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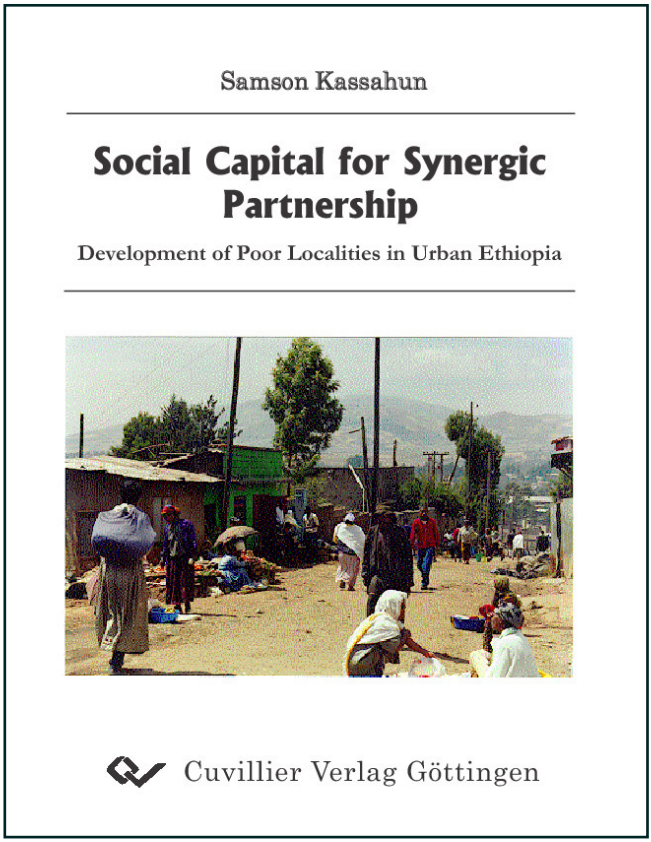
Social Capital for Synergic Partnership - Development of poor localities in urban Ethiopia



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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION
Questions, objectives and theoretical considerations

1.1. The research questions

Contemporary trends of urbanization in developing countries illustrate a distinctive depiction compared to earlier process in developed countries (Evers and Korff 2000; Gulger 1988; Gulger 1996; Little 1974). Industrialization and economic growth are almost always accompanied by urbanization (Davis 1965; World Bank 2000). However, urbanization in developing regions is a phenomenon, ascribed by a low level of economic development contradictory to the case of accelerated urbanization that began in Western Europe and North America. In some part of the world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, cities have been growing without a concomitant expansion of economic activity. The process of urbanization in Africa is mostly embedded on the migration trend, which is rapid and greater in volume. Consequently, its obstructive consequences are higher than those of industrial countries at the time they were rapidly urbanized (Hardiman and Midley 1989; UN-HABITAT 2003b).

The conjunction of rapid and high growth of urban population in developing countries has outstripped the capability of city administrations to provide and expand infrastructure, deliver services or devise and maintain regulatory mechanisms (Gilbert et al. 1996; Gulger 1996). The economic developments in the industrial and commercial sectors have not been able to furnish employment and income that can warrant the financial steadiness of large proportion of the urban population (Gulger 1996). Further, ‘social institutions’ have been unable to absorb the new urban populations either in terms of their numbers, or their cultural diversity (Gulger 1996:8).

Currently, according to the United Nations Human Settlements Program Report (2001), quite a large number of urban dwellers live in ‘life-threatening’ conditions of poverty and environmental degradation and that this number is presupposed to swell significantly by the year 2025(Satterthwaite 1997; UN-HABITAT 2001a). This statistically augmenting trajectory of urbanization of poverty, however, would not elucidate the divergence and complex element of urban poverty. Needless to say, the concept of ‘poverty’ is a challenging one, with many different constructions (Spicker 2001). Poverty implies, for

some, a lack of resources; for others, a constellation of needs, while for others, poverty is a social position related to the ability to participate in society (Baratz and Grigsby 1971).

The range of problems extends across a wide area of concern. For instance, the World Bank's participative poverty assessments, which embrace several issues beyond the needs and resources, demonstrated the seriousness of problems of social relationships, lack of security and abuse by those in power; precarious economic status limitations on the ability to participate in society, and on the capabilities of the poor; issues relating to collective disadvantage, weak community organizations and 'excluded' locations (Narayan et al. 2000). Poverty is a complex, and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Hence, urban poverty episodes the need of a secure and sufficient income to provide for the maintenance of a household's livelihoods: food, clothing, shelter, health, education and development of each of its members (Jones and Nelson 1999; Wratten 1995). Further, the urban poor are more dependent on 'subsistence production' (Evers 1989; Evers and Korff 1986). However, income and wealth are not the only indices of urban poverty. Such poverty is exacerbating by physical and social insecurity; vulnerability to crises and shocks that may be caused by injury, illness, unemployment, eviction, natural disaster; and ethnic and cultural marginality and exclusion (Amis 1995; Chambers 1995; Jones and Nelson 1999; Moser 1998; Satterthwaite 1995; Wratten 1995).

Among the many problems associated with urban poverty in a developing country like Ethiopia, an increase in the proportion of 'slums' and 'squatters' especially in the capital and other large cities has been prominent. Generally, the poor dwell in such locations and their growth has often occurred independent of any rise in prosperity through large-scale industrialization. Hence, the level of urbanization and the rate of urban expansion may not always be caused by the 'pull' of economic prosperity and opportunity in the cities. It is sometimes caused by the push from the rural areas due to significant changes in the mode of production in agriculture in which there is a steady increase in the proportion of the rural population who are compelled to seek a living outside agriculture (Todaro 1984; Yeraswerk, Fantu and Asrat 2003). Even with variations in their approach and emphasis resulting from the context and cities examined, most studies recognize the role of migration of the rural poorer sections in search of work and their frequently joining the lower circuits of the labour market and subsequent living in 'slum': congested and degraded spaces within cities (Berner 1997).

The GUO (2003:30) estimations on slum demonstrated that ‘more than 920 million people, or slightly less than a third of the world’s total urban population, lived in slums in 2001.’ The proportion region goes ‘43 percent for developing regions’, ‘six percent for developed’ and ‘78.2 percent for least developed.’ Further analysis by continent revealed that Africa had the largest proportion of the urban population dwelling in slums areas in 2001 (60.9 percent). Asia and the Pacific Region had the second largest proportion of the urban population living in these precarious settlements (42.1 percent) while Latin America and the Caribbean slum dwellers population was the third largest with 31.9 percent. Relatively, Oceania had the lowest proportion with 24.1 percent (GUO 2003:30).

Ethiopia is the least urbanized country in the world. In 1994, only 13.8 percent of the country's total population, or about 7.5 million people, were living in urban areas (OPHCC 1998). The level of urbanization of Ethiopia, compared to other African countries, was about half of that of Kenya, a third of that of Nigeria and 57 percent lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole at roughly the same period (World Bank 1996). The trend of urbanization for earlier periods in Ethiopia depicts still lower rates: 11.4 percent in 1984, 9.5 percent in 1975 and 5.4 percent in the late 1930s. Currently the proportion of urban population is 17.6 percent with a growth rate of 4.7 percent per year (Chapter III). Moreover, the Ethiopian urbanization illustrates unbalanced distribution of urban population. Industrial activities and infrastructure facilities are concentrated in the capital city, Addis Ababa, which is the main administrative, economic, and financial centres. This situation attracts migrants to Addis Ababa and creates a single primate city[1], making up 30 percent of the country’s urban population (Demissachew 1998).

In spite of the low level of urbanization in Ethiopia, a multifaceted urban poverty embracing problem of unemployment, lack of decent housing and sanitary conditions, prostitutions, beggary, street children, delinquency, and crime are common features of most urban centres in the country. Addis Ababa is no exception to this crisis. The living environment in most part of Addis Ababa is under immense threat from poverty and environmental degradation. Almost half of the population lives below the poverty line and about ninety percent of the city is considered as slum area (CRDA 1997; GUO 2003). People's purchasing power is not only extremely low, but also facilities like education, health, and sanitation are behind required level. Poverty in Addis Ababa, especially the

[1] Addis Ababa is characterized as a primate city because of its domination in the urban hierarchy. The population size of Addis Ababa is 12 times greater than the second urban centre (Demissachew 1998).

“spatial” features, can be characterized by dilapidated housing conditions and over-crowdedness that provides favourable ground for the easy transmission of communicable diseases. A significant portion of housing units in the poor-localities are marked by poor quality and quantity of construction material, absence of standard cooking and sanitary rooms, and lack of open space in homesteads. In all poor-localities in Addis Ababa there is a poverty of concern that the poor are speaking themselves. Large groups of poor people have no access to basic shelter and infrastructure services (Chapter four). They are suffering the adverse effects of increasing pollution of water, land, and air in their locality disproportionately. Despite the similarities of poor-localities, in the “spatial” perspective, they accommodate very divers socio-economical background of inhabitants and complex nature of livelihoods, in contrast to several literatures on “urban segregation” studies.

According to the Chicago school observation, city dwellers are different and independent from one another (Omenya 2003). They are independent in their struggle for a social position and convenient location in the city. Different groups occupy different spaces in such a way that the settlement pattern would characterize similarity, resulting in people with similar characteristics occupying similar spaces. This results in what the school termed ‘ecological segregation’. This segregation, according to Omenya (2003), could be ‘voluntary’ or ‘involuntary’. However, the ‘ecological segregation’ is very likely to take place in all classes of societies. The extent to which this class segregation expresses itself spatially is rooted in the economic, political and ideological strengths of the upper income group. Omenya (2003) further considered control of urban land production by the upper class, as a ‘social segregation’ process. In this argument, he agrees with Castlle (1998) that social segregation is an expression of ‘class struggle’ where the upper income groups try to apportion themselves to disproportionate urban spaces. This radical understanding of urban space and segregation could not explain the Ethiopian case of poor-localities construction and change, which has followed a completely different trajectory unlike the ‘inherent nature’ of social inequality in capitalist societies.

Rather, the construction and changes of poor-locality in urban Ethiopia appears in line with the view of the ‘subcultural school’. The subcultural school responds to the ecological perception of localities change, commenting on three basic points of departure: First, they object the economic embeddedness of the ecological models. Firey (1945), for instance, disputed that even during the early dominance of the ecological school, there are non-

economic factors, such as resident sentiment and symbolism, that are just as significant in influencing why and how residents live in certain locality within the city. Firey (1945:148) further argued, "…a different order of concepts, corresponding to the valuative, meaningful aspect of spatial adaptation, must supplement the prevailing economic concepts of ecology." In other words, where people live can induce sentimental attachment that connect them to their locality, apart from simply economic factors. Consequently, concepts such as resident confidence, sense of community, and social networks are important for understanding a change of localities from a subcultural framework. In this respect, the theoretical background and the analysis of urbanization trend and its impact on the construction and changes of the poor-localities is explained in detail in chapter III

In the current situation, extreme case of poor-localities in Addis Ababa have improper road system and sometime with no access for vehicles, no drainage, sewerage system or garbage collection, and most people rely on private or collective solutions for water supply and electricity. According to PADCO (1997), in Addis Ababa, only 21 percent of household stock meets the definition of acceptable housing. The result of the household survey showed that 40 percent of the poor populations are living in a crowded condition with an average density of 3 persons per room (Chapter IV). Moreover, in many poor households, families of five and six live in one or two room houses in extremely congested situations. On the other hand, being squatters on illegally occupied land means that the inhabitants found themselves in a permanent state of insecurity (Chapter III) as their houses and settlements could be demolished anytime. This insecurity clearly limited local interest in investing on a house - as well as in other aspects of locality development. This is likely to be a major obstacle to revitalizing poor-localities.

The interesting characteristic of poor-localities in Addis Ababa, on the other hand, is the observation of a variety of livelihood. Household from extremely destitute living conditions to better and relatively comfortable ones live together. For instance, a masonry-fenced house with glass windows, stone or brick wall indicates a relatively high-income inhabitant neighboured with an unpainted house with old wooden doors and windows, mud floor and overcrowded living condition, which indicates inhabitants with low economic status.

With regard to the social structure, observation in poor-localities where there is less segregation revealed that residential stability could be considered as a key feature that