Given Ethiopia’s history of being generally politically stable, it has become one of the main diplomatic centers of Africa. As such, the national government is essentially uprooting entire neighborhoods in favor of hotels, office buildings, and high-rises, completely transforming the city's image to better fit the model of a globally competitive city and to bring in more revenue. The majority of the thousands of displaced peoples typically lack the means to resettle, and the government, knowing this, has embarked on a massive project to build hundreds of subsidized condominiums. Most of the city residents are too poor to afford this subsidized housing, however, posing a major problem. No one is ensuring that the displaced people get new homes, and there are currently no studies about what is happening to them. Thus the social costs of these new condominium developments are only minimally accounted for by the government, potentially making them more detrimental to the city than advantageous.

When the government uproots people with their expansion, they are also destroying valuable farmland, decreasing the amount of land available for cultivation. Entire agricultural communities are moved and left with very little compensation for their land, with no other skills to rely upon in a city with already very few employment opportunities. The government expects them to use the small compensation money for investments in new livelihoods and homes, particularly in their new condominium project, but this does not often happen. This process of rapid urban development is working both to increase the populations of unemployed and homeless peoples, and to decrease the supply of fresh produce available, causing prices and food insecurity to increase.
Addis Ababa

a small scale fabric of global mainstreams
80% living in slums, 51% working in the informal sector

As an indigenous urban settlement, Addis Ababa initially expanded without any formal planning or control. The earliest settlements developed haphazardly around the king's palace and the camps (yehabs) of his generals (wossu) and other dignitaries. It appears that just like the king, the generals preferred to live surrounded by the ranks and files of their subordinates. At the same time, and at least originally, substantial vacant spaces would separate the abodes of these dignitaries from those of their subordinates. This original settlement pattern, supported by the then prevailing social, cultural and economic conditions, eventually led to the gradual filling-up of those vacant spaces and the emergence of a residential structure where the wealthy lived side by side with the deprived. The mixed residential structure that began in those days was not altered by the changes that took place in its economic base as the country opened up to Western civilization in the early 20th century and subsequently during the short-lived Italian occupation. In keeping with the pattern of urban growth of the least urbanized countries, the country is currently witnessing one of the fastest rates of urban growth in the world, namely an average five percent per annum. This combination of enormous growth in population, small pattern mixed land use and informal development results in a dense meshwork of coexistence. While there is almost no areal or functional zoning, the globalization is to be read as a layer cake of mainstreams rather than a two dimensional layout.

the coexistence of mainstreams - a global development

Over the last three decades, a few, predominantly high-income, residential areas have emerged, especially in the Bole and Old Airport areas. A new upper-middle class residential area also seems to be in the making in the eastern peripheries of the city. Today, high-rise apartments and offices block the fronts of the main streets in Addis Ababa, giving a rather misleading impression of a well-built, spacious city. Together with a mixed or apparently well-integrated residential structure, these impressive roadside buildings often effectively mask the predominantly low standards of most housing units and residential neighborhoods.