

9 Enmeshment and the Limits of State Infrastructural Power

The analysis now switches from the successes and failures of the government's developmental and distributive strategy to the mechanisms through which the EPRDF sought to secure mass acquiescence and thereby consolidate its rule. The EPRDF utilised a combination of the three powers highlighted in Chapter 2: symbolic power to legitimate the regime; distributive power to enmesh the masses; and coercive power to force would be opposition into submission. A key requirement of all three powers in building and maintaining state control is the state's ability to reach individuals and households across its territory, what Mann (1984, 1986) calls infrastructural power. This applies equally to the infrastructure required to promote state-sanctioned ideology and symbols (Mann 1986); the administrative structures required to distribute resources and cultivate dependence (Albertus et al. 2018); and the ability to deploy coercion whether low-visibility and low-intensity measures such as surveillance and harassment or high visibility violence (Levitsky and Way 2010).

While the EPRDF undoubtedly employed symbolic and coercive powers, a central concern for the political elite throughout was its distributive strategy for securing and maintaining popular compliance. As such, these distributive powers and the ways they were deployed to secure state control are a central focus of this chapter. For this purpose, the analysis draws on the concept of 'coercive distribution' whereby authoritarian regimes enmesh broad sections of the population in ties of dependence through large-scale distribution (Albertus et al. 2018). Coercive distribution routes 'citizen's survival strategies through the regime – rather than around it', creating 'more individualized rather than collective relations with the state' (Albertus et al. 2018, p. 17). The threat of withdrawal of those resources coerces the masses into compliance. Such a strategy requires the state to gain control over, or at least mediate access to, resources of sufficient importance to individual livelihoods that their withdrawal constitutes a major threat. Equally, the state must develop sufficient infrastructural power to reach individuals and households across its territory.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the EPRDF undertook a massive expansion of the reach of the party-state, particularly since 2005. This included strengthening the kebele administration through new state employees: managers, development agents, schoolteachers and health extension workers, all of whom were invariably also party members. However, the party-state also reached beyond the kebele with the creation of sub-kebele structures to mobilise the entire population. Kebele were first divided into several *gott* (or *kushet* in Tigray), with the population of each *gott* further sub-divided into government teams of 50 households and development teams of 10–15 households, beginning in Amhara and Tigray in 2003 and then Oromiya and SNNPR by 2005 (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003, Aalen and Tronvoll 2009, Rahmato 2009, Vaughan 2011). According to a senior official in the Ministry of Capacity Building that oversaw these structures, the EPRDF's post-2005 election review highlighted sub-kebele structures as a source of considerable resentment and the decision was made to scale them back.¹ Nonetheless, a renewed effort to expand sub-kebele administration was launched in 2010/11 based on Meles' insistence that 'tight control' was required to mobilise the population to deliver the 'developmental state' agenda.² Rural kebele were restructured into 3–4 zones (or *kushet* in Tigray) with these further sub-divided into male, female and youth development teams comprising 25–30 households with each development team leader also leader of a 1-to-5 network. In addition, the party structure was overhauled and expanded after 2005, with the creation of local party cells and affiliated women's and youth leagues. The party-state apparatus also included technically autonomous but heavily party-influenced structures such as microfinance institutions and cooperatives. In principle, this party-state machinery provided the infrastructural power required to reach every household and individual across the country. As Prime Minister Meles once argued,

Unlike all previous governments our writ runs in every village. That has never happened in the history of Ethiopia. The state was distant, irrelevant ... Now we have a formally structured state, there is a school in every village and clinics in every village, roads, infrastructure. (Meles, cited in Dowden 2012)

This party-state infrastructure was used to pursue an inseparable combination of the government's developmental ambitions and maintenance of political order. As such, while these structures were used to mobilise

¹ Interview respondent EG47, former senior official in the Ministry of Capacity Building, Addis Ababa, 18 February 2020.

² Interview respondent EG47, former senior official in the Ministry of Capacity Building, Addis Ababa, 18 February 2020.

the population to raise agricultural productivity, improve health and sanitation, send children to school and construct community infrastructure, they were also used to indoctrinate, cultivate dependence and intimidate.

The main source of symbolic power underpinning the TPLF's struggle in Tigray and the early years of the EPRDF was ethno-nationalism and the need for ethnic self-determination to right the wrongs of Ethiopian state-building. Over the years, this emphasis shifted with the 'developmental state's' pursuit of an Ethiopian national Renaissance promoted as an alternate source of symbolic power. Shortly before his death, Meles wrote of the need to make national development a 'hegemonic project in the Gramscian sense' with the ultimate objective that the people 'voluntarily adhere to its objectives and principles' (Zenawi 2012, p. 167). The party-state infrastructure was seen as the means of realising this hegemony.

More central to the task of maintaining control has been a strategy of coercive distribution backed up by the threat of outright coercion. As argued in Chapter 3, coercive distribution had its roots in the land reforms and 'encadrement' carried out by the Derg and TPLF in the 1970s and 1980s (Clapham 2002). Land reform undercut the economic and political base of the nobility and established direct ties of dependence between the state and individual landholders. Land access remains the basis of livelihoods for a significant proportion of the population. However, the importance of land as a distributive tool has been eroded by population growth, urban expansion and the 'developmental state's' use of land as a means of centralising rent allocation. The result is that new forms of distribution were required to provide upkeep and maintain this strategy of enmeshment. This chapter shows that a combination of state, party and affiliated organisations monopolised control over the distribution of almost every resource required for the livelihoods of the rural population: land; agricultural extension and microcredit; off-farm employment opportunities; social protection and emergency assistance; healthcare; and education. Moreover, a key means of placing the party-state at 'the center of citizens' "strategies of survival" (Albertus et al. 2018, p. 14) was the development teams and 1-to-5 networks. Research on Ethiopian politics and development has often acknowledged these structures. However, with few exceptions (Emmenegger et al. 2011), they have been subject to little in the way of empirical research. Moreover, while their role in coercion and indoctrination is often highlighted, the importance of development teams to resource distribution has not been discussed.

All states combine an image that they project to the world of a coherent whole and the inevitably more messy reality of their actual functioning (Migdal 2001). The image of the development team structure approaches

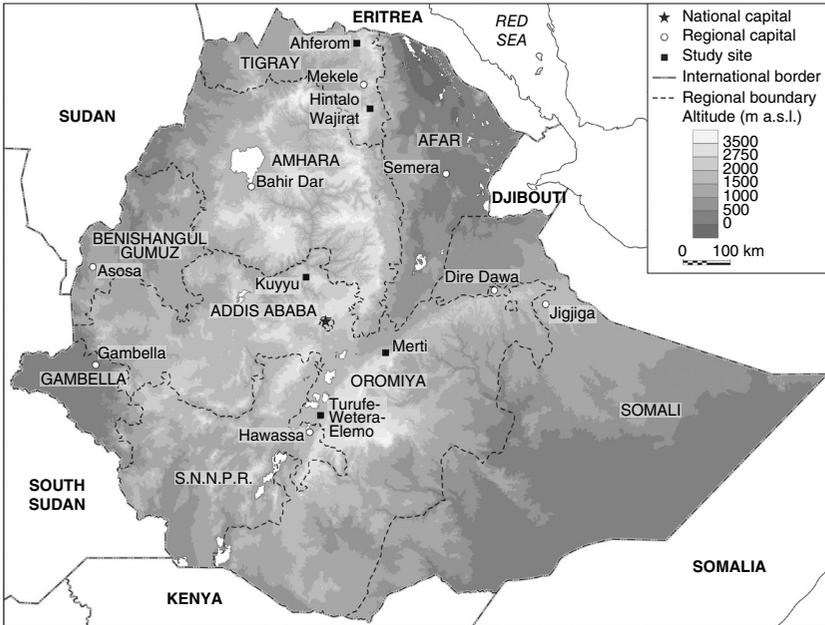


Figure 9.1 Map of the research sites

Source: author.

totalitarian control whereby the centre can monitor and shape individual behaviour across the national territory through a combination of symbolic, distributive and coercive power. The reality is that these structures varied significantly across the country and over time. The remainder of the chapter focuses on case studies of five rural communities in Tigray and Oromiya (see Figure 9.1). Within the highland core of Ethiopian society, the regions represent two extremes. Tigray is where the EPRDF's hegemonic development project came closest to realisation, with the TPLF drawing on significant reserves of symbolic power accrued during the struggle. As such, the discussion begins with two sites in Tigray, which highlight the strength of the party-state infrastructure, which was used to channel the symbolic, distributive and coercive power of the party-state. In contrast, Oromiya is the highland region where EPRDF control was most contested, with the illegitimate OPDO lacking the symbolic power of the TPLF in Tigray. The first case study focuses on a site in West Arssi Zone conducted in 2005–2010 where initial attempts to establish a development team structure prior to the 2005 elections fell flat and the party-state resorted to co-optation of neo-customary

organisations to consolidate control. Another two case studies then chart the re-establishment of development teams from 2011 in sites in North Shewa and Arssi. Finally, the chapter draws on the existing literature to highlight a similar strategy of coercive distribution in urban areas.

Overall, the cases underscore that the government's hold on Oromiya was always more fragile than that in Tigray. This is because the symbolic appeals of federalism, self-determination and developmentalism rang hollow given the OPDO's illegitimacy and since the party-state was unable to build infrastructural power comparable to that in Tigray. Moreover, and vitally for the argument of this book, the party-state was increasingly limited in its ability to enmesh younger generations of Ethiopians – in Tigray as well as Oromiya – in ties of dependence due to the growing shortage of distributive resources required for their livelihoods: land, employment and social protection.

Organise, Distribute and Control in Rural Tigray

Fieldwork was conducted in the first half of 2018 in two research sites: Endemariam *tabiya* in Ahferom wereda, and Tsehafti *tabiya* in Hintalo Wajirat wereda.³ Both are rural, agricultural areas focused on grain cultivation. Both sites, like the majority of Tigray, were classified as food insecure and included in the PSNP, as well as regularly receiving emergency assistance, the amount of which depended on annual assessments.

The structure of *tabiya* and sub-*tabiya* organisation in the two sites was very similar. The *tabiya* cabinet was the main administrative body, comprising the *tabiya* chair and deputy, the local party leader, heads of the women's and youth leagues, the headteacher of the school and one development agent and health extension worker. This cabinet reported to the elected *tabiya* council. All officials, including the council members, cabinet and employees were TPLF party members.⁴ Indeed, party and state responsibilities were completely fused, with state structures tasked with party political activities, while party structures, including the women's and youth leagues, were responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of state officials, as well as the organisation of sub-kebele structures.⁵

³ The *tabiya* in Tigray is the equivalent of kebele in other parts of the country.

⁴ Interviews with respondent TAK4, Development Agents, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK3 development agents, Tsehafti, April and June 2018; and THK4, health extension workers, Tsehafti, May and June 2018.

⁵ Interviews with respondents TAK6, Propaganda officer, Endemariam, June 2018; TAK7, Women's League Leader, Endemariam, June 2018; THK3, development agents, Tsehafti, April and June 2018; THK5, Women's League Leader, Tsehafti, April 2018; THK6, Youth League Leader, Tsehafti, June 2018.

Both *tabiya* were sub-divided into four *kushet* with a politically appointed leader and an administrative committee mirroring the *tabiya* cabinet. The *kushet* leadership was, in turn, responsible for organising its population into development teams for men, women and youth. Each development team was responsible for up to thirty households and had five leaders, with differing responsibilities: chair, vice chair; secretary, good governance and public relations.⁶ Invariably, each development team included at least one member of the *tabiya* militia, while the vice-chair had particular responsibilities for peace and security, providing a link to the militia. Each development team leader was the leader of a 1-to-5 network, responsible for five households. These leaders were also model farmers or from model households, as well as being members of the parallel party cell structure and, in the case of women and youth, also members of the party-affiliated leagues.⁷ Figure 9.2 provides an approximate representation of these interlocking structures.

Respondents reported that attendance at development team and 1-to-5 meetings was mandatory and that repeated failure to attend would result in deductions being made from the PSNP and emergency assistance for those receiving support, or fines for those did not.⁸ Like the TPLF more broadly, the development teams followed the principle of democratic centralism, whereby new initiatives were debated, but once consensus was achieved ‘by argument or by voting’, all were expected to adhere to the plans.⁹ Failure to do so would result in being ‘outcast and criticised’ through *gim gema*.¹⁰ In the words of one team member,

There is no punishment. However, you will be considered as deviant if you do not accept what the majority agreed. So, anyway participation in network teams and accepting decisions is mandatory.¹¹

Just as the *tabiya* was assessed based on annual and five-year plans derived from the national development plans, target setting and evaluation were also cascaded down to the *kushet*, development teams, 1-to-5s and individuals. *Gim gema* was used to evaluate leaders at all levels, and

⁶ Interviews with respondents TAK2, *tabiya* chair and manager, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK1, *tabiya* chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018.

⁷ Interviews with respondents TAK1, Propaganda Officer, Endemariam, March 2018; TAK4, Development Agents, Tsehafti, March and June 2018; TAK5, Health Extension Workers, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK1, *tabiya* chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018; THK4, health extension workers, Tsehafti, May and June 2018; THK5, Women’s League Leader, Tsehafti, April 2018.

⁸ Focus groups TAF5 with female PSNP recipients, Endemariam, March 2018; THF1 with male PSNP participants, Tsehafti, April 2018.

⁹ Interview with TAI1, male farmers, Endemariam, June 2018.

¹⁰ Interview with TAI1, male farmers, Endemariam, June 2018.

¹¹ Interview with TAI3, male farmer, Endemariam, June 2018.

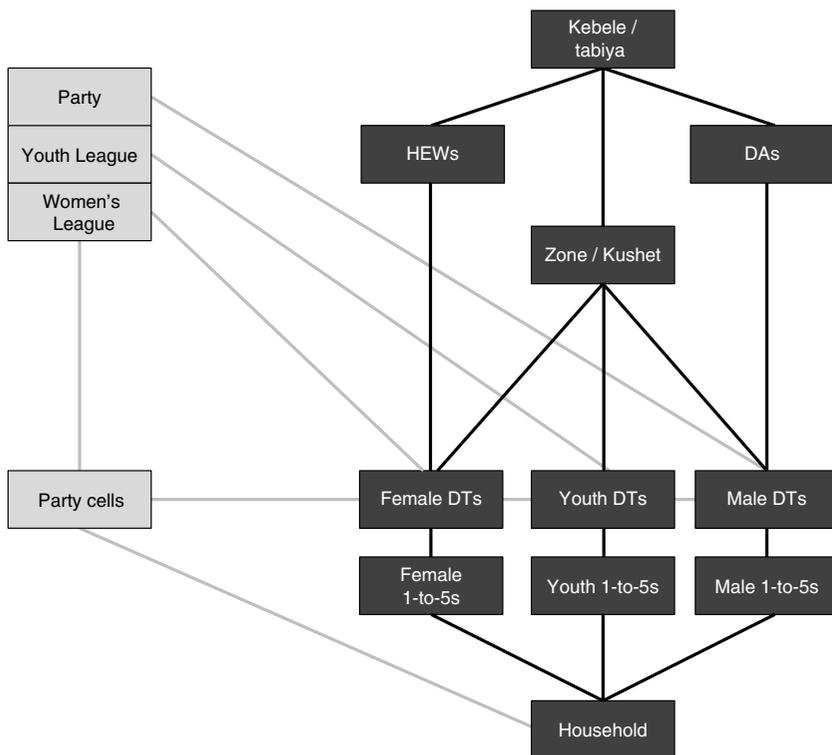


Figure 9.2 The sub-kebele party-state infrastructure
Source: author's interpretation.

individuals and households were categorised as models, half-models and non-models, depending on their adherence to government initiatives in agriculture, health, education and political participation.¹² The category of champion farmers was reserved for the very best farmers achieving success in agricultural commercialisation. As such, this structure provided clear direction to individuals and households as to the behaviour expected by the party-state.

While these structures were active during field research in early 2018, their functioning varied. Women's development teams, established later than the male equivalents, were widely considered less effective. This was largely attributed to the fact that they had focused on the same sixteen health extension packages since their inception, and members were tired

¹² Interview with respondent TAK2, tabiya chair and manager, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK1, tabiya chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018.

of discussing the same issues.¹³ Furthermore, women in male-headed households tended to participate less given the difficulty of combining this unpaid work with household responsibilities.¹⁴ Importantly, even in Tigray, the youth development teams had never worked effectively. Due to the lack of land and employment opportunities, many young people resorted to migration, commonly to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to work as domestic workers (for women) or labourers (for men), or to Humera in western Tigray seeking work in commercial agriculture.¹⁵ This out-migration meant that youth team leadership and membership was constantly changing, while the lack of distributive resources limited the party-state's control over the youth population.

The development team structure was central to all government activity. According to local leaders, development teams were the 'main route' for disseminating developmental and party-political messages to the population, particularly through regular discussion of the party newspaper, *Weyn*, in 1-to-5 networks.¹⁶ Physical infrastructure was limited in both sites, as in much of rural Tigray, with limited mobile phone coverage and no internal roads. As such, passing messages through development teams was the main means by which the tabiya communicated with the population.¹⁷ While it is impossible to know to what degree these discussions succeeded in achieving the 'hegemony' of the party's developmental ideology, the development team structure certainly provided the infrastructure for disseminating party propaganda.

Another important role of these structures was surveillance and information gathering. Respondents frequently highlighted this role with respect to development activity, with development teams used, for example, to identify pregnant women early on to ensure that they receive antenatal care, reporting so-called 'harmful traditional practices' such as

¹³ Interview with respondent TAK5, Health Extension Workers, Endemariam, March and June 2018; TAK7, Women's League Leader, Endemariam, June 2018; TAF6, female development team members, Endemariam, March 2018; THF7 and THF8, female development team members, Tsehafti, April 2018. The health extension packages cover topics such as family planning, nutrition, vaccination, first aid and latrines.

¹⁴ Interview with THZ5, female Development Team Leaders, Tsehafti, April 2018.

¹⁵ Interviews with TAK2, kebele chair and manager, Endemariam, March and June 2018; TAK4, Development Agents, Tsehafti, March and June 2018; THK1, tabiya chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018; THK6, Youth League Leader, Tsehafti, June 2018.

¹⁶ Interviews with TAK1, Propaganda Officer, Endemariam, March 2018; THK1, tabiya chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018; THK2, Public and Government Relations Officer, Tsehafti, April 2018; THZ1, Kushet Leader, Tsehafti, April 2018; THZ5, female Development Team Leaders, Tsehafti, April 2018.

¹⁷ Interview with TAK2, kebele chair and manager, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK1, tabiya chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018; THK4, health extension workers, Tsehafti, May and June 2018.

female genital mutilation and early marriage, and ensuring school attendance.¹⁸ There was no evidence of any opposition political activity in either site, though the development team structure clearly had the potential to be used for political surveillance also.

Perhaps the key role of the development teams, however, was as the focal point for state distribution. The vast majority of the resources provided by the party-state, affiliated organisations and independent organisations was mediated by the development teams and other party-state structures. Development teams played a direct role in distributing the PSNP, emergency relief, exemptions from health insurance contributions and even NGO support, which went exclusively to those on local government lists.¹⁹ Development teams and 1-to-5s regularly prepared a wealth ranking of their households, which was submitted to the kushet and tabiya whenever there were resources to be distributed. This function was not limited to these two case studies, but was acknowledged by regional government respondents,

There is a system, people are organised into 25–30 members, male and female, not only for the PSNP but for any development activity ... These are in every wereda, every kushet, both women and men.²⁰

To take the PSNP and emergency assistance as an example, distribution was the responsibility of the kushet Community Food Security Taskforce, with one leader from each development team in the kushet, and women's and youth league representatives automatically included as community representatives responsible for providing information on their members.²¹ Moreover, there was an explicit attempt by the

¹⁸ Interviews with TAZ2, female Development Team Leaders, Endemariam, March 2018; THK4, health extension workers, Tsehafti, May and June 2018.

¹⁹ Interviews with TAK4, Development Agents, Tsehafti, March and June 2018; TAZ2, female Development Team Leaders, Endemariam, March 2018; TAZ3, male Community Food Security Taskforce member, Endemariam, March 2018; TAZ4, female Community Food Security Taskforce member, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK1, tabiya chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018; THZ2, female Community Food Security Taskforce member, Tsehafti, April 2018; THZ7, Kushet leader, Tsehafti, July 2018; THZ11, female Development Team Leaders, Tsehafti, June 2018; THZ5, female Development Team leaders, Tsehafti, April 2018. In Tigray, depending on the wereda, the PSNP is distributed either by the state or by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST). Though technically an NGO, REST was established by the TPLF and maintains close ties with the Front.

²⁰ Interview with TRG1, Food Security Team Leader, Tigray Regional Government, Mekele, April 2018.

²¹ Interviews with TAK2, kebele chair and manager, Endemariam, March and June 2018; TAK4, Development Agents, Tsehafti, March and June 2018; TAZ3, male Community Food Security Taskforce member, Endemariam, March 2018; TAZ4, female Community Food Security Taskforce member, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THZ2, female Community Food Security Taskforce member, Tsehafti, April 2018.

taskforce to spread support widely to ensure that as broad a section of the population as possible received some form of support. This was achieved in two ways. First, by watering down the PSNP, undermining the programme's narrow targeting criteria and instead providing a smaller amount of support to more households. Second, by ensuring that no household received more than one form of support. While the poorest household could in theory qualify for the PSNP, emergency assistance and health insurance exemptions, for example, in practice no household received more than one of these.²²

The development teams also mediated access to other resources distributed by party-state organisations. For example, agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertiliser were provided through development agents and cooperatives, with preferential access for model farmers who had demonstrated their willingness to adhere to government initiatives.²³ In addition, credit from the party-affiliated Dedebit microfinance organisation – vital for accessing agricultural inputs and starting an off-farm business – usually required the support of development team leaders who vouched for an individual's creditworthiness.²⁴ Party structures were also involved in the distribution of other resources, with the youth league taking a central role in organising credit and training opportunities for young people through youth development teams to establish off-farm businesses and negotiating with the *tabiya* to distribute communal land to be used in groups through youth development teams.²⁵ Furthermore, party and league officials were responsible for overseeing the work of the land administration committee conducting land registration, which was, at the time of research, moving from first to second stage certification.²⁶

From the perspective of an individual household therefore, continued access to all the key resources required to survive in the short term and to prosper in the longer term were routed through party-state structures and affiliated organisations. This dominance of the party-state in resource distribution was previously noted by Sarah Vaughan and Mesfin Gebremichael,

²² Interviews with TAK4, Development Agents, Tsehafti, March and June 2018; TAZ1, Kushet Chair, Endemariam, June 2018; TAZ5, male Development Team leader, Endemariam, June 2018; THK1, *tabiya* chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018.

²³ Interview with TH13, male farmer, Tsehafti, July 2018.

²⁴ Focus group TAF1, with male residents, Endemariam, June 2018.

²⁵ Interview with THK6, Youth League Leader, Tsehafti, June 2018.

²⁶ Interview with TAF1, with male residents, Endemariam, June 2018. First stage certification involves the identification of the plot holder and neighbouring landholders. Second stage involves GPS mapping of plot boundaries.

Fertiliser in Tigray, for instance, was for some time imported and distributed by Guna, transported by TransEthiopia, on roads constructed by Sur, under an extension programme organised by REST, on credit provided by the Dedebit Savings and Credit Institution (DESCI), through Farmers' Associations and Co-operatives, with a payment guarantee from REST and/or the regional government. (Vaughan and Gebremichael 2011, p. 47)²⁷

Their description, however, omits what remains the most significant form of distribution, namely access to state-owned land. In the two sites, 80 per cent of households in Endemariam and 89 per cent in Tsehafti had some farmland.²⁸ Furthermore, the social transfers and emergency assistance that enable the most vulnerable people to survive from year-to-year was directly distributed by the local party-state. In Endemariam, 32 per cent of households receive either the PSNP or emergency assistance, while that figure rises to 36 per cent in Tsehafti. Other than household labour and livestock, almost every resource that households required to survive depended on party-state distribution. As community residents themselves underscored, there is 'no option except expecting this support'.²⁹ Moreover, any resistance to the party-state or even failure to demonstrate support by adhering to the latest party-state initiative risked the possibility of withdrawal of vital resources.

The TPLF probably retained some legitimacy amongst the Tigrayan population from the struggle and for the improvements in service delivery whilst in power. Moreover, as inter-communal violence erupted across Ethiopia from 2015 (see Chapter 10), many Tigrayans targeted in other parts of the country returned to Tigray. Respondents were very aware of this, and many saw the TPLF as their best source of protection. However, it is impossible to disentangle this support for the TPLF from the material dependence on the party-state. The situation in Tigray closely approximates Albertus et al.'s (2018) definition of coercive distribution, with strong party-state infrastructural power underpinning broad distribution of resources that enmeshes a large swathe of the population in relations of dependence. These intertwined symbolic and distributive relations are evident in a common message from community residents that the party and the Tigrayan population are mutually dependent, just as they were from the beginning of the armed struggle in the 1970s,

²⁷ Guna Trading, TransEthiopia and Sur Construction are all part of the TPLF-owned EFFORT conglomerate.

²⁸ Interviews with TAK2, chair and manager, Endemariam, March and June 2018; THK1, tabiya chair and manager, Tsehafti, May and June 2018. These figures mask the challenge of land shortages since many young people migrate out of the tabiya or remain within their parents' household.

²⁹ Focus group with TAF6, female residents, Endemariam, March 2018.

The government and people are equal, they go hand to hand, the government supports its people so that we can support back, in order the citizens do what the government says and it governs its citizens smoothly.³⁰

The government and people should have to support each other. The government supporting us as we in turn support our party every time.³¹

Seeking Control through Distribution and Co-optation in Oromiya

The focus now shifts to Oromiya, where the OPDO attempted to build a similar party-state infrastructure to that in Tigray and to use this to channel state power. The OPDO was less successful than its Tigrayan counterpart, however.³² This first Oromiya case study examines an early attempt to expand the party-state and to co-opt non-state actors, based on fieldwork conducted in 2005–2006 and 2009–2010.³³ Turufe-Wetera-Elemo kebele is located in West Arssi Zone, on the outskirts of Kuyera town near Shashemene. The kebele underwent villagisation and agricultural collectivisation in the 1980s and the main settlement of Turufe retained the grid layout of a planned settlement. The kebele was a relatively wealthy, surplus producing area. The main basis of the economy was cereal production, principally wheat and maize, with some livestock. Young people with limited land access sought day labour in Kuyera and Shashemene, and some young women had started working in new flower farms near Batu (Ziway).

The kebele and sub-kebele administration exemplified the expansion of the local state after 2001. The elected and unpaid chair, deputy chair and kebele militia were bolstered by development agents in 2003, a kebele manager in 2006/07 and health extension workers in 2007/08. In addition to the farmers' association, of which all landholders were members, women's and youth associations were created in 2004. However, these were not very active due to limited participation. Following the 2005 elections and in an attempt to strengthen the local party, women's

³⁰ Focus group with TAF6, female residents, Endemariam, March 2018.

³¹ Focus group with TAF5, female PSNP recipients, Endemariam, March 2018.

³² The situation is very different in the lowland periphery. Research on Afar, not presented here, shows that although the government sought to establish development teams and party structures, these efforts amounted to very little. The party-state lacked the requisite infrastructural power to organise society in this way and was instead dependent on the co-optation of clan structures to govern (Lavers et al. 2020).

³³ The first phase of fieldwork (2005–2006) was conducted as part of the Wellbeing and Illbeing Dynamics in Ethiopia research programme, on which the author spent several years working. Most relevant data are archived at: <https://ethiopiawide.net/database/>

and youth leagues were organised consisting of the most committed members of these associations.

The government extended the party-state to the sub-kebele level in 2004, in line with the rest of Oromiya. The kebele was divided into six *gott* comprising approximately 300 people each, and the population of each *gott* was allocated to development teams (*garee*) of 30 members and cells (*were*) of 10 members. The main participants in these structures were the household heads – predominately men, but some women – and each *gott*, *garee* and *were* had a leadership committee of chairman, secretary and treasurer. According to kebele officials at the time, these structures were intended to mobilise the population for unpaid public works: to construct and maintain roads, to collaborate in farm work and to involve ‘idle’ youth in development projects. The development teams monitored participation in regular ‘voluntary’ public works: ‘They control every member if they attended in the development work or not. They register absentees and pass to the higher hierarchy.’³⁴

At this time, there does not appear to have been any attempt to use these structures as mechanisms of resource distribution. Moreover, the attempt to use these structures for collective farm work was widely resisted and failed, in all likelihood based on the negative memories of the collective agriculture imposed in the Derg era. In the words of one respondent,

The *kebele* heads informed the people through their *gott* and *garee* heads that this arrangement will help for faster harvest and help the people to save the money they are going to pay if they employ labourers. But every farmer refused to involve himself in the programme and continued harvesting by themselves.³⁵

Introduced in the run up to the 2005 elections, the development teams were also used by the OPDO for campaigning. According to community respondents,

The *garee* and *were* heads also worked as mobilisers. They were ordered to warn each member under their *garee* or *were* to elect the bee.³⁶

In the 2005 elections, the opposition Oromo National Congress was also campaigning in the area, using school and university students from nearby towns to bring messages to the community.³⁷ The ONC used the *gott* and *garee* as a campaigning point. As one *gott* leader acknowledged,

³⁴ Focus group OTM31, Turufe Kechema, January 2010.

³⁵ Focus group OTM31, Turufe Kechema, January 2010.

³⁶ Focus group OTM31, Turufe Kechema, January 2010. A bee is the widely recognised symbol of the EPRDF signifying the values of mass mobilisation and collective action.

³⁷ Official results show the OPDO won the election locally, though many people believe that the ONC actually received most votes.

The resistance to *garee* and *gott* increased when the farmers heard the comments by opposition parties in the competition for the election. They say the *garee* and *were* are like chains tying the farmer up.³⁸

Indeed, many respondents reported their dislike for what some focus group respondents considered to be a ‘control mechanism’.³⁹ The decision was made nationally to retire these structures in the aftermath of the elections and this also took place in Turufe,⁴⁰

After the election, there is a plan to end the *garee*, *gott* system. The people have hatred, especially after the election. Thus we are waiting for a new system to be implemented.⁴¹

Given the limited legitimacy and infrastructural power of the party-state in Turufe and across much of Oromiya, there was also a concerted attempt to extend party-state influence over what are formally non-state actors. The OPDO sought to ‘revitalise the *Gadaa* system’ – the customary system of social and political organisation in Oromo society – from around the mid-2000s.⁴² The *gadaa* prescribes political and military roles for men of different age groups, with the *Aba Gadaa* serving as political leader. While the *gadaa* ceased to function in most of Oromiya during the Imperial and Derg eras, the regional government sought to revive a version of the system as a means of enhancing the legitimacy of state interventions and, in doing so, supplementing the limited symbolic power of the regional party. In the words of a respondent from the regional Bureau of Culture and Tourism, responsible for overseeing the *gadaa*,

When the regional government works through the *gadaa* it is more successful than through the local government.⁴³

By doing so, the regional government enlisted a structure with some claim to ‘customary’ legitimacy and further limited potential for any autonomous organisation outside party-state control.⁴⁴ The ‘revitalised’ *gadaa* system was organised in line with the state administration, with offices at zone, wereda and kebele, and supported the implementation

³⁸ Interview with respondent OTM7, a *gott* leader, Turufe Kechemma, 2005.

³⁹ Focus group OTM31, Turufe Kechemma, January 2010.

⁴⁰ Interview respondent EG47, former senior official in the Ministry of Capacity Building, Addis Ababa, February 2020. This aligns with other research in another part of Oromiya in the same period (Emmenegger et al. 2011).

⁴¹ Interview with respondent OTM7, a *gott* leader, Turufe Kechemma, 2005.

⁴² Interview with ORG5, senior official in the Oromiya Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Addis Ababa, February 2010.

⁴³ Interview with ORG5, senior official in the Oromiya Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Addis Ababa, February 2010.

⁴⁴ Bassi (2010) writing about the Borana Oromo and Haggmann (2005) on the Somali, report similar attempts to co-opt ‘customary’ organisations to enhance the legitimacy and control of the party-state.

of government policy, including with respect to what the government describes as 'harmful traditional practices' and land rights.⁴⁵ According to the regional government, the *Aba Gadaa* and community elders,

work closely with the local governments and they also cooperate with us at the regional level ... the *Aba Gadaa* strongly support the government's policies.⁴⁶

The extension of infrastructural power through the expansion of local party-state structures and the co-optation of non-state organisations served to enhance state control over the distribution of the main agricultural livelihood resources. While land had not been redistributed in Turufe under the EPRDF, the state certainly remained highly visible in land administration and landholders were acutely aware of the limits of their land rights and ultimately their dependence on the state.⁴⁷ During the mid-2000s, wereda were tasked with carrying out first stage land registration. Registration began at the end of 2004 and was carried out by a kebele Land Administration Committee under the supervision of the wereda Agriculture Desk. The process was facilitated by the kebele militia, responsible for announcing the area to be measured that day and bringing the relevant landholders to observe the process.

The party-state's influence over the *Aba Gadaa* and elders also enhanced state control over land. Across Oromiya and other regions, elders were expected to make the first attempt at dispute resolution, including with respect to land, before cases were brought to the court system. As such, elders played a key role in land administration. In Turufe, Imperial land grants and then socialist land reform were imposed on top of existing clan-based land tenure arrangements, whereby the clan was the ultimate owner of land and land rights were passed down through the male line. Importantly, this clan-based tenure system retained symbolic and practical relevance, and elders used clan rules to mediate disputes. Not only did the local tenure system present significant challenges regarding the land rights of women and minority ethnic groups (Lavers 2017, 2018), but an independent *Aba Gadaa* would represent an alternate source of authority and control over a key material resource. The co-optation of the *gadaa* system thereby

⁴⁵ The government sought to eliminate practices such as bridewealth; widow inheritance, where a widow is expected to marry a brother of her deceased husband; female genital mutilation; and early marriage.

⁴⁶ Interview with ORG5, senior official in the Oromiya Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Addis Ababa, February 2010.

⁴⁷ Chinigò's (2015) research in an area not far from Turufe argues that landholders were directly threatened with the loss of their land if they did not comply with government demands. There was no evidence of such explicit threats in Turufe.

ensured that the *Aba Gadaa* aligned with the party-state and that the state retained control over land administration.

The party-state also took a central role in land distribution for group agricultural projects for landless youth as part of a national initiative. In Turufe, two landless youth associations were established in 2008–2009. These associations were allocated land for agro-forestry, with members tasked with guarding the trees to stop illegal firewood collection. In three years, members expected to be able to cut and sell the trees and use the money to set up another group activity on the land.⁴⁸ Vitality, participation in the association was announced through and required membership of the *kebele* youth association. Consequently, any young person wanting to benefit from one of the few available economic opportunities would have to join an organisation associated with the ruling party. Indeed, the *kebele* told young people that membership of the youth association was a way to access such opportunities for employment and training. According to the head of the farmers' association,

There are certain opportunities of being employed and one criteria of selection is being a member of either the women's association or the youth association. So, those members of the government association benefit and the family also benefit.⁴⁹

Indeed, the *kebele* started issuing identity cards for the unemployed to facilitate priority access to employment outside the *kebele*. As one female youth association member described,

the members can get a supportive letter from the *kebele*, which can facilitate them to be employed in government offices ... Having the card would be a good opportunity to give priority to get employment.⁵⁰

The party-state and affiliated organisations also mediated access to agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, fertiliser and pesticide. Several improved seed varieties were available at the time. This included one released in 2007/08 for wheat – the main local crop – that farmers estimated produced double the yield of existing seeds. A new breed of cows was also introduced around the same time with greater milk production. Since 2007, such improved agricultural inputs were distributed through agricultural cooperatives. Though technically autonomous, the cooperatives were formed by the *wereda* administration and were located in the *wereda* compound. As one cooperative leader acknowledged, the

⁴⁸ Interview OTM9, Secretary Turufe Landless Association, January 2010.

⁴⁹ Interview respondent OTM32, Farmers' Association leader, Turufe Kechema, January 2010.

⁵⁰ Interview respondent OTM33, Female Youth Association member, Turufe Kechema, January 2010.

cooperative is 'independent of the [wereda] agricultural office, but they have a relationship'.⁵¹ Given the shortage of improved seeds at the time, access to improved inputs was restricted. Only cooperative members with at least one hectare of their own land and verified as being free of debt by the kebele administration were able to access improved seeds.⁵² Moreover, the development agents had been asked by the wereda 'to recruit strong farmers to be given the seeds' and to be made into model farmers.⁵³ However, one relatively wealthy farmer was convinced that he was refused improved seeds as a result of his limited involvement in the kebele,

The seeds are not given for all the people. They only give seeds for those that are active in meetings. Everything is internal and secretive.⁵⁴

Clearly then, the party-state's attempt to extend its control did not go without resistance from the local community, and the initial attempt to organise the population into development teams was a failure. Nonetheless, the party-state consolidated control over the distribution of virtually all key resources required for people's livelihoods through direct control of land administration, indirect influence over notionally autonomous actors such as the *Aba Gadaa* and cooperatives, and responsibility for selecting who should receive improved agricultural inputs and off-farm employment opportunities. As such, the party-state certainly loomed large in individual livelihoods, with the result that failure to acquiesce to government demands brought the risk of withdrawal of these resources.

Controlling Distribution and the Limits to Infrastructural Power in Oromiya

The EPRDF re-established its dominance following the 2005 elections. In Oromiya, as elsewhere, this included a renewed development team and party league structure, along the lines of those in Tigray. The OPDO had considerable success in this respect, albeit that the party's limited legitimacy forced it to rely heavily on distributive and coercive powers, rather than its symbolic power. The final two case studies examine the expansion and limitations of party-state infrastructural

⁵¹ Interview with OTK8, Farmers Cooperative Committee member, January 2010.

⁵² Interview with OTW3, head of Agricultural Office, Shashemene wereda, January 2010; OTK8, Farmers Cooperative Committee member, January 2010.

⁵³ Interview OTK4, Development Agent, Turufe Kechema, January 2010.

⁵⁴ Interview OTM21, farmer, Turufe Kechema, January 2010.

power in two sites in Oromiya, conducted during the first half of 2018: Halelo Cerri kebele in Kuyyu wereda, North Shewa and Shamo Gado kebele, Merti wereda, Arssi. Both are rural, agricultural sites, as well as being classified as food insecure and therefore included in the PSNP.

In principle, local administration in Oromiya was very similar to that in Tigray. At the kebele level, the main administrative body was the cabinet, comprising the chair, deputy chair, party leaders and head of the women's league, and the cabinet was accountable to the elected council. In practice, however, the main decision-making body was the 'party root', a committee of twenty senior party members.⁵⁵ The kebele cabinet was drawn exclusively from this party root, while the council consisted of 190 elected party members.⁵⁶ Moreover, it was a requirement for all state employees to be OPDO members, including the manager, development agents, health extension workers and school principal.⁵⁷ In addition, the local party structure, including the women's and youth leagues that were the 'wings of the OPDO', played an important role in evaluating the performance of the kebele leadership.⁵⁸

The kebele were sub-divided into three *zones* that replaced the earlier *gott*, and revised development teams of thirty households and 1-to-5s of five households. The forty kebele militia were distributed across these development teams to ensure that there was at least one militia in each.⁵⁹ In parallel to the development team structure, there was a party cell structure with each of the twenty members of the party root leading a cell of 7–25 members and all development team leaders were also members of the party cells and from model households.⁶⁰

While these structures existed on paper, in practice their functioning varied markedly. Respondents report that the structures initially functioned well in 2011 and that they were key to a big government push to meet development targets in the final year of the GTP1 and to mobilise people for the 2015 election.⁶¹ According to one development agent,

⁵⁵ Interview OKK2, Manager, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

⁵⁶ Interviews OMK3, Chair and Manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018; OMC2, elder, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.

⁵⁷ Interview with OKK4, Development Agent, Halelo Cerri, March 2018; OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018; OMK3, Chair and Manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.

⁵⁸ Interview OMK3, Chair and Manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.

⁵⁹ Interview OMZ1, male Development Team leaders, Shamo Gado, May 2018.

⁶⁰ Interviews OKK6, Kebele Manager, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018; OMK3, Chair and Manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018; Focus Group OMF1, male residents, Shamo Gado, May 2018.

⁶¹ Interview respondents OKK4, Development Agent, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018; OKK5, Health Extension Workers, Halelo Cerri, March 2018; OKK7, Party Leader, Halelo Cerri, July 2018.

During the national election the kebele cabinet including the development agents and health extension workers are pressured to follow up with the development teams and also to campaign and register voters. The development teams are expected to make sure that every household in their structure gets a voting card.⁶²

However, the functioning of the development teams varied considerably within the kebele, with much less activity in remote areas where extension agents rarely visited.⁶³ For example, one male respondent residing far from the kebele centre noted that,

We know we are in the 1-to-5 team but we never had a meeting ... So the 1-to-5 is just there in name but not active.⁶⁴

On the whole, male development teams were more functional than their female equivalents.⁶⁵ The Merti wereda health extension coordinator acknowledged that the women's development teams were 'more theoretical',⁶⁶ while a team leader stated that 'the organisation is just on paper it is not practical at all'.⁶⁷ Furthermore, in Halelo Cerri, there were no functioning youth development teams. Given the shortage of land and employment opportunities, many young people, especially men, migrated to Bale, Harar, Jimma, and Addis for work as daily labourers, while many young women left for Arab countries seeking employment as domestic workers.⁶⁸ It was a similar story in Shamo Gado, where young people resisted joining the youth league and development teams.⁶⁹ Again, the shortage of land and employment opportunities meant that the party-state had few material incentives with which to entice young adults into party structures.

Like in Tigray, the distribution of almost every conceivable resource households required for people's livelihoods – from land to agricultural inputs and credit to social transfers – was controlled by party-state affiliated organisations. Furthermore, the development teams were key to this distribution, as regional respondents acknowledged,

The development teams work together to support any targeting – the PSNP, credit, everything is filtered through the development teams.⁷⁰

⁶² Interview OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018.

⁶³ Interview OKK4, Development Agent, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018.

⁶⁴ Focus Group OMF2, male residents, Shamo Gado, May 2018.

⁶⁵ Interview with OKK6, Kebele Manager, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018.

⁶⁶ Interview with OMW5, Health Extension Coordinator, Merti wereda, May 2018.

⁶⁷ Interview OMZ4, female Development Team leader, Shamo Gado, June 2018.

⁶⁸ Interviews OKK6, Kebele Manager, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018; OKW1, Administrator, Kuyyu wereda, March 2018.

⁶⁹ Interview OMK3, Chair and Manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.

⁷⁰ Interview ORG1, Manager, Oromiya Regional Government, Addis Ababa, June 2018.

Development team leaders conducted wealth rankings of their members, which were used for distribution of ‘any kind of support that comes to the kebele’.⁷¹ In the words of one team leader,

The farmers are ranked in three categories namely: leading, medium and very poor farmers. So, whenever a support comes we make sure that the very poor are prioritised and then when there is more support to share to the other categories the medium famers are the ones who come next.⁷²

Kebele officials used this wealth ranking to distribute support, ranging from the PSNP and emergency assistance to exemptions from health insurance contributions and support provided by NGOs, which were allocated by the kebele.⁷³ As in Tigray, there was a clear attempt to ensure that the ‘supports are spread to try to reach as many households as possible’.⁷⁴ As such, any one household only received one of the PSNP, emergency assistance, health insurance exemptions and NGO support. Indeed, in Shamo Gado, several zones forwent targeting entirely, dividing up the zone’s quota for emergency assistance equally to ensure that everyone got something.⁷⁵

The party-state also closely controlled distribution of agricultural inputs. The main supply of improved seeds and fertiliser was through the cooperative, while the only source of credit – essential for most farmers to buy inputs before the harvest – was through the OPDO-linked Oromiya Credit and Savings Institution.⁷⁶ Accessing credit furthermore required a letter of support from the kebele administration, while development teams – where operational – also verified members’ plans for fertiliser use and their creditworthiness.⁷⁷ Furthermore, based on the group-lending model of microfinance, there was a preference for lending to 1-to-5s to enable these networks to supervise the use and repayment of the loans, although this was not always practiced.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Interview OKZ1, male Development Team leader, Halelo Cerri, July 2018.

⁷² Interview OKZ1, male Development Team leader, Halelo Cerri, July 2018.

⁷³ Interview OKK3, female Kebele Food Security Taskforce member, Halelo Cerri, March 2018; OKK4, Development Agent, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018; OKZ1, male Development Team leader, Halelo Cerri, July 2018; OMW4, Agriculture Office, Merti wereda, May 2018; OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018; OMK3, Chair and Manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018; OMK4, Health Extension Workers, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018; OMZ3, Zone Leader, Shamo Gado, May 2018.

⁷⁴ Interview OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018; also OMZ1, male Development Team Leaders, Shamo Gado, May 2018; OKZ1, male Development Team leader, Halelo Cerri, July 2018.

⁷⁵ Interview with OMZ1, male Development Team leaders, Shamo Gado, May 2018.

⁷⁶ Interview OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018.

⁷⁷ Focus Group OKF10, with male residents, Halelo Cerri, July 2018.

⁷⁸ Interview OKK4, Development Agent, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018; OMW4, Agriculture Office, Merti wereda, May 2018.

The result is that all households depended on resources distributed through party-state structures. State land was the most broadly distributed resource. Records on landlessness were limited in the two sites, but in Halelo Cerri kebele there were a total of 1,302 landholders and 1,329 households, suggesting that most households held at least some agricultural land. Moreover, landholders needed to access agricultural inputs and credit to make the most of their holdings. Meanwhile, the poorest and most vulnerable depended on the distribution of social transfers and emergency assistance, which combined to reach 23 per cent of the population of Halelo Cerri and 31 per cent of Shamo Gado in 2018. Maintenance of good relations with the kebele was vital for the vast majority of the population, while this was particularly the case for the poorest who depended on state-distributed support for their short-run survival.

In addition to their distributive role, party-state structures were used to disseminate information, with party cells and development teams used to announce meetings and new government campaigns.⁷⁹ However, the dissemination and discussion of the party newspaper was limited to the party cells with a smaller and more committed membership than the development teams, primarily because of the challenge of mobilising the population through development teams.⁸⁰ As such, the development teams appear to have provided limited infrastructure for the dissemination of party ideology and the pursuit of ‘hegemonic’ developmentalism. There were also attempts to use these structures for surveillance and monitoring of the population, both with respect to programme implementation and to maintain order. A wereda leader assigned specific responsibility for the kebele highlighted development teams’ work on, ‘pre-emptive activities such as sniffing information on peace and stability threatening conditions’.⁸¹ The development agent – also a party member with party political responsibilities – highlighted this aspect of the development teams’ roles,

The members in each group are responsible to control and monitor one another and if there is a member who is not in line with the rest of the group, he or she will be sanctioned by the group members.⁸²

In sum, the OPDO’s efforts to build a party-state infrastructure that could channel the state’s symbolic, distributive and coercive powers was

⁷⁹ Interview OKK2, Manager, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018; OKK6, Kebele Manager, Halelo Cerri, March and July 2018; OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018; OMK4, Health Extension Workers, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018.

⁸⁰ Interview OKK2, Manager, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018; OMK2, Party and Militia Leaders, Shamo Gado, May 2018.

⁸¹ Interview OMW6, Wereda Cabinet member, Merti, May 2018.

⁸² Interview OMK1, Development Agent, Shamo Gado, May and June 2018.

only partially successful. The illegitimacy of the ruling party meant that the OPDO had to rely to a greater degree on distributive resources and coercion, while the generational division in access to land, employment and social protection meant that young people evaded the party-state's efforts at enmeshment.

Distribution and Control in Urban Centres

The government's attempt to mobilise the population through party-state structures and to use distribution, alongside symbolic and coercive powers, to secure popular compliance was not limited to rural areas. After 2005, the government also sought to organise the entire urban population into development teams and mass associations that would serve the dual purpose of political control – disseminating propaganda, distributing material resources and monitoring the population – and the promotion of the government's developmental objectives.

Party-state building included the creation of 771 zones and 18,000 development teams in Addis Ababa (Gebremariam 2020, p. 6), covering the general population, as well as the civil service and university faculty. Likewise, after 2005, the EPRDF established both party-affiliated Leagues, as well as Inhabitants', Women's and Youth Forums, to provide a means of dialogue between the government and communities (Di Nunzio 2014a, Gebremariam 2018, 2020). In practice, the activities of the Associations, Leagues and Forums overlapped. This party-state infrastructure was utilised as a means of channelling the symbolic power of the state, by promoting the 'developmental state' agenda, though it is doubtful how successful the party was in this respect (Di Nunzio 2014a). Moreover, these structures contributed to the surveillance capacity of the party-state, monitoring communities for signs of unrest and passing information on to kebele and city administrations (Di Nunzio 2014b).

As in rural areas, the actual functioning of these structures varied considerably, depending on the degree to which members depended on the resources they distributed.⁸³ Gebremariam's (2020) study of urban food distribution clearly illustrates this process. High inflation led to a doubling of staple food prices between 2004 and 2008 (Admassie 2014), but unlike many other countries that experienced price hikes, there were no public protests. Rather, the government's response, at Meles' instruction, was to establish Urban Consumer Cooperatives (UCC) across Addis Ababa to distribute state-subsidised rations of basic goods such

⁸³ Many academics seemed to view the university structures as a bit of a joke, albeit one that they felt obliged to go along with.

as sugar, cooking oil, flour and petroleum (Gebremariam 2020). Not only did the cooperatives bypass the traders accused by the government of ‘rent seeking’, but the cooperatives tied households to the party-state. The party-affiliated Leagues played a central role in mobilising people to form cooperatives, while a cooperative leader acknowledged that the ‘EPRDF used to see UCCs as one of its Leagues’ (Gebremariam 2020, p. 19). Moreover, and in line with the logic of coercive distribution, the distribution through these cooperatives was intentionally broad-based,

the UCCs targeted *every household* in the city. Bringing *everyone* on board was one of the strategies. (Gebremariam 2020, p. 15, emphasis added)

The urban PSNP, adopted in 2016, employed community-based targeting like its rural equivalent, with development teams and 1-to-5 networks used to select the poorest within communities. As one World Bank official involved in the design acknowledged, ‘for good or bad it is a structure that is very effective for targeting’.⁸⁴ Similar arguments have been made regarding the Integrated Housing Development Programme, established after 2005 to provide mass housing for residents of Addis Ababa and other cities. On the one hand, the construction of mass housing was linked to a process of inner-city regeneration, intentionally used to clear urban slums identified by the party as the main source of unrest in 2005, with displaced populations dispersed across housing projects in the periphery (Di Nunzio 2014a, Weldeghebrael 2022). On the other hand, distribution of housing units based on a lottery with subsidised loans from the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (Keller and Mukudi-Omwami 2017) was used to cultivate dependence. Planel and Bridonneau (2017, p. 37) argue that housing allocation established direct ties of dependence between condominium residents and local representatives of the party-state, providing an important source of ‘social and political control’.

Conscious of the opportunities presented by public programmes, these city-dwellers frequently adopt relatively conformist day-to-day behaviour that plays a big part in reproducing political domination. Dependency and domination are thus closely related. (Planel and Bridonneau 2017, p. 33)

The same distributive strategy was evident in the allocation of employment opportunities, with party-state structures used to link job seekers to work. As noted in Chapters 7 and 8, employment opportunities in industrial parks were allocated on a quota basis through wereda and kebele in the surrounding areas. Meanwhile, party membership was widely considered to be a pre-requisite – alongside academic qualifications – for entry into civil service positions (Weis 2015). Likewise, as Marco di Nunzio and Eyob

⁸⁴ Interview with ED20, World Bank official, by Skype, 24 November 2015.

Gebremariam's (2018) research shows, the party-affiliated Leagues, Associations and Forums 'constitute the very first avenues of access to training and job opportunities within government development programmes' (Di Nunzio 2014a, p. 11). As such, kebele youth offices and party structures played a key role in selecting young people for credit and training opportunities to establish MSEs, including programmes funded by NGOs and donor agencies (Di Nunzio 2014a). The party-state even intervened in the distribution of the most basic service sector 'jobs' such as parking attendants and minibus queue monitors, forming them into associations and regulating what were previously informal activities (Di Nunzio 2012, 2014b). To access these opportunities, there was strong pressure to join the EPRDF, and associated leagues and associations (Di Nunzio 2014a, Gebremariam 2018). The result was to tie economic fortunes to the fortunes of the ruling party, with one parking attendant acknowledging, shortly before the 2010 elections, that, 'our job depends on the outcomes of the next elections' (Di Nunzio 2014b, p. 453). These direct relations of dependence meant that political contestation or opposition came at great potential cost.

Conclusion

The party-state building effort following the Armageddons of the early 2000s established a hierarchy of party-state organisations from the federal government down to individuals and households that was used for the interdependent purposes of political control and state-led development. These structures were vital to the extension of developmentalism as a form of symbolic power, as well as providing a means of surveillance of the population, monitoring signs of anti-government or 'anti-development' activities. Vitaly, however, this party-state infrastructure was key to the government's strategy of coercive distribution. The EPRDF sought to monopolise the distribution of the main livelihood resources, distributing as broadly as possible to ensure that the majority of the population was enmeshed in ties of dependence with the party-state. This does not necessarily mean that all programmes were universal in their coverage, but rather that a patchwork of small and large programmes together combined to enmesh broad sections of the population, with a recurrent focus of government policy being that as many people as possible should get at least something.

This strategy for maintaining political order succeeded to varying degrees according to the legacy of state-building and the historic relations between the ruling party and population in different parts of the country. Moreover, the effectiveness of coercive distribution varied with the growing generational division in access to resources as a result of the successes

and limitations of the national development strategy. In Tigray, the long-standing relations between the TPLF and the Tigrayan population ensured some degree of lasting symbolic power, which, along with party-state mediated distribution and the potential resort to coercion, ensured a high degree of control. The Oromiya case studies present a marked contrast, with the OPDO's illegitimacy and limited infrastructural power resulting in more varied outcomes. The OPDO was able to consolidate its control for an extended period, albeit relying to a much greater degree on its distributive and coercive powers, rather than symbolic appeals. While the analysis here focused on the extreme cases of Tigray and Oromiya, the limited research on other regions suggests similar limitations to the government's strategy. In Amhara, for example, the development teams fell short of performance in Tigray and appear to have declined over time (Closser et al. 2019). Moreover, these structures were never more than an administrative fiction in many pastoralist areas where the party-state's infrastructure was always limited (Lavers et al. 2020).

The case studies also show that the party-state's ability to distribute resources and thereby enmesh the population was highly differentiated along generational lines. Those most dependent on the party-state were the middle-aged farmers whose access to land and agricultural inputs was mediated by the party-state, as well as the poorest households who depended on state-delivered social transfers for their day-to-day survival. In contrast, repeated efforts by the party-state to organise and mobilise younger generations enjoyed limited success across the case studies, including in Tigray. To a significant degree, this was because the party-state lacked the distributive resources that would provide the material inducements to ensure their participation. Ultimately Ethiopia's stalled structural transformation excluded younger generations from the distribution of resources, resulting in a significant hole in the government's strategy of enmeshment.

Overall, then, the party-state was able to achieve a high level of control for an extended period. The result was that the party-state in Tigray, and even in Oromiya and other parts of the country, appeared monolithic and impenetrable. As is often the case, however, Christopher Clapham's words ultimately proved prescient,

Ethiopian hierarchies are rarely as solid as they appear to be. They are characteristically held together, not by solid ties of loyalty and belief, but by pragmatic considerations of obedience ... the external appearance of uniformity can instantly be shattered once circumstances arise that make rebellion seem a practicable option. (Clapham 2009, pp. 184–185)