

Integrating Urban Political Ecology with Indigenous Peacebuilding Mechanisms of Tulama Oromo and Gamo Communities in Addis Ababa Vicinities

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Abstract

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The Tulama Oromo and Gamo community in Burayu, Ethiopia, are the subjects of this study. It looks at the connection between fast peri-urban urbanisation and indigenous peacebuilding techniques. Besides, the study aims to analyse how capitalist-driven peri-urban expansion erodes indigenous governance systems, transforms socio-ecological relations, and fuels inter-communal conflict. The study's analytical paradigm combines Indigenous Peacebuilding with Urban Political Ecology (UPE). A qualitative comparative case study design based on social constructionism was used in the investigation. In Burayu and Arbaminch, 110 semi-structured interviews, ten focus groups, participant observation, and field notes were used to gather data. Purposive and snowball sampling approaches were used to pick elders, female peace actors, youth representatives, government officials, police personnel, and victims of violence as participants. The results show that the 2018 Burayu violence was greatly exacerbated by rapid peri-urban urbanisation, land commodification, the growth of informal settlements, the fragmentation of government, and socioeconomic marginalisation. The study also shows that, in spite of pressures from modernisation and state-centered governance, indigenous institutions like the Tulama Gadaa system, Jaarsummaa, and Gumaa, as well as the Gamo Dubusha assembly system, Gome cosmology, and Tuge ritual, continue to operate as adaptive socio-ecological governance mechanisms. Following the conflict, these organisations were crucial to societal healing, restorative justice, reconciliation, and the avoidance of retaliatory violence. The study comes to the conclusion that acknowledging and incorporating indigenous peacebuilding organisations as valid socio-ecological governance systems is necessary for sustained peacebuilding in rapidly urbanising peri-urban areas. Therefore, minimizing urban violence and fostering inclusive and long-lasting peace in Ethiopia requires strengthening cooperation between formal state institutions and customary procedures.

Keywords: Urban Political Ecology; Indigenous Peacebuilding; Peri-urban Urbanization; Gadaa System; Dubusha Institution; Socio-ecological Governance; Burayu, Ethiopia

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Global South, rapid urbanisation has become a significant socioeconomic and socioecological shift (Brenner & Schmid, 2014). In Ethiopia's capital city of Addis Ababa vicinities such as Burayu town, significant increase in urbanisation, land commercialisation, migration, environmental pressure, and changes in government has been seen. Tensions and violence in September 2018 G.C have resulted from this (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The fundamental socio-ecological changes that underlie the crisis are not adequately addressed by public and political interpretations, despite the fact that these interpretations often frame the violence primarily in terms of ethnicity or politics. An essential analytical framework for comprehending these dynamics is provided by Urban Political Ecology. Urban Political Ecology conceptualizes cities as socio-ecological formations produced through the interaction of political, economic, and ecological processes rather than merely as concentrations of infrastructure and population (Heynen et al., 2006). Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) argue that urbanization is an ongoing process of capitalist accumulation that transforms land, labor, nature, and social relations. Urban growth that is primarily motivated by market-oriented land commercialisation, investment interests, speculative development, and accumulation processes is referred to as capitalist urbanisation. From the perspective of Urban Political Ecology, peri-urban conflicts emerge not only from ethnic antagonisms but also from uneven urban development that produces exclusion, dispossession, and socio-ecological rupture (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003; Heynen et al., 2006).

In Ethiopia's peri-urban areas, indigenous institutions like *Gadaa* (Age-grade governance system in Oromo), *Jaarsummaa* (Institution for elder mediation and conflict resolution), *Gumaa* (A system of restorative reconciliation and blood recompense), *haadha sinqee* (Women's establishment of symbolic authority), and *Ateetee* (Women's spiritual ritual and reconciliation) offer culturally rooted processes for social reconciliation, restorative justice, mediation, and communal accountability among the Tulama Oromo. Similar to this, the Gamo community is governed by organisations like *Dubusha* (place of assembly), *Gome* (Principle of moral-spiritual contamination and accountability), *Caqqo* (traditional institution of governance), and *Tuge* (ritual of symbolic forgiveness and reconciliation) through cosmological accountability, ritual sanctions, and reconciliation processes.

Studies have not been adequately researched on systematically integrating Urban Political Ecology with Indigenous Peacebuilding in peri-urban contexts, despite plentiful studies vastly worked on the implication of urbanisation over indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms of various Ethiopian areas. While a significant amount of research has been done on Ethiopia's indigenous institutions for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, these studies have mostly concentrated on describing the composition, processes, and efficacy of customary institutions in settling regional conflicts (Assefa, 2015; Abera, 2018; Tolemariam, 2021; Tadesse, 2022). In comparatively stable rural environments, prior research has examined the function of *Gadaa*, *Jaarsummaa*, *Shimgelina*, *Gumaa*, and *Dubusha* in fostering restorative justice, social solidarity, and communal reconciliation (Dejene, 2007; Pankhurst & Getachew, 2008; Assefa, 2015). The socioeconomic and governance effects of fast urbanisation, such as land dispossession, peri-urban growth, environmental degradation, migration, and informal settlements around Addis Ababa, have been studied by other academics (Brenner & Schmid, 2014; Lawhon et al., 2018; Rademacher, 2015). Nonetheless, these two areas of scholarship have mostly grown apart. In order to explain how rapid peri-urban urbanisation alters socio-ecological relationships, customary governance institutions, and indigenous peacebuilding practices in Addis Ababa's peri-urban areas, little empirical research has methodically combined Urban Political Ecology (UPE) with Indigenous Peacebuilding. Furthermore, there are very few comparative studies that look at how Gamo and Tulama Oromo traditional institutions adjust to urban socio-ecological changes. In order to fill these gaps, this study integrates Urban Political Ecology with Indigenous Peacebuilding to investigate how urban transformation, socio-ecological change, and indigenous governance interact in Burayu.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Social Constructionism as the Basis for Epistemology

The epistemological foundation of this research is social constructionism, which maintains that language, interaction, ritual practice, and historical experience all contribute to the collective production of knowledge, meaning, and social reality. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), social reality is constantly created by institutional practices and social processes rather than being objectively set. Since institutions like *Gadaa*, *Dubusha*, *Gumaa*, and *Tuge* generate legitimacy

through culturally shared meanings, ritual performance, and communal memory, this viewpoint is especially relevant for studying indigenous peacebuilding. Ritual reconciliation is the term for culturally symbolic rituals and activities that are meant to reintegrate disputing parties into the society, purge social tensions, reaffirm coexistence, and rebuild confidence. Thus, conflict and reconciliation are viewed as socially and culturally produced processes impacted by communal interpretation rather than just factual facts. The way that different players view urbanisation itself is also explained by social constructionism. While displaced populations may view urban expansion as dispossession, cultural loss, and social fragmentation, state institutions frequently portray it as modernisation and development.

2.2 Urban Political Ecology

Urban Political Ecology refers to a critical approach that looks at how unequal urban development is shaped by political and economic power in terms of urban landscapes, resource availability, and socio-ecological relationships. Urban Political Ecology offers a crucial paradigm for comprehending how unequal political and economic processes brought on by urbanisation alter social relations, governance structures, and natural systems. Urbanisation, according to Urban Political Ecology, is a socio-ecological metabolism in which capitalism accumulation reorganises land, labour, infrastructure, and natural resources rather than seeing cities as exclusively constructed settings. Heynen (2014) asserts that because urbanisation results in unequal access to resources, services, and political power, it is not socially neutral.

In a similar vein, Swyngedouw (2006) characterises urban growth as the "metabolization of nature," in which ecological systems and land are converted into urban infrastructure and commodities. Through state expropriation, unofficial sales, and investment-driven development, agricultural land has progressively been transformed into speculative urban property in Addis Ababa's peri-urban frontier, including Burayu. Agrarian livelihoods have been disrupted, communal ties have been eroded, and tensions over land ownership and urban belonging have increased as a result of this shift. Displaced Tulama farmers associated growing tensions with the erosion of reciprocal social relationships. Displaced Tulama farmers linked growing tensions to the breakdown of mutually beneficial social relationships, which had previously been established through communal interactions and elder-based governance. Before urbanisation, people relied on

one another through communal labour and farming, according to one participant. For the reason that everyone had obligations, elders were able to settle conflicts. People now compete with one another and sell land on an individual basis (Tulama elder, In-Depth Interview, Burayu, 2024). This result shows that urbanisation changed the socio-ecological underpinnings of traditional governing systems in addition to physical landscapes.

2.3 Socio-Ecological Governance via Indigenous Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a long-term procedures meant to stop violence in the future and restore harmony. Indigenous peacebuilding refers to culturally embedded systems of conflict prevention; mediation, reconciliation, restorative justice, and social healing that are practiced through customary institutions, elders, local norms, and traditional knowledge (Mac Ginty, 2008). Instead of viewing indigenous peacebuilding organisations as static cultural traditions, this study views them as adaptive socio-ecological governing systems. Socio-ecological governance refers to systems of governance that regulate the interactions between human societies and ecological systems by integrating environmental management, social organization, collective responsibility, and conflict resolution (Ostrom, 2009). Adaptive governance describes the capacity of institutions to modify their structures, decision-making processes, and practices in response to changing social, political, ecological, and urban conditions while maintaining their legitimacy and effectiveness (Chaffin et al., 2014). Within this framework, indigenous institutions function as culturally legitimate governance systems that regulate communal relations, manage conflicts, uphold collective responsibility, and restore social cohesion through customary norms and practices (Pankhurst & Assefa, 2008; Mac Ginty, 2008).

Through age-grade governance and group discussion, the *Gadaa* system has historically organised political leadership, social responsibility, and conflict resolution among the Tulama Oromo. Organisations like *Gumaa* and *Jaarsummaa* prioritise restorative justice over punitive retaliation. Restorative justice places more emphasis on mending social ties, admitting wrongdoing, making amends, and reintegrating the community. Similar to this, the Gamo *Dubusha* system's role as a communal assembly institution has governed social behaviour through cosmology accountability, ceremonial punishments, and deliberation. Serious misbehaviour is thought to cause environmental chaos and social imbalance, according to the *Gome* principle, which is a moral and

ecological penalty. As a result, these customary institutions view conflict as a rupture of social, spiritual, and ecological ties that calls for collective rehabilitation rather than only as a legal matter. Tradition, elders, ritual norms, and socially accepted behaviours are the foundation of locally based systems of authority, regulation, dispute resolution, and collective accountability known as customary governance.

2.4 Combining Indigenous Peacebuilding with Urban Political Ecology

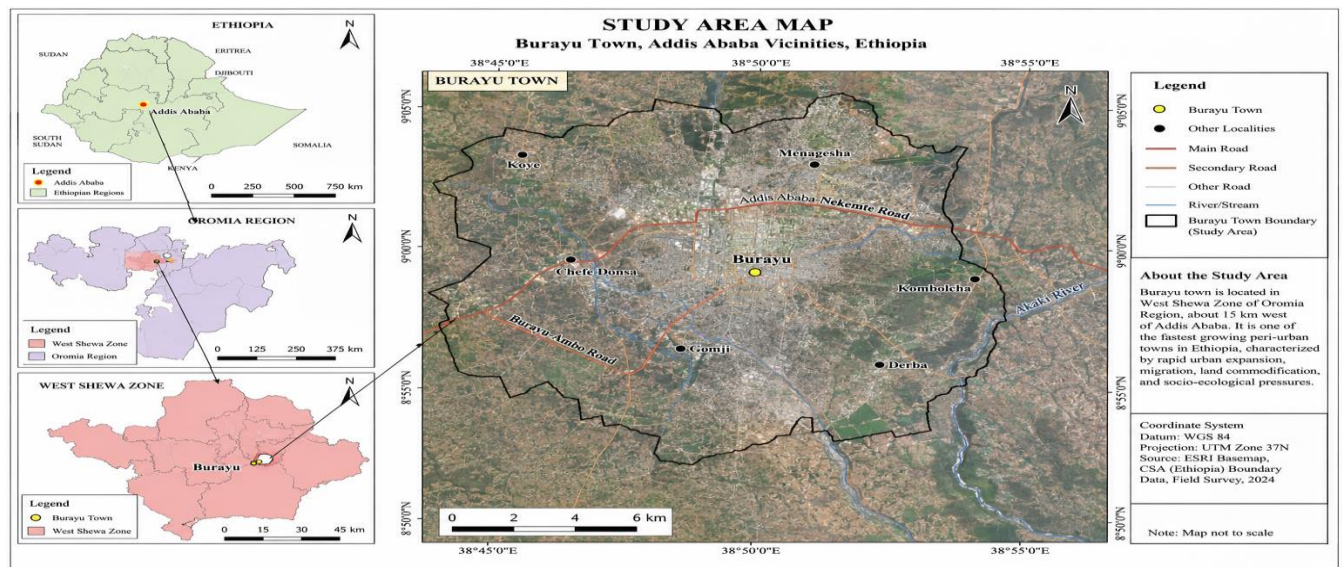
This study's analysis of urban conflict as a socio-ecological catastrophe and a governance crisis resolution is made possible by the merging of Urban Political Ecology with Indigenous Peacebuilding. In Burayu, urbanisation weakened both official and traditional government structures while escalating conflicts over land, housing, migration, and political power. Indigenous organisations continued to offer culturally acceptable channels for accountability, reconciliation, and mediation at the same time. These institutions functioned as adaptive systems in response to the socio-ecological upheavals brought about by urban growth, rather than taking the place of official government structures. Hence, this theoretical synthesis offers a more robust framework for comprehending how indigenous institutions continue to mediate social cohabitation under shifting urban settings. It also sees how peri-urban violence arises within larger processes of uneven urban transition.

3 METHODS AND MATERIALS

3.1 Design of Research

In order to examine indigenous peacebuilding strategies in the socio-ecological setting of Burayu's fast urbanisation, this study used a qualitative comparative case study technique. For the reason that it enables in-depth understanding of culturally ingrained governance structures, ritual practices, and community experiences, a qualitative method was chosen. By comparing indigenous peacebuilding mechanisms between Tulama and Gamo community, the study was mostly carried out at Burayu town, which is situated inside Sheger City around 15 km west of Addis Ababa. Burayu was chosen as an example of a fast urbanising peri-urban frontier marked by interethnic conflict, migration, land commercialisation, and the growth of informal settlements. Despite the ethnic diversity of Burayu, this study focuses on the Tulama Oromo and Gamo communities

because they were the main participants in the indigenous conflict resolution processes after the violence in 2018. Furthermore, concentrating on these communities offered the most pertinent empirical and analytical foundation for investigating how culturally and geographically diverse groups use indigenous institutions to combat urban violence and promote inter-communal harmony. Comparative fieldwork was also carried out in Arbaminch town in the Gamo Zone in Southern Ethiopia in order to have a better understanding of how Gamo elders effectively prevent violence in Arbaminch whereby Tulama elders face difficult in Burayu. This fieldwork aimed to investigate the cultural underpinnings, institutional frameworks, and reconciliation practices of *Dubusha*, *Gome*, *Caqqo*, and *Tuge* inside their respective places of origin rather than comparing Arba Minch and Burayu as distinct case studies.



3.2 Procedures of Sampling

In order to methodically find individuals who had firsthand knowledge and firsthand experience of the 2018 Burayu violence and indigenous peacebuilding methods, the study used purposive and snowball sampling strategies. Initially, Tulama elders and *Abba Gadaa* (leader of the Gadaa system) representatives, Gamo elders and traditional leaders, women peace actors, youth representatives, government officials, police officers, and victims of violence were among the participants purposefully chosen to be most pertinent to the study's goals. In order to gather viewpoints from customary authorities, impacted communities, local peace players, and state

entities directly involved in conflict management and reconciliation procedures, several participant categories were included. Following participant referrals, snowball sampling was used to find more key informants, including ceremonial leaders, revered elders, and community mediators who were hard to reach through official institutional routes. By using this strategy, the researchers were able to connect with individuals who had more in-depth, culturally aware knowledge of indigenous government and reconciliation processes.

Data were collected through 110 in-depth interviews and 10 focus group discussions (FGDs). The interview participants comprised 20 Tulama elders and *Abba Gadaa* representatives, 15 Gamo elders and traditional leaders, 10 women peace actors, 15 youth representatives, 30 victims of violence, 10 government officials, and 10 police officers. The FGD participants were recruited separately through purposive sampling and did not form part of the 110 interview participants. Three FGDs were conducted with Tulama elders (9, 8, and 10 participants, respectively), two with Gamo elders (8 and 9 participants), two with women peace actors (8 and 7 participants), two with youth representatives (9 and 8 participants), and one mixed-community FGD involving both Tulama and Gamo participants (10 participants). Until thematic saturation was reached—that is, until no significantly new themes, viewpoints, or material surfaced from further interviews and discussions—data collecting proceeded. Thus, the depth, consistency, and recurrence of responses across participant groups were used to assess the sample's adequacy rather than just numerical representation. By recording various viewpoints on urbanisation, indigenous governance, conflict, and reconciliation, the involvement of varied participant groups improved the findings' dependability and credibility. Furthermore, this diversity decreased reliance on a single participant type or point of view and allowed for cross-verification of material. The research credibility was reinforced by methodological triangulation using semi-structured interviews focuses groups, participant observation, and field notes.

3.3 Data Gathering Techniques and Analyses

Participants' experiences and opinions on urbanisation, land dispossession, governance, conflict, indigenous mediation, and reconciliation were examined using semi-structured interviews. Interpretive thematic analysis was used to examine those data by coding on their specification. The integrated analytical framework of Indigenous Peacebuilding and Urban Political Ecology was

used to interpret the discovered themes. The interviews blended narrative investigation of ritual customs and communal experiences with open-ended topic questions. In addition to enabling for the study of group interaction dynamics and shared community narratives, focus group talks explored collective conceptions of urban transition, conflict, and indigenous peacebuilding. *Ateetee* rites and post-conflict reconciliation activities were among the communal meetings and ritual ceremonies where participant observation took place. Observations, feelings, symbolic practices, and contextual information pertinent to indigenous government and socio-ecological change were recorded in field notes. The participation in the study was entirely voluntary up to leaving the interview. Primarily, participants gave their informed verbal consent, and transcripts and published materials were kept private by eliminating any identifying information.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Burayu's Urbanisation and Socio-Ecological Change

The results show that Burayu's ecological circumstances, governance structures, and social relationships were all drastically altered by the city's fast urbanisation. Strong discontent with compensation disparities and exclusion from urban development procedures was expressed in interviews with displaced Tulama farmers. A number of participants have described how the growing urban economy caused them to lose their agricultural land without providing them with sustainable alternatives. "The city grew, but local farmers became poorer," said one attendee. Farmers who were displaced became renters, while investors acquired land (in-depth interviews, displaced farmer, Burayu; interview conducted in 2024). From a Urban Political Ecology standpoint, this illustrates unequal urban development, as local residents are marginalised while politically and economically strong players profit disproportionately from urban growth. Participants went on to say that customary institutions that were formerly supported by rural social organisation were eroded by urbanisation. According to the results, ethnic hostility cannot be the only explanation for the Burayu violence in 2018. Instead, larger conflicts over land, urban resources, migration, and poor governance turned ethnicity into a political issue.

4.2. Restorative Governance and the Tulama *Gadaa* System

The *Gadaa* system, a traditional governance structure that organises political authority, social duty, and dispute resolution, is upheld by the Tulama Oromo. The *Gadaa* system, according to participants, is more than just a conventional political structure. It serves as a moral framework that governs social cooperation, mediation, and collective responsibility, according to elders. "The role of elders is not only to stop conflict but also to restore relations between people because the community cannot survive with revenge," an *Abba Gadaa* spokesperson clarified. (in-depth interviews, Burayu, Tulama elder, 2024). When it comes to the resolution of homicide and serious injury cases, the *Gumaa* reconciliation mechanism is especially crucial. In addition to emphasising public accountability, ritual cleansing, recompense, and communal reintegration, the approach makes a distinction between intentional and inadvertent violence. *Gumaa* involves several ritual stages, such as public confession, symbolic humiliation, negotiating recompense, animal sacrifice, ritual purification, and communal meals, according to field observations. "If blood is not ritually cleansed, hatred continues across generations," an elder clarified. Both parties can resume their regular interactions thanks to the rite. (FGD, Burayu, Tulama elders, 2024). These results show that *Gumaa* serves as restorative governance with the goal of reestablishing social equilibrium rather than merely acting as legal arbitration.

4.3. Cosmological Accountability of *Gome* and the Gamo *Dubusha* System

The Gamo people uphold a highly organised system of indigenous governance that is based on cosmic accountability, ritual mediation, and *Dubusha* assemblies. Elders, mediators, and ritual authority are all part of the hierarchical community deliberation processes that underpin the *Dubusha* system. Participants clarified that family, neighbourhood, and community gatherings are used to gradually settle conflicts. The idea of *Gome*, which describes the moral and spiritual contamination brought about by grave transgressions including murder, oath-breaking, and group treachery, is a key part of the system. "When violence spreads, it affects not only people but also the harmony of the entire community," said a Gamo elder. Elders act swiftly to prevent conflict from spreading because of this (FGD, Gamo elders, Arbaminch, 2024). Rather than focusing on monetary compensation, the Gamo reconciliation approach prioritises symbolic restitution and ritual purification. Public confession, symbolic shame, oath-taking, sacrifice ceremonies, and

communal reintegration are all part of rituals. The *Dubusha* system functions as a socio-ecological mechanism that controls communal harmony as well as a governance institution.

4.4 Indigenous Peacebuilding Mechanisms: A Comparative Study

In terms of institutional structure, reconciliation processes, ritual symbolism, and approaches to justice, the comparative study found both similarities and differences between the indigenous peacebuilding systems of Tulama Oromo and Gamo. Elder-led mediation, public involvement, ritual accountability, and communal reintegration are key components of both systems. In both societies, elders serve as both moral leaders and mediators, mending broken social bonds and making sure that agreements are upheld by the larger group. The study identified significant differences in institutional organisation and reconciliation practice, despite these similarities. In the Tulama Oromo community, *Gadaa*, *Jaarsummaa*, and *Gumaa* operate through relatively structured stages of negotiation, compensation, public confession, and ritual reconciliation. In cases involving injury or fatality, the *Gumaa* system places a particular emphasis on graduated compensation procedures. By acknowledging misconduct, restoring dignity to victims, and preventing cycles of revenge, compensation serves both symbolic and material purposes. According to a Tulama elder, resentment persists within the family in the absence of compensation. "*Gumaa* has restored both moral equilibrium and relationships" (Interview, Tulama elder, Burayu, 2024).

The Gamo *Dubusha* system, on the other hand, emphasises cosmic accountability through *Gome*, ritual purification, and group discussion. Reconciliation places more emphasis on purifying social and spiritual disorders that are thought to impact both people and the larger community than it does on cash compensation. In order to ward off bad luck and bring harmony back to the community, rituals sometimes include oath-taking, sacrificial ceremonies, and communal cleansing. Conflict contaminates the community spiritually, according to one Gamo elder. Both social relationships and spiritual problems must be purified via reconciliation (FGD, Gamo elders, Arbaminch, 2024). The study also discovered variations in institutional adaptability and ritual symbolism in urban settings. Milk, honey, group blessings, and blood purification rites that signify forgiveness and reintegration are common components of Tulama reconciliation rituals. Gamo rites, on the other hand, place more emphasis on ritual gatherings arranged by *Dubusha*, communal

purification, and symbolic sacrifices. Nonetheless, both systems showed a high degree of adaptability in peri-urban environments. In addition to mediating conflicts following the 2018 violence, elders from both communities employed customary institutions to reestablish harmony through mutual ritual participation, intercommunity communication, and culturally acceptable accountability systems. These results show that indigenous peacebuilding organisations continue to be dynamic socio-ecological governance systems that can handle conflict in socially diverse and quickly urbanising peri-urban settings.

4.5 Approaches of Indigenous Institutions to the Burayu Violence of 2018

According to field data, following the 2018 Burayu crisis, indigenous institutions were crucial in lowering retaliatory violence and promoting post-conflict reconciliation. Throughout the conflict, participants frequently observed that organised attacks, political mobilisation, and disinformation increased violence have taken place. Moreover, a number of respondents said that many of the attacks were from outside the immediate area. Residents of Gamo were more vulnerable during the attacks due to their spatial concentration. The victims reported experiencing extreme terror, being uprooted, and losing their belongings. "We thought the violence would continue unless elders intervened because the community was overwhelmed by anger and fear," one participant clarified. (in-depth interviews, Burayu, Gamo victim, 2024).

When Gamo elders performed the *Tuge* ritual—kneeling in front of armed youngsters while holding wet grass as a symbolic plea for pity and restraint—it was a pivotal moment in Arbaminch. Participants frequently highlighted the ritual's moral and emotional significance. "Many youths stopped when the elders knelt with wet grass because refusing elders in public would bring shame to the community," said one young participant. (FGD, young people, Arbaminch, 2024). Besides, Tulama elders organised *Jaarsummaa* networks to enable communication between communities, arrange local ceasefires, and set up gatherings for reconciliation. These results show that despite fast urbanisation and government fragmentation, indigenous institutions maintained their moral authority and practical usefulness.

4.6 Inter-communal Restoration and Ritual Reconciliation

Through *Gadaa* and *Dubusha* institutions, structured conversations, customary mediation, and reciprocal ritual involvement were all part of the post-conflict reconciliation between the Tulama

Oromo and Gamo communities. In Burayu, early talks centered on averting retaliatory assaults, protecting displaced inhabitants, and putting an end to violence. Elders, religious authorities, municipal officials, and customary authority convened in Arbaminch for later negotiations. In order to mend social ties and deter retaliation, *Gadaa* elders organised community discussions, arbitrated conflicts, and mobilised moral authority among the Tulama Oromo. "The Gadaa leaders told us that revenge would destroy both communities," a Tulama elder clarified. Restoring connections was necessary for achieving peace, not harbouring resentment (Interview, Tulama elder, Burayu, 2024).

In a similar vein, the Gamo *Dubusha* institution was crucial in promoting group discussion and peacemaking. In order to negotiate compensation, promote forgiveness, and restore community trust, *Dubusha* assemblies brought together clan representatives, elders, and impacted families. The Gamo community was given land in Burayu to create a communal *Dubusha* gathering place, which was made possible by local authorities and community leaders as part of the reconciliation process. Because it acknowledged the legitimacy of Gamo customary institutions in the urban setting and established a permanent forum for discussion, group decision-making, and dispute resolution, participants characterised this decision as symbolically significant. According to one Gamo participant, "through *Dubusha*, we sat collectively, discussed grievances publicly, and agreed that togetherness was vital for the future" (FGD, Gamo elders, Arbaminch, 2024).

Participation in cultural and religious ceremonies on both sides was another aspect of the healing process. While Tulama elders attended Gamo reconciliation rites and went to Gamo Zone to celebrate *Mesqel* (*Mesqeleyo*- religious festival) alongside the Gamo community, Gamo elders took part in Oromo *Irreecha* (Oromo festival/ritual celebration of gratitude) and *Ateetee* ceremonies. Following the violence, participants characterised these reciprocal visits as significant symbolic acts that reinforced inter-communal ties, reaffirmed coexistence, and restored trust. Oath-taking, sacrificial rites, group dinners, and symbolic acts of collective responsibility were among the ritualistic activities. According to the participants, these interactions changed negotiated peace accords into actual social relationships that were upheld by spiritual and societal duties. "Peace is not complete when leaders simply talk," said one elder. Communities need to share meals, offer blessings, and take part in each other's customs (FGD, mixed elders, Burayu, 2024).

4.7 Challenges Indigenous Peacebuilding Systems Face

Indigenous institutions have substantial structural and sociocultural obstacles despite their ongoing significance. One significant issue is religious change, especially the spread of Protestant Christianity, which has weakened traditional leadership succession and decreased ritual practice involvement. Younger generations are increasingly rejecting ritual commitments connected to indigenous governing systems, according to the participants. Indigenous knowledge transmission across generations is also hampered by urban migration. Many young people go to cities and distance themselves from traditional institutions. Indigenous peacebuilding is further hampered by a lack of resources. Elders stressed that while having a lot of mediation obligations, they receive little institutional or financial assistance. "In the past, communities supported elders collectively," said one attendee. Elders now have to prioritise survival, which makes maintaining reconciliation efforts challenging. (In-depth interviews, Arbaminch, Gamo Elder, 2024). Concerns about excessive governmental intervention were also voiced by participants, who claimed that when indigenous institutions are seen as politically controlled, they lose their credibility. According to these results, modernisation, urbanisation, and institutional centralisation are putting more and more strain on indigenous peacebuilding mechanisms.

4.8. Integrating Urban Political Ecology and Indigenous Peacebuilding in Addis Ababa Vicinities

The results of this analysis show that the 2018 GC Burayu violence must be understood within the larger socio-ecological transitions associated with growing peri-urban urbanisation around Addis Ababa, rather than being only explained by ethnic or political considerations. According to Urban Political Ecology, capitalist urban growth created conditions for exclusion, displacement, and intercommunal conflict by rearranging land relations, accelerating land commodification, increasing environmental pressure, and weakening customary governance institutions (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003; Heynen et al., 2006; Rademacher, 2015). These results corroborate the claim made by Brenner and Schmid (2014) that urbanisation is not just an expansion of physical infrastructure but a socio-ecological process that transforms human and environmental relations.

The empirical results also show that indigenous peacebuilding organisations served as flexible socio-ecological governance structures that could react to these changes. While *Dubusha*, *Gome*, and *Tuge* offered culturally acceptable means of social reintegration and reconciliation among the Gamo, *Gadaa*, *Jaarsummaa*, and *Gumaa* continued to support mediation, restorative justice, and collective accountability among the Tulama Oromo. These results are in line with past Ethiopian research demonstrating that indigenous institutions continue to be successful in settling disputes through restorative rather than punitive methods (Pankhurst & Assefa, 2008; Dejene, 2007; Assefa, 2005). However, our study shows that these institutions also adjust to the intricate socio-ecological problems brought about by fast peri-urban urbanisation, in contrast to earlier research that mostly looked at them in comparatively stable rural contexts.

By demonstrating how indigenous institutions were mobilised to resolve disputes resulting from land dispossession, migration, and governance fragmentation in Burayu, the findings also go beyond earlier research. For instance, *Dubusha* assemblies promoted collective discourse and negotiated peaceful cohabitation between displaced and host communities, while *Gadaa* elders organised mediation to stop retaliatory violence. The Tulama and Gamo elders' reciprocal participation in *Irreecha*, *Ateetee*, and *Mesqeleyo* ceremonies, as well as the distribution of land in Burayu for a Gamo *Dubusha* gathering place, demonstrates how indigenous institutions modified their customs to restore social cohesion and trust in an increasingly diverse urban setting. These results corroborate Mac Ginty's (2008) claim that local cultural norms and community involvement, rather than externally imposed institutional systems, are the sources of legitimacy for indigenous peacebuilding. From Urban Political Ecology standpoint, these results suggest that peri-urban conflicts are not just expressions of ethnic animosity but rather signs of unequal socio-ecological changes. Therefore, combining Urban Political Ecology with Indigenous Peacebuilding offers a more thorough framework for comprehending how traditional institutions address the governance issues brought about by fast urbanisation. By showing that indigenous institutions are adaptive governance systems that can address socio-ecological disruption, promote restorative justice, and strengthen sustainable peace in Addis Ababa's rapidly urbanising neighbourhoods, this integration advances current scholarship.

5. CONCLUSION

This study showed that a more robust analytical framework for comprehending peri-urban conflict and reconciliation in Ethiopia is provided by the merging of Urban Political Ecology with Indigenous Peacebuilding. The results show that ethnic or political explanations alone are insufficient to explain the 2018 Burayu violence. Instead, the conflict arose as a result of larger socio-ecological changes brought about by migration, fast urbanisation, land commercialisation, fragmented governance, and unequal urban development. The study also demonstrated that, in spite of challenges from modernisation and state-centered urban administration, indigenous institutions like *Gadaa*, *Gumaa*, *Dubusha*, *Gome*, and *Tuge* continue to function as adaptive socio-ecological governance systems. Following the Burayu violence, these institutions were crucial to ritual healing, post-conflict mediation, and communal regeneration. Cultural legitimacy, moral authority, group involvement, and restorative methods that prioritise social reintegration above punitive justice were the sources of their efficacy. Thus, by illustrating how socio-ecological disruptions affect conflict and governance in peri-urban Africa, the paper advances research on urban political ecology. By viewing customary institutions as dynamic governing structures reacting to modern urban change, it also adds to the body of literature on indigenous peacebuilding. The results have significant policy ramifications. In rapidly urbanising peri-urban areas, sustainable peacebuilding necessitates hybrid governance strategies that uphold indigenous institutions' autonomy and cultural authority while acknowledging their validity. Thus, policymakers ought to:

1. Create institutional collaboration between formal and customary systems of governance;
2. Encourage the transfer of indigenous knowledge between generations;
3. Acknowledge restorative justice practices within regional frameworks for peacebuilding; and
4. Create urban development strategies that reduce socio-ecological marginalisation and displacement.

Limitations of the Research and Future Direction

The use of a qualitative case study approach has restricts statistical generalizability because it is context-specific and purposeful and snowball sampling, which may have introduced network bias, are some of the limitations of this study. Furthermore, older participants were more prevalent than

women and young people, and trauma and memory reconstruction may have an impact on retrospective reports of the 2018 violence. In order to evaluate the applicability of the results in various sociocultural and governance situations, future research should look at how indigenous peacebuilding organisations adjust to fast urbanisation in other peri-urban areas of Ethiopia. Besides, it should be studied how varies traditional conflict institutions of multiple ethnic groups can come together to prevent and resolve violence in urbanization.

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