Displacement and Survivance: Oromo Organizing and Urban Planning in Addis Ababa (Finfinne) and Minneapolis

by

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Abstract

The role of independent media within Urban Planning is deeply important as it provides a contrasting perspective to the government narrative. In Ethiopia censorship is the norm so members of the public are limited in what they can say on planning issues as going against the government can be seen threat. Diaspora media outlets such as the Oromo Media Network (OMN) play a critical role in amplifying the voices of people that are organizing against the state driven development which seeks to destroy their livelihoods. The Oromo protest movement lead by the Qeerroo (Unmarried young person) against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan was transnational stretching to Oromo street in City of Minneapolis. This paper draws upon a diverse set of literature to argue that the creation of Oromo Street is an instance of post-colonial space making, as the Oromo who had been invisible within the Ethiopian Empire are now visible in the City of Minneapolis. The paper examines the intangible cultural assets of Oromo Street through a community mapping project that shares pictures and stories of Oromo members of the Minneapolis community. It also assesses City of Minneapolis Official Plan 2040 and how it can uplift the Oromo community's cultural heritage.

FOREWORD

This major paper culminates my Master's in Environmental Studies, with a specialization in the Planning Stream. My research is focused on the role of diaspora independent media OMN (Oromo Media Network) in amplifying voices of Qeerroo (Unmarried young person) who are organizing against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan, which seeks to destroy livelihoods of Oromo farmers. It also shines a light on the intangible cultural assets of Oromo street in Minneapolis and its role as post-colonial space. It was important for me to research this topic because there were many students that lost their lives fighting against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and I did not want their sacrifices to go unheard of. It important that there is an independent media within planning process because the government is not in the business of advocating against their short comings.

The topics covered by this paper satisfy the following learning objectives and components:

1.1 **Learning Objective:** To develop a deep understanding of the variety of planning perspectives related to urban change with global and local perspectives.

2.1 **Learning Objective:** To develop a strong working knowledge of theories behind capitalist-driven processes in urban expansion.

2.2 **Learning Objective:** To gain a working knowledge of the different tactics used in resistance against urban expansion while also examining models of negotiation which can have positive outcomes.

2.3 **Learning Objective:** To develop a deeper understanding of the Oromo protest social movement against the Addis Ababa Master Plan led by the Oromo youth movement called *Qeerroo* which translates in English as young bachelors.

2. **Learning Component:** Urban Expansion and Resistance is explored in Chapter 2 (Cultural Flows and Resistance Through Independent Media) and Chapter 3 (Oromo Post-Colonial Planning in Minneapolis). These chapters provided a foundational understanding of the Oromo Protest Movement resistance against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and the transnational organizing that happened against it within the City of Minneapolis.

The knowledge and experiences that I have gained through the MES Program have prepared me to be a candidate for the Ontario Professional Planners Institute. The opportunity to have an internship at DiamondCorp and work on courses material that were

related to my research topic provided me with the necessary tools to be a great professional planner.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my late brother, Roba Osman. I started my academic career with you alive and still live by your principles to this day. Even though your life was taken tragically from us, this paper is a part of your Sadaqah Jariyah which is a gift that not only benefits others in this life but also benefits us and our loved ones in the next. Thank you for your support, guidance and love.

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un - Indeed, to Allah we belong and to Allah we shall return.

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Introduction

The country of Ethiopia is famously known as being one of two African countries that have not been colonized. People living within western society are familiar with Ethiopia through its coffee, which many find at their local Starbucks, but it also has a rich history as a country that is tied to the more than 80 ethnic groups that call it home (US Department of State, 2022, "SYSTEMIC RACIAL OR ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION", para 113). The Oromo people are the largest ethnic group in the country, with over 30 million people. Oromo people have been historically marginalized throughout the formation of the Ethiopian state. The Oromo lands were colonized by the Abyssinian Empire in 1889, who would go on to ban Oromo traditional gatherings and festivals in order to control and assimilate them into the empire (Tufa, 2010, p.31). It would not be until the fall of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), also known as Derg, in 1991, that the Oromo would gain the ability to have their culture openly accepted, to a greater degree than in any previous time within Ethiopian history. Addis Ababa is the Federal capital of Ethiopia and also the capital of Oromia Regional State, the country's largest state. Emperor Menelik II gave it its Amharic name and changed it from Finfinne its original Oromo name. The Oromo historical grievances to city of Finfinne (Addis Ababa) are not only tied to the colonization of their lands but the current constitution of Ethiopia itself. *Article 49(5)* refers to "The special Interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia'' (Opride, 201, para 6.). However, this provision is just something written on paper as there has been no implementation of this for more than two decades.

The creation of city master plans for Addis Ababa is historically linked to challenges of urbanization, where land use policies are needed to optimize the greatest benefits of land for society. The Integrated Master Plan of 2014 called for the annexation of 1.1 million hectares of land from the Oromia zones surrounding Finfinnee (Abate, 2019, p. 629). The plan was to evict millions of Oromo farmers from Finfinnee and the Special Oromia Zone. The Master Plan of

would have destroyed the ability for the indigenous Oromo people to have territorial integrity over their lands because it would have split the Oromia zones into two distinct regions and result in the evictions of millions of land-reliant Oromo farmers (Abate, 2019, p. 629). Land traditionally within Oromo societies was seen as communal, which would be passed from generation to generation, but penetration of new market conditions has determined price value rather than use value. In Ethiopia, the start of private land ownership and large-scale state development projects have come into conflict with the livelihoods of everyday working people such as farmers. Many extended families rely upon farm work for a living in Ethiopia, making this crisis even worse. The federalist government system within Ethiopia is based on ethnicity, so the loss of the land from a particular ethnic group includes the loss of non-physical resources like the history and culture tied to that space (Mengistu, 2015, p.3). The implementation of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan would expand Addis Ababa's growth on the backs of the Oromo people while destroying their culture and livelihoods. The protest against the master plan was launched by the Oromo protest social movement led by the Qeerroo (Unmarried young person). Qeerroo are also referred to as the "Qubee or the alphabet generation" (Tibeso & Abdurahman, 2021, para 9), as result of them being a part of the system of education that took place post 1991 which allowed their mother tongue, Afaan Oromo, to be used in the classroom. Qeerroo would pivot the protest to focus on the root of the problem, which was the historical grievances of the Oromo and the lack of implementation regarding the rights of the Oromo to Addis Ababa in the constitution. The Oromo protest movement was unprecedented and set off waves of protest in other regions such as the Amarah, Somali, Afar and Sidama.

In Ethiopia, where censorship is the norm, it is critical to have independent media networks as they provide a counter ideology for those who do not have a voice and those who face discrimination because of the state monopoly of media. The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan would be the stimulus for Oromo mobilization transnationally, through independent media outlets such as Oromo Media Network (OMN) which was based in Minneapolis. The core of the governing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

(EPRDF) would be shaken and lead to their eventual fall in 2018 after being in power for more than two decades.

The Oromo people have had to flee Ethiopia to seek refuge in places like Europe, North America and Australia due to famine, war and political persecution in Ethiopia. In the USA they are citizens within their new homeland; in Minneapolis they have a street dedicated to them by the City, Oromo Street (OPride, 2015). They still have a deep connection to their country of origin, which can be seen through remittances to support their families. Introducing social media would change the landscape for the Oromo diaspora as they could connect to their independent cultural media networks that broadcast to their home country.

My research examines the connections between transnational organizing and placemaking within the Oromo diaspora in Minneapolis. It considers the perspectives of the Qeerroo within Minneapolis to better understand community organizing in the diaspora and how this relates to the efforts of Qeerroo in Ethiopia. The research further investigates intangible community cultural assets of Oromo Street through a community mapping project that shares pictures and stories of Oromo members of the Minneapolis community. The study draws upon a diverse set of literature to argue that the creation of Oromo Street is a post-colonial space, as the Oromo who had been invisible within the Ethiopian Empire are now visible in the City of Minneapolis. The paper further seeks to highlight how the City of Minneapolis Official Plan 2040 can provide more specialized tools for preserving the Oromo community's cultural heritage while improving its overall economic and social outcomes.

My Oromo heritage has allowed me an insider perspective of the connection between those within the diaspora and those residing within Oromia's homeland. The City of Minneapolis recognizing the Oromo Community through the designation of Oromo Week is inspiring, as 10,000 Oromo people call the city home. However, inclusion is more than just making proclamations; rather it about working in conjunction with community to ensure that they can see themselves reflected in the physical spaces which they call home. Inclusion is a

continuum where Oromo Street is at one end and Oromo Street Cultural Study is at the other. I have lived in social housing revitalization projects and have experience implementing community social-economic development plans. I could see that the City of Minneapolis wasn't doing the appropriate due diligence necessary to understand economic returns on uplifting the Oromo cultural institutions within the city. The transnational organizing against Addis Ababa's Integrated Master Plan highlighted that the Oromo community understand official plans and how they direct growth but also how people can be displaced during the process. I hope that my research starts a dialogue on the importance of placemaking that is centred on decolonizing space even if it's just symbolic.

The first chapter of my research is divided into three parts. The first section is a literature review on the background of the Oromo people and their social location within Ethiopian history. I provide a detailed examination of urban development patterns, Oromo media landscapes and migration and settlement patterns within the diaspora. The history of the Oromo people is tied to the land, which makes this section so crucial. Following the literature review, I situate this work in the theoretical frameworks of insurgent planning and post-colonialism to examine the Oromo protest social movement against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and the creation of Oromo Street. The ability of social movements and people to decolonize space from a transnational perspective opens the lens to discovering Oromo Street as a post-colonial space. The final section of this chapter explores my methods and methodologies, ethnography and cultural mapping, to understand the diaspora's connection to protest movements. The ability to gain insight into the mode, tone and lived experience of members within the Oromo protest movement provides a more significant layer of interpreting their transnational struggle.

Chapter Two is titled "Cultural Flows and Resistance Through Independent Media" and is divided into three sections. The first section examines the Oromo Media Network (OMN) and the Oromo protest movement and provides an in-depth analysis of OMN's vital role as an Oromo institution within the protest movement. The second section is a brief overview of how

OMN broadcast was faced censorship attempts through commercial Spyware of the Ethiopian government. Finally, I focus on OMN's role within the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan protest, which includes the role of Former Executive Director of OMN Jawar Mohammed's role with the Qeerroo (Unmarried young person) demonstrators during this period. The last section focuses on the changing Oromo narrative within the mediascape of Ethiopia and Diaspora.

The third chapter, entitled "Oromo Post-Colonial Planning in Minneapolis", consists of three sections. First, I explore Oromo Street placemaking and the City of Minneapolis Official Plan 2040 to examine the City of Minneapolis' historical acknowledgement of East African resistance movements. This is followed up with a critical examination of the City of Minneapolis Official Plan, where I provide policy recommendations on the historical and cultural preservation of the Oromo Community within Minneapolis. Building on this, I move into an examination of Oromo street's intangible cultural assets through community mapping exercises that focus on pictures and stories. I introduce every story within the community mapping project to ensure the reader can acquire some background on the image and story, which was written or transcribed. The Qeerroo youth stories provide an authentic analysis of Oromo Street and some of the intangible community cultural assets. Finally, I explore Oromo Street post-colonial space-making to conclude the chapter by identifying some of the tactics and motivations of the Oromo diaspora through community organizing.

The ability of African diaspora groups to make transnational connections through independent media has profoundly changed how authoritarian governments view social media and their ability to influence how its citizens rise up fight for their rights. In the case of Ethiopia, the government was using spyware technology on media organizations such as OMN and their representatives (Marczak et al., 2017). OMN, having to be based in the United States, speaks to the right of freedom of the press there compared to Ethiopia where critiquing the government may land you in prison as journalist. Oromo street symbolism is a step toward recognizing the Oromo Nation and its cause. The diaspora's participation in community mapping shows the significance Oromo street plays in the hearts and minds of Qeerroo within Minneapolis. This

research project aims to shed light on the Oromo people's activism surrounding urban development projects such as the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan, and the transnational effects it can create in the global north amplified by diaspora communities. Little Oromia in Minneapolis is a special place as it is home to the first generation of Oromo that have integrated into a new society without forgetting their homeland.

Chapter One

Literature Review

The Oromo Socio-Political Position within Ethiopia History

The image of Ethiopia being one of only two countries in Africa that were never colonized disguises behind the country's own historical internal colonization of the many nations and nationalities that reside in it. The scramble for and partition of Africa by European powers during the nineteenth century allowed colonial empires to control land and territory. Europeans would gain access to African commodities which would be sent to Europe to be manufactured into products, while also creating conditions for the expansion of capital into new emerging markets. Oromo scholar Belletech Deressa (1993) points out that Europe makeover of its manufacturing sector wouldn't be stopped within the borders of Europe (Deresa,1993, p.29), as industries wanted to produce greater supply than what Europe could consume, which made African markets the new major focus. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made the Red Sea area a place of geo-significance amongst European powers such as the British, French and Italians. Oromo scholar Lubie Birru (1980) suggests that it was during the same period that Europeans would strike an alliance with the rulers of the Abyssinian Empire by providing it with arms and military assistance in exchange for resources from newly acquired territories of Oromia and Sidama (Birru, 1980,p.96). The Abyssinian Empire faced internal pressures of growing population, high levels of poverty, drought and famine, a shortage of arable land, and contested battles for finite resources. The battle of Adwa in 1896 was a part of the scramble within Africa. The Abyssinians' victory in Adwa against the Italians is seen as an African victory over colonialism, but rather it was laying the foundation of colonial empire. The Oromo and Walaita didn't gain any rewards for their participation or win the battle against colonization for their communities. Rather, the victory allowed for the continuation of a "black colonialist power in the scramble for colonies with white colonialists" (Bulcha, 2022, para 3.). The Abyssinians defended their territory using slaves as cannon-fodder and would sign border delineation agreements in the early nineteenth century with Britain and France. The Abyssinian

empire would also be a part of the world economy during this period with introduction of a coin-based system that replaced the barter system.

The Oromo are historically known to be of the indigenous Cushitic people of the Horn of Africa, with a territory (Oromia) covering 30% of Ethiopia's landmass (Amnesty International, 2014, p.18). Oromia is the largest region within Ethiopia's multi-federalist state system and borders two nation-states, Kenya and South Sudan. Its people have a common language (Afaan Oromo), culture, and Indigenous political system (Gadaa) that is a model of traditional African forms of egalitarian democracy. The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the country with a population of over 30 million, but they have been historically marginalized within Ethiopia since its founding. The city of Addis Ababa was founded in 1887 on the Oromo village of Finfinnee. It is currently the capital city of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and The Oromia Regional State. The Addis Ababa population is estimated to be greater than 3.7 million people, generating 29% of Ethiopia GDP and 20% of the country employment (Weldeghebrael, 2022, para 1).

The development of Oromo urban centres began in pre-colonial Oromia as described by Oromo scholar Asafa Jalata (2010), who says that "the division of labor and the emergence of internal contradictions in Oromo society" (p.44) meant that Oromo people had few urban centres. The Gadaa political system's egalitarian features meant that the economic structures of the Oromo society were based upon the principles of reciprocity and redistribution. The continued growth of cities and urban centres within Oromia came through centralized system that allowed for the development of excessive growth "over consumption and to concentrate it into urban centres" (p.44). Traditional pastoral ways of life were now recreated to be mixed into settled agriculture, which allowed for an increase in wealth and food. This also introduced the creation of class and group structures due to the "emergence of autocratic hereditary leaders by replacing democratic leaders" (p.44) and the proliferation of markets for domestic and international consumption. The development of Oromo lands within the nineteenth century mainly came from exportation by Abyssinian Empire, who converted Oromo urban

centres into "garrison towns and became the centre of Ethiopian colonial administration" (p.49). The Oromo were now a political and economic minority subordinate to Abyssinians in Finfinne (Addis Ababa).

Finfinne's natural beauty of rolling plains, fertile land and dense forest made it a site of appreciation for the pastoralist Tulama Oromo who called it home. Dandena Tufa (2010) suggested that Finfinne's natural hot springs, made it a special place where individuals would come from the neighbouring communities. The natural hot springs had healing qualities within the water, which people would use for bathing and drinking (p.31). King Menilek II was one of the many people who visited the hot springs, and became interested in building his capital there. It would be in the 1860s that Abyssinian Emperor King Menilek II's conquest of Finfinne would begin, and by 1869 the Oromo indigenous people rebelled against the confiscation of their lands "by distributing the land among themselves for ploughing and pasture" (p.31). King Menilek II then took the drastic measure of suppressing this rebellion by sending his soldiers, who took control of Finfinne. In 1881, the King would shift his capital to Entoto, the mountain region over Finfinne, because other nations and nationalities in southern areas were still fighting him. Finfinne would officially be colonized by Emperor Menelik II by 1886, while the rest of the country would officially come under his rule by 1889. The Oromo name of Finfinne would change to the Amharic name of Addis Ababa, which means new flower (p.31). Menilek II would claim all new land as owned by the crown. However, he would allow for only 1/3 to 1/4 of lands within the south to be given to chiefs that cooperated with his empire through the subjugation of their own people within the feudal system known as Gabar in which "peasants had been serfs paying tribute in kind and cash, labor service" (Abate, 2006,p.32) to the empire.

Abyssinian dominance over the Oromo lands created a situation of economic and political exploitation. Oromo Scholar Ezekiel Gebissa (2009) suggests the that Oromo could not establish themselves because of a system of "de-urbanization" (p.151), which ensured that Oromo did not hold any power in developing new urban growth areas. The Amhara dominance within Addis Ababa allowed for the creation of "a socio-cultural frontier between themselves

and the Oromo" (p.151). This occurred in two ways, first being their language Amharic and second being the religion of Coptic Christian. The Amhara forced their language onto the Oromo people by making it the country's official language. Incapacitating the growth of Afaan Oromo, which is spoken and written by the Oromo people. The destruction of Finfinnee socially and culturally by the Amhara continued during the time of Emperor Haile Selassie 1930-1974, and those that stayed within the city had to become "assimilated into the dominant culture if they were to survive the pressures of Amharization in the Amhara-dominated city" (p.152). On January 12, 2023 Addis Ababa City Administration would officially launch a new educational system that would allow for Afaan Oromo to be taught in all schools, while still maintaining Amharic and English curriculums (Addis Standard, 2023, para 1). The Addis Ababa City Administration would fail to agree upon the displaying of Oromia regional state flag and playing of the Oromia national anthem at schools in the City (Addis Standard, 2023, para 3).

The urbanization of cities within Ethiopia such as Addis Ababa did not only occur during the Abyssinian Empire but was accelerated with the Italian Occupation of Ethiopia from 1936 - 1941. Getahun Benti (2016) highlights the fact it was the Italians who built vast road networks for their military camps which also resulted in several towns now having greater access to one another than before and provided a new gateway to economic centres such as Addis Ababa (p.101). The Italians did not only build new physical infrastructure; they also introduced a "wage-labor system through their extensive road building and urban construction activities" (p.102) that increased the levels of migration to cities, as a new wage-earning class was beginning to emerge that didn't rely upon farm activities. The population increase required new techniques in dealing with city development patterns than in the past, which is why the Italians created "master plans development for new major towns, divided them into several quarters and assigned different functions to them" (p.102). These new quarters were segregated based on indigenous and non-indigenous areas. For example, "in the western side of the city, the Italians created an open-space shopping centre, called Mercato, one of the largest in Africa" (p.104) for the indigenous population while Italians had a "business quarter at the centre of the city called a Piazza" (p.104). Italy's fascist leader Mussolini would put out a competition

together to find architects to build a Master Plan for the City of Addis Ababa. Le Corbusier and Guidi & C. Valle's would answer his calls but both plans would fail to be implemented and Italians would end their occupation of Ethiopia in 1941.

In 1946 Emperor Haile Selassie hired British planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie, to develop a master plan for Addis Ababa, making it a destination for all of Africa and the rest of the country. Abercrombie's plan emphasized a decentralized city structure with neighbourhood units, land use zones, satellite cities and a series of ring roads similar to those in Britain at the time. Abercrombie's plan would fail to be implemented, as were his predecessors. British planners' Bolton's and Hennessy's plan in 1959. In 1965, the French consulting team led by Luis De Marien had their master plan design partially implemented around the planning theory of a monumental city that focused on "revitalizing the plans of the north-south axis proposed by the Italians "(Tufa, 2010, p.45). Luis De Marien's plans seek to improve overall city infrastructure around water and sewerage, but it was short-lived as Abyssinian Emperor Haile Selassie fell from power in 1974. The Provisional Military Administrative Council (Derg) would seek to implement their land reforms under its socialist system, such as "abolishing all land rents and all forms of service to land lords" (Abate, 2006, p.33), which meant that the Gabar system was no longer existent. This created profound change within the country, as Empress of Ethiopia Taytu Betul's urban settlement plan that grouped housing structures in Sefers (group of residential clusters) of mixed-income communities became permanent (Kloosterboer, 2019, p.116). Derg would create Addis Ababa's first public housing authority and allow for cooperative housing, limiting housing ownership to only one place per individual and stopping all private sector involvement in residential building developments. However, over time, market approaches such as landlordism would come about again. Derg would hire C.K. Polanyi to implement their master plan vision by redesigning Maskal Square and connecting Addis Ababa with Adama/Nazreth. The redesigned square would be implemented, but the link connecting Addis Ababa with Adama/Nazreth failed because of a lack of funds.

The master plan of the Derg in 1986 would be created by a coalition of Ethiopian and Italian experts who wanted to "develop balanced urban system and to integrate the city within its surrounding regions and have metropolitan level areas" (Tufa, 2010, p.49). The plan was supposed to house large population residences. However, as Associate Professor in Urban and Regional Geography at Jimma University Kenate Worku (2008) describes, there was a discrepancy in terms of number of housing units required and what was being actually being funded since the land regulations of the past governments had favoured horizontal expansion into rural farmland surrounding Addis Ababa. The 1986 master plan would be fully implemented in 1994 but before that, Derg would fall to rebel liberation movements in 1991 (Kloosterboer, 2019, p.128). A new Ethiopian constitution was created in 1994 and 1995 based upon multi-ethnic federalism, which meant that regional states have the "unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession for every nation, nationality, and people" (Opride,2017 para 3). It would also be within the new constitution that Oromo rights to Addis Ababa would be finally be addressed within article 49(5), which cites, "The special Interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia" (Opride,2017 para 6.). However, this provision existed in writing only, as there was no implementation for more than two decades, enabling Addis Ababa's continued growth on Oromo lands while displacing Oromo farmers.

Kenate Worku (2008) highlights the fact that the Ethiopian government's 1991 leasing policy was damaging to the Oromo people, especially those who were farmers, as government officials and planners focused on the housing crisis in the city rather than the welfare of farmers' households, benefiting real estate investors and developers. The capitalist nature of land development in Addis Ababa has led to the displacement of farm households from their source of livelihood as well as creating socio-economic consequences such as "inadequate residential houses, social disarticulation, food insecurity and increased in joblessness" (p. 158). Now, Oromo farmers seek new livelihood methods in precarious industries such as general

labour and security services. This is also the case for women turning to the retail industry (p. 158). Worku acknowledges that most new jobs are short-lived and that some government support will be required since some groups might benefit at the expense of others. The current government response of compensating displaced people with cash is unacceptable, as most families who had been relocated would be further subjected to social and economic disarray.

The transitional government from 1991-1994 would pursue a decentralized policy within the housing market which allowed for the removal of housing co-operatives, replacing them with a market system of real-estate development. In 1999, Office for the Revision of Addis Ababa Master Plan (ORAAMP) was launched to create a new master plan that "would address the city's socio-economic problems" (Kloosterboer, 2019, p.128).ORAAMP would also lay out the structure of urban planning within the country through a five-tier system with national and urban development schemes sitting at the top followed by regional urban development plans, urban plans (master plans), structure plans and last local development plans (LDP). The City of Addis Ababa is the federal and regional state capital, meaning that the regional state plan is the urban plan. In 2004, a structure plan would be introduced to guide development for the next ten years. The structure plan allowed for the implementation of ten LDPs in areas that needed "immediate intervention, and they guided urban renewal, upgrading, and reallocation in intervention areas" (Kloosterboer, 2019, p.128). The LDPs created by City Government are guided by three complex and inconsistent polices through Ethiopia's 1995 Constitution:

49(2) The residents of Addis Ababa shall have a full measure of self-government.
49(3) The Administration of Addis Ababa shall be responsible to the Federal Government.
49 (4) Residents of Addis Ababa shall in accordance with the provisions of this constitution, be represented in the House of Peoples' Representatives.
 (Opride,2017, para 7)

Even though the constitution states that Addis Ababa shall have a full measure of self-government, unfortunately, this is not the case as Addis Ababa mayor and council are held to account by the federal authorities (Opride,2017 para 8) as stated within their own city charter. Unfortunately, municipal voters do not matter in Addis Ababa, as the federal government has

the "power to dissolve the elected city council and constitute an interim government in its stead" (Opride,2017 para 8). The federal government's heavy-handed approach within local municipal democracy and urban development is reflected in its ignorance of Addis Ababa's self-government status and of its residents' ability to initiate laws. Addis Ababa residents have 23 members of government that represent them within the House of Peoples' Representatives but zero in the House of Federation or in the Oromo state legislature (Caffee) (Opride,2017 para 8).

In 2014, the City of Addis Ababa proposed an Integrated Master Plan which was supported by French Agency for Development and the local government of Lyon, Addis Ababa sister city (Kloosterboer, 2019, p.131). France's connection to supporting urban development in Ethiopia dates back to the 1990s. The Integrated Master Plan called for the annexation of 1.1 million hectares of land from the Oromia zones surrounding Finfinnee (Abate, 2019, p. 629). The plan was to evict millions of Oromo farmers from their ancestral land. The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan of 2014 would have destroyed the ability of the indigenous Oromo people to have territorial integrity over their lands because it would have split the Oromia zones into two distinct regions and resulted in the evictions of millions of land-reliant Oromo farmers (Abate, 2019, p. 629). The Ethiopian state-driven development project continues the historical cycle of dispossessing Oromo from their ancestral lands, and this is why many Oromo refer to it as a master killer. Amnesty International's report titled *Because I Am Oromo: Sweeping repression in Ethiopia's Oromia Region* highlights that large-scale land evictions were already occurring in some parts of the country (pg.27). The protest against the master plan was launched by the Oromo protest social movement led by the Qeerroo (Unmarried young person)/Qubee generation who faced violence from security protestors through the use of live ammunition, beatings and detentions (p.27). The Oromo protest movement against the master plan raised the political consciousness of the Oromo not just to fight against the development project but to tackle the root of the problem, which was the historical grievances of the Oromo. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) had been in power for over 25 years. Even though being a collation of ethnic groups, they were mainly subservient to Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) who held dominance of all sectors within country. TPLF only

represented 5% (Ghaedi, 2021) of the country's population. The Oromo protest against the master plan stopped its full implementation but also went further as the EPRDF regime collapsed and a new government was formed by Nobel Peace Prize Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

The Addis Ababa Integrated Master plan was heavily reliant on private sector investment for needed growth. It sought a "75pc share of the private sector in the economy while providing two million houses to urbanites in 25 years" (Merhatsidk, 2014, para 24). The plan also called for the redevelopment of 10,000 hectares of land by 2032. The master plan wanted to create a "metropolitan main centre that expands the inner-city with a newly revitalized core and a distinguishable Central Business District (CBD)" (Kloosterboer, 2019, p.133). Addis Ababa's revitalization plans within its inner city were changing its urban form from poly-centric to mono-centric. The Oromo protest movement led by the Qeerroo understood that surplus land for City of Addis Ababa is the Oromo regional lands that surround city that is not formally incorporated within it. The Integrated Master Plan focused on the raw-material extraction of Oromo lands for private investment instead of centring the needs of the Oromo in the urban development process. The master plan sought to transform the lifestyle of residents of Addis Ababa, as the vision was to create "10 five-star hotels by 2024 and 25 by 2040, while it aspires to have ten international standard conference centres after 25 years" (Merhatsidk, 2014, para 19). Addis Ababa City Administration wanted to make the city a destination for tourism globally and be ranking amongst the top five. The plan would have increased tourism dollars in the city to one billion dollars in 10 years, and to three billion by 2040 (Merhatsidk, 2014, para 20). The plan also included new state infrastructure projects such as airports in Kusaye, a National Theater, Financial District and "a plan to build 80km of light railway by 2024 and to add another 93km of subway by 2040 as well as restrict vehicles older than 20 years from entering into the city" (Merhatsidk, 2014, para 22). The master plan was a vision to create a western postmodernist form of urban development to support the modern-day urban experience. It threatened the ideals of urban identity, citizenship and belonging of the Oromo as they were farmers who did not fit into the new cultural fabric of the city. The

continuous removal of the Oromo from the City of Addis Ababa speaks of the cultural dispossession of people from their ancestral lands and livelihoods.
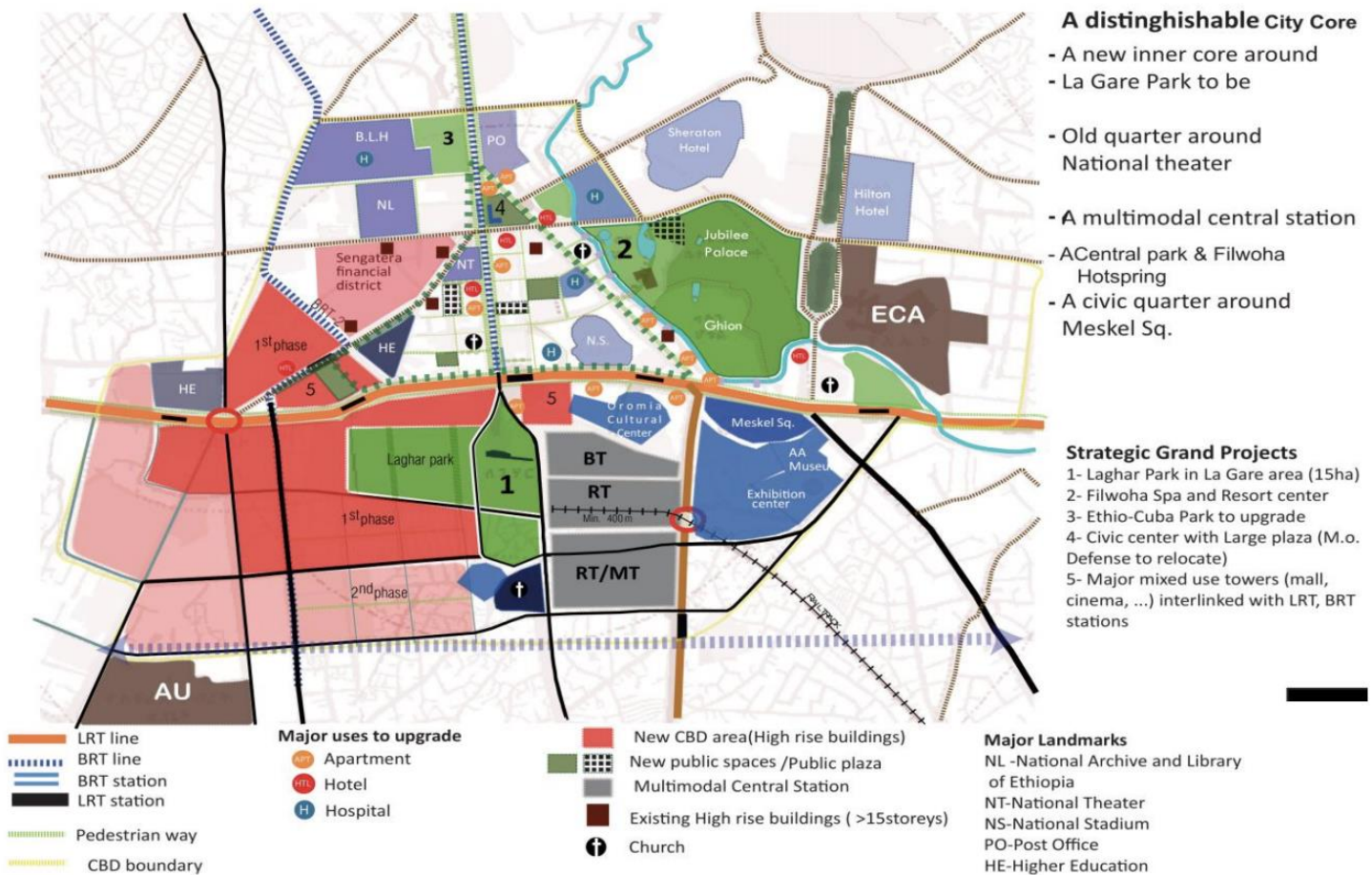
Figure 1. The Proposed CBD City of Addis Ababa (Source: The Addis Ababa City Planning Office, 2017)
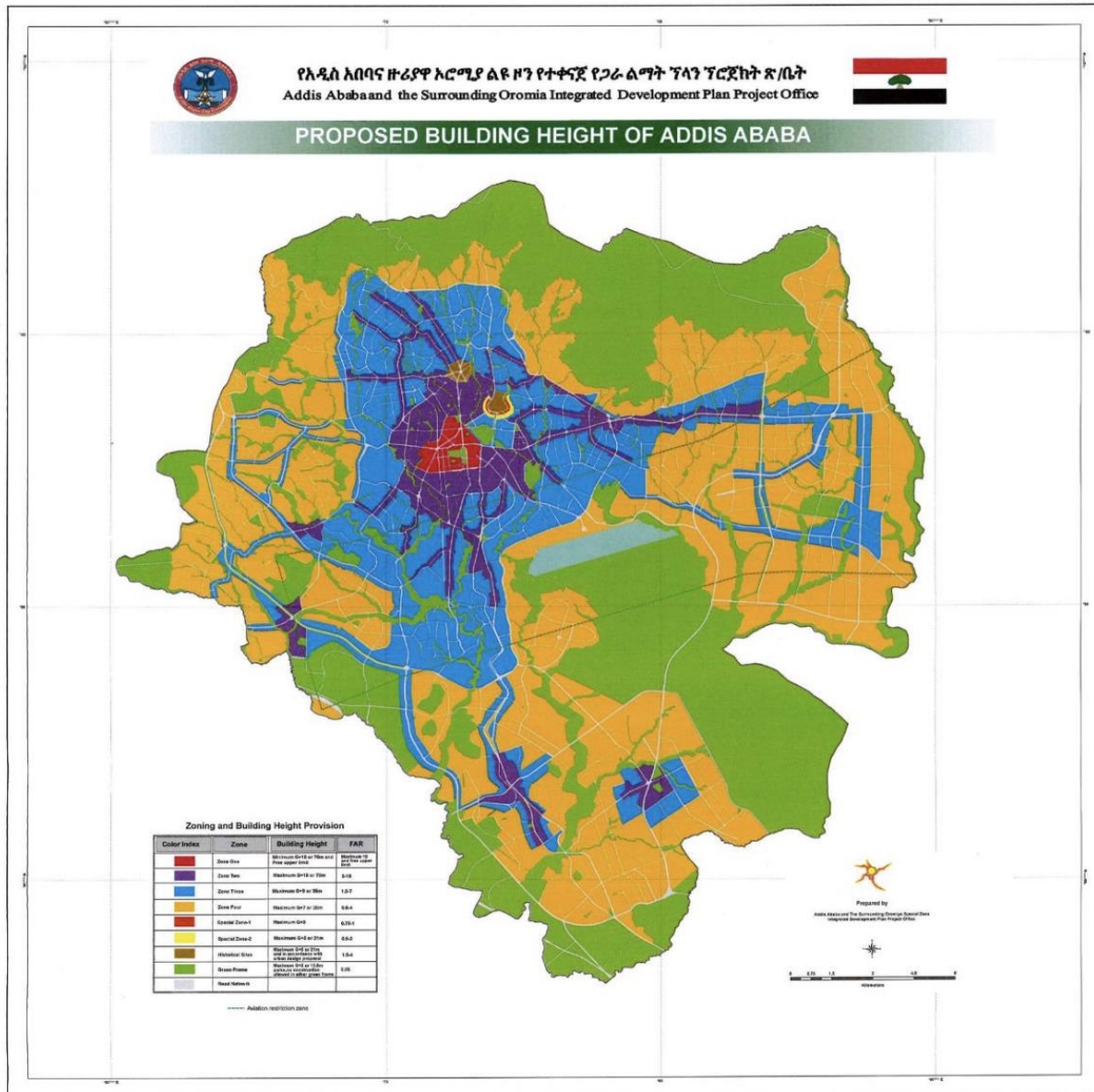
Figure 2. Proposed Building Heights City of Addis Ababa (Source: Addis Ababa Masterplan Project Office, 2013)
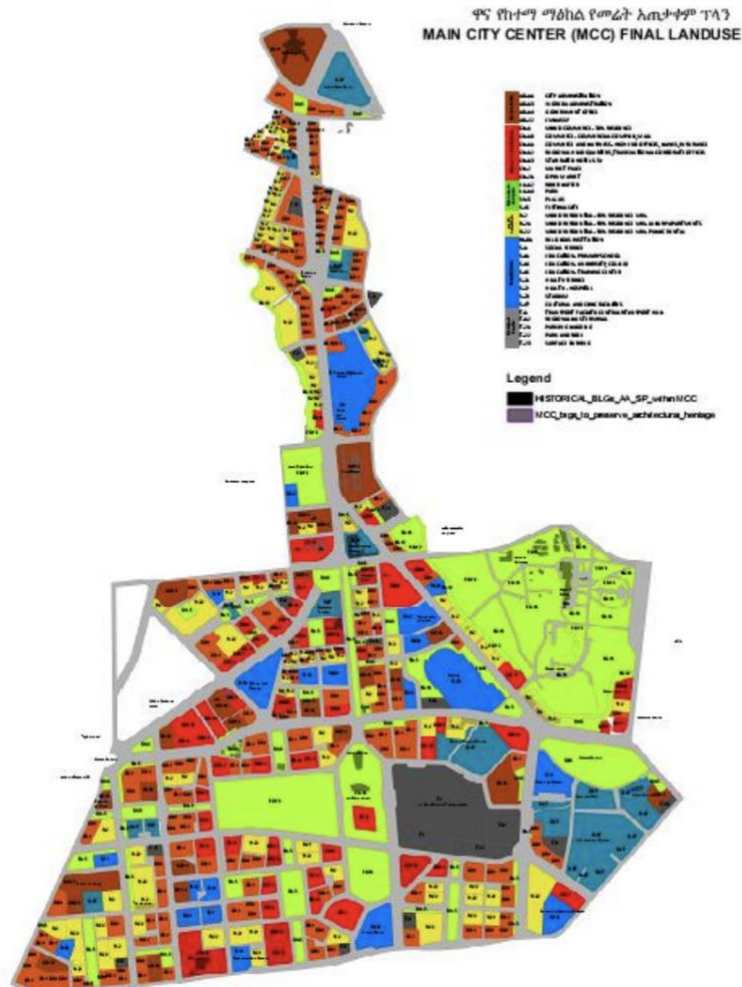
Figure 3. Main City Centre (MCC) Final Land Use (Source: The Addis Ababa City Planning Office, 2017)

The Integrated Master Plan is a continuation of State-driven development projects such as the "Integrated Housing Development Programme (IHDP)" (2011). The IHDP did not believe in formalizing informal housing through slum upgrading. Instead, they acknowledge that slum upgrading within Ethiopia wouldn't work because the deplorable conditions of the housing units, "the massive deficit that such small-scale programmes cannot address, and the need to increase density on valuable inner-city land" (p.9). The valuable land of Addis Ababa has ensured that slum upgrading is not the main priority, further creating a displacement of people from the city. Furthermore, The IHDP has not lived up to their original goal of supporting the

"poorest of the poor" (p.40) because many residents can't afford the required housing down payment. Those who find the down payment for the units tend not to live in them because of unit service and maintenance expenses, such as costs to electrify units. The economic challenges of poor people resulted in many homeowners leaving their units and "renting them out to middle-income people who can afford the monthly expenses" (p.40). These condominium units do not offer those of low socio-economic class with large families opportunities to live in them because they are mainly as designed as studio-two-bedroom units. The IHDP program did not have an inclusive board process for consultation and participation, and there was lack of monetary funds for those who had been relocated to non-permanent housing. The Oromo protesters' movement understands that state-driven models for development, such as the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and IHDP, are not focused on the unprivileged but on building a new urban world by dispossessing of the most marginalized groups, such as the Oromo, from their ancestral lands.

In August of 2022 the City of Addis Ababa and the Federal Government agreed upon a demarcation process between the Oromo Special Zone surrounding Finfinnee and the City of Addis Ababa. The Oromo Regional Government would now administer areas where new condominiums had been built. These include sites such as Koye Feche condominium, Tulu Dimtu condominium, and Jemo number two condominium, while the City of Addis Ababa would now administer the Qotari Condominium site, or Lebu area, which stretches from the Furi Hana and Oromia Condominium cites to the Qaarsa River. Even though the agreement has been made between the Oromo Regional Government and City of Addis Ababa, the mayor of the City of the Addis Ababa, Adanech Abiebie, vowed to ensure that residents of Addis Ababa that participated in the lottery system for the Condominium would still benefit. The same was repeated for people living in the Oromo Special Zone surrounding Finfinnee. However, the committee of representatives has not provided any conclusive account of how they came to their decision. In reaction to the demarcation agreement, members of the public held a two-day regional demonstration within ten cities in Oromia "against a decision by the Addis Ababa city administration under the then Mayor Takele Uma, to hand over thousands of condominium

units built by Addis Ababa City Administration Savings & Houses Development Enterprise (AASHDE) to residents of the city" (Fite,2022, para 11) through a computerized lottery draw. In places like Koye Feche, demonstrators believe that the City of Addis Ababa is acting outside of its jurisdiction and without involving Oromia regional government" (Fite,2022, para 31) and lands that had been taken from the farmers within these areas for these new condominium developments left them with inadequate compensation. The former deputy mayor of Addis Ababa, Takele Uma, has highlighted the fact he also feels the pain, especially for those who lost farmlands in order to make for way "[housing] projects and are exposed for economic and social problems" (Fite,2022, para 29,). However, Takele Uma has also not provided any comment on what the municipal or regional authorities are doing for those who have been displaced with very minimal compensation. The state goal of the market-driven development housing model is itself creating a socioeconomic crisis which is destroying the livelihoods of Oromo farmers.

The demarcation agreement puts into question the whole idea of the City of Addis Ababa being the capital of the Oromia regional state government because the demarcation would mean that there would be a new boundary between Oromo Regional State and Addis Ababa, "its own seat and the capital city of the region" (Fite,2022, para 18). The Oromo protest movement against the Integrated Master Plan of Addis Ababa was seeking to highlight the question of Oromo "ownership of the city of Addis Abeba city itself" (Fite, 2022, para 20) while continuing to call for a removal of the unregulated expansion of its boundaries which have come at the expense of farmers. Dejene Tafa, a member of the executive committee of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), which is an opposition party, believes that the question of Oromo ownership of the City of Addis Ababa should finally be answered, which the demarcation agreement fails to do. Dejene Tafa further explains the fact that if the "aim is to separate Addis Abebe from Oromia, then the struggle that has been going on for years will continue" (Fite,2022, para 38) until Addis Ababa comes under the administration of Oromia Regional Government. Some legal experts have determined that the demarcation process was not done in a correct manner because administration boundaries should actually be delineated.

The demarcation agreement didn't consult the people it should or the houses of both governments. Rather, it was done by a select few. Even though some lands had been transferred into Oromo Special Zone surrounding Finfinnee, there is no guarantee that farmers or small landholders wouldn't be displaced. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which is an opposition party, believes that the demarcation agreement will not settle the fundamental issues of segregation and long historical social, political and economic inequities. Rather, it will continue to "exacerbate the violation of rights and deprive the interests of the people who have been oppressed for two hundred years of being pushed from their homes" (Fite,2022, para 42, What do the Oromo political parties say?). The 200-year cycle of displacement that the Oromo people have been going through has now evolved into an internal crisis for the Ethiopian Government as it fights the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) throughout Oromia using drones, switch wing aircraft, militia forces, regional forces and the Ethiopian Defence Force (EDF). OLA holds a belief that the City of Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) belongs to the Oromo people and that continuing discriminatory urbanization policies against the Oromo people should end immediately.
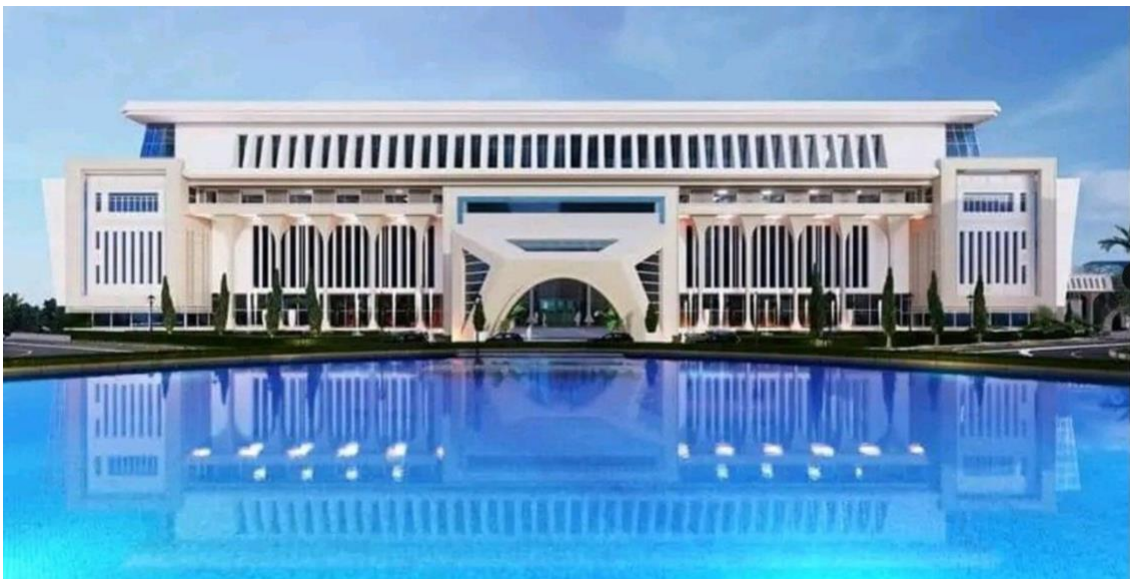
Figure 4. Presidential building of the Oromia Regional State Government in Addis Ababa (Source: Addis Standard, 2023)

Oromo migration to North America began with the Borona Oromo, who were the first group of Oromo immigrants that arrived in North America on Ellis Island, New York City, in 1902. Oromo scholar Kadiro Amae Elemo suggests that it was possible for them to come to the United States "just after Emperor Menelik's army occupied the Borana country or that they were fleeing like others to the British colonies to escape the Abyssinian slave raid" (Laurence, 2021, para 3). The second wave of Oromo immigrants to North America established themselves in Toronto, Canada, in the early 1970s. As new waves of Oromo immigrants left Ethiopia seeking freedom from political oppression, famine, and war. They sought refuge in the twin cities of Minneapolis and St Paul, Minnesota.

From Addis Ababa to Minneapolis: "The Creation of Oromo Street"

The Oromo protest social movement led by the Qeerroo /Qubee generation youth extends beyond the borders of Addis Ababa to the City of Minneapolis, which has become known as little Oromia with a population of over 10,000 Oromo living in the city (Whalen, 2020, para 16). Miller and Nicholls (2013) refer to urban social movements that build movements beyond the city as creating a scale shift that "is made possible because actors in urban coalitions may lobby their parent organizations, allies, or supporters to back larger scale campaigns" (p.464). The international protest of the Oromo against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan allowed activists within the diaspora to contribute their collective capital to the broader struggle, which was to raise awareness of the master plan's effects on the Oromo people.

The Ethiopian Government's censorship of Oromo independent media has played a significant role in the Oromo struggle for self-determination. Greg Gow (2004) states that in 2004 Ethiopia had only one "Ethiopian Television [ETV]) and two radio stations (Radio Ethiopia and Radio Fana [Amharic: 'Torch']" (p.306), which are state-owned. These stations would spend only a couple hours transmitting in Afaan Oromo even though Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the country. The development of Afaan Oromo-based media would begin to take off in 1991 after the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie, who had banned the teaching of Afaan Oromo in

schools and political spaces during his tenure. It would be under the Derg regime that this ban would be removed, and the introduction of Oromo-based print media was launched with the *Urjii* newspaper "in March 1994 and was shut down by Ethiopian authorities in November 1997" (p.307). *Urjii* was able to sell 10,000 to 12,000 copies per issue and was considered the best independent print media weekly newspaper in the country.

The goal of *Urjii* wasn't to be seen as some type of media conglomerate but rather become an avenue for independent journalism, which decided upon Oromo people as its viewership. Even though Urjii's focus was the Oromo people, they never sought out to have any biases in reporting against other nationalities within Ethiopia. However, there were those who believed that "*Urji*i was [a] subversive Oromo media outlet" (Gow, 2004, p.307) as it wasn't printed in Oromo but rather in Amharic. The uses of Amharic over Oromo made *Urjii* media seem as though it wasn't targeted to Oromo people but in actuality it was. *Urjii's* transnational reach was found through the crumpled copies that circulated across borders and through new refugee arrivals within Kenya and Djibouti. It was also shared amongst its subscribers in places such as North America, Europe and the Middle East, via photocopies.

Urjii's claim of being a heavily popularized Oromo-based media newspaper stems from its name that was promoted by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). In Oromo, "Urjii conveys the idea of a guiding star for the nation" (Gow, 2004, p.307). In the early 1970s, the arrival of a new Oromo newspaper would emerge with *Bariisaa*, which was started by OLF cultural committee. The newspaper promoted the belief in Oromo nationalism and even was written "in the Latin Oromo script" (p.308). It would be in 1977 that *Bariisaa* would be forced to publish in Amharic as the Derg regime began its censorship control campaign. By the 1980's most of the *Bariisaa* employees had either left the country for their own safety, were in jail or dead. *Bariisaa* would be controlled by the Derg regime until its demise in 1991. *Bariisaa* was hated by the Amharic even though it was printed in their language. Oromo peasants who were illiterate would be fond of *Bariisaa* even though they couldn't read it. All of *Urjii's* staff would be in jail in 1997, while its editor "Deressa was accused of terrorist activities and faced the death penalty"

(p.309). PEN Canada's Writers in Prison Committee would help resettle three *Urjii* journalists to Canada. The campaign to release *Urjii* journalists occurred online and through protests worldwide. It would be heavily broadcast on two Oromo radio stations in the United States, twin cities Raadiyoo Sagalee Oromiyaa (Voice of Oromia) and Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo (SBO) (Voice of Oromo Freedom).

Radio was a connector of Oromo mass media to the diaspora and within Oromia. This began in the 1960s with the introduction of Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu, which based out of Mogadishu, Somalia. Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu, which was financially backed by the Somali Government at the time, as it was trying to steer millions of Muslim Oromo labourers and farmers in eastern and south-eastern Ethiopia (the Hararghe and Arsi/Bale regions) against Emperor Haile Selassie (Gow, 2004, p.309). The name Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu was chosen in a compromise with the Somali Government as they didn't want to be seen promoting the ideology of Oromo nationalism. Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu would reach mass appeal within the Oromo community with over eight million listeners (Gow, 2004, p.309). The program, which was originally only 5 minutes, would be extended to 15 minutes as it would include a variety of new programs such as drama, music, poetry and viewer programs. Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu allowed members of the Oromo community to "imagine themselves as one people" (p.309) as there wasn't a way of connecting with each other before. The program gave Oromo people the ability to have freedom of speech as the Government couldn't censor its program. Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu was banned by the Government of Haile Selassie, and in 1965, he would pay for the assassination of the founder of Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu Ayub Abubakar. By 1972 the emperor created a new media organization called Harar Radio as a means of trying to stop Oromo from listening to Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu. Nonetheless Oromo would continue to listen to Raadiyoo Afaan Qottu as its program provided the right to freedom of speech which Harar Radio didn't.

The Oromo media landscape under the EPRDF would be heavily controlled by the Government, which constantly accuses many "nongovernment organizations purveying Oromo cultural/media products" (Gow, 2004, p.310) of having links to OLF. The OLF was a banned

rebel political organization in the country at the time. Media organizations such as the Gaddaa Oromo Club would have their property taken, and their operations shut down under the government terrorism laws. The Ethiopian Government would financially support media projects in the diaspora, such as the "supposed backing Selam Radio Station in Washington DC" (Gow, 2004, p.310) as a means to counter media narratives. The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), which is the ruling party of the Oromia Region and a TPLF client party within the EPRDF government, had promoted many Ethiopian based cultural/ media productions. However, Oromo didn't pay any attention to these programs at all. The atmosphere of freedom of speech for Oromo media by the mid-1990s no longer existed within many East African countries, such as Sudan and Somalia, as they were no longer accepting any dissidents. This began to extend the Oromo media landscape to places such as North America, Europe and Australia as Oromo "[took] it upon themselves to produce and disseminate multicentred cultural/media flows to audiences in Oromia and abroad" (Gow, 2004, p.311). The arrival of the internet and social media allowed for the creation of independent media networks that provide fast dissemination between diaspora populations on a variety of news topics.

The Oromo Media Network (OMN) would launch in 2014 as an independent news broadcaster based in Minneapolis and would garner over 1.8 million followers on Facebook. OMN has become a vital tool for transnational politics in the mobilization of the Oromo diaspora, amplifying the voices of resistance against the Addis Ababa Master Plan. The ability of the OMN to report on significant events has expanded the discourse on the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and allowed for the creation of space "whereby activists in diverse places believe that they are part of a much broader struggle" (Miller & Nicholls 2013, p.464). Former CEO of OMN Jawar Mohammed referred to the Oromo protest movement as a "project of building collective self-esteem" (Peralta, 2018, para 9), which gave the protesters the capacity to seek better governance and political representation. The City of Minneapolis's connection to the Oromo community is seen through their formal recognition of Oromo contributions to the city with naming a street after them in the Cedar-Riverside Neighborhood.

A newspaper article by Kelly Schoenfelder (2015) in the Twin Cities Daily Planet titled "Minneapolis may soon get a commemorative Oromo street" describes how renaming of the street is commemorative in nature and the site address would not change. As long as there isn't any opposition Minneapolis will be the "first city in the world, including Ethiopia, to have a street named Oromo" (Schoenfelder, 2015, para 5).

The recognition by the city government in the naming of Oromo Street is symbolic in the sense that it acknowledges the ongoing battle of the Oromo people with the Ethiopian colonial state. The Oromo protest against the Master Plan was more significant than just the development plan but rather about the Oromo taking back their right to their ancestral lands. The historical cycle of Oromo being dispossessed from their ancestral lands stimulated the development of a social movement that would galvanize Oromo within Ethiopia and beyond its borders within the diaspora communities to link arms with its global networks. The trans-local connection of OMN ensured that the stories of Qeerroo would be amplified without being distorted, as the media space within Ethiopia is limited to only hearing from the government narrative, not giving a voice to the voiceless. The fight for the rights of Oromos to City of Addis Ababa is historical and deeply ingrained in the hearts of minds of the Oromo community globally and within Ethiopia. Oromo Street, being a symbol of placemaking by City Minneapolis, shows the connection of meaning, belonging and settlement of the Oromo people to the city. It also brings the global north and south together in providing a new geography of space and territory that would not exist without the Oromo people. It is up to the Oromo community to continue to fight for their rights, as the Ethiopian Government is not in the business of financing advocacy against its shortcomings.

Theoretical Framework

In this project, I utilize Faranak Miraftab's (2009) concept of insurgent planning to examine the Oromo protest movement against the Addis Ababa Master Plan led by the Qeerroo (Unmarried young person)/Qubee generation. Miraftab argues that constant use of

"western planning ideals in our post/neocolonial, neoliberal times suppresses the subaltern conceptualization of cities and planning" (p. 45). Insurgent planning focuses on decolonizing the planning structures by examining subaltern cities to understand them "by their own rules of the game and values rather than by the planning prescriptions and fantasies of the West" (p. 45). The expansion of the City of Addis Ababa through its Integrated Master Plan sought to further remove Oromo from their lands. Therefore, a cyclical pattern of exclusion continues through Addis Ababa's Master Plan, which leverages western planning ideals of amalgamation as it seeks to grow the centre at the expense of those who live at the periphery. Ultimately, the plan is to continue the Ethiopian State's large-scale development approach within Addis Ababa to grab Oromo lands. For example, the Integrated Housing Development Programme (IHDP) of 2005 sought to clear dilapidated housing units in the city within ten years and for the country to become a middle-income country by 2025 (UN-Habitat, 2011, p. 10). IHDP went against current urban forms of improving dilapidated housing and having cooperative housing developments, which would give informal people rights. Instead, the project displaced 1,925 farmers in 2013 and 2014 in just one Wordea (Districts). The Oromo protest movement's fight against the Ethiopian colonial project is based upon recognition of the special interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa as outlined in Article 49(5) of the constitution. The lack of implementation of the provision has continued the exponential growth of the City of Addis Ababa at the expense of the Oromo Indigenous people.

Miraftab (2009) provides three guiding principles for insurgent planning practices which are transgression, counter-hegemony and imagination. Insurgent planning is transgressive as it seeks out the false contradictions of publicized actions taken within "formal/informal arenas of politics" (p. 45) as well as invited/invented sites of subject practice. This transgressive approach extends beyond the borders through the collective transnational movements of marginalized people. The Qeerroo insurgent movement extends beyond the borders of Ethiopia to the State of Minnesota, in which the Oromo diaspora community shows its solidarity through the creation of Oromo Street and the City of Minneapolis passing Resolution No.2021R-048 in 2021 *Supporting the Oromo and Tigray community Minneapolis.* The resolution highlighted the

"arrest and detention of prominent Oromo activists and political leaders" (City of Minneapolis, 2021). Transgressive insurgent planning is also defined by time through the proliferation of an increased historical reminder of the present experiences while still being able to recognize the fact that "global core and the peripheries North and South might exist within each other" (p. Miraftab, 2009, p. 46). The creation of Oromo Street is a place-making exercise that recognizes the settlement of the Oromo diaspora community in Minneapolis and how the global North and South exist within each other. Insurgent planning is counter-hegemonic, as it undermines the normal dominant structure of power, allowing people the right to protest, object and create their own interpretations of engagement and participation. Neoliberal structures are exposed within this phase, showcasing the clash between beliefs of inclusion and redistribution, which allows for examining "how systems of oppression are conceptualized and exerted, but also how they are contested" (p. 46). Oromo protest against the Master Plan is in opposition to the hegemonic structure of the Ethiopian State as the movement seeks to develop their terms of reference with regards to development in their lands. Insurgent planning is imaginative as its focuses on the belief of a fairer humankind which is an alternative from the neoliberal narrative that suggests "There Is No Alternative" (p. 46), as it allows the figurative representation of insurgent citizenship campaigns that create alternative possibilities for future aspiration.

The City of Minneapolis's formal recognition of Oromo Street is a place-making exercise in creating a postcolonial space for the Oromo Diaspora. My research utilizes the idea of postcolonial space by allowing members of the Minneapolis Oromo community to interpret their own perspective on Oromo Street free from the media-censored environment of Ethiopia. The diaspora connection with Oromia is consistent and ongoing even though the "Ethiopian government has also denied residents the free flow of information through shutting down internet access and social media networks" (City of Minneapolis, 2021, para 7). Oromo street place-making as postcolonial space is found in the Oromo diaspora's ability to fight for their representation in an environment that acknowledges a denial of their basic human rights within their country.

> The City of Minneapolis state that they "support the Oromo community and the people of Ethiopia, and call for the cessation of all violence and state-

sponsored oppression, access to unimpeded international humanitarian aid, the restoration of communications services in Oromia and Tigray, the release of all political prisoners, an independent investigation into crimes perpetrated by the Ethiopian government, free and fair elections which all parties can participate, and the beginning of a national dialogue which will invite healing and growth" (City of Minneapolis, 2021, para 14).

The City of Minneapolis's ability to recognize that national dialogue is a need within Ethiopia only goes to show that the formation of the nation-state itself and its aspirations are in conflict with the country's largest ethnic group, the Oromo. The rejection of the Addis Ababa Master Plan by the Oromo protest movement and the celebration of Oromo Street within Minneapolis highlights how local actions can have global connections when seeking to understand how space is formulated within the urban environment in the context of postcolonial place-making.

British postcolonial theorist Robert Young (2012) describes postcolonialism as not just a theory or disciplinary field; rather its focus has been on deconstructing "Western knowledge formations, reorient ethical norms, turn the power structures of the world upside down and refashion the world from below" (p. 20). The City of Minneapolis's formal recognition of Oromo Street turns the power structures upside down by recognizing the Oromo community's struggle against the colonial Ethiopian State. Young uses Antonio Gramsci's concept of subaltern classes which "has enabled subaltern historians and cultural critics to recover a whole arena of historical agency that had remained invisible, while history was written according to exclusive protocols of nationalist movements or class conflict" (p. 23). This project explores the applicability of the Gramsci concept as protest against the Master Plan, which goes against the western historical notion of Ethiopia having never been colonized, as it raises the issue of Oromo historical rights to Addis Ababa. It further seeks to build upon Young's concept of the "politics of invisibility" by making the invisible visible. The Oromo struggle against the Ethiopia State was always visible to the Oromo people, which is why Young describes that there is a paradox as the; "object was never in fact, invisible but rather the invisible: it was not seen by those in power who determine the fault lines between the visible and the invisible" (p. 23). The creation of Oromo Street makes visible to the world that Oromo people have taken up space

and have permission to do so from the City of Minneapolis. Young advocates that having a postcolonial perspective allows for a more observant detection of changes that occur, but it also can be late in recognizing the campaigns of subaltern historical agents such as Indigenous people. The use of Young and Gramsci's concepts within this project are important as they lay the foundational understanding of how postcolonialism can be interpreted through the Oromo protest movement.

James Sidaway (2000) examines the multiple conditions of postcolonialism through the work of Anne McClintock (1992) and Ania Loomba (1998). Loomba (1998) describes postcolonialism as being relatively obscure since the word "post complicates matters because it implies an aftermath in two senses-temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting" (p. 7). Loomba believes that if the framework of colonialism-built inequalities still exists in a country, it's false to make announcements claiming the end of colonialism (p. 7). Loomba points to the fact that it is more appropriate for us to examine "postcolonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" (p. 12). This ensures that we factor in those who have been physically displaced by colonialism and their history of anti-colonial resistance against prevailing western cultures. The Oromo protest movement against the Addis Ababa Master Plan is a contestation against the colonialization of Oromo lands based on western planning ideals. This project explores the applicability of Loomba framework of post colonialism through examining anti-colonial resistance movements such as the Oromo protest movement and legacies that currently still exist due to colonialization within Ethiopia.

McClintock (1992) believes that the term postcolonialism causes the world to focus on "a single, binary opposition: colonial/postcolonial" (p. 85). McClintock suggests that the theory begins to change "from binary axis of power (colonizer/colonized – itself inadequately nuanced, as in the case of women) to the binary axis of time" (p. 85), which reduces the opportunities to describe the diverse differences of those who benefited from colonialism and those who didn't. Postcolonialism was supposed to be about decentering history, but the uses of the term have

unfortunately been focused at paying greater attention to a period within European history (p. 85). McClintock emphasizes the fact that postcolonialism and postmodernism have been unequally developed world wide (p. 85). According to Sidaway (2000), McClintock believes that this unevenness makes it hard to identify internal colonialism in places like Ethiopia because internal colonialism is considered in the "ways that colonial categories and discourses are reimported into the wider politics of the metropolitan powers" (p. 599). When it does arrive within these centres, it is tied to "racist discourses and practices as well as disseminating into other images" (p.599). For example, the Oromo are considered the unruly class or uncivilized within Ethiopia's history through the use of the word Galla. It is a derogatory name given to them by the Abyssinian Empire and refers to them as "pagan, savage, uncivilized, uncultured, enemy, slave or inherently inferior" (Erena, 2012). This project builds on McClintock's perspective of postcolonialism by re-centring the term to allow for the Qeerroo to define what it means for them in context of a country that prides itself on never being colonized.

The recognition of Oromo Street by the City of Minneapolis also creates space for postcolonial identity and heritage. Yeoh (2001) describes that written literature such as the 1997 Hong Kong handover can be used to identify postcolonial cities "as an important site where claims of an identity different from the colonial past are expressed and, in some cases, keenly contested" (p.458). Minneapolis is not a postcolonial city, but it has given rise to a new type of urban form of postcolonial placemaking that allows for bridge to be created within the areas of social and political spheres so that conversations can take place regarding colonization. Through the creation of Oromo Street, the Oromo nation can now have a broader dialogue with those who believe in the Ethiopian State. Oromo Street is a heritage site for postcolonial memory as "urban 'heritage' landscapes are constituted" (p.461) to examine the "relationships between the memorialization of the past and the spatialization of public memory in the postcolonial context of nation-building" (p.461). Oromo street provided an opportunity for past memorization when Oromo lands were not colonized in the 1800s to now reimaging a new nation in the global world within the 21st century. The project investigates the suitability of

Yeoh's idea of postcolonial cities as it relates to Minneapolis and the ability to urban heritage landscapes to be seen through Oromo Street.

Oromo scholar Asafa Jalata (Fanon's 1967, as cited in Jalata, 1995) uses Frantz Fanon metaphor 'Black Skins White Masks' to describe how maintaining Oromummaa or Oromoness "blocked access to goods, services and self-improvement" (p.167). This would make them second-class citizens within the Ethiopian colonial State. Jalata uses Fanon's words to explain that "every colonized people...every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality finds itself face to face with the language and culture of the colonizing nation" (p. 167). As a result, the Oromo who had worn the "Amhara mask were often too transparent" (p. 167) as they were subordinate to the Ethiopian Empire but never really obtained any stature within the Ethiopian bureaucracy. Fanon (2008) further points to the important role language plays within the colonization process as speaking "means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (p.8). The Abyssinian empire understood that through colonizing the Oromo lands, Oromo people would assume traits of their culture, such as language, thus allowing for the empire to stay intact. An Oromo that engaged with colonizers would have their status "elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (p.9). Fanon uses the analogy that an individual "becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (p.9), which is the same process that a Govanah (Go-VA-Nah – someone who betrays their people or sells them out to access the Ethiopian State) goes through as they renounce their Oromummaa. Oromo street, as Fanon would describe, is a recognition that in "every country of the world there are climbers, the ones who forget who they are, and, in contrast to them, the ones who remember where they came from." (p.24) This is why the creation of Oromo street can be seen through the lens of an anti-colonial struggle as it challenges issues of colonial empire through a multifaceted strategy that accounts for a range of features but specifically pays close attention to the emotional attachment of individuals within the diaspora to their homeland.

Method and Methodology

This project utilizes the methodological approach of ethnography and cultural mapping to explore the Oromo protest movement against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and its transnational connections to the City of Minneapolis. This research focuses deeply on cultural mapping through image-story-telling and an ethnographic approach to activist practice. Narrative storytelling through Walgahii (community meeting) that recognizes how Oromo activists in Minneapolis explore intangible cultural assets of Oromo Street place-making through storytelling and photography. The use of the activist practice to understand the activities of the Oromo Protest Movement against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan is captured through structured interview questions with the Oromo Media Network (OMN) and participants within the cultural mapping project.

Sharon Jeannotte (2015) describes the importance of cultural mapping that focuses on the intangible cultural heritage using United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Article 2.2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Article 2.2 defines intangible cultural heritage through five elements, the first being oral traditions and expression, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; second is performing arts; third social practices, rituals and festive events; fourth is knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and last being traditional craftsmanship (p. 35). UNESCO has acknowledged the fact that intangible culture is not only revealed through heritage and tradition "but also has a contemporary element" (p. 35), as intangible cultural heritage cannot be seen as heritage unless it is expressed " by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it" (p. 35). Intangible cultural heritage gives life to cultural diversity and sustainable growth because it is "constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history" (p. 35). It was important that my research involved substantial forms of public engagement to understand how Oromo culture can be effectively integrated into the social, environmental and economic policies of the City of Minneapolis. United Nations

Resolution 68/223 on Culture and sustainable development suggests that culture can be an enabler of sustainable development as it provides "peoples and communities with a strong sense of identity and social cohesion" (p. 36). The Oromo diaspora's belief in Oromummaa (Oromo culture and nationalism), through evidence in my interviews, speaks to how strong culture can be a unifier amongst diaspora, especially with symbols like Oromo Street. In 2016 UNESCO recognized the Gada system, an "indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo" (UNESCO, 2016), as being an intangible cultural heritage in Ethiopia.

The use of storytelling within community mapping is not new to municipal planning. Jennotte (2015) describes the fact that Scottish town planner Patrick Geddes was a promoter of greater public participation while also suggesting that we consider "people's history and culture as the main elements that should determine a city's organic growth" (p. 36). However, this type of holistic planning has been substituted by technocratic planning models through master plans and zoning regulations. Technocratic cultural mapping has focused on tangible cultural elements like cultural occupations, industries, facilities and spaces, natural heritage, events and festivals while downplaying intangible cultural assets such as spiritual values, cultural identity, social cohesion and heritage values. It was through the field of environmental management that four new methodological approaches have been used to gage and recognize the intangible and ecological value of culture:

> 1) articulation or narrative expressions of experience and meaning; 2) open-ended classification based on categories defined by the community involved; 3) assignment of relative importance or what matters most to the community, and 4) spatial relevance or the recognition of the place-based nature of many intangible cultural values" (Jennotte, 2015, p. 40).

The ability of participants to articulate their narrative expressions and meaning of Oromo Street was critical for developing a cultural map that tells the story of a place as well as its assigned relative importance and place-based intangible cultural values. The narratives of Oromo activists within a community mapping exercise will put a story to Oromo street and increase its visibility within the City of Minneapolis.

Oromo Street Community Cultural Mapping Project

Methods for this project included a community meeting (Walgahii) and qualitative semi-structured focus group. I organized a community meeting (Walgahii) through my relationships as being a Qeerroo activist within North America and my deep family ties to the City of Minneapolis. The sample criteria for people to participate needed to be that the Oromo activists who were above the age of 18 and lived within the Twin Cities. The participants were chosen due to their activism within the Oromo community in Minneapolis and their historical knowledge of the Oromo community's immigration to Minnesota. The participants all happen to be people that I had known already due their activism within the Oromo community in Minneapolis. This allowed me to focus more on the project than me actually having to go to do outreach and find participants who would be interested in such a project. Participants had the opportunity to share their intangible cultural assets of Oromo at the Walgahii, which consisted of stories and pictures. This was special for participants and myself as we made connections to the cultural intangible stories

All stories were written by participants except that of Fuad whose story I transcribed. Participants' narratives needed to be at the centre of the Walgaahii as images and stories provided insight into the Oromo Street's assigned importance and cultural values. Even though interviewed separately, a member of Oromo Media Network (OMN) was also included in the cultural mapping project as they provided their analysis of Oromo Street's significance as a cultural heritage site for the Oromo diaspora. I had used the transcription software Otter which allowed me to transcribe and edit the community meeting as well as the focus group. I was unable to be in Minneapolis to host the community meeting and focus group in person because of the Covid-19 crisis at the time.

After the 2-hour community meeting, all participants participated in a semi- structured focus group with questions such as:
- How has OMN impacted the Oromo communities within Minneapolis and Ethiopia?
- What is the significance of the City of Minneapolis recognizing Oromo Street?

- Do you think the City of Minneapolis should create an Oromo cultural district to further enshrine a rich sense of cultural and/or linguistic identity rooted in Ceadar-Riverside Neighbourhood?
- How has community organizing within Minneapolis impacted Oromo communities in Ethiopia? And vice-versa, within Minneapolis?

The community mapping project was important because the City of Minneapolis has not even taken the time to acknowledge the intangible cultural heritage of the Oromo people, despite giving them a street. The analogy you know my name, not my story, has resonated with the experience of the Oromo diaspora living within Minneapolis. While people feel seen by members of the public their stories of the struggle for justice, human rights and equality against the Ethiopian state have not been acknowledged. The community mapping project is a foundational layer for the Oromo community in Minneapolis to begin advocating for a cultural district that ensures its cultural heritage is preserved and recognized. The City of Minneapolis Official Plan has provided the policy frameworks necessary for an Oromo Cultural District. However, the lack of political will has stunted this opportunity for the Oromo Community in Minneapolis. The utilization of the community mapping allowed for my research to focus on participants' narrative experiences of Oromo Street so as to best understand their spatial relevance to the Oromo Protest Movement. The cultural mapping project has allowed for Oromo Street to be examined as a placemaking exercise of transnational post-colonial space.

Ethnography Activist Practice

The ethnographic approach of activist practice was used to understand the activities of the Oromo Protest Movement. Jeff Juris and Alex Khasnabish (2015) describe ethnography as containing more than just the usual research approaches of participant observations and open-ended and narrative-oriented interviews. Rather it is a form of investigation and "writing that allows us to capture the subjective mood, tone, and feeling of social movement events, activities, and encounters" (p. 580). Traditional observational research methods have tended not to provide the critical theoretical insights necessary to analyze social movements. The

ability to have participants share their intangible cultural assets as well as to be interviewed allowed me to capture the subjective feeling of Oromo Protest Movement events and activities. An ethnographic approach to analyze the Oromo Protest movement allowed for greater focus on the lived experience of activist so as to understand meaning and subjectivity of the movement. This also brought into focus the internal political- cultural struggles as well as power differences within the movement as members hold different prominence. Based on this, I decided that the best way to analyze the Oromo Protest Movement against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan was by interviewing people from the Oromo Media Network (OMN) and listening to their stories. The experiences of community organizing shared by OMN and activists speak to their practical knowledge of unfolding events during the Oromo protest movement of 2014 to 2018 and current organizing efforts. As an activist-based scholar, it was critically important for my research to focus on the dual assemblies of "activists and movement scholars in the academy" (p. 580). Politically engaged ethnography is significant for this project as it considers everyday movement practices from protest to visioning a just society.

Juris and Khasnabish (2015) have provided us with four models of activist practice to understand the value of engaged ethnographic work. The first model examines everyday cultural production through an anthropological perspective, as anthropologists take into consideration the divergent perspectives on struggles of social movements, which are "cultural and material, both symbolic and political-economic" (p. 581). Anthropologists believe that culture and identity can be constructed by social movements but also can be questioned and argued amongst these movements. For example, culture is a space where many individuals and groups fight for dominance. This only shows that social movements are complicated and "defined by social and ideological heterogeneity, not only as vehicles for struggle but sites of struggle" (p. 581). Anthropologists pay attention to the joint exercises of transnational social movements where members establish new beliefs, opinions and imaginations. The ability to interview Oromo activists within Minneapolis and the Executive Director of OMN provided analysis on the various sites of struggle within this transnational movement and how members formed new imaginaries of Oromia being free from the Ethiopian colonial state through Oromo

Street. The authors use the research of sociologists Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison to understand the everyday cultural production of social movements and their "knowledge-making activities" (p. 582). Ethnographers recognized that social movements are knowledge producers and that those who focus on worldwide justice movements can use their writing skills to support "activist circuits of research, strategizing, and theorizing" (p. 583). My research is needed to produce new forms of knowledge on the Oromo protest movement as it can further contribute to Oromo's scholarly-based research.

The second model of activist practice is local-global networking, which focuses on "space, place, and practice within social movements" (p. 583). The authors point to global-level spatial practices that have transnational extensions, such as political struggles "that give shape to shifting networks formations" (p. 583). These local sites, which extended beyond borders within ethnography, are referred to as multi-sited ethnography as they follow people, "ideas, objects, conflicts, and other phenomena across networks of geographically dispersed sites" (p. 584). Global justice movements involve many network-based formations ranging from technologies, organizational forms, and political norms negotiated by activist practice. These networks allow for the creation of democratic practices to exist. The Oromo protest movement can be viewed from the perspective of multi-sited ethnography as protest within Minneapolis extends to the streets of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. OMN is based in Minneapolis and provides "political-cultural and technological processes of transmission and translation" (p.586).

The third model to be viewed is new media activism, focused on "organizational logic and cultural dynamics of contemporary social movements" (p. 586). The authors highlight that online and offline practices are not reflections of each other since they are "jointly constitutive, while particular media practices and organizing logics are always contested" (p. 586). New media forms, like social media, have created space for divergent perspectives. However, they have also created spaces for dialogue through cultural production and assisting grassroots in gaining new connections for their movement. The Oromo protest movement's use of social

media has been so enormous that the government of Ethiopia has cut the internet to stop people from organizing against developments such as the Master Plan.

The fourth is performative protests, where activists use "techniques of the body and diverse protest styles to occupy space and resist domination" (p. 587) while using their voices to speak up against disapproval and express different values and identities. The researcher's body becomes a crucial research tool when examining protests and actions. For example, when marches occur, researchers involved should pay close attention to the complexity of the spatial practices of the protest movement. Paul Routledge's concept of the terrain of resistance is used to symbolize culturally and spatially contextualized places of difference "between forces of domination and resistance" (p. 587) and those who hold different principles, opinions and purposes. Street protests are terrains of resistance as they are "physical and symbolic, conflict spaces" (p. 587), where protest occurs in which "action is set, represented, and interpreted" (p. 587). Protesters use various markings to depict different "cultural and political meanings on the surrounding landscape" (p. 587). For example, the Oromo protesters in Minneapolis shutting down of I95 highway in the wake of Hachalu Hundessa's death were not condemned. However, Governor Tim Walz came out in favour of the protestors by saying, "Hachalu Hundessa showed that music could change hearts and minds across the world. My heart goes out to the Oromo community mourning his powerful voice and tireless activism" (Walz, 2020).

Using ethnography as a research method allowed me to take an activist-scholarly approach to my research while simultaneously continuing to participate in the Oromo protest movement. Julia Sudbury and Margo Okazawa-Rey (2009) describe activist scholarship "as the production of knowledge and pedagogical practices through active engagements with, and in the service of, progressive social movements" (Sudbury & Okazawa-Rey, 2009, pg.3). The uses of the activist-scholarly approach to my research ensured there could be meaningful dialogue between the academy and the social justice movement subject like the Oromo protest movement. It recognizes my community's struggle while allowing me, as a researcher, to amplify their stories. It takes into my consideration my activism as someone who speaks upon

political, social and economic issues facing the Oromo community within Ethiopia and Diaspora. As a child growing up in Toronto, Canada, I had the opportunity take Afaan Oromo classes at my local elementary school on the weekends. It was my first opportunity to fully comprehend how to speak, write and communicate in Oromo. It was also a space where we as young children learned about our culture and history through guest speakers such as legendary Oromo musician Ali Birra. Ali was part of the famous Afran Qallo band that would produce and perform Oromo music when it was illegal in 1962. The ability to see powerful figures such as Ali Birra would inspire me in my activism to amplify the voices of the Oromo protest movement. In 2022 Ali Birra would receive a state funeral by Ethiopian government who noted his activism for the Oromo language. Activist practice as a method in my research permitted layering and deconstruction of the Oromo protest movement transnational struggle within four different phases starting with everyday cultural production through an anthropological perspective, local-global networking, new media activism and last performative protests, which provided more depth to my research. The method allowed for greater analysis of the discussions with OMN and activist within Minneapolis to best describe what phases had greater application during the protest against the Addis Ababa Master Plan and currently unfolding events within the Oromo protest movement. The ability to capture activists' feelings and lived experiences provided validity to the method of activist practice as it gave a way for activists to make meaning of their experience in a transnational environment. The method shows how cultures of solidarity are created by those who seek to decolonize space in the urban environment.

Coding Analysis for Qualitative-Based Research

Johnny Saldaña's (2013) coding analysis for qualitative-based research was used to help inform how my data would be analyzed and what questions I should ask myself as a researcher when trying to gain insight into answering my research question. Saldaña defines a code within qualitative inquiry as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2013, pg.3). Coding data allows myself as research to summarize, distill and condense

information. It also requires the researcher to able to filter the data but as Saldana points out that "how you perceive and interpret what is happening in the data depends on what type of filter covers that lens" (Saldaña, 2013, pg.7). Saldaña's uses three methods to help researcher understand how to filter data, the first one being In Vivo Coding which ensures that "data is rooted in the participant's own language" (Saldaña, 2013, pg.7). The second method is descriptive coding which allows the research "to document and categorize the breadth of opinions stated by multiple participants" (Saldaña, 2013, pg.7) and last is value coding focused on capturing and labelling subjective perspectives. In filtering my own data, I had used value coding and descriptive coding to understanding Oromo street symbolism from the perspective of participants and role of media within the Oromo protest movement. The coding data allowed myself as research to formulate themes/subheadings that connect to my research methods and further clarify outstanding areas of emphasis.

Chapter Two

Cultural Flows and Resistance Through Independent Media

This Chapter examines Oromo diaspora networks and the connection through culture and media to their homeland. Additionally, I explore how resistance movements flow from online to the pavement. In this chapter, I argue that Oromo Media Network (OMN) role as an independent broadcaster that produces an alternative narrative based upon fact goes against the Ethiopian government's distorted and unreliable perspective. The first section of this chapter examines OMN as a media entity and the historical importance of independent media organizations within the Oromo community and beyond. In the second section I discuss how commercial spyware technology is used to suppress the message of OMN through satellite jamming and targeted cyber warfare strategies. Third section examines OMN's role within the Addis Ababa Master Plan and seeks to find an answer to the question of whether former OMN CEO Jawar was the leader of the Qeerroo. Chapter four is the final analysis, that concludes with an understanding of how Oromo are changing their narrative within Ethiopia's media landscape and the diaspora.

Oromo Media Network (OMN) and Oromo Protest Movement

OMN officially launched in March 2014 as an independent media organization in Minneapolis. The start of the media organization came at a time when the Oromo community had many issues within its internal political process. The political elites in the society were not on the same page, which resulted in some feeling discouraged. OMN's creation through the support of the Oromo diaspora in Minneapolis resulted in the community realizing that "they could collectively come together and do greater things. Things that they have not accomplished before" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Many community members would cry on the day of the OMN launch as they heard Jawar describe how the airwaves above Oromia were now open, and the next phase would be the liberation of the land. OMN's launch brought a fresh atmosphere for the Oromo to realize their power as they did not have to wait for any elected or civic leader to lead them since they could do it

independently. This was the beginning of the Oromo community in Minneapolis's mobilization and actual organizing of the protest. Oromo communities began to get involved in local politics and push to meet with their lawmakers. The community would use its large voting population to be heard by local politicians who "take their issues to the Senate floor to the Congress and as a result are able to pass resolutions against the Ethiopian government, particularly regarding human rights and the land grabs" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). OMN, as a media network, provided the space for the Oromo community to come together in Minneapolis to free Ethiopia's airwaves and develop the capacity to use their large voting base to pass resolutions against the Ethiopian government. The creation of OMN in Minneapolis has provided the diaspora with a connection to their homeland that was not previously there and supplying another tool to actually amplify the voices of the Oromo community within Ethiopia facing state oppression.

The importance of OMN as an independent media organization for the Oromo community stems from historical censorship by the Ethiopian government against non-state media actors, as described by the OMN Director Musa Haramaya:

> So, as you know or have may heard, since the existence of the creation of the state of Ethiopia by Menelik and then Haile Selassie and then Mengistu Haile Mariam media and independent media or any sort of independent information dissemination methods, public gathering was banned, for the Oromos. The first thing Menelik did was ban an annual gathering of Irreecha, where all their Abba Gadas from across Oromia would gather and will come and discuss issues that each region or area has faced or is facing. So they will have this discussion, deliberation and cooperation to tackle the Oromo societal problems. If there is a security threat, they also get help from their fellow Oromo from other geographical locations to fend off those threats. And so those gatherings and smaller gatherings are the old methodologies of sharing information on societal issues and addressing them. So the first thing that Menelik did was banned these gatherings for the Oromo. So, he can divide and rule and tell one group of Oromo something else and give them some different treatment or different treaties. And that is where things started, basically for the Oromo to not be on the same page, in terms of issues they face, and at the regional level (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022).

The historical nature of sharing information amongst the Oromo people against the Ethiopian Empire was seen as a threat due to the sheer population size of the Oromo. The

Ethiopian government has not always wanted to see the Oromo people with their independent news media where they can have open dissenting voices against development issues such as the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan. OMN Director Musa Haramaya identified a gap in reporting as he described, "so us realizing that lack of information among the people about the state, the affairs of the state, and the predicament of both economically and socially that Oromo's are facing" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). OMN became significant as it brought awareness to ongoing issues facing the Oromo community from an Oromo perspective within Ethiopia. People could collectively come together to demand that their rights be respected. Ethiopia's large population was not an issue for the Oromo as a nation but rather its large sizable land area. If human rights abuses occur on one side of Oromia, it can be difficult for the other side to know what is happening because of being Ethiopia's largest regional state. For Oromo to speak out against these issues requires them to have some sort of media that independently reports on topics from the ground. The development of OMN as a new media tool for the Oromo community was significant because Ethiopia is a country that has one of the lowest internet penetrations in the world at 2.5% (Dugo, 2015, p.52). The use of social media by protestors to show inhumane violence caused by government officials in their demonstrations across Ethiopia now has global connections. EPDRF government would no longer suppress protestors with selective outages of the internet to stop sharing protests but rather a "blanket disruption of the Internet, mobile data and voice services as well as popular social media and file-sharing applications such as Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, among others" (Dugo, 2015, p.52) across the country.

When OMN started reporting as a media organization, they stated:

> You could see people uniting around issues…becoming well-informed of what's coming to them. OMN was broadcasting the government's unjust plans, particularly around rent, land grabbing, economic policies, and other forms of policies that actually trampled on people's individual and group rights. So, for people… to understand what's happening and what's coming to them, independent media… (is needed and we get) evidence from leaks…within the government. Getting it to the public helped form people's opinions about the government (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022).

OMN reporting provided more significant opportunities for the Oromo diaspora to connect with a broadcaster speaking in their language and be able to see fact-based reporting on the human rights abuses of Oromo people within Ethiopia. The creation of OMN as a broadcaster in 2014 has led to the launching of many more independent Oromo news channels. Airwaves have become accessible for Oromo people to speak about ongoing human rights issues within their communities. The use of social media as a tool of activism has allowed the Oromo community to send more messages to community members more quickly than ever before. It has the ability, as Sabina Khan-Ibarra describes, to "bring to people fair and balanced news coverage with little or no bias of mainstream corporate media or propaganda, thereby becoming the de facto news" (Khan-Ibarra, 2014, para.8). This was one of the main reasons why OMN wanted to expand their programming beyond just the Oromo people, as they felt it was their duty to help the many nations and nationalities' voices within Ethiopia to be heard just like the Oromo. Ethiopia's state as a fabric is based upon the Amhara culture and domination from a political and economic standpoint, so media space was minimal for other ethnic groups. OMN couldn't help all the 80-plus ethnicities within Ethiopia but focused on major ones such as Sidama, Amhara and Somali. Communicating with other ethnic groups such as the Amhara through media, allows people to hear other people's perspectives. OMN uses social media as a tool "to call out injustices, inaccuracies and misrepresentations" (Khan-Ibarra, 2014, para.12) as it tries to create a shared understanding amongst communities of Ethiopians for an equitable future for everyone. Media is the medium where diverse ethnic groups in Ethiopia can have a dialogue about systemic issues they face, from economic to cultural. OMN Director Musa Haramaya argues:

> OMN consciously...(try's) to be the voice of other oppressed Ethiopians. This is why OMN embarked on extending its program and platform to others. Some ethnicities within Ethiopia have never heard their language on mass media on the radio or T.V., such as the Gurage. There's an Afar program that we had when in Finfinne. When COVID came, OMN broadcasted in 17 different languages, including sign languages, so the Ethiopian public became aware of this virus and took precautions. The government couldn't even do it in all three major languages until maybe a couple of months after us. So really, OMN is trying to also show and accommodate equality and justice for all and what Ethiopia should be, right? (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022).

It is essential that independent media can be used as a tool for health promotion, especially during the most extraordinary global pandemic of the 21st century. OMN has played a vital role in ensuring that its media is used not for Ethiopian government propaganda but rather to accommodate the many nations and nationalities that call the country home. The media's ability to build bonds between diverse people is something that the Ethiopian government fears, as coalitions in the past have toppled previous governments. The ability of OMN to open up space within a controlled media environment speaks to their influential role within the media landscape in Ethiopia and the Diaspora. The Oromo protest movement against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan is amplified through OMN media broadcasts.

Commercial Spyware and OMN

The Ethiopian government's media censorship tactics would reach the shores of the U.S. and U.K. as they would target dissidents through specialized "commercial spyware posing as Adobe Flash updates and PDF plugins" (Marczak et al.,2020, p.5). The Oromo Media Network would be a target of this campaign by the Ethiopian government. The targeted attack was made through an email message that would be connected to a "malicious website impersonating an online video portal" (Marczak et al.,2020, p.6). When an individual clicks the link, they are informed that they must download and install an Adobe Flash update that contains spyware. In some situations, individuals are encouraged to install a fake app called "Adobe PdfWriter" to view PDF files. It has been identified that Israel commercial spyware company Cyberbit and its subsidiary Elbit Systems was using its P.C. Surveillance System (PSS), which is now known as PC 360.

The Ethiopian government's use of commercial spyware technology against those who spoke up against its human rights record reflects Ethiopia's undemocratic society, where authoritarian tactics are used to suppress dissent. EPRDF would be supported by many governments whose foreign policy was based on fighting terrorism and extremism while looking away at Ethiopia's human rights record. The United States of America hosted its drone base in southern Ethiopia from 2011 to 2016 to fight Al-Shabaab in Somalia (Hudson & O'Grady,

2016), while at the same time, the Ethiopian government would be launching spyware attacks from Ethiopia on United States citizens within America. It also targeted Eritrean-owned companies and government institutions, as the EPRDF regime led by Tigrayan's were adversaries against the Eritrean regime. OMN broadcasts would be jammed 39 times from 2014 to 2018.

The constant jamming of EPRDF would create a situation in which no carrier wanted to accept OMN as a client because the jamming damaged their satellite equipment. Jawar Mohammed, Executive Director of the OMN, "received eleven emails between 5/30/2016 and 10/13/2016, and one more than a year later on 11/22/2017. Each email contained links to purported videos on eastafro[.]net or Adobe Flash Player updates on getadobeplayer[.]com" (Marczak et al.,2020, pg.12). The Ethiopian government's responses to the critiques of the Addis Ababa Integrated master plan would include a cyber warfare strategy against dissent abroad like Jawar and media companies that were broadcasting the movement of Qeerroo to the diaspora. OMN Director Musa Haramaya highlights that the "Ethiopian government go far to suppress the alternative voice, and today we're under Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, not much has changed" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). The reformer Prime Minister has taken the mantle of censorship from EPRDF as he has shut down the internet, illegally detained journalists and conducted media blackouts throughout the country.

The Ethiopian government used the State of Emergency for six months starting on October 9, 2016 to ban three forms of communication, with the first one being anything that would "cause public disturbance and riot, including gesturing or displaying symbols of protests" (Dugo, 2015, p.55); the second form was "the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter "to contact what are called outside forces" (Dugo, 2015, p.55); and last was watching "diaspora-based television channels such as Oromia Media Network and ESAT, which have become major sources for people" (Dugo, 2015, p.55). The targeting of diaspora media, such as OMN, was a coordinated strategy by the EPRDF to limit protestors' ability to empower themselves to

mobilize. EPRDF government would spend its resources fighting social media as Ethiopian PM Haile Mariam Deslegn suggested that "we are seeing how misinformation could easily go viral via social media and mislead many people, especially the youth" (Schemm, 2016, para 4) even though it would be his government that would be killing protestors and not addressing their legitimate grievances. The Computer Crimes Proclamation 958/2016 was another piece of legislation that gave the government the ability to have unlimited surveillance capabilities against protestors under the guise of criminalizing protestors for their use of computers and new media technologies. The government push to try to punish people for "crimes" of sending/distributing any "illegal content data" using a computer system in the form of writing, video, audio and any other picture" (Dugo, 2015, p.56) only goes to show how desperate the regime was to maintain power over the people.

The Ethiopian government's tactics of media censorship follow in the footsteps of many authoritarian regimes against social movements. Thedor Tudoroiu (2014) argues that social media during the Arab Spring "was able to provide a movement with powerful, speedy, and relatively low-cost tools for recruitment, fund-raising, the distribution of information and images, collective discussions, and mobilization for action" (p.355). The Oromo Protest Movement and Arab Spring share similarities, as the speedy nature of revolutions took on regimes that had been in power for over 20 years. They had transnational connections, which made their fundraising campaigns even more effective. For example, the Ethiopian government's relentless campaign against OMN made their fundraising efforts more significant, as those who took part saw their donation as an act of resistance. Ethiopian government responses against the Oromo Protest Movement can be seen in the same manner as in the Arab spring, which "lacked a clear strategy and it is beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were far from imposing on social media the overwhelming control that they had on 'old' media" (p.355). EPRDF could no longer use the old tools of the past to control the media narrative as social media effectively allowed citizens to challenge the government's narrative. This brought forth a revolution that toppled the government peacefully, which was never seen in Ethiopian history. The uses of censorship tactics like the shutdown of internet resulted in the Ethiopian

economy losing an estimated $146 million in 2022 (Ngila,2023). This only goes to show that the new Ethiopian government led by the Prosperity Party continues the same censorship methods of EPRF regime.

OMN's Role in Qeerroo Resisting the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan

The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan would devastate the Oromo people, especially the farmers surrounding the City of Addis Ababa. OMN's primary purpose within the Oromo protest movement against the master plan was to relay information to the broader Oromo community on the government's shady development deals in Addis Ababa or elsewhere in the country. It was important for OMN to shine a light on the Master Plan as they were the first media organization to get master plan documents and report on community organizing efforts within Ethiopia and Minneapolis. An OMN Director, Musa Haramaya, says, "The master plan has been around for some time. There was an initial form and then an amended plan" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Land grabbing in Oromia had been a huge issue under the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) rule of Ethiopia. OMN in-depth reporting on the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan allowed the Oromo diaspora to know that plan was driven by greed by TPLF elites in power. Land grabbing was already leading to the expulsion of "millions of Oromo farmers rendering them homeless without any compensation, or if any, very minimal compensation that does not even help them to live on for more than six months" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). The underlying issue of expulsion and dispersal of Oromo people from their lands is that it also scatters people's traditional cultures and history, which are tied to that particular area. The clans of Oromo that were once concentrated within a specific area are no longer found as they are dispersed within different localities; for example, "Galaan and Abichuu that have been expelled from Addis many decades ago" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). There is now only a place called Galaan, and they mainly exist within history as "you don't even know where to find them" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). The planning process of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan sought to kill the identity of the Oromo people as it didn't take into account the cultural heritage of the people that are tied to a specific area. Previous

Ethiopian governments had banned teaching the Oromo language and the traditional cultural festival of Irreecha (Oromo Thanksgiving). Many Oromo saw the taking away of their lands as going back to a previous era where the culture was under attack while now having to deal with the issue of being non-self-sufficient because many Oromo are pastoral farmers. Qeerroo protestors knew the importance of history's connection to land development because once the original inhabitant's history is lost, it may be hard to understand environmental sustainability and stewardship issues.

OMN has always attempted to dig further into any story with the help of whistle-blowers within the government. They have exposed some of the government dealings by obtaining confidential documents. OMN leaks show that independent media are necessary, especially in urban development issues such as the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan. As people become aware of development issues, they become enraged as the land grab scoop is more extensive than previously understood. Musa Haramaya says, "People are not going to accept what is happening and about to happen. They weren't going to take it" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). The community organizing method of demonstrating on campus across the country was hard to amplify because the government would crush any dissent on campus. However, solidarity amongst protestors would develop and reach its peak during the same year OMN would launch, amplifying its message. University students at Jimma University would protest against the Master plan. They would then be joined by other university students near the capital and in towns such as Ginchi. The government would respond brutally to "peaceful protesters and killed many young people. OMN was reporting what was happening in the aftermath of the initial protest, so that kept fueling the protest. The protests quickly spread throughout the Oromia region using the social media" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Oromo Media Executive Director at the time, Jawar Mohammed, describes how they "used social media and formal media so effectively that the state was completely overwhelmed" (Gardner, 2018, para 8) as they were left with the fact of facing "reform or accept full revolution" (Gardner, 2018, para 8). Using social media within the Oromo Protest movement stems from the Arab Spring, which Jawar studied during his time

at Columbia University and Stanford University. The hashtag #OromoProtests in 2016 would be one of the top hashtags in Africa (Dugo, 2015, p.53). OMN became the go-to media for the public "to hear the latest of the government action and the public reaction also to the government's action" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022) of killing protestors who were calling for their rights to be respected.

Qeerroo's method of organizing students across the country can now be seen globally through OMN, resulting in further mobilization through social media networks. OMN allowed for the Qeerroo voice to be amplified to the diaspora, leading to protests in the streets of Minneapolis. The use of social media as a tool for Qeerroo activists allowed their movement to be transnational, just as in the Arab Spring. Tudoroiu (2014) describes how public and virtual spaces during the Arab spring "actually came into a mutual synergy, turning transnational connectedness into tangible mobilization that threatened and sometimes overthrew stable, consolidated authoritarian regimes" (p.363). This has been the case within Ethiopia, which is why the Ethiopian government shut down the internet after the death of Haacaaluu Hundeessa and raided the offices of OMN in Finfinne in June 2020. The committee to protect journalists highlighted the "Ethiopian authorities' persistence of old patterns of censorship in response to crises when the public most needs access to timely news and information" (Crouch, 2020, para 1). This only goes to show how censorship is a means for authority to punish dissent and take away the liberties of individuals. Oromo protest just as in the Arab spring, saw the rise of "empowerment of the citizen journalist" (Tudoroiu, 2014, p.364) through social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The networks provide access for the Oromo diaspora to watch unfolding events on OMN that have been uploaded and verified. Social media as a tool of activism contributed to the "individualized, localized, and community-specific dissent into a structured movement with a collective consciousness about both shared plights and opportunities for action" (Tudoroiu, 2014, p.364). It was critically important for the Qeerroo to organize online with their transnational networks to amplify their message against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan and the lack of human rights within the country.

Journalists from the BBC, NRP and The Guardian have suggested that Jawar Mohamed, the former Executive Director of OMN, was one of the main leaders of the Qeerroo against the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government. OMN Director Musa Haramaya provides insight into Jawar's role within the protest as he "sees himself as more of a strategist and advisor to the Qeerroo about the action, the planning and the goals to be achieved, and so how to achieve those goals (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Jawar Mohamed's background in political strategies, conflict resolution and advising large think groups in Washington on Horn of Africa politics has allowed him to understand the country of Ethiopia in ways most people didn't. Jawar studied the Arab spring's strengths and weaknesses which allowed him to not make the same shortcomings for the Qeerroo. With this experience and being an Executive Director of OMN, people would be "risking prosecution. They start communicating with OMN and Jawar. People have expressed their views, and those in the government have a secure and trusted partner with whom they can disclose what's happening. Jawar sat on the top of this information hub. So, collecting that information from different localities in Oromia, from the youth, particularly university students, was able to strategize on how to counter and push against the government" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Jawar's role as a movement leader allowed it to build bridges with those within the government who would leak information to OMN. The ability to be a trusted source is critical within a media environment that relies upon locking up dissenting voices against the government. It was with this belief that some believe Jawar was the leader of Qeerroo. OMN Director Musa Haramaya states:

> I see him as a leader because he strategizes to come up with ways, of course, with consultation on the ground and then sent back with a discussion about the next action to be taken on the ground. He was a leader. So, he was leading. I don't know what a leader is other than just coming up with a strategy and making decisions on the actions, with consultation with people on the ground. Information has been communicated upwards, not horizontally, so vertically, to the states. Information will be analyzed on what's happening on the ground, what the government plans to do, and how to counter that in peaceful and non-violent ways. He sent back through safe channels to the people on the ground. Everybody goes into action. I see him as a leader even though he claims that he's not he's a strategist. Yes, he does do strategies, but I see him as someone who's been leading that group. Qeerroo doesn't have a hierarchical

structure. It's a flat structure, loosely coupled structure. It is... (like this) ...for a reason. Because of the way I said earlier, the government had created mistrust between people by creating that structure of telling on each other. So, to counter that, what you have (do) is you communicate vertically and horizontally. You have very loosely coupled networks that communicate with each other horizontally, but most of the communication is done vertically (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022)

Having a loosely hierarchical structure provided Qeerroo with enough security that the movement would keep going even if members got caught and put in prison. Jawar's ability to provide a strategy to the movement made him seen as a leader within it. The Qeerroo's ability to broadcast their voices over OMN made their dissent against the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan much more powerful. It was one of the main reasons for a " 20 percent decrease in foreign direct investment" (Peralta, 2018, para.11). The Oromo protest stopped development issues head-on in a country that relies upon large-scale development projects. On Jawar's return to Ethiopia in 2018, he was greeted by thousands who "lined the streets, celebrating his return" (Peralta, 2018, para 14), citing him as their hero. This was Jawar's first return since 2008, as the government had dropped all terrorism charges against him, and he would be "transformed from an outside agitator, an activist, to a political figure with huge influence over the new government" (Peralta, 2018, para.14). OMN as an institution has uplifted people like Jawar to new heights among Oromo and all Ethiopians who take offence to or support his cause. Even though Jawar is no longer with OMN, his hand prints can still be seen on the organization as they independently report on the ground news coverage of his campaigns as a political actor within Oromia and Ethiopia.

The Oromo Narrative in Ethiopia Mediascape

OMN was seeking to tell what was occurring within Ethiopia, specifically in Oromia, from an Oromo perspective because of the lack of media that existed amongst the Oromo. OMN created a multimedia-networked communication system that brought together social and broadcast media. Max Hänska (2016) describes the uses of social media as enabling "social organisation/action in networked structures," (p.101), so as to empower individuals in an unimpeded manner. In contrast, broadcast media allows for more extraordinary hierarchical

cohesive and inclusive forms of "social organisation, empowering those who occupy gatekeeping positions within a hierarchy" (p.101).OMN brought together both broadcast and social media to create a multimedia communication system, which allowed for the cohesion of horizontal, vertical and hierarchical structures of communication for broadcast as well as production. The Ethiopian government always had the upper hand with their narrative, resulting in some Oromo being confused and some buying into the government narrative. OMN brought in many scholars from those focused-on Oromo histories or Ethiopian scholars to "correcting the wrongly narrated history of Oromo because of lack of independent media even Oromo histories have been distorted" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). These interviews provided greater detail on the Oromo cause for equality, justice and freedom compared to the disoriented image the government put out of the Oromo domination of Ethiopia and kicking every nation and nationality out of Oromia.

Oromo people had a system of governance before the empire conquered their lands called the Gadaa, which ensured the welcoming of others into their society. The Gadaa system has conflict resolution and is recognized by UNESCO as significant to World Heritage. It has been acknowledged as one of the earliest democracies in the world. The history of Oromo portraying as people are savages who are seeking to dismantle Ethiopia is categorically false as "many Oromos have defended Ethiopia against the Italian occupation, as well as the Somali invasion but they have continued to be seen as a threat to Ethiopia" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). The Oromo sacrificed their lives on behalf of the Ethiopian state but received little under the constitution. The traditional ways of life of Gadaa have been held sacred in an environment that seeks to stereotype Oromo people as destructors of the Ethiopian state. The Oromo narrative throughout Ethiopian history has been distorted, and OMN clarifies by distinguishing between propaganda and fact. Social media is space, as Hanska says of "content creators" (p.101), while broadcast media is space for "newsworkers" (p.101). OMN wasn't trying to distinguish between the channels of communication. Instead, they were trying to ensure that the distorted narrative that the Ethiopian government has produced

regarding the Oromo was being challenged in a multifaceted way by setting the agenda, tone and discourse.

OMN created Amharic programming to create an understanding between the two people, as some Amhara people don't speak Afaan Oromo. The program explained what the Oromo people were all about, beginning with their history and then presenting their cultural heritage in contrast to the distorted propaganda the government displays as the Oromo people being uncivilized and dangerous. OMN Director Musa Haramaya says, "Oromos are just striving for equality and justice, not just for themselves but for every Ethiopian as well. But of course, they also seek autonomy over their resources, including the right to self-determination" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Self-determination for the Oromos has been debated amongst Oromo politicians who considered themselves federalists, nationalists and unitarist. OMN is an independent media broadcaster that reports on the many perspectives of the Oromo people who have different opinions, not deciding which camp is correct but instead showing the Oromo response to each camp's philosophy. Historically within Ethiopia, there have been many horrible documentaries about the Oromo people created by the government. Even though they were categorically false, no media network could counter them with facts about these untrue narratives. The development of OMN as a broadcast network was able "counter some of the government narratives, exposing their lies, and people became more informed. There was enough injustice, and OMN does not need to exaggerate anything. The killings of innocent civilians are taking place every day. So, if 20 civilians are killed or maimed, OMN reports that through its verification processes, ensuring that if the number is 20, it is 20, not 50" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). The Oromo public sees OMN as a media outlet where they can find the truth about what is occurring within the country and in their communities in America. This is how OMN can change the narrative about the Oromo, their struggles, and the injustice they have endured over the years.

The Oromo serve in higher positions under the Prosperity Party regime than in the past under any other government. However, they are mostly subjugated and have constantly been

shut out of the economy. In contrast, the county has continued to rely on Oromo lands as "65-67% of the country's GDP is dependent on Oromia. Oromos, unfortunately, are economically far more behind any other group" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022). Many communities within Ethiopia are in the same situation, which is also about changing the narrative, as the Oromo are not only ones suffering within the country. Oromo are not interested in everyone's business but rather in their own. However, they also want a great relationship with their neighbours, including an integrated economy that helps everyone out of poverty. Solidarity amongst those in the movements is based upon a unifying perspective as "throughout the protest, others have joined, such as the Amhara and Sidama" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022) with their version of Qeerroo. In the case of the Sidama, the Oromo advocated for them to become a regional state which they obtained three years ago. The push for self-determination for the Sidama is something the Oromo have been fighting for.

The narrative of the Oromo people would change with the appearance of Minnesotan politicians such as Senator John Hoffman, Attorney General Keith Elision, Senator Alan Franken, Congresswoman Ilhan Omar and many others. Minnesota political leadership from all levels would seek to ensure that they would hear the concerns of the Oromo community by appearing on OMN. OMN Director Musa Haramaya describes his perspectives on the politicians now appearing on their news network:

> Besides humanitarian concern and sympathy, voting power is also the biggest element that pushes politicians to lend them an ear. Oromo has been crying, begging politicians in the past to help address some of the issues. However, because we were not organized as a community very well. We have not realized the power that we hold in terms of the voting power. Through these organizations, we have reenergized Oromos coming together and going to the politicians and saying, Hey, we are your constituents, and we are this big a number. You got to listen to us. If you do know, we will vote for you. If not, we'll go with a candidate who would lend us an ear and take our issue to Washington. So that mobilization came from the youth being organized back home and the emergence of the OMN establishment. OMN is funded by the Oromo public, and it's based in Minneapolis. So, the Minneapolis Community is very close and see OMN as one

of their institutions, that is much closer to them (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022).

The narrative of the Oromo people would change when they collectively organized, as in the case of Minneapolis now. They are being listened to by their local elected leaders. The diaspora broadcast would awaken the Oromia people to wonder why their leaders can't participate in a similar open structured environment to be accountable to the people they represent. OMN as an institution is beyond measurable for the Oromo people. It has opened the door for the American public to the more outstanding analysis of issues affecting the Oromo people in Minneapolis and the diaspora. The creation of Oromo Street has changed the narrative of the Oromo people within the City of Minneapolis because it is a formulation of the political endorsement they have received as a community that is making great strides in America. Humanitarian concerns in Oromia should appeal to the politicians to act. Still, it has become Oromo's voting base in Minneapolis, making them even more accountable to members of the Oromo community. The following Chapter, Oromo Post-Colonial Planning in Minneapolis, builds on this Chapter. It seeks to bring the connection of independent media to the urban environment and the ability of grassroots diaspora networks to bring about change collectively.

Chapter Three

Oromo Post-Colonial Planning in Minneapolis

This section of my analysis draws upon the City of Minneapolis's long history of recognizing the East African communities' plight and resistance against colonial rule through the commemoration of street signs. The creation of Oromo Street by the City of Minneapolis is not only a symbol of the economic contributions of the Oromo community to the City but a space of dialogue, inclusion, and democratic participation. In this chapter, I argue that the City of Minneapolis's official plan can legitimize and recognize the Oromo community's intangible cultural contributions to the neighbourhood of Cedar-Riverside and the greater Minneapolis area. The first section of this chapter, starts with an examination of the creation of Oromo Street Placemaking and its connection to post-colonial East African histories. Building on this, I discuss the City of Minneapolis Official Plan Minneapolis 2040. Additionally, I explore how a new generation of youth is organizing in Minneapolis to support the Oromo protest movement in Ethiopia. This active group of youth is promoting the Oromo culture and language in their new homeland. The next section presents a Community Mapping Project on Oromo intangible cultural assets in Minneapolis, which share stories on the significant cultural contributions of the Oromo people to the City. Finally, I examine the Oromo diaspora community organizing in Minneapolis and its connection to the Oromo protest movement.

Oromo Street Placemaking

On January 12, 2015, Minneapolis City Councilor Abdi Warsame launched the creation of Oromo Street. The application submitted by Mr. Warsame to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission established two commemorative street names within the Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood. Warsame's motion would require the City to change 4th Street South between Cedar Avenue and 15th Avenue South to Oromo Street and the area of 6th Street and Cedar Avenue to 15th avenue South to Somali Street. The proposal passed the commission with no objection, and on September 12, 2015, Oromo Street would officially be inaugurated with

celebrations and the cultural vocal renditions of Faaru Alaaba Oromo (Oromo Flag Song). The Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood holds a special place in the hearts of many Oromos as it was home to the first Oromo Community Centre in the early 1980s through OCM (Oromo Community of Minnesota). The community centre was born out of the need to support the local community. Organizations like the Oromo Relief Association of North America (ORANA) could no longer continue to shoulder the load.

ORANA's mandate was split between the emergency needs of Oromo refugees in camps and finding potential sponsors. Refugee organizations within the Twin Cities, such as Lutheran Social Service, Lutheran World Relief, and the International Institute of Minnesota, would be the first to establish Oromo resettlement refugees to the Twin Cities to communities such as Cedar-Riverside. Minneapolis Public School's internal data in 2006 would highlight that the "largest concentration of Oromo-speaking students lives in Cedar-Riverside" (Blevins, 2007, p.19), with the communities of Seward and East Phillips just slightly behind. The Oromo migration, settlement and integration within Minneapolis have historically gone through the neighbourhood of Cedar-Riverside. The coronation of Oromo Street was indeed ceremonial, and it's also a placemaking tool that captures the hopes and desires of the nation of many who now call Minneapolis home. The feeling of pride and cultural identity is still connected to their homeland through street landmarks. In my interview with an OMN Director, Musa Haramaya describes the significance of Oromo Street as representing

> "…the Oromo's existence in Minneapolis. So, it's basically for people who have been denied a home. When they see the Oromo street area, they feel more at home. It's a reminder of having a home even though they've been deprived of having a home because of persecution and the killing is taking place in their country" (M. Haramaya, personal communication, March 14th, 2022).

Oromo Street's post-colonial placemaking stems from the City of Minneapolis's historical acknowledgement of East African anti-colonial resistance movements through the creation of Taleex Avenue, which was named after the centre of resistance against the colonizers in the early twentieth century in northern Somalia. Taleex was the capital of the Somali anti-colonial movement and the region's centre controlled by Sayid Mohamed Abdullahi

Hassan, whose military would fight the French, Italians and British. Councilor Warsame was the first Somali to win a municipal election in United States history. However, his achievement of post-colonial placemaking in Minneapolis is even more significant because he connected the history of east African anti-colonial resistance to members of the diaspora by renaming distinctive key streets such as Oromo and Somali Street, as well as Taleex Avenue. The Cedar Riverside and Seaward Districts are heavily concentrated with Oromo and Somali businesses, with business ownership dating back to the late 1970s. These businesses tell the stories of migration, settlement and integration as they are key hubs for residents to congregate, host cultural events and promote cohesion amongst each other in their new homelands. Interviewee Iftu Ahmed describes the City of Minneapolis commemorating the Oromo people as "more recognition than they ever received in Ethiopia. Anything that represents Oromo culture in Ethiopia has been painted with this Habesha paintbrush. If it's good, they are Ethiopian, and if it is bad, they are Oromo" (I. Ahmed, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

The City of Minneapolis's recognition of the Oromo community contributions is seen as something that would not occur within Ethiopia since the historical connotations of the Oromo people are tied to that of being inherently inferior compared to the Habesha. The Oromo businesses that are located within Cedar Riverside and Seaward Districts speak to how people can come to America with nothing but dream's and make better lives for themselves as well as community. Iftu Ahmed further highlights the fact that this:

> Being called Oromo Street gives me chills in my body to know that my father left walking from Ethiopia to go to Somalia, and from Somalia, he came to the United States. When he came here, there was hardly even an Oromo community in Minneapolis at the time. So, to see my father, one of the pioneers of the North American diaspora community. Come to tears as that sign was erected, showing the importance of that type of recognition. It allows that community to pull itself up by the bootstraps, a popular term in the United States. Build yourself from the ground up, and that sign is representative of almost pulling themselves up by the bootstraps for the last four decades (I. Ahmed, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

The American Dream has been portrayed by many as owning a home with a nice white picket fence, but for many of the Oromo residents within the city, the dream has been seeking

the validation of their culture heritage which they couldn't get within Ethiopia. The ability of

the Oromo people to start their lives all over again speaks to their capacity of being resilient

people. Oromo street brings up so many emotions for Oromo residents within city as they

couldn't imagine being in space which centres them and their beliefs.

        The Oromo Street profile as a post-colonial space is visible to members of the
Oromo community within the twin cities and the vast diaspora visiting Minneapolis
during the Oromo week cultural festival. OMN Director Musa Haramaya describes in
their interview that "when Oromo come to Minneapolis, they go there and make sure
that they take a picture. They welcome us to the American society to recognize and
celebrate it in the form of the street name. So, it's significant and represents their
existence, a recognition by the City of Minneapolis, and that's huge. So, it is huge for
people whose culture has been under suppression, and language has almost declined
until 1991. For them to have an Oromo Street is huge" (M. Haramaya, personal
communication, March 14th, 2022).

However, some believe that the City of Minneapolis needs to give even more recognition than

just a street name. Interviewee Yusuf Ali describes as follows:

        What does just naming a street really do for people? Understand what I'm
saying. Like we have our Oromo street, and we have Somali street too. We also have
lots of names of other people on the streets. We have Martin Luther King Jr. Street. That
doesn't lift people from bondage. That doesn't lift people from the shackles of what
society pushes on them. So, I think, yeah City of Minneapolis recognizing Oromo it's
good to recognize, but it's also easy to recognize. For example, one of the things that we
see after George Floyd is right is that George Floyd was a global issue that happened
here in Minneapolis. All these companies say we're for black people, Black Lives Matter.
Everybody just coming out with statements, but what does that actually do? How does
that actually push the people forward? Are you creating systemic structural change
within your organization? Are you just saying, hey, I'm for black people? Yeah, recognize
something, but what about that? In particular, this is a capitalistic society. So, it's easy to
state something without providing some baggage to it. How are you structurally
changing the City? (Y. Ali, personal communication, April 10th, 2022)

The death of George Floyd has resulted in the City of Minneapolis confronting its history

of systematic racial discrimination against the black community, an experience which the

Oromo also share. Oromo street recognition is seen as the easiest thing that the City of

Minneapolis could have done for the Oromo community rather than trying to create systematic

change in the City that would have affected everyone. The social movement Black Lives Matter has opened the eyes of Oromo activists that live within Minneapolis to question the statements of local officials and put into perspective the blackwashing that occurred after the death of George Floyd by private companies. The Black Lives Matter and Oromo Protest movements are related in their foundation of being anti-colonial movements as they call for freedom, justice, and equality. The Oromo community believes that the City of Minneapolis should put more effort into uplifting the community's social and economic foundation to improve the next generation of Oromo residents that refer to the City as home.

In June 2019, the City of Minneapolis announced plans for a new commercial hub dedicated to the east African community in the Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood. The project's goal was to make it a cultural, commercial corridor so that it could be the site of destination for those visiting the City and a site of the significance of the African village similar to that of other ethnic communities such as Little Italy and Chinatown. The City of Minneapolis selected 1500s. Fourth St. as the site of development since it was a surface parking lot, and would also seek to buy the land that is directly north of the development site from Hennepin County. Even though City Council Member Abdi Warsame, City Planning Staff, and Mayor of Minneapolis Jacob Frey thought it was a great plan for the community, many businesses didn't agree. They had thought that removing parking would limit the traffic they had at their business and that the city focus should be to "address crime and other problems in the neighbourhood" (Otárola, 2019, para.2). City councillor Warsame pushed back, claiming that "98% of the Somali community in the state of the Minnesota supports this mall" (Otárola, 2019, para.7) and that the City moving away vehicle infrastructure subsidies like the parking lot would only make having a public market that much more doable. The owners of the current Somali Mall (East African Market) Sabri Properties thought it was a plan by the City to compete with their properties as the new market would be run by a non-profit. That would seek to include a clinic and the neighbourhood's Coyle Community Centre within their new development. The City of Minneapolis had a site strategy centre on creating a new market instead of developing a neighbourhood cultural strategy that focused on uplifting the current assets within the community, such as the existing businesses

and community leaders. The cultural strategy also failed to include the Oromo community that was called Cedar Riverside home and was seeking greater recognition for their contributions to the community.

City of Minneapolis Official Plan Minneapolis 2040

The City of Minneapolis in 2016 would seek to update the City Official Plan, which is a decennial requirement under Minnesota statute for local governments in the seven-county Twin Cities region. City Planning, after conducting some assessments and informal/formal engagement with members of public, were guided to create a plan that would seek to "addresses racial equity, housing affordability, and climate change—with racial equity at the top of the list" (Mogush, 2021, p.1). The City of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota have historically had some of the highest levels of racial disparities in the nation within categories such as economic wellbeing, housing and safety. The income disparity within the City of Minneapolis is evident as "White non-Hispanic residents in Minneapolis make approximately three times the income of Black and American Indian residents" (Mogush, 2021, p.1). In 2016 the median income for white non-Hispanics was "$65,000, while the median incomes for Blacks and American Indians were $20,871 and $22,476" (Mogush, 2021, p.1). Minneapolis employment and population growth were resulting in an increase in home values and rents as new housing construction was not keeping pace with the growth of the city. This has resulted in a growing number of Minneapolis residents being in core housing need as they spend more 30% of their income on housing. Black households face highest level of core housing need at over 50%, American Indian and Hispanic households coming in second at over 45% but only one in three white households would face such conditions (Mogush, 2021, p.2).

The economic disparity within the City of Minneapolis and most American cities has stemmed from historical racially restrictive zoning practices that were enabled through the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) created under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. HOLC would create a new baseline in financial lending practices that would include such things as redlining maps that allowed for that "white people could get a mortgage for a home in the

lower-density desirable areas, but nobody else could" (Mogush, 2021, p.2). The uses of racially restrictive zoning would also be extended to covenants that would be recorded on deeds by the developers which would deny "current and future owners from selling or renting their property to people of specific races, ethnicities, and religions" (Mogush, 2021, p.2). The capability of black people to own homes within communities that offered a great deal of amenities was greatly diminished due to racially restrictive zoning. Black people's ability to build wealth through homeownership wasn't allowed in same manner as their white counterparts.

In 2016 the City of Minneapolis Planning staff would create working groups and committees that would involve more than 150 city staff that would focus on 11 areas of emphasis; some of these would include land use and built form, housing, arts and culture, heritage, economic competitiveness and open spaces. Goals would be created through data collection by working group members and feedback from the public through engagement exercises. 14 goals were approved by council as means to address the historical racial disparities. Planners were surprised by the outward conversation by residents who wanted to "eliminate all R1 and R1A [single-family] zoning" and "redefine R1 to include all buildings 1-4 [units] by right" (Mogush, 2021, p.6). Residents' ability to understand racially restrictive zoning of City of Minneapolis through University of Minnesota's Mapping Prejudice was important in ensuring greater equity within City Official Plan. It allowed for them to point to areas that had been exclusionary and recommend solutions such as the creation missing middle housing and densifying along transit routes. On October 25, 2019, the City of Minneapolis adopted its new official plan, titled Minneapolis 2040. The 2040 plan would seek to build diverse housing typologies for a variety of income levels and increase the supply of housing within the City to maintain affordability levels. The new zoning amendments that were enacted on January 1st, 2020 allowed the City of Minneapolis to be first city in United States to ban single family zoning.
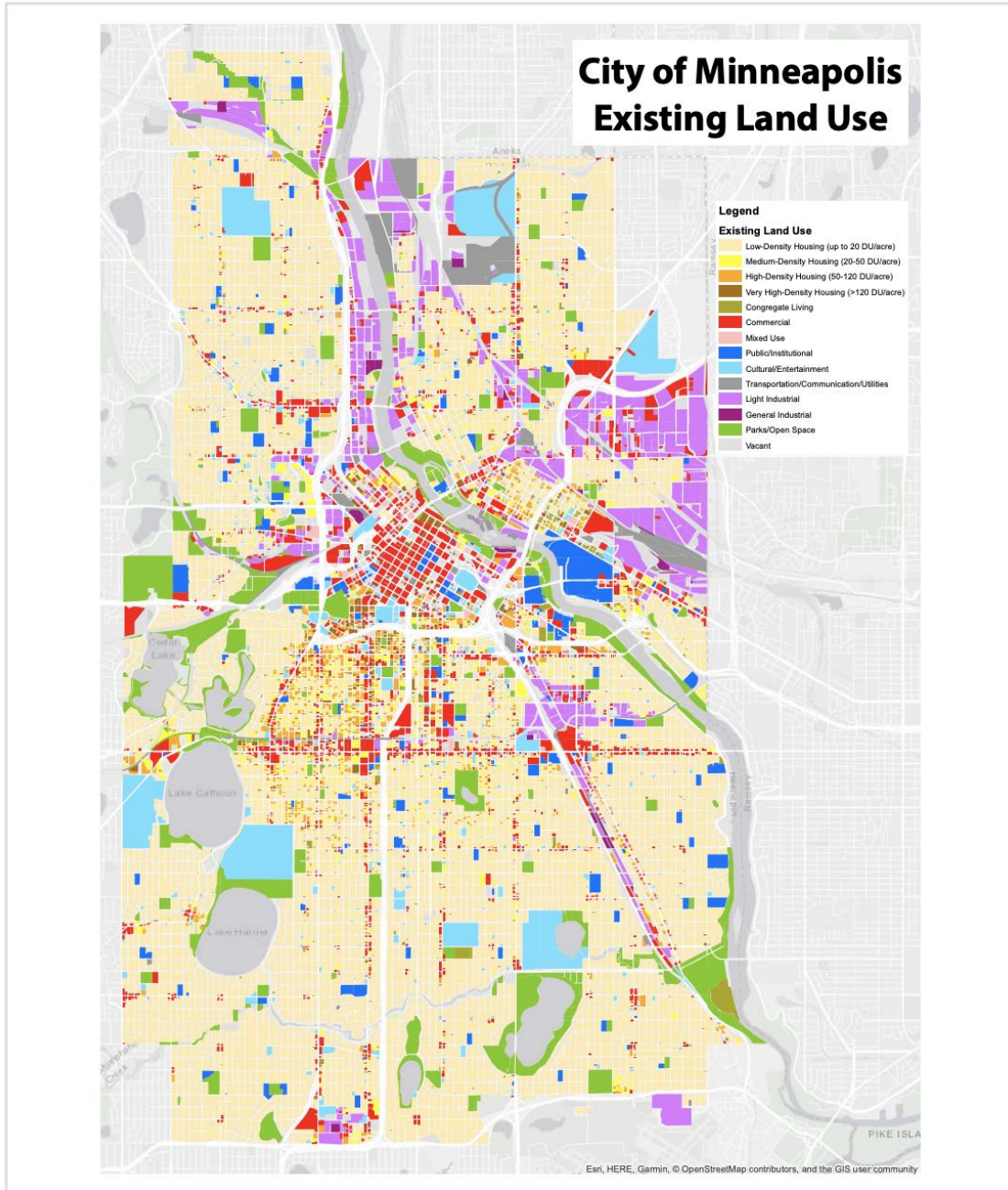
Figure 5. City of Minneapolis Official Plan 2040 Land Use Map (Source: Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan. Appendix B Land Use, 2020)

The 2040 Official Plan has provided various policy tools that can further ensure the historical and cultural preservation of the Oromo Community within Minneapolis while

providing more significant economic and social benefits. The policy recommendations below are just some of the first steps the City of Minneapolis can take to achieve this.

Policy 91, entitled Heritage Preservation and Outreach, seeks to "promote educational, outreach, and engagement opportunities related to heritage preservation, especially among communities that have traditionally been underrepresented" (City of Minneapolis, 2020, p.242). The hosting of Walgahii (community meetings) can be tool for expanding and opening up new ways that under-representative groups to participate in urban exercises of social engagements surrounding the goal of planning community heritage projects.

Policy 94, within its Official Plan on Heritage Preservation Regulation, seeks to "Improve and adapt heritage preservation and land use regulations to recognize City goals, current preservation practices, and emerging historical contexts" (City of Minneapolis, 2020, p. 247). The City of Minneapolis can recruit Oromo heritage preservation commissioners. The policy's target focus is "representative of all residents of the city, including cultural communities, communities of colour, indigenous communities, and other communities that have traditionally been underrepresented" (City of Minneapolis, 2020, pg.247. The City of Minneapolis can recruit Oromo heritage preservation commissioners.

Policy 96 on Cultural Heritage and Preservation Recognition "explores new methods and techniques to acknowledge tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage and expand recognition programs related to heritage preservation activities" (City of Minneapolis, 2020, p. 249). The community mapping project is just a first step in appreciating the contributions of Oromo intangible cultural heritage towards the development of the City of Minneapolis and its urban environment.

The City, under Policy 96, can have the ability to "design and install appropriate interpretive signs and historical markers for designated historic districts and landmarks" (City of Minneapolis, 2020, pg.249). This would give Oromo street excellent visibility to the public. As

Basha describes in the interview that Oromo Street "is literally like facing a highway and Mixed Blood Theater which is not an Oromo organization. It's not an Oromo institution or building or anything. It's kind of like being removed from a large chunk of Cedar Riverside. If you saw it, I had a hard time finding Oromo Street" (H. Basha, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

The City of Minneapolis can also develop a Cultural District using Policy 34 in its 2040 Official Plan, which is "a contiguous area with a rich sense of cultural and/or linguistic identity rooted in communities significantly populated by people of colour, Indigenous people, and/or immigrants" (City of Minneapolis, 2020, p.164).

Cedar-Riverside and the adjacent community of Seward are heavily concentrated with Oromo businesses, cultural and religious institutions, and community services. The naming of Oromo Street would have benefited from more significant consultation with members of the Oromo community and city planning staff through a multifaceted imperative strategy that examined uplifting the area's economic and cultural institutions. The Oromo Community Assessment of Cedar-Riverside Neighborhood Survey in 2016 by the Oromo Cultural Institute of Minnesota and West Bank Community Coalition found that "many Oromo people who live in the Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood need space and support to celebrate and share their culture" (Connell et al.,2016, p 1.). The youth that were surveyed in the study wanted a community centre. In contrast, older parents wanted organizations to be "better equipped to be of service to Oromo people" (Connell et al.,2016, pg.1), whose first language is not English. The linguistic identity of creating an Oromo cultural district would ensure that services delivered in the community would be accessible, whether they are banking, health and social or community services. Oromo street is already a prime area for tourism as thousands of Oromo come to see the street sign annually. Still, there has not been much leveraging of financial assets from Meet Minneapolis and Greater MSP to support businesses in the area. Developing a commercial land trust would secure long-term affordability for housing, small businesses, and cultural institutions within the neighbourhood. Interviewee Iftu Ahmed states:

The City of Minneapolis should create a cultural district to further enshrine Oromo culture. A museum, mural, or plaque should be erected that talks about the historical significance of the Oromo contribution to the City of Minneapolis. To play devil's advocate, as thankful as I am for that sign. Just erecting the sign alone and writing a declaration is not enough to contribute to the Oromo immigrant population in Minneapolis. Oromos are business owners in that area. They are running for political office in the Twin Cities. They are community activists; they have worked with the DFL. They've worked closely with the Republican party; they have contributed to society in Minneapolis on an incomparable level to many other communities, and still, we only have that sign. It's not enough. (I. Ahmed, personal communication, April 10th, 2022)

The City of Minneapolis's official plan include policies that can preserve cultural heritage of the Oromo people while also enhancing its representation as a welcoming place. Oromo people's contributions to the City of Minneapolis are not found in their monetary economic value or a street sign but rather in the culture and history they bring from their homeland to the City. This culture needs to be guarded and respected because Oromo face prejudices for celebrating their culture in Ethiopia still to this day. The ability to celebrate one's own culture will support future generations in understanding their homeland and provide them with a sense of purpose for who they are. The Oromo community in Minneapolis takes tremendous pride in uplifting the City. It is now the City's turn to repay that favour to the Oromo community.

Community Mapping Project: Oromo Intangible Cultural Assets

The community mapping exercise brought together by the youth-centric group "Qeerroo Youth" in the Minneapolis community who shares a deep affinity to the Oromo cause and aspirations. Group members a part of the first generation of Oromo youth that call Minneapolis home but they haven't forgotten about their brothers and sisters within Oromia. The Qeerroo got an opportunity to share their own stories and pictures concerning Oromo Street's Intangible Cultural Assets Project. The project is focused on making the connection of Oromo Street placemaking and cultural institutions that call it home. It is important as planners that we take into account the intangible cultural assets that make up space just as we focus on how to improve the physical fabric of the city. The community mapping project is considered to be the first phase of a dialogue between members of the Oromo community and the City of

Minneapolis. This project brings forward creative ideas that look to strengthen and enhance cultural assets within Cedar Riverside neighborhood. It seeks to use new methods of community engagement such as Walgahii and community mapping, while critically examining the role of all stakeholders in enhancing cultural institutions. The documenting of the experiences of Oromo Qeerroo within planning exercises is important because nothing like this has been done before. This project aims to inspire future Oromo urban scholars to nurture, protect and grow their cultural assets. It also ensures that those who made the ultimate sacrifice in losing their lives against Addis Ababa Masters Plan doesn't go unheard of. The cultural contributions of the 40,000 Oromo that call Minnesota home should be uplifted as future generations should take pride in knowing their past, present and future.

I have used pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity amongst participants who share their personal stories of their intangible cultural asset as to best ensure their safety. The stories below were all written by participants expect for Fuad Bikila who I had transcribed. I have provided an introduction to each story so that reader can have some background on the intangible cultural asset of which the participants have either written or spoken about. These stories below are authentic, honest and are not fiction. The story of Iftu Ahmed describes a violent incident that occurred at OMN gathering, as disclaimer if you feel uncomfortable reading her story please just read the introduction and skip to pages 78-81. However, if do read her story, it provides great understanding of Oromo Media Network (OMN) as an Intangible cultural asset to the Oromo people.

Hawi Basha Intangible Cultural Asset Orommuma (Oromo Pride) in Minneapolis - Oromo Sports Federation in North America (OSFNA)

The story and image from Hawi Basha speak on her relationship with Oromo Street and the cultural institution that is the Oromo Sports Federation in North America (OSFNA) which is based within Minneapolis. The OSFNA festival cultural festival has been recognized by the City of Minneapolis numerous times through proclamations of Oromo Week. Hawi's story highlight

a significant community leader who helped to found OSFNA as an organization, and shows its relevance as a cultural institution for the Oromo diaspora globally. It further describes the challenges and opportunity of Oromo Street which makes her story unique.

"There is not much I can resonate with as far as intangible assets around "Oromo Street". The street is not recognized on Google maps, so getting to it was a bit more difficult than it should have been for someone who is a Minneapolis "native". The street sign is tucked away, facing a freeway and sharing a block with Mixed Blood Theatre, a non-Oromo institution. This isn't meant to disregard or not give credit where it's due because the Oromo Community was once recognized for populating and migrating to this area of Minneapolis named Cedar-Riverside. The downside towards its location is that the street sign is actually located in an isolated part of an already non-representative space. The signages location ironically doesn't encapsulate or fully represent the community that it is meant to acknowledge and celebrate. Rather than focusing on the assets on a sign where half the community is unaware of, I would encourage us to understand the assets that allow us to think about what makes our community so special to this day. These assets promote cohesion, such as the many positive local organizations that promote unity and togetherness" (Basha,2022, p.1).

"The Oromo Sports Federation in North America (OSFNA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that bridges Oromo Communities throughout the world with a one-week festive celebration of Orommuma (their Oromo pride) and their passion for playing soccer. OSFNA was founded and organized by a group of Oromo migrants in the early 1990's, where the goal was to bring folks together for many diverse events which include a competitive soccer tournament, conferences, dancing competitions, as well as showcasing Oromo artists for concerts at the end of the week. My uncle, Hamza Basha, made space to establish and organize this community event for the Oromos in the local region. Hamza's passion and joy were always rooted in bringing his people together to have a good time and to recognize the eccentric beauty of the community. He never missed an opportunity to welcome others and to curate spaces for individuals migrating to the United States. No matter what Hamza did, he always kept his Orommuma in his mind and heart. Over time, the community continued to expand, and OSFNA now has reached several global networks. What started as a local idea turned to an international system of Oromo teams—ranging from Seattle to Atlanta. The rapid growth of OSFNA has cultivated and organized teams from Australia and soon other parts of the world, making this tournament more impactful than what it was originally sought to be. I am proud that my uncle was a founder of something that means so much to many people in the community throughout the world. At the 2021 annual gathering and after a year hiatus due to COVID-19, Hamza was recognized as a founder for establishing the roots of what is now so impactful to many. His legacy will always live on through his family and through this organization" (Basha,2022, p.1)

Figure 6. Hamza Basha OSFNA Lifetime Oromumma Award

Iftu Ahmed: Intangible Cultural Asset - Oromo Media Network

The Oromo Media Network is more than just a media network entity for Iftu; it is a place of connection to her past while understanding the challenges of the present. Iftu shares her journey of being a member of the Oromo Media Network Team and persevering through a hostile crowd in order to hear former CEO of OMN and activist Jawar Mohammed. Iftu goes into great detail on the connection of this moment to the on-going struggle of Oromo people against the Ethiopian state. The nature of gender violence within Iftu's story should be examined from an intersectional lens since oppression is always layered. The targeting of Iftu by opposition demonstrators only speaks to the on-going violence that members of the diaspora face when highlighting issues of human rights. Iftu then provides us an analysis of Oromo street

and its significance for the Oromo Diaspora. She critiques Oromo Street from her own planning perspective which makes her story much more significant for the community mapping project, whose goal is to engage people who have not been included with urban planning engagement processes.

"November 16, 2019 was the day that changed my life. As part of the OMN team, I traveled for our annual Atlanta, Georgia fundraiser. As the hype of Jawar Mohammed's, CEO of Oromia Media Network and well-known political activist, return from Ethiopia grew, the OMN team was in over our heads with planning a tour due to the need for high-security and vetting. As the day approached, the Atlanta community was able to secure the transportation and event security of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, local police, and state troopers. The location was not disclosed until 24 hours prior to the meeting to avoid opposition protests near the event and to avoid the threat of any personnel being targeted, as emotions run high when discussing what the Oromo people, OMN and what Mr. Mohammed stands for" (Ahmed, 2022, p.1).

"The day arrived and myself and another member of the community, Riyad Ahmed, were walking towards the meeting, after parking off-site. As we approached the building, we saw an opposition protest taking place approximately 200 yards from the meeting entrance. The police presence was evident, with over 30 marked vehicles and officers lining both sides of the street. One side of the street was blocked for vehicle traffic and the police directed all those walking to the meeting to walk on the side of the opposition protest, to avoid obstruction of traffic. The opposition protest was a sea of the former Ethiopian flag, the historical flag of Menelik II: the flag of Amhara superiority and rule. My entire life, I was brought up knowing that the right hands of working men and the breast of women of the child-bearing age were cut off, in one of the worst atrocities in Oromo history, under that flag. It is a flag that represents the hate of the Oromo people and is extremely triggering. In an act of protest, I took out my Oromo flag, wore it over my back and walked, as directed by the police, right in front of the opposition protest" (Ahmed, 2022, p.1).

"I was greeted by ethnic slurs like Galla, comparable to the "n-word" for Oromos and still I smiled. Then it was the spit, in front of and behind me and I still smiled. Then the crowd began reaching and attempting to make physical contact and with the utmost caution and composure, I still smiled and continued walking. Next thing I knew, one of the participants reached to snatch my flag, but I was quick to hold tighter. He reached once more and grabbed my hijab instead and in self-defense, I hit him and the altercation was quickly broken up by the police. When I looked behind me, Riyad, was, too being assaulted by the same crowd" Ahmed, 2022, p.1).

"Exclusivity, previously, was only for the "elite" in Ethiopia. Never have Oromos been able to infiltrate those types of spaces and the anger that was coming from the opposition on that day made me understand that they were infuriated by the simple

fact that they were not allowed to participate. This hatred and anger stemmed from the success and the tremendous support of Oromia Media Network. OMN is the first free, uncensored Oromo media, that began to shift the Ethiopian narrative. It was the media network that the Ethiopian government fought to ban in Ethiopia, but could not complete, as OMN communicated with the masses via internet, television satellite and radio for those in the countryside. It was a fresh take on the atrocities that Oromos are subjected to in Ethiopia and served as the voice of government opposition, first operating in diaspora and later taking their efforts back home, after the inauguration of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. Famously, OMN was coined "ijaaf gurra ummataa Oromoo", loosely translated as "the eyes and ears of the Oromo people". OMN was the voice for the voiceless and made its mark on the Twin Cities, Minnesota, as it was in the heart of the largest Oromo diaspora community in the world. OMN's lasting impact paved way for other media organizations like Kello Media from DC, Oromia 11 also based out of the Twin Cities and various other media organizations in the diaspora to have a running head start. The Oromo community is more informed and is stronger due the foundation laid by Jawar Mohammed and the Oromia Media Network team" (Ahmed, 2022, p.2).

Figure 7. Iftu Ahmed Intangible Cultural Asset Oromo Media Network

"It wasn't until days later that this image of me surfaced on an Orthodox Christian Amhara page, as evidence that Jawar Mohammed was looking to turn Ethiopia into an Islamic State. My best guess was that my hijab and the flag together were a

threat to the narrative that Ethiopia is united under one flag, the consecutively green, yellow and red flag seen on the right, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The image was seen as an image of hate to the opposition, but to the Oromo people, this picture was celebrated. It was a sign of strength and proof that the upcoming generation will not be swayed by the historical narrative and that day by day we are working to dismantle the Ethiopian narrative and rewrite history from the Oromo perspective. The one thing I could not help remembering from that day was the fact that I knew so many individuals who participated in the opposition rally from my time spent in Atlanta during my undergrad. I really think it was their blunt hatred for who I am, finally coming out, that made me smile so big" (Ahmed, 2022, p.2).

"This picture was what I became known for in the Oromo community. Many people knew me because of this event and refer to how proud they were, when meeting me in various Oromo spaces. It was the opportunity that inspired me to begin giving back to the youth in our community, through mentoring, event planning and facilitating spaces in which these discussions about Oromo history, current events, our plight and our future could take place. It is my promise to the Oromo community to continue to dedicate my efforts to the youth and bringing them up to a place where they, too, can walk with their heads held high in the face of adversity and challenge" (Ahmed, 2022, p.2).

Iftu Ahmed: Intangible Cultural Asset - Oromo Street

"The inauguration of Oromo Street in the heart of Minneapolis was a day to celebrate. The city nicknamed "Little Oromiyaa" was finally giving recognition to one of its largest diaspora communities and recognizing the importance of their contribution. Although it was just a small sign and it is still considered 4th Street, it was symbolic to our plight and was an emotional moment for our community as this recognition was never received in Ethiopia. Oromos are considered inferior in Ethiopia and have been denied basic human rights and have never been allotted any type of recognition that debunks the Ethiopian narrative. Knowing this, having a street named after us, in the land that gave us the opportunity to change our circumstances and that of our family, was cause for a celebration. Later came the inauguration of Oromo week, the recognition of the Oromo Soccer Federation of North America's annual soccer tournament. "Little Oromiyaa" and visiting Oromo Street is like a pilgrimage for Oromos living outside of Minnesota. To come and see small businesses, hearing the Afaan Oromo, the Oromo language, being spoken freely and frequently and visually seeing a representation of Oromia, is a sight to fill the broken hearts of our immigrant community" (Ahmed, 2022, p.3).

"From the aspect of urban planning, Oromo Street is just that, a street. There has been no development of the area to represent, display or educate the wider community about the Oromo people, culture or plight that landed them in diaspora in the first place. It would have been nice to see a museum, a mural or a plaque explaining the

street's significance, but it has yet to be planned or executed. The Twin Cities are home to Oromo artists, historians, former freedom fighters and Oromia Media Network: all entities that could support the development of this area in the neighborhood of Cedar-Riverside Plaza. There should be a vision in place to give you a look into any and everything Oromo without having to read the sign" (Ahmed, 2022, p.3).

Yusuf Ali - Intangible Cultural Asset Nomadic Oasis Barbershop - Oromo Culture and Black American Experience

The Nomadic Oasis Barbershop is the only Oromo-owned Barbershop that is located within Seward – Ceadar Riverside neighborhoods. The barbershop is an intergenerational space as it brings together Oromo men of all ages to discuss their identity, cultural heritage and contributions to the City of Minneapolis. Yusuf uses two images to put into focus the importance of black barbershops as cultural institutions within America and what they for diaspora groups. In figure 3. Black Luminaries, Yusuf shows vast spectrum of blackness as to make us understanding that Blackness is not singular but rather multidimensional and complex. Yusuf being a scholar in training provides us contrasting perspective as he connects Oromo cultural heritage to the Black American experience.

"The two pictures I took are dynamic representations of cultural heritage, identity, and meaning. In this brief write up I will discuss two elements of my pictures of the Barbershop: 1) physical space and 2) cultural importance of the pictures/art within the space. My effort in doing this is to provide a more holistic representation of pictures and its importance as an intangible cultural asset, especially for Oromo and other similar communities" (Ali, 2022, p.1).

"Much can be discussed about barbershops in relation to their historical significance for Black American communities. We understand much from scholarly literature regarding this. However, what I'd like to briefly discuss is its significance for me. As a scholar in training (i.e. PhD Candidate), much of my time is spent in predominately white, colonial, academic spaces. These spaces work in sophisticated ways to violently erase indigenous and racialized ontologies and epistemologies (i.e. cultural heritages). The barbershop provides me a physical, tangible space – like its own historical significance in Black American populations – to simply be. An opportunity to exist as my full self. It provides a way for me to figuratively "come up for air" as a I swim through the restrictive structures of academic institutions. Furthermore, it provides me with the ability to keep my ear to the streets. To understand the issues, happenings, and neighborhood news that is impacting my communities" (Ali, 2022, p.1).

"The two pictures I took of the barbershop help bring to life the description of the physical space I mentioned above. The two pictures provide a depiction of historical cultural figures that have left strong historical influences on racialized communities, especially those racially Black. Most importantly, and what I adore the most, is the vast spectrum of Blackness that it provides and speaks to. Not only do the pictures reveal African-American figures (e.g. George Floyd, Muhammad Ali, Kobe Bryant), but they also highlight East Africans (e.g. Nipsey Hussle, Hachalu Hundessa). Blackness is not singular. Blackness is multidimensional, diverse, and complex. The pictures displayed in the barbershop help illustrate the importance of that. I find this (both the physical space and pictures within) to be especially important for East African immigrants (e.g. Oromos) as they make sense of themselves within a new highly racialized sociopolitical context" (Ali, 2022, p.1).

Figure 8. Black Luminaries

Figure 9. Nomadic Oasis Barbershop

Fuad Bikila - Intangible Cultural Asset Oromo Community Organizing - Jira (What existence is mine)

The Oromo community in Minneapolis is an organizing community which makes it so unique as other Oromo diaspora groups replicate the success of what occurs within Minneapolis. City of Minneapolis is referred to as little Oromia by diaspora and those that call the City home. However, for Fuad it is important to remember that he represents the first wave of migration from Oromia to the Twin Cities. Fuad believes that Oromo have made their mark in the City of Minneapolis and that it's time that they are recognized. The freedom of representing your cultural identity is captured in Fuad's picture Figure.5 titled Jira as he protests with Qeerroo in Minneapolis. Even though Fuad's physical body is in Minneapolis, his heart is with people fighting injustices in Oromia, which makes his story so relatable.

"In this picture, we are protesting the Oromo cause happening back home. We are marching towards Oromo Street, a matter of fact. I like to say this flag represents me in general because we're one of the first generations of kids born in America, but we're also Oromo. Our parents migrated here for better opportunities. We are like the first generation of this migration, so we represent them, the Oromo people and our family. I stand for the Oromo culture and people. I put (it) in my heart that we have to represent them, because of the injustice they're going through the back home and how we put like a stamp in America because we're representing ourselves in America. Especially Minnesota, like the number one Oromo representation in America. I think the people like us here, so for them to give us that street, and we also have Somali Street in the same area, but they're more known but for Oromo… to be there and be known and have a street before other people is pretty crazy to me. It was a big deal when we went there and put the sign up. I was there when the sign was put up. A lot of people now know us. We've been here since the early 70s. So, we've been here almost 40 years and put a stamp as a household name in this country. Now when people ask you what your background or heritage is? You confidently say you're Oromo. You don't say Ethiopia. You say you're Oromo, and when they ask you where it is, you can tell them where it is. I don't think I've ever said I'm Ethiopian since I was a kid in the 90s. I've always said I'm Oromo and always stand by that. If I ever have kids, I'll always tell them you have to say that you're Oromo, not Ethiopia, and I hope everyone else takes it like that too" (F. Bikila, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

Figure 10. Jira (What existence is mine)

Oromo Diaspora Community Organizing in Minneapolis

The Oromo community within the Twin Cities has a long history of protesting for the Oromo cause in Ethiopia, dating back to the early 1970s. ORANA's participation in the International Institute's Festival of Nations in 1982 would allow Minnesotans to experience Oromo food, culture and music for the first time. It was also the first place where the Oromo cause for justice, equality and human rights would be promoted to members of the public and get the attention of Maryjane Sounder Samples, a journalist of the Twin Cities Black Journalists (TCBJ). Maryjane would allow members of the Oromo community to appear on NAACP Forum, a weekly KSTP-TV show. The community in Minneapolis would garner more significant attention than before as their cause was now being amplified. However, it was not until 2014 that Oromo community organizing reached greater heights. They would garner news media attention as over 100 people would stage "a four-day hunger strike on the front steps of the state capital over the weekend" (Brewer, 2015, para 1). The Oromo protest movement led by the Qeerroo and students at universities within Oromia would become the target of the Ethiopian government as they would take to the street to show their dissent against the government's proposal to take away farmland for the expansion of the capital Addis Ababa. The Oromo protesters in Minneapolis were also once students within Oromia that were also arrested, which underscores their emotional attachment to the situation in their homeland and the need for their continued advocacy and support as they can relate, "We know how hard it is being in that prison." (Brewer, 2015, para 7) One protestor showed a scarred? mark around his forearm, which he describes as being received from torture. Oromo advocacy through the hunger strike led to the House Committee singing "a resolution supporting the Oromo community" (Brewer, 2015, para 11). The development of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan was connected to the Oromo livelihoods and culture as it would devastate people's quality of life, belief systems and cultural heritage. Community organizing efforts would be broadcasted on Oromo Media Network (OMN) in a show of solidarity with the Qeerroo in Ethiopia.

The organizing efforts at the State Capital in Minnesota had a tremendous effect not only on the Oromo community organizing within the state but also in the broader diaspora, as interviewee Iftu Ahmed describes within her interview:

> So, community organizing within Minneapolis impacted Oromo communities, actually all over. So, during the Oromo protests in early 2014, the first community to get out in the streets and start protesting was the City of Minneapolis, and then from the City of Minneapolis trickled out cities like Washington, DC, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Washington. So, Minneapolis is essentially the Oromo mecca of diaspora. So little Oromia, as it is nicknamed, is where everything starts. It is a pioneering community. They've been able to do things with Oromo culture that many others have not been able to do—empowering the youth through organizations like the Oromo Youth Associations of Minnesota and the Oromo Students Union at the University of Minnesota. A lot of activism comes out of Minneapolis. Activism that impacts the everyday life in Ethiopia comes out of Minneapolis (I. Ahmed, personal communication, April 10th, 2022)

The Oromo community organizing within Minneapolis would reach national attention in July 2020 as they shut down lanes on the westbound side of Interstate 94 in St. Paul. Thousands would take to the streets protesting justice for the Oromo musical icon Haacaaluu Hundeessa. Many Oromos considered Haacaaluu as their Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Haacaaluu's death only took place a week after his interview with Oromo Media Network, where he spoke out against some of the reforms of the Prime Minister and the ongoing marginalization that Oromo had been going through within Ethiopia's history. Haacaaluu's music was the soundtrack that led a generation to topple the ruling coalition of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, which had been in power for over 25 years, especially with his hit single in 2015, Maalan Jira (What existence is mine). Haacaaluu understood the historical process of urbanization within Ethiopia, "rejecting the dominant scripts of Ethiopian history for Indigenous counter-memory" (Tibeso & Abdurahman, 2021, para 11). The song is profound as it "unsettles how conquered peoples and their memories of and within the Ethiopian Empire are disappeared by Ethiopian exceptionalism" (Tibeso & Abdurahman, 2021, para 11). Haacaaluu in Maalan Jira pays homage to the Geerasa, who spread the traditional oral history (folk songs) of the Oromo people to their current daily struggles for liberation. Haacaaluu performances in

Minneapolis inspired the Oromo diaspora to take collective action and support the Oromo protest movement in Ethiopia.

In the wake of Haacaaluu's death, the Ethiopian government shut down all internet within the country and independent media networks and locked up all Oromo opposition leaders. The Oromo protest on the highway would make the news rounds across the state of Minnesota. Its most significant effect was its ability to call for justice and change in Ethiopia from the large Oromo community called Minnesota home. Qeerroo, who had been participating in the City's Black Lives Matter protests, learned various advocacy tools such as "chants, signs, organizational strategies and tactics like shutting down traffic on the freeway" (Whalen, 2020, para 6). They would then use these tools in their demonstration in the city. Haacaaluu's music provided a platform that connected the youth generation to senior members of the community. Oromo scholarly historian Ayantu Ayana had the opportunity to interview Haacaaluu for her study focused on Oromo "historical preservation. She likened Hundessa to a living, breathing historical archive for a group of people whose cultural ways have been continually endangered" (Whalen, 2020, para 21). Ayana refers to the fact that since the start of the "Ethiopian state-building process, the Oromo people were deliberately left out of the state narratives" (Whalen, 2020, para 22). The Oromo had two choices - cultural elimination or assimilation. This is why the Oromo as a nation does not have many institutions as a community. Haacaaluu was seen as an Oromo institution as he shared Oromo's ancestral knowledge and history through his music. Qeerroo within Minneapolis would unite behind the death of Haacaaluu at the same time that "elders in the community are encouraging them to lead" (Whalen, 2020, para 31). As one elder describes, "Our kids have a different perception of America than us. Physically we are here, but mentally, we are back home," Hassen said. "These kids are born and raised here. They want to create a better country. As parents and elders, we need to support them" (Whalen, 2020, para 32). Qeerroo youth understand their rights as American citizens and their role as activists. Interviewee Iftu Ahmed says:

> "something the government fears in Ethiopia because we are untouchable here
> in the States. But even when they opened an Ethiopian embassy in Minnesota, during

those protests after the assassination of Haacaaluu Hundeessaa, that embassy had to shut down because of the Oromo protest. So not only were we shutting down embassies in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, we are shutting down embassies in the United States in Washington, DC and Minneapolis and the consulate in Los Angeles. So, community organizing within Minneapolis has affected Oromo communities all over the world, including that of the Oromo communities of Ethiopia and vice versa "(I. Ahmed, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

Qeerroo believes they have the upper hand as being in the United States has protected them against the harsh brutality of the Ethiopian state. They have coordinated their strategy with Qeerroo in Ethiopia to shut down embassies and government offices to bring awareness to their cause. Haacaaluu's connection to the youth is undefinable as he was their primary motivation for joining the protest. They could not let his death be in vain.

The Oromo protest was extraordinary because it was intergenerational, as the young were now leading the old. The Oromo community traditionally grieves together when someone dies but also takes action together to make sure that person can rejoice in knowing they left a legacy worth fighting. Qeerroo within Minneapolis have learned a great deal of community organizing from the Qeerroo within Oromia, as interviewee Iftu Ahmed says:

> The Oromo communities in Ethiopia have taught us fearlessness through organizations like the youth organization called Qeerroo. Qeerroo lay down in the middle of the streets as an act of defiance and protest. They shut down major roads they boycotted the economy. They choked Addis Ababa, the capital city, by not transporting produce and staple crops that kept the economy going. They stopped transferring money. We stopped sending money back home using the government bank system. We started using the black market as an act of protest and defiance. So Qeerroo inspired the youth in the diaspora to get up and fight back because now we see people our age, ranging in age from high schoolers to mid-30s. Out there in the streets, running things in Ethiopia and bringing about fantastic change. They brought the fall of the TPLF in 2017 and welcomed Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali. Then as the current Prime Minister started violating those same human rights as his predecessor, those same youth became freedom fighters. Their freedom fighters inspire us to give our pocket change to those our age who are willing to pick up a gun to fight for the freedom of Oromia (Ahmed, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

Oromo Qeerroo has not forgotten their homeland and how resilient the youth in Oromia have been as the government clamps down on their dissent. It has motivated the

Qeerroo to support those willing to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of Oromia. The choking of the Addis Ababa economy finally resulted in many urban dwellers awakening to the crisis of their city master plan and its effects on surrounding Oromo lands. The dwindling supply of foreign currency through redirecting remittances would make importing products more expensive as Ethiopia's currency is very low as they import in U.S. dollars. With these organizing efforts, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali would come to power only to do the same as his former colleagues. The Oromo diaspora community organizing within Minneapolis does not only take up the physical space of the streets of Minneapolis but the digital world through social media advocacy campaigns. Interviewee Hawi Basha describes this as follows:

> I see a lot of the organizing happening, and it is empowering to see that. Your organization Fuad Bikila was a trailblazer for what was happening in the Twin Cities or the diaspora in itself because yawl was the one to what I think did it first. I just want to say, like the Twin Cities, I do not know if it is just the Twin Cities, but we are such an organizing or activist community. Even outside the Oromo community, we know how to mobilize our people. I see it so well with the Twitter campaign that yawl did. The consistency that yawl had with that, and even if it was not working the first time around, like, you just kept doing it and kept doing it and doing it. I feel like it did have an impact to some degree. But some work is better than no work, right. (H. Basha, personal communication, April 10th, 2022).

The use of social media as an organizing tool for the Qeerroo was crucial as they now had another means to let the public know about their cause. Social media for the Oromo democratized freedom of speech and allowed them to engage in urban planning development issues such as the Addis Ababa Master Plan. It was also a connection space through the hashtag #OromoProtest where people could tag their government representatives and tell them what was happening. The Oromo Protest would go trending online in Minneapolis as well as in the country of Australia. The organizing efforts by the Oromo diaspora within Minneapolis against the integrated master plan and calling for justice for the death of Haacaaluu are events that have connected the Qeerroo across borders. It has given hope to those organizers within Minneapolis to continue their efforts to shine a light on the Oromo cause for justice and human rights. Qeerroo within Minneapolis have even garnered the attention of Governor Tim Walz, who came out in favour of the protestors by saying, "Hachalu Hundessa showed that music

could change hearts and minds across the world. My heart goes out to the Oromo community mourning his powerful voice and tireless activism" (Walz, 2020). Oromo diaspora organizing has led to more excellent representation within the urban space within Minneapolis through landmarks such as Interstate 35W and Lowry Avenue bridges which glowed red, green and red to mark the start of Oromo Week in Minneapolis in 2022. Mayor Jacob Frey's and City Council Member Jason Chavez's "proclamation recognizes the growing population of people from the Oromia region of Ethiopia who now call Minnesota home. Most of the estimated 45,000 Oromo people who live in the metro area are refugees and asylees" (Minneapolis,2022, para 1). The recognition by the City of Minneapolis to show the colours of the Oromo flag only shows how community organizing can lead to post-colonial placemaking.

Conclusion

The creation of Oromo Street as a post-colonial space makes the City of Minneapolis a site to visit for the Oromo diaspora. OMN broadcast from little Oromia would have a tremendous impact on Qeerroo in Ethiopia, so much so that government seeks to use commercial spyware to stop its broadcast. In Ethiopia, urban planning doesn't always consider the social, cultural, environmental and economic effects of development on people's livelihoods, so independent media networks are critical to allowing people to dispute development projects. In 2015 Ethiopia was number four on the Committee to protect the journalist list of most censored countries (Committee to Protect Journalist, 2015). Publicizing the non-violent protest was a crucial step for the Qeerroo as the government wouldn't allow it openly due to their record of censorship. The Oromo protest protected the farmers' livelihoods that would have been displaced if the Master Plan had been implemented. The transnational organizing of the Oromo community within Minneapolis and in Ethiopia would put tremendous pressure on local, state and federal officials in the United States to act on the human rights abuses in Ethiopia. All levels of government would take action on Ethiopia's government through resolutions, with the most important of them being "H.R. 128 (a U.S. House resolution calling on Ethiopia to respect human rights) held by Minnesota congressman (later state attorney general) Keith Ellison" (United States Congress, 2022). Oromo living in the United

States and Canada, would come to Washington to participate in the hearing. The actions of the Oromo that day and continued protest within Ethiopia would contribute to the fall of prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn. As an Oromo Canadian living in the diaspora I believe it was important to highlight human rights issues around land development within Ethiopia since country has gotten "more foreign aid from Canada since 2017 than any other African country. It's the only African country to have received more than $500-million in Canadian aid in the 2017-2021 period" (York, 2022). On April 23, 2023 Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced that peace talks between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and Ethiopia government would start on Tuesday 25 of April, 2023 in Tanzania (Addis Standard, 2023).

The city of Minneapolis Official Plan 2040 provides the guiding principles, rules and regulations for the sustainable development of lands and communities in the town. The city should have consulted one of its largest ethnic communities on how the policies in this official plan can enhance their community's economic and social fabric while also trying to perverse their cultural heritage. The Oromo community has been actively involved within Minneapolis, participating in cultural events and festivals and supporting the election campaigns of many local civic leaders. However, they have not received anything substantial from their elected leaders regarding uplifting the community's social, economic and cultural status, even though they have an estimated population of 40,000 people. Through my research, the stories and pictures shared within the community mapping project are windows into the community for residents of Minneapolis and the state of Minnesota. The project enabled the Qeerroo youth to share their intangible stories without worrying about being censored in Ethiopia. It further allowed them to engage in a planning exercise that was culturally appropriate and considered the sensitivity of the issue at hand, ensuring that when participants left the Walgahii, they could feel proud of themselves.

My area of research contributes to the broad study of the Oromo people that has been done by the Oromo Studies Association, producing research on the Oromo people since the early 90s. It further helps those interested in areas of study related to post-colonialism, urban

social movements, transnational politics, indigenous land sovereignty and community organizing. Urban planners interested in doing community mapping projects focusing on intangible cultural assets of east African communities should use my research as a stepping stone to build from since it can be challenging to implement research methods of community mapping. We must understand the role of independent media in urban planning projects because media can use their platform to engage public members in alternative ways that state governments may be unable to do. The freedom of speech within a society is a part of the development process that we sometimes don't consider as planners because we spend time working within environments in the global north where people are not heavily subjected to being censored for their opinions on development projects. It is crucial that, as planning professionals, we speak up for those who can't speak for themselves regarding development issues which is what my research papers try to do.

I hope that my project for the community hopes that it brings together Oromo youth living within the diaspora to understand that their efforts of protesting against large development projects in Ethiopia within their country matter. If members of community have solidarity with one another, it will become harder to divide them even if they are hundreds of miles away. I hope this project gets more Oromo youth involved in urban planning projects. Still, Minneapolis is also responsible for creating equity within its development process and hosting consultations with the Oromo community with interpreters to support those whose first language may not be English. The future of Oromo street will be determined by the Oromo community within Minneapolis, as they should push for the city of Minneapolis to recognize it as a cultural district. There should be murals of Oromo historical figures within the cultural district to pay homage to the history of people that have done so much for the city. Oromo street can be a media hub for Oromo-based broadcasting networks in Minneapolis, aiming to create a studio production space for Oromo to enter the cinema production world. Minneapolis should support the Oromo Community by hosting a taste Oromia festival by inviting the Oromo restaurants and catering businesses to Cedar-Riverside to enhance the cultural district's social and economic standing. There should be a museum or cultural centre in Ceadar-Riverside for

the Oromo community to allow Minneapolis residents to experience Oromo culture all year round. The Oromo community has called the state of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis home for the last 40 years. It shouldn't take another 40 years to receive the recognition they deserve.

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APPENDIX

(Images of Oromo Street Intangible Cultural Assets: photo by Community Mapping Project Participants)

(Maps and Buildings)

PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHT OF ADDIS ABABA

የአዲስ አበባና ዙሪያዋ ኦሮሚያ ልዩ ዞን የተቀናጀ የጋራ ልማት ፕላን ፕሮጀክት ጽ/ቤት
Addis Ababa and the Surrounding Oromia Integrated Development Plan Project Office