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*The politics of distributing social transfers in Oromiya, Ethiopia:
Encadrement and the fluctuation of state infrastructural power*

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Abstract

This paper examines the politics of distributing the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia's Oromiya region. Drawing on detailed case studies in Arssi and North Shewa, the paper highlights the importance of state infrastructural power in shaping programme distribution. Over 30 years of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) rule, the party-state project of *encadrement*, or the incorporation of people into structures of control, has been taken to a new level. The creation of sub-kebele administrative structures and performance evaluations that reach down to the household level have underpinned a massive expansion of state infrastructural power – the ability of the central state to implement policies throughout its territory. The case studies highlight the importance of state infrastructural power in understanding PSNP implementation. Sub-kebele structures have become a key aspect of PSNP implementation, notably in identifying who receives support. However, strong state infrastructural power has also proven problematic, used to enforce graduation from the PSNP to meet centrally defined targets, regardless of the reality of local food insecurity. The Oromo protests and the ongoing transformation of the political landscape in Ethiopia have unleashed a counter-movement to the project of *encadrement*, leading to the collapse of these structures of control. This collapse threatens state infrastructural power, both in terms of service delivery and the coercive power of the central state.

1. **Introduction**

The paper is part of a project that examines how long-term patterns of state formation and more recent patterns of political competition and party legitimacy shape implementation of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). In doing so, the intention is also to use social protection policies as a lens to deepen understanding of how local state structures function and of state–society relations. The present paper focuses on Oromiya region, with companion papers examining Afar and Tigray (Lavers, Abrha and Belay forthcoming, Lavers, Mohammed and Wolde Selassie 2020).[1]

The PSNP was established in 2005 to provide food and cash transfers to chronically food-insecure households, targeted both geographically and individually through 'community-based' targeting. Previous papers have shown that the PSNP originated in a response to a major food crisis in 2003, perceived by the ruling party as an existential threat to their rule, while programme design was shaped by ideological commitments to self-reliance and ensuring that social protection makes a productive contribution to the economy (Lavers 2019a, 2019b). As such, most households are required to engage in public works in exchange for six monthly transfers. However, labour-constrained households can receive 12 months' unconditional 'direct support'. From its inception, the PSNP was linked to extension and credit services intended to boost household income and support graduation. This study focuses on the distributive elements of the programme, particularly targeting and graduation.

The analytical framework for the project builds on Mann's (1984: 113) concept of state infrastructural power, namely: 'the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm'. State infrastructural power is a relational concept, dependent not just on the state's human and physical resources, but also on the relations between state agencies and between the state and society (Soifer and Hau 2008, Soifer 2015). Effective distribution requires particular forms of state infrastructural power. Foremost amongst these is state autonomy from societal interests, in order to prevent powerful social actors from co-opting the targeting process and diverting resources to their favoured clientele. However, in contexts where administrative data on household incomes are not readily available, targeting also requires the state capacity and territorial reach to generate information about individuals and assess who meets programme criteria. The project also examines the interaction between state infrastructural power and party politics. The common expectation is that involvement of party political actors in the distribution of social transfers would lead to preferential allocation of resources to party supporters, or the clientelistic exchange of transfers for votes. However, the project aims to submit this assumed relationship to scrutiny.

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[1] The primary focus of this paper is to lay out the empirical findings of the Oromiya case study, making provisional links to the theoretical framework guiding the project. The main reflection on the significance of the Ethiopian cases for the framework will follow in a forthcoming comparative paper.

Regular evaluations of the PSNP suggest that household targeting is relatively effective, with low-income deciles more likely to be included. However, this varies by region: Tigray appears to be one of the best performing regions, while at the other extreme, Afar is among the worst (MoA 2014, Hoddinott et al. 2015). Targeting in Oromiya is relatively pro-poor, but less well correlated with income deciles than in Tigray (Hoddinott et al. 2015). The paper highlights the importance of party-state infrastructural power to the implementation of the PSNP and a possible explanation for variation in performance between regions. Local party-state structures were vital means of service delivery, including in the PSNP, and played a particularly important role in selecting PSNP participants. More problematically, however, the top-down control afforded by these structures, and the system of performance evaluation used to discipline them, was also used to enforce graduation from the programme in line with the ideological commitments of the ruling party, regardless of the actual state of food security in local communities. Party-state infrastructural power has always been more limited and dependent on coercion than in Tigray, providing a convincing explanation for the more effective implementation of the PSNP observed in Tigray (Lavers, Abrha, et al. forthcoming). Meanwhile, Oromiya, at least until recently, compared favourably to Afar, where the party-state has long had limited infrastructural power and instead depends to a significant degree on neo-customary actors for local authority and programme implementation (Lavers, Mohammed et al. forthcoming). Oromiya stands out, furthermore, in the extent to which party-state infrastructural power has collapsed in recent years during a period of anti-government protests and political transition. This collapse threatens both the service delivery capacity and the coercive ability of the state.

Fieldwork in Oromiya focused on case studies of two sites in Arssi and North Shewa. The methodology involved application of the same research protocols across all six sites (two in Oromiya, as well as two in each of Tigray and Afar) during fieldwork between March and July 2018. In each site, data generation involved approximately 25-30 key informant interviews with government officials from the wereda, kebele and zone administrations,[2] social elites in the community and individual residents, as well as ten focus group discussions with participants and non-participants. An important limitation of a study such as this is the influence of social desirability bias. Party-state structures attempt to regulate many aspects of economic, social and political life in rural Oromiya. In a context in which the party-state is so influential, and also makes great efforts to shape norms regarding 'good' behaviour, it can be particularly challenging to get respondents to talk openly about their experiences and opinions. This is even more challenging when gender and class relations are overlaid on political sensitivities. Women in conservative rural communities have historically played a limited role in social and political life, and social norms mean that many women find it difficult to speak out. To a limited degree, we were able to address this by pairing a male and female researcher, with the female researchers conducting all interviews and

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[2] Ethiopian administrative structures are organised as follows: federal government; regional states; zones; wereda (districts); kebele (or tabiya in Tigray – sub-districts); zones (or kushet in Tigray).

focus group discussions with women. Nonetheless, highly educated field researchers entering a community are inevitably perceived – correctly – as outsiders from a very different background and social class to rural residents. Moreover, whatever reassurances are provided, the expectation – based on experience – is that these outsiders likely have ties to party-state or donor agencies. There is therefore an inevitable tendency for respondents to report what they believe researchers want to hear, rather than what actually happens in practice. To a degree, such limitations can be addressed by attempting to gain respondents' trust, spending an extended period in the community and through triangulation between the testimony of multiple, independent respondents. However, these strategies are imperfect and, particularly, in a time-bound study such as this, some limitations are inevitable.

Following this introduction, Section 2 examines the evolution of state infrastructural power in Oromiya, through an analysis of long-run processes of state formation and more recent political dynamics, including introducing the case studies. Section 3 provides an analysis of key aspects of state infrastructural power in the study sites. Section 4 then builds on this analysis to trace the distribution of the PSNP and the effect of state infrastructural power. Section 5 concludes.

2. Ethiopian state-building and Oromiya's long journey from the periphery to the centre

An analysis of state infrastructural power in Oromiya must necessarily be grounded in an understanding of the particular pattern of state-building in the region and the evolving relationship between the party-state and Oromo society. Most of Oromiya was incorporated into the Ethiopian polity during the southward expansion under Emperor Menelik II in the 19th century, beginning in Shewa and then expanding to the west and east (Figure 1). Imperial conquest entailed mass expropriation of land from the local population, who were turned into tenants on land granted to soldiers (*neftegna*) as reward for military service. The imperial conquest accelerated the collapse of the *gadaa* governance system that had prevailed in parts of Oromiya (Jalata 2005). *Gadaa* is the customary system of social and political organisation in Oromo society that ascribes political and military roles for men of different age groups and nominates the *Aba Gadaa* as the community's political leader. *Gadaa* has only persisted in the pastoralist communities in Borana in southern Oromiya, where state control remains more limited to the present.

The Derg's ascent to power in 1974 brought land reform, removing the landed elite and was met with initial support (Clapham 1988). However, the need for new mechanisms of surplus extraction and the attempt to create a socialist state led to the imposition of agricultural marketing boards, villagisation and agricultural collectivisation that damaged economic incentives and lost the support of the peasantry (Clapham 1988). The Derg's establishment of peasant associations marked the beginning of a project of *encadrement*, namely the incorporation of the peasantry into systems of control (Clapham 2002) that significantly expanded state infrastructural power in Oromiya.

While the Derg dismissed ethnicity as a distraction from class struggle, a growing sense of Oromo nationalism gathered pace during the 1970s. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was founded in the early 1970s, but failed to make as much progress in its struggle against the Derg as insurgents in Eritrea and Tigray. As the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) expanded its horizons beyond Tigray to Ethiopia, it formed the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of ethnic parties, and an Oromo wing, the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organisation (OPDO) in 1989. [3] After withdrawing from brief participation in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in 1992, the OLF was banned as a terrorist group. While the OPDO – backed by the police and military – has built sufficient infrastructural power to organise regular electoral victories, it has long struggled for popular legitimacy. The OPDO initially rejected or was rejected by those with ties to the OLF, neo-customary authorities and Derg-era administrations. Instead, the OPDO recruited young, educated leaders, including schoolteachers, who had little local legitimacy and relied on the party for their power. Lacking ethno-nationalist legitimacy, arguably the main incentive to join the OPDO became the advantages of power, including securing state employment (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003).

EPRDF reforms since 1991 have done much to consolidate Oromo identity. The creation of a unified Oromiya for the first time (Figure 2), the formal devolution of powers to the regional administration, and the replacement of Amharic with Afaan Oromo as the language of government and education in the region, have all won significant support. However, the EPRDF has always been undermined by the OPDO's limited legitimacy. Ultimately, the EPRDF failed to shake the widespread perception that it was dominated by the TPLF and that the OPDO was a stooge for another wave of northern domination.

The EPRDF took *encadrement* to unprecedented levels, attempting to incorporate the entire population into hierarchical structures of fused party-state administration, expanding state infrastructural power in the process. In Oromiya, each kebele – the lowest level of formal state administration – is divided into several zone administrations (roughly equivalent to a village), development teams – comprising 25-30 households, and one-to-five networks (structures of community mobilisation for participation in political and developmental projects) – comprising five households. Each of these structures has a leadership that links it to the level above and each plays both developmental and party political roles, providing a potentially formidable structure by which individuals can be mobilised for government initiatives.

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[3] Re-named the Oromo Democratic Party in late 2018 and subsequently merged into the Prosperity Party in 2019. Throughout the period covered by this paper, the party was named the OPDO and so that acronym is used throughout.

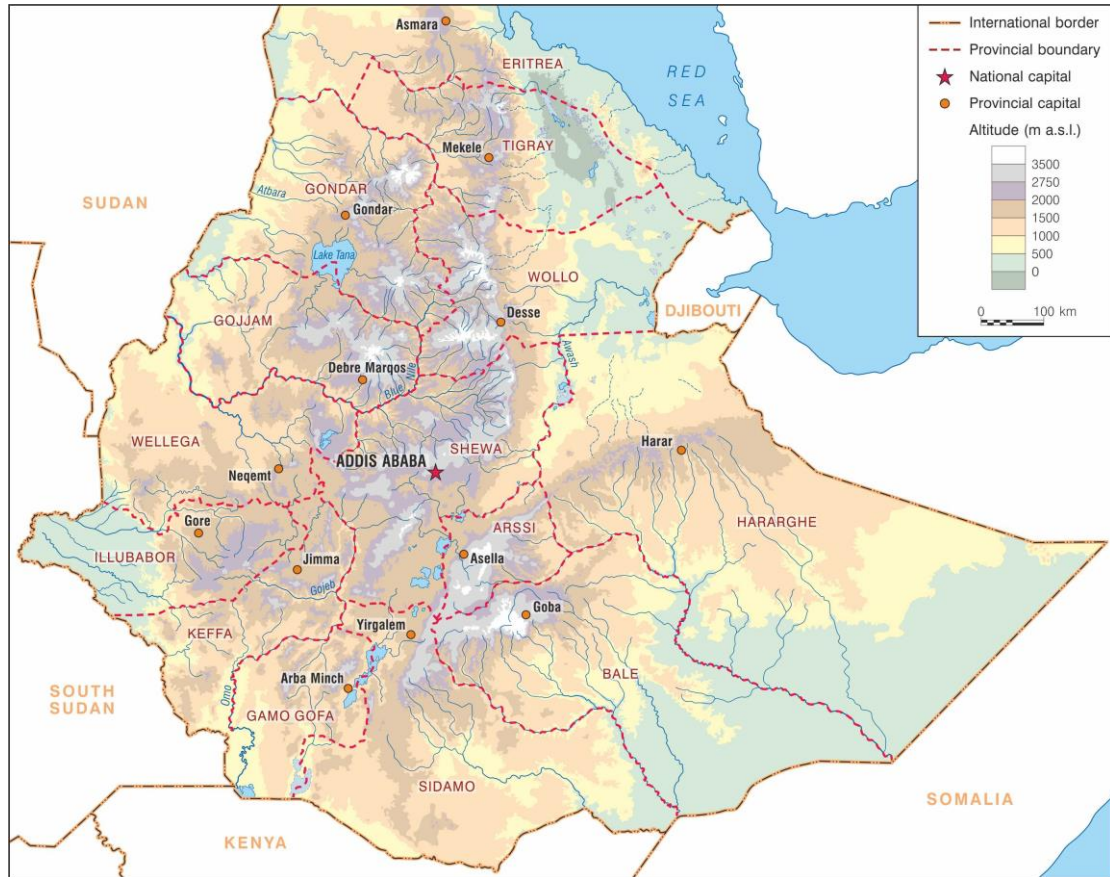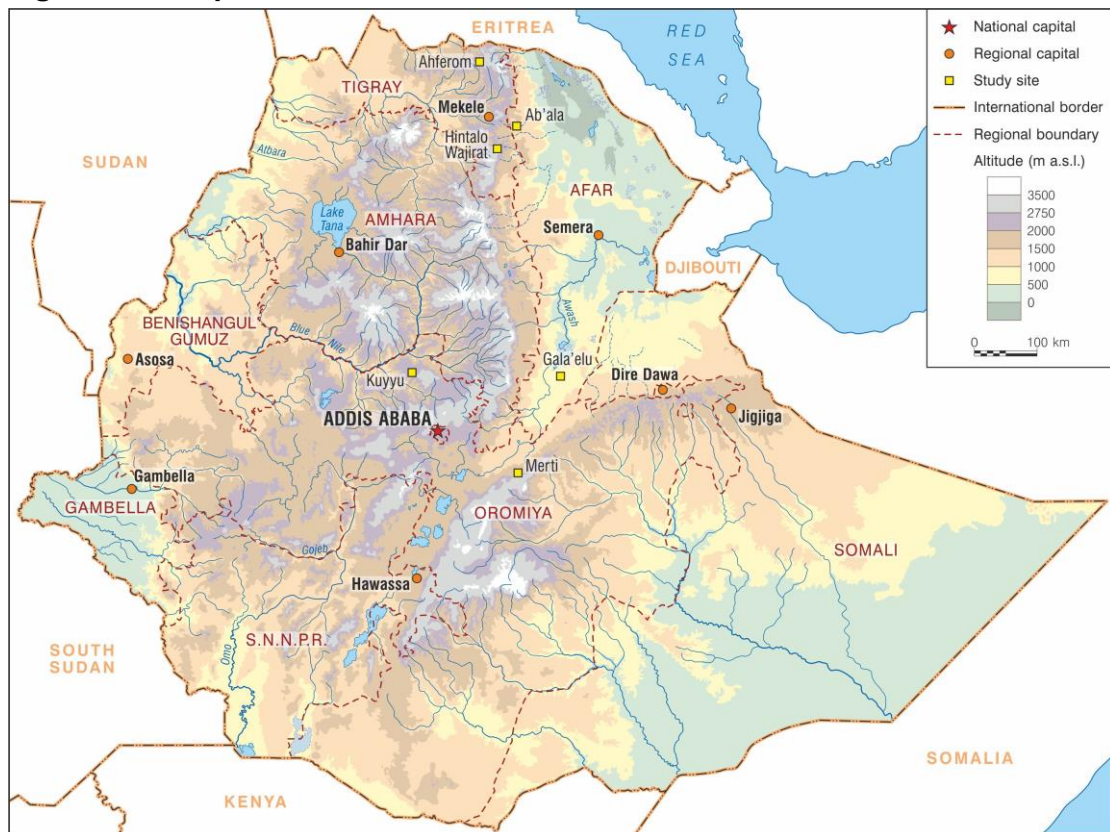**Figure 1: Late Imperial Ethiopian Provinces**

Figure 2: Ethiopia under the EPRDF with federal boundaries

Encadrement also entails building local party structures and affiliated women's and youth leagues, as well as re-establishing co-opted neo-customary authorities – the *Aba Gadaa* – to compensate for limited party legitimacy.

Encadrement has, however, long been accompanied by a counter-movement that seeks to release people from these control structures. While at times this has been limited to passive acts of resistance, given the coercive power of the state, from 2014 onwards, mass protests by the Oromo youth (*qerroo*) have challenged the government, leading many to refuse to submit to past systems of control. The initial spark for the Oromo protests was the government's Addis Ababa Masterplan and the perceived threat this represented to Oromo territory and identity. However, the protests were sustained by multiple factors, including: landlessness and unemployment; dominance of the TPLF within the EPRDF; corruption and illegitimacy of the OPDO; the brutality of the security forces; and the fragmentation of the EPRDF.

The result of the protests has been the breathtaking re-orientation of the political landscape. Based on the failure to quell growing anti-government protests, the OPDO leadership was replaced in October 2016 by Lemma Megersa, as regional President, and Abiy Ahmed as deputy. Over the subsequent two years Lemma and Abiy – two longstanding EPRDF insiders – achieved a remarkable transformation of the OPDO, securing significant popularity within Oromiya and, to a degree, beyond through a message of Oromo nationalism within *Ethiopiawinet* (Ethiopianness) and by aligning themselves with the protestors and, at times, against the federal government.

Prime Minister Hailemariam resigned in February 2018 – shortly before fieldwork began – in the face of ever-growing protests. During fieldwork in April 2018, Abiy Ahmed was selected as EPRDF chairman and Prime Minister, bringing Oromo politicians to the centre of political power. Abiy has set about transforming the EPRDF and Ethiopian politics more broadly. Reforms known as 'deep renewal' aiming to promote 'good governance' and curb corruption have led to some optimism that the top-down and coercive nature of local administration may be about to change.[4]

Oromiya has previously been described as part of Ethiopia's 'highland periphery', given its late incorporation into Ethiopia and its peripherality to the centre of power in the northern highlands (Markakis 2011). Despite the consolidation of state authority over the past century, Oromiya remained subordinate to the Amhara and Tigrayan elites that dominated the Ethiopian state. This peripheral status is, however, now being re-negotiated, with Oromo politicians coming to the fore in federal politics.

The PSNP within the regional political economy

Compared to the other regions, a relatively small proportion, less than 5 percent, of the Oromiya population is covered by the PSNP (Lavers forthcoming). Given Oromiya

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[4] Deep renewal was originally launched in 2017 but has blended with Abiy's reforms undertaken since coming to power.

contains many of the main areas of economic importance – agricultural and industrial – this is perhaps not surprising. Areas classified as chronically food insecure, and thereby qualifying for the PSNP, are concentrated in the east and south of the region, with only minor expansion to new wereda over time.

The most significant change to the PSNP in Oromiya came in the third phase of the PSNP (2010-15), during which more than one-third of participants were 'graduated' from the programme in line with federal government targets (Lavers forthcoming). However, in phase 4, the PSNP in Oromiya received an increased quota, with the programme now covering a larger number of people than ever before. The perception of progress created by mass graduation from the PSNP is highly questionable, as discussed below. Moreover, when the PSNP is viewed alongside emergency assistance, a quite different picture emerges (Figure 3). Emergency assistance has spiked in recent years, due to political unrest in the region and large-scale displacements due to conflict. Even setting this period aside, however, it would be hard to justify the claim that food insecurity is reducing in absolute terms.

Figure 3: PSNP and emergency assistance in Oromiya
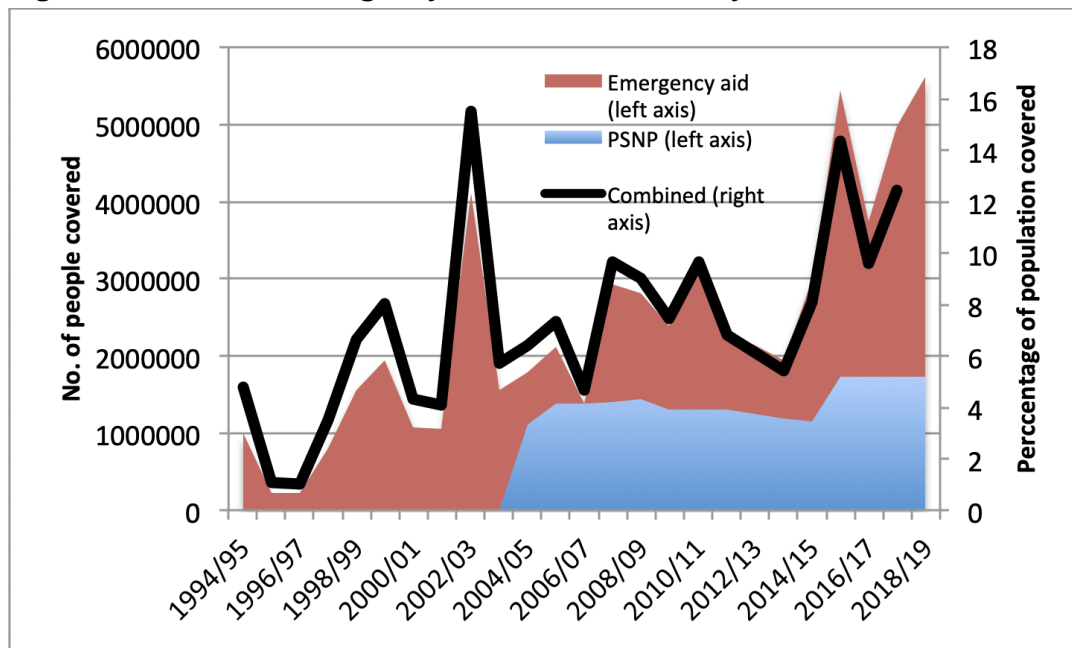
Case selection

Fieldwork focused on two sites: Shamo Gado *kebele* in Merti *wereda*, Arssi zone; and Halelo Cerri *kebele* in Kuyyu *wereda*, North Shewa zone (see Figure 2). Case selection identified diverse sites within Oromiya, while prioritising the safety of the field researchers. In Oromiya, the PSNP operates primarily in the eastern and southern parts of the region, many of which were affected by serious conflict along the Oromiya–Somali border in early 2018, making fieldwork impossible. The sites chosen remained relatively calm throughout this period.

In terms of livelihoods, in Shamo Gado kebele, most households rely on mixed crop cultivation, particularly teff and maize, and livestock rearing, with a small number growing fruits and vegetables as cash crops.[5] . The kebele is situated fairly close to the wereda town of Abomsa and wealthier households are involved in urban activities, including trade, running shops, mills and bajaj taxis. In Halelo Cerri, the temperate parts of the kebele are prioritised for livestock and dairy production, while some households are able to cultivate cash crops such as fruits and vegetables.[6] Out migration is a common feature of both sites, either seasonally for work or long-term in Ethiopia and, particularly for young women, to Arab countries.[7]

The gendered division of labour reflects common norms in Ethiopia: agriculture is considered the man's responsibility. Although women do engage in most agricultural activities, they are not allowed to plough, with the result that female-headed households give their land for sharecropping, leading to a significant reduction in household income. Women's expected roles are in the domestic sphere, cooking and preparing food for the household. Men usually manage the household budget and give women money for household consumption.

Many respondents attribute food insecurity to the weather, namely unreliable rainfall and drought in both sites, and snow and frost in Halelo Cerri.[8] In addition, many acknowledge that population growth has led to increasingly severe land shortages.[9] In Halelo Cerri, landslides have been a particular problem, displacing people and destroying some of the most productive agricultural land.[10] In addition, the Oromiya-Somali conflict recently led to the return of some people who were previously resettled to Hararghe from the kebele.[11] Many government officials also point the blame at food-insecure households themselves, as a result of their 'poor saving culture'[12] and lack of 'initiation for work',[13] leading to dependency on government support.[14]

The clan system has retained greater importance in Shamo Gado than in Halelo Cerri. In Shamo Gado, the kebele chair is from the dominant clan and his deputy from the next largest. The relative calm in both sites during the Oromo protests is widely attributed to the intervention of neo-customary leaders, who advised young people to avoid demonstrations, due to the risk of arrest or injury.[15] Nonetheless, qerroo did set up several roadblocks and some investors in the wereda were attacked.[16]

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[5] Interview respondent OMK1.
[6] Interview respondent OKK6.
[7] Interview respondents OKK6, OKW1.
[8] Interview respondents OMK3, OKK6, OKW1, OKW3.
[9] Interview respondents OKK6, OKW1, OKW3, OMK3, OMW3.
[10] Interview respondents OKK6, OKW3.
[11] Interview respondent OKW1.
[12] Interview respondent OMK1.
[13] Interview respondent OMK1.
[14] Interview respondents OMW6, OKW1.
[15] Interview respondents OMC1, OMC2.
[16] Interview respondent OMW3.

Table 1 provides information on the current coverage of the PSNP and emergency assistance in each site. In Merti wereda, PSNP coverage reduced to roughly one-third of the previous level in 2010-15 through large-scale graduation. Nonetheless, a large number of people in the wereda continue to receive emergency assistance, raising further questions about the nature of this graduation from food insecurity.

Table 1: PSNP participation in study sites

	Kuyyu wereda	**Halelo Cerri kebele**	**Merti wereda**	**Shamo Gado kebele**
Kebele population	101,180	6,646	25,030	7,400
PSNP PW	4,000	665	3,412	208
PSNP DS	492	77	1,696	144
PSNP total	4,492 (4%)	742	5,081 (20%)	352
Emergency relief	22,500	765	12,000	1,945

Note: these figures should be taken as a rough indication only. In many cases, the figures reported by officials did not add up exactly and were inconsistently provided either as individuals or households, making comparison difficult.
Sources: OMK3, OKK6, OMW3, OKW5, OKW1, OKK4.

3. Encadrement and state infrastructural power in the study sites

This section examines the contours of state infrastructural power in the case study sites. The analysis builds on the project's framework, considering: first, physical and human resources; second, the territorial reach of local state structures and their embeddedness with society; third, the systems of target setting and evaluation through which higher levels of state administration influence local administration; and, finally, relations between the party-state and society.

Resources and competence

Despite being relatively centrally located in Ethiopia, physical infrastructure is severely lacking in both sites. In Halelo Cerri, there is no electricity, computer or mobile network. In Shamo Gado, only the mosque and a few nearby houses have electricity in one part of the kebele, but there is no service to the kebele administration. While most of the kebele has mobile coverage, this is poor and unreliable. Moreover, neither kebele administration has access to a car or motorbike, and only parts of the sub-kebele zones are connected by roads.[17] When kebele officials need to visit different parts of the kebele, they must do so on foot. Given that the farthest reaches may be 15km away, they rarely go to these areas.[18] Instead, the kebele administrations rely on the sub-kebele party-state structures of zones and development teams to pass messages to the community and to call individuals for meetings.

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[17] Interview respondent OKK6.
[18] Interview respondent OKK6.

The qualifications of kebele officials in the two Oromiya sites are comparable to those in Tigray and far ahead of those in Afar (Lavers, Abrha et al. forthcoming, Lavers, Mohammed et al. forthcoming). The chairman and zone leaders in each site reached grades 7-11 of secondary education before dropping out. In contrast, the state employees – kebele manager, development agents (DAs) and health extension workers (HEWs) – have either post-secondary diplomas or undergraduate degrees. Where the two sites are less well resourced than those in Tigray is in absolute staff numbers. There are only two DAs in Shamo Gado, supplemented by visits from the wereda agricultural office.[19] While there are three DAs in Halelo Cerri, two are currently away studying for undergraduate degrees. This presents a particular challenge for the PSNP, with the DA expected to play a central role in implementation. As in several other sites, there is a female DA in Halelo Cerri, a distinct break from the male-dominated extension systems that have been the norm. Despite the common perception that agriculture is a male activity, she claimed she had convinced the farmers that she is knowledgeable and capable, and faced no problems. Kebele officials, including the chairman, manager, DAs and HEWs, have also received regular training on the PSNP in both sites.

The territorial reach of the state: Sub-kebele and party structures

The Oromiya regional government has, like other regions, established administrative structures beneath the kebele level, with a view to improving service delivery and mobilising people for 'development' activities. In principle, these extend the reach of the state down to the individual and household level. Each kebele is divided into three zones, with their own administrative structure. The zone administration appears to be relatively active in Shamo Gado. However, in Halelo Cerri kebele, officials acknowledge that the zone structure is not really functioning. Instead, the kebele cabinet allocates responsibilities relating to a particular zone to one of its members from that locality.[20]

Development teams were introduced around 2008,[21] though re-organised in 2012. Each development team comprises 25-30 households and is sub-divided into one-to-fives comprising roughly five households each. Each development team has an administrative structure mirroring that at the zone level, with leaders of one-to-fives taking up positions in the development team administrative structure.[22] Development teams and one-to-five networks are gendered, with separate male and female structures with responsibilities in agriculture and health, respectively. In Halelo Cerri kebele, female household heads are enrolled in both male and female development teams.[23]. While this potentially ensures female-headed households have access to the agricultural services accessed through the male structures, it also imposes significant extra time contributions on female-headed households.

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[19] Interview respondent OMK1.
[20] Interview respondent OKK6.
[21] Interview respondents OMK3, OKZ1.
[22] Interview respondent OMK1.
[23] Interview respondent OKK6.

Compared to Tigray (Lavers, Abrha et al. forthcoming), sub-kebele structures are very variable in their effectiveness, with many not operational at all. Failings can to some degree be attributed to the unrest in Oromiya in the years leading up to fieldwork. Overall, in both sites, respondents report that the male development teams work better than the female ones. For illustration, according to the Kuyyu wereda health extension coordinator – whose work should directly engage the female structures – 'it cannot be said that it is active and doing well, it is more theoretical' (int.).[24] Meanwhile, one-to-five members note that they have not had a meeting – supposed to be every month – for at least a year.[25]

Performance of the male development teams is also highly variable, however. In Shamo Gado, several development team leaders and members noted that there have been no meetings for a long time now.[26] Several respondents reported that the performance of the development teams had reduced over time.[27] However, others argue that the structures have never really been operational.[28] For example, one male focus group respondent reported that:

> 'We know we are in the one-to-five team, but we never had a meeting. No one has communicated us and talked to us regarding our life, about agriculture or anything else … one-to-five is just there in name, but not active'. [29]

In some cases, variation may be explained by the territorial reach of the state, with the kebele officials responsible for organising the development teams rarely travelling to remote parts of the kebele they administer.[30] Respondents were also clear that people have lost interest in the structures and the demands that they make on people's time after years of regular and repetitive meetings.[31] However, the functioning of development teams also relates to political dynamics. In particular, the DA in Halelo Cerri noted that pressure from higher administrative levels to mobilise the development teams is particularly associated with elections and the key roles that these structures play at these times.[32]

Despite the limitations of the development teams at present, the regional government remains committed to their revival. Development teams and one-to-fives are seen as essential tools for service delivery and communication with the population.[33] In the words of a regional government official,

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[24] Interview respondent OMW5.
[25] Interview respondent OMF3.
[26] Interview respondents OMC1, OMF1.
[27] Interview respondents OMF1, OMZ1.
[28] Interview respondent OMF2.
[29] Interview respondent OMF2.
[30] Interview respondent OKK4.
[31] Interview respondents OKK7, OKK5.
[32] Interview respondent OMK1.
[33] Interview respondent OMZ3.

'we must rebuild them … they are essential for everything. Before we just assumed that things worked by themselves, but when these [development teams] disappear you realise how important they are'.[34]

Directing the state through performance evaluations

State infrastructural power depends not only on the territorial reach of the state, but also on the ability of the central state to direct the priorities of lower levels. A key means of doing this is the system of performance evaluation used to align workplans with key national priorities. As with the organisation of party-state structures, performance evaluation in the Oromiya sites is far more inconsistent than in Tigray.

Annual targets and plans are cascaded from federal government down through the region, zone and wereda to the kebele. Each kebele sector– agriculture, health, education and others – makes an annual workplan and submits this to the wereda for approval.[35] Kebele officials then submit progress reports and are assessed through *gim gema*[36] by both the kebele manager and the relevant sector at the wereda.[37] Kebele employees such as DAs and HEWs are given a grade reflecting their overall performance and ranked against each other. Throughout, there is a clear emphasis on quantifiable and measureable targets, such as the amount of fertiliser distributed or the land covered by watershed management works.

The primary reward for good performance is recognition and esteem. While in theory good performance should translate into promotion opportunities, this is not always the case. The DA in Shamo Gado believes that personal connections are more important determinants of promotion:

> 'Having the best assessments result does not guarantee you a promotion. More than your work assessment results, your personal networks and relations are effective to give you a promotion opportunity.'[38]

Kebele officials in both sites were unanimous that the regularity of performance assessment by the wereda and the pressure on them to meet performance targets had declined, with most highlighting the 2015 elections and the Oromo protests as the turning point.[39] Where evaluations do take place, kebele officials feel they are too rushed to be meaningful, 'They are just doing it to say that there has been gim gema'.[40]

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[34] Interview respondent OR1.
[35] Interview respondent OMW6.
[36] *Gim gema* was a system of assessment used by the TPLF throughout the civil war with the Derg, which was then extended to the entire party-state apparatus. Officials self-critique their performance in front of their superiors and those that they serve, and are then subject to critique by others. Criticism is a source of great embarrassment and can lead to replacement.
[37] Interview respondents OMK3, OKK4, OMW3.
[38] Interview respondent OMK1, also OMK3.
[39] Interview respondents OMK1, OMK4, OKK6.
[40] Interview respondent OMK4.

The system of target setting and performance evaluation at the kebele level is cascaded down to sub-kebele units. In Shamo Gado, where the zone administration is active, each zone, and the DA that is assigned to it, is given a ranking from A to C based on *gim gema.*[41] While, in theory, evaluations also apply to development teams, one-to-fives and households, they are largely dysfunctional at present. In the past, farmers and households were classified as champion farmers, models or non-models (and in Shamo Gado also an intermediate category – half-models) based on their adherence to state priorities regarding agricultural production and health extension. Model farmers were enrolled as party members, made leaders of development teams and one-to-fives and received preferential access to agricultural inputs. However, the population has not been re-assessed as models since 2012-13.[42]

Party-state legitimacy and relations with society

As elsewhere in Ethiopia, the EPRDF-affiliated OPDO and state structures are effectively fused and all but indistinguishable. State officials are responsible for both development and party political activities and almost all are party members. Even customary authorities in Oromiya have been partially co-opted by the party-state. While the OPDO has always struggled to secure popular legitimacy, the process of *encadrement* had provided an effective means of controlling the population. With the spread of the Oromo protests and the shift in national leadership in April 2018, the OPDO has been increasingly challenged.

The OPDO remains the only political party active in either kebele. All the kebele administration and council – totalling 190 members – are drawn exclusively from the OPDO. The OPDO has a similar structure in each kebele, with a 20-member *hunde dhaba* or 'party root' constituting the party executive committee, and party members organised into cells, each led by a member of the party root.[43] Though technically separate, the division between the development teams and the party cells is far from clear, with the names often used interchangeably. The kebele chair in Shamo Gado was clear that 'development teams and cells share the same membership – they both are members of OPDO. Thus, they cooperate in development activities'.[44] Meanwhile, according to the Halelo Cerri kebele manager, 'most of the OPDO members are model farmers and also all development team leaders are also members of OPDO while some are cell leaders'.[45] In addition to the party, there is a women's and a youth league described by the kebele manager as the 'wings of the OPDO', responsible both for ensuring the rights of the youth and women and for recruiting them for OPDO membership.[46] All government employees, such as DAs, HEWs and even the school principal, are party members and are responsible for delivering political messages to

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[41] Interview respondent OMK4.
[42] Interview respondents OMK4, OKK6.
[43] Interview respondents OMC2, OMK2, OMK3.
[44] Interview respondent OMK3.
[45] Interview respondent OKK6.
[46] Interview respondent OMK3.

the community, registering voters, encouraging them to vote and then acting as observers in voting stations. [47]

There are, however, signs of OPDO control weakening, particularly since the Oromo protests, with some extension workers cancelling their party membership.[48] The party-state's ability to mobilise the population has also clearly declined. This relates not just to the development teams and one-to-fives, but also to attendance at compulsory community meetings and participation in unpaid public works. Respondents from the kebele administration in each site admitted that people resented the imposition of regular, compulsory community meetings that was the norm in the past,[49] and that, as a result, the kebele have reduced the regularity of these meetings.[50]

In the majority of interviews and focus groups, respondents said that community members were free to speak openly in community meetings and to discuss government initiatives. However, others in Shamo Gado were more equivocal, arguing that only a minority feel comfortable raising their concerns in such settings:

> '25 percent of the community speaks freely. But in some cases people will keep silent, even if they are not satisfied with the wereda and kebele leadership'.[51]

Nonetheless, a widespread view among respondents is that any objections raised in these meetings are irrelevant, as no one listens to them anyway. For example:

> **'**A farmer's view is not given much weight. When any direction comes to the kebele we just accept it and work with it'. [52]

Fieldwork presented a contrast between the two sites regarding the ongoing reform process. In Halelo Cerri, respondents remained rather guarded about discussing politics, merely noting that the kebele party leadership had recently undergone a two-week training on 'deep reform' at the wereda. [53] In contrast, in Shamo Gado, government officials and community residents were keen to discuss politics and the reform process. Respondents expressed hope that change was coming as a result of changes at the regional and federal levels. For example, one focus group highlighted that previously any dissenting view would lead the government to 'label you as an opposition'. However, this has changed to some degree, 'because of the power reshuffle at the centre, in Oromiya we are getting a relief from such threats'.[54] Another

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[47] Interview respondents OMK1, OKK4, OKK5, OMK3.
[48] Interview respondent OMK4.
[49] Interview respondent OMK3.
[50] Interview respondent OKK1.
[51] Interview respondent OMC1.
[52] Interview respondent OMC1.
[53] Interview respondent OKK2.
[54] Interview respondent OMF2.

participant went on to accuse a member of the kebele militia also taking part in the focus group of such acts:

> 'Because of this change we do not fear to express our views and dissents anymore. Previously, if you speak against the kebele cabinet, they label you as OLF, they say you have "anti-government view". The kebele militia, including this guy [pointing to one of the FGD participants], used to harass you. Now that has decreased'.[55]

Likewise, one of the development team leaders expressed similar sentiments and a much greater sense of freedom to express opinions than in the past:

> 'Previously, if you speak or criticise the government, you will be labelled as OLF and you might end up in prison. So people were living in fear. But after Lemma became president, that fear was broken'.[56]

Beyond the party-state, customary authorities remain relatively important in Merti wereda in Arssi, though much less so in Kuyyu. In Merti, there is a clan federation, which is rooted in the *gadaa* system. Though this dates back to the Imperial era, in its current form it has been shaped by the local government structure, with federation committees established at kebele and wereda levels. Moreover, the current kebele chairman is also the *Aba Gadaa*, the secretary of the clan federation at kebele level and a member of the wereda federation. In Oromiya, as in other parts of Ethiopia, elders are expected to take a leading role in dispute resolution, before such cases reach the kebele administration or court system.[57] Indeed, in Shamo Gado kebele, community elders (*jarsa biya*) are certified by the state in order to act as elders.[58] As a result, customary leaders do not act as a fully independent source of authority that could challenge the state, as is the case in Afar.

Synthesis

This analysis of state infrastructural power in the two Oromiya sites reveals a situation in which the human and physical resource base of the state is broadly comparable to that in the two Tigray sites. While there are significant limitations in each region, the Oromiya and Tigray sites are considerably better resourced than those in Afar. Where Oromiya can be more clearly distinguished from Tigray is in relation to its stalled attempts to build the same party-state structures that have been more or less consolidated in Tigray. Unlike in Afar, considerable progress was made in creating the development teams, one-to-fives and party structures in Oromiya. However, as a result of the limited legitimacy of the party-state and its limited mobilisation capacity, these structures have never worked as effectively as they do in Tigray. Moreover, since the Oromo protests they have unravelled, with these sub-kebele structures increasingly

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[55] Focus group OMF2.
[56] Interview respondent OMZ1.
[57] Interview respondents OMC3, OKK6.
[58] Interview respondent OMC2.

falling out of use, the pressure for performance from higher levels of the state falling away and, more recently, the OPDO itself being openly questioned.

4. State infrastructural power and the distribution of the PSNP

This section builds on insights from preceding sections and focuses specifically on the PSNP. Here the key elements of local governance – state, party and neo-customary authorities – all combine to shape implementation. Research in the Oromiya sites finds that, in the past, the full extent of state infrastructural power was mobilised to support implementation and targeting in particular. The erosion of these structures, however, raises questions about future implementation.

Administrative structures and state capacity

In the Oromiya sites, the Kebele Food Security Taskforce and the Community Food Security Taskforce – according to the programme guidelines, what should be the two main committees responsible for programme administration – operate only at the beginning of a five-year PSNP phase, if at all. In practice, these committees are responsible for setting up the programme, including selecting participants, but are non-functional during operation, deferring day-to-day administration to the DAs. According to the kebele chair in Shamo Gado, the Kebele Food Security Taskforce, which should have overall responsibility for PSNP implementation, is 'nominal. Their work is covered by DAs and the agricultural office'.[59] Meanwhile, there is no Community Food Security Taskforce responsible for targeting. Instead, an ad hoc selection committee, comprising the kebele cabinet and women's league representative, is formed every five years to conduct selection. A similar picture is apparent in Halelo Cerri, where there has never been a Community Food Security Taskforce. Instead, the Kebele Food Security Taskforce conducted the participant selection, but this committee has also been non-functional since 2015.[60]

The Kebele Appeals Committee is another key part of implementation and should have an entirely separate membership from that of the other PSNP committees, enabling individuals to bring appeals to an independent committee, which was not involved in the original selection. In both Oromiya sites, however, membership of the Kebele Appeals Committee is a subset of the membership of the Kebele Food Security Taskforce, with the result that the same kebele cabinet officials adjudicating appeals were the ones responsible for the original selection.[61] As the DA in Halelo Cerri acknowledged, 'The Community Food Security Task force and Appeals Committee are one and the same'.[62]

As discussed above, while procedures for regular performance assessment of state officials have been established, these evaluations are becoming increasingly ad hoc. A similar pattern is observable with the PSNP. Indeed, a regional government

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[59] Interview respondent OMK3.
[60] Interview respondents OKK3, OKK6.
[61] Interview respondents OMK3, OKK6.
[62] Interview respondent OKK4.

respondent readily admitted that 'regular performance evaluation is not really implemented'.[63] Nonetheless, annual targets are set for officials responsible for the PSNP, notably the DAs. These targets relate primarily to the productive dimensions of the programme, in line with the dominant emphasis at national level and, to a degree, to the efficient distribution of transfers – for example, the timeliness of payments. The principal targets in these plans are graduation rates, as discussed below, and infrastructure produced through public works, with the PSNP seen as a key resource to implement development plans.[64] In contrast, there is no attempt to evaluate the accuracy of the targeting, graduation or appeals processes that the DAs oversee.

Another set of key actors in PSNP implementation, albeit one that is entirely absent from the programme implementation manual, is the development teams and one-to-five networks. As in Tigray, these structures play a central role in PSNP implementation. This includes participant selection, identification of graduates from PSNP support and organisation of public works. While the functioning of the development teams has deteriorated markedly, these structures were active when selection was last carried out in 2015. The involvement of development teams and one-to-fives in targeting is not limited to the particular kebele covered in fieldwork, with wereda, regional and federal government officials acknowledging this role.[65] The DA in Halelo Cerri stated that the rationale for involving the development teams is to overcome the limited territorial reach of the state and the inability of state officials to assess who is more in need of support:

> 'As we [kebele officials] cannot differentiate the poor from the rich, the process of screening has been conducted by them [development teams]'.[66]

This statement underscores the general view amongst respondents across levels of government and within communities that community residents have the most detailed knowledge about the wealth and poverty of individual households. As a regional government respondent acknowledged:

> 'The community knows each other better than me or anyone else. The figure is allocated to that kebele and then to the community. They know each other and choose'.[67]

By implication, the state, even at the lowest formal administrative level of the kebele, is still too distant from most households to have sufficiently accurate and detailed knowledge of their circumstances. The zones, development teams and one-to-fives are therefore a means of mobilising community knowledge for the requirements of state infrastructural power. Numerous respondents highlighted this function of the sub-kebele structures, for example:

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[63] Interview respondent OR1.
[64] Interview respondent OMW3.
[65] Interview respondents OMW4, OR1, EG3.
[66] Interview respondent OKK4.
[67] Interview respondent OR1.

> 'The development teams and one-to-fives participate in the screening at the zonal level; since they know each other well, they suggest people who should be included in the programme'.[68]

The exact selection process varies between and within kebele. Development team leaders propose households from their teams, with or without the participation of the rest of the team.[69] The lists are then passed to the zone and on to the kebele.[70] When the list reaches the Kebele Food Security Taskforce, it is vetted and approved at a community meeting. In Halelo Cerri, the process is further decentralised, with each unit allocated a quota of PSNP places to fill. According to the DA,

> 'The KFSTF divides up the quota for each zone. The quota for the zone is next divided up among the development teams'.[71]

As with the selection of PSNP participants, when participants are assessed for graduation, development team leaders, who are thought to be knowledgeable about their members, are responsible for suggesting those ready to graduate. [72] Development teams and one-to-fives are also used to mobilise PSNP participants for public works and to check attendance. Indeed, the dependence on the one-to-fives for the PSNP and other services was highlighted as another limitation to the appeals process. In effect, people can only make appeals to the same structures that created the problem in the first place:

> 'In the kebele there are one-to-fives. They are basic structures. Following one-to-fives, there come zones, kebele and wereda, with broader coverage and larger members, respectively. These structures work hand-in-glove in the screening and selection process. They make all justices and injustices together. So the poor have nowhere to go for appeals'.[73]

In Tigray, both male and female development teams are actively involved in PSNP selection (Lavers, Abrha et al. forthcoming). In Oromiya, in contrast, only the male development teams identify PSNP and emergency relief participants.[74] This may be partly due to the dysfunction of women's teams. However, it is also likely related to the designation of the PSNP as an agricultural programme, falling under the Ministry of Agriculture and the male-focused agricultural extension programme. In contrast, women's roles are normally associated with the domestic sphere, something that is only reinforced by emphasis on health and sanitation within the female development teams.

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[68] Interview respondent OMZ3, a zone leader.
[69] Interview respondents OMF5, OMF7.
[70] Interview respondents OMW6, OKK3, OKW5, OKZ1.
[71] Interview respondent OKK4.
[72] Interview respondents OKK4, OKZ1, OMF8.
[73] Interview respondent OMF8.
[74] Interview respondents OMK1, OKK4, OKK6.

Female-headed households should be included in both the female and male development teams, with the result that both male- and female-headed households should have some input into PSNP selection. At best, this excludes women living within male-headed households, who might well have quite different insights into the needs and vulnerabilities of households to men. However, participation of female-headed households in the male development teams is limited in practice. The burden of income generation, care responsibilities and participation in development teams all fall on the female head of household. It is unsurprising that attendance from female-headed households is poor and their voice in selection is limited. In the words of one male development team leader:

> 'Most of the time they [female household heads] miss the meetings or delegate their young children. Even when some kind of support that targets women comes from a certain NGO, the identification is done either by the kebele officials or male development team. The role of women in the identification process is very limited'.[75]

In this respect, the stipulation that Kebele Food Security Taskforces must have a women's representative is important. In Oromiya, as in the other regions covered in this study, the women's and youth representatives are routinely the head or a representative of the women's or youth league affiliated to the ruling party.[76] Through this involvement, the women's and youth leagues are brought into the selection process, with the responsibility for ensuring that their constituents are adequately represented in the list of participants put forward for approval at the community verification meeting.

The other main set of actors involved in PSNP implementation are elders and neo-customary leaders. The regional government has actively sought to bring these groups into implementation as a means of enhancing the fairness and legitimacy of the process. This mirrors a trend in Oromiya, in which the regional government has sought to utilise the comparatively strong legitimacy of neo-customary actors to improve service delivery (Lavers 2017). The regional government considers elders and *Aba Gadaa* particularly important in the appeals process, since they have the authority to counterbalance officials involved in the original section,[77]) and elders are routinely included on these committees.[78]

The involvement of elders is justified, since they are considered by the Halelo Cerri kebele manager to 'do the selection with honesty … [without them] the selection process will not be fair, it might be done with dishonesty'.[79] For others, however, their value lies more in the degree to which people respect and even fear them. According to the DA in Shamo Gado:

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[75] Interview respondent OKZ1.
[76] Interview respondents OMK1, OKK4.
[77] Interview respondent OR1.
[78] Interview respondents OMK1, OMF7, OKK4, OKK6.
[79] Interview respondent OKK6.

'… people are inclined to select as many people as they can from their zone, and also to include their friends or relatives. The involvement of the religious leaders is important to avoid such kind of problems. People respect the elders and religious fathers and are afraid of their cursing, so they will not misuse their power'.[80]

Targeting and quotas

The PSNP Programme Implementation Manual provides 'basic' and 'supplementary' eligibility criteria to be used in targeting. However, the assumption is that under community-based targeting, the community should adapt these to the specific circumstances of their community.[81] In practice, respondents involved in selection report using very similar criteria to those in the implementation manual, namely access to off-farm employment, landholdings, livestock holdings, female-headed households and elderly and other vulnerable households.[82] Nonetheless, the PSNP quota passed down to the wereda government, and on to the kebele and sub-kebele units, is widely considered to be insufficient, given community needs. In turn, this translates into pressure on kebele officials to expand access and to cover a broad section of the population. This is perhaps particularly acute in Merti wereda, where, as discussed below, programme coverage has significantly reduced in recent years.

The common approach to the shortage of PSNP resources in the two Oromiya sites, as in most cases covered by the project, is for officials to spread available resources as widely as possible. Not only is this in tension with the targeting logic in the PSNP, but it is also contrary to the PSNP graduation model, which seeks to concentrate resources on a small number of households, to enable them to build up household assets and become self-sufficient. This watering down of PSNP transfers has long been an issue. During PSNP3, the full family targeting rule was introduced, requiring all members of a household to be included in a programme, precisely to sharpen the targeting and potential contribution to graduation. Nevertheless, this rule was never implemented at local level, with fewer places allocated per household in order to extend the number of households participating. The rule in PSNP4 that every member of a PSNP household should be covered, up to a cap of a maximum of five places, was an attempt to 'formalise what was already happening'.[83] Nonetheless, the reality is that this rule is still not being applied. Only a small minority of the PSNP participants that participated in focus groups were receiving the correct amount, with most receiving considerably fewer than five places,[84] while wereda officials in both sites acknowledged that this was a common situation.[85]

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[80] Interview respondent OMK1.
[81] Consequently, quantitative analysis could only assess whether a PSNP household is worse or better off than another excluded from the programme, not whether the PSNP is accurately targeted, since the targeting criteria are, by definition, subjective.
[82] Interview respondents OKK4, OMK1, OKK4, OKK6, OKZ1.
[83] Interview respondent ED19.
[84] Interview respondents OMF6, OMF7, OKF5, OKF7.
[85] Interview respondents OKW5, OMW3.

In part, this broad distribution is the result of individual state officials being embedded within the communities in which they work. As well as being state officials, many are also members of their communities, making it very difficult socially to apply targeting criteria objectively, given the widespread needs that exist. However officials also pointed to the logistical difficulty of identifying those most in need, when – by any criteria – a large section of the communities is extremely poor. In the words of the Shamo Gado DA:

> 'it is very difficult to differentiate between households, since majority of them are the same, poor ... Since majority of the households in the kebele are very poor, we have decided to distribute the support by giving only for two or three members within a household'.[86]

In theory, there is a clear division between the PSNP and emergency relief, reflecting the distinction drawn between chronic and transitory food insecurity addressed by the PSNP and emergency assistance, respectively. In reality, this dividing line is very blurred, with many people who require regular support excluded from the PSNP and in receipt of emergency support. In addition, the same structures – the kebele administration, DAs, zones, development teams and one-to-fives – are responsible for distributing both the PSNP and emergency relief. The result is that the distribution of the PSNP and emergency assistance is closely linked. The principle shaping distribution of resources is clearly stated by the DA in Shamo Gado:

> 'The supports are spread to try to reach as many households as possible. Those in the PSNP are excluded from the contingency support and emergency relief support'.[87]

This approach is very different from the PSNP's rationale, which emphasises narrow targeting. It also constitutes a subversion of the rationale of the emergency assistance. Yet this more universalistic approach clearly resonates with the views of at least some in the community, who see little difference between the incomes of different members of the community and consider the exclusion of some people who are in need to be immoral. As one participant put it, 'I don't think it is right to give to few people only. I cannot say that I should eat and others should die starving'.[88]   Rather than emergency assistance being allocated to those facing annual shocks, emergency assistance supplements the PSNP, which is unable to cover the large number of people facing regular food shortages.

Beyond the inadequacy of the support, there is a widespread perception in Shamo Gado kebele and, indeed, in Merti wereda more broadly, that the targeting process has been manipulated by the local administration. According to respondents, the targeting

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[86] Interview respondent OMK1.
[87] Interview respondent OMK1.
[88] Focus group OKF7.

process in Shamo Gado is far worse than that in Halelo Cerri or any other kebele covered by this research. While the methodology used in this study is not in a position to assess the accuracy of targeting, there are clearly problems with the targeting process and, moreover, the perception of illegitimacy. PSNP participants and non-participants, customary leaders, former kebele officials, development team leaders and members of the selection committee were all consistent in their claims that the targeting process is manipulated to the benefit of the kebele administration and those connected to them, to the detriment of the poorest households in the community.[89] These respondents included a former kebele chair and leader of the local OPDO, as well as one of the zone leaders, both of whom were convinced that the current kebele administration takes bribes in order to allocate PSNP places and that they favour their own family and networks in the allocation of places.[90]

As discussed above, the PSNP selection committee is certainly not operating as intended. In addition, however, two members of the committees said that they were regularly not informed about meetings on selection and excluded from the decision making process, so that the kebele administration can control the process.[91] According to one member of the Kebele Food Security Taskforce,

> 'Targeting is influenced by personal relationships, there are people included in the programme by the friendship they have with those people in the KFSTF … in this kebele, there is dishonesty and corruption. People who deserve to be included in the programme are being excluded for those reasons, there are people who can't even feed themselves and their families. But those who have land and cows are included in the programme, the selection process is not done with honesty'.[92]

Another concern is that neo-customary leaders are excluded from decision making, offering little oversight in practice. Several elders in Shamo Gado kebele disputed that elders had any influence. Instead, their names were included on the list of committee members by the kebele administration to lend a veneer of legitimacy to the process, but they were not consulted in making the decisions. In the words of one elder in Shamo Gado kebele:

> 'Elders and religious fathers were supposed to help in the programme so that there won't be nepotism … but the elders are not consulted when the targeting takes place'.[93]

Graduation and the dangers of state infrastructural power

From its inception, a central objective of the PSNP has been to promote graduation. Initially, the assumption was that all participants would quickly achieve food security

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[89] Interview respondents OMC1, OMF5, OMF7, OMF8.
[90] Interview respondents OMZ3, OMC2.
[91] Interview respondent OMF5.
[92] Interview respondent OMK5.
[93] Interview respondent OMC2.

and graduate from state support. While the government's ideological commitments have weakened over time, the commitment to graduation as a sign of progress clearly remains (Lavers forthcoming). A regional government representative was clear in this respect, comparing the PSNP to a parent taking care of a child:

> 'Here in Ethiopia, when a baby is eight to nine months we take their hands and hold them up and help them to walk. This is like the PSNP. But a parent doesn't do this forever! Eventually you have to let go and let them walk'.[94]

The PSNP's graduation model relies on a set of complementary initiatives intended to boost household production. PSNP public works aim to expand community infrastructure and thereby provide greater economic opportunities for households. In addition, livelihoods programmes[95] aim to boost household production and enable PSNP participants to move towards self-sufficiency and graduation.

One challenge to graduation in Oromiya dates back to 2010-15, when regions were allocated a combined budget for capital-intensive infrastructure investments and revolving credit funds. While other regions used most of the money to establish revolving credit funds, in Oromiya 80 percent of the budget was invested in an irrigation scheme in Fentale wereda and a water project in Borana.[96] Respondents suggest that these infrastructure projects have not been particularly successful. Moreover, the result is that credit for PSNP participants – a central aspect of the graduation model – remains extremely limited to the present day. A regional government respondent estimated that at most 25 percent of PSNP participants have access to credit.[97] This has been compounded by the low repayment rates for loans, with the result that there is currently little to no credit available in either site.[98]

Despite the failings of key parts of the graduation strategy – both the failure to concentrate PSNP transfers on a small group of households and the dysfunctional nature of the livelihoods component – the state is still heavily promoting graduation in Oromiya, as elsewhere. The national development strategy, the Growth and Transformation Plan I (2010-15), set the target of 80 percent graduation, effectively leaving just direct support recipients. Ambitious plans at federal level translate into strong pressure on lower levels of the state to implement, with targets incorporated into performance evaluations for state officials, down to the DAs at kebele level. While, in principle, graduation is supposed to be evidence based, the result is strong pressure on government officials to graduate participants, regardless of their ability to support themselves.

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[94] Interview respondent OR1.
[95] Previously the standalone Household Asset Building Programme, this has now been incorporated into the PSNP.
[96] Interview respondents OR1, ED26.
[97] Interview respondent OR1.
[98] Interview respondents OMW1, OMW4, OKW3.

Slow progress with graduation in Oromiya, as a result of the failure of the large-scale projects mentioned above, accentuated pressure in the run-up to 2015:

'Amhara and Tigray were frequently graduating people in PSNP3. We were ashamed because we were not graduating people'.[99]

While there seems to have been an acceptance within government that the 80 percent graduation target (like most other targets) would not be met, there was a huge push to show that significant progress had been made. As noted by the Merti wereda agricultural bureau,

'We had graduated 60 percent of the beneficiaries by 2006 [Ethiopian calendar, 2014 Gregorian] because the government and higher officials of the programme forced us. The plan was set by them and we were supposed to implement it. As a result, the graduation was not done according to the programme implementation manual. Rather, we just selected 60 percent of our beneficiaries without considering their status. The benchmark [for asset ownership] was 17,000 birr and most of the graduates were not self-sufficient'.[100]

A similar process that disregarded any evidence of progress was described by the wereda deputy administrator:

'Mass graduation happened at the time by political motive. The PSNP management was ordered to graduate the mentioned number of people by higher authorities and they implemented it without considering the real conditions of the beneficiaries'.[101]

When pressured by higher levels of government, the wereda passes on graduation targets to the kebele under their authority. In particular, the DAs are set targets for graduation, on which their performance and promotion prospects are assessed. While DAs have no desire to withdraw support from those in need, they face strong pressure from above to do so. As the DA in Shamo Gado kebele noted,

'Every year we are asked to make targets of graduation. Even though we know that people are less likely to improve and graduate out of the support, we give the wereda agriculture bureau a certain number because it is must to make targets'.[102]

The PSNP in Merti wereda has been drastically cut in recent years, through imposed graduation targets from 17,615 in 2005 and 18,619 in 2010, to the present figure of

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[99] Interview respondent OR1.
[100] Interview respondent OMW4.
[101] Interview respondent OMW3.
[102] Interview respondent OMK1.

5,081.[103] While the reduction in support in Kuyyu wereda has been much less severe, the same process has driven graduation there:

> 'each year a quota of people to be released from the programme is set by the wereda'.[104]

The 'graduates' themselves, meanwhile, have been given no indication as to why they have graduated from the programme and, not unreasonably, view the process as arbitrary.[105] Government officials readily admit that the withdrawal of support from those unable to support themselves has increased food insecurity and led to great hardship and many now receive emergency relief.[106] The pressure for graduation is also one reason why support has been spread more thinly, as discussed above. The DA in Shamo Gado was quite clear that this was a deliberate strategy to maintain some support to all households in need:

> 'rather than excluding households, we used a strategy of reducing the number of beneficiary individuals from each household. If we exclude a household, they will be in danger'.[107]

Under PSNP4 (2015-20), there remains a target of 80 percent graduation. Nonetheless, the pressure from the federal government for graduation has been much less. This is largely due to the severe El Niño in 2014-16, which disrupted rainfall, leading to a serious food crisis across the Horn of Africa.[108] In Oromiya, a further challenge was the Oromo protests and the large-scale displacement of ethnic Oromo from the Somali border in 2018. Under such circumstances, any reduction in government support would be very difficult, as noted by the Oromiya regional government in early 2018:

> 'At the moment, there are big challenges. The instability, it holds your attention, it is hard to focus on development. Then there is the instability and displaced population from Somali. So the issue of graduation is still light, we cannot insist that the wereda graduate people at the moment'.[109]

However, the desire for graduation and the need to maintain a sense of progress remains. With relatively good rains in 2018, a federal government respondent noted the aim to 'start graduation again'.[110] This, in turn, translates into pressure from the federal to regional government:

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[103] Interview respondent OMW4.
[104] Interview respondent OKK4.
[105] Interview respondents OMF5, OMF8.
[106] Interview respondents OMW3, OMW4.
[107] Interview respondent OMK1.
[108] Interview respondent EG3.
[109] Interview respondent OR1.
[110] Interview respondent EG3.

'We frequently get questions from the federal level – where is your progress on graduation? This year we have been set a target of 11,140 households for graduation, but there is no tangible progress … Until now 149 households have been identified for graduation. There is resistance from the wereda level. They say that the people are not ready, they need more time and we don't want to insist'.[111]

In the current political context of fragmenting federal control, greater regional autonomy and the weakening of top-down performance assessments, there are clear indications that regional, wereda and kebele administrations are less inclined to acquiesce to federal initiatives and unreasonably ambitious targets than they were in the past. During fieldwork, each of these administrations had been set graduation targets, yet the majority of respondents at wereda and kebele level were adamant that they would not follow them. The DA in Halelo Cerri kebele, for example, was clear that:

'Last year the kebele was told to graduate five people – however, we told to the wereda the people in the programme are not better off and couldn't graduate'.[112]

Graduation targets are also then passed down to the development team leaders, who occupy an especially difficult position as representatives of the party-state in their neighbourhood, but also members of that community. At times, these team leaders have also resisted the arbitrary nature of graduation:

'I was ordered by letter to screen beneficiaries who were said to be ready to graduate. They also gave me a list of beneficiaries they believed were ready to graduate. But some of the beneficiaries did not meet the criteria … I quarrelled with them [the kebele administration] over the issue'.[113]

The case studies demonstrate that the mass graduation achieved in 2010-15 had little to do with the effectiveness of the PSNP's graduation model, but rather the strength of state infrastructural power and the ability – at that time – of the regional state to impose graduation targets on lower-level officials. In the subsequent fourth phase of the programme, there has been some easing of the pressure for graduation. Perhaps even more importantly, however, the erosion of state infrastructural power has weakened the ability of the federal government to impose targets while regional and local government officials are more willing to contest them.

Pursuing development through public works

DAs oversee public works and a key part of DAs' performance targets relate to the community infrastructure constructed through public works activities. These

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[111] Interview respondent OR1.
[112] Interview respondent OKK4.
[113] Interview respondent OMF8.

infrastructure targets are calculated based on the number of PSNP public works participants and the daily targets set for each public works participant.[114]

The main activities undertaken by the PSNP public works are road construction, terracing and watershed management in Halelo Cerri[115] and terracing, construction of check dams and maintenance of kebele buildings in Shamo Gado.[116] Development teams and one-to-fives are responsible for mobilising individuals to engage in public works and monitoring attendance.

A significant challenge, particularly noted in Shamo Gado, is that there is insufficient labour to meet infrastructure targets. The wereda not only provides a quota for PSNP places, but, contrary to programme guidelines, also passes down a quota for the places in public works and direct support. The result is that too few direct support places are available and many who are unable to work are expected to engage in public works. According to the DA:

> 'of 74 people incorporated in the public work PSNP, not more than 25 are able to work on the public work requirements … The quota for the direct support and public work is assigned by the wereda – had it been our mandate, we would have included all of the PSNP recipients under direct support, because all of them are weak, old and unhealthy individuals, who could not work in the field. We asked the wereda to make all the PSNP beneficiaries under direct support, but they refused'.[117]

The shortage of able-bodied public works participants in turn creates a problem for the Das, since their community infrastructure targets are calculated based on the number of public works participants. The result is an inability to meet targets and a significant tension between the productive and protective rationales of the programme:

> 'the target was set with an assumption that the PSNP public work guys would work on that. But the problem in our kebele is the majority of the people in the PSNP public work scheme are weak, unhealthy and non-productive, who should have been in the direct support … we receive criticism from the wereda agriculture bureau that we are always behind other kebele on the public works'.[118]

One consequence is that labour-constrained households, who should really be in direct support, sometimes send children to engage in public works. Child labour has been highlighted as an issue for some time (Sharp et al. 2006, Tafere and Woldehanna 2012) and the DAs in the two sites were clear that this remains a problem:

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[114] Interview respondents OMK1, OKK4.
[115] Interview respondent OKK4.
[116] Interview respondent OMK1.
[117] Interview respondent OMK1.
[118] Interview respondent OMK1.

'Young boys less than 13 years come to work on the field, which is not right. They come to work in place of their old and sick parents'.[119]

Implementation guidelines also include provisions intended to support women specifically. These acknowledge that women play by far the greatest role in social reproduction within the household and so should work reduced hours in the PSNP, while pregnant women should be temporarily included in direct support and exempted from labour-intensive public works from three months of pregnancy until one year post-partum. Though these provisions do not attempt to challenge social norms which emphasise women's roles in the domestic sphere, they are intended to reduce their work burden and provide additional protection during and after pregnancy.

Implementation of these provisions varies by site. In Shamo Gado, the reduced workload for women does seem to be implemented. When DAs calculate their targets for community infrastructure, the expected daily targets for men are halved for women, though there is no difference in the type of work done by men and women.[120] In contrast, there is no difference in the tasks, hours or workload allocated to men and women in Halelo Cerri, contrary to programme guidelines.[121] Meanwhile, HEWs have access to pregnancy tests and will issue a certificate of pregnancy to PSNP workers that exempts them from public works requirements.[122] Where functional, women's one-to-fives and development teams are also expected to play a role in early identification of pregnant women and their referral to the HEWs.[123] The only examples found during fieldwork were correctly treated, with women exempted from public works.

PSNP within party–state–society relationships

In Oromiya, party and state are fused, while in recent years the party-state's hegemonic encadrement project has unravelled, with increasingly open questioning of ruling party legitimacy. In this context, the role that the PSNP plays within relations between the party-state and society is important. Even within a somewhat more open political climate, following Abiy's selection in April 2018, confronting these sensitive topics with respondents in the context of widespread uncertainty about the future was not easy. Nonetheless, a number of key themes emerged from discussions.

First, the PSNP is commonly viewed by those included and excluded from the programme as an exchange of support from the state for a commitment to work hard, build individual self-reliance and contribute to community and national development. A fairly typical response was that:

'in return [for support] the government expects the society to behave well and work for development plus to feed his/her family'.[124]

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[119] Interview respondent OMK1, also OKK4.
[120] Interview respondents OMK1, OMF6, OMF7.
[121] Interview respondent OKK4.
[122] Interview respondents OMK1, OMK4, OKK4.
[123] Interview respondent OKW4.
[124] Interview respondent OKF6.

Not inconsistent with this narrative, some respondents viewed the programme more precisely as direct payment for labour.[125]

Donors, and in particular the World Bank, have promoted a social accountability component of the programme, including outlining the rights and responsibilities of PSNP clients on their ID cards. However, no respondents considered the PSNP to be a right. Indeed, the only mention of rights was by government officials, who considered this to be equivalent to charity, dependency and an unwillingness to work. As such, rights and gifts are seen as synonymous and in direct opposition to the productive rationale of the programme:

> 'Majority of the beneficiaries assume that it is a gift given by the government. Some even resist when we try to cut down the number of beneficiaries in their household. They say we are denying their right, when we are incorporating only a limited number of beneficiaries'.[126]

In a very few cases, PSNP participants noted feeling ashamed or embarrassed to be receiving support and that this, in turn, was a motivation to achieve self-sufficiency. Such sentiments are entirely consistent with the government's framing of food insecurity as a source of 'painful national disgrace' (MoI 2002: 10) and the constant pressure for graduation and progress:

> 'No one wants to be supported every day. No one wants to shame himself in front of others'. [127]

Nonetheless, it is notable that access to the PSNP, even in the politically charged setting of Oromiya in 2018, does not appear to be shaped by party politics. In a context in which several respondents were emboldened to criticise the ruling party, locally and sometimes nationally, there was an acceptance that the EPRDF is responsible for the programme and that it was one of the positive things that the government has done. Moreover, there was no suggestion that government had sought to buy popular support through selective distribution of the PSNP, as has been the intention in some other country settings:

> 'The current ruling party should be thanked for the fact that it has tried its best to support the poor so that they can better their life situations ... these can be taken as positive fruits of the current government. Therefore, it should be thanked for this'.[128]

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[125] Interview respondent OMZ1.
[126] Interview respondent OMK1.
[127] Interview respondent OKF7.
[128] Interview respondent OMF8.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the politics of distributing social transfers in Oromiya, with a particular focus on the influence of state infrastructural power. The infrastructural power of the fused party-state in Oromiya has waxed and waned over the past three decades. A massive extension of *encadrement* under the EPRDF, building on the foundations laid by the Derg, greatly enhanced state infrastructural power, providing the federal government with the administrative apparatus to reach down to the household level, as well as a system of performance evaluation that provided significant control over the day-to-day activities of lower-level officials. The Oromo protests that gathered pace from 2014 onwards, and the political transformation of Oromiya and Ethiopia, meanwhile, have resulted in a counter-movement, eroding the control of the state and state infrastructural power.

Specifically in terms of the PSNP, strong state infrastructural power has played a vital role in PSNP implementation – for good and bad. On the one hand, sub-kebele structures, such as development teams and one-to-five networks, have been central mechanisms of mobilising the local population in PSNP implementation, including selection of programme participants, selection of graduates and organisation of public works. On the other, the central control enabled by strong state infrastructural power has been used to impose graduation quotas on lower-level state officials, in order to meet national targets. Mass graduation between 2010 and 2015 appears to have ignored the reality of food insecurity, undermining the programme's protective role in order to fit with its productive framing.

Recent political changes in Oromiya have served to erode the process of *encadrement* and, with it, state infrastructural power. While the weakening of the coercive power of the central state that led to the graduation of vulnerable and food insecure people is to be welcomed, the weakening of state infrastructural power also brings challenges. The PSNP is widely praised elsewhere for its relatively effective implementation in terms of delivery of transfers and targeting. Yet, the successes of the programme also rely on the strong state infrastructural power built under the EPRDF. The erosion of this implementation capacity presents risks for future delivery of the PSNP, as well as service delivery more generally. Meanwhile, the emergence of the qerroo as an influential force in local politics in some parts of the region raises questions about their ability to re-shape local resource distribution.

Seen in the comparative context of the project, the Oromiya cases represent a distinct situation to that in Tigray and Afar. In Tigray, the EPRDF project of encadrement has reached its pinnacle in terms of the degree to which individuals are incorporated into party-state structures. The limited degree to which the wave of political transformation has reached Tigray to date means that the infrastructural power of the state in Tigray remains relatively unchallenged. In contrast, in Afar, the project of encadrement remains at a formative stage. State-building in Afar is a relatively recent phenomenon and the expansion of state infrastructural power has continued to work with and through local clan structures, severely constraining the state as a result. In Oromiya,

an intensive process of state-building through encadrement under successive regimes consolidated state control in this 'highland periphery', yet under the EPRDF the party-state continued to lack local legitimacy. The ongoing political transformation within the EPRDF and Ethiopian politics has now brought Oromo politicians to the centre of political power in the country, while also weakening the coercive power of the state. Great uncertainty remains as to the direction of political reform and, with it, the infrastructural power of the state.

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Annex: Interview respondents

EG3, Head of food security directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Addis Ababa, October 2015, March 2018, June 2018, June 2019.

OR1, Head of PSNP, Bureau of Agriculture, Addis Ababa, January 2018, June 2018, June 2019.

OR2, Health extension expert, Bureau of Health, Addis Ababa, July 2018.

OKW1, Administrator, Kuyyu wereda, Kuyyu, March 2018.

OKW2, CBHI coordinator, Kuyyu wereda, Kuyyu, March 2018.

OKW3, DRMC office, Kuyyu wereda, Kuyyu, March 2018.

OKW4, Health extension coordinator, Kuyyu wereda, Kuyyu, March 2018.

OKW5, Food security desk, Kuyyu wereda, Kuyyu, March 2018.

OKK1, Commander, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKK2, Cabinet information officer, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKK3, Female Kebele Food Security Taskforce member, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKK4, Development agent, Halelo Cerri kebele, March and July 2018.

OKK5, HEWs, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKK6, Manager, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKK7, Party leader, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKK8, Female development agent, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKZ1, Development team leader, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKC1, Elder, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKI1, Male resident, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKF5, Focus group with female PSNP participants, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKF6, Focus group with female PSNP non-participants, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKF7, Focus group with male PSNP participants, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKF8, Focus group with male PSNP non-participants, Halelo Cerri kebele, March 2018.

OKF9, Focus group with men, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OKF10, Focus group with women, Halelo Cerri kebele, July 2018.

OMW1, Agri-business team, Merti wereda, Abomsa, May 2018.

OMW2, CBHI coordinator, Merti wereda, Abomsa, May 2018.

OMW3, Deputy administrator, Merti wereda, Abomsa, May 2018.

OMW4, Food security desk, Merti wereda, Abomsa, May 2018.

OMW5, Health extension coordinator, Merti wereda, Abomsa, May 2018.

OMW6, Cabinet member assigned to Shamo Gado kebele, Merti wereda, Abomsa, May 2018.

OMK1, Development agent, Shamo Gado kebele, May and June 2018.
OMK2, Party leader and militia leader, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMK3, Chair and manager, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMK4, HEWs, Shamo Gado kebele, May and June 2018.
OMK5, Female Kebele Food Security Taskforce member, May 2018.

OMZ1, Male development team leaders, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMZ2, Female development team leaders, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMZ3, Zone leader, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMZ4, Female development team leader, June 2018.

OMC1, Elder, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMC2, Elder, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMC3, Clan leader, Shamo Gado kebele, June 2018.

OMN1, Iddir leader, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.

OMI1, Male resident, Shamo Gado kebele, June 2018.

OMF5, Focus group with female PSNP non-participants, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMF6, Focus group with female PSNP participants, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMF7, Focus group with male PSNP participants, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMF8, Focus group with male PSNP non-participants, Shamo Gado kebele, May 2018.
OMF9, Focus group with female participants, Shamo Gado kebele, June 2018.
OMF10, Focus group with male participants, Shamo Gado kebele, June 2018.

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