

Greater Accra as a Fragmented Metropolis

Monique Bertrand

The joint French/Ghanaian research undertaken in response to the call for contribution on FAC Sciences Sociales' "Evolution de la vie politique, de l'économie, de la société et de la ville en Afrique" was meant to ensure that real account is taken of residential mobility in the process of town-planning and metropolis constructions in West Africa. In this regard, three assumptions have been confirmed by the Ghanaian capital when it comes to questioning the patrimonial and economical dimensions of housing practices. This first assumption is on how to identify the family determinants of urban population migrating to a large city of the Gulf of Guinea and/or experiencing intra-metropolitan residential redistributions. Both phenomena seem to be often linked but cannot, at any rate, be simply construed as a stage of entering into the city or transiting in it. The idea that individuals, households and family segments are free electrons in the metropolitan area could not be confirmed. Instead, surveys show these to be inter-related through strong economic, social and territorial determinations. Once intra-urban relocations and gradual familiarisation with different components of the big city have been allowed for, it becomes possible to validly assess the flows and actors involved using a current marginalisation/integration gradient of trajectories, that might either most likely lead to real social promotion or otherwise to disqualifying routes where mobility is blocked or even recessive.

Structured in this way by crossed logic, one in the range of possibilities is to describe city dwellers responses to the constraints and opportunities of life cycle, land rent and solvency required by urban markets, and to analyse these responses as residential "choices" or choises of location within the city. These leeways, which are more tactical than deliberately strategic, reflect an overall structuring of an urban space marked by poverty, but also of the production and the social development of many more diversified local spaces than are captured in the most common interpretations of the urban phenomenon. Thus, mobility appears to be not only linked to economic rationality – optimising location and housing costs in relation to labour market access, services and the consumption patterns associated with large population aggregates – but also to its limitations for the poorest city dwellers.

 Dodowa, New Fadama, Old Teshie



It is difficult to understand with this single argument, indeed, why of late the population growth rate of the Accra Metropolitan District still runs high. The fact that many fee holders got blocked in an aging estate of *compounds* and inherited family houses, the more or less acceptable state of urban traffic jams constitute different kinds of arguments dealing with cultural habits and collective representations of the city and household life patterns. Mobility then seems to be linked to social and notably family factors, the importance of which has been highlighted in the city dwellers present and past by the work of Elizabeth Ardayfio-Schandorf and Monique Bertrand.

The second assumption has to do with the political dimension of residing in the city. It questioned in particular the fact that unstable populations have been overlooked in the terms of reference of urban projects. Correlatively has been questioned the community credit – financial, electoral and associative mobilisations – which can be conferred to populations so locally rooted at the end of their residential trajectories that they become uppermost interested in investing in a “sustainable urban

development” side by side with the public authorities and the market actors. The residential constraints endured daily in the districts have confirmed these political housing stakes in Greater Accra: keeping social peace and ensuring a minimum integration of the citizens,¹ reducing the most blatant inequalities and the most visible frustrations. Another result was the emergence of an extensive and politically charged popular terminology: “the well-off” vs. “the excluded”, “big men” vs. “the homeless”, “veranda boys” and others who have turned into city dropouts because of the difficulties to find sustainable housing.

There have been several time steps when population mobility or settlement acted indeed as a regulator faced with the impoverishment of a large fraction of Accra residents. The developments of the rental market (Chapters 6 and 7) is one major indication among many other trends that have been observed in the neighbouring West African capitals: new onslaught on customary land division, chains of residential vacancy, and migrant guest houses prompted by the emergence of new *self-contained housing* in upscale suburbs, security of tenure for the poorest free holders, particularly the wives who have been dropped in their indigenous communities, escapism from social youth fleeing family conflicts, etc. The *exit option* and its corollary which is to return to indigenous values and land rights, have certainly already drawn the attention of rural anthropology researchers. Though urban areas continue to be marked by both, with no less political implications. Without them, one cannot fully understand the individualisation process affecting residential practices in town even if, on the other hand, one does not endorse the Western-theory of transition to a nuclear family. At play in our analysis of the Ghanaian metropolis are the combined effects of structural material constraints and a more fragmented search for security firewalls against the psychosocial pressures of city life.

The third assumption, whose arguments have also been developed based on local inquiries, has focused on the combined territorial effects of mobility and stability both involving a dialectical relationship in the making of a metropolis. Ghanaian expatriates through international migration, many young people looking for vocational training, many Ga or Shañ families deployed into residential systems in several locations, have provided all the leads needed to make fruitful comparisons between Greater Accra and its sister cities of the sub-region. The capital of Mali played for instance this analytic role as a foil of the Ghanaian ordinariness and peculiarities in West Africa (Chapters 4, 5 and 8). This reasoned contextualisation of social groups and standard city figures, according to reference locations where they could be surveyed and the mobility segments they have illustrated, contribute to renewing the interpretation of city modernity. The situations of crises, transition, cultural mix and plurality have made it appears really polysemous.

Giving Sustainable Scientific Credibility to Urban Residential Mobility

Unquestionably, urban dynamics in Africa are tested like on other continents by growing residential mobility made more complex by their orientations, determinants and variations (Dureau and *al.* 2000). From this perspective, Greater Accra is a

perfect illustration of a metropolis reconstruction process which is more driven by population movements rather than the movement of capital in the sub-regional space. The critical contribution made by this study is to have determined their scope, especially in relation to external migration and to have acknowledged all the stakes involved.

- **Methodological stakes:** This analysis indeed gives credibility to the population movements only when weighted against the city reference “stocks”, with rigorously identified measuring scales. It also adds a new longitudinal dimension to the transversal approaches to census taking which have not been so much efficient in capturing migration and mobility. We, therefore, gathered the resources it took to monitor city dwellers, not only the survey areas and the changes in compositions they have generally orchestrated, according to the combined influences of their spatial mobility and progress in life cycle.
- **Political stakes:** As indicated in the introduction, the terms of reference of urban development projects contain countless fixity presuppositions in the African capitals, for instance towards landlords whose participation, whether in a contractual or institutionalised form through a tax policy, is expected. The operational targets of urban projects have so far been silent on the tenants who form both the most mobile and the most non-migrant part of city folks.
- **Historical stakes:** One can understand the unintentional omission and implicit masking of intra-urban migration only by the degree of epistemological focus which Africans put a contrario on intra-regional and international migrations which has resulted in over-emphasising urbanization at the expense of the city (Chapter 8). Colonial labour needs and constraints weighed a lot on the contemporary formulation of “One foot here, one foot there”. There are still many contemporary reminders, though adapted to the structural adjustment crisis of the 1980s, of the African migrant “foreign to the city” theory. The victims of drought in the Sahel or non-natives of the littoral communities of Ghana finally appear to remain indifferent not only in terms of personal investment in the city, but also in terms of the conservation and the preservation of their environment. However, at play in what is usually described today as “sustainable development” is a collective awareness and will not simply outlined in future projections. The historical substance of the “co-dwelling” project being implemented, in particular by urban sub-Saharan Africa, requires hypotheses - modernity paired with the idea of urbanity in particular – going beyond both biographical temporality and the passage of time which methodological individualism can reverse.

Determining the scope and profile of residential mobility required, therefore, that the team make a clear distinction between registering the family link in a space not limited to a single place, as evidenced by the city dwellers’ multi-location practices, and the much less founded assumption of “city rejection”, as a lasting living space for migrants and their descent. Assigning city dwellers to a univocal location or to a

single reference house could not fit into our real estate and residential analysis. But even if the reverse idea of near-ubiquity of city folks² had been borrowed from some postmodernist movement, it would have also been criticised for historical negligence all the same.

For all these reasons and in line with recent scientific exchanges, we see mobility as a relevant and even strategic analyser of this co-dwelling project which the debates on the future of Africa can no longer overlook. Being the nodal point of integration and marginalisation processes, and urban density and segregation assessments, mobility documents researchers, politics and experts on the sensitive aspects of the modes of living in the finest of neighbourhoods. It also renews the work devoted in the more remote past to the public housing policies that marked African countries', at the time of their independence, and later their relative disengagement. It sheds light today on the analysis of poverty and inequalities, failures in access to urban services as well as urban responses to these failures. But beyond just quantifying the flows, the movement and its spatial orientations refer to broader determinants: land and rental markets, i.e. the urban rent issue, labour markets and relocations due to the remote location of homes, family reproduction and social network dynamics, all of which have to submit to the macro and micro-adjustments prompted by what the neoliberal situation trivialised as economic "crisis". Lastly, mobility probes the process of urbanization in Africa, through its new metropolized form, in comparison to other historical trajectories: those of Latin America whose city folks/rural folks balance has been favourable to the former for more than a generation, or those of the Asian world which has been marked by high general and urban densities.

Field inquiries have thus fully played their role in our study by first documenting city inhabitants' paces and developments in their residential positions from multiple hindsight: monitoring household membership and renewal over two years; effect of family life cycle, from formation to maturation and to the transmission of family properties; historical changes at play in the production of urban housing and leasing park. The compounded nature of metropolitan transformations, according to diverse temporalities, thus plays out through an extensive terminology of long transitions and circumstantial variations.

In this regard, the know-how of the non-Africanist members of the French team turned out to be crucial in leading the biographical analysis of city practices and making the best of them through a multi-level processing of information organised according to various inquiry levels: *urban communities, units of co-dwelling, families, reference persons and other family and household members*. They have helped us to process the successive sequences of stays or residential stages in their own chronological unfolding and in their submission to contextual effects. When it came to explaining the reasons for relocating, the answers did not always relate to job allocation and the general constraints of real estate markets. Instead, there were numerous justifications of a more random and truly fragmentary nature like "I had to follow someone", "I was sacked or adopted by someone".

Our work can, therefore, be said to have shown inventiveness in collecting field data, applying required precautions for data processing and assessing unprecedented measures. However, some technical conditions are still terribly lacking for us to be able to produce a comprehensive modelling of the survey results, the main failures having to do with nomenclature harmonisation and availability of mapping at each level of the analysis. We have, therefore, had to compare a number of survey areas by applying a geographical intra-urban approach. This prospect of a city folk on the move has led us to place the populations and urban communities between the two extremes of an unequal penchant for residential mobility, between stability polarity and mobility polarity. Greater Accra thus outlines a “quadrilateral” of the modes of insertion in the metropolitan space:

- The profile of rooted, non-migrant populations is the one precisely targeted by politicians in their incentive participatory policy;
- That of stable “captives” is made of residents trapped in the most precarious or most dense segments of the real estate market;
- For the “experimental” mobile dwellers, residential adventures or migratory retreats may be either ill-fated or pay off, land access being a high-risk undertaking not only for Greater Accra migrants;
- The “swinging”, floating or itinerant dwellers are finally left with little possibility to anticipate and are therefore exposed to a high risk of residential ejection.

At the sub-regional level, comparing Greater Accra to another capital uncovers some peculiarities. Mobile or non-mobile profiles appear to be typically Ghanaian at least in so far as the southern half of the country is concerned. While some determinants of relocation and household rearrangement likelihood have turned out to be similar in many big cities, their effects on the other individual variables appear to be more accurately localized. The whole of Greater Accra thus reflects the impact of *free holders* in housing occupancy; some specific survey areas show spatial concentration of flat type housing; others rather underline the residential separation of spouses on the Ga coastal region, while others show some regional marginal effects... Consequently, these combined effects of general factors and special circumstances have been echoed in most of our comments.

The comparative approach has, therefore, proved all its usefulness in the three authors’ contributions: not only because it finely puts into perspective the places surveyed in the Ghanaian capital (E. Ardayfio-Schandorf, M. Bertrand, P.W.K. Yankson) but also more generally relative to an inevitably plural Africa, as shown by two capitals surveyed with identical protocols. Despite their sensitive ecological and significant differences and institutional legacies, Bamako and Accra are both being organised within a regional administrative framework. Town-planning and development heavily relies on international donors, with the World Bank as the lead, and their development agencies. But among the differences affecting population redistribution to, within and from these large cities, Monique Bertrand emphasises their unbalanced registration in the historical merchant transit networks, non-standardised State regulation of real

estate markets, unequal positioning of women in the transmission of residential properties.

- A legacy of French centralism, State control of real estate is exerted in Bamako over the already secular production of land plots. It also explains why city entry denial policies alternate with informal city regularisation resulting from irregular forms of land acquisitions. The compound architecture and its uses, however, transcend this real estate dualism. In still often large families, girls are expected to live together as future wives rather than heirs. The effects of city generation prevail over the process of socioeconomic division in the understanding of urban composition mode and its rearrangements through mobility.
- These characteristics bring Accra clearly to the foreground. In fact, the Ghanaian capital rests in a port framework which explains the attractiveness of Tema-Ashaiman, an economic duplicate of a central city and its implied demographic redistributions to regional peripheries. Besides, the customary chieftaincy and its neo-customary derivatives organise a fragmented real estate market in this setting in which “spontaneous” housing concept makes no sense but over which public planning today has little control. Socioeconomic segregation is more visible there than in Bamako even on a finer urban scale, and housing supply is less exclusively centred on the compound model. The average size of city households is significantly smaller than that of the neighbouring countries, which is not exclusively linked to fecundity control in the city. It is thus relevant in order to understand these low averages to investigate the impact of the rental market which generates quite small housing. Due to poverty-related residential captives, the control of *family houses* grows into the exercise of atomised rights over a set of rooms; it maintains impressive densities while maintenance is lacking in the old districts.

Ghana and Mali’s political, economical and cultural trajectories thus impact differently their respective capitals. Based on this fact, we could not endorse the idea of an automatic link often established between the poor and especially the “poorest of the poor” (like for instance female family heads) depending on how long you have taken roots in the districts, or on the contrary, on residential turbulences beyond control. The gradient showing from the most mobile to the most stable is indeed founded in Bamako on tenants/landlords opposition. This refers to a hierarchy in terms of duration of living in town, household size and household capacity of accommodating the new migrants, and finally on financial savings capacity. The long rooted inhabitants are not the least favoured by the social space needed to defend private interests or allow them to prevail.

On the contrary, Accra might confirm the theory that the poorest city dwellers are on a relative house arrest in the metropolitan space. But our reporting on residential mobility opposed on the matter the compound occupants of the three poorest districts and the most mobile city dwellers in their biographical course (Bertrand et

Delaunay 2005). The former exhibit the lowest intra-urban mobility rates in the course of their lives. The latter today occupy the most image-enhancing housing units: individual houses and flats now available on a hire-purchase scheme. Professional status and education capital are the main factors behind their economic success which requires a re-territorialisation in the city.

Securing or Making Residential Positions Precarious?

The programme of research investigated residential practices in terms of cohabitations *in situ* and intra-metropolis relocation. To achieve this, we opted for the analysis of city compositions detailing, on the one hand, the number and quality of individuals in households and families (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and the number and quality of households in families and blocks of buildings (Chapters 5 and 7).

In the first part of our inquiry – membership of domestic units – the surveys supervised by Elizabeth Ardayfio-Schandorf and Monique Bertrand underscored the significance of the rearrangements induced by family relocations and the intra or extra-urban residential movement of household members. Variable time frames have been set for measuring these inflows and outflows: observations during the last decade, recorded movements within every period of five years over the last twenty years, biographical hindsight provided by a sub-sample of about 1,400 adults or a year period to monitor residents on a continuous basis between two passages of the survey team. All these time frames contribute to bringing under focus, beyond the political opposition of migrant and indigenous communities, the divide between poor populations and higher income groups. The forms of the divide are nuanced from the core of the city to the suburban and peri-urban areas of the metropolis. The special case of female household heads also constitutes a remarkably significant proportion – more than one-quarter of households – in the Ghanaian capital. Promotions or loss of social position, adaptations and resistance to crisis in housing conditions: the social interpretation conveyed by these contributions therefore depends not only on the type of population surveyed but also on the places surveyed in the city and on quite diversified local contexts.

Nonetheless, refining city understanding through localised inquiries does not at all mean that broader networks of individual investments and family territorialisation should not be brought into play. One of the major merits of our conclusions on gender relations in domestic control or on the transmission of urban properties is to have realised this shift between promoting intra-urban analyses and the echo induced by the latter even beyond metropolis limits: mobility to or from the *hometown*, receiving new migrating members in already urban families, land acquisition by mobilising far away savings, etc.

The second part of our inquiry – the making and membership of households – primarily focused on the particular social significance of seemingly equivalent residential positions for which common terminologies are used in Africa. Census and national surveys indeed classify households as “landlords”, “tenants” and “charge-free occupants”. Assuredly, duration of collective use does not cover the same

meaning in Ghanaian *family houses* occupied by “free holders”, according to their usufruct rights, as in the “concessions” in the Francophone urban area whose occupants appear to obey a stronger family hierarchy, while being clearly distinct from their “strangers” who can at times be lodged for a long period of time. In this case, tenure is construed as ownership, though under the tight control of the family head who tends to marginalize girls from his list of property transmission. By contrast, in the former case, management of consumables – electricity and water bills – household refuse disposal tax – and vacant rooms appears to be more fragmented. Many *free holders* in Accra also rent out their “part” of the inherited property with relative autonomy in decision-making. This results in very variable profiles of households and residential cohabitation in the urban space and a distinction being often made between *sleeping arrangements* and *cooking arrangements* which poses quite a lot challenges to the measure.

In Chapter 5, however, it was possible to compare not only the places surveyed in the Ghanaian population aggregate but also many metropolises of the sub-region based on harmonised measures of residential pressure. In this connection, there have been many authoritative numerical reporting on the description of households: between individualised property households and joint ownership households, between landlords and tenants, between occupying owners and non-residents owners, between leasers and non-leasers, etc. Compound composition thus reflects that of households in the description of city dwellers’ housing conditions.

The tenant “status” also appears to be more diversified in the Ghanaian urban area than has been suggested by existing literature, and also more varied than in the Malian capital: being a real social handicap in Bamako, house renting turns out to be sometimes sought in Accra. Then, it becomes part of an ambition “*to be on my own*”; it provides an exit alternative from the congested environment of *compounds* to some middle class households and even to the least poor of the poor. But this relatively chosen, rather than imposed renting alternative, is weakened by insufficient housing supply both in numbers and quality. The market is, indeed, constrained by the speculation on real estate orchestrated at times on a broad scale and often in conflicting ways by the representatives of *Stool* and *family lands* under the aegis of customary or private interests. Making advance payments in rents covering several years has become such a common practice that landlords have been encouraged to make real estate investments which are actually financed by the tenants. These powerful determinants have been decoded in the dual contribution made by Paul Yankson from the leasers (landlords) and tenants’ perspective. The focus here is on the economic gaps affecting city mobility, on differences in the living standards of “cumulative” owners and simple users, on the diversification of real estate parks based on their architecture and the financing capacity of their developers. Adding to this is the reorientation of *flats* management from renting to selling, and the sudden surge of private real estate promotion.

Lastly, the scope, orientation and variability of metropolitan mobility are analysed in the last chapter. A refined inquiry scale remains justified here: first because many

city dwellers proceed by “flea jumps”, relocation in the neighbourhood and gradual adaptation to Greater Accra which is constantly expanding, secondly because mobility has proved to be oriented by marked specificities within Greater Accra. Mobility thus reflects some sorting both on entry into and exit from houses in community privacy: sorting takes place when the populations coming from different urban backgrounds are settling, while other households remain in districts with less intensive flows. In return, mobility, therefore, exerts some structuring effects on these local contexts. The economic segmentation of real estate market described in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, is only matched by the territorial fragmentation that mobility brings into play (Chapter 8).

Process and Modalities of City Making

The dialectic links established between city socioeconomic composition and its rearrangements through residential mobility primarily underscore the selective nature of the urban fabric for a full set of people excluded from the traditional analysis of households and housing. The city dwellers who are housed in kiosks, garages, *boys' quarters* or unfinished houses have been recaptured under an old formulation as “floating” population; lodged itinerants, youth sleeping around overcrowded houses or night markets: all of them representing the younger poor of the political city, a kind of “homeless” who have not completely severed ties to their families and to some social dependence in their communities. The “multi-evicted” is the definition of a new profile of defaulting payers with durable insolvency record and for whom the “landlords have no longer any mercy”. The list contains almost as many urban sociological types as there are particular cases in terms of their numbers and the perpetuation of precarious situations uncovered by each of them but wrongly captured in African census taking.

As for the households already formed and clearly identifiable among the categories of urban analysis, they have also been victims of economic selections. They call though for a more general debate between two models of city membership: that of a geographic rooting with community cohesion which is far better than any republican regulation, is extensively valued in the Ghanaian identity discourse, indigenous land claims, previous references or new political standards; that of mobility is increasingly presented as a “value” of network flexibility, a “resource” associated with modern lifestyle or even a “capital” linked to the globalisation and to the urban management references.

Some of our observations tend to confirm the first interpretation. The analysis of group cohesion and solidarity – socioeconomic classes, generations of migrants, urban service uses – thus values the impact of spatial proximity and neighbourhood effects. Community references are many in the Accra context: re-composition of the extended families of northern migrants in the *zongos* or Muslim places, role played by some Churches in local sanitation preservation campaign, political exploitation of *communal labour* in voting campaigns, retention of labour force in Tema countryside despite salary redeployments by major port companies. To this

can be opposed the ways in which community sociability first suffered, in many Francophone capitals of West Africa, from the political centralism which had broken, on Africa's accession to independence, the first associations of "natives" from different regions of emigration. The decentralisation ambitions of the last decade are thus hindered in Bamako by the competition going on in the local electioneering game between municipalities and their locally elected members.

The prospect of a "city on the move" can also be amply argued by laying emphasis on an unstable relationship which is not limited to the urban territory and its political space, and in which social interests appear to be tenuous. This is an outline of city practice characterised by real strides from a temporary residential relay station to a stabilisation hub perhaps not so much temporary. Mobility thus affords the opportunity to observe how urban space effectively builds itself into a network. While it is sometimes described as "circulatory" (Tarrus 1993), this is a more fluid relationship which indeed does not exclude local investments though often ordered from afar.

Accra appears, therefore, to be "under pressure" between turbulences and re-composition, between some sort of territorial instability – modification of internal and external city limits, residential redistribution of its inhabitants – and inertia effects, inheritance of structure at the least: preponderance of population settlement gradients and contrasts, legitimisation of landlords, durable market selections etc. The fragmentation of residential integration profiles provide keys to understanding this apparent paradox which is clearly illustrated by one of the least known West African capital in Francophone research.

Yet, the analysis of city movement primarily confirms the trivial nature of metropolitan differentiation variables. Whether these variables are defined prior to the selection of survey areas and populations (E. Ardayio-Schendorf, P.W.K. Yankson) or are the result of *a posteriori* processing of statistical discriminations (M. Bertrand), they clearly document the common conclusions on Greater Accra and so many other large developing cities: impact of life cycle on individual trajectories, historical effect of migratory melting pot, impact of education level and vocational qualification. This primary interpretative framework complements other well-known patterns of urban differentiation: result of public interventions *vs.* result of market dynamics; what unfolds in central congestions *vs.* what unfolds in expanding suburbs and regional peripheries; what is associated with native communities *vs.* what is associated with migrants places; what questions jointly inherited properties *vs.* new real estate parks and clearly self-contained houses; what characterises low income *vs.* the well-off; secured landlords *vs.* dependent tenants, etc.

But the residential composition of Greater Accra happens to be affected by other logics than those clearly underlying its metropolitan expansion. The city can then be read through some tight combinations, with the previously mentioned variables possibly playing against each other from one district to another. Deep inside a large metropolitan area, mobility intensity then depends on contexts of small territorial amplitude. The level of "the local" fully participates though at variable geometry in the selection effects alluded to earlier on: not as the micro version of a process

which an overall observation would suffice to demonstrate, but rather according to really specific terms. This is the cognitive gain that a geographic approach, which is used to changing the scale of analysis, and a few field observations, can boast.

The prospect of fragmentation, therefore, guided the team's final conclusions when it assembled its special work at the result debriefing seminar organised at the University of Caen, France, from October 18 to 22, 2004. Not only have the city parts considered revealed fairly general dynamics, but they have also appeared to be configuration incubators that are hardly applicable to the whole metropolitan area. It is thus risky to attempt any statistical extrapolation in the case of Greater Accra. The absence of a reference population sample well established to serve as a foundation for a rigorous plan for polling the population to be monitored in future, alone, cannot explain this problem. It is also due to the sum of self-legitimated communities, limited reference marks and specific stories which are also part, beyond the major guidelines, of the Ghanaian urban construction.

The terms and conditions for access to land and to a highly frictional real estate market certainly play a significant role in these territorial circumstances, which justifies a fine intra-urban approach to the populations and their management. But residential mobility also contributes to a dispersion of profiles and explanatory frameworks for city integration. Finally there are four modes of this integration in the long run whereby individuals and families are placed in an unequal investment rapport to their urban environment.

- The first one is the development through mobility of plural and far apart dwelling places within a discontinued space. Most of the survey areas are not found in the vicinity of city folks and their active family ties. The geographical movement therefore involves this networking of localities and reference houses either through an opportune circulation of the youth or through the lasting ties maintained with the original community, beyond an investment realised in the city in favour of future generations.
- On the opposite side of this local plural integration, the geographic turbulences which many unfortunate migrants or itinerant tenants experience are indicative of marginal integration: social marginalisation of those who are too far from their original community or hometown to claim any land rights or solidarity; but territorial marginalisation as well, as illustrated by the mobility record high in the small city of Dodowa which is in contact with metropolitan influences and national hinterland. Subsequently, it is highly recommendable that new research addresses this dual interface – rural/urban and metropolitan region/other Ghanaian regions – shown by still rural districts like Dangbe West and Dangbe East in the Greater Accra Region as well as the administrative territories resulting from the recent subdivision of the Ga District.
- The local capture and almost house arrest effects have also been demonstrated. They are often linked to the poverty of city natives and to precarious protection in terms of right of usufruct, while also being indicative of the aging of some already old and overcrowded migrant communities around activity centres.

- Lastly, residential mobility appears to really promote social development only when it is paired with lasting access to land as can be seen on the vast western community of Gbawe. Such quests are perilous for customary landlords with whom one has to negotiate like with new environmental risks on the newly and least developed urban fronts. They are also delicate vis-à-vis institutional actors with whom transactions have to be registered in order to ensure recognition of future *community-based organizations* and new resident associations awaiting facilities and urban services. This privately-driven part of the metropolitan area still under construction echoes the *flats* suburbs (Tema, Adenta) and the real estate development observed between Accra and Tema (East Legon, Spintex Road). Access to a form of “turnkey” modernity guarantees here an ascending social trajectory though provisional for some middle-class households and more durably for the most experienced investors. Optimising home/workplace distance denotes the economic rationality of quite many residential practices that have been observed in this publicly-driven city. But regardless of the stimulants, this last profile qualifies only a minority of city families and is negligible statistically.

“Economically-affected” tenants, youth torn apart, poor under house arrest, outpaced investors, absentee landlords, provide examples of sensitive and multiple experiences of this city in the making with a combination of “accelerations and slowness”, paces of accelerations and decelerations. Reflected as such in terms of relative mobility and root taking, the social metropolitan space is as expressive as would be a sociological swamp invoked by the level of education in Bamako, that of professional status in Accra and so many other gross poverty indicators. The diversity of these profiles of integration into the Ghanaian capital is such that the latter can definitely no longer be associated, despite bibliographical or political reminiscences, with the “city bias” theory nor with the simplistic rural/urban dichotomy or the sole migratory prospect of those who would be simply shuttling between *hometowns* and workplace during their active lives. It is clear that it is in the synchronisation of external exchanges and internal movements that Greater Accra produces a territory both so trivially metropolitan and particularly fragmented.

Yet, quite many aspects of residential analysis still remain unclear. We cannot finish our work without mentioning a few of neglected angles, undervalued objects and field research that still remains to be stimulated or deepened. In this perspective, first should be mentioned a fine mapping of the compositions and progress of work. An effort by the Ghanaian census bureau to timely and freely put the local data it has at the researchers’ reach and a scientific watchdog established on the basis of a test cross-section of urban dynamics, from the centre to the periphery, might suffice for the undertaking provided that it relies on a well contextualised information. It finally implies a public will and a better readability of national scientific expertises.

Adding urban sites isolated in the rural margins of the capital region to the list of survey areas more traditionally constituted in already urbanised districts of Greater

Accra Metropolitan Area, is another step forward: from the urban core to the more strictly metropolitan territorial dynamics of an urban region. Besides the fact that it is in these remote peripheries that you find the desired chief-town of the capital region, for its future land market and, real estate reserves, school facilities and the abundant subsistence crop found in the greater periphery should not be neglected for the future of the populations today located at an extended centre. Research has already taken the opportunity to go beyond the limits of the central town and wonders about these future suburbs being prepared by the most remote peri-urbanization fronts (Gough and Yankson 1997). It is now necessary to focus on that systematically.

Ashaiman, Downtown, Tema, New Fadama



We would also like to suggest that special cohorts like the last people to have access to land ownership for instance should be followed on a continuous basis, or that multi-passage surveys that are likely to result in local observatories of urban change be conducted. Both for prospective and assessment purposes, specialised protocols should be promoted in order to stick more precisely to the targets of those who take the financial and political decisions on operational town-planning for instance in urban rehabilitation or road traffic fluidity programmes. But the primary objective is

to draw the attention of institutional and financial actors to the weak aspects of their investments like renting or even the case of free holders abandoned to their fate by well-off parents and who would have preferred the *exit option* away from their original communities.

Last but not least, indicating the migratory trajectories upstream of intra-urban flows is not the least of the challenges posed by the epistemological promotion of mobility. Better articulating external envelopes with internal urban movement factor, addressing population relocation at the international, national, metropolitan and local levels should still be the subject of research for many generations of researchers.

Notes

1. What city dwellers often express through the sentence “*to think about my future*”.
2. The fact of being “here and elsewhere” at the same time, which seems to be the case, from one generation to another, of eternal “nomads” out of their *hometown* and of the “faithful ones” who remain just as constantly attached to their ancestors’ lands.

Selected Bibliography / Sélection bibliographique

- Bertrand, M., Delaunay, D., 2005, *La mobilité résidentielle dans la Région du Grand Accra. Différenciations individuelle et géographique / Residential Mobility in the Greater Accra Region: Individual and Geographical Differentiations*, Paris, CEPED (Regards sur), 65p./63p.
- Dureau, F., Dupont, V., Lelièvre, E., Levy, J.-P., Lulle, Th., (eds.), 2000, *Métropoles en mouvement. Une comparaison internationale*, Paris, IRD-Anthropos (Villes), 656 p.
- Gough, K.V., Yankson, P.W.K., 1997, *Continuity and change: socio-economic and environmental consequences of urban growth in the peri-urban area of Accra*, Ghana, Final report to the Danish Council for Development Research, 88 p.
- Tarrius, A., 1993, « Territoires circulatoires et espaces urbains », *Les Annales de la Recherche urbaine (Mobilités)*, n° 59-60, pp. 51-60.

The Mobile City of Accra

Urban Families, Housing and Residential Practices

Accra, capitale en mouvement

Familles citadines, logement et pratiques résidentielles



Elizabeth Ardayio-Schandorf
Paul W. K. Yankson
Monique Bertrand

The Mobile City of Accra

Urban Families, Housing and Residential Practices

Accra, Capitale en mouvement

Familles citadines, logement et pratiques résidentielles

Elizabeth Ardayfio-Schandorf

Paul W. K. Yankson

Monique Bertrand



Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DAKAR

© CODESRIA 2012

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop, Angle Canal IV
BP 3304 Dakar, 18524, Senegal
Website: www.codesria.org

ISBN: 978-2-86978-181-8

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage or retrieval system without prior permission from CODESRIA.

Typesetter: Sériane Camara Ajavon
Cover Designer: Ibrahima Fofana
Printed by Imprimerie Graphi plus, Dakar, Senegal

Distributed in Africa by CODESRIA

Distributed elsewhere by African Books Collective, Oxford, UK
Website: www.africanbookscollective.com

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is an independent organisation whose principal objectives are to facilitate research, promote research-based publishing and create multiple forums geared towards the exchange of views and information among African researchers. All these are aimed at reducing the fragmentation of research on the continent through the creation of thematic research networks that cut across linguistic and regional boundaries.

CODESRIA publishes a quarterly journal, *Africa Development*, the longest standing Africa-based social science journal; *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of history; the *African Sociological Review*, the *African Journal of International Affairs*, *Africa Review of Books* and the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes the *Africa Media Review*, *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*, *The African Anthropologist* and the *Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Green Book Series, Monograph Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. Select CODESRIA publications are also accessible online at www.codesria.org.

CODESRIA would like to express its gratitude to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA/SAREC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA), the French Ministry of Cooperation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Rockefeller Foundation, FINIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), IIEP/ADEA, OECD, IFS, OXFAM America, UN/UNICEF, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), and the Government of Senegal for supporting its research, training and publication programmes.