

EMERGENCE OF PERI-URBAN AROUND MAIN TOWN OF AMBO, ETHIOPIA: DRIVING FORCES AND THE ROLE OF PLANNING MECHANISM

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ABSTRACT

The simple classification of human settlements into rural and urban has long ceased. Lately, we have newer settlements like peri-urban within the urban municipal limits but beyond the main town. These areas exhibit partly urban and partly rural characteristics. This study aimed to study the driving forces behind the emergence of peri-urban around Ambo Main Town. It also looked into the role of planning mechanism. With a sample size of 270 both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data by employing descriptive method of study. A simple ratio-based analysis was done to show agreed vis-a vis disagreed responses. Unlike the common driving forces of peri-urban as read in the literature, Ambo Town additionally identified PEACE as one of the driving forces. Planning is top-down with a centralized planning for the region.

Keywords: Peri-urban; Ambo; Driving Forces; Planning Mechanism.

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Background

All over the world, it has been a common practice to categorize human settlements into two broad categories: urban and rural, based on certain criteria like population density and occupational patterns (agriculture vs. non-agriculture). However, according to Simon et al. (2006), the simple dichotomy between "rural" and "urban" has "long ceased to have much meaning in practice". What lies between these categories is 'peri-urban', a term that has gained popularity in recent decades.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) classifies peri-urban areas as "intermediate", situated between "predominantly urban" and "predominantly rural" regions (OECD, 2010).

Geographically, peri-urban areas include landscapes of mixed land use and livelihoods (Simon, 2008). They encompass characteristics of both urban and rural environments and are located between the urban core and the rural landscape

This approach defines peri-urban areas based on the "loss of rural" characteristics (e.g., fertile soil, agricultural land, natural landscape) but a "lack of urban" attributes (e.g., low density, lack of accessibility, lack of services and infrastructure) (Allen, 2003).

Statistical trends indicate a global demographic shift towards urban settlements. In 2018, an estimated 55.3 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 2030, urban areas are projected to house 60 percent of the global population, with one in every three people living in cities of at least half a million inhabitants (UN, 2018).

Ambo Town and Its Significance

The growth of urban areas in Ethiopia has been relatively slow, especially in the last century. The percentage of the population residing in urban areas was slightly less than 5% in 1950 and a little over 22% in 2020. However, in the coming decades, this share is projected to almost double, reaching just under 40% by 2050 (Haase et al., 2018). A significant phenomenon of Ethiopia's urbanization is the rise of towns as crucial centers of social transformation (Bonsa, 2012).

Ambo is known for its mineral water, which is bottled outside of town and is reportedly the most popular brand in Ethiopia (Bradt, 2002). Ambo Town is located on the highway from Addis Ababa to Nekemte, providing good road connections to the capital city. This makes the town popular and boosts commercial activity. Additionally, Ambo Town, home to Ambo University, is a vibrant hub of various activities supported by manageable planning through the implementation of various policies by authorities. However, the periphery or peri-urban area lacks visible planning relative to the speed, scale, and focus of current development. This has resulted in pressure on various services and infrastructure such as electricity, water and sewerage, education and healthcare services, sports and recreation facilities, roads and housing, law and order, land acquisition, and governance.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Rapid urbanization in Africa presents a challenge because the rates of urban growth exceed the coping strategies of authorities responsible for urban planning and management. For several years, managing urbanization has not been a priority, with economic development being the main focus of most urban authorities. This economic development, coupled with some infrastructure development in urban areas, has enhanced urbanization, particularly due to rural-urban migration. Urban areas attract rural dwellers by offering more economic opportunities, but these expectations are often unmet, leading to urban poverty and the proliferation of informal settlements. In many African countries, informality persists in most spheres of urban life (UN-Habitat, 2017).

Ethiopia's urban population is rapidly increasing. Estimated at only 17.3 percent in 2012, Ethiopia's urban population share is one of the lowest in the world, well below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 37 percent (Lamson-Hall et al., 2018). This is set to change dramatically. According to official figures from the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency, the urban population is projected to nearly triple from 15.2 million in 2012 to 42.3 million in 2037, growing at 3.8 percent annually.

Analysis indicates that the rate of urbanization may be even faster, at about 5.4 percent annually, resulting in a tripling of the urban population by 2034, with 30 percent of the country's people living in urban areas by 2028 (Alemayehu, 2019).

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The central challenge for the Ethiopian Government is to ensure cities are attractive places to work and live, while fostering “smart urbanization”. This means implementing the right policies, institutions, and investments now, when incomes and urbanization levels are relatively low. City systems need to be well-equipped to support growing populations, enabling new residents to contribute to higher productivity and faster national growth (World Bank Group, 2015). Moreover, till date there is no research study with a focus on driving forces of peri-urban issues of Ambo town.

Objectives

1. To identify driving forces for the emergence of peri-urban around Main Town of Ambo.
2. To describe the role of planning mechanism in Ambo town’s expansion.

Research Questions

1. What are the driving forces for the emergence of Ambo’s peri-urban?
2. What is the role of planning mechanism in Ambo Town’s expansion?

Scope

Location: The study focuses on the peri-urban areas of Ambo Town, Ethiopia, specifically the settlements that lie on the outskirts of the main urban center but still within the official township boundaries. It also studies the driving forces behind the development of peri-urban settlements. It provides a historical overview of the growth of the urban population in Ambo Town and the development of peri-urban settlements in recent years. This research paper, which is an extract from Ambo University’s Faculty Research project, was initiated in 2019. Got derailed during and after Covid-19. Eventually the project was completed and submitted in 2023. The data collection is mostly around 2022. Further, it started with a co-authored investigation and ended up as mono-authored.

Significance

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of peri-urban settlements in Ambo Town. By analyzing the factors contributing to their growth and the challenges they face, the research will inform urban planning and policy-making to ensure sustainable development and improved quality of life for residents in these areas.

Organization of the Paper

It has five sections, the second gives a brief literature review, the third explains the research methodology, the fourth discusses the analyzed data and finally the fifth concludes with summary findings and suggestions.

SECTION TWO

Brief Literature Review

Africa and Asia account for about 90% of global urban population growth, which is a primary driver of urban sprawl. Africa's urban population is projected to triple by 2050 (UN-DESA, 2014). According to UN ECA (2017), East Africa, while being the least urbanized sub-region in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), is urbanizing at the fastest rate. Conversely, Southern Africa, the most urbanized sub-region, is urbanizing at the slowest rate.

Different Dimensions of Peri-Urban Areas

The simplistic dichotomy between "rural" and "urban" has "long ceased to have much meaning in practice" (Simon et al., 2006). These areas can be seen as rural locations that have "become more urban in character" (Webster, 2002). Various scholars have offered different perspectives on the dimensions of peri-urban areas to understand the dynamics of the transition from rural to urban.

1. As a Lacking Area:

- "Usually characterized by the loss of rural aspects (e.g., fertile soil, agricultural land, natural landscape) or the lack of urban attributes (such as services or infrastructure)" (Allen, 2003).

2. The Urban Fringe:

- "The space into which the town extends as the process of dispersion operates...an area with distinctive characteristics which is only partly assimilated into the growing urban complex" (Adell, 1999, citing Carters 1981 definition).

3. A Transition Zone:

- A zone of interaction between urban and rural socio-economic systems, experiencing rapid economic and social structural change (Rakodi, 1998, cited in Adell, 1999).

4. A New Kind of Rural-Urban Hybrid:

- "A dramatic new species of urbanism" (Davis, 2004).

Wehrwein (1942) defined peri-urban areas as "the area of transition between well-recognized urban land uses and areas devoted to agriculture."

The blurring of the urban-rural boundary has inspired research into the concept of urban-rural interaction. Bryant et al. (1982) illustrated this through a model where the urban-rural region ranges from the core city through the inner and outer fringe, a zone of urban shadow, and out to the rural hinterland.

Historical Context and Theories

The traditional conception of the peri-urban area originates from French literature. Since the 1940s, studies in the United States and Western countries have examined changes in the fringe areas of cities. Various theories have been proposed to explain the growth resulting from rural-urban interaction. One significant theory related to the spillover effects of urban areas is the growth pole theory.

Relevance to Ambo Town

Understanding the peri-urban dynamics in Ambo Town involves analyzing these global and regional trends and theoretical frameworks. The peri-urban areas of Ambo Town, characterized by settlements lacking essential infrastructure and services, reflect many of the issues highlighted in the literature. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving peri-urban growth.

Administrative Status

Ambo town is a zonal town with the 2nd grade (stage) of administrative status. The distance of Ambo town from the regional capital Finfinne (Finfinne) is approximately 114 kms from Addis Ababa, the national capital of Ethiopia. As we have got information from the municipality, the town has three urban gendas (Ganda) such as genda 01, genda 02 and keble 03. In addition to these three urban gendas, now the town is expanded outwardly and included certain farmers gendas.

SECTION THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research seeks to obtain information about the current status of phenomena and describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions. This research examines the current status of Ambo town's peri-urban and describes the perceptions of respondents. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed, as mixing these approaches can cover each method's weaknesses with strengths from the other (Mark et al., 2009).

Population and Sample

Target Population / Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study includes concerned public sector officials and senior residents of Ambo who have lived in the town for more than ten years.

Sampling Techniques

Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were used. A two-stage sampling technique was employed:

1. Purposive sampling was used to select concerned sectors. Interviewees were also purposively selected.
2. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from these sectors.

Sample

The sample size for quantitative data for this research was determined by using Yamane, 1967 formula. The sample size arrived at was 297. The sample was distributed across various sectors in proportion to the respective composition in the sector.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire

Closed-ended questionnaires were administered to employees of concerned sectors.

Key Informant Interview

Key-informant interviews were conducted with individuals knowledgeable about the area under investigation and managers of the select public sectors.

Observation

Non-participant observation was used to assess the status of Ambo town's expansion.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Of the 297 distributed questionnaires, 270 were processed for analysis using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency tables were used. Likert scale responses were simplified into agreement and disagreement ratios for easier visualization.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview notes were analyzed using content analysis. Themes that emerged during interviews were identified and summarized, and key messages were incorporated into the discussion.

SECTION FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Background of Respondents

Before discussing objectives, it is proper to have an idea of composition of respondents in terms of age, gender, marital status and education. The maximum percent of respondents about 41 were in the age group of 36-45 years, whereas minimum percent about 9 were in the age group of above 55 years. Gender-wise break-up is male 64% and female 36%. As regards to marital status of the respondent's significant majority about 62% were married and 5.5 were widowed. As regards to educational background of the respondents, most of them, 71% were graduates. The minimum percent was of master's degree and above, while the diploma holders were about 16.5%.

OBJECTIVE ONE: DRIVING FORCES FOR THE EMERGENCE OF PERI-URBAN

Seven statements were framed and responses obtained on Likert Scale of five.

1. Population from surrounding rural areas in migrating to Ambo Town

Twenty percent of the respondents did not agree to the idea that there is an inward flow from the surrounding areas. Eighteen percent were not sure and therefore opted 'I don't know'. Their frequency is 48/270.

Sixty-three of the respondents felt that the population from the surrounding rural areas is migrating to Ambo town.

The ratio of the respondents as to agreement vis-à-vis disagreement was 3:1. as can be seen in figure 1.

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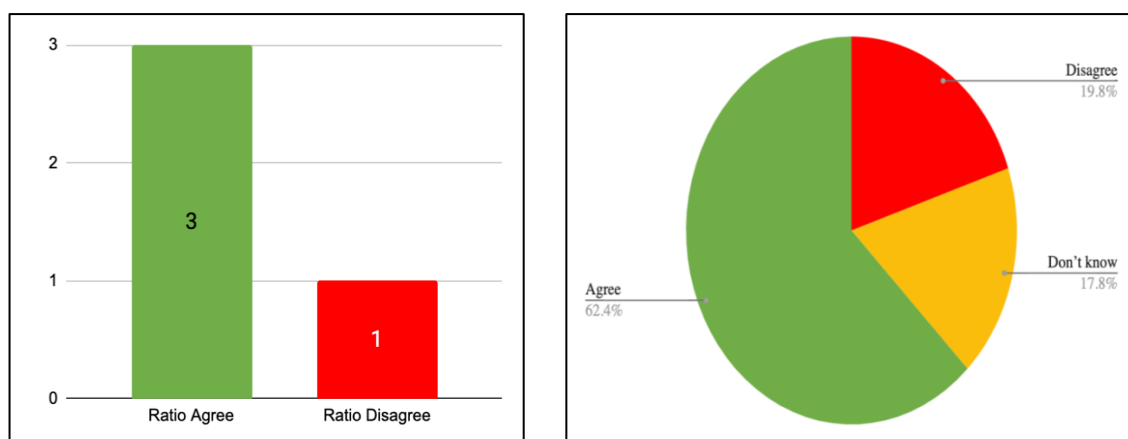


Figure 1: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Population from surrounding rural areas in migrating to Ambo Town'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

All KII respondents agreed that population from rural areas is migrating to Ambo town. However, reasons given were different. For 'KII SR 01', it was due to better security; and for 'KII SR 02', mentioned facilities such as water, electricity and education.

Based on the percentage and ratio figures, and inputs from key informant interviews, it can be concluded that a sizeable population from surrounding areas is moving to Ambo town.

2. People prefer to live in surrounding areas due to high cost of living in Ambo town

Nineteen per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement that people prefer to live in surrounding areas due to high cost of living in Ambo Town. 48 of the 270 respondents corresponding to 18% had no idea.

Sixty-three per cent agreed that Ambozens prefer to live in surroundings areas away from the main town.

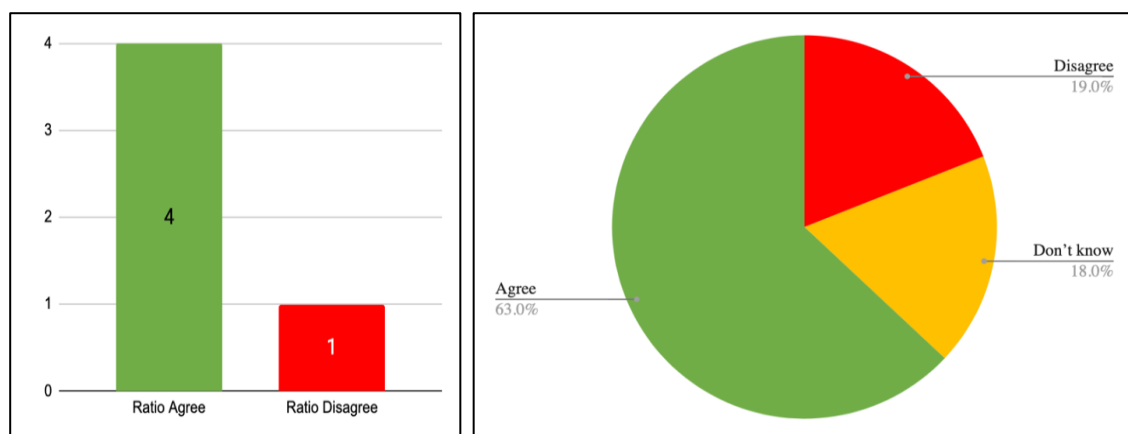


Figure 2: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagree; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'People prefer to live in surrounding areas due to high cost of living in Ambo town'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

The ratio of the respondents who agreed vis-à-vis to those who did not agree, ignoring the 'I don't know' is 4:1 as may be seen in figure 2. It can therefore be concluded that people prefer to live in surrounding areas due to high cost of living in Ambo Town. The reason for this noticeable phenomenon could be due to low housing rents at farther places.

'KIIPR 01' and 'KII PR 02' endorsed this opinion and said this was the reason as to why they were living away from the main town. As regards to utilities, 'KIIPR 01', clarified that there is a mosque around, authorized construction, where electricity supply is available. Nearby houses which are yet to be regularized, approach the utility authority with please request. If the unauthorized house is on the way to the authorized housed, the utility offices generally oblige. The difference in cost of a house in the main town and peripheral areas is 10 times. The occupants are not enthusiastic to legalize the ownership/possession as it needs lot of money. This apart middle-men are involved between the farmers and occupants. The process needs to be channeled through the government.

3. Owning a house is affordable in the peripheral areas than in the center of the town.

Twenty per cent of the respondents did not agree to the statement above and eight per cent had no opinion to offer and preferred 'I don't know' option. Seventy-two per cent of the population opined positively and affirmed that owning a house is affordable in the peripheral areas as compared to the center of the town.

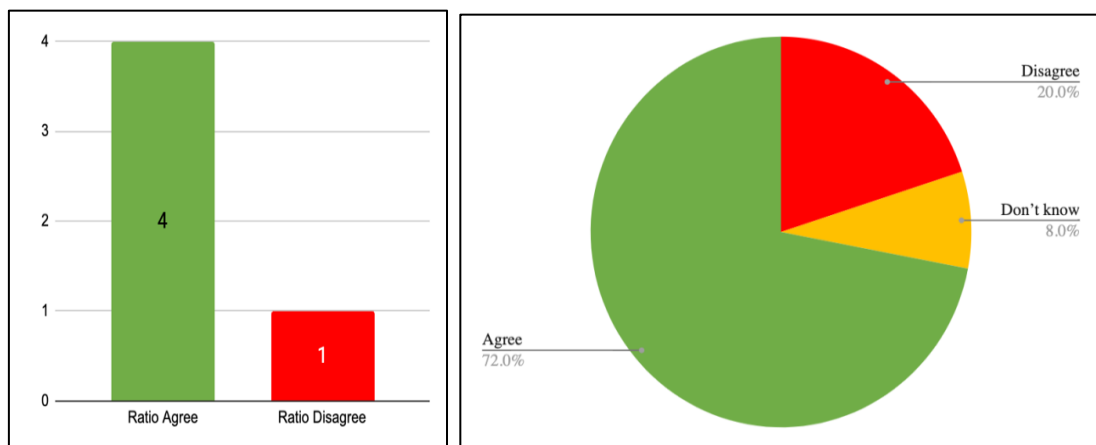


Figure 3: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Owning a house is affordable in the peripheral areas than in the center of the town'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

In terms of the ratio of the respondents who actually gave their opinion, 'I don't know' response excluded, it is 4:1. It suggests that the respondents who agreed to the statement that owning a house is affordable in the peripheral areas than the center of the town is four times more than those who did not agree. This has been visualized in figure 3.

4. Around Ambo Town (its peripheral areas) there is lack of enforcement of policies.

Twelve per cent of the respondents did not agree to the statement above which suggested that enforcement policies (related to house construction etc.,) were not implemented. It meant that the laws are not enforced properly in the peripheral areas also. Twelve per cent (33/270) of the respondents had no awareness on this aspect and therefore opted 'I don't know'.

Seventy-six of the respondents agreed that the policies are not enforced in the peripheral areas of Ambo Town.

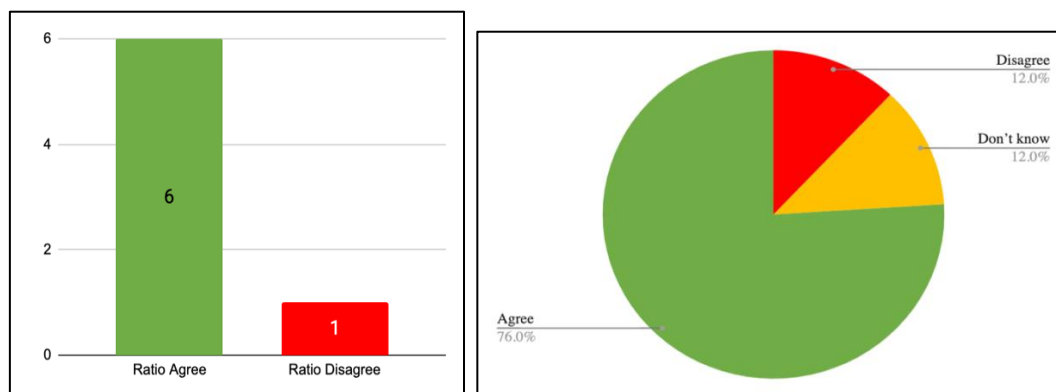


Figure 4: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Around Ambo Town (its peripheral areas) there is lack of enforcement of policies'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

When calculated as ratio by excluding 'I don't know' respondents, it is 6:1 as may be seen in figure 4. It means the number of respondents who agree to the basic statement is six times more than those who did not agree. This suggests concluding that the peripheral areas are growing in an unplanned and hazardous manner.

KIIM 02 outlined some of the causes of sprawl: land provided for residence is not adequate; local government has limitations in providing land/housing either by lease or rent. Brokers are involved in obtaining land from farmers.

5. People prefer to settle around Ambo Town rather than in Ambo Town

This question is similar to the one before this. If the responses are more or less similarly, it confirms to previous statement if not it negates.

Thirteen per cent of the respondents did not agree with the statement. Twenty seven percent, with a frequency of 73 from 270 respondents, were not aware of the picture and therefore preferred 'I don't know response.

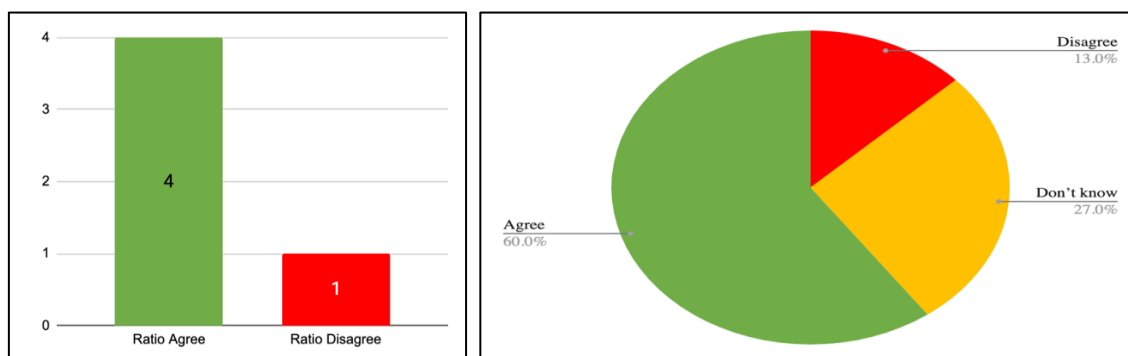


Figure 5: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'People prefer to settle around Ambo Town rather than in Ambo Town'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

Sixty percent of the respondents agreed that people prefer to settle around Ambo Town (periphery) rather than Ambo main town.

If seen as a ratio to those who agreed with those who did not by excluding 'I don't know' respondents, it is 4:1 as illustrated in figure 5. It means in a group of 5 only one person does not have an impression that people avoid main town whereas four persons opine that people avoid living in the main town. Based on the above discussion it can be concluded that people prefer to settle around (periphery of) Ambo town rather than the main town. The most likely reason if we look at it with previous question is economic considerations.

6. Newly married couples prefer to live independently and therefore move to surrounding areas of Ambo Town where houses are available at lower price/rent.

Twenty percent respondents did not agree with the above statement. Twelve per cent with a frequency of 31 from 270 had no clarity and therefore preferred 'Neither agree nor disagree' option.

Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that newly married couples prefer to stay independently, move to surrounding areas where houses are available at lesser price/rent.

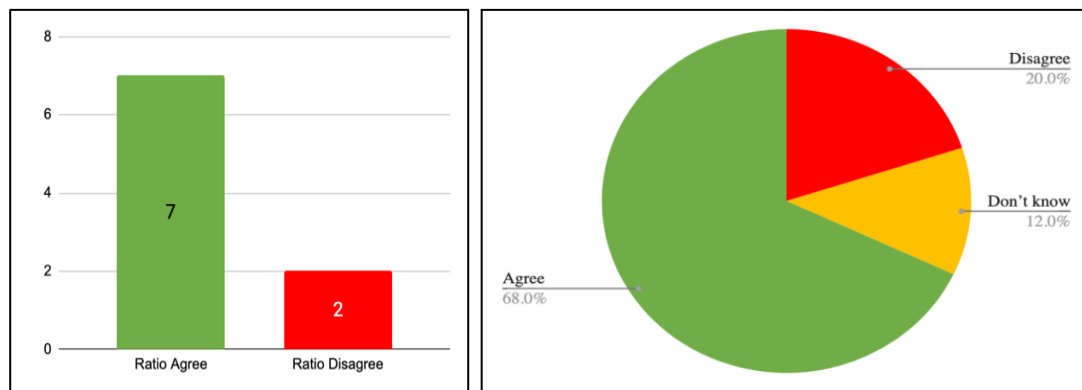


Figure 6: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagree; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'newly married couples prefer to live independently and therefore move to surrounding areas of Ambo Town where houses are available at lower price/rent'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

If we look at this scenario proposition by excluding 'I don't know' responses, it is 7;2 Out of a sub-group of nine people seven agreed with the statement whereas two disagreed as can be seen in figure 6. This throws light on two aspects. One: newly married couples prefer to stay independently suggesting change in lifestyle and attitude and two: since houses are cheaper in the surrounding areas of Ambo town compared to the main town, they move to surrounding areas.

7. People settle around Ambo main town in the hope that property rate would appreciate fast

Sixty-two per cent of the respondents did not agree to the above statement. Nine per cent with a frequency of 23 from 270 preferred 'I don't know' response. Twenty-nine per cent agreed with the statement.

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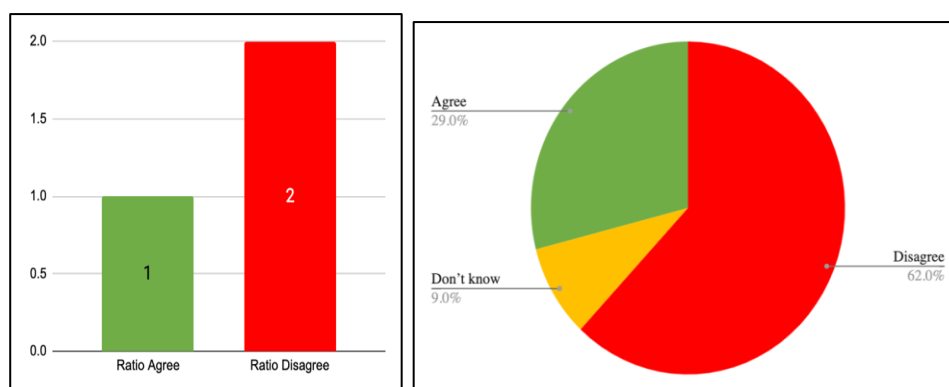


Figure 7: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'People settle around Ambo main town in the hope that property would appreciate fast'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

If seen as ratio by ignoring 'I don't know' respondents it is 1:2. This suggests that in a sub-group of 3 only one person agreed and two persons did not agree as may be visualized through figure 7. With this it may be concluded that people settle down away from the main town not in the hope of faster appreciation of the property.

However, 'KII PR 02' agreed that he has constructed the house with an intention to sell it away after a few years, when the value would appreciate.

OBJECTIVE TWO: ROLE OF PLANNING MECHANISM IN AMBO TOWN'S EXPANSION

Six responses under Likert Scale are discussed under this objective. Key information received through interviews also finds a mention.

1. The Master Plan of Ambo Town is Effective

Incidentally equal percent (forty) of respondents agreed about the effectiveness of master plan as noticeable in figure 8. The ground situation as observed by the principal investigator, as a participant observer, based on laying of new sub-roads and widening of the main road, putting into operation the new Mannara (Bus/Taxi Station) for long distance travel, dismantling of encroachments on roads at some places, speak of the implementation of the master plan. However, the degree of the effectiveness cannot be assessed because of equality of disagreement and agreement responses.

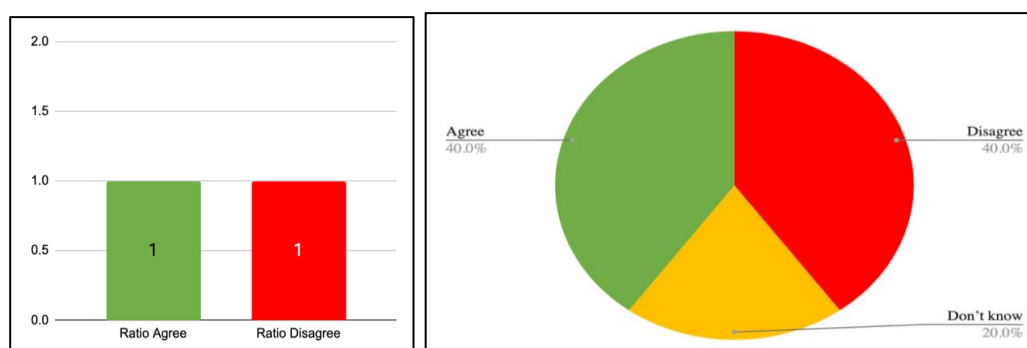


Figure 8: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'The Master Plan of Ambo Town is Effective'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

KII IM 02 said that federal government has demarked land to develop industrial zone, agro-processing zone and chemical industrial zone. The cadastral system is being introduced to manage illegal land. There are plans to mobilize revenue by promoting trade, industrial services and land lease. Further, Ujuka River Greenery Development is upcoming joint project between Ambo University and Ambo Urban Development and Housing Office, preliminary work has started. He also added that the concept of Public Private Partnership has not yet matured.

2. Underestimation of the pace of urban growth by town planning authority

Eight per cent of the respondents did not agree to the idea that the pace of urban growth is underestimated. 'I don't know' responses were close to twenty-one per cent with a frequency of 56/270.

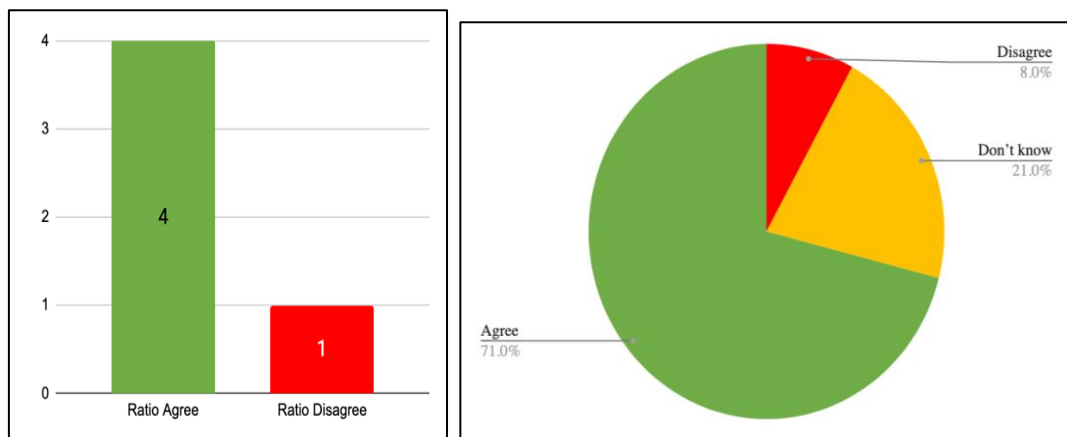


Figure 9: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Underestimation of the pace of urban growth by town planning authority'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

Seventy-one per cent of the respondents agreed that the authority has underestimated the pace of growth. This is also in conformity with the secondary data which shows a relatively higher pace of urban growth than what has been accepted by the town administration. This has already been discussed in depth in earlier part of this chapter, under objective one.

If seen as a ratio, ignoring I don't know respondents it comes to 4:1 as can be seen in figure 4.9. The mayor's office (2020) works on a projection of 4.3. However, KII PL 01, KII PL 02 and KII IM 02 during the course of the interviews gave higher projections. This suggests underestimation.

3. Implementation of Town development is behind schedule

Sixteen per cent of the respondents did not agree to the idea that the implementation of development plan is behind schedule. It may be interpreted that they feel that the development plans are implemented as per schedule. Fourteen per cent of the respondents did not know whether the plans are implemented behind schedule or as per schedule. Their frequency was 56/270. Seventy percent of the respondents agreed that the implementation of development plans is behind schedule.

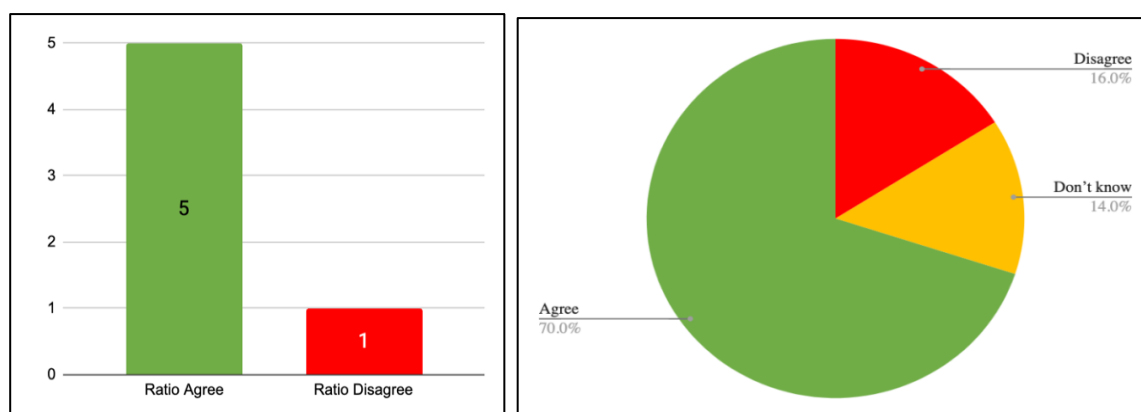


Figure 10: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Implementation of Town development is behind schedule'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

The ratio of respondent who feel that the implementation of plans is behind schedule and those who feel otherwise is 5:1. The results suggest that the implementation of town development plan is behind schedule. This is illustrated in figure 4.10.

4. Need to check unplanned Development

Sixteen per cent of the respondents did not agree with the need to check unplanned urban development. Nineteen per cent or 50/270 had no idea and therefore opted 'I don't know'.

Sixty-seven per cent of the respondents who felt that there is need to check unplanned urban development. The ratio of those agreed, to those who did not is 4:1. These responses strongly suggest that there is not only presence of unplanned urban development but also a need to check this.

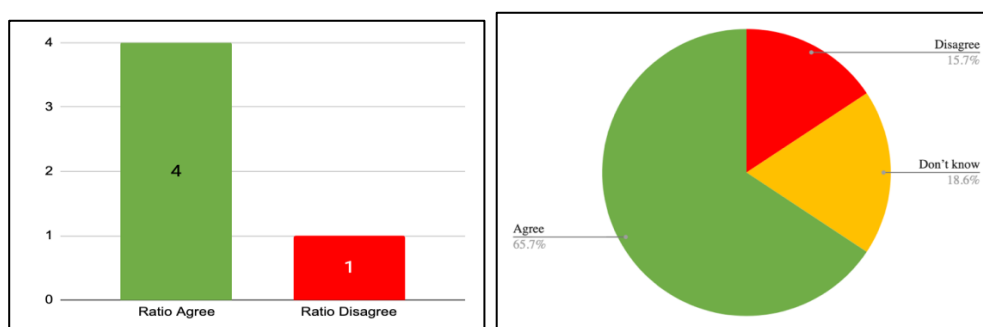


Figure 11: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Need to Check Unplanned Development'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

KII IM 02 said that the cadastral system is being introduced to manage illegal land. It is a land management and land administration tool to provide a safe and reliable real property registration system as was explained by Chekole, et al, (2021)

5. Ambozens are involved in ambo town planning

Sixty-two per cent of the respondents felt that citizens are not involved in the town planning. Nine per cent with a frequency of 23/270 had no idea.

Twenty-nine per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that citizens are involved in the planning.

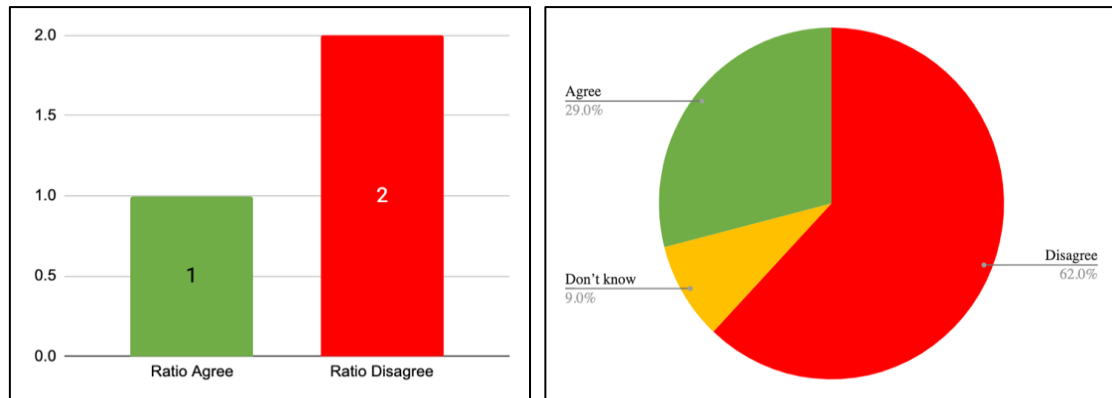


Figure 12: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Ambozens are involved in ambo town planning'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

The ratio of respondents who agreed with the statement to those who did not agree is 1:2. Out of a smaller group of three people only one person agreed that Ambozens are involved in town planning whereas the other two did not. This suggests that there is no apparent and active involvement of the citizens in the planning.

KII PL 01 said a preparation of the plan is not fully based on the needs of the community. Plans are made by the regional government and the local government either modifies or customizes it. He added that a measurement indicator for each sector is worked out. Grand Transformation Plan II started in 2018. KII IM 02 said that citizen participation is low.

6. Opposition political parties are participating in town planning

Sixty per cent of the respondents did not agree as to opposition political parties are taking part in the town planning. Nineteen per cent with a frequency of 51/270 had no idea.

Twenty-one per cent agreed that political parties other than the ruling coalition are participating in the planning of the Town. The ratio of the respondents who agreed regarding participation of opposition political parties in the town planning to those who did not agree is almost 1:3.

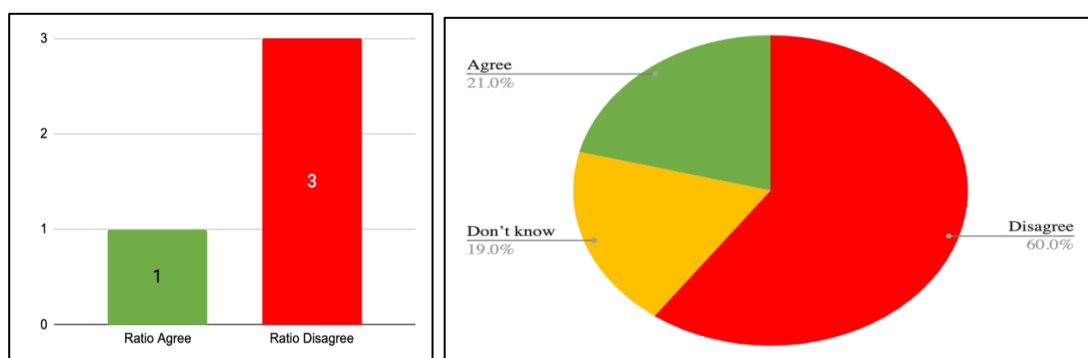


Figure 13: Left-side is ratio of agree vis-à-vis disagrees; right-side is percentage break-up of agree, disagree and don't know responses to 'Opposition political parties are participating in town planning'.

Source: Investigators' Survey

This suggests that participation of opposition political parties is not visible enough.

SECTION FIVE

SUMMARY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary Findings

The first research question was regarding the causes or driving forces of peri-urban. The reasons for peri-urban or expansion of the population beyond the main or the central area of urban town are: inward migration of people from surrounding rural areas, price or the affordability of land/housing, improved transport facilities which has reduced the distance factor, availability of electricity and water facilities, health care, educational and employment opportunities. Another reason, generally not observed elsewhere, is the stability or the peace in the town.

As regards to the question of the current planning and implementation mechanism for Ambo Town's urban expansion, there is an identified central organization, Oromia Planning Institute, based at Addis Ababa which makes ten-year plans for the town. Planning is top-down with an insignificant involvement of citizens. The local government regularizes, modifies and implements these plans. Regarding effectiveness of master Plan of Ambo town, the responses were evenly poised. Significant number of respondents feels that the implementation of plans is generally behind schedule. Handling of illegal constructions /encroachments is a complex issue as it has economic, social, and political dimensions.

Conclusion

As regards the first research question which is about causes of peri-urban growth, the findings suggest, apart from the conventional causes, that there is a new cause, not common in the literature, is that of security. Improved security in Ambo town is one of the reasons why there is migration to Ambo town from the nearby areas.

The second research question was regarding the current planning and implementation mechanism for Ambo Town's urban expansion and its effectiveness. Most of the respondents were not aware of the planning mechanism not to speak of its effectiveness. Further, the respondents are aware that there exists a top-down mechanism and they are not happy about it.

Recommendations / Suggestions

Peri-urban Growth

Expansion of the town, beyond the central or the main town, within the urban limits, needs to be encouraged so that the residents experience a more spacious and improved quality of life. The roads and the basic utility services, apart from economical means of transportation are the pre-requisites.

Planning Mechanism

Planning mechanism is centralized. This is understandable because planning a town needs expertise of different disciplines and, the financial resources and the political will. However, the Ambozens or the residents may be allowed to give their inputs by organizing group/public meetings and the academic seminars. This may help generate ideas out of the box. A sense of participation in the decision-making may help achieve involvement in the implementation. In this way some of the developmental activities may be entrusted to the community.

Suggestions for further research / publication

Urban growth / expansion is an understudied topic in the context of small towns / cities of Ethiopia, in particular, and therefore more studies need to be undertaken.

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