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Good governance translated? The Case of Participatory Neighbourhood Development in Addis Ababa/Ethiopia

The instrument of Participatory Neighbourhood Development (PND) is the first of its kind in Addis Ababa. Being referred to as a participatory tool PND, communal toilets, access roads, schools and health centres have been built by this means. According to the official operation manual problems are identified and prioritised and subsequent measures decided by the residents. In the implementation process financial, labour or know-how contributions are supposed to create a sense of ownership to the residents.

The actor oriented research at hand, is based on interviews conducted in four districts in Addis Ababa in 2005 and 2007, where players, representing different hierarchies of PND, were asked about their experiences in the PND and their understanding of good governance. The paper at hand aims to give a picture on how PND is practiced and whether it has a potential to promote grass-roots led urban development. The paper further aims to outline the nature of PND, its stakeholders, actors and their ways of participation.

1 Introduction

In the past two and a half decades Addis Ababa has gone through a lot of reorganisation efforts. The new city charter was ratified in November 2002 bringing about major changes to the administrative structure. In the following chapter, the administrative structure of Addis Ababa shall be elaborated in order to create an understanding for the paradigms that are intrinsic to the local administration.

Before the revolution and dethroning of Emperor Haile Selassie by the military, Addis Ababa had been one of a few self-governed cities of Ethiopia. The mayor - nominated by the Emperor - was able to reign autonomously. He was independent from the strong hand of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and was hence able to command internal and external resources for the implementation and acquisition of programmes as he pleased. The city government had a city council consisting of 30 members, with legislative powers. The council was formed by eight appointed department heads and 22 elected citizens of the city. The right to stand for election was a privilege to those classified as great land owners.¹

After the political change in 1974 and the power shift towards the provisional military council called the “Derg“, the city government lost all its influences and Addis Ababa eventually lost its autonomy. The appointment of the mayor and other civil servants required the membership in the single political party the „Workers Party of Ethiopia“. The growing politicisation and hierarchisation of the administrative structure created a culture of „Command and Control“. The increasing relevance of party membership led to the recruitment of „cadres“ instead of

¹ Ayenew, Meheret (1999), p. 6.

professionals and thus to the bureaucratisation of the administrative machinery and as a result hindering the adequate provision of municipal services to the citizens of Addis Ababa.

In 1991 the communist government was replaced by the government that is ruling Ethiopia up until today. In 1994 the provisional government was declared as the „Federal Republic of Ethiopia“, thus introducing a democratisation process. Addis Ababa became the capital of the federal state and a chartered city.²

The city council was elected by the citizens every five years and comprised 96 members. The major tasks of the city council were the ratification of policies and the annual budget. The mayor was nominated by the city council and chairs the council. Ethiopia's prime minister was entitled to dismiss the mayor if his performance was not satisfactory. In 2002 this right was put to practice dismissing the city council and Addis Ababa's mayor Ali Abdo.³

The revised city charter became effective in November 2002 and is valid until today. Prior to the reform Addis Ababa was structured in 6 zones, who were divided into 28 woredas (districts), which were again divided into 328 kebeles (sub districts). After the reform woredas were renamed to sub cities and their number was reduced to ten. Subsequently the number of kebeles was reduced to 203 and in 2005 to 99. Following the path of decentralisation the sub-cities and kebeles were empowered and endowed with the duty to provide a multitude of now decentralised municipal services. The prompt and efficient service provision is promoted by the Civil Service Improvement Programme, that is being implemented by the Ministry of Capacity Building and many international and national NGOs. The city council is elected every five years and appoints the mayor. As the chief executive officer of the city the mayor is accountable to the city council and the federal government. The new executive wing of the administration is led by the city manager - the executive of municipal services - who is accountable to the mayor.

The 2005 national and communal elections brought a landslide victory to the opposition party Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) in Addis Ababa's city council. None of the mandates were won by the ruling party Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The opposition party did not join parliament saying that the elections were rigged and did not take over administrative duties of the city government. The unrest following the elections led to the imprisonment of several opposition leaders including the elected mayor Berhanu Nega.⁴

Today Addis Ababa is governed by a care-taker administration. The civil servants of the current city government are supposed to be politically neutral and an interim government until elections can be held. The exact date for election is not known yet.

² Addis Ababa's role in the relation to the Oromiya Regional State is not clear, A.A. was the capital of Ethiopia, a self-governing chartered city and the capital of Oromiya Regional State. The autonomy of the city suffered from the dispute over Addis Ababa's representative role. After the reform 2002 Adama/Nazareth (120 km south of A.A.) was made capital of Oromiya. This decision was revoked following the 2005 elections and Addis Ababa was reassigned as capital of Oromiya. Addis Ababa is situated in Oromiya, like Berlin is located in Brandenburg.

³ Ayenew, Meheret (1999), pp. 6./ Proclamation 37/1997

⁴ He was recently released from prison, after he had faced a lifetime sentence for outrage against the constitution. Along with him other CUD leaders and members were set free.

1.1 Environment Development

Environment development is not solely used in an ecological sense. It refers to different kinds of urban development activities.

Government driven environment⁵ development activities began in 1997/8, when basic infrastructure was delivered to the inhabitants by the city administration. Sewerage lines, small bridges, access roads, communal toilets and communal water harvesting posts were build all over the city. Until 2002, 674km of access roads, 401 km of storm water canal, 1.596 toilets, 678 communal water-harvesting posts and 74 small bridges were built. These development activities were carried out by the woredas.

It was in 2003 that the “*Manual prepared for development Activities Performed Through The Participation of the Inhabitants*”⁶ was published by the city government. The major objective of the manual was:

*“to bring about success and sustainability with regard to activities coordinated by the Environment Development Office (municipal level) by promoting good governance, by strengthening popular participation; ensuring a free and transparent working system and structure; establishing accountability and a decentralised working system.”*⁷

The manual determines the establishment of environment development councils at all levels (Addis Ababa City Administration to kebele level). The councils are made up of representatives of different associations (women, youth), CBOs (generally iddirs⁸ are the CBOs that are represented in such bodies), NGOs and government organisation (road, water and sewerage, construction, health) and serve as an advisory body.

The manual further provides the necessary organisational structure as well as operation guidelines for planning, implementation and maintenance of development activities. Moreover, the residents of the kebeles are summoned to contribute to their construction and take over responsibility for the quality of the service provided.

“The office intends to create a convenient living and working environment for the inhabitants through giving first priority to the most unprivileged areas and by enabling direct participation of the inhabitants in the building process and amelioration of their problems.

*[...] The office sees to it that the community participates in processes from project proposal to implementation level and thus creates a sense of ownership among inhabitants by making them overtake responsibility to oversee, maintain and administer the completed projects which, it is believed, would create the culture to solve their own problems.”*⁹

The objectives of the Environment Development Office presented above, illustrate the priority to serve underprivileged neighbourhoods on the one hand and ensures direct participation from the planning to the implementation process on the other. The aim to create a “culture of solving their problems” emerges from the assumption, that inhabitants expect the government to solve their problems instead of doing it themselves. By involving inhabitants in development activities this “misbelief” is supposed to be rectified. Hence, an attitudinal

⁵ As Elias Yitbarek has identified, NGO-driven activities have been going on before and in parallel to the government structures. The “Integrated Holistic Sustainable Urban Development Project” initiated by Dr. Jember as well as Redd Barna and CARE Ethiopia (the World Bank funded “Food for Work Programme” was very successful building access roads, who are still called CARE roads in A.A. and were part of the initial upgrading activities in the city) are well known for their upgrading activities.

⁶ The manual was prepared by the Addis Ababa City Administration Trade and Industry Development Bureau, the Environment Development Office, for the German Development Cooperation GTZ.

⁷ A.A.C.A. (2003): p. 2.

⁸ Funeral society, indigenous community based organisation.

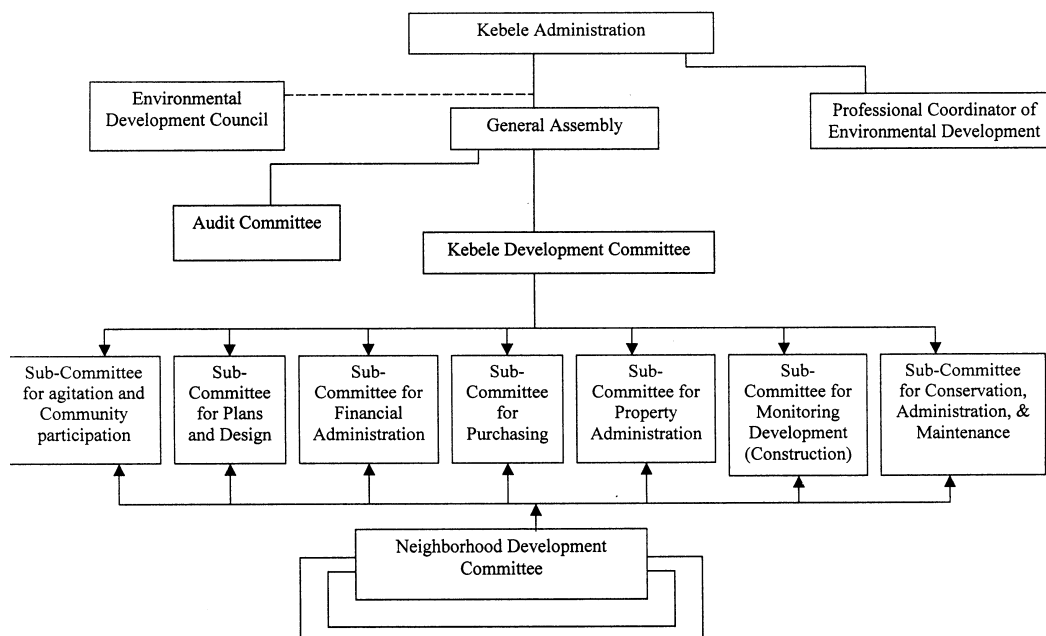
⁹ A.A.C.A. (2003): p. 3.

change is propagated by the city government. Participation has an educational implication; the sense of ownership created by it will promote self-initiative and eventually create a wish to handle matters without government support. This objective can be interpreted as the preparation of government withdrawal from small scale upgrading activities.

1.2 Organisational Set-up of Participatory Neighbourhood Development designed by the Manual

At central level, prototype regulation plans and all-encompassing designs as well as price lists, payment systems and manuals are prepared. Furthermore, sub-city activities are evaluated and reports are written.

At sub-city level the allocation of budget to the kebele and the monitoring and follow up of environment development activities as well as technical assistance to the Kebele Development Committee (KDC) are the most important tasks.



Source: A.A.C.A (2003), p 19.

The KDC and the Kebele Manager are responsible for the initial agitation and orientation of the public. The development project proposals are formulated after door-to-door questioning. Were observations are gathered by the Neighbourhood Development Committee (NDC) and commented by inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The NDC then prioritises the problems according to the intensity, presents the list to the general assembly for approval and then submits the document to the agitation and coordination sub-committee (sub-committee of the KDC).

In the preparation of the project plan the NDC facilitates the project component decision making process. According to the manual, inhabitants will decide on road construction, sewerage system, market area etc. The plots needed for the development activity will also be prepared and made fit for construction by the NDC. The NDC needs the approval of the KDC to open a bank account for the project money contributed by the community.

The estimation of contributions is conducted by the Kebele. The annual physical and financial plan is prepared by the NDC in cooperation with the professional coordinator of environment development. Thereafter, the list of prioritised requests is presented to the general assembly

for approval. The NDC further lists the material and manpower needed for the project, prepares tender documents, carries out bid for tender and makes agreement with the bid winner to buy the necessary material.¹⁰

The KDC presents the plan to the kebele administration and the kebele general assembly, so that the kebele administration can send it to the sub-city for budget allocation and lets the KDC and the coordinator of the kebele development committee know about the approved budget.¹¹

The implementation is mainly conducted by the KDC. The kebele technique team helps follow up and monitor the construction work process and reports progress to kebele administration and the general assembly for evaluation. After completion of the project it is handed over to the community to be sustained by the “beneficiaries”. The “beneficiary neighbourhood committee” called the “gurbetena committee” regularly reports to the NDC. “gurbetena Committees” are the smallest unit and are formed spontaneously, whenever there is need for it (door-to-door money collection, maintenance of communal toilets and water harvesting posts etc.).

As has been shown above neighbourhood development is subject to a structure that reaches up to the central administrative level. Albeit that fact, its potential to team up with community based development activities in order to promote grass-roots led action, will be analysed hereafter.

The initiative, the nature of activities and even design standards, that are applied to neighbourhood, are developed on a central level. The performance of the numerous committees and their interactions with the residents reflect the nature of the problems arising in efforts of the government to cooperate with residents, CBOs and NGOs.

In the following, I will therefore describe, how neighbourhood development is exercised based on results of my field studies¹² in 2005 and 2007.

2 The Potential of Kebele to promote Community Based Action

Under the rule of Addis Ababa’s former mayor Arkebe Egbay (2002-2005), the city administration launched several large scale urban renewal projects, as for instance condominium housing and road construction. Both development initiatives were criticised, for they caused the displacement of numerous people, lacking adequate compensation and shelter for their displaced. On the other side, the pace at which urban development was implemented was admired by many. Fuelled by the development euphoria, the city government believed, that the inhabitant’s contributions could be raised and neighbourhood development could be accelerated.

2.1 Participation

PND equals contribution with participation. While the financially weak are able to contribute labour force, know-how or materials, affluent citizens give money. Consequently, the percentage of initial contribution of 10 % in 1997/8 was increased to 35% in 2003 and to 65% between 2004 and 2005. Today inhabitants are supposed to cover 75% of the costs.

¹⁰ A.A.C.A (2003): pp. 22-24.

¹¹ A.A.C.A (2003): p. 25.

¹² In both my field visits I conducted qualitative interviews in sub-city administrations, kebele development teams, neighbourhood development teams, NGOs that are known for their involvement in urban upgrading activities, residents and CBO representatives.

While the upgrading of physical infrastructure was the priority in the years before 2005, the construction of 150 primary and 50 secondary schools was top priority in 2005 and 2006. In 2007 the construction of youth centres (incorporating a library, sports fields, a cinema etc.) is at the top of the list. Physical upgrading activities have therefore been downsized to a minimum.

The plans to construct schools and youth centres, both being important for the development of Addis Ababa, were still not based on results from inhabitant questioning. They were government's decisions and owing to that, those whose basic infrastructural upgrading needs had not yet been met lost interest in neighbourhood development. Especially in urban expansion areas, where water and electricity supply is still short, residents were and still are unsatisfied.

2.1.1 Decision making process

At the end of 2003 neighbourhood development was still at its beginning. As the manual indicates, the households were questioned by the development committees. In practice, the problems were not identified by the residents, but by the central administration, leaving a limited pre-selection for the questioned to choose from:

„They were able to choose between prescribed services and they could determine the amount, but they could not say what, there were water harvesting posts, drainage and so on. There was a request for lanterns for instance, because it was too dark and women were often raped on this route. But there was no programme available, no budget, no cost estimation and no one was inclined to do it in spite of that. The residents started to complain and said: ‘We want to do it ourselves, we don’t want to be dependent on the administration we can do it’. That is what went wrong even though it was still doing ok.”¹³

The interviewee points out, that the top-down approach of problem identification, the predefinition of design standards and financial procedures hinder the flexibility of the KDC. Moreover, inhabitants who are ready to participate in projects of their personal interest are disappointed, and either turn their backs on PND or organise themselves as will be described later.

The lack of flexibility contradicts the aim to enhance self-initiative in small scale upgrading activities. The major decisions, as to what can be done and how it is done does not lay in the hand of non government stakeholders.

2.1.2 Players of PND

The selection of upgrading activities and the contribution to project implementation being the basic features of the PND it was accompanied by different stakeholders.

General assembly

The the neighbourhood development committee is elected by the general assembly of the kebele. The general assembly whose purpose is to gather as many residents as possible in order to discuss kebele issues, is frequented by people who are either accidentally at the kebele (renewing their ID for instance) and therefore not interested in the issues of the general assembly or persons who expect other benefits from kebele involvement. The scope of representation of residents and the motivation to engage in neighbourhood development is therefore limited.

¹³ Interview with sub-city environment development team leader, December 2006.

“We heard the kebele has developed this community neighbourhood bla bla bla it came down to us[resident of his neighbourhood] now we said: so ok, people are doing something on our behalf (laughs) we see things are going into the wrong direction, but you can’t close your eyes and close your ears living there in that kebele, so we said why don’t we get involved? We went and, thanks to the kebele chairperson, really he was very good person and he said you are welcome you people we’ve been looking for you - the elites - we have been, you are not coming to us! whenever we call for some neighbourhood development infrastructure like road maintenance people are complaining and complaining [but] those who are usually coming to the kebele: it is the low income people who are coming to kebele callings and they are the ones who are involved in voluntary works, but you are the ones who are driving the cars on those roads and you are not coming to us. Yes, that’s what they[the poor] said: why is it that they [the elites]sleep in their multi storey building and we[the poor] have to do the work.”¹⁴

Intellectuals are often afraid of political implications of the kebele and try to stay unnoticed, while the poor are dependent on all kinds of favours from the kebele administration.

Advisory council

The advisory councils, who were supposed to engage different actors of society into development could not be established. Nevertheless, in 2005 43,000 women associations and 24,000 youth associations were active in kebeles all over Addis Ababa.¹⁵ Since they are supported by the kebele with the provision of rooms for their activities (mainly HIV/AIDS, reproductive health related), their members are present in the kebele and attend to general assemblies and other kebele initiatives.

NGOs

NGOs usually have programme based partnerships with donors and the government, who nowadays request the participation of grass-roots institutions. NGOs prefer to work with grass-roots institutions that are independent of the government, since objectives of NGOs are donor driven and might not always be in line with the kebele administration’s objectives. But, as government and NGO agreements are binding and the government prefers to cooperate with groupings established by it, NGOs often have to abide by the CBOs (mostly women and youth associations) chosen by the government. Therefore, the potential of kebeles to include CBOs through the partnership with NGOs is narrow.¹⁶

Local NGOs have started to address CBOs directly. They prefer not to get involved with government structure and thus limit their interaction to the lowest level possible. The NGO-government working relation is still shadowed by a great deal of suspicion on both sides.

Iddirs

Iddirs are:

“An association made up by a group of persons united by ties of family and friendship, by living in the same district, or by job, or by belonging to the same ethnic group, and has an object of providing mutual aid and financial assistance in certain circumstances... In practice, the Iddir is a sort of insurance programme run by a community or a group to meet emergency situations [i.e. bereavement]”.¹⁷

¹⁴ Interview with GTZ professional working on urban governance in Addis Ababa, January 2005.

¹⁵ A.A.C.A (2005): p. 28.

¹⁶ Bantayirgu (2003): pp. 140.

¹⁷ Aredo (2003), p. 40.

Due to their experience of restriction by the imperialist regime and the marginalisation by the Derg, iddirs are suspicious of government intentions.¹⁸ Anyhow, iddirs did cautiously cooperate in neighbourhood development by allowing the KDC to address their members in meetings and by offering financial contributions. Additionally, iddir leaders are well known residents so that they were usually also elected as members of the NDC. In the wake of the national and communal elections iddirs have disengaged from PND.

“In relevant questions we are not asked, our cooperation is therefore very limited. We work in the committees as individuals but not as the institution. If we need assistance we ask an NGO and work with them.”¹⁹

Iddirs used to be overlooked by development actors in spite of their abundance and vitality, nowadays their inclusion into development activities of all kinds has become fashionable.

“The Iddir is perhaps the most egalitarian and democratic grass-roots level institution in Ethiopia. It cuts across ethnic, religious and occupational boundaries. Thus it has great potential for the social and political development of the country”²⁰

It remains to be seen whether their popularity and sustainability is rooted in the inherent informal structure and the limitation to giving assistance to provide aid in emergency situations, or whether they are willing to and capable of transforming into a development institution.

Private community based upgrading initiatives

Where the inhabitants have the means, they form private community based upgrading initiatives for the realisation of projects that cannot be conducted by the development committees.

Since 1993 about 10 dwellers of the woreda 28, kebele 02, zone 3 were struggling to cover a 600 meter long rough and stony road with asphalt. They met several times and decided to raise money to improve the road as well as the ditches left and right of the road. They approached the kebele 02 administration for assistance and the kebele administration said that they were short of finance and could not help, but they recommended approaching Care Ethiopia, an NGO that was involved in neighbourhood road construction. The NGO turned their request down, because the neighbourhood did not qualify for the assistance, as there are too many better-off families amongst them. In 2005 they approached their kebele administration for another assistance. This time the kebele helped them construct 200m out of the planned 600m ditches. The rest was covered by private contributions. The group decided to formally organize itself and appointed a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer as well as an auditor and opened a bank account that was administered by 3 persons. Formal receipts were printed and they then went door-to-door to collect money from the neighbourhood. After that they approached the Kebele for support. Again, the kebele could not give financial support, but welcomed the initiative. With the recommendations of the kebele they were able to approach the municipal road authority for assistance. The manager was very positive at the beginning: He sent an engineer who calculated the costs and informed the group that the authority would construct the road at a lower rate and that they should deposit 60 Birr per km. It was agreed to try and raise more money. Unfortunately, the road authority cancelled its support, because it found itself too busy with the preparation for the Ethiopian Millennium (11.09.2007). The money was not enough to cover the entire 600-meter long road, so only half of the road was built by a private contractor at 75 Birr per meter square. As they finished the road they approached the Kebele to assist in handing the road over to the municipal road authority. The kebele confirmed that the road authority would be invited for a handing over

¹⁸ See Pankhurst (2003), pp. 23.

¹⁹ Group interview with an association of iddirs in Merkato, February 2005.

²⁰ Aredo (1993), p. 86.

*ceremony by the kebele as of next October 2007 and after that the road will be maintained by the city administration.*²¹

These kinds of upgrading activities are common in affluent neighbourhoods and are practiced independent from PND. The administration does not necessarily assist in terms of money, but tries to facilitate such efforts by swift handling and the referral to responsible authorities. Since, the city administration is successively withdrawing from basic infrastructure provision, leaving it to individuals and NGOs, the privatisation of such activities is on the rise – with the kebele acting as a facilitator.

2.2 Kebele Image

The KDC assessed the financial capacity of households and fixed the amount of the contribution based on that assessment. The city's inhabitants experienced the contributions as too high, for the majority lives on a meagre income, while inflation is rising and the cost of living is exorbitant. The practice was highly in-transparent, since the families were not involved in the assessment of their financial capacity, but judged by status symbols (type of house, availability of car etc.) that were visible from the outside.

Additionally, the distributed letter informing them of the contribution, did not specify what kind of development activities were going to take place. Furthermore, the letter carried the official kebele seal and did not indicate that the payment of the contribution not mandatory, thus exerting pressure on residents, who did not want to offend the kebele administration in fear of suspected consequences.

An old man comes to the open house day of a neighbourhood development committee meeting to complain about the height of the sum he had been asked. He says that he is not able to come up with the amount since he is old and his back and legs are hurting and he does not have anyone but his wife living with him. He appreciates the cause since the plan is to develop not to destroy, but he can only help if they tell him to come and sit down. Following the old man's plea the committees chairperson replied:

“Chairperson: Well, now we listened to your opinion and the committee will answer what it answers and you will receive the answer there [at home]. Go home now. Show him to the door, show him to the door (points to the door).

Old man: What do I do with the letter?

*Chairperson: Take the letter with you, maybe you will have money when we start with the construction of the schools, if you should get some money we will accept it then.
(Chairperson turns around to me and says)*

Chairperson: If we have a chance to get money, we take it, maybe he has money then (laughs, interruption by someone entering the room)[...]

No, if we told them: you are free from [From his duty to contribute], you are free, we know what kind of reflection that would bring.

That is why we don't say anything. Do you understand?

He can at least come and see the construction with his own eyes.

He is a pensioner, he, if we told him you are free from [the contribution, saying] you have nothing to do with this, if we said that, then people like him, rich ones, who are supported by their children living abroad, who live a good life, will be affected by it.

Not because we are inhumane. We do it on purpose. You see, if you don't stay a little bit strict, if you don't stay tuned according to the motto he might get something.

*Other committee member: Then there will be chaos in the neighbourhood.”*²²

²¹ Interview resident 10.07.2007.

²² NDC meeting attended and recorded (unannounced) in March 2005.

Being a heritage from the Derg regime, Kebeles were established in 1975 as urban dweller's associations and are still remembered by their role in the "Red Terror"²³, where they served as neighbourhood defence squads and were responsible for the killings of many opposition members. Even though kebeles have become the smallest administrative unit that provide municipal services, they are still seen as a representative of the federal government with a political agenda.

Interesting enough, the knowledge of that power was subtly utilised by the environment development teams. As the chairperson discloses above, a certain amount of fear is needed to be given due respect by the residents – or else chaos will take over and as a result no one will contribute to the neighbourhood development. By using the resident's fear of kebele sanctions in case of disobedience, in order to increase the amount of contributions, the bad image of kebeles was revitalised.

The improvement of service provision is appreciated by the citizens, albeit that fact suspicion remains dominant.

2.3 Achievements

According to the 1997 Eth. calendar (9/2004 to 3/2005) half year progress report of the Addis Ababa Care-taker Administration, a total of 33.9 million Birr (2.7 million Euro) was collected from Addis Ababans. The great share of 91% being financial contributions, as only 5% labour and 4% material contribution were noted down.

A total of 2.9 km paved roads, 8.1 km pebble stone road, 3.6km sewerage lines, 1.5 km of open ditches, 13 communal toilets, 4 libraries, one water-harvesting posts, 4.9km asphalt road and one sports field were finalised in that budget year. For the second half of the budget year the beginning of classroom construction in order to ultimately add 4,518 classrooms to the existing are set as the priority aim.²⁴

The meagre outcome in labour contribution can be explained by various circumstances. Among those households, who could not afford the contribution elders were for example not able to work on a construction site and daily labourers might not have been willing to spend the weekend away from their families. Particularly the shift towards schools and youth centres changed the mode of work and requested more expertise so that the amount of work that could be done by laymen was reduced. Moreover, the schools were built by contractors who had time tables that could not be synchronised with all the voluntary labourers.

A major achievement of the administration is the linkage of micro and small enterprises to the construction work of the environment development. Through the allocation of micro credit and vocational trainings destitute youths were involved as electricians, wood workers, masons and producers of building material (bricks). Unfortunately, the low level of training given to the youths reduces the quality of buildings. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the hopeless and homeless youths creates a source of income and a starting point from which their capacity can be built.

²³ In February 1977, the Derg opposing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) initiated terrorist attacks- called the White Terror- against Derg members and their supporters, thus killing at least eight Derg members and numerous Derg supporters. The Red Terror was the Derg's reaction and lasted until the late 1978. Derg security forces thoroughly hunted down and killed suspected EPRP members and their supporters, formally students. Mengistu and the Derg won control of the Ethiopian revolution leaving thousands of EPRP members and supporters imprisoned, dead, or missing.

²⁴ A.A.C.A. (2005), p.15.

2.4 Challenges

The 2005 national and communal elections had an immense effect on the work of PND. The handling of the political unrest that followed the election, killing more than 100 demonstrators, wounding and detaining even more, put the city into shock and caused a total retreat of the public from kebele activities. In several interviews, civil servants state, that the construction of schools and youth centres is now financed by the government alone. Political shocks and changes are a threat to the sustainability of urban development project of any kind.

NDC members state that doors have been slammed on them and that they have been insulted while trying to collect money from households. Even though the willingness to co-operate in neighbourhood development activities has hit rock bottom, NDC are still obliged to generate financial contributions. Consequently, NGOs, churches and the privates sector are now approached for assistance.

Furthermore, the role of civil servants in the care taker administration on the sub-city and kebele level is very complicated. They are supposed to be apolitical and appointed by their profession. In the view of the public they are perceived as government officials with a political agenda. In face-to-face situations, as occur on a service delivery level, they have problems convincing costumers of their genuine interest in urban development.

Furthermore, the amalgamation of sometimes three kebeles to one has broadened the scope of kebele inhabitants and has further alienated kebele staff from the residents. In interviews it was often criticised, that kebele representatives were not known individuals from the neighbourhood, but government appointees. The budget allocation from the sub-city level to the KDC instead of the NDC was also criticised. Due to the kebele representative's lack of personal attachment in the neighbourhood, money might have been wasted which was covered up by manipulated reports. Had the money been given to the NDC there would have been peer pressure ensuring accountability.

The 'professionals' of the care taker administration working as kebele development team leaders generally also manage micro and small enterprises team, thus facing a heavy work load.

“Since this is a care taker administration one person has more than one post. There used to be one person for each post before. So I am deputy executive officer of the kebele, leader of environment development and of the micro and small enterprises team. It is a title like Mengistu Haile Mariam used to have.”²⁵

²⁵ Interview kebele environment development team leader, January 2007.

2.5 Conclusion

Can government activated initiatives promote grass-roots led urban development?

The participatory neighbourhood development proves the incapability of the city administration to release the grass-roots level into independence. Initial plans of empowering the neighbourhood development committees budget wise were for instance never put to practice and the willingness to plan from the grass-roots level is not visible. In the PND the grass-roots level was only reached in the implementation process.

The contribution and involvement in urban development that was supposed to create a sense of ownership was only fairly successful in cases where physical infrastructure was upgraded and “gurbenta committees” were formed for administration and maintenance.

It was also impossible for the NDC to be free from political biases, which also makes the cooperation of community based organisations with government established committees liable to failure. In the case of PND there were a lot of opposition members working for the NDC prior to the elections and left the committee after the described outcome.

The kebele cannot be called a grass-roots actor, since it comprises far more residents than it did when it was first established as an urban dweller’s association. Then it encompassed between 3.000 and 12.000 and today the number of residents has amounted to approximately 30.000 residents per kebele.

The tendency of the city administration is to concentrate on large scale activities and therefore the small scale upgrading activities are being transferred to the third sector. The city administration’s promise to give priority to underprivileged neighbourhoods is eventually passed on to NBOs, CBOs and the private sector.

As Rahnema has identified, participation is no longer a threat to government, it has been accepted as an instrument for effective implementation of projects and has been utilised for fund raising.

The role of the kebele as a facilitator of urban development can only be successful, if participation goes beyond rhetoric, thus making a transparent working environment and accountability, as promised objectives of PND, possible.

Participatory neighbourhood development does not meet the high standards of good governance, but certainly is important as an experience to understand where accountability is lacking and how little the effective and efficient performance helps changing an image, if participation and transparency are not given.

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