“They think we can eat the condominium”

Chronicles of Economic, Social and Political Practices in Addis Ababa’s Condominiums

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Research Master Thesis in African Studies
“They think we can eat the condominium”
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“Seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, and make them endure, give them space”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible cities*
Abstract

Inner city renewal in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, leads to the eviction of thousands of slum dwellers. In its place, the inhabitants live in condominiums. This thesis investigates how living in condominium units shapes economic, social and political practices intrinsic to Ethiopian culture, particularly Addis Ababa’s relocated people. The aim is to explore new ways of looking at relocation dynamics unfolding in Ethiopia: ex-post, after relocation, and with an emphasis on the role of local government. Discussing the condominium model, a growing solution to informal housing and population mushrooming, and governmental approaches to its effects, it contributes to a still-fledged literature on relocation’s effects in the long-term. The analysis is based on six months of fieldwork in Addis Ababa, in the Jemo One Condominium area, with a collection of data through observation, residential experience, interviews in Amharic with the inhabitants and surveys with the administration of the area. This thesis uses social capital theory to holistically cover several areas of life in the condominium, with Robert Putnam’s (1997, 2000) school of thought as the cornerstone. The economic and social aspect relies on attitudinal variables such as norms of reciprocity, kinship structures as networks, and popular social capital practices in Ethiopia like iddir, eqqub, and mahber as risk-sharing mechanisms. On the other hand, the political aspect focuses on taking power consciousness and proximity between citizens and the local government, i.e. the woreda, as main parameters, using the variant linking social capital theory. Locating the discussion within the temporal becoming of the country, this thesis demonstrates how living in apartment blocks has transformed economic practices for former slum dwellers, once linked to life-sustaining support networks, now contained. At the social level, it shows how the same extended networks are unworkable in the condominium areas and further affected by class and ethnic frictions in the blocks, leading to a loss of practices such as mahber and eqqub, and iddir used predominantly for self-interest and cultural courtesy. At the political level, it assesses how the relationship between local government and citizens has been weakened to make room for a political body more interested in the object, i.e. the apartment block, than the subject, i.e. its residents. The findings of this study suggest that, as an enduring housing solution
in Addis Ababa, the experiences of living in the condominium should continue to be investigated to give a complete picture of its limitations and act on these. In this context, the thesis highlights the importance of examining local government as a link in promoting social capital, and strongly recommends its ongoing use for future research. Further work might explore more affluent and ethnic social actors' perspectives within the area for a veritable picture.
Abbreviations

IHDP: Integrated Housing Development Program
EPRDF: Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
DIR: Development Induced Relocation
DID: Development Induced Displacement
IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons

Recurrent Amharic words

Ato: Mister
Tiye: Lady
Bunna: Coffee
Injera: Spongy flatbread made from grain millet
Mahber: Association; Ritual meetings of Orthodox connotation
Iddir: Association initially designed to provide financial assistance for funeral services
Eqqub: Association to raise money on a rotating basis
Lakso: Funeral
Lemat: Development
Hiwot: Life
Eta: Lottery
Newari: Inhabitant
Techeray: Renter
Woreda: Local government; District
Acknowledgments

This thesis would be nothing without the people who supported it, who supported me. In writing these words of gratefulness, I feel melancholy at the thought of closing a project that has been with me since the beginning of January 2022.

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Moving on to the field, I have in my heart thousands of people to thank and I hope that, in some way, this thesis will do justice to all the former people of Woreda 7, who spoke to me and involved me in their lives. Among them, I cannot fail to mention my paternal family and, in particular, my cousin Sele; Sele, from the days when you pushed me to go to the woreda to the afternoons spent eating kollo, the effort you put into helping me is indescribable to me; besides blood, an incredible affection, devotion and respect is binding me to you.

I am fortunate to have so many people to lean on in life, and even if silently, I carry each of them in my heart and mind while writing these words. However, I want to express my greatest thanks to my father, Dejene, and my mother, Hirut, my greatest pillars in life. Thank you, Dad, for your infinite affection and for lending me a page of silent life, yours; life in Ethiopia has taken too many opportunities away from you, and this thesis is also and especially for you. I also want to thank Albertina for allowing me and us to write a new, hopefully, brighter chapter of life.

Finally, thank you, Mum, for years in Italy we laughed at the fact that you did not want to cut your “umbilical cord” with Ethiopia. Because of you, to this day, I think there is nothing more wonderful than being tied to a place like Ethiopia.
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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Homeplace
“Abaye¹, why does granny live in a box?” that’s how my eight-year-old version, stuck in the whys phase, would naively question my father about the Box housing my paternal relatives. A living room crammed with worn-out sofas, flanked by a single other room equally packed with mattresses, and the kesel² always red-hot and ready to warm the jebena³’s bottom. To separate the Box from the outside was only a row of sheets of metal, on which the rain beat down insistently over the rainy season, and to access it, one had to walk down a long driveway, dodge the trickle of urine, go down a dirt track, and there it was: the Box. Back then, the Box housed Granny, Uncle Jeje, Uncle Dessu, Auntie Beshu, Cousin Mary, Cousin Samry, and - extraordinarily, for our few months in Ethiopia - me, my father, and my mother. Yet, every day, the Box had actually proved capable of accommodating many more people, with neighbours stopping by for a chat, my uncles’ friends enjoying sips of tella⁴ on the sofa, and my friend Rita stopping by to play with the excuse of borrowing a couple of injera⁵ rolls. It was among the tightest places I had ever slept, though for me, having no relatives abroad besides my parents, the Box was a magical and memorable place, so much so that the sound of the constant rain sounded like a lullaby. Granny used to braid my hair, the atmosphere was always boisterous, no one, from neighbours or authorities, came to bother us and one was never bored. As an answer to my question, my father scolded me and warned me to be quiet.

This incipit illustrates the thesis’s backbone: the importance of (re)making oneself at home and how this, in the Ethiopian context, intertwines with the value and practices of community life. The concept of making home goes beyond a narrative tied to a physical place and instead refers to a process involving individuals and their continual practices of homemaking (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Besides the presence of family members, the noisy, daily dialogues in a crowded living room and negotiations over the lending-demand of injera rolls made Granny’s Box also my home in my recollections. Although fragments of life tempered by nostalgia, such

¹ Father in Amharic.
² Coal in Amharic.
³ Jebena is an Amharic word for the Ethiopian coffee pot used during traditional coffee ceremony.
⁴ Tella is the Amharic word for a traditionally home-brewed beer.
⁵ Traditional spongy flatbread made from grain millet
practices have not only allowed me to navigate beyond the apparent difficulty of sharing a few square meters, let me say, often dilapidated, with eight relatives but even transcend geographical spaces, given the factual location of my home in Italy, while equally finding comfort in it. Nevertheless, such practices were not to last too long, and I soon found myself unable to return to such Box.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1940) notes, “Home is where one starts from”. Thus, my thesis takes its cue from this, with the broader aim of investigating new collective ways of making a home, where this in the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, is increasingly determined by “new geographies of movement and settlement” (Walsh, 2011, p.516). This introductory chapter is concerned with giving an overview of my thesis, analysing the changing urban landscape in Addis Ababa, theoretical gaps in the study of relocation and its effects on citizens, the objectives of my study in filling these gaps, with its practical consequences, and finally potential limitations incurred in this thesis.

1.2 “Abaye, why does Granny no longer live in the Box?” Addis Ababa’s changing landscape

A couple of years later, in 2010, I would ask my father a diametrically opposite question: "Abaye, why does granny no longer live in the Box?“. After more than 50 years of living in the area, she and my relatives were forced to leave. This subchapter gives a brief overview of Addis Ababa’s urban context and how relocations differentiated it in the last decade.

The Box, as I called it when I was eight years old, refers to a house situated at that time in the Woreda — district — number 7, in the central area of Kirkos sub-city, in Addis Ababa. From 2010 onwards, that house, along with 1896 other kebele houses, 402 private houses, 6 rented houses, 51 privately-run businesses, and 23 rented businesses in the area (Land Development Administration, 24 February 2023) were demolished in the name of development projects commissioned by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).
The Woreda 7 is only one of many areas in Addis Ababa targeted by the state-led megaproject Integrated Housing Development Program (IHDP), a housing policy initiated in 2006 by the Ministry of Works and Urban Development, with an emphasis, among others, to mitigate urban slums areas in the capital and improve the housing supply for the low-income population (UN-Habitat, 2011, p.10).

Regarding the former, it is worth spending a few remarks on the urban context of Addis Ababa. The city's topography is somewhat peculiar when compared to other African capital cities: slums are spread throughout the entire city, with no distinction between wealthy and poor neighbourhoods, as opposed to cities in the Greater Horn of Africa such as Nairobi or Kampala, where the distinction is more marked (Charitonidou, 2022). The main motive for such urban coexistence in Ethiopia's geography is attributable to a lack of a permanent colonial ruler: without the settlers, no spatial division was undertaken between areas inhabited by them versus those inhabited by the local population, in the old-fashion dichotomy of 'the West', the side with formal houses, against 'the Rest', the side permeated by urban informality (Charitonidou, 2022; Larsen et al., 2019, p.3).

Nevertheless, what can one consider slums? Apropos of this, the UN-Habitat defines slums as any housing structure lacking permanent and climate-resilient construction, sufficient living space, easy access, safe affordable and sufficient water, sanitation facilities, and security of tenure to prevent forced evictions (UN-Habitat, 2014). Even more extensively, Ethiopian Urban Planners consider slum areas any housing structures that do not comply with planning laws and standards (Kassahun, 2015, p.172), and no wonder my grandmother's house met all the requirements to be considered as such.

Another reason the leadership hailed the IHDP was the vision of a city capable of accommodating rapid population growth; in the last decade, the population of Addis Ababa has increased by almost 2 million (Macrotrends, 2023). For years, the growing population has clashed with the limited space available, with some ineffective plans to expand the city.
boundaries to bear with it; see, for instance, the government attempts in 2014 to expand the capital’s borders to the surrounding Oromia region (Debelo & Soboka, 2022; Záhořík, 2017).

The IHDP proposed an efficient solution to the problem: the housing supply of massive apartment blocks of four or more storeys located in the peri-urban areas of the capital became the primary substitute for slums in the centre, accommodating large numbers of people.

Biruk Terrefe (2020) describes the current government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as a shift in Addis Ababa’s urban scheme because of the ambitious projects instead designed to attract the city’s elite and the diaspora, in contrast to the previous housing provision, mainly meant for low-income people (p.379). However, rather than frame this as a shift, I consider current city planning in the capital as a continuation of the IHDP: the programme freed up inner city areas, and, consequently, the current government fills them with recreational projects. In fact, it is amusing to point out how the Museum of Art and Science, the latest project inaugurated in October 2022 by the government, was born on the ashes of the former informal space of Woreda 7.

Furthermore, up to this day, high-rise apartment blocks jagging the skyline stand out, showing a city continually growing vertically rather than horizontally. In aggregate, their message is loud and clear: in Addis Ababa, condominium models are likely to stay.

1.3 Sociability within New Geographies of Settlement

The city is built on social relations (Jacobs, 1961; Rapoport, 1990). What, then, does it imply to change the urban shape of Addis Ababa?

To answer this question, this section deals with the statement of the problem, analysing pragmatic gaps in the study of issues such as relocation.

Once experienced in single-store houses, scholars typically depict social relations in Ethiopia through associations such as iddir, eqqub and mabhber (Gashayie & Singh, 2016; Kassahun, 2015; Pankhurst, 2008). Some more than others, from the early times, all these associations involve a
network of people who meet regularly to offer members economic, emotional or religious support. Their strength is stability, while their enemy is mobility (Grootaert, 1998).

Moving people to apartment blocks in distinct areas of Addis Ababa has weakened such structures of sociability (Yntiso, 2008). Using the wording of Robert Putnam (1993) to clarify further the meaning of structures of sociability, “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions” (p.167) are now threatened by the settling in condominium blocks. In my bits of records, everyday life in Woreda 7 embodies such structures of sociability with injera request or residential meeting involving drinking tella. This demonstrates how, in the Ethiopian context, low-income households usually pool financial resources to share the economic burden.

For citizens, relocating meant leaving aspects of their area that sustained everyday life economically, socially and politically. Academically, there is now a wealth of research regarding the consequences of the relocation of Ethiopian citizens. Even before the topic was in vogue, when the first apartment blocks were populated in 2013, Gebre Yntiso (2008), Alula Pankhurst and François Piguet (2009) evinced how the effects of relocation were catastrophic for low-income people and their informal networks of survival. Soon, a housing policy conceived as pro-poor by the government has been judged by scholars as a speculative action carried out with the real aim of giving birth to a utopian, modern, slum-free city (Abebe & Hesselberg, 2013; Ejigu, 2015, p.5).

There are two research gaps in this regard: what happens to citizens after the relocation within these condominium structures and, secondly, what is the local government’s role in the new areas. Studies such as those by Almaz Mekonnen (2019), Negera Gudeta Adula (2020), and Terefe Alene (2021), recent attempt to fill this gap, take a rather generalist approach to the issue, carrying out an analysis of government policies in toto rather than focusing on the micro-level, which is more effective in the context of research in Ethiopia, a country divided administratively and ethnically into several hamlets, with the result that citizens daily interface with, at most, only one of them (Ayele, 2015). Consequently, existing research is outdated and
one-sided to understand the challenges of citizens within apartment blocks, i.e. the economic, social and political dynamics that influence their everyday lives and which, for this reason, deserve to be investigated.

1.4 Displacement, Relocation and Terminology in Amharic

Navigating the different definitions of relocated people can be complicated and confusing; thus, this section aims to draw distinctions between the different terms and provide clarity.

The terms displacement and relocation describe two intertwined processes; hence they often feature jointly. The term displacement describes the movement of something, in this case a group of people, from their original place or location. As Michael Cernea (2000) notes, it could also involve expropriating productive lands and other assets to make an alternative use possible. In this context, relocation is consequential as it describes the(ir) action of settling in the new place and establishing there (Kloosterboer, 2019).

Hence, when referring to Development Induced Displacement (DID) people, one means people displaced from their original place or location for the specific sake of development plans’ purposes, and consistently, Development Induced Relocation (DIR) are relocations consequential to these development plans.

DID people also fall into the broader and younger category (Adula, 2020) of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), which, according to a non-legally binding United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees definition, applies to “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence (...) who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border”. Nevertheless, since displacement occurred within the country, people affected by DID do not fit into the refugee category or status, resulting in excluding the topic from migration research and reduced international and academic interest towards their issues (Endeshaw, 2016).
The denomination resettlement, often used as a synonym of relocation as the meaning per se is “to settle again”, mainly features in juridical literature related to migration and refugees topics; therefore, this thesis will not employ the term.

 Interestingly, within the Amharic language, there is a literal and faithful translation of the definition of DID, namely Be Lemat Ye Tenessu Sewochi, where Be lemat denotes the causal ‘for development reasons’, tenessu the declension of the verb mennesat alias displacement and finally sewochi the subject, i.e. people. The literal translation could be the following: People Displaced for Development Reasons. More importantly, the presence of a specific spatial word to designate such a phenomenon suggests how grounded the issue is in the Ethiopian context.

 Moreover, within the Amharic language, the first interviewees were keen to explain how this definition differs intrinsically from Ye tefenakelu sewochi, which, while having a similar meaning, is rather employed to designate a displacement of people as a consequence of destruction of their home due to armed conflicts or natural disasters such as earthquakes or hurricanes. The DID people and ye tefenakelu sewochi are both involuntarily displaced from their residence, yet the former seem to be in a more preferential position as they have residential alternatives — be it a plot of land, funding to secure a temporary unit, or a suburban condominium — compared to ye tefenakelu sewochi, who have nothing to fall back on.

1.5 Moving the conversation Further

This short section outlines the aim of this research, its objective, the research question guiding it, and the methodology used to accomplish it. This thesis seeks to move the conversation further on relocation issues in Ethiopia and the effects of social capital, questioning the outcomes of living in a condominium model and local government approaches to social capital. It starts from the general assumption that urban and social transformation are weaved together in the capital’s new socio-political landscape (Planel & Bridonneau, 2017).
The relocation of people, especially low-income ones, into condominium complexes has brought to life a new expression in Amharic, ye condominium hiwot, the condominium lifestyle in English. The condominium lifestyle implies economic, social and political effects on citizens’ lifestyles.

The main research question that shapes my thesis is:

*How does condominium life shape the economic, social and political practices of Addis Ababa (relocated) citizens?*

These are my sub-questions:

1. How has the livelihood of the people relocated to Jemo One Condominium evolved compared to their former neighbourhoods?
2. In which ways do condominiums inhabitants, particularly the relocated ones, forge new ways of living collectively in Jemo One Condominium?
3. What is the result of linking Woreda 1 with its residents in Jemo One Condominium?

As previously noted by Planel and Bridonneau (2017), condominium spaces can serve as "social — and potentially political — laboratories" (p.26). In my case, the Jemo One Condominium complex, popularly known only as Jemo, located in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, is the urban space where I investigated new collective living practices and interfacing with local administration. To do this, I spent six months in Addis Ababa, from September 2022 to March 2023, where I collected data about living in the condominium in a different way; the first month, living in a condominium with my relatives, then regularly visiting and spending time in the area, after I moved out, doing interviews, attending meetings and going to government offices to receive information. This thesis is above all the fruit of all this.

### 1.6 Building Home and Knowledge Inside Condominiums

The following subchapter delves into the significance of the thesis, spacing from real-world value to more theoretical significance of the study.
Moving and living in condominium patterns is now the panacea for population growth in Addis Ababa. When I ask one of my interviewees, "Do you think condominium living will be in vogue in the future?"

Eyob replies

Yes, many are being built and will be built in the future. No young people want to move to Koye feche, an area that could accommodate the entire population of Dire Dawa, but they become forced to live there. The problem of finding housing is an imperative problem in Ethiopia, especially in Addis Ababa, and without condominium projects it will be impossible to get to grips with it quickly.

Eyob's statement not only underlines how the condominium model solution is in vogue, but it also highlights how phenomena such as relocation continue to occur. Shifting the conversation to what to do ex-post is necessary in the Ethiopian academic context because it provides clarification to a way of life that is now becoming established and to which citizens are forced to adjust.

Investigating new ways of performing and implementing collective practices provides a practical, real-world value to such a thesis. A home, beyond the building, that is, the places, the people, and all the peculiarities that make a place "home", means everything for individuals. If this is substantially different in form and in the people who live there, as is the case with condominiums, research on how to make the new place a real home is necessary to help relocated communities develop new ties and support networks so that the economic and non-economic burden of life is lessened.

Regarding a more in-depth study of the role of woreda, as reported by van Noorloos et al. (2019), the role of African municipalities will be crucial in the years to come in developing ways to implement an inclusive urban future, which takes into account citizens and their needs and rights. Transposing this notion to my research means stating that the role of the woreda is crucial in safeguarding the interest of Ethiopian citizens. Researching and evaluating the work

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6 Koye Feche is an area situated in the Oromia region where condominiums are being constructed.
of the woreda can be categorized into what Ahmad (2006) calls “soft infrastructure”, that is, that set of local-level knowledge needed to define community needs and service provisions.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There are several potential limitations related to this research. Chapter III discusses the limitations of the methods and methodology used. In this introductory chapter, I will only briefly mention the limitations in terms of sample and, permissively, the limitations related to the epistemology of this thesis.

When I wrote my research proposal, I took it for granted that isolating my sample — the relocated people — would be easy once I got to the field. However, condominium realities are home to far more than them; they now involve renters, people who have the financial capacity to buy a flat, and people who won condominium units through lottery systems. Each of them perceives the condominium lifestyle in its way. This broadened my subject of study and made my research a challenge on a representative level: How to give everyone’s voices a fair space? To overcome this problem, I decided to use DIR people as my primary sample and to expand other people’s voices only in relation to them.

The relocated people themselves were not always prone to participate in the interviews. Although condominium life is hardly ever studied, especially in connection with woreda, the sample population may not consider it as such. For example, during my research, a man refused to be interviewed because he claimed that he had been interviewed for no less than five different studies and that he had obtained nothing meaningful in return. Apart from respecting his wishes, I could do nothing but reflect on the significance of my study and how my position as a researcher might or might not have undermined the community.

Furthermore, there are limitations related to the social capital theory I use in my thesis. This theory is convincing in my study because it holistically covers different areas of life in a new context, so much so that it has been used in the most diverse disciplines: sociology, economics,
politics, and, more recently, development studies areas. Nevertheless, it is precisely this use in different domains that increasingly makes the social capital theory a catch-all theory. As a result, there are pragmatic gaps related to the conceptualization of social capital, with somewhat confusing theory’s interpretation, all the more so if there is no application in the field.

Indeed, the vagueness of the notion of social capital also causes problems with measuring social capital and its operationalization in the field (Adam & Rončević, 2003, p.160; Lin et al., 2001). Humnath Bhandari and Kumi Yasunobu (2009) state that “more empirical studies and testing of the concept on the ground is needed to develop a commonly accepted definition and measurement indicators that can explicitly disentangle and quantify its effects on overall development processes” (p.481).

When applied to the African continent, such limitations magnify. Scholars need to apply the notion of social capital in Africa with extreme caution. In 1990, when it began to be widely used, the theory was tainted by coloniality: by categorizing norms, customs, and networks in Africa in the same way as those in the West, they often concluded that the notion of social capital only confirmed that the global South lagged behind the North, where African norms appeared different from Western ones (Fine, 2004, p.47; Meagher, 2005). Fortunately, the application of the theory over the years seems to have given rise to an updated, de-colonial approach to the theory, with studies on the use of social capital in Africa now being more meaningful (see Baliamoune-Lutz, 2005; Van Rijn et al., 2012).

Chapter II

Literature Review

Relocation’s effects on people have been analysed through different frameworks, depending on which element was considered. The human capital theory studies how human capital, i.e. the skills and knowledge an individual has in life, is an adaptive driver for individuals in navigating a new site (Mincer, 1974; Schultz, 1961). Similarly, cultural capital theory
identifies how cultural capital, framed as the social assets of a person, influences the integration of relocated individuals into the new setting (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Though valuable, such approaches are limited in studying a process such as relocation, having concomitant effects on individuals: social, economic and political. As such, isolating them risks flattening the magnitude of the phenomenon.

Michael Cernea made a breakthrough by formulating the Reconstruction and Development Model, also known as Cernea’s model, which comprehensively analyses residents’ livelihoods, community structures and network ties (Cernea, 1997). Nonetheless, it draws on research material that is quantitative rather than qualitative (Planel & Bridonneau, 2017, pp. 25-26). Therefore, policymakers’ research rather than more holistic studies apply the model. The social capital theory is often considered the best framework for studying the complexities of relocation’s effects because of its multi-dimensional approach. From a theory anchored in sociology, it has touched upon disciplines such as economics and politics over the years. This chapter studies the trajectory social capital theory has reached over the years, focusing on its social, economic and political value, touching particularly on linking social capital theory. The second part of the review focuses on analysing the theory in the African context, precisely the Ethiopian context, concluding with a conceptual framework of the thesis.

2.1 Social Capital: The Glue that Binds

The following part of this literature review offers a general definition of social capital theory and its influential three schools of thought. It was in 1986 when Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, employed the term social capital in academic circles to theoretically define
the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition or in other words, to membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p.248)

It seemed peculiar to give a social value to the definition of capital, at the time being more intrinsic to the discipline of economics. The trick to avoiding interpretative ambiguities was not to equate social capital with economic and financial types of capital — working, debt, trading capital — but to consider it a broader principle in its own right: "the ‘capital’ in social capital" states Tristan Claridge (2020), of the Institute of Social Capital Research, “is more analogous with tangible and intangible resources, benefits, productivity and savings” (p.1).

As coined by Bourdieu (1986), social capital theory conceived each individual as belonging to a network of persons or relationships, anchored to each other by the norm of reciprocity. The last, it is worth clarifying for the reader, can be traced back to the category first established by Karl Polanyi (1957) in the different forms of economic integration underlying the allocation of resources in society i.e. market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity. Whilst market exchange and redistribution characterize modern human societies, the first in the redistribution of resources by the government, the second in the regulation of the buying and selling of such, reciprocity date back to pre-modern societies. It involves the exchange of goods and services with symmetrical groups, i.e. with similar behaviour, unlike the first two, and, as a result, incriminated in non-market and non-hierarchical relationships. Its embeddedness in social relationships, however, makes reciprocal forms of exchange persist to this day (Polanyi, 1957).

Scholars of social capital theory have often mentioned the norm of reciprocity. This is because although academics conceptualize it differently, wording of social capital theory has remained similar.
There are three leading pioneers of social capital theory. The first, mentioned above, Bourdieu (1986) conceptualised social capital as belonging to an individuals rather than to collectivity. In contrast to Bourdieu, James S. Coleman, a socio-economically oriented academic adopting a functionalist approach, defines social capital as a combination of different entities working together within a social structure to achieve a particular end (Adam & Rončević, 2003, pp.159-160). He paves the way to the second school of thought on social capital. As close as Coleman’s school of thought is to guide my thesis, it is the third school of view, the one devised by political scientist Robert Putnam, that best suits this research for, as will be seen later, the contribution his studies have made to the nexus between social capital and institutions.

Therefore, this thesis has as its pivot the collectivist definition coined by the scholar regarding social capital, which he describes as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions” (Putnam, 1993, p.167). Furthermore, the author distinguishes three main social capital components, which will guide this thesis. The first component is the cognitive element and relates to values such as trust, the second component is the structural dimension of social capital, such as networks, and the third component is the relational dimension, i.e. the practices for which values and networks are fundamental to (Patulny, 2004, p.3; Putnam, 1993).

In an attempt to give a more comprehensive definition of social capital, more recently, Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009) concluded that the theory is closer to an idea than a tangible phenomenon. The only way to circumscribe it is “particularly rooted on the notion of trusts, norms, and informal networks” (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009, p.486). Likewise, the notion of capital, often regarded as mainly money, expanded. Neva Goodwin (2003) offers a great subdivision of capital into financial, natural, produced, human and, finally, social capital, which can help the reader understand the latter. She states that all these capitals serve to produce flows of economically desirable outputs: financial capital facilitates economic production, natural capital, the resources available in nature, is used to achieve produced capital, i.e. in deriving a flow of goods or services from physical assets, while human capital represents the
productive capacities usually obtained through education or training. Social capital, in this act, represents the common thread that allows an individual or group to range between these different types of capital (Goodwin, 2003).

To simplify, social capital encompasses those social elements such as norms, networks of people and interpersonal connections that facilitate the mobilisation of other kinds of capital (Claridge, 2020). To provide a flavour of this theory, academics define social capital as the glue that binds or even holds a community together to achieve financial, natural, produced, or human capital (Potapchuk et al., 1998). Intrigued by my research, even before I got to the field, people would hesitantly ask me: “What is social capital?” and, in order to give a short and concise answer, I would imitate: “It is the glue that binds us”.

2.2 Breaking down social capital: Form, Level, and Survey

As can be deduced from the previous chapter, there is a myriad of interpretations of social capital. However, while this is an asset of such theory, it also poses a limitation to it: up to this day, there is no consensus in the literature around it. Such a problem will be discussed in this subchapter, along with parameters used to avoid it.

Ultimately, Theda Skocpol (1996) explains the paradox of the theory in an article addressed to Robert Putnam: “Ironically for a scholar who calls for attention to social interconnectedness, Putnam works with atomistic concepts and data” (para. 11).

Indeed, the vagueness of the notion of social capital also causes problems with measuring social capital and its operationalization in the field (Adam & Rončević, 2003, p.160; Lin et al., 2001). To circumscribe this theory, attempts have been made over the years to break down the notion and define parameters. The following sections present the main parameters functional for this thesis.

Thus, at the conceptual level, social capital has been distinguished according to its form. The definition of horizontal social capital represents ties between individuals in the same
community, where the community can be understood as a “cohesive, integrated social system” (Merry, 1981, as cited in Schneider, 2006, p.14; Warner, 2001, p.188). In contrast, vertical or hierarchical social capital occurs between individuals from different ranks (Warner, 2001).

A further subdivision is related to the level of social capital. This is referred to as the micro level if it deals with the social capital of the individual, the meso level, if it deals with the social capital belonging to a group or organisation and the macro level when the social capital studied is that of a community or society (Claridge, 2018a). In applying this subdivision, care must be taken not to over-simplify the social environment studied, as the level of social capital investigated does not necessarily fit like a glove; in practice, social capital is more likely to be found in the middle (Claridge, 2018a).

Furthermore, guidelines and questionnaires have been created to make the measurement of social capital more feasible in the field. Among the most popular resources are the Instruments of the Social Capital Assessment Tool and the Social Capital Integrated Questionnaire created by the World Bank to collect social capital data at the household, community and organisational levels.

2.3 Whom it concerns? Bonding and Bridging social capital

Just as the concept of social capital has been broken down into its horizontal and vertical forms, the approach to the theory has developed similarly, especially in institutional economics and agency-oriented sociology (Meagher, 2005). However, what is the use of social capital in practice? And who does it particularly serve? Delving into who mainly benefits from social capital can explain at the core why the concept has relevance in academia and why various disciplines, from sociology to economics, are increasingly invested in studying it. The section below describes the nexus between social capital and poverty alleviation and engages the reader with some of the approaches developed in social capital theory.

In 1998, Christiaan Grootaert, in a World Bank working paper on social capital, stated that social capital impacts poverty alleviation. Indeed, where resources to meet basic needs such as
food are lacking, the social element comes into play and helps the livelihood of those in poverty. Elements such as solidarity, knowledge and reciprocity are fundamental for getting by in contexts of risk and uncertainty (Claridge, 2020). Indeed, social capital has an economic and rational value, grounded on the concept that human beings are rational beings, acting with self-interests in mind (Scott, 2000). Social capital theorists have traditionally followed the more rationalist and utilitarian line of thought. Putnam (1993) himself in *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, a book on his research in the Italian peninsula, describes the flourishing social capital in Northern Italy, as opposed to Southern Italy, as a capital that, at least in its early days, did not originate from people who come together to “subscribe to romantic ideas of solidarity and altruistic community” but rather to get by with life (Adam & Rončević, 2003, p.1974). Skocpol (1996) derides Alexis de Tocqueville for his idealisation of “voluntary groups springing up de novo from below, created by individuals in small geographic areas who spontaneously decide to associate to get things done ‘outside of’ government and politics” (para. 2), stating that the motive for such local spontaneity is what Tocqueville ignored: necessity.

The economic and rational value of social capital has been expressed in literatures with concepts such as risk-coping and risk-sharing (Grootaert, 1998; Portes, 1998). In the first case, the individual rationally decides to rely economically on a network of people to cope with an event ex post, after it has happened, e.g. by asking for loans, emotional assistance or solidarity (Yilma et al., 2014). In the second case, on the other hand, the mechanism is collective, involving a group of connections that mutually and rationally decides to distribute the risk among the different members of the group, usually ex ante, adopting informal insurance systems (Dekker, 2004; Dercon, 2002; Woolcock, 2001).

Bonding and bridging social capital are two criteria used in social capital theory, particularly to study social capital and its connection with economic value and poverty alleviation. Bonding social capital, also called close social capital by some academics, functionally delineates a social capital within people sharing commonality in some fundamental aspects (Schneider, 2006, p.5; van Staveren & Knorringa, 2007), whereas bridging social capital occurs between people having
varied backgrounds, such as being from different social groups, social classes, races and religions.

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) uses the bridging and bonding distinction and asserts that bonding social capital is sufficient for people to “get by” but establishing a kind of hierarchy between the two approaches, bridging social capital is essential for “getting through”. Indeed, in contexts of poverty, this is evident: when the social circle in which you live lacks resources, one has to mobilise other social groups, classes, religions, races and create bridges between individuals who have more financial, natural, produced, human or social capital.

However, the distinction is far from being clear cut since bonding and bridging social capital are not mutually exclusive, and it may happen, for example, that “in groups from different ethnic backgrounds people may find others of the same age and sex with a common educational background and interests” (Edward, 2004, as cited in Claridge, 2018b).

Moreover, bonding social capital has been described by some scholars as “perverse social capital” (Baycan & Öner, 2022; de Souza Briggs, 2003; Putnam, 2000) because the grouping of people, mainly based on shared characteristics, risks aggravating the very faulty lines the world is based on: race and ethnicity, social class, gender (de Souza Briggs, 2003). White supremacy generates substantial social capital; however, it is difficult to call this a positive societal outcome.

Even further, the dynamics implicit in belonging to a group can also take their toll on those involved; restrictions on individual freedom or the endless demands for continued membership, e.g. constant requests for reciprocal favours in the name of the collective, can lead people to perceive social capital as negative (Baycan & Öner, 2022).

### 2.4 How to get ahead? Linking social capital

Grootaert (1998) states that “social capital is no panacea for all impediments” (p.6). Indeed, there is no certainty that bridging or bonding social capital is enough to lift people out of poverty (Claridge, 2018a; Grootaert, 1998; Schneider, 2006). So, how could *getting ahead of*
poverty really be possible? In the following pages, I will discuss the intertwining between social capital and institutions and the institutional approach used in social capital theory, namely linking social capital theory.

Many believe that institutions are the key to lifting people out of poverty. Putnam is among the first to apply the social capital framework to institutions such as regional governments in field research. Putnam’s study (1993), reported in the book *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, following a regionalisation of Italy, found that in Southern Italy, the state, and the newly created local administrations, did little to promote social capital in areas where this was minimal. However, this was to their detriment, as the North of the country, rich in social capital, was consequently showing economic success. He thus stated, ”Development economists take note: Civic Matters”, alias civic community being the explanatory variable to economic success does matter (Putnam, 1993, p.37).

This book represented fresh inspiration for academics and policymakers to come in studying how the state, articulated in its institutions, can encourage or even generate social capital. Since then, scholars have sought to understand the extent to which institutions can help form social capital.

As Mildred Warner (2001) states, “Building and maintaining networks was not a natural given; it requires investment” (p.18), and often the best investors are the state, and its apparatuses, because they have access to considerable resources and power (Stone & Hughes, 2002). This investment involves sharing resources and power in various ways: by supporting pre-existing civic organisations monetarily or otherwise, or by investing in creating new ones (Grootaert, 1998, p.18).

The Mexican state giving peasants means of transport, Peter Evans (1996) evinces, will enable them to reach peasants in other areas and to organise themselves for the production and exchange of goods, increasing their income (p.1121). In a study of Spain, Laura Huntoon (2001) provides further evidence of the positive role of government in fostering social capital among immigrants’ communities. In the late 1990s, Spain nurtured the social capital of such
communities by giving funds to associations and non-governmental organisations in which immigrants from different countries were invited to participate. These initiatives proved to be a fundamental tool to reduce the conflict among immigrants, and between them and the Spanish state (Huntoon, 2001).

On this ground, the linking social capital theory has gained momentum in studying the interactions between institutions and social capital, emphasising their connection. Linking social capital underpins the theoretical background of this study, and a detailed account of its function will be given in this subchapter.

The theory of linking social capital investigates relations between people’s social capital and institutions, to which respectively citizens and the state and its apparatuses are the main actors (Beteille, 1999). According to the theory, institutions can always choose to play a role in citizens’ social capital: when this is not yet present, to develop it, but also when it is, whether already strong or not, to maintain or enhance it. In essence, theirs is a process in which institutions decide to join, depending on the level of social capital in a locality.

As citizens and institutions belong to different levels of the societal power hierarchy linking social capital has vertical relations as its object (Claridge, 2018b). Whilst in bridging social capital, such differences can be ignored, in linking social capital power differences are a conscious component of the relationship (Woolcock, 2001): a state apparatus such as local government is aware, in essence, that it has a comparative advantage in terms of financial, natural, produced, human capital, assets that often translate into power, and citizens do not deny that they have, comparatively, less (Beteille, 1999; Evans, 1996; Warner, 2001). As stated by the theory, once recognize their power and act accordingly by investing in the community and its social capital, acting as a link, the benefit would also expand to less powerful or excluded groups opening up new economic opportunities (Claridge, 2018b, p.4). In addition to their economic prosperity, institutions can be catalysts between individuals who do not know each other but instead trust the common bonds created through organisational connections (Schneider, 2006, p.12).
The state and its institutions must align with democratic practices, on balance with civic action. Only by doing so can the State and its institutions be the controller, provider, catalyst and facilitator of social capital (Potapchuck et al., 1998; Warner, 2001, p.189). Otherwise, the addition of the state to the social capital paradigm risks eroding the very basis of social capital, i.e. society, resulting in the development of perverse social capital by suppressing dissent and limiting opportunities for citizens’ participation (Ante, 2008; Evans, 1996; Schneider, 2006).

In this framework, what are, commonly, issues of power, instigated by a monopoly of such by the government, are overcome and become eventually just power for grassroot partnership in a new, local space involving citizens and government (Cornwall, 2002).

The diagram below and its legend best summarise bonding, bridging and linking social capital and the possible interactions between them.

**Figure 1**

*Relationship Between Bonding, Bridging and Linking Social Capital*

![Diagram showing bonding, bridging and linking social capital](image)

*Note.* From *Mercy Corps*, 2017, p.5.

Bonding, bridging and linking occurs at different levels: both within a community (i.e., between individuals and different community groups) and between communities. For example, in Communities A and B three sets of three like individuals bonded to each other, illustrated here by blue, green or teal triads. Individuals and groups with bridging social capital are able to connect across divides with other groups or individuals in the community (e.g., blue triads connecting...
with green ones). Linking social capital then enables these individuals or groups to connect to sources of power (represented here by yellow circles) within their community. A community can aggregate social capital communally—when community members are able to access bonding, bridging and linking social capital equitably, and a community has strong relationships and networks that cross identity lines or move up hierarchies, that community as a whole build bonding social capital. A bonded community can more easily bridge geographic or other divides in connecting with another community (e.g., Communities A and B have sufficient bonding social capital to connect with each other). Once connected, these communities are better equipped to organize collectively, link with higher-level power sources external to their communities (illustrated by the three yellow circles above), and make demands of these sources (Mercy Corps, 2017, p.5).

**2.5 An Africanness of Social Capital**

How has social capital theory, a concept conceived in the West, particularly the USA, been transposed to Africa? The subchapter below is an attempt to give an Africanness to social capital.

In the late 1990s, when social capital theory began to be applied in Africa, the lack of Western-like norms, connections and customs only intensified the colonial regard of Southern countries as terra nulla, countries lacking social capital (Meagher, 2005; Roy, 2011, p.314). As stated by Ben Fine (2004) “Africa [became] homogenised through contrast with the west and what is not” (p.47). This line of assertion refers to the broader concept of colonial thinking of African customs during the European colonial era, where colonialists, by imposing their own social structures in occupied territories, denied the importance of indigenous values and practices; they were, according to them, an outdated and underdeveloped version compared to European customs (Mamdani, 2018; Roy, 2011).
Turning the concept on its head, over the years, the emergence of more current and decolonial currents of study such as Southern urbanism (Roy, 2011) has disproven this Western-centric notion. Even at the idiomatic level alone, many African societies have a myriad of idiomatic expressions mirroring components of social capital such as interconnectedness, reciprocity, and trust.

In Swahili, a language widespread in East, Central and Southern Africa, the expression *mkono nenda, mkono rudi* that can be translated into English as “the hand that goes, does not go empty”, indicates how the favour, represented by the hand, that is given, will sooner or later be reciprocated by an equal favour. The expectation of a reciprocal contribution, of course, serves as a reminder of the hazards associated with social capital, previously highlighted, and how they can burden group members.

Even more, the *Ubuntu* philosophy, which emerged in 1980, is a likely reflection of the concept of social capital as it embodies interconnectedness, reciprocity and trust at the same time, which has deterred enthusiasm in literature studies of social capital. The term literally means humanity in Nguni Bantu, a linguistic subgroup of the Bantu language mainly spread in Southern Africa, but its notion refers to the broader concept of “I am because we are”. Suppose comparisons must be made with the West. In that case, Africans are in favour of community life, contrary to Western individualism, most renowned for their Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*, in English “I think and therefore I am” (Mligo, 2021, p.11). For Africans, Ubuntu expresses community living and the desire and need to invest in each other. Mligo (2021) explains that such concern “makes African suppress most pressing atrocities, such as hunger, poverty, isolation, or any other deprivations in life” (p.8). The power of caring for one another makes it possible to alleviate conditions such as poverty. Even the Ubuntu philosophy, like the social capital theory, has a utilitarian rationality at its core: the individual, as part of a community, does not put aside his or her own desire, but understands that it is only by promoting the good of the whole community that he or she will be able to achieve its greatest benefit (Lutz, 2009).
Likewise, Ubuntu philosophy, like social capital theory, suffers from vagueness. The trouble nowadays is that “Ubuntu seems to mean almost anything one chooses” (Mligo, 2021, p.9). Therefore, the notion should as well be used with extreme caution.

2.6 Ethiopian Chronicles of Relocation

As the writer Dipo Falovin ironically noted, “Africa Is Not a Country”. Every norm — legislative or, as in this study, of possible reciprocity — must be contextualised. This subchapter provides an overview of social capital in Ethiopia; difficulties posed to such, namely relocation of people, and a historical overview of relocation in Addis Ababa.

Pertinently, in Ethiopia, and Amharic in particular, I found a metaphor for interconnectedness in the proverb *dr biyabr anbesa yasr*, translated into English as “when spider webs unite they can tie up a lion”. This expression is employed to express how unity and connection can lead to greater things, unattainable individually.

Numerous studies show how social capital is necessary to alleviate poverty in Ethiopia. Among the first, it is worth mentioning Degefa Tolossa (2007), who analyses how local institutions, informal or otherwise, can improve food security in the rural communities of Ernessa and Garbi. He evinces how feeding arrangements such as *tassiga*, a ceremony where unmarried men scrape together money to kill an ox or bull and feed on it for over a week, are the livelihood’s mainstay of such communities. More recently, in the capital, Samuel Kassahun (2015) investigates how the so-called brokers of social capital, i.e. *iddir, eqqub* and *mahber* are essential to the livelihood of Ethiopian residents, with an accent on slum dwellers. All three represent voluntary and local community organisations (Planel & Bridonneau, 2017, p.39), whose presence seems indigenous to Ethiopia only (Léonard, 2013). Today one can find them in rural as well as urban areas; their existence is crucial for low-income people, as they give them access to their constraints, i.e. informal insurance market in terms of means of support and credit (Grootaert, 1998, p.4; Kassahun, 2015).
Iddirs were initially established to deal with emergencies related to funeral services and aimed to provide financial assistance to members through a collective fund (Bazezew & Chanie, 2015). After a variable, monthly amount, members of iddir are granted premium-based insurance and the cost for funerals compensated. Nowadays, however, its function can be much broader, including a variety of actors who invest in the iddir for reasons beyond material help and funeral services, such as emotional help (Aredo, 2010; Pankhurst, 2008).

Eqqub is an optimal way to save money. Each eqqub member gives a share of their money, and on a lottery basis, he or she is entitled to withdraw a share, thus helping to manage finances. Underlying the eqqub, usually more restricted than iddirs and mabhers, is a long-standing knowledge and trust (Gashayie & Singh, 2016).

Mabhers are organisations whose connotation is usually religious and Christian Orthodox, the major religion in Ethiopia. Members meet periodically to pray in one’s house and obtain God’s blessings with a priest in charge of liturgical service (Ancel, 2005). At each meeting, they gather at a banquet, in Amharic diggis, where each member in rotation prepare food and beverages and tradition has it that part of the food is shared with the needy in the name of a saint (Flemmen & Zenebe, 2016). During the meetings, there is a crucial exchange of information among the members. Their use also seems to go beyond the financial sphere, even psychologically supporting its members. Mabher resembles senbet, an organisation of members who meet periodically. However, compared to the mabhers, the religious element is even more fundamental in senbet: the meeting in fact takes place in a parish, and members must officially be part of it (Ancel, 2005, p.100).

The tacit pact underlying trust-based networks and associations, to which iddir, eqqub and mabhers belong, is that they are helped by the stability of membership and damaged by mobility (Grootaert, 1998, p.8). Ethiopia is no exception to this trend: mobility is putting a strain on citizens and their social capital.
Initially, this mobility focused solely on the rural level, with several studies focusing on the loss of social capital following large-scale foreign land acquisitions in lowland peripheries of Ethiopia, particularly after the 2008 world food price crisis (Hindeya, 2018).

Among the pioneers is Tsegaye Moreda, who investigates how in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, the Gumuz ethnic groups, after being scattered to different places, had to abandon traditional livelihoods based on access to natural resources, as well as the sharing of these among other villagers (Moreda, 2015, 2017).

Development practitioners have, rightly, classified such investments and their consequences as land grabs, yet, recent completion of the same in urban contexts fell under the broader concept of modernization (Yntiso, 2008). Likewise, urban development has been conceived as a quick fix to urban poverty, housing deficits and inadequate infrastructure and services (Gebreegziabher, 2014; van Noorloos et al., 2019). Paradoxically, creating the opposite, as not necessarily urban development is inclusive and integrative of citizens’ needs and desires (van Noorloos et al., 2019; Yntiso, 2008;).

The first comprehensive urban strategy was implemented in 2005. However, Ethiopians have a long-standing chronicle of urban settlement (Debelo & Soboka, 2022). Urban residents did not benefit from either the pre-Marxist revolution system prior to 1974 or the housing policies of the Derg military junta, an inspired Marxist-Leninist government which ruled the country from 1974 to 1987 (Erena et al., 2017; Gebreegziabher, 2014). Dawit Benti Erena et al. (2017) claim that Addis Ababa’s population was forced to live in crowded areas altered as desired by small-scale landlords as early as the pre-1974 period. Regarding the Derg military junta, while it did accomplish gradual rent reduction, it also resulted in the government’s direct engagement in the housing market: to the sound of the slogan “land to the tiller”, the Derg appropriated land belonging to the private individuals. Such a move did not prove advantageous for Ethiopian citizens, since, with time, the government’s engagement closely resembled a land monopoly.
After the Socialist government was overthrown, later governments, ruled from 1991 to 2018 by the coalition of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, initially prioritized rural areas as the nucleus of development policies, undermining urban city dwellers (Abebe & Hesselberg, 2013; Branch & Mampilly, 2015). By extension, at that time, Ethiopian literature continued to focus on rural relocation while urban ones were left on the back burner. Literature on urban relocation in Ethiopia has heated up especially from 2014 onwards (Pankhurst & Tiumelissan, 2014, pp.1-2).

The climate held during the 2005 elections in Ethiopia foregrounded the urban youth. Addis Ababa was the epicentre of opposition to the EPRDF operatus, with numerous strikes and protests led by young people, mostly unemployed, with “nothing to lose and everything to gain from participation” (Branch & Mampilly, 2015, p.158). Hence, it is unsurprising that the EPRDF, led by President Meles Zenawi, switched its focus to an urban one in response to the post-2005 elections unrest (Fransen, 2008).

Infrastructures were heralded in the country by the EPRDF as evidence of tangible city development (Mulugeta, 2020), though the population’s perception, particularly the low-income fringe, of the latter was the opposite. In this context, the best-known projects is the Integrated Housing Development Program (IHDP), a state-led and state-funded programme elaborated in 2005 and initiated in 2006 with five main objectives: to increase the supply of housing for the low-income population, to mitigate the expansion of slum areas, to increase employment opportunities for micro and small enterprises, to improve wealth creation, and to promote savings (Partnership for African Social & Governance Research, 2017). The eviction of people has given way to spaces filled by the government with recreational amenities such as parks and museums.

Families living in slum dwellers were the main beneficiaries of the programme. When evicted, they were provided with three compensation options: financial compensations determined by an ad hoc committee, plot of land compensations, or peripheral condominiums, provided the occupants could demonstrate at the time that they could pay 20% of the...
condominium and reimburse the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia for the 80% loan borrowed (Planel & Bridonneau, 2017, pp.28-30). Those receiving land compensations occasionally sold their land to rent condominium units closer to family members, making living in condominiums a favoured, indirect compensation method.

As a consequence of the IHDP, most of the beneficiaries, i.e. people living in central neighbourhoods such as those of the Kirkos sub-city, in dwellings considered slums, have been scattered throughout Addis Ababa, such as in distant housing condominiums, so-called apartment blocks, of four or more storeys located in different parts of Yeka, Bole and Nefas Silk sub-cities.

2.7 Weighing Relocation

Nevertheless, is relocation a benefit for its beneficiaries? The following subchapter explores the advantages and disadvantages of relocation, reviewing the literature related to relocation, particularly in urban Ethiopia.

There are comparable advantages to living in condominiums juxtaposed to old housing, mud and straw houses, single storey — prior to the IHDP, up to 95% of housing was single storey (Zewde & Schwab, 2022) — without private bathrooms or kitchens equipped with cookers. Regarding hygiene and commodities, condominium units provide individual living, eating and cooking space and private bathrooms.

However, such mobility meant that the beneficiaries lost their social capital, which, as mentioned above, is fundamental to the Ethiopian low-income class.

There is a wealth of research about social fabric loss following relocations in Addis Ababa. Gebre Yntiso (2008), Alula Pankhurst and François Piguet (2009) started writing about the issue when it was still niche. They found out that the process of relocating people from the inner city to new relocation sites in the outskirts has disrupted the relocatees’ business ties with customers, broken their informal networks of survival, caused loss of locational advantage and
jobs and incurred high transport costs. Although such relocation’s effects are akin to the rest of the world, they are notably outstanding in Addis Ababa, a city featuring not one but multiple business district. Hence, people remain in their own “part of the city” to keep up with their business and livelihood (Fransen, 2008, p.5).

In Addis Ababa, a city with one of the fastest-growing population in Africa, the loss of social capital is likely to increase, especially since the condominium model is considered an effective housing solution to the mushrooming of the population.

Relocation impacts citizens’ life economically, socially and politically. Research on relocation in the Ethiopian context correctly noted how these effects had a strong magnitude on the social capital of DIR people. However, they omitted what happens to such citizens after relocation. I am concerned with the economic, social and political effects of living in condominium housing, with an emphasis on the role of local government in promoting social capital.

The 2000s saw evidence, not only in the West with studies as mentioned earlier by Evans (1996) and Huntoon (2001) in Spain, but also in Africa of how local governments can foster social capital. This link has also been highlighted at a discursive level with Uganda’s President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni talking about access to social capital as part of his political campaign to eradicate poverty (Hooghe & Stolle, 2003, p.1).

In Somalia, after the fall of Siad Barre’s government in 1991, civil disorder and economic crisis ruled the country. Bosaso, a small village in Somalia, proved to be the exception thanks to a local warlord organising a security force and a council of clan elders, with support from and to local people’s networks. In addition to fostering peace, this arrangement allowed the city to continue to profit from trade while the rest of the nation was at a standstill (Mubarak, 1997).

In a similar context, the local administration in a rural region of Zimbabwe trusted community networks and cooperated with them to manage the area’s wildlife resources. Local government and citizens agreed on a procedure for sharing revenues and the allocating responsibilities, establishing a space where they could manage wildlife resources. Thanks to the increased revenue from safaris and tourism, they improved wildlife protection, increased social
cohesion, and created new economic opportunities for the local community and the government (Grootaert, 1998, p.12; Scoones & Matose, 1993).

In Ethiopia, literature on local government and its role in promoting social capital, especially concerning urban relocations in condominium, still needs to be explored extensively. Alternatively, if scholars addressed the governmental matter, they have done it broadly, questioning the role of government in all. For example, Gezahegn Abebe and Jan Hesselberg (2013) evaluated the IHDP and the national government, asserting that at that time “service provision among selected relocation sites is poor and varies widely” (p.40) and disregarded citizens’ disappearance of social capital. According to the scholars, the government could be accused of speculative urbanism.

As previously mentioned, local governments stepping into social capital is a process. As such, Abebe and Hesselberg study, like many other studies, can be justified since they took place in the immediate aftermath, i.e. *while or immediately after* the relocation: time was not enough for scholars to detect the dynamics of the condominium context, with particular regard to social capital and the role of local government.

Although relocated people lived in their new apartment buildings for more than a decade, a considerable amount of time to analyse how the local government reinvigorated their social fabric, the generalist approach to the link between social capital and local government continues to be a trend of more current studies.

Recently, the juncture between social capital and institutions has continued to be studied extensively. Almaz Mekonnen (2019) in her study on livelihood (lost), compensation, and human rights impacts seems to hit the nail on the head when she writes that previous studies “gave less emphasis to its consequence on social capital and experiences to rebuild it” (p.5). However, she does not deviate that much from these studies since her analysis of the respondents’ opinion of the government (Mekonnen, 2019, p.39) is focused in the short term and whether the compensations given were adequate. Nothing, moreover, is said on how social capital can be re-created.
Negera Gudeta Adula (2020) in The Case Study of Kirkos Sub City, one of the 11 sub cities in Addis Ababa, puts the government on trial from a more policy-making point of view and discredits it for disregarding legal frameworks in implementing relocations. An informant of hers inspires a local approach to the study of the condominium areas, stating that “the woreda officials promised us a lot about our accessibility to social services but there is inadequate social services after we came here” (Adula, 2020, p.5). However, the author decides not to elaborate further. Terefe Alene (2021) echoes the previous authors by investigating the loss of locational advantages, focusing on infrastructural challenges after relocation, drawing the conclusion that the national government and city administration should do more towards the social capital of citizens, without providing any explanation on how.

2.8 Conceptual Framework on the Ground

This thesis attempts to seek new ways of looking at relocation in Ethiopia ex post and the effects on social capital by discussing the condominium model itself and local government approaches to social capital.

The following part of this literature review describes in greater detail the conceptual framework of this thesis, meaning the use of linking social capital theory adapted to the Ethiopian context and its institutional framework, and its operationalization on the ground.

Theorists of linking social capital theory had already suggested adopting a local-institutional approach to social capital. Evans (1996) explains that “the state contribution to social capital is general and from a distance” (p.1120). Similarly, Zemelak Ayitenew Ayele (2015) describes nationally driven approaches on the matter as “remote (...) often uninformed about local needs, demands and particularities” (p.185). As a result, such a top-down lens is inconclusive for studies of social capital. On the contrary, a decentralization of the approach, like local government perspectives, is suitable for unravelling the combination of the institution and social capital and their intertwining (Evans, 1996; Flora, 1998).
Both in the early attempts of Putnam (1993) and Evans (1996) to add an institutional perspective to social capital studies and the first real theorists of linking social capital (Grootaert, 1998; Warner, 2001), concepts such as the state and its apparatuses — government, regions, municipalities or local governments — were used interchangeably, making the notion of a local-institutional perspective somewhat puzzled. To understand it, the current of everyday statehood could come to the rescue. This concept touches on a state which is difficult, in the field of research, to observe as too distant from citizens and thus creates the idea of state-related institutions, representing all the state apparatuses able to show “the everyday practice of governance by individuals and groups” (Jones, 2020, p.47).

Linking social capital theory is the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis. In addition, to make dynamics at the local level feasible, I make use of the everyday statehood notion of state-related institutions to build the conceptual framework of this thesis. One could find many state-related institutions in a study of Ethiopia, a state that has formally had decentralisation as its pivot institutional design since it transitioned from a military regime to civilian rule in 1991 (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008). Ethnically, Ethiopia has eleven regional states and two autonomous cities, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Each region is further divided into zones, and below each zone is a woreda, which definition resembles the political notion of municipal districts but can also be employed to designate a specific geographical site. Below each woreda is the kebele, whose function and authority have now fallen into disuse and devolved to the aforementioned, especially in urban centres (Vértesy & Lemango, 2022). To sum up, Daniel Mulugeta (2020) states, “there are multiple entry points, to say the least, for an ethnographic study of the state” (p.36). Of this skeletal apparatus, this thesis works within the state-related institution framework of the woreda, currently the best political institution in Ethiopia in revealing the citizens and institutions encounters as it stands at the lowest tier of governance (Mulugeta, 2020). The role of the woreda is to be custodian of the utilities, for instance, water supply, electricity, transportation, as well as other public needs and amenities such as streets, parks, open spaces in the neighbourhood (Stebek, 2013). To these obligations
and duties, one could add local bureaucratic functions such as collecting local taxes, giving identity documents, and managing agricultural development (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008).

At the structural level, the woreda, like the regions and the kebele, is divided into three bodies: an elected head of the administration, a council with an executive committee and a sector bureau (Ayele, 2014; Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008). After preparing and approving its budget, the woreda receives block grants from the regions (Shiferaw, 2007). Such a neuralgic organisation of the woreda should avoid conflicts of interest: the council balances the head of administration and is in turn overseen by the committee. Moreover, citizens have the right to participate in every step of the development of projects (Shiferaw, 2007).

The main research question that guides my thesis is:

_How does condominium life shape the economic, social and political practices of Ethiopian (relocated) citizens?_

These are my sub-questions:

1. How has the livelihood of the people relocated to Jemo One Condominium evolved compared to their former neighbourhoods?
2. In which ways do condominiums inhabitants, particularly the relocated ones, forge new ways of living collectively in Jemo One Condominium?
3. What is the result of linking Woreda 1 with its residents in Jemo One Condominium?

DIR people are the primary unit of analysis of my thesis. However, since the leading study site, the condominium area, is lived by not only DIR people, but also homeowners and, to a lesser extent, renters, I also widened the study to them. As Putnam’s social capital theory is the prime cornerstone of this study, the operationalisation of social capital is mainly concerned with behavioural variables and attitudes. It, therefore, uses values such as trust and reciprocity as norms, nuclear kinship and extensive kinship structures as networks, and iddir, eqqub, and mahber as popular social capital practices in Ethiopia. Since, as seen above, social capital affects the economy of people, especially low-income people, this framework serves to explain the
economic effects of relocation. This thesis also implies the woreda administration as a second micro level of analysis. To answer this, I explore the level of governance practices using two main parameters of linking social capital theory: power consciousness, namely the awareness of both citizens and woreda of their respective powers in the social context, and proximity, meaning the mainly social closeness between the citizens and the woreda.

Finally, in presenting my data, I adopt a Processual Approach, that is, an approach which in studying and analyzing reality relates the events occurring in a given context, in my case Ethiopia, and the becoming of networks (Abbott, 2016). Therefore, taking into account the temporal dynamics of social processes, it organises the data in a time-ordered manner.

By doing so, it seeks to contextualise factors attributable to condominium life and, more broadly, those attributable to the broader Ethiopian context. Beyond Chapters I, II, and III, which engage the reader with my study in general, Chapter IV is my first real empirical chapter, where the starting point is then not relocation to Jemo One Condominium but social, economic, and political life in the old neighbourhood before displacement. Chapter V, on the other hand, unpacks Jemo One Condominium and DIR people economic and social experiences of the area. Chapter VI deals specifically with the social practices in Jemo One Condominium. Finally, Chapter VI analyses political practices in the area.

**Conclusion**

Chapter II has set out the theoretical and conceptual foundations of this thesis. The theoretical framework is the theory of social capital, a theory that, albeit being criticised as vague for its multitude of interpretations, investigates several aspects of the effects of relocation on citizens. At the social level, it analyses the connections underlying social relations through values such as trust, reciprocity and social practices. The latter can be used at the economic level to implement mechanisms such as risk-coping and risk-sharing, and alleviate, in some cases, conditions of poverty. Relying extensively on the Putnamian school of thought, this thesis uses the linking social capital theory at the political level, a theory that proposes to see the role of government in social capital. Moreover, the main parameters this thesis considers are
distinctions between horizontal and vertical relations, bonding and bridging connections, and, in the political case, power consciousness and proximity between citizen and local government. When transposed to the Ethiopian context, social capital theory sees its conceptualisation in practices such as iddir, eqqub and mahber, mechanisms of association aimed at supporting members in various ways. In the name of development projects, such mechanisms were challenged in Addis Ababa, with the scatter of former residents of slums in various locations, the condominium being of interest in this thesis. With the final emphasis on the role of local government, i.e. the woreda, a reality rarely studied in the literature about condominium lives, the objectives, operationalization of the theory and the structure behind this thesis has been unfolded. Chapter III deals with the methods and methodologies used in implementing this thesis during the fieldwork and, afterwards, in analysing the data.

Chapter III

Methods and Methodology

It is time to explain the methods and methodological framework used in collecting and analysing the data. This thesis evidence is extensively based on a six-month field study in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, specifically from 25 September 2022 to 25 March 2023. Therefore, this chapter initially explores where the study took place, the people in the study, and the administrative environments considered. Following, the chapter looks at how the information was analysed, including the obstacles encountered during the research and ethical reflections on my position as a researcher.

3.1 Addis Ababa as a Research Setting

This sub-chapter is dedicated to a short geographic and administrative overview of Addis Ababa, the city of the study.
The city of Addis Ababa is the capital and largest city of Ethiopia. Because of its great size, covering an area of 540 km², and with a population of 5.5 million people in the urban area (Macrotrends, 2023), Addis Ababa is administrated through divisions in addition to the traditional division into woreda. The capital comprises 11 sub-cities called *kifle-ketemas* in Amharic (Erena et al., 2017; Government of Ethiopia, 2023). The areas considered in the research are the sub-cities of Kirkos and Nefas Silk Lafto. The first sub-city, in particular Woreda 7, is used as a starting point for a process analysis of the modification of collective practices vis-à-vis condominiums.

**Figure 2**

*Addis Ababa sub-cities*

![Addis Ababa sub-cities](image)

*Note.* From Ayele et al., 2022.

One major drawback of selecting Addis Ababa as a research setting is leaving systematically in the blind spot smaller cities in Ethiopia, such as Gondar or Awassa, where relocations to condominiums are happening, and which have a more sizeable population, but are still understudied in the present day. However, as mentioned in the literature review, relocation in Addis Ababa brings outstanding issues to social capital since the city has more than one main
commercial area. Thus, its population is tied to a particular part of the city to run its business and provide for its livelihood (Fransen, 2008), as opposed to Gondar and Awassa where the center is one and restricted. If deemed necessary, further research could assess whether the effects of living in condominium are generalizable or specific to Addis Ababa.

3.2 Jemo One Condominium as Leading Site

Within Addis Ababa, the site-specific research is Jemo One Condominium, and this subchapter is concerned with that area. The research site is Jemo One Condominium, located in the Southwestern suburb of the city, within the sub-city of Nefas Silk, while the object of study is mainly the people relocated to Jemo One Condominium, and, in the unfolding of their life in the area, homeowners or renters to a lesser extent. The woreda of the area, Woreda 1, and its administrative departments, and committees of the areas have been involved in the study as a further level of this study.

Completed in 2010, Jemo One Condominium is one of the first and largest condominium clusters created after the IHDP in the city (UN-Habitat, 2011). The condominium complex includes 337 residential and 50 blocks, whose roof area is 286 m² and 216 m² respectively (A. Kebede, 2015, p.25). In addition, Jemo One Condominium also stands apart in size from its sister condominium projects, Jemo Two Condominium and Jemo Three Condominium, which count 190 and 120 blocks, respectively (A. Kebede, 2015, p.26).

Figure 3

Jemo One Condominium location Map
3.3 Jemo One Condominium as a meaningful site of research from the early times to nowadays

Currently, there are 9769 households in Jemo One Condominium, while there is no statistical data on the total number of inhabitants living in the condominium complex (Nefas Silk sub-city, 22 November 2022). Due to development plans, 826 persons were relocated from previous neighbourhoods in the centre of Addis Ababa to Jemo One Condominium (Nefas Silk sub-city, 22 November 2022).

Several factors made the location of Jemo One Condominium ideal for my research. The following is a recount of them.

First of all, the prior knowledge I had of the area, as some of my paternal relatives live in Jemo One and Three Condominiums, would have been of great help in my research, especially during its initial stages, concerned observing and gathering the first respondents.

As linking social capital is a process, it develops over the years. Thus, unlike Addis Ababa’s newer condominiums, Jemo One Condominium, one of the first condominiums inhabited after...
the pilot project in Bole Gerji, currently allows exploring economic, social and political practices that have been crystallising during more than 13 years.

At the same time, over the years, the Jemo One Condominium has become highly popular among the inhabitants of Addis Ababa: not only a large number of people settled in, but other categories of city dwellers are likely to move into the condominiums by means other than displacement of any kind (Zewude, 2016, p.6). *Techeray*, the so-called renters in Amharic, can afford a large monthly payment, and *be eta ye mettu sewech*, people who won a condominium unit through the lottery (*eta*), are increasingly populating the area. While the former stay in the area for a short period of time, often renting units temporarily, the latter stay permanently in the area. Consequently, the area of Jemo One Condominium is highly innovative insofar as it mirrors the Ethiopian context in which economic, social and political dynamics are likely to be constantly evolving.

3.3 Research by Observation, Word of Mouth and Beyond

During these six months of fieldwork, I conducted a cross-sectional study involving several stages or strategies. Following is a description of the steps followed for this process.

Firstly, I went to Jemo’s woreda, Woreda 1, where I handed in the letter of support for my research, written by my supervisor and co-supervisor, to obtain permission from the authorities to study the area.

Once obtained it, a few days later, I started my research. Since part of the investigation focuses on observable items (the condominium itself), the first month was predominantly ethnographic, where, hosted by some distant family members, I lived in Jemo One Condominium. During that month, I conducted a slow profiling of the area at the local level in line with phase one of Urban Profiling (UN-Habitat, 2008), and a participant observation strategy to see the conditions of living in the area.
In this month, I also had the chance to apply, especially with my family members, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, a qualitative inquiry oriented on developing a partnership between the researcher and the interlocutors “in an effort to investigate phenomena with rather than on the local populations” (Wiederhold, 2015, p.607). The PAR method positions respondents as local experts, making them tour guides and storytellers. Through techniques such as transect walks inherent to PAR, the researcher walks with community members, obtaining “glean local knowledge” of the dwellers and the places visited (Wiederhold, 2015, p.609). This allowed me to make Jemo One Condominium familiar to me, as well as make myself familiar to its inhabitants.

In the following months, the next steps of my data inquiry took place, albeit not chronologically, but often in overlapping order. However, I will now attempt to explain the methods used in a neat summary.

I used a mixed methodology to comprehensively observe citizen’s action, local administration and their possible interplay. The woreda personnel and their actions in the area were identified using convenience samples and further investigated through surveys. These surveys were composed based on the guidance of the Social Capital Assessment Tool and delivered to different departments of the woreda: the woreda in general (see APPENDIX 1), the electricity department (APPENDIX 2), the water department (APPENDIX 3), the garbage collection department (APPENDIX 4), the transport department (APPENDIX 5), and the sewage department (APPENDIX 6). They were first drafted in English and then translated into Amharic with the help of a family member. Value surveys, delivered and collected one week later, are a valid tool of gathering data from officials (Patulny, 2004). In this study, their use allowed a fair degree of response — approaching 100 per cent — from the staff and to avoid an uncooperative attitude, possibly excused by a lack of time.

To finalize the answers to these questionnaires, I made two visits to the sub-city of Nefas Silk to access the woreda dossier and one to the sub-city of Kirkos to obtain data such as the number of blocks, inhabitants, houses, and persons relocated to Jemo One Condominium.
As for the people of Jemo One Condominium, I initially used a purpose sampling technique, as I aimed first to identify the citizens relocated to Jemo. Once the first group was identified, I relied on word of mouth to widen my scope. The primary method used to gather information was to conduct semi-structured interviews and record them. This, interestingly, was at the expense of the informants' expectations of questionnaires.

The research process resembled the following: visit an interviewee's house, conduct and record the interviews — amidst shouting, various interruptions, bunna ceremonies, and I shall elaborate on this later — and conclude by asking "do you know anyone else who now lives in the block and like yourself was relocated to Jemo?". Depending on the answer, I would then proceed or not to the house of the following interviewee. This allowed me to increase my sample considerably, as in the case of Mamush, illustrated in the graph.

**Figure 4**

*An Example of Word of Mouth Effect*

From one interviewee, Mamush, by word of mouth, my scope extended to three other people. Moreover, the method of semi-structured interviews and word of mouth allowed for information to be obtained without stressing the interviewees who initially felt under scrutiny (De Vries & Beuving, 2015).

All stages were accompanied by a preliminary “chewing over data”, meaning a reflection on the data gathered through a notebook used to record my observations and thoughts. Though I initially kept the notebook more for personal purposes than for the research itself, it proved
later to be a vital and additional data source. Sections thrived from my field notes will be marked in italics.

For instance, regarding my interviews in the homes of relocated people, I wrote on the 13\textsuperscript{rd} of October 2022

\begin{quote}
What I love about researching other people’s homes is that every home is different: some homes have lavish decorations in eccentric colours, others are more discreet. Huge 62-inch TVs are displayed on antique furniture, bare walls with cracks covered over. Walls with huge banners depicting missing figures, cupboards full of family photos, and pictures of people with or without degrees. In their own homes, the interviewees relax their muscles, and I sense that they literally feel they are in a protected bubble, their own, which I had the temporary privilege of being part of. And I smile as they tell me “make yourself at home” emphasizing the concept, i.e., feel free to be yourself. There is nothing like home. Home is everything.
\end{quote}

Although the main interview venue, houses were not my only research location. “No field site is static, just as no research inquiry is static” (Gupta & Kelly, 2014, p.6). Instead, my field sites were fluid places, which, while primarily inscribed in Jemo One Condominium, bring to life what George E. Marcus (1995) professed, preaching multi-sited ethnographies to capture “the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities” (p.96). As such, I conducted interviews in the most disparate locations. Reading The death and life of great American cities by Jane Jacobs (1961), I was intrigued by how she described the movements of passers-by in Greenwich Village as an “intricate ballet”; if I had to describe the intricate ballet of my research, I would speak of three distinct movements: one on the way to houses, where elderly people usually live, the other on the streets, where I met middle-aged people going to or returning from work, and finally the last outside the house, in a pub or administration offices, to meet most of my young interviewees and the woreda and committees administration.

The ‘while’ of my interviews is equally important to mention: while peeling onions for the preparation of the celebrations, holding babies in my arms, in the middle of a market tent, and the examples of exceptional situations could be endless. Integrating myself into the day-to-day
activities of people and Jemo was necessary to obtain data. Yet, in the subchapter on limitations, I reflect on how unromantic and disharmonious my participation with and to the community was initially.

Moreover, as field research is an ongoing process from which one continues to learn, midway through the research trajectory, I had to re-adopt purpose sampling to obtain a more calibrated ratio of young, mainly relocated respondents. Since young people make up a large percentage of Addis Ababa’s population, with 40% of the population under the age of 14 years old (Ethiopia People 2020, 2020), I predicted that a significant percentage of youngsters could provide great insights into the forging of practices in new collective arrangements.

Besides gathering young respondents, I added interviews with members of Jemo’s committees. These people deviated from my original research sample but proved crucial in assessing the social practices in Jemo One Condominium.

In each research method, be it surveys or interviews, I made sure to obtain the respondents’ permission, typically in oral form. In the case of interviews in particular, participants were informed of using an audio-recorder to facilitate the data storage. Furthermore, I made myself available for all sorts of inquiries on my research topic, assuring participants that they could stop the interviews whenever they felt like, and suppressing the recording if needed.

3.4 Collect, Categorise and Analyse

At the end of my fieldwork, I obtained six surveys from Jemo One Condominium’s administration, which I triangulated using the data — numbers — found in the two visits to Nefas Silk. In addition, I conducted 38 interviews and 3 Focus Group Discussions, one of which was unforeseen (see section 3.7, ‘Research methodology limitations’). 37 interviews and 3 Focus Group Discussions were conducted in Amharic, while one interview was conducted in English, at the respondent’s will. In total, my sample size amounted to 50 people. The following Tables provide a summary of the participants.
Table 1

Overview Participants Fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total 50 participants</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Total Female Participants</th>
<th>Total Male Participants</th>
<th>Total Young Participants</th>
<th>Total Middle-Aged Participants</th>
<th>Total Elderly participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Overview Interviewees Fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Probe</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 Interviews</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUNG</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE AGED</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDERLY</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Once the records were finished, I translated them from Amharic to English. After translating them, I classified them according to the format "Name_BlockNumber_Date", and then stored the data on the Atlas.ti software, which I was previously familiarised with. Once I collected all the interviews and Focus Group Discussions, I divided the interviewees into categories such as “elderly”, “middle-aged” and “young”. The Ethiopia Central Statistics Agency considers older people aged 55 and over, middle-aged people aged 30 to 54, and young people aged 15 to 29. Thus, I used such parameters to divide into groups my informants.

Afterwards, I proceeded to analyse the contents by creating 23 codes, identifying for instance what were the obstacles in creating social practices in apartment buildings - represented by codes such as “architecture”, “unfamiliarity”, “tenants”, “mix of different social classes” “ethnicity”- or qualitative distinctions, creating codes such as “social life in Jemo: positive perception” or “social life in Jemo: negative perception”. Storing and analysing the data via Atlas.ti allowed an ordered view of the data and facilitated the analysis process, as I combined different codes to notice patterns but also possible logical correlations, such as a the one between a negative perception of social life in Jemo One Condominium, the young age of the respondents and the variable ethnicity.

When identifying people in the thesis, I used nicknames and not their real name. However, when explicitly requested by them, I used further nicknames provided by their interviewees such as Rebbash, annoying in Amharic. Throughout the thesis, I also made sure to further
anonymise the identity of the participants without mentioning any names, if the topic touched upon was particularly sensitive, as in the case of ethnicity or drug use.

3.5 Exploring Unity in Times of Disunity

Each method and methodology have its pros and cons, and my research was not exempt from both. However, in this section, I will discuss how the disadvantages experienced throughout the process turned out to be surmountable and therefore not crucial to the purpose of my research.

At times, the research methods have proven to be quite challenging, bringing a note of hilarity to my research. On the 3rd of October 2022 I wrote in the field notes about the Participatory Action Research method that “as effective as it is in grasping as much information as possible, I sometimes spot far too much information, and without a notepad or recorder, it almost seems to fly by. Plus, Abel [a guardian of the area] walks way too fast!”

At other times, it was hard to stick to tête-à-tête interviews. Since the interviews often took place in homes, during bunna or lunches, family members, who were also relocated, often joined in, adding their perspective to one of the interviewees. Initially, it was difficult to curb this interference, so much so that one of my first interviews soon took on the characteristics of a Focus Group Discussion, and I eventually categorized it as such. With time, however, I learned to maintain the two-way interview, expressly soliciting the interviewee’s opinion and asking the other individuals to elaborate on their point of view in a separate interview.

In other circumstances the limitations involved the context in which I carried out research rather than to the choice of methods per se. Retrospectively, my research proposal devoted just four lines to the limitations of doing research in conflict zones. I thus wrote that “Addis Ababa is currently [it was the end of June 2022] part of the ‘Yellow areas’ as reported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while a large part of the country is labelled as ‘Red’ because of
conflict reasons, leaving Covid-19 related ones aside. If the situation aggravates for either of the two scenarios, I am open to postpone my research or re-adapt it”.

Nowadays, Addis Ababa still remains Yellow Area, surrounded by places patched of red, with the latest tensions occurring just a week ago, as I write this section, for the celebration of the Victory of Adwa.

Addis Ababa is considered a protected bubble. Conflicts are on the fringes of the country, yet de facto blandish the capital from time to time, if only in a non-material way. Thus, the idea of having the opportunity to do research in situ in a conflict zone, albeit at intervals, is often underestimated. This has affected conducting research in multiple ways.

From a practical point of view, several demonstrations have blocked the roads, making it difficult for me to reach Jemo One Condominium from the home I was living in.

The fluctuating reality of Addis Ababa being an area prone to conflicts also led to ethical considerations about my research. In my field notes, I discuss the ethics of “researching the general concept of unity in times of disunity” to reflect on the knock-on effects of my research. Although rare, it occasionally happened that the interviewees lingered regretfully on memories of their neighbourhood, openly mourning past and more cheerful times. This made me wonder how appropriate to investigate the topic was. After all, “For traumatised individuals and groups, silence may be a coping, not just a survival strategy” (Goodhand, 2000, p.15).

At the same time, countless enthusiastic responses from those interviewed told me they had recalled happy moments. The solution I adopted was two-faced: I respected moments of grim silence when necessary, and equally accepted thrills of happiness.

Furthermore, the inhabitants, at least those of Jemo One Condominium, seem to hover in a veil of suspicion. At the end, “Research, like any other form of intervention, occurs within an intensely political environment and is unlikely to be viewed by local actors as neutral or altruistic” (Goodhand, 2000, p.12). Especially in the early days, this attitude undermined my ability to conduct interviews. In a country where wars often have an intra-ethnic matrix, looking local and speaking the Amharic language is of slight advantage. Perhaps, being a Caucasian, non-
Amharic speaker would have made my figure less threatening to their eyes. Paradoxically, the opposite also happened, i.e. perceiving myself as a political entity, people with high expectations asked to be interviewed in the hope of a later pay-off. This perception was reinforced by my privilege of being born and raised in the West, elements that often translate to having status in Ethiopia. While in the first case, the only solution to reach Jemo was —trivially —to wait, in the second case, I tried to make the role of my research clear from the outset and often received a positive response to continue the interview.

3.6 “At the end, you live inside development”: Reflections from and after the field

Researchers in social science are continuously required to take stock of their positionality concerning their research, particularly in their fieldwork stage (Holmes, 2020). What is somewhat ironic, however, is how recently the very practice of devoting space to one's positionality, to the geographical and therefore social location from which one writes, has been criticized as ineffective over the years, especially from a feminist standpoint. The result is a Matryoshka effect: one has to dedicate space for a reflection on its self-location but simultaneously reflect on the reflection itself. In this section, I will do so by shedding light on my positionality and avoiding the risks associated with expressing it.

Positionality is usually framed through the dichotomy of insider versus outsider. The term insider is used to designate someone conducting research in a familiar habitat while the outsider carries research away from it (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020; Holmes, 2020). Each position has its privileges and limitations. The insider has familiarity with its research site and people and is perceived as having local knowledge, though local people might withhold information from the researcher because of this granted knowledge. On the other hand, the outsider lacks prior knowledge of the research site, but its position might be a door opener when researching sensitive topics because of its perceived, less threatening role (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020; Holmes, 2020).
In my research proposal, reflecting on my positionality, I wrote that my position as a researcher is in the middle of the track but might allow me not to be run over by the train.

This is because my identity and life trajectories blur the distinction between insider and outsider. Here comes the barrage of identifiers of my persona: I am a woman, I am black, *but* — is it really an adversative ‘*but*’? — born in Italy, but from Ethiopian parents, I am — I thought at the time — familiar with the Ethiopian research context having lived there; I speak Amharic fluently despite studying at a university located in the West and, all in all, I have been living most of my life on that ‘side’ of the world. In conclusion, my persona is a continuous negotiation of these labels, which may and may not give me the legitimate authority to speak *about* and *on* specific topics.

Writing a paragraph on positionality is increasingly used as an expedient scapegoat for every unethical error the researcher may place a community or geographic location. The section is framed to prove adherence to institutional protocols to oneself and the academic community, yet questions of power and advantages remain unanswered. To avoid this, at least once the research is accomplished, it is necessary to reflect on what it means to speak *of*, *for*, and *with* others.

Can my mere virtue of being of Ethiopian descent and having family ties in the context give me the right to speak and express myself to an entire community? The following is an episode I witnessed in Addis Ababa.

*As I was walking with my friend Hermiyas down the streets of Addis Ababa, he told me about a good friend of his who has been moved from the central neighbourhood of Kazanchis to the one of Gerji. He says it is due to development projects and then laughs, “In your neighbourhood in Italy there is no such thing as being displaced for development, is there? At the end, you live inside development”.*

Perhaps said in admiration of Italy, perhaps in mockery, what Hermiyas’ sentence suggests is that my position does not allow me to understand what being moved for development directly entails, though it does not deny me the opportunity to speak for others.
There are no simple answers on how to avoid harm when speaking ‘in place’ of others. Linda Alcoff (1991) recommends, for example, practising more receptive community listening rather than one-way talking in a rush to "teach rather than listen to a less-privileged speaker" (p.24). I believe I have accomplished so.

However, ‘myself’ will always mediate in the act of writing or recounting what is said or heard, providing my narrative (Borland, 2002), which will inevitably distort the integrity of the community (Alcoff, 1991, p.20). This applies to narrative scholarship, and by extension, to my thesis.

Once the field research is over, sheltered in our tender homes, one has to ask: what have I given in return to the community I have worked with? And, how can my writing avoid undermining its struggles?

To this end, it is essential to devote a section of my thesis to the practice of ‘giving back in a research setting’. The practice of reciprocity in social relations, not to be confused with charity, has been a prominent point for discussion in the social sciences. Here I emphasize how much this practice cannot be discarded in research in the Ethiopian context, which has among its pivot’s networks of help and reciprocity. Indeed, several times my informants, talking about their iddir, told me that “even an offering, the smallest one, has value for us”.

One might consider my mingling in ‘mundane’ everyday activities as part of ‘giving back’ to the community. Yet, I cannot deny how this, at least initially, was also done to make me familiar to the interlocutors and for my research. Clare Gupta and Alice Bridget Kelly (2014) outline different ways of giving back: from practical ones — bringing food and money into a community to more ‘theoretical ones’ such as becoming an activist for community causes. ‘Giving back’ is broad, including non-material sharing (Diver & Higgins, 2014). Yet, none of these is the greatest solution; on the contrary, it is up to each researcher to figure out what to do and give back.

In my context, this translated into both practical and non-practical terms. Thus, I was buying a plastic water bottle for a respondent who owned a shop, participating monetarily in an iddir, as well as maintaining the relationships created with the community and the participants by
stopping buy for a bunna or serving at a ceremony. Beyond the value of giving back to a community as a form of gratitude, I believe the practice has erased some of that veil of hypocrisy in doing social capital research.

Katherine Borland (2002) talks about extending the conversation with interlocutors post-data collection (pp.334-346). One can move beyond the interpretive authority that plagues the researcher by talking and asking for confirmation of what is understood.

There is a tendency to think that fieldwork, and thus interactions with interlocutors, ends the moment one goes home; in an increasingly digitized world, this is hard, if not impossible: interlocutors send a greeting message, when before it was a phone call or a little chat during bunna, and continue, unintentionally, to contribute to my reflections. Even during the redaction of my thesis, I aim and hope to include these contributions and carry on an ongoing reflection of my data and how I present them.

**Conclusion**

The data in this thesis are the result of different methods gathered during different phases in Jemo One Condominium, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The first month was an ethnographic month, in which I familiarised myself with the environment by living there, more than ten years after my first visit, and observed and visited the place with local people. In the following months, I collected my participants, mainly by word of mouth and interviewing them. Data were triangulated with visits I made to the sub-cities of Kirkos and Nefas Silk. The woreda and its staff, subjected mainly to questionnaires, were equally crucial in receiving insights about life in the apartment block, as were the committees. In collecting data, the where and while were equally important, having collected data in several locations — inside houses, on the street, and outside — and during celebrations or sadder events. Although I tried to ensure the integrity of my research, I report in the last sub-chapters what it meant to do research with people affected by unpleasant events - be it relocation, war, or both. By doing so, I push the reflection further, promising to reflect on how I present and record data while writing this thesis. In the following
Chapter IV

Recollections of living in Woreda 7

This chapter is the first empirical chapter of the thesis. It deals, in a broad sense, with analysing the old place of the relocated people from different points of view: architectural, economic, social and finally, political. Touching all these angles of the site is, in fact, a prerequisite for understanding to what extent condominium life is a turnaround for Ethiopian people. However, I should mention that these interviews did not take place in the now-demolished Woreda 7 informal housing but in Jemo One Condominium. In Chapter II, I anticipate how the word woreda is used to express a municipality’s political concept and designate a geographical site. To assist the reader, I expect how the first sub-chapters construe the woreda in its broader concept of a geographical area, while the last sub-chapter deals with the woreda as a political reality.

4.1 The Former Whereabouts of relocated people

The sub-city of Kirkos, in Addis Ababa, is undoubtedly one of the capital’s attractive summits. Diplomatically, Kirkos hosts national headquarters, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, as well as international ones, like the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Recently, the area has been particularly appealing to tourists who, dazed by the hustle and bustle of the capital, can enjoy an oasis of peace thanks to the Unity Park, the latest building of Friendship Park and, inaugurated in October 2022, the
Museum of Art and Science. Due to its popularity, over the years, the area has been the site of famous international hotel chains such as Sheraton Hotels and Hilton Hotels.

Its surroundings are popularly referred to as Wucciguddai, Amharic translation for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheraton area or Hilton area. Correspondingly, its inhabitants were colloquially nicknamed Ye Wucciguddai sewoch meaning in Amharic “the people from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [area]” or Ye Hilton sewoch meaning the “people from the Hilton [area].”

Although a diplomatic and political hub, this area had a high degree of sprawling urban informalidad; this section in particular of Woreda 7 was divided into four kebeles: 21, 22, 24, and 25. Beginning in 2010, the informal space has been cleared out to make room for other urban development projects, which found their materialization nine years later in recreational venues like the Museum of Art and Science and flats that, looking at their price rigorously in dollars, are probably intended for tourists. The following picture, Figure 5, represents a sharp comparison of the study area’s aerial view in 2009 and 2023. In the first image, informal dwellings sprawl across the area, while in the second image green spaces and new structures alternate sharply in the new urban landscape.

**Figure 5**

*Aerial view Comparison of the area pre and after-demolition*

*Note. Adapted from Google Earth.*

In the following subchapter, I discuss such space before its demolition, demonstrating the correlation between the spatial setting of the housing and the social space.
The informal environment had little to share regarding housing with the lush style of the area, being characterized by houses built strictly on the ground floor, with mud or foil, leaning on each other. Toilets were mainly holes dug in the ground, while showers were outside and distant from houses. It is difficult to estimate how many people lived in each house, and therefore in the woreda. However, as maintained by the Land Development Administration (2023), each house hosted a minimum of five residents. I managed to meet a handful of them in Jemo One Condominium, and I will later expand on the context in which I met them in the following chapters whilst I give here a reconstruction of the facts I gathered on this side of the Woreda 7 of Kirkos.

Citizens themselves built the first houses in the area during the era of Emperor Haile Selassie, from 1930 to 1974. As Selemon, a former middle-aged driver from the site now relocated in Jemo One Condominium, explains to me, “there was never a shortage of mud in the area” and, when a new house was needed, “we [the inhabitants] would dig it out of the soil that was still fresh from the rain and transports it to the place where we wanted to build the house”. Men usually performed all the building tasks except for a short period, from 1974 to 1987, during the Derg, when the government itself provided materials including nails, sheets and workers to renovate existing houses or build new ones, so-called kebele houses, in an attempt to formalise the spatial organisation of the country and have a hold on the latter (Charitonidou, 2022; UN-Habitat, 2007). In fact, during the Derg, Ethiopia witnessed the creation of kebele, informal vernacular houses, which, to this day, are state-owned (Charitonidou, 2022).

Contemporarily, the Derg regime established popularly elected neighbourhood administrations called kebele. Kebele were in charge of collecting taxes from the inhabitants and using them for the development of the neighbourhood itself, as well as settling legal disputes and leading cooperatives (Larsen et al., 2019; UN-Habitat, 2007).

Selemon was one of my first interviewees, but his statement was confirmed by many to come. Regarding the area, Abel, a former student of the woreda, now 29 years old, is at pains to explain to me how “the area in which the houses in the old neighbourhood developed was
narrow, and consequently, the houses were arranged in a disorganized manner, almost on top of each other”. To fit into the tiny land space, the construction of the houses defied building regulations, making the boundaries between one house and another blurred. Figure 6 is a floor plan representing an instance of the informal space next to the Sheraton Hotel, in Woreda 7, pre-destruction, which is circled to show the structure and organisation of the houses.

**Figure 6**

*Section Planimetry of Woreda 7 in 2009*

![Figure 6](image)

*Note. Adapted from Land Development Administration, 2023.*

Nevertheless, the spatial setting of the housing was also mentioned as one of the benefits of literally living clustered.

The setting of the ‘old neighbourhood’, as interviewees frequently referred to it, almost forced socialization. Already in 1975, Michel Foucault foretold how the architecture and organisation of a physical space instil social behaviours to its inhabitants. Effectively, non-verbal studies of the environment, such as the stream of man-environment studies of which Amos Rapoport is the mainstay, have shown how the built environment influences how humans live to the point of affirming that “we are told how to behave partly through the environment” (Rapoport, 1990, p.60).
At that time, inhabitants’ behaviour, inevitably, was not the most private. Ato\textsuperscript{7} Ayalew tells me "In the old neighbourhood everyone knew everything about everyone, everyone knew what was in your messob". The metaphor of the messob, the breadbasket where the injera is stored, is meant to explain how the physical closeness between households made everyone know everything about each other’s, to the point of your neighbour knowing how much food you had stored in the household, the clue to your economic capacity.

Samrawit is a 23-year-old peer of mine, and, as I ask her to be interviewed, her brothers urge her to do the interview in English, it seems to me, as a boast and honour that their sister knows English extremely well. Samrawit is still a child at the time of relocation to Jemo One Condominium, and she explains, seemingly amused, "You know, you couldn’t even cry in peace because someone would hear you and ask what’s wrong? What’s wrong with you?". As she talks to me, sitting on Jemo One Condominium’s pavement, her glances and laughter, the 'you know’ utterly pronounced, Samrawit makes me feel her accomplice to an unpleasant and at the same time amusing memory: that of dividing a few square metres into many. And yet, I think back, the stymied lack of privacy in a domestic environment, however annoying, shows how assured it was to find a shoulder to lean on and, eventually, cry.

Similarly, the proximity of the houses was not only an emotional comfort but a practical one. Samrawit explains, "it happened that no one was home and could open the door for me, so I used to enter my house through the neighbours’ windows".

The side of the Woreda 7 saturated with housing structures and people demonstrates how urban space can shape the networks of sociability and, to a greater extent, how individuals react to a given environment (Rapoport, 1990). This fact is further confirmed by the words of Burtucan, an older lady now living in Jemo One Condominium, who explains: "In our neighbourhood, architecturally speaking, each house was leaning on the other and it was almost spontaneous to lean emotionally and not on each other". Soon, building houses next to each...

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\textsuperscript{7} Ato is a form of address of reference, equivalent of Mister in Amharic
other no longer demonstrated an architectural choice but rather a respect for a cultural practice: the art of living together.

4.2 Engaging with off-home Economic Activities

"While the tourists from the Hilton were enjoying a drink by the pool, outside there were us, with the equipment to clean their shoes, waiting for them to come out". This sentence, quoted by Laké, a former young inhabitant of Woreda 7, now living in Jemo One Condominium, paints the picture of the economic conditions of the inhabitants of Woreda 7’s poorest neighbourhood and the contradiction between wealthy tourists and people living in scarcity in the area before relocation. This sub-chapter digs into former Woreda 7’s residents’ economic situation and reliance on the area.

The area of Woreda 7 was visited by the wealthiest in the country, yet the same could not be said for the former inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Most of the inhabitants of Woreda 7, at least those living in kebele 22, 23, 24 and 25, belonged to the low-income class being generally poor, whose broad definition could be understood through parameters such as food insecurity and limited access to basic services, and all its socio-economic manifestations like hunger, poor sanitation, social discrimination (United Nations). The area’s social structure was, in a sense, maintained throughout the years because, as Selemon explained in an interview, "those, the few, who ended up getting rich, left the neighbourhood and bought property in other areas of the capital".

The cost of living, based on price, was relatively low in those days in Addis Ababa (Gebremedhin & Whelan, 2008), and even more so in the informal side of Woreda 7. My interview data state that electricity cost three or four$^{8}$ birrs — this point will be explored later —, five cents filled five jerry cans of water and shiro$^{9}$, one of the main dishes consumed daily by the population, was obtained for one birr. Albeit the country’s economic status at the time was

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$^{8}$To give the reader an idea, 1 Birr, nowadays, corresponds to 0.017 euros.
$^{9}$Shiro is a famous Ethiopian stew made of chickpeas flour
not ideal, monetary inflation was not influencing the Ethiopian economy as it is the case now: to give an idea, from 2003, period to which the examples refer to, to 2021, inflation rose from 13.7 per cent to double to 26.8 (The World Bank, 2023).

At the time, prices remained relatively stable, so much so that interviewee Zewdi, a young guy now settled in Jemo One Condominium, explains to me that, twenty years later, he still remembers when the cost of shiro rose to one birr and 50 cents. As we speak, we are at the Oldies Pub in Jemo One Condominium, a rowdy bar with a convivial atmosphere. He reports, "I was twelve years old then, and I remember we started going around the houses with the injera plate without anything on, so that others moved by love and compassion would add the shiro wet to it".

One of his friends, Eyared, around the same age and with the same growing background as Zewdi meddles in the conversation and recounts, "Berebaso shoes\textsuperscript{10}, the only pair of shoes we wore all year round, was 75 cents, and I remember when they came to cost a birr".

He raises his hands to the sky, mocking his initial despair, and Zewdi and I laugh.

These accounts by Zewdi and Eyared, evoking memories of when they were both 12 years old, illustrate how prices did not fluctuate significantly then. Furthermore, they show how dwellers were considerably touched by variations of 50 and 25 cents, respectively, so much so that, in Zewdi’s words, they had to turn to the other neighbourhood inhabitants to cope with price increase.

In the neighbourhood, in terms of economic conditions, one can distinguish two pivots on which the inhabitants rested: the first, which I will now discuss, lies just outside the neighbourhood itself, while the second lies within it and, as Zewdi’s words suggest, concerns the inhabitants of the district itself. The second will be dealt with later.

The needy residents of Woreda 7's economic life was mainly based on the popular tourist sites established in the Kirkos sub-city; being within walking distance of hotels such as the Sheraton or the Hilton had more advantages. Around the area, there were several fluid ‘off-

\textsuperscript{10} Berebaso shoes are an Ethiopian brand of shoes
home activities’ to borrow the words of Habtamu Atlaw Gebre (2014) performed by adults and young people. Adults, mostly men, usually worked in the formal business sector, acting as tour guides, drivers for visitors, bricklayers to finish hotel rooms, and, occasionally, cooking in the hotel’s restaurant sector. Sometimes the formal work did not necessarily concern the hotel area but moved to factories equally located there. Women were also involved in formal off-home activities, yet to a lower degree compared to men, for instance doing labour work at Ye Kir Fabrīca, Twine Factory, a well-known factory at the time.

However, everyday work was far more popular in the area, with young people supplementing the family’s income as the main economic players in the setting. Jobs such as listro, i.e. cleaning shoes, as reported earlier about the interviewee Laké, cleaning ambassadors’ cars by lurking in front of hotels, and being a money collector in minibuses were plentiful, and they allowed young people to earn money after-school quickly, easily, and without any formal obligation to report the next day. In both formal and non-formal work cases, the proceeds did not suffer from any markdowns due to transport prices, since every job was literally ‘on the doorstep’.

Here is Selemon’s summary of the economic fortune of living in the neighbourhood: “It was a neighbourhood where many white people came, and many worked around them”. In rare, but not impossible, cases, one had the rare good fortune even to improve one’s economic condition, like Eyared, who explains to me that

In the old neighbourhood I was a driver and listro, I also cleaned cars of Hilton’s vacationers, in this way I met a white family who allowed me and my family to change our lives and support us economically and otherwise to this day. Since I met them, they made it possible for me to finish high school without having to work

Interviewers reported further tangible locational advantages of Woreda 7. In those days, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees were keen not to finish the catering food at lunch, and anyone outside the department could enjoy their leftovers. Thus, the poor inhabitants of
Woreda 7 would go and collect them. At other times, remains were equally accessible in the dumpster. Here is an anecdote from Zewdi about this:

At home we had trouble eating the leftovers, we didn’t like those, but the ones from the Ministry of Foreign Affair were a whole other story. There is a rumour going around, apparently a guy was looking through the rubbish one day and a gentleman on his way to the Sheraton, we lived right on the corner, gave him five birrs. Back in the day with five birrs you could buy ambasha\textsuperscript{11} or injera, but the guy with that money had bought himself a torch so he could rummage through the rubbish bins better. When asked ‘Why did you do that?’ the boy replied ‘Well, much better all the good stuff I find here in the dumpster than the ambasha’.

In retrospect, I think Zewdi’s interview was one of the interviews where I cried and laughed the most simultaneously. While drinking a beer, he cannot stop himself from sharing anecdotes, and I wonder if it is him being a talkative person, me asking great questions, or simply a few too many beers in his stomach.

At once amusing and painful, his anecdote best illustrates the relationship between the inhabitants of the informal side of Woreda 7 and the area in which they lived. This area, or rather the employees working there, provided them with a job, i.e. finance, but also food, i.e. material goods. Now, one has to ask: What kind of relationship occurred between the working inhabitants and the area where they worked? Was it a unilateral or multilateral dependence? If, on the one hand, the inhabitants needed the area for employment, on the other hand, one could argue that hotels and other working establishments concomitantly required, at least in those days, human capital, meaning people to fill positions such as drivers, tour guides, and cooks. Such an instance might suggest a form of multilateral and mutual dependence insofar as inhabitants and working establishments mutually need and benefit from each other’s interdependence.

Nevertheless, the future course of things brings a different answer. In fact, after the relocation of the inhabitants to the capital’s suburbs, it was relatively easy to make a staff

\textsuperscript{11} bread from Ethiopian cuisine
turnover. As Selemon, namesake and agesake of the driver, except he used to be a chef at Sheraton Hotel, explains, “All the people who worked around the Sheraton were relocated. There would have been 1,000 of us standing around, working around there. People from outside the district replaced us”. Thus, demonstrating that the inhabitants were not so essential for the economic environment of the Woreda 7, attached to the area by a unilateral dependence.

4.3 Other Challenges and Issues: Indoors and Outdoors Living

There are other practical and locational advantages to explain the even more one-sided dependence these inhabitants had on the area where they lived. This subchapter offers a brief description of locational advantages located in the outdoors and challenges found indoors.

Depending on the distance of the houses from the institutional places, citizens had a different degree of advantages. The fortunate ones located close to the ministries boasted an almost continuous presence of water and electricity, given that the ministries could hardly be lacking such utilities. Moreover, the location also vaunted advantages in terms of security: the area was patrolled daily to provide security for public figures and, consequently, the dwellers of the informal area could benefit from this and feel secure, day and night.

While the area’s security was to everyone’s benefit, the same did not apply to water and electricity: those who lived more than a dozen metres away from the ministries experienced more intermittent access to basic services. As such, it was common to light charcoal and use it to cook outside with it (Zewde & Schwab, 2022). The impression that should emerge from the houses, and by extension life, back then is not that of a space confined to the indoors, but also outdoors. Such experience of outdoor life, arguably, is akin to Ethiopian everyday life in general.

The following is an account of experience of outdoor life

*While talking to Alice, a Rwandan friend, now living in Addis Ababa, we were discussing the differences between Kigali and Addis Ababa. She told me,*

*One big difference is that in Rwanda it is hard to find even one or two people on the street, life happens inside the house, whereas here you can’t even find room to walk because of how many things happen outside*
In fact, it is common to see Ethiopian people making use of the outdoor spaces to roast onions, dry peppers, grind spices and coffee (Zewde & Schwab, 2022).

Other factors contributed to the categorisation of the place as a slum. In terms of hygiene, besides holes in the ground for relieving oneself, the interviewees spoke of public toilets located far away, with kilometre-long queues, and rather alternative methods of coping with these shortcomings.

Zewdi tells me

Sometimes we would buy a plastic bag and go far away to relieve ourselves. We used to call the bags full of excrement swings because the route they took, once used, reminded you of them: you had to carry them far away and swing them this way and that way to leave them, with nothing in your hand when you returned home.

To add to the label of the inhabitants as low-income, there was a precarious economic situation. Although the off-home activities provided monetary sustenance, they did not leave the possibility of much savings.

The aforesaid also applied to activities performed within the neighbourhood, which could be defined as “on home activities” (Gebre, 2014) and represented the second mainstay of the inhabitants’ economic revenue. Several people mentioned petty trader women who, while running the house, sold charcoal, homemade tella, but also dishes such as injera, lentils or corn on the cob. One had to go to the woman’s house to buy each delicacy. To tell the truth, I would like to give space to one lady whose work was neither on nor off home. I met her during the Orthodox Christmas, at a solidarity lunch organised by the young people of the old neighbourhood, and she told me, smiling, how she used to beg the shops near the Hilton Hotel for fruit that was about to expire, and then sell it for 50 cents back home. The fact that, in a way, the product she sold depended on the more fortuitous shops, but resold them in her own home, led me to coin the term “in-between activities”.

However, more than adding, petty traders on home and in-between activities were rounding up the salaries of husbands and children, instead of allowing any real relief from poverty.
4.4 Navigating the Former Social Capital

Since the events I am recounting serve to give a group voice, it is necessary to understand how these events affected the lives of the low-income people of Woreda 7: How did the neighbourhood dwellers perceive these issues? In the section that follows, I will explore such perceptions, arguing the role and use of social capital in the informal portions of Woreda 7.

Certainly, hilariously describing the lack of space as Samrawit, raising one’s arms in mockery at past events like Eyared, or even recounting shortcomings such as toilets in joking terms as Zewdi did may suggest that such structural or economic failings were not suffered de facto. The result of my research reported far more decisive and, in my opinion, surprising responses. Of the 38 respondents interviewed again, only 6 people explicitly disliked their conditions and, all in all, stated that they did not regret the neighbourhood or want to return for the same. Of these 6 persons, 4 were young and had blurred memories of the neighbourhood. The remainder, however, showed regret and expressed the most remarkable words of love towards it. Although not representing a full scale, the ratio is significant in indicating the experience of the old neighbourhood and living conditions.

Displacement intensifies our investment in memory (Creet & Kitzmann, 2014, pp.9-10). It is unsurprising that Woreda 7 ex-dwellers nowadays express a continuous recollection of past times, with words of affection pervading the interviews. To give an example, Eyasu’s mother, a lady in her seventies, while preparing an excellent bunna in her condominium flat, states that “Even though there was misery, there was also love”, clearing her voice, “In fact, love made it so that we did not feel poverty”.

One could, in contrast, use multiple motivations. Rosy retrospection — the embodiment of the sentence “Nostalgia makes everything look better” — or the fact that they often lived in outdoor spaces might suggest that conditions were not so though: needs could be remedied outside and showers could be solved with the public toilets located in Meskel Square. However, the fact that people would leave as soon as they earned a hefty sum of money indicates how hard the facilities were to live in.
Those who remained in the area faced the difficulty collectively. Far from romanticising or denying the conditions of poverty, the words of Eyasus’s mother suggest that, under certain social conditions, such lacks can be neglected and, at best, alleviated. Social capital played a crucial role among the needy residents of Woreda 7.

As for basic services, the lack of electricity, for example, was assuaged with a meter, its cost shared among many. Selemon says,

Only those wit a little money could afford a meter, as it cost a lot to install. Once it was open, other houses would connect, and we would share a bill that cost two, maximum five, birrs to give to the owner.

The same was true for water, where few had a water tap, and distributed twenty litres of water for ten cents. Often, the installation costs were paid for by a relative abroad, tremendous luck, or in the case of my paternal family, an Italian family my father met at the Hilton Hotel, where he was a guide. Such sharing of electricity and water, offered at a pittance, among residents are examples of how mutual help solved the lack of basic services, securing electricity and water.

There were also other demonstrations of social capital at the time, which were mentioned several times. Many people brought up the figure of the mothers of the neighbourhood as active members of networks during interviews, going so far as to recognise that “to the strong mothers of the old neighbourhood we owe everything good we have done” according to Eyasu, a young guy from the former Woreda 7, who is also present while his mother prepared the bunna.

Stumbling upon the writings of bell hooks, I found particular resonance with what Eyasu said in the chapter Homeplace (a site of resistance), where she unfolds:

In our young minds’ houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as place where all that truly mattered in life took place – the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls

(hooks, 1990, p.383)
Social capital develops with time as people accumulate experiences, networks and resources with age (McDonald & Mair, 2010). Therefore, it is unsurprising that people referred to mothers as the active part of their network. Indeed, my incipit does not present the Box as the home of uncle Jeje, though formally it was, but as the home of Grandma.

Women’s identity was built around the domestic, but not in a passive, subjugated role (Hudson-Weems, 2019). Middle-aged ladies from the old neighbourhood, intent on preparing an injera or a tella to sell, did not spare themselves from taking care of other people, young or old, in the neighbourhood and provide them food in case of need. On the street of Jemo One Condominium, my cousin and I meet a man nicknamed Rebbash, meaning in Amharic of annoying, and we stop to talk on the verge. He says that you did not go hungry because “if there was no food, you would go to the neighbour and ask for a roll of injera, some mitmita12, without paying anything”.

Being in the same economic situation, the needy segment of Woreda 7 witnessed horizontal social capital between its residents. Solidarity, trust and reciprocity were cornerstones of the community. Many confirmed this. “We knew,” says Lily, “that one day we would happen to be hungry and that same neighbour would not delay feeding us”. In this regard, I would like to quote again Zewdi, who confessed to me how, as a child, he preferred to go and ask his neighbours for food because he was given more than at home.

At the same time, the expectation from Woreda 7’s former dwellers to receive in return loans of food in times of shortage establishes an informal obligation of reciprocal bonds (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000; Polanyi, 1957), although no one necessarily referred to this obligation as a burden.

Certainly, such social capital does not arise spontaneously. Firstly, the rationality of the inhabitants in adapting to an economic situation destined to remain drove them to adopt individual risk-coping and collective risk-sharing mechanisms. In the request to borrow food, one sees an individual’s way of coping with his or her own need. However, in the giving of food by this community of Woreda 7, one sees a risk-sharing mechanism: while having provisions,

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12 Powder seasoning from Ethiopia
the group acknowledges and anticipates the risk of not having it ex ante, and, in accordance with mutual obligations and expectations, exchange assistance within social networks.

Factors such as the structure of the neighbourhood have further nurtured practices of social capital: being close enough to know what is in their neighbours’ messob raises awareness of its needs, entailing empathetic understanding and, at the same time, facilitate the delivery of aid.

Even more clearly, time is an important injector of social capital. As described at the beginning of the chapter, Woreda 7’s informal houses were built in the 1930s and most of its inhabitants lived there for more than 60 years before being relocated. Knowing people for such a long time consolidated high trust in the community. As Burtucan says, “It was the neighbourhood where we grew up and at the same time our neighbours raised us”. The same neighbours coined your playful nicknames, as one would between family members, for instance, in the case of the nickname Rebbash. Abebe, another young relocated, living in Jemo One Condominium, explains that "growing up together, we knew each other's strengths and weaknesses, but we accepted each other as brothers and sisters”.

The community was therefore well beyond extended kin. Indeed, sentences like Burtucan’s and Abebe’s bring to light another important demonstration of social capital: the fictive kin on which the networks sustained themselves. Naturally, marital relationships between the inhabitants developed over time — as Zewdi describes, ironically, “it is a risk to be taken into account in living so attached” — but community members who were not bound by marriage or blood were equally treated as family members. As a result, relationships associated with family ties were taking place between the area’s inhabitants (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000).

Primarily mothers, but shall we say inhabitants in general took care of their neighbours’ children as if they were their own. Academically, such common practice would name them “othermothers”, female individuals with no biological ties to children but still performing activities usually assimilated to mothers (Spruill et al., 2014). Here is how Eyasu describes such attachment
In the old neighbourhood, social life was good, everyone was family, there was no ‘this is my house, this is your house’ talk, everyone was everyone’s parent, everyone raised you and fed you and if you did wrong you were punished, you were pinched as if you were their child. This is how the famous saying “it takes a village to raise a child” was portrayed in this side of Woreda 7.

Moreover, having support in raising one’s child from the community had positive economic implications: it allowed families not to spend money on a kindergarten, and to carry out bureaucracy or daily chores freely.

Even more exemplarily, fictive kin system and knowing each other all provided social security in the neighbourhood. “Precisely because everyone was your parent,” Eyasu continues, “you didn’t even think about doing bad things”. Young people, especially, were careful not to run around with bad company or get into bad vices because the judgement of the inhabitants, who were considered equally their parents, restrained them. Social security embeds the concept that, as part of a community, individuals are expected to act in a way that promotes it at the cost of restricting their freedom.

An equally valid illustration in this regard would be a dialogue I had with a friend, Meron. From my field notes, on the 30th of November 2022:

Looking for a house in Addis, I asked for suggestions from a long-time friend, Meron. Meron has lived in Lideta [Addis Ababa neighbourhood] for more than three years now, and she explains to me that the good thing about her neighbourhood is that it feels like a small family, but the bad thing is that…well, it feels like a small family. A little frustrated, she explained to me, that to avoid people thinking badly of her, she had to set certain limits to her action such as not inviting too many friends home, coming home early in the evening, not going out with random guys and so on. According to her, doing the contrary would give her peers and the neighbourhood in general the reputation of Ye duriye sefer13

13 Durye in Amharic is a phrasal expression used for ‘bad boy’, the translation of the sentence would be ‘bad boy neighbourhood’
Meron: “You know how it is, Ethiopian society is very community oriented...”

Me: “...and getting out of the community comes at an uncomfortable price”.

Not paying attention to people’s judgements would result in disdain from the neighbours. This social stance would imply for Meron getting cut from the networks formed in Lideta: not asking for a food loan when she is temporarily out of money, not having someone to help her when something in the house breaks, nor having someone to carry her water tank, to name a few. These implications are similar to what the young people would have incurred back in the days. The mechanism of social security evokes a level of rules enforcement to the extent that it would get people cut off the social fabric; however, the Hilton hotel’s young people never mentioned it as a burden.

Besides protection, social security had other positive outcomes, such as negating the rumour of the Hilton youngster, considered easier to fall into bad vices. Alem, an older lady from the old neighbourhood, who now sells plastic utensils in Jemo One Condominium, is keen to confirm this.

My opinion is only shared by those who know it inside out. Those who grew up in the Hilton, the Hilton people, particularly the boys, are all considered from the outside to be bad boys with no prospects for growth. The others from the outside think that because they grew up earning money, this is then used for cigarettes or alcohol, but they would never have done that, even if they wanted to, who would have allowed them to?

Since loans were mostly in the form of food, only a few instances reported of monetary loans. The most common informal financial supports were those typical of Ethiopian culture, such as iddir and eqqub. Concerning the former, I would like to refer to the words of Tiye Wodde, an elderly lady now in charge of a women’s iddir in Jemo One Condominium.

Iddirs are usually divided with respect to gender, thus communities in Ethiopia often have women’s iddir and men’s iddir. The traditional function of the men’s iddir is to do drudgery work, such as digging graves or pitching tents, while the women’s iddir is usually doing kitchen

14 Tiye is form of address of reference, equivalent of Lady in Amharic
work. Men iddir are reported to have more finances, as they are usually the economic asset of the household, however, financial capacity is not an optimal measurement to assess how effective an iddir is. Since women tend to have greater contact with the community than men (McDonald & Mair, 2010), their iddir are usually more vital than the men’s as they present an extended set of networks and functions that go far beyond financial assistance. I am now reporting the words of a women iddir.

In the old neighbourhood there was iddir for any circumstance. For joy, sadness, for everything. Once a month, the citizens gave a quota, freely chosen. We had a chancellor who would mark the quota collected, and these funds were used to buy the various utensils needed for the ceremonies: plates, glasses, pots for cooking food...A lot of people would gather for the mourning in a tent, people would come from all over the country, and the mourner would make a list of the things they needed, so with the money we would buy a lot of dishes and hand them out. After using them, the dishes would be washed and put down.

Underlining a daily life equally lived in the outdoor spaces, tents to accommodate visitors for mourning were pitched outside the houses for the first days of mourning.

Usually, the amount for burial reasons was around 20-50 birrs each, depending on everyone’s budget, figures that did not provide strong financial capacity to the women’s iddir. However, iddir went further financial and burial assistance, eventually becoming social circles: one learns to cook in the case of women, and, somewhat as Teshome et al. (2014) note, obtains social benefits. Ato Ayalew tells me, “In women iddir, women usually talk about things they don’t talk about in front of men, while us men we play cards, do bet” he laughs. Such exchange of information in iddir represents a crucial non-material resource for women as they get in touch with business or job search (Kebede & Butterfield, 2009).

Several people expressed that the iddir in the old quarters was used for reasons beyond funerals. In addition to confirming a change in the use of the iddir, as predicted by Pankhurst (2008), I find that the emotional aid demonstrates how the inhabitants were extremely connected to the point that they decided to raise money far beyond the funeral custom. So much
so that the financial and moral support continued even after the moral obligation the iddir places everyone under during the lakso\textsuperscript{15}. Mamush, this is the nickname that he uses to present himself, is a middle age man in his forties, and describes to me the ceremony of a lakso.

You slept together, cooked for the victims, almost gave them constantly \textit{gursha}\textsuperscript{16}, and everyone cooked injera for the victims. Even after the three days of mourning, we continued to help them: if there was a need for clothes to be washed, the others took care of washing them. The pain passed quickly, because we got through it together.

The amount paid also depended on the deceased.

Tiye Wodde explains:

Depending on the person who died, a different share of birrs is given, when it is the man of the house the share is higher, because the damage to the household is higher, while for a mother the share is lower.

The circumstances for a higher share in case of a man’s death are elaborated by Solomon Addis Getahun (2011), who explains how in Ethiopia, the man is traditionally considered the main economic asset of the household: losing it affects the household more significantly than losing a mother.

However, even more popular in the area were eqqubs. Small groups would meet weekly and collect a modest amount of money, say one birr, and at the end of the week one person from the eqqub would be randomly drawn, given the amount collected and use for personal use as he or she saw fit. When asked why they preferred this way of collecting money, Selemon tells me that “People trust the bank, but they prefer to leave money in the eqqub because you are more controlled, you can’t withdraw it when you want because people won’t let you until your turn and so they control themselves more”.

As for the mahber, however, it embodied the very essence of the neighbourhood, so there was no trace of formal establishments. Tiye Wodde concludes, "In the old neighbourhood there

\textsuperscript{15} Funeral in Amharic

\textsuperscript{16} Gursha means mouthful in Amharic and describes the act typical of the Ethiopian culture of placing a morsel of food in someone’s mouth to express caring for another
was no need for an institution like the mahber, because life itself was mahber, it did not need to be institutionalized”. Her words underscore an increasingly common discursive phenomenon in Ethiopia: the term mahber, from its religious function, now takes on the holistic function of designating, in general, any associationism (Ancel, 2005). So much so that the term mahberawi hiwot is the most popular phrase to express the traditional concept of communal life. In the case of Woreda 7, mahberawi hiwot was practiced with ceremonies such as drinking coffee together, the order of the day, as well as traditional celebrations such as Christmas and Easter, showing how the community voluntarily invested, if unconsciously, in keeping the ties (Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

It is challenging to categorise the iddir, eqqub and mahber of the old neighbourhood as bonding or bridging types of social capital. Looking at the shared binder — the neighbourhood — as a sense of belonging, one could point to the former, where being part of that neighbourhood entails the same economic availability and belonging to the same social class. Yet, iddirs or eqqubs hardly found people belonging to the same religion or ethnicity within it, the latter perhaps a more critical binder in the Ethiopian context. If the aspect considered is ethnicity, it is crystal clear that Woreda 7 had a bridging social capital. Bridging social capital enhanced social cohesion in the area, and as one informant states:

There were no ethnicity problems in the old neighbourhood, next to me lived a Tigrie, behind an Amhara, on the other side a Gurage and so on. We were all mixed and ate and drank at each other’s houses17. To have destroyed that neighbourhood is to have destroyed the unity between us.

4.5 Cooperating with the Authority: Kebele, woreda and their (non-)role

Although in the area of study of Woreda 7’s bonding and bridging social capital grew organically, this does not imply that they were always living in love and agreement; rather, embedded in the concept of community is the contradictory aspect that even when

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17 Tigrie, Amhara and Gurage are three Ethiopian ethnic groups.
disagreement arises, communities remain in place (Chung, 2022). What follows in this subchapter is an account of such disagreements, with a description of the role of the kebeles and woreda in the neighbourhood, not only in resolving disputes but in its broader sense.

Spoiling the harmonious picture were several moments when social capital seemed to be put at risk.

Tiye Wodde laughs remembering this: “There were constant disputes during the iddir: someone accusing the other of not working, who accused the other of ruining the objects in common”, and the quarrels could go on for hours.

Goshu, this is the nickname the inhabitants of the neighbourhood gave to him, is a middle age guy met on the street in Jemo One Condominium. I ask him if he has some time for an interview, which turns out to be a quick tête à tête. He discloses that, “We used to insult each other everything, even with heavy insults, but caught up in the anger of the moment, so to speak”. As there was a sense of brotherhood, like Abebe said, it was easy to take it to extremes.

At times when social capital is put at risk, as in the case of disputes, according to the linking social capital theory, an institutional body can act as an intermediary to create, improve or reinstall it. In this case, this institutional body is the local government. Yet, there is no evidence of how the local government acted as a link in Woreda 7 towards social capital: this is due to two factors, specific to the area of study and its respective kebeles.

Firstly, such quarrels did not pose barriers to social capital, to the point of disrupting it. Goshu thus expresses that “they were quarrels so to”, which did not weaken social capital but, strengthened it as soon as they were resolved. Therefore, the preliminary motive for which the government should act as a link is missing.

Furthermore, if an intermediary was needed, the task was delegated to neighbours: Goshu states

Precisely because we were all brothers, brought up together, we would fight, quarrel, and there was no need for an institution to settle disputes. If there had been a fight, the
neighbour wouldn’t have cared per se, but if forced to would have tried to be a peacemaker himself. One would just scold the person.

The reason for this explanation can be attributed, in part, to the non-seriousness of these discussions, and the non-consequences they had on social capital. But more strikingly, the inhabitants and the woreda, when divided into kebeles 21, 22, 24, and 25 presented horizontal rather than vertical social capital relations. These smaller kebele constituencies allowed for accurate geographical representation, where each neighbourhood saw its peers, hence acquaintances, as local representatives. As a consequence, dwellers felt not only physical but also social proximity in their everyday encounters. Lily explains that “asking your neighbour for help to resolve the dispute, or asking a kebele employee, was the same”. The presence of Woreda 7 residents in the kebele created an arena in which citizens demanded their entitlements effectively: seeing local representatives as one’s peers, as people belonging to one’s neighbourhood, has therefore succeeded in building relationships of trust between them as well (Cornwall, 2002).

Now, one could ask: how did institutions perceive this act? Is it, as Meagher (2005) states, a context of “order without law”? Fasil, a former employee of kebele 22, says, “We didn’t worry that the townsfolk wouldn’t come to us, how could we? They were making life easier for us”. Unfortunately, Fasil does not want to elaborate too much on his institutional role, perhaps fearing for his safety, so his sentence in this thesis is merely an evocation. What it does show, however, is how citizens’ involvement in dispute resolution was not perceived badly by the institution, and on the other hand, the citizens themselves did not feel pressure to reshape institutional arrangements. Probably, this is what I found fascinating about living my summer months in Addis Ababa, Woreda 7: the possibility of living without enforcing laws, with all its attendant risks, but risking on the other side of getting a pinch from my neighbour.

Although it is unknown whether such a relationship between citizens and local government applies to all constituencies in Ethiopia, it is fair to say that in the days of the kebele, the closeness between citizens and local government was noticeable. This concept finds expression
in the words of Yilmaz and Venugopal (2008), who state that the kebele is, of all local institutions, the prime contact level for most Ethiopian citizens.

Moreover, since they did not feel the kebele, or the woreda, as needed, at the time, only a few interviewees expressed themselves about it. Nevertheless, those who did express themselves positively, for example, Lily, a middle age woman now living in Jemo One Condominium, points out that "In the old neighbourhood the kebele was really proactive, as soon as you reported a problem they would come, if you shouted at any time they would come" or Abebe explains that "My kebele in the old neighbourhood was the best, you knew the people who worked there and they knew you". According to him, personally knowing local officials of the kebele made it possible to resolve bureaucratic tasks quickly. Such an account might lead to speculate that the institution was conscious of its power when interacting with citizens: the public servant of the kebele knew that he or she enjoyed more privileges than the citizen and was willing to help him or her (Woolcock, 2001). Woreda 7 is a fitting example of how, once in institutions, people, if remain close to the citizens, are an asset to the community (Patulny & Lind Haase Svendsen, 2007).

Eyared’s words round off the concept “If you go to Kirkos, you can still see how there are people who used to live in Woreda 7 working”. Indeed, when I went to the sub-city to get data on the old neighbourhood, my cousin recognised some faces. This occurrence might lead one to believe that not all relocated inhabitants have been replaced, but the most obvious answer is that a civil servant in Ethiopia has a more stable position than other jobs.

To eliminate the administrative fragmentation of the country, the Ethiopian government decided to group the functions of the kebeles into the woreda (Atnafu, 2017). This had implications at the discursive level and on the local closeness between local government and citizens.

In fact, on a discursive level, citizens’ use of these terms gives insights into the proximity between government and citizens. In interviews, the terms kebele and woreda were used interchangeably, not only with each other but also with the broader term mengist, government
in Amharic. The explanation for the interchange of entries such as kebele or woreda is due to their perception of such as “the same thing”, quoting more than one of my interviewees.

Far from implying that citizens cannot distinguish between different elective bodies, what the interchangeable articulation of the idea of local government and mengist shows is that being the main site of contact with the government, citizens often recognize kebele’s — or woreda’s — work as the whole mengist, even though it is formally a sub apparatus, merely a local government institution (Mulugeta, 2020, p.130). Proximity to the kebele, and following the reform, the woreda, is the most feasible way for citizens to evaluate a monolithic and elusive government.

However, everyday articulation of the idea of mengist, woreda and kebele made it complicated for me to discern between the different entities. When I asked citizens for their general opinion on the woreda, I was repeatedly answered with phrases that featured mengist or even kebele instead. Notably, the term kebele is still in vogue up to this day and keeps getting swapped with woreda and mengist. I still remember when, trying to play along and ask what they thought of kebele in Jemo One Condominium, some interviewees corrected me by talking about woreda, underlining how the distinction was well known to them, and less clear to me, who on the other hand was trying to contextualise my language.

The devolution of kebele duties to the woreda, which occurred when the inhabitants were still located at Woreda 7, somewhat constrained physical and social proximity between the local government and the wider citizenry. In the old neighbourhood, this does not seem to have been complained about so much, as Selemon says, “In the end the woreda back then was just a slightly bigger kebele, you could still find your acquaintances performing functions”. This may, in part, explain why the popular usage interchanged both terms. However, more importantly, bonding and bridging social capital flourishing did not require the proactive role of local government, who, on its side, did not force presence acting as a link. Though, was it still the case in Jemo One Condominium?
Conclusion

In the investigation carried out in Chapter IV, it was primarily seen how a particular structural form has social implications; living in single storey, attached houses, the inhabitants had a social tendency to stay close together. On an economic level, off-home activities, formal or otherwise, were centred in the areas's hotel or tourist venues and rounded out by petty on home activities such as selling food, and, in one case, in between activities, generally practised by women. However, such jobs did not provide the opportunity to save money, leaving people with low economic status. The area showed the finest advantages, such as constant water and electricity, only for some, who lived a few metres away from the ministries, as opposed to the others, further away, who had to fend for themselves. In this muddling along, one can see the first practices of helping out through sociality: the lucky few who could afford an electricity meter, or a water tap shared it with their neighbours at minimal rates. In the first place, these economic conditions led the needy inhabitants of Woreda 7 to create a network full of ties. Indeed, their side of Woreda 7 boasted a flourishing social capital, anchored in time, and practised with respect for solidarity, trust and reciprocity, with the iddir as an expression of bonding since everyone was from the same neighbourhood, but more distinctly of bridging social relations because it involved different religions or ethnicities. Such social capital made the social setting of the area like that of a family. A family that, if quarrels happened, proved to be strong and whose social capital was not particularly affected. This is where the presence of Woreda 7 in not acting as a link comes in: the status of the social capital, so strong, did not require it. And besides, the kebeles’ agents were Woreda 7 dwellers, neighbours, who acted in favour of the dwellers, used their position to benefit those who did not have access to power. Rather than vertical relations, they practised horizontal relations, and the reform of grouping the kebeles in the woreda did not change the practice at the time. Chapter V sets the stage for Jemo One Condominium, and the evolution of economic, social and political practices in the new setting.
Chapter V

Unpacking the current site of the déplacées: Inhabiting Jemo One Condominium

This is how the reader is catapulted into Jemo One Condominium. No transition chapter is planned; this thesis will not dwell on the methods used to relocate people. This decision is not only motivated by the fact that academics such as Adula (2020) or Alene (2021) have adequately documented the topic, but it is, above all, a narrative device employed here to familiarise the reader with the feelings felt by the people in the process of being relocated. Abebe and Hesselberg's (2013) interlocutor states that he felt like “moving out from the warm armpit of a mother” when relocated (p.46). My interviewees reported similar feelings of separation from a missing home, symbolised by sentences like “Being relocated was like being born again”. Surprise and disorientation. This is how the relocated people, as well as the reader now, have felt. This chapter immerses the reader in the cluster of condominiums as spaces where the lifestyle of Ethiopian people changes, particularly one of relocated people. In the first part, it familiarises the reader with the new architecture, after which it studies the new economic context of Jemo One Condominium, local experiences of modernity in the new practicalities and social aspects of the condominiums.

5.1 Shared spaces, Unlived spaces within blocks

It was 2010 when the informal space of Woreda 7, no longer divided into kebeles due to the reform, was earmarked for destruction under the IHDP. At that time, 23 rented businesses, 51 privately-run businesses, 403 private houses, and 1896 kebele houses were targeted in this woreda (Land Development Administration, 24 February 2023). When asked “Where have their inhabitants gone?”, a definitive answer is difficult to give, as stated by an employee of the Land Development Administration in the sub-city of Kirkos. Most people have been allocated condominiums in Akaki, Oromia, aside from the Yeka, Bole and Nefas Silk sub-cities. "However, this is only a rough estimate since, as you know, methods of compensation are constantly being
exchanged, some people rent their flat unit in Akaki’s condominiums, move to closer locations, and so on” the employee explained to me. Therefore, one should not assume that the 826 DIR people in Jemo One Condominium all come from Woreda 7; on the contrary, this is not the case. My interviews could prove this: 38 people out of the 50 interviewed came from Woreda 7, and, precisely because most of them moved into the condominiums after selling the land they received, probably not all 38 people are counted in the 826 registered in Jemo One Condominium's woreda as DIR people. Being relocated to condominium complexes brought about several changes for the people. In the following pages, I will present the location and architecture of the Jemo One Condominium complexes, exploring the correlation between the spatial setting of the housing and the social space.

What is meant when referring to condominiums? one could wonder.

To illustrate this, one of my earliest remarks on Jemo One Condominium and a map of the place would fall like a glove.

On the 3rd of October 2022, I wrote in my field notes

Jemo is full of people; I think this is the first thing that struck me. Roads — which, compared to the last time I came, over 13 years ago — are swarmed with people, cars, bajaji18, gari19. I feel like I am constantly exposed to external stimuli, physically — whatever kind of gas invades the air, and it sure smells - and mentally. To be completely honest, I feel like I am in a jungle — I know, I could have found more decolonized adjectives to describe it.

The area of Jemo One Condominium is an assemblage of several condominiums. Each set of condominiums is divided into blocks (Block 129, Block 130 and so on), each containing 6 to 12 buildings. Each building, divided into four or more floors, has a nickname. The buildings form a rectangle whose centre is a collectively shared garden and parking lot. A continuous stream of people fills this middle space, and helplessly there is me, unable to move coherently in place.

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18 A three-wheeled motor vehicle popular on the outskirts of Addis Ababa
19 Horse-drawn carts
I was overwhelmed when I arrived, unable to make sense of myself during that hustle and bustle. Living the previous year in Leiden, Holland, a much quieter town than Addis Ababa, helped this feeling of chaos that I experienced.

The condominium complexes created within the IHDP represent collective living arrangements (Planel & Bridonneau, 2017, p.5), places that would constitute co-housing practices (Charitonidou, 2022). Spaces like the communal garden are potentially dedicated to Ethiopian community practices as the government’s attempt to respond to cultural requirements (Ejigu, 2015). However, the inhabitants do not perceive them as such. “Difficult,” Hannah begins, “to define an empty square in the middle of these concrete blocks as meaningful space for socialising”. Hannah is a distant relative of mine; she is 29 years old. She is pregnant at the time of the interview, and I will discuss her situation more extensively in the next chapter.

Her interview, among many others, is a constant barrage of sarcastic jokes and rhetorical questions which, I admit, I could not always answer.

As claimed by Cornwall (2002), investigating the process of space-making, there is no guarantee that a practical space can then be translated into a lived space: “spaces may be created with one purpose in mind, but used by those who come to fill them for something quite
different“ (p.9). At Jemo One Condominium, the communal garden is an unfilled space; at best, its surround is used for cars. The following is a picture representing such space.

**Figure 8**

*Outdoor space in Jemo One Condominium*

Retrospectively, I think this is why I felt the communal space to be inhabited by a continuous stream of people: no one had, in the first encounters, any real places to stop to — much less for my interviews.

The spatial setting of Jemo Condominium is vertical, with four to six floors. Each floor has three or more flats, containing one to three bedrooms.

A door demarcates the boundary of each apartment. Samy tells me that the same door divides them and makes everything live separately. The implication of such architecture is, as claimed by the inhabitants, isolating (Zewde & Schwab, 2022). Tzega, Hannah’s mother, similarly explains to me over a cup of bunna “Everyone lives their own life, closing the doors. No one would open, even if you would knock very hard”. If, on the one hand, the design of the apartment block allows for a more private life, on the other hand, it does not make it possible for people to get together and socialise. People have told me of at least two incidents where an older person died, and it took three days before someone, moved by the smell, forced open the — obviously closed — door and saw the tragedy. I am not sure whether it was the same older person or two different ones, but what needs to be emphasised is the extent to which such facilities prevent sociability in the community.
Charitonidou (2022) writes that by relocating people in these housing structures, “the role of commoning practices and the public or shared spaces that facilitate these practices has been underestimated or even overlooked” (p.1350). The alleged miscalculator, in this case, would be the Ethiopian government. Similarly, Nelson Mota (2015) accuses the government of disrupting vernacular social and spatial practices (p.11). Yet, Charitonidou (2022) recalls how the Addis Ababa Grand Housing Program, integrated into the IHDP in 2006, published two guides to help condominium dwellers adapt their mentality to the new condominium lifestyle (p.1349). The problem, however, is that these were not enough.

I want to extend this assertion point and bring citizens into the discussion. The feeling I got from talking to some relocated people is that they also downplayed such practices and only realised the loss later.

“We thought the apartment building would be a success, we said ‘wow, we’re going to live in houses with everything, in big buildings’ and instead here we are” Laké laughs as he says the sentence and rolls his eyes as if to indicate irony. Not all dwellers welcomed with sorrow the relocation in apartment blocks. Some people, especially the youngest, were intrigued by the amenities of the condominium, individual in themselves: having a private kitchen, with a cooker, and a bathroom for oneself was initially welcomed euphorically.
However, this dream was soon ruined when they moved to the condominiums: water and electricity were intermittent at Jemo One Condominium and did not allow citizens to enjoy their facilities. As a consequence, vernacular social practices were missed: “There was a need for a *mukecha*\(^{20}\) to pound coffee, as for those who had a grinder, this was unusable without electricity. But the noise would annoy other neighbours, unknown to us”, says Tzega.

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\(^{20}\) Ethiopian wooden mortar to grind coffee
Nevertheless, they knew their social practices would never return — at least not the same.

5.2 “Here in Jemo, life is expensive”: Entangling Economic Life in the Condominium

The architectural change that relocatees have to experience when moving to condominiums, particularly to Jemo One Condominium, also implies changes in their income-generating activities (Charitonidou, 2022, p.1355) and will be analysed in this chapter. The following section will discuss economic life in Jemo One Condominium, presenting new income-generating practices in the area, as opposed to previous ones.

Addressing economic life in the area requires the involvement of actors beyond relocated people. As mentioned earlier, DIR people are only a tiny portion of the inhabitants present in Jemo nowadays, though an accurate estimate of the population is not evident as claimed by Jemo One Condominium's woreda. New actors continue inhabiting the area: people who have voluntarily decided to settle by directly buying a flat or winning it by lottery, renters, and farmers from the surrounding area, i.e. the Oromia region, who generally rent a unit.

These actors, driven by different reasons to move to the area, belong to different social classes. Laké says that

Many of us have left, and those who have stayed do so because they do not want to readjust to a new context, saying 'once I leave, where can I go?' and here they are, to a life where in order to afford things they give up eating. And the neighbour next door instead eats, drinks, enrols his children in whatever school he wants

Laké’s sentence exemplifies a number of important themes. Firstly, he testifies how, indeed, for some, the apartment block they were allocated was a passing choice: over the years, they preferred to move out. Others preferred living in apartment blocks, although Laké describes the choice as driven by inertia and a fear of another new context to adapt to. This would ultimately lead to a life of renunciation on the part of the relocated person, as opposed to that of a neighbour, presumably a person capable of paying for the condominium unit without bank loans, who have no financial worries for its family or offspring.
In Jemo One Condominium, the upper-middle class and lower class coexist within the condominium; the separation, albeit fictitious, in Woreda 7, where the more affluent moved in or remained confined to residential areas, is swept away.

I will discuss the social implications of this coexistence of social classes later. What must be kept in mind in this sub-chapter is how, depending on social class, the inhabitants of Jemo One Condominium perform different jobs.

Different social classes, different perceptions of the cost of living in the area. If the wealthy neighbour seems not to suffer considerably, those who have been relocated in the area struggle to live there.

Rebbash exclaims that "Here in Jemo, life is expensive, rent is expensive. In the old neighbourhood, with 500-600 birrs you could support a family of five, here even 20000 birrs is not enough for the same family. It's heavy!" he sighs, continuing, “Now, to go out, you always have to have birrs in your hand”. According to the latest data recorded by Trading Economics (2023), the living wage individual in Ethiopia is 5090 birrs per month, roughly 87 euros per month, a figure unable to support an entire family alone, as Rebbash’s case discloses. The metaphor of birrs in hand indicates the need to go out with a wad of money for every eventuality. After all, who would come to your aid if you did not have it?

Occasionally, some interviewees refer to Jemo One Condominium in non-disdainful terms. Having previously introduced Mamush, I would like to say a few words about the context of our meeting. Mamush is cutting brushwood in the communal garden and initially mistakes me for a neighbour when I approach. The accent in my Amharic must quickly put him off the idea, and he replies in the affirmative when I ask him if he has arrived at Jemo One Condominium for the sake of development projects built in his previous home. After explaining my project, he agrees to be interviewed and invites me to his home, where his wife is waiting for us while she roasts coffee beans.

Mamush clarifies that he is explaining himself in favourable terms when he says that “it is no longer the idle life it used to be, I cannot support myself by doing the bare minimum”.
The impression I got is that some relocated residents blame the Jemo One Condominium site for the high prices in the area. This is justified from a certain point of view: "Prices are more expensive because the price spent on fuel to transport goods here is added". Indeed, the peripheral location of the area leads to an increase in goods coming from distant market areas such as Merkato, Africa's largest open-air market, as the distance from the place of delivery and the duration of transport to bring the products to Jemo One Condominium is added to the original price.

These two factors are ascribed to the peripheral area of Jemo One Condominium, however, Ethiopia in general is witnessing price inflation. Selemon, the driver, is a friend of Mamush, and he illustrates that economic conditions are due to the country in general. As mentioned in the previous chapter, factors such as inflation at 26.8% (The World Bank, 2023) weigh on a wage that does not increase consistently. The lack of foreign currency and war in the North do not help the situation. However, aggravating this at Jemo One Condominium for relocated people are additional expenses such as transport, mortgage to be paid to secure the house, and private electricity no longer divided among many. Selemon connects me with his mother, Tiye Turuye, an older lady; he quips “if you want to find out about social capital, you have to ask her”, and after giving me the floor and block number, I knock on the door. I name her son as a connection, and, whether it is my hopeful air or the respect she has, as she says, "towards a woman who studies", she agrees to an interview. When I sit down on her couch, I am on my third bunna of the day.

Tiye Turuye has a resigned air as she explains that “here we have too many additional expenses. We live by saying temesgen”. The expression temesgen in Amharic indicates thanksgiving to the Lord and, in Turuye's words, expresses a life of hardship whose survival is thanks to the Lord's help.

How to cope with such an expense? Where to meet again in Jemo One Condominium, the off-home, on home, and sometimes in-between activities mentioned previously? First, I will focus on the perspectives of economic activities offered or found in Jemo One Condominium by the
DIR people. Secondly, I will analyse the economic activities offered and created by a wider pool of actors.

The facilities were incomplete as soon as the condominiums filled up with relocated people. As reported by Abebe and Hesselberg (2013), it is a habit to transfer condominium housing when 20% of its construction still needs to be completed (p. 37). Young relocated people found economic opportunities in this. Eyared exposes, "We young people did a lot of finishing work, like finishing Jemo’s houses, painting, running errands, selling some items". However, such work was occasional and meant to last only briefly.

The off-home activities such as cleaning cars and shoes were not out of the question; however, they could not be found in Jemo One Condominium, in 2010, still sparsely populated if not for relocatees. As a result, the pivot of economic life was still the old neighbourhood and the businesses revolving around the area for many years.

Only when the price of transport became too high in the last five years did young people abandon these activities, no longer participating in the economic rounding off their parents’ salaries.

A more successful outcome is that of the adults, who moved the work to Jemo One Condominium, demonstrating a fluidity of off-home activities, albeit different from the previous one. These jobs were implemented by the citizens themselves, and not by the government. Selemon — the former Sheraton chef, not the driver — believes that "the mengist has not created new job opportunities here. The same thing happened in Piassa, there was a vegetable market, which was then relocated, and now the people who worked in the vegetable market have become thugs who rob". His opinion suggests that the economic effects of relocations in Jemo One Condominium are similar, if not less aggravated, to other areas in Addis Ababa, for instance, the neighbourhood of Piassa.

For some, having created economic opportunities for themselves, attracting a different job and clientele to this new area gives them self-confidence. Goshu says, in an almost proud tone, "I am now an estate agent, I find houses for people who ask me, and sometimes I even hire a maid
for them”. Goshu’s occupation suggests how he managed to create a new network of people and acquaintances in the area.

Having detached themselves from the old neighbourhood regarding work, "some have tried to create jobs here, such as the porter in a hotel, being an estate agent, some do office work and so on” says Eyared. These jobs have that bureaucratic formality that previous jobs lacked.

This formality is also visible in the search for a job: “Finding a job is not straightforward, in fact, there are several steps: first you have to get to know the person via mobile phone, then the person calls you, and after an evaluation decides whether you are right for the job” he illustrates.

As for on home and in-between activities, these were lost instantly when relocating. Alem comments on the matter thus: “I used to sell lentils. Here I couldn’t”. The impossibility is mainly due to two factors: the need for acquaintances in the area, of trustworthy customers, and the architecture of the apartment block. Activities such as selling delicacies used to take place on the ground floor, a ground floor that is now often inhabited by other apartment blocks or everyday shops. The interview with Alem takes place under a plastic tarpaulin, where the lady, seated on a stool, sells plastic kitchen utensils. Indeed, the amount of plastic tarpaulins occupying the streets of the area intrigues me and makes me think that however many vernacular practices have been lost, everyday Ethiopian life — the mess, the crush, the queue of people running all over the place — continues to exist, if only outside the condominiums’ blocks.

However, Alem is one of the few ladies interviewed who managed to find new employment. Apart from young people, many women, especially older ones, are unemployed. One example is Burtucan, who states, “In the old neighbourhood I used to work, and now here I am supported by my sons and daughters who work”. She confirms Getahun’s (2011) argument that, in the absence of a job or husband, it is expected in the Ethiopian tradition that the children take financial care of the mother figure. Nevertheless, what happens to those who have no family? In response comes Zewdi, who, suddenly turns serious from a conversation in a joking tone: “sometimes you find old people who had a decent life in the old neighbourhood begging here”. 
Jemo One Condominium gives diverse economic treatment to its inhabitants. As mentioned earlier, some people can see usable exploitable opportunities in the neighbourhood, especially with the increasing number of inhabitants in the area. Recognising this, in truth, are also the relocated inhabitants themselves, like Daniel, a young man from the former Woreda 7, “I am convinced that here, by studying the market, you can be productive by setting up your own business and opening some kind of activity”. Serkalem, a girl who now works as a nurse, confirms this “You have to ask people in the neighbourhood how the market is and evaluate. Now that there are more inhabitants in Jemo, the market has improved, and the possibility of making money is there”. Those with the economic capacity can then set up their businesses, opening shops or restaurants, even though the competition between businesses is high. Those who fail, however, can register for the woreda and wait to be drawn via a lottery system.

Now, I would like to make a brief excursus on the experience of Eyared, a young man already mentioned in the previous chapter, in particular for having had the good fortune to meet a Western family that supports him financially to this day. This acquaintance meant that Eyared had the financial means to open a car wash in Jemo One Condominium and could offer a positive experience of job opportunities in the area from a youth’s point of view.

He illustrates that

Jemo is better, it gives you a chance to grow and not stay fixed in those 3-4 regular jobs like in the old neighbourhood. Here, meeting new people allows you to get in touch with new ideas because it is only by knowing and exploring new points of view that you can grow. Sometimes ideas that in the old neighbourhood were small here turn into big ones, whereas in the old neighbourhood, at the most, I cleaned a car or two, here I got the idea for the car wash as there are many more cars concentrated in the area, this fuelled my thinking

His case would present fresh inspirations of growth, opportunity and hope found in Jemo One Condominium, were it not for the fact that his mother, Alem, the woman selling plastic utensils, denied the existence of a car wash for her son. What does this piece of conflicting evidence teach? One might think that, perhaps to make a good impression, and feeling
important, Eyared wanted to tell me a half-truth. Alternatively, that, instead, Alem is not actually aware of his son’s achievements. Apart from speculations about their personal situation, what is most appropriate to say is that Eyared’s words, whether acted upon or not, show that relocation to Jemo does not necessarily imply a negative aspect because interaction with new people, the very basis of bridging social capital, opens the mind to new horizons of possibilities. According to Wassie Kebede and Alice K. Butterfield (2009), having connections outside the usual networks bring new ideas and renew more standard economic ways of thinking. However, one needs an economic asset to bring to bear innovative ideas, as might be Eyared’s case.

Furthermore, such businesses hardly generate a steady income as they struggle to attract a stable clientele. Jemo One Condominium is increasingly filled with renters, who generally remain in the area for a maximum of one year. As a result, Eyob tells me, “The hand brings food to the mouth, but that food is only ‘yeelet gurs’, a bite for the day, and that hand does not know whether it will bring food to the mouth in the days to come”.

In Jemo One Condominium, the rural youth from the Oromia region see more economic opportunities than their inland, which no longer consists of arable land (Moreda, 2023). Overall, economic experiences from different inhabitants of the area inform that it is difficult to evaluate the economy in Jemo through dichotomous categories such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, as it is essential first to identify ‘who’ defines it as such. Indeed, when taken from the perspective of relocated people, the assessment is prompted to be less optimistic.

5.3 Other Challenges and Issues: Local Experiences of Modern Housing

The condominium structures envisioned in the IHDP were, among others, intended to cater to the Ethiopian citizen by offering facilities other than slums, commodities such as a bathroom inside the flat and a private kitchen. As I explained earlier, some welcomed the eviction positively for this very reason. However, the reality on the ground did not look so different from what the citizens were forced to leave. They were confronted with the incommodities of Jemo
One Condominium rather than the commodities of condominiums. The following part of this subchapter moves on to describe in greater detail such incommodities.

Tiye Turuye’s words fall like a pinwheel: “People think condominium lifestyle is a developed lifestyle, we thought so too, but it is not the case”. Water and electricity at Jemo One Condominium are intermittent as before, coming at different intervals in time.

The first people to be relocated in the area say in a Focus Group Discussion, ”The lack of water is heavy, yesterday it came back during the night and we spent the night collecting it. It came after a week. It was better before”. They discuss as to some people it was worse or the same as now ”then there was a time when it got better”. From people’s recollections, as suggested by the processual approach, I reconstructed in a time-ordered manner the efficiency of the water at Jemo One Condominium in this way: water was absent when a few still inhabited the area in 2010. Indeed, it was only installed after incessant requests from residents, and then it has been more periodic as the area was populated. Ashebir Kebede (2015) affirms that ”A 6 months of water consumption data of Jemo I collected from AAWSA Mekanisa branch shows that only 30% of the demand is supplied to residents by the municipality at private water pipes” (p.29). The problem remains in the fact that this periodicity is minimal. Lily clarifies that

Water comes once a week, randomly, and it is even more difficult if you live on the upper floors. In the old neighbourhood, on the other hand, it was always there, at the most, it would disappear for a day and come back around ten o’ clock at night. Here, on the other hand, there is not even a precise time when the water comes, maybe it comes at night while we are sleeping or during the day while we are at work. To know this, we leave the tap on so that as soon as we hear the roar of water, we know it has come, or we keep the shower running as it gurgles as soon as the water arrives

After that, citizens try to collect it, leaving a bermel, a barrel in Amharic, under the shower spray, though there is no guarantee that the water will be enough for the rest of the week. An example is the bathroom pictured in Figure 9, where a barrel is seen inside the shower.
Sara, the general office of a Jemo One Condominium block, a figure I will mention in the last chapter, explains that “If there is no water, each block has a cistern, ours should support 10000 households. We distribute it to make it last until next week. If it runs out before the water returns, we buy *gari jerica*.”

Wandering around the blocks of Jemo One Condominium, it is peculiar to find majestically sized cisterns at the corners of the condominiums, as one can see from Figure 10.

**Figure 10**

*Cistern of one of Jemo One Condominium's blocks*

Gari carrying jerica, jerry cans of water, are also peculiar on the streets of Jemo One Condominium. Figure 11 is an example.
Both remedies have a price; in the case of the cistern, it is set by the block, while taking five litres from a jerica costs 25 birr.

Charitonidou (2022) states that there are three different aspects related to the problem of water shortage in Addis Ababa: “first, its cleanliness; second, its accessibility; and, third, its management” (p.1354). Indeed, water is a national problem, and the inhabitants of Jemo One Condominium are aware of this. Johannes, a committee member, an organizational body I will discuss later, speaks of it as follows: “Water is a problem that affects the whole city”.

However, concerning condominiums, the inhabitants feel the burden even more, especially about hygiene problems. “We should have a daily right to water because we have toilets in the house, and how else can we get rid of the physiological needs?” Sara urges herself. The lack of sufficient infrastructure should be considered when addressing the issue of pro-poverty housing programmes in Addis Ababa (Charitonidou, 2022, p.1354). Ultimately, the government liked to impress more than to enable in the case of IHDP.
Concerning electricity, residents speak in slightly more favourable terms than water. It seems to have been absent when the first DIR arrived and then more present with the arrival of more people, although a meaningful estimate is difficult to make. From my days at Jemo One Condominium, I have memories of days without light and afternoons brightened by the TV working at my relatives’ homes. The main problem with electricity is related to prices: I will use, once again, Laké’s words: “Electricity is not divided into many, ye gara mehbrat, but it is owned by each flat and you can use it as much as you want, except that now 300-500 birrs is not enough for your personal meter”. Laké’s highlights how an economic problem such as the cost of electricity, but also of water, can no longer be tackled with a cooperation solution as in the past. In fact, in apartment blocks, the electricity meter is private and installed free of charge by the government. Trivially, candles are the most popular solution to the lack of electricity.

The high number of people in the area also bend transport, not performing at their best. Compared to the past, when they were almost absent, nowadays, from Jemo One Condominium, you can get anywhere. According to Burtucan

Transport is very good compared to other parts of Addis, you can get to Piassa, Merkato, Mexico, Saris, Hyatt\(^\text{21}\), the problem is just the number of people, but that’s all. Before, you couldn’t get here quickly, you had to make a change at La Gare, then they would drop you at Jemo Michael\(^\text{22}\) and from there you had to take a bajaj. It started to decline five years ago.

On a good day, it took me only an hour to get from Jemo One Condominium to Kazanchis, in the sub-city of Kirkos, by minibus, making only one change in Mexico. One hour is overall an efficient time for over 12 kilometres to cover in Addis Ababa. The difficulty lies in the endless hours of queuing to wait your turn to get into the minibus; the amount of buses is minimal compared to the number of inhabitants in the area. In addition, hours of queuing weigh particularly on people who have to be at work at seven in the morning.

\(^{21}\) Neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa
\(^{22}\) Jemo Michael is a church neighbouring Jemo One Condominium
Johannes speaks of water, electricity, and means of transport as a problem common to several areas of Addis Ababa, if not the whole country: "I would speak of thieves as Jemo's real challenge". The insecurity of the area is a pressing problem. Whereas previously this insecurity was perpetuated by hyenas, the area being isolated at the time, nowadays, the culprits are people from the area or elsewhere.

Laké reports that

In the old neighbourhood you could come back even at midnight, at one or two o'clock, there were no security problems, whereas here after ten o'clock I am afraid of who might be behind me, of what they might do to me, because we don’t all know each other, we don’t know who is dangerous and who is not.

The thefts can be from the most petite, like stealing clothes hung out to dry, to demands for mobile phones or money.

Speaking of which, I have had direct contact with delinquency at Jemo One Condominium, and so I report it in my bits of field notes, on the 26th of October 2022.

At first light, around 4 a.m., we approached the church for misgana\textsuperscript{23}. Apart from me and my cousin, only two men were on the road. Suddenly, a car passes by and stops a little further on — indicating that the thieves are coming from outside. They grab the older man by the neck and — I imagine — ask him for money. At this point, my cousin picks up a large stone and signals to throw it at them to scare them off, shouting Leba! Leba!\textsuperscript{24}. A little further on, a watchman hears and runs to the rescue. The frightened thieves leave without stealing anything from the older man!

Laké’s words and the experience I witnessed show how not knowing each other, aided by times when Jemo One Condominium is almost deserted, contribute to the area’s unsafety.

Finally, the last incompatibilities to mention are related to the architecture of the condominiums themselves. The first are problems related to shared terraces: frequent fights

\textsuperscript{23} Misgana is a kind of prayer in the Orthodox Church
\textsuperscript{24} Thief! Thief! In Amharic
between neighbours over the turn to hang clothes, their cleaning, or even objects falling from the upper floor to the lower ones.

Moreover, not living on the ground floor can result in a life confined to their room for some. The four to six flights of condominium stairs put older people and people with disabilities, especially physical disabilities, at a disadvantage. Here is a conversation about the issue in a Focus Group Discussion. Abraham and Henok are two middle-aged gentlemen employed in the private sector. Their testimonies, collected in a Focus Group Discussion, are among the few that I could schedule in time and date in advance.

Abraham: There hasn’t been a study done on how to integrate the blind, crippled people of the relocated people into the condominium structure

Henok: That is clear. I know a crippled person who never left the house because he lived on the fourth floor without a lift and had no one to help him, or to carry him to the ground floor

Abraham again: You are right, from this point of view, no study has been done on how to help them or even facilitate their lives. My neighbour is blind, and once she started asking for help, and her husband immediately came running to her rescue to take her to the ground floor saying, ‘besides me, who does she have?’ There are various examples like this. We have such problems in the condominium, and it seems evident that condominiums are buildings made on the spur of the moment. There should at least be lifts

Although one could specify before relocation whether one had relatives with physical disabilities, a ground-floor flat was not insured. Bribes, according to some, could secure a ground floor.

I would therefore like to end this sub-chapter with a reflection on the power of money and how this is reflected in the context of Jemo One Condominium. One wonders why people keep moving into the area in the face of all these incommodities? Day after day, the neighbourhood becomes more and more appealing, especially for those with more stable incomes. The reality is that wealthy residents are able not to endure these incommodities: privileges such as having a house on the ground floor, securing five litres of water for 25 birrs, having a private car, and
reinforced shutters to avoid thieves in the house make life in Jemo One Condominium more pleasant. But just for some.

5.4 The Social Incommodities of Jemo One Condominium

Practical problems such as lack of water, insecurity, endless queues for transport or lack of lifts are not the only issues that relocated people face. At the same time, Jemo One Condominium presents social challenges. The section below delves into such social challenges, establishing the framework within which social capital has sprung.

As already explained, Jemo One Condominium has several people in the area, which can be categorised as follows: *newari*, the Amharic translation of permanent inhabitants, *techeray*, the so-called renters, including former peasants from the Oromia region, and finally *be eta ye mettu sewech*, the people who came to Jemo One Condominium after winning the lottery. The lottery-type system is nowadays the central condominium allocation system: citizens register at the woreda with a valid ID, after which they wait for the raffle and if they win, make the down payment to the sub-city. In the last registration round, dating back to 2013, applications for apartments had the basis of 40% downpayments and 60% to be repaid to the bank over 15 years (Planel & Bridonneau, 2017). Such economic criteria make Jemo One Condominium mostly feasible for a middle or upper-middle class, which through savings, participated in the registration and, if winning the allocation, can afford these down payments.

The frequency of interaction is an essential fuel for social cohesion (Zou et al., 2018). However, Jemo One Condominium’s social context does not allow frequency nor interaction per se: people’s constant coming and going makes it difficult to get to know people. Eyasu confirms this, “We have been here for 12 years now, and we still don’t know our neighbours. Everyone lives with the door closed, they are all strangers”. Further on, Sara says on the topic

Since there are more and more inhabitants in the neighbourhood, you don’t know everyone anymore and the questions to get to know each other ‘*Who are you? Where are you from?*’
fade into the background. And if you see a thief stealing something, you as a neighbour don’t interfere, there is no solidarity anymore

Therefore, the continuous turnover of people affects human sociability at Jemo One Condominium. If people get to know each other, the tradition only lasts for a while. Mimi, this is the nickname she identifies with, is a middle-aged lady who came willing to participate in an interview with me. Mamush was my entry node to meet Mimi: as soon as I asked him if he knew any other relocated people in the area, he speedily invited her to his home. The interview with Mimi is imperious, full of anger, though not towards me, and I am not surprised to hear her pronounce the following sentence “I don’t get on well with practically anyone here in the block”. Mimi continues

I’m used to saying things to your face, and if you’re not okay with it, that’s your business, because that’s how I did it in the old neighbourhood. I had started doing courtesy greetings and drinking bunna with some neighbours here, but after a while, people get annoyed by something I say and the tradition ends

Though it may not be because of their character, as in the case of Mimi, many confirm the precariousness of such knowledge.

Talking to my interlocutors, I found some reasons for such non-socialisation. Firstly, the newariwech, the inhabitants, see no point in investing in social relationships with tenants who, at most in a year or two, would change houses. Conversely, the tenants feel they can do without it. One explains, ”What do I need it for? I won’t stay here permanently, sooner or later I will leave”. The temporariness of the social context influences both groups to not invest in social ties.

Secondly, others seem to give the reason for mistrust. Eyared exclaims

Now it occurs to me! Many may not want to help because they are afraid of being misunderstood. Like, if you see a lady with lots of shopping bags, you might be afraid to approach her offering to help her if you don’t know her, because the mistrustful lady might think you are a thief
Eyared’s view embodies an economist strand of rational choice, in which a lack of information concerning other people undermines trust (Patulny & Lind Haase Svendsen, 2007, p. 34).

Sometimes, interviewees compare unfamiliarity to moving abroad, to the West. Not only does not knowing anyone reminds one of the situations but the comparison is reinforced by the individual lifestyle pushed in the condominiums. Mamush asks me a rhetorical question:

You know the people who move abroad, to the West, and find themselves alone? That’s kind of what happened to us when we came to live here in Jemo. Even the lifestyle seems like that of people living abroad: you eat for yourself, you live for yourself

Called into question in a way, I wondered whether unfamiliarity is indeed characteristic of a Western lifestyle. On balance, I would say yes, but not in a negative sense: it is more likely that, as Eyared said, this unfamiliarity sparks a reflection of one’s position and how an act of kindness, such as helping a lady to fetch her shopping bags can, on the other hand, be perceived as an unsolicited interference by strangers.

Such a Western stance is replicated in the context of Jemo One Condominium. In a way, the area would challenge the idea of ubuntu, of collectivist African unity opposed to Western individualism. Indeed, such a dominant view has been considered too static in rapport with a transforming African society. Alex B. Makulilo (2016) describes that “Ubuntu is no longer an order of the day in Africa as it used to be many years ago” (p.194). Consistently, self-autonomy is manifesting in Addis Ababa.

However, some describe this individuality in favourable terms. Mamush himself says that he enjoys not being known and the lack of acquaintances in the neighbourhood:

This neighbourhood gave me a chance to change, to think about myself and go to university, whereas if I had been in the old neighbourhood, I would have been lounging with my other friends at dead-end jobs or even doing nothing; one day I would have spent it sitting with one of my friends, the other with another, and so on. Being relocated and divided has therefore helped and improved us
Although the rules of reciprocity did not weigh on the inhabitants of Woreda 7, Mamush reports how the emotional and physical closeness of the network burdened his growth opportunities.

Furthermore, he demonstrates how the social effects of relocation can open up opportunities. However, his story is one of many, as only some have come out of the break with existing social ties helped or improved. Many young people who moved to Jemo One Condominium find themselves addicted to drugs like khat, a flowering plant which releases its substances by chewing it. It is interesting to include my own experience in this statement. At the beginning of the fieldwork, moving from one house to another, I collected a majority of older respondents, who often stayed there due to lack of work. It took me longer to find young people, and only later did I realise why: young people, rather than staying at home, experience Jemo One Condominium more from the outdoors. And occasionally, the outdoors involved young people chewing khat. When asked, “do you think this is due to a lack of work in the area?” pointing out the many free hours at their disposal, many replied agreeably, stating, additionally, that a more significant correlation should be made between the lack of social security and the possibility of reinventing oneself, albeit negatively. “Not knowing anyone here pushes you to have these addictions, there is no one who controls you or knows you”, stated one khat user, or yet another “People who don’t know you care little about you, there is no social control so that they care about what you do and you care about their opinion”. Therefore, it is easier to fall into such vices. It takes a village to raise a child, but Jemo One Condominium has no village to rely on, at best, expensive day-cares.

Furthermore, there are factors related to a dweller’s different title, particularly whether owner or renter. One goal of the IHDP was to increase housing ownership. Besides decreasing the precarious housing in the capital, having a condominium could lead to positive social effects. When I ask Selemon, ”What did it mean for you to achieve the title of a homeowner?” the answer is immediate “It gives you happiness”. Yet, adverse social effects of the condominium owner
prototype materialise in Jemo One Condominium and require a reflection beyond the economic outcomes of being a homeowner (Charitonidou, 2022, p.1359).

At the core, condominium owners are defined as those who obtained their homes through relocation, proved they could satisfy the down payment and people with the economic capacity to pay immediately or lottery. The latter, in particular, according to Johannes, have no respect for anyone:

They do not think 'I have to speak quietly at certain times of the evening because I might disturb someone', they raise their voice and if someone says something to them, they reply in tone claiming that the space is theirs too.

Tenants cannot make the same claim, as they are temporary owners of such space; though they can afford a 10000 birrs monthly rent, which makes them a more affluent category than relocated persons.

Indeed, even though many relocated people have obtained the flat and thus also have the title of condominium owner, renters, those who obtained the house through direct payment or a lottery discredit them because of their prior social, economic background. On a narrative level, I have recorded in my field notes an episode that demonstrates this on the 19th of November 2022:

While walking through Jemo with Sele, we meet an acquaintance, who is asked, "Were you moved for development purposes?" to which he replies "No!" as if with disdain, embarrassment.

"You were the one moved for lemat, development, I won this place via eta", via lottery.

This anecdote highlights the different narratives around being part of a place one has chosen, see by lottery, being forced to live there, see by being relocated.

Moreover, tenants and owners have populated the area over the past five years, spicing up the reputation of Jemo One Condominium as 'a cool place'.

Here is another field note about it, on the 9th of January 2023

As I went to print my interviews' table overview, I got talking to the girl – editor's note: young - who was printing, and when I said that my main sample was relocated people in Jemo she said
But how? Are there people who have been relocated there?” amazed “Jemo is an abtam — rich in Amharic — neighbourhood!”. 

The presence of middle-income or high-income earners in Jemo One Condominium contributes to the qualification of the area as high-end. I remember how, in my first ethnographic month, when talking on the phone to a friend of mine about my research, I mentioned how water and electricity were scarce in Jemo, and this led my friend, born and raised in the West, to conclude that what I was experiencing was a delicate situation of impoverishment. Placing acceptance of my daily vicissitudes without giving a generalized context led my friend to the wrong conclusion. Jemo One Condominium features situations of impoverishment, but only for some. What I described was only part of the bigger picture. Since then, I always mindfully weigh how my words can be interpreted ‘from the other side of the phone’.

The most realistic portrait of the area is the coexistence of different social classes, as mentioned in the previous sub-chapters. However, coexistence does not presuppose support between classes. As stated by Laké,

People who were already poor in the old neighbourhood, here are even poorer, bent over by life. There are also middle-class people, and wealthy people, and the differences in social classes make everything different from how it was before, where we were all of the same social class. And this mixing that there is here in Jemo of social classes is not good: the rich only think of themselves, and in my experience, they don’t want to support those who are poorer or recreate a supportive social fabric. The houses, especially of the well-to-do, remain with their doors closed and all secrets are kept inside, all troubles are solved

The relocated people see the middle and upper classes as adversaries rather than potential partners. As reported by Boix and Posner (1998), although perhaps one could already quote Marx and the class struggle, inequalities — social, political, economic — affect cooperation among potential cooperating partners. This is because “to maintain their political and economic privileges, the rich will manoeuvre to undermine any collective efforts that the poor may
undertake to better their lot” (Boix & Posner, 1998, p.688). They refer to Putnam’s (1993) study in Italy and state that first and foremost, the flourishing social capital in Northern Italy compared to Southern Italy is due to an economically equal society: in the South, social life at the local level came to be ever more dominated by a landed aristocracy endowed with feudal powers, while at the bottom masses of peasants struggled wretchedly close to the limits of physical survival. Such deep-rooted social inequality was in stark contrast to the situation in the towns of northern and central Italy, which constituted, according to one author cited by Putnam, ‘oases amidst the feudal forest’ (Boix & Posner, 1998, pp.688-689).

Finally, ethnicity and its politicization influence people’s sociability in the area. Although opening up to this topic, in the Ethiopian context, would be to dwell on historical, economic and social explanations, it is worth making a parenthesis on how being relocated to the capital’s frontiers has shifted relocated people’s perception of ethnic identity and ethnic divide, interfacing with the neighbouring ethnic group.

While the latter is nothing new for relocated people, as their old neighbourhood was dense in diverse ethnic groups, nowadays ethnic divide is outstandingly felt by relocates in Jemo One Condominium. Living at the frontier daily poses them to interact with the pressuring divide. One person explains, “A lot of peasants come here from Oromia, which is a bordering ethnic region, and they feel more important than us”. Though the old neighbourhood is a salient binder for young relocated people, it is not perceived as such by some inhabitants of Jemo One Condominium. Being born in the capital grants young relocates the label of ye Addis Ababa lig, the children of Addis Ababa in Amharic, which, as an independent city, does not translate into any particular status or, even further, ethnic group.

Moreover, such effects are akin to Jemo One Condominium and experienced by those who have been relocated to other outskirts. “Those who have been relocated to Hyatt, wherever they
have been relocated, face the same difficulties as Jemo, the same story. Geographically, Addis Ababa borders Oromia, so it is similar”, it is pointed out.

Such opposition between belonging to an ethnic group or being excluded from it because born and raised in the capital creates social friction. This would partly explain why relocated people, unable to assimilate into any ethnic group, move towards their urban identity as children of Addis Ababa and, specifically, of the Woreda 7.

In his doctoral dissertation, Getahun Fenta Kebede (2015) analyses how different ethnic groups in Ethiopia have varying proportions of networks: Gurage have large connections within ethnicity but sweep in education and employment compared to the Amhara and the Oromo. The latter have inter-ethnic networks, albeit weaker than the former, and finally, the Oromo have more homogeneous networks, whether by ethnicity, educational background or employment. Therefore, his study gives a first clue as to why interfacing with several ethnicities is complicated in the Ethiopian context. Yet, it did not seem to be so in Woreda 7.

Even further, spatializing the issue to the country as a whole and in light of the recent events could suggest why the ethnic divide is particularly felt in Jemo One Condominium. The relocation of slum dwellers to the condominium itself, in 2010, happened in the context of rising ethnic tensions and conflicts in Ethiopia. In 2015, an escalation of ethnic grievances for economic and political reforms engaged various ethnic groups in the regions, from the Oromo to the Amhara (Lyons, 2019). Coming to power in 2018, the current government was initially welcomed as an optimistic chance for the country, ruling it to the sound of medemer, synergy in Amharic between ethnic groups. However, since then, ethnic identity has surpassed a national one, with the war in the North being the majestic outcome of the escalating tensions between ethnic groups. As such, what relocates people are experiencing nowadays in Jemo can be seen as a consequence of the rise of ethnic identity in Ethiopian society. Talking about one’s ethnicity is a sensitive issue. “Here you are always on the alert: who is this person, where is he from, be careful what you say, especially in ethnic terms”, says another informant.
The three most "politically important ethnic groups" out of 80 ethnic groups in the country, according to Josh Ishiyama and Post Basnet (2022), Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan have increased their preference for their own ethnic identity from 13.6% in 2013 to 23.6% in 2021, while their feeling as Ethiopian declined from 54.7% in 2013 to 31.3% in 2021 (p.90). The Amhara respondents reported more support for a national Ethiopian identity. At the same time, Tigrayan and Oromo expressed more ethnic than national allegiances, prompting the authors to conclude that "outside of the Amhara community, Abiy Ahmed’s call for Ethiopiawinet may fell on deaf ears" (Ishiyama & Basnet, 2022, p.90). As far as being without ethnicity may seem a privilege, as it avoids politicization, in the current context, it proves to be less advantageous than belonging to a particular ethnic group for relocated people: "Here in Jemo it only works by ethnicity", affirms one boy, “and we don’t have an ethnicity,” he finally claims.

Conclusion

Chapter V assessed the effect of living in apartment blocks on people's lives, specifically relocated people. Architecturally, condominium living has seen a loss of Ethiopian social practices, from food preparation to a general get-together, where instead, the shared space of condominiums has been filled with cars. These structural changes have also led to the loss of in-home and in-between petty trade activities, i.e. selling food, as people or everyday shop occupy the ground floors. On an economic level, income-generating activities from the former life of the relocated people orbited the old neighbourhood for a long time until the price of transport stopped their return to the area. In fact, there is a rise in the price of living in general. At the same time, new income-generating off-home activities arose, such as work in private companies or self-employment. Following, the chapter discussed the local modernities offered by the condominium, such as private kitchens and bathrooms, which revealed how, in reality, intermittent water and electricity hinder the experience of the latter, at least for those who, like most relocated people, cannot access them with regular water barrel payments. Lack of public transport and lifts to upper floors were equally mentioned as pressing problems, emphasising the insecurity of the area. Finally, the melting pot of the area was considered, both from a social
point of view, with affluent people, renters and from an ethnic point of view, emphasising the Oromo ethnic farmers and how, in the general context of the country, ethnic and political divides further affect people’s sociability. The cohesion of social and ethnic groups leads to a multidimensional view of the Jemo One Condominium area; some are pleased with it and those who, like the relocated people, cannot find such tangible benefits. Chapter VI analyses the effects that these varieties of factors here studied, from the architectural to the social ones, had on the social capital of Jemo One Condominium.

**Chapter VI**

**The Status of social capital: Adapting to Jemo One Condominium**

As discussed in the previous chapter, citizens do not experience communal areas in apartment blocks as such. Moreover, living in the block of flats did not presuppose real modernity in the quality of life for the relocated people due to shortages such as water or electricity. In contrast, changes at the practical and social levels were significant. Factors such as unfamiliarity, mingling of different social classes and ethnic divide influence DIR people’s willingness to interact with the other residents. Under these circumstances, one question arises: What moves people relocated, but also moved through other ways, to build social practices in Jemo One Condominium? And, if successful, how do they manifest such practices? This section reveals the foundations and realisations of social practices between actors in Jemo One Condominium. The reader must pay attention to the spatial distinction drawn between ‘inside the blocks’ and ‘outside the blocks’, but still within the site of Jemo One Condominium, as this spatial variable will delineate the chapter. The first part of this chapter will focus on the social capital created within Jemo One Condominium’s blocks. In contrast, the second part is dedicated to social capital created outside the blocks but still in Jemo One Condominium’s areas, as the motives at the rear of it are different.
6.1 The Convergence of Social Practices between Relocated and Affluent inside the blocks

Since most relocated people are still in poverty, social capital is needed in Jemo One Condominium to alleviate the situation. However, relying on their old networks of people daily is hard, as they are distant and disaggregated by relocation. Therefore, the need for a new social fabric emerges within Jemo One Condominium.

Trust lubricates the community’s networks (Bell, 1998, p.12; Putnam, 1993, p.3). As a result, at least at a minimum level, establishing trust is necessary to build social capital within Jemo One Condominium’s blocks. Moreover, the coexistence of different social classes presupposes the emergence of a purely vertical social capital, and one wonders, as the respondent Laké or academics such as Boix and Posner (1998) suggest, what is the driving force that attracts the better-off to enter into dialogue with the less well-off. This sub-chapter investigates such motives.

I argue that within Jemo One Condominium’s blocks, necessity pushes its inhabitants to overcome mistrust and social differences; if, on the one hand, relocated people are in greater need of social capital, as they are in economic hardship, on the other hand, more affluent people benefit equally. In the following pages, I will delve into the latter aspect.

Necessity is the common thread of reciprocity at Jemo One Condominium. “I don’t often ask for a roll of injera,” says Lily, “but if I really have to, I don’t mind asking my neighbour”. When hunger kicks in, it matters little whether the neighbour is a renter or wealthier than you. At the same time, renters tend to keep themselves out because of the little use of investing in solidarity relationships in a temporary context. However, this attitude is to their disadvantage. Eyob explains that “Not socialising is to your detriment. The harm is great”, suggesting how renters’ choice is not the most profitable, as when adversity strikes, no one will help as they did not cooperate with people.

With a similar alert as Eyob, some referred to the people who had died at home and layed alone for three days in the following way: “These people didn’t open up socially to anyone”, Abraham explains, “that’s why people didn’t care that much about them”.

However, apart from the necessity, nothing else from the previous cornerstones of social capital is consolidated at Jemo One Condominium. For instance, trust is relatively weak inside the blocks. Roger Patulny (2004), drawing on Eric M. Uslaner’s work, distinguishes between generalised and particularised trust. The former is normative and is based on the ethics of making a sacrifice, such as leaving aside fears about unknown people, to achieve one’s good: “If we lack information (...) we must trust, or else any kind of action would be impossible” (Patulny, 2004, p.5); the latter is based on the knowledge and experience of the people one interface with and is recorded to be more stable than generalized trust. Currently, the trust inside the blocks trends more towards a generalised trust, with relocated people taking the risk of trusting individuals to win precarious economic conditions and their occurrences.

However, for the more affluent, the driving force behind trust is more intrinsic to Ethiopia winet, to their Ethiopian identity. I would like to quote an illustrative quote, again on the messob, by Ato Ayalew in this regard: “In the end, whether the neighbour's messob is bigger than mine or not, it still contains the same thing”. No matter how different economic capacities the inhabitants in Jemo One Condominium have, symbolised by larger and smaller messobs, as they are ultimately linked by their Ethiopia winet, represented by the injera, a typical Ethiopian meal.

The life course of a human being recurs two main events: birth and death. In the Ethiopian context, to celebrate the former and mourn the latter, iddir and, in a broader sense, mahber are fundamental risk-sharing mechanisms. “No one”, I quote Tiye Wodde’s words, “can think of surviving without at least one of the two”. As for eqqub, I have seen or heard no trace of it, presumably because its main ingredient is missing: long-standing knowledge and trust (Gashayie & Singh, 2016). She establishes that “Mahberawi hiwot is a tradition of the Ethiopian culture”. The upper classes at Jemo One Condominium are aware of it and contribute even the bare minimum — a membership fee — to secure the assistance of credit groups in the case of loss or, occasionally, more joyful reasons such as a birth.
The downside, mentioned by many DIR respondents, is that the iddir has lost the holistic character of the old neighbourhood (Pankhurst, 2008) and is increasingly taking on the appearance of a practice — a fee — paid for symbolic purposes. Compared to the pre-established community, these instances of social capital make relocated people more vulnerable to economic burdens while wealthy people can additionally rely on their economic resource (Dekker, 2004), see the case of lacks water.

Tiye Wodde explains to me that “I, as well as Tiye Etenesh, have to participate in the iddir because we know that being old, it is easy for something, an illness or worse, to happen to us, and we will need everyone’s help”. The case of Tiye Wodde and, in her opinion, Tiye Etenesh support the rational motive behind iddirs in Jemo One Condominium: the ladies are aware that their age makes them more prone to frailty; thus, they feel participating in the iddir is a moral obligation. In the next sub-chapter, I will further explore the iddir within Jemo One Condominium.

However, the iddir is not the only thing seen mainly as an obligation to share risks; norms of reciprocity seem to have the same value and, this time, burden the inhabitants. While the exchange of injera in Woreda 7 presupposed a more protracted, open-ended loan, nowadays, the clock is ticking. Using Polanyi’s (1957) distinction between generalised reciprocity, where the expectation of an exact return is not a primary concern, as in the case of Woreda 7, there is now balanced reciprocity, where members keep track of the value of exchanges to ensure fairness. In this regard, I would like to recount an episode I documented in my field notes, concerning my relative Hannah.

On the 8th of December 2022, I wrote

*Sometimes beautiful things happen in fieldwork, actually, beautiful things happen in life, and in this case it was my relative who gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. As I was sitting in the apartment talking to her, I was intrigued by how all our relatives expected many people to come and visit the house – “As mum is a very active person in social capital and iddir, always helping everyone, we expected in return that many people would come and pay my respect after*
“birth” recounts Hannah. This did not happen, the cost of living is expensive in Addis, with absurdly priced children’s clothes, and equally embarrassing is the possibility of turning up empty-handed, ergo, people do not come to visit.

This episode highlights several elements. On the one hand, self-interest behind social capital is evident within Jemo One Condominium: Hannah’s mother is active in the iddir, and, as a result, she and her family expect that her commitment act to the community serves their interests. On the other hand, reciprocity is pressing in Jemo One Condominium, so much so that it reduces people to not paying Hannah’s respect, usually by taking food to the house or utilities for the unborn child, lest they fail its obligation.

In addition, there are also practical incommodities related to architecture that influence, as previously noted, practices related to sociability. Such architectural changes influence to a greater extent practices of social capital embedded in the Ethiopian culture. Rapoport (1990) states that public open spaces act as social and cultural markers for humans rather than for simply walking around. In the empty outdoor space at Jemo One Condominium, dwellers cannot remake older funeral practices. When there is a funeral, one cannot pitch a tent in the garden but rent a cominal, a condominium room designed specifically to mourn the loss. However, cominal represents an additional expense that iddirs have to cover.

Finally, there is another fundamental shift related to the practical and social factors of Jemo One Condominium. These factors are the essence of differences in social capital dynamics after relocation.

Condominium design has stimulated an individual lifestyle, consolidated by the mistrust towards the continuous arrival of residents in the area. For relocated people, these elements are reflected in the social capital: the network of relationships has changed from a fictive kin system to a nuclear kin system, with most people trusting in their family (Ante, 2008). Trust in the other inhabitants is displayed at the occurrence.

I would like to report here on a preliminary error in my research. When I was still drafting my research, I reported on a demonstration of social capital observed on my first visit to Jemo
One Condominium: when it was still semi-inhabited, the lack of light and the fear of hyenas meant that relocated families returned from the market, then located far away, in small groups and arm in arm, as a group was more difficult to attack. I still remember my cousin’s elbow pressing on my hip when, on one of my summer visits to the capital, we returned in the evening arm in arm, her hands full of bags. Bored, I would prod her for all sorts of reasons on that long walk and she would threaten to call the hyenas to eat me.

Such an example demonstrates an informal solution of using the network to secure a primary need, namely safety. Moreover, it also shows how they secured this need through a nuclear kinship, i.e. grouping family members. Even if they had wanted to, they could not have been supported by the previous fictive kinship, as it was scattered all over the capital.

Thirteen years later, however, with the arrival of renters in Jemo One Condominium, people who bought a flat or won the lottery or peasants from Oromia, there has yet to be a fictive kinship system in the blocks.

Not finding the answers I had hoped for in the early stages of my research, I was heartbroken. It was only after time that I realised, quite simply, that the absence of fictive kin did not imply a lack of social capital but only one that, with time and the arrival of people, did not evolve and, indeed, remained purely nuclear kinship. Besides regular recurrences, like funerals and sometimes birth festivities or marriages, dwellers continue to rely on their family members largely. Eyob says, “I have my mother and brother, and we get by like that”. This system emulates the ethos of amoral familialism coined by Edward C. Banfield (1958), a social structure whereby the individual relies exclusively on the nuclear family. The conditions of poverty are a crucial reason for the lack of pursuit of common goals by the citizen who, having nothing, cannot afford the mistake of extensively trusting other people and being disappointed (Banfield, 1958). Nevertheless, for the rest of the inhabitants of Jemo One Condominium, previously mentioned factors such as class differences, with wealthy people relying more on individual strategies to cope with other vulnerabilities, or ethnic bias undermined its creation.
When on the 13th of October 2022, I write in my field notes that when I enter “In their own homes, the interviewees relax their muscles, and I sense that they literally feel they are in a protected bubble, their own” I illustrate, among other things, the home making’s interviewees rely within Jemo One Condominium: no longer a box full of people, but a familiar and private bubble, where they enjoy ceremonies such as coffee on their own.

6.2 The Instance of Imawaish YeSet Iddir inside the blocks

In the previous chapter, I outlined the rationale behind the formation of social capital within Jemo One Condominium, explaining the nature of trust, the norms of reciprocity and the system of affinity typically found in the area. I have mentioned iddir as an expression of these elements within Jemo One Condominium, however, this sub-chapter will further illustrate iddir in the area.

Up to this day, even at Jemo One Condominium, older people continue to hold the responsibility to social capital.

Ato Bantayehu is a DIR older man, and he explains iddir’s organisation as it follows.

The series of iddirs in the condominium symbolise our desire as Ethiopians to want and need to come together. The iddirs here are different because we participants are different: different ways of relieving ourselves of pain, tastes, closeness. In the old neighbourhood, on the other hand, because we were close, we were together, and consequently with similar ways of living.

It is not necessarily the case that every block has iddirs and, if there are any, that the inhabitants know how to reconcile the different ways of being; indeed, this seems to be still a difficulty inside Jemo One Condominium’s blocks. However, the successful blocks in social capital show it with pride. Here is how Tiye Wodde, head of a women iddir, considers it.
Here in block 149, there is an iddir, where money is collected for problems such as loss, illness, marriage. When a woman gets married, we help each other a lot. You buy gifts etc with that money, at least in this block... but every block is different, and so is its iddir!

She continues, “Block 149 is made of 12 blocks, and there are two types of iddir: one for men, one for women”.

In Block 149, Tiye Wodde explains that “there are 150 people, and out of those only 40 are part of the iddir for men, and 16 to 20 women are part of the iddir for women”. These figures show that out of 150 people only 60 maximums, less than half, are voluntarily invested in the iddir. Those who are not are renters or, in the case of two people, wealthy and not interested in the area’s social life. In that case, their misfortunes are not ignored, as she illustrates, but more likely looked after people from afar, who provide minimal support: three days and no more.

Additionally, of these 60 maximum persons in Block 159, men have more participants and, consequently, money. However, greater financial capacities do not necessarily translate into strong iddirs, as seen in Chapter IV, since making an iddir requires, in addition to money, a social and daily commitment.

Other women iddirs interviewed within the area confirmed this. One morning I meet Hiwot, the manager of another women iddir in Jemo One Condominium. Hiwot and the other ladies are busy peeling onions for a celebration. Hesitantly, I approach and ask if I can help and I am initially looked at with distrust. Then, agitated, I mention some of my relatives who used to live in the area, and a lady excitedly says that she knows my great-aunt and invites me to sit with them on a stool and peel onions. There are few outdoor spaces at Jemo One Condominium, and the few are not used that much. But Hiwot and the other ladies in the picture, Figure 12, get permission from the block administration to prepare food in front of a rented room.
Once finished, although tired, I write down everything I remember on my field notes, and I will record the words here.

Hiwot explains

The neighbour asked us to help her with a celebration concerning her sister's engagement and we are helping her without being paid. One cannot force one to participate in iddir for joy reasons, but only for sadness. When we moved to this neighbourhood, we started the iddir because it was needed. Before, when we started, we were 18 women, now we are about 20. But there are many tenants who as precarious and non-stable tenants in the area are not interested in the iddir

In her women's iddir, the obligation to participate is only reserved for reasons of sadness.

She continues to clarify the rules to me:

One used to be included with a monthly fee of ten birrs, now the monthly fee has risen to 30 birrs. Of those 30 birrs, ten are usually used for funeral purposes, while the other 20 are kept
to buy things for the celebrations. 1 up to 5 days of the calendar are dedicated to collecting the money. When an inhabitant dies, they give us 3000 birrs to take care of the funeral traditions. We put up the rest: lentils, onions, oil. For three days, seven women of the iddir take care of preparing lunch and cleaning the dishes, while another seven take care of preparing dinner afterwards. Then we make tea and bunna. All this with the iddir’s money

In addition, all iddirs usually have a bank account, of which two persons from the group are appointed treasurer.

Another lady continues in her place: “The iddir of men is less strong. They don’t do the cooking, they don’t give any support to the person affected by the misfortune, except to carry the stools on which the people in the cominal will sit”.

After that, the conversation shifts to a less explanatory level, and two ladies are shocked by Hiwot’s revelation: “The other time, while cooking, an electrician fixing the aerial said to me ‘I smell a celebration, can I have some food?’ Hiwot quietly handed him a plate of injera with missir wet25. The impertinence of the electrician scandalised the ladies, who concluded that there was no longer the modesty of yesteryear.

Even in the iddirs of Jemo One Condominium, albeit in a minor way, one can find benefits beyond their primary function. One particular example comes to mind which, though more the exception than the rule, I feel it is worth mentioning: at the funeral of a wealthy household, it happened that such members, seeing a woman from an iddir working, were positively impressed by her dutifulness and they later hired her to work as the family’s cleaner.

Later, when we finish chopping vegetables, Hiwot invites me to her house and shows me the perfectly guarded rules of her iddir. She gives me permission to photograph and employ such rules in my thesis.

25 Red lentils stew
Figure 13

Outdated Rules of Iddir Membership

1. The name of the mahber [association] is "Imawaish YeSet Iddir".
2. Successive members pay an entrance fee of 300 birrs
3. To the person who is affected by the grief, we give the following amounts:
   Per day, we cooperate and give according to their position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person affected</th>
<th>Previous payment</th>
<th>Updated payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of house</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father or Mother</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister or Brother</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Number of people we send for the mourner:

   Breakfast from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. - 2 people
   Lunch from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - 2 people
Dinner from 4 p.m. on - 2 people

5. Will the member who wants to leave the iddir receive back her payment? She will not be refunded the payment.

6. How much is the fine if the member does not attend a meeting? The fine is 10 birrs.

7. If a month passes since the member does not pay the monthly fee, how much is the fine? The fine is 5 birrs.

8. If the member does not pay for 3 months, she is kicked out of the iddir.

9. How much is the fine if the member misses her shift in the mourning household? The fine is 10 birrs.

10. If the member is unable to attend to her work, she must replace her role with another person, let us know beforehand or change shifts with another member.

11. If the member creates problems, she is kicked out of the iddir.

Regarding food

2 kilos of chickpeas for a recent loss (*tcus lakso*)

2 kilos lentils for a recent loss (*tcus lakso*)

2 kilos of berbere for a recent loss (*tcus lakso*)

2 milk/cans of berbere for a recent loss (*tcus lakso*)

If (*mrdo*) outside the house

1 tin of berbere

Oil

2 litres of oil for a recent loss

1 litre for distant

A member is obliged to work for one year, after the first one it is not obligatory.

The legend below is a personal translation of Figure 13. I have converted the year of the Ethiopian calendar — 2004 — with the Gregorian calendar, 7 years ahead, hence 2011. In addition, I translated the Ethiopian hour count — sunrise — to the Western one — midnight —
so 1 a.m. corresponds to 7 a.m. Figure 13 shows the first regulation in 2011 drafted by the iddir named *Imawaish YeSet Iddir*, translated in English into “Compassionate Women Iddir”. I will only dwell on a few points as an outdated version of the current iddir rules. If the person concerned is the head of the house, one can report that the payment has been changed from 200 to 140. The most coherent explanation is that as the number of *iddirtegnoch* in Amharic, translated into English to members, increased, so did the iddir’s income. The members of the household — son, father and mother, brother and sister — all refer to the kinship of the household head. In addition to demonstrating a noteworthy organisation, these rules expose how the women iddir provides not only financial support to the affected person: from breakfast at 7 a.m. until dinner, the members undertake to cook and help the victim. Another significant difference is the distinction between *tcus lakso*, literally warm mourning, to represent the loss of a close relative living inside the household, and *mrdo*, a more distant loss, such as the death of a brother or sister living outside the home. The following figure, Figure 14, represents iddir’s most recent rules.

**Figure 14**

*Updated Rules of Iddir Membership*

*Personal legend. Improved laws and rules 7-10-2014.*

* To join the iddir, you pay 1000 birrs
* Every month, you have to pay a monthly fee of 15 birrs
* When any member of the iddir dies, 1000 birrs are given to the member’s family
* If a father, mother, brother, sister [of the iddir member] dies, 800 birrs is given to the family
* In a bereaved family, we do the housework. Together, we do the wet.
* The bereaved person will be helped with 3 people, 3 times a day.
* If a member leaves the iddir without reason, she may no longer join.
* The iddir member who does not attend the meeting will be get a fine of 10 birrs
* The member who does not pay the dues monthly will get a fine of 5 birrs
* The member who does not pay the monthly fee for three months will be fined the same amount, and will be asked the reason for non-payment
* The member who does not attend her shift at the mourning house will be fined 20 birrs
* The evening shift at the house affected by the grievance is from 6.30 p.m. until 7 a.m.
* All members must visit the bereaved person’s home twice
* Those who have not done the work of mourning (ye hbret sra) will be fined 50 birrs
* When there is a loss, all members are called on the phone
* If the person who is on duty working [at the bereaved person’s house] does not wash the dishes, she will be fined
* When there is a recent loss, the members prepare food for them and go out

This translation of the most recent rules of the iddir, dated 2014 of the Gregorian calendars, shows several changes compared to Figure 13. In the iddir inside the blocks, a well-defined set of rules holds solidarity, reciprocity and relationships together. On a monetary level, the entry fee has risen from 300 birrs to 1000 birrs from 2007 to 2014, and the monthly fee is 15 birrs, although, as repeated by Hiwot, it has doubled to 30 birrs monthly in 2023.
Fines, one aspect I found particularly interesting about the iddir, have in some cases remained the same in price: the penalty for not attending the meeting, for example, remains 10 birrs and the fine for missing the monthly payment is 5 birrs. These avenues of sanction represent the seriousness of the iddir, the constant effort required in being a member, and the desire to limit non-cooperative behaviour.

On the one hand, the obligation required — and the fine for not fulfilling it — has increased, as a fine of 20 birrs is added in this most recent version of the regulation in case of unfulfillment at the mourning house, one of 50 birrs if ye hbret sra, all those mourning-related chores from cooking to cleaning, are not fulfilled, and finally, another — unspecified — fine if the dishes are not washed after such a shift by the designed member.

Moreover, the number of people at work from 2007 to 2014 increased from two to three, although, as Hiwot said, in 2023, it will be as many as 7. On the other hand, the iddir’s rules also suggest a degree of leniency, as they do not directly mention kicking out the person who has not paid for more than three months; rather, they will be asking her the reason for non-payment.

Interesting elements are also the introduction of the technological world, symbolised by a phone call made to all members to report a fatality. These elements show how iddirs have evolved with condominiums but also to the times.

As I witnessed a lakso in the condominium, although not in the three days of mourning, I would like to conclude this sub-chapter by remembering it.

On the 13\textsuperscript{th} of October 2022, I wrote

*Each house welcoming me shows me a different side, today I experienced the sadness of a loss.*

*The mourning of a father who passed away, a family who received me in lakso. While the older brother explained to me how the lakso ritual worked — what was cooked, drank, with what money — I myself sipped a glass full of tella, surrounded by ladies encased in black veils.*

The brother in question is Samy, a middle age guy relocated to Jemo One Condominium. After a while, he asks me to sit outside, on the pavement, so as not to interrupt the ritual
happening in his house. The following is a picture of people waiting on the terrace outside his flat.

**Figure 15**

*Outside a Lakso*

Samy starts

A month and ten days ago, my father died. After 40 days, from the day of his death, in the Orthodox religion is a custom gathering for the memorial, that is, to remember him, *nebs imar*[^26] tomorrow is exactly 40 days, and we are gathering to celebrate him. We cook for everyone, we help each other, people from the iddir and friends from different parts of Addis and beyond help us prepare the wet, we eat for free and we say *'nebs imar'*

The situation of Samy serves to illustrate the dynamic ritual of the lakso, which embeds both support from the iddir members, and support from far away, from people in different parts of Addis Ababa and beyond.

He continues,

There is no obligation, but usually the people from other areas of Addis give a quota of birrs, depending on how much they can manage, 100 birrs, 50, as much as they want. We drink

[^26]: "Nebs imar" is an Ethiopian expression that I would translate with the Latin locution 'Sit tibi terra levis', meaning 'may the earth be light to you', a Christian greeting that wishes for peace, recalling the belief in the afterlife
homemade tella and spend the whole day together. Often some of the food cooked is taken to
the church, wherewith the expression nebs imar it is distributed to the priests and the poor.
This does not only happen during lakso, but also during happy events like weddings
Afterwards, Samy confirms the practice whereby help in the case of a funeral is necessary,
while in the case of a happy event, it is voluntary.
What changes substantially is that the expenses are more on us during the wedding, and the
volunteers are substantially less, some offer injera, others tella, but it is random. In the case
of the wedding, you do not offer food in the church for the poor, but instead they come to the
wedding venue, and beg
Interrupting our conversation is a lady. "Did you see that?" Samy rhetorically asks me, "The
iddir lady has just warned us that the injera is ready".

6.3 Fabricating Associations outside blocks

A more general and positive observation of Jemo One Condominiums iddirs is that, according
to Ato Bantayehu,"They initiate us to get to know each other". Setting up such financial
assistance becomes an engine for starting conversations between strangers. The underlying
question, however, is to which point the conversation is taken, alias, to which point does this
engine succeed in creating networks of trust and reciprocity.

Many people have also indicated the church as a meaningful site to get to know each other.
This entry point introduces not only the religious aspect in condominiums, but also social
capital outside of blocks, still confined to Jemo One Condominium. This sub-chapter is therefore
concerned with this aspect and will mainly have the relocated people as its focus.

Condominium complexes not only bring together people of different economic and ethnic
backgrounds but also people of different religions. However, religion operates in the
background and not the foreground of Jemo One Condominium; neither Muslims, Protestants,
nor Orthodox has expressed pressing social annoyances based on their religion in their
coexistence.
This may go against common belief as Ethiopia has a rich religious tradition with a plurality of faiths. As a result, religion has been a significant identity mark for Ethiopian citizens: two-thirds of the population identifies as Christian, while one-third is Muslim (Evason, 2018). I will now discuss the former practices, specifically the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian ones, which I have become more familiar with.

That Ethiopia, or at least Addis Ababa, is deeply religious is evident not only from the details — *netela*27-covered streets on Sundays, for example, or, at designated times, pavements occupied by people wiping their feet before entering a mosque — but also from the linguistic way of expressing directions; soon, I found myself having to find my way around by referring to the proximity of Orthodox churches: the square near *Estifanos*, the building near *Kidane Mehret* and, in the case of Jemo One Condominium, but also the twin projects of Jemo Two Condominium and Jemo Three Condominium, still waiting for a church, referring to places close to the church in *Medhanealem*.

Interestingly, Medhanealem Church is, to some extent, an expression of social capital in the area. The church building is based on voluntary donations, as such, is still not finished. Meanwhile, citizens pray in a rough, laminated church, which was also built thanks to citizens’ donations in two months. Wooden scaffolds fill the church, as metal is more expensive, waiting for money to continue the concrete constructions.

Offerings can be made in three ways: by putting money inside the lockers, sending it to an International Bank Account Number, or collecting them during religious holidays. In the last case, there is a tendency to take flocks and sell parts of the meat at higher prices than usual.

Mulugeta (2020), in his study of Ethiopia, touches on the metaphorical relationship in the spiritual world between God and the Christian population (p.242). In such a metaphor, drawing on Lévi-Strauss’s concept of homologous opposition, the author describes how each of the two parties has specific rights and responsibilities. Interestingly, in my study, such expectations were carried over from local moral imaginary to social capital. By way of illustration, many

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27 Woven cotton shawl
people expressed that they would rather spend money in the Medhanealem church than the iddirs of the blocks, paying their respect and love for the lord. “Once the church is over, you can pray to God, and sooner or later God will improve your economic and other situation”. By quoting this statement, I do not want to express that God is a practical means used to improve one's social condition but that, possibly, his benevolence makes the inhabitants of Jemo One Condominium more inclined to cooperate for the church than the iddir of the block.

On the 1st of December 2022, as I was about to go to that church with my cousins, I observe a series of plastic chairs filling the unfinished church: a gentleman, after asking what it was about, explains that it is the iddir meeting of the elders. Apparently, it is in the church of Medhanealem that an iddir of men meets. Figure 16 and Figure 17 are pictures taken with their consensus.

**Figure 16**

*Men Iddir meeting inside Medhanealem Church*
I ask if I can follow and sit down a little further on. In the meantime, a guy passes a signature sheet, and the young women present stand up in turn to affirm that they will be attending in place of their fathers. The gentlemen are arguing among themselves, a discussion that is only interrupted by a lady pouring tella into glasses and sharing bread bits in baskets.

Apparently, the turnout has dropped compared to the other meetings, and a man proposes a fine of 100 birrs to apply to absentees without justification. A general round of applause confirms the proposal. At the end of the meeting, more or less half an hour later, a man gets up and reads out how much has been spent, and on what. No one argues, and after finishing their glasses of tella, they express their thanks and get up. Immediately, I approach and explain my research. Four gentlemen and a lady sit down on still-warm plastic stools, and I have the opportunity to have a Focus Group Discussion with them.
While chatting, I discover that this iddir is composed exclusively of people relocated from Woreda 7. In fact, it is called YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber, the Association of Love and Peace from the Sheraton's surroundings, and I am impressed.

Ato Girma begins

Our ancestors, grandparents, have carried on these traditions for 60 years and brought us here. We created this association to not lose those old relationships, that unity, and when we meet every month, we rediscover all that, coming from all around. When we meet again, we are happy, happy to be together and not, like others, for utility.

The iddirtegnoch mention the bearers of social capital and praise them for passing on the value of social capital.

What is remarkable is how, although there are iddirs in the blocks in Jemo One Condominium, such iddirs do not suffice for the relocated people.

The main clause is one, Ato Girma says:

The only people who can be part of this association have come from the former kebeles 21, 22, 24, 25, so that the relationships, our caring for each other, created in the iddir of the old district can continue here

Therefore, the only people one trusts are bound by provenance: the Woreda 7.

Ato Bantayehu joins the conversation:

Usually, iddirs are created to solve difficulties. This was not exactly the case with us, since we moved the old iddir here, in a way. We collect money under the guise of Medhanealem, monthly and yearly, and we meet here. Lately we have dwindled. There used to be about 80 of us, many have died, others due to lack of money have sold their house to Jemo, and at the moment, there are 63 of us. We don’t only meet because of difficulties with life, but on the contrary we look forward to happy, celebratory days together, to be precise the day of Medhanealem, Megabit 27

Ato Bantayehu’s statement emphasises several points that I have been dwelling on: the high economic cost of living in the area and the moving of people to less expensive areas. In addition,
he pinpoints how the association wants to be a happy, not just a sad, moment of encounter out of necessity as if to emulate the old neighbourhood.

“The biggest goal of this iddir is the celebration of Medhanealem’s annual patron saint. Here we also bring forward the happy side of an iddir”, he continues to elaborate. “Each year, each of us puts in 12 birrs, and we bring our thanks to Medhanealem and promote its construction”.

On the 27th of March of the Ethiopian calendar, such men meet in that church and celebrate the monthly patron saint of Medhanealem. The iddir takes care of building and giving grace to where they gather. A parenthesis must now be made regarding this place; YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber encompases several elements of the iddir, a mahber and, in a broader sense, a senbet. The rules refer to an iddir, while the gathering during a patron saint would recall mahber, and the church as a meeting place a senbet. Consequently, the question arises as to which category this association falls into? The interesting element is that the Medhanealem church as a meeting place was not voluntary, but forced, says Ato Bantayehu “We had nowhere to meet, so we asked permission from the priests to meet here”. This would exclude the senbet or mahber, but the fact that they want to contribute monetarily and spiritually to the construction of the church makes the reality of this iddir fluid.

The collection of money involves buying a sheep or, in the most fortunate cases where a large amount of money has been collected, a bull to be divided among the members. In fact, the main problem with such an iddir is the lack of money. Indeed, the iddir of relocated elderly does not present financial solid capacity, since such elderly had to give up their jobs, either because of age, the increased price in transport or because in-home activities are no longer attainable. As their economic status and provenance are similar, YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber symbolises horizontal social capital. Yet, precisely because this iddir goes beyond the monetary function, the financial aspect does not burden its members as much.

Ato Zelalem takes the floor and explains a saying, ”Just as the horse has reins, this iddir also has reins, rules to guide it”. The rules, apart from provenance, are
Only one family member can participate in the iddir, you can have up to one member from more than one family. There are laws to be respected. If there are accidents or loss, there are rules to be followed on how to help the person affected financially or not. The father is usually the one who takes care of the payment, and only once he has died, will it be up to the offspring to do so.

Especially on the last rule, Ato Zelalem’s tone is firm and decisive.

It is now interesting to include the opinion of the elderly towards the young. There is no univocal view on such actors, but rather quite the opposite ones, however, I identified two trends. The first, older people who see young people as a lost cause in building or recreating social capital. The pessimistic view, rather than being related to young people’s vices, is given to external causes. For instance, Burtucan explained that

In the old neighbourhood, older people took care of the mahberawi hiwot, and in doing so, the young people lived growing up and touching like it was. Seeing how adults behaved regarding social capital gave them an example to follow and reference figures.

However, young relocated people can no longer interact daily with the bearers of social capital as they are scattered in different parts of Addis Ababa and Akaki, Oromia. In this case, the action of transmitting social capital, to take up Zelalem’s last sentence, is more utilitarian since it is linked to holding the father’s office.

The opposite current views young people with hope. Ato Girma explains that they constantly try to keep the youth in contact with the association “When there is a misfortune, we try to involve the youth a lot asking them to organise the cominal or bringing chairs in”, hoping that these actions will plant the seed of social capital.

The position of relocated young people is somewhat delicate concerning social capital. On the one hand, their age when relocated, around 12 years more or less, would imply less social capital, as trusts and networks build over time. On a conceptual level, this should make it easier for young people to adapt to Jemo One Condominium. This statement could be perceived as true, if compared to older people, who have not only more memories but also more social
capital in the old neighbourhood. Yet, the variable not considered, and complicating the situation in this facilitation, is how the young people in the area particularly feel attached to the old neighbourhood. Nowadays, this sense of belonging seems exacerbated by a context that sees them as “children of no ethnicity”.

On a practical level, it is interesting to talk about the Oldies Wendmamatoch Meheregia Mahber, meaning “the Brotherhood Oldies Association of Support”, shortened as Oldies Mahber, an iddir made up of the young people relocated, who gather periodically outside the blocks of Jemo One Condominium, at the Oldies City Pub.

The reason for the meeting point is simple, as Selemon is quick to explain it to me:

We meet in this pub because the owner is a guy from the old neighbourhood, there is mutual trust, coming here I know that if I don’t have the money to pay for the beer there is no problem because I can pay for it another day. I know I can’t do that in another pub.

In the pub itself, young people rediscover the old social capital, where obligations of reciprocity are not enforcing, and one can pay for one’s beer late. Similarly to the YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber, they produce a horizontal kind of social capital.

Here in the pub, after days of difficulty in finding them, I finally meet young people who have been relocated; I see key informants in my search, such as Zewdi, Laké or Eyob. The pub is located on a side street of Jemo One Condominium, in the middle of the blocks, and on the days I visit, I see a continuous turnout.

Selemon continues

One year ago, we relocated young people made an association of 20 people to fill the gaps in Jemo regarding social capital. The most important thing is love, if there is none, nothing, a clean house, a room to oneself, makes sense.

Like the iddir of the older people, the young people of the Oldies Mahber are looking for something in Jemo One Condominium that still needs to be recreated within the area. Further similar to the YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber, is the clause of having been relocated by the Woreda 7.
Selemon articulates the practices of the association

We have written rules, those who do not participate have 200 birrs fine, everyone has to give of their own, when a father or mother dies, we give 3000 birrs. For every holiday we slaughter a bull, at least Easter and New Year, and give it to the less well-off

Zewdi expands on the last point, “They can be anywhere, maybe they are people from the old neighbourhood who grew up there, people without children and therefore are not helped monetarily”. The Oldies Mahber shows more financial capacity than the Imawaish YeSet Iddir, as it provides 3000 birrs in the case of the death of a father or mother. In addition, this association caters to marginalized and silenced actors: people whose financial help from their iddir is not enough, and whose lives are lived with hardship. Since it is an association of young people, most of them work and can afford higher financial expenses and take care of a neglected segment of the population. Additionally, as Zewdi proudly exclaims, “We are all men, but being the heads of the family, in a way we also represent relocated mothers and sisters!”

The head of this association is Wosen, who also happens to be the owner of the Oldies pub. After a few weeks, I finally bump into him in the pub, and he grants me an interview, which turns out to be the longest I have ever had: an hour and forty minutes. From the reconstruction of events, I apprehend from Wosen that the Oldies Mahber is a peripheral constituency of a larger association of relocated young people, the so-called Fit Ber Hna Aroghe Kera Mahber, the association of Fit Ber and Aroghe Kera, two former areas of the Woreda 7’s informal part. Such association came into being in 2019 from the coming together of 40 young people, and nowadays counts 1,200 people from Woreda 7. What is interesting is the process by which, from such a large mahber, it was decided to create a satellite association in Jemo One Condominium.

Wosen states

The first goal was to understand why they relocated us. However, first the coronavirus and the war caused us to put that desire aside. Finally, the goal became to bring the same sense of community to the neighbourhoods where we lived.
Fit Ber Hna Aroghe Kera Mahber’s original aim was to understand the reason behind the relocation. Still, events such as the coronavirus in 2019 and, later, in 2020, the war in Tigray brought the nation to the fore. It is worth exploring these obstacles briefly.

In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, although it was not felt as in other Western countries, isolation was an equally required measure in Ethiopia in its early days. Yet, during this isolation, networks of support emerged from within places and saved the city (Maringanti, 2020, p.42).

Wosen describes

From that moment on, we embraced the motto ‘My health for you, for everyone’ and went to the sub-city of Kirkos, where we were born, bought sanitisers, masks, handkerchiefs and started raising awareness. With a microphone we were urging people to sanitise, to explain that one’s own health meant health for the other.

He recalls and praises the bearers of social capital for this

Our parents are at the core of everything is, who brought us up with this caring. The point of origin was our old neighbourhood because we wanted to start with our birthplace, with the mothers who fed us, and then focus on the rest.

After that, according to him, the outbreak of war in Tigray in 2020 urged further mobilisation. There were five of us, and we stayed four days in Afar, in Talalac, and we saw the worst tragedies. After 40 km we arrived in a deserted area, it had rained, the mud had flooded our car and we waited for people to help us. 30 people helped us push the car. We had loaded 50,000 bales of water, and I saw a mother giving her daughter a drink of water inside a bottle cap just as we arrived.

The difficulty in obtaining permits to go to the area eventually shifted interest to Jemo One Condominium.

Wosen states

The Oldies, my pub, was a focal point for creating a new association, but functions such as buying a bull and dividing the price between us had been there long before, for every celebration. I used to collect money from various people and fill in the missing amount with
my own money. Then, for the past year, we have been selling tickets, where we explain to acquaintances what we are doing and each of them buys tickets with a sum of money. On the 7th of January, I went to the Oldies to celebrate the Orthodox Christmas. Here are my field notes about it, on the 9th of January 2023:

Two days ago (7 January 2023), I was in Jemo for Gena, the Orthodox Christmas. The guys from Woreda 7 invited me to one of their celebrations. They gathered 20 needy people and with the money collected, which I attended, they slaughtered a bull. I went to the Oldies and those 20 people were there, and I must say it was a wonderful experience. The whole fieldwork makes you put everything into perspective, but, in particular, this day has stayed in my mind (and heart). These 20 people were all women, some from the old neighbourhood, like the lady who sold almost expired fruit in Woreda 7, and others from Jemo One Condominium. They ate, drank coffee, and we did alike; partly because we were hungry, partly because otherwise other people would have felt uncomfortable. At the end of the day, Wosen hugged me and said, "Now you too are a Woreda 7 girl".

6.4 Bonding is strong, but Bridging is missing: Discussion of data

As maintained by Portes (1998), society can witness the simultaneous existence of different types of social capital. This sub-chapter summarises the main themes emerged from social capital within and outside the blocks in Jemo One Condominium.

The Jemo One Condominium society carries on two types of social capital. The first is found inside the blocks of Jemo One Condominium and involves different types of actors: relocated people and well-off people. Both are motivated by rational reasons but with different degrees of priorities; relocated people mainly invest in networks to alleviate poverty conditions, while affluent people, on the other hand, rather than overcoming precarious living conditions, want to fulfil their Ethiopian identity, securing funeral rites or, in some cases, celebrations.

Imawaish YeSet Iddir is an iddir of women within Jemo One Condominium, of whom Hiwot is the leader, who, through a strict system of rules, ensures that practical help is provided during a lakso. Help during a happy celebration, however, is optional.
The use of such iddirs inside the blocks is weak due to a low level of trust, which is “general” and not “particular” (Patulny, 2004). In the case of DIR people and rich people, behaviour within blocks is exclusively the product of rational individual decision-making. However, while affluent people can combine a collective strategy, participating in the iddir, and possibly relying on an individual to see their needs met, like lack of water or electricity, for example, the same is not valid for relocated people. In aggregate, social capital within blocks is rather weak.

Patulny (2004) expresses how successful social capital occurs where generalized and particularized trust mutually support each other (p.5). Likewise, the concept of solidarity of interests and solidarity of sentiments articulated by Michael Bell (1998) concern two mainstay of social capital, closely in dialogue: solidarity of interests and solidarity of sentiments. The solidarity of interest touches on rational solidarity created to achieve interests, whose foundation is a generalized trust, while the latter is an inner solidarity within human beings, dealing with the world of emotions and the fact that “it often pleases us [human beings] to see others get what they want” (Bell, 1998, p.187). The last concept may initially drive individuals — it is difficult to understand what an individual is really driven by — but what Bell (1998) emphasises is how, for successful social capital, the two must be in dialogue. Social capital inside the blocks shows how this is necessary.

Although outside the blocks, old and young are not moved exclusively by a rational choice, solidarity of interest. They refuse to appropriate the practices created in condominium life and fabricate different ones elsewhere. Both located outside the blocks of Jemo One Condominium, the meetings at the Medhanealem church for the former and at the Oldies Pub for the latter symbolise their desire to bring back a solidarity of sentiments.

Jemo One Condominium is not the only context where a rational choice drives inhabitants. The same reason could be found in the setting of Woreda 7: that hunger, as the prime mover, drove them to come together. Yet, Woreda 7 was a place not only of interests but also of sentiments, where the Ubuntu philosophy was displayed, and housing factors or time have nurtured solidarity, reciprocity and familial affinity systems; this made social capital strong.
This social capital has been passed on to both older and younger people. YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber and Oldies Wendmamatoch Mehregia Mahber are two associations of relocated people, who live in Jemo One Condominium, but do not see their sense of community fulfilled in the iddirs of the blocks. Both associations tie membership to the place of origin of the participants, i.e. informal areas of Woreda 7.

Old neighbourhood-based networks allow for old and young relocated people to carry on a cheerful side of social capital. Their commitment is strong, and so is their social capital.

Whilst strictly a form of solidarity of interest and particularised trust, such networks represent a form of bonding social capital, where belonging to a category, i.e., a former resident of Woreda 7, triggers other shared characteristics within the members and their associations. In the case of the elderly, as they come from the same scarcity background, they are more likely to create horizontally based social capital, with mutual understanding and the same economic availability, but low financial capacities to the iddir YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber. In the case of the young, the neighbourhood binder additionally implies sharing the same urban identity, i.e. children of Addis Ababa; the sharing of this binder is symbolic in a context such as Jemo One Condominium, where particular ethnicities translate into certain statuses, thus resulting in relocated young people cling to the only marker they have. Eyasu explains that, "if I find myself socialising, I find myself with the guys from the old neighbourhood, from the Hilton hotel".

While the association of the elderly seems less exclusive, the Oldies Wendmamatoch Mehregia Mahber looks more likely to an unconstructive bonding social capital. Requests to join the association are incessant, yet simultaneously rejected because they do not meet the first criterion: membership. Dynamics of power and exclusion characterise The Oldies Wendmamatoch Mehregia Mahber. Since access is only granted to young boys from the old neighbourhood, people from other social classes or ethnicities are not integrated, making bridging unfeasible.
Wosen and the other boys are proud of where they come from because that place has taught them the authentic Ethiopian traditions of social capital. However, the question arises, why would one avoid sharing such traditions with those who have not had them? Or, what sense does it make to be so restrictive in the criteria, if the person who requested to join is motivated by the same value of solidarity of sentiments?

Gradually, the boys of Woreda 7 went from “bearers” to exclusive “owners” of social capital. However, it remains difficult to understand whether Oldies Wendmamatoch Meheregia Mahber is producing as a consequence “perverse social capital”. One might be happy that boys like Eyasu find solace in their peers, yet when Wosen says to me, “Now you too are a girl from Woreda 7”, I feel that I have received a title — a membership — exclusive of which I must be proud. Confirming this feeling are the words of a boy born outside the capital, whom I meet one day at the Oldies, and he tells me

Whenever I think of the guys from Woreda 7, I think I am really just living now, alongside them. Many of them are my friends and I am happy about that. I am a boy born outside the capital, but I know the details of what it was like to live there. I am older than them, but I worked a lot in the Woreda 7 area, and I spend a lot of time with these guys. Woreda 7 is also a second home for me

His words corroborate a feeling of oneness with a group, even though he is not even from Woreda 7; hanging around with them is such an honour that he feels the place as a second home. The title “friend of the Woreda 7 guys” sounds appealing, yet the friendship does not guarantee him entry into the association, as he was not born and raised in the place, and the question remains as to who can get in.

Such aspects could lead one to categorize the Oldies Wendmamatoch Meheregia Mahber as a perverse social capital, yet, it should not be forgotten how their association still has positive outcomes for society as it takes care for marginalised actors. It will probably be the years to come that will give more precise value to this association.
What is certain is that if the criterion of inclusion remains the same, YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber and Oldies Wendmamatoch Meheregia Mahber are unlikely to succeed in creating bridging social capital, which would lead to an even more substantial social capital at Jemo One Condominium. To make this happen, one should incorporate what happens outside the blocks, inside the blocks: to bring people from different economic and social backgrounds into dialogue and to ensure that those who have touched the authentic traditions of social capital can pass on this solidarity of sentiments to current and future generations.

**Conclusion**

The present chapter was designed to determine why and how the inhabitants of Jemo One Condominium reproduce social capital practices in the area. The main reason for relocated and condominium-owning people is rational-utilitarian. While the former is primarily driven by seeing their economic problems overcome, the latter participate in risk-sharing mechanisms such as iddirs to secure their rituals during funerals. De facto, such iddirs are mainly set to see funeral practices fulfilled and linked to Ethiopian rituals without giving any emotional support to its members. General trust, pressing demands to be fulfilled, and a nuclear kinship weaken the creation of a flourishing social capital inside the blocks. On the other hand, outside the blocks elders and young people born and raised in Woreda 7 come together and carry on a solidarity of interests but also of sentiments. Their bonding is strong, linked by their origin, yet the bonding does not allow for bridging with other social classes or ethnic groups. To do so, one would have to involve inhabitants of different social classes and backgrounds living in the block. Chapter VII deals with whether and how the local government of Jemo One Condominium succeeds in bridging the gap between the local government itself and the different people in the blocks and to eventually carry what happens outside the blocks of the area within it.
Chapter VII

The new relationship between the government and the citizens: The administrative machinery of Jemo One Condominium

Jemo One Condominium has different kinds of social capital, weaker and more rationalistic inside the blocks and more robust and cohesive outside the blocks. The blame, however, does not lie exclusively with the population; whilst the upper classes have reasons for not wanting to engage more in the iddir within the block, the relocated people are entitled to create a more substantial social capital outside. Patulny (2004) explores how the phenomenon of victim blaming is permeating studies on social capital: the lack of it, he argues, is often blamed on the unfortunates, who become “symbolic causes of society’s ills” (p.18). Residents of Jemo One Condominium should by no means be entirely blamed for such weak, two-sided social capital. Indeed, the social capital practices at Jemo One Condominium are at least enough to get by. Whose task is it to make social capital dynamics outside the blocks happen inside the blocks? According to linking social capital theory, to get ahead the role of government is necessary, in this case, local government (Putnam, 2000). In this sense, the operatus of local government in social capital in Jemo One Condominium needs to be questioned; this chapter, therefore, deals with the role of the woreda vis à vis citizens’ social capital, relocated or not, in toto, using both citizens’ perspectives and the woreda administration’s point of view, and political practices in condominium units.

7.1 Citizens’ Perception of the Woreda

Before exploring the performance of local government in Jemo One Condominium, it is necessary to make premises about what exactly is meant by local government, or rather, what citizens perceive it to be.

Theoretically, the ideal answer would be the woreda. However, in Chapter IV, I anticipate how everyday articulations of the idea of local government referred to mengist, woreda and kebele interchangeably; nevertheless, when I was doing the same in an attempt to replicate
their language, various interviewees corrected me and distinguished the different bodies. For example, Serkalem perceives the work of institutional bodies like this: “The mengist has improved the streets of our neighbourhood. The woreda’s job, on the other hand, was to give identity card. The kebele is now dead”. This sentence shows how according to Serkalem mengist, woreda, and kebele have three distinct roles. Furthermore, it illustrates how she is aware of the grouping of kebele into woreda following the reform. However, people did not always seem perturbed by the use of the correct term, especially the older ones who referred to the Woreda 1 of Jemo One Condominium as kebele, leaving me to interpret. My leading hint was contextualise the term with the time frame described; if they were talking about the role of the kebele in Jemo One Condominium, it is evident that they meant the woreda, since there are no more kebeles in the area. Other times it was enough to ask to confirm what they meant. It helps, at least, that in this case the term woreda was used by the interviewees in political terms and not, as in the case of Woreda 7, in geographical terms.

Although the distinction of terms was only sometimes discernible, common to the understanding of the interviewees was the perception of local government as a living reality. In fact, Serkalem’s phrase does not refer to specific operators, such as government agents, wrapped up in building the roads of Jemo One Condominium, but delegates the action to the mengist in toto. Mulugeta’s (2020) study reports similar findings in the study of the everyday Ethiopian state: “I found that all too often the state was constantly referred to in conversations as if it were a living reality, unified and tangible” (p.26).

Furthermore, the personification of the state features homologous opposition as the ones spelt out between God and the people: just as between God and the people there is a relationship of reciprocal rights and responsibilities, the same applies to the state and society, and the phrase of one of his middle-age farmer interviewees is emblematic, “God is the one who can give us rain. This is the same with the government” (Mulugeta, 2020, p.242). In parallel, my interviews also made analogies between God’s powers and the woreda ones.
For example, in addressing the role of the woreda in the area’s economy, Turuye’s neighbour relates that “God helps us as he can, and the woreda also helps the widows, those who have no family, who are at home with a child, who have been affected by the coronavirus emergency as it can”. Indeed, the shemachoc, woreda-operated trade shop, of Jemo One Condominium provides financial help to ten marginalised people.

This is not the only help provided by the woreda shemachoc. Since 2018, to exit the country’s economic and financial crisis, Ethiopia has been experiencing a privatisation of the primary food industry, such as sugar. The government manoeuvre was supposed to fight inflation and external debt, creating jobs instead and improving credit to the private sector (Zikargie et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the downside effect of extending private control over natural resources has been an increase in goods’ prices and a decrease in their access. The shemachoch is thus in the process of providing citizens with goods at an affordable price on a quota system, such as five kilos of sugar for 330 birrs against the cost of 500 birrs for the same amount sold by private companies.

At the same time, the employees of such shemachochs are usually formerly unemployed people who, having gone to the woreda of Jemo One Condominium applying for a job, were allowed to work there.

In my first bureaucratic pilgrimage to the woreda of Jemo One Condominium, in an attempt to obtain a research permit, I myself had the opportunity to witness this dynamic.

Thus, on the 3rd of October 2022, I recorded in my field notes

_Today officially started my fieldwork in Jemo 1 condominium. 8:00 am in the morning, I dressed quickly, had some juice left from the day before, and went to look for a print place with my cousin. However, right when we just arrived in the print place, electricity turned off and we had to wait one hour until it came back. Then we headed to the Woreda 1, where I needed to explain my fieldwork purpose to get my research permit. Spending an hour and a half in the waiting room allowed me to do some participant observation. The room had two tables, one facing the other, and along the wall there was a line-up of chairs, where we were all sitting tight. I rapidly_
noticed how full of young people the room was, but I mean, one could say that is no big news in Ethiopia, country with the youngest population in Africa

The age of the young people must have been 20, not more. My cousin explained to me that The woreda is trying to solve the unemployment problem. Unemployed young people apply to the woreda for a place to set up a business, certifying that they are unemployed, after which they are given a certificate stating this, they join a waiting list and every week a list of winners is published

If lucky, these young people get a plastic tent to open petty trade businesses such as bunna places, barbershops, vegetable sales. Indeed, the streets of Jemo One Condominium are full of them. The opportunity also extends to older people like Alem, who was drawn from the waiting list after applying to the woreda and got a plastic tent where she sells utensils.

Occasionally, there are also job opportunities within the woreda, with open positions for civil servants. In some regions more than others, as Yilmaz and Venugopal (2008) state, “in Amhara and Oromiya, woreda administrations play a central role in advertising and selecting (…) at the local level” (p.16).

An even younger opinion, Samry, asserts, “At the beginning of the year, the woreda distributes pens and notebooks for us students,” she laughs, “and it becomes a competition between us girls to see who can hold it best”.

The perception of the woreda is most significant regarding structural changes. For example, Johannes, a member of one of Jemo One Condominium committees, reports the woreda’s construction of a football gearbox as a positive and concrete element of its work.

Furthermore, Selemon confirms Serkalem’s opinion on the woreda and states that “With the arrival of the inhabitants, the mengist started to improve the area, widening the roads and creating alternative roads” but it was the young people themselves, pinned down by the Woreda 1, who created those roads. Sara, the general office of a block, says, “Before, the woreda helped, for example, it gave the youth the job of carpeting the streets of kobelstone…Now I don’t know what it does”.

 Nonetheless, such structural changes seem minimal, leading to an emphasis on the non-role of the woreda according to citizens. One example would be the dustbins, as stated by Turuye’s neighbour, who claims

The kebele has repeatedly asked people living on the streets in dog kennels made of foil to clear the bins, but everything has stayed the same. What should be dustbins for rubbish remain homes for people, and we need to figure out where to throw the remains

Nowadays, institutional confidence towards the woreda is not the highest. Here are Tiye Turuye’s words: “The kebele tells us ‘you have the condominium’. They think we can eat the condominium. But we were taken and thrown here by the government, we did not come here voluntarily”. Turuye’s phrase alludes to how having a condo is seen by the woreda as enough to get by, yet, as she states, one does not obtain daily food from simply living in a condo. Especially if one has not chosen to live there, having an apartment building has primarily resulted in losing of older economic, social and political practices crucial to getting ahead.

Turuye’s neighbour asks a rhetorical question, “What does woreda contribution mean?”, and exclaims

We [citizens] have not seen it! During the coronavirus, there were rumours of help for marginalised people, but it was not seen in our block. In our block, there were many people who needed a hand, one lady is blind and lives off her daughter, yet nothing was done

Turuye’s neighbour expands and states that if the woreda’s help is found, it was done elsewhere, so it is not tangible. Therefore, the woreda’s credibility is undermined.

Issues of power and exclusion also intersect within Woreda 1. Indeed, job opportunities are available, but the problem of who has access to them remains pressing. Sometimes, these opportunities are undermined by the regions themselves, as in the case of the choice of civil servants, “even when a qualified candidate is present in the region, the woreda’s administration cannot make an independent decision to hire without the regional bureau’s approval”, compromising the discretion of the woreda, since “[its] decisions are sometimes overruled by the regional bureaus or zones, without consultation” (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008, p.16).
Eyob, on the other hand, blames the woreda itself. He is pessimistic about the woreda’s help finding work and says, “The jobs given to my young friends fell during the election period, they probably gave them out to accommodate more consensus, and now all those jobs that were given out have actually been requested back”.

I could not find confirmation of this fact. However, I was told by Woreda 1 that all places offered are temporary and offered as an opportunity for people to find more stable activities in the meantime.

Eyasu similarly discloses difficulties in accessing job opportunities

We asked the woreda to give us a place for taxies, we wanted to run a taxi car park. Twice they told us to wait, and when we came back to ask for an update, a person who had paid 50,000 birrs had gotten the place for us.

The woreda is perceived as a highly politicised entity, accountable only to one ethnic group (Pausewang et al., 2002).

Eyob continues, “The woreda is a political arena, and everything produced within it is political”. One interviewee went so far as to decree that “not speaking Orominiya is a tremendous disadvantage for citizens”, to suggest that not being from the Oromo ethnic group is disadvantageous. His sentence shows how citizens are conscious that woreda would provide benefits, even if bound by speaking a specific language.

Does this disaffection represent a crisis of this institution or rather a continuation of the citizens’ perception of it? The most plausible answer is that the confidence of the citizens has never been the highest (Ayele, 2015; Pausewang et al., 2002; Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008) but that the ethnic context of the country, and in particular at Jemo One Condominium, at the moment has discredited even further the institution.

As much as I did not want to do research based strictly on ethnic or politicised terms, given the difficulty of doing so, seeing the general context of the country, I soon had to give up hope when my interviewees and I approached the topic.
Favouritism at the expense of discretion is certainly nothing new in the study of local government, any more than it is new to me, having grown up in Italy, where clientelist relationships have shaped the country's political tradition. What has astonished me, however, is how such associations have severely discredited the local government, at least that of Jemo One Condominium, and Selemon says, "For me, woreda is just a place where I can renew my identity card. And even to renew that you have to go through a thousand difficulties". This sentence highlights how the woreda is a place occasionally visited for some. Generally, the distance between citizens and local government is more remarkable in Jemo One Condominium. This may be due to the reform following which the kebeles disappeared; eliminating small geographical constituencies damages the closeness between citizens and local government, especially if the local government was formed recently. Moreover, at Jemo One Condominium, the increase in population complicates it.

In particular, for relocated persons, such as Eyob, this distance can be glaring, shifting from a contest where civil servants are your neighbours to one where you struggle to see them more than once a year.

The distance is also physical, to the extent that many interviewees claimed not to know the location of Woreda 1 of Jemo One Condominium.

Woreda’s administration indeed dedicates an essential portion of its office to bureaucratic duties, collecting fees for registrations of births, deaths, marriages and divorces (Ayele, 2015, p.215). However, it also represents a source of economic opportunity; yet, the latter is disregarded, and woreda is taking the resemblance of a bureaucratic quibble.

What about helping the residents to be social? I was interested in getting an answer to this question, because, for my research, it was essential to know how in a context where many of the inhabitants are involuntarily forced to live, and those who arrive voluntarily are strangers to the residents, the local government helps the citizens weave a social fabric. Unlike the former neighbourhood, the same relocated people I spoke to felt this was necessary. However, I was often laughed at for this question, which, nonetheless, I continued to ask. Not receiving any data
about it initially got me down before I realised that a lack of data is still data; the lack of examples about it or laughter of derision when asked such a question shows how, according to the residents, the local government has done nothing to familiarise people with each other, creating a further disappointment for its inhabitants.

7.2 A Truly Absent Administration? Woreda’s Belief

The previous sub-chapter showed citizens’ perception towards the work of Woreda 1, mentioning positive factors such as economic aid provided by the shemachoc and jobs inside the woreda itself and outside it. The structural changes seem to show more concretely and definitively the role of the woreda in Jemo One Condominium, the problem, however, is that the absence of the latter, as in the case of the dustbins, shows a more negative side to the role of Woreda 1 in Jemo One Condominium; the opportunities provided by the woreda are not accessible to all, either because of institutions, such as the regions, or because of issues of patronage or ethnic relations in the woreda itself. Furthermore, no one mentioned any action of the woreda for the benefit of social capital. However, it is worth investigating the other side of the opinion, and asking how do Woreda 1, its departments and employees perceive their role at Jemo One Condominium? And how does Woreda 1 perceive its citizens? The following sub-chapter answers this question, investigating employees from different woreda department’s role in improving Jemo One Condominium.

According to many citizens, the Woreda 1 of Jemo One Condominium is a loophole only needed to see their bureaucracies fulfilled. By stating so, residents deny economic opportunities and the woreda’s more standard role as custodian of the utilities (Stebek, 2013). The woreda does not provide utilities such as water supply, electricity, or transportation; that is a task that, as seen in Chapter V, falls to the national government, and several administrative sectors mention this, e.g. the electricity administration notes in the survey that large companies do not offer enough materials to ensure constant electricity services and the state’s management of the
city’s grids is poor. The transport department, moreover, states that public transportation in Jemo One Condominium would improve if the government offered enough transport on the day, based on the destinations.

However, the woreda must ensure that within the area they manage, the handling of these resources, or the redistribution using Polanyi’s (1957) term, is done correctly. Consequently, effectiveness does not depend on them, but efficiency does.

Indeed, frequent visits to the general Woreda 1 departments of electricity, water, rubbish, transport and sewage have made my image of the woreda associate with that of a complex piece of machinery: each gear has its role to play, but only in cooperation can they benefit the perception of Woreda 1. Woreda 1 is the lived space where many bureaucratic or political activities take place: citizens can go to complain about an increase in the bill, the employees take care of answering the various questions, as well as checking the functioning of the various utilities. When I visit, a space is also dedicated to me.

In reply to the questionnaire, the general administration of Woreda 1 writes that, in addition to the economic opportunities already described in the previous chapter, in cooperation with wealthy people and some sponsoring companies, the woreda has arranged for houses to be created and given within 60 days to needy inhabitants. During my research, I found no trace of such an initiative, nor did the interviewees mention being aware of it when questioned.

In addition, the garbage collection department refutes the reports from Turuye’s neighbour, writing in the questionnaire that

The offices are in the front line of work. They advise people on rubbish management. They request that the streets be cleaned daily. In addition, every week, we ask citizens to clean the surroundings where they live. We ask them to empty the dustbins.

The same office dedicates favourable words to the citizens, writing, “The citizens collect the rubbish immediately and take it to the bin.”

Moreover, all the offices claimed power over utility management at Jemo One Condominium. In addition to demonstrating certainty in their role in the area, this assertion shows that, at the
same time, Woreda 1 is aware of its power in terms of capital, mainly financial, natural and human one.

Soon, heading from a woreda office to an interview with a citizen made my research seem like a ping-pong match, with conflicting opinions. Such contradictory evidence between what the woreda perceives to give and what the citizen feels to receive may be based in part on a general disaffection of citizens, who, not seeing too many benefits in the woreda, are not really aware of the roles that, in reality, this local government plays on other sides.

The most surprising aspect of this conflicting evidence actually concerns social capital. Firstly, it is interesting to note how the general department of Woreda 1 writes in the survey that "The situation in Jemo One Condominium has improved socially". This perception contrasts sharply with that of the residents of Jemo One Condominium, particularly the relocated people, and leads one to wonder whether having an office position improves one's perception of the area.

More strikingly, the idea that woreda did not help the social capital of Jemo One Condominium, at least in its early days, is not necessarily true.

In 2010, when Jemo One Condominium began to be inhabited, interactions between the inhabitants did not naturally occur. Thus, Woreda 1, then called Woreda 3, particularly the section "Management of committees" implemented linking social capital, creating forums of interactions between the inhabitants.

An employee of Woreda 1 explains

The woreda posted a news item telling all flat owners in Jemo One Condominium to meet. Each set of blocks met and decided on a name for their block. In addition, the woreda asked everyone to take care of a role, such as tending the street, the garden, on a voluntary basis, but also to organise committees

In this way, Jemo One Condominium saw the birth of the committees.
7.3 Approaching Committees

The following sub-chapter analyses the committees’ tasks, a management reality inside the blocks of Jemo One Condominium. This sub-chapter analyses the committees’ tasks, the relations between the citizens and the committee, and between the woreda, in this case 1, and the committees of the blocks.

The committees are an institutional body that came into being under the impetus of Woreda 1, then Woreda 3, of Jemo One Condominium. Each block of Jemo One Condominium has a committee organisation. They represent the interests of the citizens within the condominiums, and Eyob legitimises their representation in this way:

Representation like the committees is necessary because if you think about it, in a condominium of 340 inhabitants, all 340 of them cannot react to their problems or injustices, so their grievances are channelled to some representatives, who are delegated by the inhabitants of the condominium

In order to ensure a democratic process, there is an election of this organisation every three years, where residents, not renters, are invited to vote. This means that, in the case of renters, the owners of the rented flats must be present and vote.

Each committee is led by a Wanna committee, translated in English as Board Office, and a sub-committee called Sra Ascheagi that answers to the role of General Office. Their work is documented by a Tzahafi, in English Chancellor.
Figure 18

Hierarchy of a committee

Johannes is the board office of a block of Jemo One Condominium and, sitting on a stool in the block’s garden, explains his task: “The job of the committee is to enforce the law, without committee, there is no law. We listen to people’s problems and try to solve them through the law because people do not know their obligations and benefits”. Johannes outlines three main tasks of committees: resolving disputes within the condominium, enforcing people’s obligations, and ensuring their benefits are guaranteed.

When I visit Sara, the general office of the block committee at Jemo One Condominium, I immediately observe an example of the first task. Sara’s office is narrow and greyish, in the centre is a long table. Next to the wall are four chairs, where I sit waiting for my turn, while next to the table an elderly lady is busy telling Sara about her problems. I spy and write down in my field notes, a short and clear dialogue.

From my field notes, on the 9th of January 2023

The lady reports a theft of her water tanker by a neighbour, apparently a renter, and asks Sara to take action about it. Sara asks for the lady’s particulars — name, surname, floor where she lives and house number — and explains to the lady that she would first have to ensure the
truthfulness of the act, but that she would soon take action. The lady leaves the office muttering, and I catch a few phrases like 'Let’s hope it happens soon' and 'God bless you'.

Then it is my turn to occupy the chair next to Sara, who gives an example of her role in fulfilling citizens’ obligations:

No one can occupy terraces with objects. I started to educate everyone, to tell them 'you don’t need this', if it starts to rain, things will begin to smell and that is not good for your health. I started to clean the stairs, to teach them how to do it, and once I taught that I started to explain more. For example, people on the upper floors would throw dirty or used water on the lower floors, without thinking about the residents, and I had to teach them not to do that. This narrative refers to the residents’ obligations and benefits: just as it is their obligation to ensure that a common space such as the terrace remains clean, it is their benefit to enjoy tidy spaces freely. Sara also demonstrates the committees’ role in regulating communal areas, i.e. education in living together. Although each committee in the Jemo One Condominium blocks is different, and I will elaborate on why later, it is striking how each of the committee members interviewed demonstrated a desire to care for the condominium and consequently its inhabitants. Sometimes, committees post flyers on buildings, as shown in Figure 19.

**Figure 19**

*Cleaning request notice*
For the whole community of inhabitants from the volunteer cleaning group

To raise Jemo 1[abbreviation] from block 128 to 139 on 29 August 2014, we ask you to come out at 6.30am to clean your block or neighbourhood. kindly

Recommendation: register the block and the house

Rahel is a chancellor of a block, about which she speaks positively. The interview with her takes place at her home, and while apologizing for being unable to offer me bunna, she pronounces:

Here nobody occupies the terraces with objects. In fact, people clean the stairs together once a month. If there is a problem, for example, someone smokes and throws cigarette butts on the terrace, the person who is disturbed by this comes to the committee and the committee sends a note explaining the situation.

The committees created inside the blocks are more effective in teaching Ethiopian citizens how to live in the apartment blocks than the Addis Ababa Grand Housing Program guides. Their role, as Rahel reports, has enabled the inhabitants to implement community practices.

This is most noticeable on a practical level, such as in renting the cominals, as Johannes recalls:

The committee law must also give permission to the condominiums to rent a room for mourning or slaughter a bull. If the condominees do such things without permission, they are fined, if they do not pay the fine, they go to the woreda.

But the most salient example of the practical help of the committees is in the payment and management of guards, gardeners, cleaning people in the apartment block, and also the creation of recreational places such as football pitches. It is worth dwelling on the work of the guards. They usually live on the corner of the gates of the blocks, in similar houses made of sheets. Most of them are young men, who organise their shifts as they please, and Abel, a guard in the area, explains to me how arduous such arrangements are: “Sometimes my mates skip their shifts, but
they still demand payment”. To cope with these episodes, the committee of his block enforces law through fines of around 10 birrs.

Now, it should be emphasised that the work of the committees is not voluntary but on the contrary, paid and, in a certain sense, related to the rational utility of managing common spaces within the condominium. Although part of their salary comes from a fixed monthly fee from each condominium owner, most of their salary depends on common condominium space. Sara notes thus: "We meet with all residents once a year. For the meeting to take place, 50% + 1 of those present must be present". If the constitutive quorum is reached, they choose how to manage common areas on the ground floor, usually kitchens, the comunal, and parking spaces. The ground floors are for example rented out for everyday shops, gym schools or health clinics. The car parks accommodate cars at a variable price: if you are a resident there is a nominal price, the price is around 30 birrs per day; if you are not a resident of Jemo One Condominium, the price increases and it is around 150 birrs. Ground floors, if not inhabited, are rented monthly from 4500 to 8800 birrs.

The number of people on the committee, as well as the guards, gardeners, cleaning people, and recreation places in each block is variable. If a condominium generates more income, for instance, by hosting many cars, it will have more money and therefore be able to afford more staff. Practices such as securing a safe area legitimise the committee.

Committees borrowed the authority from the woreda. Mimi shares with me an episode that clearly demonstrates this:

In Block 48, a lady who was a hairdresser near her house had opened a pipe that she needed for her shop, but next to it was a sewer manhole. A little further on, a pub worker accidentally broke the same manhole, causing pee to spill onto the street. I argued with everyone for 15 days for the situation to be resolved, and only finally did the committee call the pub owner to resolve the problem, explaining that with the sun, the pee would dry up and the smell would rise to the apartment building. So, the owner paid 2500 birrs to fix the damage. And the woreda? The woreda does nothing.
As Mimi’s story shows, their actions are not necessarily swifter than the woreda, but the fact remains that when required, the inhabitants reach out to the former. Moreover, it is remarkable to note that Mimi asks for help not only because she cares about the hairdresser’s business, which would lose clients because of the smell, but because that very stench would rise in the block where she lives.

The question arises as to whether such authority is lent by the woreda or actually substituting it. According to Lily, it is neither the committee should be our vehicle between us residents and the woreda. When you have a problem, whether it is theft or disturbance of the peace, you turn to them, but once you do, they do nothing. None of them help you, for example, if there is a theft you turn to them, but in front of them doing nothing, you turn to your neighbours, there is some unnecessary noise and only then do the police come.

However, as claimed by the committee members themselves, the hierarchy between the woreda and them is respected. Sara reports on the process of reporting problems with electricity as follows:

The main problem in the block of flats is electricity. We get harassed with requests regarding electricity, they ask us why we don't solve it, they advise us on who we should turn to. They don't understand that there are steps and a hierarchy to be respected. For problems like electricity we turn to the woreda. If the woreda cannot solve it, the problem is sent back to the sub-city, and if in turn the sub-city fails, we send it to the Ministry of Finance.

Even further, Sara highlights how local relations with residents can put under pressure committees’ members, as they have to perform and be responsive to them, even though it may not be their task (Woolcock, 2001, p.236).

Johannes’s stance, on the other hand, is somewhere between Lily and Sara since he perceives the role of the committee as a compromise:
There are situations where we intersect, like when they [woreda civil servants] want to take care of the silence of the area, of making the place quieter, of the development of the area, then we find ourselves on the same page.

If one wants to appeal to the facts, the most likely answer is that the committee is increasingly inclined to replace woreda, and admitting this, albeit indirectly, is Woreda 1 itself. For example, Eyob reports “I remember that when there was the Covid-19 emergency or the war in Tigray, the woreda did not feel in a position to ask for donations from the inhabitants directly, so they asked the committee to do it for them”. Such events show how Woreda 1 is au courant that the committee has more leverage in making specific demands. Yet, it looks undisturbed in this regard.

7.4 Committees as Inhibitors of Ways of Living Together: Discussion of data

Jemo One Condominium is led by Woreda 1, formerly Woreda 3. In describing it, citizens denote positive elements of its performance, such as the sale of primary goods at optimal prices, job opportunities, or the construction of football pitches. Yet, negative elements also emerge, with citizens claiming that this woreda is driven by patronage or favouritism towards certain ethnic groups, sometimes making access to its opportunities more difficult. Between mistrust and disaffection, Woreda 1 becomes a bureaucratic loophole that citizens resort to on a one-off basis. At the same time, the woreda’s employees stand firm, claiming to have ulterior qualities, such as regulating the efficacy of utilities such as water, electricity and transport. Citizens’ narratives and Woreda 1 reveal dissonant views, especially on the issue of social capital: while citizens claim that little is being done in this regard, Woreda 1 brings evidence of a substantial effort in promoting social capital at Jemo One Condominium.

The junction of this dissonance of opinions is the consciousness of both citizens and woreda of their hierarchical position: citizens know that they can find advantages in Woreda 1, which on the other hand claims to be an asset, especially in the area of financial and human capital. The relationship between Woreda 1 and the citizens is vertical. This premise meets with the theory
of linking social capital, whereby both parties must be aware of their positions. Indeed, analysing the effort to promote social capital in Jemo One Condominium with this lens, several elements serve insights. By forcing residents of Jemo One Condominium to meet and create committees, Woreda 1 acted as a link between individuals, sharing decision-making and organisational power with committee members. Consequently, creating to some extent partnerships between residents.

These forums of interaction had several implications. To the benefit of the woreda, the cost of enforcing regulations was reduced as it was shifted to the committee. However, it is worth investigating whether committees are currently sharing or replacing the work of Woreda 1. The answer would depend on the respondent.

From Sara’s point of view, the hierarchy between the Woreda 1 and committee is respected, confirming what Warner (2001) states about neighbourhood collaborative bodies “likely to have strong linkage within community but less autonomy than formal governmental institution” (p.190).

Yet, the woreda itself would tend to see a substitution of its work in the committee rather than a sharing, sending its members forward during monetary collections for the Covid-19 emergency or the war in Tigray. This is further confirmed by citizens’ anecdotes such as that of Mimi, who, having to complain about a burst pipe, reached out to the committee. In 2017, Planel and Bridonneau noted that “the committees are the sole interface with local authorities” (p.38). Indeed, fuelling citizens’ disaffection with the woreda is the overlapping role of the committees. The most plausible explanation is that, unlike the woreda, the committees have succeeded in building relationships of trust with the citizens (Evans, 1996, p.1121). Mundane tasks such as resolving disputes within the block of flats, observing obligations and guaranteeing benefits, translated into elements such as cleaning of communal terraces, resulted in the committee now being regarded as a credible authority inside the blocks.
In representing the only interface with local authorities, such committees reproduce the
dynamics of the kebeles in Woreda 7, where citizens saw political units as their neighbours, and
likewise succeed in creating closeness and trust with the citizens.

Now, if Woreda 1 acted as a link between the institution and the citizens, what was its effect
on the social capital of the committees? Do committees produce further social capital?

As stated by Planel and Bridonneau (2017), committees are “forging a communal space that
updates Ethiopian social practices in modern form and developing tools that structure collective
practices and supplant the clubs and societies that are so active in older neighbourhoods”
(p.38). Some actions, indeed, are proof of this. For instance, the payment and management of
guards is a symbol of collective action to improve neighbourhood safety. To cope with
insecurity, young people undertake the activity collectively and share the cost (Mercy Corps,
2017). In this sense, the committee was an incentive in implementing and coordinating this
activity.

One could find in the committee itself an expression of social capital, albeit not necessarily a
beneficial one; the constraint imposed on the residents of the apartment building generates
bonds, the limiting side being that this is often bonding social capital, where only those who are
residents can be part of the representation. One wonders, in fact, if this is why tenants
themselves want to avoid taking care of common spaces or even participate in practices such as
iddir.

In addition to such examples, the most quoted answer is that committees are restricted in
adding additional social capital to Jemo One Condominium. As Flora (1998) denotes, “Social
fields do not necessarily add up to a strong community field. One cannot simply aggregate
individual or organisational action within a community to achieve community wide action”
(p.499).

This is intrinsic to the committee's value at the moment. The committee is born for the
citizen only to the extent that the citizen experiences the condominium. They are micro-linkages
that tie community and political body, aiming to organise a collective good. This may partly be
the reason why citizens do not see the linking of Woreda 1 as benefiting social capital: committees try more to preserve the object, than the subject. In doing so, they do not create any sense of belonging, a motive for which, perhaps, Woreda 1 is exclusively mentioned as a political reality and not as a place of geographical belonging. To preserve condominium units, committees establish common practices. Johannes thus reasserts their role: “The woreda takes care of the individual citizen, and by extension the people, while we take care of the condominium”. Like the iddirs of the block, they crystallise new ways of living but are confined to their common roof. For this, the committee did not succeed veritably in shifting citizens’ interests from individualistic interests to more community-oriented ones. And so, social capital navigates elsewhere.

Conclusion

The present chapter, Chapter VII, aimed to understand the political practices in Jemo One Condominium. First, citizens’ perception of the local government, i.e. Woreda 1, in the area was examined. It was estimated that although it contributes through shemachoc and jobs for the inhabitants, as well as with tangible elements such as the construction of football pitches, the opinion of the people, especially the relocated ones, is not high. Elements such as a lack of concrete aid or clientelist, ethnic relations detract from its role, sometimes flattening it. Indeed, Woreda 1 deals with utility management, as departmental agents are keen to emphasise, and has implemented a link in creating committees. The latter is an organisation of the condominium, aimed, in its management, at ensuring compliance with the obligations and benefits of the inhabitants, concerning the area, e.g. by cleaning shared terraces or setting up a patrol. Getting a large amount of their income from the condominium areas themselves, such as parking spaces or empty tertiary floors rented out to shopkeepers and small entrepreneurs in the area, the committee only emphasises what it is: a body which, more than its inhabitants, exists to the extent that the object, i.e. the condominium, is respected. Therefore, the
interviewees do not see in its establishment a concrete operation of Woreda 1 in inhibiting a social capital, but rather a securing of the protection of the very areas in which they live.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

Approaching the end of this thesis, it is now necessary to summarise its main trajectories. This chapter will review them by summarising the key research findings about the economic, social and political consequences of living in condominium units, particularly for people relocated from the informal houses of Woreda 7 in Kirkos sub-city to the Jemo One Condominiums in Nefas Silk, Addis Ababa. By doing so, it will also discuss the contribution of the thesis and ways to move forward.

While Chapter I is an introductory chapter to the thesis, Chapter II lays the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the thesis, i.e. the use of social capital theory, as conceived by Robert Putnam, and its political ramification, i.e. linking social capital theory. Chapter III establishes the methodical and methodological basis of the research, describing the observation methods used, the interviews and surveys, and the data analysis once collected. Chapters IV and V deals with answering sub-question 1, analysing how people’s livelihoods have changed settling in Jemo One Condominium compared to former neighbourhoods, Chapter VI with answering sub-question 2 in understanding how condominiums forge new ways of living collectively in Addis Ababa, and finally Chapter VII with answering sub-question 3 and seeing how Woreda 1 links to its residents and what is the result of this link. Each answer to these sub-questions allowed to answer the general research question and show how condominium life shapes citizens’ practices in Addis Ababa, particularly relocated ones.
8.1 Wrapping up

The expression condominium life in Amharic has nowadays taken on a variety of meanings and implications: from the economic to the social and political.

This thesis sets out to explore how the livelihood of former slum inhabitants evolves when moving to condominium units. To do so, Chapter IV, navigating through memories of former inhabitants, explores living in previous informal areas of Woreda 7: locational advantage of nearby hotels and headquarters, to which formal jobs like the chauffeur and informal jobs such as shoe cleaner were anchored, a strong and flourishing network of connections, driven by long-standing acquaintance and proximity, emerged as the mainstay of livelihood in the former neighbourhood. Chapter V has identified that living in condominium units starkly contrasts their previous livelihood, as it implies high living prices, and primarily formal economic activities, such as broker, office work, or jobs in the private sector, which are hardly accessible to the lower class. The lack of a main economic source is compounded by a lack of community support in providing food. Another significant finding revealed in Chapter V is that class and ethnic differences, with particular reference to neighbouring Oromia, become more pressing in apartment blocks. Such differences contribute to the divergent connotation that living in an apartment building has, compared to those who speak; de facto, over the same economic life in Jemo One Condominium, the wealthier neighbour, usually moved in thanks to winning the lottery or because in a financial position to buy a condominium unit, will likely assert that living in the apartment block is a success, primarily because of the facilities offered: private bathroom, private kitchen. Yet, low-income people cannot enjoy such amenities due to intermittent electricity and water, which are arduous to solve by constantly paying for jericas or barrels of water. For the relocated people, the change in economic activities and social fabric, compared to the old neighbourhood, is severe, while utilities such as water and electricity continue to be suffered.

The main goal of Chapter VI was to undertake these challenges in livelihood and see how the relocated people, and more generally the inhabitants of the block of flats, forge ways of living
collectively, with a particular emphasis on networks of support found in Jemo One Condominium. One of the more significant findings from this chapter is that regardless of being presented as collective living arrangements, apartment blocks’ shared areas do not do justice to the vernacular social practices of Ethiopian life. They do not leave usable spaces for bunna ceremonies or tents to put up in the case of a funeral. What happens inside the blocks is a valid but weak intention to replicate earlier ways of living. The drive for inhabitants to forge collective practices is, similarly to Woreda 7, primarily a rational economic choice: in joining together, the relocated people seek to see their economic needs met, whilst homeowners secure funeral celebrations. The latter also combines risk-sharing strategies like iddir with individual strategies based on their wealth; relocated persons, as they are often in poor economic situations, cannot do so.

Relocated people abandon particularised trust, generalised reciprocity and fictive kin of the old neighbourhood to make way for generalised trust, balanced reciprocity and nuclear kin. Consequently, while eqqub and mahber are not practise, iddirs are a vestige of weak social capital. One only has to think of the women’s iddirs, Imawaish YeSet Iddir, who hold their members tightly by a dense network of rules, and whose support is only expressed by the guile of common Ethiopian customs.

This chapter has also shown that places located outside the blocks but still within the condominium area witness a real Ethiopian sense of community, or, one might say, social capital, involving elders as much as relocated youth. This is the case of the YeSheraton Accababi Yefikir Yeselam Mahber and the Oldies Wendmamatoch Mehregia Mahber. Feeling alienated, albeit over a decade at Jemo One Condominium, from practices that took place inside the blocks, they make their way elsewhere, to the churches for some and to the pub for others, to forge new forms of association, that resemble the old ones. Although their bonding social capital is substantial, since, solidarity of sentiments moves them in addition to an interest, it was discussed how the same bond of shared identity proves to be a problem, as it excludes other
inhabitants from benefiting from and contributing to this social capital. Such instances remain, nowadays, limited to people from Woreda 7.

Chapter VII examines the relationship between the local government, i.e. Woreda 1 of Jemo One Condominium, and the social capital of the residents. According to linking social capital theory, local government could act as a link to succeed in bringing what happens outside the blocks inside the blocks. Woreda 7 did not present significant examples of this: bonding and bridging social capital was strong in itself, and the few contexts in which this was threatened, such as quarrels between neighbours, are not significant examples of a setting in which social capital is weakened. Since the government agents in Woreda 7 were inhabitants of the area themselves, the relationship between the local government and the inhabitants had a short, primarily horizontal distance, and, if a power relationship was identified, the agents used their assets to benefit the whole community.

However, upon exploring Woreda 1 in Chapter VII, with its merits and limitations according to citizens, and asking employees and departments to evaluate its role, several elements appear attractive. Citizens realise the local government’s help on an economic level, through shemachoc, places to obtain primary products at low prices, or the provision of jobs, but, according to interviewees, these opportunities are limited to patronage networks, particularly ethnic ones. Thus, woreda’s evaluation is weak. To add to this, there is little tangible help in improving areas, resulting in bureaucratic loopholes to see the demand for documents fulfilled. Consequently, the woreda resents the denial of its role in a broader way, such as the management of electricity or water or its role as a social inhibitor. In asserting its roles and powers, the woreda is aware that it has power advantages over the citizens and lends itself to surrendering its authority in creating managerial units within the condominium.

The research has shown that even if limited to one meeting de facto, the Woreda 1 of Jemo One Condominium attempted to act as a link to the inhabitants. The myriad of committees in the area are the result of this. These committees have shown how Ethiopian citizens have organised themselves to adapt to the new arrangements at the administration’s urging. Through a
network of representatives, committees keep common areas clean, have guards, and occasionally even gardeners or cleaners. In the practice of mundane relations, such committees successfully replace the kebeles because of the closeness they boast with the citizens while undermining the woreda’s authority. Lending or substituting political bodies are increasingly tenuous concepts in Jemo One Condominium, where the resident prefers to go to the committee, as opposed to the local government, even in seeing tasks fulfilled that formally belong to the woreda.

Another significant finding identified in Chapter VII is that the financing of the committee is a hint of social organisation: the payments, apart from the condominiums, are primarily covered by the rent of rooms on the ground floor for shops, medical clinics and other businesses. However, the committees themselves are progressively inclined to legitimise their work only to the extent that it helps an object (the condominium) to be kept in reasonable condition by the subject (the residents), and not to improve the social capital of Jemo One Condominium, in its bonding as well as in its bridging. Is this, then, the new face of practice in Addis Ababa? An exercise aimed at the object, in this case, the condominium, rather than the subject, its residents?

The analysis of the six plus months of field research in Addis Ababa indicates how the fact cannot be alienated from the context; and that, ultimately, if there is an increase in the cost of living in Jemo One Condominium compared to the old habitat, this is due to inflation that has increased over the ten years. Lack of water and electricity do weigh on the condominiums inhabitants, yet, an inhabitant of another area of the capital might report the same, as accessibility deficits and management of the kind are linked to an increase in population in the country. Similarly, if ethnic gaps are more pressing if compared to the past, part of the reason can be blamed on a continuing politicisation of ethnicity, with the latest escalation in the war in Tigray, and, as a consequence, an increasingly perceptible estrangement of citizens from any governing body.
8.2 Path to Move Forward

Although problems are due in part to the times the country is experiencing, the evidence from this thesis suggests that in literature, the condominium model must be researched in its entirety as an enduring solution to population growth to the extent that, instead of offering stories of opportunity to certain fringes of the population, like the relocated people, it only exacerbates economic, social and political difficulties already present in the country. Especially if this is to be the new housing face of Addis Ababa for low-income people at the moment, where such citizens of informal areas continue to be moved into apartment blocks, further research on such living can give a complete picture of the limitations of the apartment block and, if not related to the general context of the country, act on these.

The results of this thesis support the idea that the local government can act as a link in promoting social capital, taking the creation of committees as an example. However, these committees lead to an interest linked to the sole interest of the building.

Therefore, it is only fair to explore with the use of linking social capital theory, a theory that gets stronger with time, how the woreda can act even more significantly as a link to shift the focus away from the individual citizen and the individual building and create a more cohesive community within the apartment blocks.

8.3 Ways for Further Research

As noted in the introduction, a limitation of this study concerns the sample taken during the research. As this thesis mainly focuses on the experiences of the relocated persons, it only considers other social or ethnic actors to the extent that they interact with the sample under examination. For example, affluent people’s experience of condominium life is mainly considered in their (non)interaction with relocated persons. This partial exploration is because systematic comparison of various social categories is outside the scope of my study, and methodology. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that social and political
frictions appear in research on the condominium; therefore, for the debate to be moved forward, I suggest for future research endeavours a better understanding of different social classes’ experiences of condominium life. I would expect, for example, that renters would consider themselves excluded due to their temporariness in the area and their inability to vote on committees.

8.4 Give Them Space

In conclusion, this thesis has made it possible to show the shaping of economic, social and political practices in condominiums by examining the experience of people who relocated into the Jemo One Condominium. In the introduction, I quote that home is the place where one starts from. In light of my findings, I do not believe that ways of life will return to the way they were in the informal area of Woreda 7; how many things, even in my case alone, have vanished beyond the Box? Grandma is no longer there, and my cousin Mary, after getting married, moved away with her husband from the condominium, and I myself have visited Addis Ababa less and less over the years. I hope I have shown in my thesis that ways of life evolve in step with the rhythms of life, and they are dynamic rhythms, continuously becoming and often undetectable. The future hope, therefore, is not to bring back previous, now impracticable, ways of living in the condo but to forge and adapt different but equally effective ones and “make them endure, give them space” (Calvino, 1983).
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http://www.jstor.org/stable/2781064


Appendix A

APPENDIX 1 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE WOREDA

This questionnaire was prepared as part of field research for my Research Master’s thesis in African Studies, with Jemo One Condominium being the research site. I thank you for your possible cooperation and remain available for any doubts or clarifications.

1.1 How many years has the condominium site Jemo One Condominium been in existence?

1.2 How many households are in this community?

1.3 How many inhabitants?

1.4 How many inhabitants in percentage have come here to live because of
Development:
Victory of the lottery:
Other:

1.5 In the last five years, the number of people living in this community has:
Increased [ ]
Decreased [ ]
Remained the same [ ]

What is the main reason of this change?
(a)
(b)

1.6 What are the two principal economic activities for men in this community?
(a)
(b)

1.7 What are the two principal economic activities for women in this community?
(a)
1.8 In the last three years, availability of employment for unemployed has:
Improved [ ]
Worsened [ ]
Remained the same [ ]

1.9 In the last three years, the roads leading to this community have:
Improved [ ]
Worsened [ ]
Remained the same [ ]

1.10 The availability of housing in this community is:
Adequate [ ]
Deficient [ ]

1.11 What are the two main reasons that housing in the community has improved, worsened, or remained the same during the last three years?
(a)
(b)

1.12 What is the most important source of funding in Jemo One Condominium?

1.13 Do you think that over the last five years, the level of trust in this village/neighborhood has gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?
Gotten better [ ]
Gotten worse [ ]
Stayed about the same [ ]
Please explain why

1.14 What does most often cause problems/lacks in the neighborhood?
Electricity [ ]
Water [ ]
1.15 In the past 12 months, how often have people in this village/neighborhood gotten together to jointly work with the woreda for something benefiting the community?

1. Never
2. Once
3. A few times (<5)
4. Many times (>5)

If Yes, explain:

1.16 Has this woreda ever attempted to make improvements but failed? Why do you think the attempt failed? What would have you done differently to make the effort more successful?

1.17 Have there been any efforts by the community to improve the quality of the (service or benefit) or overcome a problem? Can you describe one instance in detail?

APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE ELECTRICITY ADMINISTRATION

This questionnaire was prepared as part of field research for my Research Master’s thesis in African Studies, with Jemo One Condominium being the research site. I thank you for your possible cooperation and remain available for any doubts or clarifications.

2.1 What fraction of the community has

The entire community []
Most of the community []
About half the community []
Less than half/very few []
No one in the community []

2.2 In the last three years, the electrical service to this community has:

Improved []
2.3 Currently, the quality of electrical service within the homes of this community is:

- Very good [ ]
- Good [ ]
- Average [ ]
- Poor [ ]
- Very poor [ ]

2.4 How do you see the use of electricity by the population?

- Very good [ ]
- Good [ ]
- Average [ ]
- Poor [ ]
- Very poor [ ]

2.5 Has advice been given to residents on how to save on electricity? If so, how?

2.6 What are the two main problems with the electrical service?

2.7 Can you explain the role of your office, your daily activities?

2.8 Have there been any efforts by the community to improve the quality of the (service or benefit) or overcome a problem? Can you describe one instance in detail?

**APPENDIX 3 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE WATER ADMINISTRATION**

This questionnaire was prepared as part of field research for my Research Master's thesis in African Studies, with Jemo One Condominium being the research site. I thank you for your possible cooperation and remain available for any doubts or clarifications.

3.1 What part of the community has weekly access to public standpipes?

- The entire community [ ]
- Most of the community [ ]
About half the community []
Less than half/very few []
No one in the community []

3.2 In the last three years, potable water service has:

Improved []
Worsened []
Remained the same []

3.3 What are the two main problems with the potable water service?

(a)
(b)

3.4 Can you explain the role of your office, your daily activities?

3.5 Have there been any efforts by the community to improve the quality of the (service or benefit) or overcome a problem? Can you describe one instance in detail?

APPENDIX 4 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE GARBAGE COLLECTION ADMINISTRATION

This questionnaire was prepared as part of field research for my Research Master’s thesis in African Studies, with Jemo One Condominium being the research site. I thank you for your possible cooperation and remain available for any doubts or clarifications.

4.1 What fraction of the community is served by a garbage collection service?

The entire community []
Most of the community []
About half the community []
Less than half/very few []
No one in the community []

4.2 In the last three years, the quality of the garbage disposal in this community has:

Improved []
Worsened []  
Remained the same []

4.3 In the homes that do not receive garbage collection service, what is the main solid waste disposal method?
- Burn it []
- Throw on own lot on the street []
- Throw on others’ lots []
- Throw into river []
- Bury it []
- Pay to haul away []
- Other []

4.4 How do the inhabitants handle the garbage?

4.5 How long does it take to eliminate the garbage?

4.6 Are there any health problems due to exposure to the garbage?

4.7 Can you explain the role of your office, your daily activities?

4.8 Have there been any efforts by the community to improve the quality of the (service or benefit) or overcome a problem? Can you describe one instance in detail?

APPENDIX 5 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

This questionnaire was prepared as part of field research for my Research Master’s thesis in African Studies, with Jemo One Condominium being the research site. I thank you for your possible cooperation and remain available for any doubts or clarifications.

5.1 Is this community served by a public transport system?
- Yes []
- No []

5.2 The walking distance to the nearest community with public transportation is:
Distance (in walking minutes) ________
5.3 Public transportation is available:

Every day [ ]
Some days of the week [ ]
One day per week [ ]
Other (specify) [ ]

5.4 In the last three years, the quality and service of public transportation has:

Improved [ ]
Worsened [ ]
Remained the same [ ]

5.5 Public transportation is used by:

The entire community [ ]
Most of the community [ ]
About half the community [ ]
Less than half/very few [ ]
No one in the community [ ]

5.6 Can you explain the role of your office, your daily activities?

5.7 What two main changes can be made to improve public transportation to this community?

(a)
(b)

APPENDIX 6 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SEWAGE ADMINISTRATION

This questionnaire was prepared as part of field research for my Research Master's thesis in African Studies, with Jemo One Condominium being the research site. I thank you for your possible cooperation and remain available for any doubts or clarifications

6.1 What fraction of the community is served by a public sewage system?
The entire community [ ]
Most of the community [ ]
About half the community [ ]
Less than half/very few [ ]
No one in the community [ ]

6.2 In the last three years, the quality of this community has:
Improved [ ]
Worsened [ ]
Remained the same [ ]

6.3 Currently, the public sewage system is:
Very good [ ]
Good [ ]
Average [ ]
Poor [ ]
Very poor [ ]

6.4 What are the two main problems with the public sewage system in this community?
(a)
(b)

6.5 Do the streets of this community have sufficient sewers and drains to handle excess water and prevent flooding when it rains?
Yes [ ]
No [ ]

6.6 What other sewage and wastewater systems are used in this community?
a. Latrine
b. Septic tanks
c. River or sea
d. Other (specify)
6.7 Can you explain the role of your office, your daily activities?

6.8 Have there been any efforts by the community to improve the quality of the (service or benefit) or overcome a problem? Can you describe one instance in detail?