Meaningful life and survival in urban poverty – An ethnographic study on the dimensions of deprivation and anxiety and the coping strategies of a group of cooperative workers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

This study draws on ethnographic semi-structured interviews carried out in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia among seven members of a food processing cooperative. The focus of this study is on the respondents' own narratives: How do people themselves define and experience the many dimensions of deprivation and anxiety? What assets are included in their coping strategies in urban poverty? With the source material from the field, together with the literature survey on the discourse of urban poverty and capability and livelihoods perspective frameworks, the links between the situation of the interviewees and the transition of the whole Ethiopian society and Addis Ababa are represented.

This study examines the main causes of deprivation and anxiety in urban poverty, and people's personal survival strategies, as narrated by the interviewees themselves. The emphasis is on their personal situation and social networks. Three core themes are introduced: family and other social networks, housing situation and conditions, and livelihoods development and opportunities. Various debated, diverse and complex categorisations and relationships affect poverty eradication efforts in the global South. Ethnographic research methods make it possible to document and represent what the people on the ground experience in urban environment every day, what is meaningful and important to them, and how they cope in their difficult circumstances. The theoretical part of this study focuses on the discourse of urban poverty in Africa and the contribution of ethnographic research methodology to this discussion.

The issues are presented from the perspective of the persons studied: their experiences, values, attitudes, motives and the meanings they attach to things in their everyday life, and this is contextualised within Ethiopian society. A common thread is the participants' own viewpoints for example on their needs, hopes, difficulties and the functioning of their cooperative. Respondents' narratives are divided into emotional and physical coping strategies, and scrutinised in the context of active, passive or social networks survival strategies.

Asiasanat – Keywords
Addis Ababa, anxiety, cooperative entrepreneurship, coping strategies, deprivation, housing, livelihoods development, social networks, survival strategies, poverty alleviation, urban poverty, women

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tähän etnografiseen tutkimukseen on haastateltu seitsemää pitopalveluosuuskunnan jäsentä Addis Abebassa, Etiopiassa. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan haastateltavien pääasiallisia puutteen ja huolen aiheita, ja heidän henkilökohtaisia selviytymisstrategioitaan urbaanissa köyhyydessä. Kuinka ihmiset määrittelevät ja kokevat erilaiset päivittäiset puutteen ja huolen aiheensa? Mitä voimavaroja haastateltavat voivat käyttää selviytyäkseen urbaanissa köyhyydessä? Olen kytkenyt haastateltavien narratiivit Etiopiassa ja Addis Abebassa parhaillaan käynnissä olevaan yhteiskunnalliseen muutokseen hyödyntäen sekä haastatteluaineistoa että kirjallisuutta liittyen muun muassa urbaanin köyhyyden diskurssin kehitykseen. Ihmisten voimavaroihin ja toimeentuloon keskittyvä näkökulma toimii tutkimuksen viitekehyksenä. Tutkimuksen pääpaino on vastaajien omissa kertomuksissa, ja sitä kautta heidän henkilökohtaisissa tilanteissaan ja sosiaalisissa verkostoissaan. Kolme keskeistä teemaa ovat perhe ja sosiaaliset verkostot, asumistilanne ja olosuhteet sekä mahdollisuudet toimeentuloon ja sen kehittämiseen.

Köyhyyden käsite on herättänyt paljon keskustelua 1970-luvulta alkaen. Köyhyyden käsitteeseen ja vähentämiseen liittyvä toimintaympäristö on hyvin laaja ja moniulotteinen sekä käsitteellisellä tasolla että käytännössä kentällä. Etnografiset menetelmät mahdollistavat ihmisten omien päivittäisten kokemusten dokumentoinnin ja representaation. Mikä heille itselleen on merkityksellistä ja tärkeää? Kuinka he selviytyvät vaikeissa olosuhteissa urbaanissa ympäristössä? Tutkimuksen teoreettinen painopiste on afrikkalaisen urbaanin köyhyyden diskurssin tarkastelussa ja siinä, mikä on etnografisten menetelmien merkitys tässä keskustelussa.

Haastatteluissa esiin nousseita teemoja on pyritty tarkastelemaan haastateltavien omasta perspektiivistä. Ihmisten kokemuksia, arvoja, asenteita, motiiveja ja heidän arkipäiviäisille asioille luomiaan merkityksiä tarkastellaan mahdollisuuksien mukaan etiopialaisen yhteiskunnan murrostilan kontekstissa. Haastateltavien näkemykset heidän omista tarpeistaan, toivestaan, vaikeuksistaan ja esimerkiksi osuuskunnan toimivuudesta toimivat tutkimuksen punaisena lankana. Vastaajien narratiivit on jaoteltu emotionaalisiin ja fyysisiin selviytymiskeinoihin ja selviytymisstrategiat on jaoteltu aktiivisiin, passiivisiin ja sosiaalisiin verkostoihin liittyviksi.

Asiasanat – Keywords
Addis Ababa, anxiety, cooperative entrepreneurship, coping strategies, deprivation, housing, livelihoods development, social networks, survival strategies, poverty alleviation, urban poverty, women

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NOTE ON SPELLING

There is no universally recognised system for transliterating Ethiopian languages into the Latin alphabet. In this study I did not want to add to this confusion, hence in reproducing names of places and people I have followed Paul B. Henze (2000), the author of Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia. I use forms which are simple and familiar in current international usage and which approximate local pronunciation to me as a Finnish speaker. I have refrained from using diacritical marks for words in Amharic, although in general they would clarify the pronunciation. In citations I have decided to revise the spelling or transliteration of the original source material to make it easier and more consistent for the reader to follow. Originally the interpreter fluctuates between the first and third person in singular. For clarity I have edited everything into first person, when appropriate. Estimated ages of the respondents are always in brackets after their names to clarify which respondents were significantly younger than the majority. I have included a glossary to explain some Amharic words and terms used in the text.

GLOSSARY

condominium Apartment buildings of the integrated housing development programme. Each resident household owns their individual unit, but equally shares ownership of and responsibility for the communal areas and facilities of the building (UN-HABITAT 2011: 15).

injera A spongy, crêpe-like bread made of fermented *teff* flour, an intrinsic part of Ethiopian cuisine.

kebele Old rental houses, where majority of low-income Ethiopians live, are managed by *kebeles*, urban dweller associations. *Kebele* houses are old, having been constructed many decades ago and little to no maintenance has been carried out. At present in critical condition.

mahabr A religious association celebrated once a month on a Saint's day. Neighbours come together for a meal and pray. It is organised in turns. For example local beer, *injera* and bread is prepared and served.

teff An important Ethiopian annual cereal grass (*Eragrostis tef* syn. *E. abyssinica*) grown for its small grain which yields a white flour (Merriam-Webster 2013).

Starting point and research questions

> *"I have no option[,] the only way is to to live with it. - - I [feel] younger but because of my lifestyle - - I become older and older. My life make[s] me like this."* (Amareche, 70)

Map 1: Horn of Africa (Source: Groupe Steinmetz 2013)

I arrived in Ethiopia in February 2013 (2006 in the Ethiopian calendar) to conduct research for this Master's thesis, as well as to spend the spring semester studying at the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development in the University of Addis Ababa. I had read up on the recent discussion regarding the increasing socio-economic role of informal activities and community development in the developing world, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, and the plan was to study this field in more detail through ethnographic research.

Ethiopia and its capital Addis Ababa are unique cases compared to other Sub-Saharan countries or developing countries in general. Ethiopia was never colonised. It always remained reluctant to adopt the Structural Adjustment Programs which were given as a solution to the complex predicament of developing countries by the Bretton Woods Institutes (World Bank and International

Monetary Fund) starting from the 1980s. In recent times Ethiopia has experienced rapid economic growth, up to 10 per cent annual rate (World Bank 2013). All land in Ethiopia is state-owned. These characteristics serve as an interesting starting point for further examination of the livelihoods of the people, especially women, in Addis Ababa. Therefore, originally when entering Ethiopia the plan was to analyse the nature, composition and operational characteristics of a micro-scale business from an ethnological and socio-economic perspective. In the end the time frame for my stay in Ethiopia turned out to be relatively limited for reaching the saturation point of the original purpose of this study. I began to record women's stories about their personal history, their ongoing difficulties especially regarding housing and health issues, and their vision for the future. These stories are impressive, cry out to be heard and are certainly worthy of being represented in this Master's thesis.

The focus of this study is on my respondents' own narratives: How do the people themselves define and experience the many dimensions of deprivation and anxiety? What assets are included in their coping strategies in urban poverty? With my source material from the field, together with the literature survey on the discourse of urban poverty and capability and livelihoods perspective frameworks, I will present links between the situation of my interviewees and the transition of the whole Ethiopian society and Addis Ababa. Various debated, diverse and complex categorisations and relationships affect poverty eradication efforts in the global South. Ethnological research allows me to document and represent what the people on the ground experience in urban environment every day, what is meaningful and important to them, and how they cope in their difficult circumstances.

The theoretical part of this study focuses on the discourse of urban poverty in Africa and the contribution of ethnographic research methodology to this discussion. I will introduce the development of and debate on the concept and measurement tools of poverty. The role of informal economies and community development currently in Sub-Saharan Africa, and their direct and indirect contributions to poverty eradication especially in the case of women, will be presented. What is poverty, how do people survive, and what are the different characteristics that need to be taken into account when designing poverty alleviation tools? During the field research period in spring 2013 the focus of this study became redirected towards people's personal strategies in poverty, where a part of their life was being a member of a formal cooperative entrepreneurship project in urban Addis Ababa. I will examine these strategies using livelihoods perspective framework and the concept of asset ownership.

This study examines the main causes of deprivation and anxiety in urban poverty, and people's personal survival strategies, as described by the interviewees themselves. The emphasis is on their personal situation and social networks. I will introduce three core themes: family and other social networks, housing situation and conditions, and livelihoods development and opportunities. All of them include several important subsections, which will be divided into emotional and physical coping strategies, and scrutinised in the context of active, passive or social networks survival strategies. This study is ethnological, as I am simultaneously reflecting my own role and perspective in the field and representing the narratives of the people I have interviewed. The issues are presented from the perspective of the persons studied: their experiences, values, attitudes, motives and the meanings they attach to things in their everyday life, and this is contextualised within Ethiopian society. A common thread is the participants' own viewpoints for example on their needs, hopes, difficulties and the functioning of their cooperative.

Chapter One: Framework and source materials

1.1 Background, ethics and the selection of respondents

During spring 2013 I participated the North-South-South student exchange programme between the University of Jyväskylä and the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development (EiABC) in Ethiopia. I stayed in Addis Ababa from February to June. An Ethiopian master's student told me about a project he was also working with. This was after I had been studying and getting to know people at the EiABC for approximately a month, and talked with some students and professors about my need to find a project to conduct master's research on. My first visit to meet this group at their workplace was on the 12th of April, and all the interviews were completed by the 22nd of May.

The interviews for this study were conducted in April-May 2013 in an Ethiopian government and international NGO (non-governmental organisation) initiated food processing project in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At the time of the interviews this project had been running for three months, after a year of preparations by the NGO. Rapidly changing urban environment of Addis Ababa would make it extremely challenging to track down the people included in this study. Nevertheless, I have decided to withhold all the names. Instead I use other popular names from Amhara region, according to the age groups of my respondents. Names of the NGO and the food processing project, the exact location of the facility and the houses of the women we visited are likewise withheld in

this study. In this paper I use a made-up name FFW, Funds for Work, for the NGO. I use photos where people can not be identified. Details are in the possession of the author.

Seven members of a food processing cooperative were interviewed for this study. Interviews include seven audio recorded, semi-structured interviews[1] supplemented by notes as well as physical observation, and two more in-depth, open discussions during visits to the homes of two of the respondents. Additional interview is included from the Vice President of FFW[2], the NGO which had provided the initial funding for the project. All interviews are audio recorded and I have shared these files with the Ethiopian student and interpreter in Addis Ababa for the use of his study[3]. The main purpose of the semi-structured questionnaire was to collect data on personal history, family, health, income, livelihood development and social networks and relations. Dominant themes in the open discussions at the homes of two of the women evolved from the respondents' own interests. I have 10.5 hours of interviews in total and each of them lasts approximately an hour. All citations from the interviewees presented in this paper are from female respondents unless otherwise indicated. In this study I will only look at the situation of the project and the respondents at the time of the interviews, as I have not revisited the site since June 2013.

Photo 1: Premises of the food processing cooperative in Addis Ababa (Photo: Maija Suomela)

1 See the original questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews in the Appendix.
2 Name changed.
3 The Ethiopian interpreter's own research is not ethnographic, but from the field of housing and sustainable development. It examines income generating projects for the urban poor. Main focus of the study (still in progress in April 2014) is on the spatial aspects between the projects and the beneficiaries homes, as well as about strengthening sustainable communities in the neighbourhood.

The interviews were conducted in the vernacular (Amharic) with an Ethiopian student acting as an interpreter. The vice-president of the NGO was interviewed in English. Only the English sections of the interviews were transcribed, not the sections in Amharic. Transcriptions consist of 128 printed pages. The source materials for this study also include my field notes and photographs from the workplace of the group and the homes of two of the respondents I visited. I spent some time at the facility only observing and not interviewing. I had never visited Ethiopia or even the African continent prior to this visit. My initial competency in Amharic or any other vernaculars of Ethiopia was zero. This was an interesting set-up in which to conduct research and interview people. Several challenges arose during the field research. These are dealt with in more detail in section 1.3 of this chapter.

At the time of the interviews FFW was no longer funding the project. The project was running on its own but the participants still had not received any salary, apart from a one-time reimbursement that the women had requested themselves. They called this compensation for example "holiday money". I was told at the time that most of the profit of the cooperative was being saved in a bank account to be used for ongoing and future expenses and investments. During my field work the cooperative was investing in renovating the restaurant side of the premises to attract, and have space for more clients. They were actively participating in bidding competitions to acquire new customers for their catering business. Despite the fact that the participants had not received any wages, this project came across to me as an example of a promising cooperative entrepreneurship, with the potential to generate new income for the participants, once a sufficient customer base has been established. The interviewees were confident about the future of the cooperative.

This food processing project consists of 30 people, who are divided in two groups that work every other day. The group members are mostly women, with the exception of one man. I interviewed a selection of seven members, who all work in the same group except one woman who works only morning shift every day with both groups. She was the only one from the second group, no other members of the second group were interviewed. I focused on one group to interview people who work together on a daily basis. Their age distribution is between 23 and approximately 70 years of age. The only male respondent is clearly younger than most of the other group members. In the beginning I was not much involved in the process of selecting the respondents, for I had not yet gained a good overview of the group, and the Ethiopian student invited them in Amharic to join the interviews. The last two interviews I requested as these people were younger than the rest of the

group members and therefore could potentially give a slightly different viewpoint to the project and group dynamics. Also, one of them was the only male in the project at that time.

The original plan was to concentrate on one or two of the older respondents in more depth after the initial interviews, but there was no time for this within the framework of this Master's study. I visited two of the respondents' homes. These people were selected through their own interest – they invited us to visit their homes and meet some of their family members. A woman called Amareche[4] was the first one we interviewed and the first one of the two people whose home we visited. She is a very warm and sweet person in her 70s, easy to get along with and to find a common understanding with even without a common language. Amareche lived with her 12-year-old granddaughter Salayish, who went to school. We agreed to visit her on one Saturday when she was not working. We met up at the food processing facility first, to walk to her place from there. She had dressed nicely for the visitors and would not step in the kitchen where she works every day. Instead, she sat proudly in the restaurant side while we were waiting for my colleague to arrive. We needed to wait for an hour or two for him and it was quite challenging to try to have a discussion with one or two common words in Amharic. I felt we shared common interest towards each others, but unfortunately we could only discuss the menu on the wall or the spice mixes they had on sale at the facility. Once he arrived, I once again truly appreciated my colleague for interpreting for the rest of the day.

When we left the facility to visit Amareche's home, another woman called Yeiyeneabeba approached us eagerly. She was inviting us to her home as well. Every time she saw us since we had visited Amareche, she was asking us when we would be coming to her home, and eventually we did. Yeiyeneabeba counted that she is 64 years old. She is a very strong and straight forward character. I got the impression she had a fairly clear agenda to ask help from me in her very difficult situation with a seriously ill granddaughter Hirut at home. Yeiyeneabeba was very talkative, and I often felt that not all of it was translated to me. According to my interpreter this was because she was repeatedly talking about the trouble and needs related to her granddaughter's condition. She was clearly focused on this, which was of course understandable. On top of sharing with us the multiple challenges related to health issues and housing conditions, we also had an opportunity to hear about her eventful personal history.

4 All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

1.2 Reflections on challenges and shortcomings

1.2.1 Language and cultural context

The language issue had fairly wide consequences. Obviously, I could not directly understand most of what the respondents were telling us. Only two of the younger ones knew a couple of words in English, rest of the respondents did not know any English. My Amharic skills were limited to a few common words, sentences and numbers. I was fully dependent on the Ethiopian student to translate the discussions. He was not a professional interpreter, nor an ethnographer, and his level of English turned out not to be as competent as I would have desired. Also for him this was only one project among others, so he did not need as much in-depth information from these respondents as I did. Occasionally we were both a little frustrated due to the lack of common understanding. The arrangement was functional enough for this limited amount of time, but if I had a chance to stay longer and continue this study further I would hire a professional female interpreter.

In two of the cases I could communicate a little in English directly with the respondents. In these cases the Ethiopian student seemed to get a bit restless. Either he did not follow the situation or he wanted to switch the dialogue back to Amharic with him translating it to me. But that day he had been working on a work project all night and had not slept at all, so the low level of concentration was very understandable. On the other hand, for example social anthropologist Harri Englund has analysed status and hierarchy in relation to a workshop in Malawi. He noticed that the Malawian volunteers participating in the workshop for example associated English language with quality education and opportunities and the vernacular Chichewa with impoverishment, disadvantage and ignorance (Englund 2006: 85-93). It is possible that the Ethiopian student may have wanted to maintain the researcher appearance distinct from the respondents via language difference, but it is not possible to draw any conclusions about this in this case with the limited evidence from the field.

One quite unique, small inconvenience arose from the context of the Ethiopian time system. In addition to the fact that the country is globally in the +3 hours GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) time zone, Ethiopia also has its own time. This is based on the concept of the Ethiopian day being constituted of twelve hours of daylight, starting at six o'clock in the morning. Twelve hours of darkness starts at six o'clock in the evening. So, for example the Western six o'clock am is zero o'clock Ethiopian time. Both systems are in use and you cannot know which one is default for each person. During my fieldwork it was normal to always re-check the time with both variations, for

example like the male respondent explained his daily schedule between his two jobs: "*Then after nine [o'clock Ethiopian time], after three [pm Western time], I just go [to the] hotel.*" This means he starts to work his evening shift in a hotel at three o'clock in the afternoon, which is nine o'clock in Ethiopian time.

1.2.2 Interview situation and saturation point

It could have been an option to choose another location for interviewing people. As we decided to talk with the people in their workplace, there was a lot of background noise and many interruptions, which made it difficult to concentrate on and cover all the issues. Even so, it was a good decision to interview the respondents in the food processing facility because it enabled me to further observe the relations and daily activities of the group. This came at the expense that some of the respondents were in a hurry, or other group members were rushing them to return to their tasks quickly. There was not always enough time to cover all interesting issues fully, nor was there a chance to return to these issues later due to the lack of time.

Photo 2: The home of Amareche and her granddaughter Salayish (Photo: Maija Suomela)

Home visits were an important part of this research. It was an opportunity to see and experience the conditions where the respondents live their everyday life outside of the workplace. Both women lived in small *kebele*[5] houses and had serious problems relating to for example sanitation and many other basic issues. Their homes consisted of one room. Yeiyeneabeba had built another floor upstairs with her family. There were nine people living in their household, the others being her children or other younger relatives who were working or went to school. Amareche lived alone with her granddaughter Salayish, who went to school. The attitude and spirit of these women was impressive. They fought for their family's rights and needs, and were able to appreciate good social relations between family and neighbours. There were countless causes of uncertainty and insecurity in their lives, but they kept on fighting and hoped for the best for the future. Their homes were cosy under the circumstances, including posters, photos and other decorations. Kitchen equipment was used either outside in front of the house, or in the middle of the room. It is common in *kebele* houses to wash in the only room of the home. There are no other options really. There was electricity for the light, water was collected from a tap in the same or neighbouring compound.

I was not used to relying so heavily on someone else to communicate with respondents, and to need to settle for quite rough translations. I could not always know how the tone or attitude of the interpreter was, but occasionally I felt I would have acted differently with the respondents and therefore also their answers might have been different. This was most evident one day in a dispute related to the fee we paid for our research permission. According to the Ethiopian student and interpreter he had agreed with FFW that we will pay a total of 30 ETB (Ethiopian birr[6]) for the permission to interview people in the project. The amount was low because the interviews were for the purpose of academic research. For some reason (most likely my presence as a white foreigner) the group was not satisfied with this and asked us for more money. They wanted us to pay 30 ETB for each interview, instead of the total of 30 ETB. Eventually, the issue was resolved with FFW,[7] but this episode was fairly awkward in many ways. Of course I could not understand anything except the subject of the heated dialogue between my colleague and the representative of the group. The group had a kind of boss, a coordinator for the project, but she remained mostly silent during this dispute and let the other group representative do the talking, or shouting. The episode was loud and unpleasant and included a lot of shouting from my colleague's part and from the group member's part. The official coordinator was present in the situation but did not say much.

5 Old rental houses, where majority of low-income Ethiopians live, are managed by *kebeles*, urban dweller associations. *Kebele* houses are old, having been constructed many decades ago and little to no maintenance has been carried out. At present they are often in extremely dilapidated condition.

6 100 ETB = approximately four Euros; 30 ETB = slightly more than one Euro.

7 Like originally agreed, there was no need for us to pay any extra on top of the 30 ETB.

This episode truly demonstrated the strong group spirit and willpower of the women. It also made me wish my Ethiopian colleague could have remained a little calmer in the situation – in the end he left the facility quite upset and still protesting to me that he was in the right. From where I was standing all this could have been dealt with more peacefully without anyone losing their temper. Or perhaps the interpreter felt that this made him, and Ethiopian culture, look bad in front of a foreign visitor. Luckily, I do not think this damaged our relationship with the group. We did not interview this particular group representative at all, but this was because she did not work in the group that we were focusing on. I was worried about how all this would affect our relations with the group members but the next time we visited them everything seemed more or less normal.

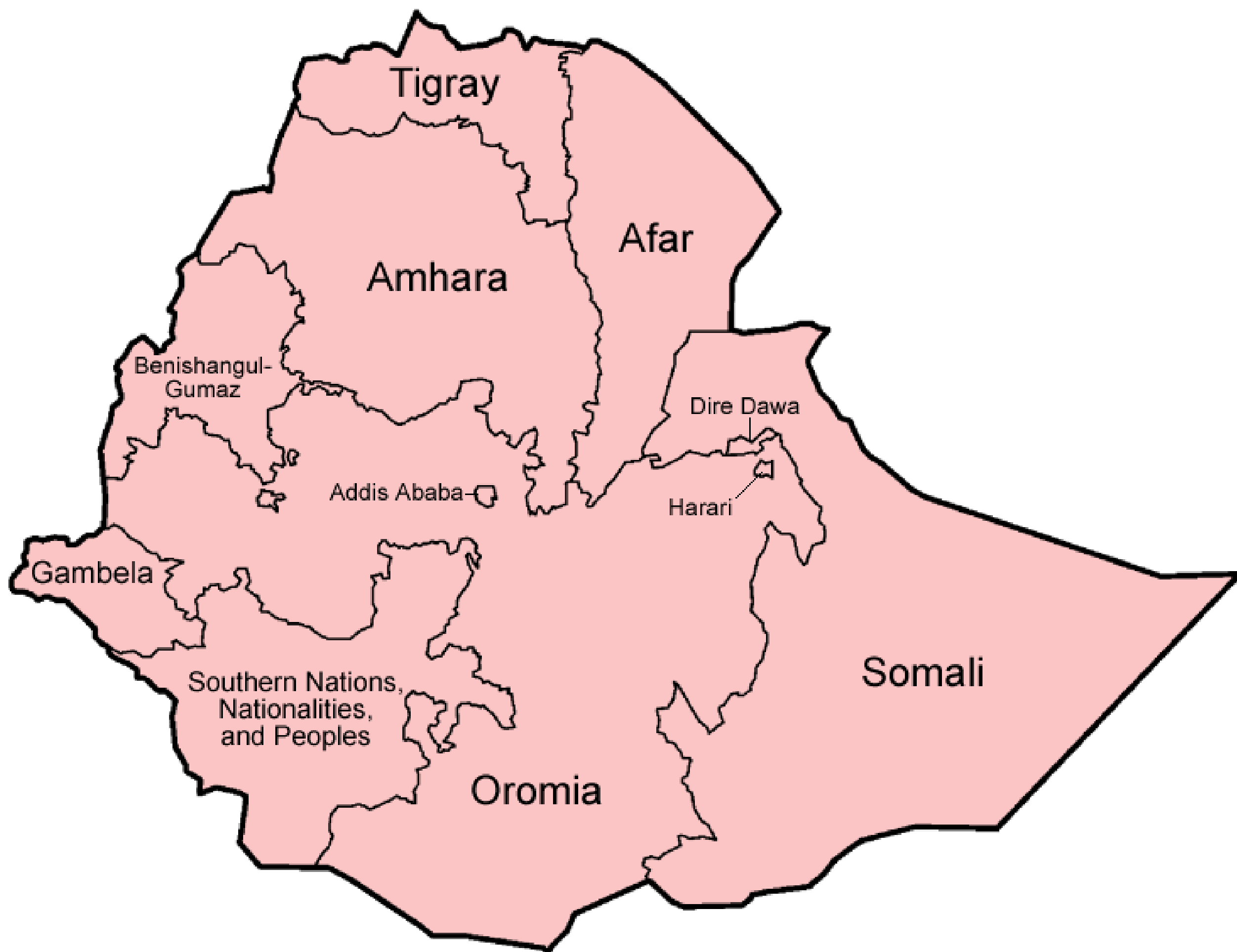
Time frame for the interviews for this study was clearly limited. I could not interview all the prominent people in the target group. The most important shortcoming with regard to the original aim of this study is that I did not have an opportunity to interview the group coordinator, who was daily working with the group in the facility. Likewise, the woman who seemed to be in charge of daily bookkeeping was not interviewed. The eldest women with the lowest income were our first respondents and they are also the ones who invited us to visit their homes. This is clearly one of the strengths of my data. The respondents I have interviewed and visited are exactly the ones for whom the poverty reduction strategies are designed for. Their narratives give valuable insight into the lives of the urban poor in Addis Ababa. Unfortunately there was no time to interview the leading figures of the group. This would have widened the perspective regarding the dynamics of the cooperative, but at the same time it made sense to direct the focus of this study more towards personal life histories, experiences and the expectations of some of the group members.

Unfortunately also my own health was relatively weak for several weeks, which made it more difficult to concentrate on conducting the research and bring everything together. However, the field data in hand is unique, valuable and deserves its place in the field of contemporary ethnological research on urban poverty.

1.3 Background information on Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest civilisations: for example the Kingdom of Axum was one of the great world powers of the third century (Henze 2000: 22). The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a huge country twice the size of France. Both ancient rock-hewn churches and modern cities can be found in this country of contrasts. There is everything between cold mountainous

regions and lowland tropical climates. Eighty ethnic groups and indigenous languages comprise the ethnically diverse population. Small villages are home to the majority of the population and are distinct from the rapidly expanding urban areas. The country does have vast areas of arable land, yet regular food shortages and famine are common. There are a few Ethiopians with considerable wealth, while a substantial proportion of Ethiopians live in extreme poverty (UN-HABITAT 2011: 1).



Map 2: Current regions in Ethiopia (Source: Wikimedia Commons 2013)

In terms of population, Ethiopia is the second largest country in Africa after Nigeria. The estimated population in 2011 was approximately 85 million. Life expectancy for men is 58 years and for women 62 years. United Nations estimates the average annual population growth rate from 2010 to 2015 to be 2.1 percent, consisting of 3.6 percent in urban areas and of 1.8 percent in rural areas (UN 2013). Officially the population of the capital city Addis Ababa was 2.9 million in 2011, but during my stay in Addis Ababa many people told me that due to rapid urbanisation a better estimate might

be closer to nine or ten million.

Major languages are Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya and Somali, Amharic being the official language of Ethiopia. Officially about two thirds of Ethiopian people are Christian, mostly following the Orthodox faith (BBC News Africa 2013). There are estimations that the share of Islam is increasing rapidly, but this does not necessarily show in the statistics (Ulkoasiainministeriö 2013). Officially 44 percent are reported to be Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and 34 percent Muslim (CSA 2007: 109). Islam is strong especially in the eastern part of the country.

The capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, is located in the centre of Ethiopia. It was established in 1886 and is one of the oldest and largest cities in Africa. It is also one of the highest, at an average altitude of 2400 meters. The capital has most of the social and economic infrastructure in the country due to the lack of development policies in other urban centres. As a result, Addis Ababa has been a melting pot to hundreds of thousands of people, coming from all corners of the country in search of better employment opportunities and services. Rural migration accounts for about 40 percent of the growth. Coupled with rapid natural population growth, Addis Ababa is one of the fast growing cites in Africa. This poses critical challenges including high rate of unemployment, housing shortage and environmental deterioration. The rapid population growth of Addis Ababa puts tremendous pressure on the city for example in terms of environmental degradation. Poorly managed industrial waste pollutes rivers, soil, air and water and these are becoming growing concerns in Addis Ababa (UN-HABITAT 2008: 4).

1.4 Short introduction to the modern history and politics of Ethiopia

Ethiopia has always maintained its freedom from colonial rule, which is unique among African countries. The only exception was a short Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941. In the first part of the 20th century, the British helped Ethiopia and put Emperor Haile Selassie back on the throne (Haile Selassie ruled since 1930). Starting in the 1960s, British influence gave way to that of the US, which in turn was replaced by that of the Soviet Union (BBC News Africa 2013). In 1974, a socialist military junta, the Derg, deposed Emperor Haile Selassie and established a socialist state. The Derg regime was toppled in 1991 by a coalition of rebel forces, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF for short. Mengistu Haile Mariam, the leader of the Derg, fled to Zimbabwe in 1991 and remains there despite an Ethiopian court verdict finding him guilty *in absentia* of genocide (BBC News Africa 2007).

Upon the defeat of the military junta, Meles Zenawi, the head of EPRDF, became president of the legislative body of the transitional government from 1991 to 1995. A constitution was adopted in 1994, and Ethiopia's first multi-party elections were held in 1995. Meles Zenawi was elected Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1995 and ruled until his death in 2012 (PM Meles Zenawi 2012[8]). Meles Zenawi was a strong leader and during my stay in Addis Ababa in spring 2013 this long-standing leader was heavily presented in public as a popular and greatly missed person, who brought Ethiopia to the 21st century. You could see his pictures hanging on the walls literally everywhere in the city, in both public and private spaces, outdoors and indoors.

A scholar in comparative media law and policy Iginio Gagliardone has analysed the political situation of Ethiopia after the death of Meles Zenawi in 2012. Gagliardone states that Meles Zenawi's role as an ideologue came at “a cost for the Ethiopian people”. According to Gagliardone, Meles Zenawi became uninterested and intolerant towards most forms of critique of his policies. Despite having a government that initially created a space for a free press, it consistently avoided engaging in the debates it had allowed to flourish. Gagliardone argues that after 2005 this lack of engagement turned into active suppression, with many journalists imprisoned and access to opposition blogs blocked. Gagliardone sees that Meles Zenawi's drive to implement his ambitious vision turned into a need to secure political hegemony for an extended period of time. The process of transforming Ethiopia into an ethnic federation through trial and errors led the political leadership to maintain control often through violence and repression (The Guardian 2012).

In Gagliardone's analysis, Meles Zenawi's death leaves the country at a crossroads. The new prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, will most likely continue along the path of Meles Zenawi. But for Gagliardone it is difficult to imagine Meles Zenawi's policies being brought to life without the ideological drive he was able to lead with. Such measures could facilitate an opening of political space, but it could also lead to the crumbling of a project requiring strong leadership in the absence of a viable replacement (The Guardian 2012[9]). Ethiopia is certainly undergoing a transition period and it remains to be seen where the country will be directed next.

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8 Source: PM Meles Zenawi 2012: http://www.meleszenawi.gov.et/en/user-data/9-main-menu/1-welcome.html Accessed 6th February 2014.

9 Source: The Guardian 2012: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/23/meles-zenawi-ideologue-ethiopia Accessed 6th of February 2014.

1.5 Ethiopian economy: Recent economic growth and the World Bank development strategy

Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries. It is ranked 169th out of 175 countries in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index in 2011 (UN-HABITAT 2011: 1). On the other hand, the World Bank has assessed that Ethiopia has experienced rapid economic growth up to an average of 10.6 percent annual rate from 2004 to 2012. Regional average is 5.4 per cent. According to the World Bank the broad based expansion of services and agricultural sectors account for most of the growth, while manufacturing sector performance has been relatively modest. Public investments are expected to have a more important role in the demand-side growth in recent years, together with private consumption. The World Bank states that economic growth has had positive effects to mitigate poverty in both urban and rural regions. In 2004-2005 thirty-nine percent of population lived in extreme poverty, as measured by the national poverty line of less than 0,6 US dollar per day, and five years later this was thirty percent (World Bank 2013).

Since the overthrow of the Derg by the EPRDF in 1991, Ethiopia has been undergoing market-oriented reforms, structural adjustment policies, decentralisation of governing structures, and a programme of agricultural development-led industrialisation (UN-HABITAT 2011: 3). Being a non-colonised country in Africa, Ethiopia and especially Addis Ababa have been playing a historic role in hosting the regional organisations such as the Organisation of African Unity / African Union, and the Economic Commission for Africa, which contributed to the decolonisation of African countries and later focused on bringing Africa together (UN-HABITAT 2008: 4).

In recent years, Ethiopia has experienced a tremendous flow of investments from China. This can be witnessed in Addis Ababa where in almost every block you can find several building construction sites. According to a local newspaper finding enough construction materials for all the enterprises during spring 2013 presented a challenge. Also, in a World Bank assessment, remittance flows from Ethiopian migrants have grown strongly and steadily in the 21st century. Between 2003 and 2008 the amounts rose from 46 million dollars to 387 million dollars a year (World Bank 2011). In 2010, 35 per cent of remittances originated in United States and 24 per cent in the United Arab Emirates. The money is mainly used for daily expenses (57 per cent) and university education (29 per cent) (World Bank 2010).

The geographic location of Addis Ababa, combined with its political and socio-economic status, has

made it a melting pot for hundreds of thousands of people coming from all regions of the country in search of employment opportunities and services. The city suffers from a high rate of unemployment (officially 31 per cent in 2011), the prevalence of slum dwellings and poor housing, infrastructure and sanitary development. UN-HABITAT assesses that the challenge is not only to reverse the current situation through balancing the economic growth with the population increase, but also to catch up with decades of neglect (UN-HABITAT 2008: 7).

The World Bank considers the main challenge currently for Ethiopia to be maintaining and speeding up the recent progress to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to identify the main causes of poverty. According to the World Bank the government of Ethiopia is already financing pro-poor programs and investments with considerable amounts and also large-scale donor support will continue to provide a remarkable contribution in the short term to meet these challenges. However, it is expected that to use this aid effectively Ethiopia needs to improve governance and empower local authorities as well as become more accountable to its citizens (World Bank 2013).

The current five-year development plan (GTP, the Growth and Transformation Plan, 2010/11-2014/15) of Ethiopia states that the country is prepared to "enhance broad-based development in a sustainable manner" to achieve the MDGs. Major developments concerning economic structure, income generation and also the level of social indicators are outlined in the plan. Rapid economic growth is one of the core objectives. One aim is to double agricultural production to ensure food security. Increased contribution from the industrial sector is also expected, particularly from sugar, textiles, leather products and cement production (World Bank 2013).

The current strategy of the World Bank "aims to help the Government of Ethiopia address ongoing challenges and assist in the implementation of Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan". Good governance and stable macroeconomic environment are the foundation of this Ethiopia Country Partnership Strategy (CPS). The aim is to support Ethiopia to increase agricultural productivity and marketing in selected areas and to increase competitiveness in manufacturing and services. Medium and small enterprises' access to financial services is to be improved as well as the quality and access of infrastructure. Regional integration is to be improved. The World Bank is to support Ethiopia to improve access to social services, including access to quality health care and education services and enhancing the resilience of vulnerable households to food insecurity. Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems and strengthening sustainable natural resource management and resilience to

climate change are to be adopted (World Bank 2013).

The World Bank will “help the Ethiopian government to improve public service performance management and responsiveness and to enhance the space for citizen participation in the development process as well as its public financial management, procurement, transparency and accountability”. Climate change and gender issues are an important part of the development process (World Bank 2013).

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework

2.1 Development of the concept of urban poverty

In this chapter the perspectives of international development agenda, and some criticism towards them, on the concept of urban poverty and informal economy are introduced. Specific focus is on the need-based and capability approaches, on the sustainable livelihoods perspective and on the controversial concept of social capital. The contribution of anthropological research on the discourse on poverty is presented, and I justify the relevance of this study.

A core study in the research on urban poverty is The Challenge of Slums published in 2003 by UN-HABITAT. The Challenge of Slums was the first global assessment of slums with an emphasis on their problems and prospects. The United Nations defined 'a slum' for operational use in the beginning of the 21st century as “characterised by overcrowding, poor or informal housing, inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, and insecurity of tenure”. The report argues that the number of slum dwellers is growing and will continue to increase unless there is serious and unanimous action by all relevant stakeholders. It is estimated that by 2035 urban poor will eventually overcome the rural and there will be two billion slum dwellers between 2030-40 (UN-HABITAT 2003). The Challenge of Slums examines the factors that impact the formation of slums, and their social, spatial and economic characteristics and dynamics and identifies the most promising approaches to improving the lives of slum dwellers. The most relevant perspectives in examining the conditions of the urban poor are housing, livelihood, health and traffic.

Discussion regarding the concept of poverty has mostly been dealt with in development studies. The concept of poverty has been central to the international development agenda and the discourse on poverty influential since Robert McNamara at the World Bank promoted it in the 1970s (Davis 2007, 71). The World Bank led the way in establishing systematic ways of representing, analysing

and theorising poverty. These views became prominent through the publication of the influential annual World Development Report, and since the beginning of the 21st century the introduction of the national poverty reduction strategies (PRS) which increasingly formed the basis of the relationship between donors and the governments of those developing countries that have fulfilled the macroeconomic and regulatory requirements that are preconditions to the new development partnerships (Green 2007, 1109-1110).

In the 1990 World Development Report (WDR), poverty was viewed as low consumption and low achievement in education and health. Economic development, brought about by free trade and markets, investing in infrastructure, and providing basic social services to poor people to increase their human capital, was seen as key to reducing poverty. In the beginning of the 21st century, World Bank started to see poverty not merely as income and consumption but as a state of relative powerlessness and exclusion from decision making process, as well as low levels of education, high rates of mortality and poor health. WDR 2000/2001 used new evidence and multidisciplinary thinking that together aimed to broaden the choices for development action to reduce poverty in its multiple dimensions. It is stated in WDR 2000/2001 that "evidence confirms that economy-wide growth improves the incomes of poor people, and in the longer run reduces poverty" and that "expanding the human capabilities of poor people remains central in any poverty reduction strategy, both for the intrinsic value of such capabilities as health and education and for their instrumental contribution to other dimensions of well-being, including income" (WDR 2000/2001: 32).

Poverty reduction strategies (PRS) have been principal instruments in defining the concept of poverty and in reducing poverty. According to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) "PRSs are prepared by the member countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as development partners, including the World Bank and IMF". PRS is updated every three years and it contains an assessment of poverty and describes "the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programs that a country will pursue over several years to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs and the associated sources of financing." Interim PRSs summarise the current knowledge and analysis of a country's poverty situation, describe the existing poverty reduction strategy, and lay out the process for producing a fully developed PRS in a participatory way. IMF stresses that "successful plans to fight poverty require country ownership and broad based support from the public in order to succeed". The PRS approach is based on five core principles. Poverty reduction strategies should be "country-driven, promoting national ownership of strategies through broad-based participation of civil society; result-oriented and

focused on outcomes that will benefit the poor; comprehensive in recognising the multidimensional nature of poverty; partnership-oriented, involving coordinated participation of development partners like government, domestic stakeholders and external donors; and based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction" (IMF 2014). PRSPs required from the governments have been criticised for instance of mainly profiting large NGOs rather than the local people. This criticism towards this new type of clientelism and NGOs is related to the critique on the lack of macro-strategy to fight the poverty. Even if there are local success stories, vast majority of the poor are left behind (See Davis 2007: 75-82).

Conceptualisations of poverty have altered from the biologically informed basic needs approach of the 1970s to today's understanding of poverty as multi-dimensional deprivation, not merely of income, but of capabilities, assets and rights. The critique towards the WDRs focused on the construction of poverty as an object and the homogenisation of the attributes of poverty and the situation of those categorised as poor. The 'poor' were understood as marginal, excluded, vulnerable, unwell, illiterate, indigenous and female unity, that predominantly live in remote rural areas and urban shanties and have few assets and weak social networks. Poverty was not seen as a consequence of social relations, but represented as an entity that must be attacked (Green 2007: 1111).

Irish development geographer Pádraig Carmody examines three main contemporary conceptions on poverty, which are the structural, the palliative, and the capability conceptions. The structural conception of poverty seeks to interrogate the socio-economic structures that produce inequality, marginalisation and exclusion. It is power inequality that produces poverty, as the ones in power are able to shape socio-economic structures to their benefit. Poverty elimination depends on structural economic transformation. The palliative conception takes poverty as a given, and asks how it can be reduced through investment in health and education, for instance. The capability approach to poverty seeks to understand what social structures influence capability development and fulfilment (Carmody 2012: 3-5).

The capability approach has been widely used as an alternative to narrow economic indicators such as growth in GDP (gross domestic product) per capita. It is defined by its focus on the moral significance of individuals' capability of achieving the kinds of lives they value. A person's ability to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of values like being in good health or having close relationships with others. (IEP 2014.) The capability approach was first introduced by the Indian

economist and philosopher Amartya Sen in the 1980s.

The capability approach understands poverty as deprivation in the capability to live a good life. Various concerns about contemporary approaches to the concept of human well-being are addressed. In Sen's thinking, individuals can differ to a great extent in their abilities to utilise the same resources. Therefore, evaluation that focuses only on assets, without considering what particular people can do with them, is insufficient. Sen also addresses the fact that people are able to internalise the harshness of their circumstances in such a way that they do not long for something that they can never expect to achieve. An assessment that focuses only on subjective indicators is insufficient without considering whether it matches a neutral observer's perception of their objective circumstances. Whether or not people take up the options they have, the fact that they do have valuable options is significant. One of Sen's main points is that as reality is complicated, research should reflect that complexity rather than take a short-cut by excluding all sorts of information from consideration in advance. For example, although it may seem obvious that happiness matters for the evaluation of how well people are doing, it is not at all obvious that it should be the only aspect that matters and so nothing else should be considered. Therefore, researchers must seek to be as open-minded as possible (See Sen 1985).

Anthropologist John Harriss has criticised mainstream poverty research for in general failing to address the dynamic, structural and relational causes of poverty. According to Harriss there is a great deal of technical research based on household surveys that has provided detailed profiles of poverty in different countries and regions. This research has also produced a number of studies of ‘poverty dynamics’ that show the implications, for example, of the distribution of assets in a society or of access to human capital. In general this research tends to be limited around the same conclusions, like the importance of household characteristics and ownership of assets, but many possible aspects of deprivation are left out. Poor people’s own concepts and concerns should be taken into account, and much greater value should be given to qualitative social and psychological aspects of well-being. Poverty should be examined in terms of different dimensions that are all relevant to the poor themselves. Poverty is a profoundly political construction and different actors construct it differently (Harriss 2007: i, 1-2).

According to Carmody, the failure of neoliberalism in Africa led to its reinvention through the use of a variety of concepts, such as governance and social capital. The continued failure of market reforms was blamed on a lack of social capital or poor governance, while the economic bases of the

policies themselves were not questioned, at least by the development institutions promoting them. Carmody also states that more recently, physical geography has been used by for example the World Bank to explain the underdevelopment of Africa. Carmody criticises the fact that the solution has been the elimination of tariff barriers and investment in infrastructure and calls the World Bank “the self-proclaimed knowledge bank”. Carmody states that inequitable economic structures in Africa produce poverty (Carmody 2012: 11-12).

2.2 Anthropological contributions to the discourse of poverty

When building a theoretical framework for this study I was as surprised as Booth et al. when collecting anthropological data for their paper (1999) on poverty in Africa. It was expected that anthropologists would have a great deal to say about how people defined by outsiders as 'poor' perceive themselves; the various ways in which well-being, vulnerability, insecurity and their causes are understood; and how the nature and causes of poverty have changed over time. However, what anthropological studies have to say directly about these specific issues is limited. The focused anthropological literature on poverty in Africa turns out to be minimal, and what there is does not easily deliver up the visions of poor people about their condition. The treatment of issues to do with poverty and well-being is split across a range of specialist literatures. To some extent the entire corpus of African ethnography is relevant (Booth et al. 1999: 5).

North American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (2004 [1974]) has examined the concept of poverty by looking at the global history and research on societies. He addresses the fact that the world's most 'primitive' people have few possessions, but are not 'poor'. Poverty is not a certain small amount of good or only a relation between means and ends, but it is above all a relation between people. He claims poverty is a social status and as such it is an invention of civilisation and it has grown with civilisation. The structures have been political as well as economic and of power as well as property. They have first developed within societies and now increasingly globally between societies. For researchers in anthropology, as for our informants, poverty is a social relation, not an absolute condition (Sahlins 2004: 37).

Booth et al. (1999) see that the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to the understanding of poverty and the design of poverty-reduction strategies has become more widely accepted in recent years. An anthropological approach to the concept of poverty reveals the constitutional role of development institutions in developing poverty analysis as problematic. The potential contribution

to the discourse on poverty from disciplines other than economics includes comprehending the perceptions of the people living in poverty, identifying their priorities and describing their coping strategies. Ethnographic research as observation and interpretation of behaviour has relevant things to say on all core issues in poverty status reports: who are the poor, why are they poor and what can be done to reduce poverty (Booth et al. 1999: 2). Booth et al. emphasise that while anthropological work can indeed help to enrich statistical poverty profiles, a more important contribution may be in documenting the diverse and contested categorisations and relationships that constitute the reality that poverty reduction efforts must struggle with on the ground. This study will contribute to the discussion concerning urban poverty with an aim to open up the daily experiences, choices, conditions and hopes behind the decisions made by a particular selection of people in urban Addis Ababa.

Development research and policy documentation represent poverty as an overwhelming global problem. In her disciplinary analysis, social anthropologist Maia Green (2007) points out that despite the apparent scale and depth of poverty in the world, poverty as a research problematic has yet to capture the attention of the qualitative social sciences to the same extent. The anthropological perspective starts from a position of interrogating the assumed categories of analysis, in this case poverty, rather than assume attributes in advance. An anthropological approach seeks to understand something of this experience, and with the basic methodological premise that the anthropologist must first observe what people do and say and use their categories to understand it. From this perspective, the anthropologist cannot be so much concerned with her own idea of poverty or with concepts of poverty derived from development documentation, as with what concepts of poverty do or do not exist in particular places and at particular times. How are these categorisations formed? Who are included in these categories? What does it mean to be designated as poor? How do these categories relate to other social categories? Moreover, researchers in anthropology, in starting with human beings as opposed to categorised ideal types, perceive poverty as a consequence of relations between people (Green 2007: 1115). An anthropological perspective can reveal the social processes through which poverty is institutionalised in policy development processes and in the institutions that monitor, assess and address it (Green 2007: 1108).

Green emphasises the importance in anthropological research of understanding poverty as a manifestation of social relations. Social agencies also classify and act upon the world through categorisation of poverty. An anthropological approach explores the content of this category and its genealogy in relation to the specific historical and social contexts in which it is relevant for different

categories of people. These approaches reveal the continuity between current understandings on poverty in development and social policy, and the assumptions that inform them. According to Green's analysis, these centre on normative ideas of social order, and a perception of poverty acts as an intrinsic threat to this order. Poverty has not been represented as the outcome of historical and social relations but as a problem that must be eliminated to maintain social functionality (Green 2007: 1116).

According to Booth et al. (1999) features of local structures, including notably gender relations, affect responses to structural change, hence multiple paths of impoverishment or dis-impoverishment remain more likely than homogeneous national or regional trends. Anthropological studies remind us that the primary stakeholders in anti-poverty operations are, of necessity, active participants in constructing their own future, while the activities of states and development agencies are not always empowering poor people. Planning for poverty reduction will generally benefit from a strong learning-process orientation. Diversity of social response does not mean that no generalisations are possible, or that those that remain robust (for instance the benefits from decontrolling rural markets, or legislating on women's rights) are not important. But it does strengthen the view that anti-poverty tools need to be built, at least to some degree, from the bottom up. Development interventions, including anti-poverty strategies, are likely to benefit from an approach that is more institutionally self-aware. This implies placing poor people's own efforts at the centre, and reflecting more self-critically on possible side-effects of the exercise of governmental and agency power (Booth et al. 1999: 2). The data from this ethnological study in Addis Ababa supports the view.

2.3 Feminist economics

Feminist economics in its contemporary form originate from the equal rights movements gathered pace during the 1960s and 1970s in several industrial countries. It challenges economic policies that treat women as invisible (Nelson 2010: 97). One of the early landmarks in the popular movement for feminist economics is Marilyn Waring's (1988) claim that the absence of women's unpaid labour in national statistics results in severely biased national policies. Although it is understood that women are the poorest of the poor all over the world, poverty reduction initiatives rarely take into account gender differences, and in some cases might even have negative impacts on women. Feminist economist Julie A. Nelson points out that the effects of liberalisation of global trade and finance often have their most immediate impact on women. For example programs which determine

macroeconomic belt-tightening through retrenchments in health care often result in women being expected to take on, unpaid, the work of providing services no longer provided by governments (Nelson 2010, 103).

In the global South, women often work in subsistence or small scale agriculture, or micro-enterprises in sectors like handicraft manufacture, food processing and retail trade. Feminist economists have analysed how marginalisation into such kind of work can trap women in poverty compared to more formal kinds of employment. But at the same time, academics working closely with local groups and NGOs have found out that such work may also help strengthen women's economic position (Nelson 2010: 101). According to Nelson, one of the most successful aspects of feminist economics has been the increased acceptance by many in the development community of the idea that a society cannot truly improve its economic situation if it leaves the female half of its population behind (Nelson 2010: 105).

According to a UN-HABITAT assessment, women in Ethiopian society occupy a marginalised position compared to men. Women face discrimination in many aspects of their lives. In the United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Related Development Index, Ethiopia is ranked fourth to last, placed 142 out of 146 countries. Stereotypical thinking, social taboos and discriminatory laws are still subordinating women in Ethiopia. Women in Addis Ababa face major obstacles. For instance, 23 percent of women in Addis Ababa are illiterate, 22 percent have only primary education, and only four percent have reached college or university level. These figures are half the levels of those for men (UN-HABITAT 2008: 4).

Ethiopian women have low levels of participation in administrative, managerial and professional jobs. In terms of housing, security of tenure is lower for women. Under Ethiopian tradition, house ownership does not extend to women, and therefore if the husband dies, the widow must fight for legal access and ownership. If a divorce takes place, women are more likely to have to find another house, or move back in with their parents or relatives (UN-HABITAT 2011: 9). According to the Vice President of FFW[10] I interviewed for this study, the opportunity to become a member of the cooperative was open for everybody, not only to women. From her experience of more than twenty years in this NGO, it is usually women who do not get jobs, for several reasons. One of the main reasons is that unlike men, the women are responsible for taking care of their homes and families and therefore cannot use job opportunities like men can.

10 The NGO included in this study. Name changed.

2.4 The informal economy and poverty eradication tools

There has been a considerable amount of research on informal and small scale or micro-economic activities during the past 40 years. Following his research in Ghana between 1965-68, British anthropologist Keith Hart introduced the term *informal economy* (Hart 1970). The term describes those economic activities that take place outside official or recognised arenas, and therefore usually escape both regulation and the official record (Barnard & Spencer 2002: 20, 609). The term informal economy arose in response to the expansion of self-employment and casual labour in the cities in the South. Hart claims that the definition remains elusive, although the social phenomenon is real enough (Hart 2010: 142).

Soon after Hart, the International Labour Organisation ILO first used the term *informal sector* in 1972 to describe the activities of the working poor who were working very hard but who were not recognised, recorded, protected or regulated by the public authorities. The *dilemma of the informal sector* was discussed at the beginning of the 1990s: should the informal sector be promoted as a provider of employment and incomes, or should regulation be extended to it although potentially reducing jobs and incomes? Today the dilemma of the informal sector is much larger in magnitude and more complex. Contrary to earlier predictions, the informal economy has been growing rapidly in almost every corner of the world, including in the industrialised countries. The informal economy can no longer be considered a temporary or residual phenomenon. A major part of new employment in recent years has been in the informal economy, particularly in developing and transition countries. Most people end up in the informal economy because they cannot find jobs or, for diverse reasons, are unable to start businesses in the formal economy. In Africa, for instance, informal work accounted for almost 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment, over 60 per cent of urban employment and over 90 per cent of new jobs over the last decade of the 20th century (ILO 2002, 1).

The term informal economy has come to be widely used to encompass the expanding and increasingly diverse group of workers and enterprises in both rural and urban areas operating informally. They differ in terms of type of production unit and type of employment status. They include self-employed workers in survival-type activities, such as street vendors, shoe shiners, garbage collectors and scrap pickers; paid domestic workers employed by households; homeworkers and workers in sweatshops and those self-employed in micro-enterprises operating on their own or with others. It is important to note the diversity of those working in the informal economy because the problems and needs are different. Mapping the informal economy to

comprehend its size, composition and evolution is extremely difficult and inevitably imprecise. International comparability is not possible because different definitions have been used and statistical information is collected *ad hoc* rather than on a regular basis. According to ILO the reliability of data is inconsistent (ILO 2002, 2-3).

The International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) held in 2003 aimed to develop guidelines for a new conceptual framework regarding the informal economy. *Informal sector* refers to informal enterprises, *informal employment* refers to informal jobs. Employment in the informal sector covers people working in units that have "informal characteristics in relation to for example the legal status, registration, size, the registration of the employees and their bookkeeping practices". Informal employment includes the people whose "main jobs lack basic social or legal protections or employment benefits and may be found in the formal sector, informal sector or households". Cross country data in the assessment of the ILO suggest that informal employment is associated with low income per capita and high poverty rates. The ILO finds several possible interpretations. People in extreme poverty may have no other option than informal employment. Also, they may not be aware of their rights to certain legal and social protections and worker benefits, or how to access such protections and benefits, in the cases when these would be available in their countries. The share of women in informal employment in manufacturing activities is usually much higher than that of men (ILO 2012). Due to the historical uniqueness of Ethiopia amongst African States the case of Addis Ababa is quite original compared to the realities in other developing countries, and therefore this study has its place also in contemporary field of research on the issue of informality and its definitions. The respondents of this study are involved in a formal government-supported cooperative entrepreneurship, but informal work has been and continues to be a part of their income generation.

Informality has a strong macro-economical role and is a new primary mode of livelihood for many. Informal work is not self-employment, but mostly working for someone else. Informality consists of networks of exploitation and extreme abuse of women and children (See Davis 2007: 178-185). The informal sector exploits the poor and keeps them poor in the case of for example industry and manufacturing sweatshops. The poor do not profit from the work, but the owners of the business do. 'Informal city' is not exclusively the ground of the poor. Better off segments of the urban population also engage in illegal land occupation and construction, at times reaping extraordinarily high profits from renting very low-standard housing. Informal production and trade of goods and services offer opportunities for rapid enrichment for better off entrepreneurs while their employees work under

highly exploitative conditions with little job security and no legal protection (Hansen and Vaa 2004: 8). Exploitative work conditions and insecurity characterise many informal economic activities.

Since the last years of the 20th century, micro-credit has often been described as one of the most effective ways of eradicating poverty or developing local community. Micro-credit policies first started to be adopted in the late 1970s (Servet 2010: 131). However, criticism concerning micro-credit has recently grown stronger. Jean-Michel Servet, a French scholar in development studies and economics, has called for re-evaluation of micro-credit in terms of their social and environmental impact and not just in financial terms, as in his view there is a risk that the growth of these might further undermine traditional welfare and solidarity systems, reduce wages because of competition and not necessarily comply with environmental regulations and norms. In Servet's view, the odds are that micro-credit is not fulfilling its promises to reduce poverty and there is now a danger that money will be diverted away from what might be more effective ways of fighting poverty (Servet 2010: 132-133). Micro-credits may not have much macro impact but are more like a survival tactic. Servet states that micro-credit can be an effective weapon in the fight against various forms of exclusion provided that both its real potential and its limitations are properly understood. In his view it is unlikely that micro-credit would be an efficient way to reduce poverty significantly in developing countries. Credit is not itself enough to encourage micro-entrepreneurship, but a lot of resources must be devoted to provide professional, technical and commercial support for the participants (Servet 2010: 137). The emphasis should be on training and in Servet's view this is often lacking in micro-finance programs (Servet 2010: 139). The evidence from this study supports the view that appropriate and customised training can significantly strengthen the assets and self esteem of the participants.

Indian urban development planner and economist Ananya Roy has examined how we could understand the "inevitable heterogeneity of Southern urbanism". Her claim is that it is not possible within the familiar categories of megacity or slum, and therefore has foregrounded four emerging concepts: periphery, urban informality, zones of exception and grey spaces. Roy has argued that informality must be understood as an expression of urbanisation, a logic through which a specific spatial value is produced and managed. Informalised spaces are reclaimed through urban renewal, while formalised spaces augment value through authorised legitimacy. In Roy's view, urban informality is a strategic device that uncovers the ever-shifting urban relationship between the legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorised and unauthorised. According to Roy this relationship is arbitrary and yet it is the site of considerable state power and violence. Urban

informality enables an understanding on how the slum is produced through the governmental administration of population as well as how the bourgeois city and its prosperity are produced through the practices of the state. In this sense, urban informality is a device that serves to deconstruct the very basis of state legitimacy and its various instruments (Roy 2011: 231-233).

According to Servet, contemporary studies on poverty show that the poorest fraction of the population are handicapped not so much because of their low incomes but by the fact that they do not have the means to deal with a crisis, such as illness (Servet 2010: 139). The source material from the field for this study supports this view: lack of money is not necessarily the core problem, but insecurity and lack of leverage due to for example health problems and unstable housing situation go hand in hand with low income level.

2.5 Sustainable livelihoods approach and the concept of social capital

The sustainable livelihoods approach was introduced in the so called Brundtland report, *Our Common Future*, of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. This report placed environmental issues firmly on the political agenda as it aimed to discuss the environment and development as a single issue. Even though the original focus is on the environmental sustainability, I find this a useful approach for this study to examine the challenges in poverty alleviation in the urban context. Sustainable livelihoods perspective offers a way of thinking about the links between vulnerability, poverty and environmental or natural resource management. It is grounded and contextual, looking at how different people pursue a range and combination of livelihood strategies given a particular vulnerability context, combination of assets and set of opportunities and constraints presented by institutional structures and processes (Seshia and Scoones 2003: v). The terminology of sustainable livelihoods has been widely adopted, mostly in development studies related to rural environment.

The concept of livelihood is broad and consists of several other factors in addition to income. These factors include access to resources and opportunities, dealing with risks, social relationships and managing social networks and institutions within households and communities. In an urban context where poverty is invisible and exists within the corners of cities, towns and poorer areas, a livelihood approach which looks beyond consumption and revenues indicators is particularly valuable (Beall and Nazneen 1999 in Mulugeta 2008: 46). Conventional approaches to poverty reduction tend to focus on poverty lines, or other measures based on income and consumption

criteria. A livelihoods approach, in contrast is less focused on needs and more on assets and capabilities. The focus is on the people: what they are able to do with the resources they have, the varied opportunities and obstacles they face and the outcomes they are able to achieve. Poverty reduction and alleviation remain central to livelihoods perspectives, and efforts to reduce poverty focus on strengthening people's control of assets, expanding their opportunities to pursue different livelihoods strategies, and enhancing resilience in the face of risk, stresses and shocks.

Sustainable livelihoods may be thought of as an approach to development that is people-centred and objective based on a commitment to poverty elimination, strengthening local capacity and achieving sustainability and as a framework to facilitate understanding of complex and dynamic livelihood systems (Baumann 2002). Sustainable livelihoods approach is a way of thinking more holistically about poverty reduction. There are several key elements. To repeat, the approach is people-centred with the emphasis on the decisions people make and actions they take with the resources they have. It looks at the way in which local, national and global are linked, and it is dynamic, focused on the broad range of assets and strategies people use to negotiate within and among different institutional arrangements and in changing, and often uncertain, environments (Seshia and Scoones 2003: 5).

Robert Chambers, a scholar in development studies, states that household livelihoods strategies that often involve different members in diverse activities and sources of support, such as in urban agriculture, exploiting common property resources, and adjusting consumption, are largely unseen by the professionals. According to Chambers, sustainable livelihoods are an objective on which both poor people themselves and professionals can agree. Sustainable livelihood intensive strategies stress natural resources management, redistribution of livelihood resources, prices and payments, health, abolishing restrictions and conflicts, and safety nets for poor people during bad times (Chambers 1995: 173-174).

The livelihood approach can be used to acquire a clear and realistic understanding of people's strengths and assets, and how they try to convert these into positive livelihood outcomes. The approach is founded on the belief that people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes; no single category of assets on its own is sufficient to give all the many and varied livelihood outcomes that people need. This is particularly true for poor women whose access to any category of assets tends to be very limited. The livelihood approach emphasises people's agency. In this approach the urban poor are viewed not as an undifferentiated and passive group at the mercy of wider social processes, but as active agents, responding to social and economic change as best

they can, no matter how harsh their circumstances might be (Beall and Nazneen 1999 in Mulugeta 2008).

There is also criticism towards this recently popular “assets-approach”. Harriss has criticised this approach for failure to examine the social and political-economic relationships that trigger poverty (Harriss 2007: 13). An Indian economist Kalyan Sanyal (2007) has introduced the idea of a need-based economy, where the purpose of people's actions is to secure survival rather than invest for the future. According to Sanyal capitalism drives economic inequality by the displacement and exclusion of the poor. Therefore, this need economy is produced by capitalism and is essential for the existence of capitalism. In Sanyal's view the logic of global capitalism is expansionist and requires it to displace large numbers of people from economic production like agriculture or local industries. At the same time it cannot re-employ these people (See Sanyal 2007).

A livelihoods framework can be adopted and adapted to suit the needs of a particular context. Ethiopian social psychologist Emebet Mulugeta used the concept of asset ownership in his technical survey on survival strategies of poor women in Addis Ababa (2008). The concept of asset ownership enables the examination of the extent of vulnerability and the availability of resources that allow individuals to attain a secure livelihood. This component has five dimensions: financial, human, social, physical and natural capital (Mulugeta 2008: 46). As in Mulugeta's work, natural capital is not as relevant for this study as it would be in rural areas, due to the urban context of Addis Ababa.

Financial capital refers to the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives. There are two main sources of financial capital: savings or assets that can easily be converted into money, and inflow of money, such as income, remittances or pensions that come regularly (Rakodi 2002 via Mulugeta 2008: 46). Human capital relates to the skills, knowledge, ability to work and health, which, together, enable people to engage in different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. It makes up the foundation upon which people build their capacity to attain livelihoods. This varies according to household size and the demographic characteristics, such as age in the households, education, level of skills, leadership potential, health status, and so on (Mulugeta 2008: 46-47). Physical capital consists of basic infrastructure needed to secure livelihoods. Infrastructure represents changes introduced in the physical environment to help people meet their basic needs and to be more productive. Some of the physical assets that are necessary to attain sustainable livelihood are secure shelter and buildings, affordable transport,

adequate water supply and sanitation and clean and affordable energy. The need for safe and secure shelter is particularly important, as it gives a sense of stability that will help people to concentrate on their other activities. The well-being of individuals is highly related to the type of housing and sanitary facilities, the kinds of consumer goods they own (radio and television sets), the levels of education individuals have attained, and their access to various types of social services, including health care facilities (Ellis and Tassew via Mulugeta 2008: 47).

Social capital has become a central concept in the 21st century development policy. Political scientist Robert Putnam established the popularity of the term social capital in the mid 1990s, but did not invent the term. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) is one of the pioneers to introduce the terminology on the forms of capital, but here have been references to the term social capital already in the beginning of the 20th century. For Putnam the essential component of social capital is trust (See Putnam 2011). Social capital can be understood as social resources which people utilise in their attempt to attain their livelihood objectives. Social capital is developed through networks that increase people's trust and ability to work together and increase their access to influential institutions, such as political or civic bodies. Social capital can be gained in different ways. One could be through membership in more formalised groups, which often requires conforming to mutually agreed upon or commonly accepted rules and norms. The other is by entering into relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges which enhance co-operation and reduce transaction costs (Mulugeta 2008: 47).

The term social capital has been widely used in the World Bank, but not much in the publications of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). In academia it has been popular in political science and sociology, but hardly used at all in anthropology. Economists have had a mixed position on the term. The critics recognise that trust, norms and networks are important, but doubt the categorisation of this phenomenon as 'capital'. Anthropologists have criticised that their discipline has been ignored for example in the publications of the World Bank on the issue, despite a massive empirical literature in anthropology regarding communities, and a significant theoretical literature concerning social networks since the 1970s (McNeill 2010: 280-282).

Being very poor constrains people's abilities to invest in social capital. Frances Cleaver, a scholar in development studies, has conducted ethnographic research in Tanzania (2005) to question the mainstream ideas of development policy that emphasise social capital as a substitution to other missing assets in overcoming poverty. In her study she examines three factors that seriously

constrain the ability of the people to actively construct or benefit from social capital through association. First major constrain is that the poor are extremely dependent on, and unable to sustain, their physical and mental able-bodiedness. Secondly, there is little flexibility in their social relationships due to fragile and unstable family arrangements. Moreover, it is difficult or impossible for the poor people to make their voices heard, or their opinion is not valued and has no impact in the society (Cleaver 2005: 896). Cleaver states that people in the poorest conditions are more dependent on their ability to exercise agency than others, and less able to do so effectively. In her view the poverty alleviation mechanisms that promote participation and institutional engagement cannot work without a deeper consideration of the structural disadvantages of the poor and the constraints in their agency. Social capital is not automatically created from participation in association and trust does not emerge from repeated interaction, but more attention needs to be paid to the effects of the lack of material and physical assets of the poor and to the socio-cultural constraints that hinder their possibilities (Cleaver 2005: 904).

Sociologist Kate Meagher (2006) has examined the usefulness of the concept of social networks for the study of informal economies in Africa, and the question of why social networks have failed to promote economic development in Africa when they have been associated with economic growth in other parts of the world. Meagher argues that contemporary perspectives see social networks within a 'social capitalist' paradigm that conceptualises networks as 'social capital' to the extent that they promote economic efficiency and accumulation, and tend to portray them as 'social liabilities' if they do not. Meagher is arguing for a sharper focus on the specific institutional capacities of indigenous economic institutions. This would enable a move beyond the cultural determinism of the conventional approaches, which have been damaging to the understanding of informal economies in Africa. According to Meagher the poor performance of African enterprise networks has more to do with the weakness of the state than with the inadequacies of African cultural institutions. Where the state fails to contribute appropriate institutional support, strains on informal enterprise networks provoke a fragmentation of informal organisation which impedes growth and exaggerates differentiation, uncertainty, and opportunism. This negative production environment undermines the development of collective efficiencies in small-firm organisation and limits the formation of subcontracting links with the formal sector. According to Meagher institutional approaches capture both the continuity and change in social networks. A more effective understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of African social networks requires an examination of the specific historical, institutional, and political context in which networks develop and operate (Meagher 2006: 578-579).

Ethologist Laura Stark (2014) argues that in order to help the chronically poor, the perspective needs to shift away from economic growth and market participation towards facilitating the survival networks in which the poor operate within the separate, non-capitalist spaces of the need economy of the poor. Stark is calling for recognition of those networks that benefit and support the poor, and those which exploit and exclude them. Stark states that models of poverty which do not acknowledge the exploitation and dislocation of the poor within and through their socio-economic networks cannot sufficiently distinguish between poverty's causes and its effects. The majority of the world's urban poor exist outside the scope of development projects and are being helped by nobody. They are simply surviving. According to Stark this survival is what one is left with when there is no development of and/or connection with the social networks one would need to access social capital. Survival is dynamic and it involves complex social networks. According to Stark people are poor in part because the networks in which they are compelled to participate in order to survive channel resources away from them. Inequality characterises networks not only in relations between poorer and wealthier groups, but also within the internal hierarchies among the poor themselves (Stark 2014). The respondents of this study were part of a collective enterprise, which was still at its early stage and did not generate income for them. Several modes of survival will be identified in the following analysis section of this study.

2.6 Summary of discussion

In this chapter I have introduced the global discourse on the complex concept of urban poverty and informality, which have mainly been dealt with in development studies. Pádraig Carmody and John Harriss have criticised the mainstream discussion of supporting unequal economic structures and not understanding the diverse dynamics of urban poverty. In his capability approach Amartya Sen addressed various concerns about contemporary approaches to the concept of human well-being. Sen understands poverty as deprivation in the capability to live a good life and in his thinking individuals can differ to a great extent in their abilities to utilise the same resources. Reality is complicated and research needs to reflect to this diversity. The most important contribution of ethnographic work on poverty alleviation is in documenting the diverse and contested categorisations and relationships that constitute the reality that poverty reduction efforts must struggle with on the ground. In the following analysis chapter I will examine the diverse dimensions of deprivation and anxiety, and the coping strategies of a group of cooperative workers in Addis Ababa with the aim to reveal the different dimensions that are relevant to the poor themselves.

Frances Cleaver has questioned the emphasis on social capital as a substitution to other missing assets in overcoming poverty. She states that poor are extremely dependent on, and unable to sustain, their physical and mental able-bodiedness and that there is little flexibility in their social relationships due to fragile and unstable family arrangements. According to Booth et al. the primary stakeholders in anti-poverty operations are, of necessity, active participants in constructing their own future and anti-poverty strategies are likely to benefit from an approach that places poor people's own efforts at the centre. As presented in this literature survey, the realities of people in poverty are local, complex, diverse and dynamic. Income is an important part of deprivation, but should only be seen as one of the aspects.

In this chapter I have presented the conservative conseptualisations of urban poverty by development industry, and some of the core criticism towards it. In my opinion poverty cannot be considered solely as given, as in the palliative approach. For me it seems evident that inequalities in power relations produce and sustain poverty. The ones in power can shape socio-economic structures for their benefit, and it is extremely difficult if not impossible for the people living in poverty to make their voices heard in the society, and in the poverty alleviation policies. In my understanding, poverty is always political, because it is economic, and economic issues are inevitably based on political decision making, in which the poor themselves are not participating.

The strong macro-economic role of informality has been understood in the current discussion. The informal economy is no longer considered a temporary or residual phenomenon. Still it is unclear whether the informal sector should be promoted as a provider of employment and incomes, or attempted to be regulated extensively, although this would potentially reduce jobs and incomes. Informality is a new primary mode of livelihood for many, but the sector also exploits the poor and keeps them poor in the case of for example sweatshops. The poor do not profit from the work, but the owners of the business do. My interpretation is that the respondents of this study will continue to engage in informal economy as long as there is not enough income generated in this government-supported cooperative, or any other work that is legally recognised. The difficulty of establishing and sustaining small-scale business in urban Addis Ababa also became clear in the interviewees' narratives. Main reasons for this in addition to lack of finance are especially poor business management skills and the lack of space.

I support the capability approach to poverty, which seeks to understand which social structures influence capability development and fulfilment. It became clear during the interviews that there are

considerable differences in peoples capabilities to cope in urban poverty. We cannot only focus on assets in general, although this social capital approach has been popular recently within development industry. Focus on the assets only is insufficient unless we consider what particular people can do with them. The concept of social capital is problematic, and I find ethnographic methods extremely important in making it possible for us to hear the poor themselves.

In the following chapter I will also demonstrate how my field data supports the view that micro-finance instruments to reduce poverty, like micro-credit, are probably less effective than appropriate and customised training would be. In recent research the implementation of micro-finance comes across as being rather more like a survival tactic than to having much macro impact for poverty reduction. Professional training can significantly strengthen the participants' self esteem and improve their assets to survive and manage in their difficult situations.

Chapter Three: Analytic Level

3.1 Method of analysis and the multidimensional survival strategies

In this chapter I examine and represent my source material via thematic analysis, guided by the sustainable livelihoods approach and the concept of asset ownership introduced in the previous chapter. It became clear very early on in the research process that several themes emerged repeatedly in the interviews. The original structured questionnaire has guided the discussion around some basic themes, but several core issues were always brought up by the respondents. During the interviews, I encouraged the interviewees to talk about the issues they wanted to talk about, and this included mainly their difficulties in life, and expectations for the future. One motivation for their sharing their difficulties with me may have been to receive assistance from me. Depending on the situation and personality of the interviewee the tone of their stories was either negative, neutral or positive. As this study is ethnographic, I will concentrate on people's experiences and feelings as they are told by the respondents. As defined by Laura Stark (2014), ethnography contains a particular way of seeing the world through the lens of how humans represent their everyday experiences to themselves, but from a critical standpoint which seeks to understand the historical, political, socio-economic and cultural processes which produce those representations. Especially themes related to marriage and family life in this study have strong links to human behaviour and to cultural stances and values. The women seemed to be honest in their stories, some were more happy to talk about themselves than others. Some, understandably, had a clear agenda in trying to get financial or other support from me in their difficult situation.

Originally my aim was first to conduct initial interviews to gain background information about the group and in the second phase concentrate on one or two of the respondents with more in depth interviews. The time frame for this study allowed me to visit both Amareche[11] and Yeiyeneabeba[12] once each. These home visits gave valuable information and insight on the personal situation and living conditions of these women, and had there been more time for me to stay in Addis Ababa, I would have liked to continue with them to spend more time interviewing these women, who live in quite similar conditions but otherwise are quite different personalities. However, I have included in this analysis all the interviews of seven members of the food processing cooperative. I was aided in this analysis phase by the guidelines and check-lists presented by philosopher Marja-Liisa Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2004) and psychologist Karen Littleton (2009).

Stark addresses the fact that ethnography enables us to "access forms of knowledge that lie outside our assumptions, or discover people's motives which are hidden and invisible to the casual observer and difficult to learn through questionnaires" (Stark 2014). Ethnographic research methods allow me to represent multiple dimensions and criteria of deprivation and anxiety as people experience them themselves. In addition to financial hardship, these negative dimensions can include social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonal deprivation, powerlessness and humiliation (Chambers 1995: 173). Dimensions of well-being will be represented by examining the coping strategies of the respondents of this study.

After transcribing the interviews, I categorised the most prominent sections of the data based on the existing literature on urban poverty and the frequency of issues in the interview materials. These were categorised and close to forty topics were identified on the grounds of their frequency of occurrence in the data. These topics were compartmentalised into analytic levels. There are three core themes in the analysis: personal history and social networks related to basic needs; housing development issues and the concept of 'home', and livelihood opportunities. These themes are connected to social and cultural, political and historical, and economic and psychological contexts. A risk in thematic analysis is that the approach will remain anecdotal (Littleton 2009). I am focusing on the internal dynamics, motivations and causes of poverty, which can only be accessed through ethnographic methods. Contextual research is not the same as anecdotal. Ethnographic methods have distinctive strengths in dealing precisely with reflexive analysis and discussion of

11 Name changed.
12 Name changed.

values and interests, which in natural sciences may be thin, and such an analysis is necessarily context-dependent (Harriss: 2007: 7). Understanding poverty dynamics can only happen within specific socio-cultural and economic contexts, and there is no such thing as universal poverty dynamics, since they depend on social relations. The links between the individual cases of this study and the bigger issues of the society are introduced and explained, even though I refrain from drawing any major conclusions or generalisations regarding Ethiopian society or traditions. Methodological issues related to qualitative ethnological research are inevitable: for instance, the number of respondents is clearly very limited, some parts of the narrated situation are not revealed to the researcher and not everything can be observed by the researcher.

I will examine the coping strategies of my interviewees using the concepts of physical and emotional coping, which Ethiopian social psychologist Emebet Mulugeta has also used in his technical survey on the survival strategies of poor women in Addis Ababa (2008). Physical coping encompasses the abilities of people to achieve positive livelihood, and emotional coping focuses on the capacity of people to attain a certain level of emotional stability to be able to function normally. Physical coping refers to the activities that women undertake in response to economic, political and social changes and other stressful events that negatively impact their livelihoods. In response to financial difficulties, policy changes and conflicts, many women in urban environment come up with strategies to mitigate the negative implications. These include for instance entering the formal and informal employment sectors, working long hours, keeping the elderly in employment, going for international migration, diversifying survival strategies, and minimising household expenditure by cutting on total spending and changing dietary habits (Mulugeta 2008: 52).

Women's multiple roles in the society create a lot of pressure and stress for them. The combination of for example financial insecurity, responsibility for the family and heavy workloads is emotionally demanding. Personal resources that are in use to cope in difficult situation include a high activity level, the ability to think rationally, the ability to focus, optimism and a desire to improve oneself, all of which contribute to engagement in activities that can improve one's life situation. Social resources consist of supportive family relationships and getting support from other individuals, such as neighbours, priests, or other social groups (Werner and Smith 1992 in Mulugeta 2008: 55). In Mulugeta's survey, the informal associations, such as *mahabr*[13] and *idir*[14], were found to play a

13 A religious association celebrated once a month on a Saint's day. Neighbours come together for a meal and pray. It is organised in turns.

14 A traditional association that provides social and economic insurance for the members in the events of death. Participants need to pay a fee to belong to *idir*.

crucial supportive role. These associations give an opportunity to the women to discuss their problems, share experiences and even joke, all of which give them momentary relief from their stressful situations (Mulugeta 2008: 54-55).

World Bank economists Michael Lokshin and Ruslan Yemtsov (2001) have analysed the strategies Russian households used to cope and adapt with economic hardship. They examined the relative importance and effectiveness of coping strategies, and identified three patterns, which I will also apply for this study. These are: active strategies, passive strategies and social network strategies. Active strategies are composed of efforts that are made to mitigate poverty by engaging oneself in activities such as employment, acquiring working space and growing food. Passive strategies are characterised by individuals' activities to adjust down their consumptions to fit the resources actually available to them, instead of aiming at increasing resources to improve situations. These types of activities include, among others, cutting expenses and selling items in moments of crises. Social networks as a survival strategy focuses on accessing necessary resources from families, relatives, friends, neighbours and organisations (See Lokshin and Yemtsov 2001 and Mulugeta 2008: 54). I will examine the narratives of my respondent by dividing the prominent issues under these three patterns of coping strategies, in this case mainly the active coping strategies.

Ethnological research allows me to concentrate on uncovering semantic links. Several aspects in the respondents' daily lives, like housing for instance, are not only linked to physical boundaries, but can be understood as a more inclusive and complex semantic space, which relates to well-being and security, among other things. The focus of this analysis is to represent my respondents' own narratives: How do people themselves define and experience the multiple dimensions of deprivation and anxiety and what assets are included in their coping strategies in urban poverty? I will examine the major difficulties of the interviewees, and their vulnerabilities caused by lack of education, income, proper housing and social connectedness, and explore what assets are most important for their daily survival. I have documented the "variable, fluid, complex and contested categorisations and relationships that constitute the reality that poverty reduction efforts must struggle with on the ground", as what Booth et al. (1999) see as the most valuable contribution of ethnological research to the discussion of poverty eradication. In the comments of our master's seminar participants in spring 2014, the situation of the respondents of this study was described as "survival in the spider web of every day life". The existing major difference between *meaningful life* and *survival* in the urban environment is clear. Poverty makes it more difficult to accomplish the former. In the

following Parts I-III of this chapter I will examine three core aspects of respondents' lives, family and other social networks, housing situation and conditions, and livelihoods development and opportunities, in the context of the diverse dimensions of deprivation and coping strategies.

3.2 PART I Personal history, family and basic needs

3.2.1 Social and cultural context

Religion is built into the value structure in Ethiopian society. It is not dealt with in the scope of this study, but it is relevant to acknowledge that the Orthodox faith and belief in God are an inherent part of the respondents' daily life and belief systems. Religious behaviour can be seen as a form of cultural schema. Religious observance is also one of the respondents' daily tasks: all respondents go to church several times per week, or even per day. All respondents wished they had time to go to church more often. One respondent (Werkea, 60) went to church whenever she had time and always on Saturdays and Sundays. Another (Yeiyeneabeba, 64) would like to go "always" but because of the work in the cooperative she only had time to go to church twice a day. Traditional gathering called *mahabr* is an important opportunity for the people to meet neighbours and build emotional strength to cope in a difficult situation. *Mahabr* as a social resource is elaborated on in more detail in Part II of this analysis chapter.

Most of the respondents did not tell me their precise age, or for how many years exactly they have lived in Addis Ababa. Some of them used political events to calculate their own life events.

> *"36 year [living in Addis]. I came here before Derg started leading the country [and in] two years Derg was in power."* (Chaltu, 65)

> *"I was born in Gonder. In a village called XX. 25 years I was - - there before moving here. 39 years here. - - I came here [and] Haile Selassie [ruled still for] one year - - Then Derg lead for 17 years, [so] from Haile Selassie add one year[,] and this party 21 year[s]."* (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Map 3: Ethiopian provinces prior to 1995 (Source: Wikimedia Commons 2014)

All of the respondents were originally from rural areas outside Addis Ababa. All of them were members of the Amhara ethnic group. The personal histories of the respondents were diverse, as the age distribution varied from 23 to around 70 years of age. For most, the conditions in the original birth region in relation to transportation or electricity were substantially non-developed compared to the situation in urban Addis Ababa. Chaltu (65) told me that there are towns very near to the village where she is from, which means it takes six hours to go there, twelve hours travel there and back, on foot.

Only the young male respondent visited his father more regularly, as the father lives fairly close to Addis Ababa. Others did not visit their relatives in their birth region much at all, for financial or other personal reasons. One reason for returning to the birth region for a while was mother's illness or funeral. High transportation cost was mentioned by several respondents as a reason not to visit their birth region:

"- - I have four sister and two brothers. All of them are there in Lalibela. - - I go there in

five years once - - They never came here and visit me. Since the transportation cost is high." (Chaltu, 65)

Yeiyeneabeba (64) even asked me for some money for this purpose while I visited her home, after I had asked her would she like to visit her siblings in the North more often. She explained to me that one of her brothers came to Addis Ababa to visit her a couple of months ago, but that the last time she visited them in Gonder was seven years ago. One obstacle is the unaffordable transport cost, and another is that someone always needs to stay at home to look after her very sick grandchild.

3.2.2 Education, literacy and matrimonial past

None of the elderly respondents could read, although most of them attended school for at least a short period. Illiteracy and the lack of education in general was perceived as a disadvantage in competing in employment markets. Moreover, Amareche (70) told me she felt the other group members were ordering the less educated women to work more than the rest of the people in the cooperative. The elderly women had had no possibility for education, even if it would have been in their interests.

"I can write my full name and I remember some letter. But I can't read." (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Chaltu (65) had not gone to school at all. Werkea (60) went to school for three years when she moved to Addis Ababa when she was 30 years old. Her parents had not sent her to school. Amareche (70) went to school for three years during the Derg regime, but now she does not remember how to read or write. She mentions the lack of education as a challenge for her: she feels she cannot compete in working life with better educated people. Several respondents mentioned that in their childhood there was no "inspiration" to have some kind of a dream job or education:

"When I was child there was no such kind of information [to]be something - - rather than working there in the farm or cattle. No other, nothing inspires us, just to be in the field." (Werkea, 60)

"I have no - - academic background or nobody inspires me [to] be like this in the future. (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Family obligations, or pressure from husband also had had an influence to decide to stay home instead of educating oneself:

> *Another time when I was taking class - - my children [were] sick and my husband told me[:] which one is better for you[,] is it caring for children or attending the school. I prefer to care [of] my children."* (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

There is a clear difference in the level of literacy between the elderly women and the two interviewees who represent younger generation. The young male interviewee (Yonas, 23, ♂) was a student before entering working life. There was one younger woman interviewee, Genet (27), and she told me that in her childhood in Addis Ababa there was no kindergarten, but that she spent most of her time in church. When she was seven years old, she went to school in the church. After one year of the church school she attended government school for twelve years. A few years prior to the interview Genet had worked in Dubai, and therefore she spoke Arabic. She would like to learn more languages. Both Yonas and Genet knew some English.

Narratives regarding personal history suggest some past trends, and indicate a transition in Ethiopian society. The data indicates that the custom of organised marriages in rural areas as well as disagreement with husband can create strong motives to leave birth region. Women's narratives include a need to leave rural areas to get married in Addis Ababa, or to escape marriage arrangements in the home village. Employment had not been such a strong motive for these people to originally move away from the childhood region. Yonas's (23, ♂) mother had left his father after "some kind of disagreement". She came with her children to Addis Ababa and bought a house. His mother had already been deceased and now the older sister of Yonas lived in the house with her family.

Amareche (70) started her story telling how she got married when she was not much more than ten years old. She pointed out that at the time when she got married, she looked like her 12-year-old granddaughter Salayish now. She acknowledged she was really young, and that it is not possible to marry at this age anymore. Amareche lived in Dese until she moved alone with her daughter and two sons to Addis Ababa. She wished she could have stayed in Dese, that it would have been nice for her to stay there rather than move to Addis Ababa. That was not possible due to frictions with her husband:

That's my mistake. - - I [had] disagreement with my husband[,] that's why I left from there. To escape from him. - - I was married [to] another one. But there is a some kind of maybe gene problem, there, we didn't... - - No children. Maybe it's because a problem with him - - The second husband he was living with me [for] some period but [we were] unable to have children, [and]he divorced me and he married another one." (Amareche, 70)

Like Amareche, most of the elderly respondents had been married several times and had many children, both formally and informally. Some kind of disagreement was mentioned frequently as a reason to divorce or leave the first husband. Amareche mentioned childlessness as a reason for the husband to separate from her. Werkea (60) came to Addis Ababa to avoid marrying a man in her birth region, in Dese. Her parents wanted her to marry but she refused. First she was living and working in Addis Ababa with some people as housekeeper:

"I get my children as well from that house. My daughter [is] from there while I was working there as housekeeper. Not yet married but - - I get my children informal." (Werkea, 60)

Yeiyeneabeba (64) was originally brought to Addis Ababa by a wealthy man in her birth region in Gonder. She explained that this man, who was a lawyer, brought her to Addis Ababa for her to marry his son. Unfortunately, when they came to Addis Ababa, this son had already married another woman. Yeiyeneabeba told the man who brought him from Gonder to find her a job, because he had brought her from there to Addis Ababa. They searched a job for her and soon she got married to someone else. From this point Yeiyeneabeba's intriguing story continued in the eastern part of the country:

"- - I [got] married informally - - and then - - that husband was very dangerous and I decided I don't want to live with him[,] and I go to Dire Dawa[15]. When I go to Dire Dawa I - - was at that time - - pregnant. - - I go there and I have my first daughter - - Because [of] that[,] I brought that daughter from Dire Dawa to him and I don't want to stay with you[,] he said and I don't want you to stay with me[,] he said - - And I married another husband formally and I live with him until he die[d]." (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Yeiyeneabeba left to Dire Dawa as her plan was to leave Ethiopia and move to Djibouti. She said

15 Dire Dawa = town in eastern Ethiopia, close to the border with Djibouti, relatively far from Addis Ababa.

she was not "afraid of anything" in the future and her aim was to leave Ethiopia, because she did not want to live in the violent relationship. So she left Addis Ababa without knowing anybody in Dire Dawa. She still felt sorry that her plan was not successful. She moved to Dire Dawa during Haile Selassie regime. She explained that at that time the transport cost was affordable, because there used to be a rail road and you could take a train from Addis Ababa to Djibouti with a very low cost. This rail road is not in use anymore, because the old infrastructure for train traffic in Ethiopia has not been maintained.

3.2.3 Current family as safety network

Family members form an important part of safety net for the respondents. If not always a financial resource, at least close relations to siblings, children and grandchildren are important to attain emotional stability to survive in the poor conditions. The evidence from one of the interviews indicates that conflictual relations within the household can cause an overall feeling of insecurity in life. It is clear from the previous section that the relatives who live in the original birth region are not part of the current safety network for the elderly people interviewed. It is not affordable for them to keep in frequent contact with these relatives in distant regions. All elderly respondents lived together with one or more of their own children or grandchildren, and the two younger people lived with, or were in close connection with their siblings. Genet (27) lived with her brother, who is not her actual brother but her aunt's son. Her aunt brought Genet to Addis Ababa from her parents when she was five or four years old. Genet explained that her aunt had no daughter and that is why she took Genet with her, to take care of her. Her aunt died seven years ago and Genet told me she was sad and did not want to be reminded of her. That is why she left Addis Ababa to work in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. A lot of faith and hope is placed on offspring for future support:

> *"Especially one of my little girl[s,] she's [a]really clever student[,] she's first in her class and I want her to be my lady with [a] good position."* (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Amareche (70) lived alone with her 12-year-old granddaughter Salayish. During my visit to her home she showed me a photograph and explained that this daughter of hers used to be the one to help her, but now she had died. Her daughter had been out of Addis Ababa for vacation when she was infected by yellow fever. She died of this disease at the age of 27. Now Amareche lived with her son's daughter Salayish, who was a fifth-grade student at school. There is no indication in the interview data about what kind of support Amareche received from her sons, if any.

Photo 3: A snapshot from the home of Amareche and Salayish (Photo: Maija Suomela)

Neighbours were an important social connection and safety net for Amareche, helping in case of difficulties. Especially for Amareche and Yeiyeneabeba neighbours can be perceived as an important part of their emotional, and even financial, security net. Yeiyeneabeba had begged from her neighbours a significant amount of money she needed for the X-ray filming of her ill granddaughter. Amareche told me her neighbours come and check she is feeling well, if they have not seen her for a while. Prior to this employment opportunity in the cooperative she had washed her neighbours' clothes to earn some money.

3.2.4 Health problems as a cause of insecurity

All the respondents had serious issues they needed to deal with in their daily survival. Difficulties

seemed to arise especially from their own or family member's health issues and housing conditions, both leading to outstanding extra financial needs in already challenging circumstances. Poverty causes insecurity in everyday life and also causes anxiety due to the uncertainty of well-being in the future:

> *"Thanks to my god but I am not that much sick. - - I'm just thinking for my future. If I get some kind of health problem who will help me[,] how could I get treatment...* (Amareche, 70)

This Master's thesis does not concentrate on psychosocial problems or other health implications caused by poverty, but literature does associate withdrawal, anxiety and depression with poverty. Psychosocial problems can also be externalised in physical symptoms (See Mulugeta 2008: 45). Financial insecurity, responsibility for taking care of family members and heavy workloads are frequent causes of emotional stress for the respondents of this study. Money, or the lack of it, is of course an overall issue in this context. There is evidence in the field data of this study that lack of sufficient income equals with feeling of not having leverage in all the essential parts of life. Own and relatives' health issues directly impact income generation possibilities. Either you are not able to work due to your own condition, or you cannot go to work because you need to take care of your children at home. Before this cooperative work opportunity Chaltu (65) had not worked for ten years. She had been bed-bound for ten years because of diabetes. She had survived because her son was living with her and "bringing everything" for her.

Some respondents could not always attend work due to their own or family member's health issues. Other members of the cooperative covered for them on the occasions when they were unable to work. For Chaltu her diabetes sometimes prevented her from accomplishing her tasks in the cooperative. If she felt ill, the other group members would help her and do her work. They also covered for her when she needed to attend hospital appointments, which was every three months. Yeiyeneabeba (64) had her sick granddaughter Hirut[16] at home, and sometimes could not go to work when she got very ill and needed to be taken to the hospital. This happened approximately once or twice a month. The serious illness of Hirut was a major hardship in Yeiyeneabeba's (64) life. It had played an important role in the choices she had made in life, and continued to do so. Like Amareche (70), she had lost a daughter because of a disease:

16 Name changed.

“Her mother is not here. The mother of this [child]. - - Died. - - Seven years ago. She was sick and then she has died. We don't know what the disease was.” (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Yeiyeneabeba took care of Hirut, who always had to stay at home. Hirut could not eat much anything. Yeiyeneabeba told us she could not eat *injera*[17] or bread, and the only thing she would take is milk and sometimes macaroni. At times she had become very ill. Her condition was a “life challenge” for Yeiyeneabeba, and also incurred a number of expenses. The family had tried to send Hirut to school, but she could not make it, for she was unable to sit at a table. She could stand but she could not walk. She had to stay home all the time and her brothers and sisters were teaching her at home. One of the reasons why Yeiyeneabeba had collected all the children from her brother and her son to live with her was because when she left the house to go to work or elsewhere, they would look after this sick girl.

Hirut had been taken to a number of hospitals Addis Ababa. Yeiyeneabeba begged from her neighbours the 3 000 ETB[18] needed for the X-ray filming at the clinic. She paid 3 000 ETB for the X-ray, but when she gave the results to the doctors they were unable to give any answers to her. According to Yeiyeneabeba, every time Hirut was taken to hospital they told her that there was nothing else to do but to keep on giving her more medicine. Yeiyeneabeba's major need was to take her to a specialist doctor, who could treat her properly, and she also asked me if I knew a specialist doctor who could help her. According to Yeiyeneabeba, once she had taken her to another hospital around Siddist Kilo[19.] The doctors viewed her results and after they discussed her condition, they decided to take her abroad to treat her. Unfortunately, after some time, the doctors changed their minds and gave it up without any kind of help to the family.

3.3 PART II Housing development in Addis Ababa and the concept of 'home'

3.3.1 Historical and political context

Displacement, dispossession, social construction of property relations and how people have rights over other people are long standing anthropological themes especially of rural societies and where rapid economic growth has brought about structural transformations (See Green 2007: 1115). In the second part of this chapter I will present the links between the insecure housing situation of my respondents and the current urban housing development programs of Addis Ababa.

17 Spongy, crêpe-like bread, made of fermented teff flour, an intrinsic part of Ethiopian cuisine.
18 3 000 Ethiopian Birr = more than 100 Euros, a very significant amount.
19 Siddist Kilo = an area in Addis Ababa, quite central.

Photo 4: An example of a condominium housing area in Sarbet, Addis Ababa (Photo: Maija Suomela)

The challenges of the urban poor regarding housing include trying to optimise housing cost, tenure security, quality of shelter, commute to work, and sometimes, personal safety (Davis 2007: 27). One of the core issues in urban cities is that there is no more land, and this creates major challenges for the poor in the cities. Current spatial exclusivity of the wealthy elite means population removals, extensive evictions and demolitions of settlements to the poor. There is a clash between raising property values and the need to be near central sources of income. Toxic industries with multiple toxins and pollutants, road accidents and pollution caused by traffic, and trash add to the list of hazards that poor face in their everyday life in the cities of the global South. Third World cities are also polluting and destroying their crucial environmental support systems, like surrounding wetlands and agriculture. Greenbelts and arable land are lost to urbanisation and waste. Agriculture is contaminated as hygienically unsuitable waste is used. Cities of the global South are facing a massive excrement problem. This challenge is even more devastating for the women. Infants and children are mostly affected by the digestive-tract diseases, like diarrhea and typhoid fever, arising from poor sanitation and polluted water. Not only housing but also water has become a profitable industry, where the poor pay more (See Davis 2007: 135-145).

The combination of high population and urban growth rates coupled with a high prevalence of urban poverty have placed enormous pressure on Ethiopian cities. Eighty per cent of the population lives in sub-standard housing that needs either complete replacement or significant upgrading. Ethiopian cities suffer from a high degree of homelessness, environmental degradation, urban decay, a shortage of infrastructure and basic services, and high unemployment. These factors combine to produce the critical urban issue: the lack of affordable, healthy housing for all sectors of the population. Addis Ababa was established one hundred and twenty years ago. It is located in the state of Oromia and has a population approximately ten times larger than Dire Dawa, the second largest city in the country (UN-HABITAT 2011: 1-2).

Majority of the houses in the current informal settlements of Addis Ababa were built by feudal landlords of the Haile Selassie era, which ended with the Marxist coup in 1974. The new communist regime nationalised all land and rental houses. Rental houses were given to *kebeles*, urban dweller associations, for management. The current government have not changed this policy, and still owns all land, and rather grants user rights (UN-HABITAT 2008: 4). Each city and town in Ethiopia is organised through units called *woredas*, or wards. Depending on the size of the city, *woredas* are further divided into *kebeles,* sub-wards. Both are formally independent administrative units (UN-HABITAT 2008: 7).

Since 2005 Ethiopia has implemented a government-led low and middle income housing programme: The Integrated Housing Development Programme IHDP. The initial goal of the programme was to construct 400,000 condominium units, create 200,000 jobs; promote the development of 10,000 micro and small scale enterprises; enhance the capacity of the construction sector; regenerate inner-city slum areas and promote ownership of homes for low income households (UN-HABITAT 2011: vii). The demand for housing units far exceeds supply, and therefore condominium housing units are allocated through a computer-based lottery system. Lottery registration forms are distributed at public locations within Addis Ababa. Once applicants collect these forms and fill them out, they return the forms to the Housing Development Project Office. The lottery takes place in a public meeting space and attendance is open to anyone who is interested. Admittance is open and free. First, the 30 per cent quota is drawn for women, then the remaining 70 percent for men and women together (UN-HABITAT 2011: 26).

The lottery system was implemented following criticism of the allocation of the first condominium

project, in which certain groups were seen to be favoured rather than the low-income target population. The programme restricts the resale of condominium units, with beneficiaries not allowed to resell their condominium for five years from the date of taking over the property. The programme places special emphasis on minimising disruption to residents affected by condominium development. The programme was planned so that compensation is given to those who have had to leave their former home for condominium development. There is a dedicated office in the City Administration which deals specifically with relocation. According to an assessment of UN-HABITAT (2011), people living in sites that are to be redeveloped have been given the option to acquire a condominium house in the same location. They are not put through the lottery process, but are allocated a condo automatically provided they can afford the down payment. Furthermore, it is written in law that those currently living in an inner-city area will be given a condominium still within the inner city (UN-HABITAT 2011: 26-27). The narratives of the interviewees of this study, as well as information provided in a personal discussion in May 2014 with ethnologist Laura Stark, (who has recently examined the housing development situation in Addis Ababa), contradict this information from UN-HABITAT. The field data of this study, collected by ethnographic research methods, gives valuable insight from current *kebele* house residents to the functionality of these regulations.

Photo 5: Official condominium lottery results (Photo: Maija Suomela)

In their assessment in 2011, UN-HABITAT states that although this large-scale programme has not met all of its original targets, it had by then built 171,000 housing units, which is seen as a significant achievement considering the previously limited capacity of the Ethiopian housing sector. The programme greatly increased the number of home owners that would never otherwise have owned a home within their lifetime, and, in parallel, has benefited the housing market by increasing the supply of owner occupied housing and rental units. According to UN-Habitat, this programme has also “built the capacity of the construction sector, addressed the existing slums and has been a significant generator of employment opportunities” (UN-HABITAT 2011: vii).

However, UN-HABITAT also addresses a number of unanticipated challenges facing the programme. The most pressing is the affordability of the units for low income households, with the cost increases in the price of condominium houses deeming them no longer an option for many low income households. Furthermore, the inability to pay the monthly mortgage and service payments forces many households to move out of their unit and rent it out rather than risk losing it through bank foreclosure. Many condominium sites are located on the periphery of the city and do not acknowledge the need for employment opportunities for residents, despite there living up to 10,000 households in some sites. This places further financial strain on beneficiaries in the form of daily transport costs. These are critical factors that must be addressed to improve the sustainability of the programme (UN-HABITAT 2011: vii). The evidence from my fieldwork strongly supports the view of UN-HABITAT assessment on the first phase of condominium housing programme. At the time of this study the third phase of this programme was under development, and the major critical issues have remained the same.

3.3.2 Harsh living conditions and the concept of 'home'

All respondents except Yonas live in rental *kebele* houses. Measured against generic and internationally known standards such as sanitation, density and availability of potable water, the situation of the *kebele* houses in Addis Ababa is critical (UN-HABITAT 2008: 4). In addition to physical conditions, the data from the interviews of this study indicates that it would be meaningful for people to feel some kind of ownership on the place where to live. For some respondents it seemed to be a source of sadness to share a house with other people, when some were happy to live together with family members as it can also strengthen the feeling of security.

Abebech (45) lived with her children in her sister's house. However, she was unhappy about the situation. During the interview she twice started to cry when telling us about her life. She would like to have her own place for her and her children, but she said that since she lives with her sister, she could not get any support for housing. She was yearning for someone to help them to have another house and felt sorry that no one will help them:

> "*I have no home at all I am just living with my sister[,] I have no option rather than just living there [starts to cry]"* (Abebech, 45)

The compound where Amareche (70) lived with her granddaughter Salayish had one water tap per three households. When I visited their home she proudly showed me they own a radio, although it did not work. They had to wash in the one room they have, they just close the door and wash there. This is common in slum areas. The main problem for Amareche and her granddaughter Salayish was that the shared outhouse of their compound was leaking inside their home during the floods in rainy season, and there was no solution to it regardless of her efforts:

> *"we already informed the government officials but no solution - - the only thing they said you should have to collect money [to fix the toilet] - - But people who are living in this compound[,] who are - - using the toilet - - that is 14 households, they all - - keep silent. Because they are not a victim of over-flooding. - -That's my main problem."* (Amareche, 70)

Yeiyeneabeba (64) lived with eight other people. They had built an intermediate floor to have another room upstairs. Yeiyeneabeba's household had no water, they were bringing it from another compound. Yeiyeneabeba was not satisfied to live in this *kebele* house, because it was too small for all of them, and it was in a very bad condition:

> *"I am not happy to live in - - [it] is very shanty and whenever it rains it's coming in. Also smoke and overcrowded. Muddy to access. There is also bad smell since it is a shanty house."* (Yieyeneabeba, 64)

The communal toilets had no good roof, it was leaking and the rain was coming in. The residents of the compound had asked the *kebele* officials for maintenance, but they had responded that the residents should repair the toilet roof themselves. They already had collected money to buy covering sheet to cover the roof. They collected money and submitted it to the *kebele* officials, but

still no covering sheet had been given to the residents for the maintenance of the compound.

Photo 6: Three toilets of the compound of Yeiyeneabeba (Photo: Maija Suomela)

Photo 7: Water tap of the neighbours of Yeiyeneabeba (Photo: Maija Suomela)

3.3.3 Familiar neighbourhood as social network and source of security

All respondents except two lived around the same area where their cooperative workplace was located, and all these women had lived there since they moved to Addis Ababa. Although living in harsh conditions, all except one respondent were very content to live in their neighbourhood. Abebech (45) lived with her sister in another neighbourhood and was unhappy. The data from her interview indicates that there was a situation of conflict in her home, which impacted on her overall well-being. She told me she does not interact that much with people in her neighbourhood:

> *"I prefer to be, keep silent. I am just entertaining my children*." (Abebech, 45)

The male respondent Yonas lived relatively far from the cooperative. He said he liked that neighbourhood because there were no robbers there and it was very busy socially. Yonas visited his friends and his sister's family mostly on Sundays, because all the other days he was working. He had two days off per month on top of all the Sundays. That is when he had time to visit his relatives and friends. If he sometimes had more time, he preferred to stay one more night at her sister's place, which was his childhood home, and then go straight back to work the next day.

All the elderly interviewees had lived around the same neighbourhood all their time in Addis Ababa, and so had the only younger female respondent Genet (27). This is the neighbourhood where the premises of the food processing cooperative were also located. Genet was really happy to live in the neighbourhood because she had stayed there all her life. She had strong relationships with her neighbours. She played and had *bunna*, coffee, with them. Genet visited and helped her neighbours if they fell ill. She appreciated the social life and entertainment possibilities in her neighbourhood, for instance the younger people used to dance together. Unfortunately, Genet said, that kind of traditional dancing was in decline. She did not explain why, but the data from the interviews indicates that lack of time due to heavy workload is one reason in general for people not to have as much time for leisure with family, friends or neighbours as they would desire.

In Ethiopian society there is also a religious social gathering called *mahabr*, when people of the same neighbourhood or compound get together every month. Yeiyeneabeba (64) said she had a very nice relationship with her neighbours and she explained to me in more detail what this religious association, *mahabr,* consists of. People get together once a month and everybody in the compound in their turn prepares and serves food and drinks. People are sitting everywhere, "even on the bed

and so on”. First they come together and pray, and break bread. The priest joins the association. The priest prays for the people and everybody prays for their community. After the prayers, bread is distributed for all. After the ceremony they eat *injera* (see Glossary, page v) and other Ethiopian dishes. They also sing spiritual songs. They come together for the *mahabr* at two in the afternoon and they depart at six. Yeiyeneabeba told me that recently the cost of food has risen up very high, and this has an impact on the food that people can afford to serve. People's need to adjust down their consumption or dietary preferences due to lack of money and rising commodity prices can be classified as a pattern of passive survival strategies.

Genet (27) told us a story from her childhood, about why her aunt bought them a television: When she was a child there was only one television in her neighbourhood and everybody went there to watch it. One day when some children had gone there, they had to sit on the floor on a carpet. When Genet had heard this she did not want go there anymore, because she did not want to sit on the floor. Genet explained to me that it is not part of Ethiopian culture to sit on the floor. She had gone back home, and after this episode her aunt bought them a television set.

Although the respondents were pleased to live in the neighbourhood, their narratives indicate that recently there had been less time to spend time with the neighbours. Everybody is quite busy:

> *“I know this area only[,] so I don't want to live [in] another. - - [I am] happy to live in this neighbourhood because people know me. I know them and there is no disturbance. And people love me [and] I love them. - - [But] I have no communication with my neighbours because everybody is going to work[,] nobody is staying in the neighbourhood. So no communication. There is not much interaction.”*(Chaltu, 65)

Also Amareche (70) had a good relationship with her neighbours. She said that her neighbours come and check that everything is fine with her, if they have not seen her for a while. They will visit her house and ask if there is something wrong. Before joining the cooperative she had more time for spending time with her neighbours, preparing dinner or breakfast together, or *bunna*, coffee. Now she said she was very busy and needed to leave home already early in the morning, at seven or six o'clock. Therefore she did not have time to associate with her neighbours like before when she used to wash their clothes and serve them coffee.

3.3.4 Fear of evictions as a cause of insecurity and anxiety

Addis Ababa is a fast growing urban centre and it is facing the same problems most cities in the developing world do, including extensive poverty, unemployment, sub-standard housing, severe overcrowding and undeveloped or poorly maintained physical infrastructure. Addis Ababa is undergoing a major transformation, which includes for instance the construction of road networks, condominium housing and other large buildings. However, there is growing concern and evidence that thousands of low-income households have been displaced and negatively affected by urban development. Reports on the demolished *kebeles* are difficult to find, but many of the older *kebele* areas have been completely demolished. Inner city inhabitants have been relocated to new resettlement sites in the outskirts of the city, and this violates for example business ties with customers, breaks informal networks of survival and causes loss of job opportunities and high transport costs (Yntiso 2008: 53). The rehabilitation of displaced or evicted people needs to deal with replacement of both housing and income generating possibilities that people had established in their former neighbourhood.

All the respondents of this study except Yonas (23, ♂) lived in old rental *kebele* housing, meaning they had not been resettled in a new neighbourhood. Yonas had a room free of charge in his relative's hotel where he worked. Several respondents mentioned the fear of evictions as a factor of uncertainty and insecurity in their lives. Ethiopian anthropologist Gebre Yntiso has examined urban development and displacement in Addis Ababa, and the impact of resettlement projects on low-income households (2008). He sees investment in rehabilitation of the displaced people as a foundation for sustainable development of the cities, which cannot be attained if equitable and affordable access to opportunities is not guaranteed (Yntiso 2008: 61). Relocations have an impact on residents' access to education and health services, as well as on social networks. He sees that membership in community organisations such as *idir* and *mahabr* is crucial for low-income households, because it creates an important social safety net for people's survival in poverty (Yntiso 2008: 67).

My source material indicates that evictions are a major issue in Addis Ababa at the time when the interviews for this study were conducted. Most of the respondents mentioned it, and feared of it:

> *"[I am] very much interested in living in this neighbourhood because there is no congestion and we communicate with my neighbours very nicely. No crime, no congestion. We are*

afraid that one day we may be evicted from [this] neighbourhood because of the new neighbourhood development. All my neighbours [are] already evicted and their houses [have been] already demolished. That's why I'm afraid.” (Werkea, 60)

As the conditions of *kebele* are rudimentary, people are willing to have a better place to live. Still, the interviewees would prefer to stay in their current neighbourhood and only find a decent house instead of current shanty houses. It becomes clear from the material that for most of the respondents condominiums are seen as an opportunity for extra income via rent earnings, rather than an opportunity for themselves to move to condominiums to achieve better housing conditions. Amareche (70) was struggling because the outhouse of their compound was over-flooding inside their home. She had asked help from the *kebele* officials for fixing the toilet, but no maintenance had been provided. Amareche had participated in the condominium lottery. She received the confirmation from the officials, but had no money to pay for the condominium. She was asking my help to cover the costs. The condominium that is appointed to her is located very far from her current neighbourhood and therefore she would prefer to rent it to someone and find a more decent house for herself and her granddaughter Salayish from their current neighbourhood:

“I - - got condominium housing letter, but - - I have no money to pay for that and I live - - in a really shanty house. - - Condominium is not here[, it] is very far away from here. If I [would be] able to pay for the condominium[,] I will rent that one and I will find another - - decent house here [for myself]. Because I don't want to leave this neighbourhood. - - So, the only thing that can be [a] solution is if I get that[,] if I own that condominium house. - - Even if I am not living there [myself,] I can rent it and - - I can rent another place [from this same neighbourhood,] which is better than this one. - - I like to live here. (Amareche, 70)

My respondents' narratives suggest that the current transformation in housing in Addis Ababa also can create friction inside families. The healthy children of Yeiyeneabeba were attending school. Harsh living conditions made it difficult for them to study. They were eight people living in the same small room and there is not much light:

“My son - - he likes [if this] area [is] demolished. - - Because this is really shanty. - - It is not good for him to study. My children want us to go to have condominium but I say I can't afford the condominium. Have no money to pay for the condominium. Even I didn't

register for the condominium house lottery because of my income." (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

Yeiyeneabeba used to live in the same neighbourhood in another rented *kebele*, but was forced to move to this one because the previous one was told to be too small for her family. She admitted that the previous one was smaller, but she was longing for it, for it was in better condition. Yeiyeneabeba said she had no idea where to live, and was waiting for the government to do something for her. She told that she had lived around forty years in this same neighbourhood. She felt there is no option for her. Their home is in a bad shape, her granddaughter Hirut is seriously ill and they have no money to afford to get a condominium, and that is why she has not even registered for the lottery. Lack of money creates feeling of hopelessness and this interview material indicates that Yeiyeneabeba was relying on the officials, because she did not know what else she could do in her difficult housing and family health situation.

3.4 PART III Livelihood opportunities and the food processing cooperative

3.4.1 Economic and cultural context

In his study on urban development and resettlement, Gebre Yntiso (2008) listed the diverse activities in which the residents of Addis Ababa engage themselves, including trade and commerce, manufacturing and industry, home makers of different types, civil administration, transport and communication, education and health services, hotel and catering services, and farming. According to an assessment by International Labour Office ILO (2009) the importance of cooperatives for social and economic development in Ethiopia has been recognised by the government of Ethiopia. Cooperative development in Ethiopia has been guided by a deliberate legislative framework. Traditional cooperatives associations have existed in Ethiopian society for centuries in the form of for example people having common objectives on mobilising resources (*iqub*) or providing social and economic insurance for the members in the events of death or damages to property (*idir*), among others. The history of formal cooperatives in Ethiopia dates back to 1960, when the first legislation on cooperatives was issued (ILO 2009: vii). In 2002 an institutional framework for promoting and supporting the cooperative movement in Ethiopia was created, and has been further developed. The recognition of cooperatives has depended on the governing regime. According to ILO special recognition to cooperatives has been given since the Derg regime (1974-1991) and the current governments in power (ILO 2009: 3-4).

Cooperatives in Ethiopia are classified on the basis of activities in which they engage. The

cooperatives can engage in single or multiple activities. There are for example producers' cooperatives, mining cooperatives, housing cooperatives, construction cooperatives, multipurpose cooperatives and services cooperatives (ILO 2009: 8). ILO states that cooperatives like private and other organisations should develop viable horizontal networks and vertical linkages with partners in order to deliver quality services to their members and increase their sustainability within free and competitive market. They must have up-to-date information exchange mechanisms on the price of products, the volume of production, the type of activities and government policies to adjust their activities and services in line with supply and demand. In the assessment of ILO, the cooperatives of Ethiopia are seen as weakly networked both locally and internationally (ILO 2009: 14). This is not the case for this food processing cooperative or in another project that the same NGO had started in the carpet industry. The carpet manufacturing cooperative had established stable markets with foreign embassies in Addis Ababa. The food processing cooperative was still young, but already had good networks. The cooperative was very active in participating in competitions for new catering contracts and had had for example a very good deal to cater for officials during elections. This NGO had long history in working with cooperatives, which probably shows in the results. It also practically owns the land where the carpet industry was located, meaning it had been leased to them on a long contract.

The ILO recommends that it is crucial to pay great attention to cooperative members' awareness creation, to human resource development for cooperatives and to research on cooperative work. Suitable human capacity development and human resource management schemes need to be put in place (ILO 2009: 20). In the case of this food processing cooperative the data indicates that the training they provided was good quality, relevant and customised for the needs of the members of the cooperative. The respondents were satisfied with the training that had been provided for them.

The ILO is also calling for promotion of academic research amongst cooperatives to ensure that cooperatives use innovative methods and develop competitiveness to enhance their effectiveness (ILO 2009: 20-21). This study contributes to this wish by presenting some means that have been put in place to initialise and develop a particular food processing cooperative in Addis Ababa. There were good aspects in this project and I was happy to hear from the interpreter in February 2014 that this cooperative continued to function and was investing in itself to become well established and successful for the future as well. The restaurant in the premises was renovated to attract more customers, and the cooperative was actively participating in bidding competitions for more customers. I have no information whether the cooperative members have started to receive regular

salaries. This was not the case in the spring 2013 when the cooperative had been running on its own for three months. Unfortunately the Vice president of FFW told me during my visit that there was intense pressure from the foreign NGO that is funding them for them to move their operation to more rural areas. This would not influence the food processing cooperative anymore, as it was already functional on its own at the time when this study was conducted. FFW was no longer financially involved with it. They had provided the training for the participants, and the government had provided the premises. However, this sort of pressure to move away from Addis Ababa would have a strong impact on the future cooperation development projects of FFW. I was surprised to hear of this current trend, or attitude of donors at a time when urbanisation is generating diverse challenges in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in the global South.

3.4.2 Income generation and skills training from the cooperative

All the respondents told me they had heard about the job opportunity in the cooperative from *kebele* officials. In fact this meant that they had either seen the *kebele* officials' notification of it somewhere in their neighbourhood, or the project been recommended to them by a relative or a friend, who had seen the notice. By the time of the interviews for the study this food processing project had been running for three months. The members of the cooperative still had not received any salary, and they did not yet make a living from the cooperative. A small allowance had been given to them after they had requested it, but the project did not yet generate regular income for the participants. Yonas, the young male respondent had not yet worked many hours in the cooperative, and had not yet received any wages.

> *"200[20] Birr they have given to us. It's just for holiday."* (Chaltu, 65)

> *"200 Birr given to us but that one is not as a salary. - - we asked we need some money and they gave us 200 Birr. Salary will be decided maybe later. We don't know."* (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

> *"One basic challenge is small salary. Except salary there is no problem. No challenge."* (Werkea, 60)

The only younger woman respondent Genet (27) had also another job in a café in a different part of

20 200 ETB = approximately 7,5 Euros.

the city. Her salary from the café was 800[21] ETB and that was her main source of income. The participants of the project were paid during the training period. Genet told that she got 400 ETB for participating in the training.

It seemed that the trainings provided by the NGO were quite comprehensive and useful for the group members. Training periods had included for example food preparation, customer service, business management, book keeping and how to get along with different people in the work environment. Overall satisfaction for the trainings provided seemed high among the respondents and most of them were pleased and surprised about the good functionality of this cooperative, meaning they had many customers and were actively looking for new clients. They had also received diplomas from the training they had participated in, and these were highly appreciated also for future employment opportunities:

> *"I was expect only [to get] work from [here], job opportunity. But other than that they gave us different skill training. - - the training they gave us is good, [and they] also give us [a] certificate."* (Yeiyeneabeba, 64)

The male respondent Yonas (23, ♂) had joined this project to acquire working space. He had another job in a relative's hotel, but told me he would like to establish his own business, to own his own hotel. He was in a position to even save money for his future plans and he very much appreciated the business management training provided by FFW. Although he knew government was to provide them working space, he had not expected it would be as good as it was. He was surprised how useful the skills training provided by FFW had been. He had thought the government would perhaps give the cooperative a working space in a *kebele* house and that the main focus of the project would be to serve individual customers in the same *kebele* neighbourhood. He was happy to have a certificate about participating in the training. He was confident that this paper would help him with future employment opportunities.

Business management training had been given to the participants, and it was a skill the respondents found very important and inspiring for their future livelihood development. Yonas was really satisfied with the business management training and saw it had helped him a lot in managing his current salary from the hotel, where he also worked. He explained how he had had reasonable income from his other job, but that he did not know how to manage his earnings and always used to

21 800 ETB = approximately 30 Euros.

spend his money on something quite useless, instead of planning how to make good use of it for the future. Because of the business management training that had been given to them his attitude had changed and he had more concrete plans for his future livelihood development:

> *"Definitely [my situation] is improving because before I joined this project I spent my money here and there[,] for nothing[,] but now I know how to manage my money and also how to work my work[,] and how to plan my life."* (Yonas, 23, ♂)

By contrast, the behaviour of Abebech (45) during the interview indicated that she felt utterly insecure in her personal and employment situation. She started to cry a few times during the interview. It was difficult for her to see any opportunities to use the training that had been provided for their support. She said that the skills she had learned would surely help her work in this cooperative, but at the same time she did not see many other opportunities for her to use the skills. She felt insecure and doubtful, because she had tried to work cooperatively before, and that project had not been successful. Her main expectation towards this cooperative was to see whether it would become functional in the end or not.

The data from the interviews indicates that the trainings FFW provided were customised according to the needs of the people and the cooperative as a whole. Besides more pragmatic training regarding the tasks in the cooperative that were found useful, the respondents said that the trainings had helped them to interact in a more sensitive way with each other and to resolve conflicts together. Genet (27) lived in the same neighbourhood with many of the elderly women, and knew them already before this project started. She had been curious to see how it would work out to work together with them and appreciated the training about how to get along, agree and work together with people from different backgrounds. Also for example Amareche (70) appreciated the training about how to live, work, communicate and interact with different kinds of people. As the eldest member of the cooperative she defined herself as a role model to the others. She said not everybody always worked very hard, and wanted to set these people a good example by working hard and accomplishing all the tasks given to her. From Amareche's point of view some people in the cooperative were quite short-tempered and it was useful training to know how to cool them down and for example how to treat people who may have had bad experiences in the past and were vulnerable.

3.4.3 Diversification of livelihoods and income generation

All the respondents had had several sources of income, both in informal and formal sectors. In addition to the cooperative, the younger interviewees had other employers at the time this research was conducted. Yonas (23, ♂) had another job as a waiter in a relative's hotel downtown. His salary was 600[22] ETB a month and he also regularly received tips from the customers. Several issues came up regarding the reasons why some previous employment opportunities had ended, varying from transport costs, poor business management skills and health issues to institutional changes and political decisions in the society. Amareche (70) told me that when she was still living in Dese, she used to make local beer, *tella*. In Addis Ababa she had washed clothes of her neighbours and baked *injera*. Currently she only worked in the cooperative and was hoping to receive regular income from this work. This was not the situation yet, because they were still in the process of establishing their business, she said. Werkea (60) had baked *injera* and made *tella* and *tez,* home-made honey wine, as her main source of income. She was contracted to cater for example for parties. She had also tried to sell clothes that she brought from Dese to establish small business in Addis Ababa. Unfortunately, Werkea said, this was not successful because she had no experience in business management. She was confident that if she got such an opportunity again, it would be successful this time. Chaltu (65) had been a street vendor, having sold for example clothes and charcoal on the streets of the same neighbourhood where this food processing cooperative had been established. As illustrated earlier, the participants had not yet began receiving regular salary from the project. Nevertheless, Abebech (45) referred to this cooperative as her source of income. When she had time she also baked bread and made *shai*, tea, in her neighbourhood.

22 600 ETB = approximately 22,5 Euros.

Photo 8: Drying spices outside the premises of the cooperative. Work clothing is hanging on the chair. (Photo: Maija Suomela)

Not everybody's livelihoods development consisted of cooking and vending in the informal sector. Yeiyeneabeba (64) used to work as a cleaner for 25 years in a government housing agency. While she was working there she received a good salary, 700 ETB. She was able to manage her family very well. In addition to the salary, the employer had provided them clothes and shoes. She lost this job due to rearrangements that the Ethiopian government implemented to increase the efficacy of governmental offices. The working shifts were extended and good customer service was emphasised. I did not get a clear picture of why Yeiyeneabeba had really lost this job. She said that the office where she used to work was not included in this programme called BPRE, Business

Processing Re-Engineering programme[23]. Before joining this cooperative her children had had to take care of Yeiyeneabeba and “bring everything for her”. Yeiyeneabeba herself felt that if she had academic education she would not have been excluded from the job as a cleaner in the housing agency. She had earlier had several other sources of income. When still in Gonder she sewed and designed clothes, and repaired the baskets for *injera*. When she was younger she worked on a building construction site. For a while she was washing clothes, but she did not want to do that anymore. She got a very bad ache in her back from washing the clothes and she even had to go to hospital because of the pain. For this reason she did not want to do that any more.

International migration, together with entering the formal and informal employment sectors, working long hours and remaining employed in old age, has been identified as one strategy for women to mitigate the negative repercussions of economic hardship (Mulugeta 2008: 52). The evidence from the interviews and my observations from Ethiopia indicate that the number of young women wanting to leave for the Arab countries to work for example as housekeepers has recently increased. The younger sister of Yonas (23, ♂) lived in Saudi Arabia at the time of the interviews for this study. Genet (27) had lived in Dubai herself. She had tried many types of work for her livelihood. Currently she was working in a café as well, she worked mornings every day in the cooperative and evenings in the café. She had also been a waitress at the headquarters of the African Union. Once she worked in a hotel, but that did not work, because all her salary went to transport costs, she said. Genet had also tried to establish her own business. She rented a container house to serve coffee, *bunna*, and *injera*. This was not successful because there were not enough customers and also she had not enough capital to expand the business.

3.4.4 Unequal distribution of workload in the cooperative

For this study I mostly interviewed the older women in the cooperative. Especially Amareche (70) felt that the older women worked more than others in the cooperative and she felt this was unfair. She did not want to discuss this issue within the premises of the cooperative, but when we visited her home, she mentioned it again as the main problem for her in the cooperative:

23 My interpreter summarised the governmental BPRE-system and Yeiyeneabebas's situation as follows: “This program meant major structural changes. This programme was designed to make government offices more effective. That meant that the workers should start to work at lunch time and Saturdays. The number of old workers was reduced in some offices. It was claimed that their work can be covered by other people. More focus was also directed towards quality customer service. The office of Yeiyeneabeba was ignored and they were not included in the program. This system is still in place in every office.”

"The main challenge - - is [that] not everybody is accomplishing their work or the task given to them - - I'm feeling happy with the work but I'm not feeling happy with the workload. - - Among our group - - we three we have no academic background. - - They consider us as illiterate. That's why they are ordering us to do everything. - - Those managers there, the group leaders. - - But these ones they will get the same benefit from the project. - - The burden has to be shared [by] all." (Amareche, 70)

The only younger woman I interviewed, Genet (27), worked in both groups of the cooperative, unlike the other respondents of this study. Each of the two groups worked every other day, so all my other interviewees except Genet worked every other day in their own group. Genet works the morning shift every day, so she works in both of the groups. She felt she is handling a lot of the workload. During her interview the others were repeatedly urging her to return to her workplace quickly:

"Since I was covering a lot [of] work in this section that's why they are waiting..." (Genet, 27)

The only male respondent Yonas (23, ♂) was not clearly a part of the group. He was the youngest and the only male among the group, and also had been away from the city visiting his father, he told me. Due to cultural norms he did not, for example, cook at all in the cooperative. I was told by the interpreter that culturally it is not a job for a young man to cook together with elderly women. Yonas and the interpreter were laughing together when they thought of him cooking with the women. According to the interpreter "it is in Ethiopian culture that ladies always prefer to work rather than let the men work". Yonas said he would not mind cooking in the cooperative, but that no working space was given to him in the kitchen. His favourite task was to deliver materials from other parts of the city and the neighbourhood. The cooperative needed for example kerosene, vegetables and oil for cooking, and soft drinks, *laslasa*, for the customers. Yonas also liked to serve customers, like he did in his other job in the hotel. He felt like an outsider in the group because all the others are women, and mostly older. He felt he could do more, and was happy to work rather than just sit and wait. That is why he liked to deliver goods for the cooperative.

Yonas said he will start to work in the cooperative more often. We did not discuss the reasons he had started to see the cooperative as more attractive than before. It is possible he became more interested in the membership of the cooperative after we started to interview and visit them

regularly, or because he knew other members of the cooperative had already received at least some money. Maybe his other job had become more insecure, or he was just back from holidays in rural areas and therefore capable of working more also in this cooperative. Based on current data it is not possible to draw any conclusion why his situation or attitude had changed.

3.4.5 Lack of free time for social interaction due to excessive working hours

Family concerns or overall workload impact the level of satisfaction in life. As most of my respondents explained, there is not enough free time for them to relax and spend time with friends or family due to excessive working hours, early mornings and long working days. Also the situation at home can be so difficult it causes constant anxiety in life. Abebech (45) prepared breakfast for her children and cleaned their house before she came to work. After she finished work at the cooperative at six in the evening, she went home and prepared dinner for her children and for her sister, with whom they live. Abebech said there was "no challenge at all" in the project for her, but at the same time she started to cry twice during the interview. She said she could manage if she had no other work than the cooperative. She had no prior relationship to any of the other group members. Yeiyeneabeba (64) took care of her ill granddaughter, who stayed alone at home when other family members went to work and to school. Their home was near to the premises of the cooperative and if needed, she could visit her during the day on her break, and return to the cooperative after that.

Only the two younger interviewees had other jobs in addition to the cooperative. Genet (27) worked an evening shift in a café located in another neighbourhood every day. She arrived in the cooperative every day, except Sundays, at seven in the morning. After one o'clock in the afternoon she left to work in the café until eight o'clock in the evening. It took an hour for her to travel back home. She would have a shower at home in the evening, go to sleep and then repeat the same schedule the next day. Genet was the only one who said she knew most of the people already before the cooperative was established. She had also met new people after this project started. However, she had no time to meet any of these people outside work, because she worked so much.

Also Yonas (23, ♂) was very busy every day because he had two jobs, but he said currently he does not mind, because he is now working hard for his future:

> *"It is no problem for me to work but I'm dreaming to change my life in the future."* (Yonas,

23, ♂)

First thing in the morning he went to church and after that he arranged his room. He came to the cooperative after nine in the morning, and stayed until one o'clock in the afternoon. From one to three he was resting. He worked at the hotel from three o'clock in the afternoon until midnight. Yonas said it was difficult for him to handle all the work, because he did not have enough time to rest. He was working a lot but felt his income did not correspond to the amount of work he had. He was dedicated to working hard now for his future, and that is why it was not a problem for him to work so much.

3.4.6 Future employment realities and the threat of beggary

All the respondents appreciated almost any employment opportunities very highly. Still, especially the elderly realised that due to their health or age the opportunities were limited. Especially in the case of Abebech (45), the data indicates that low self esteem or overall insecurity about her own situation created hopelessness also regarding livelihood development:

> *"No time at all to work somewhere else. I can work if I get opportunity but I don't think I can get [another] opportunity to work.* " (Abebech, 45)

The views regarding future employment realities varied depending on the current social networks and health of the interviewees. Chaltu's (65) children were in employment and thus in a position to take care of her, like they had done for ten years during the bad period in her health condition. She was satisfied with the cooperative work, but said that she had no capacity to work anywhere else. She felt that her diabetes in particular limited her possibilities. Werkea (60) felt she was too old to compete with younger people in the labour market, that her age limited her possibilities. However, she still wanted to be a vendor again and said the only problem was she did not have money to set up the business. If she had the money she would be interested in a similar type of business again.

Amareche (70) was confident that if she found a better job opportunity than this cooperative, she could work. Her health was still relatively good, and she said that "the older, [we] are strong[er] than the new generation." She felt sorry she had had to leave Dese, her birth region, when she was young. But now it was better for her to stay in Addis Ababa, she said. In case of unemployment she could always wash clothes for neighbours or other people in Addis Ababa, but in Dese there were

no opportunities at all for livelihood, she said. Nobody there would let her wash their clothes.

When asked if there was "someone you did not want to be like", several respondents mentioned begging as to most unwanted and worthless situation to be in. Werkea (60) said she did not like "those people who sit and beg something without any work". She appreciated hard work and did not like "lazy people". For Chaltu (65) "begging is dying", any other work but begging was fine with her. Genet (27) said that she "strongly hates cheating", and that is why she "dislikes begging more than anything". Abebech (45) said she "does not hate any work at all", but what she hates is not to work:

> *"Because work makes me have a kind of dignity."* (Abebech, 45)

Sociologist Woubishet Demewozu (2005) has examined begging as a means of livelihood in Addis Ababa. The problem of beggary is connected with socio-economic and historical evolution of poverty characterised by low incomes, high unemployment rates, rapidly rising costs of living, high rates of population growth, inappropriate public policies and continued rural-urban migration and displacement. The beggars as impoverished class find themselves in extreme and multifaceted destitution that consists of chronic food shortage and insecurity, illiteracy, homelessness or poor housing often on unsuitable land, disease, unsanitary living conditions, death and above all, marginalisation and exclusion. The life of beggars is largely restricted to their own habitat; in the social milieu in which they are surviving by themselves within the limits of the larger society they are surrounded by and from which they are, in large part, outcasts. Beggars tend to lack in depth social interactions, in the past and in the present. Social networks of the beggars are characterised in terms of support, competition and conflict (Demewosu 2005: 185).

According to Demewosu, the current beggary problem in Ethiopia needs to be seen as being influenced by certain factors that have occurred over time and therefore it would be misleading to try to understand the beggary problem solely on the basis of partial events and specific periods in time. Demewosu is urging us to consider the development of natural, economic and demographic factors, as well as public policies to see how they have influenced chronic poverty and the consequent widespread problem of beggary (Demewosu 2005: 186).

Demewosu states that the main driver behind the beggary problem today is the widening gap between the cost of basic necessities and the resources available. Poverty is the most frequent

precipitant of the problem of beggary and beneath poverty lies the widespread scarcity of resources needed for meaningful life (Demewosu 2005: 187). As illustrated in part two of this chapter, the socio-economic environment in Addis Ababa has become concentrated on the current urban development, and this has caused displacement of *kebele* residents, who may not always have a place to go other than the streets. As a result of the threat of widespread marginalisation and exclusion, the beggars struggle to maintain or establish a viable social interaction among themselves. Increasing poverty also creates social problems that upset the social order. Among the poor, many have ended up on the streets because they have lost livelihoods due to for example famine, or civil eviction. Others have been forced out of their homes to beg simply because the cost of living has risen to an unaffordable level. Other segments of the population move each day a step closer to the threat of needing to beg on the streets. The findings of Demewosu conclude that the beggary problem is part of the larger problematic of poverty, and he is calling for a resolution to the situation on the national level. Poverty is a reflection of a wider social and economic crisis facing Ethiopia. Poverty is embedded in unequal economic, political and socio-cultural relationships and it is passed on through generations. (Demewosu 2005: 188- 189) Demewosu also calls beggars "the reflection of our own insecurity; they are the face of our impoverishment".

3.4.7 The cooperative as a source of social interaction and self respect

Even though respondents had a lot of work, they were happy to have meaningful things to do in their lives. The data from the interviews indicates that employment, even if still with no regular income, brought the respondents a feeling of dignity and increased self-respect. It made life more meaningful. Chaltu (65) was proud to be the first to come to the working place in the morning. She was happy to clean and make preparations in the premises of the cooperative so that they could start working as soon as the others arrived:

> *"Very happy to join this project because I come early morning and I open the door and clean the room before they came here. And working very interesting. - - At home I have no work."* (Chaltu, 65)

Werkea (60) seemed to be satisfied with the overall load of her daily tasks. Before she arrived at the cooperative, she prepared breakfast for the children and washed clothes at home, if needed. When she returned home after the workday at the cooperative, she could rest. Her daughters prepared dinner for the family. As mentioned earlier, Yonas (23, ♂) told us he did not work in the kitchen,

because the women did not allow him to cook with them. He said he did not like to just sit and wait, so he was helping others by cleaning the premises and bringing them water from the tap outdoors. Abebech (45) especially liked serving the food. Most of the group members were actively working in the kitchen, but it suited her better to serve the customers, because it took little time and was easy, she said. Yeiyeneabeba (64) said that before this project started she spent all her time at home with the sick child, and was always very stressed. These days she felt better and “felt free”. Amareche (70) enjoyed working with this group of people in general. Although she told us she has close relationship with her neighbours, she also said these days everybody was so busy that when she was at home she felt depressed for the lack of communication or interaction with others. At the cooperative she could be sociable and feel good.

The cooperative had not increased the social interaction among the members outside work. However, the workers appreciated the work community and the social relationships it had generated. Werkea (60) said she lived near Genet (27), and kept in touch with her “always”. Other group members she only met at the workplace. Chaltu (65) never met with the other group members outside work.

A major challenge in this project had been disputes between the members. Some members tended to order others to do things rather than work themselves. Yonas (23, ♂) said that at first there used to be a lot of criticism towards other people's work. He was the only male of the cooperative and he told that as he was clearly younger than most of the group members, he treated them as his mothers. He appreciated the chance to work with them in this cooperative, and that is why he treated them with respect, in the same way he respected his own mother. He felt the women also think of him as their son. Amareche (70) emphasised that she wanted to act like a role model to the rest of the group. She felt people could learn from her upright example, as she was proud always to accomplish all the tasks given to her.

Photo 9: Cooking at the facility (Photo: Maija Suomela)

3.4.8 Expectations and leverage on the future of the cooperative and personal situation

During my field research period several development and maintenance activities were under way in the cooperative. Walls were built inside the premises to separate the kitchen area from the customer side, and to create a more properly restaurant-like milieu to attract customers. A stand for the cashier was also constructed. There is a particular tradition, or ceremony, in Ethiopia to serve *bunna*, coffee. This happens among the customers in the public space. Several interviewees had rational suggestions for how to increase the amount of customers and earnings of the food processing cooperative. On the other hand, for example Genet (27) had a suggestion for how to improve her own situation, as she was busy with two jobs. For her, the lack of a changing room in the premises of their cooperative was a major challenge. There was no shower, but it would be very useful for her, since she went every day to work in a café after first cooking in the kitchen for the morning. She would have liked to shower, so as not to smell bad when she went to the café to work there for the evening. According to Genet there was also occasionally a shortage of cooking

materials, and she thought they needed to work hard for the prosperity of the cooperative. If they worked hard, they would get more clients and more money to improve and stabilise the business.

Werkea (60) said they were working very hard to find more customers. They distributed business cards to attract new clients and she said it was also important to prepare quality food and serve the customers very well, because then these people would spread the word about the place, and the number of customers would rise. Yeiyeneabeba's (64) recommendation was to repair some of their cooking facilities and furniture. Then they could work more efficiently, increase their income and develop their own salary.

Conflict resolution was seen as something very important for the well-being of the cooperative members. According to the interviewees there seemed to be regular disagreements among the members about the quality of work, for example concerning the thickness of *injera* somebody baked. Yonas (23, ♂) described how when there was a conflict between the members, they were gathered together and attempt was made to solve the dispute. They wanted to prevent it from happening again in the future. They wanted to develop a group spirit and improve the dynamics. Yonas hoped that everybody could keep in mind how to work together, and how to be patient. He thought it would be best for the cooperative if everybody applied that principle.

When I asked the interviewees whether they had had any dream professions when they were children, for instance stewardess or diplomat and lawyer were mentioned. Abebech (45) felt very insecure in her situation and had always thought of mainly income and survival – or at least had forgotten by now if she used to dream of becoming something special. She said her dream as a child was to complete education and become employed by government to be able to help her family. In general, government employment was associated with secure income. Amareche (70) told me her dream profession was a stewardess, someone working in aeroplanes flying from one country to another. On another occasion, her 12-year-old granddaughter Salayish also told me she wanted to become a stewardess. When she was a student, Genet (27) had wanted to become a lawyer. She appreciated truth very highly, and was interested in finding the truth, she said. For this reason being a lawyer was her dream profession.

Present and future dreams were associated with a safe and secure home and establishing and owning independent business. Abebech (45) was living with her sister and she was looking forward to receiving stable income from this project, in order to be able to acquire a car and a house and so

on, with her children. Both the younger interviewees, Genet (27) and Yonas (23, ♂), were planning to establish their own businesses. Yonas hoped to save money and open his own hotel some day. His sister lived in Saudi Arabia, but he was hoping to work together with her once she returned to Ethiopia. His dream was to work together with his sister to change their lives. Genet was planning to have her own home and business:

> *"My future plan is having my own home as well as my own business. - - Having my own café and utilise my skills."* (Genet, 27)

For Amareche (70), the main concern for the future was her housing situation, because she lived in a very low standard *kebele* house with her granddaughter Salayish, and the communal toilet was flooding their home. She hoped they could somehow get enough money to acquire the condominium house, which had already been registered for her. She said she could survive if she rented the condominium house out to someone at the maximum price and rented another decent house for herself and her granddaughter. She worried about their future, but hoped that maybe she could even get her own retirement funds from renting out the condominium.

Conclusions

Marilyn Waring's closing words in her "If Women Counted" continue to be relevant and fitting to be quoted also in the context of this study of women in urban Addis Ababa:

> *"We women are visible and valuable to each other, and we must, now in our billions, proclaim that visibility and that worth. Our anger must be creatively directed for change. We must remember that true freedom is a world without fear."* (Waring 1988: 326)

In this study I have presented the discourse from a selection of people in a moment of time, when the food processing cooperative had been running for three months, excluding the training period. Women's own viewpoints and experiences have been represented and simultaneously I have followed the ethnographic tradition of self reflecting upon my own role and expectations from the field. My material is linked with the contemporary discussion concerning the concept of and the discourse on urban poverty, and the current transformation in the Ethiopian society. This one particular project has been scrutinised through various perspectives, mainly presenting the author's view and the view of the respondents as a snapshot.

Although limited in number and scope, the source material of this study is relevant and gives valuable insight from the people the current poverty eradication and housing development policies are designed for. I have demonstrated the core difficulties in the respondents lives, which mostly relate to health and housing issues. Multiple social networks are valued in order to survive in harsh conditions in urban Addis Ababa. These findings are in line with recent critical literature and research on urban poverty.

My analysis has demonstrated that there are several sources of insecurity and fear in the lives of the urban poor, in this case predominantly elderly women. I have represented multiple dimensions of deprivation and anxiety as people themselves experience them. Dimensions of well-being have been represented by examining the coping strategies of the respondents of this study. The dimensions of deprivation and anxiety of the interviewees of this study relate to three core themes: social relations, housing situation and conditions, and livelihoods development and opportunities.

To conclude, the causes of deprivation and anxiety of the respondents relate to basic needs and include several aspects. Insufficient level of income is of course a general issue. Previous livelihoods opportunities have failed due to poor management skills, policy changes or lack of capital to expand or establish one's own business. Illiteracy and lack of education together with age limitations concern especially elderly women. Own and family members' health problems are a major issue as well as sub-standard housing conditions, which relate to the lack of maintenance in *kebele* houses, the fear of evictions, and shortage of money to acquire condominium housing. Poor housing conditions include for instance home being flooded by communal toilets, and over-crowding. A desperate situation because of poor living conditions and family members' health can cause emotional stress. Also, lack of free time due to excessive working has an impact on the emotionally important social networks such as family, friends and neighbours. High transportation costs have a negative influence on the possibility to visit relatives in remote rural areas, and therefore distant relatives are not an important social resource for the respondents of this study. The evidence from the interviews of this study also indicates that conflicts at home or at the cooperative workplace can cause anxiety and feelings of hopelessness. Financial insecurity, family responsibilities and heavy workload are inter-linked, adding to the emotional burdens of the respondents.

The interviewees were in a relatively fortunate situation among the urban poor, as they had been

selected to participate in the cooperative food processing entrepreneurship. With respect to the three patterns of physical and emotional coping strategies (active, passive and social networks), passive strategies are prominent amongst the interviewees. Social networks are important, but mainly to attain emotional stability to function, rather than as a source of financial support. There was no indication in the source materials that passive strategies, like cutting expenses or selling "unnecessary" items, were being extensively used among the respondents. It is possible these strategies have been used before joining the cooperative, but more research would be needed to examine this assessment further.

Mainly active coping strategies to mitigate poverty and to improve one's own situation were utilised by the respondents. Active strategies relate closely to livelihoods and other assets for income generation. Work in the cooperative was obviously one strategy for the interviewees, and it relates to a search of working space in general. Working space was easier to acquire via a cooperative than alone. The respondents of this study wished to gain working space mainly to establish their own businesses. Several respondents mentioned they would like to establish their own business, possibilities ranging from own café or hotel to street vending. Begging was mentioned by several respondents as something not respected at all. This may indicate that they perceive beggary to be a future threat in their difficult situation, should they be unsuccessful in creating other livelihood opportunities. The enthusiasm regarding their own business plans varied depending especially on the emotional stage and physical health of the respondent. The younger interviewees were both involved in diverse employment opportunities. My younger respondents explained they wanted to save money to establish their own businesses. For most of the older women the main investment would be to acquire decent housing. Condominium houses, which are the product of the recent urban development planning in Addis Ababa, were seen as a potential source of income via renting, rather than as a housing opportunity for oneself. The respondents who mentioned the condominiums wanted to rent them to someone and find another decent house in their "own" neighbourhood for themselves. Lack of funds was the reason they could not acquire the condominiums they desired.

The physical and emotional abilities and capacities of the respondents were diverse. Several activities that can be included in physical coping strategies were carried out. They participated in both formal and informal employment sectors and worked long hours. The elderly women were still working, despite their advanced age or weakened health status. Emigrating abroad has been identified as a survival strategy for the poor, and in the case of this study, the 27-year-old respondent and the sister of the 23-year-old respondent had worked in the United Arab Emirates. All

the respondents were involved in multiple survival strategies.

Personal resources were also widely in use. The activity level of the respondents was outstanding, as well as their ability to focus and think rationally in their difficult situations. Especially the customised training provided by the NGO seemed to have created and strengthened the optimism and desire to improve one's own skills among most of the respondents. Several factors can strengthen self-esteem and confidence in one's worth. Social networks are important. Social interaction and good relationship with the family, neighbourhood and the cooperative created security and a good feeling. A familiar neighbourhood was highly appreciated due to social relationships and for reasons of safety. For the respondents, work in the cooperative was significant in many ways. For instance, this employment opportunity had made their lives more meaningful due to social interaction, training, and clarification of future business plans. Several respondents had suggestions for the improvement and further development of the cooperative enterprise. Further research would be needed to clarify whether the respondents could put these suggestions and ideas also to the leaders of the cooperative, or whether my role as a researcher was seen as a channel to get their own ideas heard.

This study represents the perceptions and experiences of the older and less educated women of the cooperative. Due to time limitations the people in the management or financial level of the cooperative were not interviewed, which limits the perspective on the core themes related to the cooperative work. This study could serve as a basis for a more in-depth ethnographic study on people's own experiences and feelings in an urban environment. What are the most urgent needs of the urban poor, and how do they relate and contribute to current development policies and poverty eradication efforts? The concepts of 'poor' and 'poverty' continue to be developed and a considerable amount of relevant information is available through ethnographic methods in order to guide development policies towards more functional and encompassing practices.

Source materials

Interviews

All interviews, in audio tapes and transcriptions, are in the possession of the author.

Structured Interviews at the food processing facility

	Name (changed)	Date	Sex	Age	Origin	Marital Status
1	Amareche	24th April 2013	Female	around 70	Dese	widow
2	Abebech	24th April 2013	Female	around 45	XX	divorced
3	Werkea	30th April 2013	Female	around 60	XX, Dese	widow
4	Chaltu	30th April 2013	Female	around 65	Lalibela	widow
5	Yeiyeneabeba	1st May 2013	Female	around 64	XX, Gonder	widow
6	Yonas	17th May 2013	Male	23years	XX	single
7	Genet	20th May 2013	Female	27 years	XX	single

Home visits

	Name (changed)	Date	Type of house	Number of household members
1	Amareche	26th April 2013	*kebele*	2
2	Yeiyeneabeba	22nd May 2013	*kebele*	9

Complementary interview

Zeritu (name changed), the Vice President of the NGO (details in possession of the author), 15th May 2013, female

Maps

Map 1, Horn of Africa: Groupe Steinmetz 2013: http://steinmetz-groupe.fr/espace-meubles/3/african-horn-map Accessed 28th October 2013.

Map 2, Current regions of Ethiopia: Wikimedia Commons 2013: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethiopia_regions_english.png Accessed 21st November 2013.

Map 3, Provinces of Ethiopia prior to 1995: Wikimedia Commons 2014: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Un-ethiopia.png Accessed 17th January 2014.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for Target Group – Interviews with women in a food processing project

April – May 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Date and time
- Home
- Name
- Marital Status

LOCATING INFORMATION

- Where do you live?
- Where were you born and when?
- Where are / were your parents from?
- What was / is the main income of your parents?
- Did your family travel a lot?
- Did you have a car in your childhood? A TV? Do you / your family have them now?
- Did you go to school or did someone teach you at home (if so, WHO)? Until what age?
- What religion do you practice? How does this show in your everyday life?
- How often do you meet or get together with your neighbours or some other relatives and friends? (If not clear: Who do you meet and) What do you do together when you meet?
- Are you happy to live in your neighbourhood? Why DO you / DON'T you like to live in this area?
- Where would you rather live if NO? Why would you prefer that area?
- Why did she move here from XX?

LIVELIHOOD, INCOME GENERATION

- What are your sources of incomes?
- Have you had a job or business before? If yes, what was your job or business?
- How long have you been a part of this project?
- How and why did you get involved and selected in this project? Where did you hear about it first time?
- Who do you mainly work with?
- Can you describe how your regular workday is? What do you mainly do? Are the tasks the same every day? How do you get to work, at what time? How long is the day, when do you finish?

SOCIAL RELATIONS

- Do you need help from others during your workday? What do you need the help for?
- Have you met a lot of new people after this project started? How often do you meet these people and in what kind of situation?
- Do you work with any men at any stage of the work, or are there men only as customers?

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

- Do you know what community development organisations work in your neighbourhood (where you live)?
- What types of assistance or training do you get from this project?
- What kind of skills did you already have? From where did you acquire this / these skill/s?
- What new things or skills have you learned here (except for the possible training)? What skills did you expect to learn here?
- How much money do you earn from this project? How big part is it of your total income?
- Do you get any financial or other support for your travels to and from work?
- Do you get any financial or other support for your housing or living conditions?
- Do you want to work somewhere else later?
- If so, how do you think working here helps you to get another job or establish business?
- What are major challenges in this project?
- Are there any other difficulties for you personally in this project, or for someone else you know? What do you think would be the best possible solutions for these challenges or problems?
- What was your dream profession when you were a child? Did you have "idols", who did you want to be alike?
- Was there someone you didn't want to be like?
- Where do you wish your children would end up working when they are adults? Why?
- In general, what would you say about the quality of your life after you joined this project?