

Accumulation by urban dispossession: struggles over urban space in Accra, Ghana

Thomas Anthony Gillespie

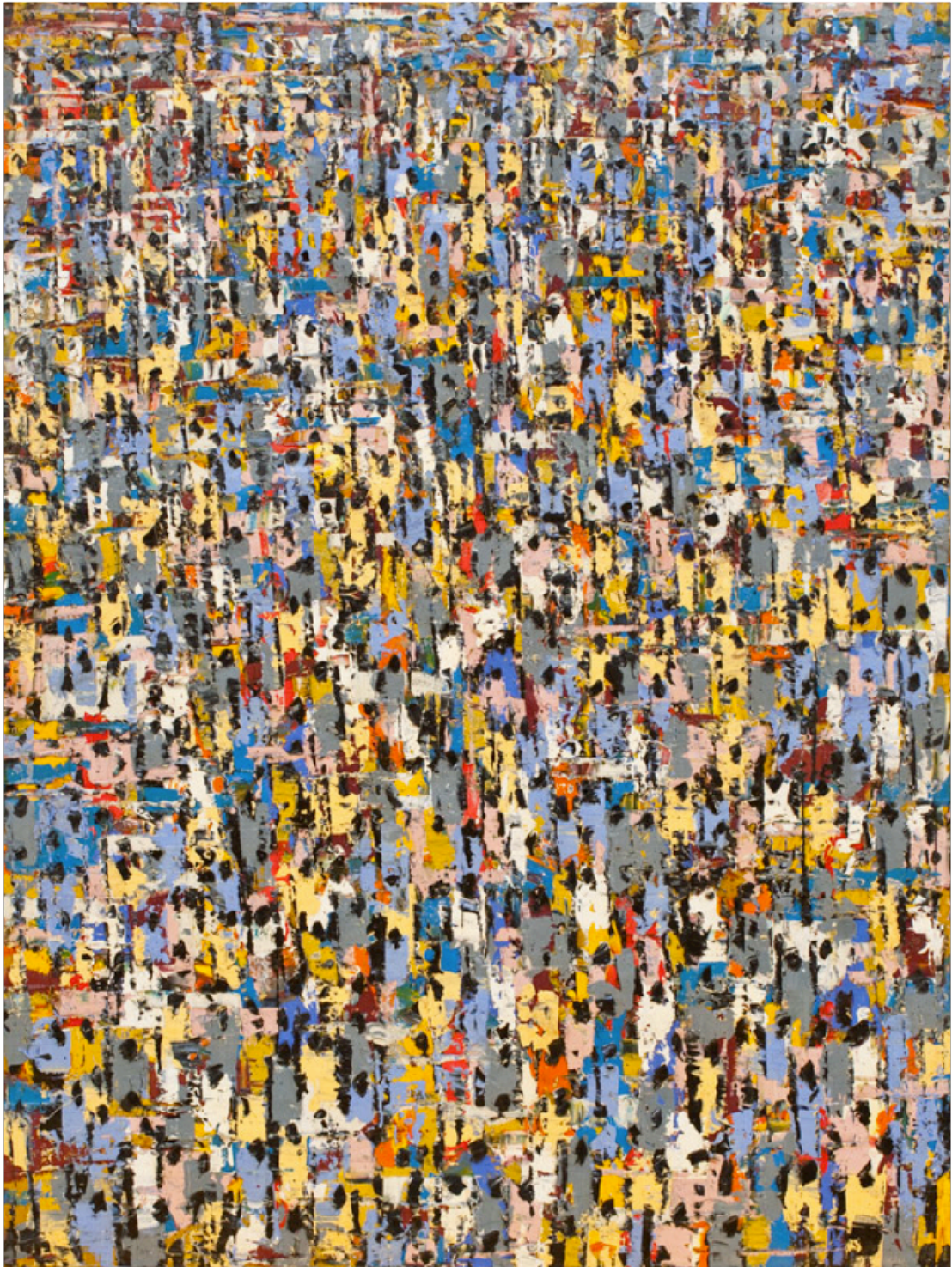
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Ablade Glover (2010) 'People II'

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Abstract

Despite the growing recognition of the utility of Marxist theories of primitive accumulation for understanding the current 'neoliberal' phase of capitalist development, there is a lack of in-depth research on the particular dynamics that 'accumulation by dispossession' assumes at the urban scale. This is a problem compounded by the lack of dialogue between Marxist theorists of primitive accumulation and critical urban geographers researching neoliberalism at the urban scale, particularly in the context of the Global South. This thesis addresses these shortcomings through an in-depth empirical case study of struggles over urban space in Accra, Ghana. Situated within a critical urban theory approach, it draws on a range of qualitative data gathered during fieldwork to explore the actors, motives, mechanisms and struggles that lie behind accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale – or *accumulation by urban dispossession* - in Accra.

This thesis argues that neoliberal structural adjustment has created a large 'informal proletariat' in Accra. This dispossessed surplus population has been expelled from the formal capitalist economy and therefore has to create 'urban commons' in order to reproduce itself outside of the capital relation. Since these commons place limits to capital's ability to valorise the urban fabric, state-led accumulation by urban dispossession is a strategic response that employs a range of physical-legal and discursive mechanisms to overcome these limits through the gentrification of the urban environment, the enclosure of the urban commons, and the expulsion of the informal poor. The thesis also demonstrates how non-state actors in Accra enact accumulation by urban dispossession through governmental technologies that reshape the subjectivities of informal settlement dwellers so as to enclose them within a market logic. Rather than being passive victims, however, this thesis argues that Accra's informal proletariat actively contests accumulation by urban dispossession by creating and defending urban commons through a combination of everyday acts of 'quiet encroachment' and organised collective action.

Abbreviations

ACORSDAF	Accra Community Regeneration for Sustainable Development Action Forum
AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
CBD	Central Business District
CEPIL	Centre for Public Interest Law
COHRE	Centre On Housing Rights and Evictions
CPP	Congress People's Party
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GAMA	Greater Accra Metropolitan Area
GDC	Ga-Dangme Council
GHAUFUP	Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor
GJF	Global Justice Forum
GRASSNIF	Grassroots South-North Internationalist Forum
IIED	International Institute of Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	International Organisation
KLERP	Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project
MWAG	Market Women Association of Ghana
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	New Patriotic Party
MCI	Millennium Cities Initiative
NDC	National Democratic Congress
OFADA	Old Fadama Development Association
PAFOG	Pan-Afrikan Forum of Ghana
PD	People's Dialogue on Human Settlements
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDI	Slum Dwellers International
SGA	StreetNet Ghana Alliance
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UPFI	Urban Poor Fund International
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

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1. Introduction

1.1 Accra – a divided city

On a hot afternoon in late 2010, a group of young men tend to their crops on a patch of urban scrubland in La, a neighbourhood in the east of Accra. These are no ordinary farmers, for they are also urban squatters. The soil under cultivation is in fact owned by the Ghanaian state, and was expropriated from the community of La decades ago for the purpose of development. However, as the years went by, most of the land was never built on, so local La people suffering from unemployment or underemployment quietly re-occupied the land to grow tomatoes, cassava and other crops to feed themselves and supplement their meager incomes. Behind the toiling farmers looms a high concrete wall, topped with barbed wire and patrolled by private security guards. The wall encircles and protects a development of opulent mansions, painted in pastel colours, that would not look out of place in a Californian suburb. When the government decided to build these mansions to house delegates for the 2007 African Union summit and Ghana's 50th anniversary of independence celebrations, before selling them off for private use, they were met with fierce protests. Community members claimed that the land was their ancestral birthright so should not be sold off by the state to build luxury mansions in the midst of a shortage of affordable housing. Despite the protests, the development went ahead. Now, this imposing wall separates the luxurious mansions from the impoverished, overcrowded, ramshackle township of La where the squatter farmers live. Although many of the farmers were displaced when the mansions were built, others continue to cultivate the undeveloped land adjacent to the mansions. One of them looks at me and then points to the wall: 'This is a Berlin Wall in Ghana, built to separate the rich from the poor'.

This scene, witnessed during a fieldwork visit to Accra in 2010, is typical of the divided city I encountered, a city increasingly characterised by inequality,

segregation and violent class struggles over urban space. These struggles form the focus of this thesis, which investigates their characteristics with a view to revealing the particular dynamics that contemporary processes of class-based dispossession assume at the urban scale. It does so in order to address the failure thus far of Marxist theories of dispossession to pay sufficient attention to this scale. This introduction situates the research in its academic context, introduces the case study, sets out the objectives and research questions, and summarises the structure of the thesis and the conclusions drawn. It begins by locating the research in relation to Marxist theories of primitive accumulation and contemporary critical urban theory.

1.2. Neoliberal globalisation and the new enclosures

Global processes of economic restructuring since the 1970s have generated enormous debate about the defining structural qualities of the current 'neoliberal' phase of capitalist development. During this period, economies in both the Global North and South have adopted policies that pursue the downsizing and privatisation of the public sector, a shift from state-led to private sector growth-oriented development, and the globalisation of finance and production flows leading to the weakening of organised labour. These developments are broadly consistent with the ideology of neoliberalism championed by Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s in the sense that they represent the extension of market logics to all areas of social life. This global paradigm shift has prompted theorists to turn to Karl Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation' in order to capture how neoliberal restructuring can be understood in terms of a wave of 'new enclosures' analogous to those that laid the foundations for the birth of the capitalist mode of production in Europe (Midnight Notes, 1990).

Marx (1867 [1976]: 899) originally discussed primitive accumulation as a historical phase at the beginning of capitalist development where 'extra-economic force' was employed in order to create the necessary conditions for

accumulation by transforming common wealth (such as land) into private capital and generating a supply of labour by creating a landless proletariat separated from its historical means of subsistence. This account emphasises that primitive accumulation was a historical phase that was superseded by accumulation proper where the 'silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker' and 'extra-economic force (is used) only in exceptional cases' (ibid.). Subsequently, however, Marxist theorists have argued that primitive accumulation is a perennial feature of capitalist development and that the silent compulsion of market forces continues to operate in tandem with the use of extra-economic force to enclose that which lies outside capital (Luxemburg, 2003 [1913]; Midnight Notes, 1990; Bonefeld, 2001; De Angelis, 2001, 2007; Harvey, 2003).

Since the 1980s, this argument has become increasingly influential, as theorists have understood neoliberal globalisation to rest on the use of extra-economic force to enclose common wealth and separate producers from the means of production. Marxist geographer David Harvey (2003) has done much to popularise this argument by asserting that the features of primitive accumulation have accelerated since the 1970s and the modus operandi of the neoliberal state is to create profitable opportunities for capital by engaging in 'accumulation by dispossession'. Numerous writers have subsequently adopted Harvey's concept in order to theorise various aspects of neoliberal globalisation as expressions of accumulation by dispossession, including war in Iraq (Retort 2005), agricultural liberalisation in Africa (Bush 2007), and the promotion of microfinance by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Cairo (Elyachar 2005).

Despite this growing interest in accumulation by dispossession, however, there is a lack of in-depth theoretical and empirical research on the particular dynamics that primitive accumulation assumes in the neoliberal city. Although theorists acknowledge that dispossession occurs at the urban scale as a result of neoliberal globalisation, the literature has largely engaged with this scale in a superficial fashion. Theorists have tended to discuss primitive accumulation in

rather abstract, global terms, prompting calls for greater historically and geographically specific accounts (Hart 2006). Furthermore, while urban examples are frequently used to illustrate theoretical arguments, there has been, to date, a lack of in-depth empirical and theoretical research on urban accumulation by dispossession in its own right (Hodkinson 2012). As such, this thesis is an attempt to address the need for greater conceptual and empirical sophistication regarding how accumulation by dispossession unfolds at the urban scale. It seeks to move beyond abstract theoretical discussions to produce an empirically grounded, but theoretically informed, study of the contemporary dynamics of dispossession in a particular urban geographical context. To achieve this, it is necessary to situate the research in relation to critical urban geographical approaches that focus on the urban scale.

1.3 Critical urban theories of neoliberalism

The effects of neoliberal restructuring at the urban scale have been theorised extensively by critical urban geographers, and this work provides some useful indicators of how accumulation by dispossession is being organised in the neoliberal city. Harvey's (1989) analysis of the global shift from 'managerial' to 'entrepreneurial' urban governance established that cities are increasingly locked into a dynamic of inter-urban competition to attract investment. As a result, the priority of urban governance has shifted from the redistributive provision of services, benefits and facilities to directly fostering private sector economic growth and development by adopting entrepreneurial strategies to lure and fix capital in place. Subsequently, critical urban theorists have critiqued the strategies adopted by the neoliberal state to this end on the grounds that they displace the working classes, exclude them from urban public space, and dispossess them of the city that they have collectively produced.

Although it was originally understood as a sporadic, uncoordinated process that occurred as middle class people started moving into working class neighbourhoods, gentrification has recently been reconceived as a global entrepreneurial urban development strategy that is actively pursued by the state

in order to encourage capital investment in the built environment (Smith 2002). As such, there is a growing focus amongst critical urban theorists on processes of class-based displacement as a key function of neoliberal urban development (Smith 2002; Slater 2009; Hodkinson 2012). In addition, Smith (1996) has identified a new exclusionary approach to the regulation of urban public space whereby the behaviours of working class groups such as squatters and the homeless are stigmatised and criminalised so that the middle classes can 'reclaim' the inner city for themselves. This cleansing of the city's streets and public spaces through mechanisms such as zero tolerance policing was theorised by Smith (1996) as a new urban "revanchism" whereby state violence was employed to take 'revenge' on those groups whose presence threatened the gentrification of urban neighbourhoods. Originating in New York City in the 1980s, this strategy has since become globalised as a key pillar of entrepreneurial urban governance (Smith 2001). Finally, critical urban theorists have adopted Henri Lefebvre's (1996 [1967]) writings on the 'right to the city', to argue that the production of urban space as a means of capital accumulation in the neoliberal city displaces and disempowers working class city dwellers and dispossesses them of 'the urban' which is their creation (Harvey 2008, 2009; Purcell 2002; Fumtim 2010; Friedmann 1995).

This literature provides valuable insights into how entrepreneurial urban governance is producing dispossession under conditions of neoliberal restructuring. As such, critical urban theoretical approaches have the potential to enrich understandings of contemporary primitive accumulation by demonstrating how dispossession unfolds at the urban scale. Furthermore, urban geographical discussions of gentrification and revanchism would benefit from taking into account Marxist theoretical arguments about the centrality of primitive accumulation to neoliberal capitalism. To this end, several critical urban theorists have attempted to bring these two theoretical approaches into dialogue with each other, by discussing processes of gentrification in terms of the enclosure of the urban commons (Blomley, 2008; Harvey, 2012; Hodkinson, 2012).

These authors demonstrate the potential for moving beyond theoretical discussions of primitive accumulation in the abstract in order to theorise the particular, concrete meanings of commons and enclosures at the urban scale. However, the extant research on urban enclosures and commons has, to date, focused on the experience of cities in the Global North. In order to build on Blomley's (2008) research in Canada and Hodkinson's (2012) research in the UK, therefore, there is a pressing need for research into the urban dynamics of dispossession in other geographical contexts. This relates to recent calls to 'decolonise' urban theory in general, and gentrification research in particular, by paying more attention to the diverse experiences of cities in the Global South rather than generating theory according to a narrow range of 'global' or 'world' cities in Europe and North America (Robinson, 2002; Macfarlane, 2008; Lees, 2012).

To address these gaps in the literature, I have conducted original empirical research into the particular form that accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale – what I term *accumulation by urban dispossession* – is assuming in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. This research makes an original contribution to Marxist theories of primitive accumulation by generating insights about class-based processes of dispossession in a Global South city. Drawing on these insights, this thesis critiques David Harvey's (2003) account of accumulation by dispossession as being overly capital-centric and neglecting the agency of the dispossessed in shaping the urban process through the creation and defence of urban commons. This research also makes an original contribution to the 'decolonisation' of Marxist critical urban theory by generating new theoretical insights about gentrification and revanchism in an African urban context.

1.4 The case study – Accra

Accra, the empirical focus of this thesis, is a historic port city located on the Gulf of Guinea on Ghana's south coast within the Greater Accra Region (see figures 1.1 & 1.2 & 1.3). The Greater Accra Metropolitan Area comprises three

administrative districts governed by elected district assemblies: the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), the Tema Municipal Assembly (TMA), and the Ga District Assembly. The AMA district corresponds to the built up metropolis of Accra that is the focus of this study, covering an urban area of 173 sq km (Grant and Yankson 2003; Grant 2009; Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2010).

According to the 2010 census, the population of the Greater Accra Region is 4,010,054, while the AMA district has a population of 1,848,614 (GSS 2012). The AMA estimates that there is an additional daily influx of 1 million people who commute to the city to participate in various economic activities (Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2010). Accra is one of the fastest growing metropolises in Africa, with an annual population growth rate of 4.3% (UN-Habitat 2009: 6). In terms of its economy, Accra is a centre for manufacturing, marketing, finance, insurance, transportation and tourism. The service sector is the largest employer in the city, followed by secondary activities such as manufacturing, and primary activities such as fishing and urban agriculture. Within these sectors, informal employment dominates, with 71% of all employed persons in Accra engaged in informal work (UNDP, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2009)

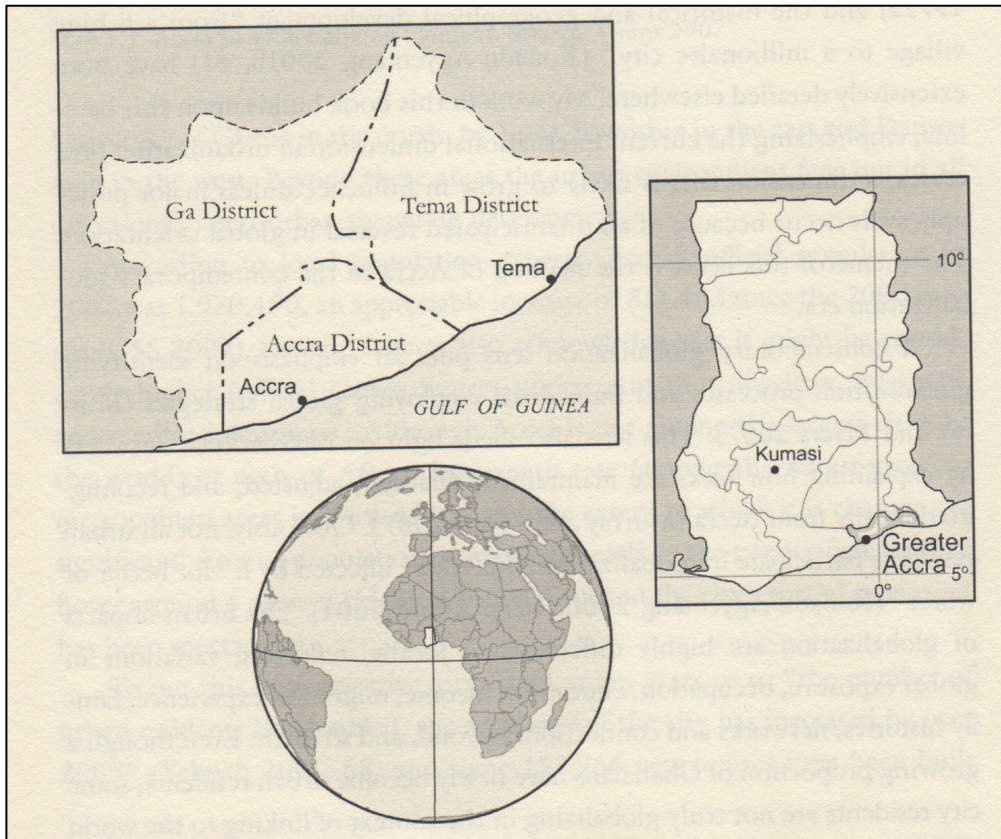


Figure 1.1 The location of Accra
 Source: Grant, 2009, p. 6.

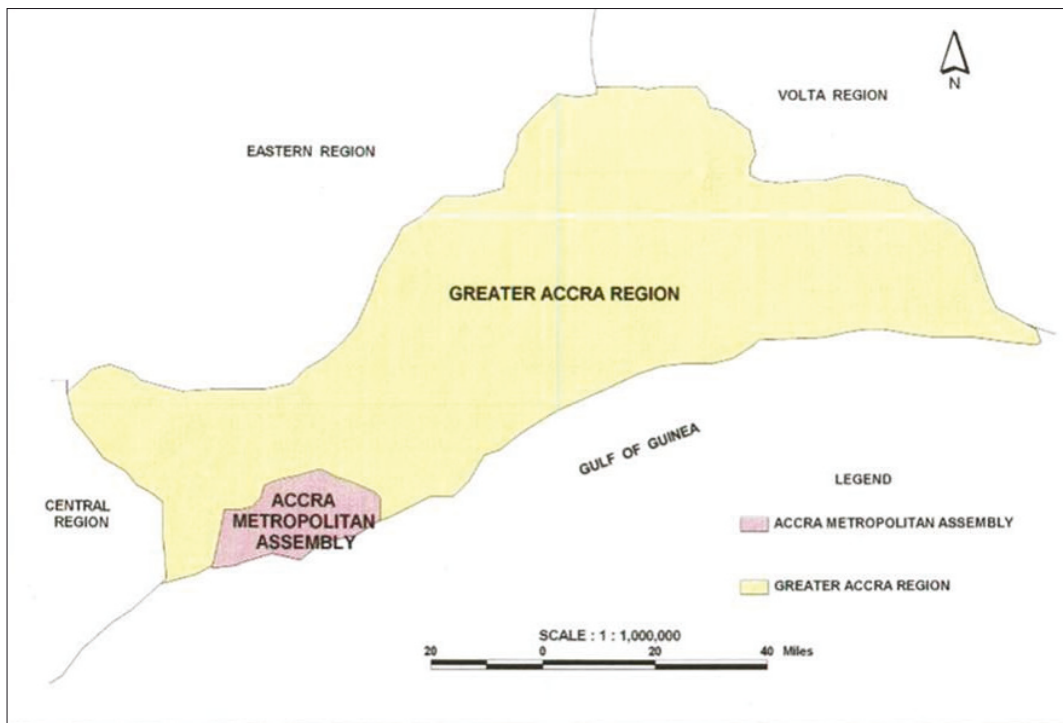


Figure 1.2: Locating the Accra Metropolitan Assembly district within the Greater Accra Region
 Source: UN-Habitat, 2009, p. 9

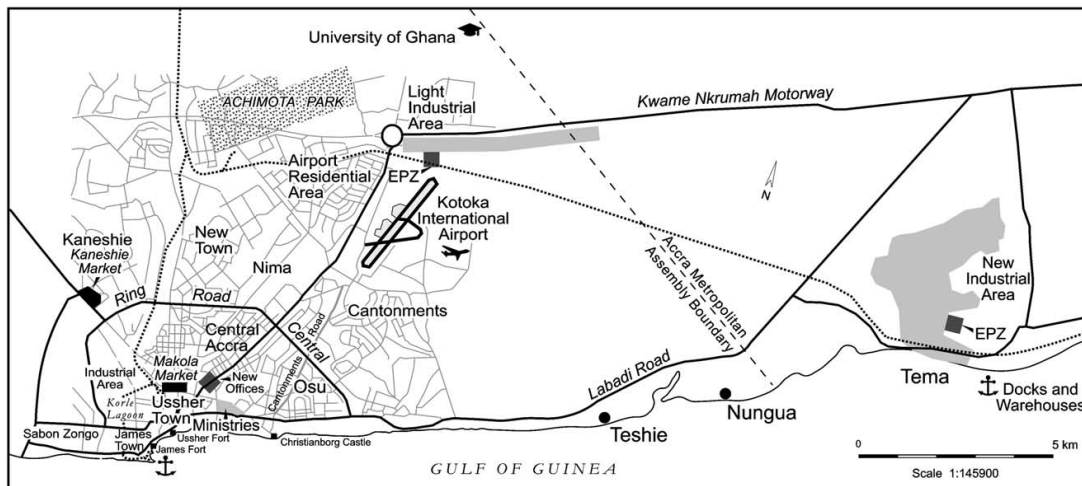


Figure The City of Accra
Source: Grant and Yankson, 2003, p. 66.

After Ghana underwent a structural adjustment programme in the 1980s under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, Accra has been marked by economic and physical growth driven by a dramatic increase in foreign direct investment and real estate development. However, during this period Accra has also been marked by deepening inequalities in income and wealth (Obeng-Odoom 2011a; 2012). As discussed in Chapter 5, this growing inequality is manifest in Accra's contemporary geography in several respects. First, much of the indigenous Ga population has been impoverished by the expropriation and privatisation of its communal lands for elite development projects such as luxury gated communities. Second, Accra is home to a growing number of poor, landless migrants who have been driven out of the Ghanaian countryside by underdevelopment and the erosion of communal land tenure. Third, mass unemployment and the growth of the informal economy have occurred as a result of the retrenchment of the workforce under structural adjustment. Finally, while there has been a building boom of luxury housing for the wealthy following economic liberalisation, there has also been a simultaneous proliferation of informal settlements characterised by poor quality housing, overcrowding and a lack of access to services.

Due to the impact of structural adjustment on the urban scale, therefore, Accra has come to be populated by a large landless population that is surplus from formal employment and excluded from formal housing markets. This population

has reshaped Accra's physical and economic geography by resorting to various informal practices in order to reproduce itself, resulting in the proliferation of informal settlements and the expansion of informal economic activities such as illegal street trading. As such, contemporary Accra chimes with the description in Mike Davis' (2006) influential book *Planet of Slums* of the effects of neoliberal structural adjustment on the geography of cities in the Global South. Analogous to the original English enclosures chronicled by Marx, Davis's book describes how economic liberalisation policies imposed by the international financial institutions have driven vast numbers of peasant producers off the land and into the cities of the Global South. However, whereas in England these migrants were driven off the land and into the mills and factories in the nascent industrial cities, urbanisation in the post-adjustment South has become decoupled from industrialisation. The result is that the cities of the Global South have come to be populated by an 'informal proletariat', a vast 'surplus humanity' that is warehoused in sprawling megaslums (ibid.).

This thesis draws on, and develops, Davis' global problematic of the informal proletariat in order to generate an in-depth account of how struggles over urban space are playing out in a particular urban context. Davis (2006) describes how central urban space in the unequal cities of the post-adjustment Global South is subject to a continuous class war between the informal poor, who congregate in the urban core in order to be close to income generating opportunities, and the state that uses force to displace them in the interest of landowners, foreign investors, and the middle classes, whose interests are also tied to the control of central urban areas. In the case of Accra, there are several instances where the informal proletariat has come into conflict with the state over the use and control of urban space:

- the state-led privatisation of communal land for elite development projects has been met with protest from members of the indigenous Ga ethnic group, as well as widespread encroachment on expropriated lands;

- the growth of informal street trade in Accra's central business district has driven the city authorities to resort to the use of brute force in order to 'decongest' the streets for the benefit of formal businesses; and
- the state is threatening to forcefully evict 80,000 migrant squatters from the city centre so that the land they occupy can be reclaimed and redeveloped.

As such, Accra offers the opportunity to study accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale by conducting in-depth empirical research into the class struggles that are currently being waged over urban space in the city.

The urban case study approach was chosen in order to generate geographically specific, empirically grounded insights to provide nuance to Davis' global narrative. Whereas *Planet of Slums* should be credited for drawing global attention to the effects of structural adjustment on the urban scale in the Global South, Davis has been widely criticised for producing a homogenised account of 'apocalyptic' urban blight that is insensitive to local differences and fails to engage with the perspectives of the slum dwellers that he is writing about (Angotti 2006; Meyer 2006; Pithouse 2006, 2007, 2008a). As such, this thesis addresses the shortcomings of Davis' global perspective by conducting in-depth empirical research that examines how these issues play out in a particular urban geographical context. Furthermore, thanks to the personal contacts I made in the early stages of my research with anti-dispossession activists in the neighbourhood of La (see 4.3.1), Accra presented itself as a good opportunity to address the methodological failings of *Planet of Slums*, by actually engaging with the perspectives of those groups within the informal proletariat that are involved in struggles over urban space. Since the empirical data generated by this case study approach is limited to a single city, further research will be required to examine to what extent the theoretical insights presented in this thesis are relevant to other urban contexts in Africa and beyond.

1.5 Objectives and research questions

This thesis explores the particular dynamics that accumulation by dispossession assumes at the urban scale through an in-depth case study of struggles over urban space in Accra, Ghana. In the process, it aims to demonstrate the case for bringing Marxist theories of primitive accumulation into dialogue with critical urban theoretical understandings of neoliberalism. The key research questions that frame this investigation ask:

- Through what mechanisms is accumulation by dispossession enacted at the urban scale in Accra, Ghana?
- What are the agents of accumulation by dispossession in Accra?
- Is accumulation by dispossession in Accra a means to create profitable outlets for capital or a response to working class struggle?
- How does primitive accumulation and proletarianisation in this context differ to the 'classic' form' identified by Marx in England?
- How is accumulation by dispossession contested and disrupted in this context?

1.6 Thesis structure and findings

This thesis is organised into 10 chapters. **Chapter 2** is a critical overview of debates about the relevance of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation for understanding contemporary capitalism. It argues that while Marxist theorists such as David Harvey have demonstrated the utility of this concept for understanding how dispossession is central to neoliberal globalisation, much of this theory operates at a high level of abstraction and has only engaged with dispossession at the urban scale in a superficial fashion. As such, the chapter concludes that there is a need for research that achieves a greater level of conceptual and empirical sophistication regarding the particular characteristics of accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale. To this end, it is suggested that there is a need to combine Marxist theories of primitive accumulation with a critical urban theoretical approach that uses the city as its object of analysis for understanding neoliberalism.

Chapter 3 discusses how critical urban theory has analysed neoliberal urban governance in terms of the organisation of dispossession through entrepreneurial strategies that displace and exclude the working class. This chapter argues that critical urban theoretical literatures concerning gentrification, revanchism and right to the city can provide insight into the particular dynamics of dispossession at the urban scale, while Marxist theories of primitive accumulation can also enhance urban critical theory. Consequently, it is argued that these two approaches should be brought into dialogue in order to produce theoretically informed and empirically detailed research on contemporary urban dispossession.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology employed. The chapter is split into two parts. The first part situates the project within a critical urban theory framework and discusses the methodological issues pertinent to undertaking critical urban theory in a Global South city, researching urban poverty and informality in a Global South context, and doing collaborative research in solidarity with activists to affect progressive social change. The second part of the chapter presents the research design. It explains and justifies the fieldwork approach, the research methods employed, and the ways in which ethical issues were negotiated, as well as reflecting critically on the research process and the issues encountered therein.

Chapter 5 provides the historical-geographical context necessary for understanding contemporary urban development in Accra. It describes how Ghana's capital is characterised by an increasingly unequal geography, evident in the growth of the informal economy, the simultaneous proliferation of impoverished informal settlements and wealthy gated communities, and the squalid living conditions of the indigenous Ga communities whose lands have been expropriated and sold to real estate developers. It is argued that this geography is the outcome of several historical processes of *accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession* during the neoliberal era that have produced a vast, surplused 'informal proletariat' that is compelled to rely on informal economic

activities and informal housing to reproduce itself, thereby bringing it into conflict with the state.

Chapters 6 to 9 present the empirical findings and analysis. **Chapter 6** gives an overview of the local and national state's strategy for developing Accra. It is argued that during the post-structural adjustment period the state has adopted an entrepreneurial approach to urban development in which it pursues a range of strategies intended to attract tourism and foreign investment and stimulate private sector growth, especially in the area of real estate development. This chapter draws on a range of data to provide detailed accounts of three entrepreneurial development strategies pursued by the state in Accra: the privatisation of state land for elite development projects, the cleansing of the city centre of informal street trade, and the forced eviction and redevelopment of an informal squatter settlement. It is argued that all three strategies can be understood as examples of state-led strategic gentrification. In addition, this chapter analyses how gentrification in Accra has assumed context-specific neo-colonial characteristics that distinguish it from similar processes elsewhere. The chapter concludes that gentrification is a key strategy of entrepreneurial urban development in Accra.

Chapter 7 theorises the gentrification strategies detailed in Chapter 6 as instances of state-led accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale, or *accumulation by urban dispossession*. This chapter defines accumulation by urban dispossession as the enclosure of the urban commons and describes the various physical-legal and discursive mechanisms employed by the state, working in partnership with other actors, through which this process is occurring in contemporary Accra. This chapter analyses the reasons for the state to engage in primitive accumulation at the urban scale in Accra. It critiques Harvey's capital-centric theory of accumulation by dispossession by arguing that accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra is a reactive 'roll out' strategy to overcome the barriers to accumulation created by the commoning practices of the surplus population produced by the 'roll back' phase of neoliberalisation. In addition, this chapter analyses how accumulation by urban dispossession in this context is

driven by a dynamic of 'expulsion' that differs fundamentally from the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation described by Marx (Sassen, 2010).

Chapter 8 builds on the analysis of state-led accumulation by urban dispossession in the Chapter 7 by analysing how non-state actors contribute to the enclosure of the urban commons through an in-depth study of one particular NGO with a presence in Accra – Slum Dwellers International (SDI). Whereas previous research on SDI in Ghana has largely adopted an uncritical perspective, this chapter draws on original empirical research to argue that SDI plays a key role in co-producing neoliberal urban governance and is working in partnership with the state and international financial institutions (IFIs) to engender accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. Whereas the state employs physical-legal mechanisms to directly dispossess the informal proletariat of its urban commons, this chapter argues that SDI is a form of neoliberal governmentality that produces dispossession through 'technologies of the self' that reshape the individual subjectivities of informal settlement dwellers in ways that facilitate market expansion.

Chapter 9 provides a counterpoint to chapters 6-8 by examining the ways in which the informal proletariat contests accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. In doing so, it explores the particular meaning of 'the right to the city' and 'the urban commons' in this geographical context. This chapter draws on the work of Asef Bayat (1991) to argue that the urban commons discussed in this thesis have been produced through everyday practices of 'quiet encroachment', and that this concept captures the particular, imperfect, actually existing form that commoning takes in this context. It also argues that the realisation of the right to the city is latent, if not fully realised, within these practices. This chapter draws on various sources of data to provide detailed accounts of how sections of Accra's informal proletariat have transcended individual acts of encroachment to take collective action to contest dispossession and defend existing, and create new, urban commons.

Chapter 10 presents four general conclusions about the dynamics of accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale in Accra. First, the enclosure of the urban commons, or *accumulation by urban dispossession*, in Accra is a neoliberal 'roll out' strategy enacted primarily by the state in response to limits placed on capital by the urban commoning practices of the informal proletariat. Second, the processes of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession and state-led accumulation by urban dispossession identified in Ghana differ from the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation described by Marx on the grounds that they are based on the *expulsion* of the dispossessed, rather than their *incorporation* into the capital relation as labour power. Third, non-state actors such as NGOs and IFIs are also responsible for enacting accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. Fourth, Accra's informal proletariat contests dispossession by creating and defending urban commons, these commons are created through everyday acts of 'quiet encroachment' and defended through collective organising efforts, and the realisation of a radical right to the city is latent within these practices. Finally, it is suggested that the creation, defence and multiplication of urban commons might form the basis of a political strategy to fully realise this right to the city and create an alternative urban future.

2. From primitive accumulation to accumulation by dispossession

2.1 Introduction

Discussions about the renewed relevance of Marx's theory of primitive accumulation for understanding contemporary capitalism have emerged recently as a key theme in human geography and beyond. This is a product of the fact that primitive accumulation, renamed 'accumulation by dispossession' by Marxist geographer David Harvey, has demonstrable utility for understanding the neoliberal phase of capitalist development, particularly in the post-colonial states of the Global South. Whilst acknowledging the explanatory power of this theoretical framework, this chapter argues that this body of literature has thus far not engaged with dispossession at the urban scale with sufficient depth. Although theorists of contemporary primitive accumulation acknowledge the urban as a scale at which dispossession occurs under neoliberal development, there is a pressing need for more research that achieves a greater level of conceptual and empirical sophistication in capturing the specificities of how accumulation by dispossession unfolds at the urban scale.

This chapter proceeds by reviewing the key developments in Marxist theories of dispossession. First, it introduces Marx's foundational account of 'so-called primitive accumulation', which framed accumulation through extra-economic means as a historical process that took place at the birth of capitalism. Second, it looks at how Rosa Luxemburg and the autonomist and open Marxists re-read Marx's account of primitive accumulation and argued that it was, in fact, an ongoing feature of capitalist development. Third, it reviews David Harvey's re-working of Marx's original argument through his theory of 'accumulation by dispossession', and explores how this theory has become widely used as a framework for understanding neoliberal development policies, especially in the

wake of structural adjustment in the Global South. Finally, this chapter will review the limitations of this body of literature for understanding dispossession at the urban scale, and suggest how these limitations could be overcome with an in-depth study of the particular dynamics of urban dispossession. To this end, it is suggested that the Marxist literature on primitive accumulation/accumulation by dispossession should be brought into dialogue with the critical urban geographical literatures discussed in Chapter 3.

2.2 Letters of blood and fire: Marx on primitive accumulation and the 'old enclosures'

Karl Marx's (1976 [1867]: 873) original discussion of 'so-called primitive accumulation' in Capital Volume I was a response to the classical political economists, such as Adam Smith, who had portrayed the origins of capitalism as a peaceful process whereby wealth was accumulated by a social elite because they, unlike the labouring masses, happened to be frugal. Marx sought to counter this 'idyllic' version of events, which he compared to the theological myth of original sin, by revealing that the birth of the capitalist mode of production was, in fact, the result of a historical process of violent dispossession (Perelman 2000: 25-27). Whereas state violence was absent in the classical political economists' account, Marx (1976 [1867]: 899) was keen to emphasise the role that 'extra-economic force' played in destroying the feudal order of things and laying the grounds for capitalism in Europe. In contrast to Smith's 'idyllic' treatment of primitive accumulation, therefore, Marx (1976 [1867]: 874-975) claimed that 'in actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force play the greatest part'. His story was the story of the violent expropriation of the commons, a story 'written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire'.

The central pillar of Marx's story is the enclosure of the English agricultural commons, which he describes as the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation. Between the 15th and 18th Centuries, peasant farmers who had previously enjoyed feudal rights of tenure to their agricultural land and customary rights of

access to common lands were dispossessed of them in a drive to consolidate smallholdings into large commercial farms. This process 'conquered the field for capitalist agriculture, incorporated the soil into capital, and created for the urban industries the necessary and free supplies of free and rightless proletarians' (Marx 1976 [1867]: 895). As such, the essential conditions for the birth of industrial capitalism were established in England. On the one hand, common wealth (such as land) that had previously been used for social reproduction was expropriated and converted into private capital for the accumulation of wealth; on the other, a supply of labour for the nascent urban industries was guaranteed, by creating a landless proletariat separated from its historical means of subsistence: 'these newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements' (ibid: 875).

In addition to this violent process of expropriation, Marx (1976 [1867]: 899) describes how it was necessary for the state to intervene to coerce the dispossessed into selling their labour at a low price in the emerging industrial towns by passing laws to criminalise vagrancy and begging, keep wages low and outlaw labour organising. Perelman (2000: 14) describes the relationship between expropriation and repressive social control in terms of two scissor blades:

Primitive Accumulation cut through traditional lifeways like scissors. The first blade served to undermine the ability of people to provide for themselves. The other blade was a system of stern measures required to keep people from finding alternative survival strategies outside the system of wage labour.

The repressive measures that constitute the second blade were justified by a moral discourse that whipped up fear of sloth, indolence and indiscipline amongst the emergent urban proletariat (ibid: 16). As such, Marx's historical discussion draws attention to the multi-faceted character of primitive accumulation and the way in which expropriation, repressive social control and discursive practices all combine to enable proletarianisation. Marx (1976 [1867]: 918-921) also discusses, albeit briefly, key components in the international

development of capitalism, such as colonialism, the national debt and the financial system, as 'levers of primitive accumulation'.

Marx's account of primitive accumulation emphasises its historical character - a violent process of expropriation that laid the foundations for the capitalist mode of production before being superseded by accumulation proper. According to Perelman (2000), this emphasis was politically motivated. The aim of Marx's critique of political economy was to draw attention to the 'silent compulsion' of market forces in compelling workers to sell their labour, and he feared that placing too much emphasis on the role of brute force in reproducing capitalist social relations would draw attention away from this. As a result, Marx's (1976 [1867]: 30-33) account obscured the ongoing, uneven and incomplete character of primitive accumulation. The following sections will discuss how Marxists have subsequently reinterpreted primitive accumulation as an ongoing feature of capitalism.

2.3 From Luxemburg to the New Enclosures: Debates on Primitive Accumulation after Marx

The reinterpretation of primitive accumulation as a perennial feature of capitalism can be traced back at least as far as 1913 to Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*, a seminal Marxist work about global capitalism, war and imperialism. Luxemburg (2003 [1913]: 345) questioned Marx's understanding of primitive accumulation as 'incidental, illustrating merely the genesis of capital, its first appearance in the world'. Rather, the continued violence and brutality of the global capitalist system led her to argue that there is an 'organic link' between the economic process of surplus value production, and the use of extra-economic means such as imperialism for the continuous appropriation of non-capitalist means of production, the creation of new markets through the establishment of exchange relations with non-capitalist producers, and the absorption of these producers into the proletariat. She concluded that "Sweating blood and filth with every pore from head to toe" characterises not only the birth of capital but also its progress in the world at every step' (Luxemburg 2003

[1913]: 432-433). As such, Luxemburg breathed life into the concept of primitive accumulation as a means to understand the ongoing relationship of capitalism to non-capitalist spaces and social formations that exist outside of it. She established that, on a global scale, capitalism requires an outside, a non-capitalist space, to feed on through primitive accumulation. This argument has subsequently been developed by theorists of (neo-) colonialism such as Samir Amin (1974) to explain the relationship between the centre and periphery in the global capitalist system.

Neoliberal restructuring since the 1970s generated fresh discussions about the continuous character of primitive accumulation, not only in the global periphery but also in the core capitalist states. These discussions stemmed largely from the need for concepts with which to analyse the fact that many states in the 1980s and 1990s underwent economic reforms that resulted in a net transfer of resources from collective or public to private hands. Led by the Anglo-American alliance of Thatcher and Reagan, these reforms were carried out either in their own countries in the name of austerity and privatisation, in the post-Communist states in the form of free market 'shock therapy', or in the post-colonial territories via structural adjustment programs (SAPs) presided over by the Bretton Woods institutions.

The idea that this neoliberal turn was to be understood in terms of a resurgence of primitive accumulation was first posed by writers from within the autonomist and open Marxist schools (Midnight Notes 1990; Federici 1990, 2012; Bonefeld 2001; De Angelis 2001, 2007). In 1990, the Midnight Notes collective published what has gone on to become an influential pamphlet, arguing that the diverse and apparently disconnected facets of neoliberal restructuring in the global North and South since the 1970s can all be understood as a wave of 'New Enclosures'. The authors describe a 'Pentagon of Enclosures' under neoliberalism made of up measures that end communal control of the means of subsistence; the use of the debt crisis by the international financial institutions to seize land in exchange for unredeemed loans; the creation of a mobile and migrant workforce to keep wages low and prevent labour organising; the

absorption of the former communist states and their populations into the world labour market; and the destruction of the natural commons and the enclosure of the bodily and personal commons (Midnight Notes 1990).

In-keeping with the autonomist tendency to understand class struggle as the motor of historical change, Midnight Notes (1990) argue that this global resurgence of primitive accumulation is capital's response to working class struggles of the 1960s and 1970s and the threat that growing proletarian power posed to profitability during this period. Foreshadowing the recent interest in primitive accumulation amongst geographers, Midnight Notes' description of the New Enclosures draws attention to the importance of space and place in class struggle. They argue that the main objective of these enclosures is to 'uproot workers from the terrain on which their organizational power has been built, so that, like the African slaves transported to the Americas, they are forced to work and fight in a strange environment where the forms of resistance possible at home are no longer available' (1990: 3). Conversely, working class struggles against dispossession attempt to 'simultaneously reappropriate and hold *places* from capital while opening *spaces* for proletarian movement' (ibid: 9). This thesis builds on these arguments to contribute new insights into the importance of place and displacement to primitive accumulation at the urban scale by theorising processes of state-led gentrification in Accra as instances of accumulation by urban dispossession.

Silvia Federici (1990), a Marxist Feminist and one of the members of the Midnight Notes collective, has analysed how structural adjustment in Africa can be understood as a strategy to enclose common land that was formerly used for subsistence production and put it to work producing for the international market. As with the other new enclosures, she describes this as a reactive strategy on behalf of capital, brought about by the challenges to accumulation posed by the persistence of communal land use in Africa and the lack of a disciplined, landless proletariat. Following the pattern of the original English enclosures, the intention of these land expropriation policies is to separate producers from the means of production, creating a disciplined, wage-dependent

proletariat. In addition to destroying subsistence economies through the privatisation of land commons, structural adjustment can be understood as a form of new enclosure on the grounds that fiscal austerity policies imposed by the IFIs have led to the radical disinvestment of the state in the reproduction of the workforce, leading to a crisis of social reproduction in Africa. As such, she argues that the former colonial world should be understood as the 'strategic centre' of primitive accumulation (Federici 2012: 102). By theorising structural adjustment as a process of 'accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession', Chapter 5 of this thesis demonstrates how IFI-led neoliberalisation in Ghana has generated class-based processes of dispossession that have had an impact on the urban scale and fundamentally shaped the contemporary geography of Accra.

Also writing from within the open and autonomist Marxist tradition, Werner Bonefeld (2001) and Massimo De Angelis's (2001) re-readings of Marx hold that the continuous character of primitive accumulation is in fact a fundamental condition for the reproduction of capitalist social relations through the constant separation of workers from the means of production. Whereas capital accumulation usually occurs in conditions in which this separation has been normalised and is treated like a natural law by the working class, De Angelis (2007) argues that primitive accumulation is necessary whenever this separation has to be enforced *ex novo* through extra-economic means, because it has not become normalised. This may occur when capital tries to colonise a new life world and encounters a 'limit as frontier', or when other social forces reclaim life worlds that have previously been colonised by capital and turn them into commons, known as a 'limit of political recomposition' (De Angelis 2007: 142-143). As opposed to understanding capitalism as a totalised system, this re-reading of primitive accumulation is based on the understanding of capital as a '*social force* with totalising drives that exists together with other forces that act as a limit to it' (ibid: 138). As such, primitive accumulation is not a historical stage that pre-dates, capitalism, but it instead 'acquires a continuous character dependent on the inherent continuity of social conflict within capitalist production' (ibid: 141). Capital as a social force must constantly engage in

primitive accumulation in order to overcome limits posed by other social forces in opposition to it.

Fundamental to the autonomist reading of primitive accumulation, described above, is the downplaying of the total domination of capital and the significance afforded to working class struggle. Midnight Notes, Federici, Bonefeld and De Angelis all understand primitive accumulation as a response to social struggles that threaten to undermine the separation of the proletariat from the means of production and, therefore, threaten the basis for the capitalist social relation itself. As such, primitive accumulation does not predate capitalism proper. Rather, it is a constant feature of capital's drive to overcome limits and address social struggles. So these thinkers understand the social field as a continuous struggle between enclosures and commoning practices that either separate workers from the means of production or reestablish their control over them. As such, the threat posed by anti-capitalist struggle and non-capitalist spaces to capital's totalising drives play a key role in the occurrence of processes of dispossession.

Another key feature of the autonomist position is a rejection of the orthodox Marxist assumption that primitive accumulation was necessary and progressive because it created the industrial proletariat, privileged by Marx as the global agent of revolutionary change. It is for this reason that orthodox Marxism was typically dismissive of struggles against primitive accumulation as somehow backwards and anachronistic (Glassman 2006). Midnight Notes (1990: 6), however, argue that orthodox Marxism has neglected the strategic importance of preserving the commons for class struggle, and that primitive accumulation uproots workers and destroys 'communal land and space that forms an energy well of proletarian power'. Furthermore, by analysing primitive accumulation largely from the perspective of the industrial proletariat, orthodox Marxism has ignored the differential effect that it has had on other groups within the working class. Silvia Federici's (2004) feminist history of primitive accumulation reveals that Marx overlooked the fact that this process created a sexual division of labour based on the exclusion of women from waged work, their consignment to

the sphere of unpaid reproductive work, and their consequent subordination to male workers. The implication is that primitive accumulation is not just an accumulation of labour and capital, but also an 'accumulation of differences and divisions within the working class' (Federici 2004: 63-64). As such, autonomist and feminist theories of primitive accumulation problematise the orthodox Marxist championing of an abstract, global industrial proletariat as the product of dispossession, and they reveal the need for researchers to broaden their understanding of working class agency, be sensitive to variegated experiences of primitive accumulation, and recognise the importance of space and place to ongoing struggles. This thesis contributes to this problematisation of orthodox perspectives by generating new insights into how processes of dispossession and proletarianisation in Ghana differ from those identified in England by Marx (see 7.4).

2.4 Primitive accumulation reinvented: David Harvey and 'accumulation by dispossession'

As the world's highest profile Marxist geographer, David Harvey's discussion of 'accumulation by dispossession' has done a great deal to popularise the idea that primitive accumulation is a perennial feature of capitalism and a key characteristic of the neoliberal epoch. In his 2003 book, *The New Imperialism*, Harvey (2003: 145) argued that 'all the features of primitive accumulation that Marx mentions have remained powerfully present within capitalism's historical geography up until now'. In fact, he argues, phenomena such as the privatisation of resources, the proletarianisation of peasant farmers, and the destruction of non-capitalist modes of production have accelerated since the 1970s, while certain features touched on briefly by Marx, such as finance capital and the credit system, have grown in significance as mechanisms of primitive accumulation. In addition, the current epoch has witnessed the emergence of novel forms of dispossession, such as biopiracy, the enclosure of human knowledge, and the destruction of the environmental commons (ibid: 145-147). Harvey reasons that it doesn't make sense to call something with such contemporary significance

“primitive”, and opts instead for the term ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (ibid: 144).

In contrast to the autonomists, who privilege working class struggle as the motor of historical change, Harvey (2003) explains the continuous nature of primitive accumulation as a function of capital’s need to find geographical ‘fixes’ to its inherent crisis tendencies, such as the tendency for capital to overaccumulate due to a lack of opportunities for profitable investment. Following Luxemburg, Harvey argues that accumulation by dispossession is the means by which capital feeds on that which lies outside it, with privatisation and devaluation policies making assets (including labour) available at a very low cost in order to create new opportunities for profitable investment. He contends that the growing influence of neoliberal ideas since the 1970s has been prompted by the search for solutions to an emerging overaccumulation crisis. The result of this neoliberal turn ‘was to make a new round of ‘enclosure of the commons’ into an objective of state policies’. The result has been a net redistribution of assets from poor to rich (Harvey 2003: 158-159).

Although Harvey’s analysis of primitive accumulation is more orthodox and capital-centric than the autonomist reading, he nonetheless acknowledges the significance of contemporary struggles against dispossession, which have shifted the terrain of class struggle away from the workplace struggles and party politics of the socialist left in the postwar period. While orthodox Marxists have traditionally privileged the struggles of the industrial proletariat to the exclusion of others, in *The New Imperialism* Harvey argues that struggles against accumulation by dispossession are equally important as, and dialectically linked to, workplace struggles against capital. However, while Harvey distances himself from the orthodox position to some extent, he is ambivalent about the progressive potential of the diverse struggles against accumulation by dispossession. He warns against nostalgia for pre-capitalist commons and argues that it is important to recognise that primitive accumulation has been necessary for historical progress from a feudal to a modern society, that standards of living have improved for some rural peasants who have been incorporated into the

urban proletariat, and that expropriation of property has been instrumental to socialist, as well as capitalist, development (Harvey 2003: 162-165). He also cautions that struggles against accumulation by dispossession can take the form of nostalgic, anti-modern and exclusionary localisms. He calls for movements to 'rise above nostalgia for that which has been lost', discriminate between the progressive and regressive aspects of accumulation by dispossession, and establish universal political goals that transcend local particularities (Harvey 2003: 178-179). As such, while he distances himself from some of the trappings of the orthodox Marxist reading of primitive accumulation, his politics situate him closer to that tradition than to the autonomist school.

Since the publication of *The New Imperialism*, Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession has been used by a number of authors to analyse various aspects of neoliberal capitalism. In their analysis of 'military neoliberalism', the Retort collective (2005: 72) argue that the Iraq War was a 'radical, punitive, "extra-economic" restructuring of the conditions necessary for expanded profitability'. The authors analyse how the invasion corresponded with crisis tendencies in certain industries at the beginning of the 21st century - namely the oil, military reconstruction, industrial design, financial services and banking capital sectors - that rely on conflict in the Middle East for continued profitability (Retort 2005). As such, they demonstrate the scope for deepening Harvey's abstract account of accumulation by dispossession with detailed analysis of how different factions of capital and the state combine under particular circumstances to enact primitive accumulation.

In addition to foreign policy, accumulation by dispossession has been a popular framework for analysing the neoliberal development policies implemented across the globe since the 1970s. Although the activist-journalist and author Naomi Klein (2007) does not use the same terminology as Harvey, her book on 'disaster capitalism', whereby neoliberal reforms that facilitate the privatisation of public wealth are forcibly imposed upon populations during times of crisis, suggests that there is a growing awareness both within and outside the academy that neoliberalism is founded on violence and dispossession. Within the

development studies discipline, Ray Bush (2007: 82) has argued that 'if capitalism was born from the theft and robbery, the slaughter and mayhem that it created in the seizure of assets from the Global South, it has continued with accumulation by dispossession in the contemporary period'. He describes the privatisation of agricultural land in Africa that has taken place as a result of economic liberalisation since the 1970s as a form of accumulation by dispossession that has fueled social differentiation by concentrating land ownership in the hands of the powerful while undermining wider access. Bush's (2007) analysis reveals the neo-colonial dynamics of accumulation by dispossession in Africa by highlighting the role that Northern states and IFIs, as well as the local state play in enforcing neoliberal reforms. This thesis develops this argument further by giving an account of the role played by IFIs and their client NGOs in producing accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale in the Global South.

While Bush focuses on the privatisation of land and natural resources, Julia Elyachar (2005) offers a more expansive reading of accumulation by dispossession in Africa that examines the enclosure of subjectivities, relationships and social networks by neoliberal development policies. She uses Harvey's concept to critique attempts by IFIs and their client NGOs to incorporate the informal economic practices of city dwellers in Cairo into neoliberal markets through the mechanism of microfinance, or 'empowerment debt'. During this process of incorporation, informal craftsmen are recast as 'microentrepreneurs', and the community relationships that underpin the informal practices of the poor are seized on as a form of 'social capital' that can be financialised in order to facilitate neoliberal market expansion. In a detailed ethnographic study, Elyachar argues that these same relationships are undermined by the fostering of an entrepreneurial subjectivity that pursues short-term private gain at the expense of the reproduction of community life. As such, she argues that 'valorizing the cultural practices of the poor as a form of social capital, and financializing their social networks through relations of debt mediated by NGOs, is an important aspect of accumulation by dispossession' (Elyachar 2005: 29).

Elyachar's study supports Harvey's (2003: 146) argument that accumulation by dispossession 'entails appropriation and co-optation of pre-existing cultural and social achievements' as well as their violent repression. However, Elyachar (2005: 29) seeks to complicate Harvey's account of primitive accumulation by arguing that 'the state is not an adequate unit of analysis for understanding such processes of dispossession. Instead, practices carried out by diverse institutional forms such as the state, IOs, and NGOs need to be studied together in one field of power'. In this case, it is financialisation and debt that links these institutional forms together in a mode of accumulation by dispossession. Elyachar's study is an important contribution that demonstrates the potential for an in-depth study of a particular urban context to enrich and deepen Harvey's abstract analysis of contemporary processes of dispossession. Her book identifies several important issues that need to be considered when researching the relationship between neoliberal development policies and primitive accumulation in the Global South. These include the role of financialisation and debt in dispossession; the role of NGOs and IFIs as well as the "state" traditionally understood; the informal sector as a site of dispossession; and the possibility of accumulation by dispossession through the enclosure of subjectivities, relationships and social networks as well as material resources. This thesis explores these issues in the context of Accra through original empirical research that critically examines the activities of the international NGO Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in the city's informal settlements (see Chapter 8).

Elyachar's (2005) study also demonstrates how different modes of dispossession can interact with and feed off one another. In her account, structural adjustment in Egypt, itself a moment of accumulation by dispossession, led to massive labour retrenchment and the expansion of the informal work force. This in turn created the conditions for new rounds of dispossession through the financialisation of informal relationships. As such, her research demonstrates the possibilities for what Vasudevan et al. (2008: 1645) call 'tracing the intersections and tense relations between different forms and processes' of enclosure.

Questions over the form that contemporary proletarianisation is taking the Global South are addressed by Mike Davis' (2006) influential book *Planet of Slums*, where he gives a global overview of how neoliberal structural adjustment has created a huge 'informal proletariat'. As in Europe during the industrial revolution, rapid urbanisation in the South since the 1970s has been fuelled by the separation of peasant producers from their means of subsistence, in this instance due to the devastation of smallholder farming by agricultural liberalisation and fiscal austerity policies imposed by the IFIs. However, whereas Victorian cities such as Manchester were home to burgeoning industries that could absorb this newly proletarianised population, urbanisation has become decoupled from industrialisation in many of the 21st Century metropolises of the Global South. Rather than becoming an industrial proletariat, as in Marx's 'classic form' of primitive accumulation, therefore, the dispossessed have to rely on informal economic activities to survive.

As with Federici (1990, 2012), Bush (2007), and Elyachar (2005), Davis' argument highlights the role of IFIs and structural adjustment programmes in processes of dispossession in the Global South. In addition, his discussion of the 'informal proletariat' suggests that there is a need to develop a nuanced understanding of the particular character that processes of primitive accumulation and proletarianisation assume in this context. Whereas orthodox Marxist understandings of primitive accumulation explain it as the process by which capital creates a supply of labour for exploitation, this does not seem to apply in the case of the informal proletariat, who are excluded from formal wage labour. As a result, the global growth of this informal class since the 1970s has led Michael Denning (2010: 81) to observe 'that 'proletarian' is not a synonym for 'wage laborer' but for dispossession, expropriation and radical dependence on the market'.

The delinking of proletarianisation and wage labour raises important political and theoretical questions about the contemporary meaning of primitive accumulation in the Global South. For example, for orthodox Marxism, primitive

accumulation was politically significant because it created the privileged agent of historical change, the industrial proletariat. As such, the divergence of the Southern experience from Marx's 'classic form' of primitive accumulation has prompted Davis (2006: 201) to ask the question 'to what extent does an informal proletariat possess that most potent of Marxist talismans: "historical agency"?'.

As Davis (ibid: 201) argues, this is a question that 'must be explored via concrete, comparative case studies' of the political life of the informal working class in the cities of the Global South. This is perhaps ironic given that he himself has come under sustained criticism for operating at too high a level of abstraction, papering over local differences, and painting a homogenised picture of apocalyptic urban blight that does not engage with the perspectives of so-called 'slum dwellers' (Angotti, 2006; Pithouse 2006, 2007, 2008). As will be discussed further in Chapter 4, these criticisms point to the need for further research that nuances Davis' metanarrative by examining the experiences and perspectives of the informal proletariat in particular geographical contexts. This thesis addresses this need for such greater nuance by engaging with the voices of groups within the informal proletariat that are struggling against dispossession in Accra.

Saskia Sassen's (2010: 27) recent writing on 'Contemporary Versions of Primitive Accumulation' provides a valuable insight into how accumulation by dispossession engendered by neoliberal development policies differs from the 'classic form' described by Marx. Sassen describes the destruction of 'traditional capitalist economies' as a result of neoliberal restructuring as a contemporary version of primitive accumulation. In contrast to Keynesian capitalism, which was based on the incorporation of people as workers and consumers, the current phase of capital accumulation is based on the *extraction* of wealth - through mechanisms such as national debt, sub-prime mortgages and corporate land grabbing - and the *expulsion* of a rapidly growing surplus population:

one brutal way of putting it is to say that the natural resources of much of Africa and good parts of Latin America count more than the people on those lands count as consumers and as workers (Sassen 2010: 26).

As such, contemporary primitive accumulation involves the expulsion of people at the same time as it brings about the incorporation of spaces into the circuits of advanced capitalism (ibid: 45). It is perhaps this dynamic of expulsion that explains how neoliberal restructuring and informal proletarianisation in the Global South is different to primitive accumulation as traditionally understood, which was premised on the incorporation of the dispossessed to the capitalist production process. The utility of this concept for understanding contemporary dispossession can be determined through further research into the specificities of primitive accumulation in particular contexts, and this case study of Accra demonstrates its importance for understanding dispossession in the Global South in the neoliberal era (see 5.5 and 7.4).

2.5 The Limits to Marxist Dispossession Theory

The literature reviewed above demonstrates how Marxist theories of primitive accumulation/accumulation by dispossession have been deployed to analyse the neoliberal phase of capitalist development, with particular attention paid to economic restructuring in the Global South. This literature has produced important insights about the centrality of dispossession through the use of extra-economic means to contemporary capitalism. However, there is to date a lack of in-depth theoretical and empirical work on the particular dynamics of primitive accumulation at the urban scale, either in the Global North or South. This section will discuss these limitations and draw attention to how they are addressed by this thesis.

As Hodkinson (2012: 500) observes,

enclosure was and remains, in many respects, the midwife of the capitalist city, wresting the peasant producer from the means of production and propelling over time a mass landless proletariat into the swelling ranks of the industrialising and urbanising centres.

To what extent, then, has this historical link that Hodkinson identifies between primitive accumulation and the urban been reflected in analysis of enclosure as a contemporary phenomenon, discussed above?

To some extent, the urban is present in recent literature. Several writers mention urban examples of dispossession to illustrate their theoretical arguments. *Midnight Notes'* argument that contemporary enclosure is designed to 'uproot workers from the terrain on which their organizational power has been built' is illustrated by the example the 'spatial deconcentration' of struggling working class communities in US cities as a means 'to economically isolate and then eliminate the ghetto as a space for organized mass political power' (*Midnight Notes* 1990a: 64). Jeffrey et al.'s (2012) theoretical discussion of the different sites and scales of contemporary enclosure argues that practices of 'walling' are facilitating the splintering of cities in the Global South into wealthy gated communities, special economic zones and precarious slums, creating a fragmented, unequal urban landscape.

As an urban geographer whose key insight is that urbanisation is driven by capital's search for profitable outlets for overaccumulated capital through the 'creative destruction' of the built environment, Harvey (2008) argues that accumulation by dispossession has been central to urban development under capitalism. His work is littered with various historical urban examples of dispossession and displacement, from Georges-Eugene Haussman displacing the working class to the urban periphery during his redevelopment of 19th Century Paris, to the current US sub-prime mortgage crisis, in which the expansion of finance and debt has led to huge numbers of low income Americans losing their homes. Both of these examples suggest that struggles over access to urban housing and space that arise during the urban development process are important for understanding contemporary dynamics of dispossession.

Finally, Hardt and Negri (2009: 137) discuss urban real estate capital as an example of how accumulation in the neoliberal era increasingly takes the form of the 'expropriation of the common'. They afford special significance to the urban

scale, describing the metropolis as a 'vast reservoir of the common' that is constantly being expropriated and privatised in an attempt to extract rent. Their notion of 'the common' does not signify a static body of natural resources, but the relationships, networks and sociality that allow biopolitical production to take place. As such, their discussion of the metropolis indicates that primitive accumulation at the urban scale is not just about struggles over land, housing and physical space, but also the immaterial qualities of urban life, such as shared culture and social life, that are vulnerable to commodification

Although Marxist theorists of dispossession acknowledge that contemporary primitive accumulation has an urban dimension, however, Hodkinson (2012: 501) rightly observes that 'urban enclosure continues to evade in-depth theorisation and empirical analysis in its own right'. Although the urban is highlighted briefly in the literature as one of the scales at which dispossession takes place under neoliberalism, there is a lack of sustained empirical research into the particular characteristics that primitive accumulation assumes at this scale. This is a reflection of the fact that, as Hart (2006: 983-984) argues, both Harvey and the autonomists 'operate at quite high levels of abstraction'. Consequently, 'there is a pressing need for more concrete levels of specification – not just in the sense of descriptive empirical detail, but concrete concepts that are adequate to the complexity with which they are seeking to grapple'. Furthermore, theories of accumulation by dispossession need 'to be rendered historically and geographically specific, as well as interconnected' (ibid: 988).

As such, there is a pressing need for more research to understand the specificities of how accumulation by dispossession unfolds at the urban scale. This thesis addresses this need by going beyond the abstract discussions reviewed above to develop a complex account of a particular geography that unpacks how different factions of capital, the state, IFIs and NGOs combine to enact dispossession, what extra-economic mechanisms are employed, who is dispossessed, what it is they are dispossessed of, and what forms of resistance and alternative practices challenge these processes. Furthermore, following Hart's argument this thesis situates this particular urban geography of

dispossession within broader political, historical and economic processes so as to appreciate its interconnectedness as well as its specificity.

The literature reviewed in this chapter raises several important questions that can only be answered by research that moves beyond abstract discussions of accumulation by dispossession to develop a more empirically and conceptually detailed understanding of urban dispossession. One question regards the ways in which different forms of enclosure combine at the urban scale to enable dispossession. Perelman's (2000) metaphor of the two scissor blades demonstrates how rural enclosures in England fuelled rural-urban migration, which, in turn, required repressive state interventions and accompanying discursive practices to discipline the emerging urban proletariat. In the contemporary moment, Vasudevan et al. (2008: 1645) call for an 'expansive conceptualization of enclosure' that traces 'the intersections and terse relations between different forms and processes' of dispossession. This thesis responds to this call by contributing new insights into how different phases of neoliberalisation and different mechanisms of enclosure combine to produce dispossession at the urban scale in the contemporary Global South.

A second question regards the relationship of working class struggle and the existence of spaces that are 'outside' capital to processes of urban dispossession. Whereas autonomist theorists describe contemporary enclosure as a response to the limits placed on capital accumulation by struggle and the creation and defence of commons, Harvey's capital-centric approach explains accumulation by dispossession as a function of capital's own internal crisis tendencies, therefore playing down the significance of working class agency and struggle. Since De Angelis (2007: 232) understands enclosure as part of an ongoing dialectic between contradictory social forces, with new commons being constantly created through struggle, he is critical of Harvey for framing the 'outside' as something that is in the process of coming to an end through ongoing dispossessions. Since this debate hasn't been resolved on the abstract theoretical level, this study of urban dispossession examines through concrete examples the extent to which contemporary primitive accumulation is part of an ongoing

dialectic with oppositional practices such as the creation and defence of commons. In the process, this research moves the debate beyond discussions of commoning as an abstract social force by theorising the particular meaning of 'commons' and 'commoning' at the urban scale.

Finally, Davis' (2006) discussion of the informal proletariat raises the question of whether primitive accumulation needs to be rethought with respect to the impact it has on the urban scale in the Global South under conditions of neoliberal restructuring. Whereas the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation as described by Marx was characterised by the incorporation of the dispossessed into the capitalist production process as labour power, this is clearly not the case in many contemporary African cities where huge numbers of workers are excluded from wage labour. As such, there is a need to examine whether, as Sassen (2011) suggests, contemporary primitive accumulation should be understood in terms of a novel logic of 'expulsion'. In addition, following Federici's (2004) feminist reading of Marx, there is a need to uncover how the informal proletariat's experience of primitive accumulation differs from that of the industrial proletariat and how we should understand the political agency and struggles of this class. This thesis directly addresses these questions by contributing to a more specific understanding of how dispossession plays out at the urban scale in the contemporary Global South.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that Marxist theories of primitive accumulation/accumulation by dispossession have established themselves as useful tools for understanding the neoliberal phase of capitalist development. A range of authors has adopted these theories to identify various contemporary dynamics of dispossession, with particular attention paid to the Global South. These include: the privatisation and devaluation of publically or communally owned assets to provide an outlet for overaccumulating capital; the reproduction of the capital relation through the separation of workers from the means of production; the expulsion of populations from traditional forms of capitalism;

the uprooting and displacement of working class communities; the neocolonial 'adjustment' of economies in the Global South; and processes of marketisation, subjectification, financialisation and the expansion of debt. Although this research is useful for understanding dispossession in the contemporary moment, I have argued that the discussions reviewed remain largely abstract and theoretical. With few exceptions, what is missing is an understanding of how these dynamics play out specifically at the urban scale. Consequently, there is a need to achieve a higher level of conceptual sophistication and empirical specificity in order to develop an analysis of contemporary *urban* dispossession. In order to achieve this, it is argued that the Marxist literature on primitive accumulation/accumulation by dispossession needs to be brought into dialogue with critical urban geographical literatures. This will be the purpose of the next chapter.

3. Urban geographies of dispossession

3.1 Introduction

Having found that Marxist theories of primitive accumulation have not sufficiently engaged with the urban scale, this chapter examines scholarly work that uses the city as its object of analysis for understanding neoliberal capitalism. Following David Harvey's (1989) discussion of how the macroeconomic shift from Keynesian-Fordist capitalism to flexible accumulation has both affected, and been affected by, changes in urban governance, a large literature that critically analyses neoliberal urbanism has developed within the field of human geography. This chapter argues that much of this analysis concerns the organisation of dispossession at the urban scale through entrepreneurial strategies to valorise urban space that result in the displacement and exclusion of the working class. As such, consulting the geographical literature on neoliberal urbanism can complement the theoretical approaches reviewed in the last chapter by providing more detail about the dynamics of dispossession at the urban scale. In addition, theoretical insights about the continuous character of primitive accumulation can enhance geographical research into urban processes of dispossession. Consequently, it is argued that these two approaches should be brought into dialogue in order to produce theoretically informed and empirically detailed research on contemporary urban dispossession.

This chapter proceeds by reviewing the different geographical literatures that concern the production of dispossession in the neoliberal city. First, it introduces the work of Harvey and others who have theorised the character that urban governance assumes under conditions of neoliberal globalisation. Second, it reviews the key debates over the definition, causes and effects of gentrification, highlighting the centrality of state-led processes of class-based restructuring to the contemporary urban economy. Third, it discusses Neil Smith's (1996) argument that the regulation of urban space in the neoliberal city increasingly takes the form of 'revanchist' strategies of social cleansing that criminalise and

exclude certain (marginal, working class) groups. Fourth, it examines the relevance of Lefebvre's idea of the 'right to the city' for thinking about dispossession, and resistance to dispossession, in the contemporary city. Finally, this chapter will discuss the advantages of using these urban geographical approaches in conjunction with the theoretical approaches reviewed in Chapter 2, the questions that this raises, and the ways in which this thesis addresses these questions.

3.2 Introducing neoliberal urbanism

Discussions on the centrality of dispossession to the contemporary urban process have grown out of a wider literature that analyses the ways in which neoliberal economic restructuring since the 1980s has transformed urban governance. Harvey's (1989) account of the shift from 'managerial' to 'entrepreneurial' urban governance is foundational in conceptualising this transformation, which he argues was both the product of, and a contributing factor to, the global macroeconomic shift from Fordist-Keynesianism to neoliberal capitalism since the 1970s. Whereas managerial urban governance during the Keynesian phase of development was primarily concerned with the redistributive provision of services, benefits and facilities to urban populations, entrepreneurial governance focuses on directly fostering private sector economic growth and development. This is largely the result of inter-urban competition engendered by globalization: 'the task of urban governance is, in short, to lure highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space' (Harvey 1989: 11).

Cities have 'relative autonomy' over the particular strategies they employ to this end (Harvey 1989: 15). They might choose to capitalise on competitive advantages for the production of goods and services, encourage consumption and tourism, or attract key control and command functions in finance, government or information services. However, the coercive logic of inter-urban competition means that cities have been compelled to adopt entrepreneurial approaches 'across national boundaries and even across political parties and

ideologies' (Harvey 1989: 4). Entrepreneurial urban development is typically speculative, rather than rationally planned, focusing on place-specific projects rather than improving conditions uniformly across a political territory, and is enacted through public-private partnerships. The latter, Harvey argues (ibid: 12), 'amounts to a subsidy for affluent consumers, corporations, and powerful command functions to stay in town at the expense of local collective consumption for the working class and poor' As such, entrepreneurial urban governance is characteristic of neoliberalism in its regressive distributive consequences. It is also resonant of postmodernism in its 'penchant for design of urban fragments rather than comprehensive urban planning, for ephemerality and eclecticism of fashion and style rather than the search for enduring values, for quotation and fiction rather than invention and function, and, finally, for medium over message and image over substance' (ibid: 12-13). A consequence of this is that entrepreneurial strategies tend to concentrate on the production of a positive place image for outsiders, which simply masks the fact that inequality, poverty and other social problems are increasing.

Urban geographers have subsequently developed Harvey's account of entrepreneurialism to build up a fuller picture of the characteristics of neoliberal urban governance in Europe and North America. First, there has been a shift from the primacy of national to global and local scales of organisation and a shift from top-down government to 'governance', consisting of partnerships between the state and the private sector, NGOs, religious groups, and so on (Jessop 2002). As such it is necessary to study what Harvey (1989: 11) calls 'urban ruling class alliances' as the agents of entrepreneurialism. Second, the globalisation of urban neoliberalism has been accelerated by place-to-place replication, as cities mimic each other through the adoption of a narrow repertoire of off-the-shelf policies. This replication of policy has also led to the replication of the contradictions and crisis tendencies associated with neoliberalisation (Peck and Tickell 2002).

Third, neoliberalisation is 'a process, not an end state' (Peck and Tickell 2002: 36). This process has taken the form of two phases: 'roll-back' and 'roll-out' neoliberalism. The roll-back phase of neoliberalism of the 1980s consisted of

deregulation and marketisation strategies aimed at the *destruction* of the Keynesian-welfarist settlement on which the macroeconomic crisis of the 1970s was blamed. In the 1990s, the ‘perverse economic consequences and pronounced social externalities’ of roll-back neoliberalism led to a metamorphosis of the neoliberal project into ‘more socially interventionist and ameliorative forms’ (Peck and Tickell 2002: 41). Roll-out neoliberalism entails increased social policy and penal interventions ‘concerned specifically with the aggressive reregulation, disciplining, and containment of those marginalized or dispossessed by the neoliberalism of the 1980s’ (ibid: 42). During the roll-out phase, ‘flanking mechanisms’ have been deployed to compensate for the contradictions, conflicts and tensions generated by marketisation and deregulation. In the cities of the Global South these often take the form of ‘neocommunitarian’ strategies that ‘promote “community” (or a plurality of self-organizing communities) as a flanking, compensatory mechanism for the inadequacies of the market mechanism’ (Jessop 2002: 454-455). To some extent this interventionism signals the deepening of neoliberalism: while roll-back neoliberalism was designed to liberate the market economy, roll-out neoliberalism is designed to embed it within a market society (Jessop 2002). However, it is also a response to the social contradictions created by deregulation and marketisation, and therefore evidence of the ‘frailty’ of the neoliberal project (Peck and Tickell 2002: 43).

Finally, neoliberalisation occurs through dialectical moments of creative destruction, in which established Fordist-Keynesian geographies are destroyed to enable the creation of new spatial arrangements to facilitate market-oriented development. As such, neoliberal urbanism does not occur in pure form but is path-dependent because it is introduced within ‘politico-institutional contexts that have been molded significantly by earlier regulatory arrangements, institutionalized practices, and political compromises’ (Brenner and Theodore 2002: 14). It is for this reason that there is a need to study ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ in particular geographical contexts so as to ‘illuminate the complex, contested ways in which neoliberal restructuring strategies interact

with pre-existing uses of space, institutional configurations, and constellation of sociopolitical power' (ibid).

Having given an introductory overview of how critical urban geographers have conceptualised neoliberal urban governance, the following sections will review how geographers have understood class-based processes of dispossession in the neoliberal city. This will be achieved through examining three related bodies of literature on gentrification, revanchism, and the right to the city. It will be argued that these literatures offer valuable insights into the dynamics of contemporary dispossession at the urban scale, but they also raise important questions that will be addressed by this thesis.

3.3 Gentrification

This section reviews how urban geographers writing on gentrification have primarily understood dispossession in terms of the *displacement* of one class by another. The term 'gentrification' was originally coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, who identified a process in the London housing market where affluent homebuyers were moving into and renovating old houses in working class residential neighbourhoods, leading to a class-based process of transformation: 'Once this process of "gentrification" starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the social character of the district is changed' (Glass 1964: xix).

Since Glass's original description of a market process involving middle class homebuyers renovating old properties in disinvested residential areas, there has been a significant broadening-out of what the term "gentrification" encompasses. According to some researchers, new-build urban redevelopment projects and non-residential retail and commercial developments can all be considered gentrification (Smith 1996; Ley 1996; Slater 2006). Rather than having to follow the original process described by Glass in all of its specifics, therefore, gentrification is contingent and geographically specific, taking different forms in different contexts (Lees 2003). This broadening out of the definition of

gentrification has, in the past, attracted criticism from some researchers, who fear that the term will become meaningless if it is used to describe a diverse range of apparently unrelated processes of urban change (Rose 1984). However, Neil Smith (1987: 160) argues that, despite variations in form, the essential characteristic that unites different processes together under the banner of gentrification is 'the change of inner-city neighbourhoods from lower to higher income residents'. As such, gentrification can be defined broadly as the 'class remake of the central urban landscape' (Smith 1996: 39).

Glass's description of gentrification in the 1960s identified it as a sporadic and uncoordinated process, a quirk of the London housing market. Smith (2002) and Hackworth and Smith (2001), however, argue that gentrification has grown in significance and has played a much more central role in the urban economy since the 1990s. Whereas the agents of gentrification were originally understood as individual homebuyers, in the neoliberal city gentrification is a coordinated urban development strategy that is actively pursued by the state acting in partnership with real estate developers. This is an expression of the historical shift from a redistributive liberal urban policy that manages social reproduction to a neoliberal urbanism that prioritises productive growth and development, leading to the 'dislocation of social reproduction at the urban scale' (Smith 2002: 89). Gentrification plays a pivotal role in this shift because it 'serves up the central- and inner-city real-estate markets as burgeoning sectors of productive capital investment' (ibid: 99). Within the context of intense inter-urban competition, therefore, gentrification has become generalised as an entrepreneurial strategy to attract investment and consumption flows and stimulate economic growth (ibid: 100).

This new phase of gentrification as global urban strategy is characterised by the involvement of global capital working in partnership with the local state, resulting in larger, more ambitious gentrification projects that are not limited to housing but extend to the production of whole urban landscapes, including retail, leisure and cultural developments. In order to generate public acquiescence for gentrification, state actors engage in discursive strategies, avoiding talk of gentrification in favour of 'regeneration', 'bringing people back to the city' and

'achieving social balance'. This discourse obscures the class character of, and therefore depoliticises, gentrification by casting it as a natural healing process that benefits *everybody* in the neighborhoods and cities concerned (Smith 2002: 98). In addition, the state increasingly employs repressive measures, such as zero tolerance policing (see 3.4), to discipline individuals or groups such as the homeless, squatters or anti-displacement campaigners whose behaviour threatens to disrupt efforts to gentrify the city (Smith 2002). As such, greater state intervention in the production of gentrification can be understood as a form of roll-out neoliberalism (Harris 2008). In sum, Visser and Kotze (2008: 2568) argue,

Gentrification is no longer only the result of the 'intrepid' middle-class resident investing sweat equity in rundown historical buildings in central-city neighbourhoods. Rather, the process, if seldom mentioned by name in urban policy and regeneration programmes, is silently induced by city managers aiming to be credited with 'turning' around their central-city districts to untold prosperity and 'global connectivity'.

In addition to discussions about the changing definition of gentrification, the literature is characterised by a long-running debate about the causes of this process of urban change. Consumption-side arguments emphasise the agency of the gentrifiers, suggesting that the post-industrial growth of the information, entertainment and service industries, and a rejection of suburban lifestyles by young middle class professionals working in these sectors, has led to a growth in demand for inner city housing amongst a 'cultural new class' in recent decades (Ley 1994). Marxist production-side explanations, on the other hand, emphasise the determining role of capital in producing gentrification. Drawing on Harvey's theory of the urbanisation of capital, Neil Smith (1996) argued that capital's inherent crisis tendencies, which lead to the periodic geographical switching of capital from one location to another in search of profitable outlets, were responsible for producing both suburbanisation and gentrification in the Twentieth Century. When capital flows out to the suburbs, disinvestment in the inner city creates a 'rent gap' - the difference between the actual and potential value of a property - which in turn creates opportunities for profitable reinvestment, and capital flows back in to the urban core. As such, while

changing consumption patterns play a minor role, it is this switching of capital in search of profit that is the primary cause of gentrification: 'gentrification is a back-to-the-city movement all right, but a back-to-the-city movement by capital rather than people' (Smith 1996: 70). Although this debate has continued back and forth for many years, there has been a recent effort to move on from debating causes, and commentators now acknowledge that both consumption and production perspectives have a role to play in explaining gentrification (Shaw 2008). Despite this, the fact that gentrification has been pursued as a state-led entrepreneurial strategy since the 1990s suggests that it has become increasingly production-led in the phase of roll-out neoliberalism.

Following Glass's (1964) original account, early research tended to take a critical view of gentrification on account of the fact that it caused the displacement of working class residents by middle class gentrifiers. Hartman (1984), for example, drew attention to the growing problem of displacement as a result of gentrification in the 1970s and 1980s and argued that the 'right to displace' enjoyed by property owners should be constrained by a 'right to stay put' for the users of property. As Slater (2009: 740) observes, 'up until the late 1980s, very few, if any, scholarly articles celebrating gentrification existed'.

Since the 1990s, however, a growing number of researchers have attempted to challenge the association between gentrification and displacement and paint it in a more positive light. Florida (2002) celebrates middle class gentrifiers as a bohemian 'creative class' who are responsible for the social, economic and aesthetic reinvigoration the inner city. Hamnett (2003) argues that gentrification is not responsible for the geographical displacement of the working class in London, but that this class has been *replaced* by the progressive growth of the middle class population of the city. Vigdor (2001), Freeman (2005) and Freeman and Braconi (2002) have all argued that working class residents benefit from the physical improvements and increased economic opportunities created by the gentrification of their neighbourhoods, and that displacement is not a significant problem. Freeman (2005) and Freeman and Braconi (2002) go as far as to argue that low income residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods as *less* likely to move

out than their counterparts in neighbourhoods where reinvestment has not occurred.

Some contemporary scholars still conceive of gentrification as fundamentally a class-based process of displacement (Atkinson 2002; Visser and Kotze 2008; Slater 2006, 2009). Slater (2006, 2009) criticises the arguments discussed above for gutting the concept of gentrification of its historical meaning. He argues that researchers are neglecting working class experiences of displacement, choosing instead to celebrate the agency of middle and upper class gentrifiers. This neglect is a product of the fact that researchers are preoccupied by tired old debates about the definition and causes of gentrification, that displacement is difficult to measure, and that neoliberal funding agendas prioritising policy-relevant research are discouraging critical perspectives. Politically, pro-gentrification research uncritically reproduces the neoliberal fiction that neighbourhood improvements can only be achieved through gentrification, and that the only other option is abandonment and decay.

In response, Slater (2009: 307) calls for a renewed focus on the working class experience of displacement as fundamental to the process of gentrification and for 'perspectives which call into question the underlying structure of socio-political interests constituting capitalist urban and land economies and policies' rather than uncritical, policy-centric research. He also calls for the exploration of political alternatives based on the decommodification of housing. As will be discussed in 3.6, this thesis contributes to this research agenda by bringing gentrification research into dialogue with the Marxist theories of enclosures and commons reviewed in Chapter 2.

The literature has traditionally focused on gentrification as a process occurring in the metropolitan centres of the Global North, such as London and New York. However, there is now a growing recognition that state-led gentrification has become globalised and is increasingly discernable in the cities of the Global South (Smith 2002; Harris 2008; Lees 2012). It has been suggested that large-scale beautification projects that generate displacement, slum clearances, the eviction of informal street traders, and the increasing fragmentation of the urban

landscape into luxury gated communities and impoverished informal settlements as a result of growing social inequality in these cities can all be understood through the lens of gentrification (Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Harris 2008; Slater 2009). The globalisation of gentrification as a result of neoliberal restructuring can be understood as both production-led, with cities adopting gentrification as a key entrepreneurial development strategy, and consumption-led, as an expression of the cosmopolitan lifestyles enjoyed by the new transnational capitalist elite based in the Global South (Harris 2008).

Furthermore, there is a growing recognition that gentrification and displacement in the Global South is taking more extreme and brutal forms than in the traditional heartlands of Europe and North America (Smith 2002; Harris 2008; Lees 2012). According to Lees (2012: 164):

It is clear that cities like Mumbai, Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Shanghai are now at the cutting edge of urban change. Active processes of gentrification in the USA and Europe today are nothing compared to the '*mega-gentrification*' and associated '*mega-displacement*' that is happening in these cities.

Smith (2002: 82) argues that while the dislocation of social reproduction at the urban scale under neoliberalism is only partial in the cities of the Global North, the 'leading edge' of this dislocation,

lies in the large and rapidly expanding metropolises of Asia, Latin America, and parts of Africa, where the Keynesian welfare state was never significantly installed, the definitive link between the city and social reproduction never paramount, and the fetter of old forms, structures, and landscapes is much less strong.

As such, it would be wrong to assume that gentrification in the Global South merely reproduces patterns of class-based urban restructuring in Europe and America (Lees 2012).

Despite these developments, there is a scarcity of place-specific research into the particular forms that gentrification is taking in the cities of the Global South (Harris 2008). In particular, there is a lack of research on gentrification in the African continent outside of South Africa, where it has been reported that

gentrification processes largely mimic Anglo-American experiences of state-led redevelopment (Visser and Kotze 2008; Winkler 2009). As such, Lees (2012: 164) argues, 'it is time now for gentrification researchers to decolonize the gentrification literature away from Euro-American perspectives and to pay much more attention to gentrification in the Global South'. Research on the specific form that state-led gentrification is taking in different cities in the Global South should rethink traditional Euro-American conceptions of what gentrification is, what processes can be included under this umbrella, and what hybrid "actually existing" forms it might take as it attaches itself to other policies. This research can do political work by contributing to 'a form of comparative urbanism in which international (Global North and South) anti-gentrification critiques, movements and groups learn from each other' (Lees 2012: 163). This thesis contributes substantively to the decolonisation of gentrification research by drawing on original empirical research into the particular characteristics of state-led gentrification in the previously neglected African urban context (see 5.5).

Theoretically, there is a need for research that explores the relationship between gentrification in the Global South and neo-colonialism. In the introduction to their edited collection on the globalisation of gentrification, Atkinson and Bridge (2005: 2-3) suggest that gentrification can be understood as the 'new urban colonialism' on the grounds that: its geographical expansion from the metropolises of the Global North to the cities of the Global South is 'reminiscent of earlier waves of colonial and mercantile expansion'; this expansion is linked to the universalisation of market discipline and entrepreneurial urban governance under conditions of neoliberal restructuring; it signifies 'a white Anglo appropriation of urban spaces and history'; it is experienced by the displaced as a process of colonisation by the middle classes; and gentrifiers often 'have the characteristics of a colonial elite'. Lees (2012: 156), however, criticises Atkinson and Bridge's collection for overlooking how gentrification as the 'new urban colonialism' might play out in the non-white cities of the Global South. This thesis addresses this lacuna by exploring the relevance of this theoretical approach for

understanding gentrification in an African context where (neo-)colonialism has had a formative effect on urban development (see 5.5).

3.4 The new urban revanchism

In the course of conducting gentrification research, Neil Smith (1996) identified a new approach to the regulation of public space that emerged in New York City in the 1980s. He argued that this approach was a deliberate strategy to displace working class groups such as the homeless and squatters from Manhattan to the outer boroughs in order to “reclaim” the inner city for the middle classes. Smith identified several interlinked strategies pursued to this end; the criminalisation and violent repression of homelessness via ‘zero tolerance’ policing, the systematic eviction and destruction of squats and ‘shanty town’ and ‘tent city’ encampments, and the withdrawal or disciplinary reform of welfare provision. He described this policy direction as a new urban “revanchism”.

The revanchists (from *revanche*, the French word for revenge), were a 19th century movement of bourgeois nationalist reactionaries who sought to restore the traditional social order in the wake of the liberalism of the Second Empire and the socialism of the Paris Commune. Smith (2001: no page) draws a direct historical comparison between these and ‘today’s new revanchists’ who ‘are rewriting urban and social policy in the wake of 20th-century American liberalism’. He does so by identifying ‘a visceral reaction in the public discourse against the liberalism of the post-1960s period and an all-out attack on the social policy structure that emanated from the New Deal and the immediate post war era’ (Smith 1996: 44).

The revanchist assault on the poorest residents of New York is framed by Smith as a form of social cleansing of one class by another with the aid of a repressive state apparatus. He describes a middle class campaign to reclaim the inner city from those whose presence and behaviour they find threatening. Policies such as zero tolerance policing were justified in terms of protecting ‘quality of life’ in the city (Smith 1996: 225). Of course, this rhetoric begs the question: ‘quality of life for whom?’ That revanchist urbanism favours the interests of one social class to

the detriment of the other, Smith explains, is evident in Giuliani and police commissioner William Bratton's *Police Strategy No. 5* – the founding document of zero tolerance policing. This document identified a range of behaviours that constituted 'visible signs of a city out of control', including homelessness, informal street trading, begging, prostitution, loud music, public drinking, and graffiti and street art, and promised to 'reclaim' the public spaces of New York by stamping them out. 'Less formally', Smith (2001: no page) claims, 'Giuliani and Bratton vowed to "clean the city" of the "scum" that apparently "threatened" decent people walking down the street'. The desired urban order outlined in *Police Strategy No. 5*, Smith argues, 'was heavily overwritten by class and race norms (that) expressed particular middle-class, white, often-suburban interests, ambitions, and identities' (Smith 2001). Behaviours that posed a perceived threat to these norms, particularly squatting and homelessness, were criminalised by this discourse, providing the ideological pretext for repressive state interventions.

Smith's analysis of revanchism in New York City frames it as the neoliberal state's use of extra-economic means to displace working class groups such as the homeless, squatters and low-income renters whose presence constituted a barrier to the strategic gentrification of Manhattan. In relation to this process of gentrification, Smith (1996) identifies a pervasive 'frontier' discourse in popular culture and the media that champions 'the adventurous spirit and rugged individualism of the new settlers, brave "urban pioneers" who buy up property in formerly disinvested areas'. This language, he argues, serves an important ideological purpose by feting the gentrifying middle classes as the bringers of moral order and prosperity to the 'Wild West' of the decaying inner city slums, whilst also dehumanising the working class victims of revanchist policy as 'savage' and 'uncivil' (1996: 18). More recently, studies of the reconstruction of New Orleans have exposed the important role that media commentators played in criminalising the occupants of New Orleans' public housing stock, describing them as drug-addicted, welfare-dependent idlers prone to looting at the first sign of public disorder (Zizek 2005; Peck 2006; Reed 2006). This discursive process paved the way for the displacement of public housing tenants by creating an

ideological environment where the rest of the population would consent (through their inaction at least) to the dispossession of this group of people. As such, revanchism is a discursive, cultural and ideological phenomenon that combines with extra-economic state force to produce dispossession. This thesis contributes new insights into this phenomenon by examining how discursive and physical-legal mechanisms combine to produce accumulation by dispossession in Accra (see 7.2).

Mitchell (2003) argues that the revanchist policing of urban space in the US is an entrepreneurial strategy to protect shops and other businesses from the perceived detrimental effects of visible homelessness. As such, it can be understood as an aesthetic intervention that seeks to manage the urban environment as a 'landscape':

a "scene" in which the propertied classes express "possession" of the land and their control over the social relations within it. A landscape in this sense is a place of comfort and relaxation, perhaps of leisurely consumption, unsullied by images of work, poverty, or social strife' (Mitchell 2003: 186).

This aestheticisation of urban policy, a theme that is explored in relation to Accra in Chapter 7, fits with Harvey's (1989: 362) description of entrepreneurial urban governance in terms of the postmodern prioritisation of 'medium over message and image over substance'.

Although Smith's original 1996 study of revanchist urbanism was limited to a discussion of New York City, he has since gone on to argue that it is not a strictly local phenomenon but rather a local manifestation of 'the ugly cultural politics of neoliberal globalization', given its particular local character by the city's 'political and corporate leaders' (Smith 1998: 10 and 16). Within the global context of the dislocation of social reproduction at the urban scale, 'entire social groups that previously were more or less integrated into urban and national economies have been "surplused" ... raising the question of social control' (Smith 2001: no page). Although an unemployed surplus population, or 'industrial reserve army', is a structural necessity for capital accumulation, Mitchell (2003) argues, its visible presence in cities undermines urban entrepreneurial strategies to attract capital

and fix it in place. It is this contradiction that is managed through the revanchist regulation of space:

The very existence of such an army of poverty, which is so necessary to the expansion of capital, means that there is an army of humanity that must be strictly controlled or else it will undermine the drive toward accumulation. If this has been a constant fact of capitalist development, then what sets the present era, and the present wave of anti-homeless laws, apart is the degree to which such regulation has also become an important ingredient in not just expanding capital but in either attracting it in the first place or in protecting it once it is fixed in particular places. This is what anti-homeless laws are meant to do. The contradiction, then, is that the homeless and poor are desperately *needed*, but not at all *wanted*, and so the solution becomes a geographical one: regulating space so that homeless people have no room to be *here* (Mitchell 2003: 174).

In-keeping with Peck and Tickell's description of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism, therefore, the role of state intervention at the urban level has metamorphosed from actively managing social reproduction to reactively engaging in repression and social control as an entrepreneurial strategy. As such, Smith (2002: 82) explains the rise of revanchist urbanism as the product of a transformed global economy where 'the connections between capital and the state, social reproduction and social control have been drastically altered'.

This raises a theoretical question about the role that working class struggle plays in engendering this particular mode of urban dispossession. Smith (2001) describes revanchism as a roll-out strategy designed to control the population surplussed by roll-back neoliberalism, but his production-side account of urban regeneration does not adequately theorise the agency of this population, or afford them much power. Rather than an example of capital's total domination of the urban process, could revanchism in New York City be understood through an autonomist Marxist lens as a reaction to commoning practices, such the squatting of empty buildings and occupation of parks and public spaces, which constitute a limit to accumulation through gentrification? Midnight Notes' account of the 'spatial deconcentration' of the community in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in order to 'eliminate the ghetto as a space for organized mass political power' would certainly suggest so (Midnight Notes 1990a: 64). This

thesis addresses this question by examining the extent to which revanchist urban policy in Accra is made in response to social conflict and the social contradictions generated by neoliberalisation (see 7.3).

Since its emergence in New York in the 1980s, and in the context of the globalisation of gentrification as an urban strategy, many other local governments have adopted revanchist urban policy as a means to manage the social contradictions of neoliberalisation. Since being credited, somewhat controversially, with reducing the crime rate in New York City, zero tolerance policing has been adapted by urban governments the world over, with politicians and police chiefs flocking to seek consultation with Bratton and the New York Police Department (NYPD) (Smith, 2001). Similarly, the systematic withdrawal or disciplinary reform of welfare pioneered in New York in this period has diffused outwards to countries such as the UK, where Labour and Conservative governments have enthusiastically rolled out 'workfare' programmes, amongst other wide-ranging benefit cuts. As such, Smith's theory of neoliberal revanchism appears to offer a global framework within which we can understand both particular instances of urban exclusion and displacement and the reconfiguration of urban governance and its relationship with capital, social reproduction and poverty in the neoliberal era.

This raises the question of how the global politics of neoliberal revanchism differs from place to place. Several writers have addressed the transfer of revanchist urban policy from one place to another in their work. Citing the influence of highly ideological think tanks such as the Manhattan Institute, the consultation work carried out by the NYPD, and policy research that uncritically reproduces representations of the urban as a site of criminality and violence, Wacquant (1999) argues that revanchist policy was spread from the US to France by elites through an international process of ideological replication. Jamie Peck's (2006: 683) research into the transfer of revanchist urban policy from New York to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina also cites the central role played by 'the ideational activists and policy retailers of the right' such as the Manhattan Institute in ideologically 'framing' crises in terms of governmental

failure and simultaneously offering pre-fabricated free market 'solutions' to policy makers. While both of these accounts emphasise continuity across space, Wacquant (1999: 339-340) adds an important geographical caveat, noting that countries that import US-style revanchist policies 'do not content themselves with passively receiving these tools' but 'often borrow them on their own initiative and always adapt them to their needs as well as to their national traditions'.

In addition to this work on policy transfer, several geographers have sought to explore the extent to which Smith's theory can be applied across space through conducting empirical research in different urban contexts. Macleod (2002) and Atkinson (2003) assess the extent to which revanchism has gained a foothold in Glasgow and Central Scotland, respectively. In both cases, it appears that the local state has adopted some aspects of New York revanchism while shying away from others. Macleod (2002: 269) concludes that "'actually existing" revanchist political economies will assume different forms in different contexts' and 'particular studies of revanchism will require much theoretical flexibility to assess the specific structures and mechanisms that lead to certain policy transfers, calls for zero tolerance, and imperatives to "cleanse" public spaces'.

Regarding how revanchism translates to the cities of the Global South, Kate Swanson's (2007) work reveals the racist, neo-colonial dimension that revanchist urbanism assumed when it was applied in Ecuador. In 2002, the city of Guayaquil contracted William Bratton (co-author of New York's *Police Strategy No. 5*) to design the overhaul of its urban policing. The result - "Plan Bratton" - laid the foundations for the adoption of zero tolerance policing in the area: indigenous street vendors and beggars were beaten, imprisoned and displaced to peripheral locations in order to make Ecuador's urban centres appear 'cleaner' for tourists. Swanson argues that these repressive policies are the product of a particular version of entrepreneurialism conditioned by a local hygienic racist discourse that has historically associated indigenous peoples with dirt and disease and imagines modernisation as a form of ethnic 'whitening'. As such, Swanson (2007: 714) concludes that revanchism in Ecuador is,

being driven by a different set of criteria than in the North. Unlike many cities in North America and Europe, beggars, street children, and informal workers are not being displaced to build luxury condominiums for Ecuador's middle and upper classes. Rather, beggars, street children and informal workers are being displaced to make way for the global tourist class. In other words, revanchism is not being driven by the demand for gentrified housing but rather a re-orientation of the city to the tourist economy.

As Smith (2001: no page) himself suggested, therefore, 'a global, postliberal revanchism... may exact revenge against different social groups in different places, doing so with differing intensities and taking quite different forms'. Rather than being imposed wholesale as an off-the-shelf policy system, revanchism appears to mutate and become hybrid as it comes into contact with local historical, political, cultural and economic factors. As such, this thesis builds on Swanson's (2007) example by conducting original empirical research into actually existing revanchism in a particular urban context. However, this thesis also reflects the need to understand place specific accounts within a context of global restructuring in which displacement and dispossession is playing an increasingly central role in the management of urban space. As will be discussed in 3.6, this is achieved by bringing critical urban theory into dialogue with Marxist theories of primitive accumulation.

Swanson's (2007) research in Ecuador hints at the potential to develop Smith's theory to analyse revanchism as a form of urban dispossession that can assume a neo-colonial dynamic, especially in the postcolonial cities of the Global South. As with researching gentrification, therefore, there is a need to abandon the assumption that revanchist policies in the Global South simply mimic those in the North. This thesis advances this argument by exploring how the revanchist treatment of informal street traders and squatters by the city authorities represents a return to colonial urbanism in Accra (see 6.6).

3.5 The right to the city

The right to the city has emerged as an important concept in critical urban geographical discussions about urban dispossession. Henri Lefebvre first published his pamphlet entitled *Le droit a la ville* (The right to the city) in 1967.

Writing about modern bourgeois urbanism in general, although clearly using Paris as his primary reference point, Lefebvre (1996 [1967]) characterised the city of the capitalist epoch as a 'product', where the production of space is determined by its exchange value as a commodity. By contrast, he described the pre-capitalist city as the creative work, or *oeuvre*, of its users, and argued that this '*oeuvre* is more closely related to use value than exchange value' (ibid: 75). The determination of exchange value in the bourgeois city is an anathema to urban life, based on use value and the *oeuvre*, as it reduces the planning and production of urban space to a means to the end of capital accumulation via the bureaucratic organisation of production and consumption (ibid: 126). This rationality produces cities characterised by ghettoisation through the separation of activities and segregation of classes (ibid: 144). The working class is the victim of this process as it is 'rejected from the centres towards the peripheries, dispossessed of the city, expropriated thus from the best outcomes of its activity' (ibid: 179). The urban centre becomes a 'New Athens', a space of decision-making and consumption dominated by ruling class elites (ibid: 161).

The right to the city is 'like a cry and a demand' for 'the urban' which is denied to working class inhabitants in the capitalist city (ibid: 158). Rather than being consigned to the periphery, the right to the city implies the right to 'centrality' for the working class (ibid: 179). Rather than the imposition of solutions from above by architects and planners, it implies the right to '*oeuvre*' and to 'participation' (the collective production and self-management of the city by its inhabitants) and 'appropriation' (the right to use space that is distinct from the right to private property) (ibid: 174). By seizing their right to the city, Lefebvre's downtrodden working class inhabitant will usher in a new 'urban reality for 'users' and not for capitalist speculators, builders and technicians' where 'use value, subordinated for centuries to exchange value, can now come first again' (ibid: 167-168).

While it is very much the product of a particular time and place (1960s Paris), Lefebvre's account of capitalist urban development as a class-based process of dispossession resonates with contemporary debates about the neoliberal city,

reviewed above. As such, his concept has been subject to renewed scholarly interest amongst critical urban geographers. Indeed, Peter Marcuse (2009: 185) recently referred to the right to the city as nothing less than the 'ultimate purpose of critical urban theory'. Several writers have highlighted the utility of this concept for understanding neoliberal urbanism. Harvey (2008, 2009) has used Lefebvre to argue that the urban process under capitalism (the creative destruction of the built environment in order to create profitable outlets for surplus capital) displaces the poor and robs them of their right to the city. He argues that this dynamic has been magnified in the neoliberal era as the control of the surplus has been increasingly privatised, and entrepreneurial governance has aligned the state to corporate interests. This has resulted in increased displacement and dispossession, such as when millions of low-income homeowners lost their homes as a result of the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US. In the neoliberal epoch, therefore, only a small political and economic elite enjoys the power to shape the production of urban space. This deepening democratic deficit is amplified by the fact that cities are increasingly shaped by global market forces that citizens have no control over, urban policy is reoriented towards entrepreneurialism in response to these pressures, and the functions of elected government are hollowed out by unaccountable transnational and local governance organisations. As such, Purcell (2002) argues, Lefebvre's call for a right to the city that empowers urban working class inhabitants is more urgent than ever.

It has been noted that Lefebvre's account of the miserable condition of working class Parisians resonates clearly with the experiences of urban dwellers around the world today, and that the phenomena he describes have become global, extending to cities in the Global South. In Africa, the right to the city is being denied to the urban poor, who are displaced to the urban fringe by projects such as slum clearances intended to 'clean up' and 'modernize' the inner cities (Fumtim 2010). John Friedmann (1995) describes the criminalisation and displacement of informal street traders in Santiago, Chile as a denial of the street as a space of conviviality and encounter that seeks to enclose it for rapid circulation, bourgeois leisure and consumption and 'legitimate' commerce. These

contemporary accounts are resonant of Lefebvre's (1996 [1967]: 76) description of Haussmann's 19th century redevelopment of Paris, which replaced 'winding but lively streets by long avenues, sordid but animated 'quartiers' by bourgeois ones', suggesting that his innovative techniques of spatial control have since become globalised. However, it would be wrong to assume that postcolonial cities have simply imported bourgeois planning techniques from metropolitan cities in the Global North. Rather, as Kipfer (2007) has argued, there are instances of spatial techniques of segregation being pioneered in the French colonies and then reproduced in Paris. As such, research on the global significance of the right to the city should not assume that bourgeois urbanism in the former colonies is merely a recreation of its European counterpart. The fact that techniques of segregation and displacement in the cities of the Global South follow a different historical-geographical logic that those in the North is demonstrated in the account of actually existing gentrification and revanchism in Accra presented in this thesis (see 6.6).

There is an on going debate about what achieving the right to the city might actually mean in practice. It has been interpreted by some as realisable through the granting of greater legal rights to citizens. Edisio Fernades (2007: 213-215) argues that the Brazilian movement for legal reform that culminated with the passing of a Federal City Statute in 2001 has 'laid the legal foundations of the 'right to the city' in the country' by introducing the notion that property has a dual function, making the right to dispose of private property conditional on the satisfaction of social needs, and legislating for various new opportunities for public participation in urban governance. Emerging from the International Social Forum and World Urban Forum processes, the World Charter for the Right to the City was intended to scale up the City Statute to achieve global legal reform by supplementing existing universal human rights treaties with a declaration on rights specific to the urban scale. The aspiration is for the right to the city to become legally enforceable vis-a-vis national governments (ibid: 216).

However, Margit Mayer (2009: 367) is critical of the NGOs, advocacy organisations and international governance bodies that have adopted the right to

the city slogan and transformed it from 'an oppositional demand, which challenges the claims of the rich and the powerful' to a 'legal claim enforceable through a judicial process'. This is undesirable because campaigns for universal rights gloss over class antagonism and struggle and are basically about good governance and greater inclusion within the current system rather than transforming the capitalist economic structures that produce poverty and exclusion. This watering down of the right to the city can be explained by the recent proliferation of NGOs and non-profit organisations, which have taken centre stage from grassroots social movements in contemporary urban struggles over access to housing and services, a development that will be explored in Accra through the original empirical research presented in Chapter 8. Mayer argues that these organisations tend to be influenced by the UN and World Bank's arguments that neoliberal capitalism can be reformed to the benefit of the poor:

In their world view... we can reconcile local autonomy with international competitiveness, and sustainability with economic growth, we can have neoliberalism with a human touch. This, of course, constitutes one of the most powerful mystifications of the contemporary era; exposing this mystification and proposing the radical right to the city instead, would seem to be the logical conclusion (Mayer 2009: 369).

Mayer's call for a radical right to the city is echoed by Purcell (2003: 576), who criticises the 'overstretching' of the concept in the literature, much of which 'underestimates the revolutionary implications of Lefebvre's idea' and Dikec and Gilbert (2002: 73), who advocate a Lefebvrian version of the right to the city that 'calls for major changes in the structural dynamics that produce urban space'. Purcell (2003: 578-579) argues that the rights to appropriation and participation imply nothing less than the end of private property and capital accumulation as the ordering principles of the urban process:

In capitalism over the past two centuries (1) the valorization of urban space has been a key accumulation strategy for capital... and (2) property rights have given capitalist firms relatively free reign during that time to produce urban space for its exchange value. The right to appropriation confronts capital's ability to valorize urban space, establishing a clear priority for the use value of urban space over its exchange value potential. The right to participation reworks the property rights regime that underlies

the valorization of urban space. If inhabitants hold a central role in the decisions that produce urban space, property ownership can no longer confer a dominant voice in decisions about what to do with urban land.

As McCann (2002: 78) points out, however, Lefebvre gives us no indication of how this radical right to the city and the triumph of use over exchange value might be achieved in practice. Harvey (2008) has suggested that the 'collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization' can only be achieved through 'greater democratic control over the production and utilization of the surplus'. Since the urban process is a major channel of surplus use, establishing democratic management over its urban deployment constitutes the right to the city' (ibid. 23 and 37). Again, however, there is no suggestion of how urban inhabitants might realise this democratic control over the surplus.

Mustafa Dikec (2001: 1790) describes the right to the city as 'a way of actively and collectively relating to the political life of the city... an enabling right, to be defined and refined through political struggle'. In another article, Dikec and Gilbert (2002: 69) argue that participation and self-management is about 'substantive practices of citizenship', rather than formal legal rights. This perspective is constructive as it indicates the possibility to look to the everyday praxis of urban inhabitants for the substantive practice of the rights to appropriation and participation.

On this note, Robert Neuwirth (2006: 22), a writer who spent several years living in squatter settlements in Brazil, India, Kenya and Turkey, argues that 'squatters offer a different way of looking at land. Rather than treating it as an economic value, squatters live according to a more ancient notion: the idea that every person has a natural right, simply by virtue of being born, to have a home, a place, a location in the world'. As such, he concludes,

the world's squatters give some reality to Henri Lefebvre's loose concept of "the right to the city". They are excluded, so they take. But they are not seizing an abstract right, they are taking 'an actual place to lay their heads (Neuwirth 2006: 311).

Chapter 9 of this thesis develops this approach to thinking about the right to the city through investigating how widespread, everyday practices of squatting, or the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ (Bayat 1997: 57), in Accra can be understood as a form of everyday praxis in which space is appropriated, produced and used in order to satisfy human need, in defiance of laws that prioritise private property and the exchange value of land. Furthermore, this thesis enriches understandings of the right to the city by incorporating ideas reviewed in Chapter 2 about the creation of commons as anti-capitalist struggle. This will be discussed further in the next section.

3.6 Urbanising dispossession

As the previous sections have demonstrated, critical geographical research on neoliberal urbanism can provide useful insights into the dynamics of dispossession in the contemporary city. Fundamentally, inter-urban competition under conditions of globalisation and ‘flexible accumulation’ engenders dispossession at the urban scale by compelling the local state to adopt entrepreneurial strategies to realise the valorisation of urban space. These strategies include state-led gentrification projects and the revanchist purification of public space. Gentrification produces dispossession through class-based processes of displacement. As such, critical urban geographical approaches enhance our understanding of the importance of place to contemporary processes of dispossession. In addition, the literature on the new urban revanchism demonstrates that neoliberal urban policy produces dispossession through purifying public space of certain groups by stigmatising and criminalising their behaviour. The globalisation and generalisation of gentrification and revanchism is the urban expression of the fact that dispossession is increasingly central to capitalist development in the neoliberal epoch. Lefebvre (1996 [1967]) and his followers reveal that the working class is dispossessed of “the urban” that it has collectively produced because of the prioritisation of exchange value over use value, leading to displacement, exclusion and segregation. The prioritisation of the exchange value of urban space is fundamental to the urban process under capitalism, but has intensified

under neoliberalism as a result of cities shifting from bases of social reproduction to centres of production (Smith 2002; Harvey 2008).

Harvey (1989) and Jessop (2002) reveal that the agent of entrepreneurial urbanism should not be understood as the state narrowly defined, but as ruling class alliances of different actors. By identifying public-private partnerships as a key mechanism of neoliberal urban governance, geographers reveal how the state combines with particular factions of capital (such as real estate and financial capital in the case of gentrification) to engender dispossession. As such, the research on contemporary urban dispossession presented in this thesis studies the partnerships that comprise urban governance in Accra rather than government per se. Furthermore, Smith's (1996, 2002) discussion of the importance of discourse in legitimising state-led gentrification and revanchist policies demonstrates that brute force is not the only extra-economic means employed to enable dispossession. Rather, neoliberal urbanism relies on discursive strategies and techniques of subjectification to co-opt various social actors into constructing dispossession (Larner 2000). Consequently, this thesis examines the role of these immaterial factors, as well as physical and legal mechanisms, in enabling accumulation by dispossession in Accra.

As Peck and Tickell (2002) and others reveal, neoliberalisation is a process that entails different phases of dispossession, with 'roll out' and 'flanking' measures being devised to manage the contradictions produced by 'roll back' market reforms. Smith (2002) and Mitchell (2003) describe how processes of privatisation, deregulation and marketisation have produced a large unemployed surplus proletariat that need to be controlled through revanchist social policies in case it undermines efforts to valorise urban space. Following Perelman's (2000) historical discussion of primitive accumulation as akin to two scissor blades, therefore, the urban geography literature provides detailed insight into how different types of dispossession interact. Revealing how different processes, phases and scales of dispossession combine in a particular historical-geographical context is a fundamental contribution of this thesis.

Finally, the urban geography literature emphasises the importance of studying 'actually existing neoliberalisms' in particular geographical contexts to understand the form that dispossession takes at the urban scale (Brenner and Theodore 2002). Although entrepreneurial urban development strategies have become globalised and generalised, the extant research suggests that revanchism and gentrification both take different forms in different places depending on the local cultural and political environment. As Lees (2012) argues, there is a need to 'decolonize' urban theory and study the particular form that urban dispossession is assuming in the cities of the Global South. In particular, and building on research by Atkinson and Bridge (2005) and Swanson (2007), there is potential to explore the particular character that neoliberal entrepreneurial policies assume when they are rolled out within post/neo-colonial urban environments. This potential is realised in the analysis of actually existing gentrification and revanchism in Accra that is presented in this thesis (see 6.6).

Just as geographies of neoliberal urbanism can provide important insights into the processes of dispossession occurring at the urban scale, however, so these approaches can benefit from taking into account Marxist theoretical arguments (as reviewed in Chapter 2) about the centrality of primitive accumulation to contemporary capitalism. In addition to producing geographically specific accounts of actually existing neoliberalisms, it is valuable to abstract from the particular to understand how processes of urban displacement and exclusion relate to global transformations in which dispossession plays an increasingly central role in the organisation of accumulation. For example, Sassen's (2010) discussion of contemporary primitive accumulation as the 'extraction' of wealth and the 'expulsion' of surplus populations suggests that there is a global, systemic logic that underpins urban strategies of exclusion and displacement. In addition, conceptualising these features of contemporary urban development in this framework locates them in a long history of primitive accumulation. This allows us to understand that dispossession is not just the product of a particular, neoliberal moment of capitalism (although it is intensified during this moment), but is in fact fundamental to capitalism itself.

Smith (1996), Mitchell (2003) and Swanson's (2007) accounts of revanchism suggests that it can be understood as a roll-out strategy employing the use of extra-economic force to remove groups whose presence in the city threatens entrepreneurial strategies to valorise urban space. But the agency of these groups is not adequately theorised in the urban geography literature on revanchism. Following De Angelis (2007), this thesis addresses this problem by exploring whether revanchism can be understood as an attempt to enclose urban space in response to urban commoning practices, such as squatting, that pose a limit to capital. Theorising revanchism in this way avoids the trap of over-emphasising dominance of capital whilst also affording political agency to the targets of revanchist policies. Whether or not such an approach is valid can only be established by research into the particular circumstances of actually existing revanchisms.

Slater (2009: 307) calls for a gentrification research agenda that puts displacement at its centre, that examines the 'underlying structure of socio-political interests constituting capitalist urban and land economies and policies', and that explores alternatives in terms of the decommodification of housing. This thesis contributes to this research agenda in two respects: it makes a substantive contribution by presenting original empirical research on gentrification and displacement in Accra; and it makes a conceptual contribution by integrating Marxist theories of enclosures and commons in order to theorise gentrification and its alternatives.

By conceptualising gentrification as an urban moment of accumulation by dispossession, the focus is placed on displacement, as the particular form that dispossession takes, as the essential function of gentrification. Theorising gentrification in terms of accumulation by dispossession establishes a framework through which to understand the connection between particular policies, projects and processes and the 'underlying structure of socio-political interests' that benefit from producing dispossession (Slater 2009: 307). In addition, it enables us to appreciate the structural dynamic that connects gentrification with other processes of urban dispossession, such as land

privatisation, and the revanchist regulation of public space. Theorising gentrification in terms of enclosure is also constructive as it points the way towards political alternatives in terms of decommodifying housing and urban space by recognising their status as 'urban commons'.

There are several urban geographers who have already begun to write about gentrification as a process of enclosure that dispossesses people of their urban commons. Nicholas Blomley (2008: 316) has described anti-gentrification protests in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside as grounded on local residents' sense of collective ownership over the site of a planned condominium. Blomley argues that this collective property claim indicates the presence of an urban commons. In contrast to private property, such as claim is 'predicated on use, occupation, domicile... and inherent need'. It is

based upon and enacted through sustained patterns of local use and collective habitation, through ingrained practices of appropriation and 'investment'. By virtue of being in place for a long time and using and relying upon the commons, residents both acquire and sustain a legitimate property interest (Blomley 2008: 320).

As such, urban commons are produced by residents through a form of 'place making' (ibid: 320). They can include 'state, private and collective property, including streets, parks, residential hotels, community centres and so on' (ibid: 316).

According to Blomley (2008: 316), private developers engaged in gentrification wield private property claims that conflict with these collective property claims because they afford the owner the right to exclude others and therefore to 'displace, remove and evict the poor', dispossessing them of their urban commons in the process. Blomley criticises the fact that ideological constructions of property typically marginalise collective property claims in favour of private property. In his argument, urban enclosure is not just a physical-legal act, but also a discursive practice based on the naturalisation of a liberal definition of property and the silencing of alternative visions based on the commons (Blomley 2008).

David Harvey's (2012) recent book *Rebel Cities* features a discussion that treads a similar path to Blomley by arguing that the urban commons are produced through a 'social practice of *commoning*' by city dwellers. These commons are not a 'thing' but a 'social relation' between a 'social group' and 'those aspects of its social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood'. Fundamental to this social relation is 'the principle that the relation between the social group and that aspect of the environment being treated as a common shall be both collective and non-commodified — off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations' (Harvey 2012: 73). Harvey identifies gentrification as the enclosure and destruction of the urban commons by real estate capital (ibid: 77-78)

Hodkinson (2012: 505) argues that 'enclosure is the modus operandi of neoliberal urbanism'. Enclosure in this sense is about 'shutting down access to any space or sociality that threatens our ideological or material dependence on capitalist social relations, thus threatening accumulation' (ibid: 509). In the neoliberal city this occurs through the privatisation of publically owned spaces and services, development projects that exclude and displace the urban poor, and the corporatisation and revanchist control of the public sphere. He argues that privatisation of public housing in UK constitutes the enclosure of an urban commons that has historically performed a decommodifying role and given people a degree of protection from the market and independence from wage labour. Privatisation has caused dispossession by separating people from these public housing commons. In addition, it has caused dispossession through displacement by unleashing market forces to produce speculation and, ultimately, gentrification. In addition to the physical-legal act of privatisation, this enclosure was enabled by an ideological assault on council housing and the fostering of neoliberal subjectivities through the promotion of popular capitalism and property ownership under Thatcher's Right to Buy policy. Hodkinson (2012: 515-516) argues that it is possible for residents to take collective action to delay housing privatisation schemes, but that 'the only way to contest the new urban enclosures is through the production and reproduction of *urban commons*'.

Hodkinson (2012) relates the urban commons to the right to the city, the production of space according to use value rather than exchange value, and Hartman's (1984) call for a users' 'right to stay put', which supersedes property owners' right to displace. Bringing discussions about the right to the city into dialogue with discussions about the urban commons is important because Lefebvre's discussion of the 'expropriation' and 'dispossession' of 'the urban' suggests that he understands the city as a common produced and owned by the working class. As such, Harvey (2012: 78) argues 'the struggle for the right to the city is against the powers of capital that ruthlessly feed upon and extract rents from the common life that others have produced'.

These approaches resonate with De Angelis' (2007) conceptualisation of the social field as an ongoing struggle between enclosures and commons. However, whereas De Angelis' account is abstract, these writers demonstrate its concrete significance by combining it with an urban geographical approach to theorise the particular meaning of 'commons' and 'enclosures' at the urban scale. Urban commons are non-commodified, collective resources that are produced by city dwellers through their relationships with the urban environment. Access to these resources are not mediated by the market but are based on need and historical patterns of use. Use value takes precedence over exchange value, and collective ownership supersedes private property claims. They afford those who use them a means of reproducing themselves that gives them a degree of protection from the market and a degree of independence from wage labour. Urban enclosures are the use of extra-economic means to separate city dwellers from these commons in order to privatise and commodify them, enabling capital to overcome its limits in the process. This process of accumulation by dispossession is at the root of entrepreneurial urban policies to valorise the city through strategic gentrification or the revanchist purification of urban space. Blomley's (2008) research in Canada and Hodkinson's (2012) research in the UK suggests that the city can be conceptualised as a field of struggle between these two social forces. This thesis draws on original research into actually existing neoliberalism and actually existing commons (Eizenberg, 2012) in Accra in order to establish to what extent this is also the case in a Global South urban context.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that understandings of contemporary dispossession can be enhanced and made more concrete by consulting the geographical literatures that analyse the neoliberal city. These literatures contain various insights into the particular dynamics that dispossession assumes at the urban scale. They reveal that entrepreneurial urban governance and inter-urban competition is a systemic motor of dispossession at the urban scale, producing class-based processes of displacement and exclusion as a result of state-led gentrification strategies and revanchist policies to regulate urban space. They reveal that different phases and types of dispossession combine at the urban scale through the use of roll-out and flanking strategies to manage those sections of society dispossessed by market reforms. As Lefebvre and his followers reveal, these processes of dispossession are a product of the prioritisation of exchange value over use value in the capitalist city, something that has intensified in the neoliberal epoch. Methodologically speaking, the literature on neoliberal urbanism is instructive of the importance of studying the role that hegemonic discursive strategies, as well as brute force, play in enabling dispossession; of the need to study governance, alliances and public-private partnerships instead of the state narrowly conceived; and of the importance of studying place-specific actually-existing neoliberalisms in order to learn the particular form entrepreneurial strategies that engender dispossession assume in particular environments. In particular, there is a need for new research on actually existing gentrification and revanchism in the cities of Global South.

This chapter has argued that critical urban geographical approaches to understanding neoliberalism can be enhanced by being brought into dialogue with the theoretical arguments reviewed in Chapter 2 about the ongoing character of primitive accumulation. Geographically specific accounts of displacement and exclusion at the urban scale need to be understood in the context of global transformations in which dispossession plays an increasingly central role in accumulation. This will also help to locate actually existing neoliberalisms as a moment within the long history of primitive accumulation. In

addition, as several geographers have begun to argue, our understanding of revanchism and gentrification can be developed further by thinking about these processes in terms of struggles between enclosures and commons, (Blomley 2008; Harvey 2012; Hodgkinson 2012). Bringing these two approaches together raises several questions that need to be addressed by further research: What is the role of working class struggle in provoking state intervention in the form of roll-out and flanking strategies? Can these strategies be conceived as responses to urban commoning practices that present a limit to capital in the city? Can gentrification and revanchism be described as forms of enclosure that dispossesses people by separating them from their urban commons? What does claiming the right to the city and producing the urban commons mean in particular urban settings, and are they related? These questions will be addressed throughout this thesis.

4. Researching urban dispossession in Accra: methodology and reflection

4.1 Introduction

This study examines the theoretical questions identified in Chapters 2 and 3 through an in-depth study of urban dispossession in a particular city – Accra, Ghana. This chapter situates this investigation within the critical urban theory tradition and details the research design adopted for studying dispossession in this context. Although critical urban theory is a well-established theoretical approach, there is no established methodological framework for conducting empirical research that is informed by this approach. As such, this chapter details how an original research methodology was designed and implemented, taking into account various issues regarding doing critical urban theory in a Global South context, doing research on urban poverty and informality in the Global South, and doing collaborative research in solidarity with activists to affect progressive social change. This chapter engages with these issues in order to develop a theoretically informed, politically engaged and ethically responsible methodology for researching dispossession in Ghana's capital city.

The first half of the chapter situates the research within a critical urban theory framework and discusses some of the methodological issues that must be considered when doing politically engaged critical urban theory in a Global South city. The second half of the chapter details how I engaged with these issues to develop a research methodology for the project. First, it describes the fieldwork in Accra. Second, it details the research methods employed, including interviews, documentary analysis, ethnography, and collaborative scholar activism. Third, it discusses the ethical issues that had to be negotiated when seeking ethical approval from the University of Leeds. Finally, before concluding, I reflect on how my positionality as a relatively privileged white university student shaped my experience of doing research in Accra.

4.2 Methodological framework: critical urban theory

Answering the research questions (outlined in 1.5), required an investigation of several instances of struggle in order to identify the agents, mechanisms and causes of primitive accumulation in this context and the ways in which dispossession is contested and disrupted by the alternative practices of city dwellers. This investigation can be located within a critical urban theory approach that explores the social construction of urban space in terms of power, ideology and class struggle. Exemplified by the work of radical urban scholars such as Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey and Neil Smith, critical urban theory draws on the Marxist tradition of critique and the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School to analyse the contradictions of urban society under capitalism and identify the possibilities for emancipatory social change emanating from these contradictions.

Critical urban theory engages in abstract theoretical arguments about the urban process under capitalism, arguments that may or may not draw on empirical research. Epistemologically speaking, critical urban theorists reject positivism and claims to objectivity, on the grounds that knowledge is produced within the social context being investigated. Furthermore, they believe that knowledge is embedded within struggle. As such, critical urban theory entails a rejection of instrumental social science that seeks to make existing social institutions more effective in favour of a political engagement with normative questions and the imperatives of social struggle (Brenner 2009; Marcuse 2009). In addition to critiquing the injustices, inequalities and exclusions of the capitalist city, this political engagement motivates critical urban theorists to search for 'emancipatory alternatives latent within the present, due to the contradictions of existing social relations' (Brenner 2009: 201). This reflects the belief, articulated by Marcuse (2009: 194-195), that 'the seeds of the future must be found in the present'. Critical urban theory also aspires to illuminate and inform political practice through, for example, exposing sources of injustice or weaknesses in the current system, identifying the agents of revolutionary change, and assessing the current state of social struggles (Marcuse 2009).

Despite being able to identify this broad approach as critical urban theory, there is a no established methodological formula for conducting empirical research within this framework. As such, this project required the formulation of an original research methodology that would address the research objectives and questions from a critical urban theory approach. In order to devise this methodology, detailed in the second half of this chapter, it was necessary to engage with a range of methodological issues regarding doing critical urban theory in a Global South context, doing research on urban poverty and informality in the Global South, and doing collaborative research in solidarity with activists. These issues are discussed below.

4.2.1 Doing critical urban theory in a Global South context

Feminist and postcolonial thinkers have been hugely influential in drawing the attention of geographers to issues of difference, representation and power that must be engaged with by researchers from the Global North working in a Global South context. The power of Western intellectuals to represent and speak on behalf of others has been critiqued as a form of colonial silencing, or ‘epistemic violence’, through which subaltern perspectives are marginalised (Spivak 1988: 76). This has informed geographers’ anxieties about the power relations that underpin processes of representation and abstraction through which realities in the Global South are theorised for the consideration of academic audiences (largely) in the North. These concerns have prompted calls for a postcolonial approach to thinking about ‘responsibility’ when working across these divides, requiring researchers to be reflexive about power relations, to recognise that knowledge is co-produced with others, and to be open to alternative knowledges that may contradict Western academic perspectives (Jazeel and McFarlane 2007 2010; Ranghulam et al. 2009).

These postcolonial concerns about representation have had a direct bearing on methodological debates about the place of Global South cities in critical urban theory. Despite calls for research into ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ in different geographical contexts (see 3.2), there is a growing concern that urban

theory is generally produced based on the experience of a narrow range of Western 'global' or 'world' cities (Robinson 2002; McFarlane 2008; Lees 2012). By contrast, there has been a tendency to view so-called 'third world' cities as either 'non-cities', lacking 'the redeeming (civilizing) qualities of city-ness found elsewhere' (Robinson 2002: 548), or as the 'urban shadows' of Western cities, empirical case studies 'framed through questions of similarity or difference to Western equivalences' (McFarlane 2008: 341). This hierarchical understanding of cities within urban theory has been criticised for elevating one particular (formal, global, financial) construct of the urban economy while neglecting the importance of informal economic activities and diverse forms of urbanism (Robinson 2002; MacFarlane 2008; Pollard et al. 2009).

In response, Robinson (2002) has called for a decolonisation of urban theory through a cosmopolitan approach that develops theory according to the diverse experience of 'ordinary cities' around the globe. In keeping with postcolonial ideas about responsible learning, she argues that this approach requires finding 'responsible and ethical ways to engage with, learn from and promote the ideas of intellectuals in less privileged places' (Robinson 2002: 549-550). McFarlane (2008: 354) calls for postcolonial urban theory that does not treat the Western global city as a model against which Global South cities are compared and that instead draws on a greater diversity of urban settings in order to produce knowledge that is more situated and 'provincialised'. Pollard et al. (2009) argue that adopting such an approach can 'queer' mainstream theoretical understandings by, for example, drawing attention to the importance of informal economies and highlighting structures of oppression, such as neo-colonialism, other than that of neoliberal capitalism.

In keeping with these debates, there is a growing awareness that Euro-American understandings of critical urban theoretical concepts such as 'gentrification' are insufficient for understanding the urban process in the Global South (Harris 2008; Lees 2012). As Lees (2012: 158) argues, geographers 'should not read gentrification in the Global South as simply the recreation of the periphery (the urban South) in the image of the supposed centre (London or New York)'.

Rather, there is a need to 'decolonize the gentrification literature' and reconsider what we define as 'gentrification' by researching specific experiences in diverse cities around the world (ibid: 164). However, although postcolonial approaches to urban theory call for more 'provincialised' knowledge, Global South cities should not be viewed through the lens of exceptionalism. Rather, studying these cities in all their particularities can contribute to critical urban theoretical understandings of global capitalism (Gandy 2006; Rao 2006).

4.2.2 Researching urban poverty and informality in the Global South

The controversy with which Mike Davis' (2006) *Planet of Slums* was received has highlighted some important methodological issues for critical urban theorists to consider, particularly regarding the danger of reproducing colonial perspectives when writing about urban poverty and informality in the Global South. Richard Pithouse (2007: no page) criticises Davis for relying on information produced by 'institutions of contemporary imperialism' such as the United Nations and the World Bank rather than talking to the squatters and informal settlement dwellers that he is writing about. As a result of this methodological failing, he argues, *Planet of Slums* reproduces these institutions' tendency to chronicle the 'bare life' of the poor from afar, while the 'thinking of people who live in shacks is entirely absent'. Davis is criticised for feeding into a historical tradition of moralistic 'anti-urbanism' by painting a homogenised picture of 'apocalyptic' urban blight in which the 'slum' is the tragic global dumping ground for an enormous population surplus by neoliberalism (Angotti 2006). He is also accused also of evoking a 'racialized' sense of 'kurtzian horror' through his 'apocalyptic' descriptions of slum life that dwell on prostitution, sorcery and child abuse (Pithouse 2008: 572). Drawing attention to the power of (mis)representation in this context, critics warn that Davis' disturbing account of the global 'slum' might encourage state repression and forced evictions by fuelling fears of urban blight (Angotti 2006; Pithouse 2008).

Davis' book is criticised for neglecting the political life of the urban poor and failing to temper his narrative of urban decay by covering the 'progressive and

often radical urban movements' that frequently characterise squatter politics (Angotti 2006: 963). According to Tom Meyer (2007: no page), *Planet of Slums* 'is a book about one billion people, and many of these people have also spoken, organized, and struggled, in ways that challenge the victimization trope of Davis' presentation'. As such, future research about the informal proletariat in the cities of the Global South should be methodologically grounded in a serious engagement with the political perspectives and activities of this class. As Pithouse (2006: 25) argues, there is a need to acknowledge 'the insurgent militancy that is often behind the formation and ongoing survival of the shack settlement'. However, researchers must also avoid romanticising urban informality, as thinkers on both the left and right have done in the past. On the one hand, Cunningham (2007) argues, neoliberal thinkers such as Hernando De Soto (1989) have praised urban informality as an admirable form of micro-entrepreneurialism that should be liberated by the withdrawal of the redistributive nanny state. On the other, he argues, anti-capitalists such as Slavoj Žižek (2007) have mistakenly assumed that, due to their marginal status vis-a-vis the global economy, the politics of the informal proletariat will inevitably be revolutionary in character.

Gilbert (2007: 710) argues that care must be taken with the use of language in representations of cities in the Global South. He is critical of the use of the term 'slum' on the grounds that it carries stigmatising historical connotations of crime, dirt and disorder, and thus 'confuses the physical problem of poor quality housing with the characteristics of the people living there'. Gilbert warns that the use of this term gives governments the language to legitimise mass demolitions and forced evictions in the name of creating slum-free cities. This highlights the responsibility of the researcher to avoid reproducing discourses that contribute to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of research participants. Rather than use the words 'shanty' and 'slum', which 'have no clear definition and tend to be defined by the eye of the beholder', Potts (2006: 281) argues, future research should use terms such as 'squatter settlement' and 'informal settlement' that have an objective, legal basis. In the first instance, illegal tenure – where occupants have no legal rights to the land upon which they live – is the defining

characteristic, whereas in the second it is that shelter is built in a way that is not planned or approved by any municipal authority and therefore may be in violation of bylaws or regulations, regardless of the legality of tenure. These terms have the virtue of explicitly describing the physical characteristics of housing rather than the alluding to the moral fabric of the people that occupy them. As such, Potts' (2006) framework will inform the terminology used in this thesis.

4.2.3 Conducting politically-engaged collaborative research

Critical urban theory aspires to connect theory and practice in order to achieve progressive social change (Marcuse 2009). Raju (2002) has warned that the legitimate concerns about difference, power and representation discussed above should not become disabling and prevent researchers and researched from forming productive political alliances in order to transform the oppressive structures that they experience in common. There is an established tradition of human geographers developing collaborative methodologies in order to forge political alliances with research participants and create a 'third space' between academia and activism by deliberately mobilising research towards political ends (Routledge 1996). In addition to being reflexive about the power dynamics of knowledge production and the positionality of academic researchers, therefore, these collaborative methodologies are intended to explore the possibility of using academic power, privilege and resources in solidarity with research participants to affect progressive social change (Routledge 1996).

Collaborative methodologies can include a variety of strategies, including; actively spreading awareness of a campaign, movement or struggle and helping to develop activist networks; generating useful information and ideas for use by activists; producing non-academic and open-access outputs and publications; doing research that engages with, and seeks to change, policy; the use of participatory methods where subjects become co-researchers and are involved in research design and the collection and analysis of data; and combining activism and research by becoming a fully fledged member of a campaign group

or movement (Pain 2003; Routledge 2003; Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010). These collaborative approaches can be understood as an attempt to overcome the 'false distinction between academia and wider society in terms of sites for social struggle and knowledge production' by acknowledging that researchers are also struggling subjects (Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010: 247). However, various scholar activists have written from experience that overcoming this distinction is complicated and challenging in practice, and that the distance between researchers and researched cannot be simply made to disappear with collaborative research methods (Routledge 1996; Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010).

Regarding working across a Global North-South divide, Routledge (2003: 68) calls for 'critical collaborative methodologies' for working with activists in a Global South context. Collaboration in this context requires researchers to engage with the 'problematic power relations that exist between research collaborators, and the ethical questions that ensue as a result' (ibid: 69). This engagement requires the formulation of research ethics that are 'relational and contextual, a product of reciprocity between researchers and researched, negotiated in practice' (ibid: 70). It also requires that researchers 'take sides' and develop relations based on friendship, solidarity and empathy with activists. Collaboration across a Global North-South divide raises ethical dilemmas such as how to work with activists without losing all critical perspective and becoming a propagandist of the movement, or how to balance academic career demands with the demands of collaboration. Routledge argues that these dilemmas 'must be worked through—often unsatisfactorily—within the contingencies and contexts of particular struggles, and the relationships forged between activist and academic collaborators' (ibid: 71).

Although collaborative research methods have grown in popularity in human geography, some scholars have argued that it is important not to devalue more traditional academic research and the role it can play in progressive social change through, for example, challenging hegemonic ideas (Mitchell 2004; Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010). Contrary to postmodernist concerns

about the violence of representation in academic research, Mitchell (2004: 30) argues that radical scholarship plays a valuable role in uncovering power relations and 'bringing the 'force of abstraction' to bear on activists' experiences in order to produce theory that reveals the systemic causes of injustice. In the field of gentrification research, for example, Slater (2009: 307) has called for a move away from policy-centric scholarship in favour of 'perspectives which call into question the underlying structure of socio-political interests constituting capitalist urban and land economies and policies'. Rather than demanding that all research be collaborative, therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the production of critical urban theory can, in itself, be a socially and politically valuable endeavor.

4.3 Research Design

Based on an engagement with the issues discussed in 4.2, I developed a methodology for researching urban dispossession in Accra. The rest of this chapter details and offers a justification for this methodology.

4.3.1 Reconnaissance and Fieldwork

Based on their own experiences of conducting fieldwork in West Africa, Adams and Megaw (1997: 226) argue that 'there is no blueprint for fieldwork; the journey's route is never fixed. Rather the research process is continually re-fashioned in response to events and experiences unfolding on the ground'. As such, they recommend that researchers doing foreign fieldwork do an initial 'reconnaissance visit' to allow for methodological rethinking before the beginning of fieldwork proper. Following this advice, in October 2010 I visited Accra for the first time in order to conduct a month-long reconnaissance visit. I had become interested in the possibility of researching urban dispossession in Accra due to personal connections I had made with activists in the PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society for Community Regeneration, based in the La neighbourhood of the city. The idea of the reconnaissance trip was to meet these activists to get a feel for whether we could work collaboratively in some

capacity and to get an idea of whether Accra would be a suitable location for studying urban dispossession.

During this visit I spent a lot of time with one of the PanAfrikanYemei activists, who kindly found me a place to live in La, showed me around the area and the city, and gave me an in-depth account of his organisation's activities. I also met several representatives of People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (PD), visited the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP) branch in Old Fadama, and established contacts within both of these organisations. In addition, I met with several AMA officials, civil servants and a deputy minister in order to build up an initial impression of the authorities' urban development strategy for the city. Prior to this visit, I had, through desk-based research, identified the threatened eviction of Old Fadama and the AMA's decongestion exercise as possible examples of urban dispossession that I could study. I was also interested in a proposed elite development project on the Accra's seafront called the Gold Coast City Project. Having visited Accra, however, I realised that this development had not yet left the drawing board, and therefore might not come to fruition. In addition, spending time with the PanAfrikanYemei activist had drawn my attention to the expropriation and privatisation of communal land in La as a major case of urban state-led dispossession that deserved greater exposure. The fact that these activists were contesting this process of dispossession suggested that there was also the scope for scholar activist collaboration in order to aid this struggle, and to this end it was agreed that I should return for a longer period the following year.

Upon returning to the University of Leeds in November 2010, I decided with my supervisors that I would return to Accra to conduct research on three instances of urban dispossession: land dispossession in La; the threatened eviction of Old Fadama, and the AMA's decongestion exercise. I returned to Accra in April 2011 to do fieldwork for a period of three months. The research methods employed during this period are detailed below.

4.3.2 Methods

In order to answer the research questions whilst also combining theory and practice, I adopted a qualitative approach based around in-depth interviews and the analysis of relevant documents, supplemented by elements of ethnography and collaborative scholar activism. The strength of this approach is that by collecting a combination of different types of data I was able to verify the reliability of the information I received through cross-referencing and triangulation (Schoenberger 1991).

4.3.2.1 In-depth interviews

I conducted 48 interviews with a range of participants, including AMA officers, civil servants, government ministers, customary land custodians, civil society and NGO actors, Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor members, street traders and street trader association activists, and activists from PanAfrikanYemei and the ADIEYIEMANFO Movement of Positive Action Networks (see Appendix 1 for a comprehensive list). The interviews were mostly conducted on a one-to-one basis, but several were carried out with a group of two or more respondents. They ranged from 5 minutes to 90 minutes in length, and they were conducted across a range of formal and informal settings, from air-conditioned offices in government ministries to busy street corners in informal squatter settlements.

The interviews were semi-structured and conversational. Following McDowell (1998) and Schoenberger's (1991) advice, my approach was deliberately flexible and responsive with a view to encouraging a dialogue to develop between researcher and respondent. I prepared a list of key questions to use as an interview guide before each interview, but I allowed the discussion to deviate from these questions as long as they were all touched on in the course of the interview. The majority of respondents spoke fluent English, with a few exceptions. Several informal street traders who agreed to be interviewed were not confident conversing in English so a Ghanaian friend who spoke Ga and Ashanti Twi translated between us. Apart from a couple of instances in which people requested that I did not record, the interviews were recorded and then

transcribed upon my return to the UK. For those interviews that were not recorded, I made extensive notes both during and after the interview. The interview transcripts and notes were then coded in order to identify themes and quotes that were salient to the theoretical questions raised by the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Regarding how I chose my respondents, some were identified in the course of desk-based research, such as reading Ghanaian newspaper articles online, based on their affiliation to an organisation in which I was interested. However, a large proportion of my respondents were introduced to me by people I had interviewed or discussed my research with previously. As such, my experience demonstrates the importance of tapping into social networks and getting people to introduce and vouch for you when conducting fieldwork as an outsider (McDowell 1998; Herod 1999). While I was largely successful in getting access to the people I wanted to speak to, there was one notable exception. Despite pleading with his secretary and various AMA officers several times a week for four months, I could not get an appointment with the mayor, Alfred Okoe Vanderpuije. My approaches were rejected on the grounds that he was too busy to speak to a research student. Since Vanderpuije is playing such a leading role in the AMA'S entrepreneurial development approach (see Chapter 6), my failure to interview him was a significant disappointment.

Since I was conducting research into issues that were highly controversial and laced with vested interests, I was aware that getting access to the people and information I wanted would be a challenge. As such, in order to maximise my chances, I had to make a decision about how much information to give to potential respondents in the government, the AMA and other powerful institutions. While I felt ethically obliged to be as honest as possible with people, I was acutely aware that if I told certain actors that I was doing research on dispossession then there was a good chance that I (with good reason) would be labelled a troublemaker and refused access. As Adams and Megaw (1997) argue, therefore, sometimes it is practically necessary to disguise the full purpose of your research. Rather than lying to state actors about my project, however, I

followed McDowell (1998) and Herod's (1999) advice and downplayed the critical aspects and avoided antagonistic discourse, opting to tell them that I was writing about urban development in general rather than dispossession in particular. This is an example of what Routledge (2006: 7) refers to as an 'ethics of deception' that is necessary when taking sides and engaging in collaborative scholar activism.

4.3.2.2 Documentary analysis

In order to supplement the primary data gathered from interviews, I collected numerous documents in both paper and digital formats. These included: Ghanaian newspaper articles; reports and other documents produced by organisations such as UN-Habitat and People's Dialogue; documents from the Lands Commission detailing the ownership of certain plots of land; press releases from state or civil society actors; urban and national policy documents; and email communications from activists. To begin with, these documents were used in conjunction with the interview data in order to check the reliability of the information I had been given by respondents (Schoenberger 1991). However, many of these documents turned out to be significant sources in themselves. For example, the AMA's Strategic Plan and Medium Term Development Plan documents formed the basis of my understanding of the AMA and central government's strategy for the development of Accra (see 6.2). In addition, a report produced by People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (2010) that was given to me by one of their officers formed the basis of my argument that the NGO is working with the government to facilitate the gentrification of Old Fadama (see 8.6.1). As such, documentary analysis has played a large role in addressing the research questions.

4.3.2.3 Ethnography

Although in-depth interviews and documentary analysis were the primary means by which I collected data, my ethnographic experience of spending time in Accra generated some important observations that informed my research. Ethnography, or participant observation, entails the researcher spending an extended period of time observing and interacting with a social group. This

approach enables analysis of how everyday place-bound actions, and the meanings attached to these actions, either reproduce or challenge social structures. According to Herbet (2000: 555), ethnography 'is of undoubted significance to geographers interested in how landscapes are constructed and lived, the processes by which structures are made real in the everyday movements and contexts of human action',

During my first trip to Accra I rented a room in a Western-style family house in the neighbourhood of La, and during my second trip I rented a room in a more traditional compound house in which I shared a courtyard and facilities with several other households, including one of the PanAfrikanYemei activists. Living in La for several months and spending a lot of time with people who lived there allowed me an insight into the everyday experience of those who had been dispossessed and impoverished by the process of land expropriation described in 5.4.1. In addition to gaining first hand experience of the poor living conditions endured by many people in La (our compound house had neither a toilet or running water), I became aware of the stress and frustration experienced by young people in the area who could not find employment and were constantly struggling to make ends meet. I also got a feel for the uneven urban geography that has shaped perceptions of dispossession in the area, discussed in 7.2.2.1, by spending time visiting elite developments built on La land, such as the AU Village, Cantonments and Accra Mall.

By involving myself directly in PanAfrikanYemei's Africa Lake campaign (see 4.3.2.4) I also gained a direct insight into the frustrating experience of contesting land dispossession in Accra. I wasted huge amounts of time attempting to get information about the owners of the Africa Lake site from the government's Registrar General Department, where I repeatedly set up meetings with officials only to be told that they could not find the information and that I should come back again next week. This experience informed my discussion about the local factors that have limited the ability of activists to take effective collective action to contest dispossession in 9.4.2. I also spent a lot of time in Accra's CBD, where I made friends with several informal street traders and market stallholders. In

down time between interviews and working with PanAfrikanYemei, I would often spend time with these friends while they worked. One particular market stallholder even allowed me to help her serve customers (see Figure 4.1). Spending time with these workers enabled me to build up a much richer picture of how they perceived themselves, their relationship with their urban environment, and their attitudes towards the city authorities and the decongestion exercise than if I had relied on interview data alone.

Finally, I had initially intended to do some ethnographic research with the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor in order to supplement the data gathered through interviews and documentary analysis. However, after sitting in on several savings group meetings it became apparent that this would not be possible, as the meetings were conducted in various different local dialects that I could not understand. As such, there is scope for building on the research I have done on SDI in Ghana (see Chapter 8) with a more ethnographic approach to researching how the organisation functions as a form of neoliberal governmentality.



Figure 4.1: The author selling rice at Tema Station market

Source: author

4.3.2.4 Collaborative scholar activism

Consistent with the aims of critical urban theory, in addition to the more traditional qualitative methods discussed above I decided to 'take sides' and work collaboratively with the PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society for Community Regeneration with a view to contributing my time, skills and resources as a researcher to their struggle (Routledge 2003). My collaborative work with PanAfrikanYemei involves several elements. First, when in Accra, I took an active role in the Africa Lake campaign (see 9.4.2), combining my own research into the expropriation and privatisation of communal land in La with campaign research to identify who owned the Africa Lake plot and whether they had plans to develop it. Second, I have given the group sustained input on developing international support for the campaign by using the Internet to tap into academic and activist networks in the Global North.

Third, when leaving Accra in July 2011, I organised a seminar with the PanAfrikanYemei activists in order to present my initial findings and discuss the usefulness of the 'right to the city' concept for contesting dispossession in Accra. In addition to this seminar, other non-academic research outputs are planned for the future. I have agreed to collaborate with the activists to produce a public exhibition comparing grassroots resistance to neoliberal urbanism in Ghana and the UK. It is hoped that this will enable my research to feed into a process whereby movements and campaign groups across the Global North and South learn from each other's experiences of contesting neoliberal urban development. I have also agreed to participate in an international solidarity initiative called the 'Panafricademy' where European intellectuals will be partnered with activists in Ghana to help them to learn about radical theoretical approaches and develop research skills to complement and enhance their organising efforts. As such, my relationship with the activists will continue beyond the completion of the thesis, and there is an ongoing dialogue between us about the outcomes of the project. This demonstrates how ethics of collaboration are produced through ongoing negotiation and are collectively, rather than individually, determined (Routledge 2003; Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010). In addition to producing non-

academic outputs, I hope that my thesis, and any academic publications that are drawn from it, will do political work by giving an international platform to the activists' critique of neo-colonial and neoliberal accumulation by dispossession in Accra. By drawing critical attention to the struggles documented in this work, I hope to demonstrate how academic research can be a useful tool of international solidarity.

Despite the popularity of participatory research methods in collaborative scholar-activist approaches, I decided against incorporating a formally participatory element into my research. Critics have pointed out that participation is often done badly, raises unrealistic expectations, and does not deliver what it promises. In addition, participatory approaches can be very demanding on the time and energy of participants (Hardy 2010; Pain and Francis 2003). I did not feel there was an identifiable political advantage to adopting a participatory approach in this context, and I did not want to do it just for the sake of being able to label my work 'participatory'. Furthermore, since the activists told me that they found organising difficult because people's time and energy was spent on day-to-day survival (see 9.4.2), I did not want the research to act as another drain on their capacities.

Although I also conducted research with two other groups of activists (Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and the informal street traders' associations), I did not adopt a collaborative methodology with these actors. When I first made contact with SDI in Ghana in 2010 we discussed the possibility of working collaboratively in some capacity. However, as my research progressed I soon realised that I disagreed with key aspects of the SDI approach and that collaborating with them was incompatible with my own political commitment to critiquing and contesting dispossession. As such, I abandoned the idea of working collaboratively with SDI in favour of using traditional qualitative methods to develop a critique of the organisation's activities in Accra. Consequently, it is possible that SDI in Ghana will view what I have written as some sort of betrayal. As McFarlane and Jazeel (2007: 783-4) argue, however, 'abiding by the questions of politics through the course of research means

researchers may well alienate themselves from some of their research subjects, particularly those to whose politics we may object’.

I also had several discussions with informal street trader association activists about working collaboratively in some capacity, but it never developed into something concrete. When I left Accra in July 2011, one of the activists told me he was disappointed that we hadn’t developed a productive alliance in order to further their cause. On reflection, I think this failure was partly a reflection of the weak, disorganised and atomised character of Accra’s street trader associations and their lack of experience of collaboration with outsiders (see 9.5.1). However, I think it was also a failure on my part to formulate a collaborative methodology that was suited to working with this particular group. As such, although I support the political aims of these actors, my research with informal street traders is basically extractive rather than collaborative. I hope the exposure I give to their cause will compensate for this.

4.3.3 Ethical issues

In order to gain approval from the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee, the design of the research had to address certain ethical issues. I decided to anonymise participants by giving them pseudonyms in all research outputs in order to avoid compromising them personally, professionally or politically. The only exceptions were the two deputy ministers that I interviewed. This decision was made on the grounds that these respondents are supposed to be publically accountable for their words and actions when in an official capacity.

Regarding the question of informed consent, the Research Ethics Committee initially asked that I obtain written consent from all respondents. However, I decided that this would be inappropriate in some of the contexts I would be working in. It was likely that some respondents in the more informal contexts would not have good literacy levels, and asking them to read and sign a form might cause them embarrassment. In addition, I decided that people threatened with an impending forced eviction may react badly to strange, white men

appearing in their neighbourhood and asking them to sign a piece of paper. For these reasons, I decided to obtain informed consent verbally from all of my research participants by explaining the aims and scope of this project and asking for their express permission for me to interview them and, where relevant, record the interview. In instances where potential participants did not understand my verbal explanations, I had a friend who spoke Ashanti Twi or Ga translate. The Research Ethics Committee was satisfied with my reasoning and granted me ethical approval. This experience suggests that, as Hardy (2010) argues, research ethics should be dynamic and sensitive to particularities and contingencies rather than static and inflexible.

4.4 Reflecting on positionality – an Obruni in Accra

It is important for researchers to be reflexive about their own positionality, especially when attempting to engage in ‘responsible learning’ across a Global North-South divide (Jazeel and MacFarlane 2007). I found that being a relatively privileged ‘Obruni’ (white foreigner) from the Global North had a significant bearing on my experience in Accra. Regarding the issue of colour, when I lived in the township of La I was, as far as I could tell, the only white person living in my neighbourhood. Although I never experienced any hostility or even unfriendliness, my presence in the area seemed to be a novelty, and people often approached me to ask who I was, where I had come from and what I was doing. Although people were generally very friendly and welcoming, this made me feel very visible and very much an outsider. I also felt that my relative privilege put an insurmountable distance between others and myself. I emphasised to friends that I could only afford the luxury of travelling to Ghana because I had been awarded a scholarship, which was true, but this didn’t change the fact that I was still more wealthy and privileged than many of the people I spent time with. Again, this made me feel very much an outsider and put a strain on personal relationships.

In some respects, I believe my outsider status gave me an advantage as a researcher. My colour and my ability to present letters typed on headed notepaper from a UK university enabled me to stroll past security checkpoints in government buildings without much scrutiny, and nobody ever questioned why I was loitering in the corridors of government ministries and local authority offices. In addition, although I was researching controversial urban development issues, I believe that being a foreigner helped me to get access to people and information as I was more likely to be perceived as a disinterested student rather than someone with a vested interest or political agenda (Herod 1999). On an epistemological level, although I felt very much like an outsider in this context, I do not think this has necessarily compromised my ability to gain insight into, and produce knowledge about, the situation in Accra. Contra to the positivist tendency to view the outsider as someone who has to transcend their positionality to access pre-established truths, Herod (1999) argues that knowledge of a situation is co-produced through dialogue between the researcher and participants. From this perspective, the outsider is no more disadvantaged than the local researcher when it comes to accessing 'the truth'. Furthermore, being an outsider may be advantage in the sense that you are less likely to take things for granted than someone who has spent their whole life in a particular context.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has detailed the methodological framework and research design adopted for researching accumulation by dispossession in Accra, Ghana. It began by situating the project within the tradition of critical urban theory, and then discussed the various methodological issues associated with doing research within a critical urban theory framework in a Global South city, doing research on urban poverty and informality in the Global South, and doing collaborative scholar activist research in order to affect progressive social change. Taking these issues into consideration, a methodology was designed for conducting research into dispossession in Accra. This framework was based on the use of a range of qualitative methods (interviews, documentary analysis and

ethnography) in conjunction with collaborative work with anti-dispossession activists in the city. In the spirit of responsible learning, I have attempted to design an approach that is reflexive and ethically responsible and in the spirit of solidarity, I have attempted to design an approach that is politically engaged and also produces traditional academic outputs that give an international platform to the voices of actors struggling against dispossession.

5. Accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession: a historical geography of Accra

5.1 Introduction

Contemporary Accra is the site of a series of ongoing conflicts over the control of urban space between the urban poor and the state. Next to the Korle Lagoon, a political battle rages between 80,000 squatters and the authorities, who are threatening to evict them from the state-owned land they are occupying. In the central business district, informal street traders are being attacked and chased off the streets by local authority heavies that have been tasked with 'decongesting' the city centre. In the township of La, the youth are mobilising to protest against the sale of their ancestral lands to capitalist real estate developers. These conflicts, which will be discussed in the next chapter, can only be made sense of if they are understood within the historical-geographical context of contemporary Accra. The purpose of this chapter is to provide this context by analysing the historical processes that have produced an increasingly unequal urban geography characterised by the growth of the informal economy and the proliferation of informal settlements. It argues that this geography is the outcome of several processes of *accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession* that have produced a vast 'informal proletariat' that has to rely on informal economic activities and informal housing to reproduce itself, thereby bringing it into conflict with the state.

This chapter proceeds by describing the unequal geography of contemporary Accra, evident in the growth of the informal economy, the proliferation of impoverished informal settlements and wealthy gated communities, and in the impoverishment of the indigenous Ga communities whose lands have been expropriated and sold off to real estate developers. Next, it provides a brief

overview of the political-economic history of Ghana from the pre-colonial period to the present day. Finally, it draws on this history to identify and analyse several historical processes of ‘accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession’ that have created the informal proletariat and the unequal geography of Accra: the expropriation and proletarianisation of the indigenous Ga; the underdevelopment of the countryside and the commodification of the rural agricultural commons; workforce retrenchment and economic informalisation; and the disinvestment of the state in social reproduction, including housing provision.

5.2 The unequal geography of contemporary Accra

This section is an overview of the growing inequality that characterises the geography of contemporary Accra. Since the 1980s, Accra has been marked by economic growth driven by foreign direct investment and real estate development. It has also, however, been marked by the worsening of inequalities in wealth and income (Obeng-Odoom 2011a; 2012). This growing inequality is evident in the dominance of the informal economy and the growth of informal street trade; the proliferation of impoverished informal settlements and wealthy gated communities; and in the squalid living conditions of the indigenous Ga communities whose ancestral lands have been expropriated and sold off for elite development projects. These aspects of Accra’s unequal geography will be explored below.

5.2.1 Unemployment and the informal economy

Growing inequality in Accra is evident in the staggering number of workers who are excluded from formal employment and therefore have to make a living in the informal economy. The phenomenon of the ‘informal’ economy was first discussed by Keith Hart (1973) in his study of urban employment in the Nima area of Accra in the 1960s. Hart reported on the activities of a large ‘sub-proletariat’ living in Accra who were poverty-stricken because of unemployment, underemployment, or because the wages they received in their formal jobs did

not cover the basic cost of living in the city. As a result, these city-dwellers resorted to a range of entrepreneurial income-generation activities outside of the realm of regular wage labour, including urban agriculture, manufacturing, trading, and a variety of criminal activities. Since Hart's original study, there has been a sustained debate on how best to define the informal economy. Although the debate is unresolved, John C. Cross' (1999: 580) definition provides a good foundation for understanding what is particular about this activity. He describes the informal economy as

economic activity that takes place outside the formal norms of economic transactions established by the state and formal business practices... it applies to small or micro-businesses that are the result of individual or family self-employment. It includes the production and exchange of legal goods and services that involves the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non-compliance with labor regulations governing contracts and work conditions, and/or the lack of legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients.

Although distinguished from the trade in illegal goods and services (such as controlled substances), therefore, the informal economy is understood through its deviation from the norms and regulatory practices established by the state and formal capitalist enterprise.

Despite the fact that foreign direct investment and real estate development have generated economic growth in Accra, there is still a drastic shortage of formal employment in the city (Obeng-Odoom 2011a). Ghana TUC estimated that, as of 2008, of the 10 million people in the Ghanaian labour force, only about 1.4 million (14%) are formally employed. The remaining 8.6 million (86%) are employed in informal economic activities (Ghana TUC 2008). Due to the clustering of public sector and formal private sector functions in the capital city, the proportion is slightly lower in the Greater Accra Region, with 71% of all employed persons engaged in the informal economy (UNDP 2007: 28). Despite this variation, it is still fair to say that this represents the dominance of informal employment in the capital. As will be discussed in 5.4.3, this is the result of a

process of economic 'informalisation' that has occurred in Ghana and across Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1980s (Yankson, 2000).

Perhaps the most visible indicator of the dominance of the informal economy in Accra is the high number of informal street traders and structures housing informal enterprises in the capital's CBD (Grant and Yankson 2003). A huge number of street traders have been attracted to the central business district, and they cluster in areas where there are a large amount of traffic and footfall; around marketplaces, transport depots and busy intersections. This leads to the occupation of public space as pavements and roads are taken over and turned into street markets (Ofori 2007) (see figure 5.1). Informal street traders in Accra sell an almost infinite variety of goods including fruit and vegetables, bread, cooked food, drinking water sachets, soft drinks, soaps and detergents, jewellery, clothing, sim cards and mobile phone credit, CDs and DVDs, and so on. Others provide services such as shoeshine and repairs, tailoring and hairdressing. Research by Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008) suggests that street trading tends to be dominated by migrants from various parts of Ghana, by younger people, and by people with no more than an elementary level of education (see Table 5.0). Through most of the 20th century, the informal trader role was constructed as a female one, while men typically worked in the formal sector. However, as a result of the informalisation of the economy since the 1980s, men have increasingly become informal traders, subverting these established gender roles (Overa, 2007).

Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008) report that street traders' average earnings are similar to that of the average Ghanaian worker – around \$2 US Dollars a day. However, it is important to recognise that informal enterprises are not uniform; For example, Rogerson (1997) distinguishes between 'survivalist' and 'growth' enterprises in the informal economy in African cities. In the case of Accra, Overa (2007: 554-556) reports that some traders manage to accumulate capital and expand their businesses over time, but many have to struggle to make enough money just to subsist. While there is a lack of data on the proportion of street traders who achieve growth, it is perhaps instructive that, according to Hanson

(2003: 218), only about 5% of home-based informal enterprises in Ghana manage to transcend survivalism and accumulate capital.



Figure 5.1: informal street traders in Accra's central business district
Source: author

Regarding the visible proliferation of informal commercial structures such as kiosks and workshops, Yankson (2000) argues that no local government authorities in Ghana, including the AMA, have made adequate provision for accommodating the growing number of informal enterprises. As a result, informal economic units have sprung up along major roads in the city, often erected on squatted land, without building permits and in defiance of zoning rules (Yankson 2000). In his survey of small-scale production and service enterprises, Yankson (2000: 319) found that many choose to squat on the side of major traffic arteries in order to access the largest possible customer base and to avoid paying rent in order to minimise production costs.

Socio-demographic characteristics of street vendors		
	Frequency	Percentage involved
Sex		
Male	63	52.5
Female	57	47.5
Age		
Under 18	15	12.8
18-25	41	35
26-33	20	17.1
34-49	34	29.1
50+	7	6
Highest level of education		
None	13	10.8
Primary	17	14.2
Elementary	56	46.7
Secondary	23	19.2
6th Form and others	11	9.2
Length of stay in Accra		
Under 1 year	20	18.6
1-3 years	18	6.8
4-6 years	13	5.9
7-10 years	24	13.6
Over 10 years	45	26.3
Region of origin		
Ashanti	22	11.9
Greater Accra	8	5.1
Western	7	5.9
Central	16	13.6
Eastern	31	26.3
Volta	14	11.9
Brong Ahafo	6	5.1
Northern	7	5.9
Upper East	4	3.4
Upper west	3	2.5

Table 5.0: Socio-demographic characteristics of street vendors in Accra.

Source: Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008: 196).

5.2.2 Housing inequalities

Growing inequalities are particularly noticeable in the class-based polarisation and segregation that characterises Accra's housing stock. In the last few decades, Accra has experienced a building boom largely characterised by private developers building high quality housing for the wealthy. In particular, there has been a proliferation of US-style gated housing estates in the city, catering to the top end of the housing market (Yeboah 2000; Asiedu and Arku 2009; Grant 2009). These developments are particularly evident to the North East of the city centre, close to the international airport (see Figure 5.2). Only the wealthiest of Accra's residents can afford these houses, and a study of gated developments found that they are typically purchased by high-income-earning professionals (for example, managers, accountants, engineers, and lawyers), diasporans and expatriates, who were primarily motivated by a fear of crime and a desire for great security (Asiedu and Arku 2009).

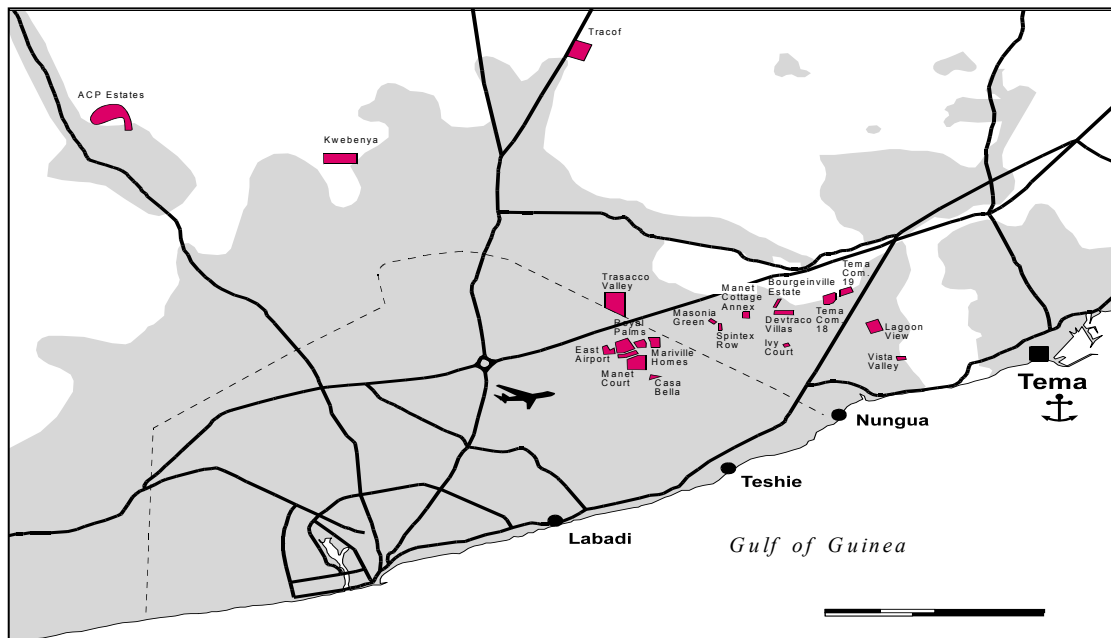


Figure 5.2: Map of gated communities in Accra, 2004.

Source: Grant 2005.

Outside of these high quality residential developments, however, the majority of Accra's residents are crowded into sub-standard dwellings in impoverished informal settlements. There is a growing deficit of housing units in Accra. The AMA estimates that only 21.4% of the annual need is currently being met and that there is a backlog of 300,000 units in the city (Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2010). Ironically, therefore, 'there is a huge scarcity of affordable houses in the midst of a real estate boom' (Grant 2009: 64). The result, according to the AMA, is that 'the housing needs of Accra's urban inhabitants are often restricted to sub-standard structures, unsanitary environments and squatter and slum communities' (Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2010: 57). According to UN-Habitat (2011: xxvi), 'only about three per cent of households can afford the cheapest formal sector dwelling on the market'. As such, Buckley and Mathama (2007) describe Accra as a "Superstar City" where lower income groups are priced out of the housing market. UN-Habitat (2003) report that in 2001 the house price to income ratio was 14:1 and the rent to income ratio was 21:1, making Accra one of the most inequitable housing environments in Africa.

As such, except for those living rent-free in family houses, the majority of Accra's residents depend on the rental market (UN-Habitat 2011). However, good quality rental accommodation is also difficult to access for the poor, as landlords routinely demand cash advances of up to 10 years rent up front (Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Consequently, many of Accra's poorer residents have had to turn to poor quality informal, often referred to 'slum', housing (Obeng-Odoom 2011). Informal housing, built outside the formal development and planning system, comprises about 90% of the stock in Ghana's cities (UN-Habitat 2011). Although not all informal housing would be described as 'slum' housing, much of it is poor quality, overcrowded, and lacking access to basic services like water and sanitation. According to a recent study by Franklin Obeng-Odoom (2009), 70% of Ghana's urban population now lives in these 'slums'. In Accra, it is estimated that the proportion is slightly lower, at 60% (Grant 2009). A large number of people working in the informal economy, in particular, cannot afford to access the formal housing market. As such, there is a link between economic informalisation and the proliferation of informal settlements in Ghana (Obeng-

Odoom 2011).

According to UN-Habitat (2011: 2), overcrowding is a huge problem in Ghana. Ghana fares badly even when compared with other sub-Saharan African countries, as around 60 per cent of urban households occupy single rooms and 'while a taxi-driver in Lilongwe, Malawi's capital, routinely lives in two or three rooms, one in Accra is likely only to have one room'. In addition, much housing in Accra is lacking basic services and infrastructure. Only 28.8% of poor households in Accra have an indoor pipe for water, and 2.3% do not have access to safe water at all. This means that the urban poor are particularly vulnerable to waterborne diseases, especially childhood diarrhoea. The majority of poor households do not have private toilets inside their homes, and 3.2% do not have any access to a toilet at all. In addition, only 8.9% of Accra's households practice safe disposal of wastewater in closed septic tanks, while the majority of poor households rely on open drains or dispose of wastewater in their yards. Again, these conditions increase the risk of disease amongst Accra's poorer residents. As well as inequality of access to water and sanitation, privatisation of waste collection means that only 2.2% of households have home solid waste collection, as many cannot afford to pay for this service. Consequently, Accra's poor informal settlements are blighted by mounds of uncollected rubbish (Boadi and Kuitunen 2005; Obeng-Odoom 2011).

Prior to 1990, West African cities were largely free of squatter settlements. This was due to a combination of factors: the customary land tenure system had traditionally made land available rent-free on a needs basis; there was a relatively high level of government intervention in housing supply prior to structural adjustment; and customary respect for traditional ancestral land ownership discouraged encroachment. However, due to the shelter crisis that has developed since the 1980s, informal squatter settlements are now common in Accra (Grant 2009). Squatting takes place on any available open space in the city, such as road reservations and railway lines, or on undeveloped state lands, such as the banks of the Korle Lagoon in the city centre (UN-Habitat 2011; CHF International 2004).

5.2.3 Landlessness

The Ga communities that are indigenous to the Accra area have been subject to the large-scale expropriation of their communal lands by the state as part of the urbanisation process. Growing inequality in Accra is evident in the contrast between the living conditions within these communities and the elite residential and commercial developments that have been built on their former lands (Yeboah 2008). 40% of land in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area has been compulsorily acquired by the state, supposedly for public use (Kasanga and Kotey 2001). This has exacerbated poverty and inequality in the city by dispossessing Ga indigenes of their living space and their livelihoods, thereby contributing to the unemployment and housing crises discussed above. As such, Obeng-Odoom (2011a) argues that the state expropriation of communal land is a key factor in driving growing inequalities in the city.

The state land system has had a particularly devastating effect on the neighbourhood of La, an indigenous Ga community located to the East of the central business district, with some estimating that the community has lost 80% of its land to expropriation (Interview, James, Trustee, East Dadekotopon Development Trust, 15/7/11). This has had serious negative socio-economic impacts on many of the town's residents. First, the residents of La have lost most of their living space. As a result, the town of La occupies less than 3 square miles and is characterised by extremely cramped and overcrowded living conditions (Kotey 2002). Second, this has contributed to high levels of poverty and unemployment in the neighbourhood, as community members have been dispossessed of their historical means of reproduction - the land.

Although these expropriated lands were originally acquired by the state for public use, during the neoliberal period large tracts have been made available for private developments. The impoverished and overcrowded informal settlement of La town is now surrounded by opulent developments such as the spacious, leafy Cantonments and Ridge estates and the American-style luxury mansions of the AU Village, all built on land originally expropriated from the community for

public use (see 6.3). As such, the state land system has contributed to the emergence of a deeply unequal and uneven urban geography, characterised by a marked contrast between impoverished Ga townships and the more modern and westernised developments built on Ga land (Yeboah 2008). The historical process by which the state land system has produced this geography will be explained in 5.4.5.

5.3 Political-economic history

Having described the unequal character of contemporary Accra, the rest of this chapter will analyse the historical processes that have produced this urban geography. This section will provide a brief political-economic history of Ghana and Accra in order to provide the necessary historical context for an analysis of the key processes in 5.4.

5.3.1 The pre-colonial period

It is thought that Accra was first settled in the 16th century by Ga fishermen, who established a village on the Korle Lagoon in what is now the city centre, before spreading out to establish more villages at Nungua, La, Osu, Teshie and Tema. These settlers now refer to themselves as the Ga-Mashie, meaning indigenous Gas (Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2010; Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Prior to colonialism, the introduction of the capitalist mode of production, and the urbanisation of Accra, village life was based around a communal subsistence economy. Production was carried out primarily for local consumption. The product of the land belonged to the cultivators, who paid little or nothing to the traditional authorities in rent or taxes. Exchange was fairly limited. Relative to the total level of production, only a small amount of trade took place between villages. There was a low level of specialisation and division of labour. Each household carried out a range of productive activities using its own non-commodified labour, including growing its own food and making its own clothing. Even the chief's household would typically produce its own food. For certain activities, such as house building and hunting, households would cooperate on the village level. Land was communally owned and had only use-

and not exchange-value. A fair share of the communal land was the right of every community member, and this prevented social differentiation through the emergence of both a landless proletariat and a land-owning capitalist class that could accumulate land, wealth and power. As such, everybody had a similar income and standards of food, housing, clothing and luxury. Although exchange was limited on the Gold Coast, a sector of society was involved in long-distance foreign trade. Gold, slaves and spices were traded with Arabs via North Africa in exchange for manufactured items, such as textiles (Hymer 1970; Konadu-Agyemang 2001; Obeng-Odoom 2011; Aryeetey et al. 2007).

5.3.2 The early colonial period, 1560-1874

Although the Gold Coast was formally colonised by the British in 1874, the Portuguese were the first European power to establish themselves in the area when they built a fort at Accra in 1560. Portuguese involvement in Ghana was initially motivated by the need to secure a regular supply of gold for use in international trade, but soon they also began to purchase slaves to work in their Brazilian colony. The trade in slaves from the Gold Coast increased during the 17th and 18th Centuries as plantations were established in the West Indies and North America (Howard 1978). As such, the Gold Coast's role in the early colonial period was established as a source of gold and slave labour to facilitate global trade and plantation production in the Americas. Several European nations, including the Portuguese, the Swedes, the Danes, the British and the Dutch, competed for the control of this trade. Contact with Europeans had a 'revolutionary impact on the country's economy and society' (Hymer 1970: 40). Domestic state formation began to occur in order to regulate and police the growing trade. The Ashanti kingdom emerged as the main economic and military power in the region and willingly traded gold and slaves with European and Arab traders (Kay 1972).

Urbanisation in the Accra area began to occur as a result of European trading activity. In the mid-17th Century, three forts were established at what are now the Ushertown, Osu and Jamestown neighbourhoods by the Dutch, Danish and British colonial powers respectively. These forts functioned as hubs within the

colonial economy where manufactured goods from Europe were traded for gold, slaves and ivory, and small settlements began to grow up around them (Konadu-Agyemang 2001: 62). Until the late 19th century, however, 'Accra was little more than a trading post, undifferentiated from many of the other posts along the Gold Coast' (Grant and Yankson 2003: 66).

From the 18th century, the Gold Coast became increasingly integrated into emerging global markets. Following the official outlawing of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807, there was a shift in emphasis to cash crop production in order to feed the industrialising continent of Europe's need for raw materials such as palm products, rubber and, most importantly, cocoa (Howard 1978: 31). Cocoa was introduced to the Gold Coast towards the end of the nineteenth century and by 1910 it had eclipsed gold as the colony's most important export (Kay 1972). The introduction of cash crops was key to the imposition of the capitalist mode of production in West Africa as it reoriented land use and agriculture away from subsistence and towards commodity production, and set in motion the commodification of land and labour in the region (Post 1977). In addition, the Gold Coast became an important market for goods manufactured by the fledgling industries of Western Europe (Howard 1978). Despite this, colonialism did not abolish communal land tenure in the countryside, and production for export was largely carried out by small-scale peasant producers (Hymer 1970).

The spread of agricultural capitalism through the growth of the cocoa trade led to growing social differentiation in the Gold Coast and the emergence of an indigenous petty bourgeoisie who, by virtue of the fact that they controlled more land than their peers, reaped a greater share of the surplus and were able to hire labour and engage in activities such as money lending. There is some historical debate over which the extent to which this petty bourgeoisie were prevented from developing into an 'authentic Ghanaian capitalist class' by the persistence of the communal land tenure system and the oligopolistic control of trade by European capital (Hymer 1970; Kay 1972; Howard 1978).

5.3.3 Formal colonisation 1874-1951

Whilst several European powers were active in the Gold Coast at one time or another during the colonial period, by the late 19th Century Britain had asserted its military, and therefore commercial, dominance in the area. Formal political control of the colony was assumed in 1874. This move was, in part, a response to the threat that the expansionary tendencies of the Ashanti kingdom and inter-tribal wars were posing to the smooth functioning of the colonial enterprise (Howard 1978). In addition, the British were motivated by the desire to exert direct control over gold production in the region. Formal colonisation was, therefore, economically motivated and designed to bolster trade by subduing the Ashanti and taking control of their gold mines, policing the various tribes in the region, and improving infrastructure and transportation (Kay 1972; Howard 1978).

Under British colonialism, the Gold Coast was integrated into the global capitalist system as a peripheral capitalist economy whose role was to support the development of industrial capitalism in the core countries of Western Europe. Peripheral countries such as Ghana fulfilled that role by providing raw materials for European industry, new markets for the goods manufactured by this industry (such as textiles, foodstuffs and tobacco), and access to low cost labour. The European bourgeoisie reaped large profits through engaging in practices of unequal exchange with producers in the peripheral countries. Unequal exchange was facilitated by oligopolistic controls over trade that were established following formal colonisation. For example, the marketing of cocoa was controlled by European firms who cooperated to lower the price paid to Ghanaian producers. European firms also worked together to fix a comparatively high rate for consumer goods imported into the country. These controls served to concentrate profit in the hands of the metropolitan bourgeoisie whilst systematically preventing indigenous capital accumulation. As such, Ghana was underdeveloped as a result of colonialism and its integration in the capitalist world economy as a peripheral country. Domestic capital formation was largely thwarted by the control of the import-export economy by the European

bourgeoisie. In addition, Ghana's dependence on European markets for cheap bulk commodity exports on the one hand, and on imported manufactured goods on the other, prevented industrialisation and the development of a diverse internal system of production and exchange (Rodney, 1972; Howard 1978).

Accra was chosen as the administrative capital of the Gold Coast colony in 1877 and it subsequently became the key port for the export of resources extracted from the hinterland. It was this integration into the global economy, as the point at which wealth was extracted from the region, that drove Accra's growth from a cluster of small Ga villages and European forts to a major urban centre (Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Consequently, rather than emerging as an industrial city, Accra developed as a centre for warehousing and exporting whose economy was dominated by foreign traders and merchants. As was typical of African cities during this period, colonial Accra was characterised by the strict spatial segregation of European and indigenous quarters. The city's docks and warehouses were located next to a clearly defined central business district, planned and built according to European standards to accommodate European companies. Indigenous markets and commercial activities were located in an area known as 'native town' that was segregated from the European central business district by an expanse of green space. In addition, well-planned European residential areas, such as the Cantonments, were clearly demarcated and strictly segregated from informal indigenous settlements (Grant and Yankson 2003; Grant 2009).

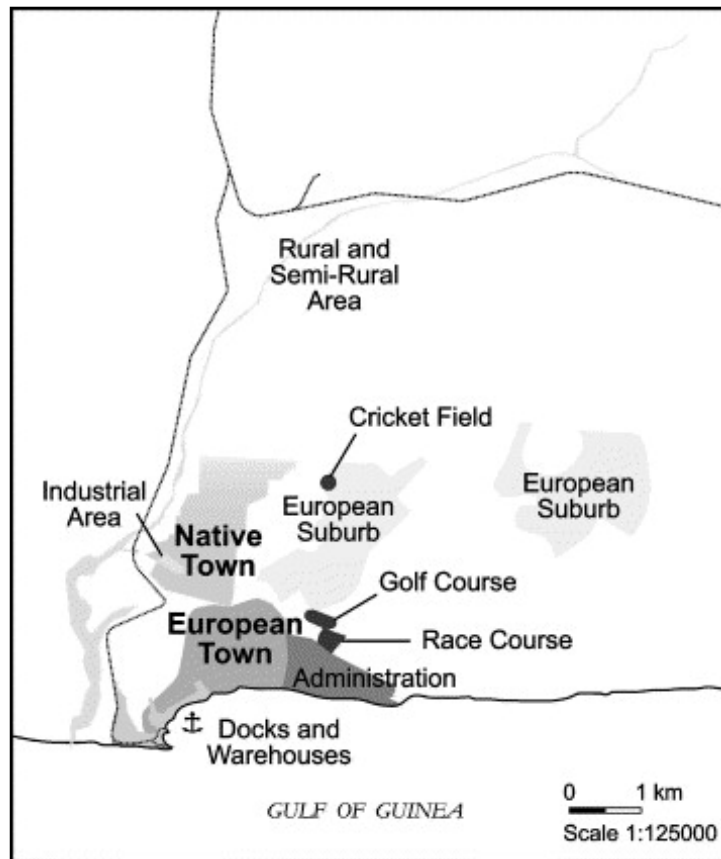


Figure 5.3: Colonial Accra
Source: Grant and Yankson, 2003

5.3.4 Decolonisation and Nkrumah, 1951-1966

On March 6th, 1957, Ghana became the first Sub-Saharan African country to achieve political independence, with Kwame Nkrumah of the Congress People's Party (CPP) its first head of state. Nkrumah was a socialist and pan-Africanist (rather than a nationalist *per se*) who, while studying abroad as a young man, became committed to liberating Africa from colonialism and neo-colonialism and achieving the political unity of the continent to prevent its exploitation by foreign powers. In 1947, after twelve years abroad in Britain and the US, Nkrumah returned to his native Ghana to serve as General Secretary in the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), a nationalist organisation set up by indigenous elites to campaign for self-rule. In 1949, Nkrumah broke from the UGCC and formed the more radical Convention People's Party (CPP) in order to demand the immediate introduction of self-government. The CPP gained the

support of the population, including the organised working class and the petty bourgeoisie, and became a mass movement. Supporters engaged in civil disobedience, boycotts and a general strike as part of a mass campaign of Gandhian 'positive action' to put pressure on the British to meet the CPP's demands, leading to the imprisonment of Nkrumah and other CPP and trade union leaders in 1950. He was released from prison the following year and invited to form a government when the CPP won a landslide majority in the country's first general election. Once in government, Nkrumah negotiated with the British for full political independence through constitutional reform, which was granted in 1957. In 1960 the Republic of Ghana's new constitution was ratified and Nkrumah was elected President.

Although underdeveloped by colonialism, Ghana at independence had many attributes that were considered advantageous for modern economic development: it was the world's largest exporter of cocoa, exported 10% of the world's gold and had accumulated large foreign currency reserves; it had one of the best infrastructure systems on the continent; and it had a relatively well educated and skilled workforce (Price 1984; Konadu-Agyemang 2000).

Nkrumah's CPP government sought to build on these advantages by transforming Ghana's primary commodity producing colonial economy into a modern, industrial one through a programme of state-led socialist development. Rapid import-substitution industrialisation was to be led by the state through investment in modern infrastructure and the establishment of state-owned industries and enterprises. Public investment would create a modern welfare state through the provision of free or highly subsidised healthcare, education, housing, and other goods and services. In order to pursue the political and economic unification of Africa, financial support would be given to other newly independent African states. This development strategy was to be financed primarily by revenues from cocoa exports, which were booming in the post-war years, although an important role was also assigned to foreign capital (Nkrumah 1973; Hutchful 2002; Obeng-Odoom 2012).

During his Presidency, Nkrumah successfully improved Ghana's infrastructure through schemes such as the Volta River hydroelectric project, improved access to education and healthcare, and made steps towards greater economic independence through establishing domestic industries and breaking the monopoly of foreign capital. However, before his development plans could be fully implemented his government was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup led by soldiers and police officers on 24th February 1966. In the context of growing foreign debt following the collapse of the price of cocoa on the world market, this coup was justified in terms of putting an end to the 'economic mismanagement' of the country by the CPP (Nkrumah 1973).

Critics of the CPP's state-led development approach have echoed this charge of mismanagement, arguing that Ghana's state-owned industries and enterprises were inefficient, unprofitable and hampered by corruption, and that many of Nkrumah's infrastructural investments, such as Tema harbour, were a waste of money (Hutchful 2002; Apter 2008). Other commentators, however, argue that the problems experienced by Ghana during this period were not the result of a failed socialist experiment, but rather a product of the persistence of colonial economic relations in Ghana's early years of independence. Dependence on cocoa exports made Ghana vulnerable to changing international terms of trade and a continued reliance on foreign capital left Ghana vulnerable to neo-colonial exploitation by the same interests that had underdeveloped the Gold Coast as a colony (Fitch and Oppenheimer 1966; Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Nkrumah (1973) himself argued that the coup happened at the point at which Ghana was about to make a breakthrough to achieving economic independence, and that the charge of mismanagement was fabricated by neo-colonialists who feared that the success of Ghanaian socialism would set a dangerous example to the rest of the continent.

5.3.5 Economic decline, 1966-1983

The 1966 coup was intended to put a stop to Nkrumah's socialist development programme and create the right political conditions for IMF-prescribed free

market reforms (Hutchful 1987). These reforms, including an austerity budget, currency devaluation, and liberalisation measures, had negative social consequences and failed to have the desired effect of jump-starting economic growth by stimulating the private sector (Hutchful 2002). Nearly 15 years of political turmoil followed, as a succession of civilian and military governments attempted, fruitlessly, to avert an ever-deepening economic crisis. Between 1970 and 1980 GDP was in decline, inflation was out of control, production in all sectors was very low, foreign investment dwindled, and government deficits grew at a rate of 650% between 1975/76 and 1981/82. The illegal parallel economy (trade in goods that illicitly ignored government price controls) or “kalabule” had grown to a colossal 32.4% of official GDP in 1982. Ghana’s transportation, health care, education and communications systems were falling apart and there was a decline in general living standards to pre-independence levels, leading to an exodus of skilled professionals from the country (Price 1984; Hutchful 2002; Obeng-Odoom 2012).

There has been much debate over the causes of Ghana’s economic decline during this period, with two contradictory theoretical perspectives emphasising different causes. Liberal commentators such as Hutchful (2002) have identified endogenous political factors as the primary reason of Ghana’s economic decline. They argue that the crisis was the product of a state-led, bureaucratic mode of development that was introduced by Nkrumah and, with the exception of a hiatus between 1966 and 1972, continued until structural adjustment in 1983. The construction of a strong central state that intervened heavily in the economy and took the lead role in national development was thought to have constrained the ability of the private sector to act as the driving force of modernisation in Ghana (Hutchful 2002; Grant and Yankson 2003; Rimmer 1992). According to Price (1984), the extension of state control over the economy was motivated by the need of the centre to buy the loyalty of disparate ethnic groups and a politicised urban middle class with redistributive welfare and development spending. As a result, Rimmer (1992) and Frimpong-Ansah (1991) argue, cocoa production was steadily undermined by various governments’ attempts to

extract more and more revenue from the sector in order to finance development projects to keeping various interest groups happy.

Contrary to the liberal position, Marxist “structuralist” writers such as Rhoda Howard (1978) have identified exogenous factors such as neo-colonialism and Ghana’s continued dependence on exploitative foreign capital and volatile export markets as the reason for its economic problems. On Africa in general, Bush (2007: 43) argues that ‘the elements of failure were built into post-colonial settlements rooting the new economies in old trading and commodity dependence that benefited Europe and industrial countries’, and that external market conditions lead to the culmination of the African crisis in the 1970s. These conditions included: an increase in petroleum prices; a decline in raw material prices; and increase in the cost of imported manufactured goods; a increase in the cost of borrowing; and industrial countries imposing tariffs on African countries’ exports in order to protect their own agricultural interests. As such, he argues, Africa’s crisis is rooted in ‘the historical context of the continent’s adverse incorporation into the world economy’ (Bush 2007: 43-44).

5.3.6 PNDC rule and structural adjustment, 1981-1992

In 1981, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings led a successful coup to establish a military government under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). Between 1982 and 1983 Ghana’s economic crisis deepened. Nigeria imposed an oil embargo and expelled one million Ghanaian migrants, while drought and bushfires devastated cocoa and food crops, with losses put at 40% of the total crop. As such, 1983 was described by Brydon and Legge (1996: 19-20) as the ‘nadir of Ghana’s economic fortunes’. It was at this point that the PNDC government, whose economic policies thus far were of a populist left wing complexion, approached the IMF and World Bank and agreed on a programme of neoliberal reforms, or “structural adjustment”, in order to secure international financial assistance.

Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) are a set of policies designed by the World Bank and IMF to reform or adjust the government and economy of a

country as a condition for it receiving financial assistance. Typically, this involves restructuring a country's economic system in order to reduce centralised state control and give greater freedom to market mechanisms and the private sector. SAPs include the promotion of exports, a reduction in the size and function of the civil service and public sector, cuts to subsidies and redistributive public spending, the privatisation of public-owned goods, services and enterprises, the elimination of marketing boards, and currency devaluation. The aim of adjustment is the pursuit of economic growth, measured as gross domestic product (GDP), at all costs. It is assumed that economic growth will naturally result in the 'trickle down' of benefits, such as job creation and poverty reduction, to everyone in society. As such, and in keeping with neoliberal theory, adjustment privileges the private sector, and not the state, as the driving force of modernisation and development (Rothchild 1991; Konadu-Agyemang and Kwaku Takyi 2001).

According to Konadu-Agyemang and Kwaku Takyi (2001) the practice of structural adjustment grew out of the growth in popularity in modernisation theory amongst development 'experts' working in powerful institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. This theory holds that African countries can only achieve development by following the same path taken by the advanced capitalist states in the Global North. This implies that that development is a unilinear process that required developing countries to 'jettison certain behavioural, social and cultural traits' that were considered 'traditional' or 'anti-development' in order to 'achieve the characteristics of modernity' (2001: 19). As such, this understanding of development is informed by the argument that post-colonial African states are themselves to blame for their economic problems due to some sort of deviant behaviour, such as political mismanagement or government interference in the market. The policy implication is that deviant countries need reforming, or 'adjusting', if they are to follow the path of development from a traditional to modern society.

In April 1983 Rawlings announced an austerity budget designed to reduce inflation and curb government spending. This earned him the approval of the

IMF and World Bank, who both granted Ghana access to funds. A SAP was subsequently formulated for Ghana. It included the following policies: cutting public spending, the retrenchment of public sector workers, the devaluation of the national currency (the Cedi), the removal of price controls, the privatisation of state-owned enterprises and public services, developing economic infrastructure to attract investment, improving tax revenue collection, and a drive to encourage the export-oriented production of cocoa, minerals, timber, foodstuffs etc. (Rothchild 1991; Konadu-Agyemang 2000).

In the short to medium term at least, adjustment turned Ghana's problem with negative growth around as private sector investment increased in response to the reforms. Growth was driven to a large degree by an increase in foreign direct investment in areas such as construction, and there has been a dramatic rise in the number of foreign companies with operation in Accra since 1983 (Konadu-Agyemang 2000; Grant and Yankson 2003; Obeng-Odoom 2011, 2012). These developments led the World Bank and its advocates to hold Ghana up at the end of the 1980s as its 'star pupil' - a runaway success story and an example of effective adjustment that all other African states should follow (Rothchild 1991).

Despite this positive macroeconomic picture, however, structural adjustment has been subject to fierce criticism for its negative socio-economic consequences and, in particular, for increasing inequalities in Ghana (Rothchild 1991; Konadu-Agyemang 2000; Konadu-Agyemang and Kwaku Takyi 2001; Grant and Yankson 2003). Income inequalities have grown worse in Accra since the 1980s.

According to Obeng-Odoom (2012: 101), 'between 1992 and 1999, the mean income of the richest 10 percent of workers increased by 600 percent, while the mean income of the poorest 10 percent increased by only 38 percent'. This situation is consistent with the global picture, in which falling inequalities that occurred as a result of state-led redistributive development efforts in the post-war period have been reversed by the wave of state withdrawal and privatisations since the 1970s. According to UN-Habitat (2003: 36), 'from 1973 to 1993, inequality, however measured, increased between countries, within most countries and in the world as a whole'.

Structural adjustment has had this effect for several reasons: the retrenchment of public sector and formal private sector workers has contributed to mass unemployment and informalisation; the government has cut spending on welfare and services and introduced a cost-recovery system for healthcare and education based on user fees; devaluation of the Cedi has lowered the price of exports whilst raising the cost of essential imported goods such as machinery and medical supplies; and increased indebtedness has led the government to divert resources away from redistributive spending in order to service its debts to creditor nations in the Global North. All of these processes have contributed to increasing levels of inequality in post-SAP Ghana (Konadu-Agyemang 2000). As Konadu-Agyemang and Kwaku Takyi (2001) argue, these problems are not particular to Ghana. Instead, 'wherever Structural Adjustment Programs have been the main staples of economic management, unemployment, poverty and inequalities tend to increase' (ibid: 35).

Given that adjustment has had a negative effect on the lives of many Ghanaians, it is notable that overt resistance to the PNDC's actions was limited to small-scale strikes and protests by workers and students that did not pose a serious threat to the authority of the PNDC. Rawlings himself argued that the lack of major unrest was a demonstration of public faith in his economic policies. Some writers, however, have been less charitable, arguing that it was only possible for Rawlings to implement such harsh measures under repressive conditions of military rule (Boahen 1989; Jeffries 1991; Rothchild 1991). The Ghana Trade Union Congress was placed under the control of an 'interim Management Committee' composed of PNDC supporters, which limited the scope for large-scale strike action, and there was little scope for autonomous workers' action due to widespread fear of violent reprisals (Jeffries 1991). According to Albert Adu Boahen (1989: 49), the 'passivity of Ghanaians' and the lack of protests and riots was 'not because we trust the PNDC, but because we fear the PNDC. We are afraid of being detained, liquidated... or being subject to all sorts of molestation'. Boahen identifies a 'culture of silence', where all public criticism of the government was suppressed and independent news outlets were closed down by

the PNDC, as the reason for the lack of open, organised dissent. In this repressive environment, people were largely limited to engaging in silent protests, such as resigning from public office, to express their discontent (Boahen 1989). As such, the Ghanaian experience of structural adjustment lends weight to Klein's (2007) thesis that radical neoliberalisation relies on crushing popular opposition through the use of extra-economic force and the suspension of democratic rights. This suggests that structural adjustment in Ghana should be understood as a form of accumulation by dispossession, an argument that will be developed in 5.4.

5.3.7 The Fourth Republic, 1992-present

Ghana began to move towards democratic civilian rule in 1988 with the introduction of elected District Assemblies. 1992 saw parliamentary and presidential elections and the full passage to elected government under Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC) party. Since the establishment of Ghana's Fourth Republic, both major political parties - the centre-left NDC and the pro-market New Patriotic Party (NPP) - have operated within the macroeconomic policy framework established under structural adjustment in return for continued multilateral lending (Brydon and Legge 1996).

Ghana is a member of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiative, the new framework introduced by the World Bank and IMF in 1999 to determine macroeconomic policy in post-adjustment states. Formed in response to criticisms leveled at structural adjustment for being too top-down and dictatorial, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiative was supposed, in theory, to give debtor countries a greater degree of 'ownership' over economic reforms. It was also supposed to enable a greater degree of 'participation' by civil society groups so that the citizens of these countries could have a say in determining the reforms. Governments, in consultation with civil society representatives, were to formulate a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that outlined a national development strategy for achieving growth in return for continued lending and debt relief. In addition, the IFIs have departed from their narrow focus on economic reform in the 1980s to make lending conditional on political reforms

in the name of fostering 'good governance'. Critics, however, argue that the PSRP approach is essentially just a rebranding of structural adjustment. According to Whitfield (2005), the formulation of Ghana's PRSP lacked any genuine local ownership or participation and was dominated by the World Bank and IMF, who imposed the same policy agenda that they espoused during the 1980s. The effect of the PSRP approach, therefore, was simply to 'repackage adjustment with new marketing techniques by co-opting the discourse of its critiques' (Whitfield 2005: 659). Bush (2007) argues that the discourse around 'good governance' serves to legitimise structural adjustment by suggesting that failures are a result of endogenous political factors rather than flawed policies being imposed on African states.

5.4 Accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession: the formation of Accra's informal proletariat

Having given an overview of Ghana's political economic history, this section will identify the historical processes that have produced the unequal urban geography of contemporary Accra. It is argued that several processes of dispossession have combined to produce a large urban 'informal proletariat' that is surplus and excluded from the formal jobs and housing markets in the city, leading to the growth of the informal economy and the proliferation of informal settlements. In each case, these processes of dispossession are a function of the fact that, after a hiatus where Nkrumah attempted to eradicate the colonial structure of the country's economy, neoliberal adjustment has restored many of the features of colonialism to Ghana. As such, this thesis argues that these processes can be characterised as processes of *accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession*. These processes are discussed below.

5.4.1 The expropriation and proletarianisation of the indigenous Ga

As discussed in 5.2.3, the state has expropriated huge amounts of Ga land, much of which has now been made available for private developers. This has resulted in the proletarianisation of much of the indigenous Ga of Accra, who have been

separated from their historical means of reproduction. This section contains a brief overview of the construction of the state land system and how the state has historically intervened to facilitate land alienation in the area.

Prior to colonialism, all land in the Accra area was subject to the customary system of tenure and was managed as a common resource that belonged to the local community as a whole and was inalienable from its collective owners. This system, according to one Ghanaian chief, is founded on the idea that 'land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless numbers are still unborn' (cited in Ollenu 1962: 4). Accordingly, individuals had the right of use (the 'usufructury' right), but not of alienation. Absolute ownership (the 'allodial' right) of land was vested in the head of the collective who managed the lands on behalf of the community, tribe or family. In the case of Ga communities in the Accra area, land was traditionally controlled by both the stools and large families, or 'quarters' (Figure 5.4). The relevant authority would allocate land to members of the stool, as a right, or to outsiders on the condition that they pay a tribute (or 'drink money') to the ancestors of that stool (Tipple and Korboe 1998). This collective land tenure underpinned the non-market subsistence economy described in 5.3.1, and can therefore be understood as a form of pre-capitalist commons.

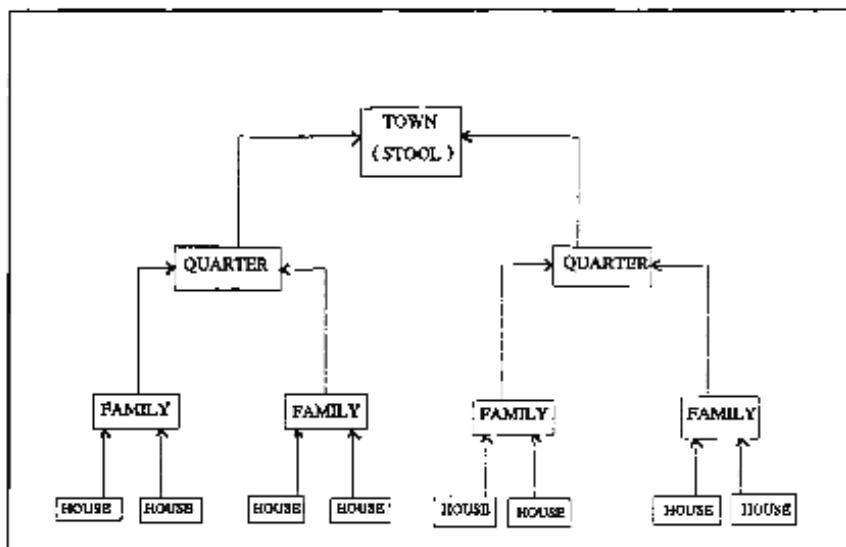


Figure 5.4: The structure of Ga townships
Source: Larbi (1994: 76).

Practices governing land use began to be influenced by western norms around the time of Accra's designation as the Gold Coast's administrative capital and economic nerve centre in 1877. Urbanisation fuelled a growing demand by government and enterprise for developable land, and compulsory acquisition became an essential tool for mobilising land for the colonial project (Larbi 1994). The passing of the 1876 Public Lands Ordinance allowed the colonial government to legally acquire large tracts of land in Accra on a freehold basis in order to develop the infrastructure, housing and public works required for a modern urban centre (Quarcoopome 1992). The colonial administration was supposed to negotiate with and pay compensation to the traditional custodians of expropriated lands, although scholars disagree about the extent that this was honoured in practice (Howard 1978; Larbi et al. 2004).

Despite this extension of state power over land during the colonial period, most land in the Gold Coast remained under communal ownership. This was a product of organised resistance to land reform by Africans who feared that the comprehensive commodification of land would lead to it being concentrated in the hands of the European bourgeoisie (Howard 1978). The colonial authorities adopted a system of indirect rule which relied on allowing the customary land system to continue so as not to undermine the power base of the local chiefs through whom they were ruling (Gough and Yankson 2000). Despite this, the colonial economy was still reliant on European companies being able to access land for commercial ventures such as gold mining. As such, the persistence of communal land tenure presented a barrier to accumulation in the Gold Coast. This limit was partly overcome by the establishment of the public land system, which created a loophole through which European businesses and individuals could acquire land. The 1876 Ordinance ostensibly legislated for the appropriation of land for public purposes. But in practice, the government rented out public lands to European firms to establish their bungalows and trading houses (Howard 1978). As such, the state land system was established as a means by which foreign capital could overcome the barrier to accumulation posed by communal land tenure in Ghana.

Following decolonisation, all lands hitherto vested in the Crown or occupied by foreigners became state lands vested in the President (Konadu-Agyemang 2001; Larbi et al. 2004). During this period, African governments across the continent expropriated large amounts of land as a means to delivering state-led development (Gough and Yankson 2000; Bush 2007). In the case of Ghana, the CPP increased the power of the state over land in order to allow it to push ahead with large-scale agriculture, housing, infrastructure and public works projects and to neutralise the potential threat to state power posed by the chiefs (Larbi 1994; Aryeetey et al. 2007). The Administration of Lands Act (Act 123) and the State Lands Act (Act 125) of 1962 simplified the process by which the President could acquire land for any purpose that he considered to serve the 'public interest' (Kasanga et al. 1996). These Acts created a streamlined, top-down system which empowered the state and excluded landowners' voices from the decision-making process. There was no need for consultation prior to an acquisition. Furthermore, issues of compensation would be dealt with after the event of the acquisition and non-payment of compensation did not invalidate an acquisition (Larbi et al. 2004). During this period, Accra was subject to large-scale governmental land acquisitions. Although this provoked protest from elements within the Ga community, the government appealed to the notion of the national interest and the fact that much of these lands were used for developments that benefitted the public (Quarcoopome 1992).

Acts 123 and 125 governed compulsory acquisition in Ghana until the 1992 Constitution was introduced. The Constitution sought to build on, rather than replace, these acts by addressing some of the recognised problems with their application since independence. The state had failed to pay compensation for as much as 90% of land expropriated since the 1960s, and lands were frequently not used for the purpose for which they were acquired and then leased out to private individuals and companies (Kasanga et al. 1996; Larbi et al. 2004). These issues have been a source of resentment amongst communities affected by expropriation. Article 20 of the Constitution rules that fair and adequate compensation should be paid for expropriated property, that land has to be acquired for a particular stated purpose, and that it must be used 'in the public

interest or for the purpose for which it was acquired' or otherwise the original owner should be given the first option to reacquire it (Republic of Ghana 1992: 22-24). Some scholars, such as Kotey (2002), have hailed the new Constitution as providing opportunities for expropriated communities to challenge government practice in the courts. However, the impact of these provisions has effectively been blunted by the fact that the changes made in the Constitution do not apply retrospectively. As most state lands were acquired before this date, there are a still huge number of unresolved disputes over the acquisition and management of state land in Accra (Larbi 1994, 2008).

Today, the state land system continues to lease expropriated lands in Accra to private developers. By making communal land that was acquired for public use available to private developers, the state has been a key force in facilitating transformations in land tenure in Accra by acting as an intermediary between the customary and capitalist land systems. The state assumed this role in the colonial period in order to make land available for various functions essential to the exploitation of the colony by foreign capital. In the neoliberal era, the state land system has played an analogous role by making land available for private developers. As such, the state land system under neoliberalism has functioned as an instrument of accumulation by *neo-colonial* dispossession, using extra-economic means to separate the indigenous residents of Accra from their ancestral commons and then serve them up as a factor of production for private capital. This has had the effect of proletarianising large numbers of indigenous Ga and contributing to growing levels of inequality in the city (Obeng-Odoom 2011) (see Chapter 7).

5.4.2 The underdevelopment of the countryside and the commodification of the rural agricultural commons

In addition to the expropriation of the indigenous Ga, the ranks of Accra's proletariat have been swelled by migration from the other regions of Ghana. As with all African countries, Ghana is rapidly urbanising. The proportion of Ghanaians living in cities has rocketed from 9% in 1931 to 47.8% in 2005

(Obeng-Odoom 2009). This process has been driven by a long-term trend of rural-urban migration that has occurred as a result of two processes that began in the colonial period and have intensified in recent decades as a result of structural adjustment: uneven geographical development and the erosion of communal land tenure.

Uneven geographical development was deliberately fostered in the colonial period so as to stimulate rural-urban migration. The colonial economy was structured so that mining and cash crop production was concentrated in the southern regions, and so were the urban centres that emerged for administering, warehousing and exporting the fruits of empire. However, the fact that Ghanaian peasants had not, on the whole, been proletarianised and separated from the means of production (their land) created a serious labour shortage in this region. In order to solve this problem, the colonial authorities had to resort to extra-economic means to create a proletarianised workforce that was separated from its land and could be employed in the mines and cocoa farms and on government works on the Gold Coast. To this end, northern Ghana was designated as a labour reserve for the rest of the colony and was strategically underdeveloped so as to encourage people to leave their land in search of a better life in the south. This policy created a centre-periphery spatial structure between the relatively urbanised south and rural north, with economic and social infrastructure concentrated in and around the urban centres that functioned as the nodes of the colonial economy (Howard 1978; Konadu-Agyemang 2001; Songsore, 2010; Agyei-Mensah and Owusu 2010).

Nkrumah attempted to reverse this colonial policy of uneven development through the provision of universal welfare and the building of infrastructure in rural areas (Konadu-Agyemang 2000). These efforts to reduce spatial inequalities were only successful to a limited extent before the coup of 1966, however, and rural-urban disparities continued to deepen in the decades following Nkrumah's overthrow (Rimmer 1992). The dramatic decline in prospects for agricultural producers during the crisis of the 1970s led to more rural-urban migration as people abandoned their farms to seek alternative

employment in the cities (Sandbrook and Arn 1977; Howard 1978). Accra, in particular, grew rapidly from the 1960s onwards due to the fact that the economic and social infrastructure, income-generating opportunities and state institutions were all increasingly concentrated in the capital (Essamuah and Tonah 2004).

Rural-urban disparities have intensified in the wake of structural adjustment. Whereas state planning sought to develop Ghana as a whole, economic liberalisation has encouraged uneven development to intensify by making it possible for investment to flood into already developed areas of the country, especially Accra, in order to take advantage of agglomeration and economies of scale. Almost 80% of all investment projects that were attracted to Ghana by the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre between 1994 and 1999 were located in the Greater Accra Region, with about 1% going to the three regions in Northern Ghana (Songsore 2010: 37). This has been cultivated by the government's promotion of Accra as the 'gateway' to West Africa, intended to link the city more closely into the global economy (see 6.2) (Konadu-Agyemang 2001; Grant and Yankson 2003; UN-Habitat 2009; Songsore 2010; Obeng-Odoom 2011, 2012).

Government data on the incidence of poverty demonstrates growing inequalities between different regions in Ghana, with the northern regions having the highest incidence of poverty, and rural areas remaining poorer than urban areas (UN-Habitat 2010a). As Konadu-Agyemang (2000: 475) argues, public spending cuts and the introduction of user fees under structural adjustment has 'rewidened the gaps' between rural and urban. He reports that incidences of poverty, malnutrition and poor health amongst children are much higher in the rural areas and the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions than in greater Accra, as health facilities are fewer in these areas and, crucially, people are less able than their urban counterparts to afford to pay the fees to access them. As Agyei-Mensah and Owusu (2010: 512) conclude, therefore, 'with structural adjustment having deepened the poverty of rural folks, many of the rural poor have migrated to Accra to seek their fortune'.

The second process fuelling long-term rural-urban migration is the erosion of communal land tenure in the countryside. As mentioned in 5.3.2, colonialism did not abolish communal land tenure in the rural areas, preferring instead to articulate peasant agriculture for cash crop production (Hymer 1970). Consequently, agricultural land in this part of the world was not subjected to the same process of comprehensive expropriation as in Western Europe, and communal land ownership and peasant agricultural production is still pervasive in large parts of rural Ghana today (Asamoah 2001; Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Despite this, the 'encroachment of market forces' is undermining peasant agriculture through the gradual privatisation of agricultural land (Asamoah 2001). A dramatic increase in foreign investment in agricultural land has been recorded in Ghana in recent years. Large areas of land are being leased to European companies by local chiefs as a result of the growth in global demand for food and biofuels. Although chiefs are reportedly encouraged to sell their land by the promise that foreign investment will bring development and create paid employment in rural areas, such benefits rarely materialise. This process of 'land grabbing' is leading to small-scale farmers being displaced from their land and is eroding the material basis of the traditional communal mode of social reproduction. As such, the commodification of the rural agricultural commons is driving people into the cities in search of paid employment (Cotula et al. 2009; Friends of the Earth 2010).

To summarise, the growth of Accra has been driven by the historical separation of peasants from their means of production – the land - either directly through privatisation or indirectly through policies of urban bias that push people out of the countryside to escape poverty. As Bush (2007) argues, therefore, both of these drivers of rural-urban migration should be understood as forms of accumulation by dispossession. Furthermore, although both processes of dispossession have their origins in the colonial economy, they have intensified in the neoliberal epoch. For this reason, I argue, contemporary processes of uneven development and land privatisation should be understood as forms of accumulation by *neo-colonial* dispossession. As Konadu-Agyemang (2001: 187) argues,

despite the fact that 'official' colonialism ceased well over 40 years ago, neo-colonialism has enabled most of the very policies initiated by the colonial authorities, or other akin to them, to be continued... As a result of the urban-bias policies still pursued by the local elite and several other complex historical factors, nothing seems to halt the lemming-like migration of people from the countryside to the cities (Konadu-Agyemang 2001).

Federici (1990) argues that structural adjustment in Africa was designed to create a disciplined, landless proletariat by separating producers from the agricultural commons. However, whereas in Europe at the dawn of capitalism this proletarianised population was forced off the land and into the factories, industrialisation has not been sufficient to absorb the migrants flooding to the cities in post-SAP Ghana. As such, this surplus proletariat has swelled the ranks of the urban informal economy. The following section will explore why this is the case.

5.4.3 Workforce retrenchment and economic informalisation

As mentioned in 5.3.6, structural adjustment has contributed to growing inequalities in Ghana as a result of the retrenchment of public sector and formal private sector workers leading to mass unemployment and informalisation. Whilst the informal economy predates liberalisation and has in fact been a perennial feature of urban life in Ghana since the introduction of capitalism, the effects of structural adjustment have caused it to expand massively since 1983 (Panford 2001; Takyi and Addai 2003; Essamuah and Tonah 2004; Overa 2007; Zeilig and Ceruti 2007; Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah 2008; Obeng-Odoom 2011). This expansion, repeated across Sub-Saharan Africa, has been described as a process of generalised 'informalisation' affecting the entire economy (Yankson 2000). This informalisation is a function of the lack of industrialisation in Sub-Saharan Africa combined with the devastating effects of structural adjustment on formal employment in the continent's cities. The urban centres that emerged in Ghana under colonialism were not, as was the case with most European cities, based on labour-intensive industrial growth, but on trading functions appropriate to their peripheral role in the global economy (Songsore 2010).

Despite the efforts of Nkrumah to address this problem through import-substitution industrialisation in the post-independence period, Sub-Saharan Africa's exclusion from the globalisation of foreign direct investment in manufacturing since the 1980s has resulted in the continuation of this dislocation of urbanisation and industrialisation (Rogerson 1997).

Under structural adjustment, huge numbers of jobs were lost as a result of government downsizing, cuts in public infrastructure expenditure, and the privatisation and closure of state-owned enterprises (Panford 2001). In addition, trade liberalisation and the subsequent influx of cheap imported goods onto the Ghanaian market has undermined domestic industry and limited the ability of the private sector to create jobs to absorb those laid off by structural adjustment. For example, in the late 1970s the Ghanaian textiles and clothing industry employed 25,000 people. By the year 2000 it had only 5000 employees (Zeiling and Ceruti 2007). Panford (2001) suggests that by the early 1990s structural adjustment had resulted in a loss of 40-50% of all formal jobs in the public and private sectors in Ghana. As such, an unemployment crisis has been created which 'stems partly from the fact that the Structural Adjustment Program has not engendered jobs to replace the ones that its implementation has eliminated' (Panford 2001: 220). As well as job losses, structural adjustment has led to a decline in real wages in Ghana due to the withdrawal of price controls, state subsidies and public services. This trend has also pushed workers into informal employment in order to supplement their incomes (Essamuah and Tonah 2004).

A knock-on effect of this unemployment crisis has been to increase the economic burden on women and children, resulting in their increased participation in informal trade (Essamuah and Tonah 2004). In addition, the negative effect of structural adjustment on educational access has propelled increasing numbers of young women into the informal economy. Whilst increased public spending on education in the 1950s and '60s enabled rising numbers of females to acquire qualifications and professional employment, the introduction of school and university fees combined with declining job prospects since the 1980s have resulted in females being withdrawn from formal education to enter petty

trading (Panford 2001). Finally, there has been a trend towards the informalisation of formal enterprise in African cities, with formal jobs being displaced by informal ones, as enterprises increasingly sub-contract functions to informal traders and producers in order to evade labour regulations and lower costs. This process of informalisation is creating a negative downward pressure on workers' wage levels and working conditions (Rogerson 1997).

As discussed in the previous section, the urbanisation of Accra has been fuelled by processes of dispossession that have intensified as a result of neoliberal economic reforms. As more and more Ghanaians flood to Accra in search of economic opportunities, however, the very same reforms have had a devastating effect on the availability of regular employment in the city. This contradiction has produced a large surplus 'informal' proletariat that has to rely on informal economic activities to survive (Davis 2006). As such, informalisation can be understood as a micro-level response to macroeconomic crisis, as workers seek to adapt to increasingly harsh economic conditions (Oberhauser and Hanson 2007). Hanson (2003: 211) describes informal enterprise as 'people's spontaneous and creative responses to the state's incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the vulnerable masses'.

The retrenchment of the Ghanaian workforce under structural adjustment is a form of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession. Nkrumah (1973) had attempted to overcome colonial dependency and underdevelopment through state-led industrialisation and public sector expansion that would, amongst other benefits, lead to the creation of jobs on a massive scale. However, neoliberalisation entailed the abortion of this process, the opening up of the economy to foreign capital, the re-establishment of a colonial economic structure based around the production of primary commodities for export, and the retrenchment of the formal labour force. As such, whereas in the Global North the postwar Keynesian aspiration of full employment was shattered by deindustrialisation after 1970 (Denning, 2010), in the case of Ghana it is the neo-colonial abortion of Nkrumah's industrialisation programme that has swelled the ranks of the wageless.

5.4.4 The disinvestment of the state in social reproduction and the marketisation of housing

As mentioned in 5.3.6, one of the drivers of growing inequality in Ghana since structural adjustment has been the withdrawal of government redistributive spending on welfare and services. Housing production is one of the areas in which state provision has been rolled-back since the 1980s. In Accra, the result has been the increasingly polarised and segregated residential geography described in 5.2.2, the exclusion of the informal proletariat from accessing formal housing provision, and the subsequent proliferation of impoverished informal settlements.

As outlined in 5.3.1, housing in pre-colonial Ghana was not a commodity but was built by the family or village unit to meet its own needs. House owners were obliged to meet the shelter needs of members of their lineage. As such, large family 'compound' houses, with lots of rooms based around a central courtyard, functioned as a social safety net in traditional Ghanaian society (Tipple and Korboe 1998). For most of the colonial period, the British did not directly involve themselves in the provision of housing for Accra's indigenous population. Apart from a few isolated exceptions, housing policy was limited to the provision of high quality housing for public servants and expatriate employees of European companies. This housing was built to British standards in well-ordered and sanitary residential areas that were strictly segregated from those of the local population (Konadu-Agyemang 2001; Tipple and Korboe 1998; UN-Habitat 2010). As such, a system of social stratification and spatial segregation rooted in dramatic housing inequalities began to emerge in the 19th Century as a feature of colonial urban development (Konadu-Agyemang 2001).

Following independence, Nkrumah's CPP government viewed the provision of housing for the masses as a responsibility of the state (Arku 2009). Nkrumah set up several state-owned enterprises to directly produce public housing estates in urban areas and established a range of subsidy and loan schemes to encourage self-help building (Tipple and Korboe 1998). The governments that followed

Nkrumah up until 1983 continued with this policy of combining state provision with schemes to assist self-builders, although the amount of state housing built varied from government to government, depending on political will and budget constraints.

In line with the requirements of structural adjustment, housing policy since the 1980s has entailed a withdrawal of the state from the direct provision of housing units. Instead, the state's more limited role under economic liberalisation has been to create an 'enabling' environment for the private sector to meet Ghana's urban housing needs. The growth of the private real estate sector is to be achieved through moving away from direct state production, liberalising land and building material markets, developing the housing finance sector, making land available to developers, and offering various financial incentives (such as tax breaks) to potential investors. The intended outcome of these policies was to encourage foreign capital to flow into the housing sector. This market approach to housing has been adopted by successive governments since the 1980s (Tipple and Korboe 1998; Arku 2009; Grant 2009; UN-Habitat 2011).

This policy has been successful in creating the building boom of high-quality housing for the wealthy described in 5.2.3. This luxury housing market has emerged as a result of several factors, all related to the processes of economic liberalisation and neoliberal globalisation. Trade liberalisation has facilitated suburban sprawl in Accra by making access to imported commodities such as building materials and motor vehicles easier (Grant and Yankson 2003). In addition, whereas the customary land system has traditionally acted as a deterrent for private real estate developers, the emergence of an urban land market in the liberalisation era has encouraged the recent proliferation of gated communities (Grant 2009).

In terms of changes in consumption trends, growing social differentiation and class inequalities following liberalisation have led to the growth of niche markets for middle- and upper-class consumers (Yeboah 2000). The growing popularity of gated communities amongst these groups suggests a cultural turn away from

the traditional large Ghanaian family home in favour of the Western nuclear family house (Grant 2009). Liberalisation has facilitated the emergence of an international market for real estate in Accra. This market increasingly caters to members of the Ghanaian diaspora who are taking advantage of the liberalisation of the financial sector to remit money home to invest in housing. It also caters to the growing numbers of foreign expatriates in the city who want to live in exclusive, prestigious and well-serviced estates (Grant and Yankson 2003; Grant 2009). Grant (2009) refers to these as 'transnational houses' because most buyers have lived and worked abroad and their cost – ranging from US\$23,400 to US\$460,000 in 2004 – is out of the reach of most residents of a country in which the average per capita income is around US\$400.

The fundamental transformation that underpins the luxury housing boom is the increasing commodification of housing within a global market, and the production of housing by private developers, rather than local communities or the state, for its exchange- rather than use- value (Grant 2009). In this new environment, Grant (2009: 46) observes, 'the profit interest of real estate developers determined the kinds of residential projects that emerged'. These developers have made a strategic decision to build only for the wealthiest consumers because the 'best way to recoup significant outlay investments (developing land and providing services and utilities) was to concentrate on the upper end of the residential market and to develop niche products like gated enclaves' (ibid.).

In some respects, therefore, liberalisation has successfully stimulated the growth of private sector housing production in Ghana. However, the developer-led building boom that has occurred since the 1980s has only addressed the needs of Accra's wealthiest consumers. In a context of rapid urbanisation, a full-blown housing crisis has developed because private developers have failed to respond to the growing demand for housing for Accra's burgeoning low-income population. Furthermore, liberalisation has driven up the cost of housing by encouraging land speculation and increasing dependence on expensive imported

building materials (Arku 2009). As such, the majority of the population has to rely on poor-quality, overcrowded informal housing to meet its shelter needs.

Following Silvia Federici (2012), the withdrawal of government redistributive spending on welfare and services can be understood in terms of the disinvestment of the state in the reproduction of the workforce. The result is the commodification of the means of reproduction so that they are only accessible to those who can afford to pay the market rate, leading to a hardening of inequalities that were previously ameliorated by redistributive state spending. As such, structural adjustment is a form of dispossession that has separated Ghana's population from the social entitlements and public goods that were established following decolonisation in order to insulate them from the negative social effects of colonialism and capitalism. Furthermore, Federici (1990: 14) has described structural adjustment as '*the recolonization of Africa*, under the hegemony of the Western powers, who are using the crisis to recuperate what was lost in the wake of the anti-colonial struggles'. As such, the disinvestment of the state in social reproduction in Ghana should also be understood as a form of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession.

The rolling back of state provision and the marketisation of housing since the 1980s is a key facet of the disinvestment of the state in the reproduction of the workforce enforced by the IFIs. As such, it is a form of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession that has commodified housing so that it is only accessible to those who can afford to pay the high prices set by private developers. As Konadu-Agyemang (2001: 183) argues, relying on private developers to produce housing as a commodity for its exchange-value has had the effect of intensifying housing inequalities:

Treating housing as a consumer good and allowing market forces to decide where they are built, how they are built, and more important, who has access to them, as the present approach adopted by the government seeks to do is to perpetuate the existing housing inequalities and to confine the poor to congested slums which have been their lot for ages.

As a result, the geography of contemporary Accra is an incongruous patchwork of extreme poverty and opulent wealth; with luxury gated communities sitting adjacent to impoverished informal settlements (Weeks et al. 2007).

5.5 Summary

This chapter has described the unequal geography of contemporary Accra and analysed the historical processes of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession that have produced this geography. Contemporary Accra is characterised by deepening socio-economic inequalities that are evident in the growth of the informal economy, in the simultaneous proliferation of impoverished informal settlements and wealthy gated communities, and in the squalid living conditions of the indigenous Ga communities whose ancestral lands have been expropriated and sold off to real estate developers. This chapter has argued that this geography is the outcome of several historical processes of dispossession that have created a large 'informal proletariat' in Accra. The expropriation of the indigenous Ga, the underdevelopment of the countryside, and the commodification of the rural agricultural commons have all created a landless proletariat that has been concentrated in Accra. The shrinking of formal sector employment and the disinvestment of the state in social reproduction under conditions of roll-back neoliberalism has led this proletariat to be effectively surplus, leading to the growth of the informal economy and the proliferation of informal settlements.

Whereas in Europe proletarianisation involved the *incorporation* of the dispossessed into the urban industrial workforce so that it could be exploited by capital, accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession in Ghana has resulted in the *surplussing* of the informal proletariat by capital and the state. While structural adjustment involves the incorporation of material goods such as land and housing into the circuits of capital, therefore, the creative destruction of Ghana's post-independence developmental state has led to the 'expulsion' of the informal proletariat from the formal capitalist economy (Sassen 2010). This population has responded by resorting to various practices, such as occupying undeveloped

land and public space, in order to reproduce itself by building informal housing and engaging in informal income generating activities. As will be discussed in the next chapter, these activities have provoked conflict between the informal proletariat and those agents of neoliberal urban governance who have a very different agenda for the city's undeveloped land and public spaces.

6. Building a Millennium City: the state's gentrification strategy for Accra

6.1 Introduction

Having examined the historical processes that have produced the geography of Accra, attention now turns to contemporary urban governance in Ghana's capital. This chapter draws on original empirical research in order to give an account of the national and local state's approach for developing Accra. It analyses this approach as a variation of urban entrepreneurialism in which the state pursues various strategies designed to attract foreign investment and tourism and encourage the growth of private sector real estate development. This chapter unpacks three entrepreneurial strategies pursued by the state in Accra: the privatisation of public land for exclusive development projects, the cleansing of the city centre of informal street trade, and the forced eviction and redevelopment of an informal squatter settlement. By examining these strategies and the way they are justified by state actors, this chapter draws the conclusion that *state-led* gentrification plays a central role in entrepreneurial urban governance in Accra.

This chapter begins with an account of the state's approach to urban development in Accra in the post-structural adjustment period. Next, it examines the three entrepreneurial urban development strategies outlined above and draws on original interview material to discuss the ways in which these strategies are rationalised by government officials. Third, it argues that each of the three strategies can be understood as a form of state-led gentrification, and that gentrification is a key strategy of entrepreneurial urban development in Accra. Finally it is argued that actually existing state-led gentrification in Accra is distinguishable from similar processes in Europe and North America by the neo-colonial character that it assumes. These preliminary conclusions prepare the ground for a more in-depth theoretical analysis of the state in Chapter 7.

6.2 Entrepreneurial urbanism in Accra

Following structural adjustment and liberalisation, Accra has followed the same pattern as many capital cities by adopting an entrepreneurial approach to urban governance in which the role of the state is to facilitate private sector growth and 'lure highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space' (Harvey 1989: 11). As a part of Ghana's SAP, the World Bank assisted the government to produce a Strategic Plan for the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) with a view to integrating physical planning with social and economic planning in order to transform the city into an engine of economic growth. The Strategic Plan dictates that the private sector should be the principle agent of development in Accra, with the state stepping back and playing a supporting role through the provision of hard and soft infrastructure, such as improved transportation networks and a liberalised business-friendly institutional and regulatory environment. By creating a favourable environment for foreign investment, the state will enable the expansion of the housing, construction, manufacturing, finance, and tourism sectors, driving economic growth in the process. It is envisaged that this will 'make GAMA the focus of international trade and finance in West Africa' and turn Accra into 'one of the major industrial centres' in the region (Ghana Ministry of Local Government, Department of Town and Country Planning 1991: 3). Furthermore, infrastructural investments in hotels, transportation and beach facilities will transform the city into a major attraction for convention and holiday tourism.

This Strategic Plan has guided the local and national governments' approach to development in Accra since 1993. This has fostered an entrepreneurial approach to urban governance in which the state focuses its energies on attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) through engaging in public-private partnerships and focusing on business-friendly planning initiatives and infrastructural investments (Grant 2009). In addition, the government has place-marketed Accra as a 'gateway' city - a connecting node between West Africa and the global economy and a regional hub for international trade and investment (Grant 2001). The result, Grant (2009) argues, is that Accra is 'globalizing' and

becoming more integrated (albeit unevenly) into the global economy, reflected in the construction boom and the dramatic growth in the number of foreign companies operating in the city since the 1980s.

Within this overarching development framework, the AMA has embarked upon a development programme in order to transform Accra into a 'Millennium City' in partnership with the Millennium Cities Initiative (MCI) based at the Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York. Under the leadership of development economist Jeffrey Sachs, the MCI has worked with the AMA since 2010 to devise a series of urban development projects intended to achieve a reduction in poverty and contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the city by 2015. At time of writing, the MCI had begun conducting research to inform a series of physical upgrading projects to improve planning, infrastructure and services in selected inner city neighborhoods, such as Nima and Ga Mashie. Beyond this, however, the Mayor of Accra, Alfred Okoe Vanderpuije, has adopted 'Millennium City' as a catchall brand for the AMA's urban development programme. As such, he uses the term interchangeably with '21st Century city' when discussing his ambitions to modernise Accra (Cedi Post 2009; Akordor 2010).

Vanderpuije, an Accra native who has spent much of his life working as an educator in the United States, was appointed in order to draw on his experience of American cities to modernise and beautify Accra (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom 2011). As such, he argues that he has a responsibility to 'bring my experience gained outside to bear on the development of Ghana's national capital' (Akordor 2010: no page). That he views himself as a radical moderniser is evident from his oft quoted catchphrase: 'eyes have not seen neither has it entered into the ears of men what man is about to see in Accra' (Okwuosah 2012: no page). In order to transform Accra into a Millennium City, Vanderpuije's AMA has named seven areas of intervention or 'seven pillars'. These are 1) the decongestion of Accra through the removal of informal street traders and demolition of illegal structures 2) the improvement of the city's sanitation and waste management system 3) the improvement of the drainage system 4) the

improvement of the educational and health system 5) enhancing revenue collection 6) upgrading the city's roads and transportation system, and 7) the improvement of other social facilities such as water and energy. The AMA states that interventions in these seven areas will take the form of public-private partnerships (Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2010).

6.3 The privatisation of public land for elite development projects

According to Grant (2009: 241), the persistence of customary land tenure in Accra is a barrier to attracting FDI because investors want to 'lay claim to their property within a legal framework'. Accra's Strategic Plan acknowledges this and states that the customary land system and ongoing disputes and litigation over land ownership are a hindrance to the growth of the construction industry in the city. It recommends that these problems be overcome by the state either releasing more state lands for private development or entering into joint ventures with developers using land as equity (Ghana Ministry of Local Government, Department of Town and Country Planning 1991). This is consistent with the state moving away from the direct provision of housing towards playing an 'infrastructure supporting role by providing funds, lands, services and expertise to the housing industry' (Ghana Ministry of Local Government, Department of Town and Country Planning 1991: 44).

During the liberalisation period, the state has sought to encourage the construction industry through the leasing out of public lands in Accra to private developers at below the market rate. The Public and Vested Lands Management Division of the Lands Commission vets applications and makes allocations to private individuals and companies on a leasehold basis. In addition, it is not uncommon for land allocated to a public body to be sub-leased to the private sector, with the permission of the Lands Commission. The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has also set up a Land Information Data Bank which compiles information on vacant land, including public land, in order to encourage and

facilitate access for investors. This strategy is an extension of a government policy that has existed since independence of aiding self-help housing production by leasing public land to individuals at a subsidised rate (Interview, Emmanuel, Officer, Public and Vested Land Management Division, Lands Commission, 28/6/11).

Private sector developments on land acquired from the state tend to cater to the consumption preferences of the wealthy Ghanaian and transnational elite. Rather than addressing the city's housing deficit by producing housing that is accessible to the urban poor, private developers are concentrating on producing exclusive housing estates, apartments and commercial developments for the upper income bracket because this is the most profitable use of urban land (Grant 2009; Obeng-Odoom 2009). These exclusive developments are particularly evident in and around La, where a huge amount of land has been expropriated by the state (see 5.2.3). Several of these developments are discussed below.

In the Cantonments and Ridge neighbourhoods to the north of the town of La, government-owned land and properties have been allocated to private developers as well as wealthy and well-connected individuals in the name of encouraging private sector housing construction. These leafy neighbourhoods comprising detached houses on large plots were originally developed on land expropriated by the colonial authorities to provide European civil servants and businessmen with a high standard of living in well-planned, low-density neighbourhoods that were strictly segregated from African townships (Konadu-Agyemang 1998). After independence, the government assumed ownership of these properties, using some of them to house ministers and civil servants. Following structural adjustment, Accra's Strategic Plan recommended that government properties built on large, under-utilised plots in Cantonments and Ridge be leased to private developers so that the density of housing could be increased through infilling and redevelopment (Ghana Ministry of Local Government, Department of Town and Country Planning 1991).

Under the NDC government, a public bidding process was established for selecting prospective developers, who also had to receive cabinet approval. 67 plots of land were leased out to private individuals and companies, and 83 new bungalows and 169 new residential units were built. When the NPP came into power in 2000 they continued to lease out government properties in these areas to private individuals and companies, but removed the requirements for open bidding and cabinet approval. Rather, the Ministry for Water Resources, Works and Housing and the Lands Commission began disposing of state-owned properties as they saw fit (Committee for Joint Action 2010). The NPP were accused of using the scheme to sell off prime land at cut-price rates to NPP members and supporters behind closed doors (Committee for Joint Action, 2010). The named alleged beneficiaries include former NPP ministers, the Chief Justice of Ghana, and members of the La and Ga traditional councils (Gomda 2009; Committee for Joint Action 2010).

Another example of public land being privatised for elite housing development in the La area can be found in the construction of the AU Village gated community. In 1957, 92 acres of land in the north of La town was compulsorily acquired by the government as the site for a telecommunications station. Most of the land, colloquially known as “Wireless” wasn’t developed and came to be occupied by squatters who used it to cultivate food crops (Interview, Farouk, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 4/7/11; see also Modern Ghana News 2006b). When preparing for the 2007 African Union summit and ‘Ghana@50’ celebrations, the presidency identified the Wireless land as a suitable site for building a gated development of 30 mansions to accommodate heads of state and other delegates. The government’s Ghana@50 Commission embarked upon a public-private partnership in which the state contributed the land and infrastructure while a consortium of banks called the African Union Development Consortium Limited (AUDCL) financed and built the mansions. The mansions were completed in June 2007, leading to the displacement of many of the squatter farmers. Following the conference, AUDCL employed a company called Amalgam Consult to lease the houses to private individuals and companies

in order to recoup the cost of building them (Interview, Farouk, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 4/7/11; see also Modern Ghana News 2009).



Figure 6.1: The AU Village

Source: author

Africa Lake, also in La, is another area of state land that has been privatised and is the site of a planned exclusive residential, commercial and recreational development. The land in question covers an area of 56 acres and features a large lake that resembles the shape of the African continent. It was originally expropriated by the state as part of the site for the adjacent International Trade Fair complex, built by Nkrumah in the 1960s to promote Ghanaian industry. Although it wasn't used for the Trade Fair development, the CPP government had plans to develop Africa Lake into public educational and recreational ground. However these plans which were aborted after the 1966 coup (Interview, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO, 2/3/13). The site was undeveloped and largely unused, but in 1998 it was leased to a company named Africa Lake

Amusements Limited (information retrieved from Lands Commission). Although at time of writing the site remains undeveloped, a website has been published detailing plans to develop Africa Lake by the Legacy Group, a south African developer that specializes in 'exclusive and luxury hotels, resorts, lodges, golf, executive suites and residential estates'.¹ Legacy also manage the 5* Labadi Beach Hotel adjacent to the Africa Lake site. According to the website, the development will include retail space, offices, a health club and spa, and apartments.²



Figures 6.2 and 6.3: Artist's impressions of Legacy's planned development at Africa Lake.
Source: www.legacyhotels.co.za

The final example discussed here is that of the Airport City development built on land acquired from La in order to build Kotoka National Airport. Since 1996, large amounts of erstwhile-undeveloped land surrounding the airport have been leased out by the state to private developers in order to create a high-rise commercial centre consisting of international-standard hotels, offices, apartments and retail outlets, including a Mercedes Benz showroom (Yeboah 2013).

¹ <http://www.legacyhotels.co.za/index.cfm>

² http://www.legacyhotels.co.za/development/projects_completed.cfm?projid=30



Figure 6.4: Airport City, with Silver Star Tower in the foreground and a new development under construction in the background.
Source: author.

When interviewed about these developments, government officials argued that the role of the state was to enable private sector-led urban development. One of the ways that the state can do this is to facilitate access to land for developers who would otherwise be discouraged by the complexities of the customary land system. According to one official:

most private investors... find (the land system) a labyrinth or a maze. Difficult to navigate through... now, in terms of investors coming in, what the government is trying to do is take the headache away from the investors (Interview, Ebo, Officer, Ministry of Water Resources, Works & Housing, 26/5/11).

As such, the state assumes the role of an intermediary that can overcome the barrier to private sector growth posed by communal land tenure by

expropriating these lands, transforming them into private property, and redistributing them to capitalist developers at below market rates.

As detailed in 5.4.1, the 1992 Constitution specified that public land should to be acquired for a particular stated purpose, and that it must be used 'in the public interest or for the purpose for which it was acquired' or otherwise the original owner should be given the first option to reacquire it (Republic of Ghana 1992: 22-24). Despite this, however, officials interviewed argued that the leasing out of lands acquired for public use to private real estate developers was consistent with the constitution on the grounds that whereas 'public purpose' implies a specific use, 'public interest' 'is a wider concept which would entail government efforts facilitating private sector development itself' (Interview, Emmanuel, Officer, Public and Vested Land Management Division, Lands Commission, 28/6/11). As Kotey (2002: 210) argues, therefore, using expropriated land in the 'public interest' can include more or less anything that government officials deem to be beneficial, including private business ventures.

Government officials argued that facilitating the sort of private developments described above was in the 'public interest' on the grounds that these projects generate benefits for the local population, such as the production of housing and the generation of employment opportunities. In addition, the Airport City development was justified as an essential component of promoting Accra as a gateway city and a regional transport hub on the grounds that wealthy foreigners were more likely to travel through the city for business or tourism if there were internationally competitive hotels and facilities in the vicinity of the airport (Interview, Selina, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 17/6/11; Interview, Farouk, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 14/6/11). According to this entrepreneurial logic, there is no opposition between private profit-seeking activities and the public interest. Rather, the former is understood as the best means to serve the latter. As such, the role of the state is to act as a facilitator for private real estate development.

6.4 The 'decongestion' of Accra through the removal of informal street traders from the CBD

As discussed in 5.2.1, the growth of unemployment and the informalisation of the economy in Accra has resulted in a proliferation of informal street traders and structures housing informal enterprises in the capital's CBD, particularly around marketplaces, transport depots and busy intersections where there is the highest level of passing trade. According to Ofori (2007) and Yankson (2000), the city authorities have historically been opposed to the presence of informal street trade in Accra's CBD for several reasons. First, there is a perception that it creates 'congestion', slowing down vehicular and pedestrian movement and therefore hindering the conduct of formal business in the area. Second, the presence of hawkers and unauthorised structures is blamed for ruining the city's aesthetic appeal and contributing to the high level of litter and dirt in the CBD. Third, 'illegal structures' such as kiosks and workshops typically do not have legal tenure for the land they are built on and have often been erected in violation of planning regulations. As a result, various mayors under both the NPP and NDC regimes during the Fourth Republic have attempted to reclaim public space through intermittently forcefully evicting traders and demolishing illegal structures (Ofori 2007).

In June 2009, following the appointment of Vanderpuije as mayor, the AMA announced that it was embarking upon a new decongestion exercise to clear the CBD of hawkers and illegal structures. The mayor himself announced that the AMA is 'committed to the decongestion of the central business district and the whole city and will stop at nothing to achieve this' (Ghanaian Times 2009: no page). Following a two week long public information campaign to encourage traders to leave the streets voluntarily, a new 'Task Force' was established to remove street traders and demolish illegal structures. According to protocol, the Task Force's role is to create a deterrent by arresting traders, and impounding their goods until the offender pays a fine of fifty Cedis to have them released. Regarding illegal structures, the Task Force's role is to ask suspected offenders to provide the relevant documentation proving that their structure is legitimate.

If they are unable to produce this documentation then the Task Force mark the structure with red paint and specify a notice period – maybe two weeks, three weeks, a month – before they will return to carry out a demolition (Interview, Esther, Chief Inspector, AMA Security Department, 11/11/10). On 1st April 2011 the AMA passed a new ‘Street Hawking’ by-law, making it an arrestable offence to sell in the street without a permit, to sell to the driver or passenger of a vehicle in traffic, to buy from a street trader, or to solicit for alms (beg) in public places. To supplement this campaign, the AMA has announced several additional measures to alleviate congestion in the city: introducing a one-way road system in the CBD to facilitate the fast movement of traffic; banning ‘truck pushers’ (informal traders and porters who use wheeled carts to transport their goods around the city) and scrap dealers from the city’s main thoroughfares; and relocating the large foodstuffs bulk-breaking market at Agbogloboshie in the West of the city centre to outside of the Accra Metropolitan Area. This last measure has also been justified as instrumental to displacing the adjacent squatted settlement of Old Fadama (see 6.5).

In interviews undertaken for this thesis, informal street traders complained about the way they had been treated by the AMA. One recurrent complaint was that the Task Force is excessively violent when dealing with traders, and one interviewee recounted a tale of AMA officials putting a trader into a coma by hitting him over the head with a loose paving stone (Interview, Fuseini, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/6/11). Traders complained that the AMA is destroying their capital and preventing them from earning a living (Interview, Joseph, Organiser, National Petty Traders Association, 24/6/11). Following the implementation of the new by-law in April 2011, Ghana News Agency reported that some street traders were finding it difficult to feed themselves and their families due to the activities of the Task Force (Ghana Districts 2011). In addition, it has been reported that the Task Force sometimes operates as a protection racket, allowing traders to continue to operate in exchange for cash bribes or sexual favours, with allegations being made of female traders being impregnated by AMA officials (Addai 2011).

When challenged on what they expect hawkers to do instead of work on the streets, AMA officials state that traders should relocate to one of the municipal marketplaces in and around the city, such as the pedestrian shopping mall near Kwame Nkrumah Circle that was built specifically to house traders displaced by a decongestion exercise in 2006 (Interview, Kwesi, Officer, AMA Legal Department, 10/6/11; Interview, Esther, Chief Inspector, AMA Security Department, 11/11/10). However, traders and their advocates counter that these market places do not have the capacity to accommodate them all, and that corruption and the high cost of leasing a stall has led to them being allocated to established market traders rather than petty street hawkers. Furthermore, the pedestrian shopping mall is so badly designed that shoppers do not patronise it, and many traders have been forced to abandon their stalls (Interview, Albert, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/7/11; Interview, Charles, Organiser, Market Women Association of Ghana, 17/5/11; Interview, Bernice, Officer, Informal Economy Desk, Ghana Trade Union Congress, 3/6/11; see also Ofori 2007; Polis Blog 2009).

According to Richard Grant (2009: 39), the size of the informal sector in Accra is a barrier to attracting FDI because 'investors are interested in a city that both functions efficiently and has good aesthetics'. As such, the AMA's latest decongestion exercise has been justified as an entrepreneurial strategy to compete with other cities to attract investment and tourism to Accra. According to Vanderpuije, 'all cities in the world are aiming at beauty and modernity so as to attract tourists, investors and other business activities, to improve their economy' (Modern Ghana News 2009c). As such, he argues that decongestion is necessary to prevent Accra being left 'behind in this race for excellence' (ibid).

In interviews conducted for this thesis, several AMA officials commented that guaranteeing the fast circulation of traffic through the city was fundamental to creating a good business environment that would appeal to investors. One interviewee explained that it was important that the long travel times across the city were reduced so that 'workers will come to work on time (and) employers will have full benefit of their workers' (Interview, David, Officer, AMA Planning

Department, 15/11/10). In addition, it was revealed that the multinational banks based on the High Street had approached the authority to complain about the number of traders on the streets and had threatened to relocate to outside of the CBD unless something was done about it (Interview, David, Officer, AMA Planning Department, 15/11/10; Interview, Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11). Vanderpuije himself was also publically quoted on this matter:

When this government took office, the business communities - the banks, commercial entities - were all planning to leave the city, the Central Business District, and were buying properties outside Accra Metropolis for re-location because the capital city was choked. People could not drive through the city. We had to decongest, we had to remove containers, we had to clear the roads and, even crime is on the decrease by 50% now, all as a result of our successful decongestion work. Consequently, the commercial entities that were hitherto going to leave this city have, today, taken ownership of the Central Business District and they are enjoying doing business here (Okwuosah 2012: no page).

In addition to practical concerns with the speed of circulation through Accra, officials are aware that the visible presence of informality can have a negative effect on investors' perception of the city. One interviewee commented that it was necessary to 'make sure that the city is clean and orderly' in order to attract investors because

if the city is congested and everybody is allowed to do what he is not supposed to do then it is like a lawless state, and that will not attract people to operate within lawless societies (Interview, Kwesi, Officer, AMA Legal Department, 10/6/11).

The Deputy Minister of Tourism argued that it is necessary to demolish illegal commercial structures and kiosks because their presence has a negative effect on property values and discourages investment in real estate in the city:

Now if you look around the world, most countries that allow these what I call shantytowns to develop right in the heart of their cities have depressed property values. Because nobody wants to put his money where there is a shantytown... people who live in those areas don't see their property values going up because anybody who wants to buy property in that area sees what is happening and are like "this is not the place for us

to be” ... you do not need a swamp or a shantytown in the heart of your city. It doesn’t help for planning purposes and it doesn’t help to attract investment into your city (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11).

As such, decongestion is instrumental to projecting a place image that will attract investment and foster economic growth.

Support for the AMA’s decongestion exercise has come from the Ministry of Tourism. The Deputy Minister of Tourism argued that decongestion is necessary in order to turn Accra into an attractive destination for conference and holiday tourism. According to the Deputy Minister, tourists are intimidated and inconvenienced by the fact that the pavements and walkways are ‘swamped’ by hawkers (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11). His successor in the Ministry of Tourism also pointed out that the inability to move around the city quickly was a big problem for tourists whose time was very limited, and that decongesting the streets was necessary to make sure they get ‘value for money’ and do not waste too much time in traffic. This is particularly pertinent where conference tourism is concerned, as people want to attend meetings in a timely fashion. He also advised that his Ministry had been approached by developers building hotels in Accra, such as the 4.5* Movenpick, who asked the government to get the traffic flowing so as to protect their investment (Interview, James Agyenim-Boateng, Deputy Minister of Tourism). Since tourism is the fourth highest foreign exchange earner for Ghana after gold, cocoa and remittances from abroad, it is evident that the government perceives clearing the streets as an important entrepreneurial strategy for facilitating economic growth.

As well as justifying the decongestion exercise as an entrepreneurial strategy to compete with other cities to attract investment and tourism, officials have employed a revanchist discourse that stigmatises informal street trade as a source of dirt and disorder that is undermining efforts to modernise and beautify the city. This has enabled the AMA to name decongestion as one of the ‘seven pillars’ of its plan to transform Accra into a Millennium City (Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2011). Vanderpuije has publically stated that the aim of the

decongestion exercise is to 'stem indiscipline and lawlessness and make the city governable and healthy to live in' (Modern Ghana News 2009c). He has also argued that the presence of street hawkers on the city's pavements has resulted in an increase in criminal activity such as pick pocketing (Mayson 2009). In an interview, the Deputy Minister of Tourism argued that the presence of hawkers harbours a criminal threat:

In addition to the fact that these people choke the walkways, you realise that criminal elements also stay in those areas and sometimes rob people. You don't want the central business district which is choked, where robbery is rampant, where law enforcement is negligible (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11).

As such, decongestion is justified as a revanchist strategy to expel those elements that are responsible for crime and disorder in the city.

Some officials also make the argument that street traders are a source of dirt and that decongestion is necessary to clean up and beautify the city. One of the primary reasons given for the removal of street traders has been to reduce the amount of litter on Accra's streets, a problem that officials blame on the activities of traders, especially those who sell drinking water sachets (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11). Cracking down on informal street trade has also been justified in terms of improving sanitation and reducing the incidence of disease in the city. When the new by-law was implemented, it was reported that the Mayor said that 'the ban on street hawking needs to be strictly enforced to give the city a true status of a millennium city and to help improve sanitation in the metropolis' (Shirimori 2011). One AMA official suggested that there was a link between the alleged unhygienic practices of street food vendors and the recent outbreak of cholera in the city (Interview, Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11). In July 2011, Vanderpuije made a public statement that celebrated the results of decongestion in aesthetic terms, equating his efforts to rid Accra of hawkers with establishing a clean and beautified cityscape:

Today if you should come to the city of Accra it has never been as clean and more beautiful than it is today. Today (Kwame Nkrumah Circle) is a beautiful place to sit at night and enjoy the breeze of Accra. Today we have no hawkers on our streets in Accra (and) as a result of that the coconut trees are growing so that we can have fresh air (Modern Ghana News 2011).

As such, decongestion is celebrated in revanchist terms as a strategy to clean up the city by removing those elements associated with the anti-modern traits of dirt and disorder.

6.5 The planned eviction and redevelopment of Old Fadama

Old Fadama is an informal squatter settlement of approximately 80,000 people, mostly migrant workers from northern Ghana, located in the central Agbogbloshie area of Accra. The settlement illegally occupies 31.3 hectares of state-owned land alongside the Odaw River and Korle Lagoon on the Western edge of Accra's CBD. In 1961, the government expropriated a large amount of land in the Agbogbloshie area for industrial use, but the area next to the lagoon where Old Fadama is now situated was left undeveloped. The undeveloped land began to be re-settled illegally in the early 1980s by migrants arriving in Accra. Since then, there have been several waves of in-migration that have led the squatted settlement to grow to its current size of about 80,000 people. In 1991, there was an influx of hawkers displaced from the Osu area to the East of the CBD by a decongestion exercise carried out by the AMA in preparation for the Non-Aligned Movement conference. Two years later, the AMA relocated Accra's yam market to the area, which has since grown into a large wholesale food market for produce from the agrarian north. This has created a source of employment that has drawn people to move to the area. The settlement swelled further in 1994 when there was an influx of refugees from the Konkomba-Nanumba land war in northern Ghana. Since the early 1990s, the settlement has grown due to economic migrants arriving in Accra, particularly from the northern regions, who are attracted by the cheapest housing in the city and its central location in close proximity to employment opportunities in the market

and Accra's CBD (COHRE 2004; Grant 2009; Afenah 2010; Braimah and Owusu 2012).

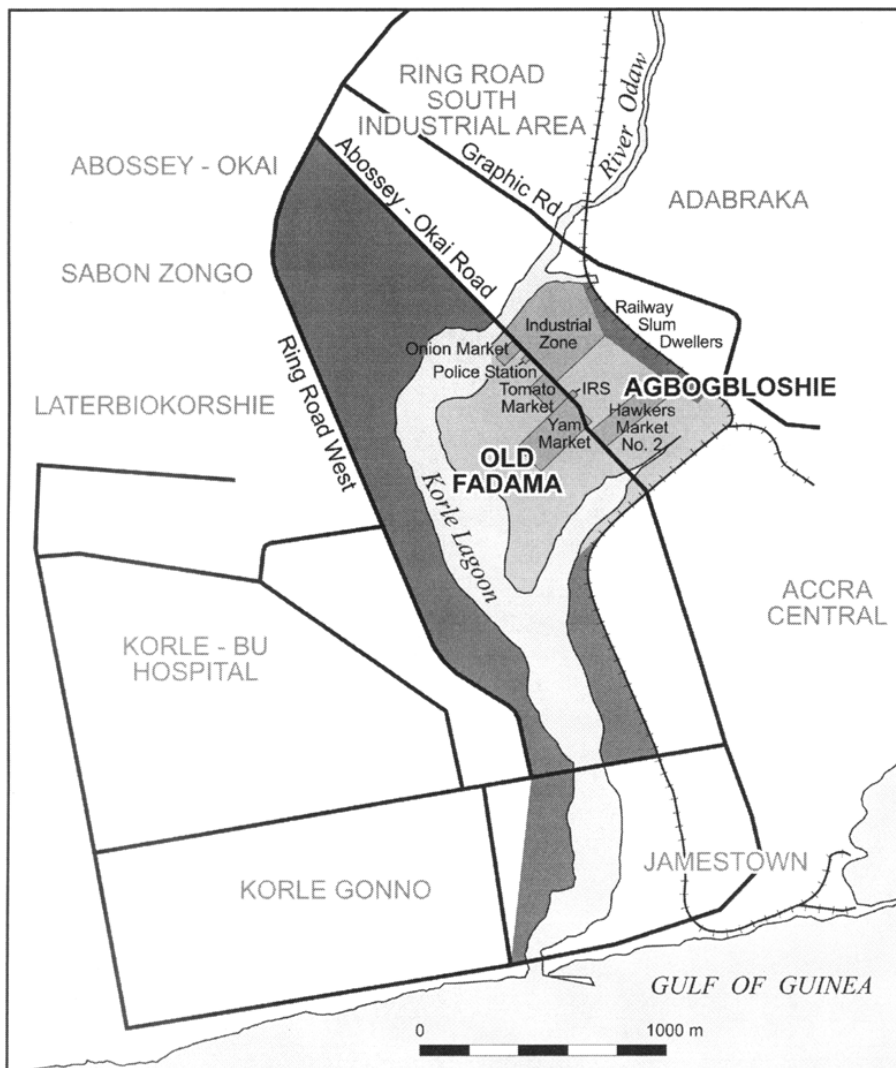


Figure 6.5 The location of the Old Fadama settlement and economic activities at Agbogbloshie
Source: Grant (2006).

While there is often a lack of concrete data on illegal informal settlements, recent enumerations of Old Fadama organised by the NGO People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (PD) have generated some important information on its demographic and socio-economic characteristics. As of 2009, the settlement had a population of 79, 864 and an extremely high density of 2424.18 persons per hectare³. Regarding the settlement's demographic makeup, there are

³ To put this in perspective, the density of Manhattan in 2010 was 266 persons per hectare (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements, 2010).

representatives of all parts of Ghana, but 72.4% of the population is from the three northern regions. As a consequence, it is a majority Muslim population (66.7%). Survey data suggests that 95% of residents are economic migrants from outside Accra who came to do business or search for a job, and 86.3% settled immediately in Old Fadama when they came to the city, demonstrating its popularity as a destination for new arrivals. 76% of respondents said they chose Old Fadama because the housing is affordable, while 21% moved there because of the employment opportunities offered by the proximity to the market (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010).

Almost the whole population (96%) is employed, with 85% of these working in the informal economy. The wholesale market and its adjacent lorry station that serves the northern regions are both major sources of employment. Old Fadama is also a home to a large number of "Kayayei", female migrant workers from northern Ghana who transport goods on their heads for customers in the local markets. The settlement is also home to a range of diverse economic activities including personal services such as hairdressing, food production, dressmaking and various forms of manufacturing. In addition, many people are engaged in the provision of utilities and services such as water and sanitation facilities. As well as relying on work for their own survival, residents have economic dependents that they remit money to all over Ghana. Housing in Old Fadama generally takes the form of shacks built from scrap metal, wood and other available materials. There is an active rental market, with 28.9% renting their shelter. Housing is some of the cheapest in the city, with rents typically falling between 10GH (£4) and 20GH (£8) a month. 68.1% are owner-occupiers, albeit without legal title, having built their house or bought it from someone else (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010).

This data on Old Fadama demonstrates how, as Obeng-Odoom (2011) argues, the growth of the informal economy and the proliferation of informal settlements are interrelated. Since significant numbers of informal workers, especially migrants from the poor rural north, cannot afford to enter the formal housing market in Accra, they are forced to seek low-cost alternatives, such as squatting,

that will allow them to live in close proximity to livelihood opportunities in the urban core. In addition to these economic factors, in my own discussions with residents it became apparent that migrants were also attracted to Old Fadama because they knew they would find a community of people from their region of Ghana who spoke their language. In this respect, Old Fadama offers sanctuary to those looking to leave their villages and start a new life in the city.

Until 2002, the Government of Ghana and the AMA tacitly accepted the existence of Old Fadama. Although the government did not provide schools, health facilities or waste disposal services in the settlement, the relevant bodies supplied water and electricity to those who could afford it (Bain 2011). However, on 28 May 2002 the AMA served an eviction notice and made public its intention to demolish the entire settlement so that the occupied land could be reclaimed and the adjacent lagoon could be restored. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8, attempts were made to mount a legal challenge and to negotiate with the authorities in order to prevent a forced eviction, and the former NPP government was persuaded to consider the possibility of relocating the squatters to greenfield site 30km north of Accra. However, following the election of the NDC in 2009 the newly installed mayor Vanderpuije announced his intention to forcefully evict the community as part of his decongestion exercise. The AMA's stated position is that it is still going to relocate all commercial activities at Agboghloshie to the site outside the city, but that it will not be relocating residents when they demolish Old Fadama. Vanderpuije has publically denied that the AMA has any responsibility to compensate or relocate the squatters (GhanaWeb, 2009). At time of writing the city authorities have not gone ahead with the eviction, but the threat still hangs over the community.

The removal of the squatters has been justified as an essential part of the Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project (KLERP). Although it was once teeming with marine life and supported fishing activities, in recent decades the Korle Lagoon has been seriously degraded by liquid and solid waste and has even been described as 'one of the most polluted water bodies on earth' (Boadi and Kuitunen 2002: 302). The AMA served the original eviction notice in May 2002

following the initiation of KLERP, a project conceived to restore the natural beauty of the Korle Lagoon area and turn it into tourist attraction by dredging the polluted water body and landscaping its surroundings (COHRE 2004; Grant 2009). KLERP's Environmental and Social Impact Statement asserted that Old Fadama was the primary source of liquid and solid waste in the lagoon, and that the eviction of the settlement was therefore an essential pre-condition for the completion of the project. The AMA's position is that the continued presence of the squatters has caused huge delays to the project, which cannot be completed until they are removed, and that this is costing the government huge amounts of money in the form of interest accruing on loans taken out to finance the project (COHRE 2004; GhanaWeb 2009; Afenah 2010).

However, an international NGO called the Centre On Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) has conducted its own independent study and found that, contrary to the case made by KLERP's Environmental and Social Impact Statement, Old Fadama was only responsible for up to 5% of the organic pollution and 10% of the solid waste entering the lagoon, and was being unfairly singled out and blamed for the whole city's waste problem. COHRE (2004: 10) asserted that the Assessment 'exaggerated the negative impacts of the settlement' and 'made demonstrably false statements'. The authors 'failed from the outset to take an objective stance, and began their investigation with the assumption that the relocation of Agbogbloshie was a foregone conclusion' rather than taking seriously the possibility that the community could co-exist with the restoration project (ibid.). COHRE's report concluded that there was nothing about the Old Fadama settlement that meant its presence was incompatible with a project to restore the lagoon. This argument was further supported by an academic paper published in 2002 that stated that waste from all over the city, including industrial and hospital waste, has polluted the lagoon, and that all of the major drainage channels in the city run into this body of water (Boadi and Kuitunen 2002).

Despite the publication of evidence to the contrary, however, the AMA and relevant ministries still persist to blame Old Fadama for the pollution of the

lagoon and are insistent that the settlement cannot be upgraded *in situ*. This may be because KLERP is not only about restoring the water body, but is also about redeveloping the land around the lagoon; land currently occupied by 80,000 squatters. According to an AMA officer that was interviewed for this thesis, the state plans to reclaim the occupied land so that private sector developers can be brought in to build high-rise mixed-use developments including apartments, offices and hotels (Interview, David, Officer, AMA Planning Department, 15/11/10). The AMA have commissioned an artist's impression of how the Old Fadama site will look once it has been redeveloped (see Figure 6.6). The Deputy Minister of Tourism, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, stated in an interview that this sort of development was needed in central Accra 'so that people can stay right in the heart of downtown and have access to the kind of offices they need'. He elaborated that,

a lot of people want to live right downtown Accra. But do you find accommodation downtown Accra? Answer is no. You understand? People who have their offices right in the heart of the city wouldn't want to go and live in the outlying areas only to brave the traffic to come into the city.

Since a huge number of informal workers are already resident at Old Fadama, it appears that the 'people' he is talking about are in fact office workers employed in the formal economy who are currently largely resident in the suburbs where most of the high quality housing has been built during the post-liberalisation building boom. Furthermore, he argued that the redevelopment of Old Fadama would provide facilities that would improve Accra as a destination for conference tourism (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11). As such, the eviction of Old Fadama is rationalised in entrepreneurial terms as a means to unlock prime real estate in the city centre and make it available to private developers.

This planned redevelopment will necessarily entail the displacement of the current residents at Old Fadama and their replacement by wealthy Ghanaians and foreigners who can afford to access the hotels, offices and apartments that will replace the shacks that currently occupy this land. One officer referred to the

redevelopment process as a form of 'upgrading', but 'not the type of upgrading where we are going to legalise people staying there. Not that sort of upgrading' (Interview, Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11). Another AMA officer stressed that some 'affordable' housing would be built for 'low income' people as part of the redevelopment of the area, but it is unlikely that these units will be affordable to the migrant informal workers currently based at Old Fadama (Interview, David, Officer, AMA Planning Department, 15/11/10).

Removing Old Fadama and Agboghloshie market from the CBD has been justified by the AMA as a key element of the decongestion exercise. Vanderpuije himself stated that 'the decongestion of Sodom and Gomorrah would send the message across that the AMA is seriously bent on decongesting all slums and emerging ones in the city' (GhanaWeb 2009). In line with their treatment of informal street traders, the authorities have attempted to generate popular support for the eviction of Old Fadama through the revanchist framing of the settlement as a den of criminality and vice that poses a threat to law and order in the city. Vanderpuije and other officials have persistently referred to Old Fadama by the derogatory name 'Sodom and Gomorrah', referencing the biblical cities that were destroyed by God because their inhabitants were sinful. Upon serving the community with a fresh eviction notice in 2009, Vanderpuije and the Greater Accra Regional Minister, Nii Armah Ashietey reportedly claimed that there was a high level of criminal activity in the area that posed a 'threat to national security' (GhanaWeb 2009; Ghanaian Times, 2009). Sections of the Ghanaian media have reproduced this revanchist framing of Old Fadama as 'Sodom and Gomorrah'. The journalist Alfred Ogbamey has claimed that 'the people of the area have been living up to the meaning of the Biblical namesake' (Ogbamey 2002). A 2006 article in the Statesman opined that

Sodom and Gomorrah in the heart of the capital is synonymous with illicit sex, crime and drug abuse. It has always bred armed robbers, prostitutes, child labourers and violence (The Statesman 2006: no page).

Through this discourse, the eviction of Old Fadama is justified as a revanchist strategy to restore law, order and decency to the inner city.



ARTISTIC IMPRESSION OF OLD FADAMA (SODOM AND GOMORRAH), ACCRA

Figure 6.6: Artist's impression of Old Fadama
(note the use of the derogatory name 'Sodom and Gomorrah')
Source: Accra Metropolitan Assembly (2010)

6.6. State-led gentrification as a pillar of entrepreneurial urban development in Accra

Having examined three entrepreneurial urban development strategies in contemporary Accra, this section will argue that these strategies all betray the characteristics of state-led gentrification, defined broadly as the 'class remake of the central urban landscape' (Smith 1996: 39). First, the privatisation of public land for elite development projects has enabled a class-based process of transformation in which the impoverished town of La has come to be

surrounded by exclusive residential and commercial developments such as Airport City and the AU village. While the descendants of those who used to farm these lands are crowded into an area of less than 3 square miles, their ancestral lands are being developed into leafy, gated estates, hotels and apartment blocks for the enjoyment of the wealthy. Second, the removal of informal street trade from Accra's CBD is an attempt to transform the class complexion of the inner city by cleansing it of the informal proletariat so as to free up the streets for the convenience of formal businesses and international visitors. Finally, the planned redevelopment of Old Fadama will lead to the displacement of the migrant informal workers who currently occupy the site and the creation of centrally located accommodation for wealthy formal sector workers and international visitors. As Afenah (2010: 161-162) has argued, therefore, the AMA perceives Old Fadama as an area with 'opportunities for gentrification through regeneration', and the squatters' presence is perceived as a barrier to its entrepreneurial urban development plans.

In each of these examples of class-based restructuring, the agent of gentrification is the state acting in partnership with private capital. These policies are justified in entrepreneurial terms of attracting tourism and investment and stimulating the growth of the private sector, especially in the area of real estate development. Consistent with Smith's (2002) description of gentrification as a global urban strategy, therefore, it is evident that state-led gentrification is a central component of entrepreneurial urban governance in Accra. Since gentrification entails the use of force to displace the informal proletariat from prime real estate and exclude them from streets and public spaces, officials have resorted to revanchist discursive practices in which they stigmatise the informal practices of the poor as a source of dirt and disorder. As such, the expulsion of squatters and informal traders from the CBD is celebrated as an act of revenge against those who threaten to undermine efforts to transform Accra into a clean, modern and orderly Millennium City.

6.7 Neo-colonialism and actually-existing gentrification in Accra

As outlined in 3.2, Brenner and Theodore (2002: 14) argue that urban neoliberalism does not occur in pure form but is path-dependent because it is introduced within 'politico-institutional contexts that have been molded significantly by earlier regulatory arrangements, institutionalized practices, and political compromises'. This section explores the particular form that actually existing state-led gentrification assumes in the context of contemporary Accra. In doing so, it uses original empirical research to respond to Lees' (2012: 164) call for the 'decolonisation' of gentrification research. It is argued that actually existing gentrification in Accra is distinguishable from similar processes in European and North American cities by the neo-colonial character that it assumes. This is the result of an entrepreneurial urban policy framework being imposed within a social, economic and geographical context that has been shaped by decades of neo-colonial capitalism. As such, this section elaborates on Atkinson and Bridge's (2005: 2-3) assertion that the globalisation of gentrification can be understood as the 'new urban colonialism' by examining the neo-colonial dynamics of gentrification and revanchism in a post-colonial African city.

As Atkinson and Bridge (2005: 2-3) argue, gentrifiers often 'have the characteristics of a colonial elite'. This parallel is particularly pronounced in Accra, where the social stratification and spatial segregation rooted in dramatic housing inequalities that is so acute today (see 5.2.2) were first established in the 19th century as a feature of colonial urban development (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). The high security gated communities that have sprung up around Accra during the liberalisation period are reminiscent of the European residential areas that were clearly demarcated and strictly segregated from informal indigenous settlements in colonial Accra. As Grant's (2009) research on homeownership in gated communities in Accra demonstrates, those who occupy these walled enclaves tend to resemble the former colonial elite in their international, cosmopolitan makeup (see 5.4.4). Due in part to the infilling and

redevelopment scheme (see 6.3), The colonial era European residential enclaves of Cantonments and Ridge, which Konadu-Agyemang (1998: 67) describes as 'a city within a city', have come to be occupied by the wealthy elite in contemporary Accra, and a high degree of social segregation has been maintained between these planned neighbourhoods and the informal settlements that surround them (Konadu-Agyemang 2001).

In some respects, the AMA's treatment of informal traders and squatters also represents a return to colonial urbanism in Accra. In many African cities, the regulations being used to prohibit informal street trade have their origins with colonial governors who wanted to restrict the growth of indigenous enterprises in urban centres (Mitullah 2003). As discussed in 5.3.3, colonial Accra was structured according to the strict segregation of European and indigenous quarters. In particular, the CBD, planned and built according to European standards and occupied by European companies, was separated from indigenous markets and commercial activities by a cordon sanitaire of open space (Grant and Yankson 2003). Based on the evidence presented in this chapter, it is clear that the decongestion exercise and the planned eviction of Old Fadama are motivated by an impulse to re-establish a similar centre-periphery structure by expelling informal economic activities to the urban fringe in order to create a CBD that is clean, modern, orderly and, crucially, appealing to international investors and tourists. It is significant that several officials who were interviewed for this thesis explained that they were looking to follow the example of various major European and North American cities in their plans to modernise Accra. The Deputy Minister of Tourism stated that the government's plans for Accra as a tourist destination were to mimic the planning characteristics of major European capitals such as Paris, London, Madrid and Rome on the grounds that these cities enable rapid transportation and therefore allow tourists to move around at their own leisure, unhindered by traffic congestion (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11). An AMA officer commented that Vanderpuije regularly tries to motivate his staff by telling them that he 'wants to make Accra like New York' (Interview, Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11). As

such, the AMA's gentrification strategy for Accra is motivated by an entrepreneurial impulse to re-establish the CBD as a modernised 'gateway' to the global economy that is distinct from the informal city.

The revanchist discourse employed by government officials in order to justify their gentrification strategy should be understood as a particularly neo-colonial form of revanchism that is based on an ideological binary between modernity, represented by the desirable traits of cleanliness, order and efficiency, on the one hand, and informality, associated with non-modern traits of dirt, disease, crime and disorder, on the other. As Popke and Ballard (2004: 101) argue with reference to South Africa, colonial urbanism based around spatial segregation was a means to establish cities as 'islands of order' and 'reservoirs of European modernity and progress', defined 'in opposition to the perceived backwardness and degeneracy of the African continent'. As such, they argue,

Cities provided the spaces through which a particular kind of (modern, European) subjectivity was structured in opposition to the purported ambivalence and chaos of Africa (Popke and Ballard 2004: 101).

It is evident from the revanchist discourse identified in this chapter that this ideological binary that poses order, modernity and progress against backwardness, degeneracy and chaos has shaped neoliberal urbanism in Accra.

In addition to the official discourse identified in this chapter, the persistence of this colonial ideology is particularly evident in sections of the Ghanaian press. Applauding Vanderpuije's 'quest to transform Accra to resemble the 21st Century capital of a civilized nation', freelance journalist Manasseh Azure Awuni has written about illegal structures and street trading as the product of a culture of 'indiscipline' in Ghana. It is this indiscipline, he argues that distinguishes Accra from the capitals of 'civilised' countries:

Have we for once thought about how expatriates from America, Europe and Asia perceive us? Do we care about what they think of our lawless attitudes? There is no

civilized country in this 21st Century where it is acceptable for traders to compete with vehicles in the streets (Awuni 2011: no page).

Similarly, the Daily Graphic's Kofi Akordor (2010: no page) has argued that street hawking, illegal structures and poor sanitation 'have cumulatively made Accra a huge jungle that defies all laws of order and modernity'. Following Swanson's (2007) observations about revanchism in Ecuador (see 3.4), therefore, it is evident that actually existing revanchism in Accra has taken on a neo-colonial hue premised on the framing of informality as the binary opposite of modernity.

Swanson (2007: 714) argues that revanchism in Ecuador is 'driven by a different set of criteria than in the North' on the grounds that 'beggars, street children and informal workers are being displaced to make way for the global tourist class' rather than 'Ecuador's middle and upper classes'. Similarly, it is clear from the account of entrepreneurial urban governance in Accra developed in this chapter that gentrification and revanchism in Ghana's capital is the product of a policy framework that privileges the interests of international tourists and foreign capital and encourages state intervention to create an urban environment that is hospitable to these interests. As such, actually existing gentrification and revanchism in Accra has a neo-colonial character in the sense that it is oriented to the economic interests of foreign visitors and investors at the expense of Ghana's own working poor. In this respect, the place marketing of Accra as the 'gateway' to West Africa signals a return to the city's colonial status as hub for international trade and the point at which wealth is extracted from the region by foreign capital. As discussed in 6.2, this entrepreneurial policy framework was imposed on Accra by the World Bank as part of Ghana's structural adjustment programme. As such, the state-led strategic gentrification of Accra is an expression of what Federici (1990: 14) has described as 'the recolonization of Africa' by the Western powers.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that the central and local state has adopted an entrepreneurial approach to developing Accra in the post-structural adjustment period. Within this approach, the state assumes the role of a facilitator to the private sector, pursuing various strategies that are intended to increase the flow and circulation of capital in Accra (Harvey 1989). Three such strategies were identified in Accra: the privatisation of public land for elite development projects, the cleansing of the city centre of informal street trade, and the forced eviction and redevelopment of an informal squatter settlement. Officials justified these strategies in terms of attracting investment and tourism and encouraging private real estate development in Accra. This chapter argued that all three strategies have the characteristics of gentrification on the grounds that they reconstitute the class makeup of urban Accra. As such, it is evident that strategic state-led gentrification plays a central role in entrepreneurial urban governance in Accra. Although state-led gentrification has become globalised as an entrepreneurial urban strategy (Smith 2002), this chapter has demonstrated that actually existing gentrification in Accra has assumed a particular *neo-colonial* form that distinguishes it from similar processes in the Global North. The next chapter will build on these arguments by theorising state-led gentrification in Accra as a process of accumulation by urban dispossession.

7. Accumulation by urban dispossession: the role of the state in primitive accumulation in Accra

7.1 Introduction

This chapter theorises the instances of state-led gentrification described in Chapter 6 as the enclosure of the urban commons. It argues that the privatisation of communal land, the revanchist exclusion of informal street traders from the CBD, and the planned eviction of an informal squatter settlement can all be understood as examples of state-led primitive accumulation. As such, it demonstrates that primitive accumulation at the urban scale, or *accumulation by urban dispossession*, takes the form of physical-legal and discursive strategies to enclose the urban commons. Contrary to Harvey's (2003) overly capital-centric account, therefore, accumulation by urban dispossession is conceptualised as a reactionary strategy on behalf of the entrepreneurial state and its partners to overcome the limits to accumulation posed by the commoning practices of Accra's informal proletariat.

First, this chapter defines accumulation by urban dispossession in terms of the use of extra-economic means to enclose the urban commons. Second, it draws on original empirical research to examine the physical-legal and discursive mechanisms of 'enclosure' that characterise state-led accumulation by urban dispossession in contemporary Accra. Third, it identifies the actors that produce dispossession through governmental partnerships and ruling class alliances. Fourth, it examines the reasons for the state to engage in primitive accumulation at the urban scale. Finally, it examines the particular, geographically specific form that dispossession takes in Accra by discussing unorthodox conceptualisations of primitive accumulation and proletarianisation. It is argued that primitive accumulation in contemporary Accra does not follow the same logic as the 'classic form' identified in England by Marx. Rather, accumulation by

urban dispossession in Accra displays neo-colonial characteristics, and, importantly, following Sassen (2010) can be understood in terms of the ‘expulsion’ of the dispossessed, rather than their incorporation into the capitalist production process as labour power.

7.2 Accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra

This section addresses the lack of in-depth empirical and theoretical work on the particular dynamics of primitive accumulation at the urban scale identified in Chapter 2. It does so by drawing on original research to identify the mechanisms and agents through which state-led accumulation by dispossession and the enclosure of the urban commons is enacted in contemporary Accra.

7.2.1 The enclosure of the urban commons

This section defines accumulation by urban dispossession as the state-led enclosure of the urban commons. As discussed in Chapter 6, entrepreneurial urban governance in Accra seeks to facilitate private sector development by creating opportunities for accumulation through the valorisation of urban space. These strategies are complicated by the fact that this same urban space is subject to pre-established patterns of use by Accra’s urban poor. I argue that these patterns indicate the presence of urban commons, or collective property claims ‘based upon and enacted through sustained patterns of local use and collective habitation’ (Blomley 2008: 320). In the case of communal Ga lands, these collective property claims are historical and pre-date the urbanisation of Accra. In the case of the squatting of undeveloped land and appropriation of public space, these claims are created anew through patterns of appropriation and use that address unmet needs and contribute towards a process of place making (ibid).

These actually existing commons are not perfect or ideal anti-capitalist spaces. However, they are commons nonetheless in the sense that they ‘provide various

degrees of protection from the market' (De Angelis 2007: 145). In the case of Old Fadama, for example, the initial process of settlement by squatting has led to an active housing rental market to emerge. As such, strictly speaking this space is not 'off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations' (Harvey 2012: 73). However, Old Fadama still provides access to centrally located housing at well below the market rate charged by landlords in the rest of the city centre. As such, actually existing commons such as this are extremely important in Accra because they allow the surplussed informal proletariat to reproduce itself independently of wage labour and formal markets for land and housing. Without these commons, those excluded from the capital relation would have no means to meet their reproductive needs. As Eizenberg (2012: 765) argues, therefore, 'actually existing commons are live relics of the ideal of the commons; they are never complete and perfect and may even have components that contradict the ideal type'.

The existence of these common patterns of use complicates the state's strategies to gentrify Accra and serve up urban space as a means of capital accumulation so as to attract investment and tourism. As such, the state employs extra-economic means to enclose urban space. This can be understood as the state engaging in accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale – or, *accumulation by urban dispossession* - as it involves the separation of city dwellers from their urban commons. This account of dispossession at the urban scale resonates with Lefebvre's discussion of the dispossession of the urban working class. In keeping with Lefebvre's (1996 [1967]) account of bourgeois urbanism, the *raison d'être* of entrepreneurial urban governance is the production of urban space as a means to the end of capital accumulation. As a result of this prioritisation of exchange value, the working class is 'rejected from the centres towards the peripheries, dispossessed of the city, expropriated thus from the best outcomes of its activity' (Lefebvre 1996 [1967]: 179). Since 'the urban' has been collectively produced by the activities of the working class, it is clear that Lefebvre is talking about the enclosure of the urban commons. The next section examines the mechanics of accumulation by urban dispossession by detailing the

physical-legal processes of enclosure employed by the state in contemporary Accra.

7.2.2 Physical-legal processes of enclosure

The entrepreneurial development strategies identified in Chapter 6 can be understood in terms of the state employing extra-economic means to dispossess urban dwellers of their urban commons. By theorising those strategies in these terms it is possible to identify three physical-legal processes of enclosure 1) the privatisation of communal land, 2) the revanchist cleansing of streets and public spaces, and 3) the eviction and displacement of low-income squatters.

7.2.2.1 The privatisation of communal land

Regarding the first process, in order to provide cheap, prime urban land for elite development projects, the state has intervened to dispossess the indigenous Ga of its ancestral commons. When interviewed for this thesis, La-based activists who had protested against the construction of the AU Village and later formed the PanAfrikanYemei group (see Chapter 9) demonstrated an awareness that a process of dispossession had occurred:

You see the indigenous people... are supposed to live and enjoy their own land that their forefathers left for them... me myself, I am one of the victims... so where is the poor man's land? Where is the land that my grandfather left for me? (For) planting maize and cassava for me? (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10).

When asked what the effect on the La people of losing their land and becoming concentrated in La town was, the same activist replied that 'they became poor forever' (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10). Another activist attributes the poor living conditions endured by the indigenes of La to the expropriation of their land for luxury housing:

Right now when you go there people are living there in slums. Whilst their fathers' lands are being used for private use...luxurious houses. Which he himself doesn't have. He himself, the rightful owner of the land, doesn't have a place to lay his head. You see?

When you go there people are rather living in slums, serious slums. Serious slums (Ebo, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 16/11/10).

As Yeboah (2008: 440) argues, therefore, the uneven geography of Accra and the stark contrast visible between the poor Ga townships and the more modernised and westernised areas built on expropriated land has encouraged a 'perception of disenfranchisement and impoverishment' amongst Ga youth. Dispossession is tangible in their everyday experiences of the geography of the city. As Jeffrey et al. (2012: 4) argue, the globalisation of gentrification and the emergence of unequal, fragmented cities characterised by 'jarring archipelagos of wealth and poverty' has led to the walling of elite enclaves as a literal, architectural act of enclosure. In the case of La, a large wall topped with razor wire has been erected to separate the AU Village from the rest of the township. The hardening division between the dispossessed and those who have benefited from the state land system that this walling represents is summed up by an activist's description of this wall as a 'Berlin Wall in Ghana', built to separate rich from poor (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10).

Despite the official line, that the privatisation of state lands serves the 'public interest' (see 6.3), in practice it is only the wealthy and well-connected elite that benefits from this practice. In the case of developments such as the AU Village, the transfer of low-cost public land to private developers amounts to a public subsidy for the development of luxury mansions for the rich, especially since the Commission of Enquiry into the Ghana@50 celebrations found that the state has lost out financially due to this joint enterprise (GhanaWeb 2010). Despite the fact that public lands are allocated for developments with high property values, the heavily subsidised ground rents charged by the Lands Commission represent a very poor return for the state on its lands (Larbi 1994).



Figure 7.1: A “Berlin Wall in Ghana” separating the AU Village from the township of La
Source: author

The state land system functions in a way that systematically benefits the wealthy to the exclusion of the urban poor. Corruption and political interference in the distribution of state land is rampant in Accra, with public figures such as civil servants, politicians, administrators and senior police and army officers apparently allocating publically acquired lands to themselves and those with connections to them. As demonstrated by the NPP government’s conduct over the infilling and redevelopment scheme, there is a long history of political interference with the Lands Commission by government ministers who seek to use their influence to allocate land to friends, family and political allies and supporters (Kasanga 2001; Committee for Joint Action 2010).

Public land for private housing development is theoretically available to any member of the public who wants to apply. However, government officials interviewed for this thesis admitted that, in practice, the system isn’t transparent or egalitarian. They revealed that the availability of public land that has been

zoned for residential use is not effectively publicised, and that this effectively excludes individuals who do not have the right connections in government (Interview, Farouk, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 14/6/11; Interview, Emmanuel, Officer, Public and Vested Land Management Division, Lands Commission, 28/6/11; see also Kasanga et al. 1996). This is compounded by the fact that it is common for administrators at the Lands Commission to demand large bribes in exchange for information that should be available to the public on request (Kasanga et al. 1996). According to an officer at the Lands Commission, this lack of transparency has led to situations 'where public servants have cornered lands for their cronies and members of the business community' (Interview, Emmanuel, Officer, Public and Vested Land Management Division, Lands Commission, 28/6/11).

In addition, the criteria adopted by the government for selecting applicants effectively excludes all but the wealthiest of individuals from accessing public land for residential use. A condition of allocation is that the applicant builds a house of a specified minimum value within 12 months of acquiring the plot (Larbi 1994). In order to prove that they have the means to do this, they must be able to produce a bankers' reference for the Lands Commission, favouring 'only the well-to-do and elite working in the formal sector' (Konadu-Agyemang 2001: 135). Larbi (1996: 208) also points out the fact that the minimum size for a plot of state land is 930 square meters, placing it 'beyond the reach of the low- and middle-income groups'. As such, beneficiaries of government allocation are mainly 'senior civil servants, politicians, top army and police officers, contractors, business executives and the land administrators' (Kasanga and Kotey 2001: 23). This is particularly unjust since 'it is precisely the above categories of people, a privileged minority, who have the means, contacts and power to acquire land on the open market', rather than from the state (ibid.).

All of the above demonstrates that the expropriation of communal land and its subsequent privatisation for elite development projects should be understood as a form of dispossession that redistributes resources from poor to rich (Kasanga 2001). As such, the state land system in contemporary Accra functions as an

instrument of accumulation by urban dispossession that expropriates land historically used as a communal means of social reproduction ('commons') and transforms it into a factor of production for an emerging luxury real estate market. As is usually the case with primitive accumulation, the effects are two fold; communal wealth is transformed into private capital to the benefit of those who have the power to control it and put it to work as a means to accumulate greater capital, and the dispossessed are separated from their historical means of collective reproduction and thereby impoverished in the process.

7.2.2.2 The revanchist cleansing of streets and public spaces

The decongestion exercise is a means by which the state uses extra-economic force to dispossess informal street traders of their urban commons – the streets and public spaces that they appropriate and use as a 'livelihood resource' in order to reproduce themselves despite their exclusion from formal employment (Brown, 2006: 22). Despite repeated attempts by the AMA to decongest Accra in the past, street traders have continued to encroach on public space in the CBD because they rely on this resource for their survival (Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah 2008). When asked by a journalist why they had returned to selling on the Kaneshie Road following the introduction of the 2011 by-law, one trader was quoted as saying "just like your office feeds you, this street feeds me" (Amegavie 2011).

As revealed in 6.4, the AMA is removing informal street traders from Accra's streets in order to ensure that they function as avenues of rapid circulation for the benefit of formal business and tourism. One AMA official revealed that they needed to remove the hawkers because the banks on the highstreet

wanted to relocate their offices from the CBD. But when we removed the hawkers from the streets they have decided not to leave the CBD anymore. So business is going on well for the banks and others (Interview, David, Officer, AMA Planning Department, 15/11/10).

As such, the state is using extra-economic means to enclose urban public space and exclude those groups whose commoning activities threatens its function as productive infrastructure that aids capital accumulation.

It is also evident from the interviews conducted with officials (discussed in 6.4) that the decongestion exercise is an attempt to stage manage the urban environment as a 'landscape' or a 'scene' that is conducive to elite leisure and consumption and is 'unsullied by images of work, poverty, or social strife' (Mitchell 2003: 186). This concern with controlling place image is evident in the Deputy Minister of Tourism's argument that visible signs of informality must be obliterated because they have a negative effect on property values and discourage investment in the city (Interview, Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11). This aesthetic dimension of decongestion can be understood in Hardt and Negri's (2009) terms as the expropriation and privatisation of the urban common. Real estate capital seeks to extract rent from the urban fabric by capitalizing on positive externalities that increase the value of property, such as a prime location in the vicinity of amenities and transport links. By the same token, however, negative externalities such as noise pollution have the effect of decreasing the value of property. As Cross and Karides (2007) argue, informal street trade is typically considered to be a negative externality by real estate capital. As the interview with the Deputy Minister suggests, therefore, decongestion is a form of enclosure by which the exchange value of the urban environment is preserved so that value can be extracted from the common by real estate capital. In the process of preserving the exchange value of Accra's streets and public spaces, their use value as a means of reproduction to the informal proletariat is destroyed.

7.2.2.3 The eviction and displacement of low-income squatters

The state's strategy to redevelop and gentrify Old Fadama is a form of accumulation by urban dispossession that will result in the enclosure of an important inner city housing commons. By occupying and transforming a flood-prone wasteland into a vibrant residential neighbourhood, the squatters at Old

Fadama have engaged in a form of place making that gives them a legitimate collective property claim to the land in question (Blomley, 2008). This claim is based on the use value of the settlement, which provides Accra's migrant informal workers with much needed low cost, centrally located shelter, in addition to kinship and community in a strange city. Although housing in Old Fadama is not totally non-commodified (some residents have to pay to rent a dwelling), it is much cheaper than the market rate elsewhere in the city centre. As such, it provides shelter to Accra's poorest and most precarious residents and allows them to reproduce themselves despite their exclusion from formal wage labour and land and housing markets.

Although the activity of the squatters has produced a housing commons with use value to its inhabitants, it has also created a potential exchange value through the opening up of a 'rent gap' (Smith, 1996). What was once dismissed as a peripheral wasteland is now viewed as prime real estate by government officials. As such, a gap has opened up between the actual rents being charged and the potential rents that could be charged in event of redevelopment, creating opportunities for profitable investment. According to Davis (2006), in the context of rampant land speculation in third world cities, squatters are effectively used by speculators as urban pioneers who are allowed to increase the value of (for example) swampland by converting it into residential use before being expelled so that the land can be redeveloped. As Huchzermeyer (2011) argues, therefore, access to prime land occupied by informal settlements for redevelopment is a major motive for forced evictions in a global context of competitive, entrepreneurial urbanism.

The state seeks to realise the exchange-value that has been created by the squatters' activities by dispossessing them of the fruits of their labour to the benefit of private real estate developers and those individuals who will be able to afford the new high rise housing. Since this urban commons has been produced through practices of place making, this dispossession takes the form of a process of displacement. Even if the squatters are relocated to a new site outside of Accra, they will have been separated from the particular qualities of the place

they created, characterised by its social networks that link Accra to the northern regions, its affordability, and its central location adjacent to employment opportunities. It is for this reason that several residents I interviewed expressed a preference to remain at Old Fadama rather than be located to a new site further away from the CBD (See Chapter 8). This highlights the importance of place and displacement to processes of accumulation by urban dispossession.

7.2.3 Discursive strategies of enclosure

According to Larner (2000), neoliberalisation is not imposed wholesale from above. Rather, the state relies on discursive strategies and governmental techniques of subjectification to co-opt various social actors into actively constructing actually existing neoliberalisms. While neoliberal governmentality and subjectification will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8, this section examines how physical-legal practices of dispossession are accompanied by discursive strategies in order to engineer popular acquiescence for accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra.

In Hodkinson's (2012: 514) account of the enclosure of the public housing commons in the UK, the physical-legal process of privatisation was accompanied by an ideological assault on council housing so that

once popular inner-city mixed working-class communities increasingly became by-words for poor quality housing, unemployment, social ills and welfare dependency, ideologically reinforcing the privatisation momentum.

In the case of Accra, various state actors have sought to add ideological reinforcement to the strategies of dispossession described above through the revanchist discursive framing of informality in terms of dirt and disorder (see Chapter 6). By framing informal street traders and squatters in these terms, officials have painted them as a threat to efforts to modernise and beautify Accra. This, in turn, gives ideological legitimacy to policies that dispossess and displace these groups by celebrating them as an act of revenge against the enemies of modernity, cleanliness and law and order. As Afenah (2012: 536) observes,

because the residents of Old Fadama are portrayed as outlaws within this discourse, they are 'physically situated within but conceptually outside of the boundaries of Ghanaian society', and this is a justification for 'the removal of their substantive citizenship rights'.

Despite this discursive framing of squatters as outlaws, the vast majority are workers who play a central role in the city's economy - whether through running the wholesale food market, carrying shoppers' goods for them, or engaging in a variety of informal enterprises – and who contribute to the local tax base. Several residents who I interviewed expressed their dismay that the AMA had resorted to portraying a working community as an undifferentiated mass of criminals. According to one resident, Mensah,

there are hard working young men and women in here who go out there every morning. These porters, carrying the so-called big men or the middle-income people, their things. And then you turn the next day and call them they are criminals. How can that be possible... these are hard working people, they pay tax. These porters pay tax on daily basis. And the City Mayor will say "they are a threat to national security" and people embrace it (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10).

As Afenah (2012) argues, therefore, the campaign to portray the squatters as dangerous outlaws who are somehow separate to the rest of society contradicts the economic reality of the situation, which is that the residents of Old Fadama are thoroughly integrated into the urban economy.

Having outlined the physical-legal and discursive elements of accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra, the following section will examine the agents that enact this process.

7.2.4 Agents of dispossession

As discussed in 3.2, rather than via 'government' or the 'state' narrowly conceived, neoliberal urban development is typically enacted through 'governance' partnerships and 'urban ruling class alliances' comprising various governmental and non-governmental actors (Harvey 1989; Jessop 2002). As

such, this section identifies the partnerships and alliances between the state, traditional authorities, NGOs and IFIs that produce accumulation by dispossession in Accra. First, it is clear from the entrepreneurial development strategies discussed in Chapter 6 that the central and local state is actively working in partnership with various factions of capital to enclose the urban commons. The privatisation of communal land for elite development projects has entailed the public land system working as a facilitator for financial and real estate capital, and in the case of the AU Village development the state entered into a joint enterprise with a consortium of banks (see 6.3). Although details are currently unavailable on the nature of the proposed development at Old Fadama, it is clear from interviews with AMA officials that the state is planning to work in partnership with private property developers to gentrify the area (see 6.5). Finally, interviews with officials revealed that the current decongestion exercise is, in part, the state's response to concerns voiced by financial and tourism capital about the slow speed of travel in the city (6.4).

In addition to the state working in partnership with private capital, the traditional authorities have played an active role in accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. The loss of communal land to state acquisition has been compounded by the leasing out of land by its traditional custodians (Kasanga and Kotey 2001). The rise in demand for land that urbanisation has engendered has given the traditional authorities and land-holding families a strong incentive to alienate customary lands. This incentive is particularly strong in the Accra area since an absence of mineral wealth and the unsuitability of the land and climate for cultivating valuable agricultural products such as cocoa has 'made land to the Ga-Mashie people the one single commodity, the alienation of which, within an urban context could bring wealth' (Quarcoopome 1992: 42). Furthermore, the government's practice of expropriating land without paying compensation has encouraged chiefs and elders to sell land in order to pre-empt dispossession (Gough and Yankson 2000). It is common for community members not see any of the benefits of the privatisation of their land (Gough and Yankson 2000). As such, traditional land custodians have come under heavy criticism for personally capitalising on the growing demand for urban land to 'transform

themselves into virtual landlords... selling land for mainly for private gain, regardless of the impact on members of the traditional group' (Aryeetey et al. 2007).

A separate but related issue is that of traditional land custodians colluding with and profiting from the privatisation of state lands. Interviews conducted for this thesis revealed that the La Traditional Council has been suspected by community members of being secretly in league with the government and having a personal vested interest in both the Infilling and Redevelopment and AU Village episodes (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 13/7/11; Interview, James, Trustee, East Dadekotopon Development Trust, 15/7/11). These suspicions are fuelled by the lack of community participation, transparency and accountability in the customary land system in Ghana. Aryeetey et al. (2007) argue that traditional custodians operate in secrecy so that they can profit from the growing exchange value of customary land in urban areas. Within emerging urban land markets, therefore, many traditional land custodians have 'put on the garb of capitalists' whose personal wealth is expanded at the expense of their wider community (Konadu-Agyemang 2001: 135). As such, chiefs and other traditional land custodians have formed an 'urban ruling class alliance' with the state in order to facilitate accumulation by urban dispossession through the commodification of communal land (Harvey 1989).

A number of other actors play a key role in shaping urban development alongside the state in Ghana. NGOs are prominent players, and the role that one particular NGO called Slum Dwellers International plays in engendering accumulation by urban dispossession will be discussed extensively in Chapter 8. Regarding IOs and IFIs, the World Bank has been influential in co-producing the policy framework that has led the state to engage in the enclosure of the urban commons. As detailed in 6.2, as part of the structural adjustment process the World Bank worked with the Government of Ghana to produce the Strategic Plan for the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area, which established the long-term physical, social and economic development plan for the capital city (Ghana Ministry of Local Government, Department of Town and Country Planning 1991).

It is this framework that has led subsequent city authorities to follow an entrepreneurial development logic that positions the state as enabler for private sector growth. As such, accumulation by urban dispossession is, in part, the result of the neo-colonial imposition of a neoliberal urban policy regime by the World Bank as part of Ghana's structural adjustment programme.

Finally, it is important to note that while it has been the primary agent of accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra, the state is not an uncomplicated, monolithic, unitary actor. Internationally, it is common for different aspects of the state to have complicated and contradictory relationships with the informal sector, resulting in a paradoxical combination of policies including repression, tolerance, taxation, regulation and promotion, often in the same city (Overa 2007; Setsabi and Leduka 2008). In Ghana, although the current NDC and former NPP governments both appointed mayors who they hoped would modernise Accra, both were compelled to intervene at some point to try and stop the AMA because they feared the political cost of decongestion. In 2005, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development stepped in to tell the AMA to stop evicting street traders out of fear that it was eroding electoral support for the party (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom 2011). In December 2009, the Ghanaian Times and Daily Graphic newspapers reported that the President told the Mayor to suspend the decongestion exercise and the threatened eviction of Old Fadama as he did not want his government's reputation to be tarred by the mistreatment of informal traders and squatters. The Mayor subsequently denied this, and the decongestion exercise continued as before (Modern Ghana News 2009a).

As the next general election drew nearer, however, apparent tensions between central government and the AMA re-emerged. In January 2012, Yaw Boateng Gyan, the National Organiser of the NDC party, publically accused Vanderpuije of undermining popular support for the government in the run-up to the general election:

it seems we are putting water in a tank while someone is at the same time, draining the water from the same tank. As a social democratic party the NDC believes that actions of

the party or government must be properly centred. We put the people first in all that we do...We can't take their views and opinions for granted (quoted in Peace FM Online, 2012: no page).

Vanderpuije himself has been publically critical of attempts by central government to put him on a leash. Responding to the criticism from his own party, he stated that 'interference from politicians is a major contributing factor to the slow development of the nation' and that he would not allow politicians to intimidate him (Mensah 2012: no page).

Economic informalisation has prompted governments across Sub-Saharan Africa to begin to intervene to support the informal economy through micro-finance and training initiatives in the hope that it can develop into a source of economic growth and long-term employment (Rogerson 1997). In the Ghana, the NDC government has set up a new National Committee on the Informal Economy (NCIE) in order to promote informal enterprise as a source of economic growth, employment and poverty reduction in Ghana. At the launch of NCIE, Fiifi Kwetey, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, spoke in favour of policies that would encourage informal businesses to grow, and criticised repressive policies that lead to the destruction of capital for small enterprises (The Statesman 2010).

This demonstrates that, at least at some levels, some parts of the state are investing in the informal economy as key to Ghana's economic fortunes. This complicates Obeng-Odoom's (2011) argument that state has adopted a combative stance regarding the whole informal sector. As such, it is more precise to say that there are certain elements within the state, particularly the city authorities, that view the spatial practices of Accra's informal proletariat as a barrier to progress. These elements do not necessarily have the support of the entire state apparatus, and there may be elements within the state that are opposed to certain practices of accumulation by urban dispossession for political or economic reasons.

7.3 Why does the state engage in accumulation by urban dispossession?

This section draws on David Harvey (2003) and Massimo De Angelis's (2007) differing accounts of the motivation for contemporary primitive accumulation to examine why the state feels it is compelled to enclose the urban commons in Accra. Utilising Harvey's (2003) capital-centric explanation, it is possible to argue that the state is compelled to enclose the urban commons in order to create profitable outlets for capital in the built environment. By expropriating communal lands and then leasing them to the private sector at below-market rate, the state is bringing assets into the circuits of capital and making them available at a low cost so as to create opportunities for profitable investment. The luxury housing building boom (see 5.2.2) is an indication that real estate capital has responded favourably to the incentive. Similarly, the state is behaving speculatively in relation to Old Fadama as it has identified a rent gap and therefore an opportunity for profitable investment by private real estate developers (7.2.2.3). In addition, consistent with Accra's Strategic Plan (see 6.2), the decongestion exercise can be understood as a strategy to create an urban environment that is ripe with opportunities for profitable investment through providing high quality productive infrastructure (such as efficient transport systems) and creating an aesthetically appealing 'landscape' (Mitchell 2003).

Although this account goes some way to explaining accumulation by dispossession in Accra, however, it does not acknowledge that the commons being enclosed are actively produced through the activities of city dwellers and their relationship with the urban environment. As such, the dispossessed do not play the role of passive victims in the process. Rather, the everyday practices of these commoners pose a barrier to entrepreneurial efforts to create opportunities for profitable investment in the built environment. Drawing on De Angelis (2007), therefore, accumulation by urban dispossession should be viewed as a reactive response to the limits to accumulation posed by a rival social force – the urban commons. According to De Angelis' (2007: 142-143) schema, enclosure is a response to either a 'limit as frontier', meaning a life

world that has yet to be colonised, or a 'limit as political recomposition', which occurs when other social forces reclaim life worlds through practices of commoning. Pre-capitalist communal land tenure in Accra can be understood as a limit as frontier that discouraged investment in the built environment and therefore had to be overcome. This was achieved by the state using the extra-economic means of expropriation and by traditional land custodians taking advantage of their position to alienate communal resources. On the other hand, the appropriation of streets and public spaces by street hawkers and the occupation of undeveloped state land by residential squatters and urban farmers can be understood as a limit of political recomposition, where previously enclosed spaces have been reclaimed and transformed into urban commons by the actions of the informal proletariat, thus creating new barriers to accumulation.

By acknowledging the agency of the informal proletariat in constantly producing urban commons, primitive accumulation 'acquires a continuous character dependent on the inherent continuity of social conflict within capitalist production' (De Angelis 2007: 141). Rather than overemphasising the dominance of capital in determining the urban process, therefore, this approach acknowledges working class agency and the role of struggle in engendering accumulation by urban dispossession. This insight can be developed further in relation to the case of Accra by arguing that accumulation by urban dispossession is a form of 'roll-out' neoliberalism embarked upon by the state in response to the contradictions produced by the 'roll-back neoliberalism' of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession (Peck and Tickell 2002). As discussed in Chapter 5, accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession and the rolling back of the state under structural adjustment has produced a surplusd informal proletariat that is compelled to rely on informal strategies in order to reproduce itself. These strategies have created barriers to accumulation through the creation of commons, thus requiring roll-out measures, such as state-led gentrification and revanchism, that will overcome these barriers through processes of enclosure. As such, accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra is

an urban roll-out strategy designed to address the struggles of the surplus population produced by the roll-back phase of neoliberalisation.

This explanation of accumulation by urban dispossession resonates with Perelman's (2000) description of primitive accumulation in Europe as characterised by the two scissor blades of expropriation and repressive social control. While the first blade created the proletariat through separating producers from their means of production, the second disciplined and regulated the behaviour of the dispossessed. As was the case in Europe, therefore, primitive accumulation in Ghana is enacted through a combination of roll-back and roll-out measures. As such, Peck and Tickell's (2002) conceptualisation of neoliberalisation as a process with different phases is key to understanding what Vasudevan et al. (2008: 1645) call 'the intersections and tense relations between different forms and processes' of enclosure at the urban scale.

The AMA's attempts to decongest Accra are doomed to failure because they cannot address the underlying causes of economic informalisation and the proliferation of informal settlements in the city. Obeng-Odoom (2010) argues that urban policy under both the NPP and NDC governments has been hamstrung by its focus on superficial issues such as beautification and demolishing illegal structures rather than addressing the structural causes of informal urbanisation. Interviews conducted for this thesis revealed that there was an awareness of this problem amongst local state actors. Several AMA officials commented that they believed the root cause of congestion was rural-urban migration driven by uneven development between the capital city and the provinces (Interview, Kwesi, Officer, AMA Legal Department, 10/6/11; Interview, Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11). One interviewee expressed their frustration and sense of helplessness at the fact that there is no coordination between the AMA, the other municipalities in the Greater Accra region and central government when it comes to addressing urban development issues. They argued that there needs to be a comprehensive development policy that encompass the city and countryside in order to address uneven development

and stop rural-urban migration (Interview, Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11).

This suggests that there is recognition, amongst some officials at least, that the AMA's revanchist attempts to enclose urban space are reactive and cannot begin to address the causes of the growth of the informal sector in Accra. These causes (such as rapid rural-urban migration and the informalisation of the Ghanaian economy occurring as a result of structural adjustment policies) encompass historical developments at a variety of scales, and therefore cannot be addressed simply through the regulation of space at the metropolitan level. As such, and due to the inability of the AMA to affect anything outside its own administrative boundaries, the decongestion exercise amounts to a hopeless attempt to violently repress the visible symptoms of a complex socio-economic crisis that has its roots in global economic restructuring and the persistently neo-colonial character of capitalism in Ghana.

7.4 Rethinking primitive accumulation and proletarianisation

Having examined the underlying motives for accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra, this section analyses how primitive accumulation in Ghana differs from the 'classic form' identified by Marx in England (1976 [1867]). In the process, this thesis nuances both these traditional accounts of primitive accumulation and Davis' (2006) global account of the informal proletariat (see 2.4) through an in-depth analysis of this problematic in a particular urban environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, orthodox Marxist accounts of primitive accumulation treat the experience of the European industrial proletariat as archetypal. Accordingly, it is assumed that the enclosure of commons is a means to drive people off the land and into the cities in order to create a supply of labour that can be exploited in the capitalist production process. This assumption is also evident in the work of some autonomist Marxists, such as Bonefeld (2001) and

De Angelis (2001), who argue that the constant separation of producers from the means of production is necessary for the reproduction of the capital relation. However, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, Accra is home to a large informal proletariat that has been separated from the land but whose labour does not appear to be of any use to capital. As such, despite being proletarianised, this population is surplussed from wage labour and excluded from the capital relation. As such, it is evident that accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra serves a fundamentally different function to the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation.

Obeng-Odoom (2010a: 337) argues that the decongestion exercise in Accra is being used to maintain a disciplined surplus labour force for the benefit of big business:

I suggest that the urban clean up exercises and the deliberate disinterest in tackling urban poverty are designed to benefit private businesses (because) it is important to have a large pool of desperate underemployed and unemployed people in cities so that wage levels can be kept low and labour can be disciplined with the threat of being sacked. Such conditions are necessary for capital accumulation.

However, this explanation is too simplistic. It doesn't take into account the fact that, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, decades of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession have already produced a huge labour surplus in Accra. Furthermore, as has been established in Chapters 6 and 7, this surplus is creating barriers to accumulation through its presence in the city and its commoning practices. As such, Obeng-Odoom's analysis does not capture the contradictory role of surplus labour vis -a-vis accumulation at the urban scale. As Mitchell (2003: 174) argues, although an unemployed surplus population, or 'industrial reserve army', is a structural necessity for capital accumulation, its visible presence in cities undermines urban entrepreneurial strategies to attract capital and fix it in place:

The very existence of such an army of poverty, which is so necessary to the expansion of capital, means that there is an army of humanity that must be strictly controlled or else it will undermine the drive toward accumulation. If this has been a constant fact of

capitalist development, then what sets the present era, and the present wave of anti-homeless laws, apart is the degree to which such regulation has also become an important ingredient in not just expanding capital but in either attracting it in the first place or in protecting it once it is fixed in particular places.

As such, the role of accumulation by urban dispossession, in the case of Accra at least, is not to create a labour surplus, but to regulate it by excluding it from the streets and public spaces and displacing it from inner city neighbourhoods to the urban fringe. Following Sassen (2010), therefore, primitive accumulation in this case assumes a dynamic of 'expulsion'. Rather than incorporating the dispossessed into the capitalist production process as workers and consumers, accumulation by urban dispossession seeks to extract wealth by enclosing the urban commons and expelling the informal proletariat to the urban periphery. Consequently, contemporary primitive accumulation in Ghana involves the expulsion of unwanted people at the same time as it brings about the incorporation of urban space into to the circuits of global capitalism (Sassen, 2010). This adds weight to Bush's (2007) argument that the plunder of resources, rather than the exploitation of surplus value through the wage relation, is the primary means by which wealth is extracted from Africa. In this respect, contemporary accumulation by dispossession in Ghana resembles the colonial enterprise that sought to extract resource wealth while treating people as a waste product.

7.5 Summary

This chapter has theorised the instances of state-led gentrification discussed in the previous chapter as examples of the state engaging in *accumulation by urban dispossession*. In doing so, it has drawn on the work of Blomley (2008), Hodkinson (2012) and Harvey (2012) to demonstrate that primitive accumulation at the urban scale entails the enclosure of urban commons. In the case of Accra, this takes the form of physical-legal strategies including the privatisation of communal land, the revanchist cleansing of informal traders from streets and public spaces, and the eviction and displacement of squatters.

These physical-legal strategies are accompanied by discursive strategies that seek to engineer popular support for accumulation by urban dispossession by the revanchist framing of informal traders and squatters as outlaws and a source of dirt and disorder. Dispossession is primarily produced by the central and local state working in partnership with private capital, but the traditional authorities, NGOs and international financial institutions also play a role.

Although the state engages in accumulation by urban dispossession as an entrepreneurial strategy to create opportunities for profitable capital investment in the built environment, it was argued that this is primarily a reactive strategy to overcome the barriers to accumulation created by the commoning practices of Accra's informal proletariat. As such, this chapter has criticised Harvey's (2003) capital-centric account of accumulation by dispossession for neglecting the agency of the dispossessed. It has also demonstrated how De Angelis' (2007) conceptualisation of the social field as an ongoing struggle between enclosures and commons has particular meaning at the urban scale. Finally, this chapter has argued that accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra has assumed a neo-colonial character, and, following Sassen (2010), that it differs fundamentally from orthodox understandings of primitive accumulation on the grounds that it is about the surplussing and expulsion of the dispossessed, rather than their incorporation as producers and consumers. By theorising state-led gentrification as an urban moment of accumulation by dispossession, this chapter indicates the state-led processes of urban displacement and exclusion are an urban expression of the fact that dispossession is increasingly central to global capitalist development in the neoliberal epoch. The following chapter will build on these insights into state-led enclosure by examining the role that NGOs play in organising dispossession in Accra.

8. Primitive accumulation through neoliberal governmentality: the role of NGOs in accumulation by urban dispossession

8.1 Introduction

According to Elyachar (2005: 29), 'the state is not an adequate unit of analysis' for understanding dispossession in the cities of the Global South. Rather, she argues, 'practices carried out by diverse institutional forms such as the state, IOs, and NGOs need to be studied together in one field of power'. Having discussed the role of the state as an agent of primitive accumulation in Chapter 7, this chapter broadens the analysis and examines practices by other institutional forms. It does this by analysing the role that a particular NGO - Slum Dwellers International (SDI) - plays in producing accumulation by dispossession in contemporary Accra. Previous research on SDI's activities in Accra has tended to be uncritical, reproducing the organisation's self-portrayal as a grassroots movement of the urban poor that is independent from the state (Grant 2009; Afenah 2010). However, this chapter draws on original empirical qualitative research to dismiss this civil society-state dichotomy and argue that SDI cooperates with IFIs and the state to engender a subtle and insidious form of accumulation by urban dispossession through the enclosure of subjectivities within a market logic and the foreclosure of alternative subjectivities rooted in non-capitalist values, such as those promoted by more radical, rights-based movements of the urban poor.

This chapter proceeds by introducing Slum Dwellers International before reviewing the debates around SDI, NGO-led urban development, and self-help slum upgrading in the existing research. Next, it gives an overview of SDI's presence in Ghana through its local affiliate organisations. The rest of the chapter draws on original empirical research to analyse SDI's role as an agent of

dispossession in Accra. It is argued that SDI facilitates market expansion through governmental 'technologies of the self' designed to reshape the subjectivities of informal settlement dwellers (Khan and Pieterse 2006: 170). These subjectification techniques serve three purposes: 1) ensuring cooperation with, and participation in, gentrification and displacement; 2) reinforcing the commodity status of land and housing through promoting market-based solutions to urban poverty; and 3) producing financially-capable, entrepreneurial subjects in order to facilitate the extension of housing finance to the informal proletariat. As such, whereas the state employs physical-legal means to directly dispossess the informal proletariat of its urban commons (see Chapter 7), SDI produces dispossession through the enclosure of subjectivities by the logic of capital. This is consistent with the World Bank's "good governance" agenda that seeks to complement economic structural adjustment with social, cultural and political reforms in order to transform the whole of society according to a neoliberal blueprint (Williams 2008).

This chapter concludes that, in contrast with the *expulsion* of surplus populations that underlines state-led accumulation by urban dispossession (see 7.4), SDI's practices are founded on the *incorporation* of these individuals and groups into market logics and practices. This is achieved by organising informal settlement dwellers into collectives to enable them to access microfinance and purchase land and housing cooperatively. As such, it is argued that SDI promotes collectivity and cooperation as a roll-out 'flanking mechanism' designed to address the inability of liberalised housing markets to meet the needs of Accra's informal proletariat (Jessop 2002: 455). In this respect, SDI's approach is consistent with the World Bank's promotion of 'capitalist commons' as a strategy to address the failures of roll-back neoliberalism (Caffentzis 2010).

8.2 Introducing SDI

Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a global NGO that presides over a network of local NGOs and CBOs based in informal settlements across Africa, Asia and

Latin America. Originating from an Indian development approach based around organising women in informal settlements into savings groups, SDI was created in 1996 to link organisations with similar approaches in other parts of the world. Under the SDI organising model, local savings groups are networked into national 'federations of the urban poor', which are supported by a local NGO affiliated to SDI. The activities practiced by member organisations are typically drawn from a standard list of 'rituals' prescribed by SDI to all of its national affiliates. These include developing national federations of savings groups; sharing information through exchanges between groups and federations; negotiating with the authorities to prevent forced evictions; conducting community-led enumerations to generate data on informal settlements; and addressing development problems through self-help housing and settlement upgrading.

SDI has established the Urban Poor Fund International (UPFI) to provide microfinance loans to fund small-scale settlement upgrading, such as housing or sanitation projects, undertaken by local savings groups. The UPFI is used to channel money from international donors into national funds managed by federation leaders and staff from the support NGOs, where it is combined with local savings and sometimes supplemented by contributions from the state. International donors that finance the UPFI include the UK Lottery Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who recently pledged US\$10m to SDI for this purpose. Upgrading projects financed by the UPFI are run on a cost recovery basis whereby savings groups generate revenue in order to repay the loans so that the funds can be recycled to other groups. Interest rates on these loans are set below commercial rates to cover inflation and administrative costs (Mitlin 2008, 2011).

SDI is a civil society champion of the global slum upgrading policy agenda promoted by global governance organisations such as UN-Habitat as an alternative to forced evictions. SDI is one of two civil society organisations that belong to Cities Alliance, an organisation created by the European Union, the United Nations Environment Programme, UN-Habitat and the World Bank to

address urban governance and development issues. A key campaign of the Cities Alliance is the promotion of self-help slum upgrading projects as a solution to urban poverty. SDI also sits on the advisory board of UN-Habitat's Slum Upgrading Facility (SUF), a programme to establish slum upgrading projects in cities across the Global South.

8.3 SDI's development ideology

This section uses content produced by the leadership of SDI in order to reveal how the organisation frames its own activities within an ideology of development and how this has been interpreted in existing academic research. In addition to the writings of SDI leaders like Sheila Patel and Celine d'Cruz, it takes into consideration publications by the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), an NGO that has worked in close partnership with SDI. IIED members such as Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite have worked closely with SDI leadership to co-produce research about SDI's activities, much of which has appeared in the IIED's in-house journal *Environment and Urbanization*. As a rule, the research published by IIED uncritically reproduces SDI's own discourse, and as such both organisations can be understood as cooperating to co-produce an ideology of development. I outline three key pillars of SDI's ideology and practice of development: partnership, rather than conflict, with the state; savings and microfinance; and SDI's role as a knowledge producer about informal settlements.

8.3.1 Development by the poor, in partnership with the state

Key to SDI's approach is their emphasis on cooperation and partnership with the state. SDI believes that the poor should take the leading role in the development process, rather than being passive beneficiaries of projects carried out by the state (d'Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005). The organisation understands itself as a 'community-driven' approach to development that is managed 'horizontally' by organisations of 'slum-dwellers' and which questions the validity of the state as a

delivery agent (Patel et al. 2001). This involves a “politics of patience” of negotiation, consensus building and long-term pressure rather than confrontation’ with state authorities (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 55).

SDI reject what they call a ‘rights-based approach’. First, on the grounds that confrontation with the state is seen to attract violence and that proposals are more likely to be accepted if the state recognizes mutual advantage. Thus, SDI groups ‘seek to persuade rather than to threaten’, the state (Mitlin and Patel 2005). Second, because rights-based activism ‘depends on state provision for its fulfillment’, and they believe the state is incapable of delivering appropriate pro-poor development. As such, they seek to negotiate state support for development solutions designed by the poor themselves (Mitlin and Patel 2005). To this end, small-scale upgrading projects undertaken by federations are intended to demonstrate the capabilities and responsibility of the poor so that donors and city officials are willing to work with and invest in them (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005).

In place of demands and confrontation, SDI call for a ‘partnership’ relationship with governments, calling for the federations to ‘define, design and manage the “solutions”’ alongside governments (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 48). The aim is for poor people to control resources and thus avoid inappropriate use of funds and corruption (Mitlin and Patel 2005). To this end, SDI encourages international agencies such as the World Bank to move away from their traditional remit of funding ‘recipient’ governments towards providing funds directly to civil society groups (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005). Partnership for SDI means that federations’ strategy is ‘not to replace government but to make government more effective’ (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 2). As such, SDI is eager to align itself with the World Bank’s ‘good governance’ agenda, and they describe the role of federations as ‘building good governance from the bottom up’ by acting as representatives of the urban poor in negotiations and discussions with governments and international agencies (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 40). Satterthwaite (2001: 136) argues that SDI has ‘the legitimate right to speak on behalf of the diverse groups that make up the urban

poor and to negotiate on their behalf' because 'it is accountable to its federations, who are in turn accountable to their members, the community-level savings groups'.

In terms of policy, SDI promotes self-help upgrading in order to cut costs, achieve cost recovery, ensure best use of subsidies and limit the need for government and donor spending. Costs are lowered through this approach by: increasing the input of local resources (poor people's savings) to supplement donor and state funding; engaging the community in the management of the process rather than relying on professionals; utilising unpaid community labour; and recovering costs by, for example, charging user fees for community facilities. SDI go even further to argue that international donors need to 'recognize that the less money they contribute the better' so as to avoid creating local 'dependency' (d'Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 6 and 66).

This approach has come under criticism from academics and activists. The pursuit of partnerships and co-operation with the state allegedly undermines the possibilities for more radical grassroots organisation by encouraging members to seek consensus with the state rather than adopting a confrontational politics (Gruffydd Jones forthcoming). In this sense, SDI is criticised for dividing, weakening and deradicalising movements of the urban poor (Huchzermeyer 2011). For example, SDI do not support rights-based oppositional grassroots movements, such as the South African shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo, and consistently misrepresents these more radical movements as naïve and unpragmatic. Abahlali (2007: no page) believe that they have been criminalised by the state and have been subject to violent repression because they have refused to give up their independence, 'be obedient' and join SDI. They argue that the channeling of funds through SDI is a strategy to undermine shack dweller mobilisation and that SDI houses are used as 'a reward for obedience' to try to persuade movements to 'give up their autonomy and to cease struggling'. As such they conclude that SDI is simply 'part of the government'.

These criticisms feed into a broader argument about political effects of the 'NGO revolution' (Davis 2006), in which the World Bank and other IFIs have increasingly bypassed governments to work directly in 'partnership' with local NGOs. This development has been criticised for facilitating neo-colonialism by enabling international organisations to dictate the agenda of local grassroots organisations (Porter 2003; Davis 2006, Hearn 2007). By 'hegemonizing the social space traditionally occupied by the left', Mike Davis (2006: 76) argues, NGOs have a chilling effect on political mobilisation in the Global South by de-radicalising and bureaucratising urban social movements, co-opting their leadership and undermining community capacity building and mobilization. In addition, these organisations are typically unelected, unrepresentative and lack accountability to the communities that they claim to work for (Di Muzio 2008).

SDI's political pragmatism has a bearing on its position on forced evictions and displacement. They admit that *in situ* upgrading is preferable to forced evictions 'because it avoids disrupting the inhabitants' livelihoods and social networks' (d'Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 2). However, SDI's commitment to conflict avoidance and partnership means that it is willing to support relocation as a compromise solution. If upgrading is 'not possible', they argue, governments should relocate settlements and support self-help and incremental development of housing and infrastructure at the new site (ibid.). Critics from the academy and social movements alike have accused SDI of facilitating gentrification by cooperating with governments to displace informal settlement dwellers (Whitehead and More 2007; Roy 2009; Huchzermeyer 2011). Abahlali (2007: no page) have criticised SDI for aiding in a process of removing squatters to 'human dumping grounds', in a process they have labelled 'forced ruralization', drawing parallels with forced removals under apartheid. Huchzermeyer (2011: 165) implicates SDI when she criticises the

near-defeatist positions of global organisations that profess to stand for participatory *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements, yet partner in their clearance and redevelopment.

8.3.2 Savings and microfinance

As well as providing members with a microcredit facility, savings is promoted as the “glue” that holds federations together. It encourages people to mobilise and meet regularly and builds their capacity to work together, solve problems, resolve conflicts and negotiate with government and other agencies (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite: 2005). Although it does not generate large amounts of capital quickly, engaging in savings is seen as virtuous because it encourages self-reliance, discipline and the capacity to manage finance amongst groups of members (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005; Mitlin and Patel 2005). This last point is key: ‘the most important function of savings and credit is that it mobilizes large numbers of people who manage money together’ (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005: 39). By contributing their own savings to upgrading projects, SDI argue, federations feel a greater sense of ownership and responsibility to make the projects a success, while also reducing the need for external funding (Mitlin, 2008). Community savings and microcredit schemes also demonstrate evidence of credit-worthiness to external institutions that would otherwise be reluctant to give squatters access to housing finance (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005).

According to Diana Mitlin (2008), SDI’s Urban Poor Fund International (UPFI) is designed to reach those traditionally excluded from the financial system and housing markets by providing credit to savings groups rather than individuals. The aim is that ‘capital, so often a mechanism for exclusion, becomes a trigger for progressive social change’ (ibid: 7). Loans are given to collectives of the urban poor who have demonstrated through participating in savings schemes that ‘they are ready’ to receive investment capital (ibid: 25). As such, the UPFI primarily serves as a technology by which the urban poor can access and learn to operate within financial markets. This is justified on the grounds that, ‘given the domination of market forms of production and distribution, communities have to be aware of the consequences of market relations’ (ibid: 71). According to David Smith of the Affordable Housing Institute, a non-profit organisation working with SDI, the UPFI provides ‘venture capital for self-taught, self-chosen, effective entrepreneurs’ (Peirce 2007).

Academics have criticised this approach for being divisive, as access to finance is only available to communities that can contribute their own funds through savings. This draws 'a line between the good, saving poor and the passive and resistant ones' (Huchzermeyer 2011: 194-195). Despite being an advocate of SDI, McFarlane (2012) argues that this self-help approach does 'endorse a model of unequal geographical distribution' where only those pro-active, disciplined communities who organise themselves into savings groups are given access to funding for upgrading. At the same time, 'it supports a culture of blame directed at 'unorganised' slum residents who—as this ideology would posit—lack the entrepreneurial energy to do it themselves' (ibid: 2805).

Self-help slum upgrading in general has been critiqued on several grounds. First, it has been argued to function as an 'ideological buttress' for the capitalist system (Burgess 1985: 298) by promoting the values of private property and home ownership as 'core building blocks of a liberal social order' (Gruffydd Jones 2012: 35). Second, upgrading has been seen as fundamentally anti-redistributive, acting as 'a smokescreen' by allowing the state to withdraw from its responsibilities for the provision of public housing (Davis 2006: 72; Obeng-Odoom 2011). Such an approach renders the problem of slums as a 'problem of finance, with a financial solution' (Gruffydd Jones 2012a: 772), rather an issue of social redistribution. Third, self-help approaches are criticised for reproducing poverty and inequality. The cost of upgrading is often prohibitive to the poorest households, who cannot find the financial contribution required of them to participate. As a result, upgraded housing is often captured by the relatively wealthy (Burgess 1985; Drakakis-Smith 2000; Berner and Philips 2005; Davis 2006). For Berner and Philips (2005: 27), placing emphasis on self-help rather than redistribution 'risks legitimizing inequity, reinforcing the complacent view that the poor are poor because they have not helped themselves'.

Fourth, an emphasis on self-help is argued to have had a deradicalising effect in 'defusing actual and potential unrest over housing and the means of collective consumption' (Burgess 1985: 303; see also Gruffydd-Jones forthcoming). As with

the promotion of homeownership in the US, self-help housing was promoted in the post-war period on the grounds that it could be used as a technology of social control to dampen political radicalisation and social unrest in the Global South (Gruffydd-Jones 2012). In short, it is argued that ‘the aim is less to change conditions for the poor than to make sure they cause no problems’ (Gilbert and Ward 1984: 770). For all of these authors, upgrading is understood as an unambiguous tool of neoliberalisation, with self-help housing representing

an attempt to palliate housing shortages in ways that do not interfere with, and often complement, the operation of those interests tied to the maintenance and expansion of the capitalist mode of production (Burgess 1985: 299).

8.3.3 Producing and sharing knowledge

SDI argue that governments lack basic quantitative and qualitative data on informal settlements. This means that these settlements are often not recognised on city master plans and their existence is barely acknowledged during the planning of infrastructure and services (Patel et al. 2012). In addition, this lack of information leads to ignorance of informal settlements’ contribution to city economies and

means there is no evidence to counter the inaccurate claims by politicians or civil servants that those living in informal settlements are law breakers or unemployed migrants who should go back to rural areas (Patel and Baptist 2012: 3).

SDI seeks to address this by producing data on informal settlements through auto-enumerations carried out by federation members. These enumerations are a ‘non-threatening tool’ to engage city authorities in order to prevent evictions and secure better infrastructure and service provision (Patel et al. 2012: 23). Enumeration data is also used to inform upgrading and resettlement programmes carried out in conjunction with the authorities (d’Cruz and Satterthwaite 2005).

It is argued that enumerations improve relations between informal settlements and local government as they provide the latter with useful data and give the former greater legitimacy (Patel and Baptist 2012). In the context of evictions, it is argued that the provision of data can have a positive effect in 'transforming evictions into resettlements or in situ upgrading' (Patel et al. 2012: 16). This approach, they argue, is a better form of communication than more traditional confrontational methods such as demonstrations (ibid.).

Knowledge is transferred through the SDI network through exchanges between savings groups and, internationally, between federations. Technical skills, such as financial management skills for savings and loans, lobbying and negotiation strategies and construction techniques are all shared between different SDI affiliates as part of the exchange process (Patel and Mitlin 2002: 132). SDI's leadership argue that this learning process is central to their community-led ethos: instead of being imparted by professionals in a hierarchical manner, knowledge is produced and owned by poor communities and then shared horizontally through exchanges (Patel and Mitlin 2002). SDI advocate the repetition of the same standardised rituals in different contexts:

protocols have been standardized, the ingredients and processes converted into a "recipe" so that they can be enacted at short notice and with relatively little preparation' (Patel et al. 2001: 56).

Academic advocates of SDI have used Foucault's concept of governmentality to theorise SDI's relationship to the state and its role in urban governance, particularly in relation to enumeration. Authors have argued that while SDI employs techniques that are central to governmentality, such as collecting population and settlement data, these are in fact a 'revolutionary' form of 'governmentality from below' or 'counter-governmentality' (Appadurai 2001: 35). These techniques render previously 'invisible' uncounted citizens visible and lay bare the myths and prejudices that are used to justify their exclusion from substantive citizenship rights afforded to other citizens (Appadurai 2001;

McFarlane 2009). As such, this engagement with the state is characterised by McFarlane (2009: 897) as 'acts of subversion'.

Contrary to these accounts of 'governmentality from below', critics of have argued that SDI's rituals signify the extension and deepening of neoliberal governmentality as a means to foster a compliant, entrepreneurial subjectivity amongst slum dwellers. The combination of 'self-enumeration, self-regulation and the notion of savings as 'spiritual' or 'moral' discipline' can be understood as a form of 'auto-governmentality' that cultivates a neoliberal economic rationality through self-regulation or 'technologies of the self' (Khan and Pieterse 2006: 170). McFarlane (2012) reflects on SDI's ethic of self-help in terms of civil society groups 'co-producing' urban entrepreneurialism with states and international institutions by framing the urban poor as entrepreneurial subjects and representing urban poverty in terms of potential new markets. This is operationalised through tools such as microfinance that attempt to marketise urban informality and create financially disciplined slum dwellers. This entrepreneurialism chimes with a neoliberal ideology of development that understands basic services as commodities that the poor should pay for rather than entitlements that are the responsibility the state. Roy (2009) argues that SDI's approach produces an 'entrepreneurial subjectivity...steeped in the morality of collaboration, participation and mediation' that precludes confrontational responses to displacement that claim the right to the city (Roy 2009: 173; see also Gruffyd Jones forthcoming).

Finally, critics have questioned the representativeness, accountability and autonomy of SDI's member organisations. Huchzermeyer (2011: 194) queries SDI's legitimacy and labels its claims to represent all 'slum dwellers' as an 'aspiration to hegemony', as SDI 'never represents more than the actively saving inhabitants of any informal settlement'. Abahlali (2007: no page) argue that it is convenient for government to 'pretend that SDI represents shack dwellers', but the truth is that

SDI is an international NGO that is embedded with local and national government and with the international organisations like the World Bank and USAid that give our government its anti-poor policies.

Further, contrary to the portrayal of SDI as a non-hierarchical horizontal network, Gruffyd Jones (forthcoming: no page) observes that SDI 'seeks actively to promote the adoption by all affiliated grassroots groups of a specific set of organizational forms, strategies and techniques'. As such, the extent to which local federations of the urban poor are allowed to exercise autonomy in decision making is questionable.

8.4 SDI in Ghana

Having introduced SDI, its ideology and the debates surrounding its activities, this section will draw on empirical evidence developed during fieldwork to give an overview of the organisation's presence in Accra. SDI first established itself in Ghana in response to the AMA's decision to evict Old Fadama in 2002 (see 6.5). Initially, community members took legal action in an attempt to prevent the eviction. They worked with two rights-based NGOs, the Centre for Public Interest Law (CEPIL) and the Centre On Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) who supported them to appeal to the Accra High Court for an injunction to restrain the AMA on the grounds that a forced eviction would violate their human rights. On 24th July, the High Court rejected the community's request and ruled in favour of the AMA on the grounds that the community was illegally occupying the land and therefore had no right to remain there (COHRE 2004).

At this point, SDI's South African leadership became aware of the eviction threat through contact with COHRE and CEPIL. Following the organising model employed in other countries, SDI established a local affiliate NGO, named People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (PD), to support the creation of the Ghana Homeless People's Federation to organise the residents Old Fadama into savings groups (SDI 2005; Grant 2009). In-keeping with SDI's ideology, PD and the Federation decided not to continue to challenge the government over the

issue of rights. Rather, they sought to engender a process of negotiation and dialogue between residents and the authorities (Interview, Kofi, Officer, People's Dialogue, 5/11/10). In 2004, Old Fadama Development Association (OFADA) was created to mobilise individuals and interest groups that had not joined the Federation's savings groups but who PD thought should play a role in negotiations, such as the traditional authorities and representatives of the different tribes and ethnic groups in the community (Interview, Kofi, Officer, People's Dialogue, 5/11/10).

Having established what they claimed to be representative organisations in Old Fadama, PD, the Federation, and OFADA began to negotiate with the authorities on behalf of the whole settlement. As a result, the NPP government modified its stance and accepted in principle that it would be possible to relocate residents to a new site. Hailing this as a successful outcome, PD began working with the authorities to plan the relocation of the residents and the wholesale market to a site 30km north of Accra near a village called Adjen Kotoku (Brammah and Owusu 2012). However, with the election of the NDC in 2009 the relocation plan was shelved and the newly installed mayor Vanderpuije announced his intention to forcefully evict the community as part of his 'decongestion' exercise (detailed in 6.4 and 6.5). The AMA's position was that it was still going to relocate all commercial activities at Agbogbloshie to Adjen Kotoku, but that it would not be relocating residents when they demolished Old Fadama. Vanderpuije publically denied that the AMA had any responsibility to compensate or relocate the squatters (GhanaWeb 2009). This announcement was met with a day of protest from residents. On 9th September 2009, what was planned as a press briefing turned into a mass rally as thousands of Old Fadama's residents turned out to demonstrate their opposition to the press and TV media. Protestors took over Agbogbloshie road, blocking traffic in order to register their outrage and kayayei (female market porters) based in the community registered their opposition by going on strike, disrupting the activities of shoppers in the area (Interview, Kofi, Officer, People's Dialogue, 5/11/10). A spokesperson told the press that 'we don't want to be refugees in our own country' (Yankson 2009: no page).

After renewing its threats of demolition in 2009, the AMA was put under pressure to hold back by President Mills, who reportedly feared the political fallout of a forced eviction in an NDC constituency. In addition, there was a disagreement over the size of the population at Old Fadama, with the AMA trying to play the numbers down, so PD and the Federation insisted that a settlement enumeration be carried out so that the Mayor would know how many people he was talking about evicting, the socio-economic profile of the residents, and the likelihood of these people relocating to other areas of the city or back to their places of origin. This profile revealed that the population of the settlement had increased almost four-fold since 2004 and now numbered 79,684 individuals. It also revealed that the majority of residents would not leave Accra in the event of eviction, nor would they relocate away from their place of work, undermining the AMA's argument that the migrant squatters would go back to their hometowns if Old Fadama was destroyed (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010). This new information, combined with pressure from central government, appears to have put the brakes on the process and the AMA has yet to follow through with its threats. However, the city authorities have not publically changed their position, and at time of writing the threat of forced eviction without compensation or relocation still hangs over the community.

In the meantime, the Federation has gradually expanded from its origins as a local community-based organisation fighting eviction in Old Fadama to a national network of savings groups called the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP). GHAFUP now has savings groups in seven out of ten administrative regions of Ghana, is active in 13 cities, and has over 13,000 members in about 125 savings groups. Each group typically has 50-70 members. GHAFUP incorporates different federations of savings groups, including: the Ghana Homeless People's Federation, comprising savings groups addressing housing and development issues in informal settlements; the Railway Dwellers Federation, formed by people living and working alongside Accra's railway lines who are threatened with forced eviction by the AMA; and the Kayayo Youth Association, attending to the welfare of female head porters, many of whom are rough sleepers (SDI, 2005; People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2013).

Ghafup engages in a range of development activities drawn from the standard list of 'rituals' prescribed by SDI to all of its national affiliates including savings groups, information exchanges, government negotiations, community enumerations and aided-self-help housing and settlement upgrading. In addition, it has set up a microcredit scheme that provides crisis loans for school and medical fees, or loans for microenterprises that members pay back at a low rate of interest. Ghafup savings groups have accessed SDI's international microfinance facility in order to fund a series of upgrading projects in Accra. In the context of Old Fadama, savings groups have used the UPFI to build a public toilet block, a bathhouse and a hostel for female head porters (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2). These facilities are run by the Federation on cost-recovery lines, with a small fee being charged to members of the public who use them. The money collected goes to pay off the loan borrowed from the UPF so that other savings groups can use the recycled funds for similar projects (Interview, Mensah, Ghafup member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10; Interview, Nana, Ghafup member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11).

In addition, the neighbourhood of Ashaiman in Greater Accra was selected by UN-Habitat's Slum Upgrading Facility as a pilot for a cost recovery-based cooperative housing project. Ghafup savings group members in Ashaiman formed the Amui Dzor Housing Cooperative and went on an exchange to look at housing built by SDI affiliates in India. UN-Habitat negotiated a mortgage from a commercial bank and a loan was taken from the UPFI in order to finance construction of two-story housing block with 32 family apartments (see figure 8.3). The tenants then pay rent in order to pay off the UPF loan and mortgage (Interviews, Adu and Kojo, Ghafup members, Ashaiman, 30/6/11). In order to aid cost recovery, the building features commercial units and a public toilet, both of which are intended to generate income to pay off the debt. It is hoped by UN-Habitat and SDI that this project will be a model that can be scaled up to provide affordable housing for the urban poor across the city.⁴

⁴ <http://www.sdinet.org/blog/2012/04/2/innovations-affordable-housing-amui-dzor-housing-p/>



Figure 8.1: Federation-built toilet block, Old Fadama
Source: author



Figure 8.2: Federation-built bathhouse, Old Fadama
Source: author



Figure 8.3: Amui Dzor Housing Cooperative, Ashaiman
Source: author

8.5 SDI as an agent of accumulation by urban dispossession

Having introduced SDI's activities in Ghana, this section will draw on original empirical research to critically assess the role that this organisation plays in producing accumulation by dispossession in Accra. Contrary to arguments that SDI makes urban development more inclusive for the previously marginalised urban poor (Grant 2009; McFarlane 2009), it is argued here that SDI is a key actor of neoliberal urban governance and is working in partnership with the state and IFIs to engender accumulation by dispossession. I assert that it does so through various governmental 'technologies of the self' designed to reshape the subjectivities of informal settlement dwellers (Khan and Pieterse 2006: 170). These subjectification techniques serve three purposes: facilitating gentrification and displacement through an ideology of partnership and participation; reinforcing the commodity status of land and housing through promoting

market-based solutions to urban poverty; and facilitating the extension of housing finance to the informal proletariat.

8.5.1 Facilitating gentrification by co-opting squatters with an ideology of partnership and participation

People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (PD), Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP), and the Old Fadama Development Association (OFADA) assumed a negotiating role with the authorities on behalf of Old Fadama's residents in order to find an alternative outcome to forced eviction. It was these bodies that agreed to the NPP government's relocation plan (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10; Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11). During a presentation at the 2006 World Urban Forum, Vancouver, PD celebrated the official government policy shift from eviction to relocation, describing it as a 'win-win solution' (Braithwaite and Agyapong 2006: 4). They also argue that the community, which had previously has been divided along political party, tribal and even intra-tribal lines, was 're-galvanized' and unified by the negotiated resettlement process (Braithwaite and Agyapong 2006). Academic commentators have celebrated GHAFUP and PD for successfully stalling the threatened eviction. In his account of the conflict with the authorities, Grant (2009) praises SDI for unifying the different tribes and factions in Old Fadama, and describes the community and the NGO as having a single negotiation position based on a general consensus that relocation is an acceptable outcome. Similarly, Afenah (2010: 162) describes the proposed relocation to Adjen Kotoku as a successful outcome for everyone concerned and praises SDI for strengthening the capacity of the community and enabling them to 'claim their right to the city'.

PD agreed to supervise and coordinate the implementation of the relocation plan. A participatory settlement enumeration was carried out during 2006-7 to generate data to inform the process, and PD trained residents as enumerators to carry out data collection and analysis. PD celebrate the fact that this signaled that the 'capacity and influence' of the Federation had grown and that 'partnerships

had started to develop between GHAFUP and the city and central government' (Braitham and Agyapong 2006: 7; Braitham and Owusu 2012: 53). GHAFUP members who I interviewed argued that generating enumeration data has given them a concrete basis with which to challenge the state and has made the authorities respect them and take them seriously because of the work and skill required to collect the data (Interview, Nii, GHAFUP member, Agbogbloshie, 16/6/11; Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11). According to PD, collecting data in Old Fadama has allowed residents to demonstrate to the authorities that they can contribute to urban development. It has also strengthened the confidence and organisational capacity of GHAFUP and the community, and increased public support for their efforts (Braitham and Owusu 2012).

These accounts of PD and GHAFUP's role in the Old Fadama episode echo SDI's emphasis on representative organisations working in partnership with the authorities to find alternatives to forced eviction. However, despite PD's claims that the whole community was united behind the negotiated resettlement process, there is evidence that there was opposition and dissent from within Old Fadama. In 2007, following a visit to the settlement, a UN-Habitat mission to Accra reported that many residents were concerned about a potential relocation site that 'might not have income-generating opportunities and might be located at a distance that would limit their ability to earn a living in other areas of Accra, due to transport costs' (UN-Habitat 2007: 56). These concerns are understandable given reports of SDI-managed relocations in other locations that have left residents stranded on peripheral sites long distances away from their workplaces and lacking in basic services (Whitehead and More 2007).

The 2006-7 enumeration was also met with resistance from some community members who feared that GHAFUP were working for the AMA to prepare the community for displacement. Fights broke out between concerned individuals and data collectors, leading to an enumerator being hospitalised. While PD describes this as a 'misunderstanding' about the aims of GHAFUP, they admit

that the enumeration was essentially being conducted to aid the authorities in the relocation of the settlement:

Some residents thought that (the enumerators) were simply representing the interests of local government and preparing the community for resettlement. This was in some sense the case, as the national government had requested GHAFUP to support it with data via enumeration to assist in the relocation plans for Old Fadama. So the exercise was undertaken with official backing, and the results were meant to be used by the city, the national government and the community for a relocation programme (Braithwaite and Owusu 2012: 53).

In addition to generating settlement data, PD assumed the disciplinary role of ensuring that residents cooperated with the resettlement process. In the 2009 enumeration report, PD offer advice about how to go about relocating the settlement while minimising unrest or dissent. A 'risk' associated with resettlement identified in the report is 'some members of the community protesting any eviction or even relocation'. In order to prevent this, it is recommended that careful planning be undertaken and that there be 'effective consultations and communication with the community' so as to carry out the exercise 'in a reasonably peaceful and cooperative manner' (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010: 29). To this end, PD argues that enumerations are instrumental to familiarising the community with the idea that they may be relocated, therefore making them more cooperative (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010: 30). Using residents as enumerators is also part of the strategy for securing compliance, as this 'results in maximum cooperation by residents since they are familiar with the enumerators' (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010: 31). All of this suggests that People's Dialogue's priority is to minimise the 'risk' of protests and secure cooperation with the relocation process.

As such, the Old Fadama case appears to add weight to arguments discussed in 8.3.1 that SDI facilitates gentrification and displacement by working with the state to relocate informal settlement dwellers away from prime real estate to the urban periphery. In this case, SDI has collected data in order to co-opt

community members and give them a sense of ownership over their own displacement, thereby managing the risk of social unrest, in order to assist the state with the relocation of the squatters. This also supports the argument made by Abahlali baseMjondolo and others that NGOs such as SDI serve the purpose of deradicalising and co-opting actual and potential movements of the urban poor and preventing oppositional, rights-based forms of anti-displacement activism from emerging in informal settlements by promoting an ideology of cooperation, participation and partnership.

There are also questions over the degree of transparency and accountability in negotiations with the authorities. PD describes the proposed relocation process as 'participatory' on the grounds that the resettlement plan utilises enumeration data collected by residents (Brammah and Agyapong 2006: 6). However, it was admitted that even in June 2006 - after relocation to Adjen Kotoku had been agreed in principle between PD, GHAFUP and GoG - this decision had not been communicated to other residents so as 'not to cause confusion, panic and anxiety among would be relocaters' (Brammah and Agyapong 2006: 7). This raises serious questions about the degree to which residents who had not volunteered to participate in the SDI process were 'participating' in the negotiation process. That the decision to relocate was kept secret so as to avoid 'confusion, panic and anxiety' amongst residents, suggests both a paternalistic attitude towards those on the outside of GHAFUP and a concern that the relocation plans would have provoked resistance if they were made public.

This lack of transparency is especially significant given that the vast majority of Old Fadama's residents are not members of the Federation, and therefore have no means of holding Federation leadership accountable. One Federation member I spoke to estimated that there are about 1000 members in Old Fadama, meaning that only 1 in every 80 people in Old Fadama is actively involved in the Federation (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10). Similarly, another Federation member in Ashaiman told me that 'the Federation is not all the community' and many people are reluctant to get involved in the savings groups (Interview, Kojo, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11). They

revealed that when ten families were moved from their homes by the traditional authorities in order to build the cooperative housing block, they were all given the option to join GHAFUP so that they could access Federation-built housing in the future. However, only two of the ten took up this:

Formerly (the site of the housing cooperative) was occupied by squatters who has no title to the land, numbering about 10 families. And a transit quarters, I don't know whether you have seen it, was built for them to relocate so that they will be part of the Federation, contributing to daily savings so that through that, when the housing project is completed, they will also have access to the rooms. Some didn't buy the idea... and two out of the ten families joined the Federation (Interview, Kojo, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11).

This evidence problematises the idea that SDI's federations are representative of the communities they are based in and have a mandate to speak for them in negotiations with the authorities.

Despite SDI and PD's position that relocation to outside the city would be an acceptable outcome for Old Fadama, several Federation members revealed in interviews that they would prefer for the settlement to stay put and to be upgraded *in situ*. One Federation member I interviewed was concerned that settlement relocations were usually badly executed and were not carried out according to the residents' wishes:

I would prefer the community to stay here....the reason that I am saying so is that the process of relocation in Africa, for me and where I have travelled to, there has never been a successful relocation. That is one. Two - the government does the relocation in isolation with the community. He does what he wants, not what the peoples want. And that's exactly what the present administration, the Mayor, does (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10).

He also cited the fact that the AMA had not consulted traders in Agbogbloshie market about plans to relocate them to Adjen Kotoku as evidence that the authorities were not interested in letting the affected people have a say in the resettlement process:

No government officials have sit with the market women or the traders that "this is where we want to take you to". And even in the first place, "let's go and you have a look at the land then we'll start the process". I don't think they have ever met them...no official meeting has ever had related to this relocation process (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10).

Nana, another Federation member, was concerned that relocation to outside the city would leave residents stranded a long way away from their place of work:

We are saying that if the government can even give us upgrading... because the upgrading is that this place is the centre of Accra business district. So if you want to go to markets, if you want to go to your work, there's no need you to bother a car to your workplace or to the market. You just walk in. But giving us a relocation to a far place, far district and you want to come to Accra or your work is in Accra, everyday you have to board a car, day-in day-out. And it will cost you. Maybe the work that you are doing you are not earning so much money there. So I think that, I prefer that, to me personally, I prefer that relocation is not the best for the community. Upgrading is the best (Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11).

An officer at People's Dialogue who was interviewed for this thesis also admitted that *in situ* upgrading would be the 'preferred option', possibly in combination with a small number of relocations to another site. He argued that relocating the whole community would be very difficult and expensive to do properly, leading to the risk of creating 'another slum' at the new site, whereas *in situ* upgrading could be done incrementally (Interview, Kwabena, Officer, People's Dialogue, 18/11/10).

As discussed in 6.5, Old Fadama exists because there is an unmet need for low cost housing for migrant informal workers in the centre of Accra. Given this, and the apparent preferences of residents to stay put, it is counter-intuitive that PD's official position is that the displacement of the community to 30km outside the city centre is an acceptable outcome. It may be the case that SDI's pre-conceived organisational position, that relocation is an acceptable alternative to forced eviction, is informing PD/GHAFUP's negotiating position, regardless of whether this is a true reflection of what residents really want or not (see also

Huckzermeyer 2011 on Cape Town). This adds weight to Porter's (2003) argument that NGOs operating in Ghana are dominated by the agenda of their international funders and partners, and this has the effect of undermining the development of local ideas, confidence and leadership amongst the poor. It also echoes Gruffyd Jones' (forthcoming) charge that SDI's global leadership does not allow its grassroots affiliates political or strategic autonomy. In the case of Old Fadama, SDI's commitment to working in partnership and avoiding confrontation with the state may be preventing the development of a more radical local anti-displacement movement. As such, SDI's influence on the trajectory of this struggle can be understood as an example of neo-colonialism, in which international institutions attempt to dictate the form that political mobilisation takes in informal settlements (Davis 2006; Hearn 2007).

There is evidence that SDI's one-size-fits-all strategy of cooperation and partnership, instituted at the global scale, is out of touch with local political realities in Accra. Despite SDI's rhetoric about the importance of slum dwellers' organisations working in 'partnership' with the authorities the AMA appears unequivocally determined to evict the squatters and redevelop the land at Old Fadama. This raises questions about whether it is possible to overcome the basic antagonisms and conflict of interests between the squatters and the city authorities and find a 'win-win' solution through the dialogue that SDI promote. Both the NPP and NDC central governments have demonstrated a degree of willingness to engage with GHAFUP and PD since their formation in 2003, first in the formulation of a relocation plan, and more recently by including PD's Executive Director on a committee to develop a comprehensive National Urban Policy (Interview, Kwabena, Officer, People's Dialogue, 18/11/10). By contrast, however, several Federation members complained that Vanderpuije's AMA is refusing to engage with their organisation and respond to their requests for a meeting. Multiple interviewees said that the mayor had not shown any interest in continuing the negotiation process established during the previous regime, preferring instead to unilaterally make plans for the demolition of the settlement. As one GUAFUP member explained:

The city authority doesn't want you to come to them, sit down with them, dialogue with them, tell them what they can also do to help you in the community. They don't want that! (Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11).

On Vanderpuije personally, a member of the Railway Dwellers' Federation said that 'He does not want to talk to anyone. This is the issue' (Interview, Twia, GHAFUP member, Railway Dwellers Federation, 4/5/11). In addition to this apparent lack of interest in SDI's politics of dialogue and partnership, the AMA has also made it clear it is unwilling to support the Federation's self-help upgrading projects in Old Fadama. Upgrading activities have provoked outrage from the AMA, who have said that the squatters have got no business engaging in development activities on land that they do not own (Modern Ghana News 2005). One GHFUP member who was interviewed for this thesis revealed that the AMA refused to lend their support for the UPFI-financed Federation bathhouse because they did not want any permanent structures built on squatted land (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10).

An officer at People's Dialogue spoke of a 'reluctance of the centre to release power' and support community development initiatives. He attributed this in part to a lack of civil society pressure and social movement mobilisation in Ghana's history (Interview, Kwabena, Officer, People's Dialogue, 18/11/10). This suggests that SDI's commitment to avoiding oppositional activism and protest in favour of negotiation and collaboration does not take into account the different local political contexts in which SDI affiliates may be operating. In certain national contexts, such as that of Ghana, the state may be unresponsive or hostile to organisations of squatters and informal workers who aspire to be 'development partners' and seek high-level meetings with officials. In a context where the city authority is unwilling to take slum dweller activists seriously and listen to their ideas, it may be that mass oppositional action such as protests and strikes are the only way to put pressure on them to take their interests seriously. If this is the case, then SDI's one-size-fits-all prescriptions are problematic and may be counter-productive.

SDI's desire to frame the relationship between squatters and city authorities as a development 'partnership' papers over the fundamental antagonism that exists between the state's gentrification strategy (see Chapter 6) and the interest of the squatters to remain in place. Given this antagonism, a 'partnership' does not make sense, as the two partners represent contradictory interests. Indeed, the notion of promoting 'partnerships' as the key to 'good governance' ignores the power, exploitation and domination that characterise the capitalist city (Jessop 2002). Rather, the attempt to gloss over contradictions and antagonisms through the language of partnership merely 'simulates egalitarianism' (ibid: 467-469). In practice, as SDI's resignation to the inevitability of displacement indicates, this language of partnership serves only to compromise the position of the squatters and reconcile them to the AMA's entrepreneurial development agenda.

Contrary to Afenah's (2010) argument, therefore, SDI in Ghana is undermining squatters' right to the city by cooperating with the state's plans to displace them to the urban periphery with the a view to gentrifying the space they occupy. For this reason, SDI is playing an important role in cooperating with the state to produce accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. SDI's accommodation to strategic gentrification is evident in the writings of Robert Buckley (2011: 280) of the Rockefeller Foundation, one of SDI's funders, who argues that 'resettlement, at least in principle, can benefit all concerned'. In the context in which centrally-located land that is being squatted has increased in economic value over time and there is an interest in redeveloping it, he argues, SDI can help achieve the optimum solution for all by freeing up the land for development while negotiating favourable terms of resettlement for the affected community. As such, 'the land's greater value in an alternative use can be realized while the rights of the long-term residents are simultaneously recognized' (ibid: 282).

Although SDI should be credited for attempting to soften the blow of displacement by campaigning for 'favourable terms of resettlement' for the squatters at Old Fadama, the NGO is aiding the gentrification process by preventing a confrontational, rights-based anti-displacement movement from

emerging in Old Fadama. It is doing so by co-opting community members through an ideology of partnership and by involving residents in the negotiation and data collection processes, which is represented as a form of 'participation'. Questions also remain over accountability and whether GHAFUP and PD have a democratic mandate to represent the whole community in discussions to determine the settlement's future. It is especially worrying that there is evidence that residents' wishes, in particular desires to stay put, are being marginalised due to SDI's organisational commitment to support relocation as an alternative to forced eviction.

8.5.2. Reinforcing the marketisation of land and housing by promoting market-based solutions to urban poverty

GHAFUP have initiated a range of upgrading projects in Accra utilising SDI's microfinance facility (see 8.4). An officer at PD who was interviewed for this thesis described ordinary people, rather than development professionals, managing funding as popular 'participation' in development (Kwabena, Officer, People's Dialogue, 18/11/10). In keeping with SDI's ideology, local Federation members explained that, as well as addressing development needs in the community, these upgrading projects were intended to demonstrate GHAFUP's competencies to the authorities in order to persuade them to support them and give them access to land and resources in the future:

we did these things in order to tell the government that if you give us a chance, give us a land, we can do more than what we have done here. That is why we put up these two structures, to be giving it to the head porters to be living there. So we demonstrate this thing and tell the government that if you give us something else, if you give us a land somewhere, we can do more than what we have done here (Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11).

Since the AMA announced that it would not be resettling squatters when it evicted Old Fadama, GHAFUP has begun to look at using savings to purchase land so it can rehouse its members in the event of eviction (Braith 2009). A

member of one savings group from Old Fadama reported that they had acquired about four acres of land in the Adenta suburb of Accra with a view to housing 50 to 60 families. The intention was that

by the time that the government was ready to evict us from this community, most of the Federation members can have their own houses elsewhere (Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11).

SDI's principles of self-help and cost-recovery encourage informal settlement dwellers to accommodate themselves to, rather than challenge, the commodity status of land and housing. As such, these principles reinforce the marketisation of land and housing and the disinvestment of the state in social reproduction in Ghana since structural adjustment (Chapter 5). Kojo, a Federation member in Ashaiman, told me that savings towards housing was important 'because it's money that's everything. And if you don't have it, housing's not for you! You have to save towards housing' (Interview, Kojo, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11).

This market-based approach to development is problematic in that it potentially excludes those who cannot access finance to purchase these commodities because they haven't joined an approved savings group (Berner and Phillips, 2005; McFarlane, 2012). According to one Federation member, The NPP government were willing to consider relocation in the case of Old Fadama because the residents are generally involved in commerce and could therefore potentially afford to pay back the costs of resettlement:

They also came up with their recommendations saying that "look, this is a community that is doing a whole lot of business to themselves, they are not like the squatter settlements that we see elsewhere, but these are purely business-oriented community. So it's easier for government to relocate them and then they can pay back off what the government spends on their housing" ...and that actually motivated the government to see to the relocation process work out for us (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10).

This cost-recovery approach to resettlement was also promoted by PD, who recommended that 'the majority of residents in Old Fadama from the study could afford a decent home at a gradual rate of payment if assisted with the necessary technical support' (People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 2010: 32). Making resettlement conditional on the ability to pay is potentially divisive and exclusionary, especially if it will only be considered for 'business-oriented' communities who can pay back the costs incurred.

Regarding the Amu Dzor Housing Cooperative in Ashaiman, members require a deposit of GH750 (accumulated through the savings scheme), and the ability to pay GH75 a month in rent in order to access an apartment. Although cooperative members are adamant that this is cheaper than government-built "affordable" housing, it is significantly higher than average rents in Old Fadama. Should a cooperative member find himself or herself unable to pay the rent for whatever reason, they will have to leave the house and be replaced by another member who can afford to pay (Interviews, Adu and Kojo, GHAFUP members, Ashaiman, 30/6/11). As such, and given that the poorest informal workers have no security of income and can be vulnerable to financial crises due to problems such as illness, it is questionable whether this cost-recovery approach to housing will be accessible for the poorest groups and it is likely to leave many without secure housing.

Interviews with Federation members revealed that their upgrading plans were severely curtailed by the lack of resources at their disposal. One member from Old Fadama commented on the difficulty of acquiring land in Accra due to high prices, while another from the Agbogbloshie settlement reported that his savings group wanted to build toilets and improve the drainage in the settlement, but they couldn't because 'we don't have money, and the little that we have will not suffice' (Interview, Nii, GHAFUP member, Agbogbloshie, 16/6/11).

As opposed to rights-based approaches that demand a fairer distribution of wealth, therefore, there is a danger that the SDI approach encourages its members to be resigned to their poverty and live within their means.

This evidence demonstrates that SDI's self-help slum upgrading approach reinforces the marketisation of housing and the disinvestment of the state in social reproduction that has occurred under structural adjustment. It does so by fostering a type of subjectivity amongst informal settlement dwellers that seeks to accommodate itself to, rather than challenge, the commodity status of land and housing. As discussed in Chapter 5, the chronic shortage of affordable housing in Accra is, in part, a product of a process of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession since the 1980s whereby state provision has been rolled back and housing production has been dictated by market forces. However, SDI's approach to addressing housing poverty depoliticises the shelter issue by taking for granted that land and housing are market goods. Rather than addressing the root cause of Accra's housing crisis, therefore, SDI's response to the exclusion of the informal poor from land and housing markets is to organise and discipline this social group so that they can access - and be incorporated into - these markets. As has been argued elsewhere (Burgess 1985, Davis 2006, Di Muzio 2008), therefore, the NGO-led self-help approach depoliticises the housing issue, diverts attention away from the structural causes of poverty, and deters redistributive demands. In the absence of a political solution to this structural problem, individuals who do not submit to the financial discipline required by SDI will continue to be excluded from formal land and housing markets in Accra. These people will have no alternative but to occupy land and build their own housing, just as they did at Old Fadama.

8.5.3 Producing entrepreneurial, financially viable subjects through savings and microfinance

Echoing SDI's official ideology, a PD officer interviewed for this thesis described participation in savings as the 'basic building block' of their approach because it brings people together, mobilises them, and creates a collective resource pool. He argued that GHAFUP provides an alternative system of savings and loans for informal workers who are excluded from the banking financial system. Whereas traditional microcredit exploits the poor by charging exorbitant rates of interest,

he argued, SDI savings, loans and interest rates are controlled and run by the borrowers themselves. He also argued that whereas traditional microcredit businesses prioritise financial sustainability and repayment above all else, SDI's priority with savings is not to prevent defaults but to mobilise people into groups to learn to manage resources collectively (Interview, Kwabena, Officer, People's Dialogue, 20/7/11). As such, informants from various savings groups in different parts of Accra reported that defaults on loans are commonplace. Nana, a Federation member, echoed this message about the value of savings as a mobilisation tool:

If you are saving and you come to meeting, you sit down and you decide what your money can do for you, you share ideas, you bring your own problems, you share it in the meeting, finally you got a solution to it. That is also brings people closer. And that is why we formed the Federation (Interview, Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11).

Another Federation member described how savings are also understood as a means to train people traditionally excluded from the financial system in skills such as saving, managing resources and book keeping. Joining a savings group allows informal settlement dwellers to access a bank account, something they wouldn't be able to do as an individual:

I can't open account alone. To go to bank and open account, in fact it would take so many money. But if we are plenty and then somebody bring 2 Cedis, this one bring 2 Cedis, we gather the money, it will help us and we can open account (Interview, Enoch, GHAFUP member, Agboghloshie, 16/6/11).

As such, SDI's savings are understood by participants in Accra as serving a primarily social function as a means of collective mobilisation and capacity building, rather than as an efficient or profitable microcredit facility. In particular, the intention is to give members the skills and discipline to work with finance and manage resources as part of a collective. Several federation members argued that the savings groups functioned to instill financial discipline, encouraging members to save and invest rather than spend their disposable income:

When we joined the Federation I saw that we can assist people. Yeah. Not by money matters as such, but we educate the people how they should live. Especially when today you brought a few money with you. At least take a portion and then save it. Save it. Save it everyday. And then for some time you see that you are somebody (Interview, Nii, GHAFUP member, Agboglobshie, 16/6/11).

You see at first, you just buy something which is unnecessary, something like, in Ghana, for a funeral we buy clothes and others. Every funeral, people want to buy clothes. But through the Federation and education, we have seen that actually it's nothing. So the money that we use for that thing we have to use it for savings.... So we have advised, if you have money to go and buy yogurt and something like that, we don't go and buy it and use it for the savings. Through this thing we can help us...we have tried to mobilise (the youth) and educate them the same thing. Because when we do that, their future they will be OK (Interview, Enoch, GHAFUP member, Agboglobshie, 16/6/11).

Savings is important because, for me, I would say that when you save, you are saving to improve your life. When you save... you can plan for yourself, you can plan for everything that you want to achieve in life. So for me, I think savings is very important (Interview, Adu, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11).

All three accounts illustrate the role of SDI's savings scheme as a 'technology of the self' that instills discipline in its members and reproduces values and attitudes conducive to a politics of self-help based on careful financial management (Khan and Pieterse 2006). By encouraging informal workers to accumulate savings rather than spending their income on non-essentials such as yogurt or funeral clothes, the savings groups seek to reorient members' relationship with money so that they use it as capital for long term investments rather than for short term pleasures. SDI's 'rituals' of saving and borrowing are therefore fostering an entrepreneurial subjectivity amongst informal settlement dwellers (McFarlane 2012). This is conducive to the financialisation of housing for informal settlement dwellers by refashioning this sub-prime population into reliable, or 'bankable', financial subjects (Gruffydd Jones 2012, forthcoming).

The financialisation of the informal practices of city dwellers should be understood as an insidious form of accumulation by urban dispossession.

Elyachar (2005) argues that attempts by IFIs and their client NGOs to recast the informal poor as 'microentrepreneurs' who are 'empowered' through access to microfinance results in their informal practices, and the relationships and social networks that underpin them, being exploited as the basis of neoliberal market expansion. In the case of Accra, SDI's technologies of the self are encouraging squatters and informal settlement dwellers to think of themselves as self-reliant, disciplined, entrepreneurial subjects who are capable of lifting themselves out of poverty through accessing microfinance as a means to participate in real estate markets. This signifies the enclosure of subjectivities (in addition to material commons) by the logic of capital, and the foreclosure of alternative subjectivities rooted in non-capitalist values, such as those promoted by more radical, rights-based movements of the urban poor. This process of subjectification is an example of enclosure as 'a value practice that clashes with others' (De Angelis 2007: 135).

8.6 SDI as an extension of neoliberal adjustment

Elyachar (2005: 172-173) observes that Appadurai and others who describe NGOs as agents of 'grassroots globalization' or 'governmentality from below' do so on the basis of a false association of NGOs with 'civil society', 'the people' and 'informality' in direct opposition to 'the state' (pp. 172-173). This chapter has dismissed this dichotomy between civil society and state by demonstrating that, rather than the local expression of a grassroots process of globalisation from below, SDI in Accra is working in partnership with IFIs and the state to co-produce entrepreneurial urban governance (McFarlane 2012). In addition, it has asserted the novel argument that this particular NGO is playing an important role in producing dispossession in Accra. Whereas the state employs physical-legal means to directly dispossess the informal proletariat of its urban commons (see Chapter 7), SDI is a form of neoliberal governmentality that produces dispossession through technologies of the self that reshape individual subjectivities. Section 8.5 has identified three levels at which these techniques of subjectification are operating in Accra: by promoting cooperation with and

participation in displacement and gentrification; by producing subjects reconciled to the marketisation of land and housing; and by recasting slum dwellers as microentrepreneurs in order to facilitate financialisation.

This section argues that SDI's approach can be located within the World Bank's 'good governance' agenda that has emerged since the 1980s in response to problems encountered with economic adjustment (see 5.3.7). David Williams (2008) describes 'good governance' as a strategy to move beyond economic adjustment to social, cultural and political adjustment in order to transform the totality of social relations. At the heart of this agenda he argues, is a liberal vision of societal transformation based on the three pillars of a 'governmental' state, an institutional structure to expand a market economy, and perhaps most importantly, 'a society made up of groups and individuals who have attitudes, habits and mores suited to the market economy and liberal social relations' (Williams 2008: 115).

These three areas of reform have been at the heart of World Bank-funded projects in countries like Ghana since the early 1990s (Williams 2008), and the analysis in 8.5 suggests that SDI's activities in Ghana are highly consistent with this agenda of neoliberal adjustment. The practices of this 'civil society' actor further this agenda in multiple ways: First, community-led enumerations and participatory relocation are both techniques that enable the development of a governmental state, which can then use grassroots-produced data to monitor, redevelop and relocate informal settlements such as Old Fadama. Second, by promoting the extension of finance to the informal proletariat so that it can access land and housing markets, SDI is facilitating the expansion of the market economy in Accra. Third, by setting up local NGOs and CBOs that adhere to a prescribed approach in engaging with the state, SDI help to engineer a liberal civil society that will work in partnership, and not in opposition to, the state in order to improve the performance of government. Fourth, by taking on responsibility for the delivery of low cost housing in order to move away from top-down state production, SDI relieves the state of its redistributive function. Finally, SDI's savings groups seek to re-engineer individuals by giving them the

skills, values and discipline to participate in the market economy as good entrepreneurs and financial subjects. That SDI's approach is compatible with the World Bank's agenda of social, political and cultural adjustment is evident from Cities Alliance's decision to fund the expansion of GHAFUP as part of its Land Services and Citizenship (LSC) programme⁵. As such, and in keeping with the continent-wide shift away from unpopular 'direct rule' by the IFIs in the 1980s, SDI is playing an intermediary role so as to facilitate neo-colonial 'indirect rule' by the World Bank and others while creating a façade of local ownership and autonomy over neoliberal adjustment (Hearn 2007: 99).

8.7 Accumulation by urban dispossession: incorporation rather than expulsion

As an agent of accumulation by urban dispossession, SDI's role is to enable capital to overcome limits to accumulation. As demonstrated in 8.5.1, SDI is facilitating the gentrification of Old Fadama by cooperating with the state to relocate the squatters to the urban periphery. As such, it is assisting state-led efforts to overcome a 'limit as political recomposition' and re-enclose a space that has been transformed into an urban commons by the informal proletariat (see 7.3). In addition, by refashioning the informal proletariat into entrepreneurial, financial subjects, SDI is facilitating the expansion of housing and financial markets into a population previously excluded by neoliberal capital. As such, its role is to enable capital to overcome a 'limit as frontier' and colonise a new life world (De Angelis 2007: 143).

As with the examples of accumulation by urban dispossession discussed in Chapter 7, SDI's version of neoliberal governmentality is a form of 'roll out' neoliberalism designed to address the contradictions generated by the 'roll back' phase of neoliberalisation. In particular, it is designed to address the surplussed informal proletariat whose exclusion from formal housing markets has resulted

⁵ <http://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/Ghana-LSC-Factsheet-Final.pdf> (accessed: 12th August 2012).

in a proliferation of informal housing and squatter settlements. However, whereas gentrification and revanchism are based on the *expulsion* of this surplus population (see 7.4), SDI attempts to rectify the failures of structural adjustment via the *integration* of the informal proletariat into land and housing markets through the medium of microfinance. As Mitlin (2008) argues, therefore, SDI intends to use finance as a tool of social change so that the informal urban poor are no longer excluded from the circuits of capital.

SDI's model of development is not straightforwardly neoliberal in the sense that it seeks to recompose society as a marketplace populated by atomised economic actors. Rather, as Mitlin (2011) and McFarlane (2009, 2012) observe, SDI diverges from conventional market approaches by promoting collective forms of organisation, resource management and land tenure amongst informal settlement dwellers. Members of the GHAFUP Amui Dzor Housing Cooperative in Ashaiman spoke about the need to organise themselves into a cooperative because government policies had failed to produce low-income housing for informal workers in their neighbourhood. One federation member explained that federation-built housing was important because people are excluded from the housing market on an individual basis:

To find solution to slums in Ghana, there must be a federation. Because almost every person living in slums cannot afford to build his or her own house (Interview, Adu, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11).

In addition, a PD officer was critical of the government's housing policy based on 'enabling' the private sector and promoting individual homeownership:

Clearly there are certain groups, certain things that are so important that you don't leave it to the private sector. OK, so if the only hope we have as a country is that the market forces would save the poor or the low income, you are dreaming (Interview, Kawame, PD Officer, 18/11/10).

These interviews suggests that PD and GHAFUP have an ambivalent relationship to neoliberalism; although they are ultimately seeking to integrate the urban informal poor into housing markets using the mechanism of microfinance, they seek to do so on the level of the collective by promoting cooperative, rather than individual, property ownership. As such, they understand the SDI approach as alternative to mainstream market provision, which allocates goods on an individual basis and which has previously excluded the informal proletariat from access to housing due to their lack of individual creditworthiness. In this sense, SDI can be understood in terms of a 'middle ground where the logic of competition meets, and mixes with, the logic of cooperation' (Edwards (1999: 162), cited in Mathie and Cunningham 2003: no page).

Although McFarlane (2012) understands this as a contradiction between different logics, I argue that cooperative organisational forms have been adopted by neoliberal urban governance as a means to overcome its own limits and incorporate subjects previously surplus and excluded from financial and real estate markets. As such, in Jessop's (2002: 455) terms, the promotion of 'communitarian values' is a 'flanking mechanism for the inadequacies of the market mechanism'. Rather than posing an alternative to neoliberal urbanism, therefore, SDI's communitarian/cooperativism is intended to flank and complement it by organising 'slum dwellers' into collectives so that they can access finance and purchase land and housing cooperatively.

Following George Caffentzis (2010), this can be understood as an example of recent experiments in 'capitalist commons' as a means to address the failures of neoliberalism. According to Caffentzis, the economic crises and social struggles that have occurred as a result of neoliberal globalisation have provoked capitalist institutions to search for a 'Plan B' to save neoliberal capitalism from its own worse excesses of unfettered marketisation. As a result, and breaking with doctrinaire neoliberals who advocate the privatisation of all resources, the World Bank is increasingly supportive of common property regimes to the extent that they aid the functioning of capitalist markets. This change in tack, Caffentzis (2010: 30) argues, is founded on the argument made by theorists such as

Eleanor Ostrom that a commons can be managed by entrepreneurial, gain-maximising actors and 'does not require the development of non-capitalist forms of sentiment and behaviour in its commoners'. In the case of SDI's promotion of cooperative housing production, it is the failure of neoliberal urban development policies to meet the needs of the surplused informal proletariat and the consequent emergence of a 'planet of slums' that has provoked an attempt by capitalist institutions such as Cities Alliance and UN-Habitat to entertain alternatives to private homeownership for this problematic section of the population. As this chapter demonstrates, the housing commons that are being produced under the SDI model function as a means by which the informal working class are to be integrated into real estate and financial markets as entrepreneurial subjects. As such, these must be understood as capitalist, rather than anti-capitalist commons.

8.8 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that the state is indeed not an adequate unit of analysis, on its own, for understanding dispossession in the cities of the Global South. It has done so by drawing on original empirical research to analyse how a particular civil society actor, Slum Dweller's International, has cooperated with international institutions and the state to co-produce accumulation by urban dispossession. SDI does this through mobilising governmental technologies of the self, designed to reshape the subjectivities of informal settlement dwellers. These subjectification techniques serve three purposes: 1) diffusing resistance to gentrification and displacement through an ideology of partnership and participation; 2) reinforcing the commodity status of land and housing through promoting market-based solutions to urban poverty; 3) and producing financially capable entrepreneurial subjects in order to facilitate the extension of housing finance to the informal proletariat. As such, whereas the state employs physical-legal means to directly dispossess the informal proletariat of its urban commons, this chapter has demonstrated how accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale also entails the enclosure of subjectivities within a market logic

due to the practices of non-governmental actors working in Accra's informal settlements. This is a particularly subtle and insidious form of enclosure that closes down the possibilities for alternative, more radical political responses to urban poverty and marginalisation by refashioning the poor so that they are reconciled to the process of marketisation that is itself the root cause of housing shortages.

As with the state-led forms of dispossession discussed in Chapter 7, SDI's technologies of the self enable capital to overcome limits to accumulation, either by facilitating the enclosure and gentrification of squatted land, or by opening up previously excluded populations to microfinance and real estate markets. Similar to those same state-led forms of dispossession, SDI's interventions are a roll-out mechanism designed to address the failures of structural adjustment that led to the exclusion of the informal proletariat from formal housing markets and the consequent proliferation of informal housing and squatter settlements. However, in contrast to state-led accumulation by urban dispossession, which is premised on the *expulsion* of the informal proletariat, SDI's interventions are premised on the *incorporation* of this surplus population into the circuits of capital. This process of incorporation is achieved through the innovative promotion of cooperative forms as a means to give the informal proletariat access to housing finance and real estate markets. As such, these cooperative forms, or 'capitalist commons', serve as a flanking measure to address shortcomings of roll-back neoliberalism and facilitate further market expansion. Rather than a process of grassroots globalisation from below, therefore, SDI's activities are an extension of the IFI-led process of neo-colonial structural adjustment.

9. Contesting dispossession in the everyday: encroachment, commoning and the right to the city

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a counterpoint to chapters 6-8 by examining the ways in which accumulation by urban dispossession is contested in Accra. In doing so, it explores the particular meaning of 'the right to the city' and 'the urban commons' in this geographical context. This thesis has critiqued Harvey's (2003) capital-centric account of accumulation by dispossession by arguing that state-led primitive accumulation in Accra is a reactive response to the commoning practices of the informal proletariat. This chapter adds meat to the bones of this argument by presenting original empirical research on the political agency of Accra's informal proletariat to demonstrate how these actors contest accumulation by urban dispossession by creating and defending urban commons. To this end, this chapter draws on Asef Bayat's (1997: 57) theory of the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' to argue that the informal proletariat in this context creates commons through everyday acts of direct action to appropriate urban space to meet its needs. Significantly, it also demonstrates how sections of this class have moved beyond acts of quiet encroachment to take collective action in order to defend existing, and create new, urban commons and claim their right to the city.

This chapter proceeds by familiarising the reader with the critical urban theoretical concepts of 'the urban commons' and 'the right to the city', concepts whose meaning in a Global South urban context have not yet been fully explored. Second, it discusses how radical thinkers have debated the political agency of the wageless proletariat, and introduces Bayat's (1997) account of the everyday politics of the 'informal people'. Third, it illustrates the relevance of Bayat's

theory to this study by identifying two widespread practices of quiet encroachment in contemporary Accra. Fourth, it examines the extent to which Accra's informal proletariat has moved beyond individual acts of encroachment to take collective action, how the local political and institutional context has constrained the ability of these actors to take effective collective action, and how attempts have been made to overcome these local limitations, particularly through international networking. Finally, this chapter draws on this account of everyday struggle in Accra to theorise the significance of the urban commons and the right to the city in this particular geographical context.

9.2 Rethinking urban commoning and the right to the city in a Global South urban context

Whereas De Angelis' (2007) conceives of the social field as an ongoing struggle between enclosures and commons in the abstract, several critical urban theorists have begun to examine the particular meaning of 'commons' at the urban scale. Harvey (2012: 73) describes urban commons as a 'social relation' between a 'social group' and 'those aspects of its social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood'. This relation is 'both collective and non-commodified - off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations' (ibid.). Blomley (2008) argues that an urban commons exists when city dwellers have a collective property claim over urban space that clashes with private property rights. This collective claim is 'based upon and enacted through sustained patterns of local use and collective habitation, through ingrained practices of appropriation and "investment"' (ibid: 320). These commons are actively produced by residents through a form of 'place making', and can include 'state, private and collective property, including streets, parks, residential hotels, community centres and so on' (ibid: 316).

Finally, Hodkinson (2012) argues that the establishment of urban commons, such as public housing, contest processes of enclosure by decommodifying urban goods and giving city dwellers a degree of protection from the market and independence from wage labour. He relates the urban commons to the right to

the city and the production of space according to use value rather than exchange value. Although these accounts are useful for understanding the meaning of commons at the urban scale, they are all either based on abstract theorising (Harvey) or concrete research in the cities of the Global North (Blomely; Hodkinson). There is, to date, a lack of in-depth empirical research on how urban commons are produced, and the political role they play, in a Global South urban context.

To recap, in response to what he perceived to be the exclusion, segregation and dispossession that characterised the capitalist city, Henri Lefebvre (1996 [1967]) called for a 'right to the city' that implied the rights to *centrality* (the right not be to consigned to the urban periphery), the right to *participation* (control over the production and management of urban space) and the right to *appropriation* (the right to use space in defiance of private property) for the urban working class. He argued that the realisation of these rights would create a new type of city where the use value of space for its inhabitants would take preference over its exchange value as a means of accumulation.

There is an active debate, discussed in 3.5, over exactly what claiming the right to the city might mean in practice. Margit Mayer (2009) has criticised NGOs, advocacy organisations and international governance bodies for adopting the right to the city slogan and watering it down from an oppositional, transformative demand into a campaign for reforms to make neoliberal urban governance more inclusive to the poor. In response to this trend, several critical urban geographers have argued for a radical reading of Lefebvre in which the realisation of the right to the city implies nothing less than a transformation of the urban process whereby urban space is no longer produced for its exchange value as a means of capital accumulation, and private property rights are replaced by the right of urban inhabitants to exercise collective control over urban development (Dikec and Gilbert 2002; Purcell 2003; Harvey 2008; Mayer 2009).

Dikec and Gilbert (2002: 69) argue that this transformative understanding of the right to the city is about 'substantive practices of citizenship' rather than formal

legal rights. This implies that there is a need to look to the everyday praxis of urban working class inhabitants for substantive practices that realise the rights to centrality, appropriation and participation, and that prioritise use value over exchange value. In the context of the cities of the Global South, Robert Neuwirth (2006: 311) has drawn attention to the everyday praxis of squatters, arguing that they perform concrete actions that claim the right to the city 'not by claiming an abstract right, but by 'taking an actual place to lay their heads'. This is an important argument, as it demonstrates the possibility for developing critical urban theoretical concepts by examining how they relate to the everyday political practices of city dwellers in the Global South. This chapter builds on Neuwirth's argument by drawing on original empirical research to examine how the everyday practices of Accra's informal proletariat can inform our understanding of what the right to the city means in practice.

9.3 Theorising the political agency of the informal proletariat: the quiet encroachment of the ordinary

Before analysing how the struggles of Accra's informal proletariat can develop and nuance our understandings of the critical urban theoretical concepts discussed above, it is necessary to examine how the political agency of this particular class has been theorised by other scholars. In doing so, this section introduces Asef Bayat's (1997) theory of the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary', which is adopted as a framework for understanding the insurgent character of the everyday practices of the urban informal poor in Ghana's capital.

There is a long history of radical thinkers debating how best to understand the political agency of the section of the proletariat that is excluded from wage labour. In contrast to his celebration of the revolutionary industrial working class, Marx and his early followers conceived of the wageless 'lumpen-proletariat' as a class that was unproductive and parasitic on the labour of others and had reactionary political tendencies, often taking sides with the forces of order during times of social unrest (Pithouse 2006; Denning 2010). During the struggles for decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s, however, Frantz Fanon

(1967) resurrected the concept of the lumpen-proletariat and argued for the revolutionary potential of the dispossessed peasants who had migrated to the peripheral shanty towns of Africa's colonial cities:

The men whom the growing population of the country districts and colonial expropriation have brought to desert their family holdings circle tirelessly around the different towns, hoping that one day or another they will be allowed inside. It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpen-proletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people (Fanon 1967 102-103).

However, Fanon also warned, heeding Marx, that

If this available reserve of human effort is not immediately organized by the forces of rebellion, it will find itself fighting as hired soldiers side by side with the colonial troops (Fanon 1967: 109).

More recently, and in light of the global proliferation of wageless proletarians engendered by structural adjustment, Mike Davis (2006: 201) has continued this line of enquiry by concluding his book *Planet of Slums* by asking the question: 'to what extent does an informal proletariat possess that most potent of Marxist talismans: "historical agency"?' Responding to Davis' work, Slavoj Žižek (2004: no page) has argued that it is

surprising how (slum dwellers) conform to the old Marxist definition of the proletarian revolutionary subject: they are 'free' in the double meaning of the word, even more than the classical proletariat ('free' from all substantial ties; dwelling in a free space, outside the regulation of the state); they are a large collective, forcibly thrown into a situation where they have to invent some mode of being-together, and simultaneously deprived of support for their traditional ways of life

He concludes, optimistically, that 'the new forms of social awareness that emerge from slum collectives will be the germs of the future' (ibid.).

Contrary to all of these arguments, Richard Pithouse (2006: 23), a scholar-activist working with the South African shack dwellers movement Abahlali baseMjondolo, is critical of attempts to theorise the political agency of shack dwellers in abstract, global terms. Instead, Pithouse calls for sensitivity to local differences and engagement with the concrete realities of struggle in particular places:

if we are going to enquire to the capacity of the global underclass to resist we should, at the very least, do this via discussion with people in the movements of the poor rather than via entirely speculative and profoundly objectifying social science (Pithouse 2006: 31)

A similar line of methodological critique is articulated by the Iranian sociologist Asef Bayat (1997: 56), who argues that Marx and Fanon's preoccupation with whether this class poses a threat to the existing social order or not makes the mistake of viewing their actions in terms of a simple revolutionary/passive dichotomy that ignores 'the dynamics of their micro-existence and everyday politics'. In response, Bayat set out to pay attention to these dynamics and theorise how the ordinary, everyday practices of the 'informal people' in Iran's cities 'engender significant social changes' (ibid).

Bayat's approach draws on the work of James Scott (1985), who argued that the political agency of the poor cannot be understood in terms of a simple revolutionary/passive dichotomy because in repressive situations where open rebellion was not possible, the poor were engaged in 'everyday acts of peasant resistance' against oppressors, such as foot dragging, sabotage and false compliance. Although Bayat (1997: 56) credits Scott's paradigm for dismissing the revolutionary/passive dichotomy, he argues that it is 'inadequate to account for the dynamics and activities of the urban poor in the Third World'. This is because the 'informal people' are not only engaged in everyday acts of resistance, but they also take offensive action to improve their life chances and restrict the privileges of dominant social groups:

Disenfranchised groups place a great deal of restraint upon the privileges of dominant groups, allocating segments of their life chances (including capital, social goods, opportunity, autonomy and thus power) to themselves (Bayat 2007: 56).

As such Bayat (1997: 57) theorised these everyday practices of the urban 'informal people' - such as squatting, street trading and the illegal tapping of utilities - as 'a silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives'. The goal of these practices is the redistribution of social goods and opportunities (such as land, shelter or public space) and the attainment of cultural and political autonomy from the modern regulations and institutions of the state.

Bayat (1997: 57) argued that these types of direct action cannot be understood in terms of an organised urban social movement because they

are marked by quiet, atomised and prolonged mobilisation with episodic collective action – an open and fleeting struggle without clear leadership, ideology or structured organisation.

Bayat (ibid: 58) argued that squatters, street traders, and other marginalised groups choose these individual acts of direct action partly because 'they are the structurally atomised individuals who operate outside the formal institutions of factories, schools, and associations', and do not have any organisational or institutional mechanisms through which to express their grievances. As such, advances are made 'quietly, individually and gradually' and are not intended as political, but as acts of necessity (ibid: 58).

If their gains are threatened by authority, however, these actors 'become conscious of their actions and the value of their gains, and they defend them collectively and audibly' (ibid: 62). It is at this point that quiet encroachment becomes self-consciously political. The state usually tolerates quiet encroachment until it passes a 'tolerable point', at which point the authorities react to crack down on the encroachers. This is a response to the fact the

informal redistribution of public goods puts a burden on the state's resources, encroachment threatens the property of the rich with whom the state is in alliance, and these autonomous practices undermine the authority of the institutions of government. In the event of a crack down, urban public space is transformed into an 'arena of politics', a site of struggle between the informal poor and the state. This 'street politics' is shaped by 'passive networks' of atomised individuals with a common identity and interests who share space. This shared space allows the passive network to become active and for these individuals to act collectively when threatened:

what mediates between a passive network and action is a common threat. Once these individuals are confronted by a threat to their gains, their passive network spontaneously turns into an active network and collective action' (ibid: 64).

This collective action may take spontaneous forms, such as rioting, or it may lead to political organising in order to defend gains made through encroachment. As such, Bayat describes quiet encroachment as a 'dialectic of individual and collective action' (ibid. 66).

Bayat's account of quiet encroachment theorises the political agency of the informal proletariat by examining their everyday practices in a particular urban context. In doing so, it reveals the dynamics of how these actors take direct action in defiance of private property to appropriate and redistribute urban space in order to meet their socially reproductive needs. As such, his theory provides a useful framework for moving beyond abstract discussions of the right to the city and the urban commons to understand their concrete meaning in the cities of the Global South. To what extent, therefore, might this theoretical framework be useful for understanding the strategies adopted by Accra's informal proletariat to contest accumulation by urban dispossession and extend its control over urban space?

Bayat himself raises two questions about the applicability of his framework in different urban geographical contexts. The first regards the extent to which the

informal proletariat in different cities has embarked on strategies of quiet encroachment. Although Bayat (1997: 67) was writing primarily about Iran, he argued that cities across the developing world were full of potential 'street rebels' because the numbers of the unemployed, informal workers and other marginalised and deinstitutionalised groups had been swelled by rural-urban migration and the effects of structural adjustment. Since these conditions are certainly present in Accra (see Chapter 5), section 9.4 will draw on original empirical research to examine to what extent Accra's informal proletariat has pursued strategies of quiet encroachment in order to advance its interests.

The second question raised by Bayat (1997: 67) regards the extent to which encroachers in different geographical contexts are able to move from passive to active networks, from individual to collective action, and how 'local political cultures and institutions' influence whether or not political mobilisation can occur in a given urban setting. Bayat speculated that in countries with undemocratic political systems and repressive governments, quiet encroachment would be a more viable option than collective protest, whereas in liberal democratic states competition between political parties could give breathing space to the informal poor and allow them to undertake collective action. Section 9.5 will draw on original empirical research to examine the extent to which Accra's informal proletariat have moved beyond individual acts of everyday encroachment to get organised and take collective action, and how Ghana's own political and institutional environment has conditioned and constrained these efforts.

9.4 Quiet encroachment in Accra

This section draws on original empirical research to describe two examples of Accra's informal proletariat using the tactic of quiet encroachment to appropriate to urban space in order to reproduce itself: the occupation of undeveloped state land for agricultural or residential use and the appropriation of public space for informal street trade. It will also outline the reasons given by some encroachers for their actions. This account demonstrates the applicability

of Bayat's (1997) theoretical framework for understanding the everyday practices of Accra's informal proletariat, whilst also problematising some aspects of his analysis.

9.4.1 The occupation of undeveloped state land for agricultural and residential use

In a context where land is scarce and market prices high, many individuals in Accra have taken direct action by encroaching on undeveloped state land. This sort of practice is so widespread that some commentators have questioned the state's ability to control its own land (Kasanga et al. 1996; Larbi et al. 2004). Some of these encroachers have cultivated this land to grow food crops (Larbi et al. 2004; Tettey et al. 2008). The growth of urban agriculture in African cities is a facet of informalisation in the aftermath of structural adjustment, as declining real wages and rising unemployment have prompted city dwellers to grow food to supplement their incomes (Rogerson 1997). As mentioned in Chapter 6, young people in La have occupied undeveloped state land at the Wireless site in order to supplement their incomes by growing food for subsistence use and to sell at market. When interviewed, one of these farmers justified this activity by appealing to historical use rights, arguing that their forefathers had farmed this land in order to feed themselves, and that the younger generation had been dispossessed of their rightful inheritance by the government's actions (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10) (see 7.2.2.1).

As discussed in Chapter 5, the marketisation of housing since the 1980s has contributed to a proliferation of squatter settlements in Accra. The largest and most high profile squatter settlement in the city is that of Old Fadama, located on undeveloped state land in the Agbogbloshie area of the city. As discussed in 6.5, significant numbers of informal workers, especially migrants from the poor rural north, cannot afford to enter the formal housing market in Accra. As such, they have encroached on state land as a strategy to obtain low cost housing in close proximity to livelihood opportunities in the urban core. In research interviews and statements to the press, the squatters justify this strategy and argue that they should not be treated as criminals on the grounds that they are working

people who are acting out of necessity because they are the victims of a housing policy failure:

The situation we find ourselves in is not our own making. It is a policy failure. It's not ours. It's not our making. It's policy failure that is make it this way. Because anyone who comes into Accra can see that a poor person has no place to live. He has to find himself somewhere in the slum communities. What is the government doing about it? The affordable housing scheme that they are putting up - how many of us can afford it? How many of us? We can't. And when the policy that they always put up, they didn't consider the poor people. No. No. They don't consider us. They always consider the middle-income people (Interview, Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10).

Our being here is not by choice but by necessity; we must survive. This problem is not about filth, indiscipline or crime; it is about shortage of affordable and accessible housing in Accra' (Old Fadama spokesperson, quoted in Yankson 2009: no page).

9.4.2 The appropriation of streets and public spaces as a livelihood resource

Following structural adjustment, economic informalisation and mass unemployment has led to the proliferation of street traders in Accra's CBD (see Chapter 5). These informal workers appropriate public space as a livelihood resource, transforming pavements, roads and other public places into improvised marketplaces (Brown 2006). Despite the introduction of the by-law making hawking a criminal offence in 2011, street traders have continued to encroach on public space in the CBD, adopting 'spatial strategies' to evade capture by the Task Force. Strategies adopted by traders include relocating to less frequently policed locations, concealing their goods out of sight, carrying their goods on their heads so that they can make a quick getaway when the officials appear, or paying bribes to officials so that they will leave them alone (Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah 2008; Modern Ghana News 2009b). As such, the AMA has been unable to wrest control of the streets off the encroachers (Obeng-Odoom 2011).

Street traders justify their continued encroachment on the grounds that they do not have an alternative means to make a living and feed themselves and their

dependants. Many of those I interviewed had migrated to Accra due to a lack of employment opportunities in the countryside but had failed to find any formal employment in the capital, and so felt compelled to resort to street hawking (Interview, Charles, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 8/6/11; Interview, Patience, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 8/6/11; Interview, Fuseini, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/6/11; Albert, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/7/11; Interview, Kodwo, United Petty Traders Association member 2, 21/6/11). One interviewee argued that the lack of alternative employment made selling on the streets a necessity:

Employment problem is the major issue in Africa here. Because they cannot create work for these people. And we don't have anything to do. How do you do unless buy and sell? (Interview, Albert, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/7/11).

Another interviewee suggested that petty street trade was one of the only accessible income generating opportunities for informal workers with no access to capital:

everyday we have about 10,000 people come to the trading activities. Because the people think that that place is a very easy place to enter. When you get say 50 Cedis, or 10 Cedis, you can even go to the shop, buy some bread or handkerchief or whatever to come and sell on the roadside or in the traffic or whatever. So trading, everyday the new peoples enter into the trading activities (Interview, David, United Petty Traders Association member, 21/6/11)

In addition, traders' experiences suggest there had been an increase in children and young people engaging in informal commerce due to the introduction of school fees under structural adjustment. Several traders I interviewed noted that pupils often sell on the streets in order to pay their school fees, or that they drop out of school altogether because it is too expensive (Interview, David, United Petty Traders Association member, 21/6/11; Interview, Charles, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 8/6/11). One trader said that he had personally migrated to Accra from the Eastern Region as a teenager because his family could not afford to put him through school (Interview, Charles, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 8/6/11).

9.4.3 Quiet encroachment as a political act

These two examples represent 'a silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives' (Bayat 1997: 57). In keeping with Bayat's theoretical model, each entails an appropriation of space that is enacted 'quietly, individually and gradually' rather than through organised political action (ibid: 62). To this extent, therefore, it is possible to say that Accra's informal proletariat is engaging in strategies of quiet encroachment akin to those originally identified by Bayat in Iran. However, the justifications for encroachment quoted above appear to contradict Bayat's argument that quiet encroachment is understood purely in terms of necessity rather than as a self-consciously political act. Although interviewees framed their actions in terms of necessity and a lack of alternatives in both of the examples discussed above, they also articulated a political analysis of the reasons that compelled them to act in this way, whether because the state had dispossessed them of their ancestral lands, because of a government housing policy failure, or because of a chronic structural employment shortage. As such, although Bayat's theory of quiet encroachment is clearly useful for understanding the political agency of Accra's informal proletariat, his over-simplistic distinction between action which is and is not self-consciously political is problematised by the research presented here.

The next section of the chapter will examine the extent to which Accra's informal proletariat have moved beyond individual acts of encroachment to take collective action to challenge dispossession in Accra, and how the local political and institutional culture has shaped and constrained these efforts.

9.5 From quiet encroachment to collective action

Bayat (2000: 554) argues that although quiet encroachment is the most viable strategy for many of the urban informal poor to improve their lives,

the disenfranchised are unlikely to become a more effective player in a larger sense unless they become mobilized on a collective basis, and their struggles are linked to broader social movements and civil society organizations.

Following the description of individual acts of encroachment in 9.4, this section draws on original empirical research to examine how elements within Accra's informal proletariat have begun to transcend their position as 'structurally atomised individuals' by taking collective action to defend their gains from enclosure and to demand access to urban space from the state (Bayat 1997: 58). In the process, this section analyses how the local political and institutional context in Accra has constrained the ability of these actors to take effective collective action, and how attempts have been made to overcome these local limitations, particularly through international networking.

Chapter 8 has analysed how a number of squatters at Old Fadama have been mobilised by the international NGO Slum Dwellers International to join the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP) in order to engage with the authorities with a view to preventing a forced eviction of the settlement. This is clearly an example of squatters transcending their position as 'structurally atomised individuals' and finding an organisational framework within which to pursue their interests (Bayat 1997: 58). Furthermore, GHAFUP conforms to Bayat's (1997) model of passive and active networks as it was formed in response to an attack by the state on the gains made by the squatters through their everyday practices of encroachment. Since the case of GHAFUP has already been discussed extensively in Chapter 8, the remainder of this chapter will examine two other instances of collective mobilisation in relation to Bayat's theoretical framework. The first example concerns attempts to organise the city's informal street traders, and the second concerns a group of activists in La who have campaigned against the expropriation and privatisation of communal land in the neighbourhood.

9.5.1 Organising the informal workforce

This section examines how informal street hawkers have taken collective action to defend gains made through encroachment in response to the AMA's revanchist decongestion exercise (see Chapters 6 and 7 for an account of the decongestion exercise). Due to the defiant practices of quiet encroachment described above in 9.4, the decongestion exercise has been limited in its impact on the number of traders on Accra's streets. In addition, there have been numerous reported incidents of passive networks of encroachers responding to an attack on their gains by becoming active and taking spontaneous collective action. In order to try and prevent the authorities from evicting them or demolishing their structures, encroachers have resorted to physical force, such as stone-throwing and setting fires. When these confrontations occur, however, the police generally have the upper hand as they are able to deploy tear gas, pepper spray and even live ammunition to subdue the traders. There are no reported instances of an eviction being successfully halted due to the use of physical force by the affected traders.

Since this sort of spontaneous collective action has proved unsuccessful in preventing decongestion, it is necessary to examine the extent to which traders have taken organised collective action to defend their access to urban public space. Many informal street traders in Accra have chosen to belong to traders' associations. According to Mitullah (2004: 12), the role of these associations is

to address problems of street vending, to fight for the rights of the vendors, particularly the right to space, and to protect vendors from harassment, and seek recognition and integration of street vendors in urban development.

When interviewed for this thesis, the spokesperson of the Ghana National of Association of Hawkers (GNAH) said that since most hawkers are not well educated they do not have any influence in the formal institutions of society, and so there is a need for them to create their own organisations to protect their

interests (Interview, Oboye, Organiser, National Association of Hawkers, 3/6/11). An interviewee from the National Petty Traders Association stated that it was the aim of his organisation to bring traders together to put pressure on government to give them 'recognition' and 'respect' (Interview, Joseph, Organiser, National Petty Traders Association, 24/6/11).

The ability of traders' associations to take effective action to achieve these ends has been restricted by the local political and institutional context in several respects. First, there has been a notable lack of organised street protest in opposition to decongestion in Accra. In response to the brutalisation of a hawker by the AMA's Task Force in early 2011, the Market Women Association of Ghana (MWAG) threatened street protests reminiscent of the Arab Spring if Vandepuije did not resign (Interview, Charles, Organiser, Market Women Association of Ghana, 17/5/11). However the Mayor was bullish in his public dismissal of MWAG and the protests did not materialise. This lack of protest activity can be explained by two factors. First, an officer at the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) argues that street traders feel criminalised and lack the confidence to assert themselves and protest against decongestion (Bernice, Officer, Informal Economy Desk, Ghana Trade Union Congress, 3/6/11). Second, traders fear violent repression by the state. A member of the United Petty Traders Association explained his aversion to protesting in these terms:

Demonstrating, it is one of our rights. It is one of our constitutional rights. We have the right to demonstrate when we are not happy about something, about government interventions. But sometimes the state security apparatus take advantage over the demonstration. At the end of the demonstration a lot of people will be injured. And they can accuse you, they can accuse the demonstrators as having caused the anger to the security personnel, that is why they have themselves injured... That's why I don't like to organise people to go on demonstration... If I see my people getting injured in a demonstration it pains me a lot. It pains me a lot (Joseph, Organiser, National Petty Traders Association, 24/6/11).

As such, his association has chosen to try and engage the authorities through lobbying rather than protest action.

Second, although street traders' associations have sought to lobby the AMA over the decongestion exercise, these organisations lack the political influence enjoyed by traders in formal marketplaces (Brown et al. 2010). Kwasi Adu-Amankwah (1999: 7), Deputy Secretary General of Ghana Trades Union Congress observes that

regardless of their numerical strength in relation to the entire workforce, (informal workers) lack representation in the policy process and have no presence in the corridors of decision-making and power.

The lack of influence enjoyed by street traders was evident in the AMA's conduct during the building of the failed pedestrian shopping mall (see Chapter 6). Representatives of both the United Petty Traders Association and the National Petty Traders Association revealed that they attempted to engage with the authorities to advise them of the flaws in the plans for the mall. In both cases, however, the AMA ignored their letters and requests for meetings (Interview, David, United Petty Traders Association member, 21/6/11; Interview, Kodwo, United Petty Traders Association member, 21/6/11; Interview, Joseph, National Petty Traders Association member 1, 24/6/11). This lack of influence is a product of two factors; the AMA's hostility towards informal street trade combined with the weak and atomised character of street traders' organisations.

Research by Mitullah (2003) suggests that the AMA is typical of city authorities across Africa that implement by-laws and build marketplaces without consulting street traders. As discussed in Chapter 6, the AMA treats informal street traders as a source of dirt and disorder rather than citizens and workers who make a valuable contribution to the urban economy, and Brown et al. (2010) argue that the street traders' associations' lack of influence is a result of the outsider status afforded to traders by city authorities. This problem is compounded by the weakness of street traders associations in Accra, who have historically failed to cooperate and coordinate their actions with one another (Mitullah, 2003).

As a result of organisational weaknesses and the AMA's dismissive attitude, therefore, organised traders lack a voice in urban governance. There are currently no formal mechanisms by which negotiations can take place between government and traders' organisations, and engagements tend to take place on an ad hoc basis (War on Want 2006). The weakness of traders' associations and their inability to put pressure on the AMA despite the staggering size of the informal workforce in the city is testament to the difficulty of workplace organising on the streets of Accra. Traders are 'dispersed and heterogenous', fear state repression and their 'delusion of being self-employed could make them disinterested in collective organization' (Obeng-Odoom 2011: 381). Many cannot afford to take time off work to attend meetings, and the instability of their work places is not conducive to organisational continuity (Mitullah 2004).

In response to this situation, and with the support of the trade union movement, there has been a recent push to strengthen Ghana's informal street trader associations and to organise them into a coordinated network that can be more effective in putting pressure on the state to take its members' interests seriously. One of the effects of the informalisation of the Ghanaian workforce since the 1980s has been to undermine trade union membership. In particular, the retrenchment of the public sector under structural adjustment has devastated the traditional support base of trade unions in Ghana, leading to a drastic reduction in the number of unionised workers (Panford 2001).

In 1996, Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) adopted a policy to actively organise the growing number of informal workers in order to expand its membership base and financial resources, strengthen the bargaining position of trade unions, make them more representative and increase their capacity for mass action (Adu-Amankwah 1999). To this end, several of the established formal sector unions that belong to GTUC have attempted to branch out into organising informal workers. In addition, several dedicated informal traders' organisations have been granted associate membership to GTUC (Bernice, Officer, Informal Economy Desk, Ghana Trade Union Congress, 3/6/11).

In 2003 GTUC supported several informal traders' associations to establish a national alliance of street traders' organisations. This organisation, called StreetNet Ghana Alliance, is affiliated to StreetNet International, a global network of membership-based organisations (such as unions, cooperatives and associations) of informal market and street traders. The aim of StreetNet International is to encourage the sharing of information and ideas on the issues that face informal traders and the development of effective organising strategies for promoting the rights of these workers (StreetNet International 2007; Brown et al. 2010). SGA's constitution reveals that it has been established with a view to addressing the weaknesses of street traders' associations in Ghana through strengthening traders' networks, sharing information on effective organising and campaigning strategies, and enabling members to gain an understanding of their common problems. SGA is also committed to promoting the leadership of women is an attempt to address the fact that, although informal commerce is traditionally a female domain, there is a lack of women leaders in many Ghanaian traders' associations. In addition, SGA acknowledges the inequalities and class relationships of exploitation that exist between different types of traders and pledges to prioritise the interests of the poorest traders (War on Want 2009; Brown et al. 2010).

The emphasis placed by SGA on networking is a deliberate attempt to address the weak and atomised character of Ghana's street traders' associations, and their failure to cooperate and take joint action for their members' mutual benefit. Singh (2000) argues that networking between street traders' organisations is essential to give them a 'larger perspective to the struggle' and to raise the 'level of intervention' beyond that of negotiating with local officials for piecemeal concessions. Rose, a market trader and a member of the SGA Coordination Committee and the StreetNet International Council, spoke about how participating in international networking activities with StreetNet has made her realise that hawkers in other countries, such as India, have more power and have established the right to have a presence in their city centres. This has given her insight and encouragement into the importance of getting organised and confronting the authorities in Accra (Interview, Rose, Organiser, StreetNet Ghana

Alliance, 29/6/11). The importance of networking is also acknowledged by other association activists in Accra. When asked what could be done to get the government to pay attention to traders' perspectives, Joseph, an organiser in the United Petty Traders Association commented that there was a need to

widen our spectrum, to widen our size, to make the international world to hear of us (Interview, 24/6/11).

According to Rose, it is a priority of SGA to provide leadership training for traders. This is to address the fact that informal traders tend to have a low degree of education, and therefore often do not have the skills and confidence to engage with the authorities (Interview, Rose, Organiser, StreetNet Ghana Alliance, 29/6/11). In September 2010, SGA organised leadership training for 26 traders, 19 of which were women, focusing on confidence training, networking, lobbying and negotiating with local authorities, media work and public speaking. As such, this training is designed to develop the political power of street traders by giving them the skills and confidence to organise themselves and stand up to the authorities. According to Rose, an organiser in StreetNet Ghana Alliance,

we want to come together, to build ourselves as informal economy workers, to be bold, to know how to speak, to know how to lobby' (Interview, 29/6/11).

Members of the SGA have begun to meet with the AMA to voice their opposition to the decongestion exercise and demand designated spaces for traders within the CBD. SGA's lobbying strategy is to challenge the AMA's perception of informal workers as urban outsiders or outlaws by emphasising that they play a central role in the urban economy, contribute to the city's tax base, and comprise the majority of Accra's workforce (Interview, Rose, Organiser, StreetNet Ghana Alliance, 29/6/11). Despite these efforts, Rose reports that Vanderpuije's hostility to informal traders is making it difficult for SGA to make headway with the AMA:

This new government doesn't seem to like hawkers... we keep on lobbying, keep on lobbying, but this present government is not helping. Each time we want to book

appointment with the AMA, he will tell us that he is busy. He will tell us that he is busy... he doesn't like the hawkers and he doesn't want to see them (Interview, Rose, Organiser, StreetNet Ghana Alliance, 29/6/11).

As such, SGA has to contend with the same institutional animosity towards informal street trade that traders' associations have had to contend with for a long time. However, the need for new forms of organisation to challenge this attitude has been recognised, and in StreetNet there are now attempts to build a national alliance of street hawkers that will have the skills, confidence and collective strength to assert itself and apply pressure when dealing with the state. As such, while local political and institutional factors such as the threat of violence, the hostility of the AMA, and the organisational weakness of the informal sector have shaped and limited the collective response of traders to decongestion in Accra, a concerted effort is now being made to overcome these constraints.

9.5.2 Land activism in La: the PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society for Community Regeneration

This section draws on original empirical research to examine how a group of young people from the neighbourhood of La have taken collective action to contest the dispossession of their historical land commons and to make demands of the state in order re-establish communal access to land.

There is a long tradition of organised opposition to the expropriation and privatisation of communal land in Accra, particularly from Ga and Ga-Dangme organisations that believe that their ethnic group is being dispossessed to the advantage of other Ghanaians. Ethnic activism against the expropriation of Ga lands has its roots in the 1940s, when the Ga State Reformation Association was formed amongst educated natives of Accra to petition against the rapid alienation of land in the area (Quarcoopome 1992). During the 1950s, Nkrumah's CPP also faced fierce resistance over its attempts to extend state control over land in the Accra area from the radical Ga Shifimo Kpee (ibid.). Today, this

tradition of ethnic resistance continues with the Ga-Dangme Council (GDC) and Ga Youth for the Advancement of Justice and Democracy (or the Ga Youth for short). These organisations make the argument that Ga lands have been expropriated for the development of the capital city and that, while this has benefited Ghana in general, this has led to the impoverishment of those neighbourhoods that have lost their communal lands through the urbanisation process. 'Thus', Yeboah (2008: 438) argues,

their case is presented within a political-economy of uneven development based on land and ethnicity that sets the group geographically apart from other Ghanaians living in AMA.

These groups campaign for an end to the privatisation of state lands (Yeboah 2008). For example, when it emerged that Jake Obetsebi Lamptey was attempting to buy the state-owned bungalow that he had occupied whilst in office under the infilling and redevelopment scheme (see 6.3), the Ga Youth picketed the property and demanded that the former minister vacate the house (Modern Ghana News 2008).

The AU Village development that displaced many of the squatter farmers at Wireless (see 6.3) was also subject to political opposition. In September 2006 the Chief of La sought a restraining order through the High Court to halt the development on the grounds that La has never received any compensation for the land, and that under the provisions of the constitution expropriated lands ought to be returned to the original owners if they were no longer being used for the purpose they were originally acquired for (Modern Ghana News 2006). On October 12th, local youths and traditional council members including the Chief marched to the site to protest against the fact that the Ghana@50 Secretariat had refused to halt construction while the matter was in court. Protestors placed a "Stop Work" sign at the entrance to the site and many construction workers temporarily downed tools or left the area in response to the commotion. The Chief told journalists that 'La people want the land to build their own houses. If the land is available, the town is appealing to the Government to give the land

back to us' (Modern Ghana News 2006a). In December 2006, however, the High Court ruled in favour of the government, allowing construction of the mansions to be completed.

In 2010 a group of young people from the neighbourhood of La formed an organisation called the PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society for Community Regeneration. Several members were involved in the agricultural occupation at Wireless and had taken part in the protests against the AU Village in order to defend the vital gains they had made through encroaching on state land. Following the failure of this protest movement, PanAfrikanYemei was formed in order to campaign for the undeveloped state land at the Africa Lake site in La (see 6.3) to be returned to community control. PanAfrikanYemei's members are influenced by the ideas of Kwame Nkrumah and their politics can be described as falling within the Pan-Africanist socialist tradition. They emphasise their groundedness in the community of La whilst also being committed to continent-wide and global change, and the organisation's constitution states that 'the Independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to total Pan-African Liberation in furtherance of Global Justice for all' (PanAfrikanYemei 2010). To this end, PanAfrikanYemei is an active member of the ADIEYIEMANFO Movement of Positive Action Networks, through which it works in close collaboration with various Pan-African and global justice groups both within and outside Ghana, including the Pan-Afrikan Forum of Ghana (PAFOG), the Grassroots South-North Internationalist Forum (GRASSNIF) and the Global Justice Forum (GJF) (PanAfrikanYemei, 2010).

PanAfrikanYemei activists criticise the state land system on the grounds that young people in La have been impoverished by the dispossession of their ancestral lands, and they identify the contrast between the luxury housing built on expropriated La land and their own living conditions in La town as an uneven geography produced by dispossession (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10; Interview, Ebo, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 16/11/10). As young people struggling with unemployment, these activists also criticise the lack of industrialisation and employment creation that has come

from the development of former La lands, and this absence of economic 'trickle-down' benefits enhances their sense of disenfranchisement (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 2/6/11). Due to their intellectual grounding in Nkrumahist ideas, ADIEYIEMANFO frame this process of dispossession as part of a broader structure of neocolonial exploitation in which the indigenous people have been systematically stripped of their natural resources and historical wealth to the advantage of foreign capital and its domestic agents. As such they understand the 'neoliberal capitalist gentrification of the Afrika Lake area' as yet another function of neo-colonialism in Ghana (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO).

PanAfrikanYemei aspire to establish democratic community control over land in their neighbourhood so that they can pursue community-led, democratic, sustainable urban development, which they refer to as 'Pan-Afrikan Community Regeneration for Sustainable World Development' (PanAfrikanYemei 2010). To this end, they have established the Accra Community Regeneration for Sustainable Development Action Forum (ACORSDAF) with a view to initiating legal and extra-legal action' in order to have privatised GaDangme land returned to community control (email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO).

Strategically, these activists believe that it is possible for the urban poor to get organised and put pressure on the state to be responsive to their demands, and to put pressure on the traditional authorities to be more transparent in land matters and to act in the wider community's interest. To this end, they are committed to engaging in 'conscientizational activities of mass education, agitation and organisation' to build a grassroots popular movement for social and environmental justice (email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO). As such, PanAfrikanYemei emphasise that engaging in pedagogical activities is a central part of their work. In particular, its members are heavily involved with climate justice pedagogy and activism and were instrumental in the organisation of Africa's first ever 'Climate Camp', where activists came together in the Ghana's Volta Region to discuss and learn about the idea of climate justice. According to one activist, creating spaces where

people can learn about and practice alternatives is an important part of this pedagogical mission (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10).

To this end, PanAfrikanYemei aim to develop a community-managed 'Community Commons' eco-park and education centre at the Africa Lake site in La. Their stated aim is,

to reclaim the Afrika Lake area and its environs in order to return them into public ownership, as Community Commons, in furtherance of the common good, very much in the spirit and ethos of the original plans of Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO).

PanAfrikanYemei argue that

if the people of La had access to a communal space at Africa Lake then it could provide education, resources, income generating opportunities and an inspiring hub for eco-friendly sustainable development in the community (PanAfrikanYemei 2011).

It is intended that this 'Community Commons' will feature a community education centre that will offer people information about social issues such as climate justice, as well as practical information about renewable energy generation, sustainable building and the like. This education centre would also provide the community with an ICT lab and meeting places. The park would provide the public with a green space for recreational use, a rare thing in contemporary Accra, and it is hoped that employment will be provided for local people through the construction of a hostel and restaurant for visitors, small-scale agricultural activities, fishing on the lake, and workshops for making and selling crafts and artwork (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 6/5/11).

At the time that the project was being envisaged, it was unclear to the activists who owned the land at Africa Lake and why they had let it deteriorate and go to waste. In early 2011, PanAfrikanYemei began working with some British students who were spending a semester studying at the University of Ghana. With the help of these students, the activists decided to approach the local

political representatives and traditional authorities to ask for information about, and assistance with gaining access to, the land. However, neither the local Assemblyman nor the La Traditional Council was willing to support the activists with their project. In addition, staff in the Lands Commission attempted to extort large amounts of money out of the activists in exchange for information, leading to long delays in the campaign. Eventually, the activists acquired documentation that revealed that the land had been leased to a company named Africa Lake Amusements. Despite this breakthrough, the activists were still in the dark as to the owner's plans for the land, and it was only when this author discovered the Legacy Group's website that they learned of the plan to turn the lake into a luxury mixed use development (see 6.3) (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 2/6/11; Interview, Sarah, British Student, 2/6/11).

Inspired by the global Occupy movement, PanAfrikanYemei and ADIEYIEMANFO began to discuss occupation as a possible tactic to demand the return of the land to community use. However, it was judged that a full occupation of the land was not safe due to the threat of violence from the police and the private land guards employed to guard Africa Lake. As such, under the banner of the 'Hedzoleklowa Africa Lake Occupation Posuban' campaign, Occupy Guerilla Peace Brigades were formed to carry out 'flying occupations'. This involved Africa Lake and other sites being visited by activists who decorated the sites with slogans and banners to raise local awareness of, and support for, their campaign (Interview, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO, 2/3/13). This tactic has been used in conjunction with the international circulation of emails appealing for expressions of support with a view to putting pressure on the government to meet their demands and to refrain from 'reactionary violence' (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO).

Through the formation of the PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society for Community Regeneration and their participation in the ADIEYIEMANFO Movement of Positive Action Networks, these actors have moved from everyday acts of quiet encroachment on the undeveloped land at Wireless, to becoming an active network and defending their gains through collective protest against the

AU Village development, to forming a political organisation in order to demand access to urban space from the state. This process can also be understood in terms of a shift from occupation as an everyday informal praxis to Occupation as the basis for a political organising strategy, as inspired by activists in New York and London.

It is possible to identify several factors particular to the local political and institutional environment that have limited the ability of these activists to take effective collective action. The first regards the effect that poverty and a lack of resources have on organising. Tettey et al. (2008) argue that the,

tendency towards elite capture of communal lands has met with protests and legal challenges from communities. But in a context where control over state institutions, the coercive apparatus of the state, and resources for fighting legal battles reside with those who have taken over these lands, poor members of communities have to contend with their losses in many cases (Tettey 2008: 138-139).

According to one of the members of PanAfrikanYemei, young people in La currently lack the resources to fight the state and the traditional authorities, and this makes achieving basic things, like getting media coverage, very difficult. This has had a negative impact on the effectiveness of protest movements such as the campaign against the AU Village. In addition, Kwesi, an activist with PanAfrikanYemei, argues that it is difficult to sustain a long-term campaign when the movement base is composed of poor, unemployed or informally employed youth because people are compelled to invest most of their time and energy into day-to-day survival:

they have injected my people with poverty. So organising my people is not easy at all for me. All the time, this man is going to find daily bread, this man is going to find daily bread...everybody is busy finding daily bread' (Interview, 16/11/10).

The second factor that has limited the effectiveness of the transition from everyday encroachment to collective action is the secrecy, corruption, and vested interests encountered by activists when interacting with powerful institutions such as the state land system and traditional authorities. As discussed in 7.2.2.1,

corruption and a lack of transparency in the public land system makes it very hard for those who don't have money or connections to get access to information, and this can make engaging in land struggles prohibitively time consuming and expensive. Through initiatives such as the Land Information Data Bank (see 6.3), the government prioritises making land, and information on land, accessible to investors so as to facilitate private sector-led development. However, as discussed above, the Lands Commission made it very difficult, expensive and time consuming for a not-for-profit group to obtain information that should be, in theory, available to the public. PanAfrikanYemei argue that this lack of transparency has had the effect of discouraging the poor from taking collective action to challenge the government over land issues (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 13/7/11).

A related problem is that of the lack of transparency in the traditional authorities' land dealings. Despite publically taking the side of protesters during the AU Village conflict, the La Traditional Council has been suspected by community members of being secretly in league with the government and having a personal vested interest in the development (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 13/7/11; Interview, James, Trustee, East Dadekotopon Development Trust, 15/7/11). As discussed in 7.2.4, these suspicions are fuelled by the lack of community participation, transparency and accountability in the customary land system. This was illustrated in the La Traditional Council's flat refusal to grant PanAfrikanYemei a meeting about the Africa Lake project (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 2/6/11; Interview, Sarah, British Student, 2/6/11).

A consequence of this lack of transparency is that anti-dispossession activists do not know whether the traditional authorities are on their side or not. Some believe that the Traditional Council's decision to publically challenge the government in the courts was a diversion intended to demobilise the grassroots protest movement (Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 16/11/10). This distrust of the traditional authorities is compounded by a lack of faith in the courts as a means of resolving land disputes. At the time that the matter was in court, the

Chief Justice was publically accused of having a vested interest in the AU Village development (Interview, James, Trustee, East Dadekotopon Development Trust, 15/7/11). Confidence in the judicial system has been undermined by the perception that the judiciary tends to favour the wealthy and well-educated elite and often also have a vested interest in these developments (Tettey et al. 2008). In sum, the opacity of these powerful institutions has made it extremely difficult for the dispossessed to take collective action to pursue their interests where land is concerned. According to one activist,

we the people of La, we are not seeing what is going on in La... it's like we are living in darkness (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 13/7/11).

The third factor that has constrained the transition from everyday encroachment to collective action is the way in which the threat of violent repression has limited the scope for taking overt collective direct action. The formation of the Occupy Guerilla Peace Brigades (discussed above) is a local adaptation of the Occupy tactic based on the political realities on the ground in Ghana. Due to fear of violent repression by private land guards and the police, PanAfrikanYemei and ADIEYIEMANFO have decided that they need to build up a broader popular movement before they can take the risk of doing confrontational land occupations:

we cannot progress the Occupy movement seriously by doing things everywhere exactly as they started with Occupy Wall Street (OWS) in the United States of America and Occupy London Stock Exchange (OLSX) in the United Kingdom. Rather than gather people together in static encampments as done in the USA and the UK, here in Ghana and in most parts of the continent and diaspora of Afrika, it is necessary and far better to organise Activists into small, mobile and fast dashing units to carry out hit-and-run Occupy operations, with the topmost prioritization of revolutionary conscientizational activities of mass education, agitation and organisation towards independent community grassroots people's self-empowerment (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO).

Awareness of these local limitations has led PanAfrikanYemei to adopt an internationalist orientation and to build relationships with activist networks and

groups outside of Ghana in order to help publicise their campaign in the global media and put pressure onto the government (Interview, Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 13/7/11). This approach is evident in the international circulation of an appeal for expressions of support for the Hedzoleklowa Africa Lake Occupation Posuban campaign with a view to putting pressure on the government to respond to their demands and to refrain from 'reactionary violence' (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO). This strategy has been informed by the fact that activists within ADIEYIEMANFO believe that President Mahama represents a relatively leftwing tendency within the NDC, and that this tendency is likely to be willing to respond to pressure from, and engage constructively with, grassroots progressive forces (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO). This cautious optimism has informed PanAfrikanYemei's strategy of working to build a critical mass from below, in combination with international support, so as to put pressure on the government to take their ideas seriously (Interview, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO, 2/3/13).

9.6 Theorising the right to the city and the urban commons in Accra

Drawing on original empirical research, this chapter has used Asef Bayat's (1997) theory of the quiet encroachment of the ordinary to theorise how the informal proletariat has contested accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. It has demonstrated that this class has redistributed urban space 'quietly, individually and gradually' through everyday practices of quiet encroachment such as occupying undeveloped land for agricultural or residential use, or appropriating public space as a livelihood resource (Bayat 2007: 62). In addition, it has demonstrated that sections of Accra's informal proletariat have transcended these uncoordinated acts of direct action to get organised and act collectively in order to defend their access to urban space from enclosure. In the process, it has revealed how local political and institutional factors have constrained the ability of this class to act collectively, and how these actors have

attempted to overcome these constraints, particularly through international networking efforts that transcend the local. Returning to the critical urban theoretical concepts discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this section will argue that these insights into how dispossession is actually contested in Accra can provide a greater understanding of the concrete meaning of 'the urban commons' and 'the right to the city' in this particular context.

First, Bayat's (1997: 66) 'dialectic of individual and collective action' is key to understanding how actually existing urban commons are created and defended in Accra. The two examples of quiet encroachment discussed in 9.4 should be understood in terms of the production of urban commons by Accra's informal proletariat. These everyday practices of encroachment undermine private property and create collective property claims through patterns of appropriation and use that address unmet needs and contribute towards a process of place making (Blomley 2008). As discussed in 7.2.1, these 'actually existing commons' (Eizenberg 2012) are not by any means ideal, anti-capitalist spaces that are totally 'off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations' (Harvey 2012: 73). Rather, they are incomplete, imperfect and 'have components that contradict the ideal type' (Eizenberg 2012: 765). However, they should be thought of as commons nonetheless, because they signify resources that have been collectively appropriated (albeit through individual acts of encroachment) in defiance of private property claims in order to provide its users with 'various degrees of protection from the market' (De Angelis 2007: 145).

This protection from the market takes various forms. In the case of Old Fadama, quiet encroachment affords protection to the informal poor by providing access to centrally located housing at well below the market rate. In the case of street hawking, quiet encroachment gives informal workers collective access to a livelihood resource that enables them to generate some income despite their exclusion from the capital relation. In the case of urban agriculture, quiet encroachment enables people some degree of self-reliance by being able to produce their own food. As such, these actually existing commons are extremely important in Accra because they allow the surplussed informal proletariat to

reproduce itself independently of wage labour and formal markets. Without these commons, those excluded from the capital relation would have no means to meet their reproductive needs.

Whereas existing Marxist theories of commoning, developed largely with reference to the Global North, tend to concentrate on organised collective action, quiet encroachment, a process of appropriation that is enacted 'quietly, individually and gradually', is the preferred strategy of the informal proletariat in contexts where there is a high risk of state repression (Bayat 1997: 62). As such, this chapter contributes a new geographical perspective to discussions of the urban commons by examining how they are actually produced by the informal proletariat in a Global South city.

As De Angelis (2007) argues, commons imply communities working in cooperation. Although Accra's informal proletariat tend to create commons through everyday acts of quiet encroachment, this chapter has documented two instances where actors have cooperated to take collective action in order to defend their commons from enclosure by the state. As such, urban commoning in Accra takes the form of Bayat's (1997: 66) 'dialectic of individual and collective action'. In the case of PanAfrikanYemei, the actors concerned have made a transition from quietly creating an urban commons through encroaching on state land, to protesting against the enclosure of this commons, to organising a campaign to make demands on the state for access to land with a view to creating a new 'Community Commons' at Africa Lake (Email communication, Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO). This illustrates how, as Pusey et al. (2011) and Hodgkinson (2012) argue, actions to defend old and produce new urban commons are intrinsically linked and often reinforce one another.

Bayat's (1997) concept is also important for understanding how claiming the right to the city is latent, if not fully realised, within the everyday praxis of the informal proletariat in the cities of the Global South. Put in Lefebvrian terms, quiet encroachment in Accra undermines the exchange value of urban space as a means of capital accumulation, and asserts its use value as a means of

reproduction for those urban inhabitants who have been surplusd by capital and the state. In the process, it disregards private property and contests processes of segregation and displacement by seizing control of centrally located space. As such, the 'silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful' can be understood in terms of claiming the right to the city as an everyday urban praxis whereby space is appropriated, produced and used in order to satisfy human need, in defiance of laws that prioritise private property (Bayat, 1997: 57).

It is possible to identify the rights to centrality, participation and appropriation as latent within these everyday practices. Individuals engaged in acts of quiet encroachment are seizing centrally located space and refusing to be consigned to the urban periphery. In doing so, they are contesting the right of property owners to exercise a monopoly over the production and use of urban space. However, as long as these encroachers are uncoordinated and disorganised, they will be vulnerable to processes of enclosure, whether enacted by the state or non-governmental actors. As such, for this latent right to the city to become fully realised requires Accra's informal proletariat to take collective action to defend its urban commons from accumulation by urban dispossession and to organise the creation of new commons. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to devise a political strategy for the defence and multiplication of the urban commons in Accra, Chapter 10 concludes with a speculative discussion of the possibilities for an alternative urban future based on the 'circulation' of the urban commons (Dyer-Witthford 2006).

9.7 Summary

This chapter has examined the ways in which Accra's informal proletariat is contesting the processes of accumulation by urban dispossession discussed in chapters 6-8. In the process, it has contributed new insights into the meaning of 'the urban commons' and 'the right to the city' in this particular urban context. This chapter has argued that Accra's informal proletariat engages in everyday practices of 'quiet encroachment' in order to appropriate land for food

production and housing, and public space for livelihood activities. It is through these practices that these actors create urban commons that enable them to reproduce themselves despite their exclusion from wage labour and formal capitalist markets. As such, this chapter has argued that the concept of quiet encroachment is the key to moving beyond discussions of commoning as an abstract social force to understanding the particular form that urban commoning takes amongst the informal proletariat in Accra. In addition, it is argued that the right to the city is latent, if not fully realised, within these practices which undermine private property and the exchange value of urban space as a means of capital accumulation and assert its use value as a collective means of social reproduction for surplus populations.

This chapter has also revealed the extent to which Accra's informal proletariat have transcended individual acts of quiet encroachment to take collective action to defend existing, and create new, urban commons. It has explored two examples of organising amongst informal street traders and land activists to identify how local political and institutional contextual factors constrain the ability of the informal proletariat to take effective collective action, and how these actors have attempted to overcome these local constraints, particularly through international networking efforts. It is through collective organising efforts such as these that Accra's dispossessed can fully claim their rights to centrality, participation and appropriation.

10. Conclusions

10.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored the actors, motives, mechanisms and struggles that lie behind accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale – or *accumulation by urban dispossession* - in Accra, Ghana. The preceding chapters have examined how and why the state and non-governmental actors combine to produce dispossession in this urban context, and how these processes of dispossession are contested by Accra's informal proletariat. This chapter reviews the findings in light of the original research questions. First, it gives a brief overview of the historical and intellectual context within which the research is located. Second, it recapitulates the objectives and questions that guided the research, and the approach adopted to answer these questions. Third, it summarises the general conclusions of the thesis. Finally, it tentatively discusses the political possibilities for creating an alternative urban future that is not characterised by segregation, inequality and dispossession.

10.2 Locating the research

Global economic restructuring since the 1970s has witnessed the widespread, if uneven, creative destruction of Fordist production and welfare states in the Global North, alongside the dismantling of developmental states in the postcolonial South. Whether pursued by elected rightwing governments in North America and Western Europe, or imposed by unaccountable international institutions in Africa and Latin America, it has been possible to discern similar social and economic processes at work around the globe as a result of neoliberal reforms: the downsizing and privatisation of the public sector, a shift from state-led to private sector growth-oriented development, the globalisation of finance and production flows leading to the weakening of organised labour, and, fundamentally, the imposition of market logics in all areas of social life. The net effect over the past four decades has been a transfer of resources from public

and collective to private ownership, a shift in the balance of power from workers to capital, and a uniform deepening of inequalities.

Within this context, theorists have become interested in the renewed importance of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation for understanding the present phase of capitalist development. While this concept was originally intended to explain how feudalism in Western Europe came to be replaced by the capitalist mode of production, numerous features of neoliberal globalisation have been identified as part of a wave of 'new enclosures' that have swept the globe since the 1970s. These include: the destruction of non-capitalist and subsistence economies by liberalisation policies; the incorporation of the former communist states into the world market; the abolition or disciplinary reform of welfare entitlements in the name of fiscal austerity; the aggressive privatisation and commodification of resources, knowledges and spaces previously off limits to capital; the destruction of the environmental commons by pollution and climate change; and the financialisation of new areas of social life and the predatory expansion of the credit system to previously excluded 'sub-prime' populations (Midnight Notes 1990; Harvey 2003; Sassen 2010). The evidence that enclosure is fundamental to neoliberal globalisation is so overwhelming that David Harvey (2003) has argued that it no longer makes sense to call it "primitive" accumulation, opting instead for 'accumulation by dispossession'.

Although scholars have adopted Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession to explain a range of contemporary phenomena occurring at different geographical scales, there has, to date, been a lack of in-depth research into accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale. Theorists have tended to discuss contemporary primitive accumulation in abstract terms, drawing on urban examples in a superficial fashion to illustrate their arguments in passing. This has prompted calls for greater historical and geographical specificity as well as in-depth empirical and theoretical research on urban accumulation by dispossession in its own right (Hart, 2006; Hodkinson, 2012). Within critical urban theory, there is rich tradition of research that has focused on the city as its object of analysis for understanding neoliberal capitalism. As such, literatures on

urban entrepreneurialism, gentrification, revanchism and the right to the city all provide useful insights into the mechanisms through which class-based processes of dispossession occur in the neoliberal city. Historically, however, these approaches have not theorised these mechanisms as urban expressions of the new enclosures that are currently enveloping the globe. Furthermore, although there have been several recent efforts to conceptualise processes of gentrification in terms of the enclosure of urban commons (Blomley, 2008; Hodkinson, 2012; Harvey, 2012), research in this vein has so far been limited to the cities of Europe and North America. As such, following recent calls to 'decolonise' urban theory by producing knowledge according to the experience of diverse 'ordinary cities' around the globe, there is a pressing need for research that examines the particular meaning of enclosures and commons in the cities of the Global South (Robinson 2002; Lees 2012).

This thesis has sought to address these limitations by investigating the particular character that accumulation by dispossession assumes at the urban scale through an empirical case study of the city of Accra, Ghana. This research was guided by the following questions:

- Through what mechanisms is accumulation by dispossession enacted at the urban scale in Accra, Ghana?
- What are the agents of accumulation by dispossession in Accra?
- Is accumulation by dispossession in Accra a means to create profitable outlets for capital or a response to working class struggle?
- How does primitive accumulation and proletarianisation in this context differ to the 'classic' form identified by Marx in England?
- How is accumulation by dispossession contested and disrupted in this context?

In order to answer these questions, a qualitative approach was adopted that combined interviews, documentary analysis, ethnography, and collaborative scholar activism. In an effort to avoid reproducing the colonial gaze evident in Mike Davis' (2006) *Planet of Slums* (see 4.2.2), this study has sought to engage

with, and give a platform to, the perspectives of the dispossessed and those struggling against dispossession in Accra.

10.3 Conclusions

This thesis offers four general conclusions about the form that accumulation by dispossession takes at the urban scale in Accra, Ghana. First, the enclosure of the urban commons, or *accumulation by urban dispossession*, in Accra is a neoliberal 'roll-out' strategy enacted primarily by the state in response to the limits placed on capital by the urban commoning practices of the informal proletariat. Second, the processes of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession and state-led accumulation by urban dispossession discussed by the research differ from the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation described by Marx on the grounds that they are based on the expulsion of the dispossessed rather than their incorporation into the capital relation as labour power. Third, non-state actors such as NGOs and IFIs are also responsible for enacting accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. Fourth, Accra's informal proletariat contests dispossession by creating urban commons through everyday acts of 'quiet encroachment' and defending them through collective organising efforts. I now set out these four principal conclusions in more depth.

10.3.1 Accumulation by urban dispossession is a strategic response to urban commoning

The first conclusion of this thesis is that the enclosure of the urban commons, or *accumulation by urban dispossession*, in Accra is a neoliberal 'roll out' strategy enacted primarily by the state in response to limits placed on capital by the urban commoning practices of the informal proletariat. Contrary to Harvey's (2003) capital-centric theory of accumulation by dispossession, therefore, this research adds weight to the argument that the continuous nature of primitive accumulation is a result of the continuous nature of social struggles, and that the new enclosures are a response to the limits to capital posed by commoning practices (De Angelis 2007). Furthermore, this research offers an original

contribution to this debate by demonstrating how De Angelis' (2007) abstract conceptualisation of the social field as an ongoing struggle between enclosures and commons has particular meaning at the urban scale.

To some extent Harvey's (2003), capital-centric perspective is useful for explaining accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. It is possible to argue that the entrepreneurial state is compelled to enclose the urban commons in order to create profitable outlets for capital in the built environment. This explanation is insufficient in itself, however, as it does not acknowledge the agency of the city dwellers that actively produce and defend these urban commons and create limits to entrepreneurial attempts to valorise urban space in the process. Drawing on De Angelis (2007), some of these limits are posed by pre-capitalist spaces of communal land tenure that discourage investment in the built environment (a 'limit as frontier'), while others are posed by the occupation of previously enclosed spaces, such as the appropriation of streets and public spaces by hawkers and the occupation of undeveloped land by squatters (a 'limit of political recomposition'). As such, state-led accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra should be understood as a largely reactive attempt to overcome the limits to capital created by an opposing social force.

This thesis has developed this insight further by drawing on critical urban theory to argue that accumulation by urban dispossession is a form of 'roll-out' neoliberalism embarked upon by the state in response to the contradictions that have been produced at the urban scale by the 'roll-back' phase of neoliberalisation. Following structural adjustment and the rolling back of the postcolonial developmental state, several related processes of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession have combined to produce a large informal proletariat in Accra that is surplusd from the formal workforce and excluded from formal housing markets. These processes of dispossession include: the expropriation and proletarianisation of the indigenous Ga by the state land system; rural-urban migration encouraged by uneven development and the commodification of rural agricultural land; the destruction of the public sector and state-led mode of development leading to the retrenchment and informalisation of the workforce; and the disinvestment of the state in social

reproduction and the marketisation of housing provision. Since it is surplus by capital and the state and excluded from formal housing markets, the informal proletariat produced by these historical-geographical processes is compelled to create urban commons by appropriating vacant land, streets and public spaces in order to reproduce itself. Since these commoning practices pose limits to entrepreneurial urban development strategies, the state is compelled to engage in new rounds of dispossession by enclosing the urban commons in order to overcome these limits.

As such, this thesis has argued that state-led accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra is an urban 'roll out' strategy designed to break down the barriers to accumulation posed by the commoning practices of the surplus population produced by the 'roll back' phase of neoliberalisation. Following Perelman's (2000: 14) discussion of the two 'blades' of primitive accumulation in England, this insight also demonstrates how different types of enclosure combine to produce accumulation by urban dispossession in contemporary Accra. As such, this research has contributed substantively to 'tracing the intersections and terse relations between different forms and processes' of enclosure (Vasudevan et al. 2008: 1645).

This thesis has identified three physical-legal mechanisms through which the state engages in accumulation by urban dispossession in contemporary Accra: the privatisation of communal land for elite development projects; the cleansing of informal street traders from the city's CBD; and the planned eviction and redevelopment of the Old Fadama squatter settlement. It is argued that all three strategies betray the characteristics of strategic state-led gentrification. This draws attention to the importance of place and displacement to understanding accumulation by urban dispossession at the urban scale. Whereas urban commoning can be understood as a process of *place making* (Blomley 2008), viewing the various physical-legal mechanisms of dispossession employed by the state in Accra through the lens of gentrification theory reveals that processes of *displacement*, whereby city dwellers are separated from the places they create and inhabit, are central to accumulation by urban dispossession.

Since state actors justified all three strategies in entrepreneurial terms of attracting tourism and investment and stimulating the growth of the private sector (especially in the area of real estate development), this research reinforces Smith's (2002) thesis that state-led gentrification has become globalised as an entrepreneurial development strategy. However, this thesis has demonstrated that actually existing gentrification in Accra is not merely an 'urban shadow' of similar processes in the metropolises of the Global North (McFarlane 2008). Rather, actually existing gentrification in Accra is distinguishable from similar processes in European and North American cities by the *neo-colonial* character that it assumes. This is the result of an entrepreneurial urban policy framework being imposed within a social, economic and geographical context that has been shaped by decades of neo-colonial capitalism. As such, this thesis makes an original contribution to the 'decolonisation' of critical urban theory in general, and gentrification research in particular, by providing an original insight into how processes of gentrification play out in a postcolonial African city (Robinson 2002; Lees 2012). It also contributes to a 'queering' of critical urban theory by demonstrating that neo-colonialism, as well as neoliberalism, is responsible for class-based processes of dispossession (Pollard et al. 2009). As such, this thesis demonstrates that, in addition to the more traditional focus on neoliberal urbanisms, a postcolonial approach to critical urban theory requires more research into geographies of neo-colonialism in the Global South.

In addition to the physical-legal mechanisms of dispossession described above, this thesis has identified discursive mechanisms employed by state to the same end. In order to justify the use of state force to displace informal street traders and squatters to the urban periphery, state actors have resorted to mobilising a revanchist discourse that frames these groups as a source of dirt and disorder whose presence is undermining efforts to transform Accra into a 'Millennium City'. This is a particularly neo-colonial form of revanchism that is based on an ideological binary between modernity, represented by the desirable traits of cleanliness, order and efficiency, on the one hand, and informality, associated

with the non-modern traits of dirt, disease, crime and disorder, on the other. This ideological binary underpins efforts to exclude informal street trade from a modernised, globalised urban core in order to create a centre-periphery structure similar to that of colonial Accra.

Before moving on to the second conclusion, a caveat is in order: although the central and local state is the primary agent of accumulation by urban dispossession, as I have argued, the state is not an uncomplicated, monolithic, unitary actor. This thesis has demonstrated that the Ghanaian state is subject to internal conflicts and contradictions regarding how best to govern Accra's surplussed informal proletariat, evidenced by state-sponsored initiatives to promote the informal sector as well as central government interventions to halt the AMA's decongestion exercise. As such, the research presented in this thesis has cast doubt on Obeng-Odoom's (2011) argument that Ghanaian state has adopted a combative stance towards the informal sector. This thesis has sought to nuance this argument by suggesting that there are certain elements within the state, particularly the entrepreneurial AMA, that view the spatial practices of Accra's informal proletariat as a barrier to progress, but that these elements are not necessarily representative of 'the state' in general.

10.3.2 Primitive accumulation in neoliberal Ghana is characterised by the expulsion, instead of the incorporation, of the dispossessed

The second conclusion of this thesis is that the processes of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession and state-led accumulation by urban dispossession discussed by the research differ from the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation described by Marx on the grounds that they are based on the expulsion of the dispossessed rather than their incorporation into the capital relation as labour power. As discussed in Chapter 2, orthodox Marxists have tended to understand Marx's description of primitive accumulation as a means to create a disciplined proletariat dependent on selling its labour for its survival as archetypical. To some extent, this assumption is also present within the work of autonomist Marxists such as Bonefeld (2001) and De Angelis (2001), who argue that the

constant separation of producers from the means of production is the means by which the capital relation is reproduced. Furthermore, Federici's (1991) analysis of the new enclosures in Africa argues that structural adjustment plays an analogous role to the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation by privatising communal land in order to create a disciplined, wage-dependent proletariat.

Contrary to these accounts, however, this thesis argues that the processes of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession that are responsible for Accra's unequal urban geography have produced a large informal proletariat that is surplussed from formal employment. In contrast to the 'classic form' of primitive accumulation in which proletarianisation involved the *incorporation* of the dispossessed into the urban industrial workforce, therefore, the creative destruction of Ghana's postcolonial developmental state did not serve the purpose of creating a supply of labour to be exploited by productive capital in the cities. While structural adjustment involves the incorporation of material goods such as land and housing into the circuits of capital, therefore, it has also led to the 'expulsion' of the informal proletariat from the formal capitalist economy (Sassen, 2010).

Regarding state-led accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra, Obeng-Odoom (2010a) argues that the state's assault on the informal sector is designed to benefit capital by creating a large urban labour surplus to keep wages low and to discipline the workforce with the threat of unemployment. However, this explanation ignores the fact that decades of accumulation by neo-colonial dispossession have already created a huge industrial reserve army in Accra, and that this surplus population is creating barriers to accumulation through its presence in the city, and particularly its commoning practices. As such, Obeng-Odoom fails to acknowledge the contradictory role that an unemployed surplus population plays in relation to accumulation at the urban scale (Mitchell 2003). This thesis draws on original empirical research to argue that role of the AMA's decongestion exercise and the planned eviction of Old Fadama is not to create a labour surplus, but to exclude it from the streets and public spaces and displace it from inner city neighbourhoods to the urban fringe so that its presence does

not disrupt the AMA's entrepreneurial development strategy and the circulation of capital. As such, rather than creating a labour supply for productive capital, state-led accumulation by urban dispossession facilitates the extraction of wealth from the urban fabric by enclosing the urban commons and the expulsion of the informal proletariat to the urban periphery (Sassen, 2010).

This insight offers an original contribution to feminist critiques of orthodox Marxist accounts of primitive accumulation that view the experience of the European (male) industrial working class as archetypal. By providing an empirically-informed account of the experience of Accra's informal proletariat, this thesis contributes to understandings of how primitive accumulation is not a uniform experience but has differential effects within the global working class (Federici, 2004). In addition, whereas orthodox Marxism has tended to view primitive accumulation as progressive because it leads to the creation of the industrial proletariat (the privileged agent of historical change), *Midnight Notes* (1990) argue that the preservation of commons is strategically important for working class struggle. This thesis adds weight to *Midnight Notes'* argument by demonstrating that the creation and defence of urban commons is necessary for the informal proletariat to reproduce itself despite its exclusion from the capital relation.

10.3.3 Non-state actors also play a role in accumulation by urban dispossession

The third conclusion of this thesis is that non-state actors are also responsible for enacting accumulation by urban dispossession in Accra. In making this argument, this thesis builds on research conducted by Elyachar (2005) in Cairo to contribute to understandings of how NGOs and IFIs combine with the state to engender dispossession at the urban scale in the Global South. Previous research on the activities of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in Accra has largely taken an uncritical approach that reiterates the NGO's own ideology (Grant, 2009; Afenah 2011). Contrary to arguments that SDI's presence in Accra is democratising urban development and enabling the previously marginalised

urban poor to claim the right to the city, however, this thesis uses original empirical research to argue that SDI plays a key role in co-producing neoliberal urban governance and is working in partnership with the state and IFIs to engender accumulation by urban dispossession. As such, this research questions the dichotomy between 'civil society' and 'the state' that is suggested by SDI's own ideology (Elyachar, 2005). Although some researchers have adopted a more critical perspective on SDI, this non-state actor's role as an agent of primitive accumulation at the urban scale has not yet been acknowledged (Khan and Pieterse 2006; Whitehead and More 2007; Roy 2009; Huchzermeyer 2011; Gruffyd Jones forthcoming). As such, this thesis makes an original and significant contribution to the emerging debate about this increasingly influential organisation.

Whereas the state employs physical-legal mechanisms to directly dispossess the informal proletariat of its urban commons, SDI is a form of neoliberal governmentality that produces dispossession through 'technologies of the self' that reshape the individual subjectivities of informal settlement dwellers (Khan and Pieterse 2006). These subjectification mechanisms contribute to accumulation by urban dispossession in three ways: by diffusing opposition to displacement and ensuring cooperation with, and participation in, the gentrification process; by reinforcing the commodity status of land and housing through promoting market-based solutions to urban poverty; and by producing financially-capable, entrepreneurial subjects in order to facilitate the extension of housing finance to the informal proletariat. These technologies of the self signify the enclosure of subjectivities by logic of capital, and the foreclosure of alternative subjectivities rooted in non-capitalist values, such as those promoted by more radical, rights-based movements of the urban poor. As such, this thesis makes an original contribution to understandings of how accumulation by dispossession does not just concern material resources, but also subjectivities and relationships (Elyachar, 2005).

As an agent of accumulation by urban dispossession, SDI's role is to use extra-economic means to enable capital to overcome limits posed by opposing social

forces. SDI does this in Accra by working in partnership with the state to overcome a limit of political recomposition by relocating squatters to a site 30km outside of the city so that the prime real estate they created can be redeveloped. In addition, by refashioning the informal proletariat into entrepreneurial, financially capable subjects, SDI is facilitating the extension of housing finance to a population previously excluded from housing and financial markets. As such, SDI is assisting financial capital to overcome a limit as frontier and produce new markets. As with state-led accumulation by urban dispossession, therefore, SDI's activities in Accra constitute a form of roll-out neoliberalism intended to manage the large informal proletariat surplus by the roll-back phase of neoliberalisation. In particular, SDI's role is to address the barriers to accumulation posed by the proliferation of informal settlements in the wake of structural adjustment, a phenomenon that is increasingly recognised as a pressing global governance problem (UN-Habitat, 2003; Davis, 2006).

However, in contrast to the *expulsion* of surplus populations that defines state-led accumulation by urban dispossession, SDI as a form of roll-out neoliberalism is designed to address the failings of the market by inventing novel techniques for *incorporating* previously excluded populations into market logics and practices. In contrast to orthodox neoliberalism, in which people are incorporated into markets on an individual basis, SDI organises informal settlement dwellers into collectives and cooperatives so that they can access microfinance, land and housing markets on a group basis. As such, SDI's approach is consistent with the World Bank's growing tendency to promote common property regimes as a means of addressing the failings of roll-back neoliberalism (Caffentzis 2010). In this instance, collectivity is promoted as a 'flanking mechanism' to compensate for the failure of the marketisation of housing provision to meet the needs of a vast surplus population in the cities of the Global South (Jessop 2002). These insights into how neoliberal urban governance is inventing novel technologies to overcome its own limitations and contradictions constitute a significant, empirically-informed contribution to understandings of roll out neoliberalisms, flanking mechanisms and capitalist commons at the urban scale.

In addition to detailing the role played by the state and NGOs, this thesis argues that international financial institutions (IFIs) are agents of accumulation by urban dispossession. Since the beginning of structural adjustment in 1983, the World Bank has had a major role to play in shaping development policy in Ghana. At the urban scale, the World Bank had a significant input into designing the policy framework that has shaped the government's entrepreneurial urban development strategy for Accra, in which the state assumes the role of facilitating private sector growth in areas such as construction and tourism. As a result, it is argued that the state-led entrepreneurial strategies of accumulation by urban dispossession identified in this thesis are, in part at least, a product of neo-colonialism and the capture of development policy by IFIs. Furthermore, this thesis argues that SDI's activities in Accra are aligned with the World Bank's 'good governance' agenda, designed to deepen structural adjustment by moving beyond the economic sphere to implement social, cultural and political liberal reforms. For this reason, and the fact that SDI in Ghana is now being funded by the Cities Alliance, it is argued that the mechanisms of accumulation by urban dispossession employed by this NGO are an expression of neo-colonial indirect rule by the World Bank.

10.3.4 Accumulation by urban dispossession is contested through the production and defence of urban commons

The fourth conclusion of this thesis is that Accra's informal proletariat contests dispossession by creating and defending urban commons, that these commons are created through everyday acts of 'quiet encroachment' and defended through collective organising efforts, and that the realisation of a radical right to the city is latent within these practices. Asef Bayat's concept of 'quiet encroachment' is key to understanding the particular form that urban commoning takes amongst Accra's informal proletariat. This thesis has argued that this concept is important for understanding how the dispossessed in Accra are not passive victims, but are engaged in offensive action to appropriate and redistribute urban space from the rich and the powerful. In this respect, Bayat's (1997) account of quiet

encroachment is an important corrective to Harvey's (2003) capital-centric account of the urban process under capitalism.

The occupation of undeveloped land for agricultural or residential purposes and the appropriation of public space for informal livelihood activities are both local examples of commoning processes where the everyday practices of city dwellers have undermined private property and created legitimate collective property claims. These collective property claims have been established through patterns of appropriation and use that address unmet needs and contribute to a process of place making (Blomley, 2008). These commons afford those who use them a degree of independence by providing them with low cost housing in the city centre, public space as a livelihood resource, and agricultural land to grow their own food. As such, these commons enable Accra's informal proletariat to reproduce itself through self-provisioning despite its exclusion from wage labour and formal land and housing markets.

Whereas commoning is typically understood in terms of organised collective action, quiet encroachment entails an appropriation of resources by the poor that is enacted 'quietly, individually and gradually' (Bayat 1997: 62). As is the case in Ghana, quiet encroachment is the preferred method of the informal poor to advance their interests in contexts where fear of violent repression discourages overtly political action. As such, this thesis draws on original empirical research to argue that the creation of urban commons in Accra typically takes the form of everyday acts of appropriation that gradually undermine private property rather than organised collective action. In advancing this argument, this thesis moves beyond abstract discussions of commoning and addresses the lack of concrete research into urban commons in the cities of the Global South by providing a novel, empirically grounded account of actually existing commoning practices in an African city.

This thesis has also drawn on original empirical research to make a contribution to the theoretical debate about what the realisation of a radical right to the city might mean in practice. Rather than an abstract right, Neuwirth (2006) argues

that the right to the city is manifest in the everyday practices of squatters around the world who appropriate urban space in order to meet their needs for shelter. This thesis builds on this argument by asserting that the rights to centrality, participation and appropriation are latent within the everyday practices of quiet encroachment that produce urban commons in Accra. It is through these practices that the masses quietly undermine private property by directly appropriating space to satisfy their needs, undermining the exchange value of urban space as a means of accumulation and asserting its use value as a means of social reproduction. Individuals engaged in acts of quiet encroachment also contest displacement and segregation by seizing centrally located space and refusing to be consigned to the urban periphery. However, as long as these encroachers are uncoordinated and disorganised, they will be vulnerable to processes of enclosure, whether enacted by the state or non-governmental actors. As such, while the right to the city is implicit in these everyday practices of appropriation, it can only be fully realised by taking organised collective action to defend and expand the urban commons.

This thesis provides insights into the extent to which Accra's informal proletariat have been able to move from quiet encroachment to collective action to advance their interests. Whereas the urban commons discussed in this thesis have been largely created through everyday acts of quiet encroachment, there are instances in which sections of Accra's informal proletariat have taken collective action to defend these commons from enclosure. As such, accumulation by urban dispossession is contested in Accra through a 'dialectic of individual and collective action' (Bayat 1997: 66). However, these organising efforts have been severely constrained in their effectiveness by local political and institutional factors. Street traders have historically sought to contest the state's attempts to displace them through forming local membership organisations, or 'associations'. These associations have been limited in their effectiveness for several reasons: they are weak, atomised, and do not cooperate with one another; they avoid mobilising their members for protest activity because they lack confidence and fear violent repression from the state; and they are dealing with a city authority that has historically been hostile towards informal street workers. For these

reasons, the trade union movement has supported the formation of StreetNet Ghana Alliance in order to overcome these local political and institutional constraints by organising informal traders' associations into a coordinated movement that can be more effective at putting pressure on the state as part of a global network of similar organisations.

The example of the PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society of Community Regeneration demonstrates how young people in La have moved from everyday acts of quiet encroachment on undeveloped state land, to defending their gains through collective protest against the AU Village development, to forming a political organisation in order to demand the redistribution of resources from the state in order to create a new 'Community Commons'. This transition was theorised as a shift from *occupation* as an everyday informal praxis to *Occupation* as the basis for a political organising strategy, demonstrating how actions to defend old and produce new urban commons are iterative (Pusey et al., 2011; Hodgkinson 2012). However, these activists have also been limited in their effectiveness due to several local political and institutional constraints: poverty and a lack of resources makes grassroots political organising very difficult; secrecy, corruption, and vested interests hinder activists when interacting with powerful institutions such as the state land system and traditional authorities; and the threat of violent state repression limits the possibility for protests and direct action. As with StreetNet, awareness of these local constraints has led PanAfrikanYemei to adopt an internationalist orientation and to build relationships with activist networks and groups outside of Ghana in order to help publicise their campaign in the global media and put pressure onto the government.

10.4 Towards an alternative urban future? The circulation of the urban commons

The four general conclusions offered by thesis demonstrate that accumulation by dispossession at the urban scale is not an inevitable, one-sided process of

creeping enclosure. Rather, the case of Accra demonstrates that the new urban enclosures are subject to contestation and exist in a dialectical relationship with the ongoing creation and defence of urban commons. By conceptualising the city as a field of struggle between enclosures and commons, this thesis aims to give the reader hope that there is a possible alternative urban future to a world of cities characterised by widespread homelessness, grotesque inequality and violent dispossession. However, it is not immediately obvious how the production and reproduction of the type of urban commons discussed in this thesis might form the basis of a broader political strategy to fundamentally transform the urban process and fully realise the radical right to the city that is already latent in the commoning practices of the informal proletariat. The final section of this thesis will suggest that the 'circulation of the common' is the key to understanding how such a strategy might take shape (Dyer-Witheford, 2006).

Just as Marx argued that the cellular form of capitalism is the commodity, Dyer-Witheford (2006: no page) argues that the cellular form of communism is the common. As such, communism is 'a multiplication of commons'. But how do commons multiply? Dyer-Witheford addresses this question by reworking Marx's model of the circulation of capital – the process by which capital accumulates through the production of commodities – into a model of the 'circulation of the common' that captures the process by which commons multiply. The circulation of capital is expressed thus: $M - C \dots P \dots C' - M'$. In this model, money (M) is used to purchase commodities (C) that are thrown into production (P) to create more commodities (C') that are sold for more money (M'). The circulation of the common, on the other hand is expressed thus: $A - C \dots P \dots C' - A'$. According to this model, associations (A) produce commons (C) that lead to the production (P) of new common resources that in turn provide the basis for the formation of new associations. Associations in this schema represent 'collectivities within which sharing occurs, collectivities that coordinate, organise and plan this sharing' (ibid.). Dyer-Witheford argues that, in contrast to uniform, top-down utopian models, the circulation of the common is 'a communism bubbling from below', a 'heterogeneous communism built from multiple forms of common logic, a communism of singularities'. Furthermore,

this process of multiplication is 'scalable, thinkable at levels from the domestic to the municipal to the planetary' (ibid.).

Dyer-Witthford's (2006) discussion of the circulation of the common focuses on three types of commons as the cellular form of communism: 'terrestrial' (i.e. natural resources), 'planner' (i.e. public goods managed by the state), and 'networked' (i.e. communicative) commons. However, Pusey et al. (2011) and Hodkinson (2012a) have also argued that the circulation of the common is relevant for understanding the process by which urban commons can multiply in order to form the basis of a post-capitalist city. Pusey et al. (2011) give the example of the cooperative housing movement in the UK, through which progressively more housing is brought under cooperative ownership, creating financial and knowledge resources that enable the multiplication of cooperative associations. Hodkinson (2012a: 441) argues that the hegemonic circulation of housing commons requires 'a critical mass of diverse strategic and tactical interventions' in order to resist enclosures and create new housing commons, and the articulation of housing commons with commons in other spheres such as 'production (e.g. cooperative food growers), exchange (e.g. people's shops) and reproduction (e.g. community schools)'.

Applying Dyer-Witthford's (2006) model to the urban commons discussed in this thesis, however, indicates that there is a lack of strategic circulation in Accra at this point in time. The account of urban commoning and the shift from individual acts of quiet encroachment to collective organising detailed in Chapter 9 indicates that nascent associations are forming in order to defend existing, and produce new, urban commons. This indicates the beginning of a process of circulation, which can be represented in this instance as: C-A. However, in order for this process to develop fully there is a need to network the different struggles discussed in this thesis into a broader movement for the full realisation of the right to the city based on the circulation and multiplication of different types of urban commons in Accra and beyond.

How might such a movement be galvanised? I want to suggest that PanAfrikanYemei's plan to establish an educational 'Community Commons' at Africa Lake (see 9.5.2) could be pivotal in this respect. The multiplication of the urban commons is linked to, and reinforced by, the circulation of terrestrial, planner and networked commons. Within this complex ensemble of commons, Dyer-Witthford (2006) argues, the networked commons is the 'strategic and enabling point', particularly because of the 'democratizing capacities' of digital networks. As such, PanAfrikanYemei and StreetNet's efforts to overcome local constraints through international networking (detailed in 9.5) implies that the networked commons will play an important role enabling the linking up of superficially unrelated struggles over different urban commons in and beyond Accra. It is for this reason that the establishment of an educational commons at Africa Lake could serve an important political function through the provision of open access IT facilities, meeting space and other valuable educational resources. By creating a local pedagogical hub for various struggles, therefore, this space could facilitate a multiplication of associations linked together by a common strategy of creating and defending urban spaces in which use value and social reproduction takes precedence over exchange value and the accumulation of wealth.

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Appendix

List of interviews (names have been changed)

Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)

- Sylvia, Officer, AMA Budget and Rating Department, 31/5/11
- David, Officer, AMA Planning Department, 15/11/10
- Kwesi, Officer, AMA Legal Department, 10/6/11
- Esther, Chief Inspector, AMA Security Department, 11/11/10

Civil Servants

- Farouk, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 14/6/11 and 4/7/11
- Selina, Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 17/6/11
- Emmanuel, Officer, Public and Vested Land Management Division, Lands Commission, 28/6/11
- Ebo, Officer, Ministry of Water Resources, Works & Housing, 26/5/11
- Timothy, Planning Officer, Town and Country Planning Department, 4/7/11
- Kwadwo, Former Planning Officer, Town and Country Planning Department, 11/7/11

Government Ministers

- Kwabena Owusu Acheampong, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 10/11/11
- James Agyenim-Boateng, Deputy Minister of Tourism, 22/6/11

Customary land custodians

- James, Trustee, East Dadekotopon Development Trust, 15/7/11
- Kofi, Secretary, La Stool, 7/7/11

Civil Society Actors

- Christina, Officer, Amnesty Ghana, 27/5/11
- Charles, Organiser, Market Women Association of Ghana, 17/5/11
- Bernice, Officer, Informal Economy Desk, Ghana Trade Union Congress, 3/6/11
- Aishia, Officer, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2/11/10
- Kofi, Officer, People's Dialogue, 5/11/10 and 3/5/11
- Kwabena, Officer, People's Dialogue, 18/11/10 and 20/7/11

Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP)

- Mensah, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 9/11/10
- Nana, GHAFUP member, Old Fadama, 10/5/11
- Nii, GHAFUP member, Agbogbloshie, 16/6/11
- Enoch, GHAFUP member, Agbogbloshie, 16/6/11
- Adu, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11
- Kojo, GHAFUP member, Ashaiman, 30/6/11
- Twia, GHAFUP member, Railway Dwellers Federation, 4/5/11
- Yaw, GHAFUP member, Railway Dwellers Federation, 16/5/11
- Kwasi, GHAFUP member, Kayaye Youth Association, 20/7/11

Informal Street Traders

- Charles, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 8/6/11
- Patience, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 8/6/11

- Lucy, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/6/11
- Fuseini, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/6/11
- Esi, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 13/6/11
- Albert, Street Trader, Accra CBD, 16/7/11

Street Trader Association Activists

- David, Organiser, United Petty Traders Association, 21/6/11
- Kodwo, Organiser, United Petty Traders Association, 21/6/11
- Joseph, Organiser, National Petty Traders Association, 24/6/11
- Oboye, Organiser, National Association of Hawkers, 3/6/11
- Rose, Organiser, StreetNet Ghana Alliance, 29/6/11

PanAfrikanYemei Cooperative Society for Community Regeneration

- Kwesi, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 26/10/10, 16/11/10, 6/5/11, 2/6/11 and 13/7/11
- Ebo, Activist, PanAfrikanYemei, 16/11/10 and 13/7/11
- Sarah, British Student, 6/5/11 and 2/6/11

ADIEYIEMANFO Movement of Positive Action Networks

- Kwame, Activist, ADIEYIEMANFO, 2/3/13