Housing Informality in Expanding Ethiopian Cities: Moving beyond the 'New Normal' Syndrome

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1 ABSTRACT

The Millenium Development Goal Target 7/11 of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 slum dwellers by 2020 will certainly depend on the credibility of approaches and systems put in place to deal with the challenge of housing informality. Unfortunately, knowledge of what works best for developing nations has been impoverished by complex processes of globalization that have seen many such approaches and systems reflecting planning ideas borrowed from the global North. The informal housing sector has regrettably over the years benefited immensely from planning ideas and approaches simplistically transferred from the North to Southern contexts. Such 'normal approaches' - as they have turned out to be called have impoverished planning thinking and practice. While the concept of 'normality' has often been justified on grounds such as globalization induced 'best practice' this analysis takes the view that the concept is directly at odds with the reality of socio-spatial dynamics and practices in cities and regions which have been increasingly subjected to peculiar global economic forces. The analysis seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate about what appropriate forms of interventions would work in different informality contexts. It does so by reviewing the extent to which different forms of institutional responses to housing informality have worked for different urban local settings in Ethiopia. The study utilized the survey method, interviews with selected officials, and a review of government and municipal documents to generate empirical data. Sixty senior town and city officials drawn across all regions of Ethiopia were enumerated through the application of the Delphi method. Empirical evidence was complemented by a study of ten cities and/or towns drawn from Ethiopia. Regional experiences were analyzed using the Comparative Studies framework. Content analysis and the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPPS) were used to analyze qualitative and quantitative variables respectively. Data from independently drawn samples was collated through meta analysis.Results reveal that urbanization and deficiencies of the public land management system (especially the land allocation process) have led to the evolution of informal housing markets. A large but varying proportion of Ethiopia's urban population is housed in unauthorized and un-serviced settlements and this trend is likely to continue in the medium to long term. Response options to the emerging informalization process from state and local authorities have taken a variety of forms. These have often ranged from *laissez-faire* and *co-optation* to *coercion*. Irregardless of the response option adopted, the resultant scenario has often taken two forms. On one hand it has resulted in isolation and resistance and on the other in partnerships, cooperation and mutual problem solving. The paper argues that only the path that creates co-operation, partnerships and mutual problem solving is ideal in dealing with housing informality in Ethiopia. Confrontation and disregard would breed antagonism and resistance. An integrative strategy would however lead to negotiated outcomes that will further assist land administrators to create more options for mutual gain.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The 'new normal' syndrome

The Millenium Development Goal Target 7/11 of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 slum dwellers by 2020 will certainly depend on the credibility of approaches and systems put in place to deal with the challenge of housing informality. Unfortunately, knowledge of what works best for developing nations has been impoverished by complex processes of globalization that have seen many such approaches and systems reflecting planning ideas borrowed from the global North (Watson, 2009). The informal housing sector has over the years (regrettably) benefited immensely from planning ideas and approaches simplistically transferred from the North to Southern contexts. It has for example become common knowledge that policies to deal with housing informality have shifted from hostility to acceptance, restriction to tolerance, restraining to enabling (Perera, 1994). To this end, governments of the South are increasingly encouraged to embrace, promote and accommodate informal activities in their urban environments (Perera, 1994; AlSayyad, 2000). Bromley, (2008:20) has in recent times observed that land titling has become one of the "…optimistic policy prescription imposed on the poor nations of the world." A barrage of land titling

programmes that have characterized the greater part of the last two decades have often been seen as appropriate measures of increasing tenure security, improving access to formal credit and reducing poverty among other things (Payne et al, 2007). Yet there is little empirical evidence to underpin such land formalization procedures. Efforts targeted at capturing the benefits of harnessing the efficiencies of informality are now viewed as either "normal" or "best" practice (UN-HABITAT, 2009). This analysis is premised on the thesis that, important shifts and new ideas are worth noting but are nevertheless, no – readymade solutions for Southern contexts (Watson, 2009).

There is a general consensus in both planning and development literature that the continuous incorporation of such 'universalist' perspectives (as they have turned out to be called) has impoverished planning thinking and practice. The central theme that is running across a spurt of critics of such perspectives is that they over the years "…shaped a dominant and persistent planning rationality, which in turn sets standards of 'normality' regarding 'proper' living environments, the 'proper' conduct of citizens, acceptable ways of reaching consensus, notions of the public good, and so on." (Watson, 2009: 186). Ultimately the planning practice has been left open to accusation of irrelevance and of directly limiting our understanding of urban poverty and informality in the developing world (Healy, 2004; Simone, 2004; Watson, 2003; 2009).

While the concept of 'normality' has often been justified on grounds such as globalization induced 'best practice' (Tait and Jensen, 2007), this analysis takes the view by Watson, (2009) that the concept is directly at odds with the reality of socio-spatial dynamics and practices in cities and regions which have been increasingly subjected to peculiar global economic forces. It therefore follows that knowledge on institutions for dealing with informality cannot be transplanted from elsewhere and 'parachuted' into the understanding of the policy practices that are inevitably situated and taking place in contexts that have particular and distinct socio-spatial, economic and environmental traits. The recent increase in scholarship on housing informality is perhaps testimony to the difficulties associated with finding answers to informality challenges that are increasingly evolving in diverse contexts. Urban housing informality has been receiving increasing attention in recent years as evidenced by the number of initiatives that have been launched by development organizations and a steady stream of academic writing on the subject (UN-HABITAT, 2009; van Gelder, 2007, 2010, Wigle, 2010).

Such increase in scholarship underscores the need to have an in-depth understanding of housing informality and overcome the deficiencies associated with committing what this analysis terms a "universalistic fallacy." It is the diversified nature of urban contexts in which housing informality is found that has undoubtedly attracted interest by different disciplines including planners (Rakodi, 2001, 2003, 2006; Sliuzas, 2004; Kamete, 2006; Kombe, 2005), architects (Shakur and Madden, 1991; Jie, 1997; Fekade, 2000; Tipple, 2000; Winayanti and Lang, 2004), lawmakers (Fernandes and Varley, 1998), geographers (Main and Williams, 1994; Gough, 1996; Gough and Kellett, 2001) and economists (such as Pillay and Naude, 2005). Though on various facets, interest in informal housing has continued to grow in the last five years (Kombe, 2005; Kironde, 2006; Rakodi, 2006; Meaton and Alnsour, 2006; Alnsour and Menton, 2009; Lemanski, 2009; Yap and Wandeler, 2010). It can be argued with a reasonable degree of confidence that all such efforts seek to augment our understanding of the conditions under which different forms of embracing housing informality would work. In other words, one would not expect the recent UN-HABITAT (2009) recommendations to recognize all forms of urban development by extending land use regulations to informal urbanization to be a universal solution in different informality contexts. Barry (2006), notes that the social and political circumstances of housing informality are complex and continuously changing. A deeper understanding of these is according to him indispensable in mapping out credible policies to dealing with informality challenges posed.

This analysis seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on what appropriate forms of interventions would work in different informality contexts. It reviews the extent to which different forms of institutional responses to housing informality have worked for different urban local authorities in Ethiopia. In doing so, the analysis assumes that informal housing markets are usually structured by informal and often illegal property rights (Mooya and Cloete, 2010). Informal housing rights are defined as those rights held by economic agents that fail to adhere to the established institutional rules or are denied their protection (Pertes and Hole, 2005). "Like in the formal market, property is acquired, sold, leased, given out and so on, but in an atmosphere of state disapproval." (Mooya and Cloete, 2010:438). Following this introduction, the analysis gives an overview of urban land policy in Ethiopia. This is then followed by a presentation of methods and

materials utilized in this study. The results and discussion sections then follow. The analysis winds off by giving some concluding remarks to the subject matter.

2.2 Urban land policy and the practice of land delivery system in Ethiopia: A historical overview

The land delivery system in Ethiopia has gone through different land tenural systems. Such tenural shifts are a reflection of the prevailing land policy and land holding tenure systems of the country under different governance regimes. Notable examples include the free hold land tenure system (pre-1975), public controlled permit system (1975-1992) and public lease hold system (1993 up to date). In addition to these, there are customary and informal land holding systems, which are commonly known in Ethiopia and other developing countries. The Monarchical feudal regime of Ethiopia had a monopoly of political and economic power for centuries, including the monopoly of ownership of land, (both rural and urban) and other property. It was after the emergency of the capitalist economy at beginning of 20th century that, saw the middle classes of starting to own land parcels by way of concession from the government or contracting from the property owners. At that time extensive areas of urban land and numerous houses were vested in the hands of 16 individual lords, aristocrats, loyal families and high government officials. However, some intellectuals and few emerging owners of capital managed to buy some plots of urban lands. All unused land was presumed to be the property of the state. The monarch and feudal nobilities had the right to allocate or reside wherever they liked in any city. On the other hand, the urban poor or low-income groups were compelled to acquire land for their proprietors as a gift, tenancy, in heritance of family, and informal settlement by group. The bulk of the most productive land assets remained in the hands of a few. The emergency and proliferation of early slums and the unprecedented rise in urban poverty can be traced back to the feudal ownership of land (Abay, 2005). It is now mostly acknowledged that the urban poor in developing countries (Ethiopia inclusive) have resorted to informal means of accessing urban land (Marulanda and Stein berg, 1991).

2.3 Formal land delivery system in Ethiopia today

The major formal land delivery system for residential housing and investment in Addis Ababa and other big cities is through the lease mechanism. But in some smaller towns it is on a rental basis. Land is a public property and an individual can enjoy only the use right of land under his/her possession. Thus, the means to acquire legally (formally) a plot of land for housing development, and investment purpose is dependent on the efficiency of the lease policy. Lease proclamation No 272/2002, is the current active law regarding land provision. It includes provisions on how an individual can acquire a piece of land. Under these provgisions, land can be acquired through an auction system, negotiation, lottery system and the award system.

The Ethiopian constitution (promulgated in 1994), retains state ownership of the land. Article 40, sub-section 3 of the constitution states that land "is exclusively vested in the state and in the peoples of Ethiopia. It further stipulates that 'land is a common property of the nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or other means of exchange." While every Ethiopian citizen has the right to own private property (article 40, subsection 1 of the constitution), the constitution does not provide for private ownership of land.

The land tenure system for urban areas is comprehensively dealt with by the Urban Lands lease holding Proclamation No. 172/2002. Under this proclamationLand is allocated through the leasing system. While the leaseholder of urban land is free to dispose off part or all of the interest by sale or other means of exchange, the lessee of public land is prohibited by law to sell the land or enter into any contract that binds the land. The policy allows that the government can retain land needed for public interest and individual holdings for better development activities by paying compensation to owners for the properties located on such pieces of land.

2.4 Materials and methods

The study utilized the survey method, interviews with selected officials, and the review of government and municipal documents to generate empirical data. Through the Delphi approach, a questionnaire was distributed to 60 key informants drawn from all regional states of Ethiopia. The questionnaire survey was conducted in January/February, 2009 and it exclusively focused on housing informality issues. The officials were conveniently drawn from government and local authority officials from various cities and towns of Ethiopia. The panel of experts enumerated came from about 18 cities and/or towns (Figure 1). At least 70 %

of the officials had more that 8 years of working experience (standard dev. = 3.08) in their respective government departments and local authorities. Data gathered was complemented by individual research work conducted in a sample of 10 Ethiopian cities and or towns in 2008/09. The consolidation of these different findings was achieved through a Comparatives Study Framework. Quantitative variables were analyzed through SPSS while qualitative variables were subjected to content analysis.
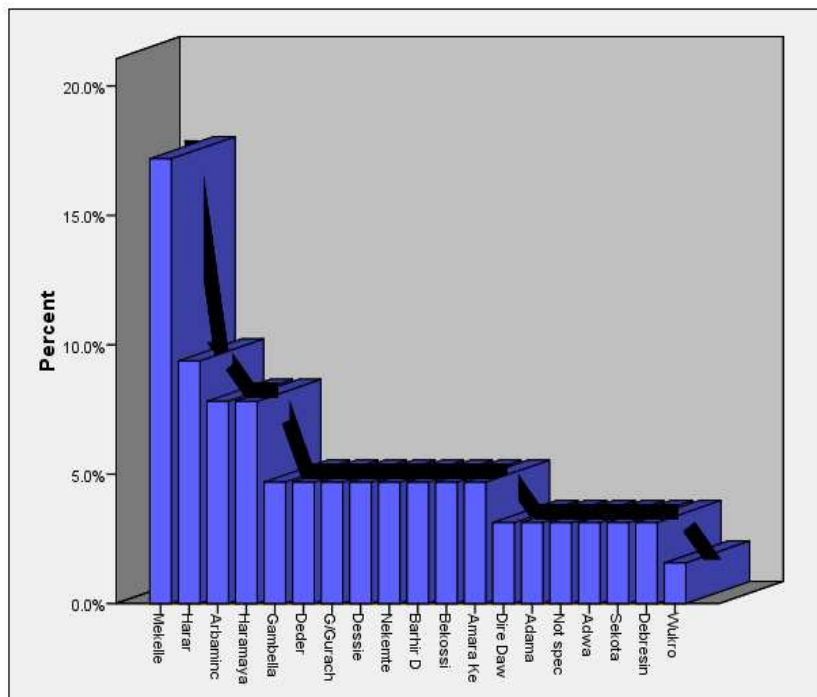

Figure 1: respondents profile by city/town (n=60)

3 RESULTS

3.1 Urban land and housing informality in Ethiopian cities

Defining the magnitude and scale of housing informality would certainly depend of how housing informality is perceived. If we take the definition of informal housing rights by Pertes and Hole, (2005) which points to the failure of economic agents to adhere to established institutional rules, one way to objectively measure it would be to look at the proportion of land parcels that conform to the basic planning and building design regulations (Table 1). Available statistics for many towns and cities in Ethiopia are far from pleasing. In Masha town for example the number of unregistered plots has remained high (over 98 %) and has been on the rise between 2004 and 2007 although 2008 statistics are encouraging (refer to table 1). In other smaller towns such as Abbiy Addi and Nekemte statistics on unregistered parcels of land have however remained comparatively low. Related statistics in Arbarminch town show a relatively high proportion of a sample 341 households having structures without an acceptable design.

Elements of illegal acquisition of housing properties and/or land, selling, leasing, and other forms of illegal transfers as defined by Mooya and Cloete, (2010:438) are also evident in other cities and/or towns of Ethiopia (refer to table 2). Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia is home to at least 30 % of illegal settlements and this trend has been worsening since 1988. It is estimated that more than 70% of Addis Ababa's population lives in slums and the houses are made predominantly from mud and straw (IHDP 2008).

Number of land parcels registered and have site plans in Masha town[1]				
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of land parcels registered	1953	2001	2064	2101
Registered land parcels with a site plan	39	27	31	15
Land parcels without a site plan	1914	1074	2033	2086
% land parcels with site plan	2	1.3	1.5	0.7
% land parcels without site plan	98	98.7	98.5	99.3

Use of standard/accepted designs by home owners in Abarminch town in 2008 (n = 381 home owners)		
Design category	No. of home owners	Proportion (%)
Standard/accepted design	160	46.1
Not standard/Unaccepted design	181	53.9

Registered and unregistered land parcels in a sample of three towns (2008)					
			Nekemte[3]		
	Abbiy Addi[2a]	Abbiy Addi[2b]	(n=15)	Masha[4a]	Masha[4b]
Number (%) of land parcels registered	1597 (77)	2136 (68)	4 (27)	1328 (74)	773 (84)
Number (%) of land parcels unregistered	466 (23)	996 (32)	11 (73)	349 (26)	121 (16)

1 =Municipality of Masha. 2007.
2 = Abiy Addi Municipality, 2008: a = old occupation/registration; b = new allocation/obligatory registration.
3 = Based on informal settler survey, 2008
4 = Municipality of Masha (Finance Department), 2008: a = Residential land plots; b= Business land plots

Table 1. Compliance to required planning and/or design standards in a sample of five towns.

Adama city (n = 75)			
	Kebele 03	Kebele 14	Total
Rural kebele administration	1 (2)	3 (10)	4 (5)
Buying from farmers	24 (53)	10 (33)	34 (45)
Buying from speculators	14 (31)	7 (23)	21 (28)
Gift from relatives	4 (9)	6 (20)	10 (13)
Occupation through force	2 (4)	4 (13)	6 (8)
Addis Ababa/Yeka subcity (n = 110)			
	Kebele 19	Kebele 20 & 21	Total
Rural kebele administration	1 (2)	1 (2)	2 (2)
Buying from peasants	19 (35)	10 (18)	29 (26)
Buying from speculators	21 (38)	29 (52)	50 (45)
Inherited from parents	11 (20)	16 (28)	27 (24)
Occupation through force	2 (4)	-	2 (2)
Acquisition of land by informal settlers in a sample of three cities			
	Proportion of informal setters acquiring land		
	Jimma city (n = 60)	Bahir Dar city (n = 186)	Debre Tabor (n = 1000
Allocated by the municipality	28	-	49
Bought from farmers	-	29	-
Bought from speculators	-	16	31
Inherited/gift	23	11	2
Occupation through force	48	44	14
Compensation	-	-	2
Other	-	-	2

Table 2. Forms of land acquisition in selected cities and/or towns (2008)

The informality situation particularly in the housing sector has been compounded by the failure by the formal land supply to meet unprecedented rise in demand for urban land. Regression statistics between land supply and demand in a sample of 5 cities show a less than perfect correlation between land supply and demand (figure 2).
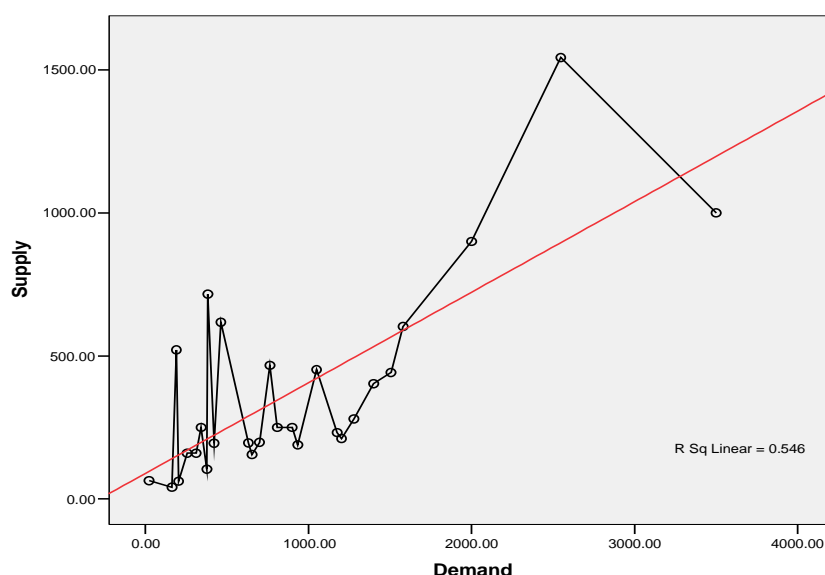
Figure 2. Relationship between residential land Demand and Supply in a sample of five Ethiopian towns and/or cities. NB: Data drawn from independent sample statistics gathered during the period between 1994 to 2008

City/town	Response option (s)	Perceived performance and/or challenges
Addis ababa/bole subcity / Yeka subcity/Kofle subcity	- bulldozing/demolition of illegal structures - use of law and the courts to ensure compliance - Engagement of self help and religious organization in providing minimum standards in illegal settlements. - 33 000 condominium housing units constructed	- A single campaign launched in Yeka subcity in 1994 EC costed the authorities an equivalent of 78 736 birr. - 13440 illegal houses in Addis Ababa have been demolished. - The demolition attracted resistants and anger among the affected. - Most beneficiaries are not informal settlers but rather people in high income brackets.
Adama city	- Demolition of illegal structures (carried 3751 demolitions within a single 5 year period). - Regularization of informal land/formalization of security of tenure (implemented in Kebele 3).	- The demolished structures were soon replaced by fresh ones. - Regularization resulted in more informality.
Jimma city	- Eviction - Demolition of illegal structures - Legalization of squatter settlements - Threat of eviction	- Regularization of squatter settlements attracted more informal settlers. - Because the demolition of illegal structures is not done consistently, affected families tend to re-assemble and start all over again. - Eviction in some cases led to social and political strife.
Bahir Dar	- Threat of eviction - Eviction - Demolition of illegal structures (up-scaled in 1995 in Kebeles 11 and 13). - no action	- Not evaluated and therefore not known.
Ambo town	- demolition of illegal structures (Demolished1050 housing units)	- Has not brought desired results
Masha town	- litigation/mediation by the municipality - Use of law and the courts (between the period August 1/ 1997 and May 10/2000EC, 412 land related cases were filed in courts.	- Use of law and courts not effective. Of the 412 case filed only 22.5% were settled. - Delays in other parts of the judiciary proceedings a big challenge.

Table 3. A snippet of institutional response options adopted by a sample of 5 cities and/or towns and perceived performances.

3.2 Response options adopted

Urban local bodies in Ethiopia have adopted different measures to deal with challenges posed by informality. Three such groups of institutional response options can be discerned. These have often ranged from laissez-faire and co-optation to coercion. Table 3 summarizes the specific response options in a sample of cities and/or towns.

The laissez-faire approach has often taken the form of 'taking no-action' by responsible bodies. No-action in this analysis refers to a situation where responsible authorities consciously or unconsciously ignore the challenges posed by housing informality either due to lack of capacity to tackle the problems or failure to explicitly recognize the problem in terms of its scale, intensity and severity. All forms of refusal to interfere and practices that allow informal settlers to do as they wish fall into this category. All the sampled officials concurred that, the current level and scale of informality affecting their respective cities and/towns, could have been avoided if appropriate action would have been taken timeously. Because of severe resource limitations, it has not been possible for many urban local bodies to set aside funds to adequately deal with challenges. As a result no action has been taken in many cases to deal with this growing challenge.

The coercion approach refers to all forms of legal and/non legal measures that result in the forceful eviction of illegal settlers. In most towns and cities of Ethiopia, this approach has often been in the form of bulldozing of illegal structures and the use of the law and the courts to evict illegal settlers. Local authorities in Addis Ababa's Bole, Kofle and Yeka sub cities have once engaged in the exercise of demolition illegal structures . A single campaign launched in Yeka subcity in 2001 for example saw the responsible authorities incurring costs amounting to 78 736 Ethiopian birrs. During the same period, 13440 illegal houses in Addis Ababa were demolished. 3751 illegal structures in the city of Adama were demolished in a single 5 year period. The municipality of Ambo town demolished 1050 illegal housing units. Bahir Dar city authorities up-scaled the demolition of illegal structures in Kebele 11, and Kebele 13 in 2001. A kebele in Ethiopia is defined as the smallest planning administrative unit. The city of Jimma has also carried out a series of demolitions in the past. Authorities in the town of Masha and the city of Addis Ababa have in the past tried to evict the illegal settlers through the use of laws and the courts.

Some urban local bodies have adopted the cooptation strategy. Such an approach can be defined as all forms of collaborative efforts that seek to bring on board all parties affected by housing informality problem so that a solution is found through mutual co-operation. Other forms of embracing informal dwellers such as informal settlement upgrading schemes, and relocation to newly constructed houses or serviced parcels of land would also fall under this category. Specific strategies adopted include the regularization of informal settlements, through issuance of titles. Other local authorities have invited Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil rights organization, and church organizations to assist in offering minimum basic services for the settlers. Formalization of illegal settlements through formalization of security of tenure has been tried in cities such as Addis Ababa, Adama and Jimma among others. Addis Ababa city authorities have even gone a step further to allowing self help organizations, well wishers and other religious groupings to assist in the provision of minimum basic services for formalized illegal settlements. At the national level, the Ethiopian government has made a concerted effort in improving the supply of housing stock to all through its condominium housing project. Since 2006 (1999 Ethiopian Calendar), a number of condominium housing units targeting low and middle income earners have been constructed in various regional states (refer to Table 4).

The majority of the officials (93 %) enumerated through the delphi method agreed that the Condominium project was the only noble approach to dealing with the growing challenge of housing informality in the country. They singled out a fair degree of fairness in the targeting of the project beneficiaries. Currently the selection of beneficiaries is done through a raffle system where a randomly selected individual is likley to get a housing unit. They however expressed concern at suatainability of the project as the system requires that the new owner pays a hefty minimum deposit fund that will later be followed by a series of installments intended to cover the cost of the property. Owing to a public outcry in 2009, that the majority of the poor households and informal settlers were not benefiting from this government sponsored project, the housing allocation process was halted pending investigations. All officials agreed that rich households were now entering into agreements with finacially constrained beneficiaries which required that all payments are made by the affluent and that lease transfers will be effected at later stage sanctioned by the government.

Regions	1999EC.		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	number of cities	number of houses	number of cities	number of houses	number of cities	number of houses	number of cities	number of houses	number of cities	number of houses
Oromia	11	9020	14	12628	18	18040	23	27060	66	66748
Amhara	7	6710	10	9394	13	13420	18	20130	48	49654
Tigray	5	4070	7	5698	9	8140	12	12210	33	30118
Diredawa	1	1650	1	2310	1	3300	1	4950	1	12210
Harar	1	1100	1	1540	1	2200	1	3300	1	8140
Addis Ababa	1	33000	1	38500	1	55000	1	66000	1	192500
Total	33	60500	43	77000	55	60500	72	148500	194	396000

Table 4. Condominium housing units in selected regions of Ethiopia.

4 DISCUSSION

The informal housing sector has over the years (regrettably) benefited immensely from planning ideas and approaches simplistically transferred from the North to Southern contexts. It has for example become common knowledge that policies to deal with housing informality have shifted from hostility to acceptance, restriction to tolerance, restraining to enabling (Perera, 1994). To this end, governments of the South are increasingly encouraged to embrace, promote and accommodate informal activities in their urban environments (Perera, 1994; AlSayyad, 2000; UN-HABITAT, 2009). The recent years increase in scholarship on housing informality is perhaps testimony that 'universalistic' approaches have tended to stiffle our own understanding of what works best in different informality contexts of the developing world (Bromely, 2008). Moving beyond this 'new normal' syndrome the analysis has described the informality context of a sample of Ethiopian towns and/or cities and chronicled a number of response options adopted to deal with the challenge.

The analysis has revealed that despite a discerning voice of such approaches (see Perera, 1994; AlSayyad, 2000; UN-HABITAT, 2009) a sizable number of Ethiopian authorities have adopted both laissez faire and coercion response options to dealing with the housing informality challenge. Both strategies have not been effective enough in dealing with challenges posed by informality. Cooptation on the other hand has been viewed as the only strategy that results in mutual solutions. Unfortunately results on the ground that indicates that most towns and cities have resorted to both laissez faire and coercion response options. For example details in table 3 show that all the 5 sampled urban areas had at some point resorted to coercive strategies through eviction or demolition of illegal structures or the uses of courts. Such practices (regrettably) are still place. Such a strategy has often resulted in isolation and resistance from the affected families, losss of property, and a breakdown of social ties (as families are relocated to different locations).

Where resources have been inadequate, no action has been taken as with the case with the city of Bahir Dar. The ineffectiveness of the two widely applied response options has often dealt a blow to the poor who constitute the majority of those who aspire to own a housing property.

Land registration as an integrative strategy has not worked as evidence of informal settlers, selling off their properties and occupying new illegal land is rife in a number towns and cities. The failure of land registration has been acknowledged by many (West, 2000; Tanner, 2002; Abdulai, 2006, Bromley, 2008). van Gelder, (2010) however notes that while there might be indications that tenure security might offer a plausible solution to urban informality, there appears to be a general lack of consensus of what type of tenure security (tenure security whether perceived by dwellers, tenure security as a legal construct, and de facto tenure security). In the absence of plausible empirical evidence both from Ethiopia and elsewhere, land registration will remain an unattractive strategy for ethiopian authorities. The condominium housing project seems to be a promising approach. Unfortunately its targeting is very much constrained. It has also turned out to be a capital intensive project whose financial sustainability is still under question. An almost similar strategy was tried and found wanting in Xochimilco, Mexico (Wigle, 2010). Wigle, (2010) has observed that such approaches command a significant part of local government authorities' time and resources. Such resources are in most always scarce.

In the absence of more compelling evidence on the other two approaches, it would seem that the integrative strategy still remains an attractive option for Ethiopian authorities as would lead to negotiated outcomes that will further assist land administrators to create more options for mutual gain. Managing housing informality rather than seeking measures of taming it is a more attractive option. The Xochimilco model for managing irregular settlements is touted to be one of the best example of how useful it is to establishment formal, normative frameworks for dealing with ''unplanned'' or irregular settlements. Wigle, (2010) notes that the model permits for the continuation of the highly-negotiated nature of planning in Mexico City, a process that often uses ''normative'' planning frameworks as a discursive guise to obscure the political nature of planning decision- making, as convenient. Given the array of planning policies and land use norms and different housing informality contexts that characterize the Ethiopian urban land scape, this situation is perhaps more accurately considered as the selective negotiation and application of existing planning frameworks, rather than the lack of planning per se.

5 CONCLUSION

Approaches to housing informally in third world countries have undougtedly been shaped by globalization induced best practices and other forms of views transplanted from peculiar circumstances that charaterize the North. The widespread adoption and application of such 'universtal' prescriptions has almost become synonymous with the 'new normal' world that all developing countries aspire to achieve. The analysis has argued that this 'new normal' perspective has unfortunately become a syndrome that is unwittingly at odds with the reality of socio-spatial dynamics and practices in cities and regions of the third word countries which have been increasingly subjected to peculiar global economic forces. The recent increase in housing informality scholarship is the first step towards overcoming the past ills (of reduced scholarship on informality) associated with the syndrome. This study has an extention of such scholaship that has appraised intsitituional response options adopted by Ethiopian urban authorities in dealing with housing informality.

The analysis revealed that response options to the emerging informalization process from state and local authorities have taken a variety of forms. These have often ranged from laissez-faire and co-optation to coercion. Irregardless of the response option adopted, the resultant scenario has often taken two forms. On one hand it has resulted in isolation and resistance and on the other it has resulted in partnerships, cooperation and mutual problem solving. The paper argues that only the path that creates co-operation, partnerships and mutual problem solving is ideal in dealing with housing informality in Ethiopia. Confrontation and disregard would breed antagonism and resistance. An integrative strategy would however lead to negotiated outcomes that will further assist land administrators to create more options for mutual gain.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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