

## **URBAN GOVERNANCE AND URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY IN ETHIOPIA**

<https://doi.org/10.47743/jopaf-2022-26-12>

**Mengistu GUTEMA**

Addis Ababa University, Center for Federalism and Governance Studies, College of Law  
and Governance

*gutemamengistu@yahoo.com*

**Solomon NIGUSSIE**

Addis Ababa University, Centre for Federalism and Governance Studies, College of Law  
and Governance

*solnegus@yahoo.com*

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this article is to look in to Ambo urban government institutions' organization and operational efficiency by employing good governance as a framework for analysis. To achieve the research purpose, this article employs a qualitative research approach. Qualitative techniques namely document analysis (analysis of relevant regional laws), interviews, and focus groups were used to collect qualitative data. According to the findings of this study, Ambo urban administration has been given significant legal responsibilities and powers, the autonomous workout of which, directed by good governance principles, could result in overall development. Nonetheless, the study also discovers that a variety of factors, including the Oromo people's dominance in urban government institutions, have a negative impact on the city's governance quality. Other significant factor is the scarcity of efficient checks and balances mechanisms at both the urban-regional (vertical) and intra-urban (horizontal) levels of government. According to this study, this situation has been exacerbated by political aspects of the urban administration, as well as deficiencies in the legislative framework. As a result, the research's main recommendations emphasize consolidating vertical and horizontal check and balance mechanisms as well as the importance of better managing the ethnic diversity of the urban administration.*

**Keywords:** *Autonomy; good governance; urban administration*

### **Introduction**

As a member of one of the Ethiopian Federation's eleven regions, Oromia National Regional State (hereafter the Oromia Region) has the authority to decide the institutional structure, organization, and competencies of local governments. Although Oromia Region constitution establishes a three-tiered local-government organization such as regional government, local government and kebele (Oromia Region, 2001) and specifies its powers and institutional structure, the constitution makes no mention of urban local government. Article 45 of the constitution of the Oromia Region simply delegates the Cafee (regional government council) to enact legislation in this area. However, their non-constitutional status does not reflect ULGs significance. This is happening rapidly as a result of the country's and region's rapid urbanization. These types of societal dynamics may point to the need for more adaptable legal frameworks, such as those provided by ordinary regional laws (instead of constitutionally enshrined provisions) that detail the institutional structure, competencies, and organization of urban local governments, as well as the institutions' complex interaction. The legal frameworks pertinent to the Oromia Region has created

decentralized urban local governments with significant responsibilities and powers, the autonomous workout of which, directed by good governance principles, could result in overall development.

Using Ambo urban administration as a case study, the purpose of this article is to look in to how and how far urban government institutions are carrying out their legally mandated powers and responsibilities. By employing good governance as a framework for analysis, the study seeks to identify the practical and legal opportunities as well as constraints. Section 2 presents a theoretical discussion on good governance in order to provide a proper conceptual and analytical framework for investigating the structure and practical operation of Ambo urban government institutions.

This article is structured from a governance standpoint, and among the contexts of governances, namely corporate governance, global governance and multi-level governance, the article uses good governance as an analytical tool. As a result, this article focuses on accountability, transparency, legitimacy, responsiveness, and the rule of law principles of good governance. Section 3 discusses the study's approach and methodology. A review of the relevant legal provisions as well as an investigation of current practice based on fieldwork conducted as part of PhD dissertation in the urban administration informs the analysis. Section 4 presents a field data analysis based on an examination of regional laws, interviews, and focus group discussions with members of the urban administration executive committee, the speaker of the urban administration council, and urban administration councilors. Section 5 summarizes the findings of the research and provides an overview of the benefits and drawbacks of good governance as they relate to urban government institutions and how they work. Section 6 concludes with some final thoughts and recommendations.

## **Literature Review**

There is no single overarching theory that explains governance. Rather, the concept of governance is explained and described from a variety of perspectives. First and foremost, governance theories operate at various spatial levels of analysis namely international, African, or regional, and the nation state, among others. The emphasis here is on local/urban governance. These actors may come from any level of society, however, the vast majority of them are almost certainly to be based in urban local government. Furthermore, governance incorporates theoretical perspectives from a variety of academic disciplines, including development studies, public administration, economics, international relations, and political science (Kooiman 1999; Newman 2001). The perspective outlined in this article is based primarily on governance literature in political science and public administration, as they deal with governing processes at the city level.

Governance can also be applied in a variety of contexts, with slightly different definitions. Rhodes (1997) mentions seven various usages, while Hirst (2000) lists five various ways. One area of usage in this regard is global governance, which entails the different patterns through which local, national, regional, and global actors collaborate to manage an expanding range of economic, political, and social affairs (Wilkinson 2002). Certain challenges, such as international financial markets, global trade regulation, and environmental issues are recognized as being beyond the capacity of single states to solve.

The second application/use of governance is multi-level governance that emphasizes governance dispersion across multiple jurisdictions (Hooghe and Marks, 2002). This application of governance begins with a dispersal of power away from national government and downwards to sub-national jurisdictions, sideways to private networks, and upwards to the supra-national level. Since the European Union establishes links between the local/regional governments and national ministries/Commission, it is frequently cited as a model of multi-level governance (Rhodes, 2000).

The third use of governance as per Hirst (2000) refers to "practices of activity coordination through networks, partnerships, and deliberative forums that have grown up on the ruins of the more centralized and hierarchical corporatist representation of the period up to the 1970s." It is contended that the government can no longer claim a monopoly on the expertise and resources required to govern and must rather depend on a diverse set of actors from both state actors and non-state actors. According to Hirst (2000), a fourth application/usage occurs when development economists discuss good governance is a requirement for effective economic modernization. It is recognized here that institutions are important and that development is more than just creating free markets. Thus, the World Bank's good governance strategy entails establishing an effective political framework that encourages economic activity conducted by private sectors (Rhodes 2000). The Global Campaign for Urban Governance was launched in 1999 by UN-Habitat with the motivation that "there is a growing international consensus that the quality of urban governance is the single most important factor for the eradication of poverty and for prosperous cities"(UN-Habitat, 2003a). This Global Campaign has developed a set of good governance principles centered on the concepts of accountability; transparency; legitimacy (as a result of inclusiveness and participation), rule of law, effectiveness and responsiveness (UN-Habitat, 2003b).

Accountability entails those in charge of decision making can be held responsible to the people over whom they rule. It is hoped that by increasing the accountability of governmental institutions, both economic and social development will benefit (Devas, 2004; Bevir, 2009). Transparency entails the free flow of information, in which information and processes are available to those who wish to comprehend and monitor them (Smith, 2007; Bevir, 2009).

Legitimacy entails participation and the right of all individuals to take part in the process of decision-making indirectly or directly via legitimate institutions that act on their behalf (Smith, 2007; Bevir, 2009). In order to achieve economic and political development, legal frameworks must be impartially enforced, fair, and democratically based, and decentralization is a method of reforming institutions to consolidate the rule of law (Smith, 2007; Bevir, 2009).

Responsiveness entails the responsibility of government institutions to respond to all citizens and when it comes to development, government leaders must have a long-term view. Decentralization is needed to achieve this, both to improve the efficiency of public institutions and to bring governance processes closer to the people that aim to meet needs on the ground while maximizing the use of resources available (Smith, 2007; Bevir, 2009). All of the aforementioned usages have beneficial components. Given the purpose of this article, a definition/usage is required, which will be decided by empirical research. As a result, in this study, the fourth application of governance i.e good governance is used as an analytical tool.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

In this article, qualitative case study design was employed. The research sought to ascertain ULG officials' perceptions of urban administration autonomy with respect to good governance. Ambo urban administration, in the state of Oromia, was chosen as a case study for this purpose. A qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer frequently makes knowledge claims that are primarily based on constructivist/interpretive research philosophy perspectives. In constructivist research philosophy, individual experiences' multiple meanings are historically and socially interpreted/constructed with the purpose of developing advocacy/ participatory perspectives or creating a theory/pattern (Creswell, 2014).

### *Sampling Size*

In contrast to its quantitative equivalent, the sample size for qualitative research is typically modest. The sample size for qualitative research is typically smaller than that of quantitative research. In qualitative research, the sample size is determined by a point of data saturation. When a researcher reaches data saturation, he or she stops hearing or seeing fresh information. As the investigation develops, the number of participants needed usually becomes apparent as new categories, explanations or themes give up arising from the data (Mason, 1996). As a result, we conducted eight interviews and two focus group discussions in Ambo urban administration. For this article, secondary data were collected from official documents, visual records, proclamations, books, journals, government policies, and other sources.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

Brynard and Hanekom (2011:54) define data collection as “the collection of information to be used in the investigation.” Data collection enables us to gather information about our research objects (Abawi, 2013). A qualitative data collection technique was used to produce data for this study. The following data collection tools namely interview, focus group discussion, and document analysis were used by the researchers of this research inquiry.

### *Analysis of Data*

We applied qualitative analysis techniques that were appropriate for the research question and the data for this research. As per Simon (2011), qualitative data analysis entails “working with data, organizing it, breaking it down into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what needs to be learned, and deciding what to tell others is what qualitative data analysis entails” (Simon, 2011). In qualitative research, data analysis is a continuous process that occurs alongside collection of data, interpretation, and writing report (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative data acquired through various methods were thoroughly examined in this research. Thematic analysis was used for the purposes of this research. There were five stages to this analysis. The data was first organized and ready for analysis. Based on the sources of information this stage entailed typing up field notes, transcribing focus group and interview results, sorting and organizing data in to various types. The goal of this phase was to become

completely immersed in the collected data. A thematic framework was created in the second stage so as to identify important issues from data. The information/data was coded in the third stage. In this research, coding entailed taking images or text data that were collected during data collection, categorizing images or sentences, and putting a label on those categories as well as naming those categories. Furthermore, in this phase the observed phenomena were classified in to conceptual categories that were identified and tentatively named. The purpose is to develop descriptive and multi-dimensional categories that will serve as a foundation for further analysis. Events, phrases, words that appear to be related have been grouped together in the same category. Throughout the subsequent phases of analysis, gradually these categories were modified and changed. The fourth phase was to create a set of thematic charts that enabled the entire pattern to be explored and reviewed across a set of data. In this study, the final phase of the analysis was data mapping and interpretation, which includes searching for associations, giving explanations, and emphasizing key ideas and characteristics.

## **Results and Discussions**

### *A Brief History and Profile of Ambo Urban Administration*

Ambo urban administration was founded in 1889 and has an area of 8,587 hectares. It is one of Ethiopia's oldest towns. The name Ambo is derived from a salt-water lake. The development of Ambo town is linked to the "Ambo Tsebel" hot spring. During the Hailesellase era, the city's name was changed to Hagera Hiwot, and when the Derge came to power in 1974, it reverted to its previous name. In 1931, the city had municipal governance and a master plan, making it one of the few preferred cities of the period. It has served as the administrative, transportation, and commercial center of West Shoa Zone due to its strategic location. Since 1931, Ambo urban administration has had its own municipal government and a master plan, making it one of the few fortunate cities of its period. It extends over a total of 1,320 hectares. The urban administration serves as the Western Shewa Zone's Administrative, Transport and Commercial hub. The urban administration was chosen as one of twenty in the ONRS to participate in a federal reform initiative.

The city's total population was 50,267 according to the results of the 2007 Housing and Population Census. However, the urban administration's projected population in 2020 is 64, 684 (Ambo Urban Administration, 2020). The expansion of the city's boundaries to neighboring West Shewa Zone woredas; the expansion of industrial and education facilities; and internal migration account for the majority of the city's population growth. According to the projected population census, the Oromo ethnic group has a 50+1 majority in the city. The Oromo have a sizable population, constituting 70.58 percent of the total population. The Amhara ethnic group has 23.5 percent of the population; the Gurage came in third (4.76%); and (1.16%) for all other ethnic groups (Ambo Urban Administration, 2020). In spite of their current numerical dominance, the Oromo used to be a numerical and political minority in the city under previous regimes. According to Tokuma (2010), aside from Oromo political dominance, their numerical increase has been fueled, among other things, by the urban administration's active encouragement of Oromo settlements. This policy of preference for the Oromo appears to be motivated by a desire to atone for the historical injustice they endured, as they were allegedly barred from residing in the city either indirectly or directly (Tokuma, 2010). In spite of the presence of an important

measure that has resulted in an increase in the number of Oromo People, non-Oromo make up 30 percent of the city's population.

*Overview of Ambo Urban Administration Institutions: Legal Framework and Practice on the ground*

Proclamation No. 65/2003 established the legal framework that governs Ambo and other urban administrations in the region. As mentioned in the introduction, the legal framework for ULG is not enshrined in the regional constitution. Although the non-constitutional status allows for the flexible adjustment of legal provisions in response to a rapidly changing societal environment, it has a negative impact on ULG autonomy. More specifically, the regional legislator has complete control over the autonomy of urban local governments.

Proclamation No.65/2003, has introduced grading of the regional urban administrations: Ambo, which on the basis of this law was designated a “second grade city.” Second-grade cities are administratively subdivided into city administration and kebele administration (Ambo Urban Administration, 2020). As a result, the urban administration has six urban and rural Kebeles namely Horaa Ayyetuu; Yaji Gada; Turbaan Kutayee; Kisoosee; Sanqale; and Awaro (Ambo Urban Administration, 2020). It also has legislative, executive, and judicial powers, as well as institutions. Regarding the upward accountability of the urban administration as per Proclamation No. 65/2003 states that Ambo urban administration is accountable to the regional government. This implies that the city is not accountable to the West Shewa Zone, which includes Ambo's territory.

As per Article 7 of Proclamation No.65/2003, urban local governments' were established with the goals of promoting good governance and self-government; promoting local development; ensuring equitable and efficient urban service delivery; fostering collaboration; and protecting the urban environment. The Proclamation not only created Ambo's urban administration, but also two major functions of the urban administration namely municipal and state functions. According to Article 6 of the same Proclamation, on the basis of population size, four grades of cities were established. As a result, cities in the first grade have populations greater than 90,000; second-grade cities have populations ranging from 45,000 to 89,999 people; the population of third-grade cities ranges from 10,000 to 44,999 people; and the population of fourth-grade cities ranges from 2,000 to 9999 people.

Article 10 of Proclamation No.65/2003 established the Council-Mayor Urban Governance Model for Ambo urban administration and Article 11 and 12 of the same Proclamation stating that the urban governance organ consists of the mayor, the city council, the city manager, and the city court. The city council and the mayor have distinct roles and duties under this model. Both the city council and the mayor are elected for the same period of time. There is a separation of executive and legislative powers in this model. In the council-mayor governance model, the Mayor's Committee and the elected Mayor have executive authority. As per Article 11 of Proclamation No.65/2003, the city council is the final say on urban issues and has legislative authority in Ambo urban administration. The city council is appointed for a five-year term. Article 14 of the same Proclamation states, the city council's powers and functions include determining urban government organizational structure; the approval and supervision of the ULG's development plans; and approving urban government service delivery alternatives.

### *Representative Urban Administration Councils*

Ambo Urban Administration council members are elected in direct elections every five years. As per Article 13(2) of Proclamation No.65/2003, the Oromia Region Executive Council determines the number of councilors. According to Article 29(2) of Proclamation No.532/2007 of the Federal Electoral Law, which also applies to city council elections, the regional legislature is responsible for determining the number of representatives from an electoral constituency, taking into account the number of seats in each council. As a result, under Article 4(5) of Oromia Region Proclamation No. 119/2006, each member of the urban administration council in a second grade city such as Ambo must represent 300 to 3000 urban residents. The current Councils of Ambo Urban Administration, which was elected in 2013, consists of 71 members. All 71 council members are elected directly. The representation of Oromo in the City Council is governed by Proclamation No.116/2006, which guarantees indigenous representation. This is implied by Article 4 of Proclamation No. 116/2006, which provides for guarantying Oromo ethnic groups up to 50 percent representation on the city council, unless the Oromo are the city's numerical majority.

Even if the city's indigenous ethnic groups (Oromo) were not given 50% of the vote, the Oromo would hold the majority of the city council seats. According to city council data, the Oromo hold 71 city council seats, despite the fact that non-Oromos such as Amhara, account for 23.5 percent of city residents, the Gurage (4.76%), and all other ethnic groups (1.16%). Although 100% of the Oromo in the city council demonstrate that representation in the city council is inclusive of the city's major ethnic groups, they also show a high disproportionality, concerns have been raised about non-Oromo residents' equitable political participation. The Oromo, who account for 70.58% of the city's population, hold 100% of the seats, while the Amhara, who make up 23.5 percent of the city population, hold 0 percent seats, and the Gurage, who make up 4.76 percent, hold 0 percent seats.

The aforementioned arrangement affirms a national trend of non-indigenous ethnic communities being pushed to the political margins, putting individuals from non-indigenous groups at risk of serious violation. One could argue that the first-past the post electoral system, which favors dominant ethnic groups, is one of the reasons for the Oromo's disproportionate representation in the city council. Nevertheless, while the Oromo are the largest ethnic group in rural kebeles, this is not the case in urban kebeles, where non-Oromo communities outnumber the Oromo (Tokuma, 2010). The political context, in which a dominant ruling party favors indigenous candidates for city council positions, explains Oromo dominance in the urban administration council.

Without political pluralism, the composition of the urban administration council is determined by the ruling party's candidate selection. The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), an EPRDF member-party, has hegemony in the urban administration, with its members holding all urban administration council seats. Pursuant to Article 15(2) of Proclamation No.65/2003, the statutory provisions governing the quorum and majorities required for decision-making allow Oromo members to make decisions without involving non-Oromo representatives, raising serious concerns about the latter's effective political participation. Oromo dominance over the Urban Administration council, which violates principles of good governance namely participation and equity, deserves serious consideration, given the Urban Administration council's significant powers and responsibilities.

Despite the fact that Article 11 of Proclamation No. 65/2003 explicitly granted the city council final say on urban issues, the Proclamation is ambiguous on the urban administration council's legislative powers. However, Article 14(2a) of the same Proclamation gives the urban administration council the authority to issue city ordinances concerning city affairs. In any case, the urban administration council has previously enacted a number of rules, some of which are or pertain to: regulating public protests in the urban administration; controlling noise pollution; and determining building heights in the urban administration.

The same is true for taxing financial autonomy, another important determinant of local government autonomy. Article 14(2c) of Proclamation No. 65/2003 granted the urban administration council autonomous taxing powers by granting it the authority to "introduce, adjust, and ensure the collection of taxes and service charges in accordance with law." Likewise, Article 37(1) of Proclamation No 65/2003 states that "the urban local government may introduce, adjust, and collect taxes, rentals, and service charges in accordance with regional and federal laws and policies." The revenue from urban land and property tax can be used for municipal functions in this case, and the city uses these as its own source of revenue. The aforementioned two provisions, though poorly phrased, appear to imply that urban local governments have the authority to tax autonomy.

The Urban Administration, on the other hand, receives funds from the regional government for the work it does on behalf of the region. Furthermore, the city administration is in charge of determining and managing the city's budget. The Mayor prepares budget proposals and presents them to residents and Kebele council representatives. The city council, on the other hand, has the authority to approve the budget proposal. The Bureau of Oromia Works and Urban Development, one of the regional government bodies, has the authority to assist the city in budget preparation and implementation. Article 37(4) of Proclamation No. 65/2003 entitles the Urban Administration to a regional government subsidy based on a percentage of revenue collected within the city boundary. According to the results of interview with the urban administration head of FEDO's, the urban administration of Ambo is also financially dependent on the region.

Pursuant to Article 18(4) of Proclamation No 65/2003, the City Council should elect the Mayor from the members of the City Council, and the Mayor is accountable to both the President of the ONRS and the City Council, with the Mayor serving the same term as the City Council. However, Article 7, Proclamation No. 116/2006 later amended this by removing the accountability of the Mayor to the city council and transferred the accountability and appointment of the Mayor of Ambo to ONRS President. In such a case, anyone loyal to the ODP/OPDO and who speaks and understands Afaan Oromoo is a possible candidate for Mayor though he/she does not run for office at the urban administration level. The Mayor is in charge of selecting the mayor's committee's other members, the city's executive body, and submitting a list of nominees to the city council for approval. The appointment procedure for appointing the city's executive body entails the executive being accountable to the city council.

The Urban Administration Council has a number of tools at its disposal to carry out its supervisory responsibility and make executive accountability a priority. As per Article 14 (2m) of Proclamation No.65/2003, the authority to approve the urban administration budget and monitor its execution is the first and most important tool. Article 42 (1) of the



same Proclamation reveals the urban administration council's authority to appoint an auditor and take action based on the audit report backs up the supervisory role of the urban administration council's in this regard, though Article 42(2) of the same Proclamation indicates the auditor's accountability to the Mayor could make auditing ineffective. Practically, the finance, budget and audit affairs committee (one of the city council's five standing committees) first discusses the budget proposal developed by the executive body of the urban administration.

The results of focus group discussions with urban administration council members demonstrated that the plenum of the urban administration council approves the budget without further discussion following scrutiny by the finance, budget and audit affairs committee. Concerning the urban administration council's authority to oversee and evaluate budget execution, the speaker of the urban administration council told the authors about one example of actions taken in response to audit report findings. The results of interview with speaker of the urban administration council revealed that the measures were based on the findings of an ad hoc committee formed in 2016 to recover public funds misappropriated by a number of urban administration officials.

The standing committees review the executive's quarterly reports in the urban administration as a formal rule of check and balance. The executive must first submit quarterly written reports on its activities, accomplishments, and challenges; then, the standing committees must provide written feedback on the reports. The results of focus group discussions with urban administration council members indicated that the standing committees also have the authority to conduct field visits to evaluate the reports received on the ground if circumstances necessitate it, though this rarely occurs.

The second supervisory tool is the urban administration council's authority to investigate the mayor's committee members and the mayor. The results of the focus groups with urban administration council members revealed that, despite the fact that punitive measures are occasionally imposed on the executive members, the urban administration council, according to its members, is ineffective in carrying out its supervisory responsibilities and holding the executive accountable. In this regard, a number of factors can be mentioned. The first is the urban administration lack of political pluralism. As previously stated, the OPDO has such a stranglehold on political space in the urban administration to the point where its members are all urban administration council representatives. The OPDO has faced little opposition from alternative political parties that representatives of the OPDO feel more accountable to their party rather than to the voters. Elections do not guarantee public accountability in this context because the electorate has very little chance of removing unpopular councilors. Besides, the OPDO is distinguished by strict party discipline, which has a negative impact on councilors' willingness to effectively represent the interests of their respective constituencies.

The merger of executive and legislative institutions brought about by the parliamentary governance system, as well as since many urban administration councilors are concurrently members of the urban administration, are the second factor preventing the urban administration council from carrying out its supervision responsibilities. Urban Councilors are understandably hesitant to express their dissatisfaction with their administrative superiors. The results of focus group discussions with urban administration council members revealed that insufficient financial incentives (City Councilors in the urban administration are not paid) as well as the resources in terms of human resources and

material, are the third factor preventing the urban administration council from carrying out its supervision responsibilities effectively. Despite its importance in ensuring accountability, popular participation, and transparency in urban governance, urban council in the urban administration does not receive much political attention. This can be seen, for instance, in the disparity in the budget allocations between the urban administration council and executive. According to the urban administration 2019/20 socio-economic profile, the Mayor's office budget was significantly larger than the budget allotted to the urban administration council.

In the end, the urban administration council's relationship with the regional government should be investigated. According to Article 16 (1) of Proclamation No. 65/2003, the urban administration council is accountable to both the electorate as well as the regional government council. Nevertheless, it is unclear how the urban council's autonomy is affected by its upward accountability. As per the urban administration council's speaker, the regional government is informed of all city council activities. The regional council (Caffee) assesses the reports and gives appropriate feedback. This procedure applies to all urban administrations in the region, which come together in only one single session for reporting and receiving feedback.

According to the urban administration council's speaker, the reporting procedure/process is similar to that of a consultative meeting, however, the authors are uncertain how far it can and does violate the city's autonomy. Because of all city council and regional council members are affiliated with the same political party, they have the potential to severely limit the autonomy of the urban administration. Nevertheless, the EPRDF and its constituent parties appear to be in flux when this research was written, with a noticeable deterioration in party discipline. It will be interesting to see how far this pattern will have an impact the internal operations of the OPDO.

#### *Urban Administration Executive Bodies*

Pursuant to Article 18 and 20 of Proclamation No.65/2003, the Mayor and the Mayor's Committee are executive bodies of Ambo urban administration. Article 6 of Proclamation No.116/2006 states the Mayor of Ambo Urban Administration is elected by the President of the Oromia Region and is accountable to the same person. Simultaneously, as per Article 7 of Proclamation No.116/2006 states the urban administration Mayor is tasked with producing his strategy and report to the Urban Administration Council, but the Mayor is not chosen by the Urban Administration Council and is not accountable to it. This arrangement of the President's and the Mayor's relations has been criticized because it forces the Mayor to prioritize upward accountability to the President's will over the Mayor and urban administration council collective accountability.

Although upward accountability is common in decentralized settings, Proclamation No. 116/2006 does not define the scope of such accountability. In this regard, it is unclear whether the mayor can be fired by the President of the regional government or what other mechanisms exist to ensure accountability. As opposed to, according to Article 30, Proclamation No.65/2003, the regional state council has the authority to dissolve the city council when an act detrimental to the public interest or endangering the constitutional order is committed. This provision not only provided mechanisms for ensuring accountability, but it also allowed for arbitrary regional intervention in city governance autonomy (Van der Beken, 2017).

This legal ambiguity allows for broad regional interference with urban government autonomy in a context where all government levels in the regional state are administered by a dominant ruling party. The President of the region is usually a high-ranking official in the party who can leverage his position in the party to put excessive pressure on the mayor. As a result, the mayor's accountability is far more political than legal. The Mayors' recent resignation from Oromia Region various urban administrations in response to strong pressure from the Oromia Region President demonstrates that, despite its weakness, political accountability is still present (Ketema, 2017).

The existence and operation of a so-called city coordination committee in Ambo exemplifies the mayor's strong relationship with the ruling party. This entirely informal committee meets once a week (the formal mayor's committee meets once a month) and is made up of the mayor, the deputy mayor, and three OPDO representatives. The committee's role is ambiguous and amorphous, violating the principle of transparency. The results of interview with the Mayor of the urban administration revealed the coordination committee is responsible for both political and developmental matters, the Mayor's Committee, on the other hand, is a more technocratic organization. Given the Mayor's close relationship with the ruling party, the coordination committee has an undeniable influence on urban autonomy and decision-making. This is further evidence of the region's ruling party's growing desire to tighten its grip on everything, even to the point of determining, more than any other body, how the urban administration day-to-day operations are carried out.

To ensure local government autonomy, the mayor's upward accountability must be clarified and specified to ensure that the legal limitations of regional and political supervision are clearly stated. Such legal clarity is also required to ensure effective accountability in the event of political dynamics shifts. Recent events in the country have demonstrated that strong EPRDF party discipline cannot be taken for granted. Democratic advancements may also result in the regional and local levels of government being administered by different political parties. In these scenarios, Proclamation No. 65/2003 does not provide the regional government with the necessary tools to effectively supervise and hold cities accountable.

As far as the Mayor's appointment and upward accountability is concerned, without a doubt, it impedes local democratic processes because it is not rooted in the community. In this regard, during the interview with the Speaker of the urban administration council, the speaker of the council sees the strategy as yet another way to keep non-Oromo from becoming Mayor of the urban administration. Furthermore, the Mayor's appointment system in the Urban Administration has a tendency to concentrate power in the hands of the Mayor, making the Urban Administration council subordinate since the Mayor has control over vertical information flows and excludes the Urban Administration Council from decision management and administration. Besides, as long as the Urban Administration Council cannot support the Mayor's appointment, it is in a weak position.

The law has given the mayor significant powers and responsibilities, which, as previously stated, are not effectively balanced by the city council. Pursuant to Article 18(4b) of Proclamation No.65/2003, the first important power of the Mayor is in charge of ensuring the observance of law and order in the urban administration. Article 18(4d) of the same Proclamation indicates the selection of the Mayor's Committee (urban administration executive councils) by the urban administration chief executive, the Mayor. Nominees for the Mayor's committee may or may not be members of the city council. The list of

nominees must be submitted to the city council for approval, but party discipline and executive dominance over the council make this largely a ceremonial affair. The results of interview with Ambo urban administration Mayor revealed that the urban administration of Ambo Mayor's committee currently has five members. Because ethnic diversity is not guaranteed by law, this body is likely to be dominated by people with an Oromo identity, as an Oromo mayor nominates candidates for an Oromo-dominated city council.

According to Article 22(1) of Proclamation No.65/2003, the municipal service is managed by a professional urban administration Manager who is appointed by the Mayor. Article 22(2) of the same Proclamation states the Manager of the urban administration is accountable to the Mayor. Pursuant to Article 22 (3) and (4), the urban administration Manager has extensive executive authority and responsibilities, among others, recruiting, administering, and dismissing manpower's working in the municipal service in accordance with law. The results of interview with urban administration civil service official and Article 8(2e) of Proclamation No.65/2003 indicated that the urban administration ability to administer its civil servants in accordance with government civil service law, i.e. administrative autonomy, is a critical component of urban government autonomy. Ambo urban administration currently employs 1,726 people across its various hierarchies. While the mayor claims that the recruitment and employment of city civil servants is done in accordance with civil service laws, a look at the ethnic composition of the city administration institutions reveals a disproportionate number of Oromo.

In 2016, for example, Oromo people made up 77 percent of the city's civil service workforce of 1,675. In 2020, 81 percent of the 1,726 employees were Oromo. The preceding figures raise serious equity concerns for an ethnic group that accounts for 70.58 percent of the total population. Furthermore, a look at the city's appointed heads of various departments reveals a similarly disproportionate number of ethnic appointments. For example, in 2016, Oromo appointees led all nine of the major departments under consideration.

Pursuant to Article 18(4h) of Proclamation No.65/2003, the Mayor is also in charge of developing and overseeing the execution of the urban administration plan and budget. The urban administration finance and economic development office (FEDO) is in charge of developing the draft plan and budget. The FEDO sends a letter inviting the other city offices to develop their budget plans as the first step in developing a draft budget. These plans are then debated with the OFED, and the first draft of the budget has been completed after an agreement has been reached. The results of interview with the head of the urban administration FEDO's revealed that the Mayor's committee debates and completes the draft budget following a discussion with the Mayor. Following that, Article 40(2b) of Proclamation No.65/2003 indicated it is the Mayor's responsibility to present the budget draft for approval to the City Council.

Budgeting and planning are key indicators of the autonomy of local governments, which can be severely limited if the local government cannot generate enough revenue to cover its expenses. In that case, the local government is reliant on external revenue (Example, transfers from regional government), which may be accompanied by external policy priorities. This possible threat to local autonomy has occurred in Ambo urban administration due to the urban administration reliance on regional grants.

Participation of the public in budgeting and planning should be ensured, for example, by having urban residents represented on the urban administration council, which

is responsible for approving the budget and plan. However, the effectiveness of public participation is hampered by a number of constraints. As previously stated, the urban administration council is ineffective in overseeing the executive for a variety of reasons. The other impediment to public participation's effectiveness is the city council's lack of inclusive and equitable representation, both politically and ethnically. There has already been mention of Oromo dominance and OPDO monopoly on city council representation. This could result in budgeting and planning that ignores non-Oromo residents' interests, as well as ignoring alternative perspectives on development. It would be considered a breach of the responsiveness principles of good governance in serving all stakeholders, including residents, and would be harmful to the policy effectiveness in development.

### **Summary of Findings: An Overview of the Benefits and Drawbacks of Good Governance**

Proclamation No. 65/2003 gave urban local governments important powers, which they exercise via the executive and legislative institutions discussed in this article's fourth section. The legislative organ, the urban administration council, has the authority to pass local ordinances; approve the urban administration plan and budget; perform supervisory duties; and set service charge tariffs. However, from the standpoint of good governance, this research has uncovered a slew of legal and practical issues.

The composition of urban administration council's is the first challenge in this regard. Despite the fact that Proclamation No. 116/2006 guarantees the Oromo people a maximum of 50% of council seats, leaving significant space for non-indigenous community representation, representatives of Oromo origin hold nearly three-quarters of these seats. This implies that the urban administration council's ethnic representation is unequal, limiting city's residents' political participation that is both equitable and ethnically inclusive. The lack of inclusiveness in the urban administration council also restricts the representation of opposing political ideas.

Non-Oromo ethnic groups are not fairly represented, and there is no opposition representation, limiting city residents' effective political participation. The current city council's composition may result in decisions that favor and reflect Oromo interests and perspectives, which is counterproductive to the principles of good-governance responsiveness in terms of providing service to all residents of the urban administration. Moreover, because only OPDO viewpoints are considered, it has a negative impact on the caliber of political debate and the policy outcomes that result.

The urban administration council's ineffectiveness in carrying out its oversight of the executive is the other barrier to good governance. The ineffectiveness of the urban administration council's supervision of the executive has a clear negative impact on the executive's accountability. The mayor's accountability to the President of the region alone, as well as the council's inability to approve the mayor's appointment, means that the council lacks the majority required to sanction the mayor. In practice, however, the lack of downward accountability is offset by the Mayor's strong upward accountability to the president of the region. This is due to the fact that, in the current political climate, both the president of the region and the mayor are members of the same political party with a rigid hierarchical structure. However, the mayor's accountability is primarily political as

opposed to institutional, because the law does not define the extent of the upward accountability of the Mayor to the president of the regional government.

The function and existence of urban administration coordination committee, a completely unofficial organization that appears to be in charge of advancing the interest of the ruling party in the city, exemplifies the mayor's close relationship with the ruling party. In this regard, the lack of legal clarity contradicts the goal of transparent decision-making. It also poses risks to effective city-region oversight, as changes in political dynamics may weaken party discipline or even result in different political majorities at the city and regional governments. This scenario could result in a lack of upward accountability to an already weak downward accountability practice. Given the mayor's significant powers and responsibilities, ineffective vertical and horizontal checks and balances could create a favorable environment for him or her to become a petty dictator.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Ambo urban administration has been given significant legal authority and responsibilities, the independent exercise of which, governed by good governance principles, should result in overall development. The urban administration main challenges and opportunities for good governance have been identified in this article, based on a discussion and evaluation of the urban administration institutional legal framework and how they work in practice. Finally, several recommendations are made in order to improve the urban administration governance quality and thus contribute to the realization of the urban administration developmental goals. Some are of the political variety, while others are of the legal nature.

The study identifies Oromo dominance over the urban administration government institutions as the first major problem. Despite the fact that Ambo's location within Oromia Region territory justifies Oromo interest protection measures (at the very least, according to the Ethiopian administrative organization's ethnic-territorial mindset), this research contends that good governance necessitates more effective participation and greater representation of non-Oromo ethnic communities in urban government. Even if urban local government Proclamations Nos. 65/2003 and 116/2006 guarantee Oromo dominance in first and second grade cities, both proclamations implicitly recognize the existence of non-Oromo groups in order to create a city government that is more ethnically diverse that reflects the city's multi-ethnic composition. However, this research found that the majority of urban administration council members are Oromo. As a result, this put up to Oromo dominance over the mayor's committee, whose membership is recommended by the Oromo mayor and then approved by the city council. According to the article, the Oromo ethnic group's disproportionate representation in the Mayor's committee and city council is primarily due to the OPDO's regional and local political dominance, a situation that benefits Oromo city council candidates.

Despite the fact that this has resulted in Oromo control of the city government, its long-term viability is doubtful because it is dependent on the OPDO's continued dominance over the urban administration political scene. Given the country's current political developments, it is reasonable to expect fierce political competition in future local elections. This political competition is expected to come from multi-ethnic and ethnic-based political parties, with both non-Oromo and Oromo candidates. Given that 30% non-

Oromo groups live in urban kebeles, the current level of ethnic politicization and the continued use of the plurality voting system is likely to result in the election of non-Oromo candidates. Greater electoral competition will likely encourage the OPDO to field a greater number of non-Oromo candidates. As a result, simply increasing electoral competition will result in more equitable city institutions and ethnically proportionate. Because such a situation would instill fear in the Oromo of being deposed in "their" urban administration, legal guarantees of continued political power are recommended so that their fear does not lead to socio-political conflict and instability.

A second issue to consider is the urban administration council's ineffective supervision of the executive. Even if the presence of representatives from various political parties on the urban administration council would undoubtedly consolidate its supervision role, even when there is no political pluralism, the ruling party could encourage its members on the urban administration council to be more assertive in carrying out their duties. To be sure, this might be asking too much given that many urban administration council members also hold professional positions in urban administration. One strategy to encourage urban administration councilor members to be more assertive should be to provide legal immunity for votes cast and opinions expressed in the urban administration council. Following the example of South Africa, the other strategy could be to make it illegal for urban administration employee to become a city councilor. Minimizing the large financial disparity between the urban administration executive and council is a political measure that would give urban administration councilors with the human resources and material they need to carry out their duties effectively.

Effective accountability mechanisms necessitate clarification of the executive's upward accountability under the law. Whilst local self-government refers the ability to make discretionary decisions, this authority is not limitless, which should be protected by a higher-ranking government (Yilmaz, et al., 2010). Nevertheless, it is critical to strike a balance between upward accountability and discretion so that the former does not obviate the latter. The Oromo urban local government law does not provide this guarantee because the scope of the city council's upward accountability to the regional government and the mayor's accountability to the regional president is ambiguous. Due to a lack of legal clarity, the regional government is currently able to interfere extensively with local government autonomy, instead of formal legal strategies of vertical accountability, close party ties are used. To prevent urban government autonomy from devolving into local tyranny, a changing political environment necessitates a legal clarification of upward accountability's substance and the means for maintaining it.

## References

1. Abawi, K. (2013). Training in sexual and reproductive health search: data collection instruments (questionnaire and interview). Geneva
2. Ambo Urban Administration Office. (2020). Ambo Urban Administration Socio-Economic Profile. Office of the Mayor, Ambo, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia (Unpublished Document).
3. Bevir, M. (Ed.). (2009). Key Concepts in Governance. London: Sage
4. Bostan, I., Onofrei, M., Popescu, C., Lupu, D., & Firtescu, B. (2018). Efficiency and corruption in local counties: Evidence from Romania. *Lex Localis*, 16(2), 215-229.

5. Cresswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications
6. Cresswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*. United States of America: Sage Publications
7. Devas, N. (Ed.). (2004). *Urban Governance, Voice and Poverty in the Developing World*. London: Earthscan.
8. Hirst, P. (2000). *Democracy and Governanance*. In Pierre, Jon (2000) *Debating Governance. Authority, Steering and Democracy* (pp 13-55). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
9. Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2002). *Types of Multi-Level Governance*. Working Paper. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Political Science.
10. Ketema, W.(2017). *Federalism and Urban Governance: An Explorative study of Intergovernmental Relations in Cities of Adama and Asosa*. PhD Dissertation
11. Kooiman, J. (1999). *Social Political Governance. Overview, Reflection and Design*. Public Management, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp 67-92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037800000005>
12. Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching*, London: SAGE Publications.
13. Newman, J. (2001) *Modernising Governance*. New labour, Policy and Society. London: SAGE Publications.
14. Oromia National Regional State. (2001). Proclamation No. 46/2001, The Revised Constitution of the Oromia National Regional State, Megeleta Oromia, Finifinie, July 12th 2000.
15. Oromia National Regional State.(2003). Proclamation No. 65/2003, A Proclamation of Urban Local Government of the Oromia National Regional State, Megeleta Oromia, 9th Year, No 12, Adama, 2003.
16. Oromia National Regional State.(2006). Proclamation No 116/2006, Proclamation for amending Proclamation No. 65/2003 for the establishment of Urban Local Governments of Oromia, Megeleta Oromia, Finfine, 12th July, 2006.
17. Oromia National Regional State.(2006). Proclamation No.119/2006: The Proclamation to provide for the Election of Member of Woreda, Kebele, and Urban Administration Councils No.119/2006, Megeleta, Oromia, 26 November, 2006.
18. Rhodes, R.A.W. (2000). *Governance and Public Administration*. In Pierre, Jon (2000) *Debating Governance. Authority, Steering and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
19. Rhodes, R.A.W. (1997). *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
20. Simon M. (2011). *Analysis of Qualitative Data, Dissertation and Scholarly Research: Recipes for Success*. Seattle.
21. Smith, B.C. (Ed.). (2007). *Good Governance and Development*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
22. Tokuma Daba, (2010). 'the Legal and Practical Protection of the Rights of Minorities in Self Administering Nations of Ethiopia: The Case of Oromia', LLM Thesis, Addis Ababa University.
23. UN-Habitat (2003a). *The Global Campaign on Governance. Campaign Overview*
24. UN-Habitat (2003b). *The Global Campaign on Governance. Principles of Good Urban Governance*.
25. Van der Beken, C. (2017). *Completing the constitutional architecture: A comparative analysis of sub-national constitutions in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
26. Wilkinson, R. (2002). *Global Governance. A preliminary Interrogative*. In Wilkinson, R. and Hughes, S. *Global Governance: Critical Perspectives* (pp1-13). London: Routledge.
27. Yilmaz, S. , Beris, Y. and Serrano-Berthet, R. (2010). *Linking local government discretion and accountability in decentralization*. *Development Policy Review*, 28(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7679.2010.00484.x>



This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution - Non Commercial - No Derivatives 4.0 International License.