

Governance structures in informal settlements – A study of actors, aims and instruments in Addis Ababa

First draft, please do not quote.

Cities in the so-called developing countries are subject to increasing governance problems. One sign for weak control mechanisms seems to be the nearly ubiquitous informality that concerns almost every area of life. Informality is also reflected in urban planning and becomes manifest in different forms of informal housing, visibly encountered in slums and informal settlements. But there is evidence that informality is not to be equalised with a lack of governance structures and that informal settlements are not free from control and steering mechanisms.

In our paper we want to proof with empirical findings that informal as well as even formal arrangements actually do exist and intertwine in informal settlements. For this purpose we will present a case study carried out in Yerer, an informal settlement at the south-eastern fringe of Addis Ababa, and identify the actors relevant for local governance systems, along with their aims and ambitions, resources and instruments.

A range of actors have proven to be relevant for governance structures and processes in Yerer: First of all the inhabitants of the informal settlement themselves have structured and restructured the settlement pattern through the acquisition of plots and a variety of building activities. By appointing a committee within their fellow dwellers the informal settlers furthermore succeeded already at an early stage to influence and control not only their respective pieces of land but also planning processes, spatial compositions and both technical and social infrastructures in the whole settlement. Also altogether formal actors and institutions in the administrative hierarchy of the city and the region of Addis Ababa put paid to completely uncontrolled development. In the case of informal settlements, their influence is admittedly minor to the internal forces but may not be neglected, notably not in the fields of dwellers' registration and the provision of technical infrastructure. In this case, formal institutions and local authorities, and especially the relationship the informal committee leaders have to them, even play a crucial role on the way to a potential formalisation of the settlement.

The thesis of the urban crisis: informal settlements as symptoms of urban disorder?

Although some authors (e.g. BOCQUIER 2005:135, 140f., RAKODI 2006:53) point out that the increase of urban population in sub-Saharan Africa has already slowed down, growth rates are still high in the big urban centres of the continent (FEIN 2009:38f.). Due to the rapid growth going along with economic decline during

the last decades contributors within the literature on urbanisation in developing countries, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa, came up with the term of the "urban crisis" (e.g. TOSTENSEN & TVEDTEN & VAA 2001, STREN & HALFANI 2001:479) (cf. FEIN 2009:39). High land consumption, environmental problems like air pollution or deforestation, impacts on the health of dwellers and the collapse of local government structures are considered to be the problems forming this "crisis" (e.g. LOHNERT 2002:39, COY & KRAAS 2003:33, TOSTENSEN & TVEDTEN & VAA 2001:7) (cf. FEIN 2009:39). But urbanisation per se cannot and perhaps should not be considered as a problem, not even rapid urbanisation. The population growth in cities does not necessarily have negative outcomes and is regarded as fatal only in circumstances in which state and society fail to manage the consequences (cf. FEIN 2009:40, FANTU CHERU 2002:161, LOHNERT 2002:42). This leads to the question what exactly these mechanisms are that can prevent cities from disorder, chaos, or even anarchy. To answer this question we would like to give evidence using the example of informal settlements, as it seems to be commonly assumed that the failure of local government structures and a lack of governance evidently occur in informal settlements as places beyond any kind of governmental or communal control.

Given the fast urban population growth unaccompanied by economic growth and a gap between supply and demand in the urban housing stock, a big variety of residential areas evolved which can be subsumed as informal settlements (cf. FEIN 2009:49, 55, MYERS & MURRAY 2007:17). They are considered by LOHNERT (2002:47) as one of the most essential and most visible signs of rapid urbanisation in Africa (cf. also UN-HABITAT 2006:92) and contribute considerably to the enormous urban sprawl, the horizontal growth of African cities (cf. FEIN 2009:49, FANTU CHERU 2002:163). In many cases, up to 50% of the urban sprawl derive from the growth of informal settlements (DURAND-LASSERVE & ROYSTON 2002:3). GAEBE (2004:140) points out that not only the poorest of the poor live in informal settlements, similarly to FERNANDES & VARLEY (1998:5) who state that informality and illegality in housing are not restricted to the urban poor (cf. FEIN 2009).

Placing informal housing in the complex field of legal issues

There is a continuum between formality and informality. To spot a housing area on this range is difficult as informal quarters exist in various, also country-specific forms. Moreover, formal and informal, even legal and illegal elements can coexist, not only within a settlement but even within singular housing units (FEIN 2009:62). Informality or illegality could refer to the purchase of the plot and/or the construction on the plot (GAEBE 2004:140). Informal settlements can be categorised along the legitimacy of land use into two main groups: Firstly squatter settlements on illegally occupied plots without the right to use the land at all, and secondly settlements on land which is not allocated for dwelling purposes but is legally or at least semi-legally possessed by its owner (FEIN 2009:62). In addition, housing stock is considered informal if it is constructed on declared building plots but does not fulfil the construction standards that apply for the particular built-up area, or if it lacks a formal building licence (FEIN 2009:62). UN-HABITAT (2003:112) numbers housing units constructed according to applicable laws and regulations for the year 1996 at 48.6% in sub-Saharan Africa.

WUBALEM FEKADE (2000:131) as well as PAYNE & MAJALE (2004:53) additionally introduce customary and indigenous tenure and emphasise that they often interfere with each other. Furthermore, PAYNE (2002:13), UN-HABITAT (2003:4) and RAKODI (2006:66) distinguish tenure between *de jure* (with legal land titles) and *de facto*, if the ownership of the building is recognised or if the plot is serviced by official authorities (FEIN 2009:63). Finally, legal titles for land or building structures can be issued individually or collectively (for a whole settlement, an association or – predominantly in multi-storey residential buildings – an owners corporation) (cf. FEIN 2009:63, PAYNE & MAJALE 2004:55). The documentation of tenure varies from full title deeds, over the verification by public utility bills, election records, tax vouchers and the like, to the non-existence of any documents (cf. FEIN 2009:63, UN-HABITAT 2006:94).

For these reasons the question of legal titles for land and constructions is quite complex but plays a crucial role for the establishment of other steering mechanisms as it can be assumed that both dwellers and absentee landlords have a stronger interest in supporting the instalment of governance structures, be it formal or informal ones, if risks of displacement, forced eviction and relocation are minimised.

In our case study of the informal settlement of Yerer, we want to demonstrate that the inhabitants recognise exactly these risks and act accordingly by implementing and adjusting different institutions and mechanisms of governance. Hence they fill the presumed governance void using formal and informal institutions based on their own actions using their own instruments and resources following their own aims and ambitions.

Informal settlements in Addis Ababa

There are different forms of informal housing in Addis Ababa that comprise spontaneous settlements in the inner-city, regular residential areas with informal housing development and peripheral spontaneous settlements (cf. FEIN 2009:201). Their characteristics differ concerning their location, their formation, their tenure status, their impact on urban development and their appearance as table 1 indicates. In the eyes of the government only settlements belonging to the third category are seen as “informal settlements” and also the case study area of Yerer belongs to this group. Therefore, the following remarks on informal settlements in Addis Ababa will solely concentrate on this category.

TABLE 1 THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF INFORMAL HOUSING IN ADDIS ABABA

	Spontaneous settlements in the inner-city	Regular residential areas with informal housing development	Peripheral spontaneous settlements
Location	Located in the older and inner-city areas.	Scattered throughout the city.	Located at the urban fringes and expansion areas bordering predominantly rural areas.
Formation	Built by land speculators during the imperial time and developed and further congested after nationalisation. Today in a precarious condition.	Formation through informal constructions in regular residential areas and through private land owners who transformed small attached and	Built informally on land due to lack of land titles. Formation since the end of the socialist regime, but accelerated since 1991.

		detached houses into rental accommodations.	
Tenure status	Land and houses belong in most cases to the government (so called <i>Kebele</i> houses).	Partly governmental partly private ownership.	Land is legally belonging to the state and disputes are common.
Impact on urban development	Congestion is the main impact and intense burden on existing structures.	Also congestion and intense burden on urban services, for instance.	Expansion of urban area and relief of inner-city congestion. Uncontrolled extension.
Appearance	Regular building extensions and high congestion. Predominantly low quality mud huts and lack of infrastructure (sewerage, latrines, fresh water, roads etc.)	Also predominantly mud huts but dilapidating and highly congested. Infrastructure is overloaded or deficient.	Are still mostly sparsely populated compared to the others. Predominantly one room mud huts which lack any basic infrastructure.

Source: KRYCK 2006:55, modified after DEMISSACHEW SHIFERAW (2000:83)

Informal settlements started to develop in the late 1980s, when peasants at the urban fringe expected that the government might confiscate their land for city expansion and started to subdivide their plots, which was not illegal, as long as land was used for agricultural purposes and not transformed into urban land (FEIN 2009:201, KRYCK 2006:56, KALKIDAN BAINESAGNE 2001:57ff.).

Like in many other African cities, the informal settlements were not connected to water supply and the households usually rely on private vendors when public taps are missing. They were also not connected to sewerage systems, and any kind of land preparation (e.g. by drainage systems) before construction has taken place. However, informal households in Yerer were mostly supplied with electricity, which was quite astonishing, as the electricity provider is a state-owned enterprise (FEIN 2009, KRYCK 2006).

At the time when our study was carried out, the most important regulation on informal settlements contained two main parts: The first one was dealing with informally built houses before 1996 and revealed that these houses can be formalised if residential use in this location is according to the Master Plan of 2001. Plots of up to 175 m² should be issued on the basis of a lease arrangement and bigger plots should be reduced to the size of 175 m², if possible, and either the surplus of land should have been confiscated by the government or the owner should have paid sanctions (cf. FEIN 2009:201, KRYCK 2006:59). If the land was not located in a 'residential area' according to the Master Plan the inhabitant would have received compensatory land of up to 150m² in another part of the capital. At first glance this seemed to be very beneficial to the informal settlers, but some of the informal settlements (like Yerer) were not located in designated 'residential' but in 'green areas' (see ORAAMP 2000:37, 49). So, they were against the Master Plan and had to be evicted by compensating the dwellers. There emerged the second problem, because people had to proof that they had started to live there before 1996 and nobody guaranteed that the compensated land would be well located (cf. KRYCK 2006:60). The second part of the regulation concerned the houses built between 1996 and 2002. In order to guarantee a planned development of the city, these

settlements should have been evicted, while the inhabitants as a group should receive compensatory land as a cooperative. All informal houses built after 2002 would have been demolished without any compensation (ibid.).

Actors, aims and instruments in Yerer

The informal settlement of Yerer, located in the south-eastern part of Addis Ababa in Bole sub-city, developed on the land of eight peasants. Until 1983 the area on the mountain slope was inhabited by these farmers and used as grazing land for their cattle (FEIN 2009:201f., KALKIDAN BAINESAGNE 2001:115). In the following 17 years, the land transformation process started slowly with the arrival of 11 urban dwellers, searching for affordable plots. With increasing demand for urban land and after the political upheaval and change of government in the early 1990s, more and more interested people came to settle in Yerer (2000: 238 plots; 2006: 365 plots) (cf. KRYCK 2006:65, KALKIDAN BAINESAGNE 2001). The main reason for the peasants' willingness to subdivide and sell the land was the experience, that their neighbouring farmers were displaced and inadequately compensated in order to vacate the area for urban development. After they predicted this to happen to themselves in the future, they sold out nearly their whole land, especially after parts on the mountain plateau were taken for formal residential development (cf. FEIN 2009:201, KRYCK 2006:66, KALKIDAN BAINESAGNE 2001:117).

By 2006, the area was already consolidated and densely populated, while only few, mostly steep, locations were left open. By this time an estimated number of 1000 households lived on the 365 plots (FEIN 2009:20, KRYCK 2006:65).

The most important actors responsible for land transformation and restructuring were identified as the dwellers themselves, the local committee they have formed and the official city administration. Their activities, aims and ambitions, resources and instruments will be identified in the following, based on findings from a study carried out by the authors from 2006 to 2009 in Addis Ababa (FEIN 2009:155ff., KRYCK 2006).

The dwellers

The inhabitants are clearly the central actors of spatial restructuring through the acquisition of plots and the construction of houses for own inhabitancy or tenancy. Therefore, they can be considered as the producers and consumers of housing. In order to acquire the financial means for construction, many plot owners subdivided their land and sold it, resulting in further densification of the area. The construction process is, like in most other informal settlements, dominated by incremental progress, i.e. a first room is constructed, followed by fencing and step by step expansion and improvement of the unit.

The main objective of this group is to have access to housing that is socio-culturally and financially adequate and is backed by secure tenure (FEIN 2010, FEIN 2009). The available financial resources of the respective household determine the adequacy of the house, while the dwellers utilised the instrument of establishing a

local committee to achieve formalisation of land and access to basic infrastructure. Before illustrating the organisational forms in the settlement, we would like to raise the question, who these dwellers are.

To answer this question briefly can contribute to an understanding of available resources and instruments for achieving individual and collective objectives. The households covered by our survey in 2006, consisted of 4.2 persons on average (FEIN 2009:225, KRYCK 2006:89). Most families could be considered as nuclear families, while only very few offered permanent shelter to other relatives (FEIN 2009:231, KRYCK 2006:89). Only 13% of all interviewees were born in Addis Ababa, indicating that rural-urban migration and new household formation are the main drivers of informal growth. Densification and rapid growth took place especially between 2001 and 2005, since 58% of the interviewed households moved to Yerer in this period. The increase of the number of tenants during this time contributed significantly to the population increase, while nearly none such arrangements had existed before 2000 (FEIN 2009:206, KRYCK 2006:93). The average income per household in 2006 was 478 Birr (equivalent to USD 54.6 or 43.6 Euro in 2006) per month, while half of the households earned incomes below 400 Birr (FEIN 2009:251, KRYCK 2006:90). These incomes are mostly generated in the informal sector (81% were self-employed or employed informally) and most considered themselves as casual labourers relying on irregular and fluctuating incomes (FEIN 2009:248ff., KRYCK 2006:90f.). Those remaining 19% of households, who relied on incomes from formal occupation, comprise a very heterogeneous group of doctors, teachers, industrial workers, taxi or bus drivers.

In order to adjust to irregular incomes many house owners use their plots for income generating activities, hence contributing to further densification but also to diversification of services and facilities. Examples for on-plot income generation are the construction and letting of rental units, the construction and running of mini-shops, bars, barbershops, bakeries or other food processing activities (FEIN 2009:248ff., KRYCK 2006:101ff.). The result of Yerer's development from a formerly rural area to an urbanised settlement is the presence of urban agricultural activities and different forms of livestock breeding (FEIN 2009:203). These activities, however, are declining and some farmers have already replaced urban agriculture with the construction of rental units, since incomes from rent are regular, reliable and far more profitable. Therefore, it is not surprising that the number of tenants increased tenfold between 2001 and 2006, paying an average rent of 55 Birr in 2006 (FEIN 2009:206). Absentee landlords are, however, still unusual, most landlords live on the same plot and often use the same basic facilities as their tenants.

This proves that the inhabitants are integrated into economic systems and therefore in a consolidated institutional setting, which comprise, particularly in the sub-Saharan context, traditional community associations (cf. FEIN 2009:90ff.). In the case of Ethiopia these are especially known as *Iddir* und *Iqub* (FEIN 2009:182). An *Iddir* is an association formed by work colleagues, members of the same ethnic or religious group, or inhabitants of the same residential area. The main purpose of an *Iddir* is to provide financial and material support for its members, originally in the case of a funeral or a wedding but also following unforeseen events. Many neighbourhood-*Iddirs* thus operate in a wide range and file petitions with public authorities, take care of the supply with technical and social infrastructure, or even engage in housing

construction, for example if a member is physically unable and in need of help (FEIN 2009:182, KRYCK 2006:107). *Iqubs* are the Ethiopian form of rotating savings and credit associations. Their members meet regularly and contribute a certain amount of money to a community coffer which is then distributed to one person who has been chosen by lot. For the case that a member is in great need of immediate financial support, the saved amount can be allocated without the lottery if the other members agree. Usually the money is meant to be used for business investments or private expenditures but in some cases is spent for building dwellings or their service supply (FEIN 2009:186f.).

The dwellers' committee

With the population increase since the early 1990s and the related process of densification, the inhabitants themselves recognised the need for a planned development, since proper access to some individual plots became difficult (KALKIDAN BAINESAGNE 2001:140). Therefore, they founded a committee responsible for the development of the settlement as a whole in 1996, by electing eight members from the community. The first activity carried out was the development of a road network that would even allow for motor vehicles to access the settlement and those plots, that aren't located at steep slopes. The active regulation of the alleged uncontrolled settlement growth was the result. The inhabitants themselves gathered in order to construct the roads of 6, 8, 10 or 12 meters width, while some plot owners had to give up some square meters in order to make space for road construction (FEIN 2009:201ff., KRYCK 2006:105).

In the further process of consolidation, the committee undertook the tasks of providing the inhabitants with basic infrastructure, like the connection to the power grid or to the telephone network and engaged in further transportation infrastructure projects, such as building and maintaining bridges, that connect the settlement to the city. Whenever financial sources were needed, the committee members advertised the need and benefits of the proposed activities and collected the money among the inhabitants. The committee, therefore, became the contracting party in the name of the inhabitants and dealt with municipal service providers. They took over responsibilities that would conventionally be part of the urban administrative bodies (FEIN 2009:201ff.).

The most prominent aim of the committee was the preparation of reliable structures that would be conducive for formalisation of the settlement. They wanted to achieve a universally accepted settlement structure and were working on the maintenance, repair and supply of technical, social and economic infrastructure. The instruments available to the committee in order to fulfil its tasks were the formulation and the control of construction rules, the budgeting and money collection for infrastructure projects, social control and close personal contacts to the local administration. In the last years, the committee had been highly successful in lobbying for public water wells in the settlement, where water supply had been one of the major problems for the community. Furthermore, the committee was effectively advocating for the recognition of Yerer's orderly development through the local administration, and finally the area was formalised during a citywide campaign (FEIN 2009:201, 205).

The Kebele administration

The public administration body called *Kebele* in the urban Ethiopian context had only minor influence on the settlement's development until formalisation. *Kebele* could be translated as neighbourhood council or community association and represents the lowest administrative level (FEIN 2009:159). The concept was developed during the so-called *Derg*-regime, declared to be Marxist-Leninist, under the rule of colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam from 1974 to 1991 as the urban counterpart to the rural Peasants' Associations and all citizens had to be registered in either one of them (FEIN 2009:159, KRYCK 2006:67). The basic objectives of the *Kebeles* are to regulate and control local developments on the basis of municipal requirements and plans, and to fulfil all duties and services related to the local administrative level. In order to achieve these aims, the *Kebele* councils refer to the instruments of laws and regulations and exercise executive power. Hence, the responsibilities of the *Kebele* council are to control any development in their very territorial entity, e.g. by forced deconstruction. However, an active intervention in governance and control of settlement structures was generally rare, since the *Kebeles* as the lowest administrative unit were not in charge of implementing superordinate directives of urban planning. This was also the case in Yerer, where most inhabitants only had to deal with the *Kebele* administration in order to acquire their ID cards or to pay taxes on property. Especially this engagement in tax collection caused irritation among the informal dwellers, since they perceived the payments as quasi-recognition of their tenure status. On the other hand, the *Kebele* had to be consulted in case of selling and buying plots, and their agreement was necessary in case of any planned construction. So the *Kebele* engaged in informal processes of land acquisition, sale and construction, and therefore ironically contributed to the informalisation of governance structures (e.g. GAEBE 2004:307f.) instead of enforcing formal institutions.

Summary and conclusion

Summing up, the three described actors have formed networks and sustained relations both within the settlement and with external actors like various authorities responsible for infrastructure supply. The inhabitants as the main group of internal actors in governance processes are often organised in the so-called *Iddir* groups. Out of the inhabitants, representatives were elected during community meetings, who form the committee dealing with local decision-making and controlling the spatial development in Yerer. Its chairman himself is also a member of the *Kebele* council, where he is able to influence decisions beneficiary for the settlement. The committee dealt directly with the Water Authority, the Electrical Light and Power Authority as well as with the Road Authority in order to represent the needs of the inhabitants more effectively. It therefore acts as stakeholder for the community's interests, but also exercises control within the settlement.

Despite the apparent disorder and lack of control in informal settlements (as mentioned in the beginning), the case of Yerer proves indeed that a number of various institutions do form sophisticated governance structures. Finally we would like to raise the question whether formality itself results in more effective

control mechanisms. From our point of view the effect of formality is irrelevant: Well established informal institutions have considerably facilitated the formalisation process in Yerer because they could easily be integrated into the formal setting of urban governance, but conversely this case shows that formal structures are not a precondition at all for strong governance structures.

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