

ETHIOPIAN LOCAL URBAN PLANNING

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1. Introduction

Ethiopia is an agricultural country situated in the north east of Africa. It covers an area of 1 million km², with a population of 32 million out of which 15% are assumed to be urban dwellers. It follows a socialistic policy on land reform. Private ownerships of extra dwellings had been abolished, and urban land put under public's control. Each city is grouped into several urban dwellers associations where each is given an autonomous administrative power controlled by the central government. Previously its local cities had developed on the base of feudalistic pattern of settlement, which in modern times had produced slum areas with poor infrastructures and environmental conditions. In order to tackle these problems, in principle the establishment of a centralised governmental urban development department, was seen as a necessity, to direct the local urban planning according to a systematic land use pattern. This office has the responsibility and right to undertake the planning of all Ethiopian cities and respectively their local municipalities' role only consist of the implementation and execution of the plan. Nevertheless, the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Abeba underwent very recently, major studies of urban planning, through the establishment of an independent master plan project office which later on, after the completion of Addis Abeba master plan is expected to turn to an urban planning institute. The purpose of this paper is not to elaborate on the work undertaken by this project office but to shed light rather on the local urban planning activities.

2. Summary of Ethiopian Local Urban Planning

Actually, the essence of the approach to planning has been to view the local cities as large design projects, the emphasis been on aesthetics. The urban planning efforts begin with a survey of existing conditions and predictions of the planning area.

a) Population studies consist of the analysis and projection of population for the next 20 years. This is a quantitative description and prediction aimed at establishing the proper design that will accomodate the anticipated growth for 20 years. The conversion from people to land is based upon an existing area standards determined by the urban planning department.

b) For land use planning, the criteria used to determine appropriate locations for each category of land use are based upon the already existing pattern and personal intuitions of the planners.

c) Most local cities annual revenue is based on land taxation.

d) Due to few number of cars in most local cities, congestion of traffic is not a major problem. The main transportations are buses, bicycles and horse carriages.

e) Open space, recreation and conservation are also taken into account in our zoning plan, despite in most cases the share they hold in comparison to the overall plan is insignificant.

f) One of the interesting thing is the attention paid to community facilities. As it is stated above, communities are organised in urban dwellers associations, each having its own facilities of different kinds such as kindergarten, play grounds, assembly hall etc.

3. Assessment of the local urban planning

Significant contribution has been made by the Ethiopian Urban Development Department in improving the existing city structure and urban communities, in reducing the length of time taken for the implementation and execution of the plan. The organisation of the communities into several urban associations and as well the urban land reform have facilitated the implementation of the plan. Despite these, our urban planning suffers from number of over simplifications, that have severely limited its usefulness:

- a) It is more concerned with quantitative problems than with the performance of the system, for example, is the park large enough? rather is the public's leisure needs being satisfied by this facility?
- b) It produces a static end product for 20 years growth, without determining how the city grows from here to there, even though our cities growth rate is not steady.
- c) No attention given to the economic base of the community, its soundness and deficiencies; hence, the planning is often incompatible to the country's economy.
- d) Adaptation of uniform urban planning design to all cities and designs of large roads which are practically unused, due to few number of cars.
- e) No attention is made for planning in the short and middle range phases of development.
- f) Lack of city planning legislations has also created some problems for the systematic land use through regulations and guidance.
- g) The land use planning not depend on reliable population forecasts, sound economic projections and lacks the participations of different social groups in the determination of the land use.
- h) Lack of coordinated planning between different infrastructures such as sewerage, sanitary water transportations and other facilities.
- i) The planning practices have also restricted the degree to which, citizens should participate in the communication of planning ideas, in the presentation of plans and education of people concerned with specific problem.
- j) Lack of exposure, to the ways of life and attitudes of mind, of the whole range of people to be served in the plan making.

4. Conclusion

Generally speaking, the local urban planning is still not yet conceived, also in term of the efficient functioning of the city, in both the engineering and the economic sense; then as means of controlling the use of land as a technic for developing a sound land use pattern. It is a design oriented planning. The reason of the presentation of this paper, is to let you understand more or less, the Ethiopian local urban planning system and to call for your attention for further analysis and study concerning the planning activities, to find out an overall method for the efficient functioning of the local urban planning in respect of the existing cultural, political, geographical and socio-economic situation.

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