

Housing construction policy in Ethiopia

Everywhere in Addis Ababa, you can see apartment complexes that have just been completed. Shiny cars are sitting outside the door. Were these apartments not intended for the poor?

Condominia

The reason is the tremendous housing shortage in Ethiopia. Three-quarters of the people of Addis Ababa live in slums. The new policy is to build high-density housing for the poor, known as condominia. This policy is being subsidised nationally and internationally. Since 2004, four and five-story residential blocks have been rising around the country.

The promise was that the new residents would be able to buy their houses in the long term. They would be allocated by a lottery system. However, those who could put down a deposit were given priority.

Richer people snapped up, and are still doing so, the apartments from under the noses of the poor. The government allows it to happen. Because they need money fast to invest even more in housing construction. The new owners sell the apartments on for three times the price, or rent them out. Result: the middle classes live in the condominia. The rich are getting richer, and the poor poorer. Forced evictions mean that the poor are losing out even more. Their slums were demolished to make way for the condominia. They receive land in compensation. But this moves them away from their sources of income. This squeezes the poor even more.



Condominia



The lake Awassa



Original building style

Condominia in Awassa

Throughout the country, the central policy is being properly implemented. As it is in the regional capital of Awassa, 275 kilometres south of Addis Ababa.

Awassa is trapped between Lake Awassa and the mountains. It has mostly low-rise buildings, except for the university, a few hotels and banks.

The local authority wants to develop the town/ But there is little room for expansion. For the last three years, condominia have been built. A success, says the Mayor, because they are for the poor. In reality, it is civil servants and political supporters who live there. Poor people who ever try to do business there are forcibly moved on. Building in flats seems heretical to them. Because they are used to living on an estate. They earn their living there.

Bottlenecks

For the more than 115,000 people of Awassa there are nowhere near enough homes. The population growth is largely due to migrants coming to the city for a better life.

Apart from impoverished farmers, investors are also coming to the town. The industrial zone is growing fast. The main roads are metalled.

Apart from the population growth, land ownership is also a problem. All land in Ethiopia belongs to the government. The so-called *kebele* houses are cheap homes rented out by the local authority. But at present, policy is heavily biased towards ownership. Land is expensive to buy. It is impossible for the poor. All in all, their slice of the cake is tiny.

'We are poor,' says a resident of a poor neighbourhood, expressing the general opinion. 'We have no right to complain to the government'.

Karin Anema