

(Re)claiming Citizenship Rights in Accra: Community Mobilization against the Illegal Forced Eviction of Residents in the Old Fadama Settlement

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Introduction

Increasing economic globalization and the spread of neoliberalism have drastically shaped the way cities are developing across the globe. Whilst a vast array of political economy writing has focused on dissecting the effects of these processes on urban development and housing rights in industrialized countries as well as emerging markets such as India, the Asian Tiger states and Latin American countries, scholarship on the impacts of these global forces on Sub Saharan African (SSA) cities is scarce. Existing literature on urban development in SSA primarily focuses on the effects of colonialism on spatial and economic development. This paper seeks to analyse the effects of globalization and neoliberalism on Ghana's capital city Accra, in order to contribute to the academic debate of the emerging body of literature on the effects of these processes on SSA cities.

The remainder of the introductory section will present the research approach and limitations. In section two I develop the theoretical framework within which the analysis will be conducted. The main tenants of political economy theory on city development in the era of globalization and neoliberalism are introduced. As such the investigation aims to uncover how the quest to increase international city competitiveness in many cases leads to "gentrification, waves of property development, and the increasing 'high-endness' of construction," (Harvey 2008 (2), p.1), and through this process marginalize and remove citizenship rights of lower income groups. The notion of 'forced evictions' in the name of urban regeneration and public benefit will be explored as one of the most pronounced forms of marginalization in this context. The analysis then turns to Henry Lefebvre's *"Right to the City"* theorem as a powerful theoretical notion and starting point to develop meaningful alternatives to existing power relations in urban areas. The analysis will be complemented with an examination of practical attempts by civil society, to counter the increasing marginalization of residents in cities around the globe, and to (re)claim citizenship rights.

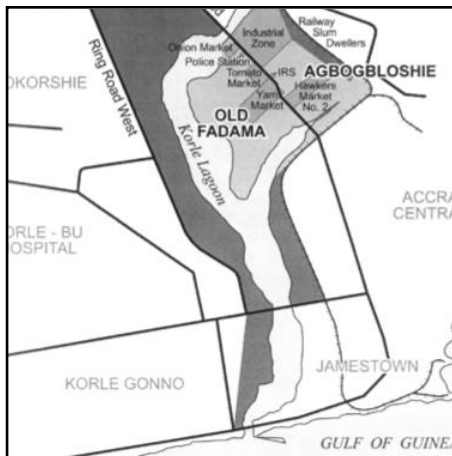
Section three examines the case of 'Old Fadama', the largest slum in Ghana's capital city Accra, where residents successfully used collective community action with the help of Shack-dwellers International (SDI) and various local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to halt an illegal forced eviction attempt by the local authorities. The theoretical framework set out in section two will be used to uncover the circumstances in which the government sought to evict, as well as to present and analyse the subsequent local urban movement that formed as part of a larger international housing rights movement in order to contest the eviction and find alternative solutions. Section 4 concludes the paper by using the case study analysis to draw broader conclusions on the scope for consolidation of a global right to the city movement.

Research Approach and Limitations

The analysis for this paper was conducted using secondary academic and professional literature, including articles published in peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles and reports from NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and International Organisations such as UN Habitat.

The author acknowledges the limitations inherent in conducting research on the basis of secondary literature. The lack of ethnographic material and or direct accounts from the stakeholders, presents a significant limitation to this research. In order to curb this shortcoming, academic literature has been supplemented with secondary literature written by the stakeholders listed above, in order to ensure a balanced representation of the case.

Figure 1: Old Fadama Settlement



Source: Grant 2006

A further issue that must be noted refers to initial difficulties in naming and defining the settlement area of the case study. The reviewed reports, and articles use three different names for the same settlement, 'Old Fadama', 'Agbogbloshie' and 'Sodom and Gomorrah', as well as differing total areas and settlement boundaries. The author concludes that the case study area is the informal settlement of 'Old Fadama' that sits adjacent to Agbogbloshie (See Figure 1), a formal settlement that has degenerated into a slum (Grant 2006).

Globalization, Neoliberalism and the City

There has been a considerable scholarly debate about whether the late 1970s and early 80s mark the beginning of globalization or whether this process has been ongoing for centuries (Appadurai 2001). Smith (2002) provides a convincing account, stating that globalization is an age-old constantly changing process, to which the globalization of production capital in the 1980s presents a novelty. The fact that Marx and Adam Smith had already recognized the existence of commodity capital and a global market, the heightened role global financial capital exchanges played prior to World War I, as well as the fact that culture has always been a hybrid ever changing phenomenon leads Smith to the conclusion that "the new globalism can be traced back to the increasingly global – or at least international – scale of economic production" (Ibid p.432).

Harvey (2008) also contests the notion that globalization is a new phenomenon. Instead, he argues that the process is inherent in the capitalist project to amend existing and create new territorial configurations to increase capital accumulation. Accordingly, the quest for investment opportunities has been expanding rapidly beyond nation state boundaries since the dismantling of capital controls in the 1970s. As Brenner and Theodore (2002) aptly summarise:

"Capitalist development ... unfolds through the production of historically specific patterns of socio-spatial organization in which particular territories, places, and scales are mobilized as productive forces—whether in the form of agglomeration economies, regional production systems, infrastructural configurations, transportation and communications networks, or spatial divisions of labour. It is in this sense that the long-term survival of capitalism is premised upon the "production of space" (p.7).

The current phase of neoliberal capitalism is thus an essential feature of the globalization of capitalist expansion. It stands in stark contrast to the 'Fordist-Keynesian Golden Age' (Ibid 385), which was characterized by a state engaged in macro-economic management, institution guiding and social integration. "Whereas neoliberal ideology implies that self-regulating markets will generate an optimal allocation of investments and resources, neoliberal political practice has generated pervasive market failures, new forms of social polarization, and dramatic intensification of uneven development at all spatial scales" (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p.5). The form and content of neoliberalism changes whenever such market failures become too apparent. The most significant shift transformed the initial 'roll-back' neoliberalism of the 1980s, characterized by a focus on market led economic growth and the removal of the welfare state in the US and Europe,

and the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) on developing countries, into 'roll-out' neoliberalism, where the state again assumes a greater role, but primarily as a gatekeeper of the neoliberal project, to ensure a stable investment climate and keep in check those marginalized during the period of roll-back neoliberalism (Ibid, Peck and Tickell 2002). Neoliberalism's strength and main survival technique then is its dynamism and the ability to adjust and bring about institutional and policy changes to curb and displace crisis encouraged by market and state failures generated by its own political framework, and to profit from such adjustments at the same time (Ibid). Neoliberalism is not monolithic in its application, but is producing hybrid, constantly changing forms that are geographically and historically contingent (Ibid). Nevertheless, there are certain patterns by which the paradigm is spreading globally. These dominant patterns will be highlighted and analysed below in order to gain a better understanding of how neoliberalism and globalization have affected the development of cities and citizenship around the globe.

Processes of economic globalization and the spread of neoliberalism have profound impacts on the way cities are developing across the globe. Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2009) highlight that we are witnessing the interiorisation of neoliberalism in urban policy through the reorientation from redistribution to competition, institutional rescaling (giving greater powers to sub- and supranational levels) and through the revitalization of the urban economy through privatisation, liberalisation, decentralisation, de-regulation and increased fiscal discipline. Mechanisms of

"international and inter-local policy transfer which take place along channels that have been created, structured, and lubricated by technocratic elites, think tanks, opinion-formers, consultants, and policy networks have been rapidly established as one of the principal modes of policy development in strategically critical fields such as systemic financial stability, the management of urban 'underclasses' the regulation of contingent labour markets, and the displacement of welfare entitlements with socially authoritarian packages of rights and responsibilities" (Peck and Tickell 2002, p394).

Harvey's notion of urban entrepreneurialism is a valuable concept to analyse the socio-political processes that accompany these urban governance and policy changes. According to him, cities are increasingly entering into global urban competition, to attract global production and investment capital. "During the ... phase of neoliberal entrepreneurialism, urban governance has moved more ... into line with the naked requirements of capital accumulation" (Ibid, p.393), by redeveloping existing and building new consumption oriented urban space. Perceived ideals of waterfront developments, cultural spectacles and enterprise and trade zones are reproduced to attract the global urban elite (Ibid).

In addition we are witnessing changes in existing articulations of citizenship. Formal citizenship refers to formal membership to a nation state, whereas substantive citizenship refers to civil, economic, political and cultural rights citizens enjoy within a given society (Appadurai and Holsten 1996). Whilst access to substantive rights are in theory dependent on full formal citizenship, globalization and neoliberalization are increasingly challenging this correlation. Urban development policy increasingly grants substantive citizenship rights to owners of global capital that lack formal citizenship rights, whilst substantive rights are increasingly withheld from marginalized residents that have de facto formal citizenship rights (Ibid).

Urban Regeneration Gentrification and Marginalization

The regeneration of strategically vital city space then is developing into one of the most essential means by which cities attempt to increase their competitiveness to attract global capital. According to Harvey's notion of 'accumulation through dispossession', the transformation of urban space through the process of creative destruction is precisely the means by which capitalism achieves surplus absorption. This process has a vital class dimension, as low-income groups and those lacking political voice usually suffer the repercussions. Paris was the first city

to experience such fierce urban planning in the 18th century, characterized by the destruction of inner city slums and the displacement of most of the Parisian working class to the outskirts, through the expropriation of land and housing in the name of public benefit (Ibid). Smith (2002) describes a similar, albeit less ruthless process of gentrification in post war London. During the 1960s middle class residents began occupying typical working class areas. Once leases expired, the rundown housing structures were renovated and passed on to higher income groups.

These processes are now applied much more systematically to advance global capital accumulation, through the implementation of urban regeneration policies that 'disguise' the project of gentrification (Smith 2002). The practice that began in the global North, has become non discriminatory and is increasingly affecting cities around the world. Most cities now have a "City Development Strategy" and employ western international consultants that take exorbitant fees for transferring western planning ideas across the globe. With international organizations and consortia such as the World Bank and Cities Alliance pressing for and co-developing such strategies, we are witnessing the globalization of urban regeneration and with it the gentrification of a vast array of city space. "Gentrification as global urban strategy" (Smith 2002, p.446) has become the "consummate expression of neoliberal urbanism" (Ibid). The origins of the term 'regeneration' lie in ecology and biomedicine and it is generally used to describe developments of organs, species or plants. The term is drawn on in this context to suggest that urban regeneration is a natural process to disguise the inequalities, marginalization and unjust power relations inherent in regeneration strategies (Ibid).

Forced Evictions

Forced evictions refer to the process of removing people from their home without their consent. They are generally "planned, formulated and ...announced" prior to execution (Ibid, p.2) and are conducted against both individuals and groups. In most cases the process violates a variety of human rights and whilst a great number of different actors, including private developers, planners, and International Financial Institutions can potentially be involved, the responsibility to prevent such evictions lies with the government (Ibid).

Figure 2: Forced Evictions by Region

Estimated Number of Reported Forced Evictions by Region: 2003-2006	
Africa	2,004,171
Asia and the Pacific	3,452,093
Europe	16,127
The Americas	174,180
Total	5,646,571

Source: (COHRE 2006)

international sporting events such as football World Cups, environmental restoration projects, social exclusion and demographic control (Ibid, Du Plessy 2005, UN HABITAT 2007). However, the practice is increasingly used as a tool to rid strategically located sites of low-income groups and free valuable land to attract global capital. It is this phenomenon that this paper will focus on.

Forced evictions are prevalent in both developed and developing countries across the globe. According to COHRE (2006) over 5,6 million cases were reported between 2003 and 2006 alone, 2 million of which occurred in Africa. Forced evictions often displace entire communities and are commonly targeted at poor residents living in informal settlements and slums (Ibid). They have a multiplicity of causes, including infrastructure projects,

According to COHRE and UN AGFE, at least 60 country governments used illegal forced evictions as a development tool between 2003 and 2006 (COHRE 2006). 19 African countries conducted forced evictions during this period and Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe all forcefully evicted residents in the name of urban regeneration, albeit having ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) that renders most forced evictions illegal (Ibid). For instance, between 1995 and 2005 South Africa's eviction record

counts almost 900,000 evicted persons, Zimbabwe's almost 1 million and Nigeria, the worst housing rights violator in Africa (COHRE 2006) and most likely second in the world after China, evicted a staggering 2.3 million people during this period.

Illegal forced evictions often have a variety of negative socio-economic impacts for the evictees that include increase poverty and asset vulnerability (UN HABITAT 2002). The lack of adequate compensation regularly results in homelessness, social conflict and disproportionately affects the poor and marginalized, such as children, women, and minority groups (COHRE 2006). Many evictees develop distrust in the political system, and suffer from emotional, physical and psychological trauma. An adequate resettlement plan is essential in order fulfil minimum international human rights standards. However, even where communities are resettled residents seldom receive financial compensation to rebuild dwelling units and the new sites are often distant from income generating activities and lack basic infrastructure and services, such as schools, health services and shopping facilities (UNCHR 2005). The impacts of such resettlement are often detrimental and include increased poverty through the loss of opportunities for income generation and or higher transportation costs and social and cultural isolation (UNCHR 2005). Forced evictions often increase inequalities, discrimination, and ghettoization (COHRE 2006) and can thus be characterized as a process of "de-housing...[with] families...often set back years in their struggle for survival and development" (UN HABITAT 2007, p.60).

As highlighted above, most forced evictions are in breach of a large number of human rights, such as the right to adequate housing, which "has been expressed in ...numerous human rights instruments, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ICESCR (UNCHR 2005, p.8). There exists an important distinction between lawful and unlawful forced evictions (Ibid). Forced evictions are lawful where exceptional circumstances apply and international human right standards (including the exploration of alternatives to eviction, community consultation prior to the eviction and the preparation of a resettlement plan) are respected. Forced evictions are unlawful where exceptional circumstances do not exist and/or international human rights standards are not adhered to (UNCHR 2005).

Whilst, international treaties are legally binding, the ICESCR still lacks an effective international complaints procedure, which leaves law enforcement to regional human rights systems and domestic courts. Whilst regional jurisprudence on forced eviction cases is increasing, it is an unfortunate fact that many governments have signed the ICESCR, without adopting housing rights legislation in their municipal law, which leaves citizens with little domestic legal remedies to contest evictions (Ibid).

Urban Resistance Movements

The spread of economic globalization and neoliberal urban policies has led to the development of counteracting globalized social movements and collaborative efforts of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), national and international NGOs as well as the UN system in a struggle to (re)claim urban citizens' rights around the globe. Much of this resistant is centred on the notion of the 'Right to the City' that severely challenges 20th century urban political and social structures. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre developed the paradigm in 1968 (Harvey 2008, UNESCO and UN HABITAT 2009), in the context of the continuing marginalization of the Parisian working class. Lefebvre sought to empower urban inhabitants to participate in the use and production of the urban space they live in, to shift the increasing importance of the city's exchange value relative to its use value (Purcell 2002). Lefebvre contended that the city belongs to all those that work and live in it rather than to capitalist firms, hence the right and responsibility to shape this future should be shared amongst the inhabitants (Goldberg 2009).

Two essential citizens' rights lie at the heart of Lefebvre's ideas, the right to appropriate urban space and the right to participate in the production of this space (Purcell 2003). In a move away

from protecting individual property rights, the appropriation of urban space refers to residents' rights to use, occupy and shape urban space to work, play, and live (Ibid). Participation, the second essential component of Lefebvre's paradigm gives citizens a central role in the decision making on issues related to the production of urban space. The concept of "appropriation poses a direct challenge to ...political-economic relationships that have been critical to the valorisation of urban space and the accumulation of capital in the modern era" (Purcell 2002, p.103). Hence, Lefebvre's 'Right to the City' fundamentally challenges existing capitalist social relations and strives towards a new "urban politics of the inhabitant" (Purcell, 2002) that grants full substantive citizenship rights at all levels of urban decision making.

Whilst many scholars and activists have adopted Lefebvre's radical ideas, there has been little theoretical exploration of what the 'Right to the City' would look like and which challenges it may generate. As Purcell (2002) highlights:

"Inhabitants may pursue the use value of urban space, but they may not necessarily pursue a Marxist notion of use value in contradistinction to exchange value. This indeterminacy and potential for undesirable outcomes has gone unchallenged in the bulk of the literature on the right to the city because of a pervasive and uncritical assumption that rights are inherently positive" (p.105).

Nevertheless, the 'Right to the City' has become the working slogan for a large variety of local and international urban and housing rights movements that can be divided into two characteristically different broad strands. The first strand incorporates formal, top down and institutional approaches largely focused on the (re)establishment and protection of individual rights (in particular human rights). This movement is largely led by the UN system in collaboration with NGOs and city governments to develop institutional frameworks to safeguard those rights and increase participatory processes (Mayer 2008).

The second strand incorporates a diverse set of more radical, bottom-up approaches of social and political urban contestations around the globe that are often centred around collective rights, each striving to (re)claim their substantive citizenship rights (Ibid). In many instances urban movements develop out of location and issue specific needs that often relate to the redistribution of social and economic resources.

Globalization from Below

The negative externalities and detrimental social costs of the globalization of capital and the neoliberalization of cities then are creating "new forms of translocal political solidarity and consciousness amongst those marginalized and excluded from the city they inhabit. The globalization of the neoliberal project has therefore been tendentially ... associated with the partial globalization of networks of resistance" (Peck and Tickel 2002, p.399).

Appadurai (2001) and others (Purcell 2003, Holsten 2001) assert that we are witnessing the denationalization of citizenship, which is intrinsically linked to the politics of scale. Just as the Westphalian political model, with the nation state as primary political community, was too limiting for the increasing global process of capital accumulation, it's accompanying liberal democratic citizenship is configured too restrictively to allow for resistance against the dominance of capital (Purcell 2003). Hence,

"a series of social forms has emerged to contest, interrogate, and reverse these developments and to create forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilization that proceed independently of the actions of corporate capital and the nation-state system... Social forms rely on strategies, visions, and horizons for globalization on behalf of the poor that can be characterized as "grassroots globalization" (Appadurai 2000, p.3).

This "cross-border activism" is conducted through transnational networks striving to reconstitute

substantive citizenship, through what Appadurai calls “deep democracy”, characterized by “new horizontal modes for articulating the deep democratic politics of the locality” (Appadurai 2001, p.26) that may be issue based (e.g. with a focus on the environment, or housing rights) or identity based (e.g. feminist, indigenous). Each movement is (re)claiming a locally specific set of rights, with some demanding their substantive citizenship rights, others asking for reforms of the existing system or even for a complete transformation, they all request changes towards Lefebvre’s ideal type ‘Right to the City’.

Right to the city movements thus often span across the globe in the quest for solidarity and collaboration. There is no vertical hierarchy in the ‘Right to the City’ movement(s). There is no central administration, no overarching goal channelled from a head office to subordinate local branches. Instead the network is a complex web of local movements, all fighting for similar issues, with some coming together to form a more global movement in the fight for a particular right. As such the global ‘Right to the City’ movement is comprised of a set of horizontally aligned movements, with a complex set of relationships to one another.

Harvey suggests that these activist groups are extremely place based and express a ‘militant particularism’. He sees scope for the militant ideas developed out of a particular place based experience to “get generalized and universalized as a working model for a new form of society that will benefit all humanity – what he terms ‘global ambition’” (Routledge 2003, p.337). In order to develop successful global networks of resistance, movements need to achieve a balance between their militant particularism and learn to understand the ambiguities that are intrinsic to transnational collaborations (e.g. different gender or race relations of participating movements) in order to create “a more transcendent and universal politics, combining social and environmental justice, that transcends the narrow solidarities and particular affinities shaped in particular places” (Routledge 2003, p.337).

Whilst Harvey presents a strong vision for societal transformation towards Lefebvre’s ‘Right to the City’ the reality on the grounds is quite different. Whilst existing small scale local, national and international networks and movements all work on similar issues, they have not formed one broad ‘Right to the City’ movement, that incorporates all of the pressing issues the individual movements are fighting for. Harvey (2008) himself states that existing urban opposition movements are not connected to one another and have to date failed to address the underlying system that has created the place based issues. He suggests that a concerted ‘Right to the City’ movement will need to address all of these issues and form one internationally coherent movement to gain momentum (Mayer Brenner and Marcuse 2008).

However, there are a number of hurdles before the formation of such a revolutionary unified movement. As asserted before, the neoliberal agenda has successfully adapted institutions and encouraged specific policies to weaken existing and prevent the development of new global networks of resistance. Mainstreaming and co-option of individual movements and causes by governments and international organizations plays a large role in this process. Many social movements engage in negotiations with local authorities and agree to solutions that result in minor shifts within the existing system. Furthermore, whilst mainstreaming issues such as ‘housing rights’ is an important process to ensure global awareness and protection of rights through the international legal system, these mechanisms often focus on individual rights, provide very little de facto protection and cause movements seeking more radical solutions to die down.

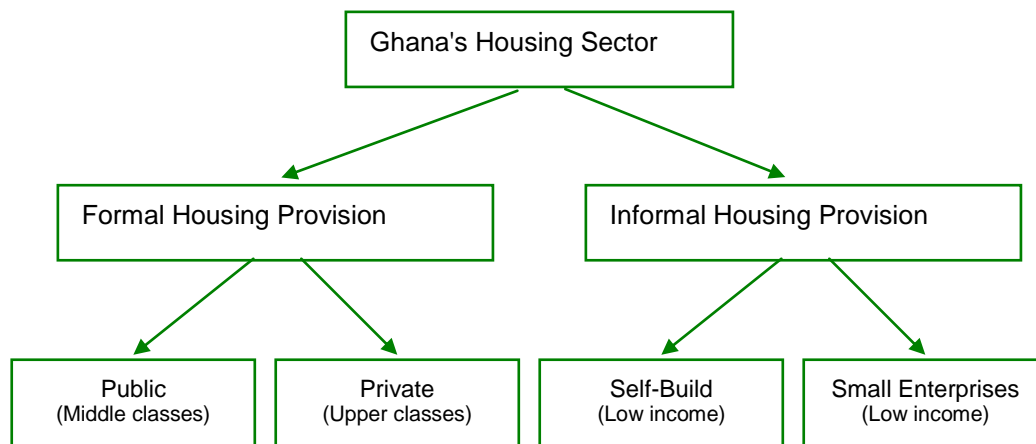
The issues raised above highlight the complexities of creating a unified right the city movement. The next section presents the experience of ‘Old Fadama’, the largest slum in Ghana’s capital city Accra, where residents successfully used collective community action in collaboration with Shack Dwellers International to halt an unlawful forced eviction attempt by the local authorities.

(Re)claiming Citizenship Rights in Accra, Ghana

According to UN Data 42% of Ghana's urban residents live in slums that are characterized by poor shelter, infrastructure and sanitation and are frequently subject to flooding and fire outbreaks (UN Data 2007). Whilst the roots of Ghana's urban problems are multifaceted, an overview of the country's housing policy history sheds light on some of the causes of these negative developments.

Ghana's housing supply is provided by a combination of the formal and informal sectors, each of which consists of two 'sub-sectors'. The formal sector is provided for by the public sector (state owned enterprises that supply social housing primarily for the middle classes) and a formal private sector (which as profit maximiser primarily provides housing for high income groups). The informal sector on the other hand is comprised of self-builders and small-scale enterprises and has been responsible for around 80% of Ghana's total housing provision as it is the only alternative available to low income groups (Arku 2009). The country operates a customary land system alongside a relatively small formal state land tenure system, and a large percentage of housing stock is built without official freehold rights.

Figure 4: Ghana's Housing Sector



Source: Authors own graphic illustration of Arku 2009

In line with the global spread of the first wave of neoliberalism, the GoG implemented International Monetary Fund and World Bank 'sponsored' SAP in the 1980s. Policies affecting the housing sector included the retreat of the state in the direct provision of public services including housing, the introduction of incentives to the formal private sector to entice the provision of social housing, the liberalization of the building material industry and land markets, reform of existing housing institutions and. Whilst SAP resulted in significant economic growth of the Ghanaian economy it caused a variety of negative effects through the neoliberal shifts from a state as primary provider towards a state as facilitator (Arku 2009). In the housing sector for instance, the country now faces an overproduction of housing for high-income earners (built by profit motivated developers) and an underproduction of housing for low-income earners. Hence, the continued dependence on the informal sector for housing provision in urban areas (Konadu-Agyemang 200, Arku 2009).

Housing Rights in Ghana

Section 5 of the Ghanaian constitution protects all citizens' human rights and freedoms (UN HABITAT 2008), including “the right of non-interference with the privacy of one’s home as well as protection from the deprivation of one’s property” (Ibid, p.1). In addition the GoG has ratified the ICESCR, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). However, the Ghanaian authorities have not adopted international housing rights legislation in the national constitution, which presents a severe impediment for local adjudication of housing rights violation.

The GoG has not shied away from large-scale illegal forced evictions in the name of public benefit (COHRE 2006). Between 2003 and 2006 alone, 7000 people were forcibly evicted from Lake Volta in Digya National Park to free up the area for the implementation of alternative land use plans, 800 persons were forcibly moved from Legion Village by the Ghanaian armed forces and 2000 traders lost their livelihoods through an unlawful forced eviction from Accra’s Kantamanto Market (Ibid).

Attempted forced eviction in Old Fadama, Accra

With an estimated population of almost 1,7 million² (the actual population figure is likely to be significantly higher due to the prevalence of informality that is not captured in official census data) and an annual growth rate of 3.4% (AMA), Accra is Ghana’s official capital and largest city, as well as it’s main economic, financial and transportation hub (UN HABITAT (1). The city developed from a collection of fishing villages into a town when the colonial headquarters were relocated from Cape Coast in 1877 (Konadu-Agyemang 2001).

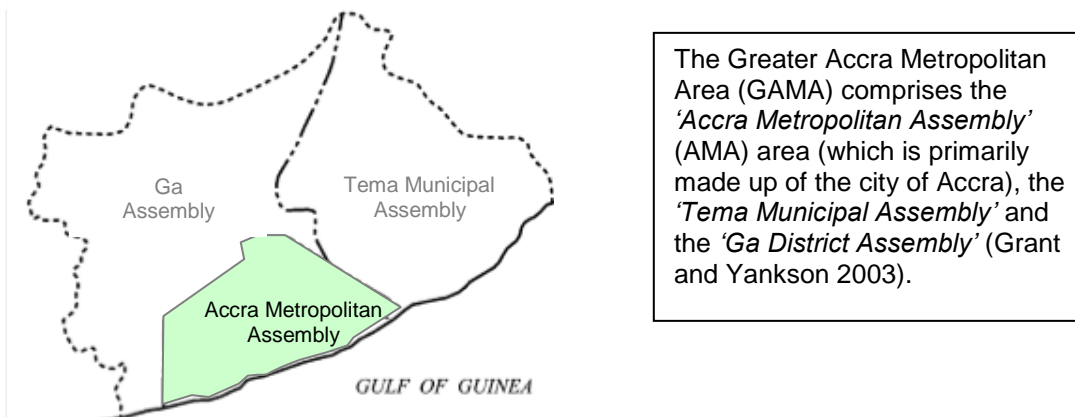
Figure 5: Map of Ghana



Source: Enchanted Learning

² Figure taken from last census in 2000

Figure 6: Greater Accra Metropolitan Area



Base Map Source: Grant and Yankson

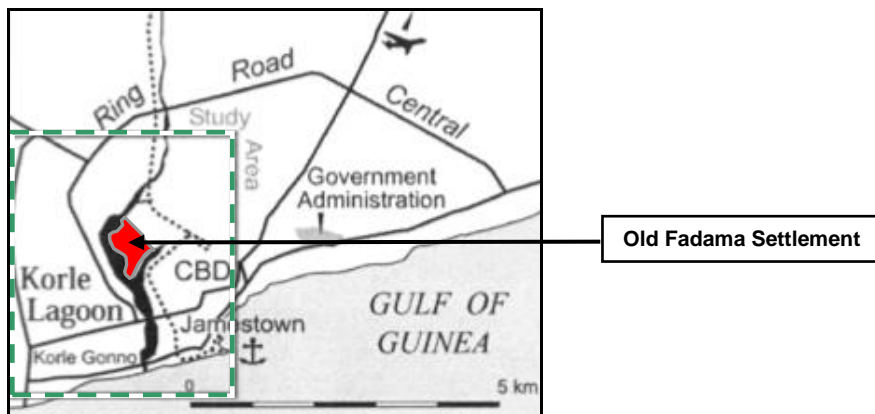
Heavy urban bias policies during the colonial period, in particular those fostering Accra into the country's economic powerhouse, led to steady flows of migration to the capital. This policy approach was sustained by post independence administrations after 1957, which "led to a further widening of the socio-economic and spatial disparities between Accra and the rest of the country, and enhanced the city's ability to pull migrants from all over the country" (Konadu-Agyemang 2001, p.18).

The results of this migration alongside the incapacity of the changing city administrations to manage existing spatial issues and plan for future growth has led to a capital that is largely unplanned and overcrowded, with housing predominantly provided by the informal sector. Accra faces serious social, infrastructural, environmental and housing related deficiencies, including high poverty levels, a lack of adequate solid waste management, obsolete infrastructure in low income areas, loss of green space and natural water bodies, frequent flooding caused by inadequate drainage systems and unsanitary and overcrowded bus and truck depots and markets (UN HABITAT (1), Obetsebi-Lampsey). Just as the informal housing sector has become essential to low-income earners the informal economy has become the only source of income for over 40% of the city's residents (Grant and Yankson 2003, p.70).

Whilst living costs have been rising, wages were frozen with liberalization and user fees for essential welfare services, such as education and health were introduced (Konadu-Agyemang 2001). The result is a price to income ratio for private sector housing of 1:67 for a senior civil servant (Konadu-Agyemang 2001). The inability of the city administrations to deal with the housing supply shortages and the low levels of housing affordability, have directly contributed to the development of informal settlements, such as Usscher Town, Nima, Zongo, Maamobi, Labadi, Teshi and Old Fadama (Konadu-Agyemang 2001).

The Old Fadama settlement stretches across 146 hectares and houses an estimated 25-40.000 residents, which makes it Accra's (and perhaps Ghana's) largest informal settlement (Homeless International(2), Grant 2006). The slum is located in the heart of Accra, to the North-west of the city's Central Business District (CBD) (see Maps 2). The settlement is built on public property and most residents do not hold titles to the land they've built on.

Figure 7: Settlement Location within Accra



Base Maps Source: Grant 2006

Old Fadama is comprised of a mix of residential and commercial informal developments. An estimated 10,000 local residents earn their living from business activities within the slum (Homeless International (2)).

The politics of land and belonging in Old Fadama are highly complex and exceed the scope of this paper. It suffices to state that the settlement grew significantly throughout the 1990s. Much of this growth is attributed to official planning decisions, such as the AMAs “decongestion exercises in 1991 and 2005 to ‘temporarily’ remove hawkers from the major intersections around Accra” (Ibid, p.6) as well as the relocation of the yam market to Old Fadama, which brought with it a need for trustworthy labour that migrated from the country’s yam producing areas. Old Fadama turned into a popular residential and work place for many, such as internally displaced people from the North, and middle class families whose income had been affected by SAP, due to its low rents and proximity to the city centre and central markets that provide ample income generating opportunities (AGFE 2007, Homeless International (2)).

Present day Old Fadama is a high-density area primarily made up of self-built wooden kiosks and shacks that lacks adequate water and sanitation facilities. Due to the area’s location between the Korle Lagoon and the banks of the river Odaw, flooding is a frequent issue (Ibid). Although the AMA implicitly recognised the settlement by providing electricity and other services in the 1990s (AGFE 2007), residents live in precarious living conditions and have been facing the threat of illegal forced eviction since 2002, “when the local authority issued an eviction order to the residents with no provision for alternative land or housing” (Ibid, p.1), which was primarily justified as a necessity for the execution of the Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project (KLERP) (COHRE 2004).

A 2004 study (COHRE 2004), suggests that the GoG had three reasons for the eviction order, the ‘illegal occupation’ of the settlement, ‘health risks’ for the residents and the settlements ‘physical location’ adjacent to the Korle Lagoon. The GoG identified Old Fadama’s residents as squatters and their homes as illegal structures built on public land allocated for alternative uses. The authorities insisted that the settlement’s existence prevents the execution of governmental restoration and rehabilitation plans and sets a negative precedent for urban land management (Grant 2006). Despite Ghana’s unsustainable housing policies the government was indifferent to the fact that without adequate compensation, the eviction would only exacerbate residents’ dire socio-economic and housing conditions. The community itself suggests that their situation

“exposes the GOG's failure to address the housing situation of the poor...People squat because there are no alternatives given the land and housing market” (Grant 2006, p.13).

The GoG was further concerned about the physical health risks associated with the recurring floods and environmental degradation of the lagoon as well as the soil quality of the land the settlement is built on. However, COHRE (2004) concluded that restoring the lagoon and upgrading the settlement on site would mitigate all legitimate health concerns without requiring resettlement of the community. In addition, I contend that the GoG has failed to substantiate how the community's health risks would be lessened if residents were forcibly evicted from their homes without adequate, alternative shelter and employment provision.

The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment commissioned by the GoG concludes that Old Fadama is the primary polluter of the Korle Lagoon (Ibid). On the contrary, COHRE's counter-study illustrates that “the assessment exaggerated the negative impacts of the settlement and... made demonstrable false statements...In fact far from being the main contributor, it was found that... [the settlement] accounts for less than 5% of the lagoons pollution load” (Du Plessis 2005, p.130). Furthermore, an unrelated study on urban waste pollution in the Korle Lagoon conducted by the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland supports this conclusion. “The lagoon receives water from a catchment area of 400 square metres [and 95% of Accra's wastewater] is discharged into open gutters and drains which flow into the Korle Lagoon, [as] none of the approximately 20, small-scale sewerage systems and sewage treatment plants in the city are operated or maintained in accordance with engineering designs” (Boadi and Kuitunen 2002, p.305). 40% of the city's waste are released into surface drains, open spaces and water bodies that all flow into the Korle Lagoon. The discharges originate from a variety of sources and consist of untreated industrial waste effluents from garment and textiles, chemicals and cosmetics, and electrical and electronics industries, as well as schools and the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital and Polyclinic (which lacks a separate waste treatment facility) (Ibid). In addition, a short-term refuse dump along the Lagoon's shores (established in the early 1990) and the Waste Departments untreated human waste disposal plant at a beach near the southern Lagoon outlet have all further exacerbated the dire environmental conditions of the Lagoon.

Both reports then suggest that the GoG's genuine concerns regarding the Old Fadama settlement could be mitigated with in-situ upgrading techniques. Why then is the GoG so keen to evict and resettle the community? Grant (2006) suggests that the Ghanaian authorities are under pressure to clear Old Fadama due to “additional costs in the form of extra interest payments that are being incurred...due to delays in completion of the [KLERP] project, [as the existing] loan terms require the removal of settlers to assist in the completion of the restoration” (Ibid, p.12).

Furthermore, the GoG believes that the settlement's existence “undermines urban planning efforts around the ... [CBD]. Accra's city authorities have devised a planning strategy to create an environmentally sensitive and green city (Obetsebi-Lamptey). Using neoliberal planning lingo, Accra's Minister for Tourism and the Modernization of the Capital City points out that

“The modernization of capital cities all over the world has always been viewed from the stand point of social engineering...with the primary aim of making such places most competitive and turn them into the...destination of choice for international gatherings, tourism, investment etc. Ours is no exception.” (Ibid, p.3)

He further states that the modern capital city should be centred around a CBD and must be secure, safe and well structured through adequate zoning laws. It should boast historical monuments and tourist sites, provide adequate social amenities and public open space to its residents (Ibid). In line with Smith's (2002) assertion that language borrowed from ecology and biomedicine is used to disguise the negative effects of regeneration, Obetsebi-Lamptey describes Accra as a defective body that needs 'regeneration'.

“The CBD is the heart of a thriving city like the human anatomy, once the heart becomes defective, the body degenerates in tandem. Such is the tragedy of the national territory³...” (Ibid, p.8).

If we apply the GoG's rational, Old Fadama becomes the antipode of the modern capital city, but its location right in the heart of Accra, adjacent to the CBD, provides opportunities for gentrification through regeneration. And so the government (as well as much of the country's press) has officially adopted derogative language and attitude toward Old Fadama, in order to diminish the settlement and its inhabitants, to the degree that they appear to have an alternative status within society, that of the sinner and outlaw.

The Ghanaian authorities have officially named Old Fadama “Sodom and Gomorrah” (Grant 2006, Boadi and Kuitunen 2002), as evident in presentations and official documents and maps (See Figure 4 which originates from the Survey Department of Ghana).

Figure 4: Accra Area Map

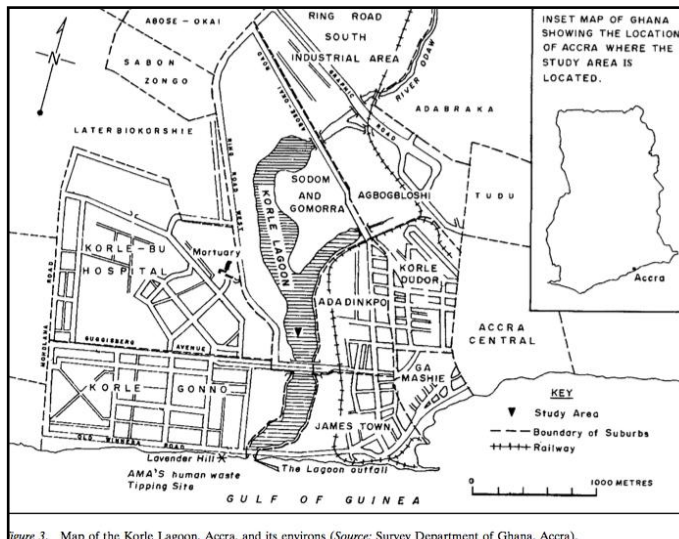


Figure 3. Map of the Korle Lagoon, Accra, and its environs (Source: Survey Department of Ghana, Accra).

Source: Boadi and Kuitunen 2002

and Gomorrah" published in a Ghanaian weekly news magazine in 2002, depicts the following picture of the settlement, completely ignoring existing community spirit, advanced political and social configurations, the neighbourhood's income generating opportunities for Accra's poor and the settlement's significant contribution to the city's food provision:

“On a ... mid-Thursday afternoon stands a lady, almost nude, throwing water on her body. A group of young men sit idle meters away from her, chatting and puffing marijuana... Sex is nothing here; rape is normal...Life here is the survival of the fittest. It's unlike anywhere else. In short, the community, born barely 10 years ago, has emerged as an albatross, with its attendant cases of social vices” (Ogbamey 2002, p.1)

In depicting the settlement as Sodom and Gomorrah, the government is openly portraying its limited lifespan, as destruction is both forthcoming and legitimate. The law does not protect outlaws, as the crimes they have committed result in the removal of their substantive citizenship rights. They are physically within, but conceptually outside the boundaries of society. Legitimizing the eviction of outlaws from a place that even god would ultimately destroy due to the vices

³ The terms 'National Territory' and 'NCT' (National Capital Territory) are alternative designations for Accra

occurring within, is easily justifiable to a constituency, especially if the accompanying propaganda has resulted in the settlement being a no-go area for other residents due to fear of insecurity.

Halting the Old Fadama Eviction through Grassroots Globalization Efforts

Old Fadama's residents have been socially and politically well organized since early settlement formation, even if the "community frameworks were not legible to the formal policy community" (Grant 2006, p.14). The settlement clearly resembles any other political community in that there exist power struggles, but it suffices to note that residents created "a common political front to oppose the threat of eviction" (Ibid). The community sought support from the Centre for Public Interest Law (CEPIL, a local NGO) and COHRE to contest the eviction note through official legal procedures. The first step was a joint letter of contestation from COHRE and others, which highlighted the four main transgression points of the eviction order from Ghana's legal obligations:

- The GoG failed to consider reasonable alternatives to the eviction
- Residents were not consulted prior to the eviction order
- The advanced eviction warning period of two weeks was too short
- The GoG failed to provide alternative accommodation or sites to the residents (Du Plessis 2005, Centre for Public Interest Law)

Following the complaints letter, CEPIL appealed to the High Court on the basis of these violations. The court issued a conclusion that represents a number of grave errors in international law and rejected the appeal (COHRE 2002). In response the residents of Old Fadama investigated alternative methods of contestation, which led to a collaboration with Shack Dwellers International (SDI). What began as a local grassroots organization named 'National Slum Dwellers Federation' in Mumbai in the mid 1970s, gradually expanded through relationship building with federations in South Africa and Thailand. SDI was officially founded in 1996, when it included federations in 14 countries across 4 continents and has turned into a global horizontal network of local "urban activist movements" (Appadurai A, 2001). The core task of SDI is to "organize and unite the poor to influence the way governments, international non governmental organizations and TNCs discharge their obligations to the poor, particularly urban poor" (Shack-dwellers International (2)).

The publicity around the Old Fadama case and the residents' contacts with COHRE led to the involvement of the South African branch of SDI. Two coordinators visited Old Fadama in 2003, while in Ghana for an international housing conference (Grant 2006). At the time of the exchange visit residents had already set up various savings groups in order to improve the physical environment of the settlement (Braimah, 2002). The community was willing to form a community based NGO that would be tasked with providing the necessary professional, technical and administrative support to create local CBOs that would provide support to residents in informal settlements to create savings and loan schemes and "ultimately build and support a federation of urban poor in Ghana" (Shack-dwellers International (2)).

For SDI the eviction note was merely a symptom of the effects of poverty, marginalization and the lack of civic and political rights facing the residents of Old Fadama as well as many other informal settlements in Ghana (Appadurai, 2001). Hence, rather than focusing specifically on halting the eviction, SDI supported the community in claiming their substantive citizenship rights. The NGO "People's Dialogue on Human Settlement" (PD) was created in 2003, in order to assist the community in setting up a national federation, formally known as 'Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor' (GHAFUP) ((Homeless International (2)). The GHAFUP leadership assisted the Old Fadama community in organizing and provided official representation before the GoG.

Within the first three years of inception PD and GHAFUP realised a number of political achievements for the Old Fadama community as well as more generally for Ghana's urban poor. The organisations created a constructive dialogue with the Ghanaian authorities in order to stall

the eviction and develop alternatives and began addressing issues of marginalization of Ghana's urban poor (Grant 2006, Homeless International (2)). The SDI model that began in Old Fadama in November in 2003, has since been replicated in many informal settlements in Ghana. By 2005 the combined federations had 52 savings and housing schemes in 82 communities with a total membership of over 6,000 families. By 2005 PD and GHAFUP had expanded operations to four of Ghana's largest urban localities, Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi and Ashaiman (Shack Dwellers International 2005-2).

The SDI model's crucial strategies and instruments are group exchanges, savings and loan schemes, local upgrading projects, settlement profiling and collaborative efforts with NGOs to create dialogues with government officials and other formal institutions (Grant 2006, Shack Dwellers International (2)). These instruments are applied to fulfil the organization's overall mission to improve the urban poor's socio-economic and shelter conditions. PD activities are expanding to include upgrading of informal settlements, the development of adequate resettlement programmes to ensure the provision of decent housing for Ghana's poor, and setting up a special fund that enables financing of community driven development.

The founding of both PD and GHAFUP and SDIs involvement in Ghana have secured collaborative efforts and support from a variety of international organization. Homeless International, a UK based charity that supports community led housing and infrastructure projects is providing financial support with grants from the UK Department for International Development and the Waterloo Housing Association, in a quest "to enable Ghana's urban poor to realise rights to adequate housing, safe settlements, secure tenure and affordable infrastructure" (Homeless International (3)). Talks at the 2004 World Urban forum in Barcelona, resulted in a UN AGFE mission to Old Fadama in collaboration with the GoGs Department of Local Government and Rural Development in 2006. In addition a meeting of relevant Ghanaian ministries in 2005 resulted in the initial development of a relocation plan for Old Fadama's residents and the GoG requested UN HABITAT and AGFE support to further develop the plan (AGFE 2007).

In summary, the Old Fadama community managed to engage in collaborative efforts with the GoG in order to develop a viable alternative to the unlawful forced eviction. Whilst the community's activism centred around a very situation specific issue, namely the planned unlawful forced eviction, it led to the development of a national urban movement that is now engaged in improving the lives of Ghana's urban poor with a vast array of national and international support.

However, despite these initial successes, Ghana's urban poor have encountered numerous hurdles in their quest to claim full citizenship rights, and it remains to be seen if the resulting shifts in power-relations are long-lasting. One of the latest setbacks for Old Fadama's residents occurred as a result of severe violent clashes between supporters of different political parties within the settlement during the summer of 2009. Accra's local authorities, under the city's new mayor, immediately took the opportunity to label the settlement as a 'risk to national security' and re-ordered the eviction that had been on hold since 2002. The threat of illegal forced eviction had once again returned to the community (Braimah, 2009).

However this time around, relationships between the residents and the Ghanaian branches of COHRE and Amnesty International prompted an immediately successful campaign against the AMA's renewed eviction plans. Furthermore, Ghana's central government, the media, and the general public have all drastically changed their opinions about the community and now support the residents' requests for alternatives to the illegal forced eviction (Ibid)

Reporting on the latest developments in Old Fadama, Farouk Braimah from PD highlights that within three weeks of the new eviction threat, the anti-eviction campaign managed to create renewed dialogue with the municipal authorities. Although the renewed eviction attempt poses questions regarding any changes in power-relations the Ghanaian urban movement has been able to achieve, the speed of the collective response and support from the central government,

the media and Accra's wider community are a clear sign that Ghana's urban poor have come a long way in the process of claiming their right to the city.

Concluding Remarks

The emerging Ghanaian urban movement, formalized through PD and GHAFUP and supported by the international horizontal urban housing rights movement SDI, supports the notion that the negative effects of neoliberal urban policy have encouraged the development of globalized resistance networks as suggested by Appadurai, Smith, Peck and Tickel and others. However, what we lack is an understanding of how these individual political movements, can transcend their local particularisms and consolidate their quest for specific rights into one large global coherent "Right to the City" movement in order to gain momentum and change the existing unequal global economic system that lies at the heart of much of the marginalization felt in those different localities. The case of old Fadama clearly demonstrates that there is scope for international urban movements to fight for citizen's rights and encourage change, but it also raises the question of how these movements can consolidate, scale-up and prevent the diluting effects of co-option.

There is scope for the urban movements fighting against the practice of forced evictions to play a key role in scaling up the efforts to create a momentum for the 'Right to the City' movement. The severity of large scale forced evictions and the publicity they receive from the media and international organizations such as the UN system, Amnesty International, Witness and others, as well as the fact that the practice violates various different human rights offers a platform for consolidated and supported action. The human rights violations that occur during forced evictions are much more evident than the more hidden effects of market based evictions for instance. The main task is to further highlight the underlying reasons for forced evictions and begin portraying it as a global process rather than presenting each case as a country specific issue. Whilst there are always locally specific socio-cultural and political issues involved in the process of displacement, we need to start drawing links between the low income families that have been forced to move away from Brooklyn New York, London's East End, or Berlin Kreuzberg due to increasing costs of rent and services and those that are evicted from informal settlements in cities like Accra, Lagos, Johannesburg and Kigali. Only once we understand the global forces that have contributed to the local issues communities around the globe are facing, can we turn Harvey's militant particularism successfully into a global ambition.

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