Representative of young people	M	26	Sidama	Secondary school	Farming and livestock

Source: Field work data, 2017

In contrast to councils of elders which are comprised exclusively of male elders, the state initiated LPCs in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* includes woman and young people. As per the LPCs guideline, the local peace committee structure needs to preserve gender issue in conflict resolution by empowering women in peace-building (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013, pp. 29-30). As shown in the Table 7.1, each local peace committee guarantees the presence of at least one woman. Their number was more visible during the above described peace forum held in the Abera High School. However, women are still least represented in communal conflict resolution in the frontier *kebeles* of Hula and Bore. Male in their 20s and 30s are generally dominant as peace committee members. By contrast, elders (above 50) are rarely involved in peace committee structures in this traditionally hostile frontier of Sidama and Guji Oromo, even though the *kebele* peace committee always cooperates with the council of elders in the area to address violent cases of communal conflicts. The council of elders usually conducts *gondoro* ritual in order to transform homicides and other serious cases of conflict.

The state initiated LPC of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* gives sensitivity to ethnic composition of the community. As indicated in the Table 7.1, the Sidama predominate the local peace committee which fairly reflects the demographic size of the community. As the informants claimed, the reverse is true in neighboring Jarota *Kebele* of Bore District where members of the Guji dominate the local peace committee. Literacy is not a requisite for membership of a committee. Nevertheless, most committee can read and write. The *kebele* chairman who coordinate everyday activities of the peace committee keep records of dispute resolution and always report their consensus to the district. Most members of peace committee speak both Sidamifa and Oromifa which they interchangeably use during dialogue forum and dispute resolution. The committee

members subsist on farming and animal rearing with exception of women who, according to local norms, rarely own land and livestock, unless they acquire them through legal means after the death of their husbands. Overall, it can be argued that the LPC of Hanqo-Baya fulfills key issues in ensuring inclusive composition as recognized in the existing literature, such as the co-ownership and participation of the primary conflict actors and sensitivity towards traditionally marginalized groups. In fact, there was little difference among the members of LPCs in terms of conflict resolution competence, even though the fact that they belong to and are trusted by the community has been crucial in their everyday peace-building.

7.2.4 External Supports to the Local Peace Committee

As per the local peace committee guideline, the state initiated *kebele* peace committees are meant to be answerable to the district peace and security office which is the authority where the right to form *kebele* peace committees resides. According to the informants, from the very beginning the LPC of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* has been facilitated by the Hula District. The *kebele* peace committee has a mandate to promote harmony and to build peace in the *kebele*. It provides a common peace forum for people to resolve disputes relying on locally generated resources. As members of peace committee of the *kebele* confirmed, the district provided them with mediation and conflict resolution skills so that they put into use to ensure peace of their community. As the members of peace committee stated, this kind of training helped them to take every minor dispute in a serious way, finding the root causes of disputes and providing viable options for reconciliation. Besides, the district supports the LPC of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* by responding to its requests for additional police reinforcement and sponsoring inter-community dialogues. However, the members of the LPC remarked that activities of local peace committees in the

frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts have primary been driven by resources rooted in local communities. Members of the peace committees carry out their tasks without any financial incentive. They are volunteers who believe in equality and truth rooted in communal values and norms.

By contrast, the establishment of peace committees in the Arsi-Sidama frontier in further north was technically and financially supported by the RCCSGA and Civil Peace Service of the government of Germany. Starting their pilot project of Peace Radio listener clubs to reduce violent inter-communal conflict in the Wondo Genet area, the RCCSGA and Civil Peace Service expanded the project into other frontier areas between the SNNPR and Oromia Region in order to reduce inter-personal and inter-community violence and promote peaceful coexistence between communities. They also sponsored the exchange visit to the members of peace committees to the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. Furthermore, in collaboration with the peace and security bureaus of the two regions, they sponsored reconciliation between the Sidama and Arsi Oromo, empowered members of local peace committees in their frontiers by providing training on mediation and conflict resolution (SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau, 2013). After the reconciliation, they established Peace Radio Programme listener clubs in the Arsi-Sidama frontiers, particularly to promote tolerance, the recognition of and respect for diversity, respect for human and group rights, non-violence, inclusive and just development and the rejection of ethos of traditional heroism, as well as to motivate the members of LPCs to promote mediation and reconciliation in the frontier areas (CPS, 2017).

In both conflict settings which also experienced traditional hostilities and warfare, the LPCs have been situated within the national, regional and local peace infrastructure that enable them to get relevant administrative supports as recognized in the literature. However, the LPCs still suffer from the lack of adequate external supports. This has so marked in the Arsi-Sidama frontiers in the south central Rift Valley where the LPCs had strong supports of NGOs (CPS, 2017). As already mentioned above, the LPC of Hanqo-Baya has retained their legitimacy and effectiveness during their needs, regardless of external support which has been achieved by relying on resources rooted within the community.

7.2.5 Impacts and Challenges of the Local Peace Committees

The establishment of peace committees was generally perceived to have changed communal conflict dynamics in the frontier of Hula and Bore Districts and beyond. As the informants in two districts in general and in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* in particular claimed, there is significant decrease in violent disputes in their villages. The local peace committees of Ethiopia was introduced, especially in the contested frontier areas which lack effective institution to provide security and justice other than the councils of the elders who usually fail to de-escalate violent inter-communal encounters in the absence of supports from local elites (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013). Unlike the context in Wondo Genet which is recognized for cross-cultural diplomacy, in traditionally hostile frontier like the one in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, involvement of culturally legitimate elders appear to have limited in cross border issues. As the informants recalled, lots of changes took place in the *kebele* after the establishment of the local peace committees. The member of the LPCs of Hanqo-Baya reported that in the past there was tension among community members that were linked to disputes over land transactions, including feeling of

persistent resentment and desires for revenge attacks. After the formation of the LPC, these issues were resolved as the committee convinced the community members to abandon these feelings, stereotypes, favoritism and live with one another in peace.

According to the informants, as result of energetic works of local peace committees in the frontier areas, there is now no space for pressure for group-based revenge attacks after violent inter-personal encounter. This is regardless of episodes of homicide involving members of the two ethnic groups. In relation to this issue, the informants from the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* raised a courageous deed of *Obbo* Utura Kereyu who is a Guji elder in the nearby Haro-Melk *Kebele* of Bore District of Guji. *Obbo* Utura de-escalated potentially violent encounter between the two groups after murder of his son by a co-residing Sidama man. As conflict prevention and resolution experts of the Bore District recalled, some villagers of the Haro-Melk *Kebele* attempted to burn houses belonging to Sidama. Even though, *Obbo* Utura dissuaded them from further bloodsheds urging that he did not want to lose both sons. He said that both the offender and the victims are his sons. He handled the offender to the local police not bowing to the pressure for the revenge attacks and encouraged reconciliation in the area (SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau, 2013).

The LPC of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* in collaboration with the councils of elders in the area held series of meeting to mediate disputes in the *kebele*. In particular, the LPC of Hanqo-Baya prevented numerous interpersonal violent episodes from escalating into violent inter-communal conflict in the area. They have been sensitive to conflicts that seem to be confined to individuals,

as such interpersonal conflict often manifest as inter-group conflict involving members of the two ethnic groups.

Let me present here the cases of inter-personal conflicts that would have caused a wide-spread conflict in the *kebele* and beyond without effective deeds of the members of the LPC of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. In 2017, two fifth graders belonging to ethnic Sidama and Guji clashed each other in the Hanq-Baya Primary School. A Guji student on the way to home from the school stabbed the Sidama, triggering inter-communal tension in the area. As informants⁸⁴ recalled, the local peace committee along with Guji elders handled the offender to the police and facilitated medical treatment of the victim. In addition, the local peace committee conducted the reconciliation between the two families which involved the payment of costs incurred for treatment of the victim. Members of the local peace committee used this episode to enhance awareness among the students toward importance of tolerance and risks of undesirable stereotypes and other harmful practices such as early marriage and school dropout. Another violent episode occurred in 2018. It involved an inter-personal dispute between young men of Sidama and Guji Oromo. They were members of daily laborers who earn incomes by loading the trunk of trees into cars in the *kebele*. In this violent incident the Sidama young man stoned the Guji counterpart. Again at this time, the members of local peace committee intervened to save the life of the perpetrator and de-escalate the tension. According to the informants, the local peace committee introduced localized by-laws for the laborers to work together. As the members of local peace committee of the *kebele* reported, there were many cases of disputes, especially,

⁸⁴ Mr. Yanas, chairman of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. (2018, January 03). (Interview with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone). Mr. Waqayo, vice chairperson of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*. (2018, January 03). (Interview with the author, Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, Hula District, Sidama Zone).

over land and pasture contracts. Nonetheless, the local peace committee dissuaded illicit land and pasture deals contributing meaningfully to decrease of related disputes in the *kebele*. These examples indicate the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* Peace Committee has some role in containing potentially violent inter-groups conflicts and re-establish trust within their community.

As the members of the LPCs of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* estimated, more than 90% of local peace committee meeting held in the *kebele* reached a solution. If however, no consensus is made, then the problem may be taken to the district court or to a collective dialogue forum of the neighboring districts. The positive impact of local peace committee in the area might be observed in the empowerment of women and young people as they become respected mediator in the community as well as in increased sense of local ownership communal conflict resolution and peacemaking. As already mentioned above, the collective dialogue forum operating in the frontier *kebeles* of Hula, Dara and Bore Districts have potential to bring together members of peace committees from adjacent *kebeles* and administrators of neighboring regions of the SNNP and the Oromia to resolve disputes in their frontier areas. This inclusive forum is perceived to have produced a number of tangible outcomes such as awareness creation, capacity building and performance efficiency. It also provided inclusive spaces to tackle problems of insecurity, border dispute, contraband trade, human trafficking and related problems. Furthermore, it enabled to bridge the gaps between the local political leaders and grassroots peace actors.

Perhaps the biggest impact of the experiment with the LPC of the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* is the spread of its model to neighboring *kebeles* as well as to the frontier *kebeles* between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones. As recognized in existing literature, the use of success experiences of one

specific area has its own impact on conflict resolution in other conflict affected area. In this regard, Adan and Pkalya (2006, p. 13) argue that in Kenya, the Wajir peace and development committees were established by a group of local women and customary elders but later on were replicated under the government sanction in other districts of Kenya to help prevent inter-communal violence. It appears that innovation in the Hanqo-Baya in terms of the bilingual primary school and local peace committee induced growing reciprocal reactions from neighboring *kebeles* contributing to communal peace in the area.

The experience of the Hanqo-Baya villagers was replicated in the further north in the frontiers between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones which saw the worst inter-communal violence for many years (SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau, 2013). As already discussed above, the neighboring communities of Sidama and Arsi Oromo in the south central Ethiopia's Rift Valley were in conflict due to competition for farm and pasture lands. Borders and land rights were not clearly documented in the area (Mustefa, 2018). As already mentioned above, the cycles of revenge attacks had existed in the area long before the introduction of ethnic oriented federal reform. Nonetheless, the conflict between the two communities erupted after the reform again and again. Many lives lost and properties destroyed in both sides, leaving communities in fear and despair. When one community attacked the other, it was not long until revenge was taken, causing more violence and retaliations. The ruling government attempted to bring the two parties into dialogue forums for peace, even though without success (CPS, 2017; Mustefa, 2018).

It was in their fourth attempt in 2013 that the Sidama and Arsi agreed to end bloodsheds and made reconciliation after learning a lesson from the grassroots peace initiative in the frontier

areas between Sidama and Guji Zones. As already elucidated above, in the frontier areas between Sidama and Guji Zones the boundary demarcation was done on bases of compromise and the idea of good neighborhood. It was particularly demarcated without affecting everyday life in the frontier area. In addition, communal peace has been sustained by activities of the local peace. The LPCs helped to consolidate the existing social capital and managed disputes that arising in the everyday life. When local peace committees were established between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones in the Rift Valley, some of members of the local peace committees were taken to the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* on an exchange visit. According to a study by the peace and security experts of the SNNPRS, the members of the local peace committees gained essential lessons and duly applied the lessons which include among others demarcating administrative boundaries that do not affect everyday life, ending hostilities using informal pact and reconciliation, and establishing durable LPC structures to prevent violent conflicts and resolve disputes (SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau, 2014). As a study by Mustefa Aman (2018) found, the impact of these peace committees felt quickly as the communities in the frontier areas between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones did not see violent inter-group conflicts since they conducted mutually acceptable peace accords and reconciliation ceremony in 2013. In addition, peace efforts by the joint local peace committees of adjacent rural *kebeles* between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones in the Rift Valley Area were successful in curbing traditional hostilities and new sources of bloodsheds. In particular, they opened inclusive spaces for young people to engage in mutually beneficial and joint economic activities such as fishery, sand extraction and tourism in the frontier areas. Furthermore, the establishment of local peace committees between the Sidama and Arsi in the Rift Valley areas led to the creation of bilingual schools in their frontier villages (SNNPRS Peace and Security Bureau, 2014).

Unlike that of the Hanqo-Baya where the members of local peace committee comprised just representative of the community, the members of local peace committees in the frontier area between the Sidama and West Arsi Zones, however, comprised mainly individuals who were affected by the cycles of violence and who had willingness to commit to peace activism. A good example to cite here is a 64 years old woman *Adde Rada Kelecho* who lives in *Torba-Hansewe Kebele*, a village in the Oromia Region in the Rift Valley. *Adde Rada* belongs to the Arsi Oromo. Despite losing her husband and son at market place in the same day, she had the courage to hide the perpetrators that killed her loved ones in her houses, protecting them from the revenge of her community. Her efforts and peace activism also enabled her to become the member of state initiated local peace committee and peace radio programme listener club, which was launched by the Resource Center for Civil Society Group Association (RCCSGA), in partnership with the Civil Peace Service programme of the government of Germany. She was among those individuals who committed to teach tolerance, respect for diversity and non-violence and living in harmony with each other, improving relations between the neighboring communities who were in frequent conflict with each other (CPS, 2017, p. 21).

Clearly, the success of the LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring Guji and West Arsi Zones is related to the fact that they are co-owned by both groups who strive to ensure peaceful coexistence in their frontiers. Moreover, the LPCs in the areas meet most of the key qualities of effective local peace infrastructure as discussed in the analytic framework in chapter two. This in turn enabled the members of the LPCs to contribute to prevent conflict escalation and improve inter-communal relations in their frontiers.

Despite their potentials to communal conflict transformation, especially in reducing tension and improving the inter-communal relations, state initiated local peace committees in the frontier areas between the Sidama and neighboring Oromia Zones suffer from some key challenges. First, activities of the state initiated local peace committee in the frontier *kebeles* of the two regional states are not anchored on a legal and policy framework. They operate in the presence of legal loopholes in their inter-governmental relations. As remarked in chapter four, the constitution and other laws of Ethiopia are silent about horizontal relations between constituting regional states. The regional states often rely on local peace actors to deal with violent communal conflict in their frontiers. Hence, the effectiveness of local peace committees appear to have depended on good will or cooperation between the regional states and respective local governments like the one in the frontier areas between Hula, Dara and Bore Districts. In the absence of such cooperation, the LPCs are likely to be exposed to ethno-nationalists led competitions aimed at creating sharp borders as well as to control scarce resources around administrative borders. This in turn constrains the activities of local peace committees.

There is also a clear shortage of capacity to facilitate communal conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the study areas. The existing literature makes the link between the success of a peace committees and the quality of support they receive from donors. These supports include both administrative and expertise in mediation and peacebuilding practices (Odendaal, 2012). The work of local peace committees in the Hanqo-Baya and neighboring *kebeles* is anchored on volunteerism. Members of the local peace committees are not paid for their work. They volunteer their skills, experiences and time to communal peacebuilding endeavors. Nonetheless, there was a high turnover and the new recruits are not adequately trained. Most local peace committee

members need skills to act as peace makers, conciliation or mediation. Their prior experience is not sufficient to mediate or facilitate dialogues. The weak capacity of the committee also mingles with the monopoly of basic expertise and skills by handful of conflict prevention and resolution experts in the local administrations.

Furthermore, there are logistic limitations, especially equipment like cell phone and shortage of budget in districts in the study sites. The members of local peace committees are expected to travel long distance away from their homes to district centers and other areas for dialogue forums. These in turn require regular budget to cover some basic costs like food and transport, especially, when the members of peace committees are expected to go to areas outside their homes. Besides, there are concerns associated with sustainability of the state-initiated local peace committees in the frontier areas between Sidama and West Arsi Zones where donors have had a direct engagement in their establishment and funding. It is here that the state initiated local peace committees, in spite of their previous success records, have been struggling to prevent politically charged inter-communal violence which was erupted in the areas after the leadership change in the ruling party in April 2018. This was due to the absence of the usual supports from the government and donors to their everyday peace efforts.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, the establishment of locally owned peace committees in traditionally hostile frontier areas between the Sidama and adjacent Guji and West Arsi Zones has contributed to contain inter-communal violence and transform long existing traditional hostilities in their horizontal relations. Following general guidelines and codes of conduct given

by the regional governments, the local peace committees like the one in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* helped to prevent threat, ensure inclusive dialogues and to build inter-communal relations. Unlike the councils of elders in Wondo Genet, the state initiated local peace committees' representation provides an interface between the more customary approaches to dispute resolution and the modern structures of governance. Thus, (joint) peace committees form hybrid and permanent mechanism used by the neighboring communities of Sidama and Oromo to create a strong buffer against violence. In particular, the members of local peace committees in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts aspire to meet needs of the victims, establish accountability for an offence and ensure a sense of community ownership and responsibility in terms of dealing with local insecurities and crimes. As a result, local government authorities on both sides of administrative borders have been keen to collaborate with the local peace committee members.

One of the key findings coming out from the case of the state initiated local peace committees in the frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring Oromia zones is the importance of respecting the unique conflict context of each community and a need to take extra care in duplicating lessons from one area to another conflicted affected areas. One should be cautioned that each conflict context has unique attribute and its distinctiveness determine the design and functions of the local peace infrastructure. In particular, it is critical to understand the level of inter-community cohesion, severity of violence and already existing peace potentials before we transport the lessons from one area to another. In particular, innovation related to state-initiated LPCs from above or outside may not be effective if communities are coerced to form local peace committee structures and/or conditioned on financial incentives. Besides, local peace committee

structures may not survive in the context of violent communal struggle to define sharp administrative borders. As will be clarified in the next chapter, the state initiated local peace committees could also do little if they are exposed to manipulation by the government.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ACTIVIST-ORIENTED POPULAR COMMITTEE OF KONSO

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the potentials and limits of state initiated local peace committees in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones. As already demonstrated in that chapter, the state-initiated local peace committees have been so helpful in containing violent inter-communal conflicts and transforming long existing hostilities and revenge killings in the frontier areas between Sidama and neighbouring Oromia zones, even though their activities are limited to villages around regional borders.

The current chapter presents a case of rival activist-oriented peace infrastructure drawing on experiences of the Popular Committee of Konso which emerged in order to deal with the dispute that arose in the asymmetric relations between the Konso ethnic community and SNNPRS. The Popular Committee of Konso particularly emerged in the setting where state initiated local peace infrastructures as well as existing social and state structures were incapable of dealing with concerns of the community. The popular committee was established locally because the community felt threatened, and that justice and local development failed. The community took the matter into its hands. The popular committee represents a highly motivated peace infrastructure and led a successful peace activism in the area. It mobilized grassroots appealing to simultaneously legal and customarily values and waging non-violent civil disobedience demanding not only for a zonally constituted homeland for their community but also to ensure the presence of inclusive and context sensitive politics. Therefore, this chapter specifically

explores and analyses the potentials and challenges of the popular committee as a rival case to state initiated local peace committees already analysed in the previous chapter.

The analysis starts by presenting general setting of the Konso, including concise overview on past conflicts in the area as well as their previous experience with state initiated local peace committee and customary institutions. Most of the data on the first section is based on previous research studies by ethnographers, linguists and peace and conflict researchers. The second section focuses on exploring and analysing an intra-communal violence and the rise of the Popular Committee of Konso, notably its mandates, role, composition, external supports to the committee, and impacts and challenges relying on my empirical study. Finally, the conclusion is given.

8.1 Background

Konso is situated on the mountainside that rises out of the Rift Valley in southern Ethiopia. It is at a Latitude of 5⁰ 30` N and a longitude of 37⁰ 30`E. It shares administrative boundaries with agro-pastoralist Borana in the south, Ale and Tsemai in the west, Burji in the east, Dirashe and Kore in the north. The Konso people call themselves Xonsitta, their land Xonso and their language Afaa Xonso, which is one of Lowland East Cushitic languages (Ongaye, 2013, p. 1). The Konso are numbered about 250, 000 (CSA, 2008). The Konso Zone is one of the newly established zones in the SNNPRS, though, after violent conflicts in the area which is one of concerns of this chapter.

A social organization of Konso follows mixture of a generation grading system or *kataa*, kinship and neighborhood. Konso generation system or *kataa* is related to that of *gada* system of Oromo but differ in many aspects from it as well as each other from one region to another within Konso. The *kataa* system is roughly divided into sons, fathers and grand-fathers (Hallpike, 2008, p. 184). It has several grades with different responsibilities that a man passes through his lifetime. Hallpike (2008) discusses the *kataa* system in detail. Briefly, the earliest grade (s) comprise childhood, followed by warrior status (*xela*), then by ritual and advisory status, and finally withdrawal from active life. The generation leaders were active in leading the warrior (*xela*) in hunting and warfare. When an enemy was defeated or a lion killed, a victory stone was erected in the main *moora*⁸⁵ for honor of the generation that performed the deeds (Kimura, 2004, p. 42). As Kimura (2004) remarks, the *Xela* serve as police forces and enforce public decisions. The *kataa* system has become less important in the past few decades except for mobilizing communal labor.

The Konso are organized into nine exogamous clans: Keertitaa, Arkaamayta, Sawdatta, Paasata, Tookmaleeta, Eelayta, Isalayta, Tikissayta and Mahalayta (Ongaye, 2013, p. 1). Except for the Keertitta clan, each clan has its own clan leader or *poqalla tuma* who administers justice, reconcile people and act as cultural and religious leader. There are two clan chiefs for the keertitta: Guufa (in Kenaa) and Kala (in Karatte). The office of *poqalla* is hereditary by the first born sons, and, thus, power is preserved for lifetime. In contrast to ordinary members a clan leader does not marry from a village he identifies with. Each clan comprises a number of

⁸⁵ Public place built in each village for different purposes among others to solve conflicts.

lineages living in various mixed neighborhoods. Lineage leaders usually perform rituals for their lineage. Male members of the same clan consider themselves as brothers and females as their sisters and do not marry each other (Kimura, 2004; Ongaye, 2013).

The Konso live in large stone walled villages. Most Konso villages are established on hill tops and are densely populated. The villages are surrounded by high walls of piled stones for protection against attacks. People lived close together in villages or neighborhood. Residence in neighborhood is not based on lineages. Some villages have lineages of all nine clans, others contain few clans. In everyday interactions each member owes great importance toward members of the village. Traditionally, the walled villages were independent from each other and were administered by their own elected councillors, although the Konso perceive themselves as one people (Mamitu, 2002). There are three recognized and traditionally designated regions in Konso, namely, the eastern, the Karatte and Faashe each encompassing various villages. Under the *Dergue* and current regimes, Konso villages were merged together to form neighbourhood administrative associations referred to as *kebele* which are in turn divided into various *kantas* or wards (Kimura, 2004; Shako, 2004).

The Konso are hard working people who make a living mainly in mountainous hills and around few plain lands around rivers such as Segen, Delbena and Woyto. They are predominantly farmers and are well known for their indigenous terracing system, which allows them to make use of even the most precipitous slope while preventing erosion (Ongaye, 2013). A prominent cultural landscape of Konso was inscribed by the UNESCO as a World Heritage in June 2011.

The Konso produce in terraced hillsides maize, wheat, sorghum, cotton, coffee, legumes, oil seeds and cabbage trees (*moringa*) as the main crops (Kimura, 2004, p. 29). Agricultural activities extend down to 700m and up to 2000m. Rain is short in the low laying peasant *kebeles* like the Abaroba whose residents subsist also by rearing animals to support their livelihoods. Maximum rainfall recorded is as much as 1500mm and minimum of 500mm (ibid.).

The Konso are socially divided into two subgroups: the *etanta* and the *xawda*. The *etanta* comprises the farmers who hold a higher social profile while the *xawda* includes the traders and craftsmen or artisans. Konso is one of the few Ethiopian communities where the craftsmen have been under close academic study (Levine, 1974). In the past the *xawda* were unfairly categorized and discriminated by the dominant group which they also share with the artisans in other parts of the country as analysed in chapter six. Nonetheless, recent studies (Amborn, 2009; Ellison, 2006; Shako, 2004, p. 159) confirm that the line between them has been blurred as the Konso farmers are engaging in activities formerly identified with the *xawda*. Besides, there is growing intermarriage between the farmers and craftsmen (Ellison, 2006).

The ancestors of Konso settled in the present territory of Konso coming from various areas such as Borana-Libena (present day Borana Zone in Oromia Regional State), Ale in the nearby hillsides, and neighboring Dirashe. The Konso have close socio-cultural, linguistic and historical ties with Dirashe, Burji and Ale (Amborn, 2009; Yacob, 2010). They have the same nine clans which cut across their ethnic boundaries. Agro-pastoralist Borana Oromo are also considered as relative of the Konso. The origin of some clans of Konso is traced to that of Borana-Liben. As already mentioned above, the Konso have a *kataa* system which is much related to *gada* system

of Oromo. Hallpike (2008) found that about 46 percent of Konso language is related with the neighboring Oromo. Besides, the Konso have been exchanging their surplus agricultural crops and specialist products (cloth, leather, pots, tools and ritual items) with neighboring pastoralists such as the Borana, the Guji and Tsemai (Amborn, 2009).

As written sources confirm, minor cases of conflicts did occur within Konso and with its neighboring ethnic groups in the past but seldom escalated as they were in recent years. There was a report of warfare between villages of Konso before it became part of the Ethiopian State in 1897 and after as well (Hallpike, 2008; Kimura, 2004). Most of the time different groups fought over disputed lands, often leading to destruction of villages. In recent years there were minor incidents of intra-communal conflicts in Konso, especially between *etanta* and *xawda* (Ellison, 2006; Kimura, 2004, p. 46; Watson, 2006). Likewise, the Konso seldom fight with the Ale ethnic community in the nearby hill sides and Tsemai across Woyta River. Hallpike (2008, p. 54) reported the Konso's fighting with the Dirashe. As Kimura (2004) found, there was recurrent traditional hostilities between Konso and Guji Oromo like the ones that exist among Sidama, Arsi and Guji Oromo, as explored in the previous chapter. A large part of the victory stelae of Konso were reportedly erected for fighters in conflict with the Guji (Kimura, 2004, p. 46), although there is no recent incident of conflict between them. It is reported that Konso did not fight with neighboring Kore and Burj.

Since the introduction of ethnic oriented federal reform in 1991 the Konso have had however a number of violent episodes with neighbouring ethnic groups, particularly with whom it had cordial relations in past. For example, the Konso had violent encounter with the agro-pastoralist

Borena in the Teltele district of Oromia region in 2007 (Ouyang, 2008) and with neighbouring Dirashe from 2009 to 2011 (Asnake et al., 2013; Yidnekachew, 2012) and with Ale ethnic community in 2011 and 2014 (Bantayehu, 2016), which had severe consequences in terms of human lives, displacement and destruction of property. All of these inter-communal conflicts took place in the frontier areas for reasons of disputes over border and natural resources (such as farming lands, water and forests) between heavily armed farmers assisted by their respective local administrations. Besides, they took place in the absence of effective means to conflict transformation as formal authorities relied on reactive intervention, especially after tensions have already erupted and turned into deadly conflicts. The key method of the regional government towards these conflicts has been emphasis on the administrative integration, even though it triggered yet a bigger conflict in the area, as will be analysed below.

In fact, the SNNPR government attempted to establish everyday peace committee structures to address some of inter-group conflicts in the frontier areas of Konso. Worth mentioning here is state initiated (joint) local peace committees in conflict affected frontier *kebeles* of Konso and Dirashe. These peace committees were composed of local officials and experts of natural resource management from the respective of local governments as well as customary elders, women and youth from adjacent *kebeles*. Mercy Corps, an international NGO had a crucial support to these local peace committees as it, for instance, involved in awareness creation, sponsoring peace dialogues, offering training to the members of the joint local peace committees and organizing youth-centred sport activities (Asnake et al., 2013). As informants⁸⁶ recalled, the

⁸⁶ Mr. Wogene, peace and security chief of the former Segen Area People's Zone. (2017, April 11). (Interview with the author, Segen, SNNPRS); conflict prevention and resolution officers of Dirashe District. (2017, April 13). (Interview with the author, Gidole, Dirashe District, SNNPRS); conflict prevention and resolution officers of Konso District. (2017, May 12). (Interview with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS).

establishment these peace committees helped to reduce the conflict and cases of theft, facilitated smooth registration of individual land holdings and reduced incidents of farming encroachment into protected forests in the frontier areas linking Konso, Kore and Dirashe, which had been a key reason for the conflict. However, most of these local peace committee structures were not made permanent nor did they serve as reliable mechanism to deal with disputes within the Konso community.

The Konso community already has rich variety of everyday conflict resolution institutions that they developed to deal with especially intra-communal conflicts. For instance, a clan chief or *poqalla*, and councils of elders are among key offices identified with conflict resolution. Clan chiefs and lineage leaders usually involve as mediator and their mediation is believed to bring life, health and peace in the community (Kimura, 2004, pp. 35-36). According to Shako (2004), elders are respected for their personal qualities of wisdom and are believed as containers of morality and right conduct. Elders are elected to resolve disputes through dialogue and consensus and receive fines not only for wrongdoings, but also for not following the social rules. In fact, customary conflict resolution institutions of Konso had undergone periods of transformation. They were particularly affected by the state cooption and attacks as well as by activities of Christian missionaries among the community (Shako, 2004; Watson, 2009) before their revival under the current regime that encouraged the use of local culture. As Watson (2009) argues, customary authorities of Konso have been playing key role in conflict resolution in the community, although in a hybrid alliance with the structures of authority of state. The customary authorities have had limited impact in the absence of the state supports, especially in cases that interfere with interests of the government as will be explored below. Thus, the next section

draws attention to the main part of this chapter; that is, analysing an intra-communal violence within Konso, the origin of the popular committee, its mandate, role, and composition, sources of support, and impacts and challenges.

8.2 Intra-Communal Violence in Konso

Towards the end of August 2016 a communal dispute arose in one of the Konso peasant *kebeles* namely Abaroba. The Abaroba *Kebele* is 14 kilometres far from the administrative centre of Konso, Karatte in the southeast (on the road to Yabelo town via the Segen Valley). It has eleven *kantas*/wards. As my informants⁸⁷ recalled, the dispute was over compensation fee received by two *kantas* of Abaroba, namely Amarra and Xormale in relation to the installation of an electricity line passing to Kenya. As narrated by the informants, the residents of Amarra and Xormale received about 120, 000 Ethiopian Birr and used the money to build guest houses in their respective wards. As the narrative goes, the other *kantas* of Abaroba *Kebele* claimed the right over the guest houses triggering a dispute in the *kebele*. A key reason for this violent communal conflict was that part of the compensation money included a communal land which was allegedly registered by names of individuals belonging to Amarra and Xormale.

As most of the informants claimed, a dispute of this scale is never new to the *kebele*, and similar disputes are usually managed by customary authorities. According to the informants respected customary mediators from other peasant *kebeles* of Konso intervened to resolve the dispute. Since the residents of Amarra and Xormale were unwilling to share the guest houses with other

⁸⁷ Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS); Mr. Kantashu, a young Konso man working in Jinka Town. (2017, June 9). (Interview with the author, Jinka, Debub Omo Zone, SNNPRS).

members of the *kebele*, the mediators convinced them rather to recollect the money and share it with other residents of Abaroba. As the informants recalled, the consensus was marked by the ritual of eating together which symbolizes the end of the dispute among Konso. Nonetheless, at the evening of the same day, the residents of Amarra were attacked by some agitators allegedly led by former chairman of the *kebele*. As the informants recalled, in the following two days the hamlets, especially in Amarra, were entirely burnt down in spite of their attempt to defend themselves and the residents took refugees in the bushes of neighboring Teltele District of Oromia.

The violent episode of the Abaroba *Kebele* is in fact not an isolated incident detached from the wider setting. It fairly took place in the setting of highly polarized standoff between the Konso protesters and the regional government of the SNNP over the former's claim for a zonally constituted homeland and a separation from the newly established administrative structure of the Segen Area People's Zone. The residents of Konso have already staged peaceful protest for ten consecutive months seeking their own zone. During the period of protest movement tensions escalated and de-escalated time and again. Several members of the Konso community faced mass arrest, release, and re-arrest. For instance, at least 200 people were arrested between November 2015 and March 2016. Besides, on Saturday March 5th 2016 confrontation between the community and the regional security forces resulted in the later firing live bullets against unarmed, killing two inhabitants of Konso (Abate, n. d; Davison, 2016; Ethiopia Observer, 2016)

The violent episode of Abaroba appeared a climax of lingering tension in the district. As most of the informants recalled, at the time of violent intra-communal conflict in the Abaroba, heavily

armed security forces were situated just 14 kilometres away at the Karatte town and waited for two weeks to intervene in the Abaroba conflict allegedly to appear neutral to the conflict. As the informants recalled, the event followed after the intervention of a large number of federal and regional security forces in the Abaroba and other villages of Konso went quite beyond a usual inter-communal violence. As the security forces intervened into rural villages to arrest leaders of protest movement, a much higher level of one-sided violence occurred in many villages, especially in the villages which were least associated with the protest movement. Horrifying pictures of elderly persons, nursing mothers and children being sheltered in the bushes as well as burnt villages were demonstrated in public media for weeks. Even if the government and the leadership of the protest movement were heard exchanging blames in public media, the government appeared relying on coercive tactics to cast the constitutional demand of the community as illegal. Likewise, in the midst of overly forceful government crackdown, angry youth were reported to have attacked assets of the government sympathizers (Davison, 2018).

According to a partial report compiled by the Peace and Security Bureau of SNNPR over 600 houses were burnt in the most affected three rural *kebeles* of Konso, namely Abaroba, Dekotto and Aylotta (Eyob, 2017). The report also describes displacement of thousands and disappearance or death of hundreds of domestic animals as well as severe damages to social infrastructures such as schools, grain mills and health stations. Although the report did not provide figures of fatalities, it recognizes that many persons were killed or injured. The informants in the protest movement estimated over 300 cases of killings and much more cases of

injuries⁸⁸. Observably, there is still unknown morbidity and mortality resulting from the inevitable public health consequences and ongoing instability in the area.

Although the protest of Konso was caused by local grievance and driven by local participants, it was eventually entangled with the protest movements in Oromia and Amhara regions against the government misconduct. The leaders of Konso protest movement responded to them according to their own interests and needs. As the government declared a nation-wide State of Emergency on October 6, 2016, seeking to put down the renewed Oromia protest movement after violent episode during *Irrecha* annual ceremony, Konso became one of security hotspots that came under close control of the security forces. As the informants recalled, a large number of security forces swarmed into rural villages to arrest leaders and supporters of protest movement and restore the local government structures which collapsed due to a yearlong protest in the district. Although the most violent manifestation of the Konso protest movement was subdued within two months after the Abaroba violent episode, the security forces were unable to stabilize the district until January 2017⁸⁹. Even though, as the informants claimed, they had to rely on coercive methods such as closing-down grain mills, roads and drinking water holes to get the compliance of the community.

One of the formally organized aspects of the Konso protest was the formation of what this author refers to as ‘popular committee’. The Popular Committee of Konso presented the community’s cause at various levels of the government bureaucracy up to the federal government seeking for

⁸⁸ Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS)

⁸⁹ Ibid.

the establishment of zonally constituted homeland for their people. The committee emerged at time there was no alternative means to express concerns of the community other than compliance to the ruling party. The Konso People's Democratic Union which was the only opposition party in the district was already non-existent in the midst of severe repression by the ruling party (Yacob, 2010). Equally, the popular committee arose to operate in restricted political space. However, it was able to galvanize strong supports of different sections of the community. For instance, the protest movement demanded for dismissal of representatives of Konso in the federal and regional councils as well as the zonal and local authorities who failed to carry out their responsibility to serve the community, although with no response from the government (Abate, n.d.). In short, the popular committee fairly tried to deal with structural dispute between the Konso ethnic community and the regional government. The next subsections specifically explore and analyse issues and interests behind the rise of popular committee, notably the potential and challenges or limits of the popular committee as part of local peace infrastructures.

8.2.1 Issues and Origin of the Popular Committee

As my informants confirmed, a key reason for violent encounter between the regional government and the Konso ethnic community lays in the creation of the new zone, namely, Segen Area People's Zone in March 2011. As the informants claimed, in a bid to provide an administrative solution to the recurring quest for self-rule by neighboring Ale ethnic community as well as to contain inter-communal violence in the wider area, the regional government granted *wereda* status to the Ale, merging seventeen Ale inhabited peasant *kebeles*, which until then were

administrated by the Konso and Dirashe Special *Weredas*⁹⁰. In haste and without any sort of public consultation, as the informants asserted, the regional administration created the new zone demoting self-ruling adjacent special *weredas* namely Konso, Dirashe, Amaro and Burji into regular *wereda*. The newly established zone with its administration centre at Segen town in the Gumayde plateaus consisted of these regular *wereda* as well as the Ale *wereda*. To most Konso the creation of Segen Area People's Zone was an imposition that overlooked too much of local issues and interests, lacking legitimacy from the community. It was an outrageous decision to dissolve the self-rule of the Konso community without consulting the people adequately. This was widely shared view across the informants I have interviewed.

The regional government recognizes that the creation of Segen Area People's Zone was intended to restore stability between neighboring ethnic communities in the wider areas. The Speaker of the regional Council of Nationalities said that the new zone was established to contain inter-communal violence in the area as well as guarantee better community participation, capacity building, increased growth and good governance⁹¹, although the latter goals appeared not its key driving factors. Consequently, the regional government persuaded its local cadres in former Konso Special *Wereda* to mobilize support for the new zone through a promise that its centre would be Karatte town which was the main town of the special *wereda*⁹².

⁹⁰ The Ale demanded their own district for decades and secured *wereda* status in 2011 after a 2010 decision by the ruling Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). Before 2011, the Ale were a minority in Konso and Dirashe Special *Wereda* (Yacob, 2010).

⁹¹ Mr. Lemma Gezume, Speaker of the SNNPRS Council of Nationalities. (2018, December 19). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS).

⁹² Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS); Mr. Kantashu, a young Konso man working in Jinka Town. (2017, June 9). (Interview with the author, Jinka, Dehub Omo Zone, SNNPRS); Mr. Calisemo, an ethnic Konso living in Hawassa. (2018, October 20). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS).

According to the informants, ever since the government advocated the idea of creating a new zone, local cadres especially from the neighboring Dirashe and Amaro could not agree on the Karatte desired by some Konso cadres and merchants. Consequently, different administrative centres (for instance: Karatte, Holte, and Abulo) were suggested by the local political leadership of the constituting ethnic communities. Nevertheless, as the informants recalled, the ruling party instructed them to choose Segen as the center of the new zone.

The Segen town is situated in the frontier land that links neighbouring ethnic communities namely Konso, Kore and Burji. The town emerged from the garrison center of the soldiers of Emperor Menelik II in the late 19th century. Eventually it served as an administrative center for the former Gumayde *Wereda* which was divided among these ethnic communities in 1996 in line with ethnic oriented administrative reform (Watson, 2009, p. 178). Consequently, parts of Konso settled peasant *kebeles* of the Gumayde *Wereda* including the Segen town was added in Konso Special *Wereda*. However, it was generally perceived as inaccessible to most inhabitants of Konso community and lack basic infrastructures like roads and administrative facilities (Kursha, 2018).

By contrast, Karatte has for long served as socio-economic, cultural and political centre of Konso community (Kursha, 2018). It is valuably linked with Yabelo town of Borena Zone which is a gateway for merchants to and from the border town of Moyale. In addition, Karatte and its environs are a popular stopover for tourists travelling to visit traditional communities in the lower Omo Valley. Moreover, Karatte is the centre of the UNESCO recognized cultural

landscape of Konso community. It is indeed in this part of Konso that the hand of the people so engraved itself on the landscape as the stone walls and terraces bear witness to the huge toll of many generation (Shako, 2004). Consequently, the idea of making Karatte centre of the new zone was used by the ruling party to gain legitimacy from the Konso community. However, it became apparent from the inception that the community including most of its own local cadres would not allow any unlawful interruption on their right to self-governance. Lack of support for the new zone among most of its local cadres in fairly populous community of Konso did not however deter the ruling SEPDM from executing the scheme. As the informants recalled, it established Segen Area People's Zone using coercive tactics such as demoting opposing cadres and civil servants, offering some senior posts in the new zonal structure to fresh graduates and imposing higher taxes upon the business community of Karatte to silence the early protests to its decision.

As can be inferred from descriptions of the informants, the Konso protest movement had also grievance from experiences of being part of the new zone itself. A key trigger in this regard was decision of the zone administrators to add rural *kebeles* of Konso into the newly formed Segen town administration without consulting its repercussion for self-rule with relevant councillors of the community (Abate, n. d). Moreover, the community members saw budget of their *wereda* unfairly dwindled, unfair quota for new college trainees, various infrastructure and services related issues, along with accusations against the zone justice department (ibid.). Furthermore, the community experienced a restricted space to develop their language and culture in the Segen town which embodies mixed culture. Besides, since the creation of Segen Area People's Zone, Konso farmers saw the violent inter-communal conflicts including in the state initiated

resettlement site of Selamago District of Debub Omo Zone. As already mentioned above, the 2009-2011 conflicts between Konso and Dirashe and border disputes between Ale and Konso are recent examples. Disputes and communal tensions were not cordially settled before Segen Zone was established. In a nutshell, since the creation of the new zone, the community saw the rising cost of living, drought, communal tensions and lack of job opportunities prompting widespread protest in the district.

What appears more evident from the in-depth interviews is narratives of relative deprivation of the community in relation to their previous self-governing status. As self-governing special *wereda*, Konso was formed in 1993. At that moment the *wereda* composed of the main Konso homeland constituting 43 *kebeles* and 10 Ale inhabited peasant *kebeles* which were later added to the newly formed Ale District. For most part of the imperial regime Konso was part of Gamo-Gofa Province, with administrative status of *wereda*. Under the *Dergue* it was upgraded to *Awaraja* status within the North Omo admiration (Bantayehu, 2016; Watson, 2009). During both the imperial and *Dergue* regimes, like other part of southern Ethiopia the Konso people were marginalized from their own area and from a fair share of resources, public services and jobs of the government. During the establishment of current ethnic oriented reform Konso was treated as distinct ethno-linguistic group and hence it was allowed to form a self-governing special *wereda* within the SNNPRS (Watson, 2009).

Self-governing special *wereda* of Konso was positively perceived by the informants resonating the earlier finding by Watson (2009). Many of the informants believe that self-rule provided them with multiple opportunities in terms of short bureaucracy, access to state resources and jobs

in government office, court and related institutions. Likewise, it was perceived in terms of upsurge in social service providing institutions such as schools and health stations staffed by the local people as well as in terms of reappearance of cherished cultural practices which were repressed by the previous regimes.

What becomes clear from the above discussion is that the Konso protest movement has been spurred by reluctance of the state to recognize the community need for dignity as well as rights, inequality and poverty, culture and identity. There was already perception that the state is not willing to offer a genuine autonomy to the community. On the other hand, the newly constituted Segen Area People's Zone lacked capacity in many relevant areas, including absence of legitimacy in the eye of the Konso community. It was also prone to elite capture, conflict, lack of coordination and consensus amongst the leadership, and lack of follow up and sensible support from the regional government (Eyob, 2017). Hence, the Konso community actors have begun to seek to establish their own zonal structure related to their own culture, histories and needs.

Although the Konso protest movement was initially undermined by the regional government, as it grew in momentum, it prompted a furious response from the regional authorities. This is because the protest was not only about quest for one's own zone but about the politics of being heard. The regional government chiefly relied on disrupting tactics accusing the customary elders, religious leaders and all those who are against the Segen Area People's Zone engaging in politics under the mask of seeking a zone for the Konso community (Abate, n. d; Ethiopia observer, 2016). As the informants confirmed, the protest is about question of demanding an absolute minimum right that the people should have a say on relevant matters like self-

governance and demanding the state not to reduce interests of the community to a few cadres and thereby thinking that the view of these cadres is the only view that matters.

The Segen Area People's Zone administrators were seen accusing the Konso cadres who were dismissed from the zonal and *wereda* offices on corruption charges misleading the "innocent citizens" to engage in protest movement⁹³. However, most of my informants contended that the Konso cadres who actively involved in the creation of Segen Area People's Zone including its first administrator had highly effective apparatus of repression that so many who tried to criticize misconducts in the zone and Konso *wereda* one way or another were treated harshly. The informants believe that their removal unexpectedly helped the cause of the protest movement.

The community reaction was triggered by the decision of the Segen Area People's Zone administration to implement until that time shelved Segen town administration establishment scheme, taking three rural Konso inhabited *kebeles* in June 2015 (Abate, n. d). It was executed by the newly appointed administrator of the zone on the pretext that it was already decided by the previous zonal administration. Angered by yet another impunity by the regional and zonal administrators, members of community decided to use their constitutionally allowed right to establish a separate zone for Konso community. According to the informants, this idea had its own origin in private meetings of members of the community and it was eventually debated across every rural *kebeles* and towns of Konso for two months. In the meantime, there were two mass rallies steered by customary elders and community leaders between July and October 2015,

⁹³ Mr. Bacha, official of the Segen Area People's Zone. (2017, April 11). (Interview with the author, Segen, SNNPRS).

calling the zonal and regional government to halt the implementation and hold public consultation though with no response from the government (ibid.).

Having been infuriated by the administrators' indifference and refusal to organize public consultation, the customary elders of Konso called yet another big rally on Friday 9, October 2015 in which more than 53,000 people staged a silent walk through the Karatte town. The protest movement drawing on history, myth, and customary rite rebuked zonal administrative members of Konso origin for their failure to serve them, their total disrespect for the elders, the community, the culture and indeed the constitution itself (ibid.). Besides, the protest movement determined that the zonal structure and their district collaborators were irrelevant to the community. They specifically called on the district councilors not to approve annual budget of the district as it was perceived unfairly distributed by the zone. Moreover, according to the informants the protest movement established popular committee consisting of 12 members on behalf of the community to deal with the government. Then after, the popular committee steered a strong peaceful civil disobedience of the community in order to get concerns of the community be heard and addressed by the government. So it can be said the popular committee had its origin in the state misconduct and its failure to honestly engage the community.

8.2.2 The Mandate of the Popular Committee

The Popular Committee of Konso is an activist oriented local peace infrastructure. According to the informants, it was established locally because the local community felt threatened, and that justice and local development failed. As a result, the community took the matter into their own hands and established the committee to act on behalf of the community in order to deal with their

dispute with the regional government. As the informants described, the overall mandate of the committee was to prepare, submit and follow up written requests to relevant government authorities at various levels of bureaucracy regarding their decision to separate from the Segen Area People's Zone and to establish a zone of their own. It had the responsibilities especially to mobilize the community, provide leadership, generate resources and conduct negotiation with the concerned government authorities. It was mainly intended to confront issues of inequality and injustice in politic that interfere with the constitutional rights of the community as well as everyday life of its members.

The popular committee is an example of provisionally organized local peace infrastructure that appeals to both socio-historical milieu and modern legal provisions in line with similar local peace infrastructure recognized in the literature (Richmond. 2013b). According to the informants the committee is locally grounded with a better chance of establishing a social contract between citizens and the state as it arose to deal with a dispute in the setting of asymmetric relations between the community and the regional government. The committee particularly was established at the time when existing formal bureaucracy was reluctant to offer justice to the community and other every day peace infrastructures are incapable of dealing with the dispute.

The popular committee also drives its origin from legal provisions of the region. As already mentioned in chapter four, the constitution of the SNNPRS grants all ethno-linguistic groups the right to establish a zone or region of its own, even though the ruling SEPDM promotes the unity and administrative integration of the region. According to the southern constitution, it is sufficient to have its own legislative council to decide on the right to establish own zone. Even

so, the proclamation no. 60/2003 (Art. 21 (3)) clarifies that a concerned ethnic group will have to submit its application to the Council of Nationalities provided that there is a violation of the individual and group rights of the community. As specific procedures stated by the guideline demonstrate, the request has to have a support of 5% of a concerned community. This guideline also allows the creation of ‘a people committee’ agreed by at least 5% of the community to follow up the request. According to the informants, this guideline was correctly followed by the committee to get formal legitimacy from the government. For instance, the claim was approved by 38 of the 43 kebeles of Konso district as well as by the district council itself.

Despite its fulfilment of general constitutional provision and specific guidelines, the informants contended that the government was not happy with formation of the popular committee because it argued that there are already adequate forums through which the community can protect their rights and interest and resolve their administrative dispute. Consequently, the state actors followed vicious steps to discredit the committee considering them as “anti-peace” and “the few” although they have been aware of the legitimacy of the popular committee (Abate, n. d; Davison, 2016; Ethiopia Observer, 2016).

On the other hand, the informants in protest movement claimed that the popular committee had a strong legitimacy with solid connection to the grassroots. They contended that the committee followed a correct legal procedures required by relevant laws. One of the informants argued that the committee was legitimate since its members were elected by the protesters numbering about 53, 000, which is near 20% of the inhabitants. Their election is perceived as fair and members of the committee are recognized and trusted by the community as they comprise diverse sections of

the community. In fact, some informants⁹⁴ in protest movement raised concerns with lack of recognition by the government in terms of its repercussion for future relations between the community and the government.

A key issue that is linked with the mandate of the Konso popular committee is that they engaged in peace activism in which they conscientized and mobilized the community to counter the existing power asymmetry thereby forcing the government eventually to recognize the concern of the community. As reviewed in chapter two, their view of peace resonates with both socio-historical experience and modern norms and standards. The committee presented a stronger legitimacy than that of the government and its local cadres. It particularly promoted grassroots peace movement which helped to deal with structurally rooted conflict.

8.2.3 Role of the Popular Committee

The Popular Committee of Konso was carrying out their mandate by involving dialogue meeting and negotiation as well as promoting peace activism. As the informants in the popular committee claimed, its activities are carried out with strong support from the community which included financial support. Since its establishment in October 2015, the committee submitted a petition signed by more than 53,000 people to the regional government representing the 12 points request. This letter was fully approved by the district council, which is the ultimate precondition for self-rule as stated in the regional constitution. In particular, the committee challenged the power of ruling political elites. However, due to the dominant position of the ruling SEPDM in

⁹⁴ Mr. Calisemo, an ethnic Konso living in Hawassa. (2018, October 20). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS); Mr. Kebado, a local cadre in the Konso District. (2017, May 12). (Interview with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS). Mr. Gelebo, peace and conflict expert in Konso District. (2017, May 13). (Interview with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS).

the Council of Nationalities, and the party's emphasis on administrative amalgamation of smaller units, the Council of Nationalities came under serious political pressure not to offer the request.

After receiving a negative response from the Council of Nationalities, the popular committee wrote a letter to the House of Federation (HoF) in July 2016 demanding the reply to their request and at the same time repeating the same points that describe how the newly created zone infringes the community's needs, rights and interests. This letter which came after the exhaustion of all relevant steps at regional level was signed by more than 80,000 members of the community and its copies were provided to relevant federal and regional offices (Abate, n. d; Kursha, 2018). As one informant in protest movement said, the process followed the correct constitutional procedures, even if the HoF referred the case back to the region mentioning administrative matter lies under the jurisdiction of the regional government (Davison, 2018).

Since its inception, the popular committee frequently travelled to the regional capital in Hawassa and to Addis Ababa to meet with officials, military officers, foreign diplomats and the media to push their claim for a zone of its own. According to the informants in conformity with regionally set precondition, the committee carried out their activities by conducting dialogue meeting and negotiation with relevant government authorities at regional and federal levels. As the informants recalled, the committee also promoted mediation of localized disputes like the one that arose in the Abaroba peasant *kebele*.

As the informants confirmed, the popular committee promoted a civil disobedience or peace activism as well. Since its rise the committee organized public meetings, mounted rapid

collective response to any government misconduct and encouraged civil disobedience to pressure the government. The committee coordinated peaceful demonstrations, and created common awareness and reported the community's grievances and human rights abuses using opportunities provided by alternative media such as the Satellite TVs and social media⁹⁵. According to the informants, as an active task force, the committee brought together all sections of the community to counter balance the government authority within the community and its role earned the trust of the community though the government resorted to more coercive tactics by deploying more troops, intimidating and arresting participants in the protest, establishing check points at entrances of every village, disarming district police, confiscating motorbikes and other property belonging to community members and so on.

Even if the Konso popular committee ensured a strong local participation in its activities, and functioned on the bases of consent of the community, one of the informants⁹⁶ raised concerns of role confusion associated with the leadership of the committee reflecting the trend in the recent protest movements in the country. This concern appears legitimate in relationship to cases of mob-oriented actions in various parts of the country that nearly substituted normal functions of the courts and police forces affecting communal peace and basic rights of citizens. Nevertheless, the Popular Committee of Konso played a key role of peace activism that contributed to political change in the country.

⁹⁵ Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS)

⁹⁶ Mr. Calisemo, an ethnic Konso living in Hawassa. (2018, October 20). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS)

8.2.4 Composition of the Popular Committee

There is no explicit reference in the guideline of the regional government about the composition of the popular committee. But it can be inferred from the guideline that such committee need to be inclusive of various sections of a concerned ethnic community. According to the informants, the members of the Konso popular committee are drawn from various social groups, namely, educators, elders, women, merchants, religious leaders, youth and peasants. This means the protest movement mobilized all the relevant structures of the community including clan networks, village based elder's councils, religious institutions, entrepreneurs associations, schools, self-help associations and the district administration itself. The committee was originally comprised of twelve members representing various section of the community. As the informants recalled, its composition was decided by the community.

At times, the regional government questioned the legitimacy of the members of popular committee (Abate, n.d; Kursha, 2018). According to the informants in the protest, members of the popular committee were elected by the Konso protest movement numbering about 53,000. In their application to the regional government which was confirmed by the Speaker of the SNNPRS Council of Nationalities⁹⁷, the committee attached support signature of about 18% of the community which is quite above formally required minimum of 5%. According to the informant, the selection of the committee was carried out in the office of the district councilors and this process was perceived by the protesters as legitimate.

⁹⁷ Mr. Lemma Gezume, Speaker of the SNNPRS Council of Nationalities. (2018, December 19). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS).

The Konso protest movement accused the agents of the ruling party of trying to discredit the popular committee by claiming that they represent only few dominant clans in the district. It was true that the committee members included prominent chief Gezahegn Kalla who is the leader of one of the Konso nine clans⁹⁸. But it is true that the committee also consisted of members from traditionally marginalized groups such as craftsmen and women. My informants believe that the committee represents a quite diverse composition, although the agents of the government sought to manipulate the committee by demanding for more members. The protesters complied with the demand of the regional government to add 11 more members as wanted by the regional government.

The twenty three member of the Konso popular committee consisted varied members representing different sections of the community such as civil servants, women, youth, representatives of elders and religious organization, merchants and educators. The informants believe that the members of the committee have necessary political awareness, personal skills and knowledge. For instance, the committee comprised of lawyers, linguists, historians, merchants and farmers who are in the age range of 28 to 80 years. Their credentials are perceived relevant to negotiate with the government even though ten committee members are farmers who have no formal qualification. Likewise, the committee demonstrated gender sensitivity as the committee has five women consisted of three civil servants and two farmers. More so, there are

⁹⁸ My informants told that there is no hierarchy among the clan chiefs and tendency to see the *Kalla* as “king of Konso” is mere lie. Kimura (2004) argues the influence of *Kalla* grew with the fact that the *Kalla* was made *qanzmach* (a political title under emperor Haileselassie). My informants also disputed a story that narrative that the *Kalla* came from Gonder. In a related story, the *Kalla* of Konso and Titipa clan chief of neighboring Dirashe are perceived to have descended from the same family which traces its origin in Borana-Liben (Frew, 2017).

many activists who assisted the committee in language skills and conflict resolution as well as offering them essential information (Davison, 2018). The committee was particularly supported by its *kebele* representatives who played key roles in coordinating the involvements of peasants in the protest movement at different times⁹⁹.

According to the members of the committee, they used flexible leadership style essentially to avoid the government sanction. The committee members meet regularly depending on circumstances. There is no officially declared chairman or leader of the committee which appears in line with their local traditions (Kimura, 2004). However, Gezehagn Kalla was mostly perceived as the chairman of the committee because the government regularly talked with him and few other members of the committee who appeared soft in their tone compared with some other members of the committee. In spite of their intension to avoid the government penalty, their status as members of the committee brought most members of the popular committee severe consequences including bodily injuries, imprisonment, damage to assets, loss of employment, economic, social and psychological suffering of their family members.

8.2.5 External Supports to the Popular Committee

Volunteerism, commitment and cooperation of the popular committee have been key driving inspirations for the protest movement and they have greatly contributed to the country-wide protest movements that forced the government to reconsider its strategy¹⁰⁰. The committee received strong community support to their peace activism which strengthened and organized the

⁹⁹ Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.,

voice for change within the community. The popular committee relied on the community's financial aids (it includes 10 Eth. Birr per month from rural farmers and more from merchants) to carry out their activities. As members of the committee contended, the money was voluntarily offered by able members of the community although the critique claim that the committee members used traditional curses upon non-compliant community members including educated elites to collect the money. Besides, the committee got moral supports and media access from interested political groups in other parts of the country and abroad to promote their cause.

8.2.6 Impacts and Challenges of the Popular Committee

Even if a problematic power asymmetry that existed between the community and the ruling SEPDM contributed to obstruction of peace among the Konso community, my informants agreed that the popular committee played a key role in promoting grassroots peace movement. Local social capital of the community and civil society organizations played an essential role in the grassroots protest movement. The committee conscientized and mobilized community members to be united in values and understanding their situations in order to balance the existing power asymmetry which in turn would be relevant to a negotiated solution to the dispute as recognized in transformative peace-building literature (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1997; Hopp-Nishanka, 2016). As already mentioned above, the committee followed the correct constitutional procedures demanding for uphold of the given laws. As the informants recalled, the committee indeed reaffirmed their commitment to the constitution in a written statement. The committee prepared 12 points request which is of course open for negotiation, although the ruling SEPDM was not willing to provide genuine space for the negotiation.

The committee resolve for a sincere negotiation made the usual tactics of the ruling party irrelevant. The committee placed the community at the center of peace, rather the state and its security apparatus. On the other hand, the ruling party frequently worked to subvert the protest by deploying the regional Special Forces and making hasty arrests (Kursha, 2018). Its approach to mediation mainly comprised of paternalism and conception of conflict resolution shaped by a party revolutionary socialist thinking that demanded strict obedience to party doctrine and policy. According to the informants, the regional government attempted to mediate differences between officials of Segen Area People's Zone and that of Konso District. However, as the informants contended, such measure ended up buttressing problematic local cadres and their personal interests. Moreover, the regional state's gesture to peaceful resolution of the dispute lacked real substance and it was characterized by intimidating the community and the committee with frequent visits by its officials that included among others the regional president, the regional police chief and Speaker of the Council of Nationalities. As the informants recalled, these officials particularly tried to convince the community to abandon their request as well as to divide the popular committee talking with only their preferred members of the committee, although they were unable to stop the protest movement due to strong collaboration and cooperation of the popular committee and its acceptability by the community.

As the government failed to provide urgent response which is quick enough to moderate the community grievance, the popular committee demonstrated more commitment to the principles of peaceful civil disobedience. In this regard, the committee drew on networks of diverse social actors such as customary and family networks, religious organizations, village councilors, civil servants, entrepreneurs, self-help association, peasants, students, educators, and etcetera, blurring

the line between formal and informal. This ethos of resistance appeared to have rooted in their local tradition which was in turn emboldened by the state misconduct. In this regard, the Konso already had evolved a culture that is against authoritarianism in that they reject the idea of being governed by arbitrary personal authority (Hallpike, 2008, p.18). The community gives high regard for discussion and truth or rule of law rejecting arbitrary authority which they have a strong distaste. Instead, the Konso obey the laws and rules they have agreed to uphold. The committee adopted this existing ethos of commitment to law and order to promote a legitimate demand of the community.

Despite their non-violent resistance to unpopular policies, grassroots peace activism of the popular committee of Konso was matched by excessive force of the government. During a period of one year, the regional government repetitively imprisoned, released members of the committee and used coercive force against the citizens. Moreover, the government accused the committee of allegedly promoting political goal and encouraging the community to close public offices and schools and trying to create alternative local structure of governance (Abate, n. d; Davison, 2016; Ethiopia Observer, 2016). Attempts to deal with the community resistance have taken more time, energy and resource from the regional government as they are not well acquitted with the principles of peaceful civil disobedience. Uses of excessive forces by the government to crash strong civil disobedience were more evident especially after the violent episode of Abaroba, when most members of the popular committee consisting of twenty three members were imprisoned on the charges of trying to overthrow the government. Those who were imprisoned remained in jail over one and a half years and were released as part of the country wide reform after the change of political leadership in April 2018. Obviously, the protest

movement of the community that aimed at transforming unjust relations were obstructed by the ruling party who relied on use of violence and subversive tactics against the community.

Moreover, during the time of field work in the area from March 2017 to June 2017, peace committee structures were being introduced by the Segen Area People's Zone in collaboration with the regional state and federal government in twelve conflict-affected villages of the Konso District with mandate of promoting peace dialogues and reconciliation in their villages. Although trainings were offered to the newly recruited members of peace committees, as the informants claim, the process of creating peace structure was not locally owned as key cultural and religious authorities who were involved in the Popular Committee of Konso were not allowed to participate in the state initiated peace committees. They further reported that the community was still under security command administration with heightened the sense of tension and fear. The government measures in Konso appear to have contributed to the escalation the conflict.

In fact, there are critiques who believe that the popular committee have been inclined to hard-line stands especially at the time when the government resorted to a violent tactics to contain the protest movement. As the critiques contended, the hardliners were in favour of use of violent tactics against the government sympathizers. They specifically mentioned case of abuses of individuals and attacks on property of businessmen by the mob violence (Davison, 2018)¹⁰¹. Members of the popular committee recognized that there were a few cases of attacks on property of businessmen, especially following the government onslaught in various villages of Konso

¹⁰¹ Mr. Calisemo, an ethnic Konso living in Hawassa. (2018, October 20). (Interview with the author, Hawassa, SNNPRS); Mr. Kebado, a local cadre in Konso. (2017 May 12). (Interview with the author, Karatte, Konso, SNNPRS)

district. As they argued, it was, however, an isolated response of angry community members against individuals who were seen publically undermining the battle for self-rule of the community. The popular committee members further argue that violent conflict such as in Abaroba had nothing to do with the tactics of the committee. Instead, they claim that it was part of coercive tactics of the regional government to cast the constitutional rights of the community illegal.

Generally, it is perceived that that peace activism by the popular committee of Konso community against the state misconduct had a key contribution for the recent administrative re-structuring in the area, even though it cost the community in terms of many lives lost and injured or detained over the course of three years. As already mentioned above, Konso resistance against misconduct of the ruling party together with similar protest movements in various parts of the country especially in the Oromia Regional State contributed to political change in the country. Nonetheless, the ruling party by and large did not take the responsibility for what had gone wrong in its decision to create Segen Area People's Zone nor did it take necessary action to heal social fracture and psychological traumas of victims of the conflict. It appears that the regional government continues to follow rather a discriminatory stance toward the popular committee and larger section of the community that they represent.

Conclusion

The popular committee of Konso emerged in the symmetric conflict context as a local agent representing the concerns of their community. In particular, the popular committee served as an ad hoc platform to promote political aspiration of their community to self-rule or to establish

zonally constituted homeland. Their local autonomy was demoted by the regional government without sufficient consultation and consent of members of the community. The decision of the regional government was in turn motivated by legitimate concerns related to among others inter-communal violence involving Konso ethnic community. Nonetheless, the regional government opted to administrative integration at the expense of local autonomy of the community. As many interviewees contend, the regional government would have prioritized building communal resilience by empowering existing capacities for conflict resolution as well as establishing (joint) peace committees as part of solution to inter-communal violence in the area. In this regard, there was already successful experiment with state initiated peace committees in the frontier areas between Konso and Dirashe however their activities were irregular or discontinued. Besides, the familiar local peace infrastructures, namely, customary authorities and state initiated peace committees in the asymmetric conflict contexts were under risk of manipulation by the government. Hence, owing to absence of reliable institutions addressing the concerns of the community, the popular committee emerged as viable mechanism to deal with dispute in the vertical relations with the regional government. The committee steered relatively effective peace activism that eventually challenged the authoritarian ruling party that privileges its political survival at the expense of needs and interests of various ethnic communities that it claims to represent. In nutshell, the popular committee was able to effectively mobilize the community using civil disobedience as a primary technique to force the government into negotiation regardless of the series of repression and obstruction by the regional government. Like that of women led peace activism in Wondo Genet, the experience of the Popular Committee of Konso clearly shows the limit of using hybrid peace relations with those actors who monopolize power as they are usually not ready to deal with conflicts in a transformative way.

CHAPTER NINE: POTENTIALS AND LIMITS OF LOCAL PEACE

INFRASTRUCTURES: COMPARATIVE INQUIRY

Introduction

This thesis was initiated with the concerns regarding the tension between positive and critical accounts of local peace infrastructures that especially involve state actors. As it is argued in chapter two, the tension between two perspectives can be bridged by accepting the peace infrastructure as a hybrid peace platform. This means the study builds on the view that communal conflict transformation which is co-owned by state and non-state actors can provide reliable spaces for communal conflict prevention, facilitating dialogues, mediation, and reconciliation. It is also presumed that local peace infrastructures can contribute to a positive peace or just society if they are sensitive toward prevailing power asymmetry in the conflict contexts, well designed, receive due external supports and executed properly. Accordingly, the author identified context-related factors as well as the sets of key factors (such as the origin, mandate, role, composition and external supports) in peace infrastructure literature that are likely to influence the effectiveness of local peace infrastructures in communal conflict resolution and peace-building. In the view of the main assumptions of the thesis chapters three and four analyzed, respectively, the sources and natures of communal conflicts and mechanisms of conflict transformation in southern Ethiopia. Chapters five and seven explored and analyzed specifically empirical evidences related to the potentials and impacts of customary authorities and state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent zones in Oromia Regional State. Such local peace infrastructures aimed to transform unpeaceful relations between

the two groups in the symmetric conflict settings. On the other hand, chapters six and eight presented empirical experiences on peace activism led by women in the Wondo Genet District and by the Konso Popular Committee. These rival local peace infrastructures emerged as response to limits in the prior existing customary mechanisms, state initiated LPCs as well as in formal state structures in their respective areas. Besides, activist-oriented local peace infrastructures operate in the context of asymmetric power relations between conflict parties. Each empirical case presented conflict contexts, responses of the state, and, especially, the potentials and possible limits of each local peace infrastructure, focusing on their origins and mandates, roles, compositions, external supports as well as impacts and challenges.

The current chapter presents cross-case comparison, notably linking the macro- and micro-level analysis, focusing generally on the potentials and possible limits of local peace infrastructures. As this study found, an effective communal conflict transformation entails positive hybrid peace relations or collaboration and cooperation between state and non-state local peace actors. In particular, the state response to the violent communal conflict in southern Ethiopia is closely linked with issues at the heart of the conflict. In this regard, communal groups engaged in the quests for self-rule have faced a persistent threat of violent suppression by the state apparatus. By contrast, the government appears neutral and often took concerted efforts to deal with the violent inter-communal conflict occurring in frontier areas, especially between the regional states. Under this condition, local peace infrastructures have some potential to de-escalate violent communal conflicts and promote reconciliation across dividing conflict fault-lines. However, local peace actors such as councils of elders and state initiated LPCs do not necessary transform structurally rooted conflicts. In structurally rooted conflicts such as the marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet

District as well as in the conflict between the Konso community and SNNPRS, reliance on peace activism appears to offer a better infrastructure for communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding as argued in chapters six and eight. The next sections present detail findings from comparative case studies analysis, emphasizing on the potential and conceivable limits of local peace actors. The analysis starts by presenting responses of the state to each types of communal conflict. The second section presents comparative case studies analysis on the potentials and limits of local peace infrastructures.

9.1 State Responses to Communal Violence

As the comparative case studies analysis indicates, the state is not a consistent actor in all types of communal conflicts. For example, the intervention of state appears to have exacerbated a localized dispute into wide spread violent conflict in Konso. Conversely, the state intervention played a key role in communal conflicts de-escalation in the situation of marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet District. Thus, this section devoted to the analysis on the state responses toward three distinct although intertwined categories of communal conflicts in southern Ethiopia as expounded in chapter three.

9.1.1. State Response to Communal Violence Arising during the *Quest for Homeland*

In comparative view, the state response to the violent communal conflicts arising during the quest for self-rule or formally recognized homeland has mostly been aggressive. As clearly recognized both in the federal and SNNPR constitutions, every ethnic group is entitled to the right to establish institution of government such as region, zone or special *wereda* in the territory that it habits. In practice, such administrative structures give power to various ethnic groups to

choose the working language and preserve their history and culture. However, as the case of Konso shows, this right has not been materialized for many ethnic communities existing in the southern region of Ethiopia, because of the emphasis by the ruling SEPDM on administrative integration of the region. This in turn intensified the competition between various ethnic groups in the southern region. As explicated in chapter two, instrumental mobilization of ethnic identities for exclusive control of collective resources previously used together clearly exacerbated a need for a separate homeland. In addition, the regional government usually takes biased decisions that affect not only relationships between local political elites in contexts of quests for separate homeland but also peaceful coexistences among their community members. This appears to have contributed to undesirable identity-based behaviors by different local political elites and groups including armed attacks against the members of other ethnic communities who are perceived as enemies. Under these conditions, the ruling party mostly relied on its local cadres to administer local governments because of the lack of legitimacy by members of the community that seeking for self-rule.

Since series of quests for separate homelands and related communal conflicts have become more disruptive and have higher political repercussions in term of administrative fractures and costs in the southern region, the regional state used both coercive and non-coercive preventive strategies to contain conflict and improve community security as it was evident in the case of Konso. Rather than relying on usual law and order approaches, the SNNPRS sought to contain the quests and arrest perpetrators and try to restore order, even though such order is inherently unstable and superficial. Overall, the regional government has been unable to end repeated quests for separate

homelands and self-seeking behaviors of local political elites and subsequent violent communal conflicts in the southern region.

As the comparative case studies analysis reveals, there is no reliable mechanism in place that allows negotiation between different levels of governments as well as between the regional government and ethnic communities seeking for self-rule. In particular, the government enjoyed a clear asymmetric power over a community demanding their constitutional rights. Accordingly, the regional state response to a conflict that emerges during quests for self-rule is more likely to intensify damages to communities. The security forces which have been a key instrument of the conflict containment in such conflict settings often lack cultural sensitivity, negotiation and mediation skills. Furthermore, formal institutions such as the HoF and the CoN that are normally expected to address disputes on the issues of self-rule, or a desire to have formally recognized homeland, have been unable to provide effective resolution to the problem due to the prevailing political practices in the region that privilege the administrative integration and interests of the ruling party.

As the analysis indicates, the regional government of SNNPRS has not been willing to allow local peace infrastructures already within a community to contribute in handling of disputes related to quests for self-rule. This is because of the ruling party has a solid political stake on the quest for self-rule. As the case of Konso's demand for their own homeland demonstrates, there is no evidence of state appeasement of customary authorities in a conflict setting where the latter engaged in advocating community's demand for self-rule. The regional state is usually disruptive of them and aggressively related to customary elders whenever they are against the interests of

the ruling government. The ruling SEPDM often prior dismisses the conflict claim and quests for local self-governance. Besides, it is willing to negotiate and cooperate exclusively on its own terms. As the comparative case studies analysis shows, the party cares to only its own local cadres who allegedly represent communities to restore political control over their members.

By the same token, in the violent communal conflicts associated with quests for homeland LPCs initiated by the regional state have been exposed to manipulation and politicization by the ruling party. Since the ruling government is the party to such conflicts, the presence of government representatives among the members of peace committees undermined their legitimacy and risked the local peace committee members advocating government agenda, for instance, by gathering intelligences which affect the interest of a community. In this setting local peace infrastructures fail to perform or carryout their intended purpose like providing space for peace dialogues as they often trap themselves within destructive conflict dynamics as it was evident in the context of Konso. Moreover, the regional state denied spaces for more organized civil society actors interested in transformation of communal conflicts occurring during the quests for self-rule. As a result localized peace activism and civil disobedience by members of the community have been effective mechanisms to counter the government's coercive strategies, as it was occurred in the Konso community's quest for self-rule or zonally constituted homeland.

9.1.2. State Response to Communal Violence *inside* Homeland

In response to the violent communal conflicts rising within a homeland or within a community like the one that occurred between the traditionally dominant clans of Sidama and artisans in the Wondo Genet District over the marriage issue, the regional government of SNNP follows mostly

law and order approaches. As already pointed in chapter six, traditionally marginalized groups such as the craftsmen and women have been discriminated and deprived of access to economic and political resources in the area as well as in other part of the region. In this sense, the marriage dispute in Wondo Genet District represented a deep-rooted structural problem. The establishment of ethnic oriented local government has not been enough to address the plights of minority groups, especially the artisans and women who do not live in a concentrated territory. Instead, the reform reinforced the privileges of powerful social groups in most parts of the southern region (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003). The regional government's response to the plights of minority groups and episode of violence against them do not go beyond regular court charging. For instance, in the situation of the marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet District, officials of the southern region accused local cadres of being neglectful of similar incidents and failing to contain negative stereotypes against women and members of minority groups. In particular, they accused perpetrators in regular local courts and helped the displaced members to be returned to their villages. In addition, the government conducted ad hoc dialogue and peace conferences in conflict affected *kebeles* in which public officials and security officers issued ultimatum to the community members and elders not to involve in related discriminatory practices against women and the members of minority groups.

As the informants confirmed, response of the government of the southern region had very limited effect to rectify socially rooted inequalities and injustices in the society. This is because there is widespread lack of awareness of most community members about their legal rights and obligations as well as the nature of conflict involving women and the members of minority groups. In addition, as indicated in chapter six, the involvement of customary elders to deal with

this deep rooted structural problem is likely to reinforce the existing social inequalities and injustice. Hence, it can be argued that peace activism along with the legal approaches appears to offer a better alternative to deal with such deep entrenched social problems in the wider country, even though such actions has been restricted to the grassroots women led activities as well as narrow awareness creation activities by few NGOs.

The response of the government toward intra-communal conflicts, however, depends on the political stake in a dispute. For instance, in the violent incident after localized dispute in the *Abaroba Kebele* of Konso District, the southern regional government preferred to associate this conflict with the protest movement in the community clearly to contain the protest movement and to cast their constitution rights as illegal. In particular, the government used the violent tactics to charge local political elites for presumably inciting violence against the government (Abate, n. d; Ethiopia observer, 2016). This occurred even with little evidence of culpability. The use of the security forces by the regional state to suppress the legitimate quest of the community for self-rule by prompting internal social division in turn undermined cooperation between the members of the community in particular and augmented the community suspicion towards the security forces in general. Subsequently, there was very limited cooperation between the community and the security forces stationed in the area. Even if the security forces stationed in the area during the incident, they had very fragile will to prevent intra-communal violence in the *Abaroba Kebele*. This in turn reinforced the community perception that the security forces serve as a tool of the government to suppress their needs and interests. The community specifically associated the government intervention as a threat to their collective security. Some of the

informants described the regional security forces as “enemy” force involved in warfare in their villages¹⁰².

Under those conditions, participation of local peace infrastructures, especially customary peace makers to mediate the dispute between the villagers of Abaroba in which they have a clear comparative advantage was ineffective because of the government meddling in their everyday activities. As a result, most of leading customary authorities became active members of activist oriented popular committee (Ethiopia Observer, 2016; Kursha, 2018). On the other hand, members of state established LPCs who had been active preventing inter-communal conflicts in the frontier areas between Konso and Dirashe in the past decades were unable to prevent tensions in their villages because they were perceived as agent of the state and hence they lost the trust of the community (Asnake et al., 2013). Accordingly, members of Konso community under the leadership of the popular committee mobilized the capacity to counter the regional government which was unwilling to recognize their concerns. They successfully brought the concerns of the community into attention by forcing the regional government into negotiation.

9.1.3. State Response to Communal Violence in the *Frontiers* of Homeland

In comparative view, the government generally appeared neutral in frontier areas affected by inter-communal violence, especially between the two regional states under study. This is in spite of the prevailing ethno-nationalists attitudes that consider borders as empty spaces where one can draw a clear line of demarcation. As already elucidated in chapter three, most of regional

¹⁰² Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatee, Konso, SNNPRS); Mr. Kantashu, a young Konso man working in Jinka Town. (2017, June 9). (Interview with the author, Jinka, Debub Omo Zone, SNNPRS)

boundaries in the country as well as borders of zones or special *wereda* in the southern region have been center of protracted inter-communal violence since the beginning of ethnic oriented decentralization reform in 1991. The violent communal conflicts arising in frontier areas are also linked with claims over border and natural resources (land, water, and forests) as well as social identities. In particular, the frontier areas have been targets of ethno-nationalist mobilization, grievances, politicization and violent communal attacks, especially in ethnically mixed settlements like the one in the Wondo Genet area. Ethnic elites often trigger inter-communal violence in their effort to create a sharp demarcation line dividing communities living side by side for centuries, as they did in the Wondo Genet area. Because of their activities, minor disputes in frontier areas are likely to escalate into inter-regional conflict affecting populations living in the frontier areas. Under these conditions, every day oriented peace infrastructures have limited control over violent communal conflict dynamics unless they are supported by the state and other stakeholders.

In response to inter-communal violence in frontier areas, the federal state has been a key actor. The federal state often intervenes militarily in order to contain violence escalation into a wide scale conflict between the concerned regions. As a neutral actor, it usually sends the federal police and the army to conflict-affected areas, even if mostly after the loss of lives, displacement and destruction of properties. In practice, the intervention of security forces in some instance means use of violent tactics against civilians which are often claimed as legitimate by the state in face of violent inter-communal clashes. However, coercive state interventions mostly complicate relationships between disputants and could fragment everyday peace efforts (Asebe, 2007; Girum, 2014). As it was evident during the initial outbreak of violence in the Wondo Genet area,

the federal government tended to co-opt customary authorities and local peace structures as tools of intelligence gathering, identifying suspects and conducting peace dialogues. These behaviors in turn had effects of undermining the potential of customary actors to prevent the conflict and their cooperative relationships with the community in the areas. In addition, the federal state relies on the use formal mechanism like use of referendum to ascertain the interest of local people in frontier areas. However, the outcomes of the referendum sometimes contribute to conflict reescalation due to claims and counter-claims of vote rigging and manipulation.

As the comparative case studies analysis suggests, unlike its response to the quests for self-rule, the regional government of the SNNPRS mostly relied on using non-coercive strategy to transform communal clashes around frontier of Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones. The officials of the two regional states and their local counterparts collaborated to promote communal coexistence and peaceful relationships which are recognized in peacebuilding literature as heart of both conflicts and its resolution (Lederach, 1997, p. 43). In this regard, the regional officials took series of measures to enhance feeling of inclusion and reduce biased stances of local leaderships that affect residents living in their frontier areas. In particular, they cooperated to ensure inclusive local developments in the frontier areas, to hold responsible local political elites in respective frontier districts whenever they abuse their position and to allow for the resolution of conflict through discussion and compromise (Mustefa, 2018). Their interregional cooperation was supported by the federal government which has mostly been less strict towards localized communal disputes in the frontier areas unless and otherwise they affect the regional power balance and architecture.

More notably, the regional states of the SNNP and Oromia supported and collaborated with local peace actors and civil society groups during dialogue and conflict resolution processes. For instance, they provided resources for formal and institutions already existing in the community. In particular, they supported efforts of customary elders and (joint) LPCs in their frontier areas with high potential for violent conflicts. As a result customary authorities and state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones helped to avert cycles of revenge killings and transform hostilities and contain the escalation of inter-communal violence after initial acts of violence, and promote cooperative crime surveillance and reconciliation (Mustefa, 2018). As it was evident in the context of the Wondo Genet area, due to ineffectiveness of formal strategies, the responsibility for communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding fell upon customary authorities. In this area, customary elders of Sidama and Guji complemented the government's desire to manage difficult frontier using social capital rooted in the communities. This is in spite of the fact that customary authorities had their own weaknesses in dealing with structural issues in the area as already analyzed above. Likewise, supports of the regional states enabled (joint) LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones to contribute for communal conflict prevention and promotion dialogue, and reconciliation, even though their effectiveness depended on the continued inter-regional cooperation, capacity building and proper execution of everyday activities.

As the comparative case studies analysis reveals, the government has also been tolerant toward more organized civil society groups, especially NGOs engaged in communal conflict resolution in the frontier areas between the regional states of the SNNP and Oromia. For example, the RCCSGA in partnership with the Civil Peace Service of government of Germany played crucial

roles in communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding, especially in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent West Arsi and Guji Zones. In particular, it promoted effective peace radio programmes, organized numerous training to members of joint listeners clubs, peace committees and customary elders, and encouraged joint communal conflict resolution involving state and non-state actors (CPS, 2017).

9.2 Potentials of Local Peace Infrastructures

Every-day oriented peace infrastructures in southern Ethiopia have been playing significant role in communal conflict resolution and peace-building. Their potentials in contributing to transform communal conflicts are chiefly related to their hybrid nature. Local peace infrastructures had better access to needs and interests of local communities and hence they are better situated to deal with communal conflicts. As the comparative case studies reveals, local peace actors have helped to contain escalation of the violent communal conflicts and restrains misconducts of those who monopolize power. Nonetheless, as this author argues, it is significant to identify two forms of local peace infrastructure depending on power relations between the conflict parties. In this regard, local peace infrastructures existing in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent West Arsi and Guji Zones operate in the symmetric conflict settings and hence they are jointly formed or co-owned by both conflict parties. Here, local peace infrastructures such as customary institutions of conflict resolution and state initiated LPCs came to assume an enhanced role in the wake of destructive, and recurrent inter-communal conflicts among residents living in frontier villages, even though customary institutions have already been active in the area as already elucidated in chapter five. The fact that local peace infrastructures are co-owned by conflict parties enabled them to be situated in grassroots and in the respective local governments. This

means that they are able to utilize the communities and government structures in order to access resources necessary to deal with violent inter-communal conflicts and provide dialogue and mediation forums and ensure reconciliation. As a result they have been playing positive role in preventing violent inter-communal conflicts and promoting communal conflict resolution and reconciliation in the areas.

By contrast, peace activism in the asymmetric conflict settings such as in the situation of structurally rooted marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet District and conflict between the Konso ethnic community and SNNPRS represent a critical peace infrastructure. Activist oriented local peace actors mainly rally around their common goal of resisting structurally rooted injustices and advocating reform in favor of their basic needs and interests. In particular, they openly resisted those who desire to maintain the status quo. Hence, the next subsections analyze the potentials of everyday oriented peace infrastructures in each setting as well as in generalized words in line with the theoretical assumptions of the thesis.

9.2.1 Potentials of Local Peace Infrastructures in Symmetric Setting

As already expounded in chapter three, most of regional boundaries in the country as well as borders of zones or special *wereda* in the southern region have been center of protracted inter-communal violence since the introduction of ethnic oriented decentralization reform in 1991. However, most of such inter-communal conflicts took place between communities which have more or less comparable ability to inflict damage up on each other. Besides, the communities lived together for centuries experiencing both cordial and hostile exchanges. As comparative case studies analysis shows, in such symmetric settings everyday oriented local peace

infrastructures exhibit positive hybrid peace platform or they are co-owned by local communities which act together across dividing conflict lines to ensure sustainable peace in their frontiers. The presence of local peace infrastructures such as councils of elders and LPCs appear pertinent to increase communities' capacity to prevent communal conflicts and promote conflict resolution and reconciliation even if they have less control over ethno-nationalists led violent conflicts' dynamics in the areas. For example, the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo in the Wondo Genet area operate around socio-spatial boundaries, dividing more or less comparable regions, namely, the Oromia and SNNPRS. Likewise, their communal conflict prevention and peace-building activities in the area are based on mutual respect. Accordingly, they remain committed to ensure sustainable peace in their frontier areas in spite of activities of the ethno-nationalists as well as lack of enough supports from the government and more organized civil society actors. In particular, they have been able to conduct series of joint forums for conflict prevention, dialogue and mediation and reconciliation of conflict parties.

Likewise, the state-initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and Guji Zones in further south operate in the symmetric conflict setting and they are co-owned and supported by both communities and respective local governments. As result the presence of permanent local peace committee structures in the villages provide an effective peace platform to inter-communal conflict prevention, dispute settlement and reconciliation. While dispute over mother tongue education and mixed settlement in Wondo Genet which was formerly known for its cordial ties has been source of tension and conflict, the same issues were transformed into an opportunity for cooperation and inter-communal interactions and ties between formerly hostile frontier villagers between Hula and Bore Districts. In the other words, in ethnically mixed villages like the one in

Hanqo-Baya the local communities were able to make a broad consensus by making compromise in order to enhance their mutual relations despite histories of their past hostilities. This was primarily done by the villagers' own peace initiative and it was later facilitated by more organized and locally owned peace committees with minimum external supports. As already analyzed in chapter seven, their experience provided crucial lessons to the conflict-affected members of Sidama and Arsi communities living further north in the south central Rift Valley of Ethiopia.

As the cases of customary actors and state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent zones in Oromia Regional State show, the presence of symmetric power relations between conflicting parties is critical for the realization of joint problem-solving processes which is by its nature contrary to authoritarian approach to communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as will be clarified in the next subsection. The fact that each peace infrastructure includes members of two ethnic groups, their local governments and other stakeholders in the problem solving forums and holds both of them accountable for execution of their collective decisions strengthen a culture of mutual respect and dialogue between the communities for durable peace across separating socio-spatial borders. Critical though it is an issue of political legitimacy which in turn is contingent upon the conflict contexts where local peace infrastructures operate appears less emphasized in the existing peace infrastructure literature.

Beyond conflict contexts the way how each local peace infrastructure is organized and executed matters for its effective contribution in communal conflict transformation. In this regard, as the comparative case studies analysis show, experiences of the councils of the elders of Sidama and

Guji Oromo in the Wondo Genet area and state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts go with the theoretical conditions for effective local peace infrastructures as already explicated in chapter two. Let me inquiry each peace infrastructure in terms of key factors identified in the analytic framework.

I. Mandate: In terms of mandate as recognized in peace infrastructure literature the presence of an official mandate is relevant for local peace actors to work in a collaborated and coordinated manner across conflict fault-lines. The presence of formally specified mandate in particular gives local peace infrastructures with leverage and crucial link to the government (Odendaal, 2012). On the other hand, the literature recognizes that the presence of an official mandate for local peace infrastructures might obstruct local ownership. It also led to manipulation of LPCs by the government, thereby jeopardizing their local legitimacy (ibid.). As the comparative case studies analysis reveals, state initiated LPCs in the frontier *kebeles* between Hula and Bore Districts fall under this theoretical claim. This is due to the state initiated LPCs in the area rely on general guidelines adopted by the local governments, although there is local variations in their applications. The fact that LPCs were established by the respective local governments has been enabling them to access state support in terms of technical, financial and leverage.

As the analysis shows, the state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between the Hula and Bore Districts like the one in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* are owned by the villagers because of the government's sustained attempt to make the local peace actors such as customary elders and community leaders to express their needs or involve in decision to establish them. Unlike local courts in these frontier areas that are mostly vulnerable to ethnic bias, the presence of jointly

owned or co-owned LPCs for ethnically mixed settlements were perceived to have relative advantages such as reduced cost, easy access and improved inter-communal relations. Moreover, they were perceived as easy to understand and use by the community members. Furthermore, their impacts were easily communicated to other nearby *kebeles* as well as Sidama's northern frontiers with the West Arsi Zone. Even if state initiated LPCs are situated within local administrations, the fact that they are co-owned by conflicting communities as well as by their respective political elites appears to have reduced risks of politicization of LPCs and facilitated cooperation necessary for communal conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Even it can be argued that the peace potentials of the councils of elders of Sidama and Guji in the Wondo Genet area have been associated with the supports of the respective local administrations and other stakeholders in the area, even though they lack an official mandate. As already elucidated in chapter five, customary institutions of communal conflict resolution are organically grown. They are also culturally and contextually situated. The fact that the councils of elders grew from within the communities is a primary condition for their effective contribution for communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In particular, the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji provided timely, well-targeted and relevant intervention in response to their communities' security concerns. Their actions are based on deep rooted understanding of the local, cultural and contextual dynamics of their communities. As a result their cross-cutting integrative activities have been able to restore trust lost during the violent conflict and reduce further conflict escalation in spite of the presence of ongoing claims and counter-claims over collectively used resources in the area. Hence, as the analysis suggests, the effective contribution of the councils of the elders in the Wondo Genet area and state initiated local peace committees

in the frontier area between Hula and Bore Districts for communal conflict resolution is mainly due to the fact these peace infrastructures are perceived to be evolved as non-political structure as well as they enjoy the supports of the communities, local governments and other stakeholders.

II. Role: In terms of role the theoretical literature on peace infrastructure remarks that in order to contribute for peace of a community, local peace infrastructure should have a clear role in relation with other institutions. While there is no uniformity in the existing literature in the way how they are related to the local government and conflict parties, as Odendaal (2010) suggests, it is crucial that there is much role-clarity as possible to avoid harmful confusion. It is particularly pertinent that local peace infrastructures are not seen as hostile to the government and/or promoting the government agenda. But, instead they could serve as means of enabling dialogues and consensus, thereby creating an environment that provide collaborative and effective solution to the problem. With regard to this issue, as the comparative case studies analysis reveals, state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts were perceived to have enough spaces presented by the general guidelines of peace committee structures. Here, the LPCs have been operating in both peace and conflict times preventing any disruption of community, creating awareness, dealing with every cases referred to them without making distinction between civil or criminal, even though they are not allowed to deal with a case of murder. The fact that the LPCs in the area operate in joint or hybrid bases enables them to carry out their tasks bringing together primary disputants, respective local governments and other stakeholders. Thus, they appear to have succeeded in their role in the community as there was no report of problem about their relations with local governments, or with concerns of the

communities. The positive image towards the LPCs in the area have given them suitable conditions to carry out their tasks of improving inter-communal relations in the area.

Likewise, the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji in the Wondo Genet area carryout a wide range of tasks in relation to communal conflict prevention, dispute resolution and reconciliation. The elders were recognized for effectively ending destructive inter-communal violence among communities who lived in cordial ties for centuries. In particular, they facilitated local dialogues and enhanced community relations through conducting reconciliation or *gondoro/ficha* ritual after cases of bloodshed in a setting where local political elites engaged in destructive cycles of claims and counter-claims. As the analysis reveals, in dealing with issues that concerns both communities the councils of the elders in the area do not carry out tasks that contradict the administrative and legal consensus or provisions.

As the comparative case studies analysis reveals, both the councils of elders and state initiated LPCs in the frontiers areas between Hula and Bore Districts work with the local governments to get their decisions enforced. As will be clarified in the next subsection, the fact that their actions do not contradict with the other state institutions and concerns of the respective community appears more evident when one sees asymmetric conflict settings where the same peace structures failed to provide constructive conflict resolution, as they usually engage, for example, in gathering intelligence information for the government. This implies that in the contexts where the government was party to a conflict, the presence of the government representatives among the members of local peace committees were seen undermining the legitimacy of the committee and risked such structures advancing interest of the government.

III.Composition: In terms of compositions the theoretical framework entails in order to be effective local peace infrastructures need to be inclusive primary conflict parties, civil society actors and other stakeholders within conflict system. The theory also indicates that state initiated LPCs often include representation of political and civil society actors, although the former might suffer from lack of local legitimacy and volunteerism. As the comparative case studies analysis shows, the general guidelines of state initiated LPCs require the composition that comprises civil and political actors at the grassroots level. As a result the composition of the state initiated LPCs in the frontiers between Hula and Bore Districts reflect social background in the area such as ethnicity, age, and gender. The fact that members of LPCs in the area comprise members of both ethnic groups comprising specifically customary elders, youth, religious organizations, self-help associations and representative of *kebele* administration, even if the number of women are still minimum. However, the fact that the committees comprise diverse sections of the community means they are able to gain local legitimacy, trust and ownership of the respective local governments and the community. By including members from the *kebele* administration and community, the LPCs in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts is consistent with what the theoretical framework recommends, even though the peace committees in the areas suffer from problem of volunteerism, high turnover and legal gaps. Even if the LPCs in the area are situated within the local government structures that usually tend to politicize them, the presence of members coming from two ethnic groups and political parties reduce the risk of their manipulation by local political elites. This is mainly due to the fact that in these ethnically mixed villages the inter-communal and inter-regional relations usually rely on actions of such everyday oriented peace structures. As already elucidated in chapter four, there are no clear constitutional

and legal provisions to manage the intergovernmental relations other than mutual dialogues between states (Assefa, 2009; Nigusse, 2015).

In contrast to the state initiated LPCs, the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo in the Wondo Genet area are exclusively comprised of male elders reflecting local traditions in the area. Unlike the state initiated LPCs, the councils of elders are not open to traditionally marginalized social groups such as women and artisans. However, since they usually pass effective resolution on issues that concern both ethnic groups in the area, an inclusive composition is less a matter in those aspects. Moreover, in their everyday decisions, especially on issues that transcend socio-spatial borders the elders have been closely inspected by respective district and zonal governments in the area as explored in chapter five. In fact, the selection of elders in each community considers not only age or family background of an elder but also volunteerism, wisdom, frankness, knowledge of the other community, experiences of conflict resolution and so on, which are relevant to reduce their bias in communal conflict resolution (Constantinous & Zerihun, 1999). Even though, the lack of inclusive representation of all relevant sections of a society has its own negative impacts on rights and interests of non-represented groups. As will be further elucidated below, the risks of non-representation of women and members of artisans in the councils of the elders in area clearly reflected in women led peace activism in the area.

IV. External supports: In terms of external support the theoretical framework makes the link between the effectiveness of local peace infrastructures and quality of technical and administrative support that they receive. As the framework also suggests, in order to play a

constructive role local peace infrastructures should have access to relevant resources. With regard to the external supports, as the comparative case studies analysis shows, the state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts were established by joint activities of Sidama and Guji administrations and hence they have been closely scrutinized and supported by the respective district administrations which also provide relevant support to the members of LPCs. This support includes among others training on mediation and conflict resolution skills. The local governments also respond to the LPCs requests by offering them with additional police reinforcement and sponsoring inter-community dialogues. However, as the case studies shows, activities of LPCs in the frontier areas such as the Hanqo-Baya village have primarily been driven by resources rooted in the communities. As a result unlike many NGOs initiated LPCs in the southern region which ceased to exist after the government restriction of civil society organizations in realm of communal peacebuilding in 2009 (Glowacki & Gönc, 2013), such state initiated LPCs remain effective during time of needs, regardless of lack of enough supports from even the government and other stakeholders.

Likewise, the councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji in the Wondo Genet area based on ethos of volunteerism and community services. The elders are not paid for their work except customary fine that are charged on offenders after an effective mediation and reconciliation. However, compared with the state initiated LPCs like in the Hanqo-Baya *Kebele*, the councils of the elders used to receive better training from the civil society actors, particularly from the RCCSGA and the Civil Peace service of the government of Germany to analyze the conflict, identify early signs of conflicts and skills to resolve disputes, and report the results to respective district peace and security officers (CPS, 2017). This training is usually given on the belief that a

person's customary dignity is not sufficient to act as peace makers/mediator in conflict contexts where local political elites engaged in destructive claims and counter-claims.

What appears more evident from the above inquiry is that beyond crucial local political legitimacy and conflict settings where local peace infrastructures operate in the way how each local peace infrastructure is organized and supported to execute its everyday activities matter, even though the emphasis on the organizational aspect received much attention in the existing peace infrastructure literature. As will be elucidated in the next subsection, this in turn appears to ignore power asymmetry between the conflict parties which in turn contribute to a 'negative hybrid peace' that is characterized by tension, violence, discriminations and injustices (Richmond, 2014).

9.2.2 Potentials of Peace Activism in Asymmetric Setting

As the comparative case studies analysis shows, structurally rooted conflicts such as the marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet District and conflict between the Konso ethnic community and SNNPRS display patterns of the asymmetric power relations between conflict parties. Civic oriented actors in such settings mainly rally around their long term goals of removing structural injustice and inequalities. In both cases the victims staged firm resistances and activism against those who desire to keep their privileges.

As the analysis reveals, local members of Konso community were united around resisting unpopular state measure that failed to take into account their demand for self-rule. As the informants remark, activist oriented Popular Committee of Konso was established by the

community because they felt threatened, and that justice and local development failed. As they claimed, the regional government in particular ignored the community's urge for security, justice and development. As a result the people took matter into their own hands. The establishment of the popular committee took place in a setting where there are no formally organized civil society actors and political parties in order to help deal with the state-society crisis in the area. This is in turn due to the lack of willingness on the part of the ruling SEPDM to allow tolerable space for even the most perceived neutral civic associations. The ruling party also denied spaces for more organized civic actors, including locally established opposition party of Konso (Abate, n. d; Kursha, 2018).

Likewise, women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District emerged against the violent communal conflicts and injustice against traditionally marginalized groups such as women and artisans in the area. As already examined in chapter six, privileges in the Wondo Genet area is allocated in accordance to age, gender and clan with older member of the clan retaining more power than youth, men more power than women and 'pure' clans more power than artisans. Women have been the primary victims of inter- and intra-communal conflicts in the area. They in particular have been exposed to various abuses including domestic violence. Even if they have engaged in rebuilding peace in their community, customary practices excluded them from full participation in everyday conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As the case study shows, structurally biased decisions of customary elders often interfere with the constitutionally granted rights of women and the members of minority groups. Besides, customary practices in the area often deprive women and members of minority groups a space where they would contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in their community causing psychological as well as

structural injustices. As a result women in the Wondo Genet promoted localized peace activism using both customary and modern civic associations in order to prevent conflicts and redress structural injustices in the area.

As the comparative case studies analysis shows, resistances and localized peace activism in both conflict contexts emerge in structurally rooted discriminations and injustices. The Konso Popular Committee, for example, emerged in a setting where the regional state acted to undermine demand for self-rule of the community or separate zonally constituted homeland and reinforced authoritarian control by dismantling the community protest movement. Likewise, in the case of women led peace activism in Wondo Genet operates in the social setting that deprives voices to women and members of minority groups. As this author argues, a communal peacebuilding in such structurally unjust settings requires first crafting enough space for activism and engaging with the associations that the local resistances generate. This is, however, not to argue that activist oriented local actor are free from any problem but the key to the rise of conflicts in such asymmetric settings in the first place lies in a prior exclusion of activist oriented local actors and interests they represent. In the other words, discriminatory actions of the state and customary practices and beliefs should not be seen peripheral to the rise of resistance and activism rather they were profoundly central to them.

As the analysis reveals, the engagement of the popular committee and women in peace activism in their respective contexts however have not undermined their potentials to act as local or everyday peace infrastructures. For example, the Popular Committee of Konso developed strong networks to promote intra-community dialogues and guard security among their community

members from disruptive state agents. In this regard, most local villages of Konso were linked with the popular committee structures to ensure collaboration between the community members for conflict prevention¹⁰³. As the informants claim, the committee exchanged key information across different social networks in order to contain the disruptive actions, collaborated in protecting their villages and ensuring non-violent resolution of localized disputes, even though the regional state opted to forcefully contain the Konso protest movement. Likewise, women in the Wondo Genet area played a key role in mitigating the conflicts, bridging differences, preparing venues for dialogues and mediation, and reconciliation as well as instructing the youth about peace and non-violent approaches of conflict resolution.

What appears obvious from the above experiences of peace activism is a question whether it is fair to view local peace infrastructures to be owner of only ‘soft’ or ‘moral authority’ as depicted in peace infrastructure literature, while the issues they are confronting involves structurally rooted injustice and inequalities. As already argued above, rather than simply dismissing their plights it is necessary to engage with activist oriented local actors. The risk of emphasizing of peace activism and resistance might be obvious in terms of the fear change of the status quo, but it is a risk to be taken to overcome the deep rooted injustices and inequalities.

Unlike the structures and functions of everyday oriented peace infrastructure in the symmetric setting, activist oriented peace actors were organized and executed in a way that enable them to conduct effective mobilization for the achievement of their aspirations. For example, the

¹⁰³ Focus Group Interview with members of the Popular Committee of Konso. (2018, November 28). (Dialogue with the author, Karatee, Konso, SNNPRS); Mr. Kantashu, a young Konso man working in Jinka Town. (2017, June 9). (Interview with the author, Jinka, Dehub Omo Zone, SNNPRS).

mandate of the Popular Committee of Konso was defined in a way to enable it act on the behalf of the community to deal its disputes with the regional state. In this regard, its strategy focused on non-violent resistance to confront misconduct of the regional state that interfered with their constitutional rights and everyday life. As the case analysis shows, the committee employed hybrid approaches combing both socio-historical norms and legal rights to augment their claims as recognized in the literature (Richmond, 2013b). In the same token, women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District has a mandate of promoting the rights of women and members of minority social group against the background of deep rooted discriminations and lack of recognition to their contribution for peace of their community.

In carrying out their mandates both activist oriented local peace infrastructures conscientized and mobilized their supporters in order to confront the existing structurally rooted problems. The Popular Committee of Konso in particular relied on a civil disobedience as its key techniques but also dialogue meeting, negotiation and diplomacy to realize their aims. Likewise, women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District used the opportunities offered by both customary and modern associations and approaches to draw the attention of the community towards their plights. They also used non-violent techniques that pressurize the offenders to ensure their rights are protected.

As the comparative case studies analysis shows, in terms of composition, activist oriented local peace actors in both sites comprised of sections of society that are essential to the promotion of their concerns and interests. For example, the Popular Committee of Konso was inclusive of different sections of the community that are relevant to limit asymmetric relations and forces the

regional state into negotiation. In this aspect, it mobilized all the relevant structures of the community such as clan network, religious institutions, schools, associations of entrepreneurs, village based self-help associations and local administration itself. Hence, the committee attempted to include a broad representation comprising educators, elders, women, merchants, religious leaders, youth and farmers. Likewise, women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet area primarily comprised of all women of the community, even though they also engaged all sections of the community, including customary structures and local political elites.

Unlike customary elders and state initiated LPCs in the symmetric conflict settings in the frontiers areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones, activist oriented peace infrastructures in the SNNPRS suffer from lack of external supports to promote their causes. Even if the concerns of women has received relatively better attentions in policy and research circles at the national, regional and district levels, in practice, actions taken to redress justices against them and appreciate their role in communal conflict transformation are still negligible. This is in spite of the presence of significant number of civil society organizations working in advocacy for gender equality and minority groups rights in the country in general and southern region in particular. However, compared with gender activism, peace activism associated with the political and group rights have not been recognized in the country mainly due to the prevailing authoritarian political practices in the country. Peace activism for political and social rights is primarily reinforced by members of a concerned community. For that reason, grassroots peace activism for communal conflict resolution and social justices in the study areas encounter negative hybrid politics from powerful actors that restrains their efforts.

9.2.3 Potentials of Local Peace Infrastructures in all Settings

As the comparative case studies analysis shows, everyday peace infrastructures comprising customary elders, state initiated LPCs and civil society oriented peace activists carryout multiple activities to prevent or mitigate violence, resolve conflict and promote reconciliation and peace activism. Unlike more formally organized state and civil society actors everyday oriented and informally organized actors has more direct contact with the conflict parties. Besides, everyday peace actors have a greater legitimacy and will to coordinate a collective action and intervene to address communal conflicts that affect their everyday life. The fact that they live within settings affected by communal conflicts and have an in-depth knowledge of the conflict context helps them to keep access to and influence over disputants. Thus, they have a better potential to deal with threats of community peace and security than more organized civil society organizations. Let me concisely clarifies here the potentials of local peace infrastructures in generalized terms.

I. Preventive Capacities: Local peace infrastructures such as customary elders and LPCs have the capacity to engage and support community conflict resolution and peace-building. Most of members in these peace structures have access to training which is necessary in preventing disputes in everyday life. They clearly demonstrated ability and volunteerism to de-escalate rumors, tensions and foster calmness through joint preventive consultations and dialogues.

Everyday peace infrastructures have clear potential to dampen communal violence when their activities are supported by community members, local governments and other stakeholders. The councils of the elders of Sidama and Guji Oromo, for example, helped to reduce violence as

evident in the Wondo Genet area because of their specific knowledge of the context as well as supports of CSOs and respective local governments in the area. The commitment of customary elders to restore cordial relation increased the confidence and support of residents in their capacity to prevent conflict and increase costs of violence for conflict entrepreneurs by identifying key trouble makers.

As it was evident in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts, the LPCs comprising diverse sections of the community were able to mobilize local support to victims of the violent conflicts. This mostly occurred in local setting where there is lack of viable supports from the government and other stakeholders. The members of LPCs here played a key role in dispersing tensions and rumors of insecurity by demonstrating sensitivity to every minor dispute and offering viable spaces for dialogue and mediation.

Generally, everyday peace infrastructures with direct contact to conflict contexts as well as with strong will to offer preventive services in the context of communal conflict threat and help to sustain durable peace process that reduce violence. As it was evident in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones, local peace actors use existing personal and social attachments to access conflict parties and/or draw up on resources rooted in communities in order to solve communal disputes and prevent tension before they escalate into wide spread violent inter-communal conflicts.

II. Localized Peace Accords and Conflict Resolution: As already elucidated in chapter two, local peace actors have an explicit aim of dispute resolution and promoting localized peace

accords and consensus through deploying non-violent methods. Local peace actors can provide a safe space to raise issue and facilitate dialogues or act as agents of localized peace accord themselves. In contrast to a view in peacebuilding literature that customary elders in contemporary period have weaker power in relations to a growing influences of youth and spread of light weapons at community levels, as this study found that they can play a key role in creating local consensus and peace arrangements as well as creating condition for future cooperation. As it has been evident in the Wondo Genet area, while series of preventive measures by the government including the referendum exacerbated communal violence in the area, consensus based customary codes together with supports by the government and other civil society organizations helped to reduce violence de-escalation in the area. Customary justice as widely recognized in the context of Africa entails the perpetrator's family or group to acknowledge responsibility of wrong done, repent and ask forgiveness and pay compensation (Cox, 2015). This in turn induces members of a community to adapt strategies to minimize violent conflict and prevent their members from involving in discriminate violence. This is because any violent in collective society increase costs for the entire community beyond individual disputants.

As the experience of the Hanqo-Baya villagers in the Hula District shows, localized peace accords by conflict affected communities serve as a cornerstone for a more better cooperation and integration of divided communities and to expand opportunities for inter-group consultation to sustain community peace. As investigated in chapter seven, the experience of Hanqo-Baya *Kebele* was replicated in neighboring peasant associations as well as in the frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring West Arsi Zones. In the latter conflict context the application of

localized peace accord under the agency of customary authorities, local governments and other stakeholders helped to transform age old traditional hostilities and cycles of revenge killing. It also has opened ways for mutual utilization of resources around their common frontiers such as farmlands, pastures, forests and water bodies (Mustefa, 2018). This localized consensus came against the background of complex communal conflicts triggered by ethno-nationalists' desire to create sharp borders in areas formerly used together. Besides, the presence of localized peace accord in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts paved the way for creation of the LPCs that are co-owned. The jointly owned LPCs in this frontier areas provided crucial venues and agency for regular dialogues and resolution of disputes emerging around administrative borders, thereby strengthening of mutual trust between local governments and communities.

III. Reconciliation: As Lederach (1997) remarks, reconciliation involves demands for not only dialogue and non-violent communal conflict resolution but also justice, truth and forgiveness and restoring cordial ties. As the experience of the councils of elders of Sidama and Oromo reveals, local peace actors can serve a genuine means to facilitate reconciliation in conflict affected communities. In this regard, customary elders have proven experience in local consensus making, building trust and reciprocity, restoring relationship or reconciling individuals or groups, and their peaceful integration into community. Customary justice and reconciliation promoted by the elders were perceived as cost effective, accessible and familiar to members of the communities. The restorative potential is also evident among the state initiated LPCs in the frontiers between Hula and Bore Districts where they carry out their tasks drawing on and collaborating with customary norms and actors.

IV. Peace Activism: As the comparative case analysis shows, local peace actors can provide critical avenues to express concerns of community members as it was evident in women led peace activism in Wondo Genet as well as in activities of the Popular Committee of Konso. This implies that local peace infrastructures might represent strong collective voices of marginalized actors at different levels of society in order to rectify inequalities and injustice in the structures of the societies and government. As this study found, peace activism is so vital to avert future violence in the settings that are characterized by power asymmetries and structurally rooted injustices. In existing peace infrastructure literature much of effectiveness of local peace actors in some conflict-affected countries are associated with their institutionalized status or in local peace infrastructures that have been formally organized and constrained by government or civil society laws (Hopp-Nishanka, 2016). Nonetheless, as the experience of activist oriented local peace infrastructures like the Popular Committee of Konso beg the question whether more formalized and institutionalized may lead to intended positive peace. As argued in this study, the potential of the Konso Popular Committee in the asymmetric and authoritarian setting lies in its ad hoc, semi-formal and advocacy status than operating in usual institutionalized platforms. As already mentioned above, in the asymmetric setting the state initiated LPCs and local government structure themselves have little role in flexibly addressing concerns of community members. Even though, as this author argues, it is also relevant to re-establish link with a repressive structure in order to bring transformation within the structure itself.

9.3 Limits of Local Peace Infrastructures

Everyday peace infrastructures such as customary authorities and LPCs did not contain communal conflict escalation in all settings. As the situations of inter-communal conflicts in the

Wondo Genet area show, the prior existence of strong cross-cultural and social ties and codes of conflict resolution between Sidama and Guji do not immune them from communal violence. It appears that breakdown in norms of reciprocal social, cultural and economic exchanges in ethnically mixed area would further complicate the conflict. Conversely, the prior experience of hostilities between communal groups do not hinder them from the creation of inter-communal ties through agencies of local peace actors as it was evident in the frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring West Arsi and Guji Zones. As the comparative case studies analysis shows, what can everyday peace infrastructures do with regard to communal conflict resolution and peace-building could be limited due to both context-related factors (such as use of violent strategies by citizens and government, asymmetric power relations between conflict parties) and organizational characteristics (such as proximity to the local government, political aspirations and lack of volunteerism) which usually undermine their capacity to contribute to communal conflict transformation.

I. Use of Violent Techniques by Citizens: As reviewed in chapter two, a lot has been written regarding the source of violent communal conflicts but this study confirms the logic that communal conflicts do not takes places in all areas of a society or country. As this study found, communal violence tends to be highly localized and not equally spread across all geographic spaces, even though different areas share similar characteristics such as ethnic and religious cleavage, economic competition and so on, as it was evident in various frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones. Nonetheless, as the evidences from the Wondo Genet area and *Abaroba Kebele* of the Konso District show, the uses of violent techniques by community members, for example, murdering key person or burning of hamlets in areas known for harmony

and reciprocity are likely to escalate conflict mobilization along ethnic or lineage, religious and political fault-lines. In such cordial areas the use of violent strategies, especially by the ethno-nationalists and political elites will trigger cycle of killings affecting their everyday life and weakening institutions of conflict resolution.

In contrast, a minor gesture of peace initiative by members of a community has a potential to engender vital peace dividends and reciprocity despite the previous experience of inter-communal hostilities as it was evident in the frontier areas between Hula and Bore Districts. Here, the creation of administrative borders did not compromise a reality of everyday life around the border. Besides, the villagers around the borders used conflict resolution institutions existing in the areas as well as those innovated from above to resolve conflicts and sustain peaceful relations in their everyday interactions. Furthermore, peace gesture by individual men and women in their frontiers had a key role in affecting the wider societies, regardless of memories of hostilities in the past.

II. Use of Coercive Actions by Government: As already mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the government has been relying on coercive approaches in response to series of violent communal conflicts associated with the quest for self-rule or formally recognized homeland in the SNNPRS, but its actions had undesired consequences for peace of communities. In this regard, the security forces often uses indiscriminate forces against civilians at time of inter-communal clashes escalation as they did after the 2008 referendum in Wondo Genet. Besides, at the early period of the inter-communal conflicts in the Wondo Genet area the government resorted to work with pro-government elders in the area. This in turn created a condition that

non-represented clans, lineages and elders resorted to revenge attacks than deploying non-violent strategies. The coercive response of state and its co-option of customary authorities also weakened potentials of the councils of elders to contribute to transformation of the conflict as the elders lost supports of respective community members.

Likewise, the criminalization of the Konso community quest by the SNNPRS and its resort to coercive approaches by deploying the security forces and making hasty arrests of the committee members contributed to the grievance and violent conflict in the area. The regional state in particular lacked genuine interest to engage key members of the community members who have relevant potential for dispute resolution. Rather, it was repeatedly seen using violent forces against the citizens to contain the protest movement in the area (Abate, n. d; Ethiopia Observer, 2016; Kursha, 2018). As already mentioned above, such actions of the regional government took place in the asymmetric conflict settings where there are no viable means to narrow the state-society crisis. Besides, the state initiated LPCs in the areas were merely used an instrument of the government for containing the quests of the community. As the members of the community suffered repressive actions in the hands of the government, they opted to support the protest movement isolating the local government structure. This explains the rise and capacity of localized peace activism to address structurally rooted problems than relying on already existing platforms that do not flexibly respond to the new local realities.

III. Power Asymmetry: As this study found, the presence or absence of power asymmetry between conflict parties matter with regard to the role of everyday peace infrastructures. Success experiences of customary elders and state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama

and adjacent Oromia zones are primarily because their activities are situated in unpeaceful inter-communal relations in the symmetric setting. The presence of a joint or hybrid peace relationships together with external supports in these areas helped them to contribute to communal conflict transformation. By contrast, the asymmetric conflict settings such as the marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet district and disputes between the Konso community and SNNPRS, local peace infrastructures, namely, the councils of elders and state initiated LPCs had a little role in reducing the conflict. The involvement of customary elders in the marriage appears to have reinforced the existing social structures which deprive women and artisans and exclude their voices and efforts in communal conflict resolution. Likewise, the presence of government representatives in the LPCs in the asymmetric settings has often exposed the committees to political manipulation, for example, in gathering intelligence. As already analyzed above, in the asymmetric conflict settings actors who monopolize power have been unwilling to resolve structurally rooted conflicts in a more transformative ways.

IV. Organizational Characteristics: As argued in chapter three, the prevailing political practices in the country in general and SNNPRS in particular are based on ethnic or lineage loyalty. This implies that most individuals tend to pursue personal gains in guise of promoting collective agenda. It appears that such political aspirations and their peace-building status in at times do not co-exist. As already stated in chapter two, transformative peace-building agenda aims to achieve ‘positive peace’ which implies removing direct violence as well as structurally and culturally rooted discriminations and injustices. In situations when members of everyday peace infrastructures pursue a motive that contradict with their organizational characteristics, they have limited impacts in communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Cox, 2015). This

was evident even among peace activists in the study areas where some members abandoned their original aspirations for inclusive agenda in favor of exclusive self-interests. As already analyzed above, despite their positive impacts in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones, there were also reports of politicization of peace-building status for specific political aspirations beyond their peace structure goals. This problem along with the lack of volunteerism had deteriorated capacities of some local peace actors not to act as genuine peace agents. Besides, needless proximity of the members of LPCs with local government structures in the asymmetric conflict context risked their legitimacy in the eye of majority of people. In short, the organizational characteristics such as political aspirations, their closeness to the government structures, lack of inclusivity, skills and weak volunteerism and limited access to external supports constrain capacities of local peace actors in communal conflict transformation.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

Ethiopia like many other countries in Africa has been vulnerable to violent communal conflicts, even though practically little has been achieved in their transformation. Do local peace infrastructures contribute to communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding? How can their possible limitations be explained? It is argued in this research that various local peace infrastructures delivered essential contributions to communal conflict transformation while at the same time demonstrating a potential for further impact if some of their limits were addressed. Given supports by the government and other external actors, local peace infrastructures would have greater potentials to keep communal violence down, resolve disputes, promote reconciliation as well as empower local actors to be agent of change in the wider society.

As the findings of this study show, in the symmetric conflict contexts where local peace infrastructures such as the state initiated LPCs and customary authorities are co-owned by conflict parties, they help to reduce tension and violence, and enhance dialogue, mediation and reconciliation across dividing socio-spatial boundaries. By contrast, in the asymmetric conflict contexts critical engagements of local actors offered a better alternative to address concerns of communities. Accordingly, the contribution of local peace infrastructures is dependent upon some key conditions related to conflict contexts and their organizational characteristics. Drawing from the empirical evidences, the study found that the use of violent techniques, asymmetric power relations between conflict parties and organizational characteristics of the infrastructures appear to have highly affecting their peace potentials. The use of coercive forces particularly by the government further exacerbates communal conflicts and limits the potentials of local peace

actors. Likewise, structurally rooted conflicts constrain the potentials of local peace actors. Undoubtedly, the use of hybrid or collaborative peace platforms in the asymmetric conflict settings that are characterized by structurally rooted problems and injustice appears worthless. Hence, the current chapter concisely summarizes the key empirical findings and concludes the argument, especially by revisiting their theoretical and practical repercussions.

10.1 Summary of the Key Empirical Findings

As demonstrated in this research, Ethiopia has been vulnerable to violent communal conflicts caused, especially by redrawing of administrative units along ethnic identity, the quests for self-rule, competition over scarce collectively used resources, disputation over borders, as well as interest-driven political struggles. The responses of the government to those communal conflicts have mainly been rooted in military-security approaches. This implies that its responses are reactive, top-down and aim more at de-escalating violence than solving them. Additionally, the government's intervention in containing violent communal conflicts is contingent up on issues of the conflicts. Its interventions initiated only after conflicts turned violence. Even though, its military-security oriented measures aims to limit further escalation. Such measures often do not work, are not enough and fail to effectively address local conflict dynamics and in many cases may even deepen and worsen conflicts and directly fuel violence. Furthermore, formal institutions of conflict management such as the House of Federation, the Council of Nationalities, and regular courts at various levels of government that are normally expected to address disputed issues have been suffering from the prevailing political practices as well as from limited capacities and widespread perceptions of favoritism.

Against the aforementioned empirical background, the author set out to examine the potentials and possible limits of everyday peace infrastructures initiated by both the government and non-state actors. In particular, this study was initiated with a motivation to bridge the gap between the constructive potential of local peace infrastructure and risk of their manipulation by those who are monopolizing power. Consequently, the familiar local peace infrastructures, namely, the state initiated LPCs and councils of the elders as well as their respective rival or critical local peace infrastructures were selected and analyzed.

Drawing from the empirical evidences, the study found that the local peace infrastructures, namely, the councils of the elders and state initiated LPCs in the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones have been serving as essential platforms for negotiating informal accords, communal conflict prevention, mediation and reconciliation. The councils of the elders, especially, in the Wondo Genet areas have been helping to restore inter-community relations which were damaged as result of conflicts over ethnic identity and borders. The elders helped to contain conflict escalation and provided inclusive peace platform for conflict negotiation, conflict resolution and justice by promoting reconciliation, regardless of the competition by local political leadership and ethno-nationalist elites for exclusive control of material resources in the area. Likewise, the establishment of locally owned peace committees in traditionally hostile frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring Guji and West Arsi Zones has been so helpful in containing violence and tension and transforming long existing hostilities in their horizontal relations. Following general guidelines and codes of conduct given by the government, the state initiated LPCs like the one in the Hanqo-Baya village helped to prevent threat, keep inclusive

dialogue and to build inter-community relations. Both everyday peace infrastructures are serving a long term platform to address communal conflicts.

Nonetheless, the familiar local peace actors, namely, customary elders and state-initiated LPCs offer a limited potential to address communal conflicts arising in the asymmetric conflict contexts which have structurally rooted injustices. This is because in such asymmetric conflict contexts both state-initiated LPCs and already existing customary elders suffer from the prevailing political practices and patronage, and their activities have been increasingly aligned with the interests of the dominant actors who obstruct their transformative potentials. Besides, in the asymmetric conflict contexts both state initiated LPCs and customary elders lack essential representation and inclusion of primary conflict actors. Hence, the asymmetric conflict contexts saw evolvement of rival or critical local peace infrastructures.

As the empirical evidences show, peace activism by women in the Wondo Genet area and Popular Committee of Konso offered alternative spaces in the absence of reliable means to address concerns of members of their communities. Women led peace activism in the Wondo Genet District emerged in response to their exclusion in customary systems of conflict resolution that suffer from limited capability in order to transform structurally rooted discriminations against members of minority including women. In particular, women led peace activism sought to ensure not only gender equality but also recognition for their role in communal conflict resolution. Even if women led peace activism still suffers from lots of challenges, many interviewees highlight significance of their activism and their unique contribution to de-escalation of communal conflict, reconciliation and change in the wider society. Their efforts to

address concerns and needs of women and members of minority groups cannot be ignored anymore in any relevant communal peace processes. Likewise, the Popular Committee of Konso emerged in the asymmetric conflict contexts as a local agent representing the concerns of their community. In particular, the popular committee served as a platform to promote political aspiration of their community to self-rule or to establish zonally constituted homeland. The Popular Committee of Konso steered relatively effective peace activism that eventually challenged the authoritarian approach by the ruling party that privileges its political survival at the expense of needs and interests of various ethnic communities that it claims to represent. Hence, the popular committee was able to effectively mobilize the community to deal with disputes in their vertical relations, regardless of series of repressive measures and obstruction by the regional government.

Across all cases the issue of power relations between the conflict parties appears to be a key factor. This factor is seldom appreciated in existing literature on peace infrastructure that focuses on institutionalization of the infrastructures at the expense of their political legitimacy. As empirical evidences of this study show, effective prevention and resolution of conflict, however, rarely depends on organizational design of peace infrastructures. This is because any conflict always involves two parties and creation of durable peace processes requires that the peace processes are to be conducted in equal and just manner. In the other words, communal peace process needs to offer the opportunity for co-ownership between the primary conflict actors. As empirical evidences suggest, local peace infrastructures that are effectively designed offer a greater potential to sustainably transform violent communal conflicts but they are also at risk of being manipulated and face difficulty when they lack indispensable political legitimacy as a

result of the asymmetric power relations between the primary conflict actors. This implies that in the presence of structurally rooted conflict a focus on the organizational design shift in favor of a need to create balanced problem-solving relations between the conflict parties as well as to replace their coercive and negative approaches. This explains relative effectiveness of the state initiated LPCs and councils of the elders in the symmetric conflict contexts in frontier areas between Sidama and neighboring Oromia zones. It also explains critical engagement of women in Wondo Genet as well as the members of Konso in the asymmetric conflict contexts.

As empirical evidences on experiences of the councils of the elders and state initiated LPCs from the frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zones suggest, effective design of local peace infrastructure offer a greater potential to sustainably transform violent inter-communal conflicts. Here, inter-communal conflicts and hostilities took place between conflict parties who more or less possess equivalent power to inflict damages up on each other. Moreover, the dividing socio-spatial lines between them though unclear were legally recognized. As a result co-owned local peace infrastructures were able to coordinate preventive actions, dispute resolution and promotion of reconciliation in their frontier areas. As already mentioned in chapters five and seven, such peace efforts took place regardless of the pressure from ethno-nationalists to draw ethnic-based administrative borders. The local peace infrastructures in the frontier areas are situated within the existing social networks and accepted norms and codes of communal conflict regulation. Both the councils of the elders and LPCs draw resources from the communities that enable them to prevent conflicts, resolve disputes and promote reconciliation including compensation to victims. Additionally, local peace actors, especially the state initiated LPCs are comprised of diverse sections of community as well as respective local governments that

enhance their legitimacy and access to resources. In short, in the symmetric frontier areas between Sidama and adjacent Oromia zone every peace infrastructures are co-owned across their socio-spatial borders and serves as an appropriate mechanism to deal with inter-communal conflicts using ‘soft’ approaches such as dialogues, facilitation and negotiation than coercive and arbitrary approaches that proved counter-productive in the area.

By contrast, in the asymmetric conflict contexts the key issue being contested was dominant actors who block transformative potentials of local peace actors. As empirical evidences shows, it required critical engagements of powerful actors to transform the structure, issues and actors that reinforced exclusion and marginalization subaltern actors. Change in the structure of conflict contexts such as the marriage dispute in the Wondo Genet District and dispute between the Konso ethnic community and the SNNPRS cannot be brought alone through everyday peace infrastructures established by the government or customary elders. For example, discriminations against women and members of minority group in the area are rooted in social structure and their quest for equality and justice as well as their contribution to communal peace has been not recognized in the wider society. Likewise, the grievance of Konso ethnic community was associated with the regional government’s neglect toward their concerns and needs as it demoted self-rule status of the community without their consent. Besides, the regional government showed clear biases against the representatives of the community and eventually became a party to the conflict. Hence, change in the conflict structure appeared a prime condition for durable peace in the area which in turn realized after the change in political leadership in the ruling party in April 2018.

What the aforementioned structurally rooted types of conflicts illustrate is that state and traditional leaders while being a party to the conflicts cannot turn into enabling and empowering actors. As Hopp-Nishanka (2016) puts, it requires ways to transform those actors who monopolize power, especially by using change agents within structures that reinforce exclusion and injustices. As empirical evidences reveals, critical local actors unambiguously embraced both social values and state institutions in order challenge the status quo, even though biases of the dominant actors still persist in the respective areas. In this regard, their respective critical organizational capacity enabled them to mobilize collective supports and put pressures upon those who monopolize power. As the informants in both sites confirmed, localized peace activism in the asymmetric conflict settings contributed to structure transformation by creating spaces for recognition of their concerns.

In nutshell, as the findings from the comparative case studies indicate, the potentials of everyday peace infrastructures to transform communal conflicts depend on both context-related factors and infrastructure or organizational characteristics. Significant context-related factors such as the use of violent techniques by community members and government undermine capability of local peace actors. Violence always weakens capacities for peace even in contexts known for strong culture of peace. For example, the use of violent attacks, especially by killing innocent lives and burning hamlets in areas known for cordial relations like the one in the Wondo Genet area and Abaroba villages of Konso could engender rapid disintegration of the existing social capital and reinforce revenge attacks that would make it challenging to local peace actors to de-escalate violence and to promote dialogues. It would be very difficult to customary authorities to contain violence when it grew in its scope covering wider areas. Likewise, the use of coercive

instruments and manipulation by government can fragment peace efforts of local actors. Another context related key condition that could limit the potential of every peace infrastructure is structurally rooted conflicts that emerge in the asymmetric conflict settings. As already argued, the state and traditional leaders, while being a party to the structurally rooted conflicts, cannot turn into enabling and empowering actors to build sustainable peace. The potential of local peace infrastructures could also be limited due to organizational characteristics; for example, as the empirical evidences shows, unnecessary proximity of the members of LPCs to the government in the asymmetric conflict contexts risked their local legitimacy. Likewise, altering peace-building role into political aspirations as well as the lack of volunteerism has deteriorated capacities of some local peace actors not to act as genuine peace agents.

10.2 Conclusions

As demonstrated in this research, every community has some inbuilt capacities that help them to regulate violent communal conflicts. However, the existing capacities may not help them to dampen violence if they are not effectively mobilized. Conversely, the prior existence of hostilities between communal groups does not hinder them from making use of inbuilt capacities as well as the innovation from above to enhance inter-communal relations.

As shown in this study, everyday peace infrastructures based on principles of non-violence and peace activism clearly played key and essential role in communal peace processes and contribute significantly to communal conflict transformation. They specifically made use of resources in socio-cultural milieu and general guides and norms provided by the state. Their potentials could have been greater provided that they were not limited by the prevailing political practices,

structurally rooted constraints, severity of violence, as well as their organizational characteristics. As argued in this study, everyday peace infrastructures that are autonomous and co-owned by primary conflict actors could have increased their transformative contribution. At the same time, one needs to be cautioned that relying on the local peace infrastructure alone could not alter the overall communal conflict dynamics. They, however, could serve as part of the wider national peace infrastructure or architecture in order to enhance their peace potentials and reduce possible limits.

Overall, it appears clear from the findings of the study that cooperation and collaboration between state and non-state local peace actors is essential to regulate violent communal conflicts that are prevalent in southern Ethiopia. However, everyday peace infrastructures could not contribute to their full potentials when their transformative processes are obstructed or manipulated by those who monopolize power. In particular, they cannot enforce peace among communal groups that rely on the use of violence to achieve their aspirations. Even though, marginalized local actors could rely on peace activism to deal with structurally rooted conflicts, especially those that are motivated by political and cultural interests.

10.3 A Peace Infrastructure Approach Revisited

As clarified in chapter two, this study developed theoretical and conceptual frameworks to facilitate the analysis of empirical evidences on the potential and possible limits of everyday peace infrastructures. As drawn from empirical evidences, peace infrastructure can be viewed comprising diverse or hybrid peace platform operating at different levels of the society to ensure peace in conflict affected areas. They can operate as part of customary institutions or as part of

innovation from above, or evolve as a critical voice in reaction to failure in already existing general or formal institutions as well as in everyday customary and state initiated LPCs. As the findings of this study suggest, everyday peace infrastructure in multiethnic communities are mostly affiliated with only one of conflict parties, even if they usually develop trust during transformative peace process. Their organizational design and functions may also shift depending on conflict situations. While local peace infrastructures with formal mandate operated in less institutionalized platform relying on customary values, informally evolved local peace infrastructures operated in more institutionalized platform in collaboration with local government structures and civil society organizations. While the existing literature on peace infrastructure point to the relevance of using them as an interim mechanism (Odendaal, 2010 & 2012), this study shows that they operated as alternative, permanent as well as ad hoc mechanism to enhance peace of communities. Even if local peace actors might claim to carryout multiple tasks, in reality, some actors focus on mediation and reconciliation, others shine on conflict prevention and facilitating dialogue and still others on peace activism.

In line with the existing view in literature (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012 & 2016) everyday peace infrastructures have a potential to be change agent for conflict transformation. They can improve inter-communal relations and to build trust and contribute to decrease power asymmetry which was crucial to facilitate negotiation and create just and durable peace. However, their potentials were limited by structural constraints in conflict contexts such as power imbalance between conflict parties, and severity of violence. Violent conflicts in particular always hinder inter-communal relations and enhance mistrust between conflict parties. Possible limits of local peace actors could be also related to their organizational characteristics such as relations with local

government structures, political aspirations, inclusivity, conflict resolution skills and access to external resources. Even though, effectively organized peace infrastructures in the symmetric conflict settings clearly help to ensure co-ownership and cooperation which are significant to improve trust and build durable peace.

As the author argues, both conflicts context-related factors and organizational characteristics determine the potential of local peace infrastructure. Both factors need to be combined in order to realistically explore and understand their potential and possible limits. The use of comparative case studies strategy will help to identify their constructive potential and risk of being manipulated by those who monopolize power. In nutshell, using already existing customary peace infrastructures as well as those established by state and civil society actors are essential to increase capacity of community to prevent conflicts. Nonetheless, mere focus on institutionalization of peace infrastructures at the expense of marginalized voices or subaltern actors does not help to build sustainable peace. It is when such marginalized voice are heard and respected that organizational/institutional structures could play a role to empower local actors to prevent communal violence and save lives.

10.4 Practical Repercussions

As demonstrated in this research, for over two decades a notable increase of communal violence was recorded between and within various ethnic communities in southern Ethiopia. Some of these violence related in part to traditional patterns of rivalry and hostilities while others were quite new, often emerged between communal groups that had kept cordial relations. Nonetheless, the fact many of low level communal conflicts in southern Ethiopia has not expanded into a wide

spread communal violence is related to the presence of strong bridging social ties and grassroots associations that encourage peoples to respect one another and to build harmonious relations. In particular, effective use of customary institutions of conflict resolution and local peace infrastructures which were introduced by the government and civil society actors helped various communities to be resilient and ensure conflict prevention as well as mediation and reconciliation after violent conflicts.

The findings from this study, nonetheless, imply that using similar peace infrastructure template for all cases of conflicts face possible limits. As already mentioned above, relying on the familiar customary authorities and state-initiated LPCs could do little in conflict contexts which are characterized by the presence of extreme power difference between conflict parties, especially, when a conflict involves traditionally marginalized groups such as women and members of minority group. Even in the symmetric conflict contexts, local peace infrastructures have to be situated in capabilities rooted in the society which however require a critical engagement. Besides, adequate time and resources has to be given in order to ensure innovation from above to be locally owned. This is because what may work well in one conflict setting may not be able to produce similar and durable outcomes if they are hastily replicated in other conflict settings. Even though, one should not expect them to function effectively in conflict contexts which are characterized by coercive tactics and structural constraints as well as without necessary qualities of effective local peace infrastructures.

Overall, the establishment of local peace infrastructures requires creativity at the individual, inter-group and organizational levels that support conflict transformation. In the situations of

conflict, primary conflict parties and stakeholders need to possess required knowledge, perception, skills and attitudes for conflict resolution and peace-building, even although these resources may not benefit them without having a legitimate joint or hybrid problem-solving relationship. Conversely, without having organizational capacity, the joint problem-solving relationship and relevant perceptions, skills and attitudes themselves do not help to sustain peace for a long period of time.

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Appendix 1: Unaddressed Conflict in the SNNPRS

This profile includes disputes and conflict related to ethnic identity of a group and/or borders between regions or zones/special woreda. It indicate the status of the region before 2017/2018 (unrelated to recent politically motivated protests and violence in the region/the country)

no	Zone/Special Wereda	Wereda	Claim raised by	Claims/issue	Status
a. Ethnic identity related issues					
1	Gamo Zone	Kucha	Kucha people	Recognition for their ethnic identity	Violent, unaddressed
2	Gamo Zone	Chencha	Dorze people	Recognition for ethnic identity	Unaddressed
3	Former Segen Area Peoples Zone	Burji	Members of Kore ethnic group in frontier area	Rights to use their language in school	Violent, Partially addressed
4	Gurage	Maraqo	Kontoma	Right to ethnic identity	Unaddressed
5	Hadiya	Misrak Badowacho	Members of Halaba ethnic groups in three <i>kebeles</i> in the Wereda	Quest to be administered in Halaba Especial <i>Wereda</i>	Unaddressed
6	Hadiya	Soro	Danta community	Quest for recognition of their ethnic identity	unaddressed
7	Kembeta Tambaro	Danboya	Members of Halaba in two <i>Kebeles</i> in Danboya	To be included in Halaba	Unaddressed
8	Sheka	Yeki	Members of Sheko in Yeki Wereda	Quest to be included in Godere wereda in Majag zone, of Gambella Regional state	Serious of violence, referendum conducted by the HoF, but did not solve it and remain unaddressed
9	Kafa	Chena	Bench ethnic members in Bala Shasha <i>Kebele</i>	To be included in Bencha-Maji zone (Sheybench wereda)	Partially addressed
10	Former Segen	Ale	Members of Konso	Quest to be	Violent, unaddressed

	Area Peoples zone		in three lowland <i>kebeles</i> near woyto river	included in Konso via of referendum	
11	Gofa	Uba	Member of Gezo	Recognition of their identity	Unaddressed
12	Gofa	Malo	Members of ethnic Basketo in four <i>kebeles</i>	Want to included in Basketo special <i>Wereda</i>	Violent, unaddressed
B. Disputes with actual and/or potential violence between border/frontier area between the SNNP region and its neighboring regional states					
1	Sidama Zone versus West Arsi Zone	In frontier between Wondo Genet and Wondo <i>Wereda</i>	Kela 01, Kucho, Gike Gina versus Intaue; Gike Atoye, Gotu Onoma (this <i>kebeles</i> are ethnically mixed	Referendum was held in the area via the HoF, with no demarcation on the area; also ownership of social infrastructures, government institutions and communal lands in the frontier emerged heatedly disputed	Violent, unaddressed; with high potential to be violent
2	Sidama Zone versus West Arsi Zone	In frontier between Boricha wereda versus Siraro wereda	In Belela and surrounding <i>kebeles</i> namely Yirba Gangeso: Torin Hansawe	Previously peasant associated inhabited by a pocket of Guji Oromo decided to be under Siraro; but the frontier area such as Belela town is inhabited by diverse ethnic groups mainly by the Sidama, Guji and the Wolayta. There is claim over infrastructure in the frontier	Violent, Unaddressed; with a recent violent encounter
3	Sidama Zone versus Guji Zone	Bona Zuria woreda versus Bore <i>Wereda</i>		Claim over forest and boundary	Unaddressed
4	Sidama Zone	Hula/Chirone	Dega Ganjure,	Claim over farm	Partially addressed

	versus Guji zone	<i>Wereda</i> versus Bore <i>Wereda</i>	Chirone versus Gutu Reji	lands in frontier area	
5	Sidama Zone versus Guji	Dara <i>Wereda</i> versus Bore <i>Wereda</i>		Claim over boundary	Unaddressed
6	Sidama Zone versus West Arsi Zone	Melga <i>Wereda</i> versus Kofele	Korekenana Abiyujiru; Wage Abiyu, Woshermina Uta	Claim over farm land; quest to be included in other region	unaddressed
7	Sidama Zone versus West Arsi Zone	Wondo Genet versus Shashmene <i>Wereda</i>	Sheshana Kakale	Claim over forest in their frontier	Violent, Unaddressed
8	Gedeo Zone versus West Guji Zone	Dilla Zuria versus Abaya wereda	Chichu: Ado Miqe <i>Kebeles</i>	Claim over boundary	Violent, Unaddressed
9	Konso versus Borena zone	Teltele	Wata Wonto <i>Kebele</i>	Farmers versus pastoralist conflict in frontier area	Violent, Seasonal and occurs mainly within Teltele district, partially addressed
10	Halaba versus West Arsi Zones	Halaba versus Shalla woreda	Mereda Kobo, Motu Bishu; Kobo Chobare; Uduna Chano	Claim over forest and boundary	Unaddressed
11	Halaba versus West Arsi Zones	Halaba versus Jido Kombolcha; Adami Tulu	Reji	Dispute over boundary	Unaddressed
12	Amaro versus West Guji	Amaro versus Gelana <i>Wereda</i>	Hanichito: Tobe kebeles	Disputes over lands in frontiers	Violent, Unaddressed
13	Sheka versus Illuababora Zones	Yeki versus Selo Nono <i>Wereda</i>	Uwa: Asendabo	Claim over boundary and lands around their frontier	Unaddressed
14	Bench Maji versus Gambela (Anwa zone)	Bero: Dima	Garo <i>Kebele</i>	Claim over boundary: Anwa giving Bero lands to investors	Violent, Unaddressed
15	Yemi versus Jimma zone	Yemi versus Sokuru <i>Wereda</i>	Deri Tegu: Orato Shapiyo	Claim over communal lands	Violent, Partially addressed
16	Konta versus Jimma Zone	Konta versus Dedo <i>Wereda</i>	Kirara: Wala	Claim over boundary	Partially addressed
17	Gurage versus Jimma Zones	Abesheg: Sekuru		Boundary dispute	Unaddressed
18	Hawassa city administration versus Shashmene <i>Wereda</i>	Hawassa versus Bishan Guracha town		Over use of Hawassa Lake	Violent, Partially addressed
19	Hadiya Zone versus West	Misrak Badawacho:	Dongoro Bonkaya;	Claim over <i>kebeles</i>	Partially addressed

	Arsi Zone	Siraro	Wiramo; Bonkoya: Tilo Kubidimitu; Sherqo Gefersa; Boye Awarsaka		
20	Silte Zone versus Adami Tulu	Lanfaro: Gido Kombolicha		Dispute over collectively used pasture in frontier	Unaddressed
21	Debub Omo Zone versus Borena Zone	Hammer/Herbore: Teltle <i>Wereda</i>		Claim over pasture lands	Unaddressed
22	Gamo Zone versus West Guji Zone	Arbaminch Zuria: Gelana Abaya		Issues over settlement of the Guji in the park area	Unaddressed
23	Kefa Zone versus Illuababora Zone	Saylem <i>Wereda</i> versus Dedo <i>Wereda</i>	Senkora <i>Kebele</i> : Hongo Senkele	Claim over forest lands	Unaddressed
C. Disputes on zonal/special woreda boundary/frontier area within the SNNPR (with actual and/or potential to be violent)					
1	Gurage Zone: Silte Zone	Gumero <i>Wereda</i> : Wuriro <i>Wereda</i>	Wusho: Wusho <i>kebeles</i>	Claims over Pasture and forest lands	Partially addressed
2	Gurage Zone: Silte Zone	Meskan <i>Wereda</i> : Alichu Wuriro	Ageta: Mikaelo <i>kebeles</i>	Claim over forest lands	Unaddressed
3	Gurage Zone: Silte Zones	Gumer <i>Wereda</i> : Sankura <i>Wereda</i>	Absuja <i>Kebele</i> : Demrir	Claim over boundary and pasture	Unaddressed
4	Hadiya Zone: Silte Zone	Anamole: Hulbareg <i>Wereda</i>	Shasha Gimb: Ambercho Gimbeba <i>Kebeles</i>	Claim over boundary and communal lands	Partially addressed
5	Gofa versus Debub Omo Zones	Melokoza: Selamago	Wobela: Toga: Baema: Gegnchure: Utsa: Shumeta: Woydedukebena: Goyo	Claim over lands in frontiers	Partially addressed
6	Sidama Zone: Wolayta Zone	Lokaabaya: Abaya <i>Wereda</i>	Abaya Zuria: Gelana Abaya <i>Kebele</i>	Claim over boundary	Violent, Unaddressed
7	Silte versus Halaba	Sankura: Halaba	Berche Kulifo: Kulifo <i>Kebele</i>	Claim over communal lands in their frontiers	Unaddressed
8	Sheka Zone: Kefa Zone	Yeki woreda: Bitu <i>Wereda</i>	Alabo: Tuga <i>Kebeles</i>	Claim over forest lands and investment activities within	Unaddressed

				forest	
9	Sheka Zone: Kefa Zone	Masha: Gesha	Anderecha: <i>Yopho Kebele</i>	Dispute over boundary	Unaddressed
10	Gamo Zone: Wolayta Zone	Mirab Abaya: Humbo woreda		Claim over land around border	Unaddressed
11	Gamo Zone: Ale	Kemba <i>Wereda</i> : Ale	<i>Tsemaha Kebele</i>	Claim over land and killing	Unaddressed
12	Bench Maji Zone: Kefa Zone	Shey Bench <i>Wereda</i> : Chena <i>Wereda</i>		Claim over forest in frontier	Unaddressed
13	Konso: Dirashe	Kusume <i>Kebele</i>		Claim over border and Kusume people	Violent, Unaddressed
14	Konso: Dirashe: Amaro		Around Lake Chamo	Claim over forests (Abulo & Alfacho) and “open” lands in their frontiers	Violent, Partially addressed
15	Konso: Burji		Around segen river	Claim over farming lands	Violent, Partially addressed
16	Konso: Debub Omo Zones	BenaTsemai	Around Woyto River	Claim over farming lands	Unaddressed

Glossary of Local Terms

Adda	custom or tradition in Oromo
Abagada	the leader in Oromo Gada system
Angamana	purity through ritual in Sidama traditional system
Awraja	sub-province in Amharic
Chambalala	feasts and rituals during fichche celebrations in Sidama
chat	stimulant plant
Cimeessa	leading member of council of elders in Sidama
Dergue	committee in Amharic
Etanta	framers in Konso
Fichche	New Year celebration of the Sidama
Gabbar	tribute payer in Amharic
Gada	the generational class and governance system of the Oromo people

Gadana	leader of the generational class system in Sidama
Gondoro/Ficha	reconciliation rituals after bloodshed among Sidama, Oromo and Gedeo
Gudumale Ceemesa	Sidama high-level conflict resolution institution
Halaale	principle of ultimate truth and justice in the Sidama language
Irrecha	New Year celebration of the Oromo
Jarsumma	Oromo conflict resolution means among the Arsi
Kebele	lowest/grassroots administrative unit in Amharic
Kalla	one of the prominent clan/leader in Konso
Kanta	sub villages in Konso
Luwa	Generational Class system in Sidama
Moote	clan leader in Sidama
Mora	gathering place for Konso men
Nagga	peace in Oromo
Poqalla Tuma	Konso ritual, clan or spiritual leader
Qallu	senior men of lineages with religious duties among the Oromo
Qaricho	leader of women's institution and gatherings in Sidama
Qege	sanction that forbid interaction in Sidama
Seera	law in Oromo
Seera	sanction, ostracism and punishment in Sidama
Songo	elders' council in Sidama
Sinqee	the peace sticks of women among Arsi and Guji Oromo
Siqqo	the peace sticks among the Sidama
Seema	traditional cloth among Sidama
Wereda	lower level of government administrative unit below zone
Xawda	craftsmen in Konso
Xela	the warrior group of Konso
Yaka	women council in Sidama