From the Kebele to the Condominium.

Accommodating Social and Spatial Practices in Ethiopia's Politics of Affordable Housing

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Abstract

One decade ago in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, more than 80% of its four million inhabitants lived in the so-called *kebele* houses, which are the local variant of a well-known urban figure, the slum. In order to cope with the housing backlog sparked by the need to replace the dilapidated *kebele* houses, to accommodate the city's natural growth, and to deal with the massive rural-urban migration, the government created in the mid-2000s the Integrated Housing Development Programme (IHDP).

This program aimed at building throughout the country 360,000 dwelling units in five years based on a standard mid-rise housing block type that eventually became ubiquitous, especially in Addis Ababa's built landscape. Over the last decade, the IHDP actually created "only" an average of 35,000 new flats per year, half of the expected turn out. In any case, "the condominiums", as they are commonly known, have succeeded in upgrading the material living conditions of thousands of people. However, they have also disrupted established social networks and vernacular patterns of inhabitation. Further, the IHDP triggered a conspicuous strategy of marginalization of the urban poor that occupied premium real estate in the city centre.

In this paper I will deliver a critical review of the condominium settlements using literature review, empirical evidences gathered from site surveys, and analytical accounts of Addis Ababa's housing figures. I will argue that the spatial qualities of the new housing complexes were overlooked in favour of a technocratic approach. I will further contend that the IHDP has some emancipatory potential, though more attention should be given to the social and spatial practices of the *kebele* compounds and cooperative housing to re-conceptualize the politics of affordable housing in Addis Ababa, gearing its approach towards the development of a more inclusive city.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Housing, IHDP, Vernacular tradition, Patterns of Inhabitation

Introduction

In 1961, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, wrote a seminal essay in which he summarized one of the most problematic and paradoxical cultural challenges of that time: "how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization."[1] More than fifty years after, Ethiopia is facing the same challenge. Nowadays, the country is referred as one of the African "tigers" and its political leadership drew ambitious plans "to eliminate poverty and become a middle income country by 2025."[2] In this pursuit of material advancement, economic development and full participation in the world civilization Ethiopia is also facing "a sort of subtle destruction", which threats "the creative nucleus of great civilizations and great cultures", as Ricoeur put it.

With 90 million inhabitants, Ethiopia is second only to Nigeria as Africa's most populated country. The country's capital city, Addis Ababa, is a city of 4 million inhabitants that accommodates approximately 30% of Ethiopia's urban population. Most of the city dwellers live in dire conditions, though. In 2010, a report stated that 80% of Addis Ababa's housing stock was considered "slum" according to UN-Habitat's definition.[3] The country's current rate of urbanization is relatively low, with less than 20% of its population living in cities. However, this is about to change as the rural urban-migration is increasing fast pace. According to UN-Habitat, this phenomenon will contribute to a significant increase in Ethiopia's urban population, with a special impact in Addis Ababa, which will continue to rise, probably reaching 12 million inhabitants in 2024.[4] This state of affairs creates an overwhelming pressure on the existing housing stock, on the one hand, and on the development of new housing policies to cope with rapid urban growth, on the other hand. In this context, is it possible to preserve the country's rich culture of inhabitation while, at the same time, pursuing a keen drive to get it onto the road towards modernization? To what extent can the spatial configuration of housing settlements contribute to mitigate, preserve, mediate or shatter the delicate balance between local culture and universal civilization?

To contribute with some insights for possible answers to these questions, in this paper, I will examine the most ambitious housing policy ever launched by Ethiopia's government, the Integrated Housing Development Programme (IHDP), reviewing some of its main policies and focusing specially on the morphological and typological characteristics of the housing complexes created by this initiative. I will discuss the social and spatial practices brought about by the new schemes and compare them with the vernacular figure known as the *kebele* houses. This comparative approach shall be instrumental to discuss the pervasive tension between pursuing scientific rationality and preserving the cultural creativity of the nation.

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[1] Ricouer wrote this essay while the Algerian independence movements challenged French colonial rule in North Africa, and were about to win the independence for Algeria. Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," in *Architectural Regionalism. Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition*, ed. Vincent B. Canizaro (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 47. The original essay was published in French in the journal *Esprit,* in 1961.

[2] Dereje Feyissa Dori, "Ethiopia's 'African Tiger' Leaps towards Middle Income," *The Guardian*, October 22, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/oct/22/ethiopia-african-tiger-middle-income.

[3] UN-Habitat, *The Ethiopia Case of Condominium Housing: The Integrated Housing Development Programme* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2010), 5.

[4] UN-Habitat, *Ethiopia: Addis Ababa Urban Profile* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2008), 7.

Co-existence and Simultaneity

Addis Ababa is a relatively young city. It was founded in 1886 by emperor Menelik II (King of Shoa, 1866-1889; Emperor of Ethiopia, 1889-1913) who, according to the legend, decided to follow the advice of his wife, Taytu Betal, and settle the capital of his kingdom at the foothills of the Entoto mountains, roughly in the geographical centre of the Ethiopian highlands. Eventually the new city would become in 1889 the capital of the whole Ethiopian empire. Menelik II became a mythical figure after defeating the Italians in the battle of Adwa, in 1896, which contributed to preserve Ethiopia as the only African empire that resisted European colonization. [Figure 1_The battle of Adwa] The emperor was both an intrepid warrior as a shrewd political strategist. He decided to summon the leaders and officials of the empire to settle in the new capital, thus isolating the nobles from their provincial bases of power and thus strengthening further his power.[5]

This strategy created a peculiar urban pattern. At the turn of the 20th century, the new capital grew as a constellation of palace compounds, the so-called *Ras* Palaces, dispersed around Menelik's imperial complex, the *Ghebbi*. [Figure 2_Topographical Map of Addis 1910] Through time, rural families flocked to Addis Ababa escaping from the famine that devastated the countryside and searching for opportunities in a city that was swiftly evolving from a military encampment into a civilian capital, as Fasil Giorghis put it.[6] These rural migrants created informal settlements in the interstices of the Ras palaces, and shaped an organic urban fabric, highly responsive to the site topography. In other words, from the onset, Addis Ababa was a territory of simultaneities, a mix-city where different urban fabrics constantly negotiated their boundaries.

After the death of Menelik II, in 1913, a young member of the Ethiopian aristocracy, Ras Tafari Makonnen, ruled the empire as regent under empress Zewditu, from 1916 until 1930, and as Emperor Haile Selassie I until 1974 with an interruption in the period of the Italian occupation (1935-41). In effect, in 1935 the Italians invaded Ethiopia in a successful attempt to establish their colonial empire, which they called the *Africa Orientalle Italiana* (AOI, Italian East Africa). [Figure 3_ Italians in Ethiopia] Immediately following the occupation, the Italians designated Addis Ababa as the capital of the AOI and prepared plans to superimpose an urban structure on top of the city's multipolar growth that had been happening since the late 19th century. This superimposition was indeed an attempt to come to terms with an urban structure that challenged the colonizer's idea of "organization". As cultural anthropologist Mia Fuller puts it, for the Italians this "disorganization" was in contradiction with their expectation that "African cities" should be planned in order to avoid the presenting perils of miscegenation.[7]

The first plans produced for Addis Ababa as the capital of the AOI testify to this drive to discipline the city's spatial organization and "correct" the problematic social and morphological mix. Indeed, as Mia Fuller contends, Mussolini sought to create a visible sign of his will to visibly absorb and control the apparatus created by Menelik II, whose army jeopardized the expansion of the Italian empire in the late 19th century. Curiously enough, on 19 August 1936, just three months after the occupation, Le Corbusier offered his services to Mussolini, sending a sample of his vision for the new cities of the AOI, especially

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[5] Fasil Giorghis, "Capitals on the Move," in *Cities of Change: Addis Ababa : Transformation Strategies for Urban Territories in the 21st Century*, ed. Marc M. Angelil and Dirk Hebel (Basel: Birkhauser, 2010), 51.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 199.

the imperial capital, Addis Ababa.[8] [Figure 4_Le Corbusier's Plan, 1936] While Le Corbusier's vision was somewhat in tune with Mussolini's will to reaffirm on the ground the superimposition of Italy's domination, the *Duce* favoured a plan designed by Italian experts.

Hence, instead of the well-known Swiss architect, the transformation of Addis Ababa into the capital of the Italian African Empire was assigned to Cesare Valle and Ignazio Guidi, who produced four tentative plans until a final version was approved in 1939.[9] As in many other cases of colonial planning, Valle and Guidi created an urban structure articulated around the administrative centre, and divided between the city of the colonizers and the city of the natives. [Figure 5_ First Plan for Addis] It comes as no surprise, then, that the colonial masterplan, with its politics of ethnic segregation, interrupted the co-existence of different social strata that characterized hitherto the development of Addis Ababa's urban fabric.

The Italian occupation lasted until 1941, when the British crushed Mussolini's dream of an African empire. However, to secure their own colonial interests in the region, the British administered the country and gave the Ethiopian emperor limited freedom and sovereignty. With the help of the Americans, Haile Selassie I struggled against the high degree of isolation imposed by the British domination, and undertook some initiatives to modernize the country. This development drive was somewhat superficial, though. It was mainly focused on projecting an image of modernity through the upgrade of the country's military and institutional apparatus, rather than a structural modernization. For one thing, the emperor overlooked the grave problems in the nation's housing sector. Without structural plans to accommodate the demographic growth, the landowners just had to make do with the remnants of the infrastructure built during the Italian occupation and, once again, promote an encounter between different typo-morphological figures and social groups. [Figure 6_Kasenchis]

In Addis Ababa, throughout Selassie's rule the housing shortage grew relentlessly, further emphasized by an extraordinary inequality in the distribution of urban land. As a report of UN-Habitat contends, "in 1962 [...] 58 per cent of the land in Addis Ababa was owned by only 1,768 individuals, equating to ownership of over 10,000m^2 each, leading to 55 per cent of housing units being rental housing." Under these conditions, the report further argues, "low-income households had little option but to rent housing and this was done outside of any formal control or planning system."[10] With the property concentrated in few powerful owners, squatting practices were virtually impossible. Instead, the landowners themselves accommodated the relentless population growth and the urban poor's need for shelter producing unauthorized and substandard dwellings that were rented to the low- and middle-income sections of the population. [Figure 7_Inner-city slum areas] As a report from UN-Habitat points out, [i]t was through illegal subdivision and extension of existing housing units that the property owners attempted to meet demand, and especially in the inner parts of the city, during the population boom years of the 1960s and

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[8] See Rixt Woudstra, "Le Corbusier's Visions for Fascist Addis Ababa," *Failed Architecture*, accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.failedarchitecture.com/le-corbusiers-visions-for-fascist-addis-ababa/.
[9] See Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 197–213.
[10] UN-Habitat, *The Ethiopia Case of Condominium Housing*, 2.

early 1970s".[11] Eventually in 1974, this situation would suddenly change as Selassie's empire was overthrown by a military *coup* in *1974.*[12]

The Kebele and the Cooperatives

From 1974 on, a Marxist military junta known as *the Derg* ruled Ethiopia. In July 1975, the military *junta* commanded by Mengistu Haile Mariam nationalized all urban land and rental dwellings through the proclamation 47/1975, known as Government Ownership of Lands and 'Extra' Houses. Next to this attempt to reduce the wealth inequality across the country, the junta created an agency for the administration of rental houses owned by the government and, most importantly, created the *Kebele Housing* managed by the smallest government administration unit, the Kebele, which operated at the neighbourhood level.[13]

These political decisions caused an impact on the built environment of Ethiopian cities, first and foremost in Addis Ababa. In the capital, after the 1975 proclamation, the kebeles were responsible for 95% of all rental accommodation.[14] The rental market changed noticeably with the monthly rent average dropping 15% to 50% in the lowest rental values. From 1976 on, homeownership was solely promoted through housing cooperatives, which were financed by Ethiopia's Housing and Savings Bank (HSB) and technically supported by the government's Town Planning and Land Administration Department. The latter was the governmental agency responsible for the site plan and the house type selection for the settlements promoted by the cooperatives. The promotion of housing through cooperatives was indeed a major concern of the Derg administration, chiefly driven by ideological motivations. In effect, as the UN-Habitat report points out, "as compared to private homebuilders, housing cooperatives received preferential treatment throughout junta rule."[15] However, this was not enough to cope with Addis Ababa's housing shortage. In effect, the same report contends that "[f]or all these efforts, though, the net outcome of the junta's housing policy was a near complete disruption of the urban housing market."

Eventually, in the late l980s, the funding conditions became less attractive for the housing cooperatives, which triggered a strong development of self-help initiatives, using sweat equity as an alternative to conventional financial schemes.[16] Altogether, the housing policies implemented by the Derg regime failed to meet the demand for housing in Ethiopia as a whole, and especially in Addis Ababa.[17] Hence, overcrowding of existing houses, and new squatter settlements became pervasive in Addis Ababa's built

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[11] UN-Habitat, *Situation Analysis of Informal Settlements in Addis Ababa* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2007), 27.

[12] The decadence of Haile Selassie's regime in its final period was magnificently portrayed by the Polish journalist and writer Ryszard Kapuściński in his *The Emperor,* first publushed in 1978. See Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006).

[13] The Kebeles are urban dwellers' associations whose size is generally comprised between several hundred and a few thousand households. According to UN-Habitat, "[e]ach kebele serves as the lowest echelon of municipal government and its officers are in theory elected by local constituents." See UN-Habitat, *Situation Analysis of Informal Settlements in Addis Ababa*, 10.

[14] Ibid., 11.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Frew Mengistu Truneh, "Institutional Interfaces and Actors' Behavior in Transitional Real Estate Markets of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)" (PhD Dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2013), 197–200.

[17] For an account of the housing policies implemented by the Derg Regime, see Wegayehu Fisseha, "Analysis and Evaluation of Housing Programs in Ethiopia: 1976-1986" (PhD Dissertation, Rice University, 1987).

landscape. Curiously enough, however, in Addis Ababa squatter settlements were not poverty-driven. Instead, as a research conducted by Minweylet Melese showed, they surfaced in the western periphery of Addis Ababa mainly through the agency of middle class households.[18]

In the context of this crisis, the lower income sections of the society, the poorest of the poor, suffered the most and lived in dire conditions. In the late 1970s, this situation received especial attention among the international community and in 1981 the Norwegian NGO Redd Barna (Save the Children in Norwegian) submitted a proposal to develop kebele 41, one of Addis Ababa's worse cases of urban misery and squalor. Redd Barna's drive was to promote a community based integrated project focused on physical upgrading, creation of income-generating activities, preventive health programmes, and fostering community awareness and participation.[19]

While the Kebele 41 initiative was important in developing new strategies to promote slum upgrading, in the late 1980s Redd Barna Ethiopia (RBE) would be engaged in developing a novel strategy to accommodate the urban poor, designing a new formula to promote home ownership while preserving a sense of collectivity. The upgrading intervention for the Menen area, part of Sidist Kilo locality, was based on clusters of two stories high housing blocks comprising minimum dwelling units with areas ranging from 10m2 to 25m2. In 1994 RBE handed over 23 housing blocks that could accommodate 198 households and several shared facilities such as communal kitchens and water stands. [Figure 8_Redd Barna Menen]

The stakeholders involved in the process created a Saving And Credit Co-operative (SACC) to manage the development of the operation and to take over the ownership of the housing units, ensuring tenure security, safeguarding the development from gentrification and protecting the replacement of the intended target groups by a "favored" group" as had happened in previous experiences. As Elias Yitbarek points out, "[t]he method used by RBE to protect the transfer of benefits, e.g. to the middle income, is by avoiding one-time handouts and to tie the benefits through a 'matching input' principle. The housing and its attached subsidy were also made non transferable to a third party for 20 years, the age required for a child to support him/her self."[20]

Next to its innovative strategy to develop a community-based housing policy providing tenure security and avoiding gentrification, the Menen experiment created also an alternative typo-morphological figure to those employed hitherto in slum renovation. To be sure, the clusters of two-stories high housing blocks with their associated communal facilities created conditions to accommodate the vernacular patterns of inhabitation while improving people's living conditions and sanitary infrastructure.

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[18] "Unlike squatters in many other large cities in the developing world who build shelters in marginal areas, those in Addis Ababa do so on prime urban land except for its peripheral location. The lot sizes they find are often larger than those currently provided by municipal authorities for members of housing cooperatives." See UN-Habitat, *Situation Analysis of Informal Settlements in Addis Ababa*, 28.

[19] For an account of this process see Yves Cabannes, "Community Based Urban Development in Ethiopia," in *Building Community: A Third World Case Study*, ed. Bertha Turner (London: Building Community Books, 1988), 25–32.

[20] Elias Yitbarek, "Between Renting and Owning: Saving and Credit Cooperative Based Tenure Transformation in the Inner-City 'slums' of Addis Ababa," in *16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. Svein Ege et al. (Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim, 2009), 949.

The Grand Housing Programme

As in many other African countries, the geopolitics of the Cold War determined Ethiopia's fortune until the late 1980s. Then, in 1991, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, ethno-nationalism gained momentum in the country and, without the support of the Sovied Union, the Derg was replaced by a new government led by the military affiliated with liberation movements and other armed political forces. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in June 1991 led by its most influential politician, Meles Zenawi, a former member of the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front. From then on Zenawi's political program was geared towards the end of the civil war and the implementation of a market economy, which could modernize the country and bring Ethiopia back into a more prominent position in the regional and global affairs.

The new government's ideas regarding housing policies were at odds with the Derg's. To be sure, in an attempt to distance itself from the previous regime, Zenawi's government dissolved the Housing Cooperatives Department in 1993 and, as Mengistu Truneh points out, "[a]ll of the regular cooperatives which were organised to benefit from bank loans had been obliged to be converted into the less regulated and flexible self-help form of housing cooperatives."[21] An administrative limbo followed suit. On the one hand this triggered speculative manipulations of the cooperative system, and on the other hand it contributed a great deal for the development of self-help housing initiatives.

In effect, in the first years of the new government, the housing issue was not one of its priorities. Rather, under Zenawi's leadership, the initial attention was focused on rural development. This strategy would produce some tangible results. With the end of 17 years of civil war, and with the implementation of market-oriented policies, the country ensued a path of rapid economic development and demographic growth. In this process, Addis Ababa became one of the fastest growing cities in the world, a phenomenon that brought about a great deal of opportunities but also many challenges.[22]

The housing shortage was indeed one of the most pressing problems. To cope with this issue, land ownership became a crucial aspect to implement a new housing policy and to control the housing sector. Indeed, even though the new government was keen in distancing itself from the Marxist junta, they kept one of the signature decisions of its predecessors: public ownership of all urban land as decided in the 1975 proclamation mentioned above. According to a report by the UN-Habitat, in a context of market oriented policies, "[t]he government's declared intention [to keep urban land as public property] was also to create a steady source of revenue for city authorities, so that they could use leasehold-generated revenue to improve municipal services."[23]

Notwithstanding the initial efforts to modernize the country's economy, in the mid-2000s, an overwhelming 97% of Addis Ababa's housing stock was still made out of single-story residential units.[24] [Figure 9_ Urban Fabric of the Kebele]. A great deal of these were overcrowded and dilapidated after decades of neglect. Despite their poor material condition, they were built in premium real estate,

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[21] Frew Mengistu Truneh, "Institutional Interfaces," 201.
[22] Addis Ababa in particular, and the whole Eastern Africa in general, is now "by far the world's most rapidly urbanizing [region]." See UN-Habitat, *The State of African Cities 2014. Re-Imagining Sustainable Urban Transitions* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2014), 146.
[23] UN-Habitat, *Situation Analysis of Informal Settlements in Addis Ababa*, 14.
[24] Ibid., 29.

occupying vast areas in central locations. Indeed, the timid modernization of Addis promoted successively by Menelik II, the Italian occupation, Haile Selassie I, the Derg regime, and the first decade of Zenawi's government have never succeeded in accomplishing the eradication of informal settlements from the city centre of Addis. On the contrary, Addis developed a quite unique urban fabric, in which different typo-morphological figures shared the same territory, and where different income sections of the society lived next door.

This co-existence and territorial simultaneity of different spatial configurations and income classes was about to change. In 2004, the government presented a new housing policy, the Integrated Housing Development Programme (IHDP), which was designed to build affordable housing and eradicate the slums. The IHDP, also known as the Grand Housing Programme or condominium housing, aimed at solving the housing shortage through cost-efficient large scale interventions, as opposed to the small scale programs that had been hitherto engaged in slum upgrading and in cooperative housing.

After a pilot project developed from 2002 through 2004 for the area of Bole Gerji, the IHDP was officially launched in 2005, with the goal of building throughout the country 360,000 dwelling units in the its first five years of implementation, from 2006 through 2010. For the government the IHDP was more than another housing policy. It was a political project, and their ambitions were not timid. In the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, held in Abuja in 2008, the Ethiopian Minister of Works and Urban Development pointed out that the IHDP envisages "the utilisation of housing as an instrument to promote urban development, create jobs, revitalise the local urban economy through MSE development, encourage saving and empower urban residents through property ownership, and develop the capacity of the domestic construction industry."[25]

Emancipated Consumers
One of the premises of the IHDP was, and still is, the eradication of slums through a cost-efficient housing figure, based on the multi-story block type. [Figure 10_The condominum housing complex] The project was initially designed with the technical assistance of the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the Ethiopian firm MH-Engineering. In the pilot project for 700 housing units for the Bole/Gerji area, the designers succeeded in building the complex for a price under $100,00/m2. Four dwelling types were considered, ranging from studios with approximately 20m2 through three bedroom flats with 50-60m2.[26] The government agreed with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, which is entirely owned by the state, funding schemes designed to facilitate assess to credit for low-income sector of the population.

In the technical manual that resulted from the pilot project for Bole/Gerji the authors pointed out that it "is also a pilot for densification, vertical growth, cost-efficient and cost-effective building technologies on

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[25] Ministry of Works and Urban Development, *Integrated Housing Development Programme of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, AMCHUD, Abuja, Nigeria, 28-30 July 2008, p. 3. Quoted in UN-Habitat, *The Ethiopia Case of Condominium Housing*, 10.
[26] Each dwelling unit was connected to the infrastructure of water, sewerage, and electricity and included a bathroom and a separate kitchen. For more information about the typical units see Ibid., 20–27.

the base of cost-effective designs without sacrificing aesthetics."[27] Further, Arkebe Oqubay, then mayor of Addis Ababa and one of the driving forces behind the IHDP, in his prologue to the technical manual pointed out that "[t]he Addis Ababa Grand Housing Program makes housing for the first time accessible for low and middle urban income dwellers. It enables them to acquire decent shelter to raise their children in a healthy environment improving their overall living conditions."[28]

The program indeed succeeded in attracting the ill-housed citizens and luring them to become emancipated consumers, instead of tenants of (dilapidated) governmental housing. To be sure, when Addis Ababa's city administration opened the registration process for the condominium flats, almost half a million people enrolled, an amount that testifies to the dimension of the city's housing backlog.[29] This high demand is not uniform, though. As a report for the UN-Habitat points out, part of it was *effective* demand, and another part was "aspirational" demand. While the earlier included people who were in fact able to advance the required down payment (variable from 10% to 30% of the total cost of the flat), the latter gathered people who wanted a new dwelling but did not have enough savings to meet the down payment.[30]

Eventually only half of the output programmed for the five-years plan was actually built (170,000 units), and approximately half of dwellings (78,000 units) were constructed in Addis Ababa.[31] While the programme failed to meet the enthusiasm of the population and the quantitative expectations of the government, it certainly succeeded in shifting Ethiopia's housing policies paradigm. To be sure, throughout the first five-years plan, the IHDP built an average of twelve housing units per working hour.[32] Indeed, especially in Addis Ababa, it transformed conspicuously the built landscape and the patterns of inhabitation for several thousands of families.

Notwithstanding these achievements, moving from the kebele to the condominium was far from being a straightforward upgrading. The program's emphasis on densification and affordability overlooked some of the shortcomings of a massive process of urban renewal and development of new settlements based on a single typological figure, the free standing housing block, that was alien to the 97% of the citizens that lived hitherto in compounds of single-story houses. In effect, the major challenges of the IHDP can be divided in two groups: Those brought about by the development of massive condominium housing complexes built on peripheral areas and those triggered by the use of condominium blocks as a typological figure to operate in processes of inner city urban renewal.

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[27] Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, *Technical Manual. Vol. II* (Addis Ababa: Ministry of Federal Affairs, 2005), 11.

[28] Ibid., 3.

[29] For a critical account on the pros and cons of Addis Ababa's "Grand Housing Program", see Dirk Hebel and Bisrat Kifle, "Housing Addis," in *Cities of Change: Addis Ababa : Transformation Strategies for Urban Territories in the 21st Century*, ed. Marc Angélil and Dirk Hebel (Basel: Birkhauser, 2010), 109.

[30] UN-Habitat, *The Ethiopia Case of Condominium Housing*, 38.

[31] These units would be built both in the capital city, Addis Ababa (175,000) and in the other regional states (185,000). See Eyob Dolicho, *Condominium, A new housing Development Approach for Addressing the Low Income housing problem of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia* (Final Report). IChUD, IhS, June 2006, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

[32] UN-Habitat, *The Ethiopia Case of Condominium Housing*, 37.

Colonising the Periphery

For the Ethiopian government's politics of housing, in the first years of implementation of the IHDP, time was an important factor to achieve their ambitious goals. Consequently, in Addis Ababa for example, while the city government recognized the dire conditions in which people lived in the inner city *kebeles,* they quickly understood that renovating these in large scale would imply complex negotiations and eventually trigger social unrest. Hence, they decided to develop small to medium operations in green- and brown-field sites where they could skip consultations with existing residents, problematic relocations and expensive compensations. This was the case of the successful condominium complex built at the Gotera site. [Figure 11_Aerial Chronological Sequence of Gotera]

Cases such as Gotera were more the exception than the rule. Indeed, to speed up the process and to deliver new housing units as soon as possible, it was decided to build up large-scale condominium complexes in vacant land on the periphery of the city. The Jemo site, built to the South east of Addis Ababa, clearly illustrates this strategy. [Figure 12_Aerial Chronological Sequence of Jemo] The Jemo condominium was built on agricultural fields and designed to accommodate 10,000 households. The scale and spatial features of this housing complex are noticeably distinct from previous housing settlements built in Addis Ababa. Indeed, the sheer size of this residential complex contrasts heavily with the urban fabric of the kebele settlements, and brings about new figures of public, collective and private spaces, which are scarcely resonant with the vernacular tradition. The open spaces are generous and the expected density (around 200 units/hectare) is accommodated in five-stories high housing blocks.

However, the location of the complex creates three concurrent problems: infrastructure, connectivity, and income generation. In fact, extending the city's already strained infrastructure network to peripheral areas has proven to be a big challenge. Then, those who moved into these complexes soon became well aware of the additional costs and time consumed to commute to their working places, or otherwise to places where they can find ways to generate income. Further, the typology of stacked flats also hinders the possibility of developing household activities (cooking *injera,* for example) that could bring additional income, especially for women, as it was common practice in the kebele. While the development of condominium complexes at the periphery brought about important challenges, in the inner-city urban renewal operations the scenario was also changing.

Re-Inventing the Centre

On 11 June 2007, the BBC journalist Amber Henshaw reported from Addis Ababa on the "Ethiopian capital's home wreckers". She described the incidents triggered by the government's decision to build new infrastructure and renovate premium real estate land on the city centre of Addis Ababa. Exploring the case of the twenty-four-year-old Osman Redwan, one of nine-siblings sharing a small kebele house, she pointed out that "[c]ity planners had drawn a line through his neighbourhood to make way for a huge road expansion programme. And stunned onlookers watched as diggers came in to demolish everything along that line - one person's front porch, another's back garden, the front third of a traditional wooden house, half a shop. The work was quick and clinical. Demolition teams stripped away plaster and partitions, leaving a series of bizarre cross sections behind them."[33] Even though these demolitions were meant to

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[33] "Ethiopian Capital's Home Wreckers," *BBC*, June 11, 2007, sec. Africa, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6727931.stm.

give way for a road, the same scenario could be depicted in the clearing of sites for the so-called urban renewal component of the IHDP. With one big difference, though: In this case it was not only the front porch or the back garden of a house, but the whole building.

The Lideta condominium is one case in point. [Figure 13_Aerial Chronological Sequence of Lideta] After developing a great deal of large-scale peripheral developments such as Jemo and some inner city operations such as Gotera, the city's authorities were now ready to implement large-scale operations in the inner city. In the meantime the administration of the programme created mechanisms to mitigate the problems associated with massive evictions and expropriations. They compensated the homeowners and relocated (temporarily or permanently) the tenants of the kebele housing. Despite the scale of the intervention and its disruptive nature, consultations with the residents affected were seldom promoted.

The building types designed for the peripheral locations were revised in order to increase the density of the housing complex and thus take advantage of the privileged location, close to the city centre. The blocks expanded from five stories high to eight and even further in some cases. Moreover, a great deal of the land on the site was auctioned and sold in the market to generate funds that could be use to cross-subsidize the development of the condominium complex.

The Lideta condominium became eventually a benchmark for the government's program to eradicate the slums from the city centre. In fact, on the area formerly occupied with kebele housing, we can see now mid-rise office buildings, sumptuous private houses and condominium blocks. For one thing we must acknowledge that the government's strategy catered for some kind of inclusivity, bringing together such different functions and typo-morphological figures. On the other hand, however, the social and spatial practices accommodated hitherto in the kebele housing were completely displaced. With it, long-standing social structures were shattered and a great deal of the former residents saw their everyday trajectories radically changed and even threatened by having to cope with alien patterns of inhabitation.

Conclusion
Over the last decade, the vernacular social and spatial practices of hundreds of thousands of Addis Ababa's inhabitants were disrupted when they moved from the kebele to the condominium. While the material and sanitary conditions improved noticeably, the ideological construct behind the figure of the condominium created social tensions. On the one hand the housing policy behind the IHDP was designed to empower the city dwellers giving them security of tenure. On the other hand, the pressure to deliver cost-efficient residential complexes stressed the need to increase density, and reduce the variety of possible housing schemes and typological solutions. The merits of the programme are undeniable, especially regarding job creation, building capacities, and active policies for positive discrimination of women and disabled people. However, the emancipatory potential of the programme is hindered by the monolithic use of a single typo-morphological housing figure, which fails to accommodate vernacular social and spatial practices.

The same goes for the structure of public and collective space. In fact, the generous open spaces created by the designers of the new condominium settlements do not have a precedent in local spatial practices. While every household is required to become a stakeholder in the management and activation of these spaces, most of them refrain from doing so, as there is little motivation to claim this collective space.

Instead it brings costs and responsibilities that are contested by the dwellers. The programme indeed suggests an ambiguous boundary between the realm of the individual and the realm of the collective. It promotes home ownership and security of tenure and, at the same time, it stimulates shared responsibilities in the management and maintenance of the housing complexes.

In effect, this ambiguity was already part and parcel of the everyday life in the kebele. In many cases the available dwelling units were so crowded that the line separating each household from its extended family was hard to draw. However, the scale and the spatial organization were completely different and the development of community-driven social prcatices came about naturally. A similar phenomenon could be found in the Redd Barna housing scheme built in Menem. To be sure, both the kebele compounds and the Redd Barna complex accommodated vernacular social and spatial practices where the courtyard or the surrounding open space performed as an extension of the dwelling. These are social spaces where a small community of households strengthens their bonds and negotiates their conflicts. In the condominiums, however, the sheer size of the blocks and their typo-morphological characteristics thwarts the development of an organic connection with meaningful social spaces.

For hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian citizens, moving from the kebele to the condominium resonates with an opportunity to catch up with the road toward modernization. We should not overlook the emancipatory potential of this process. In fact, for many citizens, being evicted from the kebele is perceived as a blessing in disguise. However, as the IHDP process illustrates, despite a great deal of good intentions and smart strategies, there is also a dark side to this promise of emancipation. It is shattering vernacular social and spatial practices in unprecedented levels. Under the banner of policies for slum eradication and poverty alleviation, little attention is being given to the development of alternative design strategies to the dogmatic approach currently employed in urban renewal operations and in proving affordable housing.

After ten years of dramatic transformations in Addis Ababa's housing policies, it is now high time to move beyond the dogmatism of scientific rationality and consider the cultural resources of Ethiopia as a vital player in the modernization of the nation's patterns of inhabitation. This re-conceptualization ought to take into account that we should not aim at preserving a virginal, unpolluted and primitive figure. Rather, we must be prepared to cope with a contaminated situation where, as Paul Ricoeur would put it, national cultures are being pervasively challenged by universal civilization.

Figure 1:

Unknown Artist - The Battle of Adwa
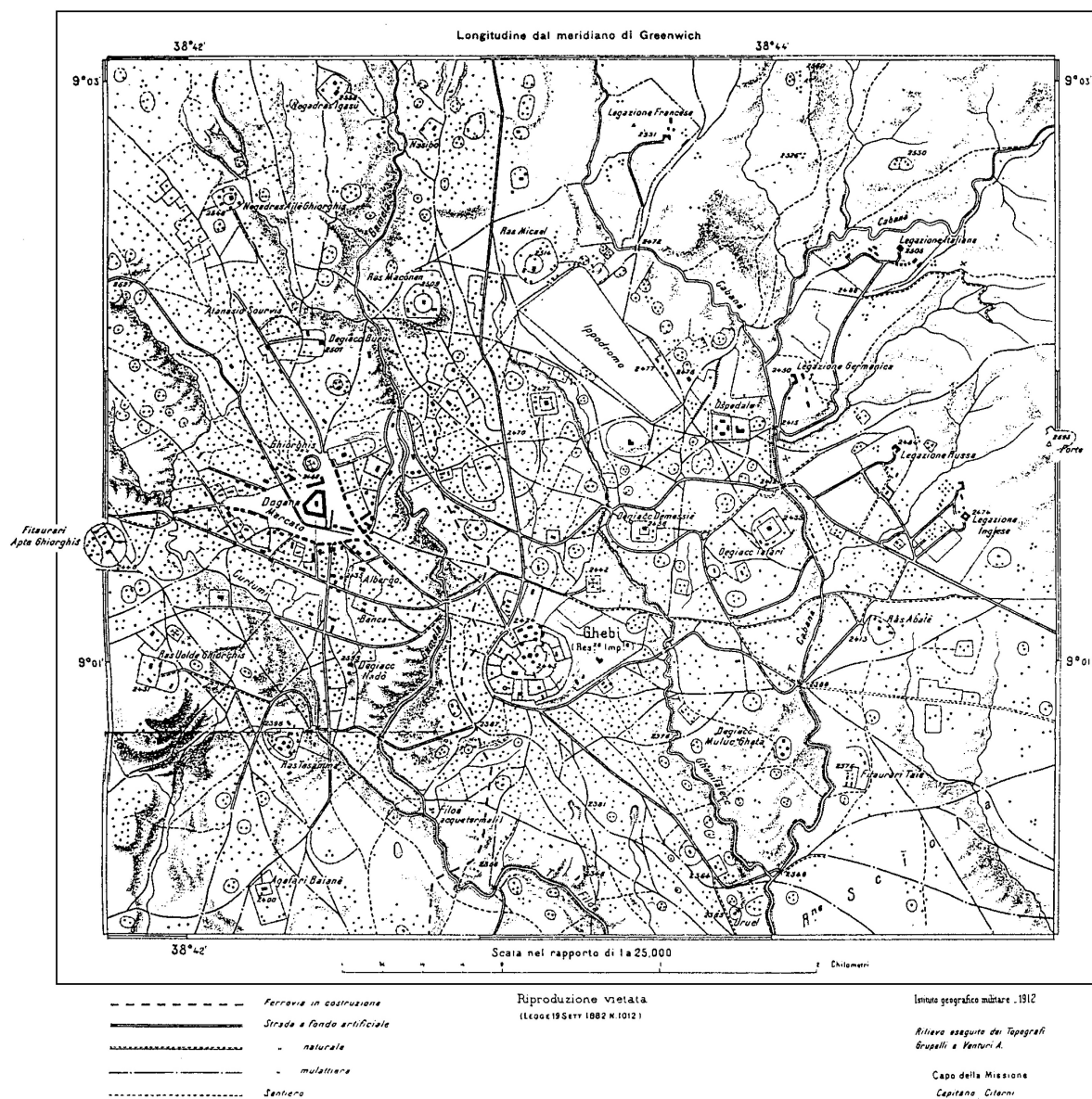
Source: British Museum (Af1974,11.34)

Figure 2

Topographical map of Addis Ababa drawn by the Italian Military Geographical Institute in 1910

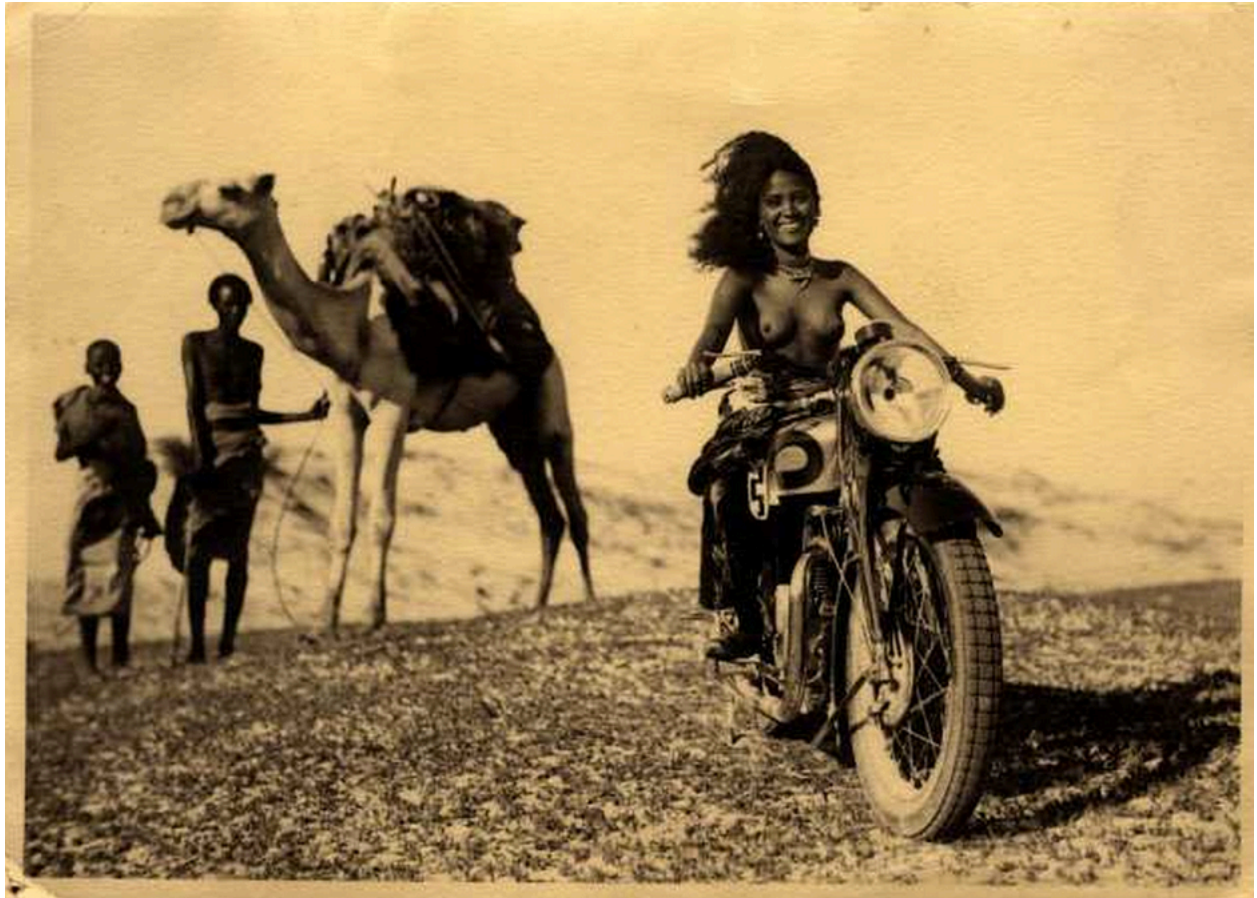Source: Il primo rilievo topografico italiano di Addis Abeba, *L'Universo* 6 (1936)

Figure 3

Young Ethiopia Woman riding a motorcycle
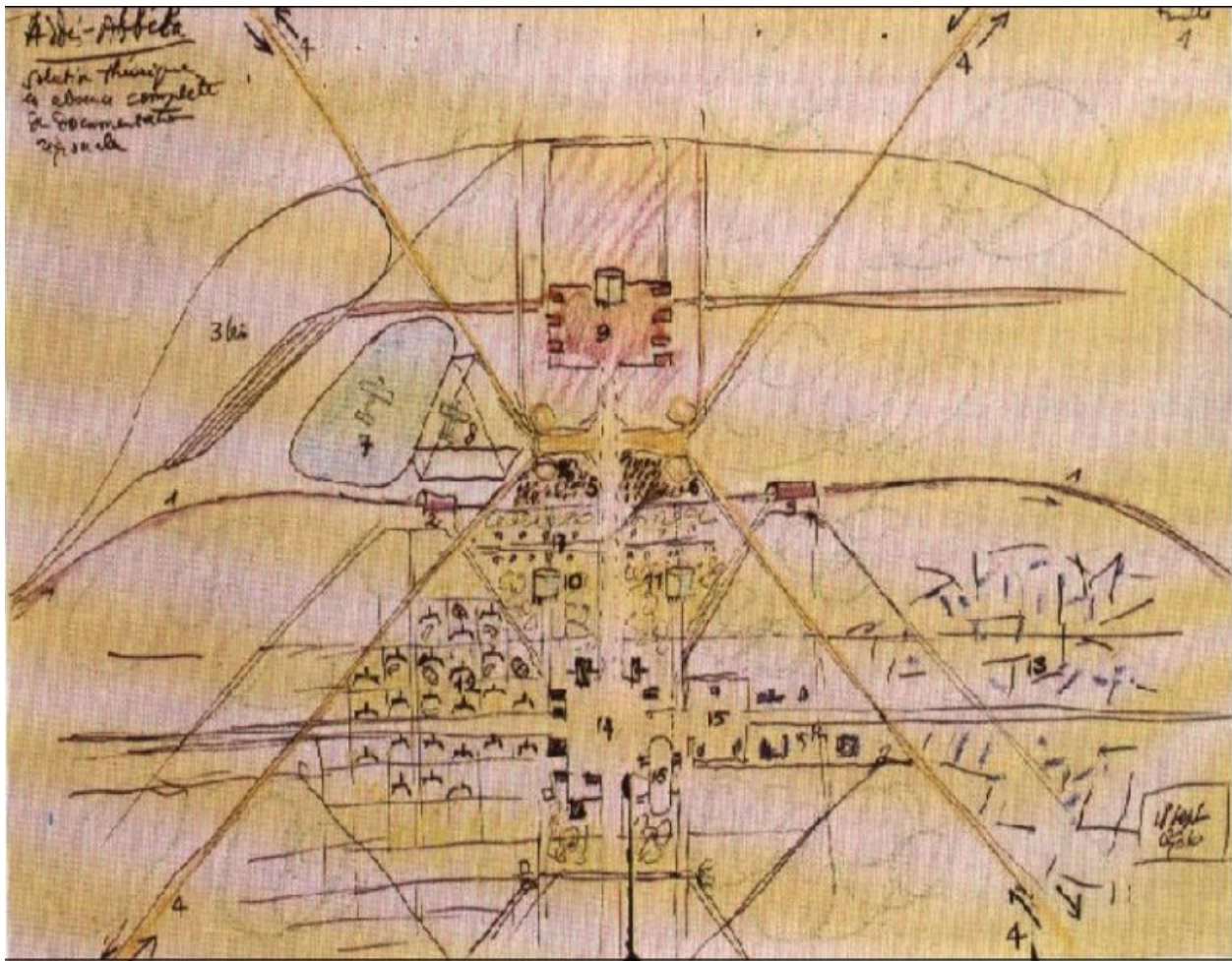
Source: Fonds Pier Luigi Remaggi B 06 025 (http://www.memoriecoloniali.org/)

Figure 4

Le Corbusier's sketch of a plan for Addis Ababa, 1936.

Source: Fondation Le Corbusier
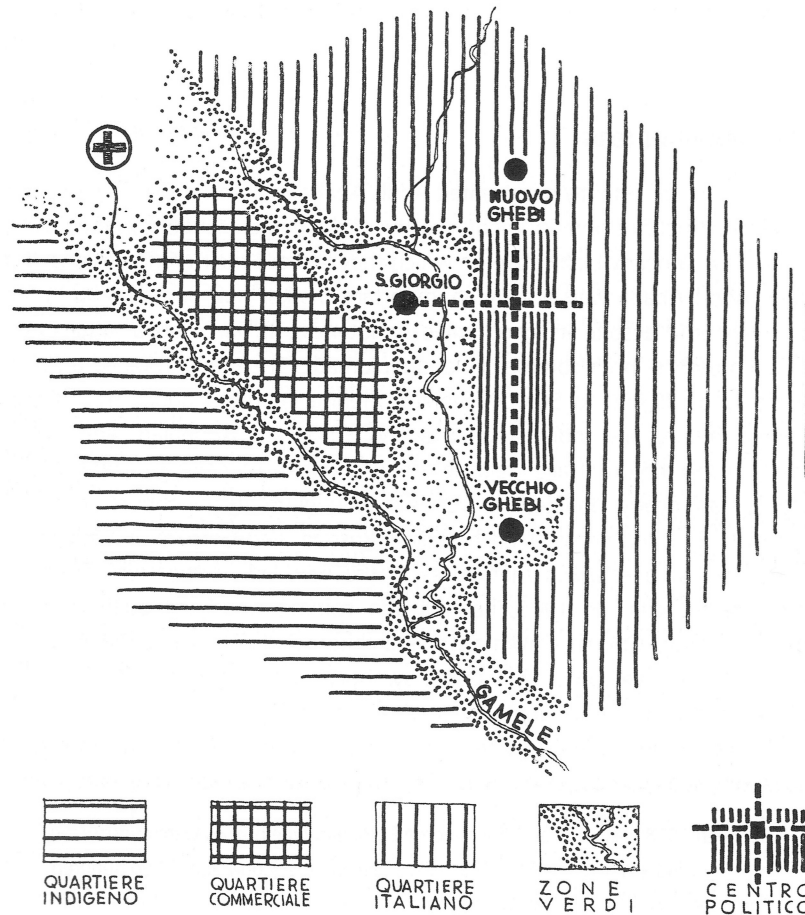
Figure 5

The first Italian plan for Addis Ababa

Source: Cesare Valle "Programma urbanistico per Addis Abeba. Architetti Ignazio Guidi e Cesare Valli,"
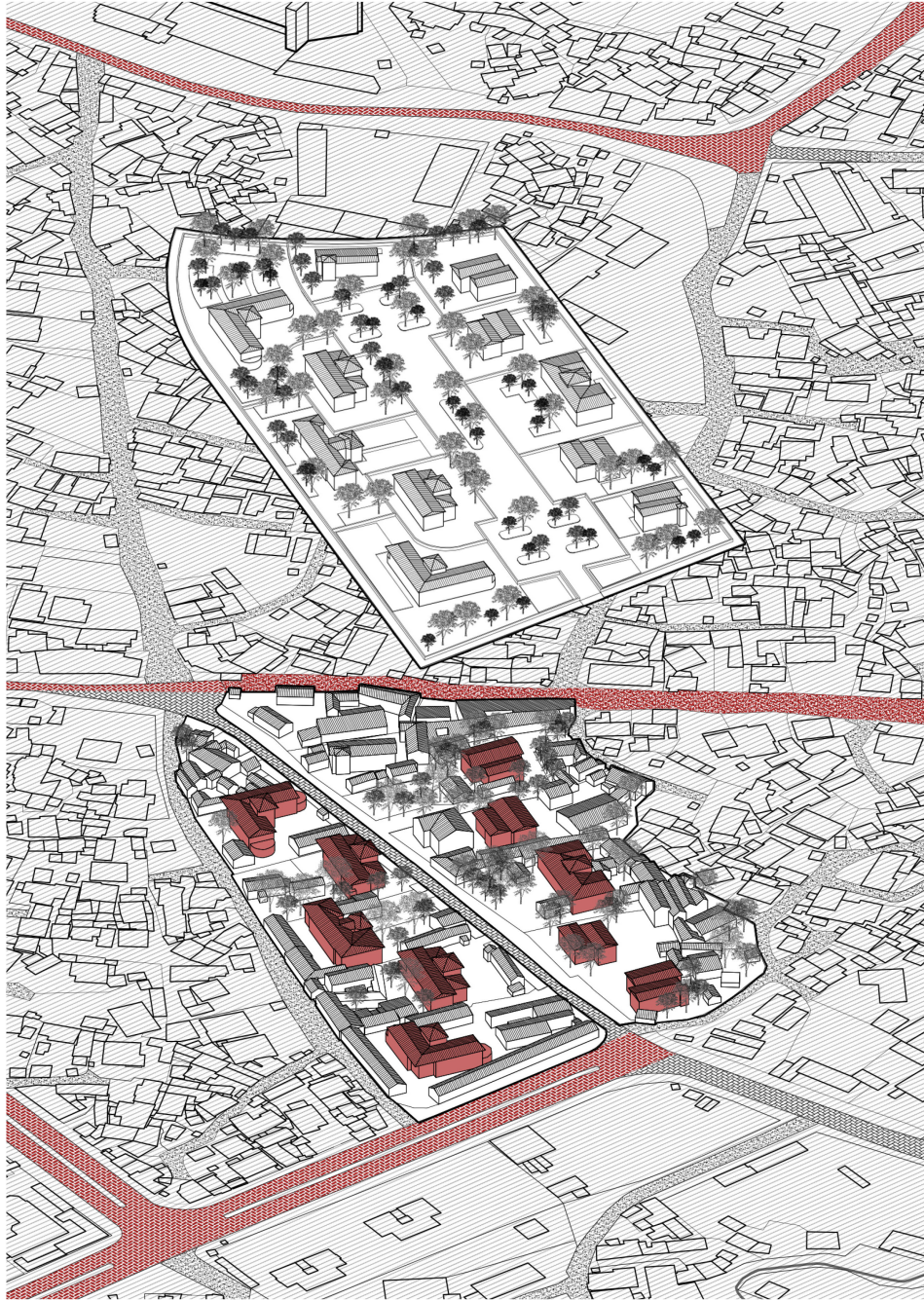*ARC* 16: 2 (1937)

Figure 6

Kasanchis, Addis Ababa. Axonometric view of the current situation of the colonial housing neighbourhood with original plan overhanging

Drawing : © Thijs Huisink, Jules Gallissian, Andrea Migotto
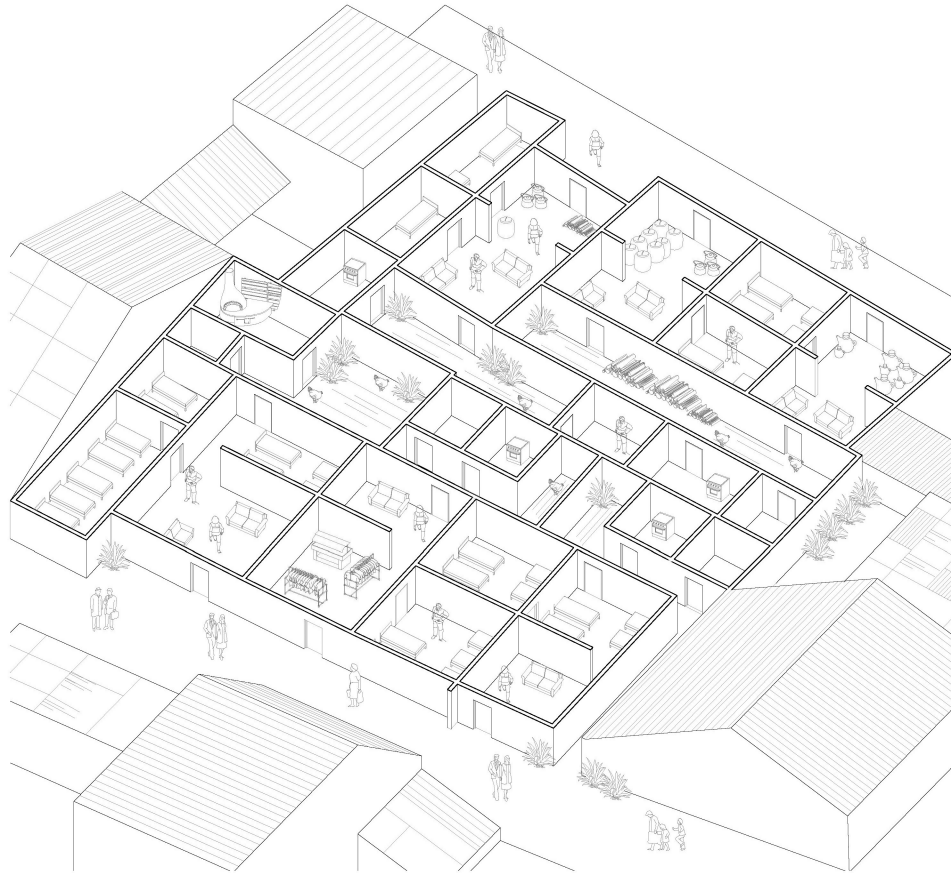
Figure 7

Single story high inner city slum compound, Addis Ababa

Drawing : © Pinar Sefkatli, Chiara Cirrone, Juan Camilo Arboleda Gomez

Figure 8

A courtyard in one of the clusters built by Redd Barna (Addis Ababa, 2013)

Photo: © Nelson Mota

Figure 9

Kebele Housing in Addis Ababa
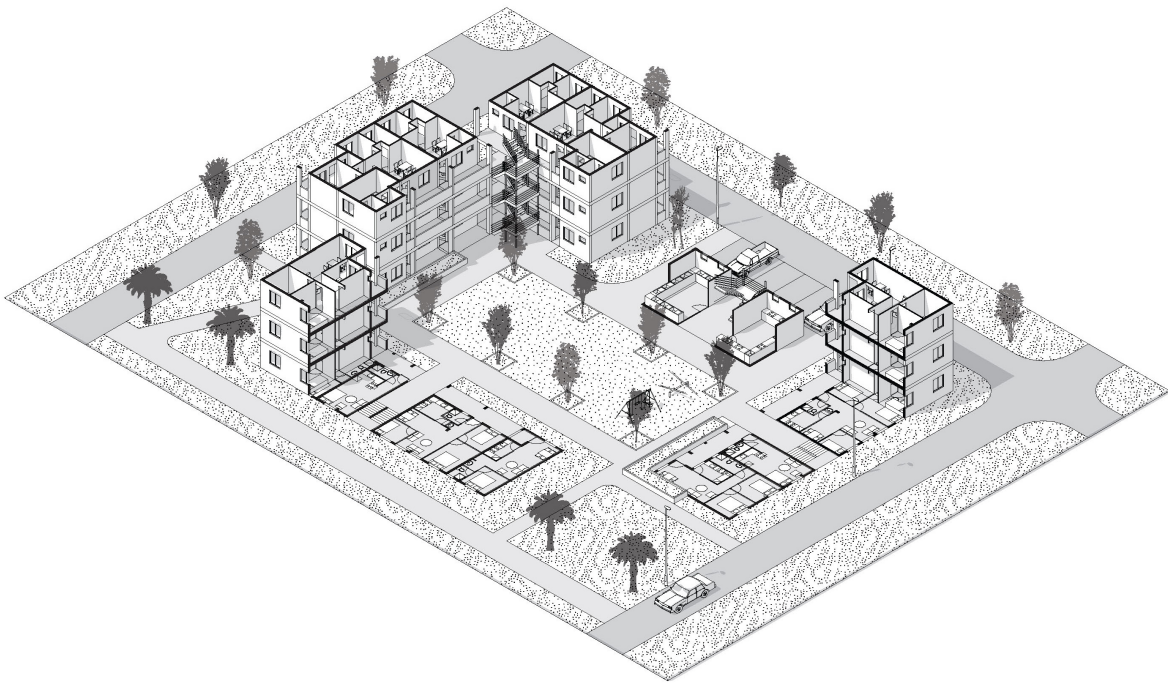
Photo: © Felicity Crawshaw

Figure 10

Exploded Axonometric Perspective of a Condominium housing complex

Drawing : © Max Brobbel and Stephanie Snellenberg

Figure 11

Aerial View of the Gotera site, Addis Ababa, in 2003 (above) and 2011 (below)

Source: Google Earth

Figure 12

Aerial View of the Jemo site, Addis Ababa, in 2005 (above) and 2009 (below)

Source: Google Earth

Figure 13

Aerial View of the Lideta site, Addis Ababa, in 2008 (above) and 2014 (below)

Source: Google Earth