

# Regional Planning and Governance for Sustainable Development in Addis Ababa and Its Surrounding Towns

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**Abstract:** The rapid expansion of Addis Ababa into peri-urban areas has resulted in detrimental effect such as the loss of agricultural land, forest degradation, and worsened livelihoods. With a significant influx of people from both Addis Ababa and its rural areas, the Oromia Special Zone surrounding Finfinnee has experienced rapid urban growth. This phenomenon exemplifies how areas can quickly expand from the city center to the outskirts, resulting in land grabbing and peri-urbanization. Unfortunately, the city's governance system makes land expropriation decisions based on immediate needs, without considering the current capacity and demographic dynamics. Empirical data shows that these plans have not effectively managed the increasing urbanization. To achieve sustainable urban development, it is crucial to understand population growth rates and the expansion of urban areas. Therefore, a comprehensive study aims to investigate the continuous urban growth in Addis Ababa and its surrounding towns. The most effective approach to address conflicts and promote sustainable development involves regional planning, good governance, coordinated economic development, environmental preservation, and efficient utilization of urban land. By adopting an Ethiopian mindset and acting at the regional level, this strategy can foster social equity, economic stability, and environmental viability.

**Keywords:** Regional Planning, Peri-Urban Areas, Special Zone

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## 1. Introduction

A sustainable approach to urban population management is needed in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is growing at a rate of 4.1%. Poor urbanization can have detrimental effects on the environment, inadvertent suburbanization, and displacement. To make decisions that will promote sustainable growth, it is essential to comprehend urbanization [5]. Based on data from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing and the World Bank, the nation's growing rate of urbanization has played a significant role in the formation of peri-urban areas. Urbanization has been a long-standing trend in several African countries, including Ethiopia. Nonetheless, there has been a gradual increase in urbanization over time. In comparison to other rapidly urbanizing sub-Saharan African nations, it was only around 21.2% in 2015.

There are opportunities to redesign the built and external environments to improve sustainability and live ability, and regional planning requirements vary depending on the development trajectories of cities [5]. Due to the large areas of

land that have been occupied as a result of rapid urbanization, the peri-urban environment has been degraded and grown out of control as built-up areas have expanded into peri-urban areas [14].

Due to a significant influx of people from Addis Abeba and rural areas, the Oromia Special Zone that encircles Finfinnee has seen rapid urban expansion. This has resulted in peri-urbanization development and land grabbing. It also offers a great scenario for researching the rapid expansion of towns from their peripheries to their centers. In light of this, efforts at management and planning within the Oromia Special Zone have been unsuccessful in limiting urban growth in ecologically sensitive regions [14]. Water-borne infections and decreased productivity are further consequences of poor riparian corridor landscape design [10]. Therefore, the study wants to explore:

1. the ongoing urban expansion and development of Addis Ababa and the Oromia regional urban system.
2. the determinant factors that hinder the implementation of regional planning through appropriate governance to

ensure the sustainability of city growth in a regional context.

3. To recommend regional planning as a useful instrument for promoting physical and economic development.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study used a case study design with a descriptive and explanatory research design. The use of primary and secondary data sources was made. Semi-structured interviews with important stakeholders in Addis Ababa and nearby towns in the Oromia region were the primary method of gathering data. Urban planners and representatives of the government were among these stakeholders.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. The Rationality of Regional Planning and Governance for Addis Ababa and Its Surrounding

In a variety of urban centers, urban development policies must take the needs of the urban poor into account. But there is a disconnect between their needs for a living and the policies that are in place [14].

The other factor is that Addis Ababa is rapidly becoming more urbanized as a result of its rapid expansion and overcrowding. As a result, there is little infrastructure, heavy traffic, and high density. Basic services are suffering, and the city's institutional capacity is being strained. Investments in socio-economic development are required to meet the rising demand for social services, housing, and employment due to the city core's high density and subpar living conditions [17, 21].

Addis Ababa's urban population has grown significantly as a result of migration. Push-pull factors including land acquisition, inheritance, parental sharing, redistribution, forest clearing, renting, and share cropping are what propel this migration. The arrangement and dispersion of towns are also influenced by other variables, including institutional and governmental reactions as well as modifications to commerce, transportation, and small industrial sectors [21].

Addis Ababa's urban unemployment rates range from 16.7% to 28.6%, with a decline from 32.1% in 2003 to 28.6% in 2006. Despite economic growth, Addis Ababa faces significant challenges, including high unemployment and poverty levels at 23.5% and 22%, respectively. Over one in four households has an unemployed adult, and the informal sector employs 30% of the economically active labor force. Youth unemployment is a significant issue, with 25% of the unemployed population in 2020. The city administration requires independent, small, informal companies to register and pay taxes [11].

Housing, transportation, water scarcity, fire danger, auto accidents, and subpar housing quality are among the issues Addis Ababa must deal with. Low-income and informal settlements are disproportionately impacted, and rush-hour traffic is a result of the city's massive investment in road infrastructure, which promotes motorization. Public

transportation in the city's informal settlements and housing complexes on the outskirts is inadequate [21].

Addis Ababa has experienced significant spatial expansion over the past two decades due to the country's expanding economy, high urbanization, and political factors. Land use efficiency gaps in Addis Ababa and its surroundings are a source of urban challenges. Urban centers need to use land efficiently and not evict citizens if it is not needed for immediate development. Rapid changes in built-up and agricultural lands among land use classes are evident, with built-up areas expanding rapidly in Galan, Dukem, and Bishoftu between 2006 and 2021. Especially since 2002 Urban sprawl is rampant in Addis [19, 20].

The growth of Addis Ababa along its five radial roads has resulted in higher transportation expenses, traffic jams, and ineffective public infrastructure services. Housing and land-use decisions are made based on available land resources, and there is a lack of coordination between investments in transportation and urban development. Problems with productivity, quality of life, and social inclusion have been brought about by low street coverage and a lack of a street grid network [21].

### 3.2. The Practice of Regional Planning: AA Integrated Master Plan

A joint urban planning project between Oromia and Ababa, the Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Integrated Plan covers a larger area and takes land-use priorities, industrial zoning, regional contexts, and environmental protection into account [1]. Institutions and locals. Following this plan in 2014, a protest erupted in Oromia National Regional State, which was against the plan's inclusion of public input [6, 14].

Some perceived it as serving a political agenda. Seen as political, the development plan for Ethiopia ignores Article 49 (5) of the 1995 Constitution and is incompatible with linguistic and ethnic divides. Additionally, it suggests creating a combined administrative unit for Oromia and Addis Abeba, but this idea is unsound in legal and empirical contexts and ignores the true issue facing the area [6]. A senior expert from the Oromia region urban planning institute suggests that key questions include institutional capacity to identify priorities, adapt planning processes to changing priorities, monitoring and enforcement capacity, and full implementation of technical, spatial, and urban development plans. However, urban intensity and socio-economic impacts need further consideration for successful implementation and management.

According to an interview from Addis Ababa city planning, this came from a misconception that it had used planning responses for political agenda, but it is a very important tool to bring sustainable development that benefits society among the integral development process that will get different opportunities like job creation, social service provision, and infrastructure developments, and it would be a model to extend its practice for other regions because it is not practiced in Ethiopia but has been applied in various countries in the world that have checked its significance in solving different

urban problems.

### **3.3. The Concept of Regional Planning and Governance for Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Report, World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), aims to meet present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own. It encompasses economic development, social equity, and environmental preservation. As urban populations increase in emerging nations, concerns about environmental, public health, and basic necessities are growing. City governments struggle to maintain regulatory processes, infrastructure, and services [11]. In a connected, sustainable society, there is no "away" where waste can be disposed of or unchecked exploitation can take place. People should act as though everything in a sustainable world is interconnected. In an ideal world, our governmental structures would be suitable for the areas in which we live. The dynamics of ecosystems, cultures, and societies would occur in closely adjacent regions. Institutions for managing these shared spaces, along with natural and social systems, would act with respect to the same territory of interests, and the effects of their decisions and actions would be understood and cause rational and moral reactions. This is where worries about sustainability in the long run or competitiveness today would manifest [18].

Understanding urban expansion and population change is crucial for sustainable urbanization. Efficient urban land use is essential for economic development and environmental protection [11].

Regional planning is a crucial human activity that involves investing in geographically dispersed areas for widespread development. This approach helps policy-makers allocate investments in services, facilities, and infrastructure to build settlement capacity and stimulate development. Tested in over a dozen developing countries, it identifies settlements as service, production, and trade centers, determines linkages between settlements and rural areas, and delineates areas with limited access to town-based services and facilities [16, 18]. This is a crucial tool for integrating urban risks, stresses, shocks, and uncertainties as well as for identifying scenarios of hazards that can be modified or avoided in the past, present, and future. It incorporates multiple hazards and necessitates developing coordinated policies at different levels of detail because tackling these urban issues has been hampered by the lack of democratic political representation of the city's citizens and the institutional ambiguity surrounding the nature of the government's relationship with the neighboring Oromia regional state. It can be also successfully achieved through decentralization and urban good governance.

### **3.4. Factors Affecting the Implementation of Regional Planning in Addis and Its Surrounding**

#### **3.4.1. Conflict of Interest**

In Ethiopia, peri-urban areas are a domain of unreported land transactions dominated by disputes over land access and

control. This was demonstrated on field trips to Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Bahir Dar, and Assosa, where the construction of hundreds of impromptu homes led to disputes between the builders and the city's officials. An instance of conflict between members of the city government and unofficial settlers occurred in 2016. The main issue facing Addis Ababa's city administration is dealing with unauthorized settlers who constructed homes around peri-urban areas [17]. The capital of Ethiopia's Abyssinian Empire, Addis Ababa, has seen tremendous population growth as well as territorial expansion. Although the city was given the ability to govern itself by the 1995 Constitution, the State of Oromia's stake in Addis Ababa has not been upheld. The Oromo nation's denial of constitutional rights is examined in this study using historical institutionalism. In order to establish inclusive institutions and carry out constitutional rights, there must be symmetry in political power. Oromia should have a city within a state governance structure adopted by Addis Ababa to safeguard its interests [9].

A succession of regimes, especially in the last three decades, have routinely exploited the commodification of land, the reconfiguration of the demographic composition around Addis Ababa, and narratives of development and modernization as justifications for state intervention [6]. Because of their intimate ties to the natural world and their customary ways of subsistence, the Oromo people have two distinct rights to land and resources [2].

Since its founding, the Ethiopian state has been expanding its sphere of influence, and the EPRDF government has done so by utilizing land as a means of gaining financial and political support. Oromo farmers who had been facing home displacement and land dispossession were incensed by the 2013 launch of the Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Intergrated Development Master Plan. Resistance movements broke out in Oromia Regional State in early 2014, and Addis Ababa was planning to extend its borders there. They argue that since the area is their ancestral home, they should have a fair share—if not a greater one—of the current urban development. Therefore, the displaced people assert that the economic and social conditions of the Oromo people who reside in and around Addis Ababa have suffered for generations at the hands of the city's political-economic establishment. Furthermore, the Master Plan document lacked transparency regarding the fate of farmers whose land would be incorporated into the revised plan. The future of towns and rural villages close to the capital is now even more uncertain due to these factors, which are exacerbated by a lack of transparency and the top-down approach of government policies [6].

Along with taking over territory, the Master Plan obliterates the group's linguistic and cultural identity. The project, whatever name it goes by, destroys the Oromo people's roots and robs them of their shared identity. In addition, the Plan was created with complete disregard for the needs of the millions of Oromo farmers who call these regions home. The plan is still imposed "from above," whereas a true development plan would require the affected parties' free and

informed consent and include safeguards to prevent or lessen potential harm to the community [7].

The expansion of the current water supplies and the development of new water supply dam projects from the nearby Abay Basin—the Sibulu and Gerbi Dams, located 30 km north of Addis—have gotten more attention. However, a large amount of the untreated wastewater—both domestic and industrial—produced in the Addis Ababa metropolitan area ends up in the Awash River in Oromia, severely contaminating nearby water sources [9].

On the contrary, the senior planner, who was a member of the regional planning committee as per the interview, stated that the new Integrated Development Master Plan (2013) established, in order to become competitive in the modern, globalizing economy, three goals for expanding service provision across national, continental, and international urban frontiers. The first goal was to accelerate the rate of urbanization in the nation from 17% to 30% in 10 years and to 50% in 25. Making Ethiopia competitive on the global stage in terms of business, tourism, and service delivery was the second goal. The third goal was to establish Addis Ababa as a center for continental and international business associations [1].

All these claims made the authoritarian EPRDF regime fail to implement the plan and eventually suspend it.

#### **3.4.2. The FDRE Constitution**

The Ethiopian federation consists of nine regional states with vast territorial, social, and economic differences. The FDRE Constitution outlines two categories of local government: ethnic and regular. Ethnic local government is envisaged under Article 39 (3), recognizing the right of each ethnic community to territorial autonomy. Regular local government is envisaged under Article 50 (4), aiming to enhance democratic participation and service delivery. The constitution leaves the determination of the number of tiers and units to regional states.

Ethiopia is a democratic federal state organized along ethnolinguistic lines, but de facto centralization of power, political repression, and politicization of ethnicity remain dominant features. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has faced political instability and the Covid-19 pandemic, making it difficult to sustain development momentum. The city of Addis Ababa has been used by national political elites to experiment with modernist visions, with the city government administered by a popularly elected council and a mayor [3].

#### **3.4.3. Ethiopian Land Policy**

Land ownership is a complicated topic in Ethiopia due to the country's varied topography and socioeconomic background. Land in the form of "Gult" and "Rist" was owned by the church, nobility, and peasants prior to 1974. Land ownership was formally transferred to state property following the overthrow of the regime in 1974. Both the state and the Peoples of Ethiopia are exclusively granted ownership rights to both rural and urban land under the 1995 Constitution. However, according to [14], Ethiopian peasants are entitled to

land without compensation and to be shielded from eviction. The real issue that the people face and how they choose to address it has not been addressed by land policy. Since the state owns land as a means of achieving eminent domain, regimes can occasionally be in contradiction with one another. In reality, current land ownership is insufficient to protect the public interest, which fosters the growth of corrupt urban managers and land speculators. Due to the government's commodification of urban and periurban areas, land expropriation has increased throughout Addis Ababa, using both legal and illegal methods

The 2005 Land Expropriation Proclamation gave the government total authority to seize land for "public purposes," but it didn't outline what the public interest was or require landowner collaboration. 2020 saw an increase in compensation per square meter, but market values and crop production were not taken into account [6].

#### **3.4.4. Lack of Coordination**

According to senior interview, the challenges facing the city have proven difficult to address due to contested claims over Addis Ababa and top-down modes of governance. The majority of city government officials are political appointees, and the political party controlling the federal government controls governance. Coordination of metropolitan development interventions has also been challenging due to the lack of an institutional framework that has been mutually agreed upon to improve relations between the Oromia regional state and the city government of Addis Ababa. The African Cities Research Consortium could conduct in-depth analyses of intricate issues in Addis Ababa and establish collaborations with parties dedicated to reform and tackling some of the most critical problems facing the city.

#### **3.5. Possible Alternative for Effective Regional Planning and Governance for Sustainable Development in Addis Ababa and Its Surrounding**

Regional planning in Addis Ababa and the surrounding Oromia Special Zone can address uncontrolled urban expansion and development. However, selecting the right strategy is crucial as it directs actual activity. Implementing plans requires allocating resources and staff time. The Integrated Regional Development Plan focuses on a "negotiated planning" approach, analyzing interconnections between planning, infrastructure, and land. Resilient cities have well-coordinated, legally enforced, inclusive, and cross-sectoral planning processes. Key stakeholders align plans with sector priorities and consider societal interests. Multiple strategies are in place to achieve primary urban development goals amidst changing demographics, urbanization rates, and economic shifts [14]. The major possible responsive approaches for ensuring urban sustainable development are described here under in detail.

##### **3.5.1. Thinking New Regionalism, Instead of Thinking Locally**

Access to desires is now possible regardless of geography,

ethnicity, or religion because the world has become a neighborhood. Survival and development depend on thinking globally and acting locally. Strong national economies with well-defined borders and strong central governments defined the Pax Americana after World War II. This hierarchy of political and economic relationships has been altered by technological advancement and economic restructuring, creating a multilevel hierarchy. The rapid advancement of technology and the competitiveness among regions call for reforms at the regional level [12, 14, 26].

Since the mid-1990s, new regionalism—a blend of political and cultural regionalism—has become more popular in North America. It was born out of worries about environmental degradation, traffic jams, and suburban sprawl. A new set of physical planning guidelines was produced by the Congress for the New Urbanism, which also had an impact on movements for sustainable development, smart growth, and livable communities. These days, it encourages global economic competitiveness, fair resource distribution, and reasonably priced public infrastructure [24, 25].

Therefore, thinking as Ethiopia and acting regionally in Addis Ababa city and its surrounding towns by avoiding conflict and changing to mutual benefit is more important to effectively achieve sustainable urban developments than thinking and acting locally to be competent among the global phenomena.

### **3.5.2. Resolving Conflict of Interest Through Indigenous Approach**

This study explores the role of traditional institutions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ethiopia, particularly in Addis Ababa and surrounding towns. It highlights the importance of fostering a sense of community and ownership of peace processes through traditional conflict resolution systems. The gadaa system and other an example of a customary and statutory system, is used to guide Oromo people's lives and manage resources. It suggests a synthesis of customary and statutory institutions to improve resource management and avoid top-down enforcement of statutory laws.

In a boundary dispute between Addis Ababa and surrounding towns, indigenous conflict approaches were used to resolve the issue. A team of youth, experts, political and religious leaders was formed to study and come up with solutions without adversely affecting each other. The solution was to give some plots of land to the Oromia Special Zone and compensate for disadvantaged farmers community [8]. However, the study warns against giving one side a chance, as it could lead to political upheaval and civil wars, affecting the entire community.

### **3.5.3. Metropolitan Planning**

Metropolitan regions are areas of local governance containing a large concentration of people around a city, used to monitor urban dynamics. In Ethiopia, rapid urban growth and low-density residential developments require cross-regional analytical frameworks. Western nations' experiences can help control sprawling, but it also poses

challenges like agrarian eviction and violating federal constitutional systems. Small towns and cities in developing countries can perform social, economic, and service functions, but large-scale manufacturing alone is not enough for widespread development. A system of towns and cities is necessary to spread development benefits [14, 16].

### **3.5.4. Cross – Boundary Investments**

The emergence of equity, social justice, and sustainability concerns, as well as the monetization of urban areas, are direct results of industrialization's influence on society. To solve this problem, the idea of the "right to the city" was created. Lefebvre's theory of 'production space' provides additional support for this idea, as it explains the ways in which different spatial actors interact with physical urban space and how they conceptualize and claim their built environment. It has influenced the reordering of spatial priorities in multidisciplinary social science analyses. This is necessary to establish a socio-spatial environment that is more inclusive and humane. It has influenced the reordering of spatial priorities in multidisciplinary social science analyses. This is necessary to establish a socio spatial environment that is more inclusive and humane [15, 19].

### **3.5.5. Joint Regional Projects**

According to a senior interview, there is a need to establish joint regional projects in some of the regional states that provide minorities with autonomy and space to manage their own affairs. However, their autonomy is severely limited due to their significant financial reliance on regional governments and the excessive oversight and control they receive from them. To empower local communities, enhance public participation, and ensure adequate service delivery, it is hoped that regional states in Ethiopia will create an efficient policy and legal framework for wereda government. This will enable wereda governments to become significant partners in these endeavors and prevent urban sprawl that encroaches on agricultural lands [22].

### **3.5.6. A Good Governance and Capacity Building Package**

Good governance is crucial for peace, stability, and development. UN-HABITAT launched the Global Campaign on Urban Governance in 1999 to eradicate poverty through improved urban governance. The campaign focuses on the "Inclusive City" concept, ensuring everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, race, or religion, can participate in cities. Good urban governance ensures access to necessities of urban life, such as shelter, security, water, sanitation, health, education, and employment. However, conflicts in land acquisition and expropriation often arise due to lack of good governance and tenure insecurity. The strategy focuses on equity, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, usefulness, affordability, reliability, and committed urban governance. The study area's urban planners must address the specific, complex, and intertwining problems of suburbanization, housing, business, commerce, job creation, and public transport [4, 14]. Ethiopia's capacity building initiative focuses on human resources development, institutional

strengthening, and effective working practices. It aims to strengthen the civil service's role in good governance and economic and social development. The Urban Good Governance Package includes institutional development, system reforms, and capacity-building measures for accelerated urban development [11].

### 3.5.7. Stakeholder Collaboration: Donors and Institutions in Urban Development Programmes

With the goal of reducing urban poverty and developing infrastructure, the Federal Government of Ethiopia has to collaborating with donors, urban local authorities, regional governments, and development actors. In order to combat poverty and create jobs, the government is aware of the difficulties posed by the fast urbanization of the country. Proactive planning is also necessary. Including the interests, needs, values, and concerns of the public in decision-making and action on public issues depends on public participation. The cornerstone of urban strategic planning is good urban governance norms, in which participation is sought at different levels through mechanisms such as issue-specific working groups, cross-sectoral teams, and urban consultations. Regional government bureaus create supportive environments for urban centers and offer technical assistance, while institutions offer policy initiatives and technical standards [13, 14, 23].

## 4. Conclusions

Regional planning and governance in Addis Ababa and its surrounding towns is essential for sustainable development. Thinking as Ethiopian and acts as regional is best policy to address the conflicts and problems. It can help to ensure development is equitable and inclusive, protect the environment, build resilience to shocks and stresses, promote economic development, and create jobs. By working together, governments, businesses, and civil society can create a more prosperous and sustainable future for all.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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