

The changing face of Ghanaian towns

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Abstract

The paper argues that the face of Ghanaian towns has changed since the initial contact with the colonialists. Investments in infrastructure, urbanisation and enhanced economic activities have combined to change the face of Ghanaian towns. These changes in turn have affected the quality of urban life and the disparity in development between the north and the south as well as in various towns with marked spatial segregation of residential areas. Considering that the current face of several Ghanaian towns is characterised by overcrowding, cluttering of houses, insanitary conditions and poor environmental conditions; it is argued that the face of Ghanaian towns should increasingly reflect orderly development, adequate environmental sanitation, tolerable densities and effective local planning to create a more livable and sustainable environment.

Keywords: Urbanisation, urban form, urban infrastructure, Ghanaian towns

1. Introduction

According to the *2010 Housing and Population Census of Ghana*, the country had a population of 24,658,823, out of which 50.9 percent lived in urban areas, with the rest living in rural areas (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). This represents a 30.4 percent increase over the 2000 figures, implying that the country is gradually becoming urbanised. Other estimates also indicate that by 2015, nearly 60 percent of Ghanaians will be living in urban areas or settlements with more than 5,000 population (Farveque-Vitkovic et al., 2008). A direct implication of the foregoing is that, the number of large and medium sized human settlements (those with more than 5,000 people) in Ghana is likely to increase because settlements with less than 5,000 population will grow beyond this threshold to become urban centres (see, for example, the 2000 and 2012 Census Reports of Ghana). In

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addition, the medium and large settlements will continue to experience increases in their populations. While all human settlements in Ghana are experiencing changes in their populations, layout and physical outlook, very little is known about the nature of these changes as well as their implications for urban planning and management. In this paper, therefore, some of these physical changes in the face of Ghanaian towns are presented, with the view to drawing lessons to inform current urban planning practices and subsequent management of these towns*.

In addition to population growth, Ghana has also experienced impressive economic transformation over the last two decades, in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction, with average growth rates of 4.7 percent annually (Kolavalli, et al., 2011). The poverty rate in the country declined from 41.6 percent between 1988/1989 to 28.5 percent in 2006 (UNDP and NDPC, 2010), although the last Afrobarometer Survey conducted by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (2012) showed that the perception of the prevalence of poverty in the country has worsened. There is no doubt that cities and towns which are places with complex social, economic and political interactions contributed significantly to this transformation of the country (NCC, 2009). This is as a result of the fact that, cities and towns are hubs of trade, businesses, jobs, higher education as well as offer high order goods and services to peripheries within their catchment areas thereby facilitating development. Empirical evidence from Farvacque-Vitkovic et al. (2008) indicates that Accra accounts for 10 percent of the country's GDP. Angel et al. (2005) have also estimated that between 1985 and 2000, Accra's per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at an annual rate of 2.21 percent; indicating the importance of the city to the country's overall growth. It is, therefore, evident that cities and towns play a crucial role in the transformation process of Ghana. As Ghana develops, its cities will experience change and will be transformed in terms of layout and human activities with implications on the use of urban land, physical outlook, spatial development and in general wellbeing.

Consequently, this paper examines how socioeconomic and political developments in Ghana have shaped urbanization in the country. It does so by drawing on primarily secondary or published data. Using the Institutional-

* Throughout this paper, the descriptor, 'town', is used in a generic sense to imply 'urban area' or settlements of more than 5, 000 people, unless otherwise specified.

Analytical Framework, similar to what was used by Obeng-Odoom (2012) in documenting the growth of Sekondi-Takoradi, the analysis is captured under the aegis of four time periods, namely: pre-independence, independence, post-independence, and contemporary times. Implications of the current state of cities and towns are presented with recommendations to help Ghanaian cities and towns contribute more effectively and efficiently to the socio-economic transformation and development of the country.

2. Pre-Independence Era (Before 1957)

2.1 Colonial Policies and Settlement Development

During the pre-independence era, the colonial investment strategies were informed by the basic consideration of investing in regions with exploitable and exportable resources, which invariably led to the subsequent provision of basic infrastructure in such areas (Owusu, 2005). Consequently, the “colonial city” developed as a centre of commerce and administration, rather than industrial production. It originated as a means whereby the metropolitan rulers established a base for the administration of the countryside, and the exploitation of its resources for export (Songsore, 2010). This situation favoured urban concentration and thus attracted population and development to such areas relative to other parts of the country such as the Northern territories. This was the beginning of a slow but gradual process that resulted in marked disparities in development between areas and towns in the northern part of the country and those in the southern sectors (Dickson, 1968).

It was during this period that Governor Guggisberg, a colonial governor of the Gold Coast, launched his Infrastructure Development Plan spanning the period 1919-1926. This was reputed to be the first of its kind in the world, and provided for the construction of the Takoradi to Kumasi Railway Line, Takoradi Harbour, Achimota School, Korle-Bu Hospital, Cocoa Research Centre at Tafo, inter-urban trunk roads among others. In fact, the Guggisberg plan created the basis for the then Gold Coast to become a major global exporter of cocoa, timber and gold during the colonial administration (Osei-Bonsu, 2012). And coincidentally, that colonial infrastructure laid the firm basis required for Ghana’s economic wellbeing

in subsequent years. The location and distribution of these investments also tended to influence the distribution of the country's population.

According to Owusu (2005), in 1921, 7.8 percent of the population lived in urban centres, but this figure rose to 15.4 percent in 1950 with 3.4 percent and 1.9 percent of the urban population domiciled in Accra and Kumasi respectively. The number of urban localities; that is localities with more than 5,000 population, in the country stood at 39 settlements in 1948 (Farvacque-Vitkovic et al., 2008). Prominent among them were Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi and Tamale.

With the exploitative interest of the colonialists, two main structures were evident in the spatial economy of the country. First, a centre-periphery structure emerged under which the centre consisted of the forest belt where production of raw materials was concentrated; Kumasi was the centre of this system. Secondly, the coastal port structure that emerged was such that the towns played a crucial role in import-export activities (Songsore, 2010). As a result, the northern parts of the country were in principle exempted from any developmental activities and benefits thereby necessitating the birth of a developmental gap between the north and south (Dickson, 1968). This partly accounts for the underdevelopment and least urbanised nature of the modern day three administrative regions comprising northern Ghana (Upper West, Upper East and Northern Regions) which has persisted till date. Dickson (1968) has further interrogated this issue and characterised this geographical region as Ghana's "problem region". Interestingly, in the northern regions, the north-south development dichotomy was also replicated with the urban nodes of Tamale, Bolgatanga, Wa and other large centres being more developed than their adjoining rural areas.

2.2 Face of Ghanaian Towns during Pre-Independence

The colonial developmental policies greatly influenced the spatial and physical development of towns in the country. The Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1945 was the basis for zoning and building codes which were strictly enforced (Ahmed and Dinye, 2011). In the major towns, spaces were left between buildings and they were wide enough to provide vehicular access should the need arise. According to Grant and Yankson (2002), in Accra, "zoning and building codes were strictly enforced to maintain an orderly European character and

ambience in this district”; especially in the Central Business District (CBD). As a result, this marked the beginning of the spatial differentiation of population in Accra as occurred in other large cities. In effect, there was a deliberate spatial segregation policy which saw to the separation of expatriate residential areas from the native settlements because the latter was perceived as unsanitary and mosquito infested. This segregation was particularly evident in most of the major towns including Accra, Kumasi, Cape Coast, Sekondi-Takoradi and other towns in the Gold Coast where the colonial administrators worked and lived.

Also towns and cities had skylines of not more than three storeys. Environmental sanitation was good enough and wastes of all kinds were hardly seen either on the streets or in their drains. Security was essentially a major problem in the large towns as indicated by Busia’s 1950s account of Sekondi-Takoradi (Busia, 1950). There was reasonable landscaping throughout the towns and ceremonial streets were adorned with nicely planted trees as captured in Bowdich’s account of Kumasi in 1817 (Bowdich, 1873, as cited in Korboe, 2001). Building materials used were the basic ones including sandcrete blocks and iron or aluminium roofing sheets in the well planned areas of the large cities but in the other areas, it was simply “one mass of thatched buildings arranged in a haphazard manner and separated by narrow crooked streets” (Stanley, 1876 as quoted in Grant and Yankson, 2002). Ventilation was adequate and appropriate in the well planned areas but was the reverse in the traditional areas. All the above was possible because of several factors including the relatively low population of the principal towns as well as the strict adherence to town and country planning regulations within the selected parts of the major cities and the neglect of the same rules in the other parts of the cities.

Kumasi, for instance spanned an area of just two (2) kilometres with a resident population of between 10,000 and 15,000. It had clean, straight and wide streets aligned in compliance with the gridiron layout with professionally constructed accommodation influenced by European building standards (Korboe, 2001). Vehicular congestion was hardly experienced anywhere within Kumasi on account of the low vehicle ownership and population (for an account of the evolution of transportation in Ghana, see Ntewusu, 2011).

Housing conditions and ancillary infrastructure were generally of high standards and quality. Most settlements had good access roads within them and some sectors were even fenced.

A notable feature of cities during this era was the infrastructure built by Europeans to serve foreign commercial enterprise interests to facilitate trading. In Accra, Fort Ussher was built by the Dutch in 1605, Christiansborg Castle by the Danes and named after King of Denmark, Christian IV. The Swedes built an earthen lodge on the same spot in 1657. Fort James was built by the British in 1673 (Grant and Yankson, 2002). During the 1870s, Accra occupied a land area of less than 10 square kilometers. After 1877, Accra hosted the British colonial headquarters which had been relocated from Cape Coast, for two main reasons: the limited berth depth in Cape Coast, poor environmental sanitation and the proximity of Accra to the Prampram area, which was a flourishing commercial centre (Quarcoo, 1992). Indeed, the movement of the British colonial headquarters contributed in no small measure to the fortunes of Accra but led to the decline of Cape Coast at the same time (Agyei-Mensah, 2006).

With colonial administration came commerce and the development of Accra. According to Grant and Yankson (2002), the African merchants occupied the “Native Town” north of the market and west of Ridge, which was the exclusive expatriate residential area. This rigid residential segregation was enforced through zoning and land use planning. The less desirable residential locations in Accra which were low lying lands liable to flooding, were inhabited by the native or indigenous Ga people (Rain et al., 2011). In a sense, the pattern of residential development in Accra was replicated in most towns within the country with higher grounds or more favourable locations, which were well drained, being inhabited by either expatriates or local business persons and the other less desirable locations settled by the local population. Where there was an influx of migrants from northern Ghana to these towns, they also settled in well defined enclaves known as the migrants’ sector or “Zongos”.

This then set in motion a pattern of spatial segregation in Ghanaian towns which continued to independence, when as a result of several contributory factors, the face of Ghanaian towns began to gradually change.

3. Independence Era (1957 to 1966)

3.1 National Policies and Settlement Development

After attaining independence in 1957, Nkrumah, Ghana's first President, sought to develop Ghana as a modern, semi-industrialized, unitary socialist state. According to Hug (1989), Nkrumah pursued the socialist approach to economic development. It may be observed that the path to economic development pursued by Nkrumah in a strict sense was not consistent with socialism. Hence, a combination of both socialism and free market tendencies defined Nkrumah's ideology (Hess, 2000). To pursue his ideology of building a "socialist state" to facilitate achieving a rapid rate of economic growth, Nkrumah in 1964 launched the 1963/64 – 1969/70 plan for national reconstruction and development. This plan which was more emphatic on industrialization as import substitution was declared a policy objective within the plan. To achieve this, Nkrumah made the state machinery the agent of development. The state was responsible for constructing social and economic infrastructure as well as providing social services in the country (Buah, 1998). During this period, industrialization was pursued vigorously to change the colonial functions of cities and towns from commerce to industrial production in order to effectively implement the import substitution strategy. The linkages and interactions between cities and towns within the country's spatial economy were to be enhanced, for example through the construction of roads, so as to make Ghana self-reliant. This was to ensure egalitarian development of all areas as well as eliminate the north-south gap created by the colonialists (Hess, 2000).

However, as Songsoore (2010) has observed, the industrialization drive was concentrated in the "golden triangle" of Accra–Tema, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi. During the period, Accra-Tema accounted for 59.5 percent of all industrial establishments while Kumasi had 16.5 percent and Sekondi-Takoradi 10.2 percent. Consequently, only 13.8 percent of all industrial establishments in the country were located outside the "golden triangle".

Available evidence indicates that, the industrialization drive was unable to achieve the aim of eliminating the north-south divide by ensuring egalitarian development of all areas (Owusu, 2005). Instead, Accra replaced London as the center of accumulation and this was perpetuated by the system of education which imbibed in the bourgeois class and the planning officers with colonial mentality

(Dickson, 1968). This facilitated the growing gap between the north and south making the south more urbanized than the north. Major towns “within” the golden triangle such as Accra-Tema, Takoradi, Kumasi, Tarkwa, Aboso and Koforidua grew very fast during the period. For the country as a whole, the population living in urban areas rose from 7.8 percent in 1921 to 23.1 percent by 1960 (Owusu, 2005) with Accra and Kumasi accommodating 5.5 percent and 3.1 percent of the urban populace respectively (Farvacque-Vitkovic et al., 2008).

The industrial policy in colonial Ghana was to develop the extractive industries to feed secondary metropolitan industries. Nkrumah took bold steps to ensure that these raw materials were reserved for local industrial production. Nkrumah’s government also had the intention of nationalizing these extractive industries, or to make them joint-enterprises, with government holding majority shares. To support growth and distribution, Nkrumah developed the transport and communications sector. Many roads which were constructed in the colonial days (such as the Accra – Kumasi trunk road) were widened and tarred (Government of Ghana, 1964). In addition, several kilometres of new first class roads (most importantly, Accra-Takoradi-Axim-Tarkwa road, Kumasi-Tamale Trunk road) were constructed. Trunk roads in the Volta Region were connected by the Adome and Sogakope bridges to link the region with the main parts of the country (Government of Ghana, 1964). Interaction between these settlements increased as reflected in the increases in average daily traffic volumes on these roads that had increased from a few vehicles a day to several hundred vehicles a day.

Nkrumah’s government also developed the rail transport sector by building a connecting railway line starting from Achiase, on the Huni Valley to the Kade railroad to join the Accra-Kumasi line at Kotoku near Nsawam. This was to reduce the circuitous Sekondi-Takoradi, via Kumasi to Accra railroad. Another railway line was built from Achimota to the seaport of Tema. It is arguable that these road networks contributed substantially to the growth of some of these towns. Analysing development of small towns in Ghana, Owusu (2005) confirmed the importance of such interventions in the development of towns located along arterial roads. He stated that, these favourable locational factors (including location on main trunk roads, location closer to mining activities), or their combination and spill-over effects from large urban centres, contributed to the growth of towns, which eventually grew to become other large centres.

It must be noted that while towns such as Nsawam and Nkawkaw grew as a result of this, Tamale can be said to be an exception. The growth of Tamale, especially in the 1970s and 1980s was due to the development of the rice industries (Songsore, 2003) and natural increase in population. It was against such backdrops that Owusu (2005) argues that, the influence of these factors are not uniform and that the ability to determine which factors are responsible for growth of towns would require the study of specific small towns in the country. In this regard, Grant and Yankson (2002), Korboe and Tipple (1995) as well as Obeng-Odoom (2012) have studied the growth of Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi, respectively. However, others such as Ablorh (1967) have provided an omnibus study of the growth of several towns in Ghana.

The impact of some of these interventions can still be felt, as the summary report of the final result of the *2000 Population and Housing Census* indicates that, aside the national capital city region (Accra-Tema) and Kumasi, all the urban centres specifically identified by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) report as net receivers of migrants are mining centres, such as Bibiani, Tarkwa and Prestea.

Nkrumah's government also made progress in health service delivery under the general programme for improved welfare services. The government did not only expand and provide modern equipment to hospitals built in the colonial days, but it also put up larger ones to replace older ones. The Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital probably witnessed the largest expansion with the construction of many multi-storey blocks and wards to serve as a teaching hospital for the Ghana Medical School. Other developments during the period included the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi and the Efia-Nkwanta Hospital in Sekondi-Takoradi as well as other district hospitals in many rural areas. During this period, the Akosombo Hydro-Electric Power Project and the Volta Aluminium Smelter Plant, in addition to the Akosombo Township were constructed. The Volta River development was the biggest single step that had been taken in the economic and industrial development in Ghana. It involved an investment of £70 million in the Hydro Project, £57.6 million in the Aluminium Smelter Project and £7 million in ancillary development (Government of Ghana, 1964). The foregoing developments facilitated the growth of the affected towns within their catchment areas. Akosombo and Tema Townships grew rapidly while new towns were created to cater for those inundated by the lake.

Tema and Akosombo townships were planned and constructed to house workers in the industrial port city and the hydro electric dam at Akosombo respectively. These two newly planned townships were the first new towns in Ghana and had several facilities including well laid out roads, planned neighbourhoods and communities, sewer lines and communication links. The planning and construction of these two towns were complemented with the planning of several resettlement communities arising from the Akosombo Hydroelectric Project.

Prior to the construction of the Tema Harbour, Takoradi and Accra were the main gateways for import and export in the country. As mentioned earlier on, the limitations of the offshore surf boat port of Accra led to the construction of the deep port of Tema. The building of a second deep-water harbour was apparent when the government envisaged the push for industrialisation and export-led development with its attendant implications. The government sought to construct a port and industrial township of Tema. This vision is now evidenced by the Tema Harbour, the well-planned township of Tema and the motorway connecting the seaport to Accra (Buah, 1998). The Tema Project comprised a whole new town for 35,000 inhabitants and Africa's largest artificial harbour which had been built at a cost £27 million (Government of Ghana, 1964). The location of the harbour and the development of the township, in addition to other industrial establishments resulted in the eventual growth of the Tema industrial township recording a phenomenal population growth as the 27,127 people recorded in the Tema Municipal Area in 1960 rose to 102,431 in 1970 (Benneh et al, 1993).

From the perspective of planning of new towns and resettlement of project affected people, Nkrumah's efforts were instrumental in defining the face of towns in Ghana during the period. The planning and construction of 52 new towns around the Volta Lake, as well as, the design and construction of Tema Township were very important milestones in Ghana's planning history. They led the way in demonstrating how communities can be physically organised around communal facilities to engender increased interaction as demonstrated in the case of Tema Township and the numerous resettlement towns such as, Adumasa, Akrade, Mpamu, and Senchi.

Buah (1998) has observed that urban population in the country grew rapidly soon after independence primarily because of the: (i) concentration of industries

and other physical developments; and (ii) centralisation of administration and other services in the cities and bigger towns. These factors accordingly attracted population, especially school leavers seeking jobs to cities and resulted in an acute shortage of accommodation in the urban areas which also contributed significantly to the development of slums. In presenting the Seven-Year Development Plan (1963/64-1969/70) to Parliament, Nkrumah acknowledged this by commenting on how the rapid migration of rural people into urban areas, especially large cities since the end of the second world war, had resulted in the creation of satellite towns and overcrowding of slum areas in these cities (Government of Ghana, 1964).

Realising that these unplanned settlements (satellite towns and slums) which housed immigrant workers were important in providing the critical accommodation for the teeming workers but experienced major sanitation problems; the government sought to develop and implement a policy for the development of sub-urban towns as initial reception centres for immigrant labour in the large cities with emphasis on the provision of adequate sanitation, controlled layout and water supply (Government of Ghana, 1964).

The government, therefore, established a standalone Ministry of Housing, as well as the State Housing Corporation and the Tema Development Corporation with its chief mandate being the general development of housing for workers in the harbour township. The housing facilities that were developed were either sold outright, or disposed of under the hire-purchase or house-ownership scheme. The bulk of the houses, however, were let on a rental basis, especially to the low-income group (Buah, 1998). The government therefore sought to provide 25,000 new dwelling units in the three large cities (Accra-Tema, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi) and another 35,000 in other towns and municipalities at a minimum cost of £G44.5 million. This was during an era which saw the provision of mass social housing by various governments in the world.

The State Housing Corporation was into direct housing and was to construct 200 middle income houses, 1,500 lower income and 5,000 labourers' quarters at £2,000, £500 and £200 per unit respectively. The amount allocated for this investment was £2 million. Up till the middle of 1962, the Ghana Housing Corporation had constructed over 2,000 housing units in urban areas in all regions of the country and had also taken over administrative role of 14,000 housing units

previously built by government. The total value of housing units under the control of the Ghana Housing Corporation was £G10.5 million (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001).

By traditionally providing adequate accommodation for themselves through local savings and construction by owner-occupiers, Nkrumah's government also embarked on the Roof Loan Scheme under the Ministry of Communication and Works. Societies of 30 to 40 members were formed in each community and it was through these societies that the Department of Social Welfare disbursed the funds. By 1960, there were 25,000 members in such societies and a total of \$1.85 million had been disbursed (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001), helping to build over 11,000 houses of improved quality in the villages (Government of Ghana, 1964). In the seven-year development plan (1963/4 – 1969/70), the government sought to extend the roof loan scheme and develop a building materials industry to help rural communities obtain affordable access to building materials. Arku's (2009) account on housing policy changes provides an indication of the various efforts pursued by government to tackle the housing problem in Ghana.

3.2 Face of Ghanaian Towns during Independence

The vision of Nkrumah made towns in this era industrial centres characterized by an appreciable level of infrastructural development including road, rail, and housing among others. This set in motion the urbanization process in the country as towns became recipients of migrants as labour for industries.

Considering that towns during this era grew rapidly, the planning authorities virtually had little time to plan for their growth and development, and in several respects this situation still characterizes the planning system in Ghana (Adarkwa, 2011). As a result, several towns sprawled linearly over large areas but in the main, there were two distinct sectors; well-planned sectors and areas which appear to be the result of spontaneous development. As is to be expected, the planning machinery was more effective in the well planned areas but least effective in the overcrowded and spontaneously developed sectors (Boamah et al., 2011). In a sense, this period marked the beginning of a decline in public hygiene, especially environmental sanitation. With further increases in residential populations and densities, this era saw uncontrolled transformations in the estate houses initially built by the state to accommodate the

increasing population. The traditional sectors of various communities in the large urban areas also saw a marked increase in the location and distribution of temporary structures in front and between residential buildings, along street verges and reservations, thus reducing environmental quality (Arku, 2006). In the interim, the areal expansion of most cities also began to show substantial increases.

It was also during this period that, skylines in Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tema, Tamale, and several other towns saw gradual changes. In Accra, for example, a number of multi storey commercial buildings along the High Street, Kojo Thompson Road and Independence Avenue were constructed. In Kumasi, most of the commercial properties along Harper Road, Maxwell Road and Prempeh II Street were developed during the period (Adarkwa and Oppong, 2005), and so it was with similar properties around Market Circle in Takoradi and Tamale. It is interesting to note that, most structures in the Central Business Districts (CBDs) of these cities, particularly Accra, were more than three storeys. The tallest building in Accra during the period was the old four-storey Kingsway Building along the Kwame Nkrumah Avenue.

Journey-to-work in Ghana's major towns during the independence era was shorter and less stressful. During the early 1960s, for example, the public transport systems could reach virtually every part of Accra and typical journey-to-work was less than 10km and the use of private means of transport was also not widespread (Olu-Davies, 1981). In view of the relatively effective planning machinery at the time, there was a reasonable amount of development control in the sense that, it was difficult to construct any structure without a permit, especially in the well planned sectors. Enforcement and monitoring of physical development was satisfactory in these areas. The indiscriminate scattering of buildings of any kind over an entire area was rather limited on a city-wide scale apart from a few exceptions which included the sprawling of Madina as a suburban settlement and Ashaiman as a dormitory town to accommodate the overspill of population from Tema.

It may also be pointed out that during this era of Ghana's development, the towns were "greener" than they are today. Several demarcated areas zoned as open spaces were kept for that purpose and encroachment of such lands by other uses was hardly heard of or reported in literature. In Kumasi, for example, the city was "green", leading to it being described as the "Garden City of West Africa". During

this period Kumasi covered an area of approximately 25 square kilometres with lush vegetation, various colourful shrubs and well tended lawns (Korboe, 2001). Other open spaces such as Abbey's Park, Heroes' Park and other identifiable spaces designated as open spaces were very much maintained as such because, there was limited scope and need for rezoning such spaces to other uses. A planning scheme drawn for Kumasi in 1963 was the principal document guiding land use and development control with provisions for industrial, commercial, and ranked residential areas (Tipple 1987 in Korboe, 2001). This coupled with well designed and constructed infrastructure facilitated harmony within the spatial economy of Kumasi.

In short, most towns in Ghana were rather more compact because of the pattern of development and the fact that urban sprawl was minimal (Songsore, 2010). In general terms, physical development proceeded according to plans and the planning authorities, even though they were largely centralised, were able to adequately deal with the myriad of development problems in Ghanaian towns. As will be seen in the next phase, the planning machinery was subsequently weakened on account of other extenuating factors.

4. 4. Post-Independence Era (1967 to 1988)

4.1 National Policies and Settlement Development

After Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966 and a series of coups which followed, diminished the economic and development gains achieved over the years. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), called the Economic Recovery Programme in Ghana, was therefore embarked upon to restore economic stability and subsequently ensure economic development of Ghana. The SAP, to a large extent, had a positive impact on the cities and towns of Ghana, especially small towns. Owusu (2005) has indicated that the SAP brought about improvements in the infrastructural base of rural areas and smaller urban centres through electrification schemes and road rehabilitation projects which culminated in the opening up of such areas to the broader spatial economy to enable them integrate fully. However, Yeboah (2003) has shown that in spite of the contribution of SAP to the development of Ghanaian towns, it was unable to bridge the gap between the north and the south as investments continued to be concentrated in the south

especially foreign direct investments majority of which were located in Accra. Even in Accra, socio-economic inequality increased as SAP promoted economic growth (Yeboah 2003). It is interesting to note that, in spite of conscious efforts by government during the post-independence era to influence the location of investments away from the “Golden Triangle”, the situation has remained largely unchanged.

In 1988, the decentralization programme was initiated to increase local level participation in the development process of the country. PNDC Law 207 transferred greater functions to the District Assemblies (DAs) and increased their number from 45 to 65. The Local Government Act (Act 462 of 1993), which replaced PNDC Law 207, gave the DAs the powers to: (i) exercise political and administrative authority in the District; (ii) provide guidance; (iii) supervise all administrative authorities in the District; and (iv) ensure overall development of the Districts including development of basic infrastructure, provision of municipal works and services, as well as management of human settlements and the environment (Farvacque-Vitkovic et al. 2008).

The establishment of districts meant strengthening cities and towns to perform administrative functions through the infusion of investments to facilitate the provision of critical services and functions. These towns or cities were to be the development nodes responsible for the growth and development of their respective jurisdictions. This situation provided the basis for the growth of hitherto rural settlements into urban centres and an increase in the number of urban areas (Owusu, 2005). As expected, administrative functions ascribed to these towns attracted public infrastructure and population gradually making the country urbanized. Consequently, the population living in urban areas rose to 32 percent in 1984 and to 44 percent by 2000 (Owusu, 2005).

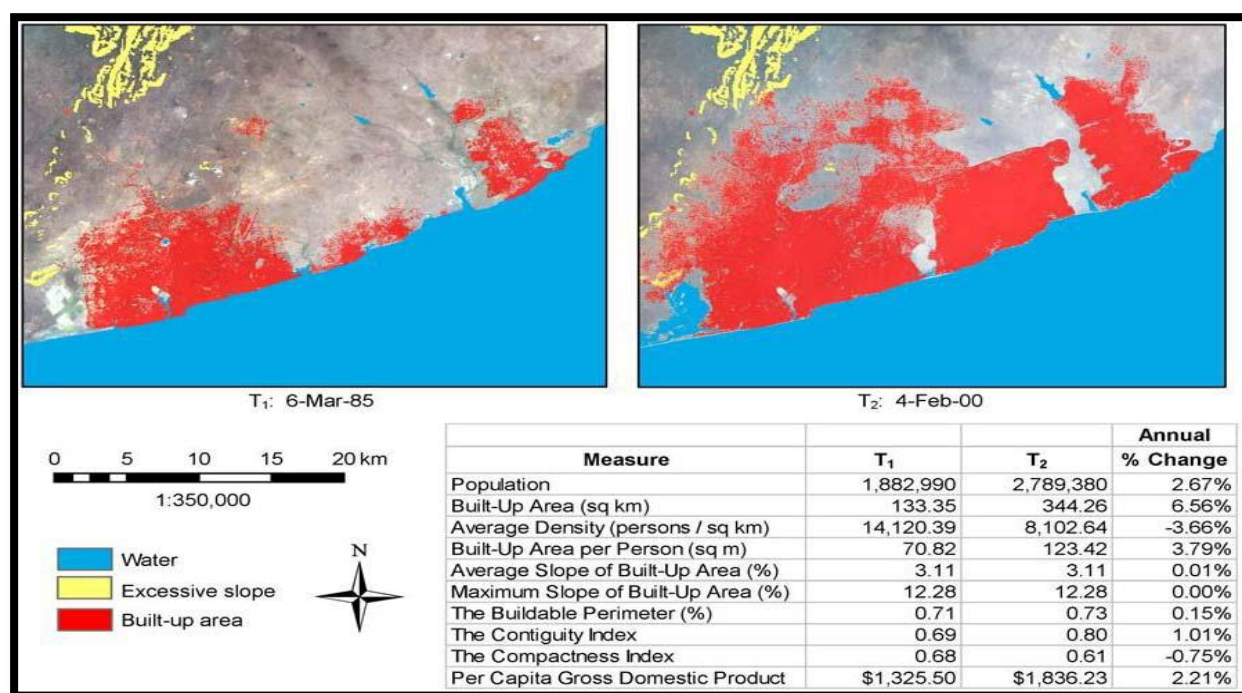
The decentralisation programme was able to ensure a fair level of improvement in the socio-economic infrastructure of towns and cities, but the programme was unable to address the growing gap between the north and south (with 44 percent of the population residing in urban areas in the new millennium, Accra housed 8.4 percent of the urban populace with Kumasi taking up 6 percent (Farvacque-Vitkovic et al. 2008)). This trend clearly indicates that urbanization has become a consequence of Ghana’s development process and it is estimated that by 2015, the urban populace will account for 55.1 percent of the population of the country. This rapid increase in urban population has consequently resulted in urban

sprawl as depicted by Figure 1 and has extended the physical boundaries of most cities with Accra now being referred to as the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) encompassing settlements such as Madina, Adenta, Abokobi, Dome and Pokuase. The process has also been replicated in Kumasi which has also engulfed nearby settlements such as Kwamo, Krapa, Pankrono, Breman and Atonsu Agogo. The sprawl of these towns, and many others, as well as the lack of orderly development is the result of limited capacity for urban management and ineffective codes.

To further illustrate the case of rapid urban sprawl in Accra, Angel et al. (2005) have estimated that between 1985 and 2000, the city of Accra experienced an outward rate of expansion of 6.56 percent per annum and consequently densities reduced from 14,120.39 persons per square km to 8,102.64 persons per square km, even though the built up area increased from 133.35 square km to 344.26 square km (see insert table in Figure 1). The rapid increase in the areal extent of Accra and most of Ghanaian cities during the post-independence era has been partly as a result of an increase in the demand for residential properties or housing units and urbanisation.

Figure 1: Map depicting Urban Sprawl in GAMA, 2008

Source: Angel et al, 2005 as cited in Farvacque-Vitkovic et al. (2008).



In Ghana, the housing market has always been an interplay between the private sector as consumers and producers of housing units on one hand, as well as, the state as both supplier or producer and consumer at the same time. However, on balance, it can be said that, the role of the private sector is dominant in the provision of housing units for the population. Indeed, the majority of housing (about 90 percent) is provided by the people for themselves through local contractors on land given to them by local land-holding chiefs under customary ownership (UN-HABITAT, 2011). The state also provided housing during this period. For instance, The Low Cost Housing Programme in 1972 was granted substantial funding for three additional Tema Development Corporation (TDC) communities in Tema and State Housing Company as well as the State Construction Corporation development of several housing estates in Accra (Dansoman Estates), Tema (Ashaiman, Sakumono and Manhean) and Kumasi (Chirapatre). It only achieved 6,092 dwellings out of the target of 23,000 but this period represented the highest level of public housing delivery up to that time. The National Redemption Council (NRC) government established the Bank for Housing and Construction (BHC) in 1973, to support housing and construction in general (UN-HABITAT, 2011). However, as it was not allowed to operate commercially, it proved unsustainable in the long run. In 1975, the government established the Public Servants Housing Loans Scheme and the Armed Forces Mortgage Loans Scheme to support these two favoured groups. Funds came from the budget for lending to beneficiaries at 10 percent below the market rates that hovered around 30 percent per annum. The schemes had processed only 435 loans by 1988 (33 per annum) (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). The changing values ascribed to traditional rural and modern urban locations, and the preferences for single-family homes have also been very important in contributing to the increasing spatial extent of many towns in Ghana (Owusu-Ansah and O'Connor, 2009).

The quasi government institution, Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) provided over 7,000 dwelling units between 1988 and 2000 across the major cities and towns in the country. These were mostly allocated to civil servants and managed as rental units. Also the government initiated the affordable housing project in 2005 which was aimed at producing 100,000 housing units in six sites in five regions of the country (Sam-Awortwi, 2010). Private developers, comprising real estate companies and other international housing construction

companies, have particularly contributed to housing development in the post-independence era. Particular mention must be made of Renaissance Group which aims to develop Kpone-Appolonia-City of Light and the King City, both in the Greater Accra and Western regions on 2400 acres and 2000 acres of land respectively at a total cost of US\$600 million (Angel et al, 2005, in Farvacque-Vitkovic et al., 2008). Despite the efforts of individuals, the state and private real estate developers in housing provision, there seems to be an acute shortage of housing units in the country as can be seen from Table 1.

Year	Population	Housing Demand	Housing Supply	Housing Deficit
1970	8,559,313	1,678,296	941,639	736,657
1984	12,296,081	2,410,096	1,226,360	1,184,636
2000	18,912,079	3,708,250	2,181,975	1,526,275

Table 1: Housing Demand, Supply and Deficit in Ghana, 1970 - 2000

Source: UN-HABITAT, 2011.

4.2 Face of Ghanaian Towns during the Post-Independence Era

In the face of rapid urbanisation occurring in Ghana, it is logical to infer that, the face of Ghanaian towns during the post-independence era has changed significantly. Following the adoption of decentralisation as a tool for local governance, the District Assemblies (DAs) are now seen as the development agents responsible for the socio-economic development of their jurisdictions. Consequently, some towns have experienced appreciable levels of development in terms of infrastructure and social services thereby attracting more migrants and gradually urbanising hitherto rural settlements. The series of coup d'états witnessed by the country virtually resulted in neglected maintenance of most of the infrastructural facilities which subsequently led to massive re-investment in these facilities during the post-independence era. This meant that the infrastructure base developed by the colonialists and Nkrumah was run-down very rapidly. This, in addition to rapid population growth over the period rendered cities and urban areas deprived of adequate infrastructure. As a result, as cities and towns grew through colonial times, the neighbourhoods continued to display the extremes in living conditions characterized by chaotic and insanitary conditions (Rain et. al, 2011).

As Akrofi (2006) has argued, considering that African countries and governments are seldom able to satisfy the demand for formal land and provide affordable houses, the situation is bound to further worsen.

The typical medium sized modern Ghanaian town is now characterised by congestion, choked drains and poor environmental sanitation. The skyline in most towns has changed and a skyline line of more than five storeys characterizes modern day cities and towns of Ghana (see Plates 1 and 2).

Plate 1: Changing Skyline

Source: Ghana Rising (2010)



Plate 2: High Rise Buildings in Accra

Source: Wandering Educators (2011).



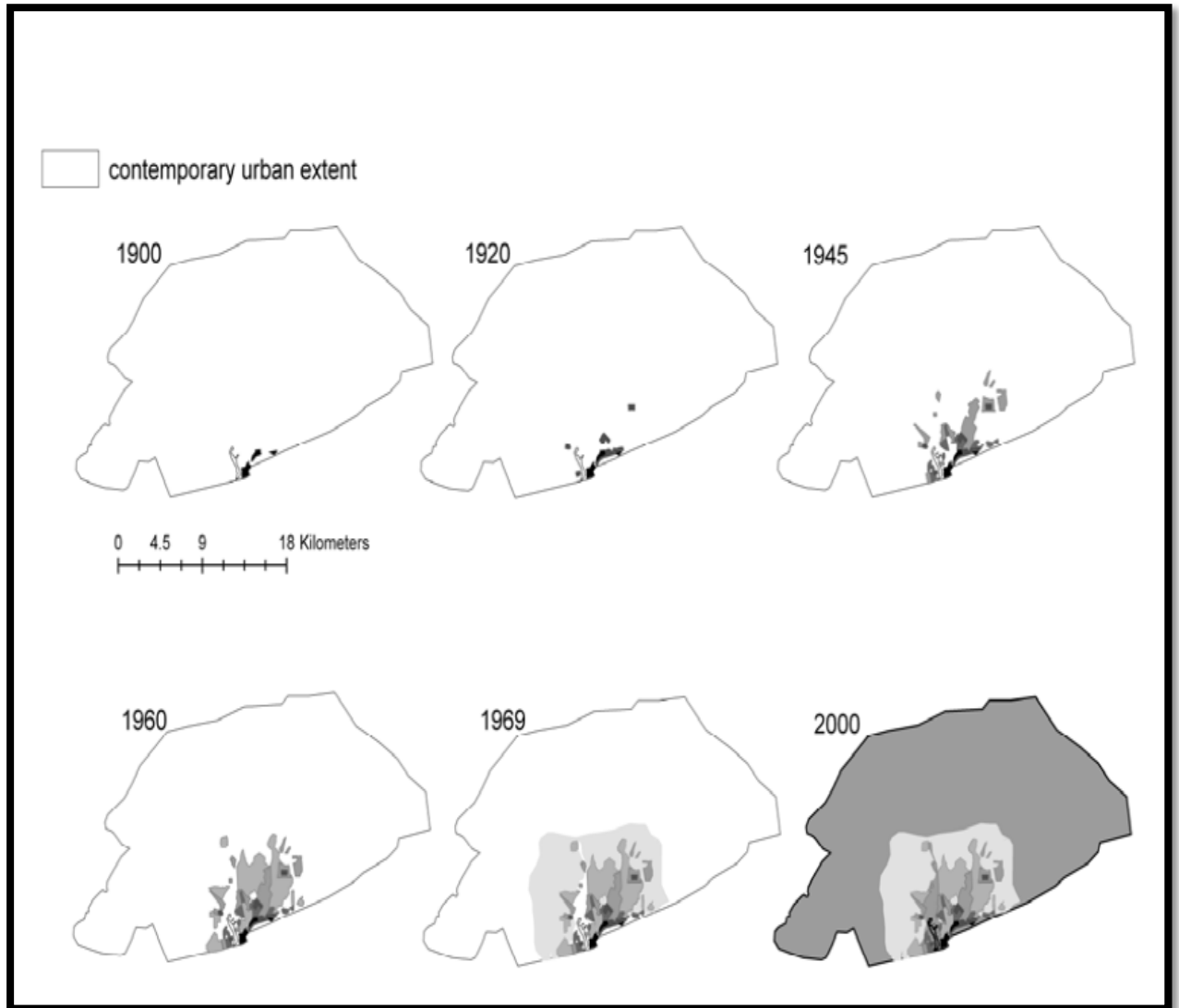
Gated housing estates abound, especially in Accra where most studies of the phenomenon have been conducted (see Asiedu and Arku, 2009 and Grant, 2009). While the quality of the architecture, aesthetic appeal, and economic status of these communities, make Accra appear ‘international’, they are simultaneously an outward expression of social stratification in the city. An examination of Accra’s physical development from the standpoint of spatial planning at both the national and local levels concluded that the fragmented pattern of Accra is the result of a planning system that is unable to sustain development. In the view of Rain et al. (2011), the short-sighted planning is to blame for urban sprawl in Accra. This may be an over simplification of the situation. Post (2001) has also argued that, increased economic activities following the adoption of liberalization policies by the government of Ghana has contributed significantly to the rapid land use changes being experienced in towns of Ghana. It is clear that these policies have also resulted in the renewal and redevelopment of various parts of Ghanaian towns, especially the Central Business District (CBD). Commerce which initially contributed to the growth of selected Ghanaian towns such as Sekondi-Takoradi and Kumasi, is still a major contributory factor whose impact can be seen by the several commercial activities along major roads in Ghana.

Overlying this panoply of factors is the nature of the planning system which appears to be overwhelmed because of obvious limitations of human and financial resources. In addition, the DAs, which according to Act 462 (Section 12 [1]), are the planning authorities do not have the required professional personnel to initiate and control development (Republic of Ghana, 1993).

Expansion in the fringe areas (See Figure 2 for the spatial expansion of Accra) is occurring in a largely unplanned and uncontrolled manner, creating sprawling low-density development that is uneconomic in terms of land use and service delivery. As the city grows by filling in areas between older neighborhoods that lack roads, sewers and other infrastructural facilities, problems are created that may be difficult to resolve in subsequent years. Currently, people face long traffic queues on poorly maintained roads. This situation, according to Rain et al. (2011), is not currently sustainable, and promises to be less so if migration rates increase in the future.

Figure 2: Expanding Spatial Extent of Accra, Ghana from 1990 to 2000

Source: Rain et.al, 2011.



5. The Current Face of Ghanaian Towns (1989 to Date)

The face of most Ghanaian towns has changed since independence and some of the underlying reasons include the increase in population, enhanced economic circumstances, rapid expansion in the areal extent of most towns, better distribution of employment opportunities than what pertained in the past and increase in vehicle ownership. With the increase in population and unprecedented increase in demand for the limited housing units within the urban area, most people displaced by the housing market, have sought to move outside towards the fringes where land prices and property values as well as rents are relatively cheap. Others have been forced by the city authorities to live in particular areas through recurrent

forced actions (Yeboah and Obeng-Odoom, 2010). The development has had two major impacts: an increase in the average journey-to-work length and competition between the demand for farmland and urban housing. Consequently, there has been an unprecedented development of peri-urban communities all over the country; especially on the outskirts of most of the large urban areas such as Accra, Kumasi, Tema, Sekondi-Takoradi and Tamale. Considering that the spatial structure of towns has remained essentially the same; with all roads converging on their CBDs, this has resulted in congestion. Most Ghanaian towns now experience congestion on virtually all their roadways. In Kumasi, for example, recent studies by Okyere (2012) and Adarkwa and Poku-Boansi (2011) clearly indicate that congestion is widespread and much like Accra, if the private means of travel is not discouraged, the transportation system will be unsustainable. In both studies, it is clear that the face of Ghanaian towns is changing primarily, as a result of enhanced economic circumstances which have led to an unprecedented increase in vehicle ownership (Adarkwa and Poku-Boansi, 2011).

The skylines in most of Ghanaian cities have changed because of the increase in overall demand for urban land uses, especially office and residential space. In view of this, vertical development of structures is now the norm to enable the maximum and optimum use of the scarce land, especially lands in the CBDs of most cities and large cities. Instead of single storey structures, there is now the tendency to develop multi storey structures as a way of reducing the uncontrolled lateral expansion of Ghanaian large settlements. In spite of this trend, planning authorities are still unable to successfully control physical development.

The environmental sanitation in Ghanaian towns has also declined tremendously in the wake of rapid increases in population and the inability of local governments to adequately manage the situation (Awortwi 2006, Oteng-Ababio, 2010). As a result of this, it is now common to see heaps of solid waste littered in various residential areas. In addition, most drains along major streets are choked because they have, by the inaction of the local authorities, become receptacles for solid waste leading to avoidable natural disasters such as flooding. There is now a widely held view that Ghanaian cities particularly Accra, is engulfed in filth (see for example, Obour, 2012). Innovative interventions to deal with the situation have been the involvement of the private sector and this appears to have made some positive impacts but the overall effect will be dependent on the availability of

financial resources to compensate private sector participants or contractors (Awortwi, 2004 and Obiri-Opareh, 2003).

Unfortunately, the Local Government Reforms since the 1980s, including the creation of many Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, appears to have had very little effect, or impact, on the face of Ghanaian towns partly because of lack of professional personnel, financial resources and political commitments. Consequently, the planning officers have not been effective in controlling growth and development in their respective jurisdictions. What further worsens the situation is that, there have not been any major attempts to review the various master plans for settlements that have such plans. On the other hand, several towns do not even have such plans to guide their development. The current situation is clearly unacceptable and could further worsen the plight of towns in Ghana.

Once the National Development Planning Commission develops an overall spatial development framework for Ghana, the various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies can then be expected to evolve town plans for as many settlements as possible within the overall framework. It is also expected that the spatial development framework will make provision for comprehensive development by providing long range perspectives for towns, including water, energy and transportation.

6. Concluding Remarks

This paper has demonstrated that the spatial form, urban infrastructure and urbanisation have changed tremendously since the pre-independence era, and have collectively changed the face of Ghanaian towns. In addition, the quality of urban life in Ghana has also been affected. The initial impetus for these changes was the infrastructural facilities built by the colonialists to facilitate exploitation of natural resources and administration process. This has been confirmed by other studies including Owusu (2005), but concerns have been raised about the north-south disparities in development (Dickson, 1968; Songsore, 2010) as well as the marked differences in urbanisation rates between these same areas. According to Grant and Yankson (2002), zoning and building codes were strictly enforced in the well planned sectors of many towns, including Accra, whereas the poorly planned areas received very little or no intervention at all. Consequently, in most towns, the

scenario was characterized by these two sectors with contrasting features; a well planned and zoned area, on one hand, and a cluttered, crowded and congested sector on the other hand, which has continued to date (Rain et al., 2011).

During the Independence era, Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah followed an ideology which sought to develop the country as a unitary socialist state to enhance rapid socio-economic development by launching the Seven-Year Development Plan. The strategy of import substitution led to the rapid infrastructural development in selected towns and, thus, changed their level of infrastructural development (Buah, 2003). The strategy of industrialisation pursued attempted to change the colonial functions of selected towns from commerce to industrial production. However, this effort was concentrated in the "Golden Triangle" (Songsore, 2010), and exacerbated the north-south inequalities in development. With the "Golden Triangle", the development of railways, for example, led to the growth of Nsawam, Kade and Huni Valley, and other towns located along the railway route. In addition, government's re-investment in earlier infrastructural facilities also led to the growth of other towns as exemplified by Tema and Akosombo, together with all the 52 newly created resettlement towns. Government's efforts to increase the housing stock received a major boost during the period but this was also a period which witnessed marked transformations in the estate houses to satisfy demand. The skyline in most cities began to change leaving the planning authority with very little time to effectively control physical development.

During the post independence era, efforts to restore economic stability, through the Structural Adjustment Programme, had a positive impact on several towns in Ghana because of the re-investment in infrastructural facilities which had deteriorated. Decentralisation, which meant the assignment of planning and some administrative functions to urban and city authorities also led to the growth of several district capitals. The interplay of urbanisation, unprecedented demand for housing units and dispersal of employment opportunities contributed substantially to changing the face of Ghanaian towns.

The face of Ghanaian towns is likely to change further, and, therefore, it is important that the process is documented and better understood. All stakeholders including the National Development Planning Commission, the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, the utility and infrastructural development

agencies as well as local communities must be involved in the process. This way, adequate provisions can be made by settlement planners and all other stakeholders to plan appropriate interventions to deal with the associated problems including the further resourcing of town planning authorities to adequately deal with the problem.

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