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From the Garden City of West Africa to a landscape of urban crises

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the mutation of Kumasi from the 'Garden City' of West Africa to a landscape of urban crises. Although it focuses on contemporary issues, it also instigates into the discourse, historical perspectives to reveal the factors responsible for the urban crises using data from multiple sources. The results show dual city governance structure resulting from the sociopolitical power relations between the traditional set-up and the State governance structure served as leitmotif for the urban crises. It is argued that Kumasi's unique customary identity must be integrated into city management structures to respond to the realities of changing times.

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Introduction

The debates on the inability of city authorities in developing nations to manage their urban spaces have intensified in the last few years. In the African context, the discourse features actors from diverse backgrounds, such as community leaders, national government institutions, civil society groups and international development partners. These key actors continually argue that the challenge is due to multiple institutions with duplicated functions involved in urban management (Adarkwa 2012; Amoako and Adom-Asamoah 2019). Again, other arguments are that the urban space management models since historical times have been and are still framed based on the standards of cities in the global north. Therefore, their successes are judged through the lenses that consign the African situation to the doldrums (Robinson 2006). As rightly pointed out by Watson (2013, 1), 'larger cities in Africa are being re-visioned in the image of cities such as Dubai, Shanghai, and Singapore, which claim top positions in the world-class city leagues' and intended to modernize cities on the African continent and turn them into gateways for international investors and showpieces for ambitious politicians.

In Ghana, formal activities relating to city management started with the British colonial master in the mid-1840s, even though the indigenes had their form of planning through their traditional structures (Acheampong 2019). Kumasi is one of the cities that

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benefited from the British – style spatial development through town buildings. As opined by Amoako and Adom-Asamoah (2019, 3):

The differences in town building approaches between the Asante traditional set-up and the British became the first point of spatial conflict that shaped the morphology of the emerging town, and this is central in understanding the changing landscape of Kumasi.

The spatial planning introduced by the British was to meet their needs and satisfy the indigenous people's needs (Schmidt 2005; Wilks and Wilks 1975). The literature further indicates that the spatial planning scheme introduced by the British in Kumasi was for a dual purpose - to perpetuate the authority of the British colonial government and to suppress all resistance from the local people who were not in support of spatial changes and shape the morphology of the city (Amoako and Adom-Asamoah 2019; Schmidt 2005; Wilks and Wilks 1975). Characteristically, the British-style spatial planning mimicked Howard's (1902) Garden City Model. The Model featured the creation of green belts around the city. The plan also proposed developing many parks and urban green spaces to define boundaries against sprawling and provide agricultural lands. Even though these forms of urban planning met resistance from the indigenes, they formed the basis for subsequent planning schemes of the city. These schemes ushered Kumasi into what became known in 1961 as the Garden City of West Africa (Adarkwa 2012; Korboe 2001). The reason was that the city's architecture integrated a considerable green cover with the city's space to enhance social well-being and promotes leisure (Howard 1902). Again, residential communities were located on elevated areas with well-designed layouts, pollution-free rivers, and streams that flowed in their natural valleys at lowlands. For instance, available records (see Dinye, Edusei, and King 1987; Korboe and Tipple 1995) show that residential developments concurred with river tributaries that divided the city through residential communities. Among the water bodies that added beauty to the Kumasi included Wewe, Subin, Asuoyeboa, Oda, and Susan, among others. Industrial and commercial facilities were developed at specific locations that did not impair the beauty of the city space. As part of the process, city authorities demarcated zones for halls, libraries, museums, hospitals, concert halls, and theatres. These facilities were located in easily accessible zones such that they became the magnet of attraction to bring people together.

However, the literature shows that the city has rapidly expanded beyond its original boundaries (Darko et al. 2022; Owusu-Sekyere 2019). The features that defined the GC have almost faded as some clean river systems have been polluted, and the reserved green belt has been encroached on (Amoako and Adom-Asamoah 2019; Asare 2013). But what factors could have sped the deterioration of once an iconic city? This study answers the research question by examining how socio-political power relations between the traditional governance set-up and formal State governance structure are responsible for the dissipation of the Garden City. The study was approached by first looking at the origin of the GC in the introductory section. The historical perspectives of spatial planning are then discussed. Section three presents the methodology while examining the factors responsible for the GC's deterioration. Finally, we conclude by reflecting on the way forward for Kumasi's urban planning.

1.1. Kumasi's evolution and spatial development

The confederation of many separate city-states formed in Kumasi during the preindependence era to challenge the colonial masters' foreign policies. The selection of Kumasi as the capital of Asante was due to its strategic location at the centre of the trans-Saharan commercial routes. The strategic location in no way contributed immensely to the growth and wealth of the city (Korboe 2001, 41). Another significant factor that contributed to the city's growth was the Asante Kingdom's rich culture that manifested itself as the chieftaincy institutions with the distribution of paramountcy and other power hierarchy among the chiefs. These chiefs had various colourful regalia, artefacts, spiritual spaces, and other unique symbols (Korboe, 2001). The city was the centre for the buying and selling of gold, enslaved people, weapons and farm implements. These contributed significantly towards the growth of Kumasi.

The well-developed socio-political system of governance with the Asantehene as the symbol of authority with unchallenged power and loyalty was central to Kumasi's growth and development. Amoako and Adom-Asamoah (2019) observed that Kumasi was so strong that the first Asantes defeated the British in the first socio-political conflict fought in 1824 between the British and Asantes. However, in 1874, 50 years after the first conflict, the British eventually defeated the Asantes (Korboe 2001). By 1896 Kumasi was rebuilt by the British merchants after the defeat of Asanteman in the protracted war, which started in 1874 (Tipple 1987b; Toku et al. 2021). The defeat of the Asante and the subsequent rebuilding of Kumasi marked the beginning of the spatial transformation of the Kumasi (Quagraine 2011). The spatial transformation also led to a series of conflicts between the Asantes and the British because the landscape was redefined, and this saw the destruction of sacred sites, ritual grounds, and other protected areas and replaced with structures that the indigenes described as lacking spiritual (Korboe 2001).

The 'new' spatial structure was characterized by physical infrastructure development (Ablorh 1972). Some notable physical infrastructure facilities include the railway line, the Bantama High Street, the Basel Mission Church, the United Trading Company (UTC), the Bank of West Africa, Schools and Barracks for the Army between 1903 and 1920. The Asantes saw these developments as an attempt by the British to perpetuate their dominance and reduce the powers of the traditional authority. The British Colonial Government destroyed reserved sites of spiritual, cultural, and ritual significance because they were deemed unimportant. The rebuilt City was designed to reflect a more culturally familiar landscape of the British colonial masters (Quagraine 2011). The British introduced urban planning schemes that represented their needs, not the Asantes (Schmidt 2005; Wilks and Wilks 1975). Historical accounts from Schmidt (2005) and Wilks and Wilks (1975) indicate that the spatial planning schemes introduced by the British were crafted such that they changed the City's morphology and conferred social and political powers to the British so they could control and quell any resistance from the indigenous people.

There was, however, a paradigm shift in 1920 when the British reestablished land ownership to the Asante traditional authority. As a first step towards restoring the city to its previous glory, the central area was rebuilt while other sacred sites were restored (Korboe 2001; Quagraine 2011). The British still reserved some portions of land around

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one square mile of the fort and 100 ft on either side of long distant roads for the British Crown (Korboe 2001). A dual power relation was thus created between the British and the Asante Traditional set up a situation that has persisted to date. Another significant landmark of Kumasi's development was the design of the 1945 master plan by Maxwell Frye and Jane Drew. The plan was designed to mimic the characteristics of the Garden City (GC) model, which was popular then and allocated a substantial part of the City's land area to green spaces. The GC model reserved a large portion for parks which intermingled the physical scenery of the City. The plan reserved five urban parks, including Kejetia Park, Suntreso Park, Amakom Park, Fante Newtown Park, and the Kumasi Zoological Gardens (Adjei Mensah, 2014a; Quagraine 2011). Kumasi became by the turn of 1957, and the green belt envisaged in the 1945 plan had come to fruition. Moreover, tourism had picked up, and cultural prominence and national significance were back (Korboe, 2001).

The birth of Ghana's independence marked a turning point in Kumasi's sociopolitical development as the government rather consolidated the gains made by the traditional authority rather than perpetuated the planning powers of the British colonial regime. According to Korboe (2001), the government was hostile to the indigenes and crushed any dissent to its powers. This drove most influential Asantes into exile, while those who dared to stay were constantly arrested and detained. Again, there were also efforts to take over or nationalize all the lands of the Asante Kingdom. Still, the literature show this was largely successful due to the resilience of the traditional authority. The state-led planning effort to reinstate Kumasi to the GC status continued through the 1960s. Historical records show that by the 1960s, city planners in Kumasi had reserved nearly 40% of the City's land area for reserves and park development (Dinye, Edusei, and King 1987; Korboe and Tipple 1995). The parks and gardens included Adehyeman Gardens, Children's Park, Parks and Gardens, and Fante Newtown Park, among others. Green planning enhanced the City's proper functioning and calved a unique identity that could make it different from other West African cities (Mensah 2014). It was also to make the city livable and clean and to fulfil the notion that a healthy city can attract investment (Amoako & Adom-Asamoah, 2018). City planners believed that a green city was a symbol and apex of good urban planning and administration; a hale and hearty environment for civilization; plants, animals, and a source of pride to the people and the State (Darko et al. 2022). As observed by Ebenezer Howard, the GC planning model proponent, a city interspersed with a considerable green cover enhances social well-being and promotes leisure (Howard 1902).

Another feature of Kumasi's cityscape was that residential communities were located on elevated areas with well-designed layouts, pollution-free rivers, and streams that flowed in their natural valleys at lowlands. For instance, available records (see Dinye, Edusei, and King 1987; Korboe and Tipple 1995) show that residential developments using the 1945 spatial plan concurred with river tributaries that divided the City through residential communities. Among the water bodies that added beauty to the Kumasi included Wewe, Subin, Asuoyeboa, Oda, and Susan, among others. Industrial and commercial facilities were developed at specific locations that did not impair the beauty of the city space. As part of the process, city authorities demarcated zones for halls, libraries, museums, hospitals, concert halls, and theatres. These facilities were in



Green belts	Outlying communities
Industrial zones	Water bodies
Planned communities	Civic and Culture

Figure 1. The 1963 Planning Scheme for Kumasi. Source: Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority, Kumasi

easily accessible zones such that they became the magnet of attraction to bring people together. To further boost the preservation of the GC, a planning scheme was developed in 1963 to guide spatial development in the Kumasi Metropolis (Figure 1).

The 1963 planning scheme also allocated specific comprehensive land-use districts for manufacturing, markets, and residential activities. Eventually, the 1963 master plan, as it was known, became the reference point for land-use guidelines and development control in Kumasi. The plan assigned about 42% of Kumasi's land reserve to open green spaces. Other historical records show that the City had a great green belt of about 330 yards which rivers and their tributaries flowing through them with beauty (Curtin 1992; Dinye, Edusei, and King 1987). These green spaces were further developed into parks and gardens to provide different purposes to meet the leisure demands and make the city attractive and livable. Overall, these urban trees and flowers formed the green infrastructure of Kumasi (Adarkwa and Owusu-Akyaw 2001). The green infrastructure made Kumasi one of the cities in West Africa with the largest green attractions that serve as a tourist magnet for local and international tourists.

Kumasi reached a Metropolitan status in Ghana's 1988 decentralization system under the PNDCL 208. The Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462 allowed for full community participation in the planning process through the elected representatives of the local Assemblies (Adarkwa and Owusu-Akyaw 2001). The decentralization process was a prelude to Ghana's democratic process dispensation. The Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462 has been replaced with a new Local Government Act, 2016, Act 936, aiming to enhance local government authorities' power so they can address new issues at the local level (Toku et al. 2021). The Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016, Act 925 has also been promulgated to further enhance urban spatial planning at the decentralized level. The existing planning systems have operated alongside the powerful traditional institutions over the past two decades, creating dual relationships in managing Kumasi's spatial governance.

The literature review shows that Kumasi's evolution and spatial planning were deeply rooted in traditional structures and the State's official plans. These two structures established dichotomous relationships that were often characterized by conflicts. The – sometimes divergent – ideals of the two structures influenced and still influence the development and political geography of the City in terms of morphology and governance. The subsequent discussions of the paper on the factors responsible for the current state of Kumasi's urban space are situated within these two structures in the context of land ownership and city management.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study context, design and data

Kumasi lies approximately within Longitude $1.30^{\circ}-1.35^{\circ}$ and Latitude $6.35^{\circ}-6.40^{\circ}$ north of the equator and is situated in the middle belt of Ghana (GSS, 2012). It is Ghana's second-largest City and serves as the administrative capital of the Ashanti Region (Figure 2).

One significant landmark of the presence of one of West Africa's trading hubs-the Kumasi Central Market, which serves traders from Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast and Nigeria. Over the years, the City has expanded outwards, putting pressure on city managers to provide proper management services to the outlying communities. For instance, around the 1950s, the size of Kumasi was just around 25 km². The Ghanaian Statistical Service (GSS) indicated in the 2010 housing and population census that Kumasi has expanded beyond the 1950 limit and occupied 214.3 km² of land area (GSS, 2012). However, due to the reclassification of the City following the creation of five new Municipal Assemblies, including Kwadaso, Tafo, Suame, Oforikrom and Asokwa, Kumasi's territory has shrunk to less than 100 Km². The expansion has serious implications for city planning and management. Kumasi's population has consistently exploded over the years. For instance, in 1970, the population was 346,336; in 1984, it jumped to 487,504; this figure hopped slightly over 1,000,000 people in 2000. The figure more than doubled in just 10 years to 2,022,919 in 2010 (GSS 2012). Current figures estimate that Kumasi's population is about 2.5 million people, translating into an estimated growth rate of 5.4% per annum among the countries with the highest growth rate in Africa (Toku et al. 2021). The fast population growth without planning schemes to cater for this growth has had a negative impact on the once beautiful City of West Africa.



Figure 2. Map of Ghana Showing the Kumasi Metropolitan Area. Source: Adopted and modified from GSS, 2012.

The study used a qualitative research design for data collection and analysis because it is flexible and allows the researcher to probe interviewee experiences in-depth (Chapelle et al. 2002). As part of the primary data-gathering exercise, a transect walk, a participatory rural appraisal technique (Chapelle et al. 2002), was used to understand local land-use changes along some principal streets, parks, and gardens of the city. Three transect walks were conducted, one on Asafo – Aful Nkwanta Street, one on Roman Hill-Prempeh II Street, and the last at Dr Mensah-Ash Town Street (Figure 3).

The parks and gardens observed during the transect walk are shown in Figure 4. These streets and parks were at the heart of Kumasi's spatial planning. Each transect walks covered about 1.2 km and lasted for about 1 hr, 50 mins. Transect walk was adopted because it is seen as a suitable and effective tool for investigating local issues cost-effectively (Eduful and Shively 2015). The walk allowed the researchers to have first-hand information about land-use changes. It also offered the researchers the opportunity to interact freely with 15 residents on each street who were randomly selected. The 45 randomly selected respondents provided useful information on city management, sanitation, population growth, and land-use changes.

Additionally, a semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from respondents, some of whom were either selected purposively or through snowballing. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 23 officials from both State and private institutions. The officials from State institutions were from the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority, Lands Commission, KMA and the Survey Department. The interviews covered spatial planning in Kumasi, challenges in managing the City and



Figure 3. Map showing transect walk locations.



Figure 4. Location of parks and gardens covered in the study.

future land use planning. The issues that were probed with the private institutions were proper land use planning, protection of water bodies, greening programs, land use regulations, pollution, and proper sanitation.

The snowball technique was used to select seven senior citizens (mostly chiefs and clerks) who had the chance to live through the 1960s and some of whom had the opportunity to work with city planners at the time. The snowball was used because such people were few in the system, as many of their contemporaries had long passed. The researchers needed to contact friends or relatives to show where they lived individually. The interviews with these seven respondents took over three months since many would only volunteer information when caretakers were around. During the interview sections, the interviewer had to pause several times to make meaning of the discourse, as continuous talking was a major problem. Often, the information is hard to re-echo caretakers for proper understanding. Their historical knowledge unpacked a lot of insights into the GC and why the city is where it is today. These combined diverse research approaches enhanced the data quality and helped the analysis. The data collection lasted about six months (January 2020 to December 2020). Lastly, historical literature on spatial planning and the management of Kumasi's space was extensively reviewed. Among the documents reviewed were Kumasi's 1945 and 1963 spatial development plans. The documentary review provided information on the nature and extent of land use and spatial planning during the different phases of Kumasi's growth trajectories. Other reviewed documents included Ghana's current urban policy; housing policy; spatial planning policies; Town and Country planning documents, and similar records from Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA).

Apart from the interactions with the officials, which were done using English, the rest of the interviews were completed in Twi, the native dialect of the people. The interviews that were conducted in Twi were recorded and later transcribed and translated into the English language. In line with the philosophies of Miles and Huberman (2014), the emerging themes and patterns from the interviews were identified and studied for the analysis. The emerging themes were narrowed down to compelling themes (i.e. the number of times different respondents mentioned the theme). Verbatim quotations illustrate the importance respondents attached to each theme. The self-generated pseudonym was used to identify respondents to ensure confidentiality and comply with ethical principles.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. The Garden City in shadows

From the fieldwork, three factors, namely challenges in parks and aquatic management, poor city management and poor housing infrastructure, emerged as contributing significantly to Kumasi's urban crises.

3.2. Challenges in parks and aquatic management

The documentary evidence revealed a significant decrease in Kumasi's parks and gardens. For instance, the flora spaces, including parks, have reduced from 41,158.08

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hectares to 22,513 hectares between 1980 and 2007 (Oduro-Ofori, Braimah, and Agyeman 2014; Adjei Mensah, 2014b). The field observation revealed the well-decorated trees usually found along the principal streets, the parks and gardens, and the well-manicured lawns around Adum and Kejeti have all been lost to the built environment. It was observed that housing developments were responsible for the deteriorated green spaces in the built environment infrastructure. One of the key informants put it succinctly:

'The demand for housing facilities is unavoidable. Once the population increases, physical infrastructure development will automatically increase. As you know, increased physical infrastructure will put much pressure on the green reserves. If not controlled, it will eventually destroy the preserved green vegetation that has to make Kumasi the garden city'

The observations showed that the initial goals of the parks and gardens had been lost for a long time. Today, they are generally unused or, at best, used for subsistence farming, landfills for solid waste, or a haven for thieves. Table 1 shows the State of parks and gardens covered in the study in 2020.

Apart from the increasing demand for land due to the high population growth, the study revealed that the convoluted framework for managing green spaces in the City, which is woven around state institutions, customary land ownership structure, and city authorities are responsible for the bad state of parks and gardens in the City. The Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) is the body responsible for planning and managing the City. Other agencies which are directly involved in planning and managing the City include the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority, the Department of Parks and Gardens (DPG), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands, Forest Commission (FC), and the Lands Commission. Table 2 lists agencies and their responsibilities towards managing green spaces in Kumasi.

Our interactions with some key informants revealed that the number of institutions at the managerial level responsible for managing the green spaces could not coordinate, collaborate, and design common sectoral plans for overall city management.

The duplications of functions which often run contrary to existing customary rights on land ownership in the cultural city has frequently resulted in conflicts in the management of the parks and gardens. (a Key informant at Adum)

PARK & GARDEN	LOCATION	STATUS
Adehyeman Gardens	Mbrom	Destroyed and reconstructed as a multi-purpose shopping centre
Kumasi Children's Park	Amakom	It has been left to fallow, and it is hardly patronized
Ridge Park	Ahodwo	Still exist but has been encroached on by private developers
Dunkirk Park	Fante Newtown	has been destroyed and turned into a parking lot and washing bay
Abbey's Park	Ash Town	It has been reconstructed into a social centre
Jackson Park	Fante Newtown	It has been reconstructed into an event centre by the State called the Jubilee Park
Dogo Moro Park	Asewase	It has been reconstructed into a football field
CBD Lawns	Kejetia	Have been destroyed and re-built into shops

Table 1. State of Parks and Gardens in Kumasi as of 2020.

Institutions	Responsibility
Environmental Protection	 Develop policies to protect the City's environment at large
Agency (EPA)	 Provides public education on environmental issues
	 Set by-laws to regulate, coordinate and protect the City's environment
Department of Parks and	Landscape, environmental development and the management of parks and gardens
Gardens (DPG)	 Responsible for the beautification of the City's landscape
	 Maintenance and protection of green spaces in the City
Land Use and Spatial	 Guides spatial planning and the City's physical development
Planning Authority	 Develop policies on zoning, manages open spaces and direct land uses
	 Prevents encroachment of conserved spaces
	 Provides permit to land developers
	 Develop building codes and set planning standards
Kumasi Metropolitan	Design and manage green spaces in the City
Assembly (KMA)	Prevent the encroachment of reserved spaces, regulate land development and
	provides basic social infrastructure
	Source for funding for City planning
	• Provides building permits and ensures buildings conform to prescribed standards
Lands Commission (LC)	Vested with the power to manage all public lands
	Helps the government to acquire lands
	Registration of land deeds and protects public spaces
Forest Commission (FC)	• Constructs, manages and protects the green spaces in the city
	 It is assigned the task of preparing and implementing an integrated plan for wildlife management and forest for the city
Friends of Rivers and Water	Promotion of sound environmental protection and the management of water
Bodies	bodies in the city
	Provides public education on the protection of natural resources

Table 2. Institutional responsibilities on spatial planning and management in Kumasi.

Source: Extracted from various sources.

The lack of coordination and harmonization has and continues to present a major challenge for the conservation and management of open spaces and nature reserves. The research further revealed that the lack of collaboration among the fragmented institutions has also led to the degradation of drainage systems that once defined the beauty of the City. The field experience showed that seven water bodies that defined the GC was heavily polluted, had shrunk or, in some cases, been filled up (see Figure 5).

The degradation of the water bodies is due to ineffective management amid high population growth and demand for land. The key informant from the Lands Commission explained further:



Figure 5. Polluted water body at Abrepo, Kumasi.

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The multiple allocations of land and the ineffective management of such areas are responsible for the encroachment of the water bodies. People with the money bought the land around the watersheds and turned them into shopping centres. At the same time, those in the low-income bracket start building in water-logged areas because those locations are relatively cheaper. These are why important rivers like Nwabi and Aboabo are heavily polluted.

The key informant explained further that the lack of effective management and people's ability to acquire green spaces and the lands around water bodies is inherent in the land tenure system. Even though the KMA and other allied state institutions are mandated to plan and manage the green areas, historically, such areas were owned by traditional institutions before they were acquired by the State (Ablorh ; Amoako & Korboe, 2011). The land ownership structure may have been reformed, but the strong authoritarian character of the customary institutions still exists. The literature indicates that customary institutions own about 80% of Kumasi's lands in trust for the people, and therefore the chiefs still control access to and use of land and can allocate land to a prospective user (Eduful and Shively 2015; UN Habitat 2009). Research participants were unanimous that institutional problems may have aided Kumasi's degradation of water bodies, including the absence of skilled labourers, sectorial conflict, monetary challenges, and lack of compliance with existing land use procedures.

3.2.1. Services management challenge

The poor management of the City's social services reveals the second evidence of the urban crisis. Our transect walk exposed how the formally well-grid street networks had given way to pervasive tumble-down cubicles set up by street traders in the formally well-constructed pedestrian walkways. The key informants contacted were unanimous that the situation is due to diverse factors, including decades of poor planning, limited funding for infrastructure development, chronic urban poverty, and unchallenged political interference amid population growth. We further observed that Kumasi's CBD exhibits a 'free-for-all' character. Put differently; the CBD is a scene for the survival of the fittest. There is a mixture of every activity without morphology. Traders and pedestrians cannot be distinguished, drivers from commuters and formal from informal. Typically, pedestrian walkways and pavements that were designed as part of beautification purposes are regularly occupied by traders.

The KMA has, on several occasions, tried to decongest the City, but the legal and moral basis of such exercises has always been questioned by traditional authorities who also claim the right to ownership of the City. The interactions with some officials from the state institutions in charge of managing the City show that there have been several instances where city authorities have been summoned to the various palaces to explain the source of authority for such exercise. A key informant at KMA explained:

We evicted the traders from the major streets about two months ago at a huge cost. Three days later, one of the powerful chiefs in the City called us to a big palace to explain why we did the exercise without their approval. Therefore, We were asked to suspend the exercise since Christmas was approaching, and the traders needed to cash in on the festivities. That was the end of the exercise.

In many cases, the interferences have resulted in conflicts between street traders and city authorities. According to the literature (Quagraine 2011; Amoako & Korboe, 2011), the unchallenged powers of the traditional institutions result from their historic role in making Kumasi the traditional capital of the Asante State. Therefore, they were the original owners of Kumasi's lands before they were acquired and persevered by the State. The subtle unfriendly relationship between the customary institutions and the KMA is rooted in the same acrimonious between the Ashanti Kingdom relationship and the British Colonial Administration in the 1940s. The research further revealed that poor sanitation is another aspect of city management services that have added to the urban crises. An interviewee at the Metropolitan Assembly gave reasons for the sanitation crises:

The economic downturn and the implementation of neoliberal policies resulted in limited investment in the sanitation infrastructure of the GC. Like other public services, sanitation also experienced continuous financial and organizational challenges. This resulted in wide inequalities in access, disorganized collection, and poor disposal practices.

The transact walk revealed that the landscape of Kumasi typically consists of uncollected waste, choked gutters, toxic pools of liquid waste, and communities scattered with plastic and e-waste.

Public spaces in the city centre and low-income communities were the least served with adequate waste collection service. Though there have been attempts to reorganize sanitation services, such policy attempts have not only disadvantaged and marginalized the vulnerable migrants, but it has also inappropriately affected the indigenes. It is estimated that about 70% of solid waste generated in the city is collected, but only a fraction of this percentage is disposed of at waste disposal sites. In most cases, the rest are unattended and made to rot in backyards and waterways or dumped at illegal dumping sites. This creates a real nuisance for residents of these neighbourhoods (Obirih-Opareh and Post 2002; Oteng-Ababio 2011; Owusu-Sekyere and Amoah 2020).

3.2.2. The housing challenge

Key informants' views, supported by historical records, showed the British created official housing and communities, along with urban regulations, to transform Kumasi's architectural morphology. The informant argued further that the architectural design profoundly changed the built environment to reflect the authority of the colonial master. Gordon Guggisberg, governor of the then Gold Coast in the 1920s, for instance, introduced the native housing scheme called Dispossessed Person's Housing Scheme, where citizens were given loans to purchase building materials to put up their own houses, and the literature shows that by the end of 1933, an amount of £9,280 had been advanced to people (Adarkwa and Owusu-Akyaw 2001). Similarly, in 1943, Alan Burns, the governor of the Gold Coast, also prioritized housing scheme had been developed for Kumasi and rented out to citizens at subsidized rates (Kwofie, Adinyira, and Botchway 2011). The interviews with some key informants revealed that the State could not sustain the housing sector's investment drive, including the First Gold Coast Building Society established in 1956 (Jenks and Jones 2010). The lack of

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investment and unsustainable housing provision was because, by the 1970s, Ghana's economy started experiencing crises from all fronts.

The period was marked by a crisis in energy supply, increasing cost of crude oil, high-cost building materials and reduction in foreign funding, and these generally affected the real estate industry. The period also coincided with an intense demographic shift from rural areas to Kumasi, a city already suffering from poverty, social exclusion, and rising joblessness (Awotwi and George 2007). As succinctly pointed out by one of the senior citizens:

Planning schemes as of the 1970s had broken down such that decent housing had become a challenge. People had no choice but to live in slums made of wooden structures. You know, the many old structures you see at Aboabo were not part of the GC plan, but those people at that time could not afford building materials, so they needed to make do with wood. Access to water and other sanitation facilities was also challenging for them, so the only option was to settle in waterlogged areas where the land was free and access to water was assured.

The narratives of the key informant are also in sync with studies of Nelson and Ayeh (2009), Benjamin (2007) and Nsiah-Gyabaah (2010). They observed that the nearly two to three decades of economic downturn and constraints of planning imagination, however internationally credentialed, heightened the distinctions between a formally planned GC and informal settlements within the city.

The housing challenge has led to different dwelling characteristics. The first is the development of slums characterized by overcrowding. The overcrowding is the offshoot of migrants from deprived regions to the city searching for jobs. These migrants tend congregate in communities where their kind has taken solace. Such arrangements lead to cramped living spaces with inadequate sanitation facilities, which often increases health risks. The overcrowding further pressures existing infrastructure and services, including water and electricity supply. The GSS (2012) observed that slum dwellers experience the most unacceptable living and environmental conditions. Typical slum communities housing migrants in Kumasi include Moshie Zongo, Aboabo, Anloga, and Akwatialine (Zogli 2016). It is estimated that 71% of the materials used to construct dwelling units in slums and unplanned communities are wood, plastics, and materials from demolished structures modified to suit the available space (GSS 2012). Most of the slums are usually built on land that is illegally acquired or not designated for housing, leading to issues of land tenure and insecurity. This situation is a stark deviation from the planning schemes that gave birth to the Garden City.

The housing crisis has also led to the growth of illegal housing extension in the older inner-city neighbourhoods such as Roman Hill, Dunkirk, and Asafo. Modifying residential compound house into commercial use changes the original structure to accommodate more tenants. The results show that the modifications are usually built with substandard materials lacking the necessary basic amenities and are prone to structural problems and can easily collapse. In inner-city spaces, it is common to find a landscape characterized by the coexistence of slums and upscale (rich, modern) residential neighbourhoods. In general terms, the provision of adequate and affordable housing has been one of the major concerns Kumasi has been facing. It is therefore not surprising that according to the Ghana Statistical Service, of the about 520 234 housing units in Kumasi, 55.2% are poorly built houses with some overcrowding (GSS 2012) and that about 2.9% of the population live in wooden Kiosks while 3% live in uncompleted buildings. In sum, the housing crises have produced distinct territorial underclass groups, distinct by their specific geospatial features and the precise communal characteristics of the present circumstances, resulting from the City's lost planning opportunities. Addressing the issue of poor housing is crucial for mitigating the urban crises in Kumasi. It requires a multi-faceted approach involving providing affordable housing, upgrading and improving existing housing stock, implementing effective urban planning strategies, and promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

4. Concluding thoughts: searching for a new planning paradigm for Kumasi

From all indications, Kumasi looks a pale shadow of its precious history with most of what was shaping the landscape now available in shadows. Kumasi has grown in physical form, economic muscle, and social reorganization over the years. The dual city governance system is still prominent, and the traditional institutions will continue to play significant roles in the planning and management of the City due to its historical past. This means that planners must shift attention away from fixing the City to a particular scheme that may not reflect the dual city governance system, a view that is also shared by Carmody and Owusu (2016) and Turok (2016). For this reason, the Greater Kumasi (GK) spatial development plan and the Ghana Gold City (GGC), two projects intended to restore the City to its enviable status of a model city, are welcomed. Although these two schemes are 'western-styled' projects, they also recognize the role customary institutions can play to make them successful. The two incorporate semblances of the GC planning scheme with a well-thought road construction inter-laced with green space and contemporary recreational centres. GK is a spatial plan designed by the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency to be implemented by the Town and Country Planning Department. The GK spatial plan launched in 2013 covers the KMA and the seven adjoining districts. In short, GK is a sub-regional geographical development agenda intended to provide the foundation for feature developments with the role of traditional institutions duly acknowledged.

On the other hand, the Ghana Gold City development plan is an initiative of United World Infrastructure, a global infrastructure and investment company. The project is planned to provide infrastructure facilities that meet international specifications. Our key informant further indicated in the interview:

When completed, it will be a new regional development hub with a fully integrated and sustainable living, working, and leisure destination focusing on green and smart technologies supporting Kumasi's environmental, social, and economic objectives. To ensure the project succeeds, we have conducted wide consultations, including the traditional institutions, to ensure their concerns are addressed.

It is important to note that Kumasi's current version of new development plans continuously evolves and incorporates private and state-funded schemes. However, these plans and projects are framed within an ideal vision which is sometimes much 16 👄 E. OWUSU-SEKYERE ET AL.

less unique than it may seem. As our research revealed, the purpose of these projects is to position the City such that the positive developmental framing associated with urbanization can be projected and not as has been the case in the literature (Awuah and Hammond 2014; UN Habitat 2009), which normally highlight the chaos, disorder, and disaster events associated with the City's growth process. However, the major concerns of city planners are that these plans do not suffer the same fate as previous ones that only remained in offices and never saw the sun.

I hope these fantastic planning schemes are well funded locally and internationally so they are actualized. I say so because most drawings and prototypes are Western-oriented with little local input. In such cases, structural changes in world economic order easily affect their implementation, a key informant at KMA.

The concerns of the key informant have been well articulated by Bhan (2013). He observed that development plans that are far apart from the lived realities of a community suffer the fate of not being attained because the 'chaos' that such plans try to avoid is exactly the setting in which they must function. Irrespective of the context, city planners expect that these projects can attract the needed investment and support to help the urban extension to take root since it has the potential to alter the spatial organization of Kumasi forever. Apart from these new visions, there have also been conscious attempts to regenerate degenerated facilities (Amoah et al., 2019). The reasons for revitalizing the City are based on the notion that urban centres are fundamentally and continuously changing without reaching the end to respond to the people's aspirations. For this reason, modern planners consider urban centres seek to become vibrant and remain attractive nodes for economic activities, regeneration becomes inevitable.

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