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Youth in Movement: An Ethnographic Study of Oromo Youth Political Movement
The case of Burayu Town , Oromia National Region (Ethiopia)

By
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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I, Fekadu Bizuneh , hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Youth in Movement: An Ethnographic Study of Oromo Youth Political Movement The case of Burayu Town ,Oromia National Region Ethiopia)”is the fruit of my original research work. I made every effort to clearly indicate when I used the contribution of others. Besides, the work has not been previously submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining any degree other than this one.

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Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application of another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Acronyms/ Abbreviations

AACA	Addis Ababa City Administration
AAIMP	Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan
ADP	Amhara Democratic Party
AESM	All Ethiopians Socialist Movement
AMN	Amhara Media Network
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
ESAT	Ethiopia Satellite Agency
EHRP	Ethiopian Human Rights Project
ENYP	Ethiopian National Youth Policy
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
ESM	The Ethiopian students' movement
ESUE	Ethiopian students Union in Europe
ESUNA	Ethiopian Students Union in North America
EPLF	Eritrea People Liberation Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGDS	Focus Group Discussions
GCAO	Government Communication Affairs Office
GHO	Gadise Ghedza Oromo
HRLHA	The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa
HRLHA	Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa
HRW	Human Rights Watch

KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONRS	Oromia National Regional State
ODP	Oromo Democratic Party
OFC	Oromo Federalist Congress
OPDO	Oromo People Democratic Organization
OBN	Oromia Broadcasting Network
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
TPLF	Tigray People Liberation Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USUAA	University Students Union of Addis Ababa
WHO	World Health Organization

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Abstract

This research explores the political engagement of Oromo youth by taking the case of Burayu Town, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia, with a specific focus on historical activism, movement trajectories, challenges faced, and mobilization strategies of youth political movements. The study underscores the indispensable role of social media in political participation and the profound impact of political songs deeply entrenched in Oromo culture, serving as catalysts for mobilization, unity, and the expression of collective aspirations. Moreover, it illuminates the transformative influence of digital culture and cultural expressions in shaping contemporary social movements. Employing qualitative data collection methods such as key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, casual conversations, and focus group discussions, this research finding uncovers that the Oromo youth political movement is driven by concerns such as youth unemployment, the repercussions of urbanization, and marginalization. The finding of this study also highlights the power of social media platforms and protest songs in mobilizing youth politically during the period spanning from 2014 to 2018. Furthermore, the research meticulously traces the evolution and fragmentation of organizational structures within Oromo youth groups, offering insights into the prevailing political landscape in Burayu Town. It underscores the necessity for policy formulations that integrate youth perspectives, recognizing the pivotal role of youth engagement in political processes for societal advancement and the formulation of effective policies.

Chapter One: Background of the study

1.1 Introduction

My journey into researching youth political engagement began with a series of impactful events that drew me to this dynamic field. As an urban anthropology lecturer, my exposure to various urban challenges—such as youth unemployment, the youth bulge, and related issues—sparked my fascination with critically examining the role of youth in urban contexts. Among the many dimensions of this exploration, youth subcultures and lifestyles emerged as particularly compelling areas of study.

The study of youth is deeply intertwined with societal perceptions and assumptions. Historically, young people have often been characterized as reckless, self-centered, and irresponsible. From marginalized perspectives, they are sometimes viewed as morally inept due to their perceived immaturity (Bucholtz, 2002). They have also been depicted as unpredictable, lacking self-control, and prone to disobeying norms (Bucholtz, 2002; Tatek Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016). However, in today's world, with a rapidly growing youth population, young people are increasingly asserting their voices and driving significant societal change. Unlike the global student movements of the 1960s, contemporary youth movements leverage modern technology to transcend national boundaries and advocate for meaningful causes (Juan Carlos, 1995).

Modern technology, particularly social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, has revolutionized how young people engage with social and political issues. These tools enable the creation of virtual communities, facilitate real-time information exchange, and foster global collaboration. Social media has democratized discourse, empowering youth to tackle complex societal challenges and amplify their voices. Platforms such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook have become central to youth involvement in social, religious, and political movements (Buckingham, 2007; Palencia, 2005). Mobile communication further enhances engagement by allowing young people to connect beyond traditional media, fostering individual expression and political participation (Castells, 2007).

Today's youth embody a unique blend of local, national, and global perspectives while maintaining strong community ties. They actively share political content on diverse platforms, acting as "social politics curators" who engage in campaigning and citizen journalism (Thorson, 2014). Social media also provides disenfranchised youth with opportunities to connect across boundaries, advocate for change, and challenge societal norms (Boyd, 2014). This activism highlights the role of young people as change agents whose efforts often yield significant societal benefits (Boyd, 2014).

In Africa, youth play critical roles in socio-political spheres, particularly in informal settings such as shanty settlements, migratory routes, and conflict zones (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005). The Arab Spring of 2011 vividly demonstrated the transformative power of youth mobilization, reshaping political landscapes across North Africa and beyond (Sadiki, 2015). Inspired by these movements, I focused my research on the political mobilization of Oromo youth in Ethiopia, using Burayu Town in the Oromia National Regional State as a case study.

In Oromia, political and social transformations have profoundly impacted young people, leading to increased mobilization. Events like the Oromo Ireechaa Festival serve as critical platforms where Oromo youth advocate for their political rights, favoring grassroots movements over traditional political institutions. Unlike older generations, these youth prefer social movements as vehicles for their voices.

My anthropological research investigates youth political engagement in Ethiopia, with a specific focus on Burayu Town. Situated in the Oromia Special Zone surrounding Addis Ababa—recently restructured and named Shagar City—Burayu reflects broader regional and national trends. This study highlights the pivotal role of youth in driving political change and shaping the socio-political fabric of the region. By examining youth mobilization in Burayu, the research sheds light on how young people navigate and influence Ethiopia's evolving political landscape

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Youth play a critical role in shaping societal change, and their contributions are often viewed through two contrasting perspectives. The first perspective positions youth as vulnerable and susceptible to harm, suggesting that their behavior is shaped by their upbringing, specific circumstances, or broader social factors (McIntyre et al., 2002; Treiber, 2009). This view

dominates much of the media and academic discourse, often portraying young people as troublemakers rather than recognizing their potential as agents of change.

In Ethiopia, scholars have extensively explored the socioeconomic challenges faced by youth, which are deeply influenced by systemic issues. Research by Guarcello and Rosati (2007), Getnet and Asrat (2012), Genene et al. (2001), and Gezahegn (2015) examine how these challenges impact Ethiopian youth. Yordanos (2006) highlights the resilience of youth in Addis Ababa, particularly how they navigate difficulties by engaging in micro and small manufacturing enterprises. This emphasis on adversity presents Ethiopian youth as victims of their circumstances, but it also underscores their remarkable capacity for resilience in the face of hardship.

Conversely, a second perspective emphasizes the proactive role of youth as active agents of change. This view portrays young people as capable of addressing social issues and driving societal transformation (Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995; Lunenburg, 2010). Honwana and De Boeck (2005) argue that youth are producers of society, actively influencing and shaping its structures. This view aligns with historical examples of African youth leading political movements and social change. Notable instances include university student protests in Africa between 1985 and 1998, Angola's fight for independence, Ethiopia's overthrow of the Derg regime, and Mozambique's liberation from colonial rule (McIntyre, 2002; Konings, 2005). Youth in Madagascar and South Africa also played pivotal roles in political transformation, participating in identity politics and the anti-apartheid struggle, respectively (Lesley Sharp, 2002; Van Kessel, 2000).

In Ethiopia, particularly during the imperial era, youth played transformative roles in the country's political landscape. The student movements of the 1960s and 1970s ignited a revolution that raised critical issues like land tenure, democracy, and equality (Balsvik, 1985; Eyob Balcha, 2009; Andargachew, 1993; Assefa, 2006). These uprisings, often led by students and young politicians, brought national and political issues such as nationalities, land tenure, and social justice to the forefront (Eyob Balcha, 2009). The work of Bahru Zewdie (2014) documents the profound impact of these movements, further solidifying the political agency of Ethiopian youth. While previous studies have predominantly focused on the political role of Ethiopian

youth (Eyob 2009; Balsvik 1985; Dorman 2005), there is a noticeable gap in understanding the changing dynamics of youth political participation in the digital age.

Building on these historical perspectives, this dissertation aims to investigate the evolving role of Ethiopian youth in political mobilization, particularly in the context of digital technologies. Unlike earlier political movements, today's youth increasingly use social media platforms—such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube—to advance their social and political agendas. These platforms have become vital tools for sharing information in real-time, enabling large-scale mobilization and global awareness (Furze et al., 2015). Social media's rapid connectivity has revolutionized how youth participate in political movements, allowing them to join causes quickly and efficiently (Maria Blanco Palencia, 2005). For instance, during the Arab Spring, social media helped form organizational structures for political movements, which later led to significant changes in the political landscapes of various countries.

The use of social media in youth-led movements is not limited to the Middle East. In Africa, movements such as Y'en a Marre in Senegal, Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso, and La Lucha in the Democratic Republic of Congo have also utilized digital tools to catalyze political change (UNFPA, 2011; Arnould et al., 2016). Similarly, Ethiopian youth have employed social media as a tool for political mobilization, especially after the 1990s, coinciding with the introduction of a multi-party system and technological advancements. Disillusioned with traditional media and political institutions, Ethiopian youth have increasingly turned to digital platforms to express dissent and advocate for change.

A prominent example of this trend is the Oromo Protests (2014–2018), during which Oromo youth effectively used social media and music to mobilize against systemic injustices. This movement mirrors the strategies seen in the Arab Spring, combining online and offline activism to challenge political repression and demand social change.

This dissertation draws on resource mobilization theory and social capital theory to analyze the political role of Ethiopian youth. These frameworks help illuminate how modern technology acts as a resource for youth to accumulate social capital and mobilize for political causes. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focused on the historical and political contexts of youth

activism, this research integrates these theoretical perspectives to provide a more nuanced understanding of youth political engagement in Ethiopia.

This study specifically examines youth mobilization in Burayu, a town near Shagar City in the Oromia region, between 2014 and 2018. Burayu represents a key site for youth activism due to its strategic location, its diverse participant base, and the shared grievances of its youth population. The youth in Burayu, frustrated with political disenfranchisement and socioeconomic challenges, have utilized social media to mobilize for political change. This town's significance as a focal point for youth activism reflects the broader dynamics of youth mobilization in the region.

One key motivation for focusing on Burayu is the lack of ethnographic research on youth political movements in Ethiopia, especially studies that employ qualitative methods to understand youth agency. This study aims to address this gap by conducting an ethnographic exploration of the political role of youth in Burayu and analyzing how their activism has influenced the political landscape of the region.

This dissertation seeks to fill the gaps in the existing literature on Ethiopian youth political movements by providing an in-depth analysis of youth mobilization in the digital age. It highlights the agency, creativity, and resilience of Ethiopian youth in navigating the complexities of modernization and globalization. By examining both historical legacies and contemporary digital tools, this research contributes to a broader understanding of youth political participation in Ethiopia. It also offers practical insights for policymakers and stakeholders interested in engaging with youth movements, enriching the understanding of their dynamic role in the country's ongoing political transformation.

1.3 Objective of the Research

This thesis has provided a deeper understanding of the dynamics, tactics, and outcomes of the Oromo youth political movement during the 2014 to 2018 protests, contributing to academic research and practical efforts to promote social justice and democratic reform. Focusing on Burayu town in the Oromia National Regional State, the study examines the crucial role of Ethiopian youth in driving change. It aims to analyze activism of the youth in Ethiopia,

especially in Burayu Town, and its impact on the local political landscape. The research has steered by the following objectives:

1. To explore the historical development of political participation among Oromo youth in Ethiopia.
2. To examine the root grievances and causes, such as socioeconomic disparities, political marginalization, cultural suppression, and issues of land rights, that has propelled the involvement of Oromo youth in protests.
3. To investigate the strategies employed by Oromo youth, including the use of social media, political music, and global advocacy networks, to initiate and sustain demonstrations.
4. To explore the main challenges and opportunities for political engagement and mobilization of Oromo youth.
5. To explore the impact of the Oromo youth protest on Ethiopian politics, society, and governance, considering changes in public dialogue, and the nation's trajectory towards democratization in Ethiopia.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the political participation of young people and its impact on community transformations. It has examined the influence of political movements and social media on young people's political opinions and behaviour, as well as the strategies used by political movements to gain public support. In the context of young people's political engagement, the following research questions have formulated:

1. What is the impact of consistent political participation on newly formed political movements within the research field? Specifically, how has the political engagement of Oromo youth evolved?
2. How did young people interact, experience, and engage with politics?
3. What are the different facets of Oromo youth political movements that affect them profoundly?
4. What are the tools used by the Burayu Youth to garner support for their political movement?
5. What are the different ways that youth participate in politics?
6. What factors contributed to political transformation and changes during the political mobilization process of Oromo youth?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This dissertation is characterized by a limited scope both in terms of geography and theme. Its research focuses on the agency of Oromo youth, specifically in the Oromia National Region State. The main focus of the study is social action and youth agency, with a focus on politically active Oromo youth who are trying to play an important political role in Ethiopia. The study aims to explore the political role of Oromo youth and the various factors that have led to their mobilization for political change. It seeks to provide a detailed analysis of the emergence and mobilization of youth for political change in the country.

To this end, the study utilizes the youth of Burayu Town as an example to examine the agentic role of youth in Ethiopian politics and their involvement in bringing about change in the country. The research employs a qualitative approach in data collection, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the political agency of youth in Ethiopia.

Geographically, the study narrows down to politically active Oromo youth, using the youth of Burayu, a town located near the capital city of Addis Ababa, as a representative sample. To better understand this topic holistically, the research is restricted to Burayu town, one of the focal points of the current youth mobilization taking place throughout the Oromia National Regional State. It provides an insightful examination of the various political, social, and economic factors that have influenced the youth's participation in political activities and how their agency has contributed to political change in the country.

Overall, the study provides a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the role of youth in Ethiopian politics, specifically in the Oromia region, and how their agency has contributed to political change in the country.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Many young people are looking for possibilities to change the world because they have the desire and ability to do so. Youth have played a significant role in almost every significant social movement in modern history. However, the youth agency has not received the respect it deserves in academic work in the social sciences. Instead, they are viewed as lawbreakers who disobey national laws and regulations. In the last few decades, these presumptions seem to have gotten

worse. The changing role of youth as agents of change in the nation has only recently been the subject of a small number of studies. Therefore, I want my study to address the gap in the literature about the function of youth in the nation.

Furthermore, it seeks to add to the expanding body of research on Ethiopia's young movement for change by examining the development of the Youth Agency in Burayu Town. Such an understanding is crucial for both widening our perspective on the diverse roles played by youth and developing youth capacities for the benefit of both communities and the youth themselves. This research will inspire academics from other fields to further investigate the subject of young social movements and agencies in Ethiopia.

For those governmental and non-governmental groups focusing on youth, the study will be crucial in developing a thorough and contextualized understanding of Ethiopian youth for policy interventions and strategies. By giving significant insight into the role played by youth in the fight against all types of authoritative authority, the study further improve the role of activists.

By bridging the identified gap, this dissertation will make a significant contribution to the field by advancing our understanding of the subject matter. Moreover, it will provide a platform for future research that can build upon the proposed framework and further expand our knowledge base on youth political mobilization in Ethiopia.

1.7 Outline of the Dissertation

There are eight chapters in this dissertation. The first chapter, which serves as an introduction, covers the background of the study area, statement of the problem, the research aims, the significance of the research, the study's methodology, and fieldwork experiences. The conceptual framework and secondary literature review, both of which are directly related to the research, are the main topics of the second chapter. It offers crucial fresh perspectives on how young people are perceived in a larger empirical context. This section discusses the main theoretical frameworks for comprehending youth political movements in society.

In the third chapter, I went into further detail on the theoretical and methodological methods dealing with the issues of epistemology, ontology, and the methodological approach dealing with this research, as well as the analytical and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4's main themes centre on the evolution of Oromo Youth Social Movement. In this way, the beginnings and growth of youth political mobilization have been examined in the context of the cultural and technological orientations of young people. The study has made an effort to investigate how youth political identity is established and changes for political reasons in light of the nation's fluctuating political trajectories. The nation's nascent politics are highlighted in terms of its usage, development, and evolution of young politics in the study area is highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 5 discusses the fundamental causes of Ethiopian youth's political mobilization, their political behaviour, and how it has changed over time.

Chapter 6 explores the profound impact of social media on young people's political participation. It elucidates the diverse strategies employed by youthful political activists and their adversaries. It meticulously analyzes the dynamic between young individuals and contemporary technology, shedding light on how these technological advancements catalyze social transformations nationwide.

In Chapter 7, the focus shifts towards the significance of protest songs in Oromo youth political mobilization. It explores how Oromo youth effectively harnessed the power of songs for political mobilization, emphasizing the pivotal role of music as a tool in the youth protests spanning from 2014 to 2018

Chapter 8 deeply examines the key drivers of political change in Oromia, focusing on how Oromo youth develop political consciousness for resistance. It traces the transition from youth engagement to advanced political resistance, highlighting its significant impact on the political involvement of young individuals.

Chapter 9 gives a concluding remark on Oromo youth political mobilization and social movement in Ethiopia.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Perspectives

2.1.1 Conceptualizing Social Movement.

Social movements are forms of collective action that occur outside the realm of formal politics. They are purposeful, sustained, and deliberate activities designed to address perceived inequalities and unfulfilled social, political, economic, or cultural demands (Giddens, 1989; Veno & Furze, 1997; Castells, 1997, quoted in Furze et al., 2015). These movements involve an organized set of constituents working toward a shared political agenda of change over time (Batliwala, 2012).

At their core, social movements are long-term collective efforts by individuals or groups outside of political institutions, aimed at rectifying perceived injustices (Langs, 1961, p. 507, cited in Lauer, 1976). According to Alberto Melucci, social movements should be understood as the process through which individuals interact, negotiate, produce meaning, and make decisions within a historically and socially constructed context. It is also the process by which a collective identity is formed, often emerging from invisible networks and manifesting as visible public phenomena.

The primary goal of social movements is to challenge and alter norms perceived as unjust. They are composed of diverse people and groups with similar objectives, but these groups may employ varied strategies to achieve their aims (Furze et al., 2015:455). These movements are shaped by people's lived experiences and involve the development of political and cultural links, creating new spaces for dialogue and participation that surpass traditional democratic frameworks (Nadia Ferrer, 2014:28).

Social movements often draw on historical precedents, utilizing techniques, symbols, political ideologies, and narratives from the past to inspire contemporary engagement. Their origins are closely tied to the rise of modernity, with the intersection of capitalism, state-building, urbanization, proletarianization, and warfare providing the networks, resources, identities, and grievances necessary for their formation (Buechler, 2011:1).

Historically, social movements have evolved from immediate, localized demonstrations and riots into sustained, organized challenges to political structures (Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1995, 2004, referenced in Buechler, 2011:2). The social movements of the 1960s exemplified this transformation, focusing on issues such as civil rights, women's rights, environmentalism, and

gay rights, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with societal institutions (Furze et al., 2015:461).

The evolution of social movements in the 1970s marked a significant shift in theory. While U.S. social movement theory moved from "collective behavior" to a focus on "resource mobilization" and the "political process," European political sociology began to move away from the Marxist focus on class struggle and labor mobilization, towards the analysis of new social movements (Buechler, 2011:158). The distinction between "old" and "new" social movements reflects this shift. Old movements were primarily concerned with labor strikes and class-based mobilization against capitalism, while new movements address a broader range of social and political issues, often focusing on cultural and identity-based concerns (Buechler, 2011:158).

Social movements are historical and dynamic phenomena, shaped by circumstances. They evolve in response to enabling or constraining factors, making them contingent on the specific social, political, and economic context (Dütting and Sogge, 2010:31). Despite their differences, social movements typically follow a life cycle with several stages, as identified by Blumer (1969). These stages include emergence, coalescence, institutionalization, and decline.

The emergence stage marks the initial formation of a movement, often in response to perceived injustice or inequality. The coalescence phase follows, during which the movement and its leaders define their objectives, develop strategies for attracting new members, and leverage media to garner support for their cause. As a movement gains momentum, it enters the institutionalization stage, during which it becomes more organized and bureaucratic. Bureaucratization may bring stability but can also reduce the movement's disruptive power, as it shifts from direct confrontation to more traditional forms of political engagement (Piven & Cloward, 1979).

However, if a movement fails to institutionalize, it may lose direction, weakening its capacity to sustain itself. Eventually, social movements may enter the decline phase, losing momentum for various reasons. The resolution of the movement's core issues, external suppression, or internal conflict can contribute to a movement's demise. Government repression, through tactics such as undermining leadership or targeting activists, can also cause movements to falter (Piven & Cloward, 1979). In some cases, the government may "co-opt" a movement by offering symbolic concessions, which diminishes the movement's urgency while maintaining the status quo.

Ultimately, social movements may cease when their objectives are achieved, but more often than not, they decline due to internal divisions, resource depletion, or loss of participant enthusiasm. The life cycle of social movements underscores their adaptability and the interplay between internal dynamics and external factors, shaping their trajectory and impact on society.

2.1.2 Forms of Social Movements

Social scientists classify social movements based on the type and scope of change they aim to achieve. As noted by D. A. Snow and Soule (2009), a wide range of social movements have emerged throughout history and continue to thrive today. These movements can be broadly categorized into four main types: alternative, redemptive, reformative, and transformative movements.

Revolutionary movements, a subcategory of political movements, are particularly focused on systemic reforms. These movements work vigorously to establish a new government or even a new way of life, seeking radical societal changes. Revolutionary movements have historically been a powerful force in shaping the course of history, such as the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Chinese Revolution in the 1940s, uprisings in Eastern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, the Cuban Revolution of the 1960s, and the Ethiopian Revolution of the 1970s. Because both reform and revolutionary movements focus on political change, they are often referred to as political movements (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009).

In contrast, reactionary movements represent a type of alternative political movement that seeks to stop or reverse social progress. One contemporary example of a reactionary movement is the anti-abortion movement, which gained momentum following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing most abortions. The movement advocates for restricting or even outlawing abortion, in direct opposition to previous legal advancements. Other notable types of movements include religious movements, which aim to convert non-believers, and self-help movements, where individuals work to improve themselves on a personal level. Organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers are examples of self-help movements.

Reform movements, which aim to bring about modest changes to political, social, or economic systems, are the most common and significant form of social movement. Rather than seeking to overhaul or fundamentally alter the existing system, reform movements work to improve it incrementally. Some notable reform movements include the Abolitionist Movement during the American Civil War, the Women's Suffrage Movement after the war, the Labor Movement, the Civil Rights Movement in the South, and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009).

Transformative movements, on the other hand, pursue radical and fundamental change in society. These movements challenge existing power structures and aim to create a new social order. They often involve mass mobilization, civil disobedience, and direct action, with the goal of shifting societal values, norms, and beliefs. The Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa and the Occupy Wall Street Movement are prominent examples of transformative movements that sought to radically alter the political and economic system. Today, transformative movements primarily include feminist, environmental, and youth movements. Given that this study focuses on youth political movements in Ethiopia, we are particularly concerned with transformative movements.

Beyond these broad categories, social movements can also be distinguished by their ideologies and methods of operation. Some movements are issue-specific, like the environmental movement, while others, such as the labor movement, address a broader array of concerns. Movements also vary in their approach: some rely on peaceful methods, while others may resort to violence or armed struggle.

Social movements differ in their levels of organization and structure as well. Some have a formal structure with defined leadership and specific goals, while others are more decentralized and rely on grassroots activism and community participation. The rise of digital technology and social media has introduced a new form of activism known as "clicktivism." This involves using online platforms to raise awareness and mobilize support for various causes.

Social movements are powerful forces for change, each with its own unique characteristics and methods of operation. Whether aiming for grassroots change or challenging established power structures, social movements play a vital role in driving social, political, and cultural progress. As society continues to evolve, it is crucial to recognize and support the diverse forms of social movements that work toward a more just and equitable world. This study specifically examines how youth in Ethiopia engage with various forms of political movements, including transformative ones.

2.2 Youth Political Agency

Politics is a relational phenomenon, and what is politically significant depends on the settings and conditions at play (Hakli and Kallio, 2014: 183). Context and circumstances influence political importance. Politics is all about important issues, whether they relate to national policy or a person's everyday life. For those who view politics as having a public agenda, it must be widely addressed, acknowledged, and publicized. On the other hand, everyday tasks that are ignored as being apolitical are done so because only those directly involved may know what is at stake. The main problem is how important issues are contested or questioned because those involved have a vested interest in them.

The emphasis ascribed to agents or to structure in characterizing the nature of political involvement and societal changes is a topic of much dispute. Those who write about the power of agents or power connections tend to focus on actors; those who address the power structure or system tend to concentrate on structures. The agency-structure relationship delves deeply into a wide range of issues that, at first glance, seem unrelated and into quite varied methods of political engagement. There are also disagreements over what makes an agent and the nature of society's structure within each of the divide's halves. These divisions have a significant role in the larger split.

The dualist discussions on agency and structure have been attempted to be resolved by many authors. For instance, according to Habermas' critical theory from 1987, social action arises as a result of a conflict between social structures and the democratic state. Although it depends on people's ability to critically interact in their socio-historical reality, his structural theory of communicative actions emphasizes features of agency (Saidi, 1987: 252–254).

His detractors criticize him for supposing that people can interact, act, and make decisions logically without getting into conflict and for ignoring the complexity of social phenomena (Saidi, 1987: 260).

Rorty's critics charge Habermas with idealizing reason and the pursuit of enlightenment in opposition to creativity and 'aesthetics' (Nadia Ferrer, 2014:30), and they claim that his method is unable to explain agency outside of rationalist explanations. The Habermas method explains social action based on people's capacity to rationally identify, develop tactics, and participate in accomplishing their goals, much like RMT (Nadia Ferrer, 2014:31).

One of the foremost identity theorists, Melucci (1996), focuses on how actors create their "meanings, communicate, negotiate, and make decisions" (Melucci, 1996:331) to bridge the gap between structuralist and agency approaches and the process that unites peoples. As he states, —...how certain individuals come to recognize themselves in a more or less shared sense of 'we' ‖ (Melucci,1989: 20).

By describing how collective action is formed in this way, Melucci transcends the dualism of structuralist theories and RMT and adopts a more pragmatic approach (Melucci, 1989: 20). In addition, Giddens (1984) proposes a model that blends subjectivism and objectivism to dispel the structure-agency dualism (Giddens, 1984: xx). He makes the case in favour of the significance of identifying the dialectical relationship between structure and action (agency) in his structuration theory.

According to Ahearn (2001:110), the agency has recently attracted more attention in social theory as a whole. The social movements in the US during the 1960s and 1970s, the social upheavals in central and eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the ensuing academic interest in how practices affect structures, as well as postmodern and poststructuralist critiques that "have called into question impersonal master narratives that leave no room for tensions, contradictions, or oppositional actions on the part of individuals and collectivities.

For this purpose, Ahearn (2001:112) presents a tentative definition of the idea of agency as 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act', recognizing that this concept of agency can be qualified and expanded upon in a variety of ways. She notes, for example, that some scholars

suggest differentiating among sorts of agency, adopting non-individualistic definitions of agency, or concentrating on how agency emerges in emerging contexts, places, and times (2001: 113).

In a similar spirit, Tatek Abebe (2019) contends that policymaking and academia are two overlapping sources of agency. The first is an actor-oriented approach (Long 2001, referenced in Tatek Abebe, 2019), which presupposes that people are social actors who actively contribute to society rather than passive recipients or mere dependents on others or social structures.

On the other hand, Assad (Assad 2000, cited in Tatek Abebe, 2019) shifted away from communal ideologies and toward the belief that every person has the moral power and obligation to act for themselves. The expansion of the idea of agency, a crucial component of modern neoliberal capitalism and modes of governance, is closely connected to the concept of an independent and accountable person (Durham, 2011; Aiteken, 2018).

Part of the agency approach is to realize that youth have been equally inclined, especially during the past few decades of societal deterioration, to be actively involved in crime and predatory armed activities. This is typically explained by their tangible sorrow, their search for role models among males, and a lack of other possibilities. It is well known that youngsters are the driving forces in several rebel or guerrilla groups (Young 1997) and neo-traditional protest movements, sometimes with a substantial socio-political impact.

The agency method is typically accompanied by a request to listen to young people's perspectives and take seriously the study of youth, both in Africa and internationally. Based on both empirical and epistemic reasons, agency cannot and should not be denied. It is helpful to make us aware of the meta-concept that social structure is an interactive whole where individual's and small groups' actions both "realize" and "transform" structures. Youth are people who are attempting to forge their paths rather than being passive participants in a world that has been predetermined for them. Without a realist viewpoint on human agency and newly emerging forms of action, the dynamics of collective movements are incomplete (Abbink, 2005:9).

In the modern world, young people actively participate in a variety of activities, including fashion youth culture, noble and striking forms of innovative economic engagement and hustling (Maine, 2007), innovative political mobilization of various forms and methods (Honwana and de Boeck, 2005), and intriguing new efforts to fashion youth subcultures (Cole and Durham, 2006).

African children's and youth organizations must be defined in connection with many distinct circumstances. In this context, Tatek Abebe (2019) claims that African youth demonstrate novel kinds of everyday agency by actively participating in what is thought of as banal routines to deal with poverty and build resilience in the face of threats.

The application of agency and resistance theory provides a powerful framework for understanding the Oromo youth political mobilization during the protests of 2014 to 2018. This perspective emphasizes the capacity of individuals and communities to act intentionally and strategically in challenging structures of power and oppression. Here's how agency and resistance theory can be applied to analyze the Oromo youth protest movement: Agency theory underscores the collective agency of marginalized groups to organize, mobilize, and resist injustice. The Oromo youth protest movement demonstrates how young Oromo activists exercised their agency to challenge state repression, demand political reforms, and assert their rights and dignity as a marginalized ethnic group in Ethiopia.

Agency theory highlights the processes through which individuals and communities become empowered to challenge systems of domination and oppression. The Oromo youth protest involved a process of consciousness-raising, community organizing, and mobilization that empowered young activists to speak out against injustices, mobilize mass demonstrations, and demand political change.

Agency theory emphasizes the strategic and deliberate actions taken by individuals and groups to effect change within their social and political contexts. The Oromo youth protest movement employed a range of tactics and strategies, including mass protests, civil disobedience, social media activism, and international advocacy, to challenge state violence, demand justice, and advance the Oromo cause.

Agency theory recognizes the importance of collective identity and solidarity in fostering resistance movements. The Oromo youth protest movement was grounded in a sense of Oromo cultural identity, pride, and solidarity, which served as a powerful basis for mobilizing collective action and building alliances with other marginalized groups within Ethiopia.

Agency theory highlights the creativity and innovation of resistance strategies employed by marginalized groups in challenging systems of oppression. The Oromo youth protest movement

utilized creative forms of resistance, such as art, music, poetry, and performance, to express dissent, assert cultural identity, and mobilize support for their cause.

Agency theory emphasizes the resilience and persistence of resistance movements in the face of state repression and adversity. Despite facing violent crackdowns, arrests, and censorship, the Oromo youth protest movement persisted in its demands for political reforms, drawing strength from its collective agency and commitment to justice.

By applying agency and resistance theory to the Oromo youth political mobilization during the protests of 2014 to 2018, researchers can gain deeper insights into the dynamics of empowerment, mobilization, identity formation, and collective action within marginalized communities, as well as the transformative potential of grassroots resistance in challenging structures of power and oppression.

2.2.1 Youth Areas of Engagement

Young people are leading the way in identifying risky areas and enhancing local disaster preparedness (George and Uyanga, 2014). Additionally, they have been in charge of several community service projects, including street cleaning projects sponsored by churches, sports clubs, and civic organizations. No matter how modest, they have a long-lasting, positive impact on society. The best hope for the future is among today's youth. The level of development in each society is therefore largely determined by its youth (George and Uyanga, 2014).

Based on their potential and opportunities, youth have actively participated in a variety of activities. In the literature, there are numerous definitions and conceptualizations of youth participation. It is occasionally used synonymously with other phrases like youth empowerment (Joselowsky, 2007), good youth development (Fletcher, 2005), and youth involvement (Fletcher, 2005).

Despite the fact that their precise definitions may differ, Bell (2005) describes youth engagement as instances in which young people are "actively involved in cognitive and social endeavors that promote growth" (Weiss et al. 2005: 24). Bell (2005) similarly underlines the significance of youth empowerment and agency.

Engagement is described as "active involvement, commitment, and concentrated attention, in contrast to superficial participation, apathy, or lack of interest" (Newman, 1992:12).

The majority of these issues have reportedly been investigated through formal and institutional participation channels, such as public consultation, civic or youth organizations, and academic institutions, as a result of the emphasis on youth engagement's active elements, particularly participation, according to Camino and Zeldin (2002). They draw attention to how these approaches pay less attention to participation in informal and non-formal situations, such as social interactions, or to the cognitive or emotional aspects of engagement. According to Camino and Zeldin, studies of the cognitive or emotional components of involvement are typically conducted in isolation rather than in tandem and from the position of encouraging or inhibiting behavior rather than as major elements in and of themselves.

Bourn and Brown's (2011) perspective on young people's involvement in international development issues encompasses a range of levels of active engagement, such as political activism, social and consumer action, and fundraising, as well as levels of reflection and exploration, such as self-understanding and forming social connections. "To engage with" can be to "show an interest in," "explore the issues," or "take action on," they say (Bourn and Brown, 2011:11).

They further point out that "in discourses around young people and development issues, the term engagement has recently been dominant, along with terms such as 'participation' and 'global citizenship', and has tended to carry with it a sense of activism rather than one of reflection and exploration" (Bourn and Brown, 2011:12).

Numerous literary works highlight the various facets of youth participation that take into account its cognitive, emotional, and active dimensions in a given environment (Sullivan, 2011).

Youth engagement is described as "meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity with a focus outside of him or herself" (Centre for Excellence on Youth Engagement, 2007). Engagement experiences are complex and differ greatly in quality. They consist of both objective and subjective elements, such as behavior, structure, and content (CEYE, 2007:2).

This term has been utilized by many studies, organizations, and youth involvement efforts worldwide. As an example, consider Pancer et al. (2002:2). This is described by the claim that "full engagement consists of a behavioral component (spending time doing the activity), an affective component (finding enjoyment from participating), and a cognitive component (knowing about the activity)."

Other definitions have also included multifaceted views of youth involvement, with Sherrod (2010) emphasizing the value of multidisciplinary research in the field's evolution to its current level of complexity and breadth of conceptualizations. He focuses on youth involvement for the purpose of bringing about social and environmental change and highlights the psychosocial components of youth engagement beyond simple participation in civic activities such as volunteering or voting.

Similarly, Anderson and Woodrow (1998) contend that engagement entails strengthening people's knowledge and comprehension of a specific issue that is important to them as well as their participation in solutions, giving them the ability to change. Engagement is, in their own words, "a powerful way to help them increase their understanding of their own situation, and therefore their capacities to effect desired change" (Mona Betour, 2013: 80).

According to Checkoway (2006), youth participation is defined as their involvement in processes and decisions that have a direct impact on their own lives. He emphasizes that meaningful involvement happens when children can actively engage with issues that directly touch their lives and have a real impact on their decisions, as opposed to their mere appearance or symbolic engagement.

The difference between "participation as a social activity and participation as influencing or creating change" is made by Anttiroiko (2003:19). Accordingly, the term "influencing" denotes the capacity to change how decisions are made in political or social contexts (Percy-Smith and Thomas 2010).

Additionally, Simovska and Jensen (2009) highlight two distinct interpretations of youth participation. According to the first interpretation, involvement is defined as taking part in or attending a program or activity without necessarily having an impact on the decisions or actions that are taking place. The second places emphasis on the exercise of active citizenship through

shared decision-making and initiative ownership. Similar claims about young people's meaningful participation are made by Cook and Kothari (2001), the IFRC (2011), and Hart (1997), all of which are cited in Mona Betour's (2013:80).

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, 2007) has developed a spectrum of participation based on Hart's (1992) approach. The spectrum, which exhibits an increasing level of public effect, represents the five participation goals of informing, consulting, involving, cooperating, and empowering (IAP2, 2007:89). The Youth Caucus at the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development urged the world to "see young people as a resource, not a problem" (IAP2, 2007:93).

Young people require a strong sense of self-efficacy and autonomy in order to feel empowered. People's perceived self-efficacy refers to their confidence in their capacity to effect change or be successful in a certain pursuit. This idea has the power to influence a variety of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of people's lives, including their views, motivation, and level of success. For instance, perceived efficacy strengthens young people's perceptions of themselves as change agents with the potential to influence constructive social and political change. It affects their motivation and the value individuals place on their actions, as well as their political interest and desire to engage in political activity (IAP2, 2007:94).

As a result, self-efficacy serves as a mediator between capability and action and is essential for fostering juvenile agency, which is the capacity to initiate and direct events that have an impact on one's life. It is possible to define youth agency as "the power to understand, act on, and effect positive change in one's personal and social contexts; embodying the sense of hope and possibility (grounded in an understanding of social reality) that one can make a difference in one's own life, family, school, and local community as well as in the broader national and global community" (IAP2, 2007:95).

Thus, a sense of agency and self-efficacy are essential for encouraging young people to actively participate in processes and activities they believe they can improve or modify, as well as to have a say in the laws and decisions that have an impact on their lives. Additionally, when perceived self-efficacy interacts with cognitions and motivations, it affects young people's emotional states and general well-being, particularly affective responses to frustration, failure, or motivation

(IAP2, 2007). Youth has been played an agentive role in different part of the world .For instance young people

2.2.3 Youth Political Engagement in Africa

In examining youth political engagement across Africa, it becomes clear that young individuals are redefining traditional boundaries of participation. From driving advancements in popular culture to establishing local NGOs and creatively leveraging information and communication technologies (ICT), African youth are actively contributing to political and social spheres (Abink, 2014). Seeking (2006) underscores the dualistic portrayal of youth during South Africa's political transition, describing them alternately as "heroes" or "villains" and revealing the nuanced and multifaceted roles this demographic occupies.

Honwana and De Boeck (2005) highlight the transformative potential of African youth, emphasizing their capacity to reshape societal structures and cultural norms. They argue that youth engagement in cultural expressions and political activities is central to societal change, positioning young people as agents of resistance, resilience, and transformation.

Mamadou Diouf (2003) observes that the shifting behaviors of African youth have driven significant societal changes, challenging conventional notions of citizenship and identity, especially in the era of globalization.

The diversity of youth political engagement necessitates a nuanced understanding of their roles. Young people participate in politics in a variety of ways, ranging from informal grassroots activism to formal involvement in political party structures, demonstrating a wide spectrum of influence (Furlong, 1997). Throughout history, African youth have served as pivotal change agents, from their roles in pre-colonial societies to their involvement in nationalist struggles and pro-democracy movements, consistently shaping the continent's political landscape.

Youth have made significant contributions to political transformation, such as in the fight against colonial rule in Egypt and Sudan and during South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. These examples highlight the enduring influence of young Africans in reshaping political narratives and driving societal change (Resnick and Casale, 2011). Despite comprising the majority demographic, however, youth voter turnout remains relatively low, presenting a challenge in harnessing their collective power for political transformation (UNFPA, 2011).

Scholars like Mamdani (1995) and Branch and Mampilly (2015) have explored the essential role of youth in African social movements, emphasizing their contributions to political awakening

and activism. The concept of an "African uprising" reflects the transformative energy of youth movements, which have challenged entrenched power structures and advocated for justice and equality (Branch and Mampilly, 2015). Through grassroots advocacy and activism, young Africans have reshaped political discourse, amplified marginalized voices, and worked toward creating a more inclusive and democratic society.

The involvement of youth in African social movements marks a pivotal chapter in the continent's history, underscoring their enduring impact on political and social transformation. This vibrant participation highlights the potential of youth engagement to foster a more equitable, participatory, and just future for Africa.

2.2.4 The Arab Spring and Youth in Africa

The Arab Spring of 2011 marked a significant turning point in the political landscape of the Middle East and North Africa, with the youth playing a central role in challenging existing leadership and advocating for social and political change. The catalyst for this wave of protests can be traced back to the actions of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia, whose self-immolation sparked a chain of events that reverberated across the region (Smith, 2012).

Young Africans have continued to play a vital role in pushing for reforms and engaging with leaders to address the pressing issues facing their societies (Jones, 2016). This active engagement with political and social challenges mirrors the motivations behind the youth participation in the Arab Spring uprisings, where disillusionment with the status quo and a desire for change fueled mass mobilization efforts (Brown, 2014). The Arab Spring is the name given to the series of mass protests that began at the start of 2011. Young people were very high profile, which will be due, at least in part, to the demography of cities in the 'global south' (Hansen, 2008).

These countries have young populations, and their young people have been moving into cities despite facing chronic shortages of housing and employment. Like the youth mobilizations in former communist countries, the Arab Spring is probably best regarded as a still incomplete process (Ken Roberts, 2015: 12).

Facebook and Twitter are said to have played a significant role in drawing the initial hordes. One could foment animosity by posting footage of police aggression, which is regularly recorded on mobile phones, on YouTube (Shahine 2011). According to Noueihed and Warren (2013), at the

beginning of 2011, less than 6% of Egyptians utilized Facebook and only roughly a quarter of the population had access to the Internet.

The television network Al-Jazeera played a significant role in forging a global public sphere and amplifying messages with new media roots. Notably, the "Twitterati" were likely to be astonished to learn that they were nowhere near 50%, let alone 99%, wherever the protests led to elections. The results of these protests have varied from nation to nation (Noueihed and Warren 2013).

2.2.5 Youth Political Engagement in Ethiopia

Youth political engagement in Ethiopia has a rich history dating back to the early 1960s. Andargachew (1993) and Assefa (2006) have highlighted the active involvement of Ethiopian youth in political movements, where they have made significant contributions to various national issues such as nationality rights, land tenure, democracy, and equality. The Ethiopian youth have been pivotal agents of change, particularly evident in the initial uprisings in Asmara against the Ethiopian government led by students and young individuals. Notably, student protests in Addis Ababa and Asmara played a crucial role in the emergence of prominent figures like Isaias Afewerki and members of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and EPLF (Ammar, 1997). The youth movement, in collaboration with organizations representing women and workers, officially aligned with the EPLF in 1978 (Sara Rich Dorman, 2005: 194).

During the political movements of the 1970s and 1980s in Ethiopia, the youth were active participants in the efforts to overthrow the Derg regime in the 1990s (McIntyre, 2002:236-238). Ethiopian students were catalysts for ideological shifts, developing New Leftist discourses of change and social reordering that laid the groundwork for the Ethiopian Revolution in the early 1970s and the subsequent governmental overthrow. Education also played a crucial role in these transformations, as highlighted by Balsvik (1985).

Furthermore, Bahru Zewdie (2014) provides a detailed historical account of the Ethiopian student movement, tracing its evolution up to the period just before the revolution and the emergence of the Derg regime, which led to the fragmentation of the movement into opposing political factions. This scholarly work by Bahru enhances our understanding of the historical trajectory of the Ethiopian Student Movement.

Eyob (2009) emphasizes the substantial involvement of Ethiopian youth in political engagement, particularly during and after revolutionary periods. Additionally, Eyob Balcha (2009) explores the intergenerational dynamics and socialization that shape youth political participation in Ethiopia. The elder generation's influence, especially within the ruling party, has significantly impacted the perception of politics among the younger generation, transforming it into a structure where sheer numbers often outweigh youthful insights and ideas. Through these scholarly analyses, a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between Ethiopian youth and politics emerges, shedding light on the historical significance and contemporary dynamics of youth political engagement in the region.

2.2.6 Oromo Youth Political Participation: Dynamics from 2014 to 2018

Oromo youth political engagement has been a prominent feature in the political landscape from 2014 to 2018, drawing inspiration from events such as the Arab Spring. The Oromo youth have actively participated in political movements and protests, leveraging resources like social media and music for political mobilization. This engagement mirrors the strategies employed by youth during the Arab Spring, demonstrating a collective effort towards effecting political change.

The utilization of social media by Oromo youth activists during the 2014-2018 political resistance activities in the Oromia Regional State highlights the significant role of digital platforms in contemporary political mobilization in Ethiopia. The Oromo Protests during this period stand out as a noteworthy example of how social media has been harnessed for political mobilization within the country.

Oromo youth activists have emerged as a crucial political force among Ethiopia's young population, employing diverse strategies to amplify their message. Their activism extends to various online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, in tandem with established media outlets like OMN and ESAT, to bolster a vigorous social media campaign in response to the #Oromo protests. The youth's engagement in activism is a response to the government's perceived failure to address economic, political, and social grievances, coupled with the use of repressive measures against society.

The mobilization of a considerable following for their cause underscores the effectiveness of utilizing multiple channels, including social media and mainstream media platforms, to galvanize

support. By exploring Oromo youth political movement in Ethiopia, this dissertation aims to contribute valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of youth participation in the country's political sphere, shedding light on the strategies, challenges, and aspirations of the youth as they navigate the complex terrain of political activism and resistance.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Youth Political Movement

2.3.1 Resource Mobilization Theory

Youth collective political movement refers to the participation of young people in the political sphere, to promote social and political change. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of young people joining and leading political movements all around the world.

This phenomenon can be attributed to a variety of reasons. Firstly, the rise of social media has played a crucial role in mobilizing and organizing young people for political action. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have become powerful tools for young activists to spread their message and connect with like-minded individuals.

Social media has given young people a platform to voice their opinions, share information, and organize protests and demonstrations. This has allowed them to reach a wider audience and create a sense of community, leading to the formation of collective political movements.

Secondly, the youth today are more politically aware and informed than ever before. With easy access to information and news through the internet, they are well-informed about current events and issues. This has made them more conscious of the political climate and the impact of policies on their lives.

As a result, they are actively engaging in political discourse and are not afraid to challenge the status quo. The rise of youth-led political movements is a reflection of their desire for a more just and equitable society. Moreover, the current political and social climate has also played a significant role in the rise of youth collective political movements. In many countries, young people are facing challenges such as unemployment, rising tuition fees, and lack of affordable housing. They are also witnessing the impact of climate change and the failure of governments to

take decisive action. This has led to a sense of frustration and disillusionment with the traditional political system.

As a result, young people are turning to collective political movements as a way to demand change and hold those in power accountable. Another reason for the rise of youth collective political movements is the desire for social justice and equality. Young people today are more diverse and inclusive, and they are demanding representation and equal rights for all. They are fighting against systemic injustices and discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. The youth-led Black Lives Matter movement, for example, has brought attention to police brutality and racial inequalities, while the #MeToo movement has shed light on sexual harassment and assault. These movements have not only raised awareness but also sparked important conversations about social justice and equality.

Since its conception in the 1970s, the resource mobilization hypothesis has had a significant impact. A number of interconnected theories about social movements that emerged in the 1970s are collectively referred to as resource mobilization theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). This theory suggests that social movements arise as a response to persistent societal challenges and discontent. Despite enduring dissatisfaction, people may not actively participate in protests. The theory emphasizes the role of social movement leaders in mobilizing public resources like time, money, and energy to drive effective political action. It also highlights the impact of significant political changes, such as those resulting from governmental vulnerabilities in times of economic or international crises (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009). It helps to explain how the collective base of social movements and the damaged people make it possible to start an organized demand for change, according to Jenkins and Perrow (1977:250). It draws attention to the reality that social movements are ongoing political phenomena that require consistent funding infusions to persist over time.

According to McCarthy and Zald (1977:1213), this theoretical approach has made an effort to analyze social movements from the perspectives of resources mobilized, networks connecting social movements to other groups, the reliance of movements on outside support for success, and the strategies used by authorities to restrain or incorporate movements.

Insightful theoretical frameworks identify social movements as a reasoned endeavour to advance shared interests. Social movements look at society's tactical political responses to the harsh political system as well as its logical political endeavors. From psychological phenomena, it moves on to resources. Social movements are characterized as groups of political actors committed to advancing their professed substantive aims. According to academics, motivations for group activity go far beyond purely economic gain. People may join organizations to establish a sense of community, promote solidarity, and discover common values (Fireman and Gamson, 1979; quoted in Jenkins, 1983).

Additionally, people may join groups in exchange for rewards, including social, symbolic, and normative incentives (Cress and Snow 1996). Social movements have been studied from a political perspective, where group conduct is just as influenced by reason as other social actions. This theoretical approach highlights the fact that collective demonstrations are not explained by any particular behavioural dynamics and that any distinction is due to the various political ideologies of the organizations engaging in social movements. Additionally, it acknowledges how successful social movements depend on both official and informal groupings to endure and succeed.

In order to investigate the causes of youth mobilization and the variables that drive individual actors to behave in that way, this research uses Resource Mobilization Theory. Analyzing the factors that youth agents use to mobilize support for their political causes is beneficial. This study examines youth political mobilization and activism in Ethiopia using resources and mobilizing tools from this strategy.

2.3.2 The Political Economy Model in Examining Youth Political Movements

The political economy model offers a comprehensive framework to explore the intricate interplay between economic structures, political power, and societal change (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009). When applied to youth political movements, this model provides insights into how socio-economic conditions, power dynamics, and institutional structures shape the motivations, organization, and impact of youth-led initiatives globally (Castells, 2012). This section examines the role of economic marginalization, globalization, and state repression in driving and shaping youth political engagement across different regions.

Economic marginalization emerges as a critical driver of youth political movements worldwide. High levels of unemployment, underemployment, and precarious working conditions disproportionately impact young individuals, fostering disillusionment with political systems perceived as corrupt or unresponsive (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998). This disenfranchisement not only fuels frustration but also contributes to a sense of alienation among youth, highlighting the nexus between economic disenfranchisement and political disengagement (Castells, 2012). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009) argue that globalization has intensified challenges faced by youth, creating a "risk society" where systemic failures render young individuals vulnerable. Technological advancements and globalization have facilitated the rise of digital platforms as essential tools for organizing, mobilizing, and disseminating information among youth activists (Castells, 2012). These platforms enable real-time communication, coordination, and the creation of transnational networks that transcend geographical boundaries, empowering grassroots movements to challenge established systems.

State institutions often employ coercive measures, including surveillance, censorship, and repression, to suppress dissent and maintain the status quo. This dynamic is evident in movements like the Arab Spring and the African awakening, where youth challenge authoritarian regimes and neoliberal policies perpetuating economic and social disparities (Mamdani, 1995; Branch, 2015). The adaptability of youth movements, characterized by decentralized structures and innovative tactics, allows for sustained resistance against state repression and systemic injustices (Tufekci, 2017).

Youth political movements intersect with issues of identity, challenging economic injustices and cultural hierarchies. Crenshaw's (1989) framework of Intersectionality underscores how systemic inequalities are experienced differently across diverse youth populations. The Oromo youth movement in Ethiopia exemplify how youth activism bridges economic exploitation with cultural erasure, advocating for rights, environmental protection, and cultural preservation (Tatek Abebe, 2020).

The political economy model, through its examination of economic structures, political power dynamics, and societal change, provides a robust lens to analyze youth political engagement. By addressing economic marginalization, state coercion, globalization, and this perspective offers a nuanced understanding of the drivers and impacts of youth movements globally. Understanding

these dynamics is crucial for fostering sustainable political reform and social change that empowers and uplifts marginalized youth populations.

2.3.3 Globalization and Transnationalism

Whether globalization is a radical new force and how it will change societies around the world have been hot topics of discussion (Buckingham and Tingstad, 2014). Debates about whether young people were the victims of the new global order or its agents and whether their experiences showed the dominance of a homogenizing global culture that was displacing local cultures, or the emergence of hybridity, fragmentation, differentiation, and fluidity, followed the quick association of young people with globalization (Buckingham and Tingstad, 2014). In the anthropology of globalization, for instance, Appadurai's work from 1996 has argued that globalization is not a 'disjunctive' heterogeneous process with a single American export but rather a process with many centres of influence and interaction. Furthermore, culture is not merely a byproduct of politics and the economy. The possibility exists that cultural worlds are not merely byproducts of the dominant capital and labour "flows" due to the emphasis on people's experiences, lived realities, and what Appadurai refers to as the "social imaginary," which characterizes massive global processes and transformations (Appadurai, 1996).

This has led to a focus on cultural reactions to globalization that are eclectic, numerous, and varied and that emphasize the creation of meaning within localized contexts. Today's processes of globalization act to link the 'local' and the 'global' through cultural and economic forms and processes in an unfixed and varying process of interrelation and 'flows' (Appadurai, 1996).

According to Appadurai (1996), the global is made up of a variety of scapes, such as ethnoscares, media scapes, finance scapes, technoscares, and ideoscares. However, all of these scapes relate to and respond to one another through encounters of friction.

Neoliberal capitalism and Western enlightenment cultural forms are two aspects of what is commonly referred to as "modernity" as a whole. However, "modernity" itself is fractal, dynamic, and fluid. Most anthropologists currently contend that these processes of globalization and "modernity" are manifested via a post-modern situation and are instead appropriated by local actors, settings, and interpretations, contrary to earlier forecasts of global cultural homogenization.

Therefore, modernity does not lead to universalization but rather to alternative or vernacular modernities created through grassroots interpretations. As a result, it becomes feasible for different and intertwined subjectivities and identities to exist inside a particular locality, which in turn creates a more diverse yet interconnected world (Appadurai, 1996:4).

It appears that these forces occur independently of one another and are perceived as such by individuals when Appadurai explores the idea of globalization and modernity as expressed through a range of -scapes (Appadurai, 1996).

It is challenging to categorize real-life experiences since they are not divided into "scapes or experiences," but rather are lived through a web of relationships. The use and introduction of technology, which is intimately related to consumer behaviour patterns, individual purchasing power, strategies for making a living, experiences with migration, national economic policy, and global economic processes, is often how new media is experienced.

Kearney (1995:550) adds that the emergence of unlimited, multidimensional spaces where people can interact and forge their identities is another aspect of globalization. Rather than being viewed as distinct, bounded entities, cultures are now considered to be dynamic and situated about one another (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 7). Globalization and modernity, as they are experienced and appropriated within a specific region, are entangled with other components of that social network to produce a dynamic social plane on which people interact (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 7). Furthermore, as Kearney claims, globalization entails the opening of unbounded, multi-dimensional spaces in which people interact and produce identity (Kearney, 1995: 550). Rather than being viewed as distinct, bounded entities, cultures are now considered to be dynamic and situated in relation to one another (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 7).

Trace the connections, processes, experiences, and objects that interact to influence youths as well as be appropriated by them by looking at the changes youths experience in the expression of their gendered identities through their experiences of globalization and modernity (Latour 2005). These connections join wider processes with more local experiences.

An important topic on how globalization affects young people's lives during the late modern age has been brought forward by Fleerackers (2012). One of the biggest factors contributing to the impoverished conditions many young people in developing nations experience is globalization.

The majority of today's youth are generally in a better position to benefit from the processes of globalization than any previous generation, and globalization can have a positive impact on human development. It offers great potential to advance human progress, reduce insecurity, relieve vulnerability, and eradicate poverty (Latour, 2005).

The majority of scientific and policy discourse on the subject is focused on crisis-related issues, driven by recently hotly contested topics like female genital mutilation, child soldiers, AIDS orphans, child slavery and trafficking, and the sexual abuse of young children, particularly in Southern Africa. Even though societal development and globalization present new chances, this is still the case.

Recent research has confirmed that young people's social insertion, or their more-or-less predictable integration and blending into larger society during adolescence, is extremely unstable (Abink, 2014:7-8).

Cuervo & Wyn's (2017) study highlights pressing issues that young people face regularly. They draw attention to the necessity of creating environments that encourage young people's meaningful participation, the value of offline and online communities in promoting young people's wellbeing and sense of belonging, and the impact of institutions like schools and welfare agencies on young people's day-to-day lives. Even though each study is situated within its own unique social, political, and economic context, they all emphasize the proactive and frequently underappreciated work done by adolescents to shape their own lives and the futures of their communities through practices of belonging. According to Charity and Sheila (2009), young people in Africa find global arts and media to be the most engaging outlets. Since the early colonial period in Africa, arts and culture have served as weapons for liberation and decolonization (Charity & Sheila, 2009). Kenyan youth have used hip hop as a tool for liberation and decolonization, addressing local concerns and engaging in political dialogue. They have come together to represent unity across ethnicities, both nationally and internationally (Charity, M & Sheila, P. 2009).

More recently using social media in particular, young people have voiced their ideas and opinions on a range of subjects, from straightforward criticism of the government (as happened

in the case of the kidnapped Chibok girls in Northern Nigeria in 2014) to full-fledged revolutions (as happened in the case of the June 30 movement in Egypt in 2013).

The disappearance of the kidnapped Chibok girls, which had occurred three weeks earlier, was brought to public notice by young people using social media. Massive Facebook and Twitter campaigns using the now-famous hashtag "Bring Back Our Girls" brought attention to Nigeria (UNFPA, UN 2011).

This study focuses on how youths' lives are significantly impacted by global technology, how it affects young people's daily lives in Ethiopia, how Ethiopian youths respond to global culture, how they use technology to their advantage to affect change in the nation, and how technology enables youth social movements in Ethiopia.

Anthropologists studying the Oromo youth political movement may examine how globalization and transnational connections shape activism, solidarity, and mobilization. They may analyze diaspora networks, social media activism, and international solidarity movements concerning the Oromo struggle for rights and recognition.

Globalization theory offers valuable insights into understanding the Oromo youth protest movement of 2014 to 2018, particularly about how global forces intersect with local dynamics to shape social movements and activism. Here are some ways in which globalization theory can be applied to analyze the Oromo youth protest: Globalization theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of societies and the flow of ideas, information, and activism across national borders. The Oromo youth protest movement benefited from transnational networks of Oromo diaspora communities, human rights organizations, and solidarity movements that mobilized support, raised awareness, and advocated for the Oromo cause on the global stage.

Globalization has facilitated the rise of digital activism and social media as powerful tools for organizing, mobilizing, and disseminating information in social movements. The Oromo youth protest utilized platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to connect with supporters, share videos and testimonies of state violence, and coordinate protests both within Ethiopia and among the Oromo diaspora worldwide. The use of social media as form of political resistance is one of the guiding principle of Oromo youth movement and thus globalization theory in align

with social capital theory is the principal theoretical perspective that guide this research endeavor.

Globalization theory highlights the unequal distribution of wealth and resources that accompanies neoliberal economic policies, which often exacerbate inequalities and marginalize certain groups within society. The Oromo youth protest can be understood as a response to economic marginalization, land dispossession, and unequal development policies implemented by the Ethiopian government, which are shaped by global economic forces and neoliberal agendas.

Globalization theory also underscores the role of cultural identity and collective consciousness in shaping social movements and resistance. The Oromo youth protest was driven by a sense of Oromo identity, pride, and cultural assertion, which were both shaped by and resisted against dominant narratives imposed by the Ethiopian state and global power structures. Globalization has facilitated increased awareness and advocacy around human rights issues on the global stage. The Oromo youth protest movement drew attention to human rights violations, state repression, and political injustices in Ethiopia, leading to international condemnation, diplomatic pressure, and calls for accountability from the Ethiopian government by global human rights organizations, foreign governments, and international bodies.

By applying globalization theory to the Oromo youth protest movement of 2014 to 2018, researchers can gain insights into the complex interplay between global forces and local dynamics, as well as the ways in which transnational connections, digital technologies, economic policies, identity politics, and human rights discourses shape contemporary social movements and activism in the context of Ethiopia and the wider world.

2.4 Conceptual Framework on Oromo Youth Political Movement

This study aims to explore the interplay between agency and structure in the context of political involvement and subsequent transformation of Oromo Youth. The study reveals that the Oromo youth's political mobilization and agentive role were widely supported by the larger Oromo community, which is an integral part of the societal structure. As a result, there is a symbiotic relationship between youth individual agency and society as a structure. The case of Burayu

Oromo youth exemplifies the interplay between youth agency and the Oromo societal structure in the ongoing political mobilization of youth in Ethiopia.

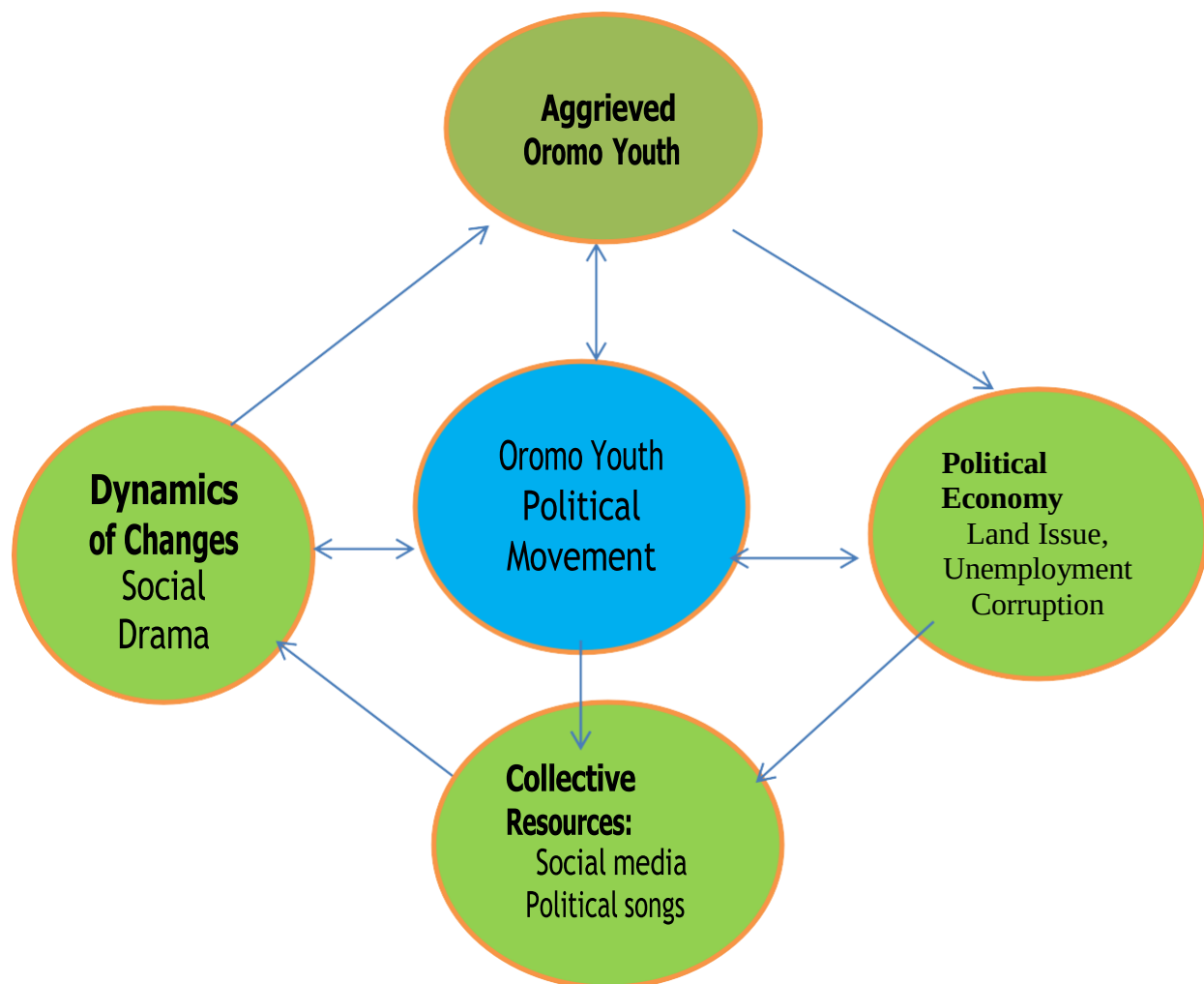
To investigate the political mobilization of youth in Ethiopia, this study employs interrelated theories. Thus, this research employed a theoretical framework that integrates resource mobilization theory, social capital, and social drama anthropological approaches which could be termed dynamic Mobilization Theory. Dynamic Mobilization Theory posits that social movements, such as the Oromo youth political movement, are shaped by the interplay of resources, social networks, and symbolic actions.

The Oromo youth movement from 2014 to 2018 can be effectively analyzed through the lens of political economy theory. Driven by economic marginalization, political exclusion, and a strong sense of cultural identity, the movement's strategic use of nonviolent protest led to significant political changes in Ethiopia. This case highlights the importance of addressing socio-economic inequalities and political grievances to achieve sustainable political reform. Among the mobilizing tools, social media is the leading one that unites young people for political action in Ethiopia. Moreover, the Social Capital approach is used to locate the social capital that helped Oromo Youth for political action and to see the political mobilization of youth in Ethiopia. The approach helps to investigate how Oromo youth emerged and developed for social action by utilizing social capital such as music and other resources in the 2014 to 2018 youth protests and mobilization in Ethiopia. Social Capital Component: The theory also emphasizes the role of social networks, trust, and solidarity in fostering political mobilization. It recognizes that strong social ties and shared identity among activists provide the social capital necessary for collective action. These social networks not only facilitate coordination and communication but also generate a sense of belonging and mutual support essential for sustained mobilization. The study employs a resource mobilization theory to identify the mobilization tools used by young people in Ethiopia during the 2014 to 2018 youth protests. This aspect of the theory acknowledges the importance of resources such as organization, leadership, media access, and financial support in facilitating collective action. It emphasizes how the availability and strategic utilization of resources enable social movements to mobilize, sustain momentum, and achieve their goals.

The social drama anthropological approach highlights the performative and symbolic dimensions of protest movements. It emphasizes how protests serve as dramatic displays of

resistance, identity assertion, and contestation of power structures. Within the framework of Dynamic Mobilization Theory, social drama is seen as a tool for mobilizing emotions, galvanizing public attention, and framing grievances in ways that resonate with broader audiences.

By integrating these three perspectives, Dynamic Mobilization Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how social movements emerge, evolve, and achieve impact. It recognizes the dynamic and interconnected nature of resources, social networks, and symbolic actions in shaping collective mobilization efforts. This framework can be applied to analyze various social movements, including those led by marginalized groups like the Oromo youth, and inform strategies for fostering effective political mobilization and social change.



Source: Researchers' own frame based on field data.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Analytical Framework

3.1 Background of Research Site

The town of Burayu is located on the road to Ambo, 15 kilometers west of Addis Ababa's outer limits. Burayu Town, which had a population of 100,200 in 2010, is located around 15 kilometers from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The town had significant growth, as seen by the population growth, which went from 4,138 in 1984 to 10,027 in 1994 to 63,873 in 2007 to 122,397 in 2022 (CSA Population Project ,2022). Young people made up about 48.7% of the most recent population, which was growing at a pace of 4.28 percent per year⁵.

Burayu town is quite close to Addis Ababa when compared to other metropolitan areas in the region⁶. Under Burayu town administration, there is six kebele. Because Burayu youth have established themselves as change agents in a variety of fields, including politics, economics, religion, and other areas of participation, the researcher has chosen to focus on them. They have used technology, particularly Facebook and the mainstream media, to get their message through. Therefore, the focus of this study will be on young activists who use technology and other tools to influence politics in their communities.

Because Burayu youth have established themselves as change agents in a variety of fields, including politics, economics, religion, and other areas of participation, the researcher has chosen to focus on them. They have used technology, particularly Facebook and the mainstream media, to get their message through. Young activists who use technology and other means to affect politics in their communities have thus been the focus of this study.

3.2 Research Methodology

Any scientist conducting research must consider both their philosophical worldview and the specific techniques or methodologies they will employ. A researcher's decision to make explicit the underlying philosophical principles can be better understood through a prior study strategy. This approach aids in clarifying the choice of research methodology (Croswell, 2009).

A philosophical view influences the practices of the research and need to be identified to conduct research. A research initially adopts stances towards the nature of knowledge and this stance will underlie the entire research processes and governs the theoretical perspectives selected. The theoretical perspectives will be implicit in the research questions and dictate the researcher's choices of methodology and finally this methodology will in turn inform the choices of research methods employed (Guba,1990).

Since this research unit of analysis is youth political participation, the research is guided by socially constructed knowledge claims which assume that individual seeks understanding in which they live and work and the social construction of knowledge about the world (Guba, 1990).

It assumes that the best approach to understand the world is to examine how people see and define it, develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meaning directed toward certain objects or things. These meaning are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning in down to a few categories or ideas. The research is assumed to investigate those assumptions by thoroughly looking at the phenomenon holistically and in describing, interpreting, explaining and examining the issue of youth movement and social change in the study area.

Indeed, how researchers proceed depends upon a range of factors, including their beliefs about the nature of the social world (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology), the purpose(s) and goals of the research, the characteristics of research participants, and the positions and environments of the researchers themselves.

Epistemological stance raises how reality can be known, the relationship between the knower and what is known, and the characteristics, the principles, the assumptions that guide the process of knowing and the achievement of findings, and the possibility of that process being shared and repeated by others in order to assess the quality of the research and the reliability of those findings.

3.2. Ontological and Epistemological stances

The philosophical underpinnings this research acknowledges the subjective construction of knowledge and the presence of multiple realities. This acknowledges the existence and study of the interplay of multiple views and voice. Yet, this knowledge cannot be understood without understanding the meaning that individuals attribute to that knowledge – their thoughts, feelings beliefs and actions (Illingworth, 2006).

Ontologically, this research has employed relativist position that asserts there is multiple interpretation of reality and reality is only knowable through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings, and no reality exists independently of these (Crotty, 1998). Since this research unit of analysis is urban youth political movement in Burayu the research is guided by socially constructed knowledge claim which assume that individual seek understanding in which they live and work and the social construction of knowledge about the world. It assumes that the best approach to understand the world is to examine how people see and define it, develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meaning directs toward certain objects or things.

These meaning are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning into a few categories or ideas. The research has assumed to investigate those assumptions by thoroughly looking the phenomenon holistically and in describing, interpreting, explaining and examining the issue of youth movement and social change in the study area. The research has attempt to discern meanings within the context in which the social actions take place performing the empirical research in which Geertz (1973) calls it thick description that involves accurately describing social actions and exploring underlying meanings.

Thus, this research has employed a subjective epistemological stance that see reality as subjective and variable across individuals, and its major goal has to understand how these views of reality differ and how people come to make sense of the world and carry out their everyday lives. The theoretical orientation of this research is an interpretive one which focuses on the way in which urban youth make sense of their subjective reality and attaches meaning to it. This

approach enable to describe the lived experiences of urban youth from their own viewpoints and understand how youth interpret‘ their experiences and posits knowledge as a social and cultural construction and the social world is actively constructed by interactions, that those interactions usually invoke symbols that are important to those interacting and that a key goal of the research is to understand how people construct and make sense of the world they live in and of the other people in it.

3.3 Research Design and Approach

Creswell (2003) identifies three different approaches to social science research: qualitative, quantitative and mixed. For this study, qualitative approach yields a better understanding of research problems and provides a deeper understanding of the examined behavior gives a voice to everyone involved in the behavior being examined and makes the conclusion to be strong (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Creswell (2003) discusses options on the priority within these methods for addressing the study’s purposes in research. In this research, qualitative approach of data collection has been employed. The decision is based on the nature of the research and the type of data required meeting the given set of objectives. A qualitative research approach has been used for this study to extract the meaning buried in people's behaviors, relationships, sentiments, and symbols. Stated differently, investigating events and experiences from the viewpoints of young people experiencing them is one of the main goals of this study.

The tradition of qualitative research tends to focus on the *meaning and motivations* that underlie cultural symbols like language, personal experiences, and phenomena and on detailed understandings of processes in the social world. The goal of this research is to understand how young people make sense of their settings and experiences through symbols, social roles, identities, and other elements of culture and why young people think and act as they do. This research emphasis on individuals‘ own interpretations of their experiences and studying what they say and do in detail. This study makes extensive use of the statements of the research participant to illustrate how they are seeing and shaping the world. Understanding how young people interpret the social world is the core of this research. To do so, it is necessary to study people in their natural settings and thus the researcher would seek an insider’s perspective on a

subject matter. Using qualitative methods does not ensure the quality of the research outcomes but should be parts of the generating thinking that encapsulates ideas about how social life of a given society is ordered, structure and patterned, how social actors are formed and how they interact with one another (Atkinson, 2017:2).

3.4 Data Sources of the Study

This research has been conducted under the auspices of primary and secondary sources. In this research endeavor both primary and secondary data sources and publications are essential to construct and examine youth political mobilization in Burayu, Oromia National Regional state. Relevant literature were sought to construct a theoretical frame work for the study. Related literature was also reviewed on youth social movement and political mobilization. Secondary data has been thoroughly examined from various printed sources such as publications, newspapers, books, articles etc., and electronic sources such as online publications, websites and web portals etc. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing documents both printed and electronic materials such as computer and internet transmitted materials (Bowen 2009). Using procedure social media texts and materials such as face book, You Tube, Telegram and main stream media texts gathered and examined in order to elicit meaning, understand and develop empirical knowledge out of it.

Information from these sources have been used to construct conceptual/theoretical frameworks and to review-related empirical literature on the topic. Youth everyday discussion in the social media as well as main stream media have been collected and analyzed so as to understand the political role that youth plays using these instruments and how powerful are the themes they raised and its mobilizing effects.

3.5 Selection of the Study Participants

When researching youth political movements, the careful selection of study participants is paramount. Validity and reliability of the research findings can be enhanced by considering factors such as age range, diversity, level of involvement, geographical location, inclusivity, and adherence to ethical principles, including informed consent. The first consideration in participant selection was the age range, which was set between 15 and 35 years. This range was chosen to align with the study's objectives and the context of youth political movements. A diverse

participant pool was essential to provide a comprehensive understanding of these movements. Diversity was ensured by including participants from various gender identities, places of origin, socioeconomic statuses, and political affiliations. This approach aimed to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences, offering a more accurate representation of the youth political movement in the study area.

Participants were categorized based on their involvement in the youth political movement. Some were active leaders and organizers, while others were passive supporters. This differentiation was critical to understanding the various levels of engagement and their impact on the movement's goals and strategies. During the preliminary phase, active participants were identified as key informants for interviews, ensuring that their insights contributed significantly to the research.

Geographical diversity was another important criterion. Participants were selected from various regions to capture the local variations in the movement's goals, challenges, and approaches. This consideration helped contextualize the findings, offering insights into the distinct regional dynamics of political movements.

Accessing participants required employing various techniques and strategies. Through personal and social networks, rapport was established with informants. These relationships were built on mutual respect and empathy, fostering trust and open communication. This approach facilitated the collection of candid and reliable data.

Efforts were made to include participants from marginalized and minority communities to understand their unique challenges, motivations, and objectives within the movement. This inclusivity ensured that the research captured diverse viewpoints and addressed issues of representation.

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the participant selection process. Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, potential risks, and benefits, and their voluntary consent was obtained before participation (Bernard, 2006:189–190). This ensured the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were employed to identify and recruit participants.

Purposive Sampling: Used to select participants directly involved in youth political movements, ensuring their relevance to the study objectives.

Snowball Sampling: Allowed initial informants to recommend additional participants, helping to overcome trust barriers and access individuals with varied backgrounds (Bernard, 2006:193–194). Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with diverse youth participants aged 18 to 35. The groups included four male and two female groups. The discussions explored the role of young Oromo individuals in political mobilization and protests in Burayu from 2014 to 2018. Participants were selected based on their involvement in these movements, particularly their roles during the protests.

Additionally, 12 key informants were purposively selected for interviews, while 16 youth participants were chosen for in-depth interviews. These interviews aimed to identify patterns of political participation and mobilization influencing the changes that occurred in the region during the specified period.

Participants responded positively to interview requests after the researcher clarified the study's purpose and their role within it. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants to ensure their comfort and convenience. Permission to record the interviews was systematically sought and respected, maintaining transparency throughout the fieldwork and research process.

By carefully considering age range, diversity, level of involvement, geographical context, and inclusivity, this study ensured a robust and ethical selection of participants. These measures, combined with appropriate sampling techniques and rapport-building strategies, contributed to a comprehensive understanding of youth political movements in Burayu.

3.6 Data Collection from the field

3.6.1 Phases of Data Collection

The data collection for this research was conducted in six phases, spanning from October 2019 to May 2021. Each phase played a distinct role in gathering, verifying, and organizing data to address the research objectives effectively.

Phase 1: Initial Fieldwork (October 12 – December 3, 2019)

The first phase of the research lasted 20 days and included obtaining research permission, collecting secondary data, and conducting a preliminary survey. Given the politically sensitive nature of the topic, accessing informants and building rapport proved to be significant challenges. My unfamiliarity with the research site and being new to the Burayu area further complicated these efforts. Additionally, the political instability during this period heightened public apprehension, making participants hesitant to discuss youth political roles or share insights.

To facilitate entry into the field, I relied on connections with family and friends, who helped establish initial contact with local youth. My supervisor, Dr. Fekadu Adugna, also played a crucial role in fostering rapport with key youth participants. Over time, I was able to strengthen my relationships with informants, allowing me to observe their daily political activities and engagement more closely.

Phase 2: In-Depth Fieldwork (December 15, 2019 – January 15, 2020)

In the second phase, I returned to the field to conduct interviews with youth participants and engage in activities aimed at deepening my understanding of the people and the area. This phase was instrumental in gathering extensive information and bridging gaps identified during the preliminary survey.

Phase 3: Analysis and Reporting (January 15 – February 15, 2020)

After completing the second phase, I returned from the field to report my findings to my thesis advisor. Discussions during this period were essential in refining the study's focus and addressing any emerging challenges. This phase also marked the beginning of the draft thesis writing process.

Phase 4: Secondary Data Collection and Verification (February 15 – March 25, 2020)

During the fourth phase, I focused on collecting additional secondary data to address any remaining information gaps. I also revisited and cross-checked data gathered in previous phases to ensure consistency and reliability.

Phase 5: Supplemental Fieldwork (March 26 – May 26, 2020)

In this phase, I conducted supplemental fieldwork to augment and validate the data collected earlier. Revisiting the field allowed for deeper engagement with informants and provided opportunities to clarify any ambiguities in the data.

Phase 6: Writing and Submission (June 2020 – May 2021)

The final phase was dedicated to writing the dissertation. During this period, I compiled, analyzed, and synthesized the data collected throughout the research process. All dissertation chapters were drafted, and the first complete draft was submitted to my supervisors for review and feedback.

By structuring the data collection in six distinct phases, this research ensured a systematic and thorough approach to understanding the complexities of youth political movements in Burayu. Each phase built upon the preceding one, enabling a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the research topic.

3.6.2 Methods of Data collections

The central focus of this study on youth political participation necessitates an ethnographic approach, which systematically examines social realities and lived experiences (Atkinson, 2017:20). Given the multimodal nature of everyday life, the research approach incorporates diverse methods, including sensory and visual techniques, to reflect this complexity.

A variety of data collection techniques have been employed, such as analyzing documents (texts, photographs, and sound recordings), observing conversations and social interactions, and documenting participants' daily activities and local environments. These methods aim to

construct a detailed narrative of events, phenomena, and experiences related to youth political engagement. Life stories were also gathered to explore participants' life histories, perceptions, emotions, and sentiments.

To understand the youth political movement in Burayu town, data were collected through in-depth interviews, key informants, observations, focus group discussions, and informal conversations. Secondary data from official documents and published materials supplemented this primary data. These data were gathered over multiple field visits between September 2020 and September 2021. Study participants were selected to represent a broad spectrum of youth political movements. Four group discussions were conducted—three with male groups and one with a female group—comprising informants aged 18 to 35 from various youth factions.

The snowball sampling method was employed to identify informants from diverse backgrounds for in-depth interviews. Nine key informants (six male and three female) were selected, and interviews focused on understanding political participation, mobilization, and the dynamics of change during the protests. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms and first initials replaced participants' real names, and some fieldwork details were anonymized.

Data collection methods were designed to elicit comprehensive descriptions of social phenomena while encouraging participants to openly share their experiences. Prolonged in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with politically active youths were prioritized, supported by detailed field notes on research settings and interactions. These methods enabled an analysis of key agents of change, significant relationships, and the characteristics of the youth population in the study area.

Each research tool complemented the others. For instance, intensive interviews provided detailed personal accounts, while focus groups revealed collective dynamics and social contexts. This combination ensured a holistic understanding of the subject.

Ethnographic Observation

Ethnographic observation was fundamental to understanding the research context and producing authentic narratives. Participant and non-participant observations were conducted to gather data

on daily interactions, events, and behaviors. The political protests by Oromo youth required meticulous fieldwork to comprehend participants' attitudes, motivations, and strategies. Establishing rapport with participants was crucial to gain deeper insights. Through observation, the study identified key leaders of the movement and their organizing strategies, as well as the social networks and communication methods, such as social media and community meetings, that facilitated protests. Observations also documented the impact of demonstrations on daily life, including work, education, and family dynamics. The Oromo identity was prominently showcased by protesters through dress, language, customs, and traditions. The study also examined intergenerational interactions within the community and their influence on the movement. Ethnographic observation provided insights into participants' motivations, emotions, and perceptions. It tracked the evolution of activism, noting internal tensions, external threats, and the broader effects on the Oromo community, including identity and social cohesion.

Interviews

Interviews, both formal and informal, were conducted with key informants, including youth activists, government officials, community workers, and journalists. Informants were selected for their knowledge and relevance, and a snowball sampling method was used to identify additional participants.

A total of 28 informants (21 male and 7 female) participated, with 16 selected for in-depth interviews and 12 serving as key informants. Interviews explored topics such as the history of youth political mobilization, motivations for participation, challenges faced, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. Informants also provided insights into the use of social media for organizing networks and mobilizing protests.

In-depth interviews allowed for repeated interactions with participants, fostering trust and enabling the collection of rich, detailed data. These interviews covered daily activities, social movements, challenges, and the relationships between youth and other community groups.

Focus Group Discussions

Six focus group discussions were conducted: four with male groups and two with female groups, each comprising six participants. These discussions generated rich data on youth engagement in social movements, their motivations, and the interplay between different sociopolitical contexts. The method facilitated the collection of diverse perspectives and provided insights into collective political sentiments.

Case Studies

Case studies supplemented other methods by providing detailed accounts of youth social movements and agency. Informants were selected based on their activism, challenges faced, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. The cases offered nuanced insights into the outcomes of youth participation and agency within social movements.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify and categorize patterns and themes during data collection. Coding and indexing facilitated the organization of qualitative materials, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and observational notes. Content analysis was applied to documentary data to triangulate findings and enhance the study's validity and reliability. The analysis aimed to describe and contextualize specific behaviors and relationships while integrating data from multiple sources for a comprehensive understanding.

3.8 Ethical Reflections

Ethical considerations were central to this research. As Bell (2008) and Tatek Abebe (2009) emphasize, researchers must uphold the principles of doing good, avoiding harm, and respecting participants' autonomy, safety, and dignity. This study adhered to ethical guidelines, maintaining reflexivity (Geertz, 1973) and promoting participant involvement throughout the research

Process. Confidentiality and anonymity were prioritized, with pseudonyms used to protect participants' identities. Trust-building measures included transparency regarding the researcher's identity and intentions, ensuring informed consent and reciprocity. The research also respected local values and customs, ensuring that participants' rights and dignity were safeguarded throughout the study.

Youth Informants and Ethical Considerations

Context and cultural values have greater impacts on how to key ethical issues such as power imbalance, informed consent and volunteerism are addressed. In this thesis, I follow the ethical standards that set a principle to do researchers considering each participant equally. In this sense, the research strictly follows the principle of not harming young participants in whatsoever situations and conditions. This research is strictly grounded in the expectation that participants will suffer no harms as a result of the research process or its outcomes (Tatek Abebe, 2009).

The research is in a position to protect the value and decisions of research participants whatever his/her age, family background, and class. The research is guided by the principles of respecting the voices, views and opinions of the participants and act upon the participant interests. In this study reflexivity and openness has been important principle since this research is an ethnography accounts that expose researcher for an extended period of contacts with community and research participants. For ethical reason, the full names of participants involved in the case studies have not revealed. Rather, I have used the first letter of their names and pseudonyms.

Issue of Informed Consents, Confidentiality & Anonymity

Gaining participants' trust is one of the most significant challenges field researchers face. Establishing rapport requires a long process of interaction and negotiation, during which researchers must build relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. The guiding principles of this research are grounded in ethical practices, including raising awareness about research ethics, ensuring no harm to participants, respecting their rights, and prioritizing their well-being. Informed consent was a foundational component of this study. Before engaging participants in any research activities, the purpose of the project was thoroughly explained to them. Participants were given the freedom to decide whether to participate, with the option to withdraw at any stage without penalty. They were fully informed about the nature of the research, any potential risks, and how their data would be used. Confidentiality policies were

also clearly outlined, specifying who would have access to the data generated during the research (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007). As a qualitative researcher, establishing positive relationships with participants was essential to obtaining their consent and cooperation. Building these relationships required significant time, effort, effective communication, and respectful dialogue. To protect participants' privacy, identifiable information was strictly avoided. Pseudonyms were used in place of real names, and some fieldwork details were altered or withheld to ensure anonymity. These measures were taken to safeguard participants' identities, especially given the sensitivity of the research topic, which could impact their social lives.

Throughout the study, the safety, security, and rights of participants were top priorities, as outlined by ethical guidelines (Young & Barrett, 2001). Maintaining confidentiality was a vital practice adhered to throughout the research process. Ensuring the anonymity of participants was crucial to protect them from potential harm. To this end, pseudonyms were consistently used, and all information was handled with the utmost care to preserve participant confidentiality and uphold their safety and dignity. By following these rigorous ethical standards, this study sought to build trust, protect participants, and ensure the integrity of the research process.

3.9 Field Work Situation

The fieldwork for this dissertation is full of challenges since it needs the active involvement of the researcher in the day to day activities of the people concerned. Thus, in the beginning of my fieldwork I was considered to be an 'outsider' to the region and the people. In the first phase of the fieldwork, I did little more than running to get official research permission from Zone administrative office at Burayu to that of the local level at Burayu Kebeles which was a difficult task and took me more than one week. The next step was being familiarized with the site and the people and identifying key youth informants to begin my research. During this time the town officials collaborated positively through friends who know the area very well and have numerous friends from the area. I am not a good conversant in Afaan Oromo and thus I had to employ an interpreter who helped me very much in identifying reliable informants and get to know with many people and these activities took me another two weeks' time.

The most difficult task during this time was how to make rapport with youth political participants and getting the trust of them as I was considered someone who was either

government cadre or the members of the opposition party. So I had to persuade them that I am just a researcher who got an interest on youth political movement and I have no political agenda. Finally I won the trust of the informants which make me to get each details of the youth political movement in Oromia. During the time of the interviews and focus group discussions informants were hesitant concerning about the roots reasons of youth mobilization and fragmented youth movement and the emergence of misunderstand between youth groups. The reason, I believe, is that there is a taboo to tell for an 'outsider' for the people consider themselves as Oromo brothers. In the interview they only focus on how youth mobilization had emerged and what kinds of achievement that achieved but left aside major debatable issues in youth political mobilization. Thus I had to make a mechanism so as to identify this one of which was individual interview from both government supporter youth groups which made them free to talk about the other anti-government support group members where they were absent. This opened the door of discussion about the other which later in the presence of both groups to talk freely about the two groups interactions, both issues of misunderstanding and friendly relations in the passage of time. But at the official level they were unfriendly to discuss about the issues of the other youth groups relation and also reluctant in allowing me to see archival material. Lastly, to write up this thesis, I had to make checking and rechecking and counter-checking the data obtained, by increasing the number of informants I have in the area. Moreover, I had to carry out informal discussions during coffee ceremonies, in market places and when they were performing their routine in their home. Other than this method focus group discussion, in depth interview and a thorough observation of everyday activities of Youth made the research at least partially fulfilled the goal and make the researcher understand the political mobilization of this youth group.

Chapter Four: Oromo Youth Political Movement: Its History and Development

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the origins of the Oromo youth political movement since the 1960s, exploring how participants have challenged the status quo from the early 1960s to the present. The study focuses on the impact of the nation's evolving political landscape on youth political identity and its transformation for political ends. It delves into the history of youth political mobilization, various mobilization methods, and the influence of history and societal position, among other factors, on Ethiopian youth political engagement and mobilization under the current political regime. A thorough analysis of entities like the Macha Tulama Association, pivotal in promoting Oromo socio-economic and cultural progress, is essential. The role of Oromo culture in the ethnic formation and political mobilization of youth is also scrutinized in this chapter.

This chapter also considers the employment of cultural capital for the mobilization of youth and politics in Ethiopia following the implementation of Ethnic Federalism in 1994–1995, which significantly impacted the political engagement of Ethiopian youth. The nation's constitution underwent amendments by the newly established government, spearheaded by the EPRDF, to incorporate provisions related to socio-political rights and the recognition of Afaan Oromo as the national language. Additionally, the introduction of Qubbee in 1994 served as a communicative instrument for the youth of Oromia. This section delves into how the constitution has shaped the current generation's outlook on the growth of political awareness and the rise of proactive political participants within the Oromia youth.

4.2 Genesis of Oromo Youth Movement

The political engagement of Ethiopian youth began in the 1960s with their active participation in student movements, responding to global political ideologies. They raised their voices, became more politicized, and significantly impacted local politics while advocating for social, economic, and political reforms (Balsvik, 1985). By embracing diverse ideologies and political instruments, youths of the period Youth of the period has started struggling against the regime. Their political newspapers, pamphlets, and poems galvanized the public.

The youths' contributions to the 1974 Revolution profoundly affected the sociopolitical fabric of Ethiopian communities through their stirring poems, newspapers, and political pamphlets (Balsvik, 1985; Bahiru Zewde, 2014). Among the famous poems of Addis Ababa University

students of this period were —Melasen Tewoolegn (Just Spare my Tongue) by Abebe Worke, «Berekete Mergem» (Gift of Damnation) by Hailu Gebre Yohannes, —Bone Under the cliff, by Yohannes Admasu, «The poor man Speaks», by Tamru Feisa, «Iski Teteyku» (Submit to cross examination by Yohannes Admassu, «Who (Actually) is the Ethiopian? by Ibsa Gutema (Kiflu Tadesse, 1993:36).

It was under this condition that the Oromo intellectual has started to voice the grievances and marginalization of the Oromo community of Ethiopia since the early period of political struggle in Ethiopia. The Oromo's activism history dates back to the early 1960s, when The Macha Tulama society was established as a welfare society to strengthen and grow the Oromo community in Ethiopia. The Macha Tulema Self Help Association, a volunteer group established in the 1960s, was the first expression of Oromo identity (Paulos Chanie, 1998). It was initially for the social and educational improvement of the Oromo community. The Macha Tulama Association, under the guidance of Colonel Alemu Kittesa and Haile Mariam Gamada, played a pivotal role in fostering this activism among Oromo political elites. Their significant efforts led to the incorporation of three self-help groups from the Shewa Province, now part of Central Oromia, into the Association. The dedication of Alemu Kittesa and Hailemariam Gamada was instrumental in merging these groups, establishing a unified sociopolitical agenda that served the interests of the Oromo people across Ethiopia (Olana, 2013). The primary goal of this association was to promote the socioeconomic and cultural development of the Oromo people, as well as to foster Oromo ethnic identity (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997:38). In the remote areas of Shewa and its neighboring province, the association focused on providing services such as constructing roads, schools, and clinics, as well as building mosques and churches for communities lacking places of worship. It endeavored to support the vulnerable, impoverished, and disabled within these marginalized communities. Additionally, it promoted health literacy and empowered local communities to stand up for their rights.

The establishment of the Macha Tulama Association represented a significant turning point in the development of Oromo nationalism and provided a vital forum for Oromo political mobilization (Teferi Nigussie, 2019). The Macha Tulama Association distinguished itself as a political organization that challenged the Ethiopian government's disregard for the Oromo language, culture, and identity in a quiet but firm manner. It was the first organization to actively involve people from every social class in Oromo society, which helped the Oromo people

develop a stronger sense of national identity. With its appearance, the Oromo people began to systematically oppose the Ethiopian imperial regime. The association strongly voiced its complaints about cultural oppression, discrimination, and unstable land tenure brought on by rising evictions of pastoralists and peasants as a result of the introduction and growth of commercial farming in Ethiopia (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997).

Following the creation of branch offices in the majority of Oromia, the association amassed a sizable following and evolved into a pan-Oromo social movement. General Tadesse Biru and Haile Mariam Gamada had a significant leadership role in this regard (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997:39). This affiliation strengthened the Oromo people's resolve and political mobilization in their fight for political rights. Youth were heavily active in this movement and contributed greatly by joining the organization in Addis Ababa and the nearby urban regions.

The disturbing events surrounding the arrest and subsequent death of the leaders of the Macha and Tulama Self-Help Association in 1966 coincided with the significant radicalization of the student movement at the University of Addis Ababa. Students at Addis Ababa University became increasingly radicalized in the late 1960s and early 1970s, leading to the formation of independent political organizations (Kiflu Tadesse, 1993).

The Haile Selassie administration failed to fulfill their pledge to prioritize Ethiopian development during their over three decades in office, which led to numerous sociopolitical and economic challenges and resistance for the regime. Moreover, the regime was characterized by the persecution and suppression of religious, welfare, and social associations of the *edir* and *mahaber* type like MTA (Kiflu Tadesse, 1993:310). The indignation of the regime has created a favorable condition for the emergence and flourishing of political parties in Ethiopia. During the period of political unrest that ensued in the aftermath of the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia, numerous Ethiopian youths made the decision to align themselves with multiethnic political organizations as opposed to organizations or parties with an ethno-nationalist focus. One particularly noteworthy trend was the involvement of members of the educated Oromo elite, who actively advocated for the rights and equality of all Ethiopians, irrespective of their ethnic origins. This progressive stance was exemplified by the dedicated efforts of individuals such as Haile Fida and Senay Leke, who committed their lives to the cause of promoting equality and justice across all Ethiopian communities.

In this climate, a majority of students opted to join the Ethiopian People's Liberation Organization (EPLO) (Kiflu Tadesse, 1993:58). However, there were others, like Senay Leke, who chose to align themselves with the Ethiopian Minority National Struggle (Echat), and Haile Fida, who became associated with the All Ethiopians Socialist Movement (Andargachew Assegid, 2020). These varied affiliations reflect the complex and dynamic nature of the political landscape in Ethiopia during this period.

In the late 20th century, a group of radical students from Addis Ababa University took an initiative to establish political organizations that were reflective of the interests of the Oromo ethnic group in Ethiopia. These organizations aimed to redirect their focus towards addressing national concerns that were impacting their community. Notably, within the Oromo community, a faction of militant Oromo intellectuals and leaders played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for the emergence of Oromo nationalist political groups, prominently including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). In the late 1970s, Oromo elites played a pivotal role in mobilizing the population towards insurrection. Concurrently, a number of individuals became affiliated with political organizations that were founded based on racial or geographic considerations. Notably, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front emerged as the two most prominent factions dedicated to championing the liberation of their respective communities. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) emerged as a prominent political organization distinguished by its adoption of diverse strategies and methodologies to mobilize popular support and advance its cause. Key figures such as Baro Tumsa, Mamo Mazamir, Ibsa Gutema, Mekonnen Gallan, and Taha Ali Abdi— other Oromo students at Haile Selassie I University—played a pivotal role in spearheading a significant political campaign to address the socio-political and economic challenges confronting the Oromo community. Their concerted efforts were central to the founding of the OLF and the subsequent formation of a strategic alliance with the Macha and Tulama Association (MTA). This collaboration marked a transformative period for the association, culminating in the establishment of the Oromo national movement for political engagement, a milestone that underscored the radical reorientation of Oromo political activism (Hassen, 1996, p. 75).

4.3 Oromia and the Qubbee Generation

The period spanning the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 through the 1990s marked a transformative chapter for youth in Oromia, defined by significant political turmoil, organized resistance, and a renaissance of cultural identity. The revolution, which brought an end to the feudal monarchy of Emperor Haile Selassie, ushered in the authoritarian rule of the Derg regime (Markakis, 2011). This shift to centralized governance profoundly reshaped the socio-political landscape, deeply influencing the aspirations and struggles of Oromo youth. Confronted with systemic marginalization, these young individuals emerged as key drivers of resistance, challenging policies that perpetuated the suppression of Oromo identity and culture.

Central to this period was the formation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a political and military organization committed to the self-determination and rights of the Oromo people (Mohammed Hassen, 1996). The OLF became a critical platform for mobilizing youth, who played pivotal roles in grassroots organization and armed resistance (Mohammed Hassen, 1996). The widespread injustices faced by the Oromo community—including land dispossession, cultural erasure, and political disenfranchisement—galvanized the youth. Oromo students, in particular, engaged in intellectual and organizational activities such as study groups, the dissemination of literature, and educational discussions aimed at reclaiming and promoting awareness of Oromo history and culture (Keller, 1995). Despite the significant risks posed by state surveillance and violent repression, these efforts successfully cultivated a heightened political consciousness and a unified vision for the Oromo national movement.

Cultural revival efforts formed the backbone of the resistance, with initiatives focusing on the preservation and promotion of Afaan Oromo, traditional practices, and historical narratives. These efforts underscored the broader struggle for political autonomy and cultural integrity. Institutions like the OLF and the Macha and Tulama Association (MTA) were instrumental in embedding cultural identity within the framework of the Oromo liberation struggle (Baxter et al., 1996). By fostering a renewed sense of unity and purpose, these cultural initiatives not only resisted attempts at cultural erasure but also inspired a collective commitment to the Oromo cause.

Nonetheless, the activism and resilience of Oromo youth faced severe challenges. The Derg regime's Red Terror campaign targeted activists and their communities with brutal tactics,

including mass arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings. These actions disrupted educational systems, dismantled community networks, and imposed lasting socio-economic hardships on the younger generation (Markakis, 2011). Despite these adversities, the determination and resistance of Oromo youth maintained the momentum of the movement and laid a strong foundation for ongoing advocacy.

The fall of the Derg in the 1990s and the subsequent rise of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) introduced a new political era. While this transition initially promised greater regional autonomy, many Oromo youth continued to experience systemic marginalization and repression under the new regime (Assafa Jalata, 1993). Nevertheless, the political engagement and activism of Oromo youth during this transformative period were instrumental in shaping the trajectory of the Oromo national movement, ensuring that the pursuit of justice, self-determination, and cultural preservation remained central to their collective struggle.

Since the introduction of ethnic federalism, the political philosophies of the ruling party and its nationalist dogma have significantly influenced the political behavior of Ethiopian youth. The EPRDF administration believed that Ethiopian history needed to be revised and revisited in order to address the political injustice and inequality that had persisted in the country for decades. Its response was the ethnicization of state politics and the political system of the country. According to the size and geographic distribution of each ethnic group, the new political system has established an ethnic-based political system that divides political power and distributes resources (Vestel, 2016). The EPRDF spearheaded the introduction of the 1995 constitution, which encompassed a range of socio-political rights, including fundamental rights. It was grounded in the UN's declaration of universal rights and principles, thereby integrating democratic norms and international rights. The constitution aimed to enshrine the rights of ethnic communities and their self-governance. Ethiopia was structured into two city administrations, and nine national regional states. Each national state developed its own regional constitution and zoning. Authority was decentralized from the regional states to the zone administrations and further devolved to the weredas and kebeles, in line with the specific needs of the national state.

Yet the implementation of the constitution's goals and principles proved unfeasible. The constitutional rights that were assured to Ethiopian citizens largely remained unexercised.

Moreover, the political ideologies of the EPRDF have been causing a rift among the nation's diverse ethnic groups. Consequently, the dynamics among the ethnic groups constituting the nation have experienced considerable sociopolitical shifts. These shifts, particularly in the late 1990s, profoundly impacted the younger generation leading to a marked increase in the political awareness of the youth. Ethiopia's establishment of ethnic federalism gave national regional entities the flexibility to practice self-governance, protecting rights including the use of the national language for a variety of reasons. The Oromia Regional State was one of the national states established in Ethiopia as a result of the new constitution.

Afaan Oromo is currently available to the population as the regional state's official language for judicial, administrative, and educational purposes. The Oromia regional state issued a curriculum that made *Qubbee* a medium of instruction from primary through secondary school levels with the introduction of a new educational curriculum that focused on the native vernacular languages of each regional state (Wendimu Tegegne, 2016).

The *Qubbee* generation as a result began to acquire a strong feeling of Oromo national identity. With the introduction of *Qubbee* as a medium of instruction and the creation and widespread distribution of several published works in Afaan Oromo, the younger generation developed a political consciousness that emphasizes the revival of Afaan Oromo.

This aided in the emergence of a new generation of young Oromo, who eventually developed a sense of pride in themselves and a shared sense of Oromo identity. A vibrant youthful generation that was prepared to challenge the incumbent administration over any incidents of injustice or bigotry emerged during this time. This aided in the emergence of a new generation of young Oromo, who eventually developed a sense of pride in themselves and a shared sense of Oromo identity. In this period, a new, energetic generation formed that was ready to confront the current administration over any instances of injustice or prejudice.

A young bachelor who fought against any form of injustice is referred to as *qeerroo* in traditional Oromo culture. It is also referred to those young Oromo who advocate for social and political justice. In addition, it refers to young people who banded together at the local level to significantly change the lives of their community as well as their (Tatek Abebe, 2020:2). However, it now has a broader meaning and stands for both the Oromo social movement and

protest, which has been pervasive in Oromia since 2014. They symbolize a new generation of politically active Ethiopian youth fighting for increased political freedom and representation in the federal system (The Guardian, 2017). There were several student demonstrations against some aspects of the new government's ethnically-based politics and policies (Konings 2002: 179-204), although, as Merera (2002: 37) rightly put it: "The general discourse on the politics of ethnicity and nationalism in Ethiopia" originated from the national question that was first raised and analyzed by the Ethiopian student movement in the late sixties and seventies. They stand for the rights of those who are imprisoned by the oppressive EPRDF government and become voices for the voiceless majority of the country.

They walked out into the street with their bare hands and demanded that the government cease imprisoning all Ethiopian civilians for nothing more than requesting their release. Young students first took to the streets to demand academic freedom as well as the democratic rights of citizens of the country. When many young people joined the rally throughout the majority of Oromia, the protest gained pace. A significant wave of youth activism in Ethiopia has been distinguished by this political mobilization of young people.

4.4 The Role of Ireechaa in Oromo Youth Political Mobilization

The revitalization of the Oromo language and cultural customs strengthened both individual and group identities and gave young people the confidence to stand up for their rights and actively shape their future. This cultural rebirth has had a long-lasting effect on Oromo society, influencing Ethiopia's social and political climate and reverberating through succeeding generations. The cultural renaissance of the 1990s marked a pivotal moment for the young generation in Oromia. It opened doors for education, sparked a resurgence of cultural pride, and prepared people for political engagement (Mekuria Bulcha, 1994). Young people started to support Oromo cultural traditions and actively participate in the movement to revive Oromo cultural traditions.

This was partially brought on by the sluggish socioeconomic growth history, which ultimately led to the establishment of Oromo nationalism. The situation is currently one of the worst in the rural districts of Oromia, one of the largest triumphs of EPRDF authority, which has been praised for the predominance of absolute poverty, low socioeconomic development, and the prevalence of injustice and security. Such flagrant government failure to represent the interests of

the Oromo people is the main catalyst for political change across the nation, according to the younger generation of Oromo nationalists. Following these changes, Oromo youth have begun to organize politically along that specific Oromo ethnic identity, i.e., promoting *Oromummaa* (Gemetchu Megerssa, 1993), and to advocate for the protection and advancement of the rights and interests of their ethnic kin. The main assertion extols the virtues of Oromo character, which is shaped by both internal and external factors and "binds the Oromo to their lands, with its mountains and rivers, its plants and animals, its climates, its seasonal patterns, and the other cultures with which it interacts" (Gemetchu Megerssa, 1993:92).

The young people of Oromia today want to use the Oromo language to express their ties to their ancestral homes. These connections to Oromo culture and heritage have been respected by the younger Oromo. For young Oromo's main goal is to realize sociocultural fulfillment, which is dependent on *Oromummaa*. The concept of Oromo identity, *Oromummaa*, are constructed and used in identity formation (Gemetchu Megerssa, 1993). It encompasses the cultural, historical, linguistic, and political dimensions of what it means to be Oromo. *Oromummaa* reflects the deep-rooted identity and national consciousness among the Oromo people. Assafa Jalata (2012:1) goes on to say that

Oromummaa was developed from the moral codes and guiding principles of Oromo society and has served as a mechanism for building Oromo society in the past, leaving its distinct mark on the people and their environment. It is based on the personal, interpersonal, and collective connections that the Oromo have to a historically shaped form of knowledge that emerged out of the Oromo experience of several centuries of 'jiruf jireenya' (or 'life and living').

Oromummaa is a pivotal element of Oromo identity and culture, encapsulating the hopes, principles, and shared awareness of the Oromo populace. It plays a crucial role in preserving and enhancing the culture, music, language, and traditions of the Oromo. This concept underscores the Oromo people's commitment to self-governance, resilience, and unity. *Oromummaa* transcends geographical, religious, and political divisions, fostering peace among all Oromo groups. Moreover, it encourages collaboration and reciprocal aid during times of adversity and misfortune.

The Oromo people's quest for autonomy and self-determination is at the heart of Oromummaa. It promotes economic, social, and political empowerment in order to guarantee the preservation and protection of Oromo rights and interests.

Throughout history, Oromummaa has been closely linked to the fight against injustice, marginalization, and oppression. It symbolizes the Oromo people's unwavering determination to oppose repressive governments and work toward equality and freedom. Oromummaa emphasizes the need of peaceful coexistence with various ethnic groups and communities, even as it values assertiveness and resilience. In order to create a society that is more inclusive and harmonious, it encourages communication, peacemaking, and respect for one another.

Oromummaa is a dynamic and evolving concept that adapts to changing circumstances while retaining its core values and principles. It draws strength from the rich history and experiences of the Oromo people while also embracing innovation and progress.

In summary, Oromummaa represents the collective identity and ethos of the Oromo people, reflecting their shared history, struggles, and aspirations. It serves as a unifying force that inspires Oromo individuals and communities to uphold their culture, assert their rights, and strive for a better future.

According to Assafa Jalata (2007:15), Oromummaa is a political ideology that guides the Oromo community in establishing an Oromo centric identity for political action. This fosters a sense of identity and unity among young Oromo people, empowering them to develop their own "Oromo-centric" political strategies and tactics that encourage collective action. This political ideology, founded on the notion of Safuu (or moral and ethical order), strives for individual and community freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation.

The construction and revitalization of Oromo identity under Oromummaa has helped Young people in Oromia by raising their awareness and political consciousness to stand against Ethiopia's authoritarian government (Gemetchu Megerssa, 1993) and has served as a cultural capital for political mobilization in the recent youth political movement. Such form of cultural capital that motivate Oromo youth to take up political action is the *ireechaa* festivity .The Ireechaa festival reinforce Oromo Identity as forms of cultural capital and plays significant role in Oromo Youth political protest and in the struggle for rights and recognition among youths in

Oromia (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997; Megersa Tolera, 2023) For youth of Burayu town, Ireechaa festivity served as a cultural capital that mobilized young people for political movement that emerged in 2014 and continued until 2018. Our young informant, Biratu Geda, a 28-year-old youth political participant who has been actively involved in the Burayu political movement since 2017, made the following claim:

The Oromo religion Waaqeffannaa, which worships a unique supernatural being known as Waaqa (God), has served as the context for the interpretation and implementation of ireechaa. To commemorate Thanksgiving as a month of giving gratitude to God, all Oromo people of all ages, origins, and religious convictions gather together to celebrate Ireechaa .

(Interview conducted on May 3, 2020).

My informants mentioned that historically the Oromo practiced the *Ireechaa* ritual as a two-times-a-year (in the spring and autumn) thanksgiving celebration to thank Waaqa (God) for the peace, health, fertility, and abundance they had received in relation to the people, livestock, harvest, and the entire Oromo land. *Ireechaa* is observed as a way of giving thanks for the favours one has received in the past and as a platform for making formed-focused prayers. The Oromo congregate in these ritual settings, which often include hilltops, riverbanks, and the shade of large sacred trees. September is chosen as the start of the New Year and the month of Thanksgiving, when they pass from rainy season which starts in June and ends in August. According to the Oromo Calendar, a new season starts when the land is becoming green and covered in a variety of colorful blooms in the month of September. The people praise God who created all the beautiful things in the world and for the things that God gives to human beings. The people of Oromo praise God for making the land greener, making the rivers and lakes calm, and for allowing people to survive the months of summer. This new season represents the month of prosperity, calm, and tranquility.

In the past, the Oromo used to celebrate *Ireechaa* twice a year (in the spring and autumn) as a way to express gratitude to Waaqa (God) for providing them with prosperity, peace, fertility, and abundance for their people, cattle, crops, and the entire Oromo area. *Ireechaa* is performed as a platform for future prayer as well as a manner of returning the Waaqa (an unpleasant speech) for the blessings that have already been received. In these *Ireechaa* rituals, the Oromo convene in

places with symbolic value, such as hilltops, river banks, and the shade of big sacred trees, called Odda.

The rituals and practices of the Ireetchaa festival vary among different Oromo communities, but some common elements include the Gathering of Participants. People from various Oromo clans and communities come together to participate in the festival. It is a time for reunion, solidarity, and communal celebration. Participants wear traditional Oromo attire, which often includes colorful garments, jewelry, and hairstyles. The attire reflects cultural pride and identity. The festival features traditional music, dance, and poetry performances, which serve as expressions of Oromo culture and heritage. Drumming, singing, and chanting are common forms of artistic expression during Ireetchaa celebrations. Participants engage in ritual processions around the sacred sites, often circling the area in a counterclockwise direction, symbolizing the cyclical nature of life and the renewal of the seasons. In the ireetchaa festivity, water holds special significance in Oromo cosmology, representing life, purity, and rejuvenation. As part of the festival, participants may immerse themselves in or sprinkle water on themselves as a form of purification and blessing.



Ireetchaa Festivity celebration in Bishoftu(2019).

According to Qarisa Dori ,a 25 years old informant from Burayu ; *historical cultural memories and the accounts of his adult countrymen, the main hub of the Ireechaa celebration used to be in and around Hora Arsadi in Bishoftu town, around 45 km south of Addis Ababa.* (Interview conducted on June 23, 2021).

He goes on to say, *according to the local history of Burayu, this festival has also been held for generations but has been neglected for decades due to political tyranny. Annually, the Oromo from various regions of the nation get together and enjoy the rite, especially during the Ireechaa Birraa (the Autumn Ireechaa) in the third weeks of September in Bishoftu. I've had a lot of experience with this. Our father had assembled in a group at a site of cultural ceremony to praise Waaqa for bestowing a wealth of natural treasures.*

In recent years, the Ireechaa festival has grown in prominence, attracting thousands of participants from across Oromia and beyond. The festival has also become a platform for asserting Oromo identity, cultural revitalization, and political expression, particularly amid calls for greater autonomy and recognition of Oromo rights within Ethiopia. It became more of an arena where the Oromo identity is articulated, reconstructed, created, and practiced in the modern context, where the ritual brings Oromo from various walks of life, rather than as a religiously focused or simple thanksgiving festival(Serawit Bekele, 2018).The cultural element became one of the main inspirations and motivators for young people. Additionally, it is referred to as one of the Oromo people's "core common cultural values and modes of thought" (Baxter 1985:2, Hultin 1987:2).

It has flourished as a means of cultural renewal and a fight for political independence started to be revived in the late 1990s.The revival of Ireechaa, the Oromo ethnic group's Thanksgiving feast, is one of the most obvious manifestations of the retraditionalization movement in post-1991 Ethiopia (Asebe Regassa and Meron , 2016; Serawit Bekele,2018). Despite the repressive surveillance of the present Ethiopian government, the Lake Arsadi ireechaa festival was brought back in the middle of the 1990s because to the effort of MTA members (Mekuria Bulcha, 2015).

But the restoration of Ireechaa is not merely a MTA sponsored project; it is a multidimensional, difficult process that requires the participation of many people. Political parties (both the ruling party and the opposition, which utilize it for political mobilisation), cultural elites, traditionalists,

Oromo nationalists, and the Oromo Diaspora are some of the important participants in this equation. Each of these groups has certain goals (Asebe Regassa & Meron, 2016).

According to FGD mixed focus group discussants whose ages range from 23 to 29 and who live in Burayu town;

.. the Macha Tulama association organized this festival in Hora Arsadi, which combines religious components as well as the political arena, where Oromo people beyond religious borders unite and their common identity could be seen. Elders would place Waaqa at the center of the ritual in order to provide prayers and blessings during this Thanksgiving celebration. young people dress in traditional clothes and sing songs. They exalt the Oromo's national identity and emphasize the importance of Oromo culture through these actions. So, via ceremonies, prayers, blessings, and thanksgiving, Ireetchaa came to represent the network and link between the Oromo and Waaqa and how emotional, psychological, spiritual, and identity difficulties are ingrained in Oromo cultural beliefs. (Interview conducted on March 12, 2020)

One noteworthy aspect of this celebration is the increase in the number of young people and educated people that attended compared to the pre 1990s. University students, government employees, businesspeople/women, and others from many professions attended this cultural event. It has occasionally developed into a place where individuals can get together, have conversations, and express their shared concerns—primarily political and cultural ones.

For Oromo youth in Burayu town, the importance of ireetchaa is significant and its cultural components and identity construction has been underlined. Megerssa Assafa, our Burayu youth informant, a 28 years old youth political participants who engaged in the youth protest of 2017 in Burayu, argued that:

I can't put into words what I see or how I feel about ireetchaa festival. This, I sincerely believe, is both my culture and my faith. This is what our forefathers left for us, and I will do the same for my offspring (interview conducted on April 5, 2020).

Ireechaa has become one aspects of cultural capital that sustain hope, optimism and a positive outlook of the future in the midst of violent and despair among young member of an Oromo society. It became an arena where young people criticize the government and an arena of new forms of resistance. For young people like QA, a 25 year old Burayu resident, *¶In the old days being present in Hora Harsade to celebrate Ireechaa did have a cultural meaning that attach Oromo community to praise God but now a days it has become a symbol of Oromo political resistance against any form of subjugation¶*

Regarding *Ireechaa* and other Oromo cultural revitalization initiatives, the ruling party had to deal with two contradictory trends. First, it theoretically grants nations and ethnicities the right to exercise their culture, religion, language, and history through the constitutional provisions it adopted. However, the practice of such rights by individuals, as in the case of *Ireechaa*, music, language, etc., would inevitably increase their level of self-consciousness, which would eventually lead them to oppose the current quo. For instance, many participants on *Ireechaa* used to decorate themselves with material culture and costumes that featured the banners of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rather than the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), utilizing the constitutional right as a legal defense.

The Ethiopian government closely monitored the *Ireechaa* celebration in the years 2003–2004 and attempted to sway it in its favor (Serawit Bekele, 2018). While such interference increased *Ireechaa* visibility (the festival occasionally received extensive coverage on state media), it also gave the celebration a political undertone. However, it should be highlighted that this cultural area is still contestable.

Ireechaa celebrations were reportedly revived in Hora Arsadi in the mid-1990s thanks to the efforts and institutional leadership of *the Macha-Tulama Association* (Serawit Bekele, 2018) Since Oromo nationalism and self-awareness peaked in the 1990s, *Ireechaa* evolved from its traditional role as a religious practice to one that allowed Oromo people of all faiths to come together and celebrate their shared identity. But it didn't lose its core component of ties to Waaqa (God). Waaqa has been placed at the centre of ritual by elders' prayers, blessings, and thanksgiving celebrations, while songs and objects of material culture used by young people to beautify themselves have highlighted the political and developing Oromo national identity.

Two guiding ideas of the ritual, however, persisted over time in different ways. First and foremost, Ireechaa served and continues to serve as a conduit or representation of the relationship between the Oromo and Waaqa through blessings, prayers, and thanksgivings. Second, one cannot separate one of these parts from another because Ireechaa rituals show how emotional, cultural, psychological, spiritual, and identity difficulties are ingrained and lived inside the Oromo. The post-1991 ireechaa celebrations increased youth and educated class attendance was a significant aspect as well (Serawit Bekele , 2018).

During the period of political protests in Ethiopia from 2014 to 2018, the Ireechaa festival served as both cultural capital and a political instrument for youth political protest. Ireechaa is deeply ingrained in Oromo culture and identity, representing a powerful symbol of cultural heritage and pride. As such, the festival provided a platform for Oromo youth to assert their cultural identity in the face of historical marginalization and cultural suppression. By participating in the Ireechaa festival and engaging in its rituals and traditions, Oromo youth demonstrated their connection to their cultural roots and heritage. This cultural capital strengthened their sense of belonging and solidarity within the Oromo community, empowering them to challenge oppressive political regimes. The Ireechaa festival also became a political instrument for Oromo youth to express dissent and mobilize for political protest. Recognizing the symbolic significance of the festival and its large gatherings of people, youth activists strategically utilized the festival as a platform to voice their grievances and demand political change. Oromo youth used the Ireechaa festival as an opportunity to raise awareness about issues such as government repression, human rights abuses, and lack of political representation. They incorporated political messages and slogans into the festival ceremonies, speeches, and performances, effectively turning the festival into a political rally.

The large gatherings of people at the Ireechaa festival provided a conducive environment for youth activists to organize protests, distribute pamphlets, and engage in political discourse. These activities helped to mobilize support for the youth political movement and amplify their demands for justice and equality.

University students, government employees, businesspeople/women, and others from all professions all took an active part in the festivities. It occasionally developed into a place where individuals could come together, have conversations, and more visibly express their political and

cultural commonalities. The Oromo Youth exploited this cultural event as a tool of resistance against the government. Attending this cultural festival has evolved into one of the means of resistance that unites the Oromo. Ireechaa gatherings provide opportunities for Oromo youth to come together, socialize, and network with peers from different regions and communities. These cultural events serve as important spaces for community building, relationship building, and grassroots organizing among Oromo youth activists. The cultural capital of Ireechaa has facilitated connections and collaborations among young people, strengthening the social fabric of the Oromo political movement. Ireechaa gatherings provide opportunities for Oromo youth to come together, socialize, and network with peers from different regions and communities. These gatherings served as spaces for political discussion, consciousness-raising, and mobilization, as young people share grievances, exchange ideas, and organize collective action.

Ireechaa Festivity has also carried symbolic significance as a manifestation of Oromo unity, resilience, and resistance against historical injustices and oppression. In the context of the Oromo youth political movement, the symbolism of Ireechaa has been invoked to rally solidarity, inspire activism, and mobilize support for the Oromo cause both within Ethiopia and among the Oromo diaspora worldwide. Some Oromo youth activists have utilized Ireechaa gatherings and festivities as platforms for political messaging, advocacy, and protest. Speeches, songs, and performances at Ireechaa events may convey messages of solidarity, resistance, and demands for justice, drawing attention to issues such as land rights, political repression, and human rights abuses faced by the Oromo people.

The Ethiopian government has exhibited varying degrees of tolerance and suppression in reaction to the politicized expressions of Ireechaa. Occasionally, tensions and physical confrontations have arisen when security forces have disrupted or tried to quell Ireechaa events considered politically subversive or critical of the government. On October 2, 2016, during the annual Ireechaa celebration of the Oromo ethnic group, the use of tear gas and firearms by security forces to control an unruly crowd led to a stampede (Carboni, 2017). A youth festival participant claimed to have witnessed some protesters tricolor flag of the Oromo Liberation Front, which the government has denounced as an organization, as the cause of the stampede. In reaction to protesters' tossing of stones and bottles, security personnel first used baton charges and then tear gas grenades. The anxiety that the teargas produced caused at least 50 people to fall

into a deep ditch on top of one another. Images captured at the scene showed many people scrambling out of what appeared to be a ditch that was at least 6 meters deep. One of my informants, who were present at the celebration, said ;

I was present at the Ireechaa celebration in Bishoftu. I saw dead bodies being carried out by people, and there was a pickup truck carrying dead people being driven to a hospital. So many people were killed. While running away from the security guards, some people drowned in the lake nearby. I also heard from others that some people were shot by the security guards. Some fell into a deep, open ditch and died there. The roads leading out of the area were blocked by armed security forces, leaving us with few options to escape, and many were crushed. Before 2016, nothing like this had ever happened—no major incidents or security issues, even with the huge crowds every year. But after what happened in Bishoftu, the youth started organizing violent protests.

This incident further observed by Human Rights Watch (2016) and stated that some people were shot by security guards. After falling into a deep, open ditch, some people died. Important roadways leading away from the area were blocked by armed security personnel, leaving people fleeing with few options and resulting in many being crushed. Prior to 2016, there have never been any noteworthy incidents or security concerns despite the yearly massive crowds. But following the incidents in Bishoftu, youth organized violent protests. In the days that followed, protesters destroyed companies and flower farms, many of which were owned by foreigners, whom they accused of benefiting from the government's divisive growth strategy (Carboni, 2017). Thus, in an effort to limit young protest and social mobilization for political change, the government proclaimed a state of emergency on October 8, 2016 (Freedom House Report, 2016).

The 2016 Ireechaa festival was organized after a year of protests against government policies and security force violence that resulted in over 1000 deaths around Ethiopia and tens of thousands being arrested by security forces (Human Rights Watch, Sep 2017).

In response to ongoing tensions that had been noticeably exacerbated by a year of harsh repression, the government made an effort to play a more dominant role than in prior Ireechaa by stepping up security and attempting to control who on the platform.

Shimelise Siyum, a 26 years old youth political participants who actively engaged in Burayu political movement since 2017, attested that:

Government action fueled the anger in most parts of Oromia including Burayu and led some youth to mount the stage and lead anti-administration chants. But Security officers further attempted to control the demonstrators by using bullets and tear gas and later security guards fired live bullets into the crowd .Peaceful protests were outlawed in and around schools and universities, and social media and foreign-affiliated TV networks including Oromia Media Network (OMN) and Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) were subject to restrictions. (Interview conducted on July 11, 2020).

Information sharing and mobilization during the protests were greatly aided by social media and Diaspora television stations. In addition to restricting opposition parties' access to the media, the state of emergency also forbade citizens from protesting by shutting down businesses, using social media to share information, or viewing Diaspora television (HRW, 2017).

Following juvenile attacks on both public and private property, an oppressive and extensive state of emergency was declared (it was later lifted in August 2017). The government has repeatedly placed access restrictions on social media platforms and other websites as well as the broadcasts of international radio stations like Voice of America and Deutsche Welle after proclaiming a state of emergency that contained content that disagreed with its position on significant issues. During this time, security authorities unlawfully imprisoned approximately 21,000 people in the so called "rehabilitation camps." Furthermore, political trials of artists, politicians, and journalists have been reported in a number of locations, as has an increase in military activity.

This political condition has marked in the emergence of violent youth protest in many parts of Oromia. Thus, youth protests continued throughout Oromia regions and Ireechaa festivity has provided as instruments of political unity and mobilization among the Oromo community. This cultural symbol has its own large political share in formulating and inculcating the political mind of young Oromo who later resorted to political resistance against the government. The role of this cultural capital should be underlined in shaping and raising the political consciousness of young people who later mobilized to bring fundamental change in the country.

Ireechaa carries symbolic significance as a celebration of Oromo's resilience, unity, and resistance against historical injustices and oppression. The cultural symbolism of Ireechaa has been invoked by Oromo youth activists to assert their rights, demand justice, and challenge the

Ethiopian government's policies of marginalization and discrimination. The festival's emphasis on unity and solidarity has inspired Oromo youth to organize and mobilize for political change within Ethiopia.

4.5 Conclusion

The political mobilization of Oromo youth dates back to the 1960s. Between 2014 and 2018, Ethiopian students and political leaders played a significant role in organizing political protests. The efforts of the 1960s students paved the way for the youth movements of the 1990s and beyond. The legacy of youth political mobilization and involvement has its roots in the diverse strategies of student political activism.

The youth of the 1960s played a pivotal role in shaping the sociopolitical landscape of Ethiopian communities with their evocative poems, newspapers, and political pamphlets (Balsvik, 1985; Bahiru Zewde, 2014). The political awakening of the qeerroo generation was a continuation of the activism started by students and political elites during the 1960s, profoundly influencing the political identity and evolution of the youth for political purposes.

The history of Oromo activism can be traced back to the early 1960s with the establishment of the Macha Tulama Association, which aimed to bolster and expand the Oromo community in Ethiopia. Students from Addis Ababa University, previously known as Haile Selassie I University, collaborated with the MTA to foster political awareness and ethnic identity among Oromo youth for future political endeavors. The inception of the Macha Tulama Association was a pivotal event in the development of Oromo nationalism, serving as an essential platform for political engagement (Teferi Nigussie, 2019). In the latter part of the twentieth century, several radical students from Addis Ababa University established political groups to advocate for the Oromo ethnic minority in Ethiopia. These groups sought to focus on national concerns impacting their community. Significantly, a few militant Oromo scholars and leaders established the groundwork for the emergence of Oromo nationalist political movements, with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) being the most prominent.

The revitalization of Oromo culture and ethnic identity was significantly bolstered by the advent of Ethnic Federalism between 1994 and 1995, which greatly influenced the political engagement of Oromo youth in Ethiopia. The country experienced constitutional reforms initiated by the EPRDF, incorporating provisions for socio-political rights and recognizing Afaan Oromo as a national language. Additionally, the introduction of Qubbee in 1994 served as a communicative

tool for the youth of Oromia. The newly established government, under the EPRDF, revised the nation's constitution to enshrine socio-political rights and officially recognize Afaan Oromo as the national language.

Constitutional amendments and political advancements in Ethiopia have shaped the current generation's view on the rise of political consciousness and the active engagement of youth in Oromia's politics. Cultural assets like the Ireechaa festival have played a role in enhancing the political awareness of Oromo youth. The revival of the Oromo language and cultural practices has strengthened both individual and collective identities, empowering the youth to stand up for their rights and actively shape their destiny. This cultural resurgence has left a lasting imprint on Oromo culture, influencing the social and political landscape of Ethiopia and resonating with future generations.

The cultural renaissance of the 1990s marked a pivotal moment in the youth movement of Oromia. It opened doors for education, rekindled cultural pride, and readied individuals for political engagement (Mekuria Bulcha, 1994). The development and rejuvenation of Oromo identity through Oromummaa have helped the youth in Oromia to heighten their awareness and political consciousness against Ethiopia's authoritarian regime (Gemetchu Megerssa, 1993). This has also acted as a form of cultural capital for political mobilization in recent youth movements. The Irecha festival is a prime example of such cultural capital that motivates Oromo youth to engage in politics.

The Ireechaa festival strengthens Oromo identity, serving as a vital cultural asset. It is significant in the political protests of Oromo youth and their pursuit of rights and recognition in Oromia (Megersa Tolera, 2023; Mekuria Bulcha, 1997). This cultural asset has been pivotal in restoring Oromo culture, reinvigorating Oromo ethnic identity, and mobilizing the youth politically in recent times.

Oromo political leaders played a crucial role in the formation of the Macha Tulama association and political entities such as the OLF, which contributed to the rise and development of radical Oromo youth movements in the 1990s. The political engagement of Oromo youth was further enhanced by cultural events like the Ireechaa festival, which fostered unity among Oromo youth for subsequent political cooperation and the creation of networks during the youth protests from 2014 to 2018 across Oromia. These developments supported the mobilization of Oromo youth in the Ethiopian protests from 2014 to 2018.

Chapter Five: Condition that Shaped Youth Political Engagement in Oromia

Introduction

This chapter has examined the factors influencing the political mobilization of Oromo youth and the emergence of a youth political movement in Oromia. It delves into the reasons behind the political engagement of the youth and how the nation's political economy has laid the foundation for such mobilization. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the influence of the Arab Spring on the Oromo Youth political movement and analyzes the global political conditions that have shaped youth mobilization, including the direct catalysts like Ethiopia's Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan.

5.1 Youth Bulge and Unemployment

Youth employment in Ethiopia presents an immense challenges considering 71.1 % of the population is under the age of 30(UNDP, 2018). Compared to other regions of Ethiopia, the Oromia Region contributed the highest share of unemployed population to the total urban areas of the country by 560,924 people with 18.2 unemployment rate in the year 2020. This is mainly a result of rapid population and labor force growth and limited employment generation capacity of the modern industrial sector of the economy.

An irregular state of youth unemployment has become one of the major challenges confronting Ethiopia. Youth bulge has become an emergent challenge that affects the lives of young people in Oromia. Youth experiences and circumstance of lack of job has various financial, political and moral outcomes .Unemployed young people are more likely to abuse illicit substances than employed young people. Youth unemployment also contributes to the prevalence of crime and violence in societies where employment opportunities are limited (Dejene, Mansingh and Warkaw, 2016). Although the youth have a strong sense of belonging to the Ethiopian state, they also feel cut off from it, which reflects an apolitical and pessimistic perspective of the political possibilities of Ethiopian youth. Youth experience political alienation and discrimination on the bases of their identity, age and gender base as well as urban rural divides. Various forms of discrimination and alienation in the forms of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability as well as political orientation make relationship, representation of different sub groups of youth and recognition of their identity difficult (Assafa Jalata, 2012)

Unusual young unemployment is one of Ethiopia's fundamental development problems. Youth unemployment has a variety of financial, political, and moral repercussions. Young people who are employed are less prone to abuse illegal substances than young people who are unemployed. In countries with little employment prospects, youth unemployment also adds to the incidence of crime and violence (Dejene, Mansingh, and Warkaw, 2016). According to young people interviewed, being unemployed is a stressful aspect of youth culture that depresses them.

5.1.2 Youth Unemployment and Corruption

But one of the challenging bad practices that has contributed to the unemployment rate of youth is corruption. Corruption increasingly has become one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world. It is a universal problem which compromises people's quest for development, peace, democracy, and human rights through its degree of severity vary (Gashaw, Endalcachew, and Zelalem, 2015).

Corruption undermines good governance and the rule of law and in turn leads to the misallocation of public resources, harms both the private and public sector and particularly hurts the poor. It is found everywhere, but it is deep-rooted in the poorest countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, newly industrialized countries, and in several of the post-communist countries. Corruption in developing countries continues to be one of the greatest factors of poverty and underdevelopment. As it is the case in other developing countries, in Ethiopia, the tradition of corruption has grown roots in society at large and become endemic. The reason is that politicians and bureaucrats are typically observed to show greater interest in rent-seeking activities than in delivering services wanted by their citizens (Shah, 2005). The Oromo youth faced significant economic challenges, including unemployment and land dispossession. The Ethiopian state's development policies, which favored neoliberal capitalism, often resulted in land grabbing and exclusion of the youth from economic opportunities. This economic marginalization was a critical factor in the protests, as the youth sought to reclaim their rights and futures (Mebratu Kelecha, 2021).

Regarding this, my informant from Burayu, Nono Kebele, said that —problem of implementation of youth unemployment strategies due to corruption, illegal land grabbing in the name of an investor, impartial service delivery and, others are the causes of youth protest. Belay Lemessa, a 23-year-old Keta Kebele young political participant, made a similar statement when he said;

"youth were deprived economically due to selfish government officials, which resulted in protest against the government." (Interview conducted on September 22, 2020).

This informant strongly argued that most government sectors were not served without rent seeking. He condemns the government for the widespread unemployment and corruption and explicitly stated:

... in our Kebele most youth have no hopes to expect, no dream to achieve since here is the widespread of corruption and inequality. We have been swimming in the widest ocean of nothingness. Those cadres coming to power had promised to change the lives of youth but failed to do so. We have no opportunity provided to do something in our lives. Our lives lies on succumb hopes and dreams. Our struggle is for having equal opportunity in our country, to be treated as equal in every aspect. We have been treated in many forms, as secondary in economic as well as sociopolitical terms. As member of Oromo society, we have treated as marginalized, second rate citizens. We have education but no hopes to get job opportunity....

Different forms of rampant embezzlement of government bureaucracy and rent seeking attitudes among government officials further crumbled government institution that supposed to change the lives of the community for good. The shortage of farmland and limited access to education were central issues, as these factors directly impacted their livelihoods and future prospects. The Ethiopian state's development policies, which favored neoliberal capitalism, exacerbated these issues by unequally distributing economic growth benefits, leaving many young people feeling dispossessed and excluded from both rural and modernist futures (Tatek Abebe,2020).

Regarding these forms of institutional failure and corruption of government officials another Youth leader from Keta Kebele said that 1000 Birr was asked for a Kebele identification card (Keta Kebele Youth leader, 2020). Thus, corruption has significant contributions to the instability of the country and further created economic crisis in the country. Therefore, corruption aggravated youth discontent and encouraged them to protest against the government. Youth and other citizens' distrust in government are often related to the bad performance of the government (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2014). Excessive forms of corruption clearly encourage youth to mobilize for political change.

According to my informant, Debele Kebede , a 24 years old key youth informant from Burayu, *high unemployment rate was due to ineffective implementation of employment policy because of corruption* (interviewed on July 20, 2020) .Furthermore, he also stated that, —high unemployment rate of youth due to the limitation of plough land that shared by their family for agriculture. This indicates the youths in the kebele are jobless. Similarly, my second youth informant, Megersa Lelissa, shares the idea of Debele Kebede. He said that —*Since there were no significant investment opportunities which were used to minimize youth unemployment rate in the Wereda, youth were limited to employ and also there was the problem of equal resource distribution* (July, 2020).

The failure of democratic institutions to deliver expected public services for the poor also resulted in calls for deepening democracy through the direct participation of citizens in governance (Joshi, 2010). Moreover, accountability for service delivery can be demanded from a range of stakeholders: of politicians (e.g. Not adopting appropriate policies; or of public officials /not delivering according to rules or entitlements, not monitoring providers for appropriate service levels; or of providers (not maintaining service levels in terms of access and quality). Further, initiatives to hold these multiple actors to account can be state-led or citizen-led. Similar to this the way how service delivered to youth also contribute to their grievances. These economic as well as political grievances further aggravated by lack of real democracy; failure to receive justice from the legal system; transparency and accountability; and surveillance of citizens (Ortiz et al., 2013).

Youth issues were only lately given some consideration in the nation's development policies, despite the urgent problem of youth unemployment. There has been some improvement and general macroeconomic stability in the country as a result of the current policy emphasis on the promotion of the private sector, increasing investment to improve agricultural productivity, and introducing off-farm non-agricultural activities for the purpose of employment diversification in rural areas. In this instance, the private sector has improved recently, but more work still has to be done given the enormous economic and social issues the nation is facing (Berhanu, Abraham, and Van der Deij, 2005).

Furthermore, youth faced economic marginalization which is a direct outcome of a mismatch between the quality and relevance of education and the skills needed for the job with limited

capacity in the public and private sectors. This is a major cause for high school and college graduate youth to be more likely to be unemployed than uneducated youth who can do whatever job available at hand. The case of Burayu town youth show similar development in this regard. Economically, youth face an employment opportunity challenges.

5.1.3 Youth Livelihood Strategies

Youth Employment and Livelihood: Informal /Formal Economy

Youth of Burayu town resorts to different livelihood strategies for a living. Some youth of the town engaged themselves in works like labor intensive agricultural activities, labor intensive manufacturing industry, and physical labor.

Recently, Burayu labor market dominated by youths who came from southern Ethiopia and engaged in infrastructure industry such as road construction daily laborer, shoeshine, domestic workers as well as street vending. Burayu youth also engaged in the manufacturing sector's micro and small enterprises to secure everyday means of living. This section of youth community are engaged in light industry manufacturing sector such as flour, plastic industries that accommodate few labor forces of the town.

Informants in our focus group discussion (Bikila Soressa, Mulatu Ogeto, Alemu Kitessa, Gurmesa, Alemayehu Gemetchu, and Melaku Beyene) unanimously concur that, in comparison to the town's overall young population, only a small number of youth communities have found employment opportunities in the manufacturing and service sectors. This is a result of the widespread basic skills gap that has a significant impact on its work force. (Interview conducted on December 5, 2020).

Many youth are engaged in the infrastructure sectors like road construction as daily laborers. Gamo and Wolayita youth were largely engaged in this sector as daily laborer. Most young people whose age ranged between 17 to 30 years were the main actors in the construction industry of the town.

It was these Burayu youth group who were an active participant's of political mobilization in Burayu town from 2014 to 2018 since they are the most affected youth cohorts who were economically as well as politically marginalized.

Shimelis Bayu, one of the participants of Focus group discussion ,further explain that most of them forced to this situation working as daily laborer because they lacked the necessary skill and knowledge. He pinpointed that,

We have engaged in this activity so as to improve our economic lives .We serve as road construction daily laborer, foreman as well as engaged in the construction of houses and bridges in the town. It is our labor that effect changes in the town. This employment opportunity has brought changes in our economic lives as well as improves the infrastructural development of the town. (Interview conducted on December 19, 2020)

Females are also largely employed as domestic workers and as daily laborers in the building and construction industry. In this town most domestic workers were young people who came from southern part of Ethiopia.

The life experience of Buze Huto, a 29 years old female resident of Burayu, clearly shows the livelihood trajectories of most women in Ethiopia. She has served as domestic workers for individuals conducting works including house cleaning, cooking and later serves as waitress. With regards to labor intensive works, it is common to see young female engaged in the construction industry carrying constructional materials on their backs. The lives of these young female indicates how this young generation are striving and thriving for a successful livelihood pathways.

Street vending as form of Youth livelihood strategy

Since the government could not provide jobs for everyone who graduates in the formal sector most youth of the town in non-farm employment are engaged in small-scale trade activities, such as street and market vending. Activities of the urban informal sector in the public arena of cities are particularly apparent in street based trading, which is widely known as street vendors. Street vendors include women, children, youth and men engaged in micro business on the street as a means of livelihood. They are mobile with no fixed or permanent selling areas and operate as sales agents to big shops at times on the subcontracting for their income (Bromley, Ray, 2000).

It was observed during my field visit to Burayu that young women dominated street vending Business. Dorote and Buze, young women street vendors stated that —... *Engaging in this economic activity, financially we are supporting ourselves and our families‘ .Many of us is*

primary earners for our families. Our earning is necessary for survival and income multiplicity. (Interview conducted on October 27, 2020).

During my field work observation, the streets of Burayu were full of street vending hosted by young men and women from all walks of lives. Street vendors' exchanged a variety of commodities like biscuits, vegetables, sweets and cigarettes. Some of these youth have been engaged in the trade of changing coins for taxi and minibus drivers. Among the six Kebele of Burayu, the street of Abidi Nono, Gefersa Nono, Gefersa Gude Kebele are the major centers of street vending where all the pedestrian area as well as the asphalted road crowded by street vendors. Abdi Nono and Gefersa Nono kebele are growing in a speedy manner and they are center of emerging industrial as well as market centre where large numbers of youth community are striving for job opportunity. According to Belay Mitiku, a 23 years old Burayu Youth; *...youngsters with less education have fewer access to formal sector jobs, thus their only alternative is to work in the informal sector, one of which is street hawking. This industry has emerged as the primary source of work for the town's low-income and jobless youngsters.* (interviewed on November 10, 2020)

Youth informant argued that informal economic sector has provided economic opportunity for the majority of the youthful community. Since they do not pay tax to the state, they provide diversified marketable items for lower prices compared to formalized market prices. This helps to improve their living condition and changes their economic lives.

According to Alemayehu Gemetchu, a 27 years old resident of Burayu; street vending has provided job opportunity for those youths who have very little access to education or have no employment opportunity at all. He said;

I came from rural village of Ginchi. I am a secondary school dropout. When I came to Burayu, the only option that I had for a living was street vending. Thanks to this sector, I am alive and survive. I always ask myself what might have happened to me if street vending did not exist as a source of livelihood. (Interview conducted on March 5, 2021)

These youth life experiences clearly demonstrates the predominant everyday livelihood trajectories that young people who do not have access to formal employment opportunity passes through.

Migration as alternative livelihood Strategy

Youth should explore every opportunity available to them. This in turn results in the risks of immense rate of migration through irregular and undocumented channels in search for better livelihood and economic opportunity in both internal and external migration. As a result of this, youth from remote rural village migrate to the nearby urban areas in search of job. Burayyu youth consists of youths of who settled there for many decades and youths coming from the surrounding towns of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia looking for jobs and economic opportunities. Since Burayu is found adjacent to Addis Ababa and a flourishing new urban center, it encourage many young opportunity seekers from Ambo, Gindeberet, Wellega, Ginchi and Gamo areas to migrate and settle in Burayu.

Alemu Kitesa, a 27 year old youth informant originally from *Jeldu* (Western part of Oromia) area, said that;

I have tried hard to change my life by doing every works available at my locality but could not bring any change at all. I was even engaged in share cropping agricultural activities, but it did bring nothing in my life. So, I had to leave my place of birth for Burayu and started working in daily laborer activities. (Interview conducted on September 28, 2020)

The experience of our informant demonstrate that youth life trajectories which is full of ups and downs and the struggle for survival by employing different forms of resilience mechanisms ,one of which is internal migration as a forms of alternative livelihood mechanisms for a living .

The experience of Mulatu Ogeto, a 19-year-old youth informant from Burayu, further demonstrates the life trajectories of youth in Ethiopia. As He remembered his past life experience saying;

I had lost hope of living in my birth place due to unemployment, poverty and food insecurity and decided to migrate to the city. First I had to establish myself and explored opportunity in Shashemene which is near to my birth place but decided to move to Addis Ababa. Life in Addis was difficult. You do not afford to rent a house because it is so expensive and most of the time we slept on the street around our working places. It was

because of this and other economic reasons that I have to move to the outskirts of Addis Ababa, first Asko and then Burayu.(interview conducted on November 17, 2020).

Burayu youth mobility pattern and livelihood navigation is related to multiple factors. Because of multiple reasons people have resorted to mobility. Rural community migrates to urban areas more often than otherwise. Each year rural areas as well as some urban areas lose a significant share of their work force among which youth are the most important one, as youth leave their homes and migrate to cities or abroad in search of a better imagined future(Hanna .et.al, 2005). Recently, large migration flow of youth community has become a common phenomenon following the widespread of unemployment, poverty and the changes in international political economy (Fekadu Adugna, 2018).

Internal migration flows in Ethiopia are currently larger than external mobility, but the exact number of people who migrate internally is not well known (Fransen, Sonja & Kuschminder, Katie, 2009). Internal migration occurs in the form of rural-urban migration, rural-rural migration, and migration in connection with resettlement policies, which are all substantial in Ethiopia. In a number of Ethiopian communities there was a sense that increasingly younger people were migrating to urban areas in search of opportunity.

Youth have multiple reasons for moving often, and may be influenced by the desire to take advantage of opportunities near to or away from their localities and by a desire to escape challenging situation in their localities. Most of the time, most migrants move to urban areas in search of work and better economic and educational opportunities, and to escape rural areas they describe as bereft of hope and prospects. Most urban centers in Ethiopia are the foci of rural migrants. For instance, important urban towns like Shashemene (Bejeren, 1985:53,Awassa(Berhane,1993:72) , Bahir Dar(Shegawu G/Medhin ,1993)Adama (Kebede, 1991:70) ,Abraminch (Birru, 1997:50) and Addis Ababa are major destination points for migrants communities coming from the surrounding rural as well as urban towns of Ethiopia(Feleke Tadele, et. al,2006) .Access to resources in home areas is likely to be a critical factor and one that varies according to individuals' wealth, gender and generation (Tacoli, Cecilia,2001: 141).

Mekuriya Biratu, a 29 years old resident of Burayu from *Gefersa Nono Kebele*, Burayu Town, linked the reason for migration with land scarcity;

I am originally from West Wellega and have become a resident of Burayyu Town because of economic difficulties. When I was in the Wellega area, there was land scarcity. Past family land redistribution resulted in the reduction of land for new family members. Land scarcity further aggravated by over crowdedness. The only land open to cultivation is those state and publicly owned land. Young people from this locality have no many alternative sources of livelihood. Since our locality is small village, it is not well developed to have any forms of industries so that youth would have an employment opportunity to earn a living. So no hope kept me to staying in my locality. This factor has become the reason why I had to move to Burayu, to embark on a new economic life. (Interview conducted on April 2, 2020).

The above life experience shows that people move from the countryside to cities in search of opportunities. This flow of people from rural areas to the cities reflects the existence of clear difference in economic development in the two areas. Cities are centers of economic activities providing different opportunities that attract huge numbers of people from rural areas as well as peripheral areas. (Castles, Stephen & Miller J, Mark, 2003).

For some youth community security and political reasons mentioned as the reason behind some youth groups leaving their locality and reside in Burayu. This is common among Oromo youth who came from western Oromia following the widespread of political instability in their locality. In this part of Oromia, most youth were indicted as members or supporters of OLF and seek a safe haven in other parts of Ethiopia, and thus Burayu has become the near haven protecting their security.

Megerssa Assafa, a 28 year old youth informant from *Gindeberet*, an area which is part of the West Shewa zone and is bordered to the south by Jeldu, to the west by Ambo, and to the west by the Guder River, who is working as a foreman in construction industries in Burayu Town recalls the reason for on moving from his locality because of security reasons:

I am the only child for my family. My father had politically well informed but had no political participation in any political affairs for many decades. My father started to support political mobilization lead by OLF and he gave his support to this political party. Because of this, he was imprisoned by the local government security officials. We did not know his where about. I heard

that the local security officials were on the lookout to incarcerate me .It was because of this that I left my locality and moved to Burayu .In Burayu I have managed to get a peaceful shelter and stays safe .Now, the most important thing is continuing my education and have a career to improve my life . (Interview conducted on October 1, 2020)

Young people increasingly construct their livelihood aspiration by drawing inspiration and life experiences from the local environment political economy that is a result of the interplay of different forces spanning from urbanization, migration as well as engagement in diverse economic activities (Langevang and Gough 2012).

Bikila Soressa's, a 28 years old resident of Burayu life experiences shows a remarkable livelihood trends that has navigated many ups and downs. He illuminated his life experience as follows:

I grew up in Burayu village with a poor family background. I had the opportunity to join formal education and completed both primary and secondary education here. I have got a passing result for university and joined Haromaya University and graduated from Haromaya University specializing in Ethiopian language studies. I have tried to get employed in government institution but did get none. Then moved to my relative around Mojo area and worked in the flower industry as daily laborer. Since working as daily laborer could not satisfy my basic need and negatively impacted my health condition, I had to move back to my relative in the rural village. But condition remained to be challenging in our neighborhood, then returned to Burayu town and have started working in the road construction industry as foreman.

The aforementioned youths and still others used to think migration as the most valuable livelihood strategies since they have very little alternative other than this. The aforementioned livelihood trend clearly demonstrated among youths of Burayu.

The above life experience narrative clearly demonstrates how young people design alternative livelihood strategies and find ways to have jobs in the urban towns of Ethiopia as well as plan to migrate to any Middle East countries and western countries through different means. Youth mobility process and patterns clearly indicates how they have developed alternative livelihood strategies by escaping to urban area.

Still there is some youth group that found themselves in difficult livelihood trajectories. For some youngster life has become very challenging and thus to forget about this life situation they chew chat and drink coffee seating all day in the town's traditional coffee houses. These traditional coffee houses have become both the center of opportunity and expressing areas of disgrace and lost opportunity. For these unemployed youthful community the problem of ‘passing excessive amount of time’ (Mains, 2007) has become a common life challenge that they face in their daily life. Thus, this public place has become gathering place to enjoy coffee and chew chat throughout the day.

This is highlighted by Gurmesa Tesfaye, 23 years old informant from Ginchi area, by saying;

Here you can find youth from various areas gather to exchange their views regarding what is happening to their lives. This gathering includes all walks of youth community who came from rural village as well as who reside in the urban area. It also includes youth who have a college degree as well as high school dropout. This traditional coffee house has become a place and space where youth socialize, networked, exchange their daily livelihood as well as political experiences and also has become meeting ground for expressing their disgruntlement. (Interview conducted on February 26, 2021).

The common shared discussion among youth informant was lack of employment opportunity and the current political situation in the country. They criticize the government. Every day experiences of these young people explicitly demonstrate the existing socioeconomic as well as political condition of some young people in the country. Every day experiences of these young people explicitly demonstrate the existing socioeconomic condition of young people in the country.

5.2 Urbanization and Land Policy

The urbanization experience of the western world has shown that cities grow and expand; economic growth and development will progress and act as drivers for social transformation and improvement for both urban areas and the rural hinterland (Sjoberg, 1965; Gottdiener and Hutchison, 2011). However, experiences in developing countries show a disjuncture between urbanization and the envisaged socio-economic transformation. In Africa, for instance, the dramatic effects of rapid urbanization can be clearly seen in cities and peri-urban areas. As cities

expand, one of the main zones of direct impact is the peri-urban area and those living in the peri-urban interface. Maina in his study of the Nairobi rural-urban fringe discovered that due to the horizontal expansion of the city several unintended problems have been created. These include breakdown of communal and social life, decline of agricultural practice and destruction of vegetation cover (Maina, 2013:78). This is affirmed by Desalegn Getachew, a community elder of Burayu town who has lived there for decades. He described his experiences in the following way:

On farm and off farm activities were the major sources of income for the residents of Burayu before the expansion of Addis Ababa into the fringes of the town. Before its urban expansion, Burayu and its surroundings were covered with thick forest. There was sufficient available agricultural land that could accommodate the community very well. The land provided agricultural products to the community. The area was also known for rearing cattle and other animals as a source of economic diversification. Honey was also one of economic assets of the community. For generation and until very recently, we used to cultivate the land using both the ox plough complex and the hoe and produced maize, sorghum, teff and other agricultural products. Factors contributing to the challenges of livelihood activities include urbanization, industrialization, internal migration and its related problems on the lives of the local community. (Interview conducted on December 27, 2020).

The construction of industrial hub closer to Addis Ababa surrounding towns and villages of Oromia Region have influenced mobility in those areas. These mobility patterns have an impact on the demographic composition and expansion of most urban areas of Ethiopia which also encourage rural community to migrate to urban areas seeking for opportunity (Fransen, Sonja & Kuschminder, Katie, 2009). It is because of rural urban migration that in the post 1990s the city of Addis Ababa has started to expand and grows in a speedy manner (Feleke Tadele, et.al, 2006). The process of urbanization attracts large number of young people for their labor. Labor markets at destination are often segmented along lines of gender, age and ethnicity, the latter reflecting the migrant networks' control over specific sections of the urban labor market (Tacoli, Cecilia, 2001:141). The growth and expansion of Addis Ababa is related with internal migration from all parts of Ethiopia. Likewise the growth and development of many urban town of Ethiopia can be linked with the labor migration as well as trade oriented migrants from the surrounding

neighboring areas. This expansion has impacted immensely and encouraged the growth of peripheral areas like Burayu. In 2008 Burayu town registered as one important city within *finfine* surrounding zone of Oromia regional state.

This in turn impacted and encouraged various group of young people and others to reside and pursue their opportunity in the town. It is because of this that the recent dwellers in Burayu include youth from the nearby towns of *Ginchi, Jeldu, Gindeberet, Ambo* and *Wellega* as well as migrants from distant rural *kebele* in *Wolayita, Gamo* and *Gofa* zones of the Southern Nations and Nationalities' Regional State (SNNRS).

In addition to creating high pressure on agricultural land, urban expansion has also caused the displacement of peasants from their ancestral homes and forced them to change their livelihood strategies. This kind of physical change and transformation from agricultural livelihood to other economic activities can be observed in Burayu. From Burayu Town areas like *Ashewa meda*, has become a new site for both housing and market center development.

In this site the *Gurage* community were known in residing in large number and engaged in different economic activities. *Gurage* youth have started business following using their family networks most of whom were residents of Addis Ababa in *Kolfe Keraniyo* wereda, *likuwanda*.

This place is adjacent to Burayu town where most of the residents predominantly *Guragigna* speaking resident of Addis Ababa who have engaged in trade like meat butchering and other trade activities and that is why this place is called *Likuwanda*. It was these young opportunity seekers who are known for their perseverance in their hard work later have owned large business company and industry in the town.

Young people coming to Burayu from different parts of the country are involved in various economic sectors to generate income to sustain their life. These include agriculture, trade, handicraft, light industry and other service giving activities. Some of the economic sectors that involve the migrants are formally recognized and registered and hence are part of the formal economy while others like street vending form part of the informal economy.

The growing demand for land in urban areas have been a cause for cities to physically expand to the surrounding rural and peri-urban areas by including additional land where people based their

lives in agriculture (SADC, 2017:9). Fintine surrounding weredas of Oromia Regional state have attracted the attention of both the government of Addis Ababa and its resident due to its proximity to Addis Ababa. Since such kinds of urban expansion affect much of the hinterland communities, Oromo people who reside in the hinterland of Addis Ababa resisted the master plan.

Other than demographic increase of the town, Burayu town has faced more challenges coming from its neighbor Addis Ababa City. The government of Ethiopia announced its urban development measure, the greater Addis Ababa Master Plan. In mid-2012, the Addis Ababa City Administration (AACA) had organized a project office called —Addis Ababa City Planning Project Office¹ and tasked it to prepare a city development plan that it claimed would work for the coming ten years.

In the middle of the process, however, the Project Office was given an additional mandate of preparing a plan that instead should make the city as a metropolitan centre. The project then expanded its planning boundary to include the surrounding areas of Addis Ababa – covering as far as 40 to 100 kilometers in an area as big as 1.1 million hectares of land. As these surroundings belong to and are administered by the Oromia National Regional State (ONRS) a supervisory body from the region was established to oversee the activities of the project office.

The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan played a significant role in triggering the Oromo youth protests from 2014 to 2018. The plan, proposed by the Ethiopian government in 2014, aimed to expand the boundaries of Addis Ababa, the capital city, into surrounding Oromia region territories. The plan provided for an expansion of the capital of Addis Ababa into the surrounding Oromia Region, a move which would cause the Oromo community to lose their constitutionally enshrined regional rights

Other than this there is common political argument among the community that there has been a continuous encroachment of the city boundary over Oromia region where land for establishment of industrial parks and real-estate development targeting middle-class residents are in high demand. Addis Ababa surrounding *weredas* of the Oromia Regional state have attracted the attention of both the government of Addis Ababa and its resident due to its proximity to Addis Ababa. One of the most affected areas in this regard were Ambo, Ginchi, Burayu, Sululta and

other fringe town where the City of Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan intended to incorporate its surrounding environ.

My informant Berehanu Bayisa, a 25 years old resident of Burayu and youth political leader, whose name is altered for ethical reasons, remarked by saying that,

Oromo families on the outskirts of Addis Ababa including Burayu, Ginchi, Sululta, Sebeta and even Ambo wondered whether their communities would be displaced. In areas near Addis Ababa such as Ashewa Meda residents were worried that the city administration would take measures that would displace them from their lands. There were times that homes on the fringes of Addis Ababa were started to be demolished in order to implement the master plan project. People had started to raise their voices to the government but the government did not have the ear to listen to the appeals that these communities made. In areas where poor farmers forcefully displaced, there was no compensation provided for these forcefully displaced poor communities. Other than the encroachment of the city of Addis Ababa into Burayu area both local and international investors participate in large-scale land grab deals in the town. Young people as well as farmers stood in the streets, attempting to prevent the demolitions but the protests were met with swift and harsh government repression. (Interviewed on May 26, 2021).

Globally, 10 million people were displaced because of development related activities, and among those displaced 6 million are attributed to urban expansion (Cernea, 1997 cited in Firewu, 2010:1). As a result urbanization has put pressure upon the natural resource base, changed socio demographic structure and the local political landscape of the peri-urban communities. This in part points to the fact that the forces and process of urbanization is complex and the cumulative effects of historical, political, economic and geographical contexts varying across space and time (Haregewoin, 2005). In Ethiopia, the government has been increasingly using expropriation as the single most important device to take land particularly from small landholders to supply it to corporate farmers and industrialists with a declared intention of boosting economic growth. Both local and international investors participated in large-scale land deals. Young members of the community have very limited access to land and are marginalized by government land appropriation policies. This situation has significantly impacted the economic lives of these youth, prompting them to become politically active against the government. Consequently,

widespread opposition emerged, leading to a broader political campaign that united the masses and the youth against the government (EUISS, Dec 2016). This is happening in the context where expropriation laws are inadequate to protect peasants and pastoralists. The state is not paying cash compensation for land use rights, compensation for property on the land is paltry, and uniform rehabilitative schemes are absent. Youth of Oromia contended that the Oromia Regional state, as part of the Ethiopian Federal state, should be autonomous to administer its land without heavy handed interference of the central government (Tatek Abebe, 2020).

The Oromo protest movement of 2014 flared up in response to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan (AAIMP). Youth mass protest and mobilization erupted in Ginchi town, 60 km west of Addis Ababa when young primary school students came out to demonstrate against the Addis Ababa Integrated Development Plan (Tatek Abebe, 2020:3).

Other than the physical increase of built environment, urbanization or urban expansion also brings ecological and socio-economic effects (Samat et al., 2014:350). When the Ethiopian government announced the greater Addis Ababa Master plan, in November 2015, the Oromia Region saw a sharp rise in street protests. The plan provided for an expansion of the capital of Addis Ababa into the surrounding Oromia Region, a move which would lead the Oromo community to lose their constitutionally enshrined regional rights.

Many argued that the master plan would have resulted in the displacement of Oromo farmers and communities from their ancestral lands. Many Oromo people viewed the plan as a form of land grabbing and a threat to their livelihoods, cultural heritage, and way of life. Those who opposed the master plan also feared that it would lead to the subordination of Oromo culture, language, and emotional attachment to their ancestral land (Assafa Jalata, 2016).

The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan was perceived by many Oromo people as a manifestation of the Ethiopian government's systemic marginalization and discrimination against the Oromo community. The plan reinforced historical patterns of land dispossession, economic exploitation, and political exclusion faced by the Oromo within Ethiopia.

The expansion of Addis Ababa under the master plan also raised environmental concerns, including deforestation, pollution, and the degradation of natural habitats in Oromia region

territories. Oromo activists highlighted the ecological impacts of urban sprawl and industrial development on local ecosystems and water sources.

The proposed expansion of Addis Ababa galvanized widespread opposition and mobilization among Oromo youth activists, who played a leading role in organizing protests, demonstrations, and civil disobedience campaigns against the master plan. Oromo youth utilized social media and digital activism to mobilize support, raise awareness, and coordinate resistance efforts both within Ethiopia and among the Oromo diaspora worldwide.

The Ethiopian government responded to the Oromo protests with brutal crackdowns, arrests, and violence, further fueling anger and resistance among Oromo youth. The use of excessive force by security forces, including live ammunition and tear gas, resulted in numerous deaths, injuries, and human rights abuses, escalating tensions and drawing international condemnation. The protests continued with vigor although the Ethiopian Government scrapped the AAIMP in January 2016 (European Union, 2016).

The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan served as a catalyst for the Oromo youth protest movement from 2014 to 2018, sparking widespread opposition and mobilization against land grabbing, marginalization, ethnic discrimination, lack of consultation, environmental degradation, and state repression (Aberra Degefa, 2019).

The protests ultimately evolved into a broader struggle for democracy, human rights, and social justice within Ethiopia, reflecting deep-seated grievances and aspirations for political change among the Oromo people and other marginalized communities in the country.

5.3 The Arab Spring and Its impacts on Oromo Youth Political Mobilization

The global political environment has had its own impact on the political lives of youth in Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular. The Arab Spring was a complex, rapidly unfolding phenomena of uprisings, revolutions, mass demonstrations, and civil war that spread throughout North Africa and the Middle East (Sadiki et al. 2015; Karen Kaya, 2012). It was a diverse set of movements with diverse instigator, agents and aspirations that include freedom, opportunity, regime change and ending corruption. It started in Tunisia (Dec 2010) and spread to the rest of North Africa and the Middle East.

Compared to what happened in North Africa and the Middle East, the Arab Spring had a far slower impact on Ethiopian society. But through a variety of methods and procedures, Ethiopia and other parts of East Africa were affected by it.

Because they were aware of what was happening in North Africa and the Middle East, Ethiopian youth attempted to replicate the Arab Spring techniques of resistance there, but the repercussions didn't materialise until much later. However, its means of resistance were manifested through ad hoc demonstrations that lacked significant support from the mass of Ethiopians (Gagliardone, Iginio, & Pohjonen Matti, 2016).

Young Ethiopians have gained knowledge from the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring made it easier for Ethiopian young to become politically active. Young Ethiopians learned how to use various technical tools for political purposes thanks to this. The Arab Spring prompted mainstream media and other media sources to mobilize the public, but the government's response made it difficult for the public to understand what had occurred in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Arab Spring, which began 2011, had a significant impact on Oromo Youth political mobilization and protest movements from 2014 to 2018. While the Arab Spring did not directly trigger the Oromo protests, it did serve as a source of inspiration, influence, and mobilizing resource for the Oromo youth activists. Here's how the Arab Spring influenced the Oromo protest movement:

In casual conversations with youth groups in the Burayu region, the Arab Spring demonstrated the power of mass mobilization and collective action in challenging authoritarian regimes and demanding political reforms. The success of movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries inspired Oromo youth activists to similarly demand democratic change and government

Lelisa Ulbanaa, a 20-year-old Burayu youth informant, stated that;

The Arab Spring was characterized by the extensive use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to organize protests, disseminate information, and mobilize support. Oromo activists adopted similar tactics, leveraging social media as a powerful tool for organizing protests, sharing news and videos of state violence, and rallying international solidarity for the Oromo cause. The political mobilization of youth in Oromia is related to the

Arab Spring .Thus, Oromia teenagers created youth organisation on the campuses of high schools and universities since 2011. They were motivated by the Arab Spring. (Interview held on November 21, 2020)

However, it lacked the authority to enlist a large portion of Oromo youth in social activism on its own. The group's actions were most noticeable in the public universities and colleges in Oromia, and afterwards in other parts of the country. The succeeding movement was started by two young Oromo university students from the engineering and public administration departments at Addis Ababa University. Numerous Ethiopian institutions, as well as private and governmental colleges located in Oromia Regional State, have seen Oromo youth protests since 2012.

Oromo activists drew inspiration from the Arab Spring's emphasis on people power, human rights, and democracy, forging alliances with other pro-democracy movements and diaspora groups worldwide. In this context, 34-year-old Burayu resident Bayisa Mamo recalled the following events during his 2011 freshman year at Haromaya University:

We employed every strategy at our disposal to enrage the administration on everything from campus food complaints to bathroom usage. The idea that we must oppose the government and organize our community from scratch was widely accepted and embraced. The university administration and the government responded to our complaints with severe actions, including the detention of our youth activists. We organized a nonviolent demonstration to demand the release of these Oromo students who were kidnapped from their residences in April 2011. However, this demonstration led to more detentions and kidnappings. (Interview conducted on May 21, 2021).

After that, there were youth demonstrations at Arba Minch University in the SNNP Regional State, which led to the detention of several young people in 2017. Then Oromo students in Somalia Regional State's Jigjiga University protested.

Once it got going, the campaign spread, and Oromo students from Fiche Preparatory School in Northern Shewa joined the protests. Then the demonstration in Adama University broke out like a highly contagious disease. Through the years of 2011 to 2014, these protests persisted nonstop but on and off.

The Oromo youth revolt from 2014 to 2018, akin to the Arab Spring, was ignited by the authorities' handling of local administrative matters, but it has also been associated with broader economic disparities. The Arab Spring protests were precipitated by factors such as authoritarianism, violations of citizens' fundamental rights, political mismanagement, nepotism, financial crises, unemployment, severe poverty, and demographic structures, including a large proportion of educated yet dissatisfied youth (Abdel Salam, Elfatih, 2015: 123). These elements were similarly present in the Oromo youth protests during the same period.

Youth in Burayu Town became more active and vibrating for political mobilization thanks to all these political mobilizing tools and opportunities, which eventually turned into youth political mobilization in the upcoming 2014 to 2018 youth political mobilizations.

Gurmesa Tesfaye, a 23 years old young informant from Burayu corroborated this assertion, stating that university students have galvanized Oromo youth from both rural and urban settings to protest. Spurred by these events, individuals have rallied together for political action via social media, both physically and digitally. Areas that were once marginalized and disconnected have now become pivotal to the movement, owing to the synergistic efforts of both traditional and digital media. Events and circumstances that were once thought to be absurd become vehicles for political mobilization and demonstrations by Young Oromo students. The youth began to take advantage of this political opportunity for their own upcoming political goals.

The principles of people power, social media activism, and global solidarity championed during the Arab Spring resonated deeply with the aspirations and strategies of the Oromo protest movement. This resonance played a pivotal role in enhancing the movement's resilience, visibility, and impact on Ethiopian politics. The ethos of people power that underpinned the Arab Spring movements, emphasizing the collective agency of ordinary citizens in effecting political change, found echoes in the mobilization efforts of the Oromo youth. By embracing this ethos, Oromo activists tapped into the transformative potential of grassroots organizing and mass mobilization, fostering a sense of empowerment and unity within their movement.

Through digital platforms, Oromo activists were able to amplify their voices, share information, and mobilize support both locally and globally. This engagement with social media not only

expanded the reach of the Oromo movement but also facilitated the dissemination of their message and demands to a wider audience, garnering international attention and solidarity.

The spirit of global solidarity that characterized the Arab Spring resonated with the inclusive and interconnected nature of the Oromo protest movement. The sense of unity and shared purpose that transcended geographical boundaries inspired Oromo activists to forge alliances, collaborate with other social justice movements, and draw strength from the support of a broader community of activists and advocates around the world.

5.4 Conclusion

Economic and political challenges spurred the Oromo youth to engage in political activism. These challenges encompassed the absence of genuine democracy, exacerbating issues such as the judicial system's inability to ensure justice, transparency, and accountability. Additionally, the surveillance of citizens propelled the youth towards political engagement (Ortiz et al., 201x). This chapter thoroughly examines the factors that led to the rise of the youth political movement in Oromia, shaped by various events and conditions. The sociopolitical climate of the country has fostered increased political involvement among the youth. Moreover, the political economy of the nation has facilitated the participation of youth in political movement in Oromia.

The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan incited widespread concern among the Oromo youth due to its potential expansion into Oromia, significantly affecting the socio-cultural and economic welfare of the Oromo people (Abera Degefa, 2019). This plan was pivotal in igniting a youthful political movement and mobilization, as it directly challenged the rights and interests of the Oromo community. It led to the Oromo youth protest movement, which saw a substantial increase in resistance and mobilization against state oppression, land expropriation, marginalization, ethnic discrimination, and the absence of consultation. These protests evolved into a steadfast struggle for social justice, democracy, and human rights in Ethiopia, highlighting the Oromo people's enduring grievances and calls for political reform. The political awakening in various regions of Africa, characterized by forms of political uprising (Mamdani, 1995; Branch and Mampilly, 2015), draws parallels with the techniques and resources employed during the Arab Spring of 2011, which witnessed a series of protests and uprisings across the Arab world (Sadiki et al., 2015). This global phenomenon significantly influenced the political engagement of young people in Oromia, transforming their approach to participation in politics.

By leveraging digital platforms, the Oromo youth tailored their strategies to address the specific challenges and aspirations of their community, reshaping their political struggle from 2014 to 2018. The adoption of social media and music platforms as tools for mobilization enabled the Oromo youth to transcend traditional barriers to collective action. Through these platforms, they fostered collaboration, built networks of mutual reliance, and forged interpersonal connections, empowering themselves as agents of change within their society. This innovative approach not only amplified their voices but also facilitated a more inclusive and participatory form of political engagement, reflecting a paradigm shift in how young people navigate and influence the political landscape. This technological evolution in youth political engagement highlights the transformative power of new media in mobilizing and organizing grassroots movements. By embracing digital tools, the Oromo youth harnessed the potential of technology to democratize political participation, challenge existing power structures, and advocate for social change. This shift underscores the adaptability and resilience of young activists in leveraging innovative strategies to advance their political objectives and amplify their voices within the broader discourse of societal transformation.

Chapter Six: Oromo Youth Means of Political Resistance

6.1 Introduction

The contemporary landscape of political dissent has undergone a profound transformation, catalyzed by the dynamic actions of youth activists. This chapter examines the strategic maneuvers adopted by young Oromo individuals in challenging established political norms, shedding light on their unique approach to defiance within the prevailing societal framework. A notable case study spanning from 2014 to 2018 highlights the resolute endeavors of the youth in Oromia, who spearheaded a series of protests rooted in grievances encompassing land rights, political marginalization, and cultural suppression.

Central to their mobilization efforts was the adept utilization of social media platforms, which emerged as indispensable tools for galvanizing and sustaining the momentum of the youth-led movements in Oromia. This chapter aims to elucidate the multifaceted ways in which these young activists harnessed all available resources as a means of social capital and political mobilization within the realms of the political sphere. Through a strategic deployment of resource mobilization strategies and leveraging social capital, the Oromo youth effectively unveiled the realities underpinning their social movements, with a particular emphasis on the pivotal role played by social media networks.

By circumventing the constraints imposed by state-controlled media channels, these youth leveraged social media platforms to facilitate swift dissemination of information, coordinate protests, and amplify global awareness of their cause. This chapter scrutinizes the intricate dynamics through which social media served as a catalyst for empowerment and advocacy within the youth political movement, underscoring its instrumental role in reshaping the contours of contemporary socio-political activism. The advent of social media has significantly transformed the digital age, acting as a catalyst for change and ushering in a new era of activism and participation in Oromia. The period from 2014 to 2018 witnessed the critical role played by social media in influencing Oromo youth demonstrations and their strategies of effective opposition. Throughout the 2014-2018 Oromia uprisings, young Oromo organizations were encouraged to utilize social media for mobilizing political action.

During this timeframe, a significant number of young people in Oromia actively participated in political mobilization, with social media amplifying the voices of Oromo youth and becoming a significant catalyst for political change in Ethiopia. The chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of how these elements influenced Oromo youth activism and societal consciousness, leading to a collective community endeavor to raise awareness and drive transformative action. Furthermore, it explores the impact of social media on the political resistance of young individuals, with a specific focus on the region of Burayu, Oromia. This analysis highlights the pivotal role of social media in fostering and mobilizing young people for active political participation and movements throughout the period spanning 2014 to 2018.

6.1.1 The Place of Social Media in Youth Political Mobilization

The place and space of youth in the world have changed every time in line with the changing modes and means of technology. Today, technologies which are sometimes called virtual technology or social media have become one of the most important factors that have come to shape the lifestyle of young people. The youth use these technologies because they have the potential to alter the flow of political information, and to reduce the cost of conventional forms of participation. Ultimately, this contributes for the upsurge in participation by reducing costs associated with publishing and accessing information pertaining to youth political or other forms of movements (Leizerov 2000 cited in Garrett, 2007).

Technologies further facilitate group formation and increase one's recruitment opportunity and retention by improving group efficiency, all of which contribute to increasing political participation of the larger society (Garrett 2007:204). As a result of the introduction of modern technology, youth experiences have changed rapidly. In recent times, the internet has emerged as a major space and place that young people use to embark on various life experiences. This is an opportunity for young Africans that can help them achieve their goals and aspirations. It is this technology that allows young people to communicate and connect together because it has helped them to become more visible and increasingly creative to inhabit their own world of media which is distinct from the mainstream media.

The wide spread of information technologies such as social media has widened youth's opportunity to access the new world of thoughts and outlooks about their political and social

environments. This has facilitated the urban-rural inter-linkages among different groups and communities. This inter-linkage in turn has brought about a paradigm shift in the lives of young people because the internet and social media provide marginalized youth with the opportunity to develop connections with like-minded individuals/groups to move beyond geographic and symbolic restrictions (Boyd 2014).

By using technologies for their political actions, young people have been agents of change in which the force of change has sometimes brought them to power, or has yielded huge damages and benefits to society. Though change has been a common phenomenon in youth life since the 1960s, modern/virtual technology has accelerated the pace of this change and has enabled the mobilization of friendship networks for targeted political action (Buckingham 2007). Using Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and other forms of social media, the young generation may take part in and interact with social, religious, or other movements in a much more rapid and profound way than before (Maria Blanco Palencia 2005:421). For instance, social media played an important role in the pre and during Arab Spring in mediating youth friendship relations which later changed to other forms of groups that promote social movements and group mobilizations for specific changes (Yurdagul Meral,2017; Sadiki, Larbi,2015).

In Ethiopia, social movements that have political, economic, religious, and cultural characteristics can be dated back at least to the early 1960s (Andargachew 1993; Assafa, 2006). While in the pre-1990s period, there was no opportunity to adopt social media strategies for social movements, the post-1990s movements adopted these technologies to publicize their struggles to the broader international audience by communicating more frequently with their members and constituencies. Facebook has, for example, offered Ethiopians the opportunity to exercise freedom of expression they could not do otherwise. The utilization of these media by young people became much visible during the 2016-2018 political resistance movements in Ethiopia. Thus, the main aim of this section has to illustrate the place of technology both as a resource and as an instrument for Oromo youth political resistance in Burayu town in the Oromia National Regional State of Ethiopia.

6.1.2 Youth Digital Activism: The Ethiopian Context

With regard to the agentive role of youth, Honwana & De Boeck (2005:3) state that they contribute to the making of structures, norms, rituals, and directions of society while youth

themselves are also being shaped in the processes. They also make themselves through creative forms of self-realization and ingenious politics of identity while they influence society by acting as political forces and as sources of resistance and resilience.

The African youth have been using modern technology, particularly social media, to express their views and opinions regarding issues ranging from mere criticism of the governments to full-blown revolutions(Fasola &Oyadeyi, 2021). The rapid rise in social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, has had significant impacts on the underpinning social movement activities today. Social media facilitate both real-time information sharing among a broad audience and new forms of collective action. By looking at the undergoing series of changes since the 1860s, one can see that social movements share one thing in common; that is, they are caused by perceived inequality and involve a collective and sustained effort to change (Furze et al.2015:466). Cyberactivism has become a new form of activism in recent movements where the youth are using the internet to encourage young people to actively participate in any discourse and have a platform to be heard, hold the elected accountable, mobilize for causes, raise funds, and advocate to bring changes.

As stated above, African youth have expressed their views and have participated in social movements by employing different technological instruments. The Arab Spring is a good example of a recent social movement in Africa in which technology is used for political action (Sadiki *et al.* 2015). Here, social media campaigns have mobilized large young protestors which resulted in the unexpected flight of Tunisia's longstanding dictator, Zine Abedine Bin Ali. This, later, triggered a region-wide demonstration effect that soon brought down the Mubarak Regime in Egypt and destabilize authoritarian rulers in Libya, Syria, and Yemen as well as producing wider political repercussions throughout the Middle East and North Africa region (Sadiki *et al.* 2015:17).

It was through widespread Facebook and Twitter campaigns such as the _Bring Back Our Girls' hashtag campaign in Nigeria (UNFPA, UN 2011), *Y'en a marre* in Senegal, *Balai citoyen* in Burkina Faso and *La Lucha* in the DRC (Arnould, Tor &Vervaeke 2016) that youth mobilized the society for political action. Sudanese youth played a leading role in mobilizing a large number of the Sudanese community to rise up against Al Bashir Regime in early 2019 by using social media as a major means of mobilizing political movements in Sudan ((David, Financial

Times writer, May 2019). This Sudan youth mobilization and its consequences, according to the above Financial Times writer, has brought about the completion of the Arab Spring. These examples illustrate how social media has enabled both a rapid and broad social mobilization for change.

In Ethiopia, social movements that have political, economic, religious, and cultural characteristics can be dated back at least to the early 1960s (Andargachew 1993; Assafa 2006). Ammar (1997) argued that young people and students were at the heart of early uprisings in Asmara against the Ethiopian regime. Young politicians and students played an important role in the country during the revolution and in its aftermath by raising broader national and political issues including the question of nationalities, a change in the land tenure system, the question of democracy and equality (Eyob Balcha 2009). It was the student movement in collaboration with other social movements including the Labor Union, Peasant Uprising, and the involvement of the military that brought about the dismantling of the feudal regime of Haile Selassie and the coming of the *Derg* into power (Balsvik1985; Bahiru 2014). Thus, students were the harbinger of change that had brought about the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the overthrow of the old regime.

The use of social media methods like the internet and cell phones was not common among social movements before the 1990s. However, since the 1990s, these technologies have been extensively used to raise awareness about youth struggles to global audiences and enable more frequent communication between youth and their members and constituencies. Before 1990, social movements were more effective in representing youth voices through institutionalized ‘parties and groups in Ethiopian politics. However, since the 1990s, modern technology, such as social media, has played a vital role in the activities of many Ethiopian youngsters.

Though internet penetration is at its lowest level compared to other parts of the world, recent political development show that social media platform has started to account for the development of the Ethiopian urban youth political landscape (Eyob Balcha & Linda Herrera, 2016:149). Social media has emerged as an alternative political platform for the young generation of Ethiopia (Eyob Balcha & Linda Herrera, 2016:155). Thus, youth political participation is characterized by the use of social media for tactical purposes. Recently, youth political movements, provoked by state suppression and violence rolling out over the vast territories of Ethiopia, are social media driven due to the frustration and lack of opportunities for social

mobility and changes in their lives, which pushed them into political confrontations with the regime (Di Nunzio 2016). Of course, this laid the ground for the mobilization of young members of the community to bring change to the country at large. The EPRDF established the Youth League in 2009 in the name of coordinating the efforts of the youth wing which had 1.25 million members (Youth Unemployment: Ethiopia Country Study, 2012).

It is often told that the 1974 Revolution grew out of the student movement of Ethiopia which became the breeding ground for political parties in Ethiopia for the first time. Both the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON) inherited from the student movement of Ethiopia (Eyob Balcha & Linda Herrera, 2016:149). Of course, the *Derg* Military government had a similar youth association (Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association, REYA).

Other than these, Ethiopian youth have rarely been involved in the formal political affairs of the country and, even today, the youth do not have a better formal alternative to promote their political movements than resorting to the use of social media. In light of the significant role that contemporary technology has played in the youth movement, Bayisa Tolera, a 27-year-old Burayu youth informant states:

...the internet has largely affected the urban dwellers in Ethiopia; young Ethiopians have easy access to technology compared to their predecessors. These technological facilities have made the youth more vibrant and active. It is this technology that has made young Ethiopians easy access to the global world. It also facilitates understanding the local problem through the eyes of the global world. Ethiopian social media bloggers and commentators are the leading individual political players who have laid down the space for online political social movements by fomenting anti-government protests in the recent political/social movements of the country. Most of them have become well-known activists who have played an important political role in mobilizing the mass. They have played a political role that the mainstream media could not do. This means of using the internet mobilized a large number of Ethiopians for political struggle. Other than this, young activists like Zone 9 have started to post what the government was doing and shows to the public that the system was incapable to meet the demands and interest of the public. Zone 9 was a Facebook page of young activists who started political activism to criticize what the incumbent government was doing. This page's bloggers include Abel Wabella, Atnaf

Berhane, Mahlet Fantahun, Natnael Feleke, Zelalem Kibret, and Befekadu Hailu. (Interviewed held on 24-5-2021).

Furthermore, Biratu Geda, a 28-year-old teenage informant, vehemently asserted that:

We had made different means of political resistance to achieve our goal. Sometimes we were forced to shift from strong criticisms to support of the ruling party to minimize the risk of imprisonment and criticism. Instead of considering the incumbent government as an enemy, we strategically wanted to create a friendly relationship with top officials using social networking platforms so that the government would take socio-political measures that benefit the youthful community as well as the mass. (Interview conducted on January 3, 2020).

This form of digital activism had started in Ethiopia long before the Arab Spring broke out in North Africa and the Middle East. The 2005 election in Ethiopia witnessed that, for the first time in the country's history, opposition parties enjoyed a fair allocation of controlled mainstream media to use for their political campaign as well as the right to freedom of expression for citizens of the country (Zewge Abate, 2010: 7). During this time, protesters combined new and traditional communication channels in ways that closely resemble the uses of the media that would characterize the 'Arab Spring' in 2011 (Gagliardone, Iginio, and Pohjonen Matti, 2016: 26). But the international media and society has a lukewarm attitude towards the Ethiopian mass mobilization of the period that preceded the Arab spring of 2011 (ibid).

It was during and after the 2005 election that young Ethiopian bloggers laid down the foundation for digital activism that enabled innovative forms of communication to be experimented. Interview done in August 2020 with male young political actors who have been actively involved in the Burayu political movement since 2017, further stated that —*This form of resistance (digital activism) had found very little attention among the public and government. Despite the youth effort to minimize outright criticism of government, the government did not give any attention to their efforts. The government did not have ears to listen to the criticism that these digital activists provided. Notwithstanding the critics and tolerable resistances, the incumbent government took authoritative measures such as imprisoning activists and journalists by accusing them of collaborators of —outlawed opposition parties such as Ginbot7.*

Even though youth protests in Ethiopia, like other movements in any sub-Saharan African country, seemed amorphous and disorganized. It often began peacefully but degenerated into violence due to harsh responses from security forces and because of the prevalence of criminality and indiscipline among some participants (Alex de Waal & Rachel Ibreck 2013:304).

Ethiopian youth political participants understood that using social media for mobilizing mass protests has the potential to transform the political leadership. So, the youth have been the harbinger of new forms of protests for developing connections between grassroots activities and national-level mass protests. The young resistance movement has been mobilized and disseminated across the country mostly through social media.

It was demonstrated by Oromo youth political participants that available resources, both offline and online technologies such as social media platforms have been instrumental in Youth political mobilization. Oromo youth amassed these technological tools for political action. Thus, the paper strongly argues that the rational and conscious efforts and resource mobilization of Oromo youth have contributed to the political changes in Ethiopia in 2018.

6.1.3 Youth Digital Activism in Oromia

One of the most important youth political engagement in Ethiopia is Oromo youth activism. As many other new social movements do, the Oromo protests employed different tactics and strategies such as activism and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in combination with satellite television broadcasts and other mainstream media networks (Arora, 2018; Forsén 2018). Unlike their predecessors, the young Oromo vibrant activists have understood that using mainstream media as a political strategies for their cause failed to bring any fundamental socio-political change in the lives of the large sections of their communities and, therefore, believed in the importance of a paradigm shift in their strategies and means of resistance movements.

Oromo youth's astuteness and agility in capitalizing on new technological instruments for political mobilization helped the movement immensely. There is a strong urgency of creating new ways of resistance and forms of struggle that the young generation should uphold against the old forms of resistance that the Oromo political leaders and participants embrace (Jawar Mohammed, 2009). Thus, as many other new social movements do, the Oromo protests

employed different tactics and strategies such as activism, lobbying, rallies, and social media to achieve its ultimate goal.

These young political resistance participants have understood the importance of using both the mainstream media and the new technological instrument that was clearly used during the Arab Spring. It is interesting to see the development of a convergent culture where the mainstream media outlets such as mainstream media and the contemporary social media outlets collide together bringing together both local media at a grassroots level with that of corporate media internationally (Jenkins, 2006). Young Oromo political participants have made use of available resources for political action and thus resource mobilization has brought some changes in their lives as well as the society.

Oromo protests employed different tactics and strategies of activism such as advocacy, lobbying an international community, rallies, and social media campaign across the globe under the hash tag #Oromo protests to get recognition.

My informant, Bayisa Mulatu, stated:

Overseas Oromo civil society organizations were formed to provide effective and coordinated leadership to sustain the Oromo protests movement. The protests also created links with International organizations such as the European Union which called for the UN investigations of the conflict in the restive Oromia and Amhara regional states. (interview on September 3, 2021).

As part of the larger Oromo political resistance movement, the efforts of young political movement in Burayu town were accompanied by informal and formal mass mobilization and non-institutionalized actions that undermined the existing local authorities, and contributed for the region-wide protest to bring the political reform in 2018. Social media technologies were highly employed in their actions and collective mobilizations and served as social capital in youth political mobilization.

In this connection, one of our focus group discussants in the town pinpointed that:

... social media is the blood that gives life to our political struggle. With social media youth easily disseminate their voices and message within fractions of seconds. It shortens the time and space for disseminating the information. It was through this technological tool that youth exposed human rights violations perpetrated during the protests in Oromia. Youth mobilization has given fruit because of social media. Our political mobilization could not be realized in such a short period of time if there were no internet and the media.

For young political participants in the study area, social media such as Facebook have had a tremendous advantage in expressing their resistance movements during the protests in the Oromia region. In this context, my informant, who was interrogated in April 2021, said the following:

Facebook has offered young people the opportunity to exercise freedom of expression they could not do otherwise. Facebook serves as an important source of information and means of political mobilization by reflecting what is really going on in the country. It serves as mobilizing resource for the young generation. It is this technology that allowed young people in Burayu town to communicate and create their network of relationships.

Social media significantly influences the political engagement of Burayu's youth. It has enabled them to forge friendships and networks, fostering discussions on local and national political issues while sharing their personal viewpoints and insights. Through these platforms, they have created a unique media presence, diverging from mainstream channels and attracting millions of followers. This medium has the power to reach and engage thousands instantly. They stay informed and connected by simply tapping on their phones, searching on Google, and utilizing social media applications.

This is valid for youth political movement participants like Bikila Hundessa, who said that: *The social media site has helped to mobilize Oromo youth for political action. This social media platform has played a significant role in connecting young people in Burayu and the surrounding area. This technology has allowed us to share information, schedule protests, and determine what measures should be done to dissuade government action.* (Interviewed in May 2021).

For young people in Oromia, social media has functioned as a means of exchanging information and communicating information about the right to equality before the law, the right to life, the right to work and employment, and other concerns. Oromo youth learnt about what was going on in their community and throughout the country through social media platforms. It made them comprehend that the Oromo people suffered greatly in a variety of ways. Oromo activists' Facebook posts demonstrated how crooked the system is and how it has failed to answer the people's demands. These posts and reposts have helped to raise youth political consciousness. This media platform is further backed by broadcast media like OMN and other media networks have contributed in broadening youth political consciousness.

These electronic tools have enabled the young in this area to actively participate in political mobilization. Our FGD participants highlighted the critical importance of social media in the Oromo youth political movement from 2014 to 2018. Our FGD discussant pointed out that in the Oromo youth protest, everyone is responsible for sharing messages and information about the objectives and aims of the next youth demonstration, rather than following a tight young leadership chain. The social media platform has helped to reduce the line of command in young political mobilization.

During such political moments, youth established effective ties among different members of the group and leaders which made these ties endure beyond the resistance movement period to create further collective identity among the group members. From our focus group discussion and key informant interview, it was identified that in the early period, they did not have formal organization but through time their networks have become better organized. Later, there emerged a hierarchical command chain which have a single leader starting from village, locality, and to the town level.

In our discussion, they stated that people from the Diaspora communities had contributed to connecting young person in Oromia with each other and with the wider public to take part in Oromo political resistance. To do this, Diaspora communities have explored the opportunity of using social media technologies and mainstream media that were not affordable for the local communities. In this way, they have exerted far greater influence on the youth communities in the country than ever before. Therefore, we can see that Oromo protests were reinforced by social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as well as messaging apps together with

mainstream media such as satellite TV broadcasting including OMN and ESAT and many others. According to my informant, Bikila Hundessa, a 27 years old Burayu town resident:

The youth in Oromia have become politically aware through technological platforms and Oromo internet sites such as @gadaa and @opride. These platforms have provided essential information about the current state of affairs in Oromia and Ethiopia. Additionally, Jawar Mohammed's social media updates are a major source of news on the developments in Oromia and serve as a significant means of mobilizing the public. His posts on Facebook and in mainstream media have been a crucial source of political information. These resources have bolstered our political awareness and resolve to advocate for the Oromo cause. (Interviewed on 24-5-2021).

The quotation clearly brings out the role that members of the Oromo diaspora and especially Jawar Mohammed used the media in publicizing the government's repressive political action and getting followers throughout Oromia. During our interview, Ielissa Megersa, One of active youth member resident of Burayu town resident, further underscored that:

Jawar played a crucial role in our political mobilization. He mentored young Oromo political activists. He spearheaded our political battle, supported youthful political mobilization efforts, and made substantial contributions to keeping Oromo youth overseas and at home informed about the situation in Oromia and the condition of Oromo protestors in Afaan Oromo, Amharic, and English. Furthermore, his advice and mentorship have significantly contributed to the development of youth political mobilization and resistance, strengthening leadership and fostering a coherent and organized Oromo youth movement in Oromia. Jawar has actively defended the Oromo cause on various social media platforms, using these channels to amplify his message. (Interview conducted on March 27, 2020).

Drawing from the aforementioned sources, it is evident that Jawar Mohammed's social media presence served as a pivotal platform for disseminating news and political updates across the nation. Through his various social media channels and posts, he meticulously documented events ranging from protests, fatalities, and civil unrest to instances of military forces engaging in violence against unarmed civilians, including reports of troops resorting to shooting and artillery usage amidst defenseless populations.

His writings and messages inspired Oromo youth to become more involved and politically conscious. As a result, his social media following grew over time, recognizing his political position as the leading spokesperson for the Oromo cause. His following has grown steadily after he began using three languages: Afaan Oromo, Amharic, and English. He has made significant contributions to young Oromo political mobilization and the growth of citizen journalism among youth in Oromia and other regions of Ethiopia.

It is not surprising to see young Oromo rallying around the Oromo cause. Youth all over Oromia have started to acknowledge Jawar's role in the successful mobilization of young people and the mass at large. Jawar's message rallied among the youth by different means of communication, including phone calls and word-of-mouth where few people, later, could access his message through 'proxies or special software' when all forms of the network were shut down during the climax of the resistance movements in the region.

The following opinion is extracted from Ebsa Gute, who served as an informant in a diverse focus group discussion with young individuals aged 23 to 27 from Burayu town. From 2014 to 2018, these youths were actively involved in organizing and executing resistance activities in Burayu town.

Between 2014 and 2018, Oromo young individuals brought to light several critical issues affecting their lives, such as youth unemployment, corruption, and inadequate governance. Jawar Mohammed's social media campaigns brought these essential concerns to the forefront for the Oromo people. His posts ignited a dynamic movement and protests, revealing the regime's harsh response to peaceful demonstrators in Oromia. (Interview held on January 3, 2020).

This enhanced the political participation of Oromia's young, largely through protest and activism. Oromo youth have used the mainstream and worldwide media to express their frustrations through resistance protests. Youth in Oromia have linked arms with Oromo diaspora who have abandoned their nation and joined the social movement; this youth protest has been ongoing periodically till 2018.

Between 2014 and 2018, Oromo youth leveraged social media for political ends and mobilization. In this period, social media became a significant tool for the political mobilization of Oromo youth. Their adept use of social media led to outcomes that mirrored the aspirations and interests of millions of young individuals, addressing critical issues within the Oromo community. A portion of the Oromo populace voiced fundamental concerns regarding their people, the government's inadequate political leadership, and the government's neglect in addressing these issues. It also highlighted the authoritarian tendencies of the incumbent regime and the necessary steps to challenge it.

6.1.4 The Impacts and Effects of Oromo Youth Digital Activism

The role social media played in exposing human rights violations perpetrated during the protests in Oromia. So, the Ethiopian government blocked access to social media and news websites to prevent reporting of attacks on protesters by security forces during the wave of protests that started in November 2015 and led up to the state of emergency (Amnesty International, 2016). Moreover, the parliament of the Ethiopian Federal government introduced a cybercrime in June 2016. This law stipulates serious penalties for involving in a wide range of online activities such as posting —defamatory speech. This, in turn, gave authorities greater surveillance and censorship powers that would limit access to information on digital platforms (Associated Press, 2016). According to a Freedom House report (2016), the adoption of this law led to the shutdown of Facebook, Viber, and WhatsApp in parts of the Oromia National Regional State. Authorities also cited social media posts as shreds of evidence criminalizing digital activists. After this, many young activists were found guilty of —terrorism charges under the country's anti-terrorism proclamation (Addis Standard, 2017).

According to Melkamu Mulatu, a 25 years old Burayu youth a political participant who was one of the active participants of youth protest from 2014 to 2018 in Oromia;

... Despite many challenges that we were facing during this time, Oromo youth ranging from primary schools to government employees had become part of this political mobilization. It was the perseverance and commitment of every Oromo youth political participant that contributed to the emergence and development of a unified and organized political movement of Oromo youth throughout the country. It was this organized resistance that resulted in the abrogation of Addis Ababa's city master plan.

It was the social and mainstream media that brought together the youth for the 2014-2018 protests. Social and mainstream media initiated a campaign in response to the events in the Ginchi region, close to the Chilimo Forest. The 2015 incineration of the Chilimo forest by unidentified perpetrators caused widespread indignation in several areas of western Shewa. It was the November 2015 Ginchi Senior Secondary School protest that ignited youth protests in the surrounding towns of Ambo and Burayu. The immediate cause of the protest was the burning of a public forest found in Ginchi. Youth protests had spread to other parts of Oromia including, West Shewa, West Arsi, and Wallaga because the government had used forces to crush the revolt. The introduction of the Addis Ababa City Integrated Master Plan generated additional youth protest causes (The Finfine Tribune, October 2015). Major Facebook posts and reposts by Oromo youth activists, and YouTube posts facilitating information on what really going on and what is the reason behind the introduction of the Addis Ababa Master plan. Most of these posts stated that the implementation of this master plan would result in the expansion of Addis Ababa into Oromo land and a large section of Oromo communities would lose their land and culture. This has created the mobilization of large youth groups for political protests in most parts of Oromia.

Oromo youth have utilized social media to highlight the true events in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian government's plans to infringe upon and extend into Oromia's land under the pretext of urban development in Addis Ababa and its adjacent Oromia regions, especially around the Finfine area, now called Shager Town, as part of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan (SADC, 2017;The Finfine Tribune, October 2015). Social media played a pivotal role in revealing the realities of the master plan's execution, which posed a threat to displace the Oromo people from their lands, strip them of their inherent rights to these lands, and cause significant social and cultural impacts. The dissemination of this information by the youth is crucial. In 2018, The Guardian reported that young Oromo activists led a significant walkout that contributed to the toppling of the prime minister in one of Africa's most authoritarian countries.

For youth focus group participants, a 29-year-old male who has been actively involved in the Burayu political movement since 2017;

The Oromo youth (qeerroo) emerged as a bold and spirited young political organization, gaining recognition from all segments of society after years of operating secretly and engaging in battles

since 2018. After expanding its influence throughout Oromia, the qeerroo launched an open protest and political mobilization, announcing a mass demonstration across the region. However, as Oromo youth movement organizations become more bureaucratic, they risk losing effectiveness by moving away from the disruptive actions that initially propelled the movement's success, and instead, engaging in more traditional activities that operate within the system rather than outside of it (Interview was conducted in August 2020).

Many Oromia regional state officials were active in giving supports to these young political resistance movements since 2017. Tacitly, these local government officials did play an important role in coordinating mass protests by using even the state-owned media.

In an interview conducted on May 23, 2020, Melaku, a 25-year-old youth political participant from Burayu, stated that since 2019, the Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) has been actively broadcasting events on the ground. This effort has gained significant support from various parts of the community. OBN has been fulfilling the role of an independent public media by providing authentic information to empower the people with credible public information and evidence.

Oromia National Regional State mouthpiece -OBN- shifted its orientation more decidedly towards broadcasting the political question of the young in Oromia. It became the mouthpiece of the mass by addressing the real problem and questions of the Oromo people. Later, even the Oromia Regional State assigned a diaspora as a media director to run the OBN. Following this development, OBN emerged as one of the major public media that addresses the interest of the mass, and it was celebrated for exposing the ruthless mistreatment of the mass and for exposing the widespread corruption and maladministration throughout the country. The youth was very much passionate about this media as it engaged in exposing government failures to meet the demands and questions of the community. In this way, OBN has become the voice and ears of the mass in the period of youth protest in Oromia starting from the late 2017 .

Burayu Town youth political mobilization leader, Lelissa Megerssa who is a 28-year-old resident of Burayu who has participated in the Oromia Youth Protest since 2016 , emphatically argued that;

There were some changes following protest and resistance made by us from 2014 to 2018. These significant changes observed since the beginning of 2017 among the security forces whereby most of them made no attempts to stop us from protesting and rioting in because members of the security forces were sympathizers of the causes of the resistance movements.

The aforementioned informant statement goes in line with what has been observed at national level whereby government has been promised political reform to satisfy the interest of youth. For this purpose, in the opening speech of the Houses, the president of Ethiopia had promised far-reaching reforms which include electoral reforms, a more proportional system of government, a much more effective measure against corruption and the liberalization of the economy. Thus, a significant measure was taken by reshuffling the federal government ministers which is said to be part of that reform process (EUISS, 2016). But these government measures could not go in line with what the young Oromo protesters demanded. When this continuous protest gained maximum mass support since the beginning of 2017, the incumbent regime under the leadership of PM Haile Mariam Desalegn resigned in 2018. Replacing Haile Mariam Desalegn might also be one way to meet the demands of Oromo youth protesters who have accused the authorities of marginalization. And thus the incumbent regime was forced to address the question of Oromo youth by assigning Abiy as the new prime Minister of Ethiopia in April 2018. One of the immediate measures that the new administration took was a crucial political decision to release political prisoners. This administration further took other political measures to facilitate situations for many opposition political parties such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ginbot 7 to participate in the political arena of Ethiopia without any political harassment and persecution. These political decisions by the incumbent government gave hope to the young protesters. Together with this, the opening of political spaces for freedom of expression and assembly signaled the emergence of enough political space for Ethiopians to participate.

According to Alemayehu Gugsa, a 24 years old political activist who was participated in the Oromia youth protests between 2014 and 2018;

Beginning from 2018 onwards, the youth of the town have gained political freedom to express their views and ideas freely. Youth have gained the right to express whatever they want as far as they do not violate the rights of others. The voices of the people have gained the attention of the

incumbent town administration for the time being. The new administration has tolerated opposition parties like OLF to engage in political activities without the intervention of the government. OLF leaders and supporters have been allowed to participate in political activities for a short period of time. But freedom of expression and political activities prevailed only for six or seven months. (Interview made on May 28, 2021).

So, during the early period of PM Abiy's administration, things seemed very inspiring and many young people were happy for they thought that situations were in favor of the cause of their protests throughout the Oromia region and the rest of the country. Every news outlet talked about 'Team Lemma' for the success and accomplishment of political changes in the country. Team Lemma consists of a group of Oromia and Amhara Cadres under the leadership of Lemma Megersa that ousted the TPLF led government of Ethiopia. The coalition between Oromia and Amhara cadres had later brought about Oro-Amhara coalition and cooperation which lasted only for one or two years. Oromia youth were appreciated for their relentless struggle and protests against the authoritative government of Ethiopia and for bringing political changes to the country.

Yet, some argue that the success of the political change in the country would only be possible because of the cooperation and coordination of political cadres within the then EPRDF for they nurtured the youth political movements from within. Thus, there is a strong argument that political change was possible because of the mobilization and collaboration between the young and the old generations.

Barisa Mulu, a 28 years old youth informant, pinpointed that this period was remembered as one of the major political development that the government made sympathy towards the public. He exclaimed that:

Following the return of OLF leaders and Oromo diaspora groups from exile, a large section of Oromo youth gathered at Meskel Square to celebrate this victory (September 15, 2018). This was an eventful moment that so many Oromo youth who came from the surrounding wereda of Oromia and participated to commemorate our victory. This was the moment when we expressed our relentless support to the OLF leaders and the diaspora elites. Every young Oromo entered into a state of euphoria since the government of Ethiopia opened up political space which further

facilitated the expansion of democratization and the prevalence of justice for every citizen of the country for the time being. (Interview held in May 2021)

This was also followed by an attempt by all Oromo opposition political groups and parties to cement a coalition for a unified Oromo cause, Gaaddisa Hoogganssa Oromoo (GHO) _Oromo Leadership Unity .With this political attempts political parties like Oromo liberation front, Oromo Federalist Congress, Oromo Democratic Party and other small parties who sought to fight for the cause of the Oromo came together and agreed to the interest of the Oromo society. Such a strategic coalition and agreement became a center of acknowledgement and enthusiasm among young Oromo people. This gave a sign of positive change and development among young community of Burayu Town.

These political decisions by the incumbent government gave hope to the young generation calling for equality and justice. Along with the opening of political spaces for any citizens in the forms of free expression and assembly and freedom of media, these signaled the opening of the political space for civilian as well as the oppositional parties‘ politics.

According to Melkamu Mulatu, a 25 years old informant who has been an eyewitness to these political reforms stated that;

Burayu town administration has started a reform program that would benefit the community immensely. Accordingly, two schools were completed and one technical school was constructed to benefit the community. Furthermore, one female boarding school has been constructed to benefit the community. Other than this, there is an infrastructural development projects carried out in the town which benefits the town to have an asphalted road that connects Addis Ababa with Ambo and constructed bridges. Further development was demonstrated in the area of greenery area and youth center. It is because of the struggle and protests of youth that the administration has started to give due regard to the cultural values of the Oromo people which acknowledge the importance of Ireetchaa festivity and other cultural values. This is not limited to Burayyu but even change happens in Addis Ababa whereby the city administration has allowed the the Ireetchaa ceremony to be conducted every year in Addis Ababa at place given by the city administration in Mesquel Square area.

It is important to highlight here that youth in Burayu has become the voice of the masses through

utilizing different technological outlets and effecting changes.

This study shows that youth in Burayu has played a prominent political role in using various modern technological outlets and instruments to effect change. This is clearly a manifestation of the contemporary youth political movement that produces measurable effects at different levels. This line of argument goes in line with resource mobilization theory which gives due regard to how resources are mobilized for political purposes by Youth members of the community.

In this study I have examined youth political movement and their mobilization using the different social as well as other capital to effect changes in Ethiopia since the late 20th century. In this research endeavor to verify the political trajectories of youth vis-à-vis the changing power politics has been examining.

The political paths taken by young people in Ethiopia that sparked political action, protests, and both offline and online activism against a political dictatorship were the main topic of this essay. The study investigated the use of social media by Ethiopia's Burayu town's youth in their political opposition. It was discovered that young people have used a variety of social media technologies to quickly and effectively interact with one another and the rest of the world.

In order to explore young political mobilization in the research domain, the theories of resource mobilization and New Social Movements were both used. One of the dispersed and fragmented nascent forms of resistance was discovered in this investigation. The resistance movement used social media (technology) to achieve reformation in the socio-political state of the country, not to bring about revolutionary changes politically.

This study went into detail about how youth political movements initially arose as a result of social conflicts before evolving into political acts. This was then translated through pre-existing social dynamics, where networks among young people, informal organizational structures, social media, and mainstream media all played significant roles in bringing about change in society.

6.2 Conclusion

The youth-led digital activism within Oromia, notably led by the Oromo youth, emerges as a seminal chapter within the intricate tapestry of Ethiopia's political terrain. Between 2014 and 2018, these young activists adeptly navigated a complex network of social and mainstream media platforms, strategically deploying a myriad of tactics and strategies to amplify their voices and stimulate a wave of political transformation.

Within the context of Oromia, the Oromo youth demonstrated acute acumen and dexterity in leveraging novel technological tools for political mobilization, heralding a paradigmatic shift in their approach to resistance movements. By embracing social media as a central instrument, the youth movement in Oromia effectively harnessed the potency of digital platforms to disseminate information, coordinate protests, and elevate global awareness of their cause. This departure from conventional modes of political engagement heralded a new era of youth-led activism and advocacy.

The fusion of social and mainstream media streams played a pivotal role in galvanizing the Oromo youth towards collective political action. Through a blend of targeted social media campaigns, advocacy initiatives, and organized rallies, the Oromo youth charted a resolute course towards realizing their overarching goal of socio-political metamorphosis. This utilization of both traditional and digital media conduits underscored the evolving landscape of youth activism, characterized by an amalgamation of grassroots movements with globally interconnected digital networks.

Amidst the unfolding of the Oromo protests, the youth movement adeptly navigated the impediments posed by governmental restrictions, including the enactment of cybercrime statutes and media censorship. Despite these challenges, the Oromo youth persisted in amplifying their voices, mobilizing for political action, and shedding light on human rights violations through poignant social media campaigns and grassroots mobilization endeavors.

The reverberations of Oromo youth digital activism transcended the confines of Oromia, resonating across broader political narratives and catalyzing substantial socio-political reforms. The collaborative endeavors of the youth, bolstered by the backing of diaspora communities and international organizations, propelled the movement towards tangible outcomes, fostering an environment conducive to political discourse and reform.

Chapter Seven : Music as a weapon of Political Resistance

Introduction

Protest songs, especially those resonating through the melodic verses of young Oromo artists in Afaan Oromo, have evolved into potent instruments for articulating and amplifying the shared struggles and aspirations of the Oromo populace. These musical expressions not only serve as mobilization resources but also function as political conduits, igniting and galvanizing the younger demographic towards advocating for transformative political shifts.

The profound impact of Oromo protest songs on mobilizing the youth for political metamorphosis has been underscored in scholarly discourse (Diani, 2003). These musical compositions have effectively tapped into the political consciousness of Oromo youth, sculpting their pathways to political engagement. Within the heart of Oromia, the younger generation has adeptly leveraged social ties and networking avenues as conduits for active involvement in political spheres. This chapter embarks on an exploration of the pivotal role played by protest songs within Oromo political movements, unraveling how they have sparked fervor of political activism among young Oromo advocates.

Music, as a catalyst for transformation, has wielded a profound influence in reshaping the perspectives of young individuals, fostering a proliferation of cultural activities within intimate circles and the emergence of robust cultural networks. These interconnected networks have not only fostered the genesis of novel cultural movements but have also served as bastions for safeguarding the social and cultural identities of the youth. Music, in this context, has emerged as a communal political asset, acting as a unifying force that congregates the younger generation towards active political participation, notably exemplified in regions like Burayu.

Throughout the period spanning from 2014 to 2018, contemporary Oromo music stood out as a pivotal reservoir of social capital, essential for mobilizing and enkindling political fervor among the engaged youth cohort. The resonance of protest songs reverberated through the fabric of Oromo society, mobilizing and elevating political consciousness among the youth, thereby sculpting a dynamic narrative of political activism and cultural resurgence within Oromia.

The political mobilization of the Oromo has a long history which can be dated to the early 1960s. The growth of Oromo national movement has contributed the forging common front by Oromos from all walks of life against different regimes of Ethiopia since 1960s (Assafa Jalata, 2007). According to Assafa Jalata (2002) Oromo nationalism has undergone three stages of development such as reform nationalism in 1960s, revolutionary nationalism in 1970s, and mass movement since 1990s.

The Oromo national movement has spearheaded under the leadership of The Macha Tulama Association. The formation of the association (Olana, 2013) was made possible through the tireless efforts of Colonel Alemu Kitesa and Haile Mariam Gamada. These two men and their colleagues managed to merge three self-help associations operating in Shewa Province, in the present Central Oromia. The objectives of the association was to build schools, churches, mosques, clinics, and roads, help the poor, weak and disabled persons, organize the communities stand for their rights and spread literacy and basic knowledge about health care. The primary objective of this association was to promote socio-economic and cultural development among Oromo and promoting the ethnic identity of the Oromo (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997:38). The association was initiated by educated Oromo in urban areas.

The formation of the Macha Tulama Association was a land mark event in the development of Oromo nationalism. The Macha Tulama Association was the first Oromo organization that sought to peacefully but critically oppose the Ethiopian state's policy disregarding the Oromo culture, identity and language (OPride, 2014). It was the first organization that politically mobilized Oromo from all sections of Oromo society and brought a political consciousness in Oromo national identity. Its formation marked the genesis of a coordinated Oromo resistance against Ethiopian imperial regime. It became a platform for political mobilization of Oromo in Oromo inhabited parts of Ethiopia.

Mekuria Bulcha argues that the association strongly expressed grievances regarding discrimination and cultural oppression, land tenure insecurity caused by increased evictions of peasants and pastoralists due to the introduction and expansion of commercial farming in Ethiopia. The association gained large number of supporters following the establishment of branch offices in most parts of Oromia and became a pan-Oromo social movement. In this regard

the leadership role of General Tadesse Biru and his associate Hailemariam Gamada were enormous (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997:39). This association galvanized the collective will and determination of the Oromo political mobilization and struggle for political rights. Youth in Addis Ababa and in the surrounding urban areas were highly involved in this movement and made an enormous contribution by becoming members of the association and willing to participate in many socioeconomic and political activities.

Following the imprisonment and killing of some of the leader of The Macha and Tulama Self-Help Association in 1966, Oromo students from Haile Selassie I University such as Baro Tumsa, Mamo Mazamir, Ibsa Gutema, Mekonnen Gallan, Taha Ali Abdi have joined a militant political organization for Oromo causes (Olana ,2013) . They contributed to the radicalization of the Association and later the formation of The Oromo Liberation Front. The Haile Selassie government had promised to bring development to Ethiopia, but after three decades in power it failed to meet the expected goal of the majority., As a result, the regime faced challenges.

This young generation of 1960s and 1970s attempted to challenge the existing system by employing different ideological perspectives. They mobilized the society through their political poems, pamphlets and newspapers. It was through their agitating poems, newspapers and political pamphlets that the youth of the 1974 Revolution played a significant role in the sociopolitical life of the various Ethiopian communities (Balsvik, 1985).

Since 1991, the pervasiveness of TPLF domination of Ethiopian politics provoked a reaction from the Oromo youth manifested in protests and street demonstrations. Lack of respect for human and democratic rights and corruption in the government were the major charges against the ruling party in Oromia. The first revolt leading to popular mass uprising against the government was triggered by the introduction of Addis Ababa City Integrated Master Plan in 2014(Abera Degefa, 2019). The majority of the people had already developed deep resentment against TPLF dominated EPRDF government before the news of the master plan had begun to be circulated on social media (Mekuria Bulcha, 1997; Assafa Jalata, 2007; Tatek Abebe, 2020).

Since the post 1990s, Oromo youth revolt and resistance has been shaped and mobilized by young Oromo artists musical lyrics. Social movements have traditionally placed a high value on the arts (Eyerman, Ron, 2014).

The distribution of political movement concepts to a wider audience as well as the internal dynamics of movement expressed through artistic representations (Eyerman, 2014:549).

Art is the place where youth *exercise* their freedom through displaying political resistance. Music as sources of social capital plays an important role in the lives of young people. It is through music that the young generation found platform for political mobilization. Music construct our sense of identity through the direct experience it offers the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives (Simon Firth, 1996: 124-125). Internal movement processes like recruiting, mobilizing solidarity, and developing collective identity all benefit from artistic representations. They are crucial for spreading movement concepts over the globe and building a library of cultural materials for future use (Eyerman, 2014:549). Music is not simply a reflection of culture, but a harbinger of change, an anticipatory abstraction of the shape of things to come (Attali, Jacques, 1985). Music plays a significant role in drawing a boundary between collective identity and solidarity as well as in the construction and maintenance of internal cohesiveness among movement participants (Eyerman, 2014:549). Moreover ,music has played a pivotal role as a social capital and as a mode of social relief and political expression from the very begging of —WE Shall Overcome! musical outcry of Black American civil right movement to the music of anti-Apartheid by Black South African (Makky, 2007). The proliferation of Reggae music and the inauguration of an intense fuzzy political conversation among youth could be the best example of particular forms of youth resistance using music (Jérémie Kroubo Dagnini, 2011). Tatek Abebe (2020) illustrated that Oromo youth mobilization has been instrumented by the songs and lyrics of various Oromo artists. Music and group singing are a crucial recruitment artistic tools that draws supporters into a political movement and mobilization (Eyerman, 2014:550).

With the widely available broadcast technology, Oromo youth listen the political songs of these vibrant political singers. Many youth I met listen to such songs downloaded on their mobile phones. Youth movement adopted music to publicize their struggles to broader, international audiences and enabled the movements to communicate more frequently with their members and constituencies. Oromo youth political participation is characterized by the use of music for tactical purpose and it is music driven movement provoked by state suppression and violence rolling out over the vast territories of Ethiopia. Music has been used by Oromo youth to artistically protest against unacceptable condition and treatment, such as oppression to

communicate, to relieve psychological or physical stress and strain .More importantly, music in Oromia has been used to relay significant political message to the general public so that the public respond positively to mobilize themselves for political change. Thus, this paper seeks to examine how youth in Oromia has made use of music for political mobilization and change in the study area.

7. 1 Songs as a Weapon of Resistance in Oromo Youth Political Mobilization

The political struggle of the Oromo against the feudal Imperial regime has been traditionally told through folk literature and resistance songs. The telling of a story through these resistance songs has been the most widespread form of mass resistance during this time of struggle. The array of Oromo protest music, which emerged as early as the 1970s has provided alternative documentation of the struggle against the Ethiopian regime. The early Arfan Qallo music band set the ground for these forms of protest music. The Arfan Qallo was a cultural musical group established in Harar in the early 1960s to promote Oromo music and culture (Teferi Nigussie, 2019). Music produced by Arfan Qallo came to be instrumental in the early opposition against the feudal regime. Most of the songs of Arfan Qallo provoked the youth to join the Oromo political struggle from the very beginning. This group's songs have always been sites of political agitation, cultural self-affirmation, and spiritual rejuvenation, drawing together audiences who share an unassailable commitment to the Oromo cause. Ali Birraa and Ahmed Shabbo were the leading members of the group.

Most of Oromo's youth movements have been backed by musical performances usually sieved out from historical genres such as proverbs, wise sayings, and myths. Music and young political artists have played a prominent role in the Oromo political mobilization. The Oromo artist's powerful lyrics have given voice and significance to the group's insufferable indignation (Assafa Dibaba, 2015). Afraid of their role in the Oromo political struggle and mobilization, the Imperial government banned Arfan Qallo's musical band in 1965. Several of its members were arrested and a few including Ali Birra escaped to Addis Ababa. Reportedly a few others escaped to Mogadishu. Ali in 1971 produced the first Album in the history of Oromo Music. Ali Birraa had been known for criticizing the incumbent government of Ethiopia in the 1970s and fighting against the feudal system of Ethiopia. In his 1975 musical Album, he strongly condemned the feudal system and its landlords. He eloquently put his anger and frustration by saying:

Hamma hardhaa tofta soba uumtee { You have employed treacherous and
misleading approach }

Ummata saamuudhaan lafa waalit qabatee { Plunder the people and take over the
land together

Qotee bula rorrodhaan dhamaftee { Exhausted the farmer by being
persecuted from their land }

In this music genre, Ali expressed his frustration, anger, and grievances towards the old feudal system landlords. He further exposed the feudal system and its ruling structure depravities that led to its downfall. This song has clearly indicated the parasitic nature of landlords in Ethiopia that contribute nothing but the oppression and exploitation of farmers.

In addition to exposing the old feudal oppressive rule, Ali's songs have played a crucial role in articulating and creating the ideas of *Oromummaa* – Oromo nationalism (Mohammed Ademo 2013). Accordingly, Ali has considered the father of the Oromo struggle through his musical activities (Mohammed Ademo 2013). According to our informant, Ali Birraa's songs and lyrics have stolen the heart and minds of most Oromo communities. Furthermore, the lyrics and melodies of his songs have inspired numerous Oromo communities to rise against the feudal regime as well as the Ethiopian government that comes later.

7.2 The Mobilizing Role of Music in Oromo youth protest: 2014 to 2018

Youth are at the forefront of incorporating global influences into their cultural products which are often viewed as part of the culture (Birgit Englert, 2008). It is through music that the masses protested against unjust systems that created unacceptable and unjust social conditions such as oppression of communication, to relieve psychological or physical stress and strain and to relay significant political messages to the general public.

Music as a weapon of the weak has started to be recorded fighting against any form of brutal government in the U.S.A by jazz legend Billie Holiday in 1939, in his —Strange Fruit _ album. This song had been considered a song of the civil rights movement and the first direct assault

against racial lynching in southern parts of the U.S.A (Margolick, David, 2001).In his sympathetic lyrics exclaimed:

*Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the roots,
Black body swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees*

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

*Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scene of magnolia sweet and fresh,
And the sudden smell of burning flesh!*

Young generations through political songs enhance their political struggle and it facilitates sharing of messages in a situation where there is no other alternative means of communication. Thus, music plays an important role in political mobilization and protest which serves as fuel and foundation for the successful social movement in the world. From the late 1960s and early 1970s development in music and drug culture created a situation that brought middle class, working class, and lumpen elements together (Hobsbawm,1994).

This generation had developed new ideas from readings of revolutionary fighters like Marx, Fanon, and Rodney, and a little about Nkrumah, Pan Africanism, Marcus Garvey, and Che Guevara (Jérémie Kroubo Dagnini,2011). They connected these writings with the lyrics of the reggae musicians and were able to draw examples from African history in the era of slavery and colonialism to demonstrate the exploitation of Africa's resources and its continuation in the post-colonial era. Music helps as a vehicle for vocalizing social, cultural, and political outcries within society. Youth's everyday appropriation of music style and associated objects, images, and texts are instrumental in Oromo's political mobilization (Awol Allo, 2020).

Music serves as a mobilizing factor in the development of political consciousness among youth activists (Clay, 2006) and has an impact on politics and social mobilization in Africa (Okeke, Remi Chukwudi, 2019). South Africa's apartheid freedom songs provide important mobilizing resources for young people making claims on the street by employing various political strategies such as infrastructural opposition, litigation, and public demonstration (Von Schnitzler, 2014). Music has a positive effect on democratization among the youthful communities of Ghana (Collins, 2002). Music has also served as one of the major instruments in glorifying and honoring the national state to bring national unity (Ephrem Belete & Daniel Mengistie, 2019).

From long period of time on Oromo musicians have publicized Oromo culture, language, and political consciousness. Folle among Shewa Oromo is a cultural treasure house of expression, when New Year comes express their gratitude to God (Assafa Dibaba, 2015). The role of music as a social capital in shaping the identities and lifestyles of young people in Oromia is prominent. It is through music that Oromo community expresses their voice. It is clear that Oromo has holds greater potential in mobilizing the Oromo community for political changes. Music also has the potential in informing as well as preparing youth for political action. In the words of Megersa, a young political participant from Burayu:

In Oromo, traditional music plays and mirrors the unique cultural life of the people, their land, political life, nostalgic critique of the existing systems and accounts of the past, culture of the common people, and a conservative critique of modern life and aspiring the old ways of life. The Shewa Oromo is known in traditional music like Foollee. Foollee is young men's traditional song that expresses the political condition, grievances, and injustices as well as the cultural life of the community and thus has played a role in mobilizing the Oromo community.

In the past and until recently, a young person whose hairstyle signifies an Odda tree of the Oromo culture collectively sings a song emphasizing the perseverance and dignity of the people against all the odds. Recent modern political songs have become an additional ingredient for our cause and have a huge impact on young people in Oromia. Strategic uses of Foollee and modern political songs by Oromo youths have created a massive resistance against an oppressive state structure including police, media, corrupt local officials, and fraudulent election boards. In fact, this went beyond challenging or

attempting to change the status quo; rather, it is a social critique of general oblivion or intense opportunistic tendencies in the public, particularly in youth subculture.

The Oromo social movement is galvanized by the role played by modern political songs as well as traditional folk music. Oromo modern songs have always been sites of political agitation, spiritual rejuvenation, and cultural self-affirmation which draws together a large number of Young Oromo audiences who share a common sense of commitment to the Oromo causes.

Music is an important instruments and tools to express their gratitude to God, their alienation from political representation and time of solitude as well as the time of happiness. The songs composed were directed towards the expression of the Oromo life situation under the ruling classes. In this regard, the great Oromo singer Ali Birra with his associate —The Afran Qallo band musical activities gave birth to Oromo cultural nationalism and laid the foundation for political mobilization through inculcating and cultivating the minds of young Oromo and the masses (Surafel Gelgelo, 2019).

The songs played an important role in revolutionizing the mind and soul of the community for political action. They have become one of the rallying points in the development of the political consciousness of youth in Oromia young. Their songs have emerged as the major instruments of political mobilization to manifest their political injustice and past grievances that enabled them to awaken the masses so that they stood together for their rights.

Ali Birra's 1976 album "Abbaa lafaa" delved into the pressing issue of land rights through a series of impactful protest songs. Released in the wake of the 1974 revolution, the album's standout track "Abbaa Lafaa," penned by Abdi Mohammed Yesuf (Abdi Qope), confronted the feudal rulers of the imperial period for their treatment of tenants as personal property. This powerful song conveyed a clear message to landlords, highlighting the end of their exploitation of peasants and luxurious lifestyles. Furthermore, it mourned the plight of the underprivileged within the exploitative system, while celebrating the revolutionary progress that allowed tenants to gain property ownership rights. The whole spirit of the song's lyrics suggests two points such as the verse imply that another group is yet to come to enjoy its shares at the expense of the poor by saying;

<i>Hamma arraan tanaa hiyyessa saamtanii</i>	{You exploited the poor}
<i>Dafqa malee bay'ee burraayxanii</i>	{And lived with comfort}
<i>Asirratti raawwatti faraqaan teeysanii</i>	{Your turn is now over }
(Surafel Gelgelo, 2019:128)	

Ali's musical play contributes a lot producing many vibrant artists to play further political roles in mobilizing a large section of the Oromo community. He is one of the renowned artists producing many young talents for political action. He used music as a political mobilizing instrument cultivating many young vibrant musicians and activists in Oromia and the rest of the country.

Ali Birra musical legacies have remained and are instilled in the works of young Oromo talents such as Hacaaluu Hundessa, Galanaa Garommssa , Ittiqaa Teferi, and Caalaa Bultume's. Most of them provoked the youth to join the Oromo protest beginning from the very beginning. Especially, many of them grew up hearing and watching many famous Oromo singers from Ali Birraa to Qubbee generation /youth generation songs. Oromo music and concerts have rarely been strictly musical (Assafa Dibaba, 2015). We must not forget the significance of protest songs during the 2014 to 2018 Oromo Youth Protest. They played a crucial role in rallying support, expressing grievances, and upholding the collective memory of the movement. Specifically, from 2014 to 2018, Oromo protest songs addressed a range of important topics that reflected the experiences and aspirations of the community.

Music and young political artists have played a prominent role in Oromo youth political mobilization (Assafa Dibaba, 2015; Tatek Abebe, 2020). They have always been sites of political agitation, cultural self-affirmation, and spiritual rejuvenation, drawing together audiences who share an unassailable commitment to the Oromo cause. The Oromo artist's powerful lyrics have given voice and significance to the group's insufferable indignation (Assafa Dibaba, 2015; Tatek Abebe, 2020). Political songs have been instrumental in galvanizing the youth in Oromia to take bold political action and have established a strong foundation for heightened political awareness among young people in Burayu and other parts of Oromia. In Burayu, there has been a significant surge in youth involvement in local politics, accompanied by a profound

comprehension of the political landscape in Oromia. Oromo songs serve as potent expressions of people's struggles, aspirations, and defiance against injustices such as land grabbing and corruption. Furthermore, they play a pivotal role in mobilizing and fortifying youth resistance, bolstering the community's resilience against all forms of injustice, persecution, and marginalization, and illustrating how the community can effectively combat injustice and instigate transformative change in people's lives. These songs are a reflection of the Oromo oral tradition, serving as a means of social commentary deeply entwined with the people's connection to their land, culture, and rights. Within the traditional songs, there are prevalent themes that address the sociopolitical and economic challenges faced by the community, providing insight into their experiences and struggles. The following themes are protest songs that depict Oromia's sociopolitical conditions and the community's life.

Protest Songs against Land Grabbing and the Potential Impacts of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan

Protest songs often serve as powerful expressions of the community's struggles, aspiration and resistance against injustices such as land grabbing and corruption. In recent times, a significant number of protest songs have centered on the pressing issue of land grabbing (Tatek Abebe, 2021). This issue has been brought to the forefront due to the government's intention to expand the capital city, Addis Ababa, into the surrounding Oromo farmlands through the implementation of the "Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan". The proposed expansion is causing alarm as it puts at risk the livelihoods of millions of farmers who face the imminent threat of displacement. These poignant songs not only shed light on the imminent land grab but also emphasize the profound and intrinsic connection that the Oromo people have with their ancestral land. The lyrics vividly portray the struggle as a poignant battle to safeguard their rich history and cherished way of life.

He often addressed the socio political issues facing the Oromo people. His song _ ‘ Maalan Jirall speaks about the struggle of the Oromo people including the issues of land grabbing in Oomiya and its surrounding environ of Addis Ababa. The lyrics reflect the pain of losing ancestral lands and the impacts of such injustice on the community. Hacaaluu Hundessa was the leading young Oromo political singer. He has become famous due to his 2015 soundtrack —MAALAN JIRALL, (what I am existing!)(Asebe Regassa, 2023). In this song, he expressed the discrimination and

oppression that the Oromo has faced as it is perceived by the overwhelming majority of the Oromo. My focus group discussant exclaimed;

Malaan Jira exposed the evils of the government and uninterrupted displacement Tulama Oromo initially from the center and at the moment from the coastal city of Addis Ababa by jara, as he vocalized in his song as diiganii gaara sanaa (they demolished that hill). He urged togetherness, a collective mental map in his nationalist narrative song in the form of ani hinjiru 'I am not alive/. Following this song, youth who had been torn apart for so long was finally reunited against their common enemy. Hacaaluu has revealed so much excruciating pain and unspeakable suffering of Oromo in the TPLF/EPRDF prison cell since 1991.

In his song, Hacaaluu expressed memories of suffering, a history of grievances, and the political violence that the incumbent government has been doing by destroying the history of the people of Oromo who reside in the surrounding fringes of Addis Ababa. In his lyrics, he echoed saying;

<i>Diiganii gaara Sanaa,</i>	{They destroyed that Mountain,}
<i>Gaara diigamuu hin-mallee,</i>	{A mountain that should not be destroyed,}
<i>Nu baasaan addaan baanee,</i>	{They separated us;}
<i>nuu addaan bayuu hin-mallee.</i>	{We do not deserve to be separated.}

Hacaaluu vehemently expresses outrage over the devastation of the Oromo land, which has been reserved for ages. This egregious act has led to the divisive splitting of the Oromo people, and Hacaaluu unequivocally asserts that they do not deserve to be divided. The catastrophic consequences have plunged the Oromo people into a perilous situation in this region. Hacaaluu underlined the suffering and outrageous acts of the government upon the community that robbed their lands without due process of the law (Tatek Abebe, 2021). In this genre, Hacaaluu wanted to emphasize and expressed the situation in the surrounding area of Addis Ababa. This verse indicates that the Oromo land has been appropriated and the people lost what they had and do not have grazing lands for their cattle let alone cultivate for their daily survival. It is true that because of the so-called development-induced displacement a large number of Oromo families had been displaced from their lands and their lands were appropriated by large-scale investors, both national and international investors. The system did a ruthless measure upon the citizen of the

land and made them suffer a lot. He further lamented that the incumbent government robbed the land of the people that broke up their economic backbone. According to our informant from Burayu town;||

For Hacaaluu Hundessaa, the multiple problems spring from the crafty acts of jaraa (stranger or alien mainly referring to the authoritarian TPLF-dominated Ethiopian government), which he symbolically presented as illegal intruders in the Oromo land. ... in his song, Hacaaluu expressed the condition in Ethiopia by which Oromo nationalists had been raped, mutilated, tortured, dismembered, and murdered under successive authoritarian Ethiopian rules. In these verses, he emphasized the cruelty of the system that led to the crumbling and suffering of the Oromo community that lost much of their ancestral lands such as Sululta, Gullaallee, Galaan, and the land that the Abbichuu clan cultivated. Because of this, the Oromo community has no more rights to graze their cattle where their forefathers grazed their cattle happily for centuries. This clearly indicates the systemic violence against the community and the widespread land grabbing after the expansion of Addis Ababa into its fringes of the Towns of Oromia Regional State.

Hacaaluu exposes the Ethiopian government, mainly the TPLF, cruelty to Oromo nationalists, which includes rape, mutilation, torture, dismemberment, and murder. This has resulted in the Oromo population losing ancestral lands while acquiring land rights, emphasizing systematic brutality against the Oromo people and massive land grabs following Addis Ababa's expansion into the Oromia Regional State. Hacaaluu has also attempted to depict the current political context in which the public has shown perseverance, self-affirmation, and confidence despite government violence and authoritarianism. His song teaches listeners that the previous history of the Oromo and the current condition reveal political injustice, systemic corruption, and widespread cultural malpractices that need to be changed and fought by political measures (Tatek,2020).

Hacaaluu was a symbol for the Oromo people who spoke up about the political and economic marginalization that they had suffered under consecutive Ethiopian regimes. He remarkably put his protest in one of his famous songs saying —Do not wait for help to come from outside, a dream that does not come true. Rise up and make your horse ready and fight. It is you that the one close to the palacel. In his eloquent musical tone, Hacaaluu aptly asked the people of Oromo

how long they would have to wait for freedom and bypass the absurdity of marginalization of the whole of the Oromo community. He strongly criticizes a rigged EPRD government that created a system of exploitation and injustice in the country.

Oromo youth protest (also called the Qeerroo protest) and resistance has been shaped and mobilized by such young Oromo artists' musical lyrics. Tatek Abebe (2020) illustrated that Oromo youth mobilization has been instrumented by the songs and lyrics of Oromo artists such as Hacaaluu Hundessaa, one of the most influential Oromo singers. Our informants agree on the instrumental role resistance music lyrics of Hacaaluu Hundessaa played in the protest and beyond against the contemporary government of Ethiopia. With the widely available broadcast technology, the youth listen to the resistance songs of these vibrant singers (Assafa Jalata, 2016; Awol Allo, 2020). Many of them downloaded the songs on their mobile phones and showed them to one of these authors in the field.

Alemayehu Gugsa, a 24-year-old political activist from Burayu town, discusses the role of Ittiqaa songs by saying:

His song is an inspirational political song that drove young people as well as adult and old people together to the political fields in large numbers. This was an inspirational political song that has become one of the most important political instruments for youths during this time. His song urged the youthful community to maintain perseverance to the point where it was no longer appropriate to be in prison by saying —Danda'ii maleel (without being able to do justice). Ittiqaa emphasized that Oromo freedom fighters were jailed without undergoing trial. So, this becomes an emotional injury for him. This is a figurative injury to the feelings or pride of the Oromo. He underscored that mentioning it outwardly might reopen the inflicting wound that the Oromo suffered under TPLF/EPRDF rule. So, he didn't want to explain outwardly. He explains this in a figurative poem in his music. If he had told outwardly, he would have certainly been thrown into a prison cell like others. Deep in his and his fellow Oromo people's hearts lives the silent or inflicting wound for over. The right reader of this good poem can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken a memorable and unforgettable wound that he will never recover it. For Teferi, TPLF/EPRDF rule not only has caused outward inflicting wounds but also the deepest emotional pain or offense to the Oromo society. The emotional injury of Oromo society looks like a bloody record of a tremendous inner battle for him. He also mentioned the jailing of

political prisoners without the determination of a person's innocence or guilt by due process of law when says in his song si hidhan yaa falmattoota kiyyaa (they have arrested you, my defenders).

According to our informant mentioned earlier, Ittiqaa song has become an important political tool for young people. The song emphasizes the emotional and symbolic harm suffered by Oromo freedom fighters under the current regime, highlighting the lack of due process in their detention. The lyrics of the song reflect the deep emotional wounds and internal conflicts within Oromo society. It serves as a reminder of the significant emotional suffering and injustice experienced by the Oromo people.

Moreover, Two years later a new revolutionary soundtrack was released by Hacaaluu which encouraged the young activists to continue their political struggle against the incumbent government. His songs often focused on the rights of the Oromo and became an anthem in a wave of protest that led to the downfall of the previous Prime Minister, Haile Mariam Desalegn, in 2018. His music has become the sound and voice of the Oromo cause.

Youths in the surrounding areas of Addis Ababa were the first to be responsive to these lyrics since they were the first who were affected largely. They listen to this and other musical lyrics and took a lesson for political purposes. These political songs have become a youth mobilizing factor that led young people of Oromia to be who they are and be strong enough in facing these challenges. They served as a mobilizing instrument for the young activists.

Understanding youth's political mobilization and protest from the music viewpoint started to a distinctly greater extent after the TPLF-led Ethiopian government began the so-called —Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan in 2014, which exploded widespread mass protest; especially by Oromo youth protest to dismantle TPLF-dominated EPRDF totalitarian administration structure. Caalaa Bultume's —*Maasteer plaanii jedhanii sanyii siduguuguu*", used to express his deep displeasure and fierce opposition to this Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan project.

According to Barisa Mulu, A 28 years old youth informant from Burayu;

This song conveyed a message to a wide audience and contributed significantly to the Oromo youth uprisings since the majority of young Oromo people have never agreed with the master plan's development project .We took a stand against the TPLF/EPRDF administrations.

Oromo protest singers have played a crucial role in addressing issues like the implementation of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan that would affects the lives of the Oromo community if it is implemented. In this regards, Caalaa Bultume's 2014 song "Maasteer plaanii jedhanii sanyii siduguuguu" declares that the government would carry out a development project that results in the prevalence of a form of genocide among the Oromo community. Caalaa Bultume's used to express his deep displeasure and fierce opposition to the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan in this song. It conveyed a message to a wide audience and contributed significantly to the Oromo youth uprisings in Ethiopia.

It's interesting to note that the majority of young Oromo people have never agreed with the master plan's concept. They took a stand against the TPLF/EPRDF administration's opposition to the legitimacy of Ethiopia's current government as a result. The song by Caalaa Bultume's was discovered to have spread rapidly throughout Ethiopia's Oromia region and diffused throughout the world among Oromo Diasporas. The music is being utilized by the Oromo diaspora all over the world as one of their primary tools for encouraging youth political cooperation, solidarity, and a spirit of oneness.

It was through these protest songs that the community expressed their widespread unhappiness that finally started to shake the government of Ethiopia. Oromo from every region of Oromia, especially the Qubbee generation, has continued to assert and express their opposition through musical songs in response to Ethiopia's government expansionist forms of economic aggrandizement at the expense of the Oromo society. First, the majority of the youth were especially influenced by Caalaa Bultume's master plan song, which was an inhumane, self-sacrificing song, during the unrestrained revolution once underway in Oromia by social media, the Oromo diaspora, and elites within the country with organized youth movements.

Political Songs of The intensification of Oromo Youth Resistance and Songs of Indignation

Galanaa Gaaromsaa's lyrics are seen as a powerful form of protest against the current government of Ethiopia. Through his music, Galanaa expresses his discontent and the suffering of the Oromo people under the TPLF/EPRDF-led government.

His protest song resonated with young as it underscored the root causes of their struggles and the resilience needed to fight for their freedom and political rights. The song effectively reflects the political environment where the youth have encountered these challenges and should unite in opposition to the system. It is replete with political messages encouraging the current Qubbee generation not to fear the government's use of firearms. "Soda qawwee hin qabnu," a 2016 song by Galanaa Gaaromsaa's, speaks to the defiance and courage of the contemporary Qubbee generation against the government.

The line "Sone Robe biyon jagama ngaatee, Sone robe biyon kebede Bedasaa ngaatee, Sone robe gnuumaafoo sodaccissaa" from Gellana Garommmssa's protest song highlights the severe conditions faced by young political activists in Ethiopia. It essentially conveys, "They will not cease to devour the flesh of the young Jagama and Kebede Bedassa, and we too are their political prey!" Galanaa pays tribute to history and the historical narrative through his music, placing the Oromo people at the forefront of his lyrics. He was cognizant of the Oromo's political, cultural, and historical progressions over time. With skill, he depicts the political state of Oromia, casting the past in a dramatic light.

In his song, a young informant from Burayu conveyed that —*the resistance of Oromo youth is rooted in the historical experiences of oppression and the valor and discretion exemplified by Oromo nationalists such as Waaqoo Guutuu, Tadesse Biru, and Sadam Saaddoo. He was initially impressed by the Qubbee generation's fearless acts of bravery during revolutionary protests, as they stood undaunted in the face of armed government forces. Furthermore, Galanaa declared to the regime that the youth possessed the military courage of Waaqoo Guutuu and the clandestine nature of Sadam Saaddoo, as well as the heroism of Brigadier General Tadesse Birru.*

Galaanaa's song boldly criticizes the TPLF-dominated EPRDF administration and fervently encourages Oromo youth resistance. This resistance is deeply rooted in past persecution and the

extraordinary bravery and wisdom of Oromo nationalists such as Waaqoo Guutuu, Tadesse Biru, and Sadam Saaddoo. Galanaa strongly acknowledges and celebrates the courage of the Qubbee generation in their revolutionary protests and military service.

Melaku and Bikila, two young informants, stated that the lyrics of Galaanaa's music have inspired the youth of Oromia by alerting them to the presence of political opportunists and deceivers among the populace. They also encouraged everyone to resist the manipulations previously employed by tyrannical dictators, believing that silence does not serve justice in Ethiopia. In his song, Galanaa highlighted that young people cannot find the truth by appealing to contemporary government officials, as they are widely considered to be untruthful. Conversely, if they succumb to the officials' deceitful strategies, it is not the TPLF rule or the imposed system that perishes; instead, they perish due to their own errors, just as predecessors have. Instead, they called on the youth to reject any insincere attempts at reconciliation. Indeed, Galaanaa has empowered every young Oromo to distinguish between truth and false allegations, thereby making informed choices.

Galanaa explained in his vocalized genre that: "*garaa laafuun hammeenyaa diina nutti bittekaa*," which translates to: "Compassion for others weakens us in the eyes of our enemy, who then views us as evil." He conveyed in this genre his opinion that an unyielding wire frame bounded the Oromia border and bridge. All he wanted was revenge to make up for the Oromo people's blood that the TPLF/EPRDF government had so vainly shed.

Galaanaa's song presents a compelling notion that despite OPDO's decision to emulate *Keessummaa* in the mistreatment of Oromo society, there remains an opportunity for them to alter their path. Galanaa believes it is politically unjust for the Oromo to endure this challenging time alone. He warns OPDO officials who fail to back the Oromo youth movement, predicting they will face significant resistance from protestors and could even face personal repercussions, such as the loss of their graves and those who would bury them. Galanaa advises OPDO leaders, formerly allied with TPLF, to join the youth protests.

After young people began to demand radical change, some OPDOs formally tried to calm them down by threatening to withhold the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and offering some advantages from the city of Addis Ababa.

In his lyrical composition, he advised the Oromo youth to remain vigilant, resilient, and courageously abandon their homes despite the regime's deployment of heavy weaponry against protesters. He also expressed that silence should not be the default reaction to those who disrespect them. Exhausted by the sight of Oromo filling the TPLF/EPRDF's prisons, he urged the youth to confront hostility with equal measure, a departure from the Oromo's traditional approach.

For Bikila Hundessa, a 27 years old informant from Burayu;

Galaanaa's song has influenced young Oromo as well as the Oromo diaspora when he said, —Hayyuun waltaatee, biyaaf alaa walitii asaasaa. Foreign diaspora fomented a sense of ethnic self-awareness in Oromo society. Galanaa called TPLF the Keessummaa (stranger or guest) and illegal intruder into the heartland of the Oromia. For Galanaa Keessummaa wished they could easily penetrate into the heart of Oromia through a scheme Integrated Master Plan. However, penetrating deep inside one's home in the Oromo tradition is out of the way. In the Oromo tradition, if a guest appears in the Oromo home, he/she has no right to speak the speech which doesn't even deserve to be an issue in family life and enters deep inside the home. Keessummaa is in possession of the goods of his country to a satisfying degree.

According to the provided source, Galaanaa's song has had a profound impact on the younger generation of the Oromo community and its diaspora, fostering a heightened sense of ethnic identity. The source staunchly characterized the TPLF as an illegitimate presence in the heartland of Oromia, exerting control over the ancestral lands of the Oromo people.

Galaanaa's song has played a significant role in boosting the morale of the Oromo people against the government. In the song, he expresses his willingness to die rather than allow strangers to enter Oromo's land. The lyrics, "du'eetan bada malee keessummaan dinqa hingahuu," which means I would rather perish and vanish from this earth than let strangers encroach upon the heartland of Oromia.

The newly developed neighborhood of Burayu, located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, is often influenced by the city in various ways. The youth in Burayu have connected the words of this song to real-life events in Burayu Town and the surrounding Oromo villages. The song's lyrics

have become a symbol of hope that resonates with their grievances. Many Qeerroo have been inspired to engage in political activism through these songs. Consequently, most social movements in Oromia feature these songs prominently. The music of young Oromo artists has captured the attention of the youth, spurring a significant number to become politically active, a fact well-recognized in Oromia. Thus, music has become a vital social capital, offering the energetic younger generation a framework for political engagement. These songs provide political guidance to the youth, highlighting their adversaries and the critical questions to be raised.

The music played a crucial role as a means of voicing discontent and mobilizing opposition to the government's policies (Asebe Regassa, 2023). Through the lyrics, the artists conveyed a strong desire for sweeping political reforms and the reversal of measures that were perceived to concentrate power at the detriment of regional autonomy. Despite the prevailing hardships, many songs also carried messages of hope and optimism, articulating a vision for a future where the Oromo people would break free from persecution and flourish in a tranquil and prosperous homeland.

The political mobilization of youth in Burayu was further strengthened by the song of Ittiqaa Teferi. Ittiqaa Teferi in his song “*Saaqi saanqaa, saaqi Falmattoota kiyyaa* _ ‘ (Open the door - the door of the prison cell)! Open it! My dear freedom fighters) further mobilized the Oromo youth to stand against injustice. Based on this, Ittiqaa Teferi's song effectively illustrated the political context of Oromia as well as political contestation. This is seen in his verse:

<i>Falmatota haqaa harqafi milla hiitee</i>	{ You imprisoned defenseless activists by tying their wrists and legs, }
<i>Maalii dentaan addaa ati nuuf hawwiitei</i>	{ What special place do you wish for us? }
<i>Dhiigni siif lola ‘u har ‘as adda hin cinne</i>	{ You should be aware that these individuals have continued to endanger their lives and draw blood for this cause. }

Ittiqaa song condemns the incarceration of innocent activists, emphasizing the ongoing threat to their lives and the violence they face for their cause. In the song, Ittiqaa expresses emotional distress by recalling the imprisonment of activists who support Oromo issues, as well as the mistreatment and torture they suffered at the hands of government security personnel.

He adamantly challenges government officials regarding the specific special treatment they intend to provide for the Oromo people. He cites Article 49 of the Ethiopian Constitution, which explicitly declares Addis Ababa as the center of the Oromia Region and highlights the rights of the Oromia Region upon it. Ittiqaa emphasizes that the Oromo will continue to battle bigotry and abuse, even if it means risking their lives to protect their rights. He highlights the need for community collaboration and common knowledge to deal with the opponent and underlines the necessity for the community to reach a consensus in the fight against the enemy. At the same time, he asks the people to be united against the government and to be successful in this political mobilization by saying:

Ilmaan dubbii himee, lafti abbaatti hafaa, { The land belongs to the father, as told by the
sons. }

dhagahi mana tokko siti himu, namni mana tokko gamtaan ijaaru citaa wal-hin saamu

Ati isa kufiste, innis si kuffisee,

{Men who build houses are unlikely to steal from each other.}

Yoo lafaan wal geesan, biyya keenya irratti garbummaan daraaree bilisummaan eesaani?

{ If you attack one, he will retaliate. }

Fighting each other will not lead to freedom; instead, it will establish servitude in your land. Ittiqaa emphasizes the necessity of Oromo community solidarity to bring about change in their territories. Enmity will simply divide the Oromo community, allowing the government to exploit the situation. One cannot stand alone and confront their main enemy while divided. Division is the enemy of the people, but unity is the power and the mother of liberty. Ittiqaa song exposes the true state of affairs in Oromia. It encourages youthful and dynamic political figures to resist when faced with sincere resistance, highlighting the need for bravery in a political climate that does not provide a voice to the voiceless.

According to our informant, through his songs , Ittiqaa has helped his listener to see examine the political condition in Oromia. In his song , Ittiqaa said ,

Sobneeti sirbinaa keessi keenya madaa

{We are successful in keeping our wounds deep and singing joyfully. }

Ijji himimmaan mormaan ragadaa

{We cry but continue to chant with our foreheads. }

This song clearly indicates the political environment whereby Oromo community lives. In the past Shewa people would only perform "Ragadaa" at happy times. However, in more recent times, people have appeared to be pleased while playing "Ragadaa" and masking their interior pains.

Ittiqaa song serves as a metaphor for the current state of affairs in Oromia. It describes the way the Oromo people live. The people appear joyful as they sing and recite traditional Oromo chants symbolizing happiness. However, underneath their apparent joy, they bear the internal wounds of society. They continue to chant the old songs with their foreheads raised, seemingly joyful but deeply hurt.

This is further elaborated by our informant who described the situation by inscribing what Ittiqaa says in his song. For Ittiqaa, the imprisonment of Oromo fighters have no legally established claim. He also explicated the overcrowding of prison cells by saying :

falmattoota ,—asi hiiqii hinqabuu, achi hiiqii hinqabuu manni hidhaa —hirribni hin jiruu, teessumni hinjiruu dhaabbiidhaa.

Ittiqaa describes the dire circumstances faced by the Oromo freedom fighters. In the prison cell, there is no space to rest or even sit down - they can only stand. The cell is so small that there is no room to move closer to or away from the walls. In his musical genre, he strongly condemned the government that used different forms of political violence including imprisoning and killing of political participants for the causes of the Oromo people.

For Ethiopian political prisoners prison houses are places of disgruntlement, torture and many forms of abuses. There is harsh and life threatening prison condition and there have been many instances wherein Ethiopian political prisoners have been subject to inhuman conditions of sexual abuse, violence, and torture of many forms. There are five federal penitentiaries in Ethiopia which include Qaliti Federal Penitentiaries (Addis Ababa), Qilinto (Addis Ababa), Shewa Robit (Amhara Region), Ziway (Oromia Region), and Dire Dawa City Federal Penitentiaries. Other than these penitentiary there are police station served as reserved local prison houses. Meakelawi is very well known police station in Addis Ababa for every kinds of torture and abuses performed by the Ethiopian security forces upon the prisoners of Ethiopia. . Every region has established its own regional police penitentiary for this purpose. Every police station, government offices and hotel building emerged as places of investigation and torturing houses for young people in Ethiopia. These places were not what thought to be correction center for young people but place of inhumane torturing. Ethiopian political system advocates the opening up of many prison houses for the purpose of torturing and criminal forms of investigation.

Administrative building, hotels and restaurants, police station and private individuals' buildings have emerged as center of torturing ground whereby large number of Oromo youth faces many forms of torturing because they are against the government. Because of in humane forms of criminal investigation and torturing mechanisms many youths were found dead, amputated and lost many of their body organs. They become mentally traumatized and pass through many forms of psychological stresses and emotional disturbances.

The tragic aspect of the Oromo protests was the loss of lives, injury, and incarcerations of tens of thousands of protesters in prisons and military camps across the country. Many Oromo youth who opposes the government have been the subject of torture and amputation of their parts of body.

One of Our informant, Bayisa Mulatu, A 21 years old informant from Burayu area remarks that:

If we oppose the government our chance of imprisonment is very high. I was labeled as rebel whose intention is destruction. I was imprisoned for nine months in Burayu Administrative Building prison house. In this prison house I was tortured, abused and

mishandled in a way that is not even for animal. In this penitentiary most of the prisoners were those young Oromo from different parts of Ethiopia. There were no legal instruments to protect the rights of these prisoners. Every police has the right to kick , abuse and torture these young prisoners.

As a result of this decision many young Oromo were put into jail and sentenced for many years of imprisonment. Political labeling was the common features of Ethiopian politics during this period. It was because of this labeling that many young Oromo activists have been sentenced for many years of jail for the alleged crime since they were one member of the Oromo Liberation Front that opposed the incumbent regime. This clearly shows that how did the government transformed in to a police state.

Qarisa Dori, a 25-year-old informant from Burayu, stated that imprisonment was a part of Oromo youth's existence. Every youth is accustomed to it. He explicitly said that;

እስር ቤቶች ለአሮሞ ወጣት ሲክል ነበሩ።ቡራዪ ላይ አሮሞኛ ተናጋሪ ደብዳቤዎች ሲሆኑ አዲስ ላይ አስደብዳቢዎቹ ትግርኛ ተናጋሪ ደብዳቤዎቹ አሮሞኛ ተናጋሪ ነበሩ። እኔ ለስድስት ወር በከተማ አስተዳደሩ ግቢ ውስጥ ባለዉ እስር ቤት ስታሰር አሮሞኛ ዘፈን ይዘሀል ተብሎ ነዉ ከትምህርት ቤት የያዙኝ።በተመሳሳይም ዘመዴ የኣነግ ደጋፊ ነዉ በሚል ለአምስት አመት ታስሮ ተፈቶ ነበር አሁንም እስር ቤት ነዉ ያለዉ።የዱላዉ አይነት በየአይነቱ ነዉ። (interview held on June 23, 2021).

Prisons were misery for Oromo youths. The majority of the jail guards in Burayu Town speak Afaan Oromo, whilst the investigators speak Tigrigna. I was yanked out of school and imprisoned at the Burayu Municipal Administration facility for six months. I was kept in a jail cell at City Hall for six months and arrested on suspicion of possessing a political video clip on my phone. Similarly, my cousin was arrested for five years for supposedly supporting the OLF and is still in prison. The sort of stick is of its kind. Many different interrogation tactics were used in jail cells, ranging from fist-punching to brutal treatment of captives. He requests the people to open their minds and fight for truth reason, justice, and Wisdom.

The example of my informant exemplifies the plight of young people and how the government mistreats them while dealing with the political crisis in Oromia. The system has clearly grown authoritarian in its governance of its citizens, with no one permitted to listen to music that is

considered politically aroused and incites the population to mobilize for political action in Oromia or anywhere else in Ethiopia. People were imprisoned for months or years for containing and listening to music that was thought to be aligned with OLF ideology, including songs that incited the community to take political action. Songs that targeted the government in opposition to any sort of prejudice or cruelty were classified as OLF songs, which may lead to imprisonment and punishment.

These political songs have contributed to the formation of organized protest following the formation of informal Oromo youth network. This youth network and the relationship has led to the formation of Qeerroo political force, as one of the leading political force whose organization, networks, and leadership is barely recognizable. They did not know who their leader and organizer were but knew the purpose of the organization.

The formation of this political force led to widespread protest among youth in Oromia. The social-political crisis later produced a widespread Oromo youth social movement which erupted in 2014 and continues at a large scale up to 2016. It erupted in response to centuries-old sociopolitical as well as economic inequalities perpetrated against Oromo communities and it is an attempt to bring about social change by addressing these inequalities.

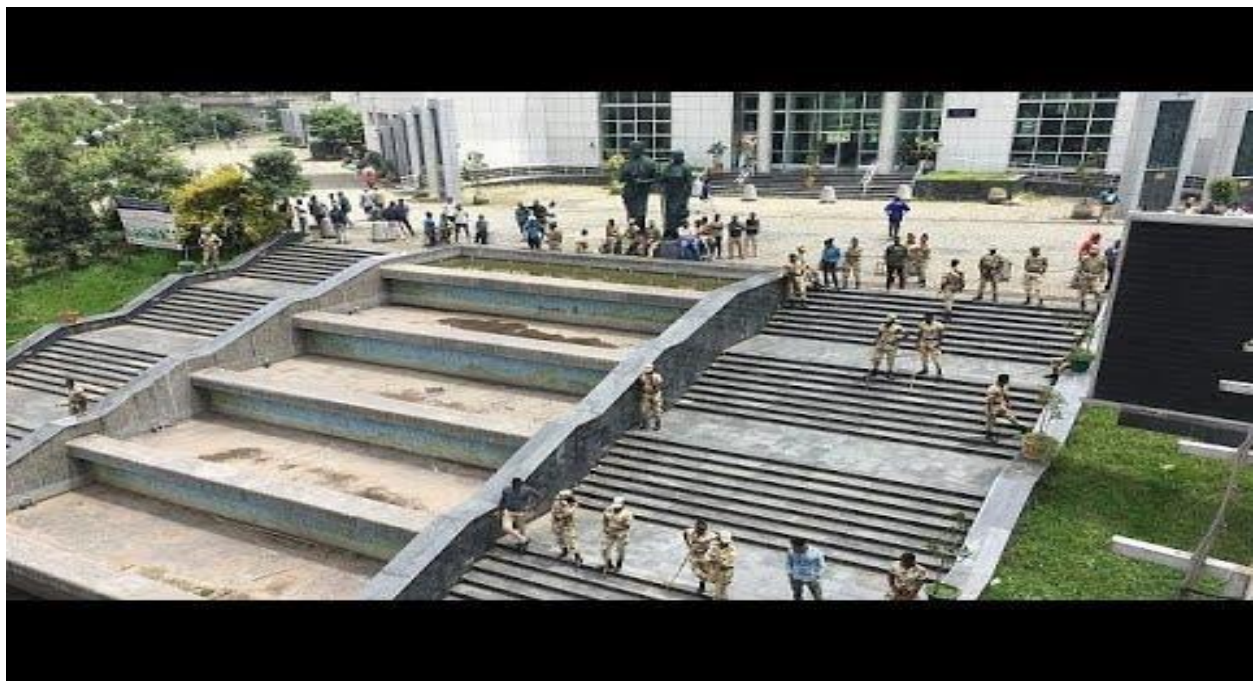




Photo: Youth demonstration in a rural kebele of Burayu in 2017.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter delves into the methodological underpinnings of youth political resistance, illuminating how young change agents carve out their unique field of political defiance within the existing socio-political framework. The emergence of the Oromo youth social movement is intricately intertwined with a response to prevailing political challenges. This evolution has entailed the adept utilization of preexisting social structures, involving youthful networks, organizational frameworks, and the strategic use of protest songs—all instrumental in propelling societal transformation. As theorized by Melucci (1996), the Youth Movement has catalyzed institutional innovations, facilitated the ascent of new Oromo elites, revitalized Oromo culture, and notably contested the entrenched political ethos of the nation. This chapter stands as a definitive depiction of contemporary youth-led social movements, resonating across diverse societal echelons.

Aligned with the resource mobilization theory, which scrutinizes how impassioned youth harness resources to achieve political objectives, the recent youth political mobilization in Oromia has witnessed a surge of young individuals leveraging various forms of political resistance to advance their objectives. Notably, the chapter identifies music as a pivotal tool of resistance utilized by the Oromo youth to instigate change. Music has emerged as a significant social capital, inspiring and mobilizing the younger generation to engage in political activism. It has served as a potent social and political instrument, galvanizing youth to advocate for political change.

This burgeoning political movement led by young Oromo activists has garnered substantial backing from the broader Oromo community, including farmers, businesses, and supportive government officials. This collective support underscores the proactive role of youth using protest songs as an instrument of mobilization, vividly demonstrated throughout the Oromo youth's struggle from 2014 to 2018. The power of protest songs has been instrumental in resonating beyond Oromia, influencing regions like Addis Ababa, Wellega, Ambo, Ginchi, and towns in Oromia, drawing them closer to the national capital. The peak of these demonstrations culminated in the abrupt removal of Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Haile Mariam Desalegn, in 2018, amidst escalating clashes and protests across the nation. The recent wave of youth political mobilization in Burayu town showcases diverse opposition techniques employed by numerous

young individuals to advance their collective objectives. The role of protest songs in mobilizing youths and other community members has been distinctly evident during the youth protests of 2014 to 2018.

Chapter Eight: Dynamics of Youth Mobilization: Fragmentation and Disorientation?

Introduction

This chapter effectively captures the dynamics of the Oromo youth political movement. From 2014 to 2018, the movement experienced significant developments, such as protests, agitation, and strategic shifts. The focus is on the evolution of youth political groups into comprehensive political opposition movements and the impact on the political careers of the youth. It explores the organization of youth-led opposition activities in Oromia, including protests and rallies. The chapter also discusses the influence of government policies on youth political engagement and the rise of a police state in Ethiopia. The resilience of the movement and the changing internal political dynamics has led to significant shifts in Ethiopia's political landscape. The chapter delves into these substantial political changes and the political dynamics of the Oromia youth political movement.

8.1 Opportunity Structure for Youth Political Movement

The EPRDF system was seriously tainted, and it lacked the guts to change its problematic political system. It has transformed into an unmotivated and uncommitted political system. As they receive their bread, its cadres are waiting for someone to modify it. A political turning point that would end the EPRDF was anticipated by every stakeholder in the system. By taking the cases of the Cuban Revolution of the late 1950s is a case in point Llewellyn (2003:90) explicitly stated that:

...the Batista regime was so corrupt and brutal that it alienated the majority of people, including many from the upper and middle classes who would later oppose Fidel Castro as well. Because wealth was centered in a small elite and there were few methods for redressing popular grievances without threatening the system as a whole, Batista's main basis of support came from the Army. It is doubtful that Castro won the revolution in any military sense, because his own army never consisted of more than 2,000 men and he never succeeded in controlling a single province. However, the Batista regime had become so ingrown, so self-serving, and so alienated from the populace that it virtually collapsed under the weight of its own corruption. When Batista took his money and ran, the old system lacked resilience enough to form a new government; Castro, with the only major organized force in the country, simply stepped into the power vacuum.

The corruption and political injustices that struck the very core of the EPRDF and the center of the TPLF's political elites made it possible for new elites to emerge from inside the EPRDF in favor of political reforms and improvements (Lyons, Terrence, 2021).

This political opportunity fosters the cooperation and coordination of political cadres within the EPRDF, which supports the rise of fighters within and later broadens its conflict by inspiring and supporting youth to effect change in the country. The Lemma Megersa-led "Team Lemma" political cadre organization, which was composed of Oromia and Amhara cadres, made substantial contributions to the creation and growth of youth-driven political mobilization.

This is the point where agency and structure converge and where it is difficult to tell them apart. The agency youth has gained momentum and developed a mutually beneficial connection with the political system. Political mobilization in the later period has been successful due to a dialectical relationship between youth agency and society, including governmental structure. Youth had won the mind and soul of the masses and able to persuade some of the government security personnel. In this regards, Bikila, youth informant from Burayu area exclaimed that:

—Oromo youths were effective in establishing a dialogue with Oromia Regional state police and security personnel and persuade them that they were all victims of the political regime. Most security personnel were sympathizing with youth cause and made no attempts to stop them in protesting and rioting in many parts of Oromia including Burayu.‖

A government official played a key role in arranging huge protests through state media for political mobilization. Among National State Media, Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN), following the appointment of Mohammed Ademo as director of OBN in October (The Reporter, September 23, 2024), and Amhara Media Network have dared to broadcast what is really going on the ground, gaining momentum and support from a large section of the population. They demonstrated what independent public media should achieve by providing authentic information and enriching the public with unbiased data and insights.

For Debele Melaku, a 29 years old informant from Burayu;

—OBN shifted its orientation more decidedly towards the political question of the young in Oromia. It became the mouth pieces of the masses by addressing the real problem and questions of the people of Oromia. Even the Oromia Regional state assigned diaspora media director to run the OBN. Following this development OBN emerged as one of the

| *major public media that addresses the interest of the masses for the time being*
(interview conducted on June 29, 2021)

In our focus group discussion with active youth participants of Burayu Town, he underscored that Oromia Broadcasting Network played crucial role in providing updated information with regards to what is going on in other parts of Oromia and giving a positive encouragement towards queerroo struggle. He further said that ;

OBN celebrated for exposing the ruthless mistreatment of the masses and further exposed the widespread corruption and mismanagement throughout the country. Youth were very passionate about this media as it engage parts of the society and exposing government failure to meet the demands and questions of the community and not being up to what the society expected to be. In general OBN has become the voice and ears of the masses for the time being.

Gaining widespread support and empathy, the youth protests peaked in late 2016, compelling the Ethiopian government to address these burgeoning elements of political power among the youth. As momentum and political acumen increased, the young activists became more organized and adept in their advocacy. By 2016, the Oromia region had become increasingly structured and well-coordinated, with its assertive presence challenging the EPRDF's stronghold and amplifying the voices of the populace.

After years of clandestine existence and struggle, the youth emerged as young political organizations, earning acclaim from all societal segments for their courage and combative spirit. Having established their organizational framework and bolstered their strength by connecting with every part of Oromia, they launched an overt protest and political mobilization, calling for a widespread demonstration across the region. As Oromo youth movement groups become more bureaucratic, they lose effectiveness, transitioning from the disruptive actions that marked the movement's early success to more conventional activities within the system (Piven & Cloward, 1979).The Ethiopian government's reaction to protests and calls for political reform presented an opportunity for the Oromo youth to mobilize. The government's forceful tactics, including arrests and violence, intensified support for the movement.

A young source from Burayu reported that these youthful political activists also garnered support

from officials within the Oromia regional government, though by various means. They managed to establish a coalition between Amhara and Oromia leaders, leading to an Oro-Amhara alliance and cooperation that persisted for approximately one to two years. This coalition has declined due to political differences and internal competition between them. The movement expanded its influence and support by creating partnerships with other opposition groups and civil society organizations. This political shift within the youthful movement was enabled through significant collaboration and coordination. The involvement of the older generation instilled a sense of political dedication and assertiveness in the youth. This political shift serves as evidence of the solidarity between the younger and older generations, uniting for national political mobilization. In this context, Debele Melaku, a 29 years old youth political participant from Burayu Town underscored the significance of this moment, adding that;

Team Lemma's positive approach towards the qeerroo and his promising commitments to address the genuine concerns of Oromo youth led us to believe that a new administration had emerged to improve the lives of the Oromo people. Since 2018, we have been a significant supporter of the new administration. Under Abiy's leadership, the atmosphere seemed very inspirational, and many youths were thrilled that better days had come to Oromia and the rest of Ethiopia. All news channels lauded 'Team Lemma' for their role in effecting political change in the country. The Oromia youth were celebrated for their relentless struggle and protests against Ethiopia's authoritarian regime, contributing to the reforms in the nation

In the midst of the country's collapsing government political system, Team Lemma coordinated the formation of new political parties that claimed to promote democratic unification, such as the Oromo Democratic Party and the Amhara Democratic Party. However, this was eventually renamed to Prosperity Party by enabling all nationality groups in the country to become party members. This definitely signified the demise of the TPLF's paternalistic leadership. The EPRDF, which was once anchored by the TPLF in dominating all significant economic and political positions for their own benefit, has lost its grip since the formation of the prosperity party. The Oromo Prosperity Party controls all significant posts in an alliance with the Amhara and Southern Nations, as well as the Nationality People Prosperity Party since 2019.

Since the beginning of 2020, the Ethiopian Federal Government has considered the TPLF to be its major foe. This is a significant decision that has had a significant political influence on the lives of young people in Oromia and throughout the country. During the Oromia youth political movement and protests spanning 2014 to 2018, the younger generation engaged with the older generation and other community members within the structure due to arising political opportunities. Here we can clearly see generational dynamics whereby youth envision and plot their life trajectories striving to attain adulthood and realize social behavior and bring political change in the country. This form of generational and relational aspects of youth activities, action, interaction, and role are very important when we consider an African society in general and Ethiopia in particular (Tatek Abebe, 2008 & 2019; Di Nunzio, 2016).

8.2 Dynamics of Political Change: Hopes and Challenges

Between 2014 and 2018, the Oromo youth political movement was characterized by both promise and challenging conditions. It emerged in response to the perceived marginalization and unjust treatment of the Oromo people in Ethiopia (Assafa Jalata, 2016). The movement and subsequent protests represented the most significant challenge to the TPLF-EPRDF's rule since 1991. The Ethiopian government's forceful response to the demonstrations led to violence, arrests, and fatalities, creating a climate of fear and suppression (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Often, the Ethiopian administration depicted the protests as a looming threat to national security, using anti-terrorism laws and rhetoric to justify the crackdown on protesters (Amnesty International, 2017).

Many analysts argue that the government's extensive reliance on disproportionate force and unjust delegitimization of the protests serves to validate the claims put forth by the demonstrators (Doerri, 2016). This approach, typical of numerous African governments, involves the use of force, security personnel, and paramilitary units to address political challenges, often disregarding the limited effectiveness of force as a sole tool for sustained political control (Llewellyn, 2003: 90). Furthermore, the previously flourishing Ethiopian economy, touted as the fastest growing on the African continent, has experienced a slowdown due to political instability, inadequate measures to address the political situation, and the ramifications of youth unrest.

The year 2016 witnessed a surge in youth protests in Ethiopia, prompting the government to address the political activism driven by the younger generation. During this period, the Oromia

youths experienced a heightened level of organization and structure, positioning themselves as powerful advocates for the public. Following years of operating discreetly and encountering various challenges, the qeerroo, a youth-led political organization, gained widespread admiration for their courage and resilience. Strengthening their organizational framework and expanding their influence across Oromia, they initiated open protests and political mobilization, ultimately culminating in a mass demonstration that spanned the region.

The increasing establishment of formal organization of Oromo youth movement groups has led to a decline in their effectiveness, as they have shifted from disruptive actions, which were successful during the early stages of the movement, to more conventional activities operating within the system instead of outside of it (Piven & Cloward, 1979). It is noteworthy that officials from the Oromia regional administration have provided support to these young political activists.

The wave of youth protests and resistance has brought about numerous changes, necessitating deliberate political realignments to address the interests of young people. Consequently, during the inaugural speech at the legislative houses, the President of Ethiopia has committed to far-reaching changes, including electoral reforms, a more proportional governance structure, enhanced efforts against corruption, and economic liberalization (EUISS, 2016).

Significant reforms were carried out by the administration to restructure the administrative framework, quell protests that had erupted across the nation, particularly in Oromia, and to address issues brought up by the country's young (EUISS, 2016). However, there is skepticism about whether these actions truly reflect the desires of the people. The youth are actively advocating for increased job opportunities, alternative economic development, and economic reforms that prioritize the public's needs. Additionally, they are calling for a more equitable distribution of power and a reevaluation of the federal system to ensure balanced representation between the central government and the various regions. In response to widespread youth protests and clashes, the government retracted the Addis Ababa City Integrated Master Plan in January 2016 and approved a law acknowledging Oromia's special interest in the city.

According to an international publication, the tenth master plan for Addis Ababa, integrating socioeconomic aspects of Ethiopia's capital city, has been officially released for public discussion, marking the culmination of a two-year transition following the phase-out of the

ninth master plan. This new master plan has been developed by the Addis Ababa City Planning Project Office, which was recently renamed. The proposal includes a reduction in the originally anticipated 1.1 million hectares of land outside the capital to 52000 hectares. Additionally, it suggests an increase in the number of districts to 13, achieved by dividing each of the existing three districts into two to meet established standards. Furthermore, Yeka, Aqaqi Qaliti, and Bole are proposed to be twinned with six other districts.

A proposal has been submitted for the establishment of a specialized body, the Addis Ababa Planning Commission, tasked with monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the plan. The proposed approach adheres to a vertical expansion model of urban development, emphasizing redevelopment, compact community creation, as well as integrated planning for transportation, housing, and socio-economic spheres. Six key areas have been identified, including transportation, housing, environmental protection, industry, development, and recreational centers. The proposal also recommends informing program residents about its timeline.

Once again, homeowners should receive compensation with new homes either in the same location as the redevelopment or within a one-kilometer radius. Despite the government scrapping the Master Plan, many individuals remain skeptical. After years of unfulfilled promises, many believe that these declarations are purely for an international audience, and that the government has no intention of abandoning its oppressive approach to development (Human Rights Watch, June 2016). Furthermore, in an apparent effort to appease demonstrators' demands, the administration has announced intentions to release all political prisoners in order to promote national unity and make space for democracy in the country.

The current administration has failed to address longstanding issues, leading to dissatisfaction among the youth and the general public, thereby resulting in ongoing protests. The political elites in power appear to lack an understanding of the country's political situation. Many government elites have compromised their power bases through corrupt and ruthless practices, alienating a significant portion of the population. The demonstrations led by Oromo youth have effectively weakened the influence of the TPLF-EPRDF in the Oromia region and have caused upheaval within the entire government system, leading to a substantial weakening of the ruling coalition, EPRDF.

The protests by the Oromo community, which started in 2014 and lasted until 2017, significantly weakened the stability of the Ethiopian government. These protests led to sweeping political changes in the country. As a result of the demonstrations and resistance by the youth, various changes were initiated. To address the concerns of the younger population, the President of Ethiopia promised comprehensive reforms in his inaugural speech. These reforms included changes to the electoral system, a more proportional system of governance, improved anti-corruption measures, and economic liberalization (EUISS, 2016). However, the government did not initiate a broad discussion on the relationship between the state and its citizens (Doerri, 2016). According to Assafa Jalata (2016), the #Oromo demonstrations have had a significant impact on weakening the power structure of the TPLF-EPRDF in the Oromia region and also causing a shakeup in the entire government system. In January 2016, the government abandoned the Addis Ababa metropolis Integrated Master Plan and enacted a law prioritizing Oromia's interests over the metropolis. However, despite these actions, the Oromo demonstrations persist as the government has yet to address the long-standing issues of the people (Awol Allo, 2016).

Following the declaration of a state of emergency on October 9, 2016, the government reshuffled the cabinet, adding several more Oromo ministers to the portfolio, and promised a more representative electoral system that would include opposition parties that have not had a single seat in Parliament since 2015 (Schemm, 2016). However, despite claiming to have implemented "deep reform" to address the grievances expressed by the demonstrators, the Ethiopian government has shown little genuine interest in addressing the demonstrators' complaints.

In response to the pressure exerted by Oromo youth, the federal government has implemented intentional measures to accommodate the demonstrators' demands. These measures entail a reorganization of the cabinet of ministers based on educational qualifications, as well as the addition of nine new Oromo lawmakers in the chambers. Oromo youth adeptly engaged in dialogue with Oromia Regional state police and security officers, persuading them that they all bore the brunt of political dictatorship. A significant number of security officers expressed sympathy towards the youth movement and opted not to thwart their demonstrations and unrest across various areas of Oromia.

The government's actions did not align with the aspirations of the younger generation. The youths sought opportunities for employment, alternative approaches to economic development,

fairer power distribution, and adjustments to the federal system to better accommodate the public's needs. A protracted meeting convened by members of the EPRDF central executive committee in December 2017 concluded that the country's challenges were rooted in a dearth and/or inadequacy of effective political leadership within the EPRDF at upper echelons. In the wake of persistent and widespread support for this demonstration, the prior administration, led by Haile Mariam Desalegn, tendered its resignation and acceded to addressing the concerns of the Oromo youth by appointing Abiy as the new prime minister of Ethiopia.

In 2018, under Abiy's leadership, Ethiopia underwent a significant transition from the previous regime to a modern reformist approach, marked by abrupt and decisive changes. This included the implementation of an amnesty bill leading to the release of political detainees and the subsequent closure of the Meakelawi detention facility (Jon Temin and Joseph Badwaza, 2019). Moreover, the parliamentary action to de-designate the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Ginbot 7, and other entities as terrorist organizations in June 2018 permitted them to participate in political undertakings. Abiy orchestrated a sweeping revamp of the upper echelons of the government through the nomination of opposition politicians, women, civil society representatives, and members of the diaspora network (Maggie Fick, 2018; Giovanni Faleg, 2019).

Upon assuming power, the new Ethiopian government promptly made significant political decisions, leading to the release of political prisoners. Additionally, the administration implemented policies to allow various oppositional political groups, such as the Oromo Liberation Front and Ginbot 7, to participate in Ethiopia's political sphere without encountering any form of harassment or persecution. These proactive political measures undertaken by the Ethiopian government facilitated the return of OLF leaders from exile. Notably, Jawar Mohammed, a prominent Oromo writer and activist, availed himself of the amnesty granted and returned to Ethiopia in August 2018. Consequently, the political directives of the current government have instilled hope and optimism in the younger demographic, who have been fervently advocating for principles of equality and justice.

Since Abiy assumed power, Ethiopia has undergone a remarkable political transformation. The new administration has exhibited promise in areas that the populace had long aspired for during the tenure of EPRDF governance. Additionally, there has been the establishment of political spaces for all citizens, encompassing free expression, assembly, and media freedom. Notably, the younger demographic has emerged as a potent force propelling political change in this reinvigorated political climate. Following the election of Abiy and the government's decisions, there has been a noticeable improvement in most parts of Oromia. Violent protests have significantly decreased between October 2017 and April 2018, indicating a notable reduction in civil unrest during this period (Hilary Matfess, ACLED, October 13, 2018). Several factors may have contributed to this decline, including effective government responses, increased dialogue between authorities and protesters, and a shift in public sentiment favoring more peaceful advocacy methods. Additionally, emerging social media campaigns and grassroots movements have redirected energies towards constructive engagement rather than confrontation.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers aiming to sustain this downward trend in violence and foster a more stable societal environment. This decline has also been accompanied by a reduction in reported fatalities. Since taking office, only six documented deaths have resulted from military clashes with adolescent demonstrators— a stark contrast to the 137 deaths reported in the months leading up to Abiy's election. This substantial reduction underscores a significant shift in government policy away from employing stringent measures against young individuals, reflecting a broader commitment to reducing violence and promoting dialogue.

Minalu Sori, a 24-year-old youth informant, expressed in an interview conducted on December 26, 2020, that the current period signifies significant political progress. He noted that the administration is adopting a more sympathetic approach toward the public, reflecting a positive shift in governance. He stated that — *...On September 15, 2018, leaders of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and diaspora organizations returned from exile, drawing a large gathering of Oromo youth at Meskel Square to commemorate their accomplishments. This event served as a historic occasion, uniting numerous Oromo youth from neighboring regions of Oromia in celebration of their collective achievement and in the declaration of unwavering support for the OLF leaders and diaspora elites.*¶

This led to an effort by all Oromo opposition political groups and parties to form a coalition for a shared Oromo cause, termed Gadise Ghedza Oromo (GHO). Through these political endeavors, organizations such as the Oromo Liberation Front, the Oromo Federalist Congress, the Oromo Democratic Party, and other smaller parties advocating for the Oromo cause united and concurred on the objectives for Oromo society. This strategic alliance and consensus among Oromo political factions have fostered a sense of pride and enthusiasm among the Oromo youth. It signified a positive change and advancement for the youth in Burayu Town.

Every young Oromo felt a surge of joy when the Ethiopian government expanded the political space, paving the way for democratization and the temporary prevalence of justice for all citizens. The government's current political policies have instilled hope in the younger generation who has long championed equality and justice. The creation of political spaces characterized by freedom of expression, assembly, and press freedom signified the opening of Ethiopia's political arena to civilians and opposition groups alike.

In the initial months of Abiy's administration, the situation seemed promising, and many youths were thrilled with the resurgence of better times in Oromia and beyond. 'Team Lemma' received widespread acclaim from news outlets for their role in fostering political transformation. The youth of Oromia were commended for their relentless fight and protests against the authoritarian regime in Ethiopia and their contribution to the nation's change. Some believe that the political shifts were achievable due to the collaboration and strategic planning among EPRDF's political members, which spurred the emergence of combatants who, in turn, inspired and mobilized the youth to effect change in the country.

In this scenario, the government officials were pivotal in orchestrating a major rally, leveraging state media to mobilize the populace. Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) and Amhara Media Network courageously reported the actual events on the ground, challenging the National State Media, and garnered substantial support from a wide audience. They demonstrated the function of independent public media by delivering accurate information and enlightening the citizenry.

OBN has shifted its focus more decisively towards the political challenges faced by the youth in Oromia. It has become a voice for the people by addressing the real problems and concerns of the inhabitants of Oromia. The Oromia Regional State even appointed a diaspora media director

to manage OBN. With this change, OBN has emerged as a major public media outlet that serves the interests of the masses. OBN is commended for exposing the harsh mistreatment of citizens, as well as widespread corruption and incompetence throughout the nation.

The youth showed great enthusiasm for this medium as it involved various societal sectors and highlighted the government's failure to meet the community's needs and expectations. Thus, OBN temporarily became the voice and ears of the people. Political reform was facilitated by the mobilization of the youth alongside the older generation, who contributed their combative spirit and political commitment. The dynamics between generations enable an analysis of how children envision and strategize their life courses to achieve adulthood, understand social conduct, and effectuate political transformation in the country.

In the context of African culture, especially within Ethiopia, the generational and relational aspects of youth activities, actions, interactions, and roles are of paramount importance (Tatek Abebe, 2008 & 2019; Di Nunzio, 2016). Such political transformations are epitomized by the intergenerational collaboration between the youth and the elderly, uniting for political mobilization within the nation.

The opening of political space by the Ethiopian government brought joy to every young Oromo, paving the way for democratization and justice for all citizens. One notable political move by the Ethiopian administration was allowing OLF leaders to return to the country. The homecoming of these leaders and Oromo diaspora organizations from exile led to a large gathering of Oromo youth at Meskel Square to celebrate their victory on September 15, 2018. It was a significant event where numerous Oromo youths united to commemorate their success and express their solid support for the OLF leaders and diaspora elites.

This was succeeded by an effort from all Oromo opposition political groups and parties to establish a coalition for a unified Oromo cause, named Gadise Ghedza Oromo (GHO). Political entities such as the Oromo Liberation Front, the Oromo Federalist Congress, the Oromo Democratic Party, and other smaller parties united to advocate for the Oromo cause and concurred on the interests of the Oromo society. This strategic collaboration and consensus among Oromo political factions have sparked pride and excitement among the Oromo youth. It symbolized significant progress and development among the young residents of Burayu Town.

The municipal government has launched a reform initiative that promises significant benefits for the community. Consequently, two schools have been completed, and a technical school has been established to serve the local needs. Additionally, a female boarding school has been constructed to support the town. Moreover, infrastructure development projects are in progress, including an asphalt road connecting Addis Ababa to Ambo and bridge construction. Improvements have also been made in landscaping and the youth center.

Due to the youth's struggles and demonstrations, the administration has started to acknowledge the significance of the Oromo people's traditional values, such as the Ireechaa festivities. This recognition extends beyond Burayu, with the municipal administration designating areas for the Ireechaa ritual to be celebrated annually in Addis Ababa. The political reform measures enacted by Abiy's administration have altered the landscape of violent youth protests in Ethiopia, moving them from western Oromia to the municipalities surrounding Addis Ababa, especially Burayu.

8.3 Dynamics of Oromo Youth Political Movement: Fragmentation and Schism : Social Drama ?

While the youth movement pressured the government to initiate reforms , progress was limited , and change was slow to materialize , leading to frustration and disillusionment among activists. In every social movement there are situation where success is not always possible. The strength of any forms of political movement can be measured based on the power of participants, the political culture, political opportunity and other interrelated issues of the system. It is an aggregate result of whole situation that led to the success of the social movement (Diani, Mario; 1997)

Anthropological research endeavor have clearly demonstrated that youth and any other society should not be measured on the basis of other's criteria but should be studied and considered on their own terms (Bucholtz, Mary ,2002; Honwana & De Boeck, 2005). A clear indication of this is the work done by James Scot ***“Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (1985)*** which emphasize that people have their own ways of dealing challenges and have become agents in their own ways. Scott's general argument was that we need to recognize not only —big events as representing forms of political resistance, but also the many small acts

that people (peasants in this case) carry out to improve their situation, acts with which they manage to bring about change. Dominated people, Scott argued, are usually well aware of their situation, and have —hidden scripts‖ whereby they carry out their acts of political protest, often in invisible and non-verbalized manners. Scott’s approach stimulated a whole range of studies that focused on ordinary forms of resistance and rebellion.

In the same manner, Oromo youth have tried their own best to achieve their own political goals and made significant impacts on the political structure but their political mobilization has confronted many challenges and setbacks. This is a result of the political situation in the country.

The Ethiopian politics have been characterized by one of political fragmentation and conspiracy which are clearly a particular configuration of the African continent political elite’s culture and practices. This is also because of lack of accountability and responsibility among the political elites in the continents. Elites are regarded as the most polarized and fragmented one since they are using power for political bargaining that intended to satisfy their personal interests.

In Ethiopia, to satisfy their political program, political elites have mobilized along ethnic line which is _a result of the Ethiopian government’s system of ethno federalism –regionalism, emphasizing ethnic identity a way for ethnic groups and ethno regional politicians to signal their strength and jockey for influence (African Arguments, 2 October 2018).

It was clearly demonstrated that the social movement and political mobilization could not achieve its expected positive changes. de Waal and R. Ibreck (2013:305) clearly argues that African social movement initially may have organized in demanding transformative change nevertheless it would end up becoming an alternative patronage system for better positions and limited changes within a fundamental unaltered system.

In the same manner, Ethiopia has been known in the formation of personal leadership and leadership personal cults rather than institutional development and facilitating democratization processes. It is such an unfortunate that Ethiopian leaders have lacked an advance and a more sustainable human oriented development agenda and reform program that would bring fundamental changes in the lives of the masses.

Melkamu Mulatu, a well-known 25-year-old youth political participant who made a substantial impact on young people's political mobilization (in an interview which took place in Burayu Town in November 2021) ,went on to elaborate on the nation's present political climate by stating;

Because of the presence of one political party, prosperity party and the prevalence of leadership personal cult, the reforms that intended to bring changes end up with inefficient and malfunctioned institutional structures whose power reside under the aegis of the incumbent government. Since every change is dependent on the personal good will of the leader of the government, the fruits of change could not bear much and the reforms that started by the Abiy administration have started to face many criticisms and allegations by many members of youth community. The reforms that have been taken in areas like military, judiciary, election board and security forces could not be continued in line with institutional development and restructuring in good faiths. Moreover, this reform does not consider the overall past experiences of the country and could not incorporate other areas in the same manner that serve the demands and interests of the community at large.

In fact this political mobilization and zest for transforming the Oromo society in a unified manner could not last long and eclipsed following the emergence of political fragmentation and resentment among leaders of political parties.

Political support given to premium Abiy has started to dwindle through time. Peaceful demonstration and celebration could not last long because of what happened in many parts of Ethiopia, unrest and protests widespread in the town.

I found that among Oromo youth, the social dramas have revealed the related sets of oppositions that are characterized by fragmented and malleable social structure. The social drama theoretical insight by Victor Turner (1980:149) is visible in Oromo youth political movement. Social Drama is a spontaneous unit of social process and a fact of everyone's experience in every human society having four phases such as breach, crisis, redress, and either reintegration or recognition of schism.

As social dramas occur within groups of persons who share values and interests and who have a real or alleged common history, in the Oromo youth community it is possible to see fragmented

political situation whereby the main actors are persons for whom the group has a high value priority. It is the one with which a person identifies most deeply and in which he finds fulfillment of his major social and personal desires. In this fragmented political situation, youth have become all members of many groups, formal or informal, from the family to the nation or some inter-national religious or political institution.

Each youth makes his/her own subjective evaluation of the group's respective worth whereby some are "dear" to one, others it is one's "duty to defend," and so on. Some tragic situations arise from conflicts of loyalty to different star groups (Turner, 1980:149).

Turner (1980:151) explicitly has put this kind of political division and fragmentation by saying:

...as a result of this categorical opposition and schism develops between ambitious individual versus other, schism between families, neighbor, the forwardness of youth versus the domineering elders, status seeking group versus other, hostile feelings, grudges and intrigues versus friendly respect and generosity towards other.

Following the eclipse of political change and the emergence of disappointment among the masses, huge demonstration and protest reached its climax stage where youths have started divide based on which political party they are supporting and which party political orientation that they are following.

Eventually, the new incumbent government has lost the caliber to address the basic question of youth. The episodic euphoria that these youth felt dwindle in unprecedented manner and clearly shows a condition whereby youth group in Oromia enter into disorientated political situation. This is because of the sine qua non of youths political question is ignored and the platitude of the incumbent government rhetoric has become the well-established facts of political lives in Ethiopia. The incumbent regime has made use of this political opportunity whereby it told stories about how Oromo youth successfully helped them to come to power. With this and other divisive mechanisms there emerged factions of youth groups that align themselves based on their political ideology and individual interests. Some align themselves with the incumbent government and other refused to do so and remained to be independent.

The lives of my informants demonstrate the dynamic of youth political mobilization. Lelissa Megersa, the town's 28-year-old youth leader, makes this quite evident. He was the leader of the Oromo youth movement in the town and now disgruntled and shy away from any political activities. He stated that:

In the early stages of Oromo youth mobilization, all young people joined the movement without hesitation, regardless of their sex, age, education level, or location of birth. "Justice for all" was their lone and consistent catchphrase. The protests and demonstrations were like heavy rain that drenched Oromia have gradually subsided and become history. Youth in Ethiopia now consider this type of protest and demonstration to be history.

This event demonstrated the emergence and development of a rancorous political struggle between the government and its allies and some youth groups. In fact, the Ethiopian political culture is basically established based on —who is with us and —who is against us and not on the analysis of the existing political condition of the country (Abbink, Jon, 2010).

But some youth argues that the new administration attempts to take youths questions as a major forces for policy reform which successfully incorporated into the political question of all youths of the country has become one of the reason for the decline of youth protest in the country.

In light of this, Kebede Baadana , a 22 years old leader of the youth movement (whose identity has been altered due to ethical concerns), in an interview on October 23, 2021 stated that;

I have backed the Abiy government because I believe that they are working very hard to achieve a reform that would improve the life of the nation at large and the youth community in particular. I can tell that the new government employees are eager to improve the quality of life in the community. As long as there is commitment and willingness, things will eventually change.

Melaku, a thirty-year-old Oromo activist for Burayu Youth, vehemently disagrees with the statements made by the aforementioned informant and other proponents of the new regime. For him, some reform attempts have been made during the period of six months of the early period. He lamented that;

The former EPRDF day reappears in many incarnations. Security guards change their uniforms naturally, but not their brains. Nevertheless, by designating them as Oromo Liberation Front-Sheenees supporters, young Oromos have been imprisoned. By referring to you as an Ababa Toribee member, they could send you. Your likelihood of being branded an enemy of the system is increased if you do not support them. I have family in the Ginchi region. She held a business education degree and was a university graduate. She was slain in front of the Ginchi Police station because she was an outspoken political critic of the establishment. Everyone is aware of the murderer's identity, but according to a local police statement, it is OLF/sheenees. Everything in our area is unclear and unsafe. The town administration had encouraged us to organize ourselves to be benefited from the fruit of the new political changes. They told us that we would get lands for our home and business center. Hundredths of youth organizations flourished but only few were benefited and got lands and any forms of employment opportunity in the town. 180 youth were benefited from this land distribution because of their attachment to the local administration.

There is only limited attempts have been made to limit the contagious spread of breach, certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms, both formal mechanisms such as personal advice and informal arbitration by leading youth groups and adult members of the community to resolve the division between members youth group.

Because of lack of strong forms of bureaucratic youth organization, they lose their focus and not have enough power to keep on going. That is why youth movement enters into and thus enters into the decline stage of a social movement that indicates social movements eventually decline for one or more of many reasons.

Scholars have provided reasons for why movements decline. It has been argued that sometimes participants of movement achieve their goals and naturally cease because there is no more reason to continue. More often, however, they decline because they fail (Piven&Cloward, 1979).

For the decline of youth movement in Oromia, many reasons have been provided by the community for the sterility and poverty of the political movement of youths. One of the reasons forwarded by youth informant is that there is no well-established youth led organization that

addresses their basic questions. The political struggle of youth is emotion driven episodic mobilization that does not manage to reach to the level of organized group or whatsoever.

In this regards my informant emphasized that after the imprisonment of Jawar Mohammed who sought large supports among Oromo youth and who also very well known for his contribution in organizing youth mobilization, youth mobilization seemed to lose its major caliber for political changes. He was the heart and soul of youth organization whose voice and political opinion accepted enthusiastically.

Our informant, Bayu Sisay, a 25 years old Burayu youth political participants explains to me saying:

...Jawar uses of multiple social movement tools including social media as well as main stream media said to bring large youth mobilization in all parts of Oromia. He was such an important figure in youth political mobilization in all parts of Oromia. His imprisonment could be regarded as losing youth main body organs. Losing him is like losing one of our eyes that clearly led to darkness in our morale and political motivation.

And now both lack of mobilization resources and loss of enthusiasm among a movement's members lead to the decline of youth political movement, and the emergence of factionalism, fragmentation or strong divisions of opinion within youth political movement.

Disorientation and fragmentation, among other factors, can be perceived as elements of the social drama characterizing the Oromo youth political movement from 2014 to 2018. The Ethiopian government has not adequately addressed the majority of the issues raised by the young protestors during the Oromo youth demonstrations from 2014 to 2018.

This is because of the widespread of fear and terror among youthful community as well as divisive political rhetoric by the incumbent government. In highlighting the existing political situation, Lelissa Ulbanaa, residents of Burayu stated that:

The current political climate in Oromia has deteriorated beyond the era of TPLF governance. Historically, our grievances and protests have been met with precise countermeasures. Security forces have shown hesitation in taking firm action. When they did decide to act against the

youth-led protests and political rallies, they did so with restraint. Now, individuals are openly subjected to torture, murder, and targeted killings for expressing their political views and concerns about justice. Young people, as critics of the current political regime, have become the most agile and oppressed segments of our society. This regime cannot be equated with hyenas; even hyenas are more honorable in that they do not attack unless provoked within their habitat.

This took place under the political administration of Oromia's newly established government, specifically in Finfine Zone, presently referred to as Shager Town. Here, the government's control is absolute, and the administrative system is beyond comparison to the rule of wild animals in the jungle. In fact, the jungle's wild animal rule seems more favorable than the new Oromia government, which has exerted a harsh form of control over the local population. Consequently, every emerging community is experiencing a time of fear and apprehension.

The new administration has adopted a divide and rule approach, splitting youth groups into factions that support the new regime and those that remain in opposition due to unresolved youth and community issues. Certain members of the qeerroo movement have sided with the ruling party, attaining positions of influence and affluence. These individuals have become systematic representatives for the youth, who were once considered the vanguard of the opposition.

According to Bikila Hundessa, a 27 years old Burayu Youth political participant;

a political dispute between the ruling party and the administration. Youths are being categorized by their birthplace, with preferential treatment given to those with government connections, membership in the ruling coalition, or certain regional origins. In Burayu, it is evident that youths from Wellega, Ambo, Arsi, and Bale are treated as second-class citizens, receiving attention only after the local Burayu youths. Such practices are fostering divisions within the youth community. The town's youth have been reduced to serving the current leadership, with some compromising their political principles for financial and political gain. When Team Lemma was in power, it united all the Oromo youth. However, after the events involving Lemma and his group, unity has diminished, and discord has increased.

The situation in Oromia has worsened, with the government taking measures against political mobilization and agents of change. The youth are unable to access political music, as content

from YouTube is now banned. Young singers who have pursued political mobilization have been pursued and incarcerated, with some leaders being exposed to public discourse. According to our Informant , Megerssa Tolera , a young political movement activist from Burayu Town:

Following the incidents involving Hacaaluu Hundessaa, young activist often highlighted in his songs, the political mobilization fervor among Burayu's youth has diminished. Hacaaluu, hailing from the Ambo district, was a prominent figure in the community. He maintained strong ties with the local qeerroo, offering advice and support in various ways. After the events that befell him, many young residents of the town protested in the streets. Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Geriba, and Hamza led the organization of his final tribute in his hometown of Ambo. However, this mournful event escalated as official security forces provoked disturbances and public outrage. Subsequently, numerous young people and leaders from the town were arrested and received lengthy prison sentences.

During a mixed group discussion in Burayu in July 2021, our informant Belay Sisay contended that Hacaaluu was instrumental in politically mobilizing the youth through his politically charged songs and active involvement across Oromia, especially in Burayu. They equated his loss to losing vital organs of the body, which in turn quashed the political hopes of the town's youth. The community's youth mourned the loss of a pivotal figure who significantly contributed to their political songs. For the Oromo youth, Jawar and Hacaaluu were akin to two eyes that shed light on the political perspectives of the Oromo people and fueled their political fervor.

In the discourse on the town's political climate, our informants highlighted that youth politics signifies a substantial shift in mobilization and combativeness. They elaborated that Haccaalluu's assassination was a major blow to their political vision, while Jawar's arrest greatly diminished and halted their political activities. The situation worsened with the emergence of splinter factions within the youth political movement.

The town's declining youth movement cannot be attributed to a single factor. Government persecution has intensified the downfall of youth political movements. The reactionary policies previously set in place were enacted swiftly, and the anticipated reforms from newly appointed ministers and officials failed to materialize. Many observers have stated unequivocally that the change was nominal rather than substantial, with the old guard still in power. A brief but intense

period of chaos swept across the country. The confusion among the Oromo youth is reflected in Galanaa Gaaromsaa's latest songs. In his lyrics, he starkly proclaims that the nation's leadership is absent, and the prosecutor (Alenga in Oromifaa) is effectively nonexistent.

The incidents in Burayu, along with the violent confrontations across the nation, may have led to the fragmentation of elite politics and political divisions. Consequently, both international and local media have started covering the disputes, destruction, and crises nationwide. Reports indicate that Oromo youths rampaged through the streets, looting stores and assaulting individuals, specifically targeting businesses and homes of ethnic minorities. This violence resulted in the deaths of approximately 28 individuals from ethnic minorities, including the Dorze and Wolayita, with the government's response being criticized for its lack of promptness. The situation in Burayu has exposed the fractured nature of party politics, which appears to be driven by political maneuvering and conspiracies rather than responsible and accountable governance. Regarding this incident, Sisay Negash, a 30-year-old resident of Burayu, expressed that the crimes were not perpetrated by the youth but by individuals seeking to manipulate politics at the cost of the locals' safety. The rationale behind a Burayu teenager committing such an act is perplexing. He questioned the rationale behind involving the town's children in such violent acts. To him, it seemed like sheer fiction. He exclaimed, *"These communities have coexisted peacefully for decades without such events." This raises the question: why now? It is believed that many youths were provoked to commit similar actions. Although we are deeply concerned by the numerous violations of our territory, we have no intention of harming the innocent for political gain. Our primary aim is to engage in political demonstrations that call for equality, equal opportunity, and justice.*¶

This era is marked by confusion and disillusionment. Consequently, teenagers are ensnared in a political-ideological quagmire, feeling caught in a tangle of loyalty and guilt due to the challenge of discerning which political philosophy to adopt or whom to trust. This predicament has led to numerous splits within the Oromo youth movement. The contentious political climate manifests in various ways. Some political figures perceive their objectives, actions, and responses as means to gain power. Meanwhile, others view them as anarchists lacking significant life ambitions beyond destruction.

Some argue that the young group's initiator and coordinator is their own party, acting as a subordinate to their political agenda. This mirrors the situation in Ethiopia during the early Derg period, where ideological and political divisions among students and elites were rampant, leading to widespread ideological confusion that has persisted ever since.

A significant political development arose with the emergence and expansion of a new death squad called *Aba Toribe*, whose organizational structure and network remain a mystery. They have sown fear among the population by publicizing the names of individuals associated with the current government. Their tactics include murder and torture. This entity did not exist prior to April 2010, which coincides with the appointment of a new prime minister.

During our informal conversation Biratu Geda, a 28 years old youth informant from Burayu pinpointed that;

Aba Toribee's actions have been depicted as an organized group insurgency that may take action after the week against people who supported corruption and bad politics. First, they advise officials and members of the community not to do anything they consider wrong. If an individual is unable to redress and remedy his or her error, the group will take action within seven days. It only formed as a small insurgent organization that took action after the working day. The measures include murdering, torturing, and wreaking havoc on individuals and their families who refuse to perform what is demanded of this organization.

During our focus group discussion, Dida Kumsaa, a 29 years old youth informant stated;

... the change is only nominal. The promises made are ineffective. In reality, the political transition is merely a rebranding from EPRDF to Prosperity Party, with no fundamental change in the approach to systematic violence, torture methods, or the suppression of political demonstrations and public mobilization. Numerous active youths in the community have been detained and taken to undisclosed locations for opposing political oppression. The Ethiopian government's aggressive response to demonstrators, involving arrests, fatalities, and internet blackouts, has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, further bewildering activists.

The political movement of the Oromo youth has experienced fragmentation across multiple lines, notably ideological differences among its members. Within the numerous factions and groups of

the movement, there were ideological disputes and conflicts. While some advocated for nonviolent resistance, others endorsed more radical methods. Such ideological divisions have led to fragmentation and internal strife within the Oromo Youth political organization.

Moreover, the Ethiopian government employed divide-and-rule tactics to sow distrust and discord within the Oromo youth political movement. This strategy involved co-opting select Oromo leaders, exploiting ethnic and regional disputes, and spreading misinformation to disrupt the activists' solidarity and unity. As a result, fragmentation occurred among the youth groups due to the municipal government's co-option of some young activists and organizers through minor, mostly symbolic, and material compromises that diminished teenage discontent and debilitated youth activities. An example of these economic compromises was the distribution of land for economic development to individuals identified with the term "qeerroo," with funds being allocated and disbursed in various manners.

The administration allocated minimal funds to curb the political mobilization of the youth. This led to the rise of various youth factions, yet the town's young population remains divided into several fragmented groups. These include individuals aligned with the ruling party, those who oppose the government and seek to preserve their autonomy, and those who are disenchanted with party politics and prefer to distance themselves from both sides.

Victor Turner's theory of social drama provides a useful framework for understanding the breakdown of the Oromo youth political movement in late 2018. Turner characterizes social dramas as dynamic processes characterized by conflict, tragedy, and change, which are common among disadvantaged or oppressed communities. Social dramas usually include antagonists or conflicting forces that exacerbate societal unrest and hardship. The Ethiopian government was the primary adversary of the Oromo youth political movement, employing severe tactics to quash resistance and maintain control over it.

Turner's theory also recognizes the possibility of fracture and division within social dramas, since various factions or interest groups within a society may have opposing aims, beliefs, or techniques. In late 2018, the Oromo youth political movement became fragmented along ideological, regional, and generational lines, resulting in internal splits and clashes among activists.

The social drama perspective offers a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of conflict, fragmentation, and transformation within the Oromo youth political movement in late 2018, emphasizing the complex interplay of social, cultural, and political forces shaping the movement's trajectory.

8.4 Conclusion

The younger generation actively engaged with the older generation and other community members during the Oromia youth political movement and protests from 2014 to 2018. They seized the opportunity presented by the political changes to comprehend social behavior, plan for adulthood, and influence political change in their nation. Through their interactions within the social structure, they highlighted the complex relationships between different generations. The study of Ethiopian society and wider African society reveals that the interplay between generational and relational factors significantly affects the roles, activities, and interactions of young people (Tatek Abebe 2008, 2019; Di Nunzio 2016).

The recent movement has led to a shift in the community's political attitudes, from passivity to activism. As a result, the youth organization's structure has transitioned from being secretive to becoming more public. Additionally, changes have been made to the collaborative efforts among the political parties in Oromia. The Oromo youth protest movement has been impacted by the changing political landscape in Ethiopia, leading to a decrease in opportunities and hope. Due to the lack of strong organizational structure and leadership, Oromo youth missed out on early opportunities as a result of their resistance and protest. This has caused previously unseen challenges and divisions within the political culture and organizational structure.

The Oromo youth political movement experienced internal divisions driven by ideological differences among its members. Disputes arose between various factions, with some advocating for nonviolent resistance while others favored more radical approaches. These ideological differences resulted in internal fragmentation within the movement. The social dramas experienced by young Oromo individuals have exposed flexible yet fractured social structures, reflecting Victor Turner's theoretical insights on social drama (1980:149).

Chapter Nine: Summary and Conclusion

Following the global regime changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, the collapse of Communism, and the subsequent advent of Apartheid, anthropological studies began to emphasize social movement and revolution themes in the 1990s (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; 1997). Ortner and Sherry (1995) correctly identified a series of "ethnographic refusals" to focus on political resistance, which can be identified with broad reference to various forms of political activities that seek to question existing patterns of domination. More significantly, as seen in Robert Redfield's work in the 1930s, anthropologists began to focus on "complex societies" and "states" (see Thomassen 2008). James Scott, a political scientist by training, made significant contributions to the study of political uprising in "Weapons of the Weak" (1985).

Anthropologists often overlook political revolutions due to the challenges of conducting field studies on revolutionary behavior, which can be difficult, if not impossible. Revolutions typically occur unexpectedly, making it hard to plan fieldwork in advance. While anthropologists can arrange studies on peasant behavior or urban youth mobilization, orchestrating research around political revolutions lies beyond their scope. Additionally, in the midst of a revolution, the immediate priority for individuals may be to escape rather than engage in research.

Experienced anthropologists often rely on historical records to inform their work. However, when ethnographic research is conducted shortly after significant revolutionary events, informants are usually willing to share their experiences. Today, revolutions can also be analyzed remotely and spatially using electronic communication tools, broadening the scope of study.

It is indeed feasible to conduct an anthropological study of political revolutions while analyzing the characteristics and patterns of revolutionary behavior. Through such research, anthropology has provided valuable insights into the processes underlying this social movement. As Bucholz (1989) notes, there is a growing interest in the anthropology of youth, driven by a focus on young people's agency, the documentation of diverse youth cultures, and the exploration of emerging identities within new cultural formations that skillfully integrate global capitalism, transnationalism, and local traditions.

In the past anthropologists have been particularly active in repositioning the peasant as a revolutionary subject, against Marx's denigrating view (T, B,2102:781). It was in this context

that Eric Wolf made his comparative study of peasant resistance, and James Scott (1976) wrote about the moral economies of Asian peasants—to mention just the most famous cases. In this constant launching of the marginalized into the vanguard, anthropology has played a role that decades of disciplinary reflexivity have left relatively untouched. This remains a significant contribution to theorizing resistance, and certainly, the single most quoted anthropological contribution to the study of political change from below.

Anthropologists can help us understand these young movements since they have historically been quite receptive to social and political emancipation, particularly in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Thomassen, Bjrn, 2012:780).

By using the example of Burayu Town in the Oromia Regional State, I have looked at youth political movements in Ethiopia's recent history. The thesis is supported by fieldwork conducted in Burayu with a total of about 30 young people serving as informants. As a result, this project is an empirical micro-study: a thorough investigation of practices in specific places at a specific moment. This research focuses on the political paths taken by young people, which result in political mobilization, protests, and activism both offline and online against the ruling party.

The study also explores the historic and modern political structures of Ethiopia's young society as well as the tactics of resistance they employ to mobilize for political change. Since the dawn of time, youth have always engaged in political resistance outside of the official political channels. The fact that students from the late 1960s were instrumental in the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution serves as proof of its existence. More importantly, it's clear that young are vital now as evidenced by the political resistance of youth groups around the world. In this thesis, I examine youth activism in Ethiopia by taking the case of the Burayu Youth protest, from 2014 to 2018 and employ a variety of theoretical frameworks to discuss young people's social movements.

In this regard, it is crucial to emphasize that Ethiopian youth have taken on a leadership role in society by using various electronic platforms to advocate for change. This demonstrates how young people have been politically active in Ethiopia, using a variety of contemporary technical platforms and tools to bring about change. Regarding political mobilization, the argument of both resource mobilization and new social movement theoretical perspectives were employed. This is unmistakably an example of a modern adolescent social movement that has measurable effects on various levels. This line of reasoning is consistent with the resource mobilization

hypothesis, which acknowledges how resources are mobilized for political ends by a community member who has been wronged. This viewpoint is discovered to be consistent with the Burayu youth political movement.

The Oromo protests used a variety of methods and techniques, including activism and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in conjunction with satellite television broadcasts and other mainstream media networks (Forsén, 2018). This is a practice shared by many other modern social movements.

This study emphasized how socioeconomic tensions gave rise to the Burayu Young social movement, which was afterwards altered by political acts. This was then translated through pre-existing social elements, where youth social networks, corporate structures, social media, and mainstream media all played significant roles in changing society.

The research identified that a combination of cultural, political, economic, and social reasons contributed to the political alienation and plight of young people, which in turn gave rise to a common understanding among them to rebel against the ruling regime and its proxies. I have focused on youth political activism to examine such circumstances. I looked at how young people's political paths have changed in light of shifting power dynamics. In this research, I have made an effort to investigate the origins of youth political protest and mobilization, which were sparked by a variety of circumstances and backgrounds.

This study emphasized how societal conflicts gave rise to youth social movements, which were then modified by political acts. This was then translated through pre-existing social elements, where youth social networks, corporate structures, social media, and mainstream media all played significant roles in changing society. Social unrest and related forms of resistance traverse traditional national borders in present and future trans-global crisis scenarios.

Expressions of dissent and resistance work to bring about change using unusual methods, challenging both the status quo of governance and participation. By altering learned values, subjectivities, and knowledge, they want to have an impact on society. Collectively, young people explore their potential and forge their projects and identities that do not adhere to predetermined patterns but rather act while reflecting. By merging theoretical insights from diverse sources, the causes of the political mobilization of youth in the study area and the mobilization of capital have been examined.

It emphasizes how youth political movements utilize different cultural and other forms of

capital to bring about reforms. It has tried to examine youth participants of political movement's aspirations, doubts, and perceptions which play a crucial role in the study of this piece (Barth, F, 1996)

In this research project, I have determined that, in contrast to the conventional political approaches of representative political participation, youth forms of resistance are decentralized and segmented based on the principle of direct democratic participation approaches. The youth movement has sparked institutional changes and produced new Oromo elites who have held influential positions (Melucci, 1997). In terms of their political goals, youth movements were not aiming for revolutionary change but rather for some sort of concession to the nation's sociopolitical circumstances and, if possible, a shift in the nation's long-standing political traditions and culture.

The youth movement has sparked institutional changes, produced new Oromo elites who have held prominent positions, contributed to the revival and flourishing of Oromo culture, and, most importantly, challenged the country's ingrained political culture, as Melucci made abundantly clear in his writings. This is unmistakably an expression of Ethiopia's current youth social movement, which has significant repercussions at several levels. The repeal of the Addis Ababa master plan is one of the Oromo movement's achievements. The nonviolent protests, which began on November 12, 2015, in Gincii Senior Secondary School in central Oromia, swiftly expanded as far west as the province's borders (Tatek Abebe, 2020).

According to The Guardian (2018), young Oromo activists led the mass walkout that assisted in toppling the prime minister of one of Africa's most dictatorial nations. This information relates to the role the youth have played in Oromia. This line of reasoning is consistent with the resource mobilization hypothesis, which acknowledges how resources are mobilized for political ends by a community member who has been wronged.

This study presents a significant contribution to the theoretical and empirical exploration of youth dynamics within the African context. The emerging field of the anthropology of social movements necessitates heightened scholarly engagement and attention. Historically, youth have often been viewed as instruments of political manipulation by older generations, overlooking their potential as independent catalysts for change. Contrary to this prevalent perception, anthropological research strongly advocates for recognizing young people as proactive agents capable of wielding substantial influence on global political landscapes. In light

of these insights, this study has unearthed compelling empirical data that underscores the pivotal role of youth as change agents, effecting diverse outcomes not only in their personal spheres but also in broader societal realms. Through this investigation, the intricate interplay between agency and structure in the context of youth-driven political mobilization has been elucidated, illuminating new perspectives for scholarly consideration.

Through conducting this research, I have gained valuable insights and emic perspectives by engaging in the natural setting of the study, which facilitated an understanding of the intrinsic cultural differences significant to the research site. This approach has enabled the collection of accurate and valid data on various descriptions and concepts related to youth political movements, as well as the identification of terms, distinctions, and labels recognized and used by the youth community. These emic perspectives have provided a foundation for developing etic viewpoints, which aim to uncover concepts and categories that resonate with researchers.

This investigation of the youth social movement has been conducted as a comprehensive study of a specific aspect of the movement within its societal context. It encompasses all topics related to religious rites, such as the Ireechaa festival, along with specific symbols used by young people for political mobilization, thereby enhancing its holistic nature.

The research also considers the various socioeconomic factors that influence and surround these events. By examining how these complex occurrences shape local youth perceptions and evaluations of political events in the area, the study provides a thorough exploration of youth social movements. Key factors include predominant religious beliefs, kinship or ethnic ties, economic and social norms, and the impact of contemporary communication technologies.

In analyzing each political upheaval in the study area, attention has been given to the distinct economic, religious, gender, familial, and other dimensions of society that constitute the focus of this research. This approach grants each upheaval its emic significance, magnitude, value, and context.

The youth aim to influence society by transforming learned values, subjectivities, and knowledge. Collectively, they explore their potential and forge identities and initiatives that defy predetermined patterns, acting with reflection. For instance, the Oromo Protest, which took place from 2014 to 2018, sought to reform Ethiopia's system of multinational federalism, ensuring that every nation and nationality within the country could benefit equitably (Asebe Regassa, 2021, p. 74).

This dissertation offers insights into the dynamics of youth political participation and agency within a rapidly changing political landscape by analyzing the experiences of Oromo youth in Ethiopia. It aims to clarify the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the Oromo youth political movement and the resistance movements that took place from 2014 to 2018. The thesis argues that one of the primary drivers of the Oromo demonstrations was the expansion of this youth political movement, which has been significantly supported by protest music and social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and messaging apps. The importance of these elements in the Oromo youth political movement during this period is emphasized.

In conclusion, when examining youth political participation through the lenses of resource mobilization theory and social capital, we find that both concepts are crucial for understanding and enhancing youth engagement in politics. Resource mobilization theory posits that access to resources—such as time, money, knowledge, and networks—significantly influences an individual's ability to participate in political activities. For youth, ensuring access to education, information, mentorship, and opportunities for civic engagement is essential. By providing these resources, young people can overcome barriers to participation and actively contribute to political processes.

Additionally, a political economy framework has been employed to examine the fundamental factors driving youth mobilization, including youth unemployment, corruption, marginalization, and issues of nationalism. On the other hand, social capital emphasizes the importance of social networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity in fostering political participation. For youth, building strong social connections within their communities, schools, and online networks can provide valuable support, encouragement, and access to political opportunities. These social ties facilitate information sharing and create a sense of belonging and collective identity, motivating youth to engage in politics.

By integrating resource mobilization theory, social capital perspectives, and a political economy approach, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing youth political participation. Addressing structural barriers to resource access and fostering social networks and trust can empower young people to become active and engaged citizens, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive democracy.

In analyzing the Oromo youth political movement during the protests of 2014 to 2018, incorporating resource mobilization theory, social capital approach, and social drama

anthropological approaches provides a comprehensive understanding of its dynamics and impact.

Resource mobilization theory underscores the importance of resources such as organization, leadership, funding, and media access in shaping social movements. In the case of the Oromo protests, access to resources played a significant role in mobilizing and sustaining the movement. This included utilizing social media platforms for communication, organizing protests, and raising awareness both locally and internationally. Additionally, leadership within the movement helped coordinate efforts and articulate grievances effectively.

The social capital approach highlights the role of social networks, trust, and collective action in fostering political mobilization. Oromo youth leveraged existing social networks within their communities, as well as diaspora networks, to mobilize support and solidarity. Trust and shared identity among Oromo youth fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity, strengthening their resolve to challenge oppressive regimes and demand justice and equality.

Social drama approaches have been employed to examine the performative and symbolic aspects of protest movements. This analysis revealed that the Oromo protests were marked by dramatic displays of resistance, including mass demonstrations, strikes, and acts of civil disobedience. These actions served not only as expressions of grievances but also as powerful means of reclaiming cultural identity and asserting political agency in the face of marginalization and oppression.

In conclusion, the Oromo youth political movement during the protests of 2014 to 2018 was shaped by a combination of resource mobilization, social capital, and social drama dynamics. By mobilizing resources, building social networks, and engaging in dramatic acts of resistance, Oromo youth challenged existing power structures, raised awareness of their grievances, and ultimately contributed to political change and social transformation in Ethiopia.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

General Information _____

Date of Interview _____

Time of Interview _____

Profile of Interviewees

No	Age	Sex	Educational Status	Occupation	Year of Residence	Remarks

Section I. Guiding question on Oromo Youth genesis of political resistance

1. Who inspired the Oromo Youth to resist political oppression?
2. What were the key factors that contributed to the formation of Oromo Youth as a

political resistance movement in the early period?

3. How did the Early Oromo Youth political mobilization contribute to the development of Oromo nationalism?

4. What were the legacies and lessons learned from the early Oromo Youth political movement?

Section II: Guiding question on the Oromo youth political movement

1. Is it possible to characterize Oromo youth political mobilization?

2. What were the consequences of the Oromo Youth's resistance?

3. Where did the Oromo Youth movement originate?
4. What were the consequences of the Oromo Youth's resistance?
5. What were the key grievances of the Oromo Youth?
7. What are the major areas of y Oromo youth political resistance?
8. What are the major instruments of political resistance for Burayu youth?
9. Why did the Oromo Youth movement ultimately decline?

Section III. Factor motivating Oromo youth for political mobilization

1. What methods of resistance did the Oromo Youth employ?
2. What were the strategies and tactics used by the Oromo Youth in their resistance movement?
3. How did Oromo Youth challenge the existing political system in Ethiopia?
4. Who inspired the Oromo Youth to resist political oppression?
5. What were the key grievances of the Oromo Youth?
6. Why did the Oromo Youth feel politically oppressed?
7. When did the Oromo Youth movement begin?
8. When did the Oromo Youth movement reach its peak?
9. Where did the key events of the Oromo Youth movement take place?
10. Why did the Oromo Youth decide to resist political oppression?
11. What were the specific goals and objectives of Oromo Youth?
12. What were the major successes and achievements of Oromo Youth?
13. What were the challenges and obstacles faced by Oromo Youth in their resistance movement?
14. How is the Oromo Youth resistance movement relevant to contemporary political struggles in Ethiopia and beyond?

Section IV. Guiding question on the nexus between Oromo youth political resistance and youth technological appropriation

1. What methods of resistance did the Oromo Youth employ?
2. What are the key characteristics of Oromo youth political resistance?
3. How have Oromo youth used technology to resist political oppression?
4. What are the challenges faced by Oromo youth in their political resistance?
5. What is the role of social media in Oromo youth political resistance?
6. How has technology empowered Oromo youth to organize and mobilize for political change?
7. What lessons can be learned from the Oromo youth political resistance for other youth movements around the world?
8. What are the implications of the nexus between Oromo youth political resistance and youth technological appropriation for the future of Ethiopia?
9. What was the impact of Oromo Youth on the broader political landscape in Ethiopia?

Ethnographic Observation

- 1. How do youth manage to live in the study area?**
- 2. What are the major forms of social organization that facilitate youth living and working conditions?**
- 3. What are the strategies that Youth make use of for everyday living conditions?**
- 4. What conditions facilitate youth to engage in political issues in the study area?**

Introduction
My name is Fekadu Bizuneh Tadesse, a PhD student of Social Anthropology at AAU. Currently, I am doing research entitled” Youth in Movement: An Anthropological Study of

Youth Political Movement in Burayu, Oromia Regional State” as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Therefore, I request you to reply genuinely to the questions that I am going to bring up throughout our discussion. Thank you in advance for your time and insights.
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