Cultural Heritage Sites and Urban growth: The case of Neakutoleab, Lalibela

Etsegenet M. Kebede

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Etsegenet Messele Kebede: emk2206@columbia.edu
Advisor: William Raynolds

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Abbreviation

ARCCH: Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage
CIS: Corrugated Iron Sheet
CSA: Central Statistics Agency
EOC: Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EOTC: Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church
ESTDP: Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Development Plan
GDP: Gross domestic product
GIS: Geographic information system
GPS: Global Positioning System
GSAPP: Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
GTP: Growth and Transformation Plan
LCTO: Lalibela culture and Tourism Office
PPT: Pro-poor tourism
PSNP: Productive Safety Net Program
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO/ WTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization
WHL: World Heritage List
WHS: World Heritage Site
WMS: Welfare Monitoring Survey
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Abstract

This study explores the inherent tensions that exist between urban growth and cultural heritage sites in the context of Lalibela, Ethiopia.

Lalibela, located in the northern part of Ethiopia is renowned for its eleven rock-hewn churches that are World Heritage Sites. The site features, a 12th-century church construction technique with monolithic edifices connected in a system of trenches and passageways. The churches are believed to have been designed and constructed by King Lalibela who was endeavoring to build a second Jerusalem. Besides the heritage status of Lalibela, the site is considered holy by followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As a result, each year, it attracts thousands of tourists and pilgrims alike.

Lalibela is a primary tourism site in Ethiopia that fetches high revenues for the country, and since its inscription into the World Heritage List, the site has witnessed large urban growth. Backed by the pro-poor tourism policy of the state, which uses tourism as a strategy towards achieving developmental goals, and the urban policy which encourages sprawling towns, the tourism industry is fueling the urbanization of rural areas. This, in turn, is altering lifestyles and identities of districts. Among many of these districts is a small rural town called Neakutoleab, located south of Lalibela where a monastery of the same name exists. The monastery has religious, architectural, historical and natural significance whose attributes are threatened by the expanding town of Lalibela. Through the close up study of the relevance of this monastery, the sociocultural status of the community, and its lifestyle, the urban and tourism policies of the administration are evaluated. Furthermore, the tensions between developmental and heritage protection goals and necessary tradeoffs are discussed.

Finally, mitigation strategies are recommended along with different parameters for plans that protect the heritage site while making appropriate accommodation for continued growth.

1.2 Problem Statement

The town of Neakuteleab is currently where many competing land uses overlap – government directed urbanization, the tourism industry, a sacred heritage site that attracts high numbers of
pilgrims and agricultural land. The government has a policy that aims to take advantage of tourism sites for the economic development of the country. It is in the best interests of the state government as well as those in the service sector to see tourism grow. In fact, the administration would like the visitor number in Lalibela to increase by 33% each year achieving the goal of the country to be one of the top five tourist destinations in Africa by 2020.1 While the main attraction point in Lalibela is the eleven rock-hewn churches, Neakutoleab monastery is one of the sites that is included as a destination in the tour packages of most tour agents. The town of Neakutoleab is home to a cave monastery of the same name which is currently registered as a regional heritage. It is in the process of being nominated for World Heritage Status along with other 60 rock-hewn and cave churches. Therefore it is understood by at least the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH), that it currently holds a national heritage status. 2 It is a site of religious, historical and natural significance.

The research started out seeking to understand the urban-growth implications on the Neakutoleab monastery and how to regulate it without preventing future development. To realize the how the study needed to address why the growth was happening in the first place; what were the qualities of the monasteries that deserve to be protected, and from these qualities which once were vulnerable to urbanization. It was also essential to understand who the stakeholders involved in this monastery were.

In the context of Lalibela, urban growth will soon exceed the existing structural use plan for the community. Engaging with stakeholders at the outlying cultural heritage sites of Neakutoleab to negotiate the terms of cultural preservation before the pressure of urban development arrives in full force will result in a new model of preservation practice for Lalibela that will avoid some of the drawbacks of the past.

1.3 Research questions

- How can cultural heritage managers in Lalibela balance the need for more urban growth with the protection of cultural heritage sites?

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2 Interview with Ato Abel Assefa, ARCCH, 2018
• How can the town better prepare for the anticipated encroachment of another historical site?
• What mitigation strategies could be applied in the case of Lalibela, where available flat land is in short supply?
• How can principles of sustainable development be applied to the management of the heritage site as well as the urban growth?
• How can heritage managers engage the community for the sustainable development of the city?

1.4 Methodology
The research was carried out through a desk study of various relevant books, reports, and articles dealing with the issue of urban growth, tourism and heritage management and field work that involved collecting interviews, and surveys of the many stakeholders of the Neakutoleab monastery. Moreover, GPS readings of new constructions that were taking place at the site were recorded. The methodology of the research is discussed in much detail in chapter 4.

1.5 Limitations
In the course of this research, there was a lack of sufficient reliable data about necessary information such as demographics. Many sources were consulted to make up for this lack and to formulate the discussion. Also, the issue of developmental pressures on heritage sites is a thorny issue where different interests play out, and it deserves a much thorough investigation and analysis. This research has attempted to put forth and frame the main problems that the Neakutoleab site is facing within the time constraint of this academic work.
Chapter 2 – Background

2.1 Lalibela

2.1.1 Location and history

Lalibela is a mountainous area located in the Northern part of Ethiopia. It is about 700 kilometers away from Addis Abeba, the capital of Ethiopia. It is found at an altitude that ranges from 2430m-2550m. Lalibela is renowned for its eleven rock-hewn churches that are World Heritage Sites. The construction of the churches is attributed to King Lalibela, the 12th-century ruler of the Zagwe Dynasty who was endeavoring to build a second Jerusalem. Lalibela was one of the first sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1978. These churches are owned and operated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They are active to this day and give religious services to followers of the faith.

Figure 1 Location

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The history of Lalibela, a small town surrounded by rugged topography, is told through legends and oral history that is passed down from generation to generation. Some authors and historians have been able to ascertain the legitimacy of these stories and legends through architectural styles and details observed on the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela. Others have been able to cross-refer other written and documented data with these legends to understand them to be factual.

Historians credit the Portuguese missionary and explorer Francisco Alvarez as the first foreigner to have recorded a description of the churches of Lalibela in the 1520s. He wasn’t very descriptive of what he saw, but he was able to communicate the monumentality of the churches. 4

After the Portuguese missionary, many explorers have visited and written about the churches. It is understood that the most comprehensive account of the churches was prepared by the Italians, Monti della Corte in 1940 and Bianchi Barriviera in 1943, 1957 and 1962-3 during the brief occupation of Ethiopia by Italy. 5

The widely accepted history of Lalibela is that it was a town which was established in the 6th century by the expansion of the powerful Christian Aksumite Kingdom, ruled by King Kaleb (514-543). 6 The kingdom had its currency and maintained international trade with other civilizations of the time and had contact with the Hellenic and of the Christian world. It was the chief center of commerce for gold dust, ivory, leather, hides, and aromatics. This was a kingdom that used to rule as far a land as South Arabia and Yemen. The conquest of South Arabia in the 6th century was a significant event that positioned the Aksumite kingdom in equal status with the greater powers of the day and made a considerable impact on the Middle East. 7 Between 574 and 578, the Ethiopian empire in Arabia collapsed and the former monarchy was re-established under the ruler-ship of Persia (570-628). 8 This event would be the start of the downfall of the Aksumite
Kingdome. When the whole of Arab nations accepted Islam in the 7th century, they became allies and controlled all the ancient trade route of the Orient, its harbors and it's caravan roads which proved disastrous for the Aksumite kingdom in its influence overseas.

2.2.2 The Zagwe Dynasty

Another threat that led to the downfall of the Aksumite kingdom which claimed descent from the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon was the rebellion of the Agao tribe in the 10th century who overthrew the empire. When the government was unable to defend itself against the uprising, the royal family fled southward to Showa. There is little consistency to the date marking the rise of the Zagwe dynasty. According to Pankhurst, the date for this event has been put as 928, 1137, 1145 and 1147. ⁹ But less than hundred years from the fall of Aksum would rise the Zagwe dynasty which would form a new government that would stay in power for the next three hundred years. Some studies state that there were eleven kings in this dynasty, of whom the first five were Jewish or pagan and the last six Christians, the last of which was Lalibela’s son Yitbarek. ¹⁰ Under this dynasty, the Ethiopian kingdom and its church became well known outside of Ethiopia. King Lalibela who was one of the last six Christian kings, chose Roha, the early name of Lalibela, to be his capital and transformed it into the center of his theocratic dynasty. ¹¹ Lalibela came to construct his churches after traveling to Jerusalem where he was disconcerted by the Islamic occupation of Jerusalem. When he returned to Ethiopia, he came up with the idea to construct a second Jerusalem. ¹²

According to Felleke, the Zagwe Dynasty ruled present-day northern and central Ethiopia from the 900s to 1270. When the rule declined in 1270, it was passed to a Showa-based kingship that

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¹² There are many narratives to why and how King Lalibela constructed his church none of which have been established.
took power to the south, restoring the Solomonic dynasty. Lalibela-town, as a result, lost its political function and became an inward-looking monastic center.

Four of the eleven kings that used to rule in this dynasty were priests who used to administer the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) as well as the country. These were Yimrehanekristos, Lalibela, Neakutoleab, and Gebremariam. All four of them are of the same family; Yimrehanekristos is the cousin, Neakutoleab the nephew and Gebremariam, the brother of Lalibela. Lalibela passed down his authority to Neakutoleab who reigned over Ethiopia for forty years. After his time in power ended, he is said to have dedicated the rest of his life to the work of priesthood. Neakutoleab monastery, as well as the rock-hewn church of Ashetemariam, are attributed to Neakutoleab. The four priest-kings have been canonized and are considered as saints by the EOC.

2.2.3 Lalibela town

In the beginnings of Lalibela town, ‘a hub for hermits, devotees and pilgrims’, people chose to live on flat topped hills with commanding views of the surrounding. The main reasons were for protection from enemies, protection from seasonal flooding and to have plain areas for cultivation. The community lived in dispersed homestead settlements of huts and tukuls but close family members build their houses close to each other.

Nowadays it is not uncommon to find rectangular houses that are much larger in size than their older counterparts. Residential homes are more and more being built out of modern materials such as concrete and corrugated iron sheet. This is considered and valued as being better than the circular mud huts which have become associated with poverty. The developing town of

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17 Dombrowski, Joanne Carol, *Excavations in Ethiopia: Lalibela and Natchabiet Caves, Begemeder Province*, Boston University, 1971
Lalibela is mainly characterized by organic growth that has spread out in the four directions with the rock-hewn churches as its center.

The majority of the accounts about Lalibela focused on its built structures and not so much about the people that lived around them. Nonetheless, according to David Phillipsons’ book: *Ancient churches of Ethiopia*, the community remained a small traditional settlement until the mid-20th century. Raffray who is quoted in that same book says, in 1882 there was an estimated population of around 3000 and notes that the same figure was indicated more than fifty years later in 1938. They both explain the population as being clustered around the rock hewn churches. Before 1950s the only access to the site was by mule or on foot. In 1960 a rough airstrip was constructed, opening up more options for visitors to arrive to the site. However, road access was only possible in the 1990s.

Other sources that give an insight about the state of the community are early photographs that were taken by Irmgard Bidder and other visitors. A 1994 satellite image available from the Ethiopia Mapping Authority shows an already established village around the churches. It can be observed that the four villages of *Michael Ghibi, Addis Ade, Chifrigoch* and *Gebriel sefer* were already present. The map shows the Lalibela churches as the center of the town out of which the settlement radiates from.

In the 1930s, when Emperor Haile Selassie made a pilgrimage to the site, it drew international attention to the existence of these structures. By 1966, World Monuments Fund, then known by the name International Fund have started a conservation project on the churches. In 1978 the site was nominated and designated as a world heritage site.

In 1974 the monarch government was overthrown and a communist rule was established in Ethiopia that continued to rule the country until 1987. In the years 1983-1985 the country went through one of the worst humanitarian crisis of the 20th century with civil war and famine resulting in the death of nearly half a million people. As the result of the crisis the country was

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going through, there was little tourism in Lalibela. In 1987 with the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) there came about a relative stability and peace to the country. Consequently, in the early 2000s the Lalibela site started getting frequent tourists and visitors.²⁰ The rise in tourism resulted in the urban development of the site. From the 2007 census report Lalibela had a population of 34,029 (Urban and Rural). Currently, the 2017/18 population size of the Lalibela town administration that is based on a 2008 projection is 36,126 out of which 45.6% are below the age of 19.²¹ It is predicted that in 2025 the population would become 62,316.²²

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²⁰ Kidanemariam Ayalew. “Heritage management on the ground heritage conservation versus local community in Lalibela (Ethiopia).” Thesis. Pantheon-Sorbonne University. 2016. p.21
²¹ The Lalibela town administration, 2017/2018
2.2.4 Other significant sites in the vicinity

While the 11 churches of Lalibela are the most well-known, there are several other rock-hewn and cave churches in the Lalibela area. Out of these churches, a handful of them are within a walking and driving distance of Lalibela. Some are also more significant than others depending on their architecture, the hierarchy of the saint they are named after and the blessings promised.
in the hagiography that have been written about the saint. The following sites are located less than 50km away from Lalibela and they are usually part of the tour package for international tourists. These are: YimrehaneKristos, Ashetemariam, Neakutoleab and Genetemariam.

a) **YimrehaneKristos** is a built-up cave church and palace structure (12th century), found about 42 kilometers away from the center town. Tradition ascribes it to YimrehaneKristos who ruled as king prior to Lalibela. It is a religiously, architecturally and historically significant structure.23

b) **Genetemariam** is located 25 kilometers south east of the town of Lalibela. It is a rock hewn church that bears similarity with Bete Medhanialam of the Lalibela churches. It is attributed to Ykunno Amlak who defeated the last king of Zagwe dynasty putting an end to the rule.24

c) **Ashetemariam** is a rock hewn church located about 8 kilometers in the south east part of Lalibela. It can only be accessed on foot as it is situated at an altitude of 3090m on Mount Kirkos Amba. Local tradition holds that the church was started by Lalibela and finished by Neakutoleab.25

2.2 Neakutoleab Monastery

2.2.1 Location and history

The monastery is located 7 kilometers away from Lalibela town, at an altitude of 2090m (GPS reading of field survey 2018), within a district of the same name. It is built inside a cave at the foot of Mount Kirkos Amba, overlooking a valley. It is attributed to Neakutoleab (Ge’ez word, a Semitic language whose use today is limited to liturgy use in the EOC, it translates to ‘let us praise God the Father’), who was one of the priest-kings that ruled Ethiopia in the 12th century.26 He was the nephew and successor of Lalibela. Just as his three predecessors, he used to jointly lead the church as a priest and the country as King. Legend has it that he never died

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but disappeared inside the cave where the Neakutoleab monastery currently exists.\textsuperscript{27} To this day, his day of disappearance is celebrated every year on November 12 (Hidar 3 in the Ethiopian Calendar) by the local community and pilgrims.\textsuperscript{28} Local documents as well as other studies, indicate that, the monastery was built originally as a praying place for the priest-king. Other sources suggest that the original walls that enclosed the monastery were destroyed at a certain unknown time and that the current one was built at the initiative of Queen Zewditu in 1925.\textsuperscript{29}

The monastery is part of a pilgrimage route for people that journey to Lalibela, especially during the Christmas celebrations. This holiday is one of the most notable celebrations in Lalibela. The birth date of both Lalibela and Neakutoleab also coincide with this festivity as it is on Christmas day that both of them are believed to have been born.\textsuperscript{30} Just twelve days following the Christmas celebrations, Epiphany is observed. Therefore, thousands of pilgrims flock to Lalibela in this season, usually spending two weeks or more to also celebrate Epiphany. International and local tourists also head to Lalibela to witness the religious processions.

It is at this particular time that Neakutoleab receives its highest number of visitors. The monastery is renowned among followers of the EOC for the water that drips down from the roof of the cave which is then collected in nine round stone basins. The water is considered to be holy and that can rid people of diseases and ailments. The history of the king is also another reason for people to visit the site as there are stories/ legends that have been written and told about him that create curiosity and wonder among people which then compels them to visit the place. The site was designated a regional heritage statues in 1978 right after the Lalibela churches became World Heritage Sites.\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{flushright}
31 Tesfaw, Habtamu (Head of Lalibela Culture and Tourism Office) interviewed by Etsegenet Kebede, Lalibela, Ethiopia. January 2018
\end{flushright}
Figure 3 Neakutoleab Town

Church school/ Yekolo timhirtbet

The Neakutoleab church administration has a traditional/religious school known as Yekolo timhirtbet. The students, (Yekolo temari) which are approximately 10-15 in number live inside the churches property where they have their own small huts. The students come from Neakutoleab locality as well as from neighboring rural areas. They range in age from 12-20. They choose to go on this path and abandon modern education if they are interested in becoming priests.

Yekolo Timihirtbet is part of the long tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church’s role as an educational institute. Before the establishment of the Ministry of Education, thus modern education, these religious schools played a significant role in elevating the literacy level of the country usually giving lessons on Ge’ez alphabets, on poetry, arithmetic, music notations and
spiritual hymns, on readings of psalms, the old and new testaments...etc, to students at
different stages. Even after the 20th century, traditional schools continued to be key for learning
to read and write in the Amharic alphabets.32

Figure 4 Small huts in the church’s property where Yekolotemari live

2.2.2 The Architectural elements of the monastery
The Neakutoleab monastery is categorized as a built-up cave-church, one of many in this
locality. It is situated about 1km off the main arterial street that crosses the town of Lalibela.
There is a dirt road that branches off from this street and leads to a plateau where the
monastery is found. (Fig. 3)

Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, June 2011.
Once at the plateau, the monastery is accessed by a series of steep steps that wind and turn with the topography, leading down to the relatively flat and wide mouth of the cave. There is a long exterior wall that goes parallel to the grotto functioning as a gate. It has four arched windows and two entrance points. It is composed of irregularly shaped masonry blocks with cement mortar joints. The corners of the two entrance points have rough quoins that define the edge. The arched windows have keystones and wooden plaques have been used as lintels for the two doors. Inside the cave, there are three well defined quarters and ancillary structures can be seen on both ends of the cave. In the first room on the left, where the congregation performs their worship, there is a masonry wall connecting the very back wall of the cave with the exterior wall, separating it from the other ancillary structures found on the far left of the cave. The floor as well as the ceiling are of the natural jagged surface of the cave. The very
farthest room to the right side of the entrance point is where a copy of the arc of the covenant, a necessary object in any Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), is kept. This room is separated from the central quarter by a curtain. Only high ranking monks are allowed to enter this room as it is considered holiest of holy rooms in the monastery. The room at the center is where the holy water is located. It has another layer of masonry walls enclosing it on two sides. This enclosure has two entrance points and the wall is composed of red, uniformly sized stone blocks with lime mortar joints. This is the most public room in the monastery where numerous pilgrims come to be sprinkled by the holy water. There are nine stone tablets on the ground where the water that drips down from the ceiling is collected. It is a local marvel that the amount of water that drips down never varies despite the change of season. It amazes the locals and followers of the faith that water is dripping from a seemingly dry ceiling. They consider this as something that can only be explained as a miracle, a work of God. The back cave wall of this room has large perforations. Part of the wall has been draped with a cloth showing various traditional painting of several scenes from the bible. Local tradition holds that behind the perforations is a tunnel that leads to the Ashetemariam church, a rock hewn church located 2 km farther North, at the top of Kirkos Amba mountain. Inside this tunnel is where Neakutoleab is said to have vanished.
According to the interview conducted with the Abbot of Neakutoleab, the cave was Neakutoleab’s personal praying space. It was only after his disappearance, that the cave was turned into a monastery.

Today, there are small structures adjacent to the monastery that functions as a Sunday school, security office, and small residential houses for monks. It is unclear when these were added, but they seem to have been built by the current church to fulfill various needs. There is a small museum, at the top of the plateau that houses various historic artifacts. The content of the museum varies from priest staffs and crosses to copies of old and new testaments written on parchment, in Ge’ez. Some are more valuable than others such as Neakutoleab’s personal stamp, crowns and crosses made out of precious metals and parchments from the 12th century.
The church is building a new museum not far from the current one and they hope to transfer all their artifacts in the old museum to the new building once it’s completed.

2.2.3 The Neakutoleab community

There isn’t adequate written data about the gradual change of the monastery or the community that lives nearby. But from interviews conducted with monks that have lived and served in the monastery for substantial amount of years, there has always been a community of people that used to live near the monastery. As can be seen from the Lalibela churches, historically, religious institutes have been the pull factor for the emergence of a community. The understanding is that the community at Neakutoleab started with few scattered houses where priests who serve at the monastery would live in. It slowly expanded and increased as families grew. In this regard, it can be inferred that, the community at Neakutoleab is a web of relatives who have known each other from one generation to the next. It is a tight knit Christian community that has a very close relationship to the Neakutoleab monastery and to the church that administrates it. The story of this town and its development is very much linked with the story of Lalibela town. As a result of the inscription of the Lalibela churches as WHS in 1978, the number of tourists that visit the Neakutoleab church has increased. It has also increased the visitation number of the other neighboring churches around Lalibela town. The inscription of the Lalibela churches and subsequent international recognition, suddenly started attracting people to these previously unknown and remote areas.

The Neakutoleab community also has a firm link with each other through edir, which is a traditional social support system which is about helping each other during mourning a loss or when celebrating a wedding. Each member makes a monthly financial contribution which establishes the edir’s fund. This is a common practice throughout Ethiopia even in more urban locations such as Addis Abeba. Both events - wedding and the mourning process involve an investment on the family’s part. Therefore during this time, the community assists each other, with the edir covering certain expenses and members helping through service. There are around eight edirs in Neakutoleab and each meet with their members once a month, usually on the plateau found inside the churches property and discusses about different social issues. If
there is a disagreement or conflict between individuals they make peace between them. It is customary for new comers of the neighborhood to join *edir* especially if they have a family of their own. The socio-economic statuses of the community are more or less homogenous. They are also a mono religious community and they would like to remain that way.

From the interview conducted with the head priest of the monastery, international tourists started visiting Neakutoleab church in the 1980s. Back then, the church used to have a policy that restricted international tourists from visiting the monastery. There is a notion that is still felt within the EOC that a non-believer shouldn’t enter a place that is held as sacred. However, in the case of Neakutoleab monastery, having realized the economic advantages they could have, they allowed foreigners to visit with admission fees. The church started employing security guards in 1995, now that it has opened itself to outsiders. This explanation implies the trust that must have been understood within the community and the vulnerability that is felt by the monastery opening itself for outsiders. In the years following the change of policy, the church was able to increase its budget from the revenue it was making, and offer better salaries to the priests employed there. In 2009 the church built a new church by the name of *Kidane Mihiret*, at the top of a plateau that is few meters away from the monastery (fig. 3). It was constructed to expand the churches capacity to hold and accommodate all church attendants. In order to free up space for the construction, the church relocated 25 households that had occupied part of the churches property. It compensated the relocated people and constructed houses for them at a different plateau overlooking the new church.

Neakutoleab is a small village with agricultural land. In 2008, the regional gov’t included the surrounding villages of Lalibela to be administered by the municipality of Lalibela. Neakutoleab was one of the rural *kebels* included in the territory of Lalibela administration. This move suddenly targeted Neakutoleab as a potential expansion area. Currently there is a trend in which farmers are dividing their land into small plots, building houses on each and selling them.33

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33 In Ethiopia, individuals cannot buy or sale land legally as it is owned by the gov’t. Therefore, by building a small house farmers can sell the house and by extension the land.
2.2.4 Neakutoleab the Priest-King

Current knowledge about St. Neakutoleab is mainly sourced from the hagiography that was written about him. He is a famous saint that is highly venerated among followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. The story indicates that he was raised by Lalibela, his uncle, till power was transferred to him to rule over the country. After ruling the country for forty years, he retired to pursue priesthood fulltime and dedicated his life to worshipping God. In the acts of Neakutoleab, which was originally written in Ge’ez, and later published in Amharic and Ge’ez, Jesus Christ promises him the following,34

- All those who remember him by their prayers and build his church shall be redeemed for seven generations.
- All those who come to his church for worship and prayers shall be redeemed.

• At a place of his disappearance, droplets of water will come out of the rock until the end of the world. All those who use these droplets of water in faith, shall be cured of their physical and spiritual ailments.

It is written that St. Neakutoleab disappeared when he was seventy years old inside the cave where the existing monastery is situated.  

Believers understand the water that drips down from the ceiling as a manifestation of God’s promises. Thus, having heard the story or having read the hagiography, curiosity compels them to visit. It is also the motive of pilgrims to be blessed and healed of their sickness. Therefore, it can be inferred that the current values associated with the monastery, especially by the local residents, priests and pilgrims; originate from the story and legend of the saint.

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Chapter 3 - Lalibela-Urban growth

3.1 Recent history - Overtime urban pattern

Lalibela town since the inscription of the monolithic churches to the WHL, has grown and expanded in all the four directions. An unprecedented growth was recorded between 1994 and 2014 in which the urban footprint grew from an area of 1.22km² to 3.056 km². In 2015, the footprint expanded more adding 0.54 km² to the enlarging city. The dominant growth is along the north south direction following a primary street, but the town has also experienced growth on the west and east directions. In Lalibela, the dramatic mountainous topography, which ranges in altitude from 2000 - 4190m (Mt. Abune Yoseph), plays a dominant role in defining the pattern of growth. With 84% of the land area having slopes steeper than 15°, a large majority of it is not convenient for living, farming or transportation. According to the Lalibela Town Administration Information Office, 33.3% of the topography is covered with mountains, while 53% of the land is plain, the rest – 13.65% is river valley. For these reasons, the development is concentrated along the north-south axis where there is relatively flat land available. In the census conducted on 2007 by the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia, the population of Lalibela was reported as 34,029. According to a 2016 report by the World Bank, Lalibela is growing at a rate of 5.7% per year exceeding the growth rate of the country, which currently stands at 4.8%.

With the increasing growth rate of the city, in 2009, Neakutoleab was added to the territory of Lalibela as an expansion zone. The other locality that was added was Simano which is found

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37 Ibid
41 “Urban Population Growth (annual %),” Urban Population Growth (annual %) | Datab, accessed April 30, 2018,
https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW.
to the north of Lalibela town. Simano is located in a low-lying area with a sudden drop in altitude separating it from the rest of Lalibela town. This area is witnessing growth as well but when compared to the Neakutoleab area it’s growing at a much slower rate.

Between 2009 and 2015, as part of the Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Development Project (ESTDP) – a collaboration with World Bank, about 700 households were relocated from the inscribed property of Lalibela to other sites few kilometers away from the center town. The Lalibela World Heritage Site has always had a small community living nearby and it didn’t have a buffer zone when it was inscribed in 1978. The tourism that came about with the popularity of the heritage sites fueled more houses and businesses around the churches. Shops selling artifacts, and cultural items emerged. According to the 2011 World Bank report, traditional drinking houses, musical performances aimed at attracting international tourists and possibly brothels were some of the functions that were created around the churches. These functions, considered unsuitable near a religious institute would later create cultural problems. Restaurants and hotels that were trying to fulfill the demand for such services started being constructed. As years went by, the community increased in number until the property was encroached to an extent that parts of the trenches that are necessary for the drainage system of the WHS, were occupied.

The ESTDP is an initiation from the government’s side that aims to take advantage of cultural heritage assets for the economic development of the country. In this project, which also included the rehabilitation of two other sites in Ethiopia, Axsum and Addis Abeba, attempts were made to revitalize the heritage industry in a way it could be conducive to the tourist. In the case of Lalibela, one among many of the steps taken by this project was the resettlement of households which were living inside the inscribed property. The rationale given for this decision was to enhance the tourist experience, and to better manage conservation effort of the

43 Bridonneau, Marie. “Move in the name of heritage protection and economic development?” The Political Space [Online], 22 | 2014-1, posted on 17 March 2014, accessed 01 March 2018. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/politicalSpace/2941; DOI: 10.4000 / policy.space.2941
45 Ibid. p.12-18
heritage structures.\textsuperscript{46} It was reported that 61\% of housing units that were in the inscribed property didn’t have toilet and a well-planned sanitary system in their house.\textsuperscript{47} Therefore open sanitation was an issue in the church compound. Moreover, the different incompatible functions that are deemed inappropriate around religious institutes (bar, musical performances, and brothels) were undermining the spiritual values of the church. Some argue that the site was never intended for human living as it is a sacred site.\textsuperscript{48} Church officials say that even King Lalibela avoided living near the churches because of his respect for the sanctified surrounding. Furthermore, the frequent use of footpaths that crisscross the inscribed property were causing surface erosion. The proximity of residential houses to the historic site also had aesthetic consequence that negatively affected the site. \textsuperscript{49}

This community was resettled to Kurkure, a site located three kilometers south of the center town, towards Neakutoleab, along the major road that crosses the town. It was a relatively flat farmland that had sparsely built huts. There were farmers whose land was expropriated for the resettlement purpose.\textsuperscript{50} It was reported that they will be compensated and get a substitute 500 m\textsuperscript{2} plot of land somewhere else.\textsuperscript{51} The site was chosen for its relative proximity to the center and its potential for future expansion of residential and mixed use activities. The site already had facilities like a high school, and a bus terminal. This growth towards the south side of Lalibela that occurred between 1994 and 2014 is partly caused by the resettlement that was done by the ESTDP. This move might also have encouraged more development towards Neakutoleab.

As the urban foot print of Lalibela expands towards Neakutoleab, the same issues that caused the resettlement at the Lalibela churches could possibly occur at Neakutoleab monastery.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. p 9
\textsuperscript{50} World Bank. “Ethiopia - Sustainable Tourism Development Project: resettlement plan (Vol. 7): Resettlement action plan for Lalibela town (English).” s.l. ; s.n.2011. p.8-10
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, p. 50
The following figures show GIS maps of how the urban footprint of Lalibela expanded in the years of 1994, 2014, 2015 and 2016—a product of a studio project conducted at GSAPP, Columbia University, 2016.

**Figure 13 1994 Urban footprint**

![Figure 13 1994 Urban footprint](image)

**Figure 14 2014 Urban footprint**

![Figure 14 2014 Urban footprint](image)
In an effort to continue monitoring the growth in Lalibela, GPS readings were collected in 2018, marking 237 more houses in Neakutoleab that previously didn’t exist in 2016. As can be seen on figure 17, the urban footprint of Lalibela has expanded more towards Neakutoleab. The growth is characterized by low density, residential structures that are single story houses, not more
than 40 m² in area. They are constructed with wooden structures, mud plastered walls and corrugated iron sheet roofs. Most of the houses were unfinished or were in the process of being constructed at the time of the field work. There is a theory that some of the structures might have been serving a symbolic purpose than an actual use. This is because in Ethiopia once an area that used to be a rural region has been included into an urban locality, there is precedence for land to be expropriated. Therefore farmers build structures to increase the property value of their land. This will eventually increase the compensation that they get from the government.

Figure 17 2018 Urban footprint

Based on the 2008 population census projection for 2017/2018, from the Lalibela Town Administration, the population of Lalibela is currently 36,126. According to the Central Statistics...
Agency, the population was expected to be 41,897 by 2015. The two projections show a significant difference. Nonetheless, the town is increasing in size and the construction of the new houses at Neakutoleab can be in part explained by the rise in population. However, it is more nuanced than what it appears to be. During the field work it was realized that, the inclusion of the area in the Lalibela administration zone, has triggered the local farmers to build small houses and sell them to potential buyers. Since land is owned by the government in Ethiopia, individuals cannot legally sell land. But the law doesn’t restrict them from selling a house. Therefore, when people want to sell their land, they build a house and sell it, indirectly the land. Hence this explains why the local farmers are building small houses on their farm land. When the land comes under the jurisdiction of the town of Lalibela, excess land i.e. more than 500 sq. meter, will be taken by the town administration against a nominal compensation. Therefore, farmers are selling their property to private buyers at a higher price rather than waiting until the town administration forces them to accept a lower rate of compensation to sell to a public buyer. Another possibility mentioned earlier is that, the small houses could be serving a symbolic purpose as the more structures a farm land has, the more it will be valued, when it eventually gets expropriated. Therefore the 237 GPS readings collected for new constructions taking place at Neakutoleab, don’t necessarily reflect an increase in population. These dynamics of the town expanding, and the possibility of expropriation of land is potentially changing the lifestyle and character of Neakutoleab’s inhabitants motioning them into a possible urbanization of the locality.

53 Information from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Figure 18 New GPS readings in Neakutoleab

This map shows the 25 households that were relocated from the church’s property. They do not exist now.

54 This map shows the 25 households that were relocated from the churches property. They do not exist now.
Figure 19 The new constructions relative to the monastery
3.2 Land resources in Lalibela

Lalibela, besides its identity as a religious center, is a district whose inhabitants follow the agrarian lifestyle. This can still be witnessed at Neakutoleab where the locality produces cereal, pulses, and oilseeds.\textsuperscript{55} It’s also common for the community to rear livestock and have flock of chickens.\textsuperscript{56} The agricultural activities are very much traditional, subsistent and strictly dependent on rain. Furthermore, the land is ploughed with the help of oxen.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. p 14-16
Lalibela was one of the localities that were affected by the 1984-85 famine in Ethiopia which caused close to 400,000 deaths.\textsuperscript{57} Based on the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) conducted by the Central statistics agency in 2011, 22.96\% of households in the Amhara region face famine shocks every year.\textsuperscript{58} For this reason, Lalibela, and by extension, Neakutoleab is one of the districts in Ethiopia that have been identified as drought vulnerable areas and is included in the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), a project that was established by the Ethiopian government and carried out in partnership with World Bank, the mission being to enhance food security and nutrition for rural households vulnerable to food shortage.\textsuperscript{59}

3.2.1 Distribution of basic needs

It is only 29.06\% of individuals in Amhara region, that get access to safe water and it’s only 19.7\% of the households that have electricity for lighting.\textsuperscript{60} Therefore the locality faces quite a lot of work that needs to be done regarding the provision of basic facilities besides guaranteeing food security for its community. Furthermore, there is yet more to be done regarding the distribution of school and overall increase in the literacy level of the locality. In the 2011 WMS, the literacy level of the Amhara region for the age of 10 and above was 48.75\%.\textsuperscript{61}

3.3 Land and Urbanization

Neakutoleab is a locality that was categorized as a rural area nearly ten years ago but since the inclusion into Lalibela’s Administration zone, it faces land acquisition through which urban centers expand in Ethiopia.

Rural land is defined as a land outside of a municipality holding. Under Proclamation Number 456/2005, on Rural Administration and Land use, “individual farmers, pastoralists engaged in


\textsuperscript{59} “Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP),” Essp.ifpri.info, accessed May 02, 2018, \url{http://essp.ifpri.info/productive-safety-net-program-psnp/}.


\textsuperscript{61} “Welfare monitoring survey 2011, statistical report, Indicators on living standard, accessibility and household assets”, \textit{Statistical Bulletin}, Volume I, CSA, April 2012
agriculture for a living have the right to use rural land for purposes of agriculture and natural resource development.” This land is given free of charge with no time limit. Those that have such a land are given holding certificates, which is a certificate of title issued by a competent authority as proof of rural land use right. 62

The proclamation also says that if the holder of the land is evicted for purpose of public use, “he shall be compensated proportional to the development he has made on the land or shall be given a substitute somewhere else.” 63

Under proclamation Number 721/2011, Urban Land Lease Holding, urban land is defined as land located within an administration boundary of an urban center. Urban center is defined as “a locality having a municipal administration or a population size of 2000 or more inhabitants of which at least 50% of its labor force is engaged in non-agricultural activities.” It also states under article 5/1, that no person may acquire urban land other than the lease holding system provided under this proclamation.64

Therefore, the expansion of the Lalibela town, and subsequent inclusion of Neakutoleab into the Lalibela administration zone in 2008/9 automatically made Neakutoleab an urban land. At the time of the inclusion, there weren’t as many houses at Neakutoleab as they are now. It was and still is a place where the agrarian way of life dominates. Currently within the administration, Neakutoleab is a rural zone of Lalibela, but according to Proclamation 721/2011, because it is located within an administrative zone of an urban center- Lalibela, it is considered as an urban land. Therefore, the associated legislation regarding urban land applies to Neakutoleab.

The implications of Neakutoleab being included into the administration zone of Lalibela in light of the urban policy of the country is that the land management will transition from being used for agricultural purposes free of charge and with no time limit to being managed under the lease system in which the administration rents land for a time limit of 99 years. This would

63 Ibid
mean that farmers would have to leave their land with compensations that they will get from the administration to again start establishing a new farm land in another area. The administration could possibly provide a replacement land for them.

Furthermore, Proclamation No. 455/2005 about Expropriation of Landholdings for Public Purposes and Payment of Compensation states that, “A woreda or an urban administration shall, upon payment in advance of compensation in accordance with this Proclamation, have the power to expropriate rural or urban landholdings for public purpose where it believes that it should be used for a better development project to be carried out by public entities, private investors, cooperative societies or other organs, or where such expropriation has been decided by the appropriate higher regional or federal government organ for the same purpose.”

Additionally it states that if the land has crop or some sort of structure on it, that more time will be given for the landholder to move after the compensation has been paid. Also- if the land has some structure built on it, it will be valued and compensated more.

It’s a recent history that, Kurakure which is located just three km away from Neakutoleab was the site of land acquisition for the purpose of the resettlement project of ESTDP where farmlands were expropriated by the administration. It was reported that farmers were given compensations and substitute farmlands. However there were information of grievances regarding the compensation and how it was being computed. This is an issue not just in Lalibela but in other parts of Ethiopia as well. The 2015 riot in Addis Abeba was set off primarily as a result of the urban policy of the country which was looking to expand the territory of Addis Abeba at the expense of several farmers losing their land. In addition, many grievances were communicated about the land acquisition and compensation practice at a farming area surrounding Bahirdar city. The administration needed land on the periphery of the city for

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development purposes and farmers had to cede their land. The complaints consisted of lack of advance notice, absence of community participation in the valuation process and dissatisfaction about the compensation that was finally given. This land acquisition process has been criticized for being top down and unfair for those local communities from whom land is taken compulsorily. (Fikade, 2000)

The current activities at Neakutoleab are therefore, one way or another instigated by the threat of land acquisition that is posed by the administration.

3.4 Structural Master Plan 2009-2019

In 2009 a new structural master plan was designed for the period of 2009-2019 that included Neakutoleab and Simano as expansion zones of the Lalibela administrative zone. The structural plan attempted to address various social, economic and environmental issues that Lalibela town was facing at the time. With the vision of the master plan being “making Lalibela town a leading tourist destination”, various suggestions were put forth that promote tourism while improving the socio-economic realities of the town. The structural master plan anticipated the population of the town to be 28,692 by July 2019 and calculated that there would need to be 4,100 more housings within the next ten years. To accommodate this demand, the master plan proposed for a linear growth with Simano in the north, Lalibela at the center and Neakutoleab in the south, functioning as three nodes of Lalibela town.

Moreover, the plan mentioned various relevant issues and made good suggestions like promoting other economic sectors such as manufacturing and trade, encouraging stronger link between tourism and agriculture, strengthening provision for social service such as construction of more schools and health institutes that can elevate the quality of living in Lalibela community. It also made the intention held by the administration, to increase the tourism industry, and encourage the surrounding peasantry to engage in off-farming activities, very clear.


Regarding Neakutoleab, a grid iron pattern of city planning with residential buildings of up to five story, community hotels, commercial area and space reserved for urban agriculture was proposed. (Fig. 24) In addition, the Neakutoleab monastery surrounding was zoned as a public worship area. Out of 28 hectares of developable land in Neakutoleab whose slope ranges from 0 to 30%, 1.8 hectares was allocated for residential use and 7.7 hectares for community tourism developments, the idea being the community to participate in the industry by organizing themselves into associations and building Lasta houses as traditional accommodations for tourists.  

The structural master plan was based on an intention to exploit tourism potentials as a strategic tool to fighting poverty and stimulating local socio-economic development, therefore, each suggestion was made from this angle. Moreover, the Lalibela churches were the central tourism attraction points discussed in the proposal, without enough mention of the surrounding monasteries and the implication of the proposal for their continued preservation. The Neakutoleab locality was brought up in regards to its available land and not as a site of a sacred heritage spot that deserved protection. Therefore, it lacked perspective regarding the possible consequence of urbanization for the heritage sites around Lalibela.

The structural master plan was never realized because of budget constraints and it will soon go out of date in 2019. Once the master plan is out of date, it will presumably be updated to fit current needs without much change to the core principles.

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3.5 Tourism Policy and Urbanization

Ethiopia plans to achieve middle income status by 2025 and tourism is one of the strategies through which the country hopes to attain that goal. While agriculture has been the primary sector that contributed the most to the GDP of the country, with the service and manufacturing industries coming second and third, since 2010, the service industry has surpassed the agricultural sector. Tourism in Ethiopia currently generates about US$2.9 billion annually contributing about 4.5% of the GDP. In 2016, 871,000 tourists visited Ethiopia and the ministry of culture and tourism plans to triple this number to more than 2.5 million to fulfill its plans of making the country one of the top five tourist destination sites in Africa.

In order to achieve these plans, the government has drafted a sustainable tourism master plan that focuses on destination marketing and promotion work, revitalizing destination

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71 The map is from the Municipal office of Lalibela.
infrastructures, amplifying coordination and communication between stakeholders, investing on hospitality trainings, and a rebranding of the tourism sector.

Lalibela is one of the many attraction points of tourists who travel to Ethiopia and tourism is the main driver of growth in the town. Between 2011 and 2015 visitation number of international tourists rose from 41,158 to 62,420. The industry has brought about employment opportunities, better infrastructures, and created interests from investors within the tourism industry.

Currently, there are 563 licensed individuals working directly with the incoming tourists either as local guides, assistant guides or as mule owners (rentals). It is mandatory that every tourist requiring a guide should use a local one. If tourists come with their own guide from Addis Abeba, the tour agent still pay a local guide even though he will not participate in the tour. This is a policy that the Lalibela Tourism and Culture Office established to make sure the local youth benefited from the industry.

In the 2016 survey that was done in the area, there were overall 2000 employees in the tourism industry. Calculating with the average household size of 4.6, about 9200 people benefit from the employment in the tourism industry i.e. about 26% of the town depend on tourism for their livelihoods. Relatively, the revenues gained from this industry at a time could be more than what the rest 74% of the population makes. The top three sectors that benefit the most from the tourism in Lalibela are hotels 45%, transportation 19% and the church 13%.

3.5.1 The tourism market
Tourism in Neakutoleab is seen as a rare opportunity for development. For the monastery as well as the community, it is an appealing industry to get involved in. This is especially true

75 Discussion at the Lalibela Culture and Tourism Office, 2018
76 The municipal office of Culture and Tourism, mentioned in Heritage, Tourism, and Urbanization, the Landscape and Development of Lalibela, Ethiopia. 2017. New York: Columbia GSAPP. p.55
because the subsistent farming activities cannot be relied on. Therefore tourism can be seen as a pathway through which one’s standard of living could be transformed.\textsuperscript{79}

Lalibela receives high numbers of visitors during Christmas season. The largest group of visitors are devout pilgrims (estimated to be around 200,000/year) whose motives are religious while the second group of visitors are international tourists whose motives are usually secular.\textsuperscript{80} The international tourists are the targets of the tourism market in Lalibela. This is obvious from the price of accommodation as well as food that cannot be afforded by the large majority of the pilgrims. It should also be noted that the tourism services charges different prices for international tourists and Ethiopians. Nonetheless, the pilgrims who are mostly farmers from neighboring regions and walk on foot to Lalibela, cannot afford it.

There are 60 hotels that are clustered in four locations in Lalibela.\textsuperscript{81} These serve the international tourists as well as the local religious travelers (those that are coming from other cities in Ethiopia) who can afford it. The pilgrims spend the night in makeshift tents and in some of the empty tukuls that were abandoned by the people who moved from the inscribed property.

There is a culture within the orthodox youth association to organize themselves and wash the feet of the pilgrims who have travelled far from their original home town. The community also provides food and water. The administration has attempted to provide restroom facilities which were one of the aims of the ESTDP that phased out in 2015. However, the restrooms stand unused because their construction was never completed. According to a discussion with the LCTO head, the contractor who won the bid for the construction of the restrooms left without connecting the sanitary ducts to the grid and since then no one was made accountable for the

\textsuperscript{81} Heritage, Tourism, and Urbanization, The Landscape And Development Of Lalibela, Ethiopia. 2017. New York: Columbia GSAPP. p. 68
unfinished work. Currently the town administration allocates two open fields demarcated for female and male open defecation.

Unfortunately, the tourism industry serves those who can afford to pay. The LCTO also hasn’t designed a sustainable and systematic framework that can serve the pilgrims. In addition, the diocese of Lalibela church, which charges USD 50 for admission tickets, haven’t provided provisional facilities for the pilgrims who travel to participate in the religious procession of the church.

Currently the Lalibela administration incentivizes the construction of hotels by providing tax free importation of construction materials. As a direct result of the incentives given by the government, the construction of more hotels is still going on in Lalibela. The current number of hotels might not be enough to accommodate all the tourists that are visiting during the high season however outside of high season only 22% of hotel beds are used which means for more than half of the year nearly 80% of the hotel beds are empty. This occupancy rate is less than the world average of 67%. In addition to the hotels there are over 100 souvenir shops and 46 restaurants clustered in two locations and they too are mostly dependent on foreign tourists.

Lalibela is increasingly being designed to accommodate international tourists. This can be observed from the traffic signs, hotel names, street names as well as posters describing the eleven churches of Lalibela which are all written in English, a foreign language, without Amharic translations.

Although, there is a general estimation, the pilgrims travelling to Lalibela are not counted and there is no written data about the number of pilgrims that enter Lalibela. However the number of international tourists who travel to Lalibela is documented. This has to do with how the LCTO gets its data. Since international tourists buy admission tickets, they are easy to keep track of. The lack of figures about the locals is vital information because it is indicative of the goals and

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plans of the administration and the country which could become lopsided as a result of overlooking certain data. The plans of the city are targeting the growth of international tourist visitation numbers. The lack of statistics regarding the visitation number of local tourists (Ethiopians are not required to buy admission tickets to visit the Lalibela churches) as well as the pilgrims automatically erases them from consideration during such activities as city planning or management plans.

Furthermore, there is a huge discrepancy with the rate with which the tourism sector is growing and the level with which basic facilities are being provided for the community. While accommodations for tourists have all the basic facilities, the majority of households in Lalibela do not have access to safe water and electricity.\textsuperscript{84} The tourism industry might be growing but minimum return is observed to the standard of living of the community.

From an economic stand point, it is the international tourists who bring the most revenues to the industry as well as to the country. However this doesn’t mean that future plans should only be dictated by this understanding. Also, the economic justification narrows down the significance of Lalibela as well as the other monasteries as just economic assets.

The annual number of international tourists that arrive in Lalibela all together is above the population of the town. It is estimated that about 200,000 pilgrims also visit the town during Christmas season.\textsuperscript{85} The international tourists stay for an average of two days while the pilgrims stay longer.

Lalibela town is under the pressure of handling this huge influx of visitors that arrive at a particular time.

\textsuperscript{84} “Welfare monitoring survey 2011, statistical report, Indicators on living standard, accessibility and household assets”, Statistical Bulletin, Volume I, CSA, April 2012

3.5.2 Tourism in Neakutoleab

For pilgrims who arrive during the Christmas season, Neakutoleab is one of the stop overs on their way to Lalibela. The pilgrims who usually travel on foot, first salute Neakutoleab monastery before continuing their journey to Lalibela.

According to the Neakutoleab’s Abbott, the monastery receives roughly 6000 - 7000 international tourists per year and 300-400 pilgrims per month. The monastery charges international tourists’ 200 birr (approx. USD 6.6) admission fee.

The tourism industry along with its associated service sector hasn’t yet arrived to Neakutoleab in full force. Therefore, 100% of the tourists who visit the monastery come from and return to Lalibela town. The pilgrims also do not spend the night at Neakutoleab.

With aims of engaging the community at Neakutoleab, the LCTO has organized the local women into associations and given them trainings on crafting souvenir articles that can be sold to tourists that visit to the site. The women can be found sitting outside in groups with their articles displayed in front of them.

3.6 Factors influencing urban growth

Besides the direct effects of tourism at Lalibela, the government and its pro-poor tourism policy are other drivers of growth. The administration is in charge of allocating land for development, providing better infrastructures and promoting the tourism sector to local and international investors. In addition, the pro-poor tourism policy which is potentially narrowing down the significance of heritage sites to just being economic assets has caused the protection of heritage values to become secondary considerations. Moreover, the urban planning policy which allows cities to sprawl, usually through expropriation of farm lands, has contributed for the current life style changes at Neakutoleab. The changes that are currently observed at the site are stemming not from the applied policy but the lack of it. However the applied policy itself aims towards urbanization of the town.
In the context of Neakutoleab town, a religious site, the pressures of urbanization fueled by tourism and actualized by government policies threaten the lifestyle, the tangible and intangible aspects of the monastery.
Chapter 4 - Field Work

4.1 Study Area

The study took place in the vicinity of the Neakutoleab monastery and around the village where the community lives. The questionnaires were filled by people that were either working at or visiting the monastery.

The study was carried out from December 28 to January 5, 2018, around the Ethiopian Christmas celebrations, which takes place on January 7 of every year. It was the high season of Lalibela, therefore the town was very busy with thousands of pilgrims and tourists who had come to attend the special programs held at the eleven rock hewn churches of Lalibela. Even though the pilgrims head to Lalibela to celebrate Christmas, it is also their mission to salute many of the other churches located around Lalibela, one of which is Neakutoleab, from which they believe to receive blessings. It is customary for tourists as well to visit other popular churches in the vicinity of Lalibela. The study site, Neakutoleab is few kilometers away from the place of celebration and was busy with many pilgrims who would stop by on their way to Lalibela at the time of the study. Having the field work carried out at that particular time guaranteed access to a variety of responders – pilgrims, local residents, priests and tourists.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Questionnaire

To carry out the study, both Amharic and English questionnaires (attached as annex) were used to engage to different stakeholders. Face to face interviews were also conducted with the head of the Lalibela Tourism and Cultural office, with an expert from the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH) and with the head priest of the Neakutoleab monastery. The interview candidates were chosen based on their authority in their respective institution and based on their knowledge of the site. As part of the research, GPS readings were also collected of new constructions that were taking place at Neakutoleab at that time.
Nature of Questionnaires

The four target groups of the questionnaire were: local residents, pilgrims, priests and tourists. Each group received the same survey with sections specifically prepared for each group. They were voluntarily interviewed, and responses were recorded on to the questionnaires which were kept anonymous. The intention of the questionnaires were:

a. To assess the significance of the Neakutoleab monastery. To understand the value held by each of the stakeholders.

b. To understand the role of the church in the lives of its local residents as well as to know how popular of a destination site the monastery is among pilgrims and tourists alike. The other main goal of the questionnaire was

c. To understand the drivers of the urban growth of the Neakutoleab area; to assess whether it’s a planned settlement or an organic one and to see what was fueling it at such a rate of transformation.

d. To understand the response of various stakeholders to this growth. Lastly it was to

e. Evaluate the state of preservation activity of the monastery.

The majority of the questions on the questionnaire had choices out of which the respondents picked one or more answers. There were few open ended questions where by different perceptions of the responders towards the topic of concern was witnessed.

4.2.2 Administration of Interview

The interview was conducted with three officials that represented the office of Culture and Tourism at Lalibela, the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH) and the Neakutoleab monastery. The aim of the interviews was to help give a greater insight into how these institutes worked together and individually to manage the resources of Neakutoleab. It was also to assess the views towards the anticipated urban growth of Neakutoleab and how that relates to the preservation of the monastery. The interviews, gave insights about the political, cultural and social factors of the development.
4.2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed for frequency, descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis using SPSS software. When the data was entered, four categories representing the four stakeholders were established which were tourists, priests, residents and pilgrims. Each group was forwarded specific questions, but they also shared common questions. There were tourists that stated that they were pilgrims. These were added to the “tourist” category. The “tourist” category also included local tourists who had come from a city center in Ethiopia. For this research, the labels, “tourist” and “pilgrims” were not only serving to distinguish between the motives of visitors, but it was also differentiating between two different social and cultural groups. The pilgrims who are locally known as “Samiwoch” were traveling from rural areas, and they usually walked on foot all the way from their locality. The ‘Pilgrim’ category only had responses from these individuals. Even though, the priests who responded to the questionnaire had their category in the questionnaire, since they were also residents they had answered the questions prepared for residents as well.

The GIS map for this study area is based on a basemap produced by students of Historic Preservation in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Columbia University (GSAPP) in 2015/16. The basemap was created out of data compiled by the University of Cape Town, Zamani project in 2009 and on satellite imagery from 1994-2106. Since the current study builds on the research carried out by the students, the latest GPS readings collected were entered on to the original GIS map, updating the development witnessed in Neakutoleab area since 2016.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Frequency of the Respondents

Out of a total of 100 responders that participated in this study, there were 26 local residents, 24 priests, 24 pilgrims and 26 tourists. 65% were male and 35% female. Out of the 100 responders, 68% were above the age of 41. This data is indicative of the fact that the tourists (80%), and the pilgrims (75%) visiting this site are older individuals. On the other hand, it was
only 38.5% of the 26 residents and 19% of the priests asked, that were older than 41. Just looking at this sample, the local residents might be proportionally younger which is in line with the data of the whole country. (45.6% of the population of Lalibela is below the age of 19).87

Out of the 50 responders that live in Neakutoleab (26 residents and 24 priests), 98% started living there either as a result of marriage or because their family has always lived there. Therefore, it can be potentially inferred that the community is a tight knit one; especially because, 94% of the respondents have been living in Neakutoleab for more than 10 years. Therefore their knowledge of the monastery as well as the surrounding is based on substantial time spent in the area. Out of the 50 priests and residents that were asked how often times they went to the monastery 96% of them responded that they visit at least once per week. This portrays the tight relationship that exists between the monastery and the community. The monastery is not just for the nuns and the priests but it gives service to the whole community.

Out of the 24 pilgrims that were asked whether it was their first time visiting Neakutoleab or not, 87.5% of them said that it was their first time. A majority of them intend to stay in Lalibela for a minimum of one week (87.5%). Since most pilgrims come on foot from localities that are at least 300km away from Lalibela, starting their journey three or four weeks prior to the Christmas week, it’s a huge investment of their time, energy and money. Therefore, they don’t plan on returning soon. They intend to stay at Lalibela till the Epiphany celebration that is a week away from the Ethiopian Christmas. They also make sure that they see all the other churches in the vicinity of Lalibela.

When asked how many other sites they intend to visit or have visited, 92% of them intend to visit or have already visited Lalibela, Yimrehanekristos, Asetemariam, Neakutoleab and Genetemariam churches that are all located within 50km of Lalibela. 75% of these pilgrims are travelling independently with their families while the rest is traveling in groups, usually with their neighbors, or with people that live in the same village. This indicates that their journey wasn’t dictated by any other body other than their own initiation. 75% of them will be staying

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87 “Population size by single age (0-19).” Lalibela Town Administration, 2017/2018
and spending the night outside at the Lalibela open field, in the inscribed property of the Lalibela churches. The vacant tukul houses, which are also part of the inscribed property will also be occupied by pilgrims during the holiday seasons. 12.5% of the 24 respondents expressed that they will be staying at these houses. This data indicates the main pull factor of the locality which is the celebration at Lalibela. These pilgrims are the largest singular group of visitors who double the population of Lalibela town within a time span of a week only at a particular time of the year. This sudden spike in the number of visitors is one of the key management challenges of the town.

For the question dealing with why the pilgrims chose to visit Neakuteleab over the other churches, the two top answers were because of the holy water and the history of the church. When they are referring to the history of the church, they usually mean the hagiography of Neakuteleab, which portrays the present monastery and the presence of the dripping water as a manifestation of God’s promises to Neakuteleab.

Out of the 24 priests that answered the questionnaire, 58% of them expressed that the increased development around Neakuteleab has increased the number of visitors. This is
portrayed as a positive thing as the church depends heavily on the revenue it makes from ticket sales. 29.2% of them said that the growth has affected the spirituality of the site.

Out of the 26 tourists that were asked how they came to know about Neakutoleab, 65% of them heard about it from their tour agent. This might indicate that tour operators to a certain extent dictate the number of tourists that visit Neakutoleab monastery.

When asked what other sites they have visited or intend to visit 100% of them answered that they have visited Lalibela. 23% were intending to visit other churches in the vicinity of Lalibela in addition to Neakutoleab. 61.5% came in tour groups and all of them are staying at a hotel in Lalibela. This portrays that the main attraction point for these tourists are the Lalibela churches and that there is no other center with hotels and other visitor facilities other than Lalibela town. Most of their movement, which is usually in tour groups, outside of the Lalibela town is determined by tour operators. There were few tourists that were travelling independently and were well aware of the locations of the other monasteries outside of Lalibela town but the majority of them were being led by tour guides.

Out of the 7 resident business owners, that were asked specific work related questions, 43% responded that they lead their lives from selling fresh produce in their suq (a small street shop). 43% have been in the business for more than three years. 71.4% of those owners are not sure of the continuity of their business neither are they satisfied with the revenue they are getting from their business.

Out of 100 respondents that were asked what mode of transportation they used to get to Neakutoleab, 69% said that they walked. This number includes the 26 local residents, and 24 Priests who live not too far from the monastery. The number also includes 18 pilgrims who indeed travelled a long distance on foot. The pilgrims that have been interviewed for these questionnaires travelled from Gondar and Gojam which are areas located at least 300 km away from Lalibela. A majority of the pilgrims who venture on this pilgrimage are farmers. This journey is a huge investment of time, energy and money. It usually takes them three to four weeks to reach their destinations and they have to carry enough food that could last them the
entire journey. 96% of the tourists who voyage to Neakutoleab either use a minibus or another type of car.

There were few questions that were targeted to understand the level of urbanity that Neakutoleab was experiencing, one of which was where the different stakeholders ate or stayed at while in Neakutoleab. 50% of the 100, responded that they eat at home. This is because 50% of the respondents are residents of Neakutoleab. 83.3% of the pilgrims indicated that they carry their own lunch box. They also mentioned that when they run out of the food they had brought for the journey, the community they pass along on their way to Lalibela, feeds them wherever they may be taking a rest or spending the night. All the tourists eat at a restaurant or hotel in Lalibela. This data portrays that the town of Neakutoleab doesn’t provide options for eating outside of one’s home. There are no restaurants or cafeterias in the town. It is a totally residential settlement.

When asked about the significance of Neakutoleab monastery, 31% of the respondents, with residents and priests being the majority, chose all the qualities indicated in the questionnaires which were, the landscape, the church itself, the holy water, the community, and the history associated with the monastery. 21% of the responders, answered that it was the physical church itself that is the most significant element about the heritage site. The majority of tourists and pilgrims chose this answer. This difference in perceived significance is important as it is indicative of the values associated with the monastery and its surrounding.

On the question regarding the strength of Neakutoleab, 68% of the responders agreed that the strength of the monastery is the fact that it’s a holy site. The majority of residents, pilgrims’ and priests picked this answer while the response from tourists was equally dispersed among all the options. This question can show that for the pilgrims, residents and priests who are Ethiopians, and followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the significance of the monastery lies in the fact that it’s a holy site - a term that fully expresses the entirety of the value. While for tourists, each of the attributes given in the option are the strength of the site. The natural setting of the site isn’t a unique feature for all the three stakeholders as the whole northern part of Ethiopia is mountainous and rugged topography. In fact, some have commented that there is nothing
attractive about the natural setting. Moreover, since there are many other cave churches around Lalibela, the setting isn’t as valued as the other attributes of the site by the three stakeholders.

For the question that inquires about attitudes regarding the increasing number of people living near Neakutoleab, 56% said that it’s a good thing while 38% expressed that it might be a challenge. Those that responded that the growth is a challenge are usually thinking about the change in the economic, social and cultural statues of the locality. Those that perceive the growth as a good opportunity are looking at the matter in terms of the economy, infrastructure and employment prospect. There was a mixed response from all the four stakeholders about this issue. But a big portion of them seem to see the development that has occurred in Lalibela and that is anticipated to occur in Neakutoleab as a potentially good indication of economic opportunities.

For the question, “What role are you playing for the protection of Neakutoleab monastery?”, while 21.4% said that they support the church financially, 22.4% of the responders said that they contribute nothing & 19.4% of the responders said that they help through respecting the physical structure and through creating awareness among others. The financial contributions
are not necessarily for the preservation activity of the church but it’s the tithes and offerings that the congregation makes that the church may use for work on the monastery. It is common for the locality to give their agricultural produce as tithes to the church.

For the question, “How do you relate to the challenge of balancing growth and heritage protection in the context of Lalibela?”, they were offered the following choices,

a) “I am a stakeholder who is concerned about this challenge and I fear for the heritage sites in Lalibela”,

b) “I am conscious about this but I don’t see any challenge in Lalibela, I don’t understand it”,

c) “I am a stakeholder but I don’t see the problem. The growth is good.”

d) I don’t understand it.

This question was attempting to assess the responders take on the effect of urban growth on the eleven churches of Lalibela. For this question, 27.7% said that they are a stakeholder but that they do not see the problem that the growth could potentially have on the heritage sites of the eleven churches. They believe the growth to be good for the area. 26.6% said that they are stakeholders and that they are concerned about this challenge and fear for the heritage sites in Lalibela. 21.3% replied that they are conscious about it but that they don’t see any challenge in Lalibela as a result of growth. 20.2 % said that they do not understand the whole issue that the question is attempting to ask. Therefore it was only 27.7% of the responders that indicate some concern over the effect of urban growth on the Lalibela heritage site.

For the final question, “What aspects of the site could be improved to better protect the cultural heritage?” which was an open ended question, a majority of the responders - 66.3%, replied saying that better infrastructure needs to be built while 18.8 % said that better preservation need to be done to the monastery. Better infrastructure constitutes availability of water, proper road, facilities such as restaurants and hotels.
4.3.2 Factors influencing significance

A linear regression analysis was carried out for the question dealing with the strength of Neakutoleab monastery (What are the strengths of Neakutoleab?) with the following constant variables: The stakeholder, age, sex of the respondents, frequency of visits to the monastery, the length of time residents have lived in Neakutoleab and the significance of Neakutoleab.

The question, “What are the strengths of Neakutoleab?” was attempting to assess the significance of the monastery. Though it was assessing significance, it was phrased in a different way. The Amharic translation of the question makes better sense than the English. The question elicited a better response than the question “What do you think is significant about Neakutoleab?” Therefore, it has been selected for further analysis of its relationship to the response received from the other questions. The word strength and significance are used interchangeably to explain the results.

The results of the linear regression, presented in table 1 show that the frequency with which the locals visited the site, their age, and sex had a significant effect on the significance of Neakutoleab monastery.
Dependent Variable: What are the strengths of Neakutoleab?

* Significant at 0.05

The variable “How often do you go to Neakutoleab monastery, had a statistically significant level of 0.001. It shows that the frequency with which people visit the site, has an effect on the significance of the monastery. The more the frequency of the visits, the higher will be its religious importance. The survey included 100 individuals out of which 50 people were residents. Out of the 50, 96% answered that they visit the monastery at least once a week. Therefore the more frequently people go to the monastery the higher will be the attraction force of the monastery to the society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the equation</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
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<td>1 (Constant)</td>
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<td>1.905</td>
<td>-.522</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>.058</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>-.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you go to Neakutoleab monastery?</td>
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<td>.267</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>3.621</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the respondents</td>
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<td>.210</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>2.253</td>
<td>.029*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is significant about Neakutoleab?</td>
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<td>.038</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>1.958</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you lived in Neakutoleab?</td>
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<td>.453</td>
<td>-.158</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of the respondents</td>
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<td>.327</td>
<td>.384</td>
<td>3.059</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Linear Regression
Age of the respondents was another constant that had a significant result on the dependent variable. People that were at the same age level gave the dominant answer to the question – “what is the strength of Neakutoleab.” Out of 100 individuals that participated in this survey, 68% of them were above the age of 41. Most of the tourists and the pilgrims were older than the other stakeholders. The high number of older pilgrims can potentially be explained in that individuals get more religious the older they get, as their social responsibilities diminish and feel that they are getting closer to their end, thus want to clean themselves from every sin they commit. Therefore older individuals are attracted more readily to the monastery than others.

Sex of the respondents is another variable that had an important effect on the significance of Neakutoleab. 65% of the 100 respondents were males while 35% were females and the majority of the males think the significance of Neakutoleab lies in its being a Holy site. This result can be explained in that men relatively have got enough time to visit the monastery as females are busy with household chores (fetching water and firewood, taking care of kids, preparation of food for the family which is often, not conducted by males). Besides, in Orthodox Christianity, almost all church activities are mainly carried out by men, and this might have affected the level of understanding or acceptance of females on what is happening in the monastery. Therefore, it can be inferred that the significance of the monastery is better understood by male visitors. Males might also consider the place as a meeting place to discuss different social issues in the society (e.g., matrimonial arrangement, conflict resolution, etc.) as they are the sole decision makers in almost all problems in the community.

4.4 Interviews

As part of the field work, three interviews were conducted with individuals from ARCCH, LCTO and the Neakutoleab monastery. The aim of the interview was to understand the views held by each institution regarding the Neakutoleab monastery and to assess attitudes regarding the urban growth of Lalibela. While the interviews don’t necessarily represent views of the institution that each interviewee came from, it gives an insight into the interests of each institution and the role they play in the protection of the Neakutoleab heritage site.
4.4.1 Interview with Aba Tilahun Tsegaye

Aba Tilahun Tsegaye, is the Abbott of the Neakutoleab church. He has been head of the monastery since 2007/08. He expressed the typical attitude held by the community as well as church officials regarding the values associated with the monastery, thoughts about the urban growth and the tourism industry.

Regarding church attitude towards the fast-paced urban transformation and tourism, the Abbott expressed that tourism has allowed easy profitability, attention and access to resources without much effort from the country or from the church. By virtue of the Lalibela churches being World Heritage Sites and the locals being proximate to the site they have been able to transform economically. While this is considered as a positive influence of tourism, he also feels that it has created a culture of taking the stream of supply for granted and has discouraged drive from the young generation.

The Abbott expressed that the growth that is occurring as a result of tourism is generally good. However, it’s a challenge for the spiritual and cultural aspect of the society on the grounds that urbanization introduces different religions, viewpoints and cultures that potentially can go contrary to the principles of Christianity. As an example of the challenge, he mentioned how the local youth at Lalibela have started dreading their hair – a practice that started in recent years, and is seen as foreign to Lalibela. In addition, he notes the introduction of homosexuality as something that tourism has brought. In the long run he believes that the cultural and religious identity of the society will be lost along with the growth that is taking place. He refers to Lalibela town as the scenario that Neakutoleab will soon join.

Regarding the economic advantages that tourism has brought to Neakutoleab, he confirms that there have been many benefits that came as a result of the revenue that tourism had brought to the church. He explains that there have been a raise in the salaries of the priests as a result of the admission fees that the church charges foreign tourists. The church’s annual budget for

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88 Lalibela is considered as a holy land by followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, therefore, the attitude of the church as well as the society is that it should remain to be a Christian locality.

89 In Ethiopia, practicing homosexuality is illegal under Article 629 of the Criminal Code. Within the context of Lalibela – a conservative Christian society, it is not acceptable.
salaries alone has increased from 2000 to 106,000 birr\(^9\) since 2008. The increase in budget has benefited not only the priests but also the society who in turn benefit from the increased buying power of the priests, thus the money trickles down benefiting everyone. As a testament to that transformation, he mentioned that many of the locals have transitioned from living in thatched roof huts to building a house made out of corrugated iron sheet (CIS) – which is considered a progress. Undeniably, there are only few thatched roof, circular huts in Neakutoleab now and they have been dominated by rectangular, CIS roofed houses.

Additionally, as a result of the tourism revenues, the church was able to hire security guards (since 1995) to protect the artifacts of the monastery as well as the forest on Kirkos Amba Mountain. According to the Abbott, tourists come to see different species of birds around the cave and at the forest. But the locals need wood for cooking, for construction of houses, and they send their cattle for grazing. Currently, the guards are keeping the forest safe from such activities preserving the presence of suitable climate for birds as well as a serene place where priests can use as a retreat to meditate on the word of the bible. There are also students (yekolo temari) that go to the forest to do their daily recitation of religious verses. Presently, as a result of the initiation the church took to protect the forest, there is an excellent amount of green coverage on the part of the mountain facing the town of Neakutoleab.

Furthermore, as a result of the rise in the economic capacity, the church was able to build a new church called Kidane Mihiret, on top of the plateau found near the monastery. For the construction of the church, they resettled 25 people who used to occupy part of the churches property. The resettlement was attempted in 1976 but failed because the church didn’t have enough financial capacity to carry out the move. It only succeeded in 2008 when the church was in a better economic position. The Abbot mentioned that prior to the resettlement, small children from nearby houses used to hassle tourists that were visiting the monastery. Besides, the sanitary condition of the area was also compromised as a result of the presence of the dwelling places nearby. The church convinced the locals that they had to leave the area as they can’t expand or start businesses while living near the monastery. The church offered to pay

\(^9\) Birr is the currency in Ethiopia.
compensations, therefore, they complied. Even though there were no ordinances that restricted people from building business, since the houses were inside the churches property, the church mandated the sort of functions that could be sustained in the area. It is understood that this process took place through discussion among the community leaders. Passive methods were employed even though the church had every right to its property and was under no obligation to compensate the people. The church sponsored the construction of the new houses they were going to be relocated to and it also paid the full reparation. He concluded that, the church’s financial capabilities were strengthened as a result of the revenue from tourism to better protect the monastery as well as its surrounding.

Although, the church has no formal boundary, (there is a rough estimate using geographical features as reference), private construction in the compound is not allowed. The church is the one enforcing the state of preservation of the compound. He clarifies that the monastery is proactively cared for by the church and the community and not by the responsible government office, even though they give their assistance whenever they are requested.

The Abbott speaks of the community and the church as one unified body that has the same interests and values. Surely, the 128 individuals that serve in the monastery, are residents in Neakutoleab town therefore they are part of the community. He is certain that if tourism stops, cutting the supply of revenue, the security and safety will come from the community. But as long as tourism is there, the church will guard and preserve the state of the monastery through security guards.

*Significance*

The Abbott explained the story of the four priest-kings of 12th – 13th century Ethiopia and how Neakutoleab, after ruling the country for 40 years, retired to a life of isolation. Neakutoleab used to utilize the cave as his personal praying and meditating location. Currently access to this area is restricted for any visitor (pilgrims as well as tourists). It contains valuable artifacts as well as books of spiritual value. He explains that before tourists started visiting the monastery, there was no protocol to access the books in there. There were also no security guards. The
books used to be sent wherever they were needed which was mainly for healing purpose.\textsuperscript{91} But now the books cannot be taken out of the monastery without a long process.

According to the Abbott, because Neakutoleab spent his life fasting and praying, meditating on the sacrifices of Jesus, it was promised to him that there would come droplets of water from the roof of the cave in remembrance of his (Neakutoleab) tears. This water is famous for healing people of various disease and ailment. In fact many individuals come from rural areas looking for the water. They come directly without consulting a doctor while believers from more urban areas come when all hope is lost in their recovery. He claims that about 200-300 people get healed each year.

Besides the religious significance of the monastery, the Abbott explained that, tourists are attracted to the birds found in the forest and the cave. Moreover, visitors sometimes go to the house of locals to see their way of life, the way they farm and so on.

\textbf{4.4.2 Interview with Ato Abel Assefa}

Ato Abel Assefa who works as an expert at Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH) in Addis Abeba, is a professional in the field of Archaeology and Heritage Management and has done multiple field surveys at Lalibela for ARCCH.

\textit{Significance}

He reasons that the cave churches demonstrate the continuation of the tradition of rock cutting technology that developed during 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD in the Axum civilization. There are more than 40 rock cut churches in Gerealta that date from 4\textsuperscript{th} century to 11\textsuperscript{th}, and around 60 in Lalibela that were built during the Zagwe dynasty.\textsuperscript{92} The cave church of Neakutoleab adds to the assemblage of such sites.

According to Abel, the construction of cave churches is associated with the history of Jesus Christ being buried in a cave. Therefore, the numerous cave churches in Ethiopia, signify the continuity of this interpretation.

\textsuperscript{91} The books are thought to be holy and have healing powers.
\textsuperscript{92} Gerealta is a locality found in Tigray, on the northern part of Ethiopia.
Regarding its architectural heritage, there are better examples of cave churches that have been
designed with finer details. However, he argues that we cannot compare one heritage site with
the other, noting difference in style and period of construction. The Bete Amanuel church of
Lalibela has been designed with fine details while Bete Gebrel Rufael is a roughly hewn church.
But this doesn’t make one less significant than the other. In the same manner, Neakutoleab has
its own quality and architectural character.

Hagiographies and oral traditions are usually the main source of knowledge regarding the four
Priest-Kings as well as the churches they built. While it is necessary to practice caution when
basing once research on such information, the data communicated can be factual. Ato Abel
mentioned that during a project ARCCH was conducting on Yimrehanekristos – a cave church
located 42kilometers away from Lalibela, they were able to prove the date of construction of
the monastery that is written on the hagiography as being accurate through physical samples
taken from the wall of the monastery.

Tourism and Urban growth
Ato Abel predicts that, with the current rate of population growth, and scarcity of land the city
of Lalibela will continue to stretch more in the coming years.

He reasons that the tourism industry has created development but it has also created a large
gap between rich and poor. It can be stated that the general public hasn’t changed. While there
are people who are financially capable to invest on tourism, the majority have limited
capacities. Land allocated for investment is leased through a bid which is open to investors
from Addis Abeba who potentially have a better purchasing power. Therefore the tourism
industry that is observed at Lalibela, might not necessarily reflect the economic growth within
the community.

He believes that better promotion work and infrastructure needs to be done at Lalibela. The
road from the airport to the main Lalibela town hasn’t been finished for the last seven years. He
is confident that if better provisions to infrastructure were met, that the tourism industry
would grow even more.
The office of ARCCH recently have conducted a training where the abbots and priests of churches around Lalibela, including Neakuiteleab, were invited for a one week training on heritage preservation and promotion. It involved site visits whereby priests of each church were given exposure to other churches around the locality. This is something that should be encouraged as it empowers and equips the religious institutes to take care of their property.

4.4.3 Interview with Ato Habtamu Tesfaw

The third interview was conducted with Ato Habtamu Tesfaw who is the head of the Lalibela Culture and Tourism office in Lalibela. He is in charge of conservation as well as tourism development issues in Lalibela.

Significance

Neakuiteleab monastery is one of the heritage sites with a high tourism potential located formerly in the Lasta woreda and now administered under the Lalibela zone.

It has a religious and natural significance. It also has an important history associated with it.

The office of Culture and tourism in its attempt to keep the heritage site safe have so far built a retaining wall around the church protecting it from possible water flooding. It has also built a water drainage that is 500 meters above the mouth of the cave. Moreover, the office does annual inventory of the church’s movable heritage - canonical books, staffs and other church artifacts.

The office, gives professional advice to the monastery whenever requested. The construction of the new museum at the heritage site was possible through the professional and financial help of the office. The preservation of the forest, the office claims, is also another activity that is being done by them. Additionally, they have helped with the appropriation of the vehicular path that currently connects the monastery to the main arterial street and installed electric light.

Regarding the urban growth and tourism, the deputy officer stated that the city is growing according to the designed plan. The town is a tourism center; therefore it is attracting more and more people from bordering districts to migrate to Lalibela. The more the migration the more
the need for housing. Therefore, the expansion of the city has forced the Lalibela administration zone to take the neighboring rural districts into its administration zone, growing from two kebele to five.

Having witnessed the resettlement program of the ESTDP, the office assures that they are working towards avoiding the same pressures from occurring at other heritage sites. The management plan and the structural master plan of Lalibela are being synchronized to produce a unified document that handles such pressures. It wasn’t made clear as to who was doing this work or when it will be done. He argues that since the boundaries of the Neakutoleab heritage site will be demarcated in that plan, no one will intrude on it.

Ato Habtamu predicts that the urban growth will continue and it will go past Neakutoleab and could potentially reach the river. There are plans to establish an educational institute in that direction and the construction of other structures is to be expected to follow. He affirms that, the population of the town will not go down, and that the city will continue to expand. But as long as there is a legal framework protecting the heritage sites, the development will not affect the continued preservation of the Neakutoleab monastery.

The real question, as to the existence of enough legal framework to protect the heritage site and who will be implementing it remains unanswered.

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93 Tributary to Tekeze River
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*Table 2 Summery of the interview*

### 4.5 Visual observations

The physical structure of the Neakutoleab monastery is protected by its natural setting from being encroached. The church has also been proactive in firmly protecting its property from residential or any other use. Therefore, the monastery is least likely to be encroached in the future. However, the church has built ancillary structures around the monastery that serve different purposes. On the plateau found above the monastery, the church is building a new, two story museum out of concrete. The choice of design and material might be questioned and it demonstrates a need for a professional to guide future developments that the church is carrying out in its property in a way it respects the visual coherence of the surrounding.

While the actual cave is protected from being encroached, the natural context is vulnerable to changes from the anticipated growth. With the proposed urban plan, the skyline, scale and rural character of the surrounding is anticipated to change.
4.6 Findings and analysis

4.6.1 General

Based on the questionnaires collected and the interviews conducted, the dominant attributes that make the monastery significant to the community, pilgrims, priests and generally to the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) originate from the belief system. Considering the main users of the monastery, the site is meaningful because it is believed to be a holy site with a holy water capable of healing the sick. Thus, a large number of followers of the religion, who can be categorized as pious travelers, head to Neakutoleab to get healed of their illnesses. They are also motivated to visit the site to receive the promises believed to have been made by God. The pilgrimage is not mandatory by the religion. It is something the pilgrims do on their own initiation. This activity is seasonal, as a majority of the pious travelers’ journey to Lalibela during the Christmas celebration, where special processions take place in Lalibela. Therefore, the intangible aspect of the site is what is drawing them to the monastery. These values are better understood and appreciated by followers of the EOC.

The pilgrims who journey on foot always pass through Neakutoleab. The path is an informal footpath, and they do not pass by Neakutoleab just because the path was designed that way. But the pilgrims created that footpath because their journey includes saluting the Neakutoleab monastery. While most of the pilgrims at the time of the research were on their way to Lalibela there were some who had entered Lalibela directly, and have returned to Neakutoleab to salute it. It is usual for the pilgrims to at least spend 30 - 45 minutes at the monastery, resting under the trees located near the cave. It is usual for them to fast until 3pm at this time of the year (Christmas celebration) therefore they don’t drink the holy water until they break their fast. Most of the questionnaire with the pilgrims was carried out while they were resting, seated in front of the cave.

As evidenced from the results, tourists’ value tends to be distributed almost equally among tangible and intangible attributes. The results show that they valued the holy site, the community, the natural setting as well as the architecture. However it is evident that, their main attraction point was the WHS of the eleven churches of Lalibela, that are renowned for
their architecture. Their activities are dictated by tour operators as 65% of the tourists surveyed replied that they first heard about the monastery through their tour agent. For the devout followers, although the other attributes are recognized, the main defining element of the site is the sacredness of the location.

The ARCCH and the LCTO are the national and regional offices, respectively, in charge of protecting heritage sites. They function under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism whose principles of tourism direct these two offices. Therefore the Neakutoleab monastery is seen as one of the heritage site in the Lalibela administration zone, with a high tourism potential. To this end, the monastery and around 60 other rock hewn and cave churches found in Lalibela are in the process of being nominated for world heritage status. Consequently, the management of the Neakutoleab monastery is in the process of being transferred to ARCCH.94 This by default makes the Neakutoleab monastery a national heritage. It is expected that the nomination, and ultimately the enlisting will draw more tourism to the country.

The town administration, as evidenced from the structural master plan of Lalibela, considers Neakutoleab as a potential expansion area for the ever growing city. The urban plan has pictured Neakutoleab as a center town with “community hotels” and commercial spaces.

All stakeholders interviewed understand tourism to be the main driver of the urban growth at Lalibela and Neakutoleab. The administration of the church recognizes the heritage statues and the opportunity that can come along with that and welcomes tourists. Opening access to tourists has improved the financial status of the church enabling it to better protect the site. The increase in finance, has allowed it to better guard the forest and its property. On the other hand, while the monastery recognizes the benefits of tourism, it also sees it as a potential threat to the social and cultural values of the society.

On the churches side, Lalibela and all the other churches located within the vicinity, charge admission fees from foreign nationals. This has positively impacted their budget. The Lalibela church alone owns four hotels. Compared to other churches, the Lalibela church pays well to its

94 Interview with Ato Abel Assefa, ARCCH, 2018
1000 hired priests therefore it is a more attractive job to potential priests from Lalibela town or from other regions. According to interviews conducted with priests at Neakutoleab monastery, they too wish to emulate the Lalibela church and build a hotel to establish a more concrete foundation for their continued survival. One can assume that the churches also want a share of the growing tourism industry, merging the religious institute to the business one. While the need for building a substantial capital for the church is understandable, the Lalibela church is highly criticized for the way it has been using the revenues its making. Specifically for its lack of contributions towards the provision of utilities to its pilgrims who usually travel a long way to get to Lalibela. At the end of their journey, they don’t get enough facilities – potable water, clean and proper restrooms. The same issue exists at Neakutoleab with no facilities dedicated to pilgrims.

The tendency for churches to develop a business side is a contentious issue. It is especially controversial for monasteries. Because, theoretically, monasteries are for people who have rejected the worldly life for the austere one. To that end, monasteries are built in the hinterland. Asrat and Ayalew, mention that, “the location of almost all of the rock churches in obscure, isolated and inaccessible places can be attributed to asceticism, which favors a secluded life, separated from the secular world.”95 There are hundreds of such monasteries all over Ethiopia, always outside of city centers, in rural locations, and usually at the top of a mountain, or inside caves. The original creators of those monasteries were intentional with their choice of location. But in the case of Neakutoleab, even though it was once established far from the urban area, the Lalibela town has stretched, and now threatens to change the way of life there, defeating the very intent of it. This calls for a professional body that can regulate the character of spiritual sites that can potentially lose their value as a result of the appeal from tourism and from urbanization of rural areas.

Regarding the attitudes about the anticipated growth of Neakutoleab, it is generally understood by the local people as well as the church that the culture and socio-economic status of the

community will potentially change. While the majority of responders are in favor of growth, some see it as a potential threat to the ways of life. The idea of growth is certainly welcomed in Neakutoleab but it undoubtedly will have other unavoidable consequences. The church’s authority in the life of its community could potentially sustain the value system if its role continue to exist. However, the administration also has a part to play by identifying the exact intangible attributes of the community/monastery, providing strong legal framework and being intentional about preserving them.

The questionnaires were distributed to people from a wide range of background. Some responders were more informed about urbanism and its effect on heritage sites, others were not. Urbanism was mostly associated with development and better economic opportunities. Owing to the fact that there was a negligible amount of physical structure at the time of the survey that can qualify Neakutoleab as a developing town, the subject of concern that the research was attempting to answer wasn’t visible. Therefore, it was difficult for the lay person to foresee what the research was attempting to study.

For the question regarding the effect of urban growth on the Lalibela churches, the issue was not as obvious to the majority of the responders. There were sentiments of the resilience of the Lalibela churches from a significant number of responders. Many believe that because of the monumentality of the churches that nothing will happen to them. But it is evident that they were only considering the safety of the physical fabric of the churches. Only 26.6% of the 100 responders said that they would be concerned for the safety of the churches. On the question regarding the increased development around Neakutoleab, out of 24 priests, only 29.2% responded that it could be a challenge to the spirituality of the site. For the question, that inquires about attitudes regarding the increasing number of people living near Neakutoleab 56% said that it’s a good thing while 38% expressed that it might be a challenge. The above three questions which were assessing the same thing, have received a consistent answer. The growth is perceived as a good opportunity by a majority of the responders and it is not necessarily seen as a threat to the heritage site. For those that answered that the growth could
be a potential threat, their reasoning ranged from scarcity of produce/farm land, high cost of living to the introduction of other religions.

The communities who were being questioned, especially the pilgrims, were mainly farmers who might not have had formal education. However, this does not translate to illiterate. For it is common for children of rural areas to receive basic level education from a local priest. As priests are the learned part of a rural society, it’s customary for children to first attend a traditional church school with a local priest teaching the Amharic alphabets. These students are generally boys. The girls are not usually sent to school. This is part of the culture where by men and women have categorically different roles in the society. Once children learn to read and write they go to a higher level of church teachings and theology. Some continue to become priests while others may get to a conventional educational institute.

Many of the female pilgrims, except from their intention to be at Lalibela, have not had much exposure outside of their region. During the field survey, several of the women declined to have their opinions taken, stating that they were women and that they don’t know what was being asked. This was an enlightening experience that showed the roles that women feel they occupy in their society. This is part of a bigger issue that has to do with the culture and value system of the country where girls are not brought up in the same manner as boys. Although the replies from the female pilgrims showed an extreme case in the way they understand their roles to be, the perception of girls being less in capacity (by the girls themselves) holds true in almost all other parts of the country and there is a long way to go before sexual equality could be understood and practiced in Ethiopia.

Most of the respondents – pilgrims, priests and local residents were devout Christians and their answers to questions inquiring the future of Lalibela or Neakutoleab involved ideas of God being in charge. Such an interpretation of the belief system has, partly, discouraged ideas of planning as every attempt of thinking about the future is left to God.

For the open ended question that was inquiring about how to better preserve the Neakutoleab monastery, there were logics pertaining to the idea of God being the creator of such a place and insurer of its continued existence, at which point the concepts of preservation becomes
irrelevant. This perspective towards the monastery’s well-being is backed up by one of the promises written on the hagiography of the Neakutoleab, which states that “at the place of his disappearance, droplets of water will come out of the rock until the end of the world”. Therefore, it assures believers that the holy water at least will go on perpetually until the end of the world. Such traditional ways of thinking were prevalent among the respondents. Consequently the questionnaire didn’t elicit the responses expected.

The narrative of the local farmer population is missing in this conversation regarding how their way of life could possibly change due to the urbanization of the locality. The questionnaires were lacking in assessing this particular issue from the farmers perspective.

4.7 Significance

Tangible Aspects

a. Natural Significance:

The context where the monastery is located in is an essential aspect of the significance of the monastery. It is set in a natural environment characterized by the mountainous topography of volcanic plateaus. It is a quiet surrounding with beautiful scenery and uninterrupted viewsheds with minimum imposing manmade structures. It is a typical rural area characterized by, small houses, low-density settlements, and farmlands with natural features being the dominant elements of the landscape.

The descent towards the mouth of the cave and the nature of the actual cave is a beautiful experience even for someone who has no interest in the religious significance of the site. The cave is home to various birds and monkeys. There is a well-guarded forest that is found on Kirkos Amba Mountain, under which Neakutoleab is located. The trees located in the forest are indigenous species that naturally grew as a result of the protection that has been granted by the Neakutoleab church administration. The priests use the forest as a retreat where they can

meditate on the word of the bible. While the students (Yekolo temari) go to the forest to do their daily recitation of religious verses.

The shed of the tree is an important aspect of life in Neakuteleab. It is under the shed of a tree where Yekolo temari learn their religious education. It is also where the edir meets. During the pilgrimage season, the locals feed the pilgrims who have traveled a long way, and this also happens under a tree. Therefore, the natural surroundings of the monastery is an important aspect of the monastery that needs to be protected.

a. Architectural Significance:

As mentioned, the monastery was rebuilt in 1925; therefore it has lost its original building fabric. Nonetheless, it has almost been a century since the rebuilding of the monastery. The wooden lintels, doors and windows are of large-leaved cordial wood (Cordia Africana), a species indigenous to Africa. It is a representation of the typical construction of a church built in a natural setting, of which there are several examples.

b. Church Artifacts:

There is a small museum, at the top of the plateau that houses various historic artifacts. The content of the museum varies from priest staffs and crosses made out of valuable metals to copies of old and new testaments from the 12th century. The other valuable article in the museum is a personal stamp of Neakuteleab which is presumably from the 12th century as well.

Intangible Aspects

a. Religious Significance:

The values associated with the monastery, especially by the local residents, priests and pilgrims, one way or another, originate from the hagiography of the saint. In the document, various promises have been made that encourage people to visit.

However, the main motive pilgrims come to this site is to receive healing from the water that drips down from the roof of the cave, which they believe to be holy water. Stories of people, being healed from disease, fuel more visitation numbers.
The history of St. Neakutoleab and the belief system are the two key aspects that generate the significance of the monastery. They are the two elements that attract pilgrims to the site. This is best assured and sustained by the church who is the rightful body.

b. Social significance:

The Neakutoleab church has a powerful place in the daily life of the community. Practically, all things are connected to the church one way or another. Marriage, birth, observance of holidays, even sowing and harvesting days are connected with the church as the community gives tithe and offering of the year when they harvest their produce. The church also serves as a meeting place whereby the locals discuss and decide on important issues in the community. These multifaceted services by the church have raised the feeling of ownership and the responsibility to protect it amongst the community. As a result of the strong social identity that is dictated by the church and by the close knit community, there is trust and minimum crime levels within the community. This is also because of the small size and the small population of the locality.

4.6.2 Challenges

There are many challenges to the field of preservation in Ethiopia and by extension in Lalibela, which affects how any heritage site is being cared for. There are layers of challenges to the field of preservation and many issues were raised in the previous section. However the following list of challenges have been identified as they directly impact the Neakutoleab monastery.

Lack of efficient legal framework and documentation:

The LCTO, the ARCCH and the Neakutoleab Abbott, understand the Neakutoleab monastery to be a national heritage, despite the absence of documents that ascertain this status. According to Proclamation 839/2014/3/a, a cultural heritage site that has been inscribed as World heritage, automatically become a national heritage. It also lists other criteria that qualify different sites to be registered as national heritage. However, since the ratification of the document on August 2014, there have been no guiding principles or directives for the implementation of the proclamation. Therefore, all cultural heritage sites that have been designated as National heritage sites are World heritage sites which make Neakutoleab a
regional heritage. But from the interviews conducted with ARCCH, since the monastery is in the process of being nominated for World heritage statues, there is a general understanding within the ARCCH that it is a national heritage.

There isn’t a well-structured and systematized method of registering, documenting and managing heritage sites, this is especially true if they are regional heritage sites. Those that have been designated as national heritage sites, have good documentation but it’s because of their World Heritage statues which requires them to have basic documents. Neakutoleab monastery doesn’t have a designation report or a document that lists its significance and its virtues.

Therefore, there hasn’t been no monitoring done of its development since its designation.

*Lack of clarity in management*

Proclamation 839/2014, which is one of the two heritage proclamations in Ethiopia, hasn’t been followed up by bylaws on the specifics of the proclamation. Therefore, there are areas that are still vague. The Neakutoleab monastery is owned by the Neakutoleab church and by the archdiocese office of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Proclamation 839/2014 makes the regional cultural and tourism office the designated office in charge of regional cultural heritages. But the law doesn’t make it clear as to the responsibilities of each actor.

*Lack of management plan*

The Neakutoleab monastery has no management plan. It is mentioned in the Lalibela landscape and cultural site management plan but the document doesn’t address the effects of tourism or urban growth on this site.

*Lack of amenities for the locals, pilgrims, and tourists:*

According to the discussion with the local residents, the small community of Neakutoleab has drinking water and electricity. But there are complaints of power cuts and lack of running water. The local women use a water-well located near the monastery to fill up and carry water back to their house. At the monastery, there are minimum amenities available for pilgrims who usually arrive having travelled for many days, on foot.
Constructions near the monastery

The church, out of current needs, has been adding ancillary structures in the vicinity of the monastery. This is potentially taking away the integrity of the existing monastery as well as the quality of the cave. The new museum that is being constructed at the church is a two floor concrete structure which raises questions of appropriateness and choice of design that are being made at the site.

Lack of budget:

The Lalibela cultural and tourism office doesn’t have enough funds to carry out regular tasks associated with the site. The lack of vehicles, a necessary item to get around in the rugged topography, have forced them to use three wheelers to carry out inventories.

The urban growth of Lalibela town

The continuation of the urban footprint of Lalibela town can physically change the natural setting and rural character of the Neakutoleab locality. The agrarian lifestyle of the community is going to change through the expropriation of land which will then be used for other purposes. Besides the physical effects of urbanization, the cultural and social aspects of the society will alter which can affect the role of the monastery in the life of the community.

Chart 1  A summary of the attributes that are going to be affected as a result of Urbanization
Chapter 5 - Impact of Tourism and Urbanization

Ethiopia has nine listed World Heritage Sites, eight of which have been designated as cultural heritage and one as a natural heritage site. In such a developing country, these sites are tourist destinations bringing in much needed foreign currency to the country. Tourism is well understood as a development tool and indeed it has resulted in increases in GDP and employment rates of the country. However, its impact on heritage sites, especially on active religious heritage sites like the Lalibela rock hewn churches, the Neakutoleab monastery and other cave churches of the surrounding area deserve to be studied.

5.1 Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organizations defines tourism as an activity of a person travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other reasons. If visitors stay less than 24 hours in the destination visited they are classified as excursionists.

Tourism is one of the leading and fastest growing industries in the world. In 2017 it contributed 10.4% of the global GDP (USD8.3 trillion) and created 7million new jobs. For this reason, it is considered as a major driver of prosperity and has been recognized as such by many developing countries.97 Tourism as a result has become a growth strategy in many of these countries.

5.1.1 Immediate impact

The economic advantages are considered as one of the direct impacts of tourism to destination sites. Within the economy of the country, it’s a source of revenue to the tourism sector that then trickles down producing indirect and induced impacts.

While the benefits of tourism are justified by the flow of foreign currency, the number of employments created and the industry’s share in the GDP of the country, such researchers as

AJ Ashworth detract from the common narrative and challenge the idea of tourism as an instrument of economic development. He believes that there isn’t enough systematic structure of understanding of either the role of tourism in cities or of cities in tourism. This discussion was made regarding tourism in an already established urban area where the activity of visitors is just one component of the city. This kind of tourism is termed as urban tourism, which refers to tourism in an already established urban location where facilities haven’t been constructed for the exclusive use of tourists contrary to tourism urbanization where the driver of growth and the purpose of infrastructures is more or less exclusively for tourism purposes.

In urban tourism, where the city is a multifunctional entity that support different processes, tourists are likely absorbed so that they cannot be economically, socially, and physically distinguished from the rest of the public. He argues that the city is a complex and dynamic place that is made up of multiple layers of social, economic and political processes. The paper challenges how much of the urban change can be attributed to tourism when the city is a continually changing entity with many dynamics occurring side by side to tourism. He states that understanding urban tourism is dependent on an awareness and appreciation of the urban context in which tourism is inextricably embedded. Tourism cannot be analyzed isolated or divorced from its spatial context where other processes are taking place.98

Furthermore, he makes the point that in comparison with cities with diverse sources of economy, those that depend the most on tourism benefit the least from it as “this very reliance betrays the narrowness of their functional base.” Lalibela and many other heritage sites all have a high season when they host tourists. Such areas that depend heavily on tourism as their source of economy only benefit from it at a certain time of the year. For almost half of the year many of the services constructed for tourists’ consumption remain empty thus losing money. In contrast to such cities as New York, where the city is least dependent on tourism, it is still a source of economy occurring throughout the year. The city needs to be bigger than the tourism industry to make a success out of the industry. “The industry needs the varied, flexible and

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accessible tourism resources that cities provide but it’s by no means so clear that cities need tourism.” He concludes that the asymmetry in the relationship between tourism and cities is critical for the economic success of tourism. Also - understanding the context, in which tourism is embedded is central to comprehend what urban tourism is dependent on.

5.1.2 Gradual impact

Tourism can gradually impact the social-cultural and environmental context of the destination site.

Urbanization is defined on encyclopedia Britannica, as the process by which large numbers of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities. Rural areas on the other hand are closely associated with nature and are inhabited by communities that are more or less homogenous in nature.99

Paul J Lane, in his article Future Urban Growth and Archaeological Heritage, Management: Some Implications for Research Activity in Africa, discusses the various criteria for a place to be designated as urban location. While many countries consider cities with population of 20,000 or more as urban, there is a considerable difference when it comes to which smaller settlements would be designated as urban. Some countries base their definition purely on the number of the population, others associate livelihood with the definition. They expect a certain percentage to have non-agricultural livelihood in order to designate it urban. In Ethiopia the threshold is set at 2000 inhabitants, out of which 50% of its labor force needs to be engaged in non-agricultural activities.100 According to this standard, while Lalibela is an urban area, Neakutoleab is not.

In the demographic data compiled by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UNDP) in 2009, the number of people living in urban areas on a global scale had for the first time surpassed in human history the number of people living in rural areas (UNDP, 2010: 2). And this growth is likely to continue in future decades. In

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World Urban Prospects published by the department of economic and social affairs, 2017, Africa and Asia are urbanizing with a faster rate and they are projected to become 56% and 64% urban, respectively, by 2050. When the study was done Africa was the lowest urbanized continent with 40% of urban levels. The UN estimates that the population of Africa over the next forty years will be around one billion people with Ethiopia and Nigeria as the two largest contributors to population growth on the continent. (UN-HABITAT, 2010: 1). Ethiopia was ranked 10th on the list of countries that are projected to contribute 25 million or more to the global urban increment between 2014 and 2015. Therefore, the country is growing populous with each year. With this rise in urbanization we can understand the direction that the country is heading to.

Urbanization is synonymously used with development and is generally considered good. However, it can potentially pose a problem to heritage sites, especially when the pattern with which it’s growing is not regulated. Urbanization brings resources and talents, demands and supply in one proximate location that the economy thrives. This assures better quality of life and assures the exchange of ideas encouraging collaboration with people of diverse backgrounds. Urbanization also brings infrastructure, buildings, businesses, and overall its own culture with it.

In the case of a locality with a heritage site, visitor accommodations are one of the structures that occupy space. The very occupation of space brings about, change of character, scale and identity to the location. This is just one aspect of the conflict between a heritage site and new developments. Occupation of space, and how that space is utilized and for what, the interaction of each of the processes that take place with the site all has an impact on a heritage site. In the context of Lalibela, a rural locality, just fifty years ago, has progressed into an urban area as a result of its World Heritage Status. Even though the Lalibela city had existed as a religious center before the inscription of the heritage sites, it is currently growing more towards becoming a tourist center. From preservation point of view, the continued existence of heritage sites of significance across the country is contingent upon stronger policies that regulate the possible tensions that come about as a result of this expected rise in urbanization.
5.2 Tourism Urbanization

Tourism urbanization is a development of the city almost exclusive for tourists and for the purpose of leisure. Mullins defines it as a city developed for the sole purpose of consumption, in reference to the services established for the incoming tourist’s population. In such a city, the consumption is not of basic needs like housing, health care or education. In the city that falls under such a description the urban growth is caused by the development of the tourism related industries usually with a portion of the locals taking up many of the labor demand. (Mullins, 1991). 101

The author defines tourism urbanization with the following elements

- Spatially different because it is socially different
- Symbolically distinctive with the urban symbols acting as lures to tourists
- Distinguished by rapid population and labor force growth
- Distinguished by a flexible system of production
- Distinguished by a form of state intervention which is boosterist in style
- Distinguished by both a mass and customized consumption of pleasure
- Distinguished by a residential population which is socially distinctive.

While some of its defining elements don’t apply to Lalibela a few do. Lalibela was not established with tourism in mind. Its original conception was that of religious. It still is dominantly a religious center more than it is a tourism one. Ethiopia is currently following a pro-poor tourism strategy to reach its development goals. As a consequence of that policy, the town is being developed more and more with tourism in mind. Therefore, the effect of that intention is spatially visible now with districts dominated by visitor accommodation, souvenir shops and associated services. In addition, the choice of language used for street signs, direction, hotel names, and street names, which can be regulated by the administration, are foreign to the locality. The promotional works of Lalibela on different media also seems very carefully curated with public perception and image of the country in mind. Moreover, the rapid population and labor force growth is another element from the list that applies to Lalibela. However, the points about the use of urban symbols acting as lures to tourists, a place of mass

consumption of pleasure and socially distinct residential population, do not apply to Lalibela in the way the author intended it to be.

5.2.1 Pro-poor tourism (PPT)
The idea of tourism as poverty alleviating method emerged in the 1970s with the idea that development can only be achieved by alleviating poverty, reducing unemployment and inequality. The 1980 Independent Commission on International Development Issues (Brandt report) and the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development report (Brundtland report) aimed at alleviating poverty towards development. In the 1950s and 1970s when the tourism industry started to increase, it was recognized that international tourism could play a key role in poverty alleviation. Agenda 21 which was adapted by the UN in 1999 also paid focus on tourism as a way to involve community members to participate in local development projects.  

Pro poor tourism can be defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor, but the concept hasn’t yet been well defined in terms of how it can actually benefit the poor. According to Ashely, a successful PPT depends on giving the poor access to the tourism market, there should also be policy framework that provides a secure investment climate. Furthermore she states that PPT is not an appropriate tool for reaching the poorest as those with fewest assets or skills are least likely to be engaged in the commercial economy. Goodwill stress that “it is far less risky for communities to engage in tourism if that engagement complements their existing livelihood strategies rather than competes with or replaces them.”

PPT is not necessarily for the poor in fact it is acceptable even if the non-poor are the majority benefiting from it as long as the revenue trickles down to the poor. Also, PPT is not just about

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104 Goodwin, H. ‘Pro-poor tourism: Principles, methodologies and mainstreaming’, Key Note Address as delivered at International Conference on Pro-Poor Tourism Mechanisms and Mainstreaming Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 4-6 May 2005. p. 5
economic benefits it could also include better infrastructure gains, capacity building and empowerments. The general assumption is that PPT will eventually benefit the poor through the trickle-down effect.

The concept is criticized for not truly reaching the poor and for not being about the poor at all. The methods of impact assessments are also thought to be not satisfactory in revealing whether the goal of changing the economy of a location has been achieved or not. According to Goodwin, such statistics as tourist arrivals and expenditure tell little in themselves about the tourism impacts at the destination site. Moreover, it overlaps to a large extent with other conventional tourism types such as sustainable tourism and community based tourism.

*Tourism justification to preservation*

Tourism can offer an incentive to developing countries to address their conservation strategy or handle the need for local community job creation. However, tourism should not be the only justification for the protection of cultural heritage sites. In the context of such developing countries as Ethiopia, there can be a tendency to focus on sites of interests to international visitors in order to protect it, thus sites of little interests may not be worth saving. In such contexts, the motive for the protection/designation of a site could be skewed in a way that one wonders whether sites are being protected for their value and meaning to the community or for their potential to bring tourism and foreign currency. When it comes to heritage protection there are certain heritages that must not be lost whether they attract tourist or not or whether the benefits justify the expense or not. There must be a fixed stand regarding why a heritage is preserved. The motive should be first and foremost its value to humanity. The stream of revenues shouldn’t be the sole component of the calculation. If we are basing our calculation on revenues, it would lead to the wrong practices in which less interesting sites won’t be preserved, the proliferation of artificial tourism attractions like a casino that could make more

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business sense and the maximization of tourism visitation at the cost of the site being damaged.\textsuperscript{107}

5.3 Social and cultural identity

Tourism is said to be a double bladed sword for being a tool towards economic growth but being detrimental to the social and environmental aspect of the destination site. This is most apparent in underdeveloped areas where the legal framework for protecting the community, their cultural practice, and the environment may be lost. The impact of tourism on the social and cultural identity of the locals depends on the number of tourists that are coming to the location, who benefits from their presence and the presence of gateway communities.\textsuperscript{108}

The lack of strong policies puts the local community in vulnerable positions, and at the mercy of good tourism practices. They might also see tourism as the only alternative out of their situation; therefore they might abandon their lifestyle and culture for the new one. There are studies that suggest that host attitudes towards sociocultural impacts, depends on who is engaged in the industry, on age and on the length of residence.\textsuperscript{109} However this result tends to differ from place to place.

Sharply points out that the acculturation occurs to those who engage in meaningful conversations with tourists and not to all part of the community. But studies have found this notion to be incorrect as people don’t have to be engaged with tourists to be influenced. Some communities engage and pursue tourism opportunities while others watch it from the side lines. Nonetheless, they are both prone to be influenced by it.\textsuperscript{110}

Tourism brings together two groups of people who might not have encountered each other in any other way. The sociocultural event happens to both of them. However, it is the local communities that are usually most vulnerable.


\textsuperscript{110} Harrison, David, “Pro-poor Tourism: a critique,” \textit{Third World Quarterly}, June 2008
Other studies suggest that tourism is the contributor to social and cultural changes rather than the cause. Since we live in an increasingly globalizing world, where communication technologies has sped the transfer of information, more and more people in rural areas are exposed to acculturation. Therefore the role of TV, and the internet shouldn’t be under estimated in this argument as they also contribute to homogenizing the globe. This ambivalent nature of tourism requires effective strategic planning, and sensitive mitigating measures to protect delicate social fabric of local communities while benefiting from the economical aspect of tourism.

5.4 Land
In The Butler Model of Tourism Development, tourism activities go through a cycle of growth, success, stagnation and decline, with a possibility of rejuvenation again. Its stagnation is characterized by visitor number reaching its peak, with the carrying capacity exceeded of the destination site, with the tourism activities causing environmental, social and economic problems, and with artificial tourism design superseding the primary once. In the 1980s, with this model, the concept of tourism carrying capacity and sustainability was introduced into the discourse. Carrying capacity can be identified in terms of the environmental factors such as land scarcity, air quality etc., and social factors such as crowding, resentment by the local population etc. 

With this understanding of carrying capacity, sustainability ideas are now shifting demand driven tourism approaches to supply driven approach. This method can be implemented by first identifying the carrying capacity of the destination, understand the minimum revenues that can allow such a policy and the seasonality or consistency of the industry. This will inform where to set the limit. Following that, it can be applied by capping the number of planes, or


trains that arrive to the destination site, the number of beds that can be occupied, the number of tourists that can be at the site at a time, etc.

In the context of Neakutoleab, it is not the direct tourism impact that is currently threatening the heritage site rather it is the urbanization which is being propelled by the tourism industry. This concept of carrying capacity can be used to limit the amount of urban development that can take place to an area. Land is a fixed resource and it has a limit to what it could sustain. This idea informs the natural and human made structures that can be supported in the land without compromising resources for future generations. The more land is in demand, the more expensive it gets. There may be more demand for houses in Neakutoleab with the increasing population but the heritage values need to be factored in to come to a point where both can take space without new structures compromising the quality of the tangible and intangible aspects of the heritage site. Preservation ordinances should also have flexibility to allow for growth to happen. Therefore, this matter of high demand and short supply of land needs tradeoffs from both sides.

Tourism plays a key role in bringing people together and creating understanding and appreciation across nation. It supports conservation efforts in locations such as Neakutoleab that otherwise would not have been able to pay for it. It creates 1 in 10 jobs in the global economy.\textsuperscript{114} However it also have a negative side to it with possible impacts to the environment and socio-cultural identity of destination sites. It is a fact that unless tourism is managed it will have negative consequences. Therefore sustainable practices that enable the economic advantage of tourism to go smoothly without the destruction of either the environment or the sociocultural identity of the locality should be implemented. Furthermore, the perception of residents should be considered in the policy and planning stage and the idea of supply driven tourism introduced in Lalibela.

\textsuperscript{114} World Travel and Tourism Council, The economic impact of Travel and tourism, March 2017
Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 Why is the growth happening?
The urban growth of Lalibela is not produced by a single force, rather it is the result of a complex dynamics and processes of what other urban areas in Ethiopia are going through today. Ethiopia so far, have had a consistent population as well as urban growth and Lalibela is following that direction. Nonetheless, the growth rate in Lalibela is far more than the rest of the country, which begs some research into why this is occurring. One of the largest industries in Ethiopia, tourism is the main driver of growth and urban transformation in Lalibela. Since the inscription of the eleven rock hewn churches of Lalibela in 1978 and especially since 1994, the population of Lalibela has increased. In 2008, the rural town of Neakutoleab was added to the administrative zone of Lalibela as a potential expansion area. Between 1994 and 2014, footprint of the town grew from 1.22 to 3 sq. kilometer mainly on the north-south direction. By 2016 the city was sprawling more towards the southern part of Lalibela where the rural town of Neakutoleab is located. In the field work carried out at Neakutoleab for this research, it was documented that there were 237 new houses that didn’t exist previously in 2016. This is indicative of the rate of change that is taking place in the locality.

6.1.2 What is happening in Neakutoleab as a result of the growth?
In the context of Neakutoleab particularly, an agricultural land where the main occupation of the community is traditional subsistence farming, the life is changing with the growing urban foot print of Lalibela. The Lalibela town administration, in its 2009-2019 structural master plan of Lalibela, designed a grid-iron city plan, with residential houses having a maximum of 5 stories, commercial spaces and “community hotels” for Neakutoleab town. This has triggered a trend in which farmers are selling their land. This is because when the land comes under the jurisdiction of the town of Lalibela, excess land will be taken by the town administration against

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115 Satellite photos from the Ethiopian Mapping Agency
a nominal compensation.\textsuperscript{117} Therefore farmers are selling their property which is potentially changing the lifestyle and character of Neakutoleab.

6.1.3 What are the qualities of the monastery that deserve to be protected? Which qualities are most vulnerable to urbanization?

The Neakutoleab monastery is the religious and social center of the locals. Followers of the EOC value it for its holy water. It is architecturally and naturally significant with a cave church that is set in a mountainous landscape surrounded by a community that follows the agrarian lifestyle.

The natural aspect such as the mountainous landscape, the rural character and the natural forest are vulnerable to changes. Also, the social and cultural role of the monastery in the life of the locals is threatened by urbanization.

6.1.4 Who are the main stakeholders involved in this site?

As the site is an active religious institution, the Neakutoleab monastery administrators, the community, and the seasonal pilgrims are the core stakeholders who share the same value and religious beliefs. The Lalibela Cultural and Tourism office (LCTO), the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH), tourists, investors and tour operators are the other stakeholders of the site that can be considered secondary for reasons of their motive or interest in the site. The government offices – ARCCH, LCTO and the Neakutoleab monastery administration are the two stakeholders with the authority to make a difference at the site. The interests of ARCCH and the LCTO are based on the policy of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism which is to use tourism sites for the economic growth of the country, therefore their actions are geared towards the realization of that goal. However it is also their interest to guard and preserve the heritage site.

From the perspective of the Neakutoleab monastery administration, the community and the pilgrims, the monastery is primarily an active religious institution where believers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) travel to, to have a religious experience.

\textsuperscript{117} Information from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
For tourists heading to the monastery, it is usually, a cultural, adventurous, and leisurely experience.

The tourism industry, which targets the international tourists, is the other important stakeholder which has the ability to capitalize on such heritage sites and transform places.

**6.2 Recommendation for the anticipated urban growth**

The proliferation of different services around the Lalibela heritage site, in the absence of a clear buffer zone was the reason for the resettlement that took place from 2009-2015. In this regard, the Neakutoleab monastery has been proactive in defending its site by regulating the development that is taking place inside its property. With the continued efforts of the Neakutoleab monastery, and the inconvenient setting of the monastery (inside a cave), this pressure is least likely to affect the site. However, in the same way the tourism industry in Lalibela has transformed it into an urban locality, Neakutoleab’s context and the socio-cultural identity of the site, are prone to this change.

The negative outcome of the urban transformation at Lalibela are:

- The focus of the administration on tourism as the only driver of growth:
  - Neighborhoods being saturated with hotels. Eg. Getergea
  - Advertisements of a foreign language, signaling a change in identity.
  - Change in the skyline and scale of the town, as more and more buildings are constructed.
  - Challenge to the spiritual value of the site as the site becomes seen as an economic asset.
  - Over-commercialization in the town.

- Development
  - Lack of direction and management to the design of the town. Lack of consistent look to the design, height, material of new constructions.

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The loss of nature as a result of the continued urbanization of the town.

The loss of view sheds at Lalibela.

- Community
  - The agrarian lifestyle stopped for the sake of continued tourism development.
  - The community is not benefitting from the tourism industry.

The same pressures and the same actors are heading in Neakutoleab’s direction. In order to protect the Neakutoleab monastery and its context from the negative consequences of growth, this research proposes to have the tourism industry and urbanization regulated. Furthermore, it proposes for Neakutoleab town to maintain its agricultural land since the way of life, culture and the natural surrounding is vulnerable of being altered by the urbanization of the locality.

To realize the above vision the following policies are recommended:

6.2.1 Social and Cultural Issue

Neakutoleab is a small town with relatively small number of people living in it. The Neakutoleab monastery takes the center of the community’s life as it plays a significant role in the different life processes such as mourning, birth, marriage and crop harvest of the community. The church is also the moral authority that guides the community’s value system through the belief system which keeps the monastery valid. Many of the priests that serve in the monastery are local residents as well. Therefore the community and the priests can be considered as one. Moreover, the churches property serves as a meeting point where edirs convene once per month to discuss on community-related issues.

96 % of the community surveyed reported that they visit the monastery at least once per week. From the analysis done, the frequency of visitation and the significance of the monastery are correlated. The more future developments maintain this relationship, the longer the significance of the monastery will stay among the community. Therefore, it is proposed that these aspects be preserved.
6.2.2 Land and environment

From the field survey conducted and visual observation made, the mountainous landscape, the rural character with large expanses of open land, farmlands, the open cave with water dripping down from the ceiling are main aspects of the monastery that make up its surrounding. There is fresh air, minimum noise and pollution that are sometimes taken for granted but are important elements of such a rural area. In addition, the forest with its different specifics of birds is also an important feature. This is highly appreciated especially by international tourists whose motive for visiting the site usually isn’t to have a religious experience. As the locality continues to grow, the preservation of these qualities need to be considered. The continuation of the holy water need to be assured as it is the main aspect of the monastery’s significance for followers of the EOTC.

On the other hand, Lalibela is growing with a high population rate and is predicted to reach 62,316 by 2025. Neakutoleab has 28 hectares of developable land. With the increase in population and demand for more land, the maintenance of Neakutoleab as a low-density area can be challenging. Thus a healthy compromise need to be reached whereby land could be used for development without the disruption of the natural, and religious attributes identified.

6.2.3 Economy: Tourism vs. Farming

The Neakutoleab community follows the agrarian lifestyle and traditional techniques are used to plough subsistence farms. Historically, the locality has experienced famine shocks and is not particularly known for the productivity of the land. However, if time and energy is invested into increasing the capacity and know-how of the farmers, the production of the land could grow. In addition, tourism and farming are both seasonal activities. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the community to participate in the tourism industry when they are not occupied with farming. Most farmers would have already harvested their crops when the high season for tourism arrives in January. Currently nearly 50% of the population of Lalibela is below the age

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of nineteen which indicates that there should be more employment opportunities for the young generation.\textsuperscript{120} The tourism industry can offer this.

6.3 Data/Research-related Recommendation

During the course of this research it was evident that there was a lack of current and reliable data about not only the heritage site in concern but also basic information such as demographics. There were no accessible documents about the designation of Neakutoleab monastery as a regional or a national heritage. Also, in passing – there is no information regarding the total number of heritage sites in Ethiopia, regional as well as national.

While visitor numbers for international tourist was recorded, the numbers of pilgrims or local visitors was not well documented. The lack of such information affects the plans and policies of the town administration as well as the LCTO. In Lalibela, a place that hosts large number of people and where the rate of change is much higher than other locations, it is imperative that updated data be available.

Moreover, the availability of data not only helps better inform policy makers it will also encourage researchers to carry out studies that could help advance the discourse of heritage preservation in Ethiopia and elsewhere.

General recommendations

- The Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage to do more efficient and significant researches regarding heritage sites and the changing socioeconomic and environmental status of surrounding areas as a result of tourism or other forces. And for this researches to be publicly accessible.
- There needs to be more effort into creating a systematic frame work of registering and documenting heritage sites in Ethiopia. A shift towards, online registration of heritage sites and digitally available documents is encouraged so that regional and national documents could be synchronized and made accessible to the public.

\textsuperscript{120} Population size by Lalibela Town Administration 2017/2018
There needs to be more documentation work regarding the history and significance of each heritage site in Ethiopia.

Specific to Neakutoleab,

- The lack of basic statistics such as monthly international and domestic visitors’ number has inhibited insight into effective and appropriate decisions in Lalibela. Therefore, there needs to be an office within LCTO that is fully dedicated to the research and documentation work of the monastery as well as other sites in Lalibela. Also - since the Lalibela churches take priority over the rest of the regional heritage sites, the presence of a different office dealing with the other sites is essential. The office is to be in constant communication with the section of the office that deals with the Lalibela churches since decisions made on the WHS impact the surrounding sites.

- Moreover there needs to be a committee composed of all stakeholders of the Neakutoleab monastery (Priests, community members, LCTO, Town Admin., Tour operators and investors) that meets and reports back to the community regarding plans for the area. This committee is to be initiated by the LCTO and LCTO in turn needs to report back to the Town Administration regarding such issues as land management and attitudes about it among the community.

6.4 General Policies

This research proposes that, for such a site as Neakutoleab, where the topography limits the amount of urbanization that could take place, a low density agricultural area is to be maintained along with a developable land for other structures. In order to do that, the carrying capacity of the land needs to be researched and put against the demand for housing and other services (market, health and educational facilities). The openness and the rural character of the area are main attributes to the monastery therefore they too need to be factored into the
above calculation. An area that is sufficient to preserve these attributes needs to be decided in order to zone it and maintain it as an agricultural land. This will ensure the protection of the social, cultural and spiritual aspects as well as the physical monastery. Moreover, it will also preserve the natural forest that has been preserved on the Kirkos-Amba Mountain. But a limit needs to be set to the amount of land that could be developed. Unplanned settlements also need to be regulated. Once the carrying capacity has been reached, the administration should direct development towards much larger space such as Simano which is located north of Lalibela. Other areas within Lalibela zone should also be considered that do not have heritage sites associated with them.

The following general policies have been proposed for use within the context of Neakutoleab,

**Policy 1.** The ecosystem and natural setting of Neakutoleab are preserved and its cultural tangible and intangible attributes are identified and maintained.

**Policy 2.** Tourism activities and associated development are reconciled with the safeguarding of the Neakutoleab monastery and its setting.
**Policy 3.** Urban growth is adequately managed through the suitable and efficient implementation of a master plan for Lalibela

**Policy 4.** Sustainability principles are incorporated in management and regulatory tools for Neakutoleab and the wider Lalibela context.

**Policy 5.** The lifestyle of the community at Neakutoleab is preserved and incentives are in place to promote the continued existence of the agrarian livelihood.

**Policy 6.** Integrate the organic growth of the town with the planned one, identifying patterns, and respecting existing lifestyles.

### 6.5 Proposed Governance Framework

The existing governance framework of the site consists of ARCCH who is now in charge of the Neakutoleab monastery as it is considered as a national heritage, the LCTO who is the regional Culture and Tourism office located in Lalibela and the Neakutoleab monastery administration who own the property.

Currently, the Neakutoleab monastery manages the day to day activity. The security of the monastery and its artifacts are also handled by the church itself. Tickets are collected by the church and the revenue goes to the budget. The LCTO collects inventory once a year and may assist in giving professional advice when requested. The office was responsible in clearing out the dirt road that leads to the monastery.

The monastery doesn’t have a formal management plan and the roles and duties of each of the stakeholders haven’t been clearly laid out. Moreover, there is lack of representation from the local community in this framework. Therefore, the following points are proposed to the Governance framework of Neakutoleab monastery.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Influence</th>
<th>Weak Influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weak Influence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCCH, The Neakutoleab Monastery</td>
<td>The local community Pilgrims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak Interest</strong></td>
<td>International visitors</td>
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<td>LCTO</td>
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*Table 3 Stakeholder say on the Heritage site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Influence</th>
<th>Weak Influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weak Influence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCCH, LCTO and The Lalibela Town Administration</td>
<td>The local community The Neakutoleab Monastery*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak Interest</strong></td>
<td>International visitors Pilgrims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Stakeholder say on Urbanization of Neakutoleab*

*The monastery doesn’t have much say on the urban plan that the administration plans to design for the locality. However, within the churches property it has functional authority.*

- The roles and duties of each of the governing stakeholders needs to be clearly laid out as to carry out responsible work. Decision making mechanism for the heritage site as well as its broader context needs to be clearly defined and communicated to the Neakutoleab community.
  - It is proposed that the Neakutoleab monastery be given more authority within the community. Since they are close by and in constant exchange with the community, they should be given trainings that would equip them to monitor all the identified attributes of the monastery which are, the surrounding rural character, the forest, the monastery itself, and the associated intangible heritages. They should also be in charge of keeping data such as the number of international as well as domestic visitors. These activities could take place with

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121 Because of the world heritage sites of the 11 rock hewn churches that demand much more effort from the office, Sites of lower status get less attention.
the LCTO taking the lead role in organizing them. The data they collect should be reported back to the LCTO.

- The church to be given recognition as the authority controlling the maintenance of its plot.
- Decisions regarding building new structures by the church should be done with the involvement of the LCTO.

- The users of the monastery – the community need to be involved through either *edir* or through other agency in processes that take place regarding the monastery.
- Formulate participatory decision making processes.
  - The community needs to be involved in decisions regarding the tourism industry; land administration and urban planning that will affect their town. The participation of women is also to be encouraged as they constitute half of the community and they have an important role to play in the matter.
  - The community to be represented through a new committee that the LCTO will set up where by all stakeholders will participate in having their say on the intentions for the site.
- Formulating a hierarchy between the different stakeholders is necessary. Those who are going for religious experience; their interest and values should be prioritized over secondary stakeholders.
- As mentioned in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the Neakutoleab monastery to take responsibility in putting aside a fund for the preservation and protection of its heritage.

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122 Under article 4, 3, it states the Financial resources derived from visits to cultural sites and monuments should, at least in part, be used for the upkeep, safeguard, development and embellishment of this heritage.
6.6 Overarching Objectives

6.6.1 Tourism

Ethiopia is basing its economy on tourism without a strong management system in place to guard its heritage sites from the possible negative effect of tourism and/or urbanism. The Minister of Culture and Tourism’s policy regarding tourism for development, is transforming rural areas into urban locations. Therefore, instead of applying such policies indiscriminately to every heritage site, more research needs to be carried out on the effect of tourism to vulnerable locations.

Tourism enables the intersection of two socially and culturally different groups of people who otherwise would not have met. Local communities tend to be more affected from this dynamics than the tourists. Therefore care must be taken to the interaction that takes place between the two. For instance, the giving of money shouldn’t be encouraged as this will create dependency cycle, as well as reduced quality of experience to the tourists.

Considering the above points, the following objectives have been suggested:
• Integrate all the pilgrim routes within the management system of Lalibela. Reassess the existing structural master plan of Lalibela considering the implications of tourism at Neakutoleab, as well as, the other pilgrim routes.
• Regulate the impact of tourism at Neakutoleab through a well-structured management plan.
• Formulate supply driven tourism management strategies.
• As mentioned in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the Lalibela church, the Lalibela town administration and ARCCH to provide a platform to communicate facts about the heritage site to tourists. Including the culture, dress code, hotel and admission price to the churches.
• The church, the Lalibela town administration, and the Lalibela Culture and tourism office to set aside a budget for the provision and maintenance of basic facilities for pilgrims.

Visitor management

Visitation of the monastery is posing no visible problems currently. However as the number of visitors, who usually arrive at the same time, increase there will be an issue with how the space is used inside the monastery. The landscape as well as the monastery itself doesn’t allow for the presence of several people at the same time without posing a hazardous situation. Therefore a management needs to be in place to regulate the amount of people that could be in the monastery at a time.

This is to be managed by the monastery staff as they are more aware of how and when the space should be used.

• The monastery is primarily a religious institution; therefore priority should be given to religious activities.
• Pilgrims and the local community should be prioritized for the use of the holy water.
• Pilgrims and the local community should be prioritized for saluting the interior of the monastery at any time.

• The time spent inside the monastery by a tour group should be limited.
• The church to prepare information fliers about proper ethics. Eg. Voice levels, removal of shoes, dress code etc.

6.7 Land use and planning/ infrastructure and services

From the field work done at the locality, it was perceived that the Neakutoleab monastery administration has been proactive and efficient in protecting its property. It has also taken the initiative to protect the natural forest above the cave. Tourism has enabled the monastery to better protect the heritage site and its surrounding. Therefore, this research proposes that more capacity and authority be given to the church, so that it could be in charge of guarding the different attributes of the site.

Cities that depend on tourism for economy tend to benefit the least from it.124 Lalibela’s total economic dependence on tourism should be revised and other sectors such as rearing livestock, beekeeping and agriculture need to be encouraged. The investment on hotels should be counterbalanced with improved investments on schools and hospitals which will increase the quality of life of the residents.

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Under this section, the general policies proposed about land and infrastructure are further detailed into objectives.

- Regulate the urban growth of Lalibela through densification and better land use policy.
- Integrate the ideas of carrying capacity in the structural master plan of Neakutoleab and revise the city plan in a way it integrates the farming and living patterns of the locals. Currently the urban design doesn’t fit the mountainous landscape. (Fig 27) Even though it may seem practical on paper the grid system doesn’t work in the mountainous topography of Neakutoleab. The organic patterns such as the informal pathways created by the community and their farm plot lands should be considered when redesigning the urban plan.
- Put a stop to the unplanned growth of the town with productivity of farm land in mind as there is a minimum size to a farmland that can become productive.
• Safeguard the scale, skyline, character and identity of Neakutoleab with regulatory frameworks.
  o Prepare a design guideline to dictate how new constructions should integrate with the landscape.
  o Set up a buffer zone that protects the forest and the surrounding open space of the monastery. The buffer zone should protect important views towards the mountain and the monastery. It will also preserve land for farming. (Fig 28)
• Develop the informal management system of the church with trainings so that the monastery staff could monitor the site.
• Invest on farmers so that they are empowered to produce better harvest. Organize farmers in an association that can facilitate capacity building and the transfer of knowledge with other successful agricultural associations in Ethiopia.
• The agrarian lifestyle is incentivized and encouraged.
  o Create a link between hotels located in Lalibela and farmers in Neakutoleab so that they supply their food stock.
  o Encourage bee keeping activities to thrive.
• Large portions of government revenues from tourism, to go into developing the infrastructure and facilities of the locality.
  o Access to water and restroom facilities to each household to be built.
  o Access to educational facilities to be arranged.
• The construction of schools and hospitals, basic facilities that Lalibela is in need of should be incentivized.
• The development of alternative industry sectors such as manufacturing to be incentivized in Lalibela.

6.8 Conservation of cultural heritage
It is vital that the tangible and intangible aspects of the monastery be documented as it will make it easier to regulate the different changes that are occurring to its surrounding. It is important to document the oral tradition associated with the monastery, since it is the basis for some of the values associated with it. In order to carry out these tasks, it is recommended that
the community be engaged in communicating the different attributes associated with it and how to best preserve them. Equipping the church leaders with an understanding of the different tools and methods available to preserving the values is going to help them take charge of their own heritage.

Regarding the provision of facilities to pilgrims at Neakutoleab, currently, with the good will of the locals, pilgrims are well taken care of. They are served with food and tela\textsuperscript{125}, and their feet’s are washed by a group of youngsters from the local Orthodox Youth Association\textsuperscript{126}. While such virtuous activities might be partly as a result of the lack of basic facilities in the locality, it is still recommended that water and public lavatories be available to the pilgrims within the church property.

Here are the objectives suggested for the conservation of the cultural heritage:

- Documentation and inventory of the monastery, the museum and the artifacts it houses need to be done.
- Documentation of oral history and all intangible aspects need to be documented.
- Equip the LCOT as well as the church administration with necessary tools required for the preservation of the monastery. Engage and carry out capacity building with all the stakeholders concerned.
- The spirituality of the site needs to be maintained.
- The Neakutoleab church to serve its pilgrims with basic facilities.

\textsuperscript{125} It is a traditional alcoholic drink.  
\textsuperscript{126} They are not funded by the church. They do this out of good will.
Conclusion

With a relatively unknown and un-researched site, this study ventures out to investigate the effects of developmental pressures in a country that has a high growth rate, a minimum legal framework for the protection of cultural heritage sites, and a clear tourism strategy.

The Neakutoleab site is where the growing urban footprint of Lalibela is coming in direct collision with the preservation interest for the site. The need for more land, and the urban & tourism policy of the administration are the drivers of growth in the town of Lalibela. The study argues that the total dependence on tourism and its ensuing growth that is characterized by the service industry dominating other functions are neither the sustainable way forward nor a profitable model of growth. The sustainable way forward is instead the diversification of industries and the multi-layering of activities through which the social, economic and cultural dynamics of the town could be varied. Moreover, the idea of carrying capacity and supply-driven tourism is suggested as the only sustainable way, through which preservation and future growth could be harmonized.

Through a focused study of the Neakutoleab site, its significance and the interests of different actors, this thesis demonstrates the conflicting and equally legitimate needs to protect the heritage site while accommodating future growth. Drawing parallels between the town of Lalibela and the town of Neakutoleab, the study, puts forward a multifaceted proposal composed of general policies, new governance framework and better management strategies in an attempt to balance between the different tensions and interests that played out at Neakutoleab. The challenges that are mentioned in this research go beyond preservation; however, with the continued effort from the administration and the religious institutes, a better future could be imagined.
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Appendix

Copy of the Amharic Questionnaire

የአማርኛ መ鲱ያና የደምንት:

1. ይፋ □ ዓለም □ እያት

2. ለጋው □ 20-40 □ 40-60 □ ከ60 ለጋ

3. የክዘው ከአን ከጋጌ, ከጋጌት ከጋ ባለው እንወ?

v. ይማኝት

- ከማት ከመት ያለባው መጋገር ያደረጉ
- ከምግባር ከለበት መመር ይህ؟
  □ ያስሸራጉ
  □ ያስሸራጉ ያስተገኝ
  □ ያስሸራጉ ከሚያስገኝ
  □ ያስሸራጉ ያስተገኝ
  □ ያስሸራጉ ከሚያስገኝ

- ከምግባር ከለበት የማጆች ያስተገኝ ያስሽር ያስከፋለት ይህ؟
  □ ያስሸራট
  □ ያስሸራጉ
  □ ያስሸራጉ
  □ ያስሸራጉ

A. ከማያስገኝ ያስክለ ያስሳማች

- የማያስገኝ ከለበት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፂለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስከፋለት ያስክለ ያስሳማች
  □ ያስሸራጉ
  □ ያስሸራጉ ያስስማች
  □ ያስሸራጉ ያስስማች
  □ ያስሸራጉ ያስስማች

109 | Page
• ያማውሬ ከወ ያውሳ ብቻ ቋን ቤተ?

• ያለሁፐው ያታች ገራት?
  □ ከላሊ ከተማ ያባል
  □ በየት ያለእ ከሰጡ ያባል
  □ ከማህፋታ ያባል
  □ ከለት

• ቋንቋቸው ያላላትው ያለመሰረ ብርሃን ቤተ?
  □ የስጠላ ያነገሩ
  □ ይታችሮቸው ያነገሩ
  □ ያልት ያስጠላ
  □ ከለት ያስጠላ

  ከ . ያስጠላ

• ያማውሬ ከወ ያውሳ ብቻ ከስጠላ ከጂጹታ ብርሃን ቤተ?

• ያህል ያለእ ያለው ያለት ያለእ ያለተለከኝ ቤተ ያለፍርወ ያት ያት ከሌ ያባል
  □ ያለፍርወ ያለት ያባል
  □ ያለስጠላ ያለው ያለት ያለስጠላ
  □ ያለስጠላ ያለው ያለት ያለስጠላ

• ከሌት ያስጠላ ቤተ

  በ . ብርሃን ቤተ

• ያህል ያለእ ያለው ያለት ያለስጠላ
  □ ያለስጠላ ያለው ያለት ያለስጠላ
  □ ያለስጠላ ያለው ያለት ያለስጠላ

• ያህል ያለእ ያለው ያለት ያለስጠላ ቤተ

  ከ . ከስጠላ
1. የተፈጠረው ተጠሪ ከጠይቀው ውስጥ ነው؟

2. ይህ መጋቢት የሚሸጡ ይሸጥ ይቻለው? በማይችል ይህ ይሸጥ ይቻለው?

3. መቀበል ይህ የሚሸጥ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው? በማይችል የሚሸጥ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው?

4. የሚሸጥ ይህ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው? በማይችል ይህ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው?

5. የሚሸጥ ይህ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው? በማይችል ይህ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው?

6. የሚሸጥ ይህ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው? በማይችል ይህ ሥሌጣን ይቻለው?
7. ይስ ከፋዳራል ብርሃና ያለው ነው? 
   የሚሆን ከፋዳራል ያለው ነው
   ይህንም ያለው
   ይህንም ያለው
   ይህንም ያለው
   ይህንም ያለው

8. በከናṖወለሁ እንጂ ይችላሉ ይችላሉ ከፋዳራል ያለው ነው? 
   ይህንም ያለው
   ይህንም ያለው

9. የከናጽለሁ ከፋዳራል ያለው ከፋዳራል ያለው ከፋዳራል ያለው ነው? 
   ይህንም ያለው
   ይህንም ያለው
   ይህንም ያለው

10. በከናጌወለሁ እንጂ ይችላሉ ይችላሉ ከፋዳራል ያለው ነው? 
    ይህንም ያለው
    ይህንም ያለው
    ይህንም ያለው

11. ከሥራትወለሁ ከፋዳራል ያለው ከፋዳራል ያለው ነው?
Copy of the English translation of the questionnaire

Survey Question

1. Gender
   Male
   Female

2. Age
   20-40
   40-60
   Above 60

3. What brings you to Nakuteleab
   a. Resident
      • How long have you been living in Nakuteleab?
      • Why did you decide to live here?
         I. I was resettled
         II. Family reasons
         III. Affordability
         IV. Convenient location
         V. Other
      • How often do you go to Nakuteleab monastery?
         I. Frequently
         II. Once per week
         III. Once per month
         IV. I don’t go there
   b. Pilgrim
      • Is this your first time at Nakuteleab?
      • How long will you stay in Nakuteleab?
      • What other sites have you visited or intend to visit?
         I. Lalibela
         II. Ashetemariam church
         III. YimrehaneKristos
         IV. Other
      • Are you visiting as part of a tour group or independently?
      • Where are you staying?
         I. Hotel in Lalibela
         II. Hotel in Nakuteleab
         III. With relatives
         IV. Other
      • Why did you choose to visit Nakuteleab over the other churches?
         I. Its holy water
         II. Its priests
         III. It’s close to where I am staying
         IV. I am visiting the other churches as well
c. Priest
   • How long have you lived/worked here? ________________
   • Has the increased development around Nakutuleab affected the monastery?
     I. It has increased the number of visitors
     II. It has affected the spirituality of the site (Noise, views)
     III. It has affected the views towards the landscape
     IV. It hasn’t affected the monastery
     V. Other ________

d. Tourist
   • What country are you from? ________
   • How did you hear about Nakutuleab? ________________
   • What other sites have you visited or intend to visit?
     I. Lalibela
     II. Ashetemariam church
     III. YimrehaneKristos
     IV. Other ________
   • Are you visiting as part of a tour group or independently? ________
   • Where are you staying?
     I. Hotel in Lalibela
     II. Hotel in Nakutuleab
     III. Airbnb
     IV. Other ________

e. Business
   • What kind of business? ________________
   • How long have you been in this business? ________________
   • Is there an increasing demand for your business?
     I. Yes, I am confident
     II. I am taking a chance
     III. I am not sure

4. What mode of transportation did you use to get to Nakutuleab?
   a. Bajaj
   b. I walked
   c. Mini-bus
   d. Other ________________

5. Where do you eat/drink while in Nakutuleab?
   a. Home
   b. Restaurant/Hotel/cafe
   c. I cook
   d. I don’t eat/drink

6. What do you think is significant about Nakutuleb?
   a. The landscape
b. The church itself

c. The holy water

d. The community

e. The history associated with the monastery

f. Other ________________

7. What are the strengths of Nakutuleab?

a. holy site

b. holy water

c. natural beauty

d. church museum

e. welcoming community

f. other ________________

8. What do you think about the increasing number of people living near Nakutuleab

a) It’s a good thing

b) It’s a challenge

a. There are fewer people living here now than ever before

9. What role are you playing for the protection of the Nakutuleab Monastery?

a. Supporting the church financially

b. Respecting the physical structure

c. Creating awareness among others

d. Other ____________

10. How do you relate to the challenge of balancing growth and heritage protection in the context of Lalibela?

a. I am a stakeholder who is concerned about this challenge and I fear for the heritage sites in Lalibela

b. I am conscious about this but I don’t see any challenge in Lalibela

c. I don’t understand it

b. Other ______________

11. What aspects of the site could be improved to better protect this cultural heritage?

__________________________________________
Survey results

Questions for Residents:

1. How often do you go to Nakutuleab monastery?

2. How long have you lived in Nakutuleab?
Questions for Pilgrims

Is this your first time at Nakutuleab?

How long will you stay in Nakutuleab?
Question for Priests

How long have you lived/worked here?

![Bar chart showing frequency of time spent at the site. The majority have spent more than 10 years.]

Has the increased development around Nakutuleab affected the monastery?

![Bar chart showing frequency of responses to the question. Most respondents have said it has increased the number of visitors, followed by those who have said it has affected the spirituality of the site.]
Questions for Tourists

How did you hear about Nakutuleab?

![Bar chart showing the frequency of information sources for Nakutuleab. The highest frequency comes from my tour agent.]

What other sites have you visited or intend to visit?

![Bar chart showing the frequency of visited sites. The highest frequency is for Lalibela.]
Questions for all stakeholders

What mode of transportation did you use to get to Nakululea?

Where do you eat/drink while in Nakululea?
What are the strengths of Ne'akutole'ab?

- Holy site: 60
- Holy water: 40
- Natural beauty: 20
- Church Museum: 10
- Welcoming community: 5
- All five: 5
- Other: 0

What do you think is significant about Ne'akutole'ab?

- The Landscape: 20
- The Church Itself: 30
- The Holy Water: 0
- The Community: 10
- The History Associated with the Monastery: 10
- The Landscape + the Church Itself: 40
- The Church and Its Holy Water: 5
- All five: 0

Legend:
- Tourist
- Priest
- Pilgrim
- Resident