

Visible and Invisible Actors in Urban Management and Emerging Trends of Informalization; A Case Study from Kolfe-Keranio Sub-City Addis Ababa

Synopsis of Ph.D. Dissertation^{*}

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Introduction

Cities of developing countries have experienced rapid physical and demographic growth in the recent decades. This has brought two challenging tasks for the governments of such countries. The first task is promoting economic growth aimed at improving the living standards of citizens. The second challenging task is coping with the growing demands of urban infrastructure and services to promote socio-economic and environmental sustainability. However, with increasing population growth and inefficient urban management, keeping up the growth of cities in pace with the basic social and physical infrastructure development is becoming unattainable. The failure of municipalities to provide basic social and physical services in the newly expansion areas of cities has led to the mushrooming of informal actors in areas of urban land and service management.

Addis Ababa is inhabited by a population of almost four million and it is one of the fastest growing cities of Africa where the provision of infrastructure and services has never kept pace with the growth of the city. Even though there have been various interventions to harmonize the process of urbanization, with the overall qualities of life, the generic problems of the city still form part of the daily life of its citizens. The study summarized here attempts to give an account of the growth of Addis Ababa through examining the urban management practices and planning interventions and their implications for the management of urban land, infrastructure and services. The study has uncovered the discrepancy between the rhetoric urban management objectives and the actual outcomes of urban management policies and strategies. Major emphasis has been on how the formal and informal actors involved in urban land, infrastructure and service management interact and the technical and structural constraints that have contributed to the uncontrolled growth and unsustainable management of Addis Ababa.

As a frame of analysis, the study utilized an urban political economy approach planning theories and other related concepts such as structure, agency, institutional analysis, and societal non-compliance. The urban political economy approach is found to be relevant in offering a problem-centred frame of analysis for urban management and participation of citizens in decision making. The theoretical framework is also useful for assessing the rhetoric and actual achievements of urban

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planners and managers in harmonizing the different conflicting interests under the existing political and economic constraints. In the study it is argued that impacts of inefficient land use and inadequate urban services in Addis Ababa in general and in the selected case study areas in particular are best understood by linking the physical growth of the city with the underpinning economic and political constraints in which planning and management institutions are operating. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing techniques were the main analytical tools used in the research to analyse, and map the spatial data related to land use, settlement patterns, process of land subdivision, and availability and accessibility of infrastructure and services. The integration of remote sensing and GIS techniques in the research helped in the attempt to understand the process of changes driven by rapid urbanization and its spatial impacts. The theoretical framework is supplemented by agency, structure, institutional analysis and, societal non-compliance concepts to understand how informal land subdivision works and the underpinning rules and regulations that govern actors' behaviour involved in land, infrastructure and service management. Data related to land use, land tenure, land transaction, the operation of urban management are complex and cannot be captured and analysed using a single method. Moreover, the national election in May 2005 and its subsequent unintended consequences left the city in a tense and uncertain political environment. For the sake of having a wider and deep understanding of the issues, the study employed multiple approaches in data collection and analysis.

Discussion and Conclusions

The management of sustainable urban development trying to meet objectives of growth and equity needs properly designed and implemented policies that maximize the effective roles played by the public and private sectors in planning, investment, finance, construction, operations, maintenance, and rehabilitation of urban services. This requires policies and strategies that promote the participation of various formal and informal actors for the distribution and operation of key resources and services which can be accessed by the urban poor. It also requires appropriate allocation of responsibilities and authority between the public and private actors, as well as among the different levels of government.

The study revealed that urban management participation in Addis Ababa has been mired in political and other structural problems which neither the past nor the present administration have been able to tackle successfully. The municipality of Addis Ababa has performed its management tasks together with fragmented development inputs of various stakeholders. Uncoordinated development plans, unsustainable administrative structure and the lack of commonly agreed priorities are perpetual problems in the management history of Addis Ababa city. Most of the master plans of Addis Ababa were found to be the reflection of foreign ideologies and values, based on ambiguous and poorly defined problems, inadequate resources and incomplete information. Furthermore, the planning institutions were divorced and isolated from the plan implementing bodies. From a closer examination of

management practices of Addis Ababa, the following are core findings and conclusions of the study:

Heritages of Unsustainable Administration and Malgovernance

From its inception, the physical growth of Addis Ababa has been accompanied by inefficient and unstable administration, inadequate basic social and environmental infrastructure, and unsustainable land use. In general, the city has grown without proper implementation of plans, adequate and affordable housing and other social and environmental infrastructure installation and deteriorating environmental conditions. The central issue here is why joint policies and strategies implemented by governments with the collaboration of international bodies have been unable to address the various urban problems related to housing infrastructure services, and the environment and why Addis Ababa continues to grow physically with its past and present problems. Here it is appropriate to assert whether the lack of physical and human resources or lack of efficient management and governance are the primary cause of the City Administration's failure today to cope with the uncontrolled and explosive urbanization and the chronic shortages of basic infrastructure and services.

Political conflict and power struggle in the history of Ethiopia have had a huge impact on the growth and sustainability of Addis Ababa. During the early period of Haile Selassie for instance, there was an intensive internal power struggle which led to a total neglect of the administration of the city. In the Derg time there was a total diversion of city revenues to finance the civil war which sustained throughout the reign of the regime. This undermined investments in housing and infrastructure in the city. Furthermore, the political power transition in the history of Ethiopia has never been smooth and Addis Ababa has been the victim of political unrest and subsequent social and economic crises. Political instability and administrative uncertainty are conditions under which mass illegal land subdivisions and transactions are most likely to occur. Today it is a common phenomenon to use political instability as an opportunity to secure public land or try to justify access to plots which are already occupied illegally. In the history of Addis Ababa, political instability has always been followed by municipal administration instability and uncertainty. The principle of 'politics comes and goes but administration stays' has never been applicable in the history of Addis Ababa. Administrative instability is a common feature of Addis Ababa.

A well established and sustainable administration is an indispensable resource which needs to be built over accumulated, uninterrupted practices and wisdom. In this regard, Addis Ababa has suffered from lack of stable and efficient administration able to function without interruption in times of chaos and uncertainty. In practice, what has been observed in the municipal history of Addis Ababa is that whenever new leadership comes into power it will shake up the existing *modus operandi* and introduce a new system; clearly the new system will take much time and resources in the process. Whenever changes in political ideology occur it also affects administration, and a new politically motivated administrative and

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management structure will be in place irrespective of its practicality and relevance. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising to observe unsustainable administrative and management structure which are highly sensitive to political instability. Thus it is safe to argue that the lack of sustainable and efficient administration in the history of Addis Ababa is a more pressing problem than constraints on physical resources.

Institutional memory and a well-established administrative structure are vital resources that enable the activities of a given city even when political changes occur over time. In contrast, lack of institutional memory and sustainable administration has been responsible for the failures of policies and strategies aimed at addressing the multifaceted problems of Addis Ababa. The central argument here is that administration should be perceived as a relay race where each team adds its contribution and passes it on to the next team, and then the next team needs to capitalize on the strong side of its predecessors to achieve their common goals. More importantly, there should be a common vision and coordination between the teams which means the state-society relationship should be founded on a cooperative base in order to build trust and credibility between the state and society. In this regard the city is very reluctant to learn from its past failures, mistakes and successes. As a result no concrete effort has been made to avoid repeating yesterday's mistakes or make the successes of yesterday stronger. A sustainable institution which is a prerequisite to keeping institutional memory will help the city to avoid being caught in a cycle in which the good and the bad of yesterday are recreated in unproductive ways. A stable administration would help the city to look at its past in order to look forward. More importantly, it would help whenever new leadership aims to capitalize on the past strengths and rectify inherited misdoings. Sustainable administration allows sufficient time to implement various social, economic and environmental development plans without interruption and delay. Short-lived leadership in the City Administration has highly undermined the continuity and smooth operation of urban management and administration in the past.

Heritages of Inadequate Infrastructure and Services

Provision of adequate infrastructure and services is one of the major indicators of efficient urban management. It is clear that Addis Ababa's administration has never been able to meet the continually growing demands for water, transportation, waste collection services and other environmental and social services. The primary cause for the failure in the coverage and quality of urban services in Addis Ababa is not the lack of resources. The evidence from this study shows that in many cases the resources devoted to urban services are substantial but used inefficiently. There is a close link between managing and protecting the environment and provision of basic infrastructure and services. Environmental management in Addis Ababa has been either very costly or simply ineffective due to the failure to deliver key urban services such as clean water, sanitation, waste collection, and efficient transport. One of the major contributing factors for the mismanagement of urban infrastructure and

services in Addis Ababa is lack of clarity in the division of functional responsibilities between the different levels of government structures responsible for urban service delivery. A clear linkage between a particular unit of government and a specific service is missing and various service providing agents have been functioning in a disorganized manner, thereby undermining accountability and efficiency. Hence, inadequate urban infrastructure and service provision are not merely resource constraints but rather other constraints are causing major bottlenecks, particularly in the institutional arrangements for urban service delivery.

Empirical evidence suggests that expansion areas of Addis Ababa have no direct access to sanitary infrastructure or services or to roads. The road network of Addis Ababa is far from adequate in both density and quality. Recently serious attempts have been made to develop east-west and north-south access to the city linked up with the ring road. Despite all the efforts, much of the city is still not served by paved roads. In many areas, the quality of access roads was characterized by non-surfaced or poorly compacted earth, which becomes dusty in the dry season and muddy or slippery in the wet season.

With regard to water supply, Addis Ababa suffers from a significant shortage of potable water. The city's water production capacity has never kept up with demand. For instance, in the year 2000, while the projected demand for potable water was 293,000 m³ per day, the city was able to supply only 173,000 m³. By the year 2003, the city's supply of treated water stood at approximately 188,000 m³ per day. This suggests that well over one-third of the city's demand for potable water remains unmet. Although there have been efforts to increase potable water production, according to the UN-Habitat report (2007) the city's per-capita water consumption fell from 43.87 litres per person to 34.15 litres per person during the period 1998–2004. Thus, the rate of improvement in the production and distribution of potable water is falling far behind increasing demand due to population growth. To make things worse, some 30 per cent of the potable water produced in the city is lost through leakage. Addis Ababa produces approximately 800,000 m³ of liquid waste on a daily basis, whereas it has the capacity to collect only one per cent of this amount. The main problem is that only 10 per cent of the built-up area has connection to the modern sewage system. Therefore, the liquid waste generated by most households either enters the dry pits and septic tanks that are commonly found close to most shelters, or simply finds its way into the city's open ditches and streams. In general, measurements made on the physical accessibility to public facilities, such as water and sanitation show how the spatial distribution of these facilities is inequitable and uneven in the case study areas. In other words, continuous demand for basic services and infrastructure usually outstrips supply which is patchy in coverage and directed towards high-income neighbourhoods. It is clear that the existing infrastructure and service base of the city is under strain to cope with the rapidly growing population. Unfortunately, the expansion of settlements preceding basic infrastructure and service installation has been a generic problem throughout the history of Addis Ababa.

Inefficient Urban Management Practices

Urban management components such as urban land management, infrastructure management and environmental management are facing major constraints to be responsive to the alarming socio-economic and environmental problems. In matters of urban land management there is no clear understanding of urban formal and informal land market operations. The management of urban land is hampered by the lack of a land information system, clear and innovative land policies, and simplified legal and institutional arrangements for land supply, development, and transactions. This study has indicated that most land policies adopted by the different regimes have contributed to shortages of land rather than helping the supply of land affordable to low- and middle-income people. Although land is one of the essential resource ingredients of urban growth, the Addis Ababa City Administration has poor data on the operation of land markets and relies on inadequate and outdated mechanisms to promote sustainable urban land development. Owing to this, the City Administration has no up-to-date information with regard to processes of land transaction, pricing, actors involved, and informal rules and regulations that govern the behaviour of actors in the land transactions. The recent growth of Addis Ababa is characterized by skyrocketing urban land prices, declining affordability of housing, high costs of infrastructure development, increasing extralegal settlements and proliferation of informal actors in urban land and infrastructure management.

The infrastructure management also suffered from uncoordinated planning, financing and operations. It also lacked appropriate institutional arrangements and clearly defined roles for local government, central government and private actors. In general, the urban management has failed to design appropriate strategies for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure and services. Integration of urban environmental planning is almost non-existent in the management practices of Addis Ababa. The external urban environmental costs have never been considered in most of the master plans. In theory, potential environmental risks caused by urban growth and monitoring strategies need to be integrated with land management. However, this is one of the missing elements which in turn has contributed to unsustainable urban land use and poor environmental quality. In all the case study areas it has been observed that the city is growing in the absence of basic social and environmental infrastructure and services. This escalated the rapid deterioration of environmental quality and unsustainable use of urban land. In this particular study, it can be said that the growing environmental problems in the study area are not the outcome of urbanization but rather they are the manifestation of poor management, poor plan implementation and absence of coherent urban policies.

The Informalization of Urban Management and Administration

In all developing countries during recent decades, it has become clear that the informal economy plays an important role in job creation, income generation and service provision. Without undermining the roles played by the formal urban

management structures and actors, this study claims that a process of informalization is happening in urban management and administration in Addis Ababa as it had happened in the urban economic activities. The detailed discussion on land, infrastructure and service management from two case study areas demonstrated the norms, strategies and competence of informal actors in the provision, access and management of land, infrastructure and services. The examination of the internal organization, institutional arrangement, and the process of informal land, infrastructure and service management has indicated that actors were guided by informal rules and regulations which substituted for or ignored the formal rules. The failure of the formal urban governance and management structures has contributed significantly to the failure of service provisions and declining operational efficiency of installed infrastructure. Unlike the general perception of informal infrastructure and service delivery, which are mostly related to informal settlements, in this specific case study it was evident that the informal infrastructure and service management were also equally important in the formal settlements. Without doubt, the informal institutions and actors are assuming key roles in urban management when the formal actors are no longer competent to manage fast and uncontrolled urban growth. My central argument here is that there is a need to focus on the potential and ways through which the informal institutions can be key partners in the management of urban services and infrastructure. This study has revealed that the formal rules which are the focus of theories and empirical studies are not the real set of rules that govern the behaviour of actors. Paradoxically, informal institutions which dominate urban services and infrastructure provision have been given scant attention in both academia and policy making. Therefore, there is a need to make the informal actors legally visible to accommodate them through policy reforms that appreciate the potential of informal actors and the social capital they utilize.