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Opposition in the Ethiopian Diaspora in Norway: Mobilizing Supporters Abroad

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Declaration

I, Fredrik Brogeland Laache, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

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Date.....

Abstract

Over the past two decades, the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway has increased their mobilizing efforts and civic participation. With a steady influx of Ethiopian migrants and refugees to Norway, the scope of diasporic political activity has expanded. This includes the establishment of opposition groups that mobilize against the Ethiopian government, seeking to bring what they call ‘democratic change’ to their homeland. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the most prominent Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway, and account for some of the causes and mechanisms that can help explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The thesis will argue that the Ethiopian opposition diaspora is diverse, and consists of movements, organizations and political parties which are motivated by similar grievances, but represent different stances, political projects and aims. While there are many causal factors that could explain diaspora mobilization in Norway, this thesis will primarily highlight the importance of long-term grievances and single incidents and processes such as the 2005 election in Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi’s visit to Norway in 2005, Norwegian asylum politics and the diplomatic relationship between Norway and Ethiopia. Furthermore, a conceptualization of causal mechanisms – supported by concepts from social movement theory – will show that the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway use framing, transnational entrepreneurship, political opportunities and lobbyism to mobilize supporters.

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Any errors are mine alone.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AEUP	All Ethiopia Unity Party
ALF	Afar Liberation Front
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy (<i>Qinijit</i>)
DCESON	Democratic Change in Ethiopia Support Organization in Norway
Derg	Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army
EASA	Ethiopian Asylum Seekers Association
EDORM	Ethiopian Democratic Officer's Revolutionary Movement
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ESAT	Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio
ESM	Ethiopian Student Movement
ETNK	Ethiopian Norwegian Channel (<i>Etiopisk-norsk kanal</i>)
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Meison	All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement
MFA	The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NOAS	Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers
NRK	Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (<i>Norsk rikskringkasting</i>)
ODF	Oromo Democratic Front
OFC	Oromo Federalist Congress
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OMN	Oromia Media Network
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
PG7	Patriotic Ginbot Sabat (7)
RM	Resource Mobilization
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
SLF	Sidama Liberation Front
SMNE	Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia
SoE	State of Emergency
SSB	Statistics Norway (<i>Statistisk sentralbyrå</i>)
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network
TAND	Tigrean Alliance for National Democracy
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UDPJ	Unity for Democracy and Justice
UEDF	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UOSE	Union of Oromo Students in Europe
US	United States

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1 Introduction

With the advent of globalization and the growth of cross-border movement worldwide, the interest in diaspora politics has increased exponentially over the past two decades (Adamson 2015). The rise of *the diaspora* in academic and political discourse has broadened our ideas about non-state actors, and introduced a concept that blurs the lines between ‘the domestic’ and ‘the international’ (Shain & Barth 2003; Adamson & Demetriou 2007; Varadarajan 2010). As geographically dispersed people who mobilise across borders and retain a strong connection to their homeland (Safran 1991), diasporans have become influential actors in shaping policy. Some argue that diasporas are inherently political due to their civic and political engagement in homeland affairs (Lyons 2007; Horst 2013). In the past decade, diasporas have made good use of the ever-expanding communication technology to mobilise transnational networks in support of their aims (Brinkerhoff 2009). By being situated outside their original nation, but inside the people (Shain & Barth 2003), diasporas are able to exercise influence from afar, oftentimes enjoying the political freedoms of liberal democracies, allowing them to be more vocal and critical about homeland politics than their kinfolk back home.

One diaspora group known for its political engagement is the Ethiopian exile community – from now on referred to as ‘the Ethiopian diaspora’. Living in large settlements across countries like the US, Canada, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Sudan, Kenya, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, France and Norway (IOM, 2015), the Ethiopian diaspora represents a complex web of different ethnic groups and conflicting political stances. Much like other diasporas, the Ethiopian diaspora constitutes a diverse group of people, ranging from political refugees and migrant workers, to family immigrants and students. As stated by Terrence Lyons, ‘it is impossible to characterize the diverse population and wide range of identities within the Ethiopian diaspora fully or accurately’ (2007: 593).

Due to protracted grievances towards the current or former Ethiopian government(s), some segments of the diaspora have transformed into opposition groups who are working against Ethiopian authorities. These groups include opposition parties, political movements, civic organizations, women’s groups, or media cooperatives. The Ethiopian opposition diaspora employs numerous mechanisms to mobilise its supporters to act in favour of political change in Ethiopia, making them key players in homeland conflicts (Lyons 2007).

The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway, and explain some of the causes and methods behind the mobilization of Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway. By highlighting causal factors such as long-term grievances, political developments in Ethiopia, Norwegian asylum politics, and the diplomatic relationship between Norway and Ethiopia, I intend to provide a comprehensive analysis that examines the motivations behind the mobilization of Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway. This includes accounting for and explaining the efficiency of mobilizing mechanisms such as strategic framing, the role of political entrepreneurs, lobbyism, resource mobilization and other relevant causal mechanisms. Some of the causalities presented in this thesis are well-known in diaspora studies, while some findings may provide new insight into causal relationships that are explanatory of diaspora mobilization. I will argue that the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway comprises a diverse pool of actors, projects, stances and expressions which at times generate highly efficient and explosive mobilizing efforts. I will furthermore emphasize the importance of long-term grievances against the homeland and the hostland as essential causal factors for mobilization, and argue that Norway's diplomatic relations with Ethiopia has aggravated the diaspora and created futile grounds for mobilization. The theoretical framework of the thesis contains useful concepts from diaspora studies, transnational studies and social movement theory – all of which will help conceptualize the findings. The following three research questions have guided my thesis:

- 1. What does the political landscape of the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway look like?*
- 2. What causal factors can help explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway*
- 3. Which mechanisms have been used by the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway to mobilize supporters?*

1.1 Why the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway?

To my knowledge, the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway has not been the focus of an academic dissertation prior to this thesis. Given the high activity level of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway over the past two decades, and the diaspora's growing influence on political developments in the homeland, it is only appropriate this case is given scholarly attention. Still, lack of academic interest in the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway does not mean that this is the case for the Ethiopian diaspora as a whole. Influential studies focusing on the mobilizing abilities of the Ethiopian diaspora, particularly in the US, have been carried out by Terrence Lyons (2004; 2007; 2009), and to a lesser extent Yussuf Yassin (2007). Additionally, Terje Skjerdal has conducted research on Ethiopian diaspora online communities (2011), and Aaron M. Terrazas has studied the migration flows of Ethiopians (2007). Furthermore, an overview of Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian diaspora organizations in Norway was published by Cindy Horst and Mohamed Gaas in 2009. Naturally, these studies will be useful for this thesis.

The arguments for doing research on the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway are many. One obvious reason is the large number of Ethiopians who have settled in Norway in the last decades. As of 1 January 2017, 12,458 people of Ethiopian descent were living in Norway, of which 7,888 were immigrants, and 2,499 were born in Norway to Ethiopian-born parents¹ (Statistics Norway, SSB). The number of immigrants from Ethiopia has averaged around 540 per year since 2007, and there are no signs that the flow of arrivals will decrease any time soon. Another reason for studying the diaspora is the need for more knowledge about the Ethiopian diaspora's impact on homeland affairs. This includes a close look at the efficiency of transnational networks, the popularization of communication technology, the military capacity of diaspora-supported armed groups, the effect of remittances, the diaspora's credibility in the eyes of the hostland, and not least their overall ability to mobilize and recruit supporters in the hostland. Diaspora activities that aim to bring political change to the homeland must be understood by looking at a set of causal relationships fuelled by political motivations and collective perceptions of the homeland. In the Norwegian case, increased awareness about the role of the Ethiopian diaspora opposition may lead to a better understanding of the diaspora's political grievances. I assume that this is of interest to Norwegian authorities and civil society organisations that have relations with both the Ethiopian government and diaspora groups.

¹ The remaining 2071 were either born to Norwegian-born parents, born to one Norwegian-born parent, born to one foreign-born parent, or born abroad with two Norwegian-born parents (Statistics Norway, SSB).

1.2 Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into four main chapters with an additional final chapter summarizing the findings and proposing recommendations for further research. The background chapter, which follows directly after this introduction, seeks to establish a historical framework explaining the rise of opposition parties in the Derg-era and under the EPRDF-rule. The chapter will furthermore elaborate on the authoritarian characteristics of the Ethiopian state as a contributing factor to the mobilization of opposition parties, and their continual struggles – both in Ethiopia and abroad – to challenge the political status quo in the homeland. The third chapter establishes the theoretical framework guiding the analysis. Important conceptualizations and discussions regarding the meaning of the term ‘diaspora’ will be accounted for to demonstrate the diversity of diaspora expressions. Furthermore, the chapter will argue for the application of concepts from transnational studies and social movement theory as useful thinking tools to conceptualize diaspora mobilization and cross-border activity. Chapter four describes the methodology of the thesis, and accounts for potential shortcomings with regards to the sample and the research method (interviewing). Chapter five presents the findings of my research with three sub-chapters corresponding to each research question. The analysis of the findings is incorporated into this chapter, and will be developed parallel to the presentation of the empirical evidence. The final chapter will briefly summarize the main findings.

2 Background

The mobilization of the Ethiopian diaspora is a result of historical and political grievances. The process of mobilization has evolved gradually as a chain of reactions to political developments in the homeland. Understanding the intricate networks of loyalties and hostilities that constitute the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway therefore necessitates a closer look at the development of the Ethiopian state and the upsurge of opposition parties over the past 50 years. This includes the rise and fall of the Derg-regime, the ascent to power of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the establishment of ethnic federalism, and the persistent lack of political pluralism at the hands of different ruling regimes. The following section will contextualize the thesis topic by highlighting important events, processes, allegiances and state structures that have led to the consolidation of power by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). I will furthermore focus my attention on some of the most influential political organizations in recent Ethiopian history, such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD).

2.1 Opposition under the Derg

Since the downfall of the feudal system rule of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, the Ethiopian state has been controlled by two different regimes. First, under the military autocracy of the Derg² lasting from 1974 to 1991, and successively under the multi-ethnic party coalition known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which is still in power today. During the Derg-regime, the country was subjected to the institutionalisation of "barrack socialism", which in the words of renowned Ethiopian scholar and opposition figure, Merera Gudina, "opened the way for a bloody military interlude that turned the country to a big prison house for 17 years" (2004: 28). In the decade prior to the Derg's overthrow of the Emperor, a student movement³ rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology had emerged as a forceful adversary to the Imperial rule at the University College of Addis Ababa. By the late 60s, the movement had managed to amass Ethiopian students abroad, and even primary and secondary school students

² The Derg, meaning committee or council in Amharic, is the short name for the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991.

³ The Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) came into fruition shortly after the attempted coup d'état against Haile Selassie in 1960. Initially, the movement advocated for student rights related to housing, food and other issues before turning into one of the main organizations for national political dissent (Joireman 1997: 389).

in the capital (Lemma 1979: 34). Student demonstrations were held under the slogan ‘Land to the Tiller!’ with demands for drastic land reform aimed to redistribute huge land plots owned by the royal family, the nobility and the Orthodox Church (Darch 1976; Lemma 1979). Due to the Imperial regime’s growing suppression of the increasing disgruntlement in the late 60s and early 70s, students, intellectuals, peasants and other dissidents across the country had to go underground, where secret plans to carry out a socialist revolution were initiated. However, due to ideological differences, the underground movement split into different factions, eventually leading to the formation of several political organisations, including the communist (pan)-Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Party (EPRP) (Joireman 1997: 390). Up until and following the Derg’s ascent to power in 1974, the founders of the EPRP had consistently opposed the idea of military rule. Consequently, when the Derg successfully capitalized on the revolutionary ideas introduced by the students, but ended up excluding political parties from power, the EPRP stood ready to lead the revolutionary movement – now against the military rule of the Derg (Markakis & Ayele 1977: 99). The conflict between the Derg and the EPRP intensified in 1976 when the latter moved towards full confrontation with the dictatorship by organizing labour strikes and popular protests (Markakis & Ayele 1977: 101). The EPRP continued its insurgent activities until 1978 when these were quelled in the cities by the Red Terror campaign⁴, which actively targeted EPRP affiliates (Joireman 1997: 390). In addition to the killings of EPRP members and supporters during the Red Terror campaign, the EPRP was also attacked by guerrilla groups who were vying for power in the rural areas (ibid.). During this time and all the way up until the overthrow of the Derg in 1991, the first wave of Ethiopian regime critics, including a substantial amount of EPRP affiliates, arrived in Norway as political refugees (Landinfo 2015: 6).

Due to heavy centralization and the Derg’s refusal to “share power with either the politically conscious middle classes or the emerging regional and ethnic elites”, the regime was quickly challenged from many quarters (Young 1996: 534). In the North, the peasant-based Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) had formed in 1975 on the conviction that the elimination of ethnic oppression was just as important as class struggle (ibid.). After centuries of Amhara-dominance and marginalization of ethnic minorities, TPLF’s Marxist-inspired revolutionary

⁴ The Red Terror was the largest campaign of official violations of human rights perpetrated by the Derg. The campaign lasted between 1977 and 1980, and was characterized by summary executions, arbitrary detentions, disappearances and torture, among other things (Aneme 2006: 66). The victims of the Red Terror-purges in the years 1977-1978 are minimally estimated to be between 20.000 and 40.000 (Abbink 1995: 135).

ideals placed self-determination of the nationalities at the top of their priority list (Berhe 2008: 63-64). Consequently, in the mid 70s, TPLF had become EPRP's biggest challenger for supremacy of the anti-Derg opposition in the Northern Tigray region, and growing tension between the two clandestine organizations eventually led to bloody confrontations in rural areas (Tadesse in Prunier & Ficquet 2015: 265). With its sturdy emphasis on military capability, the TPLF was often accused by the EPRP of being a "right wing petty bourgeoisie organization with strong fascist inclinations" (ibid.). TPLF on the other hand criticized the EPRP for not having what it takes militarily, which in a sense turned out to have some truth to it when the EPRP was defeated by the TPLF in 1978. "Winning the war against the major pan-Ethiopian nationalist force in Tigray paved the way for the TPLF dominance of Ethiopian politics in the years to come" (Tadesse in Prunier & Ficquet 2015: 266). Today's hostile relationship between TPLF and EPRP diasporans can therefore be traced all the way back to the power struggle that emerged in the barren lands of Tigray, and hence provide some explanations to the seemingly perpetual distrust between the organizations.

Parallel to the clashes in the North, another ethnically based liberation front was mobilizing forces against the Derg-regime further south. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) had been founded in 1973 to promote self-determination for Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, the Oromo⁵. The OLF aimed to facilitate a referendum in which the Oromo people could decide whether to create "an independent republic of Oromia, or to build a multicultural democracy by joining other peoples in a federal or confederal arrangement" (Jalata 1998: 11). Initially, the Oromo welcomed the 1974 revolution and the Derg's initiatives to restore their lands from the rule of the Northerners⁶ (Joireman 1997: 394). However, government interference in Oromo areas, growing disapproval of the Derg's policies, and a "widespread feeling that the Oromo were under-represented in the central government and treated as second-class citizens" (ibid.) soon led to an intensification of rebel activities. In 1976, the OLF drafted an official political programme which presented armed struggle as the only mean to achieve the ultimate goal: *bilisumma* (independence) for Oromia (Markakis 2011: 196-198). Still, the Derg-regime did not pay much attention to the OLF until the mid-80s when Oromo nationalism first started to gain momentum (ibid.). During the same period, contact was established between the TPLF

⁵ The Oromo are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa with a population of approximately 40 million in Ethiopia alone, and an additional 10 million in the Horn of Africa (Jalata 2010: 2).

⁶ 'Northerners' in this case refers to a ruling class of Abyssinian settlers who were responsible for the maintenance of the imperial state and its economy (Markakis 2011: 6).

and the OLF, which led to an on-and-off co-operation hampered by disagreements, mainly because of the OLF's reluctance to work closely with organizations that aimed for state representation (Joireman 1997: 394).

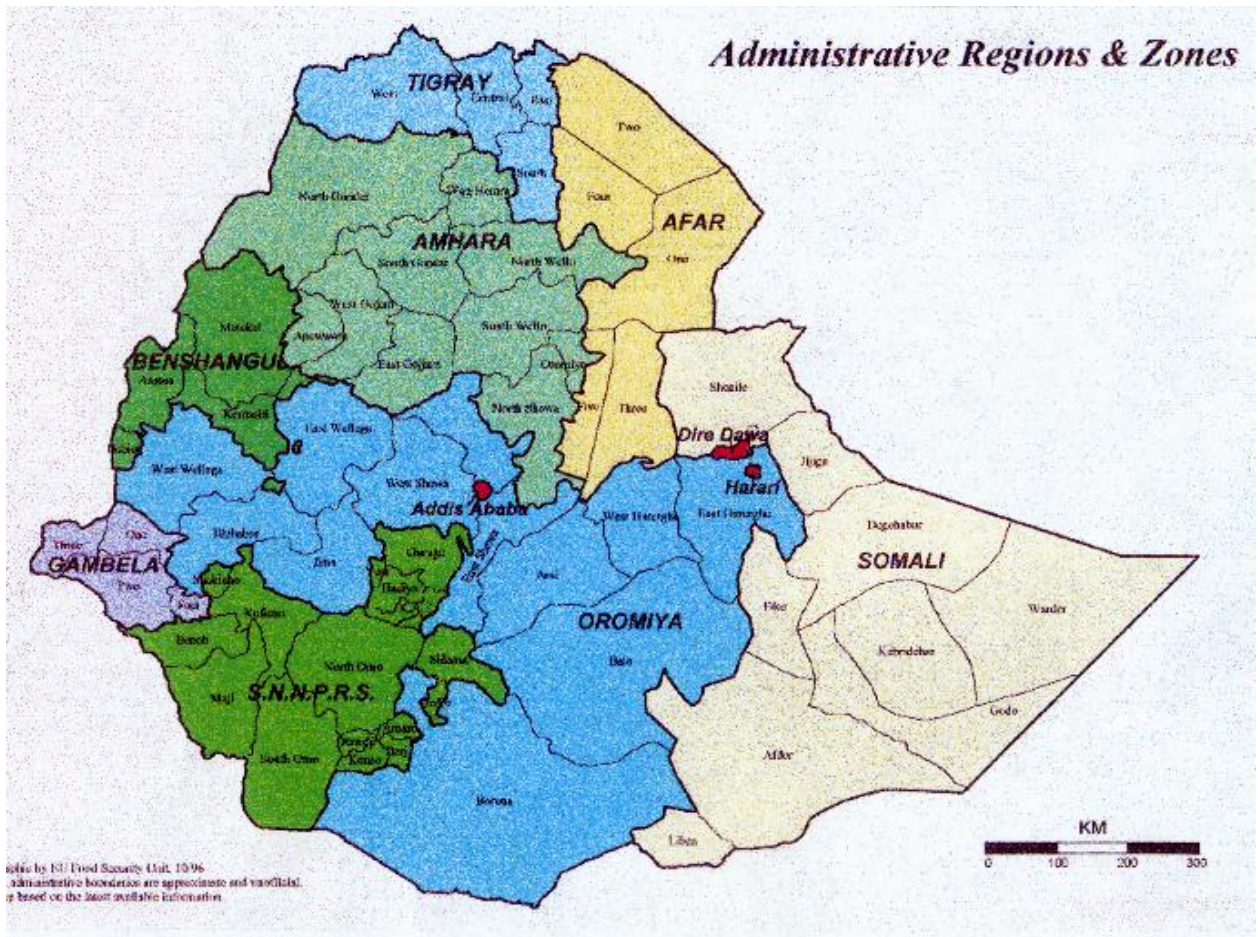
2.2 The rise of the EPRDF and ethnic federalism

During the 80s, the TPLF was able to expand beyond its traditional borders, and gradually earned the position of the most efficient and militarily capable guerrilla group in the country. At the time, TPLF was looking for potential partnerships with other national movements that would share its ideological outlook, and in 1989 the TPLF “established the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)⁷ as a federation of various sub-organizations” (Tadesse in Prunier & Ficquet 2015: 273). Inspired by the Stalinist theory of nationalities and the idea that ethnicity was an important rallying point, the TPLF quickly made sure that the coalition's political programme was rooted in the TPLF's political orientation (Aaalen 2006: 245; *ibid.*). When the EPRDF/TPLF finally entered Addis Ababa and seized the capital in late May 1991, the coalition swiftly initiated a transitional process. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) was established in the wake of a national conference in Addis Ababa in July 1991, upon which the chairman of the TPLF, Meles Zenawi, assumed the presidency. The EPRDF/TPLF was given 32 seats in the newly formed 87-seat Council of Representatives⁸, while the second largest party to the conference, the OLF, ended up with 12 (Keller 1995: 630). Furthermore, the new charter proclaimed the right to self-determination for all Ethiopian nationalities, which meant that “local and regional administrative units would be defined on the basis of nationality” (*ibid.*). The focus on the ‘national question’, which essentially led to the establishment of a federal system based on nationality, “was a result of an agenda predetermined by the EPRDF/TPLF, and partly by the OLF”, rather than a pact between all the organisations that were parties to the conference (Aalen 2002: 41). The aims of the new transitional government were to decentralize the highly centralized state they had inherited from the Derg, democratize Ethiopian politics by introducing a multi-party system, and not least

⁷ In addition to the TPLF, the federation comprised the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (the precursor of the Amhara National Democratic Movement, ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Ethiopian Democratic Officer's Revolutionary Movement (EDORM). After some time, the latter was disbanded, and in 1992 the Southern People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) became part of the EPRDF.

⁸ “Aside from the OLF and the EPRDF member organisations, nationality interests were represented by 16 bodies, of which half were ‘liberation fronts’ with a pre-existing record of political and military activity in Ethiopia” (Vaughan 1994: 45).

liberalize the economy in line with the neo-liberal trend dominating the global economy (Vaughan in Prunier & Ficquet 2015: 284). Furthermore, the delineation of the new *kilils* (regions of Ethiopia) produced a different Ethiopian map, which is still the official map of Ethiopia today:



The first elections for regional offices in the transitional period were conducted in 1992 with the OLF posing as the biggest challenger to the EPRDF/TPLF. Realizing the OLF's potential, however, the EPRDF/TPLF "pushed hard on behalf of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) – its Oromo affiliate – and OLF supporters faced harassment and intimidation" (Lyons 2010: 111). Due to the EPRDF/TPLF's efforts to restrict political competition, an appeal to postpone elections was put on the table by opposing parties. When the appeal was denied, the OLF and 17 other parties withdrew from the elections, leaving the EPRDF/TPLF as the only viable option (ibid.). In the wake of the 1992 elections, the OLF's military capacity was severely weakened and thousands of soldiers in the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) were put in prison. The armed struggle initiated by the OLF after the

disappointments of the 1992 elections, and consequent efforts by the regime to neutralize the struggle, eventually laid the groundworks for an exodus of OLF combatants, members and supporters during the 90s and 2000s. According to informants interviewed for this thesis, many OLF supporters arrived in Norway as political refugees in the late 90s and early 2000s.

2.3 The 2005 elections and recent unrest

The EPRDF/TPLF won 96.6 percent of the regional assembly seats in the 1992 election. The following national and regional elections in 1995 and 2000 were boycotted by many opposition parties due to harassment and restriction of political activities, leading to a landslide for the EPRDF/TPLF in both elections. The 2005 parliamentary elections, however, marked a significant change in Ethiopian political history. For the first time ever, public debate between the ruling coalition and the opposition parties was broadcasted on radio and television, and widespread campaigning in the countryside was allowed without too much harassment or sabotage from government supporters. This apparent democratization of elections led to what Abbink has termed “an atmosphere of hope and dynamism” (2006: 176). The two main contenders to the EPRDF/TPLF were the Coalition of Unity and Democracy (CUD or *Qinijit* in Amharic) – a coalition of four parties with large urban and business-class constituencies characterized by its non-ethnic profile – and the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF or *Hibrät* in Amharic) – a coalition comprised of mainly ethnic-based opposition groups that had emerged in the south and west after 1991 (Abbink 2006: 181; Aalen & Tronvoll 2009: 194). Both coalitions received financial and political support from numerous diaspora opposition groups, who viewed the unprecedented opening-up of politics as a unique opportunity to rid itself of the autocratic and *ethnized* policies implemented by the EPRDF/TPLF. The election results, however, ultimately turned out in favour of the ruling coalition. The EPRDF/TPLF won 371 seats (67.8 percent of the vote), while the CUD won 109, and the UEDF won 52.

Although the preface to the election showed promising signs, the post-election period ended up destroying all illusions that Ethiopia was ‘opening up’. As the votes were counted from 15 May, both the EPRDF/TPLF and the opposition parties made statements claiming victory. To calm the situation, the ruling party issued a ban on public demonstrations, and a state media campaign accusing the opposition of disloyalty was initiated (Abbink 2006: 185). The demonstration ban eventually resulted in protests among students, high-school children and street youth in Addis Ababa, which led to the killing of 46 protesters, and the imprisonment of more than 350 people

in June 2005 (ibid.) When the official election results were announced on 5 September, the opposition parties immediately accused the ruling party of voter fraud and repression. Facing pressure from the diaspora, the CUD decided not to take its seats in parliament⁹ during the opening in October, leaving the party “an easy prey for further state offensives” (Aalen & Tronvoll 2009: 196). Internal disagreements regarding the CUD’s decision to boycott parliament led to divisions in the coalition, which would later result in the disintegration of the party. Several members of the CUD Central Committee were also arrested on 1 November 2005, accused of starting and encouraging protests throughout the country. The November protests in Addis Ababa led to the arrest of tens of thousands of youngsters, and the death of 193 civilians and nine politicians (*The Reporter* cited in Aalen & Tronvoll 2009: 197). After the pardon of the CUD leadership in 2007, most of them left the country and continued political activities against the ruling party abroad. The support for CUD was broad in Norway, and led to an intensification of mobilising activities, which will be thoroughly accounted for in the analysis section of the thesis. The UEDF were supported financially and politically by, among others, the EPRP and other diaspora organisations, which pressurized the UEDF to reject the result and decline to take their seats in parliament. This external demand eventually led to conflict between the politicians who wanted to take their seats, including Beyene Petros and Merera Gudina¹⁰, and diaspora organizations promoting boycott.

Parliamentary elections in 2010 and 2015 largely followed the recipe of pre-2005 elections: complete dominance by the ruling coalition, government-led efforts to intimidate and restrict opposition parties, and the absence of free and open public debate. The last couple of years have seen the rise of popular dissent in the form of widespread protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions, which ultimately led to the declaration of a State of Emergency (SoE) in early October 2016. Protests started in Oromia in mid-November 2015 as a result of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which aimed to extend the administrative scope of the Addis Ababa city administration into adjacent areas of Oromia (Lefort 2016). The fear among Oromos was that

⁹ The UEDF on the other hand decided to join parliament despite loud protests from their diaspora backers.

¹⁰ Beyene Petros – a professor of biology at Addis Ababa University – is currently the chairman of the largest opposition coalition in Ethiopia, Medrek. In the 2005 election, Petros held the position of vice-chairman in the UEDF. Merera Gudina – a professor of Political Science at Addis Ababa University – is the chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC). In the 2005 election, Gudina held the position of chairman in the UEDF. In December 2016, Gudina was detained by Ethiopian police accused of supporting terrorism. Prior to the arrest, Gudina had attended a meeting in the European Parliament in Brussels where he had been invited to discuss the political situation in Ethiopia with, among others, Berhanu Nega (former deputy chairman of the CUD and current leader of Patriotic Ginbot 7). When this thesis was submitted, Gudina was still in jail, awaiting a final verdict.

the plan would result in the exploitation of farmland for investment purposes, and thereby lead to the expulsion and resettlement of thousands of Oromos. Faced with growing unrest and intense opposition to the Master Plan, the ruling coalition eventually decided to shelve the project to accommodate the public's dissatisfaction. But, as argued by René Lefort, "the Master Plan was simply the straw that broke the camel's back; the culmination of a much wider and more long-standing conflict" (2016). The protests, which later spread to the Amhara region, epitomised a people who felt marginalized at the hands of a ruling coalition dominated by one minority ethnic group represented by the TPLF. Further causes for the protests were the broken promises of decentralization and self-determination for the nationalities, which have left the ethnic federalist system without much credibility, and the complete lack of democratic practice, all the way down to the *kebele*¹¹ level, which has exposed the regime's authoritarian tendencies. In addition, the rapid growth and development hailed by Ethiopian authorities is not trickling down to people in rural areas, who only see the developmentalist agenda as a pretext for land grabbing and damaging foreign investment. Furthermore, protests have been met with harsh measures, and 669 people have died since November 2015 according to the government affiliated Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), and tens of thousands have been arrested, including leading figures from opposition parties and journalists. In a recent interview with the BBC, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn refuted that unlawful arrests had been carried out, justifying the imprisonment of opposition figures on the basis that the prisoners had been communicating with external sources that aimed to destabilise Ethiopia: "The Ethiopian government has not detained anyone because of their political view. The detentions have been there because these guys are directly communicating with armed struggling groups in Eritrea to destabilise the country" (BBC, 18 April 2017). Among the groups that are referred to are the OLF, and the Patriotic Ginbot Sabat (PG7), led by former CUD-profile and mayor in Addis Ababa, Berhanu Nega. Both groups have broad support bases in the diaspora, and have been accused by the government of encouraging and orchestrating violent protests over the past years. In 2011, both movements were designated terrorist groups by the Ethiopian government.

¹¹ Kebele is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia – similar to a neighborhood. A kebele is part of a *woreda* (district).

2.4 Ye mengist

An important trait of the EPRDF is its efficient ability to restrict the space of civil society and political opposition by being omnipresent (Desplat & Østebø 2013: 241). The EPRDF's holistic approach to governmental authority, and the "high social value accorded in the highlands to order and stability premised on hierarchies of authority" has led to the blurring of distinctions between party, regime, state and government (Vaughan in Abbink & Hagmann 2012: 623). This blurring is further enhanced by the EPRDF's adoption of the term *ye mengist* to describe their rule. In Amharic, this translates to both 'ruler', 'government' and 'state' – a legacy from the imperial era when the emperor *was* the state and could not be held accountable by anyone (Aalen 2011: 47). The misperception between what constitutes the state and what constitutes the government is an efficient mechanism of exercising control and power. Aalen argues that this is particularly seen

at election time, when voters understand that if they do not vote for the ruling party, they could lose the public benefits and services to which they are entitled. Party agents, through their propaganda and actions, inform voters that the EPRDF and the state are one and the same and that failure to support the party/state will lead to exclusion from essential state benefits (ibid.).

Tronvoll and Aalen argue that while the 2005 election was probably rigged to some extent, the major reason for the election victory was the EPRDF's ability to portray itself as the mighty ruler (*mengist*) and pressurize rural voters through a network of control which extends to local administrative structures (2009: 197). In this system of widespread monitoring, the *kebeles* have been seen as an instrument to control voters and punish opposition supporters (ibid.). In the years after the 2005 election, the EPRDF has strengthened its permeating power by enacting several laws aimed at quelling opposition and civil society. In 2009, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation was introduced with a rather broad definition of 'terrorist acts'¹², giving the state greater powers to prosecute citizens that may disturb order. Since the enactment of the law,

¹² The Proclamation defines terrorist acts as 'whosoever or a group intending to advance a political, religious or ideological cause by coercing the government, intimidating the public or section of the public, or destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional or, economic or social institutions of the country: 1) causes a person's death or serious bodily injury; 2) creates serious risk to the safety or health of the public or section of the public; 3) commits kidnapping or hostage taking; 4) causes serious damage property; 5) causes damage to natural resource, environment, historical or cultural heritages; 6) endangers, seizes or puts under control, causes serious interference or disruption of any public service; or 7) threatens to commit any of the acts stipulated under sub-articles (1) to (6) of this Article; is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 15 years to life or with death. Furthermore, the proclamation states that 'whosoever plans, prepares, conspires, incites or attempts to commit any of the terrorist acts stipulated under sub-articles (1) to (6) of Article 3 of this Proclamation is punishable in accordance with the penalty provided for the same Article' (Proclamation No. 652/2009, Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, p. 4829-4930).

thousands of people have faced trial and imprisonment for terrorist-related activities, including several high-profile opposition leaders such as Merera Gudina, Bekele Gerba, and Andargachew Tsiege. Furthermore, “the Anti-Terrorism law has been used to override existing norms regulating the media in Ethiopia and to silence, attack, or threaten critical journalists inside and outside the country” (Gagliardone 2014: 294). Another law seriously undermining the role of civil society is the Charities and Societies Proclamation from 2008 which allows the government appointed Charities and Societies Agency to “interfere in the internal affairs of organisations”, and deny organisations their licenses if the agency so wishes (Aalen & Tronvoll 2009: 202). The law also restricts organisations’ access to funds abroad, and prohibits organisations with more than 10 per cent funding from outside Ethiopia to engage in “fundamental civil society issues such as human rights, conflict resolution and reconciliation, citizenship and community development, and justice and law enforcement services” (ibid.). This has severely limited the diaspora’s and other external actors’ ability to support civil society organisations operating in Ethiopia, and curtailed the role of civil society organisations as watch dogs.

The aim of this chapter has been to provide historical context to the thesis topic by discussing important events and periods in Ethiopian history. I have focused on the unique characteristics of the Ethiopian state and the actions of recent regimes to shed light on the restricted political space that continues to dominate Ethiopian politics. By chronologically recounting parts of Ethiopian political history, I have been able to examine the origins of important opposition groups, including the EPRP, the OLF and the CUD, and account for the 2005 election and the recent unrest, which have been important catalysts for increased diaspora activity, and the rise of PG7. Some of the events explained in this section have been instrumental in building a transnational Ethiopian diaspora network, and will thus be revisited in the analysis chapter. While the focus of this section has primarily been on opposition groups that have a large following in Norway, it is still important not to forget that Ethiopian politics comprises hundreds of movements, parties and organizations that exercise influence outside or inside Ethiopia. This thesis, however, is delimited to the analysis of opposition groups that are relevant to the Norwegian context. Important details about the establishment and developments of diaspora organizations in Norway will be described in the analysis chapter.

3 Theoretical framework

The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis. To conceptualize the thesis topic, I will rely on an extensive body of literature on diaspora politics, transnationalism and social movement theory. These academic fields contain a broad range of relevant concepts and theories which can provide us with several entry points to the conceptualization of diaspora mobilization. Subsequently, in explaining the rise of a well-organized, and occasionally highly motivated and mobilised Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway, we can draw on several concepts that seek to explain how and why diasporas become mobilized. In the first section of the chapter I will provide an explanation of the term ‘diaspora’ by outlining some key criteria that often constitute the diaspora concept. This includes a closer look at some of the most prominent discussions within the academic field regarding the meaning of the concept, or lack thereof. In the second section I intend to emphasize the relevance of transnationalism in diaspora politics by situating the diaspora within a transnational framework. In the last section I attempt to argue for the relevance of social movement theory as an entry point to understand the mechanisms driving mobilization. Scholarly efforts to explain diaspora mobilization by way of concepts such as strategic framing, political opportunities, and transnational brokerage will be central in developing my analytical framework.

3.1 The diaspora concept

The increasing flow of migration and trans-border movement world-wide, as well as growing academic interest for transnational networks, has led to a broad demand for research on the influence of diasporas. Consequently, diaspora politics has been the focus of attention of many researchers in the last decades, and numerous influential case studies have been carried out – many of which focus specifically on the mobilising effects of diasporas and immigrants (e.g. King & Melvin. 1999; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Wayland 2004; Fair 2005; Lyons 2007). As argued by Adamson and Demetriou, “the organizational and spatial logic of the diaspora as social form appears to be gaining in popularity as a model for political mobilisation” (2007: 497). The proliferation of the diaspora concept in academia has led many scholars to attempt to formulate distinctive interpretations of what a diaspora is and how the concept is best understood. For a long time, the term diaspora was used to describe the dispersion of certain exclusive groups like the Jewish, the Armenian and the Greek diaspora (e.g. Safran 1991; Tölölyan 1996, 2012; Sheffer 2003). Today, however, it appears that the diaspora has come to mean “any group of migrants and their descendants who maintain a link

with their place of origin” (Bakewell 2008; 5). The stretching of the concept to accommodate an increasingly more diverse immigrant population prompted Roger Brubaker to argue that the term was losing “its discriminate power – its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions” (2005: 3). While a broader understanding of the term diaspora has made it more accessible for research purposes, it has all the while made it more difficult to find a proper definition that safeguards the concept. A rather precise definition is provided by Shain and Barth:

We define *diaspora* as a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland – whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control. Diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others – inside or outside their homeland – as part of the homeland’s national community, and as such are often called upon to participate, or are entangled, in homeland-related affairs (2003: 450).

Shain and Barth’s definition points to three important elements which are often underlined as trademarks of a diaspora, understood by Brubaker (2005: 5) as the following components: dispersion in space; orientation to a ‘homeland’; and boundary maintenance. The dispersion in space can be understood both as a physical dispersion, in which a people or their ancestors have been dispersed from an original ‘center’ to several foreign regions (Safran 1991: 83), or as Sheffer argues as a *political-ideological dispersion*, in which dispersals are not only created “as a result of migration of individuals and groups, but also due to ‘the ‘travel’ or the spread of ideas and dogmas” (2003: 67). The second component is orientation to a ‘homeland’, which is an entrenched part of the diaspora psyche and can be conceptualized in various ways. Safran (1991) highlights the importance of homeland-relations by providing four criteria that is constitutive of a diaspora. The first is the shared collective memory about their homeland; the second is the inherent conviction that their homeland “is their true, ideal home” to which their descendants will return; the third is the belief that they have a collective commitment “to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity”; and the fourth and final is their ability to relate to that homeland in a way that defines “their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity” (Safran 1991: 83-84). Here, however, it is important to keep in mind that collective identities also ‘encompass the civic and cultural values of the host society’ (Brinkerhoff 2009: 5), and are therefore not exclusively formed around the homeland. Finally, boundary maintenance can be understood as the natural space that tend to develop between a diaspora and the host society, which furthermore gives life to the diaspora as a distinctive community (Brubaker 2005: 6). These three core concepts – the dispersion in

space; orientation to a ‘homeland’; and boundary maintenance – are important features of what constitutes a diaspora, and must therefore be viewed as intrinsic to our understanding of diaspora mobilization.

Efforts to refine and dispute notions about the diaspora concept have been made by scholars over the past decades. An important discussion revolves around the formation of diasporas with some scholars arguing for the adoption of a constructivist approach to challenge essentialist interpretations. Lyons and Mandaville argue that diasporas are not “given, pre-existing social actors”, but rather generated by politics and often include “only those who are mobilized to engage in homeland political processes” (2010: 126). This constructivist view juxtaposes the essentialist idea that diasporas are “pre-political, natural entities” (Adamson 2008: 4). In contrast to the essentialist approach, constructivists tend to “view diasporas as being socially constructed – through discourse, elite manipulation, or processes of political mobilization” (Adamson 2008: 5). The essentialist assumption that diasporas consist of predisposed and coherent communities has been criticised by Nauja Kleist, who rather argues that the diaspora is a “concept of a political nature that might be at once *claimed by* and *attributed to* different groups and subjects” (2008a: 307). This interpretation of the diaspora concept is an important contribution because it challenges the homogenization of diasporas, or as Floya Anthias has pointed out, “the assumption [...] that there is a natural and unproblematic ‘organic’ community of people without division or difference, dedicated to the same political project(s)” (1998: 4). Such assumptions, Cindy Horst argues, is “particularly problematic in situations of violent internal conflict, especially when different [diaspora] groups are contesting what constitutes the nation and the nation-state” (2013: 231). The Ethiopian diaspora for example represents a wide variety of political expressions and demands distinguished by ethnic and nationalist grievances, and must not be conflated to represent a unitary actor. Awareness regarding essentialized constructions that elevate the importance of collective identities and shared imaginations of community is therefore necessary since these components constitute “but one element of definition among others” (Sökefeld 2006: 267). This, however, is not to say that we must avoid applying essentialized constructions, which according to Sökefeld are generally and almost necessarily adopted by most scholars studying diasporas – but rather attempt to not take such constructions at face value (2006: 266).

3.1.1 Conflict-generated diasporas

Sheffer points to two main reasons for the organization of diasporas: 1) to ensure and promote the well-being and continuity of their communities in their host countries; 2) to increase their ability to support their beleaguered homelands and other diaspora communities of the same national origin (2003: 26). A common trait among some diasporas is the inclusion of members who have been forced to leave their nation of origin against their will, often due to political persecution, insecurity, human rights abuses and the likes. Given such conditions in the homeland, some “diasporas often become critical of the political systems that prevail in their homelands and especially of the policies that the government pursues” (Sheffer 2003: 215). In this regard, one can talk about ‘conflict-generated diasporas’, which according to Terrence Lyons, are “groups produced by a specific set of traumatic memories” that serves to enhance their “symbolic attachment to the homeland” (2007: 529). It is argued that “conflict-generated diasporas tend to be less willing to compromise and therefore reinforce and exacerbate the protractedness of homeland conflicts” (ibid.). In addition to the Ethiopian opposition diaspora, other well-known conflict-generated diasporas may include the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora (see for example Wayland 2004 or Fair 2005), the Kurdish diaspora (see for example Østergaard-Nielsen 2001), and the Zimbabwean diaspora (see for example McGregor & Pasura 2010). The hostility that tend to characterize the relationship between these diasporas and their respective homeland authorities often stems from deep-seated grievances which are effectively used to mobilize supporters. As argued by Lyons and Mandaville, the central importance of conflict “shapes identities among certain conflict-generated diasporas in their new host country and serves as a focal point for community mobilisation and political action” (2010: 532). Furthermore, conflict-generated diasporas often consist of ethnic groups that claim a homeland that does not necessarily correspond to a country. Horst argues that “these diaspora groups illustrate how identifying a diaspora can be a very politicized exercise, as their claims to diaspora status are closely linked to their claims for an independent homeland” (2013: 236). Well-known examples of such diasporas are The Tamil and the Kurdish diasporas. Of particular interest in this thesis is the Oromo diaspora, which some would say fit the same description.

3.2 Mobilizing in transnational spaces

Khachig Tölölyan has described diasporas as “exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (1996: 4). Here, the term transnational refers to “human activities and social institutions that extend across national borders” (Bauböck 2003: 701). Shain and Barth argue

that “diasporas are among the most prominent actors that link international and domestic spheres of politics” (2003: 451). This statement is supported by the fact that diaspora communities tend to operate across borders and express their political aspirations through trans-border networks, which is why many scholars have chosen to conceptualize diaspora politics by way of a transnational framework (e.g. Wayland 2004; Sökefeld 2006; Van Hear 2006; Adamson 2008). The advantage of analysing diasporas through a transnational lens is that it allows scholars to view diasporas “as social and political constructions that are proliferating in tandem with processes of globalization” (Adamson 2008: 6). Particularly interesting is the broad tendency to view the diaspora as an expression of a transnational ‘imagined community’ that stretches across borders, while maintaining strong ties to the homeland. The term ‘imagined community’ derives from Benedict Anderson’s ideas about the nation as an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1983: 49). Furthermore, Anderson argued that the nation is imagined because the members will never know most of their fellow-members, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (ibid.). The construction of an imagined community that transcends borders can therefore be quite powerful because it has the potential to connect geographically dispersed communities and encourage members to engage in a common political agenda to influence outcomes (Lyons & Mandaville 2010: 132). Fiona Adamson has argued that “diasporas are best viewed as the products or outcomes of transnational mobilization activities by political entrepreneurs engaged in strategic social identity construction” (2008: 2). Furthermore, Betts & Jones have argued that scholars of diaspora politics should abandon the assumption that diasporas are entities or populations with more-or-less fixed borders, and rather view the diaspora as a transnational “mode of organisation” (2012: 4). Consequently, they suggest that we move away from

looking simply at the way in which one people in one state contests a particular homeland, towards taking a global systemic approach which captures interconnections across organisations and identity categories, and the nature and consequences of those relationships (2012: 20).

Efforts to understand the diaspora as a ‘mode of organisation’ can be traced to the ideas of Roger Brubaker, who has urged scholars to conceptualize the diaspora as a set of “stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on” (2005: 13). With this approach, Brubaker argues, it is possible to “study empirically the degree and form of support for a diasporic project among members of its putative constituency, just as we can do when studying a nationalist project” (ibid.).

Diasporas have been compared to transnational advocacy networks (TANs). Much like TANs, diasporas form political linkages across borders, and engage in political activities to influence policies. Keck and Sikkink understand TANs as “political spaces, in which differently situated actors negotiate – formally and informally – the social, cultural and political meanings of their joint enterprises” (1999: 90). What distinguishes diasporas from TANs or other transnational networks, however, is that the former is often built “upon a pre-existing common ethnonational identity” (Wayland 2004: 411). Another major distinction which sets diasporas apart from TANs is highlighted by Lyons and Mandaville, who argue that diasporas are often constricted to particularistic political projects. An important observation has been made by the same authors, who claim that a new form of transnational politics has emerged, which focuses on local issues “even while political processes are increasingly globalized” (2010: 125). These include particularistic agendas, often sponsored by diaspora groups, that are more “narrow, partisan, and sometimes chauvinistic” in their approaches (ibid.). The specificity of such agendas represents a clear contrast to the “cosmopolitan visions of universal rights” (Lyons & Mandaville 2010: 128), often advocated by TANs. Despite being transnational, diasporas are still circumscribed to certain national, ethnic or religious identity markers. The peculiarity of diasporas is echoed by Adamson, who claims that “diasporas seek particularism rather than universalism – even if their basis may be a universal ideology such as nationalism” (2008: 12). Examples of such particularistic agendas have been illuminated in several research projects, including Quinsaat’s (2015) study on diaspora mobilization among Filipino exiles in the Netherlands, or for example Lampert’s (2009) study on the Nigerian diaspora in London and its contributing potential for development in Nigeria. Case studies like these demonstrate the ability of certain diasporas to mobilise based on narrow political projects, and are thus valuable examples of how diasporas adopt particularistic agendas in their mobilizing efforts. In the following section I turn my attention to processes of mobilization and how social movement theory can provide useful concepts in the analysis of diaspora mobilization.

3.2.1 Social movement theory

The transnationalization of social movements and their ability to challenge powerful stakeholders, has occupied the minds of scholars for quite some time. A common perception is that nation-states, intergovernmental institutions and other influential actors are increasingly confronted with a “transnationalism from below” expressed through “local resistances of the informal economy, ethnic nationalism, and grassroots activism” (Guarnizo & Smith. 1998: 3).

Sometimes these resistances turn into social movements – defined by Charles Tilly as sustained challenges to powerholders in the name of a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction of influence of those powerholders (1993-1994: 257). In addition to being contentious, Sidney Tarrow argues, social movements engage in the construction of organizations and collective identities, mobilization of supporters, and articulation of ideologies (1998: 3). Two important paradigms have dominated social movement theory – the resource mobilization approach (RM approach) and the new social movements approach. The RM approach took actors and constraints as given, and set out to examine the mobilization of resources, the links between social movements and other groups, the dependence on external support, and strategies used by authorities to control the movements (McCarthy & Zald 1977: 1213). The RM approach is closely associated with ‘the political process model’ which aims to explain the origins and powers of social movements by focusing on three basic theoretical components: the concepts of mobilizing structures, political opportunity structures, and cultural framing (Morris 2000: 446). These three concepts are of relevance to the conceptualization of diaspora mobilization, and will thus be further examined in the ensuing sub-section about mechanisms of mobilization. The second paradigm, known as the new social movements approach, placed actors and collective identities back at the center of the stage and “drew attention to the structural determinants of protest and collective action” (Della Porta & Diani 2006: 10). Furthermore, it “captured the innovative characteristics of movements which no longer defined themselves principally in relation to the system of production” (ibid.). In the past decades, a growing number of scholars have called for more synthesis in social movement theory with efforts to bridge different theoretical traditions (Goodwin & Jasper 2004; Della Porta & Diani 2006).

Social movements can take various forms, and grievances may be expressed through a wide variety of activities, ranging from individual action (e.g. the signing of a petition) to mass action (e.g. demonstrations), to transnational campaigns of political contention (e.g. demands from TANs). Viewing social movements as groups or entities has been rejected by Charles Tilly, who opened for the conceptualization of social movements as a “complex form of social interaction” (1993-1994: 5). This line of thinking finds reverberation in Brubaker’s ideas about the diaspora as a practice used to “make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties” (2005:12). In the past decades, social movements have gradually adapted to a more interconnected world in which opportunity structures have expanded, both physically, technologically and psychologically. In this new era of transnational

activity, Della Porta and Tarrow have outlined four important processes of transnationalization among social movements: 1) diffusion of movement ideas, practices and frames; 2) domestication or the playing out on domestic territory of conflicts that have their origin externally; 3) externalization in the form of challenging supranational institutions to intervene in domestic problems or conflicts; and 4) transnational collective action, expressed through coordinated international campaigns against international actors, other states, or international institutions (2005: 2-3). Della Porta and Tarrow's framework provides a useful basis from which strategies and mechanisms of transnational mobilization can be conceptualized – even with regards to diaspora mobilization. Much like social movements, diasporas are also involved in contentious politics and engage in transnational activities to influence outcomes. While not trying to equate or further compare diasporas and social movements – which are different in many ways – I do believe that insights from social movement theory can provide valuable tools when analysing diaspora mobilization. Some scholars engaged in diaspora studies have already advocated for this approach (e.g. Adamson 2008; Baser & Swain 2010), including Sökefeld who points to the many similar processes that underpin the mobilization of social movements and diasporas (2006: 268). In the following sub-section I will use the framework outlined by Della Porta and Tarrow as well as research on diaspora politics, to highlight relevant mechanisms and strategies of diaspora mobilization.

3.2.2 Mechanisms of mobilization

Mobilization of diasporas normally manifest itself by way of various mechanisms, and with differing motives. Diasporas may try to influence the policies of a host society to support or challenge a homeland; impact politics in the homeland by aiding opposition groups or governments; extend remittances in support of political parties, social movements, and civil society organisations; or promote and sponsor violent conflict in the homeland (Vertovec 2005). Causes for mobilization often relates to political developments in the homeland, such as for example international or intrastate conflicts, regime change and nation-building, or environmental disasters (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Given the diversity of diaspora activity, I find it necessary to outline some core concepts derived from Della Porta and Tarrow's framework that can help explain the mechanisms behind diaspora mobilization. The first topic of interest outlined by Della Porta and Tarrow deals with the action of diffusion, which is closely linked with strategic framing. In the words of Benford and Snow, framing refers to

an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment (1992: 137).

The study of diaspora mobilization requires us to recognize the influence of collective framing processes as a means to construct particular identities. Here, framing processes can be understood as “the conscious attempts by individuals to fashion shared worldviews and sets of common grievances that justify collective action” (Wayland 2004: 415). Diasporas, much like social movements, use framing as a mechanism to single out existing social conditions and define them as “unjust, intolerable and deserving of corrective action” (Snow & Benford 1992: 137). These frames may appeal to feelings of national belonging and kinship responsibility, or emphasize obligation, for example related to the provision of remittances (ibid.). In some cases, the sheer feeling of belonging to an ethnic group can facilitate fertile framing grounds for diaspora mobilization. While it is important to stress the fact that diasporas are composed of so much more than a shared sense of ethnic affiliation, it is nonetheless necessary to explore the potential explosive power of ethnically motivated diaspora mobilization. As argued by Tölölyan, “the lines separating ethnic groups from diasporas are not clear-cut, and they shift in response to a complex dynamic” (1996: 17). The reason for this complexity is the diverse manifestations of opinions, worldviews and identity formations that tend to emerge within a diaspora. Consequently, communities and individuals that belong to the same diaspora might behave as ethnics in some cases, and diasporans in others, demonstrating that “mobility is an internal as well as an external characteristic of the contemporary ethnodiaspora” (Tölölyan 1996: 18). The utilisation of ethnic grievances to mobilise diasporas becomes particularly strong when the grievances are framed as a reaction to ethnically-motivated persecution (Wayland 2004: 416). Furthermore, when there is conflict or instability in the homeland, the likelihood of what Adamson has termed *ethnic and sectarian outbidding* among diasporas, becomes greater. This occurs when diaspora organizations “attempt to outbid each other in their articulation of a national or ethnic identity as a means of increasing their power and standing in the diaspora” (2013: 71).

Examples of powerful framing efforts can be found in the Kurdish diaspora, who has successfully adopted the frame of being a people robbed of a homeland (Khayati 2008), or the Ethiopian opposition diasporas' description of itself as an oppressed group struggling for democratic reforms in an authoritarian homeland. An example of how strategic framing can

advance the influence of diasporas is given by Shain and Barth, who highlight the Armenian case as particularly interesting:

Given their international location, diasporas are aptly suited to manipulate international images and thus to trigger a “national identity,” as the Armenian diaspora has done with their image as genocide victims. Once triggered, this dynamic can be used to influence homeland foreign policy decision making. This is done by engaging in domestic politics of the homeland, something that diasporas can do because, while being outside the state, they are still perceived as inside the people (Shain and Barth 2003: 473).

The yield of collective framing processes depends much on the presence of influential and powerful political entrepreneurs, labelled ‘brokers’ by Della Porta and Tarrow (2005: 3), who are able to articulate frames that resonate with the perceptions, values, or interests of diaspora members (Adamson in Checkel 2013: 70). Portes et al. distinguish between two types of transnational entrepreneurs – actors that have economic incentives for their trans-border mobilization, connecting suppliers, capital and markets, and actors that have political incentives, including party members, government functionaries or community leaders whose goals are “political power and influence in the sending or receiving countries” (1999: 221). In cases where conflict exists between the diaspora and homeland authorities, Adamson argues that entrepreneurs have the ability to connect networks, both symbolically and materially, to the conflict (2013: 69). Social networks, which exist separately in different locations, but share common traits, can thus be transformed to transnational identity communities through political entrepreneur(s) who deploy identity categories, such as nationalism for example (Adamson in Checkel 2013). Today, the proliferation of new and improved means of communication has made it easier for entrepreneurs or brokers to transfer frames from one country to another. In her research on digital diasporas, Jennifer Brinkerhoff has emphasized the diaspora’s ability to use the internet to foster shared identities, frame issues and promote specific norms or rules of engagement (2006: 26). Consequently, the internet provides entrepreneurs with a transnational digital platform “for the exchange of ideas, debate, and the mobilization of opinion, potentially culminating in strong social bonds and relationships” (Rheingold in Brinkerhoff 2009: 11).

The second and third processes of transnationalization outlined by Della Porta and Tarrow relate to the domestication and externalization of conflict. For the sake of this thesis I will only engage with concepts associated with the domestication of conflict – also understood as “the playing out on domestic territory of conflicts that have their origin externally” (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005: 4). While social movement theory mostly focuses on the domestication of

conflicts that are grounded in grievances towards international institutions (see for example Imig and Tarrow's study on protests against the EU, 2001), scholars of diaspora studies have been more interested in diasporas' grievances toward homeland authorities. Mechanisms adopted by diasporas to domesticate conflicts and grievances – meaning the ways in which diasporas mobilize to draw attention to a homeland conflict in the hostland – may come in the form of protests and demonstrations, or through more peaceful practices, like lobbying and persuasion (Adamson 2013: 72). Efforts by diasporas to lobby hostland authorities and influence their politics with regards to homeland conflict, have been studied by some scholars (e.g. Ambrosio 2002; Mearsheimer & Walt 2007). Ambrosio has argued that ethnic groups adopt three main strategies when trying to influence policy: 1) framing; 2) information and policy analysis; and 3) policy oversight (2002). Whether the diaspora is successful or not in its lobbying efforts depend on the group's organizational strength (Mearsheimer & Walt 2007), understood as all the components that determines the efficiency of an interest group, such as internal unity, the presence of a professional lobby group, financial resources, access to politics and the salience of the message (Haney & Vanderbush 1999). Their success also depends on political opportunities, defined in social movement theory as those “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 1994: 85). In an effort to explain why and how conflict-generated diasporas sometimes adopt moderate claims regarding homeland conflict, Koinova has argued that “the explanation lies in their instrumentalist pursuit of sovereignty, linked discursively to a global political opportunity structure of liberalism” (2011: 460). In Koinova's case, the Albanian and the Lebanese political communities constitute the diasporas, while the US (i.e. the hostland) provides the global opportunity structure of liberalism, motivating and facilitating moderate claims. In her study, Koinova shows that when the diasporas pursued moderation over more radical endeavours, the receptiveness of the hostland (i.e. the US) took on a more cooperative and open-minded approach (ibid.). This may indicate that the presence of a political opportunity structure which endorses liberal values such as democracy and rule of law can contribute to moderate ways of diaspora mobilization. Political opportunities can therefore be seen as a set of criteria established by hostland authorities which determines the hostlands' acceptance of diasporic demands.

Della Porta and Tarrow's fourth and final process of transnationalization relates to transnational collective action, or the “coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions” (2005: 7). While

this thesis only looks at the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway, it is still important to recognize the fact that diasporas engage in transnational engagement and are linked to co-nationalists in other host countries. Cindy Horst argues that transnational engagements of diasporas “should be recognized as a form of civic participation not just in the country of origin, but also in the country of settlement” (2013: 240). Horst draws on the theoretical framework of Dita Vogel and Anna Triandafyllidou, which relate civic participation to people giving

a voice to societal concerns, e.g. by engaging in political parties, local committees, parent associations or migrant lobby organizations; and/or organizing solidarity and self-help, e.g. by taking leadership functions in religious associations, ethnic associations or informal self-help networks (Vogel & Triandafyllidou in Horst 2013: 240).

The importance of civic participation in the US-based Ethiopian diaspora has been emphasized by Terrence Lyons, who has observed that the diaspora engages in cultural, professional, economic and political initiatives through “a wide range of organisations and newspapers, and dozens of web sites, e-mail lists and influential blogs” (2007: 536). Some diasporans, including Ethiopians abroad, engage in transnational political parties that directly challenge homeland authorities. Lyons argues that political parties that are engaged in the homeland’s conflict “depend on diaspora supporters for resources and access to international media, international organisations, and powerful host governments” (2007: 545). Consequently, the survival of these political parties, associations, organisations and other types of networks is due to the resource mobilization set in motion by civic participation. Through these entities, diasporans engage in transnational political practices that can roughly be divided into direct and indirect participation, where the former refers to the direct participation in the politics of their countries of origin, while the latter refers to the activities that indirectly target those countries through actors like the host society or international organizations (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Viewing diasporas’ transnational engagement as a form of civic participation opens for a broader and more holistic conceptualization of diaspora mobilization, and recognizes the various forms and expressions through which diaspora activity may materialize. In the words of Cindy Horst:

Civic participation is always engaged and starts from a commitment, a dedication, a drive. It is always positioned, and it is inherently political – indeed, it is expected to be so. Accordingly, understanding a diaspora’s engagement with its country of origin as a form of civic participation in the country of settlement (as well as in the country of origin) does much greater justice to the political reality of diasporas...(2013: 241).

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical framework of my thesis. The main aims have been to examine the different conceptualizations of the diaspora concept, and develop an analytical

framework suited to guide my analysis. I have drawn on well-established concepts and ideas in diaspora studies to argue for a holistic understanding of the diaspora concept. Scholarly discussions regarding the meaning of the term 'diaspora' reveals that the field is characterized by a wide range of opinions concerning criteria that constitute the diaspora. It is thus important to view the diaspora as a rich and diverse concept comprised of a plethora of stances, projects, grievances and political networks, and not as a unitary actor. I have further emphasized the importance of transnational activity, and drawn on insights from literature on transnationalism which can contribute to a better understanding of diaspora mobilization. Similarities between social movements and diasporas have prompted me to use concepts and frameworks from social movement theory as a basis for examining mechanisms of mobilization. Consequently, the analysis of my findings will primarily be guided by concepts like strategic framing, political opportunities, transnational entrepreneurship, lobbying and civic participation.

4 Research methodology

The following chapter accounts for the chosen methods in my research, and discuss challenges and ethical dilemmas. The first section deals with the case study as a research approach by emphasizing the advantages and downsides of the method. In the second section I turn my attention to the concept of internal validity and the application of process-tracing as a method for ensuring that causal inferences are accurate. In the third and final section I discuss interviewing as a method, and point to challenges related to representability and access to information.

4.1 The case study approach

The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway, and explain some of the causes and methods of mobilization in the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The particular case of the Norwegian-Ethiopian diaspora will serve as an example of how diaspora mobilization may materialize when there is conflict between the diaspora and homeland authorities. Subsequently, the purpose of the thesis is not only to carry out an intensive examination of a single case, but to also analyse the case as an example of a broader category of which it is a member (Bryman 2012: 70). In this case, the broader category would comprise ‘conflict-generated diasporas’ in liberal democracies, while a narrower categorization would only include ‘Ethiopian opposition diasporas’ in liberal democracies. Needless to say, findings from one single-case study will hardly produce or justify conclusions on overarching tendencies in diaspora mobilization. What a case study of this calibre *can* do, however, is point to causal links that have been understudied, neglected or simply not detected before, and thereby provide additional insight and suggestions for further research. As argued by Yin, the role of the case study researcher is “to expand and generalize theories (analytical generalization), and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (1994: 10).

One significant advantage of conducting a case study is that it opens up for an in-depth investigation of “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin 1994: 13). In the case of diaspora mobilization, which is a complex and ever-evolving process led by diasporas in different locations, the suitability of applying a case-based research design seems evident. Furthermore, the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway has not been exposed to academic scrutiny prior to this thesis, which makes it an appropriate focus for a case study. As argued by Gerring, the case study is useful when “a subject is being encountered for the first

time or is being considered in a fundamentally new way” (2007: 40). The status of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway as unexplored territory prompts the need for a deeper understanding of its mobilizing power and role in Norwegian society. Faced with the choice of providing *depth* or *breadth*, this thesis will primarily focus on the former by aiming to provide more knowledge about less, rather than less knowledge about more (Gerring 2007: 49).

The central theme of this thesis is related to the causal link between people’s motivations and the mobilization of people. More specifically, the question of what has *motivated* or *caused* the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway to become mobilized. A case study approach can help locate the causal mechanisms at work in a causal relationship. Gerring argues that a well-constructed case study allows a researcher “to peer into the box of causality to locate the intermediate factors lying between some structural cause and its purported effect” (2007: 45). In my efforts to uncover the mechanisms by which the Ethiopian opposition diaspora has become mobilized, the case study approach has allowed me to ‘see’ the interactions between X (causes) and Y (outcomes) (ibid.). In this thesis, that interaction may reflect the mechanisms that sustain and strengthen the causal relationship between the diaspora’s perceptions of the homeland and the mobilization of the diaspora. These mechanisms function as tools that are utilized to transform or channel these perceptions and motivations into diaspora mobilization, whether those tools come in the form of political entrepreneurship, online communication platforms or public demonstrations. Understanding the importance of these causal mechanisms requires a proximity to contexts or informants that can provide valuable inside information, which may be hard to detect not using the case study approach. As argued by Gerring, “tracing causal mechanisms is about cultivating sensitivity to a local context” (2007: 48).

Like with all methods, the case study approach also has its limitations. Yin outlines four criticisms that have characterized the scepticism towards case studies: 1) the lack of rigor of case study research; 2) the difficulty of providing a basis for scientific generalization; 3) the exaggerated longevity of the research; and 4) the objection against the case study as a method for detecting causal relationships (2009: 16). The last objection is the most relevant to this thesis as it addresses the ability to identify causalities in case study research. I have already argued that the case study is a preferable method if the aim of the research is to analyse causal mechanisms. The downside of case study research, however, is its limited ability to identify *causal effects*, meaning the expected effect on Y of a given change in X across a population of cases. As argued by Gerring, “it is difficult to arrive at a reliable estimate of causal effects

across a population of cases by looking at only a single case or a small number of cases” (2007: 44). Causal effects can of course be detected and examined in the Norwegian context, meaning that I am able to determine how the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway has been and still is dependent on certain variables. However, those causal effects cannot be applied uncritically to explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian diaspora in countries outside of Norway, where independent variables like asylum politics, homeland-hostland relations and organizational strength may be completely different. On an additional note, tracing the effects of diaspora mobilization to Ethiopia is also difficult due to lack of access to informants in Ethiopia and the fact that diaspora organisations are very careful not to reveal any information about their influence on the ground.

4.2 Internal validity

One of the main considerations when conducting research and choosing a research design is the degree of validity that can be obtained. As argued in the previous section, it is difficult to ensure that a case study research is representative of a broader category that encapsulates a bigger population; what is commonly referred to as external validity. A case study is better suited to provide internal validity, meaning the verification of a causal relationship that pertains to a single case rather than for a larger set of cases (Gerring 2007: 43). This thesis will apply the technique of *process-tracing* (e.g. George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007) to ensure internal validity and enhance the accuracy of causal inferences. The process-tracing method attempts to “identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George and Bennet 2005: 206). The advantage of process-tracing is that it allows the researcher to narrow the list of potential causes by “considering the alternative paths through which the outcome could have occurred” (George and Bennett 2005: 207). With respect to this thesis, which includes a large set of perceptions, and thus varying explanations that may account for diaspora mobilization, process-tracing helps compile the various observations in an ordered fashion. “Rather than multiple instances of $X_1 \rightarrow Y$, one examines a single instance of $X_1 \rightarrow X_2 \rightarrow X_3 \rightarrow X_4 \rightarrow Y$ ” (Gerring 2007: 173). The establishment of a causal chain gives way to a narrative that explains the process, which in turn is based on certain assumptions about the world. Process-tracing is effectively a tool for determining whether the thesis topic is characterized by *equifinality* (George and Bennett 2005: 215) – the principle that an outcome can be reached by

many potential means. In addition to process-tracing, the thesis will draw from available theory to determine whether my outcomes coincide with relevant theory on diaspora mobilization.

Internal validity also depends on the researcher's ability to prevent the occurrence of *confirmation bias*, i.e. "the seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations, or a hypothesis in hand" (Nickerson 1998: 175). Confirmation bias may occur when the study is led by expectations embedded in certain theories, or in the instance when a case study approach is selected to pursue or advocate particular issues (Yin 2009: 72). To avoid such biases, George and Bennett (2007: 24) argue that process-tracing, in combination with *the congruence method*, i.e. assessing a theory's "ability to explain or predict the outcome in a particular case" (George and Bennett 2007: 181), can be applied. Process-tracing allows the researcher to identify additional observations which may not fit with analytical expectations, thus mitigating the possibility of confirmation bias (Bennet & Checkel 2012: 23).

4.3 Interviewing as a method

The outcomes of this thesis are largely based on interviews with representatives from the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The reason for this is that primary data, such as party documents or correspondence between diaspora groups, are difficult to obtain due to the inclusion of sensitive information. Many diaspora organisations conduct most of their work underground, and they go a long way to keep the inner workings of their movements or parties a secret, even from objective scholars. The advantage of using interviews as a method, however, is that it allows the researcher to peek into the organizational dynamics of movements and parties by engaging in discourse with people who have valuable information.

My interviewing approach deviates from the standard practice, in which the interview is rigidly structured with no time for digressions or out-of-topic monologues, nor allowing the interview to become or be perceived as a conversation (Miller & Dingwall 1997: 59). The alternative way of understanding the interview is as a jointly constructed discourse, which "develops through mutual reformulation and specification of questions, by which they take on particular and context-bound shades of meaning" (Mishler 1991: 53). The interviews conducted for this thesis were guided by topics (Appendix 1), but opened up for the possibility to take the interview in different directions than originally planned without losing track of the thesis topic. Paget argues that the distinguishing feature of in-depth interviewing is "that the answers given continually

inform the evolving conversation” (Paget in Mishler 1991: 97). This opens up for replies that are searching, even hesitant, and formulated parallel to the answering; that is “a situation where the respondent too is engaged in a search for understanding” (ibid.). The interviews conducted for the thesis tended to adopt this loose and informal approach. Still, the topic guide was used as a support system in the case of restrained informants or when the interview had to be brought back on track after a digression. Nearly all interviews with Ethiopian informants were initiated with questions concerning their journeys from Ethiopia to Norway, and their settlement in Norway. This opening strategy yielded spontaneous and rich descriptions (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015: 161) where the informants provided detailed accounts of their previous lives in Ethiopia, and why they had to leave, or in some cases, escape the country. By establishing the chronology of the informants’ lives in Ethiopia, which were oftentimes highly political, and thus relevant for their later activities in Norway, the interviews ended up revealing complicated and spectacular life stories. Usually, the life stories were told in the following chronological order: 1) Life in Ethiopia; 2) journey from Ethiopia to Norway (some informants spent time in another foreign country before settling in Norway); 3) becoming a political actor in Norway; 4) and the informant’s role in his or her organization.

4.3.1 Choosing the informants

In total, I have carried out 19 semi-structured interviews with informants, of which 17 of them are Ethiopians. The remaining two are ethnic Norwegians who have followed the Ethiopian diaspora community in Norway closely for the past couple of decades. The composition of the interviewees from Ethiopia are as follows: three EPRP-members/supporters, three ODF-members, one OLF-member, one member of the Elders Council in the Oromo Community (*Det oromiske samband*), three PG7-members/supporters, one member of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), one member of the Tigray Alliance for National Democracy (TAND), one Blue Party-member, and two categorized as ‘neutrals’. Many of the interviewees have leading positions in their respective organisations or parties, and some were handpicked by fellow members as their preferred representatives to participate in the study. Given the overwhelming dominance of men in leading positions in the diaspora, only three women were interviewed. Furthermore, I have had numerous informal conversations with some of the informants in addition to the interviews. Information from these conversations will also be examined in the analysis section of the thesis. Most respondents were identified using snowball sampling, i. e. when the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of informants and

then uses these to establish contact with others (Bryman 2012: 202). I first reached out to a few diaspora organisations whose phone numbers and addresses were available online. Following early conversations with a handful of people I was able to map out the leaders, parties, movements, and civic organisations. These initial conversations helped me pick informants based on purposive sampling, i.e. when those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed (Bryman 2012: 418).

The main aim of the sample was to include leading figures in influential political movements and parties, such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF), Patriotic Ginbot 7 (PG7), and Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). I also wanted to include grassroots activists and some of the people that identify as neutral, in addition to Norwegian experts, who could provide an 'outsider' perspective to the topic. The sample is not diverse in terms of gender and educational level; the majority are men with higher education who came to Norway as political refugees in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The sample is, however, diverse in terms of political affiliation, including representatives from seven different political parties and movements. On the other hand, the main fault of the sample may be the exclusion of pro-government informants living in Norway. The initial plan was to include some of these informants in the sample, and efforts were made to contact a pro-government organization. However, the focus of the main research questions clearly center on the opposition diaspora, and upon second evaluation I decided to concentrate my attention solely on the opposition community to avoid an expansion of my research focus.

4.3.2 Informants' biases

A presentation of Ethiopian politics through the lens of the opposition diaspora will not provide a sober account of the intricate political landscape that constitutes today's Ethiopia. Almost all informants interviewed for this thesis nurture deep-seated hostilities toward the Ethiopian regime and the Western powers that sustain it. Some also express scepticism about other diaspora organizations, which further adds to the polemic environment that tend to characterize the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Western countries (e.g. Lyons 2007). These hostilities have fostered harsh accusations against individuals and institutions that have not been given the chance to respond, nor refute possible exaggerations. Allegations that cannot be verified by more than a couple of sources or with the help of primary sources will not be addressed in the thesis. Another challenge related to the information extracted from the interviews is

determining the reliability of informants' claims about the size and influence of their organizations. Such statements must therefore be checked against available literature about Ethiopian political movements and parties. While these biases must be recognized and accounted for, such statements also constitute an important aspect of the diaspora's perception of itself. As argued by Brinkmann & Kvale, "a recognized bias or subjective perspective may come to highlight specific aspects of the phenomena investigated and bring new dimensions forward, contributing to a multiperspectival construction of knowledge" (2015: 198).

To determine the veracity of undocumented claims made about the diaspora, state institutions, whether in Norway or Ethiopia, and pro-government elements in Norway, I have used triangulation as a method. This has been done by "comparing the perspectives of people from different points of view" (Patton 1999: 1195). For example, claims made by one informant has been cross-checked with other informants, including both those who belong to the same movement or party, and informants who belong to other diaspora organizations or possess comprehensive knowledge about the diaspora community. This also entails the validation of information obtained through interviews "by checking program documents and other written evidence that can corroborate what interview respondents report" (ibid.). This is not to say that the aim is to evoke identical results, but rather to test the reliability of the statement or claim. However, inconsistencies will occur, but as argued by Patterson, inconsistencies should not be viewed as weaknesses, "but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study" (1999: 1193).

4.3.3 Identification and quotation

The sensitivity related to certain aspects of the thesis topic requires a more thorough assessment of ethical questions with regards to identification and quotation. Most informants have agreed to be identified in the thesis, with some encouraging me to use their names. I wish to underline that all informants are well-known activists in the diaspora community with the exception of two people, who shall remain anonymous. The rest of the informants will be named, primarily because openness gives credibility to the thesis and the final outcomes, and the fact that all informants are resourceful individuals who have consented to identification. The decision to identify my informants was reached after an evaluation of how my research could have negative consequences for the informants. As argued by Glesne, "although 'no harm' may be done during the research process, harm may result from making research findings public" (2006:

139). In this case, ‘harm’ may for example imply strong reactions from the Ethiopian regime, harassment from pro-government elements in Norway, or in a worst-case scenario, harassment of the family back home in Ethiopia. These are of course serious consequences, but for some of the informants, the harm has already been done since most of them have been harassed or threatened to various degrees. The fact that the majority of my informants are well-known public figures whose opinions about the Ethiopian regime are expressed online, in newspapers, on public platforms or in mass meetings, is another reason why the disclosure of their identities is justified. To sum it up; they are already known to their adversaries, and aware of potential consequences. On an ending note I should inform that many of the quotations have been translated from Norwegian to English.

4.4 Delimitations

Some delimitations have been necessary to restrict the scope of the thesis and focus attention on the most important periods of diaspora mobilization in Norway. The analysis will primarily concentrate on the period from the late 90s up until today. Prior to this, the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway was marginal and lacked necessary human capacity and network infrastructure to mobilize anywhere close to the numbers accumulated in the past two decades. This assertion is based on interviews with informants – particularly those who came to Norway in the 80s who claim that political diaspora activity was minimal in Norway before the late 90s. The Norwegian registry for enterprises and organisations, *Brønnøysundregistrene*, shows that most Ethiopian support groups and civic organisations were established in the 90s and 2000s¹³. Increased activity among Ethiopian diasporans over the past two decades is also evidenced by higher frequencies of public dissent, demonstrations, fundraisers and petitions. Although still an underreported segment of the Norwegian immigrant community, the Ethiopian diaspora has featured more prominently in Norwegian media in recent years, especially in relation with human rights abuses in Ethiopia and living conditions for Ethiopian refugees in Norway.

The Ethiopian diaspora in Norway is diverse and consists of many actors and organisations with different ideas about the homeland. Some organisations are merely civic – at least on paper – while some are local branches of established political parties, or in the words of informants,

¹³ The support group for EPRP was established in 1994; Tigrayan Community in 1994; the Ethiopian Community in Norway in 1998; the Oromo Community in 2001; DCESON in 2005; the support group for OLF in 2012 (Brønnøysundregistrene).

support groups for political parties. This thesis will primarily focus on organisations with a large following and high influence, which means that smaller entities will be somewhat neglected. These include for example the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Blue Party, TAND, which are known to have supporters in Norway. However, the influence and scope of these organisations are rather limited or almost non-existent in Norway, and therefore not influential enough to be analysed in this thesis.

5 Findings and analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the research questions and analyse the findings. This includes providing an overview of the Ethiopian political landscape in Norway, followed by an account of causes, motivations, methods and messages that have determined and encouraged mobilizing efforts in the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The analysis will be based on answers, explanations and perceptions that are corroborated by several informants with support from the analytical framework developed in chapter 3. The chapter is divided into three main sections that correspond to each research question. The first section seeks to describe the variety of political expressions in the Ethiopian diaspora by mapping the most influential organisations, support groups and political parties in Norway. This section will illustrate the complex web of loyalties and allegiances that constitute the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway. By engaging in various forms of civic participation (Horst 2013), the Ethiopian opposition diaspora has been able to spread their efforts across different organisations and political parties. Theoretical arguments emphasizing the heterogeneity of diasporas, and the rejection of diasporas as unitary actors, will underpin my findings. Subsequently, this section sets out to answer the first research question: What does the political landscape of the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway look like?

The second main section seeks to answer the second research question: What causal factors can help explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway? Answers to this question can be categorized by distinguishing between causes and motivations that are related to long-term grievances, and those that are related to single incidents, both in Norway and in Ethiopia. The first category may comprise deep-seated feelings of negligence and betrayal, such as the Ethiopian regime's marginalization of certain ethnic groups and the lack of political pluralism in the homeland. The second category pertains to particular events that have triggered mobilizing activities, such as the 2005 election or Yara's decision to award the 'African Green Revolution Yara Prize' to Meles Zenawi the same year (Yara.com 2005). In total, both categories comprise a set of causes and motivations that have contributed to the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. By situating the diaspora as a transnational actor with strong allegiances and connections both to the homeland, the hostland, and other similar diasporas abroad, this section seeks to highlight how incidents and processes that happen in both Norway, Ethiopia and other countries with a diaspora population, have caused and enabled a type of mobilization that transcends borders.

The final section will trace the mechanisms used to mobilize the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The analysis will draw on theoretical concepts from social movement theory and diaspora studies with sub-chapters focusing exclusively on specific mechanisms of mobilization such as strategic framing, political opportunities, transnational entrepreneurship, lobbying and civic participation. Here, methods adopted by the diaspora to mobilize its supporters will range from being local, i.e. directed primarily at the Norwegian diaspora community or Norwegian policy makers – to transnational, i.e. aimed at the homeland or networks of diaspora organizations that operate across borders. However, this is not to say that mechanisms must be either local or transnational. After all, efforts to mobilize are often based on an idea of cross-border solidarity, and a wish to impact authorities in the homeland and the hostland, as well as NGOs, multilateral organisations, and other diaspora communities. Subsequently, this section seeks to answer the final research question: Which mechanisms have been used by the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway to mobilize supporters?

5.1 Main parties and organisations in Norway

The political segments of the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway can roughly be divided into three categories: 1) opposition groups that are organized along ethnic lines and emphasize the importance of self-determination for the nationalities of Ethiopia; 2) opposition groups that encourage the restoration of a pan-Ethiopian identity and national unity, largely dismissing the ethnic component as a central part of politics (Lyons 2007); and 3) groups that support the Ethiopian government. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF) and the Oromo community (*Det oromiske samband i Norge*)¹⁴ belong in the first category¹⁵, while the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP), Patriotic Ginbot 7 (PG7), and various support groups and civic organizations with close links to the EPRP and PG7

¹⁴ The Oromo Community is a civic organization aimed at promoting and facilitating broader understanding between Oromos and ethnic Norwegians and other immigrants (Brønnøysundregistrene). According to Abadima Guye – one of the members of the Elders Council – the community gathers Oromos from different political standings, and constitutes an important platform for discussion and mobilization (Guye, Interview 19, April 2018).

¹⁵ The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) from the Ethiopian Somali-region is yet another political movement that mobilize supporters around ethnic and regional concerns. The ONLF, however, is not included in the sample of this thesis, mainly due to its limited presence in Norway. Examples of other regional and ethnic political movements with supporters abroad are the Sidama Liberation Front (SLF) and the Afar Liberation Front (ALF). Medrek, or ‘The Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia’ is the main opposition party coalition in Ethiopia, and consists of both ‘ethnic’ parties and ‘nationalist’ parties.

belong in the second category¹⁶. The third category comprises individuals who are sympathetic to the efforts of the Ethiopian government – primarily people of Tigrayan descent who supports the TPLF. Some of these pro-regime elements are said to be associated with the Tigrayan Community in Norway (*Tigrean forening*), which is a civic organisation aimed at protecting and safeguarding the culture, language and identity of Tigrayans in Norway (Brønnøysundregistrene). The following three sub-sections will introduce the origins, political ideas and allegiances of the most influential Ethiopian organisations, communities and political parties in Norway. The aim is thus to provide an overview of the Ethiopian political landscape in Norway, and demonstrate the full range of Ethiopian diaspora politics.

5.1.1 Oromo organizations

One of the first Oromo political movements with active supporters and members in Norway was the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The support base for the OLF in Norway prior to the late 90s was minimal, counting only a handful of active individuals. Former OLF-members, Daniel Gemtessa and Alemayehu Fantahun, put the number of active OLF-supporters in Norway during the 70s and 80s to around five¹⁷ (Interview 6; Interview 18, April 2017). However, with the growth of the Oromo population in Norway following increased arrivals of Oromo refugees in the late 90s and early 2000s, the political activity level within the Oromo community intensified. The influx of Oromo refugees to Norway and other Western countries followed the OLF's armed uprisings against the EPRDF/TPLF in 1992, which forced many Oromos to flee Ethiopia (Landinfo 2015: 6). Abadima Guye from the Oromo Community¹⁸, who himself fled Ethiopia in 2001 due to his support for the OLF, confirms the increase of Oromo refugees coming to Norway:

Before 2000 there were very few Oromos in Norway....However, in the late 90s many Oromos came to Norway as refugees through the UN quota system due to the brutal crackdown on Oromos in Ethiopia during the 90s (Interview 19, April 2017).

¹⁶ Other nationalist, pan-Ethiopian organizations include for example the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (Meison), the Blue Party (Semayawi), and the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDPJ).

¹⁷ These individuals were, according to Gemtessa, members of the Union of Oromo Students in Europe (UOSE), which was founded in Germany in 1974. The Norwegian branch was established in 1977-1978, and comprised approximately five members at that time. The UOSE is a political organization that has adopted the political programs and political ideals of the OLF (oromostudents.wordpress.com).

¹⁸ Today the Oromo Community (*Det oromiske samband*) has local branches in Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Kristiansand, Trondheim and Haugesund, in addition to smaller branches in Finnmark, Møre og Romsdal, and Aust Agder (Guye, Interview 19, April 2017).

In the late 90s, the number of active members in the OLF was still small, counting somewhere between 10 and 15, according to Gemtessa and former OLF-member Fekadu¹⁹ (Interview 6; Interview 12, April 2017). However, in the beginning of the 2000s the membership number started to grow steadily, and the support group in Norway managed to capitalize on deep-seated grievances against the Ethiopian government in their mobilizing efforts. Today there are a total of 120 members, according to the current chairman of the OLF support group in Norway, Asaminew Melese Kenate (Interview 5, April 2017). Here, it is important not to confuse members with supporters, who unlike members are not obligated to provide economic support to the organisation nor abide by the principles of the front (Kenate, Interview 5, April 2017). The total number of OLF-supporters in Norway who are not active members is difficult to estimate due to lack of available data. The OLF support group in Norway does not identify as a diaspora organisation, but merely as a support group for members and supporters on the ground in Ethiopia (Kenate, Interview 5, April 2017). This distinction is important to highlight because it reveals a certain determination to divert attention away from the diaspora, and remind constituents of where the *real* struggle is taking place; namely in the homeland. While supporters in Norway are free to engage in whatever activism they deem efficient, members are obliged to keep a low profile and handle sensitive information with great care. This separation between *members* and *active supporters* is explained by Asaminew Melese Kenate:

OLF is not a diaspora-based organisation. We have members and supporters on the ground in Ethiopia. We don't do any politics on social media, though there are many of our supporters who use social media as a tool for activism. This type of activism is influential, but it is not part of us. OLF does not use social media channels to reach people because the information we are dealing with is highly sensitive, so we have to use people on the ground to disseminate information (Interview 5, April 2017).

Much like other Ethiopian opposition parties, the OLF in Norway has been hampered by internal divisions due to fragmentations in the central leadership of the OLF. Disagreements within the party has spilled over on OLF support groups and Oromo communities in the diaspora, including Norwegian constituencies. In Norway, internal division in the Oromo community seems to stem from various causes, ranging from regional loyalties, religious affiliation, and political ideology (Kenate, Interview 5; Gemtessa, Interview 6; Berglund-Steen, Interview 12, April 2017). One of the main sources of disagreement among OLF-members and supporters in Norway is related to the question of an 'independent Oromia' – in other words,

¹⁹ This informant did not consent to the use of his last name. He will therefore be referred to by his first name *Fekadu* from now on.

whether Oromia in the long-term should secede from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia or accept its integral part of the Ethiopian nation and continue the struggle for more self-determination and autonomy as a regional state. Disagreements in the Oromo community in Norway were fuelled by an internal split in the central leadership of the OLF in 2008 when former Brigadier-General and defector Kemal Gelchu created his own OLF faction called ‘OLF for Change’ (OLF KY)²⁰. The Gelchu-faction claimed to represent a new vision for the OLF by focusing on the advancement of all Ethiopians, and not only that of the Oromos, thus abandoning the hardliner Oromo-nationalist agenda of his adversary, OLF-chairman Dawud Ibsa (Schröder 2011). Despite its eventual disintegration, the rise of the OLF KY revealed deep-seated disagreements within the movement, which ultimately trickled down on support groups abroad. Some informants interviewed for this thesis describe the members of the OLF in Norway as ‘hardliners’ whose lack of willingness to compromise regarding the question of an independent Oromia hampers any co-operation between the Oromos and other Ethiopian opposition groups (Zerihun, Interview 7; Fekadu, Interview 11, April 2017). In the words of Rune Berglund-Steen, a former employee at the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), who has worked closely with the Ethiopian diaspora for many years:

The OLF-community in Norway has appeared quite conservative, and there has been little contact between the OLF and other opposition groups like the EPRP and PG7...I have rarely seen OLF-members or supporters at demonstrations or various collaborative forums...The problem is that OLF-people often react with anger if someone uses the term ‘Ethiopian’ to refer to a collective identity. They would typically react by saying ‘but we are not Ethiopians’ (Interview 12, April 2017).

This is further corroborated by several informants from pan-Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway who claim that collaboration with the OLF in Norway has proved difficult due to the OLF’s scepticism towards parties and organisations with a dominant Amhara-following, such as the PG7 for example (Zerihun, Interview 7; Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017). This reluctance stems from historical and political grievances, and many Oromos’ perception of the Amharas as a power-seeking ethnic group (Kenate, Interview 5, April 2017). In 2013, the OLF experienced another split when one of the OLF’s founders, Leenco Lata, established the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF)²¹. The ODF is essentially a diaspora-based organisation with members

²⁰ Gelchu and his support base – mainly National Council members from Arsi – accused OLF-chairman Dawud Ibsa (based in Asmara, Eritrea) of mismanagement and political errors, and set out to reform the organization. The announcement that Gelchu had formed his own faction was quickly rejected by Ibsa and his supporters, and Gelchu’s faction eventually disintegrated (Schröder 2011).

²¹ The ODF was formed as a political party in March 2013 after weeks of discussions in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is led by former Norwegian resident and one of several OLF-founders, Leenco Lata.

in several Western countries, including Norway. Currently, 12 members have left the OLF support group in Norway to join ranks with the ODF (Fekadu, Interview 11, April 2017). ODF-members in Norway have justified their decision to leave the OLF by pointing to the stagnation and lack of new ideas that characterize the front. The OLF's reluctance to engage in dialogue with other opposition groups and the movement's emphasis on secession and non-dialogue with the Ethiopian government has, in the words of ODF-member Fekadu, "not created any solution for the Ethiopian political problem, which is why the ODF is adopting new policies and opens for dialogue with the government if possible" (Interview 11, April 2017)²². The political differences between the ODF and the OLF are primarily grounded in disagreements regarding the call for an independent Oromia:

The OLF has a maximum and a minimum program. The maximum program is to create an independent Oromian state. The minimum program is to form a union with other people based on the will of the Oromo people. The OLF has decided that this can be done only through a referendum of the Oromo people; only they can decide whether to create an independent state or live with other nations and nationalities in Ethiopia, forming a union. The ODF has taken our minimum program, and made it their maximum program, i.e. that we should live in union with other Ethiopian people (Kenate, Interview 5, April 2017).

The ODF further distanced itself from the OLF in August 2016 when a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the ODF and Patriotic Ginbot 7 (PG7)²³. In Norway, this rapprochement has led to increased dialogue between the ODF and PG7. However, deep-seated grievances between the Oromos and the Amharas still prove a hindrance to real collaboration and partnership. In the words of the leader of PG7 in Norway, Dr. Mulualem Adam Zerihun: "We have no problems getting the leadership [of the ODF] on board with this collaboration. The real challenge is convincing the [Oromo] grassroots to support the idea of co-operation between Oromos and Amharas" (Interview 7, April 2017).

The relationship between Oromo political groups – particularly the OLF – and Norwegian authorities has been characterized by sporadic meetings and growing distrust. During the 2000s,

²² In 2015/2016, ODF-chairman Leencho Leta travelled to Ethiopia to explore the possibilities for dialogue with the EPRDF/TPLF. According to informants and media networks, the request was rejected by the Ethiopian government under the pretense that they were not ready to accept the ODF as a legitimate political contender in Ethiopia (Fekadu, Interview 11, Interview 2017).

²³ The MoU was signed on August 11th, 2016, and requires both organizations to form an alliance on the basis of three cardinal principles. The two organizations shall strive to: 1) build a truly democratic federal state, which promotes and guarantees the equality and unity of its people on the basis of social justice, equality, citizenship, economic prosperity, and protects and safeguards the sovereignty of the country; 2) bring an end to tyranny, dictatorship, and exclusive monopoly of political and economic power in Ethiopia; 3) not use minor policy differences to hinder the prevalence of freedom, justice, equality and democracy in Ethiopia (patrioticg7.org).

there was irregular contact between OLF-representatives and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) regarding the political situation in Ethiopia. At the same time, the Oromo community nurtured a close relationship with Norwegian researchers whose unique expertise on Ethiopian affairs invited to dialogue and discussion. These connections eventually led to the organization of a state-sponsored conference in Bergen in 2004, in which Oromo elders, scholars and politicians from around the world were invited by the Chr. Michelsen Institute to discuss and stake out future solutions to the ‘Oromo problem’. At this time, the Oromo community perceived Norwegian authorities as supporters of democratic change in Ethiopia, and sympathetic to the Oromo cause. This, however, apparently changed with the Ethiopian-Norwegian diplomatic crisis in 2007, which saw the expulsion of six Norwegian diplomats from Ethiopia due to what Ethiopian authorities perceived as Norwegian involvement in “clandestine and underground activities contravening international laws governing inter-states relations” (Aalen & Tronvoll 2009: 204). Norwegian support for opposition groups such as the OLF and the CUD prior to the 2007-incident has been singled out as a contributing factor to the crisis (Sørli 2007: 71, 77). To re-establish diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, Norwegian authorities (the MFA) decided to distance themselves from opposition groups, both in Ethiopia and in Norway, which in turn shattered the image of Norway as an agent of democratic change among Oromos and other Ethiopian diasporans (e.g. Gemtessa, Interview 6; Zerihun, Interview 7; Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017).

5.1.2 The pan-Ethiopianists

The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP) was probably the first pan-Ethiopian political entity with representation in Norway. The organization was registered in *Brønnøysundregistrene* by a small group of approximately five members in 1994 (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017). However, EPRP-affiliates had started to arrive in Norway as early as in the mid-1970s when the EPRP was waging a war against the Derg-regime back home. One of the first EPRP-members to arrive in Norway as a political refugee was Tadesse Gash. He recounts his first encounters with EPRP-affiliates in Scandinavia:

At that time, the EPRP was very strong, both at home and abroad. The unit in Scandinavia was active, and we were in close contact with each other. The program of the EPRP was also accepted and supported by democratic and progressive forces in Norway, so it was very easy for us to get involved in opposition politics (Gash, Interview 8, April 2017).

Today, the Norwegian EPRP-branch represents between 70 and 120 members, according to its leader in Norway, Asayegne Tilahun (Interview 9, April 2017). Since 1998, the EPRP has held monthly meetings in Oslo where decisions about policies and mobilizing activities have been adopted and reported to EPRP-headquarters in Washington D.C. and Paris. Though the EPRP in Norway is obliged to follow the political principles recognized by the central EPRP-committee, local branches still have extensive autonomy with regards to the implementation of local policies. The emphasis on local autonomy is enhanced by the EPRP's horizontal structure:

Unlike other opposition groups, we don't have a leader or a President or a Secretariat. We have a common committee, and every fourth year we meet for the general assembly. Present at these assemblies are representatives from countries with active members, including Norwegian members. Somewhere between 12 and 15 individuals are elected as committee members, and they become responsible for different policy areas, such as propaganda, politics, foreign policy, internal affairs etc. (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017).

The concept of organizing in committees is furthermore adopted by local branches like the Norwegian branch, where members are assembled in various committees, such as the women's committee, the youth's committee, the social committee and the action committee (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017).

Much like their counterparts in the OLF, the EPRP has had regular contact with Norwegian authorities regarding the political situation in Ethiopia. However, the EPRP has gradually been labelled as an increasingly irrelevant actor in Ethiopian politics by Norwegian authorities. In a report from 2013, Landinfo claims that "there are few signs of EPRP-led political activities present in Ethiopia today". EPRP-informants on the other hand argue that the invisibility of EPRP-activities is due to the self-censorship members and supporters must exercise to escape the watchful eye of the EPRDF/TPLF. As argued by Asayegne Tilahun, "the EPRP never gives out information about their size, their members, nor the whereabouts of their activities in Ethiopia. Even when EPRP-members are imprisoned they keep quiet about their political orientation" (Interview 9, April 2017). EPRP-affiliates in Norway claim that the EPRDF/TPLF harbours particularly strong antipathy towards the EPRP, which can be traced all the way back to the war between the two parties in Tigray in the 70s (see chapter 2). Here, one should remember that the EPRP is the oldest modern political party in Ethiopia, which allots it a special position in Ethiopian history. The antagonistic relationship between the EPRP and the Ethiopian government was recently displayed in a public note drafted by the Norwegian EPRP-branch, in

which regime accusations about the EPRP's role in the recent unrest, was rebuffed (Internal document 2016).

A second pan-Ethiopian political group of great importance in the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway is Patriotic Ginbot 7 and its support group, Democratic Change in Ethiopia Support Organization Norway (DCESON). Both organisations derive from the CUD support group in Norway, which was established prior to the 2005 election as a political and financial backer of the CUD in Ethiopia. This group comprised pan-Ethiopianists advocating for national unity and democratic change in Ethiopia, and managed to mobilize large numbers of Ethiopians in Norway in the lead up to the 2005 election (Amare, Interview 3; Zerihun, Interview 7; Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017). However, in the wake of the election, the support group went through a period of low morale due to the final election results and general confusion about the future of the support group. In the words of Muluaem Adam Zerihun: "We were so demoralized after the election, and I think everyone just needed a break from politics. Our hopes for a new and improved Ethiopia had been so high, and yet again we were disappointed" (Interview 7, April 2017). Growing polarization in Ethiopia following the 2005 election had also created splits between moderate Tigrayans in Norway who had welcomed the opening of the political climate in Ethiopia prior to the election, and opposition groups who adopted an increasingly hostile rhetoric against the TPLF after the election. Several informants have described the period before the election as a time of reconciliation and friendship between moderate Tigrayans and opposition groups associated with the CUD-faction in Norway (e.g. Zerihun, Interview 7; Zeratsion, Interview 17, April 2017). This, however, changed when "Tigrayans started to distance themselves from people in the CUD support group due to increasing tension on the ground in Ethiopia" (Zerihun, Interview 7, April 2017).

The CUD support group eventually disintegrated in the fall of 2005, but was replaced by a new support group in 2006, namely DCESON. Initially, DCESON supported all three factions that sprung out of the CUD following the disintegration of the coalition after the election. These groups included the Coalition of Unity and Justice (UDJP) led by Birtukan Midekssa, the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) led by Hailu Shawel, and Patriotic Ginbot 7 led by Berhanu Nega. Since 2011, DCESON has limited its support to include only PG7, whose membership number amounts to 'multiple hundreds' in Norway, according to Muluaem Adam Zerihun (Interview 7, April 2017). DCESON and PG7 are also known to nurture close relations with

the influential diaspora TV-network Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT), for which they have organized several fundraisers in Norway.

Today, DCESON and PG7 seem to represent the largest and most influential opposition voice in the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway. In the words of several informants, “the PG7 has become the most dominant and well-organized diaspora organisation, not only in Norway, but globally” (e.g. Zeleke, Interview 10; Zeratsion, Interview 17, April 2017). While there has been certain co-operation between PG7 and the EPRP in Norway, the two groups are still miles away from forging an alliance like the one seen between PG7 and the ODF. Among the reasons are the EPRP’s scepticism about PG7’s presence in Eritrea and allegations that certain members of PG7 in Norway are former TPLF-supporters or remnants of the Derg-regime²⁴. The EPRP also opposes the coalition between PG7 and the ODF because of the inclusion of ethnically organized political parties (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017).

5.1.3 Pro-regime elements

The political segments of the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway is not only comprised of opposition groups. There are also those who actively support the Ethiopian government and work to prevent opposition groups in Norway from gaining attention. Information about the pro-regime community in Norway – which primarily consists of Tigrayans – remains limited and largely inaccessible to people outside the community. Some informants claim that TPLF-supporters are associated with the Tigrayan Community in Norway, though this has not been further verified. The findings presented in the following section is based on accounts from informants who belong to or are supportive of opposition groups in Norway. Consequently, the accounts are highly biased against pro-regime elements, and focus mostly on methods adopted by such elements to destabilize and sabotage the opposition.

All informants point to the presence of active pro-regime elements in Norway as a serious challenge to opposition activities and mobilization. These elements are supporters of the ERRDF/TPLF-regime who engage in behaviours aimed at monitoring, destabilizing and dividing the opposition diaspora. Infiltration of diaspora communities abroad and the gathering of information about key diaspora players have been documented by, among others, Human

²⁴ Accusing members of other opposition groups to be former TPLF-members or remnants from the Derg-regime is exercised by most opposition groups in Norway.

Rights Watch (2014). Nevertheless, statements suggesting links between pro-regime elements in Norway and the Ethiopian regime is difficult to verify despite credible evidence and vivid recounts from informants. Hostility between pro-regime elements and members of the opposition increased after the 2005-election, and coincided with a growing division between Tigrayans and members of other ethnic groups who had previously worked together in civic organizations like the Ethiopian Community. In the words of Muluaem Adam Zerihun, “our friends from Tigray started to distance themselves from us because we were supporting the CUD. When things got more and more intense after the election, it was difficult to keep them in the [Ethiopian] community” (Interview 7, April 2017). The intensification of mobilizing activities in the wake of the 2005 election demonstrated the capacity and competence of the opposition diaspora in Norway. The increased activity level supposedly intimidated certain TPLF-supporters, according to informants, and led to a counter-mobilization against the opposition. Apparently, this is when the TPLF in Norway truly began their efforts to keep an eye on opposition activities in Norway (Berglund-Steen, Interview 12, April 2017). Over the past decade several confrontations have occurred between TPLF-supporters and members of the opposition. Such confrontations are often a result of provocation from regime-supporters who have developed a wide range of mechanisms to intimidate opposition groups, both publicly and privately. The following methods of intimidation have been observed most frequently by the informants:

- Showing up at anti-government demonstrations to take photos or video;
- Trying to prevent landlords from renting out premises to opposition groups by telling the landlord that he or she is renting out to a terrorist organization;
- Infiltration;
- Threats – both face to face and over the phone, or by using social media.

The first mechanism outlined above – being present at an anti-regime demonstration to photograph or film protesters – is the most common act of intimidation according to informants. In the words of Jon Ole Martinsen, senior consultant on Ethiopian affairs in NOAS: “They photograph or film people with the presumption that the material will be shared with Ethiopian authorities where they will be registered as troublemakers” (Interview 14, April 2017). A concrete incident which exemplifies this type of behaviour occurred in relation with the celebration of Andargachew Tsiege’s 60th birthday at *Antirasistisk senter* in Oslo in 2015. During the celebration, an unknown number of TPLF-supporters gathered outside the building

to demonstrate against the event, screaming anti-opposition slogans and threatening to enter the building (Jon Ole, Interview 14, April 2017).

The second mechanism is a more indirect way of intimidation since it goes through a third party, i.e. a landlord, while the third mechanism seeks to infiltrate opposition organisations and extract sensitive information about their activities. A common allegation is that infiltrators are dispatched to Norway to spy and gather information about opposition groups:

The Ethiopian government is sending their own people as refugees, as political asylum seekers, to infiltrate our organisations, to create weakness. This is a known fact. We suspect that some Oromos have been promised benefits in Ethiopia as a reward for spying on us. The government can for example promise them land rights, business opportunities or the chance to travel without a visa (Fekadu, Interview 11, April 2017).

Though such allegations are difficult to prove, such accounts have been corroborated by almost all informants interviewed for this thesis. Fear of infiltration is also why most opposition organisations operate with strict requirements for membership, and make potential members go through ‘trial periods’ before they are allowed to join the organisation. The EPRP for example operates with a six month ‘trial period’ in which background, family situation, political sympathies and profession are cross-checked with information provided by the person (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017). The final mechanism outlined above – threats against members of opposition groups – is a well-known method of intimidation. Almost all informants have received threats, whether over the phone, through social media or face-to-face, for example at a demonstration or walking home from work. One informant recounts an incident when he was threatened following an incriminating blog post he had written about the government:

I received several emails with some bad language and threats. They wrote ‘see you at the Bole airport’, and what does that mean? It means that if you come back to Ethiopia, we will take you (Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017).

Efforts by TPLF-supporters in Norway to threaten and intimidate members of the opposition has created an environment of incessant suspicion and wariness in the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway. On the other hand, it seems that increased polarization has also led to stronger mobilizing efforts from both parties in the past decade as confrontations have grown more frequent, coupled with increased popular unrest in Ethiopia.

This section has provided an overview of the most important political actors in the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway. An examination of the political climate in the diaspora has shown that Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway engage in similar struggles, although with differing justifications and motives. The diversity of political projects and organisations is illustrated by the presence of both old and new movements and parties separated by what seems to be an ideological division between ethnically oriented parties such as the OLF, and pan-Ethiopian parties such as the EPRP and PG7. The Ethiopian opposition diaspora is far from united, but rather comprises a wide range of “diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on” (Brubaker 2005: 13). Furthermore, the presence of pro-regime elements contributes to the complexity. Subsequently, the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway is a highly dynamic and differentiated diaspora, representing a stark contrast to the essentialist assumption that diasporas are organic communities without division. This is furthermore evidenced by the continuous internal divisions, causing new organisations to emerge, which in turn contributes to an increasingly diverse and complex web of actors. The frequent surfacing of new parties, coalitions, movements and organizations make the Ethiopian diaspora a particularly challenging case study, which can never be exhausted in a master’s thesis of this scope. The secrecy of the organizations is another challenge that impedes a more precise examination of each group and the many particularities distinguishing them. I now turn my attention to the analysis of causes and motivations of the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway.

5.2 Causes and motivations

In this section of the analysis I will attempt to identify relevant causal factors that can help explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The two following primary objectives will guide this section; identifying and describing causes and motivations that are 1) centred on long-term grievances; and 2) centred on single incidents or processes. The analysis will show that causal links are rooted in political developments in both Ethiopia and Norway, as well as in the diplomatic association between Norwegian and Ethiopian authorities. Causal factors are grounded in developments, events and processes that are linked to both the homeland and the hostland. Consequently, the accumulation of causalities is a result of the Ethiopian diaspora’s connections to multiple developments in different countries, exemplifying the diaspora’s ability to “link international and domestic spheres of politics” (Shain & Barth 2003: 451). The transnational character of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora is

thus an intrinsic part of why it became mobilized in the first place. This section seeks to give answers to the second research question: What causal factors can help explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway?

5.2.1 Long-term grievances

Most informants interviewed for this thesis point to long-term grievances as a main cause for diaspora mobilization. These grievances are directed mostly against the Ethiopian regime, and to a lesser degree, against Norwegian authorities, the international community and the media. The mobilizing efficiency of a grievance depends on the framing of the grievance, and its ability to represent a shared perception among diasporans that can lead to collective action (Wayward 2004: 415). Grievances among the Norwegian diaspora against the Ethiopian regime are often based on traumatic memories of abuse, imprisonment, flight, and in some cases, torture and harassment of family members. Half of the informants interviewed for this thesis are political refugees²⁵ whose accounts suggest that they have been victims of some sort of abuse and harassment prior to their migration to Norway. Such experiences may explain the potency of their grievances, which in some cases indicate a strong anathema to the Ethiopian state. The potential for diaspora mobilization is greater when there is a causal link between “politics or conflict in the country of origin and the decision (or requirement) to migrate” (Lyons & Mandaville 2010:137). One informant who spent time in prison before fleeing to Norway, recounts his experience:

I was arrested in 1993 in relation to the student riots, and some of my friends were killed. When they set us free we were dismissed from the University [Addis Ababa] with a warning that we should not engage in any political activity, and they made us sign an agreement not to come close to the University campus area. So, I have gone through all that before I ended up in Norway (Mekonnen, April 2017).

Several informants were politically active in Ethiopia before coming to Norway, and have gone through similar experiences as the one described above. Subsequently, grievances are not only based on general disagreements about how the Ethiopian government runs the country, but also on personal experiences of having been targeted by that government. Another informant, who came to Norway in 1974 as a student, gives a description of the Ethiopian state which is representative of the sample:

²⁵ Just in my sample, 10 out of 19 are political refugees.

To understand what kind of regime this is, you must go and live with the peasants outside Addis Ababa. If you are there with the peasants, you will feel it to your bones – that this regime is the worst fascist regime ever. The way it oppresses the people, the way it sucks the blood out of people economically, land grabbing and whatever. It is unbearable (Gemtessa, April 2017).

Such hostile descriptions of the Ethiopian state demonstrate the deep-seated grievances that exist among Ethiopian diasporans. But what are the specific contents of such grievances, and what determines their effect on mobilization?

The most common grievances against the Ethiopian regime among informants are roughly based on four primary criticisms: 1) ethnic marginalization and widespread repression at the hands of an ethnic minority rule; 2) lack of political pluralism and democratic institutions; 3) corruption and a skewed distribution of wealth; and 4) uncritical financial support for the Ethiopian state by Western countries, and their subsequent reluctance to criticise the Ethiopian regime. These grievances, however, are not limited to the Norwegian case, but rather represent long-standing criticisms that have been central to the mobilization of the global Ethiopian opposition diaspora, regardless of ethnicity or country of settlement. The first grievance outlined above deals with the sensitive issue of ethnic marginalization, and the apparent dominance of one ethnic group in Ethiopian politics. The notion that the Tigrayan ethnic group – representing approximately 6 percent of the total population in Ethiopia – is controlling Ethiopian politics, security and economic development is an established truth among members of Ethiopian opposition groups in Norway. This perception gains credibility from the fact that the ruling coalition is dominated by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) (Aalen 2006: 250). Several informants claim that the multi-ethnic coalition of the EPRDF is nothing more than a façade designed to appear like a representative government (e.g. Gemtessa, Interview 6; Zerihun, Interview 7; Tilahun, Interview 9; Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017). The following excerpt from an interview is a typical example of how the TPLF is presented as a bunch of power-greedy autocrats with little concern for others than themselves:

The Tigrayans don’t want to let go of power, they don’t want to share. They are clinging to power because they don’t know if they can rule in any other way than what they have done so far. If they let go, they will lose control, and they are not ready for that. The Tigrayan elites want more and more, leaving the rest mere observers (Guye, Interview 19, April 2017).

The ‘rest’ must be understood as all the other ethnic groups, as well as poor and underprivileged Tigrayans, whom according to most diasporans are also suffering under “their own regime” (Zerihun, Interview 7, April 2017). One of the big sins of the TPLF-regime, and an important

cause for diaspora mobilization, is the regime's betrayal of ethnic federalism, and the subsequent adoption of *ethnic marginalization*. These accusations are addressed thoroughly in the political programs of leading diaspora movements and parties. For example, the EPRP uses the term 'ethnic chauvinist group' to describe the EPRDF/TPLF (Political program, 2008), while PG7 calls the Ethiopian regime an 'ethnic dictatorship' (Political program, 2008). In a policy note named *The Democratic Alternative in Ethiopia*, the EPRP goes so far as to say that "the army, the police, and the bureaucracy are all dominated by one ethnic group [Tigrayans]" (2009: 4).

The pan-Ethiopian diaspora groups tend to be more critical of the ideas that have facilitated the construction of an ethnic federalist system than the OLF and other ethnic movements. Moreover, the pan-Ethiopianists see the ethnicization of politics as a destructive invention with no roots in Ethiopian history:

...when I grew up in Ethiopia, I was never brainwashed to think according to ethnic lines. Even during the communist regime...the only thing we were complaining about was that we didn't have freedom of expression, we didn't have the right to organise, and this and that, but ethnicity? I have never in my lifetime heard my parents say 'you have to do this and that, and this ethnic group is like that' (Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017).

Today, questions of ethnicity and its role in society is at the centre of Ethiopian diaspora politics. The wish to eradicate the ethnicization of politics represented by the TPLF-regime is one of the main motivating factors for diaspora mobilization among pan-Ethiopianists. Ethnic movements like the OLF on the other hand are more inclined to support the idea of an ethnic federalist system. Their grievances, however, tend to concentrate on the regime's lack of ability to implement the ethnic federalist system in a truly decentralized and self-administering way. This concern is echoed in the OLF's political program:

The root cause of political problems in Ethiopia is national oppression by the Ethiopian empire state and refusal by the state to respect the rights of oppressed peoples to self-determination. The Oromo and other oppressed peoples are endowed with the right to decide the form of sovereignty they want, whether on their own or in union with others on the basis of freely expressed consent (OLF policies, oromoliberationfront.org).

Another grievance commonly referred to by informants relates to the lack of a pluralistic multi-party system and transparent institutions. Informants view Ethiopia as a country with great potential were it not for the undemocratic institutions administering the state, and the perpetual exclusion of opposition parties (e.g. Amare, Interview 3; Abebe, Interview 4, April 2017). The

Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway sees it as their task to promote and hopefully bring democracy to their homeland, or in the words of one informant “teach each other the democratic way of living together, and having different views” (Fantahun, Interview 18, April 2017). The fact that Ethiopians have never really enjoyed the advantages of living in a democratic homeland, nor had a representative government, has created an infrastructure of power that awards corruption and patronage, preventing real democracy from being exercised. Terrence Lyons has used the term ‘electoral authoritarianism’ to describe the Ethiopian regime. This label refers to regimes that “hold regular polls but do so without the kinds of political rights and freedoms necessary for elections to be a tool for advancing democracy” (2010: 109). This means that elections are held every five year, but the context does not allow for competition to threaten the government (ibid.). Opposition parties are essentially prevented from campaigning in a free and fair way due to widespread harassment and surveillance, imprisonment of opposition leaders, and general sabotage at the hands of the EPRDF/TPLF-regime (Aalen & Tronvoll 2009; Lyons 2010). Recent arrests of prominent opposition figures like OFC leader Merera Gudina, OFC deputy leader Bekele Gerba, PG7 deputy chairman Andargachew Tsige, and Blue Party spokesman Yonatan Tesfaye, as well as well-known journalists like Eskinder Nega and members of the blogging collective Zone 9, have fuelled diaspora mobilization and possibly motivated opposition groups to consider non-peaceful measures in the struggle against the regime:

People like Merera Gudina and Bekele Gerba have always promoted non-violent movements, and supported democracy, equity, social justice and fair distribution of resources. When the politics of these peaceful individuals cannot be tolerated, it creates incentives to carry out the struggle in other ways, maybe through violence. The regime does itself a disservice by arresting these people (Guye, Interview 19, April 2017).

Ethnic domination and lack of democratic practice is closely linked with corruption and a skewed distribution of wealth. All informants agree that the accumulation of wealth in Ethiopia primarily benefits a small elite of mostly Tigrayan businessmen, politicians, entrepreneurs and members of the military apparatus. While the international community have praised the Ethiopian regime for successful economic development, diasporans have expressed serious doubts about the prevalence of this development, claiming that the wealth is “only reaching a lucky minority, and not trickling down on most the people” (Fantahun, Interview 18, April 2017). The following assessment from former TPLF-politician, Ghidey Zeratsion, provides a common account among diasporans of how Western donors are manipulated by the corrupted Ethiopian regime:

They [the Ethiopian government] manipulate statistics. The discrepancy between reality and what they show is often big. For example, they present impressive projects, but these are only means for getting more money from donors. When you go down to the public level, you can see that it does not spread much. People from the outside might not have the possibility to visit all parts of the country, and ends up seeing only the demonstration areas [infrastructure projects for example] (Interview 17, April 2017).

Another common grievance among informants is directed against the seemingly fertile relationship between Ethiopian and Western countries, including Norway. Here, it is important to note that the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Norway after the 2007 diplomatic crisis has both motivated mobilization among diasporans, but also dealt a blow to the hope and expectations among diasporans regarding Norway's potential role as a neutral part. Several informants express strong disappointments about Norwegian authorities' lack of condemnation regarding human rights abuses in Ethiopia. In the words of one informant:

The Norwegian government is so silent about the human rights situation in Ethiopia. Democracy and human rights are the fundamentals of Norwegian society, and they should wish that for other countries too. They cannot keep their eyes closed when human rights are abused, when dictators are killing innocent people. This frustrates me so much (Fantahun, Interview 18, April 2017).

The idea that Norwegian and Western authorities are disproportionately more lenient towards the Ethiopian regime compared with other autocratic regimes, is widespread among members of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. Informants argue that Norway and other Western countries are less inclined to criticise Ethiopian authorities due to the country's important location and its willingness to provide security and stability to an otherwise unstable region (e.g. Zerihun, Interview 7; Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017). In Norway, the Ethiopian opposition diaspora has sought to actively consult with Norwegian authorities to convince them to re-evaluate their support for the Ethiopian government. This has prompted a certain form of lobbyism which extends not only to Norwegian authorities, but also to NGOs and other important civil society actors in Norwegian society. While some informants have completely given up on Norwegian authorities, others are still hopeful that Norway will return to its pre-2007 politics of supporting the Ethiopian opposition. In the words of one informant, "why should Norway always be a tale and not a head?" (Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017).

5.2.2 Single incidents

One can point to many incidents that have caused diaspora mobilization in Norway since the late 90s. I will, however, restrict my focus to four incidents and developments frequently referred to by informants that have had profound effects on diaspora mobilization. These are the following:

- The 2005 election in Ethiopia;
- The 2005 Yara prize to Meles Zenawi and subsequent visits to Norway by Ethiopian leaders;
- Norwegian asylum politics and the ensuing Ethiopian hunger strike in Oslo cathedral in 2011;
- Recent unrest in Ethiopia;

Informants from all opposition groups agree that the most successful period of mobilization occurred between 2005 and 2011. The incidents mentioned above contributed to this.

The year 2005

Most informants agree that 2005 marked the year when diaspora mobilization truly intensified in Norway. Two important events contributed to this: the 2005 Ethiopian election and the announcement that the Norwegian chemical company Yara was awarding the African Green Revolution Yara Prize to former TPLF-strongman Meles Zenawi²⁶. Both events led to intense mobilization across party lines and ethnic affiliations, and materialized in big demonstrations in Oslo and other Norwegian cities (e.g. Åmås in *Aftenposten* 2005; Teferra in *VG* 2005). The opening of democratic space in Ethiopia prior to the 2005-election (e.g. Lyons 2006; Abbink 2006; and Lefort 2007), coupled with the rise of compelling opposition coalitions such as the CUD and the UEDF, led to renewed optimism that democratic change might be possible among Ethiopian diasporans in Norway. In the words of activist and writer Leul Mekonnen, who at that time was actively advocating for the CUD support group in Norway:

There were real elections [in 2005]. The opposition groups were there, and they were advocating their positions and people in Addis were flooding the streets to show their support. Millions of people. Even in the absence of radio or other diaspora television, they mobilised, because people were frustrated (Interview 13, April 2017).

²⁶ Meles Zenawi died in Belgium in 2012 after contracting an undisclosed infection.

The election was followed by widespread repression against opposition supporters, and the imprisonment of leading opposition figures. These events coincided with the announcement that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was due to arrive in Norway in September to receive the African Green Revolution Yara Prize. Many informants claim that the Yara-prize was a catalyst for increased mobilization, which in the words of former TPLF-politician Ghidey Zeratsion motivated the Ethiopian diaspora to form its “strongest coalition” yet (Interview 17, April 2017). Approximately 1200 demonstrators gathered outside Oslo Concert Hall on 3rd September 2005 to protest the award ceremony (Nettavisen 2005; NTB Scanpix 2005). Successive visits to Norway by Ethiopian leaders, such as Zenawi’s second visit in 2010 and the Ethiopian Ambassador’s visit to Oslo in 2013, were also met with huge demonstrations by Ethiopian diasporans (VG 2011; Utrop 2013). Several Informants affirm that demonstrations have been attended by a wide variety of Ethiopians, including segments from both nationalist and pan-Ethiopian groups, indicating that such visits have had a unifying effect.

Norwegian asylum politics

Norwegian asylum practices seem to have played a rather important role in the accumulation of diasporic activity among Ethiopians. In this case, asylum practices refer to the politics determining the requirements for obtaining a resident permit as an asylum seeker. In Norway, asylum practices for Ethiopian asylum seekers have at times been put under serious scrutiny by civil society organizations due to allegations of overly strict practices (NOAS 2012). Rune Berglund-Steen recounts that “denials of Ethiopian asylum applications were particularly difficult to understand [...] since many had accounted for oppositional activity in Ethiopia, as well as imprisonment and sometimes gross torture” (Interview 12, April 2017). A current employee at NOAS has explained that the Ethiopian case is unique in the sense that Ethiopian asylum seekers are prevented from being forcibly returned to Ethiopia if they decline the offer to return voluntarily in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Ethiopian authorities (Martinsen, April 2017). This has produced a significant amount of Ethiopian asylum seekers who have been in Norway for a long time without legal documents²⁷ – so-called *longstanding unreturnable asylum seekers*. The fear of being returned, and the feeling of illegality among these asylum seekers have contributed to an activism in the Ethiopian diaspora community that combines protest against Norwegian asylum politics and

²⁷ The number is in the hundreds, according to NOAS (Martinsen, Interview 14, April 2017).

protest against the Ethiopian regime. A useful example is the varying asylum practice regarding EPRP members and supporters. Informants from the EPRP have described the Norwegian asylum practice as “particularly strict” by presenting uncorroborated claims that some EPRP-affiliates have been granted asylum in Germany after being denied asylum in Norway (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017). The cause for the occasional strict practice is the impression among Norwegian authorities that the EPRP is an insignificant, if not non-existent political actor in Ethiopia (Landinfo 2013). Consequently, the perception among Ethiopian diasporans – particularly in the EPRP-community – that Norwegian asylum politics is weakening opposition groups in Norway is not uncommon (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017).

The perception of Norwegian asylum politics as too strict has prompted the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway to actively engage in *immigration politics*²⁸. This is understood by Østergaard-Nielsen as “political activities that migrants or refugees undertake to better their situation in the receiving country, such as obtaining more political, social and economic rights [...]” (2001: 5). In the Norwegian case, immigration politics has occasionally motivated diaspora mobilization and initiated processes of dissent. Rune Berglund-Steen and Jon Ole Martinsen (NOAS), claim that many of those who mobilized support for demonstrations in 2005 were asylum seekers from the opposition – some of whom were living under harsh conditions as undocumented refugees (Interview 12; Interview 14, April 2017). In February 2011, undocumented Ethiopians went on a hunger strike in Oslo cathedral to protest strict asylum policies²⁹ (NRK 2011; TV2 2011). The hunger strike was widely covered by Norwegian media³⁰ and for a short time the Ethiopian human rights situation was on the national agenda. Newspapers reproduced opinions about the Ethiopian regime, and Norwegian asylum politics was used as a rally point for mobilization:

Most people here are members of the political opposition in Ethiopia. I have personally profiled myself as an opponent to the regime through seminars and public debate in Norway. If we are sent back [to Ethiopia], we risk imprisonment, torture, and at worst, death (Bizualem Beza, Interview with Aftenposten 2011).

²⁸ In 2006, the Ethiopian Asylum Seekers Association (EASA) was established to provide assistance to Ethiopian asylum seekers. Civic and political organizations are also involved in this work.

²⁹ In 2010/2011 Norwegian authorities withdrew tax cards from Ethiopian undocumented asylum seekers, preventing them from working. According to NOAS, this decision left some Ethiopians homeless with no other alternatives than taking to the streets.

³⁰ A search on “Ethiopians, Oslo cathedral” in the newspaper database Retriever shows 171 hits for 2011.

The causal relationship between asylum politics in the hostland and diaspora mobilization has not been thoroughly studied, and a theoretical framework conceptualizing the relationship has therefore been difficult to find. Consequently, this thesis will suggest that more attention on asylum and refugee policies in hostlands may provide a richer picture of diaspora mobilization, particularly in cases where many diasporans are asylum seekers.

Recent unrest in Ethiopia

Since late 2015, Ethiopia has experienced a wave of public dissent, which has triggered mobilizing activities in the diaspora. Opposition groups in Norway have organized protests, written commentaries in Norwegian dailies, and used social media as a platform for the dissemination of information from the homeland. While recent unrest and the brutal handling of protesters by the Ethiopian state has further exacerbated the relationship between the Ethiopian government and the opposition diaspora, it has also created hope. Several informants view the current situation as a turning point in Ethiopian politics. In the words of OLF-leader in Norway, Amasinew Melese Kenate:

The state of emergency has created a time bomb for the regime. You cannot rule people with absolute dictatorship forever. When you are being pressurized, you will react. Recent unrest has triggered many youngsters in Oromia to join the struggle, so it has created favourable conditions for us militarily (Interview 5, April 2017).

Recent unrest has also motivated opposition groups in Norway to increase their efforts in collecting funds for the struggles back home. For example, members of the OLF and PG7 are required to contribute financially to their organisations – funds that are channelled through the central committees of the organisations for military and political purposes (Kenate, Interview 5; Zerihun, Interview 7, April 2017). Financial contributions have thus become an important mechanism of exercising influence for the diaspora, especially in times of unrest in the homeland. Social media has also played an important role in fuelling diaspora mobilization in the wake of recent unrest. One informant who runs the Ethiopian Norway-based TV-channel, *Etiopisk-norsk kanal (ETNK)* emphasizes the importance of online communication: “Social media has become a powerful tool for information sharing and mobilization. We use Facebook, Twitter and conversation forums to inform each other about demonstrations and political events. This has become particularly important these days, with the current situation in Ethiopia” (Abebe, Interview 4 April 2017). Informants also claim that recent unrest has exposed

the brutality of the Ethiopian government to a younger generation in the diaspora who have not experienced the repression hands on like their parents or grandparents:

Demonstrations back home have revealed the true nature of the Ethiopian regime to the youngsters in the diaspora. The repression of their brothers and sisters irritates them. That is why they are so active right now. Remember, they are the ones who have to carry the struggle forward (Gemtessa, Interview 6, April 2017).

5.3 Causal mechanisms

The following section will present some of the most important mechanisms driving diaspora mobilization by drawing from concepts in social movement theory. Such concepts include strategic framing; transnational entrepreneurship; political opportunities; resource mobilization; and lobbying and persuasion. The section will also argue that ethnic outbidding has contributed to mobilizing efforts. Mechanisms of mobilization can furthermore be viewed as a form of civic participation, in which members of the diaspora channel their mobilizing efforts through organisations and political parties. This section seeks to give answers to the final research question: Which mechanisms have been used by the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway to mobilize supporters?

5.3.1 Framing and entrepreneurship

The act of framing provides an efficient mechanism for diaspora mobilization if the frames manage to align the perceptions, values, or interests of diaspora members with those of the political entrepreneurs who formulate the frames (Adamson in Checkel 2013: 70). As argued by Lyons, “these perceptions are influential in homeland politics because the diaspora plays critical roles in financing political activities and framing political debates” (2007: 535). Grievances, like the ones described in section 4.2.1, are actively used and modified by entrepreneurs in the Ethiopian diaspora to create frames that demonize the Ethiopian regime. Today, digital technology has improved the diaspora’s ability to disseminate frames, helped by numerous diaspora networks like the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT) and Oromia Media Network (OMN)³¹ which are pumping out news stories 24 hours a day. In Norway, framing strategies have often echoed those of other diaspora communities, albeit with

³¹ ESAT is one of the most influential diaspora networks. It has a pan-Ethiopian profile, and nurtures close relations with Patriotic Ginbot 7. Fundraising events aimed at collecting money for ESAT have been organized by the diaspora in Norway. OMN is headed by controversial Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed. Pan-Ethiopianists in Norway view Mohammed as an extremist advocating for the secession and independence of Oromia.

a special focus on the relationship between Norway and Ethiopia. Recurring framing strategies tend to centre on Norwegian authorities' silence when confronted with human rights abuses in Ethiopia, or accusations that Norwegian aid is financing repression. Some informants have even declared that Norwegian money is used to kill people in Ethiopia (e.g. Amare, Interview 3, April 2017). Some of the strongest reactions from the diaspora has come as a result of Norwegian-Ethiopian cooperation, such as the recognition of Meles Zenawi by the partially state-owned company Yara in 2005.

These framing strategies are both direct and indirect as they address both the homeland and the hostland – and sometimes both at the same time. In Norway, political entrepreneurs have played an important role in the formulation of opinions and criticisms. In the words of Leul Mekonnen:

The political elites that migrated [to Norway] during the communist regime and in newer times – whether from the EPRP or as defectors from the TPLF, or from other organizations – they were intellectuals who had tremendous experience in international politics, and they had been tested as guerrilla fighters in addition to their political enlightenment. So those people have done a great job in attracting newcomers, and establishing and moving on with the political activism (Interview 13, April 2017).

Some of the most important political entrepreneurs in Norway have been interviewed for this thesis, and include the likes of Daniel Gemtessa, Asayegne Tilahun, and Dr. Muluaem Adam Zerihun. The latter has been described by several informants as a particularly important entrepreneur due to his close relations with PG7 leader Berhanu Nega and PG7 deputy leader Andargachew Tsige. Daniel Gemtessa, on the other hand, is a close associate of ODF leader, Leenco Lata, who is a former Norwegian resident. The fact that these individuals are highly respected in the Ethiopian diaspora, not only in Norway but also internationally, have enabled them to take on the role as *transnational brokers* or *entrepreneurs*. Adamson argues that the concept of “transnational brokerage helps explain how networks defined by diasporic ties become connected with ‘conflict networks’ that are actively engaged in political violence” (2013: 69). Political entrepreneurs in Norway are in regular contact with the leaderships of their respective organizations in other countries. These relationships ensure the consolidation of the Norwegian branches' inclusion in the transnational network, and sustain overall connection with the ‘headquarters’ where decisions about homeland affairs are made, including violent military and insurgent strategies. Being responsible for the maintenance of transnational relations, political entrepreneurs, or brokers, can connect a group symbolically and materially to a conflict (ibid.). Moreover, entrepreneurs have the important role of conveying to their peers the strategies of mobilization which have been decided on at the highest level. In the words of

the EPRP leader for the Norwegian branch, “we are autonomous, but we always follow the principles of the EPRP” (Tilahun, Interview 9, April 2017). The same goes for Norwegian branches associated with PG7 and its support group, DCESON, as well as the OLF and the ODF. Changes in politics, and new strategies and principles are passed on to local entrepreneurs, who use both open and closed (mass)-meetings as well as demonstrations and an extensive network of diaspora media to disseminate information. Moreover, the transnational flow of information, which is channelled through entrepreneurs and social media, helps synchronize mobilizing activities across borders. A member of the Ethiopian Community and PG7 supporter explains it like this:

There are so many different branches around the world, but there’s only one MAIN organisation [in this case, PG7]. A large part of the communication goes through this [organizational] system that we have built globally. If we plan demonstrations, we use social media like Facebook or YouTube to inform our brothers and sisters in other countries so they can do the same thing (Amare, Interview 3, April 2017).

The success of political entrepreneurs in Norway, according to informants, has been their ability to unite constituencies across party lines and ethnic affiliations. In the words of Mulualem Adam Zerihun, “Norwegian opposition groups have avoided polarization, and managed to cooperate in certain cases by promoting togetherness. This has not been the case in other Western countries” (Interview 7, April 2017). This statement, however, must not be confused with the idea that harmony has reigned in the diasporic community, since this has been widely rebuffed by several informants who have complained about periods of severe fragmentation, and deep divisions, both internally and among organizations³². Still, sporadic co-operation between certain opposition groups, particularly between pan-Ethiopian segments, has been corroborated by third parties like Rune Berglund-Steen and Jon Ole Martinsen (Interview 12; Interview 14, April 2017).

While there have been instances of true rapprochement between different opposition groups in the diaspora – particularly in the aftermath of the Yara-prize and during the hunger strike in

³² The OLF – both in Norway and globally – experienced divisions and conflict in 2008 (the creation of Kemal Gelchu’s OLF-offshoot) and 2013 (the creation of ODF). The CUD support group, which eventually transformed into DCESON, experienced periods of fragmentation in the wake of the 2005-election when the CUD split in three factions. The EPRP went through a period of serious internal disruption in 2007 when the EPRP split in two factions – ‘the Democratic Faction’ led by Mersha Yousef, and ‘the Iyasu faction’ led by Iyasu Alemayehu. In Norway, indications by informants point to a rather cold relationship between the OLF and the pan-Ethiopian groups. The EPRP and PG7, on the other hand, attend many of the same meetings, and co-operate around large manifestations. Furthermore, the relationship between the ODF and PG7 has improved after the parties decided to work together after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2016.

Oslo cathedral – the practice of *ethnic outbidding* as a mobilizing mechanism has simultaneously worked as a serious impediment to co-operation. Ethnic outbidding must be understood as the politicization of ethnic differences in which “diaspora organizations [...] attempt to outbid each other in their articulation of a national or ethnic identity as a means of increasing their power and standing in the diaspora” (Adamson 2013: 71). Both Oromos and Amharas in the Ethio-Norwegian diaspora have particular ways of exercising ethnic outbidding. Oromo informants tend to emphasize the historical marginalization suffered by Oromos, both under the rule of Amharas and Tigrayans. In the words of OLF-leader Asaminew Melese Kenate:

Our base argument is that we have been colonized by the Northern Habesha group³³...Our point is that we have been targeted by the Ethiopian empire for being Oromo. Our resources have been exploited, our culture and history is undermined, and any dissent expressed by an Oromo will be brutally punished. This injustice has been committed against us, both from the Amharas and the Tigrayans. So yes, collaboration with Amhara-dominated groups is difficult (Interview 5, April 2017).

Subsequently, Oromos’ outbidding efforts are not only limited to violations under the EPRDF/TPLF-regime; the outbidding also incorporates historical grievances against the former dominance of Amhara-elites. Amhara informants, on the other hand, are less inclined to apply ethnicity as a tool for political mobilization due to their tendency to reject the ethnicization of politics. As argued by Mulualem Adam Zerihun, “thinking along ethnic lines is venomous and a strategy used by the TPLF to stay in power and divide us” (Interview 7, April 2017). In instances when Amharas do emphasize their ethnicity, it is normally to highlight recent injustices committed against Amharas by the EPRDF/TPLF-regime, such as the eviction of Amharas from territories that did not befall the Amhara regional state following the establishment of new administrative regions in the 1990s. Furthermore, a common feature in diaspora media is the publication of articles that use the word ‘genocide’ to describe violations against Amharas under the EPRDF/TPLF-regime³⁴.

³³ Here, the Northern Habesha group refers to the Amhara- and Tigrinya-speaking people of the Northern highlands. The ethnic category *Habesha*, however, also encompasses the Gurage (1,9 million) and the Agew (0,9 million) (Ficquet & Feyissa in Prunier & Ficquet 2015: 17).

³⁴ See for example:

<http://www.zehabesha.com/english-documentary-the-hidden-genocide-of-amharas-what-the-world-need-to-know/>

<https://www.tesfanews.net/truth-tplf-genocide-lies-disinformation-ethiopia-ii/>

<https://www.nazret.com/2016/09/16/ethiopias-killing-fields-and-silent-genocide/>

5.3.2 Resource mobilization, lobbying and political opportunities

In a process of diaspora mobilization, a wide range of activities and efforts are initiated to impact on developments in the homeland. One efficient method to achieve influence in the homeland as a diaspora is through resource mobilization. These resources may be strictly material in the form of financial support/remittances, or human, in the form of technical expertise or recruits (Adamson 2013: 72). Collection of funds for opposition parties, diaspora media, or military insurgencies in Ethiopia have proved to be a preferred mechanism of *direct participation* among Ethiopian diasporans in Norway, if we are to borrow from Østergaard-Nielsen's (2001) framework for transnational political practices. Both nationalist and pan-Ethiopian movements have organized regular fundraising events over the years, which according to NOAS have been very successful, and increasingly more frequent:

The impression is that the character of activities has changed lately. Before, the diaspora focused more on being visible by organizing big demonstrations and manifestations. Now, the organization is more internal, fundraising events have become very popular and successful. They even manage to convince their leaders to come to Norway and participate at the fundraisers. Berhanu Nega was here last summer, and activist and artist Tamagne Beyene was here in 2013 for an ESAT-fundraiser (Martinsen, Interview 14, April 2017).

The funds collected at these fundraisers are normally transferred directly to the organizations' headquarters where the fund is channelled into salaries and support for both civil and armed struggle. Several informants emphasize the diaspora's responsibility to finance and maintain the struggle, whether that is done by paying the salaries of journalists in the opposition media, leaderships in various movements or soldiers on the ground in Ethiopia or Eritrea. Based on research on the Ethiopian diaspora in the US, Terrence Lyons has argued that the 2005 election prompted the Ethiopian diaspora to engage in homeland politics in new ways through fundraising, lobbying, and engaging in political debates (2007: 543). While fundraisers seem to have been quite successful in Norway, most informants agree that lobbying efforts have proved a much harder task. Contrary to resource mobilization, which tend to represent a direct way of participating in transnational political practices, the act of lobbying hostland governments falls more in the category of *indirect participation*. In the words of Østergaard-Nielsen, "indirect participation is when migrants or refugees draw upon their resources to influence the government of the receiving country to pursue particular policy towards their homeland" (2003: 22). There is relative broad consensus that contact between the Ethiopian opposition diaspora and Norwegian authorities has declined after the 2007 diplomatic crisis. General disappointment regarding Norway's Ethiopia-policy has contributed to reduced moral,

and denigrated efforts to lobby the MFA, politicians and other actors of interest. The perception that Norwegian authorities were more sympathetic to diaspora grievances before, and thus more inclined to absorb information from diaspora sources, is regularly referred to by informants. The increased negligence of Norwegian authorities is described by Daniel Gemtessa in the following way:

Whenever we demonstrate or appeal to Norwegian authorities, the response is silence. They say, 'we will answer you', but the answer never comes. Many still believe that Norwegian politics is the same as it was 10-15 years ago, when Norway was a bridge maker. They don't understand that Norway has turned its back on them (Interview 6, April 2017).

Subsequently, lobbying as a way of exercising influence has become a source of great frustration for Ethiopian diasporans. This, however, does not mean that contact between Norwegian authorities and the Ethiopian diaspora is completely absent; it still exists, albeit without the same enthusiasm and hope that characterized diaspora lobbying in the early 2000s. While lobbying efforts have proved challenging lately, several informants still praise the inclusiveness and openness that characterize the Norwegian political system, which has provided diaspora groups with *political opportunities* not enjoyed by their counterparts in Ethiopia. In social movement theory, political opportunities are those “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 1994: 85). In Norway, civil society organisations play an important role in Norwegian policy making – often meeting with politicians and other policy makers to inform and influence decisions. The encouragement of civic actors to participate and actively contribute to political discourse is an intrinsic part of a liberal democracy, which is not enjoyed by people who live under the auspices of an autocratic regime. Several informants point to the transparency and inclusiveness of the Norwegian model as an incentive for mobilization and agenda setting. One informant emphasizes the egalitarian nature of Norwegian society as an important contributing factor to increased dialogue among different opposition groups in Norway:

The Ethiopian intellectuals that came to Norway decades ago have adopted the social democratic way of thinking; to be inclusive, to be *folkelig*. They don't care about class or social background, and can therefore interact with all types of people, including asylum seekers who don't have anything. This has contributed to more dialogue between people who wouldn't necessarily speak to each other in a different context (Mekonnen, Interview 13, April 2017).

6 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis has been to provide an overview of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway, and point to relevant causal factors and causal mechanisms that can help explain the mobilization of Ethiopian political parties, movements and organizations in Norway. The case of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway was chosen due to a general lack of available research prompting the need for more knowledge and broader empirical suggestions. The thesis was guided by three research questions aimed at illuminating the diversity of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway, and highlight its ability to mobilize supporters – primarily in the hostland. The sheer magnitude of Ethiopian diaspora groups in Norway required some delimitations which occasioned a disproportionate focus on the most influential parties and organizations – mainly the OLF, the ODF, the EPRP, and PG7.

To answer the research questions and conceptualize the findings, an analytical framework was established encompassing concepts from diaspora studies, transnational studies and social movement theory. The analysis started out with a descriptive elaboration of the main categories of Ethiopian diaspora groups in Norway: Oromo organizations, pan-Ethiopian organizations and pro-regime elements. An examination of the different organizations illustrated important loyalties and hostilities that contribute to the consolidation of divisions and diversification – suggesting that the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway is characterized by serious fragmentation along political, ethnic and cultural lines. For example, findings suggest that Oromo organizations – particularly the OLF – are less inclined to seek cooperation with other Ethiopian opposition groups due to fundamental disagreements about the future of the Oromian state. The analysis also showed that historical grievances have generated a common assumption among Oromos that Amhara-dominated diaspora groups are power mongers with aspirations to dominate other ethnic groups. This is furthermore complicated by the presence of pro-regime elements which seek to destabilize opposition groups by using methods of intimidation and surveillance. Consequently, the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway is an exemplification of a non-organic diaspora that consists of multiple political projects, stances and expressions, rather than a cohesive and finely attuned community. Abandoning the conceptualization of the diaspora as a *unitary actor* with coherent motives, encouraged by several scholars in diaspora studies, can contribute to a more holistic understanding of Ethiopian diaspora politics.

The second section of the findings and analysis chapter set out to outline several causal factors that can help explain the mobilization of the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway. The analysis suggested a dual conceptualization of the underlying causes of mobilization; long-term grievances and single incidents (both in Norway and Ethiopia). Most causal factors associated with long-term grievances were related to developments in the homeland, and more specifically feelings of being marginalized and targeted by the Ethiopian state, strong dissatisfaction with the lack of political pluralism, and a general condemnation of government corruption, repression and brutality. These grievances are not unique to the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway, but rather represent shared ideas among Ethiopian diasporans which serve to create and enhance transnational bonds and cross-border mobilization. The Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway nurtures strong connections with likeminded Ethiopian diaspora groups in other hostlands, and uses those connections to consolidate the transnational space in which grievances and mobilizing efforts are generated. The analysis has also demonstrated the importance of single incidents or processes in sparking diaspora mobilization. Some of these incidents have occurred in Ethiopia – like the aftermath of the 2005 election and recent popular unrest – while other incidents are particular to the Norwegian context – like the Meles Zenawi-visit in 2005 and the hunger strike in Oslo cathedral in 2011. These incidents caused massive mobilization among Ethiopian diasporans in Norway and generated large-scale demonstrations in several Norwegian cities. Findings suggest that 2005 was a particularly significant year for diaspora mobilization as it corresponded with a contentious election in Ethiopia and a visit by Meles Zenawi to Norway to receive the African Green Revolution Yara Award. The combination of these events triggered a new-born willingness among diaspora groups to join forces against the Ethiopian government, which simultaneously created divisions between moderate Tigrayans and opposition groups. The analysis also suggests that diaspora mobilization has been caused by strict asylum regulations imposed by the Norwegian government and the rapprochement between Norwegian and Ethiopian authorities following the 2007 diplomatic crisis. This indicates that diaspora mobilization is not exclusively caused by the actions of the homeland government, but also by the politics of the hostland government. Mobilization against the treatment of Ethiopian asylum seekers is furthermore an expression of widespread dissatisfaction with how Norwegian immigrant authorities assesses the security conditions in Ethiopia. Consequently, these reactions are not only caused by the implementation of strict asylum policies, but also by a general fear of deportation among undocumented immigrants whose anxieties about returning are exacerbated. Exploring the causal links between asylum politics in the hostland and diaspora mobilization may prove relevant in other

cases involving refugee diasporas and could potentially contribute to a heightened understanding of diaspora politics by examining the links between asylum rights and diaspora mobilization.

The final section of the chapter focused on mechanisms of mobilization. By drawing on well-known concepts from social movement theory, the analysis attempted to establish a framework through which mechanisms could be conceptualized. These concepts included strategic framing, entrepreneurship, political opportunities, resource mobilization and lobbying and persuasion. Initially, the analysis focused on the creation and dissemination of frames as a powerful mechanism of mobilization. Frames have been used by the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway to create an image of the Ethiopian state as a repressive and dictatorial regime. The spread of frames is generated by wide-reaching opposition media like ESAT and OMN, which have a large following in the Norwegian diaspora. Additionally, the presence of articulate and highly influential entrepreneurs in the Ethiopian opposition diaspora in Norway has contributed to the consolidation of frames. These entrepreneurs are often well-educated men who have assumed leadership positions in their organizations, and nurture close relationships with leading figures in the Ethiopian diaspora opposition like Berhanu Nega and Leenco Lata. Subsequently, entrepreneurs enjoy widespread admiration and respect from their supporters, and ensures that Norwegian branches are up to date with the plans of the central leadership. Finally, the analysis highlighted resource mobilization, lobbying and persuasion as important mechanisms of mobilization. These mechanisms may include fundraisers, financial contributions through party membership, efforts to convince Norwegian authorities to change or modify their Ethiopia-policies, and regular meetings with politicians, Landinfo, immigration authorities and Norwegian NGOs concerning the security situation in Ethiopia. The analysis shows that lobbying efforts have become a source of great frustration for opposition groups due to what is perceived as a declining interest in diaspora matters from Norwegian authorities. The thesis will end with a critical observation by one of the informants:

Norway is not conducive for opposition groups – it is very hostile. We really struggle to get access to different authorities. We still don't have any good partner who supports our cause. In other countries, people from parliament stand with the Ethiopians, they feel our pain. You have vocal MPs supporting us in Sweden, Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK. Here, all they say is that Ethiopia is going in a good direction, that the country is experiencing economic progress and so on. So, no, we don't have anyone here (Zerihun, Interview 7, April 2017).

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Interviews

Interview number	Date of interview	Informant
Interview 1	28 March 2017	Sewasew Johannessen
Interview 2	3 April 2017	Anonymous 1
Interview 3	3 April 2017	Zufan Amare
Interview 4	5 April 2017	Shiferaw Abebe
Interview 5	6 April 2017	Amasinew Melese Kenate
Interview 6	6 April 2017	Daniel Gemtessa
Interview 7	10 April 2017	Mulualem Adam Zerihun
Interview 8	10 April 2017	Tadesse Gash
Interview 9	19 April 2017	Asayegne Tilahun
Interview 10	19 April 2017	Girum Zeleke
Interview 11	20 April 2017	Fekadu
Interview 12	20 April 2017	Rune Berglund-Steen
Interview 13	21 April 2017	Leul Mekonnen
Interview 14	21 April 2017	Jon Ole Martinsen
Interview 15	24 April 2017	Yussuf Yassin
Interview 16	24 April 2017	Anonymous 2
Interview 17	26 April 2017	Ghidey Zeratsion
Interview 18	27 April 2017	Alemayehu Fantahun
Interview 19	28 April 2017	Abadima Guye

Appendix 1: Interview Topic Guide: Ethiopian Diaspora in Norway

Main topic	Refining questions
Introduction/background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about your background; how did you end up in Norway? • What did you do in Ethiopia before you came to Norway?
Life in Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have your life been like since you came to Norway? (Job, family, studies etc.) • How would you characterize Norwegian society?
Political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When and why did you engage yourself in politics? Were you politically active before you came to Norway? (Motives, goals etc.) • Why did you end up in this specific party/organization/movement?
Political aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main aims of your party/organization/movement? • How do you work to achieve those aims?
Organization and mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the reasons behind the mobilization of the Ethiopian diaspora? (Common struggle, identity, nationalism etc.) • How is your party organized? • How do you keep in touch and co-operate with other oppositional organizations abroad? • How do you go about to influence what is happening on the ground in Ethiopia? • What are the main commonalities among the members in your party/organization/movement? • What messages are used to mobilize resistance?
The Ethiopian state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are oppositional groups abroad viewed by the Ethiopian government? • In your opinion: What characterizes the Ethiopian government/state? What are your general thoughts about the Ethiopian government/state? (Politics, ideology, reputation, willingness to compromise etc.) • What is the best governance model for Ethiopia? • What can Norway and other Western states do to pressure the Ethiopian government/state?
Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What measures are taken by the Ethiopian government to monitor citizens abroad? (Examples) • Why would they want to monitor people? • What institutions are monitoring Ethiopians in Norway? • What kind of sanctions are to be expected if you return to Ethiopia? • Do you know of someone who has been subjected to such sanctions? If so, how did that go down?
Activity in Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of activities do you organize in Norway? • What is your impression of the Ethiopian diaspora in Norway in terms of political organization? (Size, influence, power etc.) • How would you characterize your relationship with the Norwegian state (i.e. Ministry of Foreign Affairs)? (Support, dialogue, scepticism?) • What are the main differences between politics in Norway compared to Ethiopia?

Wrapping up

- What needs to happen for you to want to return to Ethiopia?
- What are your predictions for the future of Ethiopian politics?
- Is there anything you would like to add?