



Urbanisation in Ghana: Residential land use under siege in Kumasi central



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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an analysis of urbanisation in a Ghanaian city of Kumasi in relation to its impacts on commercialisation of residential land use is presented. The analysis further highlights the impacts of residential land use makeover on urban functionality and the urban poor. Using physical survey, interviews, agency consultations and review of secondary data, findings indicate that a majority (85%) of residential land use has been converted into commercial and mixed land uses due to increased demand and associated high land values as well as weak urban planning system. Regrettably, most urban poor (86.7%) cannot afford higher rents, resulting in their eviction by property owners and occupation in kiosks and on streets in Kumasi central creating urban blight. Additionally, urban functionality is hindered with chaotic scenes of uncontrolled commercial development and activities, and limited consideration for basic facilities such as parking. Planning implications of the findings are further presented.

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1. Introduction

According to Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, and Amoateng (2015a) urbanisation is a demographic, ecological, sociological and economic phenomenon that concentrates population in urban areas and has the potential to either fuel or impede growth and development of these areas. Research evidence of rapid urbanisation and predictions of potential serious impacts in the foreseeable future on Africa's urban environment are often expressed in the literature (Bao & Fang, 2012; Cobbinah et al., 2015a; Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, & Amoateng, 2015b; Cohen, 2006; Darkwah & Cobbinah, 2014; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division [UNDESA/PD], 2012). For example, the UNDESA/PD (2012) estimates the level of urbanisation in Africa, which was 39% in 2010, to reach about 58% by 2050. Many (e.g., Cobbinah et al., 2015b; Cohen, 2006; UNDESA/PD, 2012, 2013) are those who argue that urbanisation is one of the major contributing factors for degradation of urban ecological services, poor urban management and haphazard physical development across Africa's urban landscape. Others (Boadi, Kuitunen, Raheem, & Hanninen, 2005; Cobbinah et al., 2015a) argue that poor urban management in Africa resulting from rapid and unplanned urbanisation is

harming many of Africa's urban poorest people, and it is sometimes viewed as a major contributor to urban poverty. Ongoing urban poverty, slum proliferation, urban sprawl, congestion and their associated health implications increase vulnerability of urban residents (Amoako & Cobbinah, 2011; Boadi et al., 2005; Cobbinah & Amoako, 2012; Cobbinah et al., 2015b). According to the UNDESA/PD (2012), urban areas in Africa will become home to about 1.3 billion of the world's urban population by 2050, and are likely to experience increased exposure to many negative events, including vulnerability and insecurity, unsustainable land management, climate change impacts, energy crisis and destruction of ecologically sensitive areas (Cobbinah et al., 2015a; Darkwah & Cobbinah, 2014; World Economic and Social Survey, 2013).

Although Ghana's contribution to global urbanisation is negligible, the adverse effects are significant due to increasing and often unregulated informal activities (see Afrane & Ahiable, 2011), unprotected ecological systems (see Ahmed & Dinye, 2012; Cobbinah & Korah, 2015), fragile economic base and poor urban planning and management structures (Adarkwa, 2011; Grant & Yankson, 2003). From 2000 to 2010, Ghana's urbanisation level increased by about 7% at a rate of 3.9% (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2012; UNDESA/PD, 2012). The increase in Ghana's urbanisation rate has been higher in the cities where urbanisation rate sometimes exceeds 5% (see Cobbinah & Amoako, 2012; GSS, 2014), and is also higher in comparison to urbanisation rates of some African countries including South Africa (1.9%), Zimbabwe (1.3%) and Tunisia (1.4) (UNDESA/PD, 2012). It is worth acknowledging, however, that urbanisation in Ghana is only interpreted from the demographic perspective with human settlements having population threshold of

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5000 and over described as urban (GSS, 2012). This interpretation of urbanisation, according to Korah and Cobbinah (2016), is simplistic and problematic because it ignores the socio-economic benefits and ecological characteristics of the urbanisation process. This, of course, is not to argue that demographic characteristics are not important in the urbanisation process, instead oversimplification of urbanisation may perhaps underscore the several adverse effects in Ghanaian cities.

Ghana's urban population is skewed towards the regions in the southern part of the country, particularly Greater Accra and the Ashanti region, where major cities of Accra and Kumasi are located (see Fig. 1). With more than half of Ghana's population now living in urban areas (GSS, 2012), the rapid rate of urbanisation is providing a new identity to Ghanaian cities, particularly Accra and Kumasi, as population concentration and economic activity hotspots, and these changes have potentially serious consequences for urban management and urban residents, as well as for the conservation of ecologically sensitive regions (Amoako & Cobbinah, 2011; Grant & Yankson, 2003; Quagraine, 2011).

Some of the observed impacts of rapid urbanisation have been: encroachment on and extinction of public open spaces and ecologically sensitive areas, pervasiveness of slum communities, unregulated informal economic activities, congestion, flooding, haphazard and unauthorised land development, and increasing conversion of traditional land uses into other uses. These occurrences have contributed to urban planning and management failure and increased housing and livelihood insecurity (Afrane & Ahiable, 2011; Amoako & Cobbinah, 2011; Cobbinah & Amoako, 2012; Grant & Yankson, 2003; Korah & Cobbinah, 2016; Quagraine, 2011). More than 50% of urban residents in Ghanaian cities such as Accra – the national capital – and Kumasi (the second largest city in Ghana) are migrants, many of them unskilled (GSS, 2012), and with limited livelihood options, Ghanaian cities have become centres of chaotic scenes, in terms of haphazard and unregulated physical development, congestion and increasing struggle for livelihood resources and space (see Adarkwa, 2011; Grant & Yankson, 2003). In addition, the rising residential housing demand is challenged by increasing conversion of residential land use into commercial and other uses especially in city centres. This situation, according to GSS (2005), has created an urban environment where most of the poor live in containers and kiosks.

Unfortunately, there is limited knowledge and information available on how specific rapid urbanisation is impacting residential land use in central parts of Ghanaian cities, its consequences on urban functionality,

and the effects on the survival of the urban poor. The analysis of the impacts of commercialisation of residential land use as a result of unplanned urbanisation is important in the rapidly growing cities of Ghana, where poverty abounds, rural-urban migration is rife, housing is inadequate and urban management is failing (Adarkwa, 2011; Amoako & Cobbinah, 2011; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016a; GSS, 2005). This research investigates: (i) how rapid urbanisation is influencing the commercialisation of residential land use in Kumasi central; (ii) the effects of residential land use conversion on urban functionality; (iii) the consequences of residential commercialisation on urban poor; and (iv) the urban planning implications of ongoing commercialisation of residential land use in Kumasi central.

2. Urban planning in Ghana: an antidote to or a catalyst for unplanned urbanisation?

Several studies have documented the importance of urban planning in managing urban areas in Ghana (e.g., Adarkwa, 2011; Amoateng, Cobbinah, & Owusu-Adade, 2013; Fuseini & Kemp, 2015; Grant & Yankson, 2003). Many (Gocking, 2005; Quarcoopome, 1993) argue that urban planning in Ghana began during colonial rule and largely focused on the establishment of town councils as control centres, in terms of responding to urban planning challenges (e.g., poor location of structures) and emergencies such as outbreak of diseases in the major cities of Ghana. Others (e.g., Fuseini & Kemp, 2015) argue that planning in Ghana during colonisation was based on investment in the extractive sectors (e.g., mining and cocoa producing areas) of the economy. In their reflections, Fuseini and Kemp (2015) argue that planning during this period was limited in geographic spread as planning efforts and investments were concentrated on areas in southern Ghana with exploitable resources. Cities of Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi were used as the vertices of the 'Golden Triangle' with increased infrastructure development to serve colonial interest (Adarkwa, 2012; Fuseini & Kemp, 2015).

A call for a nationwide wide planning resonated following the passage of the Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1945 (Cap 84). The Cap 84 provided the legal framework for the establishment of the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD), an agency with the primary responsibility of promoting and ensuring sustainable planning, development and management of Ghanaian cities, towns and villages in an efficient, orderly and safe manner based on the traditional master planning approach. The master planning approach was used in British

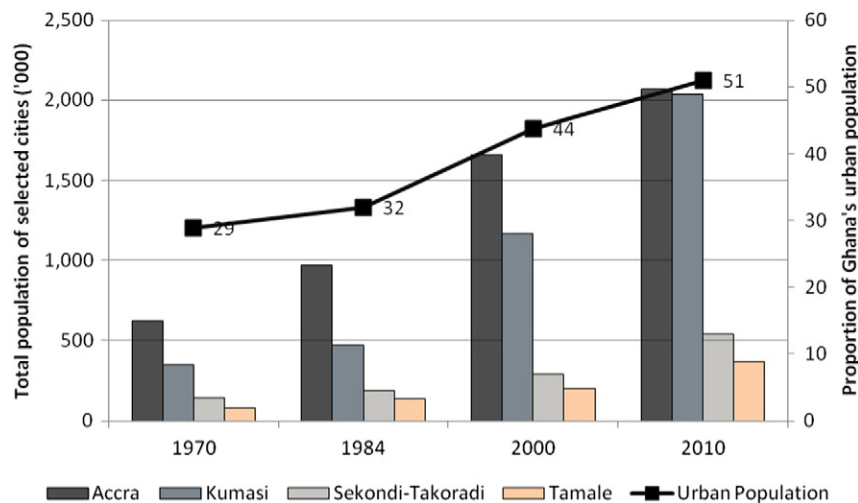


Fig. 1. Urbanisation pattern in major Ghanaian cities (1970–2010). Source: Adapted from GSS Records (2012, 2013)

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