
9 **Relativistic International Development and Its Potential for Implementing Self-Determination in Ethiopia: Policy Recommendations**

Summary 9.1 Strengthening Civil Society and Human Rights. – 9.2 Pastoralism. – 9.3 Small-Holding Farmers. – 9.4 Customary Governance. – 9.5 Special Case: Lower Omo Valley. – 9.6 Special Case: Internal Border Issue.

These policy recommendations were prepared on the occasion of the 33rd Annual Conference of the Oromo Studies Association (Finfinne/Addis Ababa, 2019). They are built upon the arguments I have presented in two open-source articles (Bassi 2014; Bassi 2019a), summarised in this introduction.

My 2014 article was focused on the abuse of minority rights in Ethiopia. The central argument posited that the developmental ideology embraced by the ruling party was incompatible with both multi-party democracy and the respect for minority rights, two principles

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formally protected by the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE Constitution). The ruling party's highly centralistic and undemocratic practices resulted in severe abuses of the rights of pastoralists, ethnic minorities, and smallholding farmers (Box 1). Special attention was devoted to the livelihood crisis expected to arise from the construction of the Gibe 3 dam among the peoples living downstream of the dam. The Social and Environmental Impact Assessment fell short of meeting the standards required for their diverse languages and identities, as well as their social, political, and economic marginality. Given their disadvantage in the national arena, the environmental consequences of eliminating the river's regular flooding in a very dry area, along with the direct large-scale 'grabbing' of their territory for industrial irrigated agriculture, cannot be offset by gains in terms of standard development and salaried jobs.

In my 2014 article, I challenged critics who questioned the FDRE Constitution's emphasis on the self-determination of the 'nation, nationalities, and peoples' of the country. During the process of designing new administrative boundaries based on the prevalent native language of the inhabitants, the idea of univocal identification of administrative spaces with a single ethnicity prevailed. This feature was considered to be the origin of ethnic clashes along administrative borders, resulting in large-scale displacement of the population - a problem that continues to impact Ethiopian politics. Instead, I have suggested that the introduction of multi-national federalism is deeply justified by the specific political history of the country (Bassi 2019a). The negative ethnic conflict side effects are not inherent to the adopted constitutional model. Rather, it is the consequence of the "failed implementation of complementary key components of the FDRE Constitution, especially respect for fundamental political and minority rights" (Bassi 2014, 47, 68; 2019a).

The starting point of my 2019 article is that more than a decade of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth exceeding 10% failed to prevent the emergence of inequalities and widespread discontent. This scenario fuelled *Qeerroo's* protest, its harsh repression by the government, and the 2018 escalation of the protest at a federal level. At the crossroads between democratising and disintegrating (Lata 1999), the ruling coalition took the virtuous path that, in 2019, led to the Nobel Peace Award for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali. It is, therefore, the right time to reconsider the ideological stands and political practices that have so far impeded the full implementation of the FDRE multinational and democratic Constitution.

In the article, I draw a parallel between the early practices of international development, solely focused on achieving GDP growth, and the Ethiopian developmental policy. Both have resulted in similar negative side effects, rhetorically implying well-being for all but,

Box 1. Official United Nations reports on serious minority rights violations in Ethiopia, delivered between 2006 and 2010

CRC. “Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention. Concluding Observations: Ethiopia”, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Forty-third session, CRC/C/ETH/CO/3, 1 November 2006.

McDougall, G. “Implementation of the General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of March 2006 entitled ‘Human Rights Council’. Report of the independent expert on minority issues. Addendum. Mission to Ethiopia (28 November-12 December 2006)”, United Nations Human Rights Council, Fourth Session, A/HRC/4/9/Add.3, 28 February 2007.

CERD. “Consideration of the Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 9 of the Convention. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Ethiopia”, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Seventieth Session, 19 February to 9 March 2007, CERD/C/ETH/CO/15, 20 June 2007.

CERD. “Consideration of the Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 9 of the Convention. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Ethiopia”, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Seventy-fifth session, 3-28 August 2009, CERD/C/ETH/CO/7-16, 7 September 2009.

CaT. “Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 19 of the Convention. Concluding Observations of the Committee against Torture. Advanced Unedited Version. Ethiopia”, United Nations Committee against Torture, Forty-fifth session, CAT/C/ETH/CO/1, 1-19 November 2010.

(Source: Bassi 2019)

in practice, marginalising and dispossessing certain disadvantaged categories. The parallelism extends to the political field. As happened in several African states soon after decolonisation, the ruling party gained political support by mobilising national resources, but democratic accountability was strongly reduced by the establishment of single-party systems. In Ethiopia too the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has established a de facto single-party system, despite the constitutional democratic provisions.

Strong international criticism against the early practices prompted

the emergence of alternative paradigms of development [tab. 7] and the adoption of new human rights instruments.

Table 7 Schematic representation of the main paradigms of development (Bassi 2019a)

DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM	MAIN DISCIPLINARY DOMAIN	MAIN INDICATORS
Economic growth	Macroeconomics <i>Later:</i> microeconomics + political sciences	GDP <i>Later:</i> World Governance Index
Social equity	Sociology Amarthya Sen's theories	Human Development Index
Environmental sustainability	Environmental sciences	Biodiversity, pollution and climate indicators
Beneficiaries' active role	Development studies Applied, engaged and militant Anthropology Engaged and militant sociology	Emic and holistic indicators on conditions of life of specific communities or social groups

The critical review of this international process reveals that the corrective measures have progressively been informed by a growing 'relativistic attitude', defined as "giving consideration to the relevance of specific articulations of culture, formal or informal norms and local conditions, in ways that impact the implementation of development" (Bassi 2019a).

The relativistic attitude is especially associated with third-generation human rights [tab. 8], consisting of instruments of international law that recognise collective cultural and territorial rights, including customary institutions and norms. Such treaties and conventions establish development procedures that allow indigenous peoples and communities to gain more control over the development choices that can affect their livelihoods. The expansion of human rights is reflected in a wide array of best practices and voluntary guidelines in the realm of responsible business. It is also evident in binding internal directives and procedures adopted by international financial organisations, UN agencies, and legislation by national governments, especially concerning prescriptions related to the implementation of Social and Environmental Impact Assessments.

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Table 8 Some human rights instruments supporting a relativistic approach to development. (Bassi 2019a)

CULTURAL UNIVERSALISM Context and culture differences are seen as irrelevant to the development process	DESCRIPTIVE (WEAK) RELATIVISM Context and culture differences are considered key factors of development planning, with cross-cultural approach	NORMATIVE RELATIVISM Context and culture differences determine the development agenda
FIRST GENERATION HUMAN RIGHTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) • International covenants on civil and political rights (1966) 		
ECONOMIC GROWTH PARADIGM: Good governance component	<i>Respect for first generation human rights is considered a precondition for enforcement of second and third generation human rights</i>	
SECOND GENERATION HUMAN RIGHTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Covenants Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) • Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) 		
SOCIAL EQUALITY PARADIGM: Basic needs	SOCIAL EQUALITY PARADIGM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human development (recognition of categorical inequalities) • Gender issues 	<i>Third generation human rights were developed to assure, under specific constraints, implementation of second generation human rights</i>
THIRD GENERATION HUMAN RIGHTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International covenants and declarations on tribal and indigenous peoples (ILO 169, 1989; UNDRIP, 2007) • Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) • United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (2018) • Procedural rights in development • Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa (2010) 		
<i>The economic growth paradigm has incorporated procedural rights either in the form of binding social and environmental assessments or as voluntary guidelines and responsible business</i>	BENEFICIARIES' ACTIVE ROLE PARADIGM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory rural development 	BENEFICIARIES' ACTIVE ROLE PARADIGM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethno-development and other approaches based on self-determination in development • Self-reliance • Endogenous development • Communitarianism • Pastoral development (IFAD approach)
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT DECLARATION (MILLENNIUM GOALS) (2000) <i>Economic growth + basic needs + women's equality</i>		
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT DECLARATION (SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS) (2015) <i>The relativistic approach is possible in relation to some of the goals</i>		

The relativistic shift in human rights and international development is rooted in the concept of self-determination, exercised by sub-national groups – a characteristic shared with the FDRE Constitution. In international law, this transition occurred simultaneously with a change in the legal interpretation of the concept of self-determination. There was a shift from the political emphasis on secession as part of the decolonisation process to providing distinct institutional space and decision-making capacity in development and policy within existing states (Anaya, Lenoir, Rogers 2009, 58-79; Quane 2011; Waller 2018).

Undoubtedly, the international experience can offer valuable inspiration for the policy shift currently needed in Ethiopia. The relativistic aspect of the FDRE Constitution, which strongly emphasises self-determination, was overlooked under the highly centralistic, technocratic, and top-down developmental policy. The implementation of self-determination was limited to the creation of ‘ethnic-based’ administrative spaces. Owing to imbalances in power relations within the ruling coalition, marginalised groups lacked the influence to shape policy.

The ongoing political transformation in the country presents a remarkable opportunity to transcend the existing developmental ideology and fully harness the potential of the FDRE Constitution in promoting a relativistic approach to development. This approach involves acknowledging and accommodating the diverse traditions, values, and cultures within the country. Concerning the specific challenges faced by farmers, pastoralists, and ethnic minorities, third-generation human rights and best practices in international development already offer valuable insights and indications for potential solutions.

9.1 Strengthening Civil Society and Human Rights

The FDRE Constitution introduced electoral liberal democracy in the country and is highly detailed in terms of protecting human rights. UN experts have noted that the FDRE Constitution even includes provisions allowing cases to be brought at the national level based on violations of international treaties to which Ethiopia is a party but have not yet been adopted into national legislation (Ziegler 2005, 11; McDougall 2007, 7, 18, 27). However, scholars have emphasised the discrepancy in Ethiopia between the formal principles internationally claimed and the political practices adopted by the ruling party. There is, therefore, an urgent need to take measures that may facilitate the implementation of constitutional principles.

The establishment of effective multi-party democracy is, of course, the general precondition for all other components. Third-generation human rights cannot be properly implemented without the respect

of fundamental political rights, including freedom of association, expression, press, and an independent judiciary. There is, however, also a need to dedicate specific attention to minority rights, and this, in turn, requires the establishment of a strong and independent civil society.

In international development, awareness has grown about the need to accompany economic growth with specific attention to good governance, with civil society providing a key pillar. This is the area where Ethiopia is diverging from the liberal-democratic model. With the adoption of the *Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009*, the government has significantly limited civil society's independent action. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are the key instruments of expression for local communities and disadvantaged categories. Internationally, they have been crucial to the emergence of the development paradigm based on the beneficiary's active role and, given their capacity to relate to specific local contexts, are key to the implementation of relativistic development measures and approaches.

The revision of Proclamation No. 621/2009, therefore, deserves high priority. It needs to take place in conjunction with a radical change in the role assigned to CSOs in development and human rights. This includes:

- Establishing mechanisms to involve CSOs in the systematic monitoring of human and minority rights.
- Strengthening CSOs and enabling them to engage in local processes for the protection of the community's collective and procedural rights.

9.2 Pastoralism

Pastoralism holds significant relevance for Ethiopia, both in terms of the extension of pastoral areas and the impact of conflict and refugee flows in these regions. Despite explicit protections for pastoralists outlined in the FDRE Constitution, the pastoral policy adopted by the Ethiopian government thus far aims at eliminating mobile pastoralism (Bassi 2019a). This Ethiopian pastoral policy stands in contrast to the most advanced international policy recommendations. While pastoralists have not yet achieved the adoption of any pertinent international declaration or convention, a broad consensus is emerging internationally regarding the necessary measures to support pastoralists, including a relevant component of relativistic measures (Bassi 2017). In terms of policy, in 2011 the African Union adopted the *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa: Securing, Protecting and Improving the Lives, Livelihoods and Rights of Pastoralist Communities* (AU 2010) (Box 2).

Box 2. The African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism

The *African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism* builds on elements that are also considered in the *African Union Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa*, including transboundary and regional cooperation, acknowledgement of the legitimacy of indigenous land rights systems and institutions, the importance of informal land rights and the need to build an interface between customary and state institutions. The *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa* is highly detailed on mobility, considered the prerequisite of pastoralism and the most appropriate livelihoods strategy. It acknowledges the problems created by various processes of rangeland expropriation and outlines a number of rights belonging to pastoralists, including (AU 2010, 7, 11, 14):

- improving the governance of pastoral rangelands and thereby securing access to rangelands for pastoralists;
- recognising communal landholdings;
- legitimising traditional pastoral institutions and providing an interface between customary institutions and state-led systems, with special reference to conflict resolution, management of land, tenure, mobility, and interaction between pastoralists and other interest groups;
- ensuring consent and compensation in relation to development projects and investment in pastoral Areas.

(Source: IFAD 2018a: 11-12)

Moreover, IFAD has developed practical guidelines that are entirely aligned with the African Union *Policy Framework for Pastoralism*, promoting self-determination in development initiatives involving pastoralists and pastoral areas (IFAD 2018b).

It is therefore crucial to thoroughly revise the country's pastoral policy in line with international indications and to implement new projects, considering relativistic best practices.

9.3 Small-Holding Farmers

Ethiopian small-holding farmers have been significantly impacted by land dispossession without adequate compensation. At the individual level, this occurred due to foreign, domestic, and governmental

investment in industrial agriculture, as well as the consequences of the expansion of towns and industrial development, particularly in the areas around Addis Ababa and in the surrounding portions of Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region.

Land grabbing has also operated at a collective scale, especially against agro-pastoral groups, to a degree that seriously threatens the survival of entire identity groups. This issue has been addressed in the UN reports listed in Box 1. In evident contradiction with the protections contained in Article 40(5) of the FDRE Constitution, the process of large-scale expropriation of collective land was made legal by the Preamble and Article 5(3) of the *FDRE Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation* (2005). There is, therefore, an urgent need to revise this proclamation and establish redressive mechanisms in line with both the FDRE Constitution and international best practices.

The global response to the impact of the post-2008 global rush for land resulted in the adoption of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants* in 2018. While this is not a binding international legal instrument, it offers essential guidelines that well-intentioned governments can adopt and subsequently legislate. Many of the articles within the declaration contain relativistic measures that are highly relevant to Ethiopian small-holding farmers [tab. 9].

Table 9 Selected articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants

ARTICLES IN THE UN DECLARATION	DESCRIPTIVE CONTENT	RELEVANCE TO ETHIOPIA
Art. 2, comma 3 Art. 5 on social and environmental impact assessment	Strong provisions for consultation of farmers before adopting and implementing legislation and policy that may affect them	It gives protection against land grabs and the consequence of the construction of the Gibe 3 dam
Art 17, comma 1, 3, 4, and 5 Art. 24, comma 2	It establishes strong land rights, at both individual and collective level, including customary land tenure not currently protected by law. It explicitly condemns eviction of farmers, including as a punitive measure or as a consequence of legislation	It gives protection against land grabs, both to individuals and in relation to large-scale land dispossession of small agro-pastoral groups, especially in the South West of the country Relativistic approach
Art. 17, comma 5	'Peasants and other people working in rural areas who have been arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived of their lands have the right, individually and/or collectively, in association with others or as a community, to return to their land of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived [...]'	It promotes restitution of land

Art. 21, comma 1, 2 and 4	It established the right of access to water and to safe and clean water, and it provides for restoration from chemical and poisoning of water bodies	Highly relevant to water pollution in relation to mining (for instance in Guji area) and industrial agriculture (for instance in the lower Omo valley or in relation to floral industry in the highlands). It qualifies the curtailing of the Omo River regular flooding as an abuse.
Art. 23, comma 2 Art. 26, comma 1, 2 and 3	They protect traditional knowledge and medicinal plants. They affirm right to enjoy the farming community's own culture and freely pursue its cultural development	Relativistic approach
Art. 15, comma 4 and 5	Food sovereignty is recognised	Relativistic approach, by establishing self-determination by communities of farmers in agricultural development

Many of the relativistic principles established under this Declaration were already practised by some international organisations. The International Fund for African Development (IFAD) mandates all actors funded by them to apply the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in all projects likely to affect land access and/or use rights of communities (IFAD 2015). IFAD has also adopted a robust land tenure policy whereby customary, informal, and collective tenure of farmers must be seriously taken into account (IFAD 2008).

In practical terms, promoting the rights of smallholding farmers can be achieved by establishing a country-level platform on land issues, with active participation from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) expressing the views of local farmers. This kind of initiative could be supported by the International Land Coalition, a global civil society association with specific expertise in this field. IFAD is the most suitable UN agency to finance the necessary concrete activities in support of farmers, as part of its regular international mandate.

Under the pressure of the Sustainable Development Goals to integrate development objectives with biodiversity conservation, due consideration should be given to the existence in Ethiopia of various subsistence-oriented agricultural, pastoral, and agro/pastoral systems with high biodiversity value. These systems are rooted in local and indigenous knowledge and customary governance, including collective land tenure, in ways that are unique to Ethiopia. They often ensure the conservation of endemic wild and agro-biodiversity. Specific attention should be given to them with the possibility of engaging farmers in improving their livelihoods without compromising the biodiversity and cultural value of their agricultural or pastoral landscapes.

In line with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants*, this should be done by fully respecting the food sovereignty¹ of the involved local communities. Agroecology and ICCAs/Territories of Life² provide tested and comprehensive approaches to achieve this goal. Several UN agencies and bilateral development cooperation may support such processes, including UNDP, UNEP, and FAO.

9.4 Customary Governance

The *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention* (ILO 169) and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) are two key instruments of international law that legitimise customary institutions and laws, establishing their relevance to development. Customary elements, including collective territorial rights, gain significance in conjunction with procedural prescriptions, especially the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Internationally, numerous local groups are developing ‘community protocols’ to enable external actors to properly adhere to the required procedures.

In Ethiopia, indigenous rights are not officially recognised. However, irrespective of the issue of indigeneity, Ethiopia possesses an extraordinary heritage of customary institutions. The FDRE Constitution already acknowledges the importance of customary law and delegates power to decentralised institutions and governmental units for the establishment and implementation of policies. There is no constraint on these decentralised organs to better implement the constitutional provisions for self-determination by creating their own governance and consultative mechanisms, in line with the core values of the various nations, nationalities, and peoples of the country.

The Oromo have pioneered significant experiences by informally involving *gadaa* leaders in governance related to development and inter-ethnic conflict (Bassi 2010; 2012).³ This involvement extends to the field of biodiversity conservation. In an EU-funded project by SOS Sahel-Ethiopia, the juniper national forests in Borana were protected with the direct involvement of *gadaa* elders (Tache, Irwin

1 Food sovereignty is a human right developed by civil society in response to the global land grab. With art. 15 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants* it has entered international law. It refers to self-determination in the field of agricultural development. Comma 4 of the same article provides the definition: “This includes the right to participate in decision-making processes on food and agriculture policy and the right to healthy and adequate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods that respect their cultures”.

2 For more information please refer to the ICCA Consortium website, <https://www.iccaconsortium.org/>.

3 Chs. 6 and 7 in this book.

2003). In 2007, *gadaa* leaders of the Borana, along with other elders and community representatives, delivered the Yaaballo Statement on the Borana Conserved Landscape, expressing the intention to conserve biodiversity by demanding control over the development process (Bassi, Tache, Sora 2008; Bassi, Tache 2011). *Gadaa* expresses the deepest values of the Oromo (Megerssa, Kassam 2019), and where it is still operative, it is the key institution regulating the allocation of land rights and the use of water. It operates through a diffuse link to all relevant rural residential and socio-economic units. Decisions are collectively made with full participation from all concerned extended families through an articulated range of thematic assemblies (Bassi 2005; Megerssa, Kassam 2019, 212-35). It is, therefore, possible to rely on *gadaa* as an advisory institution, with a 'custodianship' role of safeguarding the core values and key resources.

More generally, in Ethiopia, customary institutions can be involved in governance when dealing with policy, development, and conservation initiatives that may affect the well-being of rural communities. Through their established indigenous assembly institutions (Ayyaana 2019) or, where relevant, alternative institutional devices, they can give visibility to marginalised, disadvantaged, and otherwise 'invisible' rural communities.

9.5 Special Case: Lower Omo Valley

The construction of the Gibe 3 dam poses a serious threat to the survival of the peoples of the lower Omo Valley due to two significant side effects:

- Downstream elimination of the Omo regular flooding: the flood was key in watering the soil and fertilisation, in an extremely dry area. It was the environmental factors that allowed the subsistence of a dense population through pastoralism, flood-retreat agriculture, fishing, hunting, and beekeeping.
- Regularisation of water flow enabling irrigation and expansion of industrial agriculture: the government's policy of large-scale acquisition of the most productive territories in the lower Omo Valley implies massive-scale 'grabbing' of common land, displacement, and *de facto* forced resettlement.

Since the Gibe 3 dam has already been constructed, its environmental damage is irreversible. However, there is still much that can be done in terms of addressing its social and environmental impact. The challenge lies in the economic, social, and political disadvantage of these marginalised peoples, making solutions difficult to identify. This case demands special attention and requires the mobilisation of international support, experts, think tanks, and bilateral

development cooperation agencies. The intervention needs to be based on the self-determination of the Lower Omo Peoples, as defined in terms of indigenous rights.

As suggested by David Turton:

[...] a targeted and well funded programme of compensation, livelihood reconstruction and benefit sharing should be put in place. Amongst other things, this should focus on ways of integrating irrigated agriculture with subsistence herding. Above all, and given the knowledge, experience and expertise of the affected people, they should be the ones to take the lead in arriving at the most effective solutions and in planning specific strategies, with the government and NGOs playing a supportive and facilitating role. (D. Turton 2018, 61)

The redressive solutions may involve a thorough revision of the current plans, encompassing both the cost-benefit analysis of the dam and the allocation of land rights between investors, the government, and the indigenous communities.

9.6 Special Case: Internal Border Issue

Ethnic clashes related to internal administrative borders demand priority attention, necessitating a combination of measures. Each conflict has its local dynamics, preventing the identification of a solution useful for all contexts. However, certain general elements can contribute to the construction of peaceful local relations.

Kjetil Tronvoll has highlighted a feature of Ethiopian political culture that justified the disregard for minority rights as defined under international law. It consists of the idea that self-determination replicated at all administrative levels could protect the interests of minorities by channelling their demands through the formal governmental structure (Tronvoll 2000, 19). However, under conditions of absolute power exercised at the regional and local administrative levels, communities that find themselves as minorities within each administrative space are likely to face harsh abuses. This situation has led individuals and 'ethnic entrepreneurs' into a life-or-death struggle to obtain their own 'ethnically' connoted political space or to be included in it. Protecting minority rights with independent civil society and monitoring mechanisms would therefore be of great help.

As mentioned, each case of ethnic conflict needs to be addressed with *ad hoc* negotiation mechanisms. In this process, due consideration should be given to customary territorial rights and abuses that occurred in the demarcation of new administrative borders. The well-documented case of the Borana section of the Oromo along the

Somali-Oromo border illustrates that the government did not take a neutral position but sided with one or the other ethnic community based on its own strategic military and electoral objectives. As a result of this process, the Borana have been squeezed into a portion of their pre-1991 territory, losing access to key economic and symbolic resources, including ritual grounds and the sacred *tulaa* wells of Eel Goof and Eel Laee (Bassi 1997; Adugna 2004; Tache, Oba 2009; Bassi 2010).