



Characterising urban growth in Tamale, Ghana: An analysis of urban governance response in infrastructure and service provision



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ABSTRACT

This study sought to characterise urban growth dynamics of Tamale, Ghana, and to analyse urban governance response to the growth dynamics regarding urban infrastructure and service delivery. Analysing satellite imagery, qualitative and secondary data sources, we found that the city expanded spatially by 78% between 2001 and 2014 at an annual rate of 4.4%. Increasing human and vehicular populations added complexities to the growth experiences of the city, and collectively exact a high demand for basic infrastructure and services. The metropolis' population had better access to water and electricity but there is a huge access gap in relation to sanitary facilities, a situation that exposes the inefficiencies of the decentralised urban governance system of the city. The article argues that the state of affairs is a recipe for poor development outcomes such as low economic performance and negative public health issues. It is recommended that urban governance systems in the metropolis devise and implement innovative measures through inclusive and participatory approaches to promote sustainable urban development.

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, urban growth and associated demographic dynamics are forecast to occur and present serious challenges to sustainable urban development among developing country cities, especially those in Africa (UN-Habitat, 2014). The perceived challenges stem from multiple factors including generally weak institutional capacity in those countries to manage the unfolding growth, and ineffective urban planning systems that have failed to deliver sustainable urban development over the years (UN-Habitat, 2009a,b; 2010). These forecasts and analyses are often done by taking a generalised view of countries in a category (e.g. developing countries, Africa) for the sake of simplicity and perhaps due to inadequate resources including time, human and finances. Thus, the generalised characterisations do not necessarily provide concrete evidence for micro-level solutions. In a foreword to the UN-Habitat's 'State of African Cities report (2014)' Joan Clos (Executive Director, UN-Habitat) concedes the limitation of the generalised analysis and the impracticability of a one-size-fits-all solution when he notes that "cities are simply too individual and specific in

their needs and vulnerabilities for standardised solutions" (UN-Habitat, 2014: 3). Thus, research that targets country- and city-specific peculiarities in terms of growth dynamics, challenges and opportunities enhances our appreciation of the issues and the efforts needed for addressing them.

Effective management of urban growth is key to the socio-economic development of Africa in that urbanisation has made a positive impact on the continent's development contrary to earlier views regarding the relationship between the two (see Njoh, 2003; Obeng-Odoom 2010a,b; Potts 2012). Africa has recorded impressive Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates in the first decade of the 21st century with 80% of its GDP being produced by its urban population (UN-Habitat, 2010). In the process, the continent is experiencing a growing middle class population that stood at 355 million in 2010 and is projected to reach 1.1 billion people in 2060 (UN-Habitat, 2014). The World Bank, which previously had a pessimistic view about the development impact of urbanisation in Africa, in a recent report of urbanisation in Ghana, remarked that "rapid urbanisation in Ghana over the past three decades has coincided with rapid GDP growth, helping create jobs, increase human capital, decrease poverty, and expand opportunities and improve living conditions for millions of Ghanaians" (The World Bank, 2015 p. 1).

Ghana has transitioned from a predominantly rural population

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at independence in 1957 to predominantly urban in 2010 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013a). The country's urban population more than tripled between 1984 and 2013 from about 4 million to 14 million people with annual growth rate of 4.4% (The World Bank, 2015). The country is ranked as one of four and one of 21 countries with more urban than rural population in West Africa and in Africa, respectively (Obeng-Odoom, 2013a). Similar growth patterns have been recorded in the major towns and cities such as Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. For example, the Tamale metropolitan area recorded a 116% population growth between 1984 and 2000 and remains the fastest growing metropolis in Ghana after Kumasi (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, 2013a,b,c,d). Yet, Ghana's urbanisation has been associated with challenges including poor service delivery, a gaping housing deficit, inadequate infrastructure, unsanitary conditions, unregulated/sprawl spatial development, threats of food and livelihood insecurity, and urban poverty (see Tipple & Willis, 1992; Korboe & Tipple, 1995; Konadu-Ayemang, 2001; Yeboah & Obeng-Odoom, 2010; Boamah, 2010, 2013a,b; Adarkwa, 2012; Boamah, Gyimah, & Nelson, 2012; Government of Ghana, 2012; Akaateba & Yakubu, 2013; Obeng-Odoom, 2013a; Yeboah, Codjoe, & Maingi, 2013; Baffour Awuah & Hammond, 2014; Baffour Awuah, Hammond, Lamond, & Booth, 2014; Gyasi, Fosu, et al., 2014, Gyasi, Kranjac-Berisavljevic, et al., 2014; Yakubu, Akaateba, & Akanbang, 2014).

Ironically, these challenges exist in a decentralised system of governance which mandates local government authorities to, among other functions, develop, improve and manage human settlements by providing the requisite infrastructure, municipal works and services within their areas of jurisdiction (Republic of Ghana, 1993). The framing of Ghana's decentralised local governance system followed the emergence of decentralisation in the 1980s and 1990s as an alternate approach to promote efficient and responsive governance in developing countries (Bardhan, 2002). In contemporary times, this reasoning resonates with debates about shifts in planning theory towards collaborative planning and urban governance as partnership, participatory and multistakeholder engagements to tackle urban challenges (Healey, 1997, 2002, 2003; Watson, 2002, 2009, 2014; Obeng-Odoom, 2013a, 2012; Roy, 2009, 2014; Stoker, 1995; Stone, 2004, 2005; Tibajuka, 2007). This orientation makes Obeng-Odoom (2013a,b) argue that urban governance be operationalised as decentralisation, entrepreneurialism and democratisation in order to undertake local-level development through democratic engagement and partnerships among the local government authorities, businesses, civil society, international development partners and non-governmental organisations. In principle, Ghana's local government law (Act 462 of 1993) reflects the tenets of both collaborative planning and urban governance. Therefore, the existence of urban challenges in Ghana suggests an inefficient decentralised governance system which, if not well understood and managed, could cause "grave danger" for national development (The World Bank, 2015: 1).

It is from the above that this paper seeks an empirically nuanced analysis of urban growth dynamics in Tamale and urban governance response to tackling some of the aforementioned challenges. The objective is to zoom in on the pressures of urban management at the city level as opposed to the macro-level analysis referred to earlier. This does not only provide empirical evidence of city-specific urban conditions but also has potential utility in stimulating micro-level solutions due to the impracticability of one-size-fits-all remedies. As the challenges span a wide spectrum, our analysis will focus on road infrastructure provision and service delivery namely, water, electricity, sanitary and waste disposal facilities. These are critical for the sustainable transformation of the economic, social and environmental aspects of the city's growth in line with Ghana's urban policy framework. By this focus, the study

contributes to urban research in Tamale relative to previous studies that have had narrow focus on single themes such as housing (Boamah, 2010; Yakubu et al., 2014), agriculture and food security (Fuseini, 2014; Naab, Dinye, & Kasanga, 2013), urban growth dynamics (Braumoh & Vlek, 2004) or multiple themes of different focus (Gyasi, Fosu, et al., 2014, Gyasi, Kranjac-Berisavljevic, et al., 2014). The study so provides an understanding of urban growth and urban governance issues as well as access to vital urban services by adding to the body of urban research in Ghana (see for example Obeng-Odoom, 2013a,b, 2015a,b; 2010b; Adarkwa, 2012; Akaateba & Yakubu, 2013; Ayee & Crook, 2003; Baffour Awuah & Hammond, 2014; Baffour Awuah et al., 2014; Boamah, 2012, 2013a,b; Boamah et al., 2012; Cobbinah & Amoako, 2012; Cobbinah & Korah, 2015; Peprah et al., 2015; Ubink, 2008; Yeboah & Obeng-Odoom, 2010; Owusu, 2011; Yeboah & Shaw, 2013; Yeboah, 2003; Yeboah et al., 2013).

2. Methodology

2.1. Definition of key concepts

The key concepts used in this paper – urban growth and urban governance – require definition. In this regard, urban growth is used to connote the transformation of settlements, through both natural population increases and in-migration, into increasingly densely populated entities with concomitant spatial and functional expansion (Gyasi, Fosu, et al., 2014, Gyasi, Kranjac-Berisavljevic, et al., 2014). In the Ghanaian context, urban growth occurs when a settlement of 5000 or more people (threshold for defining a settlement as 'urban' in Ghana) experiences increases in its population, spatial expansion, human activity, functions and services in space and time. Urban governance on the other hand refers to processes of decision making in urban settings involving multiple actors such as governmental, non-governmental, private entities, civil society groups, businesses, local people and traditional authorities (Obeng-Odoom, 2013b, 2012). Unlike government, governance connotes horizontal and vertical partnerships that transcend formal government structures to recognise and encompass the participatory roles of the aforementioned actors. These partnerships reflect urban actors' shared resolve to respond to their problems and challenges which arise from the social, cultural, economic and environmental changes and transformations (Stone, 2004). By its nature, urban governance has no fixed actors as the issues that underpin stakeholder collaboration and partnership building keep changing, inviting new actors while some old actors become redundant in the process (Stone, 2005). Therefore, urban governance is used in this paper to refer to processes of decision making in Tamale that transcend formal governmental structures to include civil society groups, non-governmental organisations, actors in the informal sector, chiefs and elected representatives in the local government system. This conception is in line with the participatory local governance system prescribed in Ghana's local government law (Act 462 of 1993) (Republic of Ghana, 1993).

2.2. Study area

The study was done within Tamale Metropolitan Area (TAMA) (Fig. 1) which, for the purpose of this research, includes two local government administrative units – the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA) and the Sagnarigu District Assembly (SDA). The TaMA and the SDA are two of 26 local government administrative units within the Northern Region of Ghana. The SDA was carved out of the TaMA in 2012 in accordance with Ghana's local government law (Republic of Ghana, 1993). Due to its young "age", the SDA is still connected to the TaMA in many ways and their demographic,

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