

Peri-urban transformations: Changing land markets and (in)security in peri-urban Accra, Ghana

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Introduction: peri-urban spaces and their land markets

The increasing transformation of customary land in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has opened up contemporary discourses around land use, landownership, land governance and land administration practices (Obeng-Odoom, 2016; Bansah, 2017; Akaateba, 2019; Chimhowu, 2019). Central to this discourse is the evolving land market and the associated (in)securities in the peri-urban areas of major cities in SSA. Wehrmann (2008: 75) reveals that the peri-urban land markets have become the ‘most dynamic and most diverse in sub-Saharan Africa’. The increasing attention on customary land in peri-urban areas (defined as a space between urban and rural settlements and characterised with rapid spatial and social change) is informed by urban sprawl, rising demand for land, uneven power relations among different actors and the complex land governance systems (Wehrmann, 2008; McGregor *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, the land market in peri-urban areas is now acknowledged and analysed in terms of uneven power relations, negotiation processes and competing interests among actors, especially in situations where land transfers and transactions have become highly contested (Ubink, 2008; Wehrmann, 2008; Arko-Adjei, 2011; Asafo, 2022).

In a recent review of customary land in SSA, including peri-urban land, Chimwohu (2019) presents new evidence of land transformation shaped by the interplay of global opportunities and complex state-informed neoliberal processes including commodification, privatisation, deregulation, re-regulation and flanking and support systems. He suggested that the outcome of these processes has resulted in a ‘new’ African customary tenure characterised by altered governance and institutional structures, and uneven power

relations in land use and land management (see Chimhowu, 2019). Akaateba's work in Ghana reveals how exclusionary outcomes are evident as customary tenure regimes increasingly experience manipulation (2019). Empirical evidence reveals that countries including Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Ghana and Nigeria have witnessed the establishment of institutions for land registration and the devolution of legal authority over land to facilitate access to land by private individuals (Chimhowu, 2019). A more significant feature of these transformations is the proliferation of different actors especially in peri-urban areas with either supporting or competing roles within land administration frameworks (Rakodi, 2006; Wehrmann, 2008; Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

While the literature on the rising number of actors in peri-urban areas has generally focused on land use, access, land delivery, governance and tenure rights (Larbi, 1996; Chimhowu and Woodhouse, 2006; Gough and Yankson, 2006), much is left unexplored about the proliferation of these different actors and how their actions shape the peri-urban land market. This chapter, therefore, investigates how these new actors are altering existing land transaction practices in the land market and their implications for tenure (in) security in peri-urban Accra. The intersection of rising speculation beset by conflict and insecurity by land-owning, intermediaries and land-seeking individuals in Greater Accra, the proliferation of housing production outside of legal and formal planning frameworks commonly for the purpose of satisfying the need for affordable urban accommodation, and changes in land use and processes of densification evident within peri-urban Accra speak to the logics of the speculative, auto-constructed and transitioning peripheries detailed in the Introduction of this book. Indeed, Accra offers a clear example of the ways in which different peripheries' logics are overlaid and bleed into each other (see Introduction and Meth *et al.*, 2021a). Speculation within this analysis relates not necessarily to the investment practices of large private sector institutions bent on profiting from Africa's new peripheral elite enclaves (Van Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018) but rather to the gains and potential for gains of various actors (customary leaders, local estate agents, individuals, landguards, welfare associations) from their control over or access to a highly contested resource, namely land, including at times through the use of force or intimidation. More generally, trust and social relations are key within these speculative practices,

although speculation is often achieved through devious practices and multiple land sales. This chapter therefore offers an extension to the book's framing of peripheral logics through its analysis of the proliferation of actors engaged in speculative practices, its focus on transitioning peri-urban spaces driven by land market changes and its observation of the growth in unplanned housing structures.

Drawing on evidence from four peri-urban communities in Accra, the chapter is driven by the following questions: what are the emerging land transaction practices in peri-urban Accra? Who are the new actors in the land market? How are their activities shaping land transaction and tenure (in)security within the peri-urban land market? The interactions and outcomes of the various actors in peri-urban land markets not only reveal their interests but also how they influence the composition, dynamics and practices of land markets (Lombard, 2016; Asafo, 2020). Understanding these land market dynamics and how they are shaped contributes more broadly to the focus of this book on the drivers of change in African peripheries. This chapter offers a specific investigation of the role of land and land markets as central drivers of change and centres conflict as integral to peripheral transformation. Exploring these core components of the peri-urban land market is paramount to unpacking the different outcomes of land transformation and (in)securities, which is vital for policy reforms and improving the political economy of land in SSA.

The subsequent discussion is structured into four strands. The first provides the context to customary land in peri-urban Accra, Ghana, and this is followed by a discussion on the theoretical approach and the methods informing the study. The third section presents and discusses the results by providing empirical evidence on the theme from the case study communities, and the fourth and final section outlines key conclusions.

Land management and the peri-urban land market in Accra, Ghana

Similar to most countries in SSA, but distinct from both Ethiopia and South Africa, land in peri-urban Accra is collectively owned and largely controlled by customary institutions including the stool,¹

families and clans (Kasanga and Kotey, 2001; Ayee *et al.*, 2008; Arko-Adjei, 2011). These institutions hold the allodial interest to land, while any transfer of land made to other entities such as individuals or groups is based on leasehold. While it is estimated that 80 per cent of the land is under customary authority, the remaining 18 per cent and 2 per cent is owned by the state and held in trust for the community through the state respectively (Kasanga and Kotey, 2001). Also, despite the fact that landownership is similar all across Ghana, there is a significant difference between land in peri-urban Accra and land in other parts of the country. In peri-urban Accra, for example, families and clans own the majority of land, whereas in other parts of the country, such as the Ashanti region, land is solely controlled by the stool (Mireku *et al.*, 2016).

Customary control of land existed before prehistoric times; however, the footprints of colonial governance practices in Ghana have altered land management practices and, more significantly, changed the perception of land from a communal good to an economic good (Sackeyfio, 2012). This was evident through laws and policy reforms such as the Public Land Ordinance in 1876, which permitted state acquisition of land for public use. Sackeyfio (2012) revealed that this practice introduced elements of state control and commodification into the customary land market in Accra. Land policy reforms such as the Land Title Registration Law (PNDC 152) and the State Land Acts 1962 (ACT 125) are examples of this, as they established government institutions to provide tenure security through land title registration. The outcome, therefore, has been the co-existence of multiple institutions (state and customary) in land management in Ghana, especially in the Greater Accra Region, as is common across many African countries.

The co-existence of both the state and customary institutions in the management of land has not been on a smooth trajectory following the differences in their *modus operandi*. That is, while the state draws on set legal standards, formal land-titling and planning processes, customary institutions are characterised by flexibility, customs and social values such as trust and social networks in managing land (Leduka, 2006; Rakodi, 2006; Amanor, 2008; Chimhowu, 2019). The consequence of this has been complex administration problems, summarised by Ehwi *et al.* (2019) to include land acquisition challenges, land registration challenges and

tenure security challenges. Policy interventions to enhance effective land administration include the Land Administration Programme I (2003–10) and II (2011–14), which established the Customary Land Secretariate (CLS), a hybrid institutional framework that complements state powers and customary authority in the management of customary land (Gough and Yankson, 2006; Gyapong, 2009; Arko-Adjei, 2011; Ehwi *et al.*, 2019).

The land market in peri-urban areas is currently undergoing intense transformation as a result of the increasing urbanisation and urban sprawl, particularly in Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA), which is home to the majority of the urban population in Ghana (Asafo, 2022). This population is faced with increasing housing deficits and the high cost of rent, forcing people to seek refuge in peri-urban areas, which have relatively cheaper and available land (Asafo, 2020, 2022). Significantly, the informal nature of the peri-urban land market, that is, land transactions outside state regulations (Urban Landmark, 2010), has seen increasing purchases following the argument that the formal land market managed by the state has complex bureaucracies and high costs (Arko-Adjei, 2011; Obeng-Odoom, 2016). The resultant effect is rising land values in the peri-urban land market, as evidenced by Adogla-Bessa (2018) that a plot of land in Accra's peri-urban areas in the past ten years had increased by 450 per cent.

Nonetheless, complex uncertainties have characterised the informal land markets in the form of intense conflicts over ownership and access (Whermann, 2008; Arko-Adjei, 2011). A major outcome of this situation is landguardism, defined as the employment of individuals or a group of young persons who use 'illegitimate forces to protect land and landed properties as a service in exchange for cash or in-kind remuneration' (see Ehwi and Asafo, 2021: 3). Although landguardism has been banned through the Vigilantism and Related Offence Act, 2019 (ACT 999), Ehwi and Asafo (2021) argue that the fight against landguardism with vigilantism perceived as one holistic challenge is defeated given that landguardism is a long-standing problem characterised by complex causal factors as compared with political vigilantism, which is a current phenomenon informed by political interests. It is without a doubt that although landguardism is banned, the act continues to operate. Landguardism continues to be associated with insecurities tied to

the land market in peri-urban Accra. The chapter turns now to an outline of its theoretical framework to explore these wider issues of changing land markets and insecurity, and the research methods underpinning the study.

Understanding the changes in the peri-urban land market through actors' access

One of the main elements underpinning the transformation of the peri-urban land market is the proliferation of different actors, whose varied interests shape access, control and use of land. To this end, the study draws insight from access theory to understand the factors influencing the control of land by various actors and how this influences land delivery, price modalities and associated insecurities. Access theory analyses the ability of actors to draw benefit from resources, in this case land (see Ribot and Peluso, 2003; William, 2013). Ability here constitutes what Ribot and Peluso (2003) called bundles of power, which either limit or facilitate the capacity of actors to draw benefits from resources. Considering that the peri-urban is a contested space characterised by intense struggles and uneven power relations over land (Ubink, 2008; Asafo, 2020), a careful analysis of how actors use different mechanisms to control land is relevant to understanding broader everyday politics and socio-economic changes that are affecting the land market. This focus also speaks to a wider interest of this book, which is to understand how African urban peripheries are lived and how the actions and experiences of different actors work to produce the peripheries in different ways.

The focus on access theory is a clear departure from the idea of property rights, which also informs access to resources (Ribot and Peluso, 2003; William, 2013). This departure follows the argument that the peri-urban land market is fluid and largely informal (Rakodi, 2006; Arko-Adjei, 2011; Chimhowu, 2019); hence, there are interrelated and complex underlying factors that influence access and control rather than rights. Although Sen's (1981) notion of entitlement underpins access theory (William, 2013; Myers and Hansen, 2020), Ribot and Peluso (2003) argue that property rights as an analytical tool for investigating the control of resources is

limiting and does not consider the broad interplay of socio-economic and political factors that shape access. Other scholars (Arko-Adjei, 2011) have also argued that despite the entrenchment of customary land in entitlements and inheritance, the recent transformation within the peri-urban land market is characterised by social relations, negotiations and economic power (financial capital). These social characteristics constitute structures and social agencies that actors use in the quest to control land. With the largely informal nature of the peri-urban land market, Ribot and Peluso's classification of the mechanism of access into right-based access (legal and illegal mechanisms) and particularly the relational mechanism of access (see Ribot and Peluso, 2003 for a detailed discussion on each classification) offers a more nuanced understanding to the response in the land market by the state and customary institutions.

Context and methods

The study focused on peri-urban areas within GAMA. GAMA (see Figure 7.1) constitutes the geographical region that covers a much wider part of the Accra Metropolitan Area and accommodates peri-urban communities in the country's capital, Accra (Oteng Ababio *et al.*, 2013; Agyeman, 2015). With GAMA's population growth rate of 3.1 per cent, this is said to be occurring in peri-urban areas as a result of its rapid integration with the city of Accra and the availability and cheaper cost of land which is compelling people to move into these areas (Bartels, 2019/20; Asafo, 2022). The implication for Accra's peri-urban land market therefore is rapid transformation, particularly the rise of different actors in the market (see Arko-Adjei, 2011; Asafo, 2020).

The specifics and drivers of Accra's transitions on its peripheries, including the configurations of actors, are in part distinct from but also map on to some of those detailed in the South African and Ethiopian cases elsewhere in this book. Accra's case parallels much of the rapid transition, particularly that which is informal or auto-constructed, evident across cities in SSA (see Mabin *et al.*, 2013), including in Dar es Salaam where the demand for affordable housing pushes peripheral growth (Andreasen *et al.*,

2017), a trend noted in South African cities too (see Mbatha and Mchunu, 2016). Accra's cases and their use within this book hence work to illustrate the 'transitioning peripheries' logic (detailed in the Introduction) and provide insights into the kinds of dynamics which may become more evident in places such as Molweni, South Africa (see Chapter 6), where hybrid governance arrangements are in place but where there is less clear evidence of rapid changes in land markets as detailed in this chapter. In Ghana and Accra, a very large part of the city is customary land, whereas in eThekweni (and other South African cases where it exists), it is relatively small and the speculative aspects are less developed but emerging (see Mbatha and Mchunu, 2016 on eThekweni). This comparative focus on Accra is productive for how the book more generally understands trends relating to customary land in contexts such as South Africa, and it illustrates that the issue requires deeper exploration therein.

The study adopted a qualitative approach, using interviews and observations to gather data from key people on how the proliferation of different actors is shaping land in the peri-urban land market. The fieldwork, carried out between December 2017 and April 2018, focused on four communities in peri-urban Accra, namely Oyibi, Abokobi, Achiaman and Oshiyie (see Figure 7.1). The selection criteria of the cases include increasing land sales, parallel land management institutions (state and customary institutions), persistent cases of landguardism and land conflicts. In total, twenty-two key actors in the land sector constituting fourteen land sellers (at least three from each case study community), four chiefs (one from each case) and four municipal planning officers (one from each case) were interviewed.

Although the land is customary in the case study communities, some distinctions in the ownership composition are evident. For instance, in Oyibi and Achiaman the larger portions of the land are owned and controlled by families, followed by stools. In contrast, in Oshiyie the stool owns and controls larger land parcels, followed by the families. Conversely, the land in Abokobi is religious, largely controlled by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Zimmerman congregation), with other parcels of land owned by individual families. These distinct features highlight the complexities that exist within customary land in peri-urban Accra.

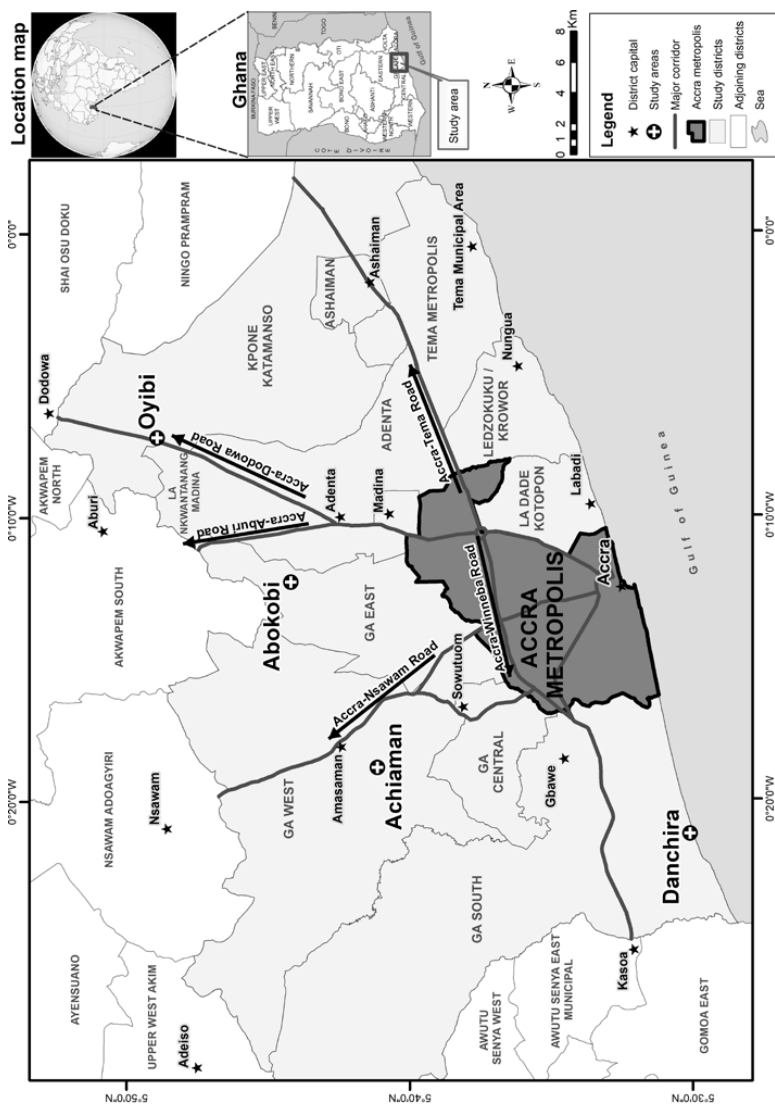


Figure 7.1 Map of GAMA showing the selected study communities (source: author's construct)

Land transaction practices in peri-urban Accra

Changing price modalities

Historical accounts of the four case studies point to the fact that there was no monetary transaction for land but rather the presentation of gifts and drinks (mostly alcoholic liquors), which depicted a symbol of allegiance and acknowledgement to landowners (Kusaana and Gerber, 2015). However, contemporary land transaction practices in the four case communities have seen a significant shift towards cash payments for the purchase of land. The majority of the land sellers in the study communities disclosed that this cash payment corresponds with the current market value of the land following rising demands which have intensified commodification.

The study discovered price variations in land (Table 7.1) as a significant feature of the land market in peri-urban Accra, which is consistent with the transformation patterns of land markets in Ghana, including flexible land transaction practices (Gough and Yankson, 2006; Ubink, 2008). The cost of land in the four case communities, for example, ranges from Ghc6,000 (\$1,245) to Ghc55,000 (\$11,458).

Arguably, these variations in land prices in peri-urban Accra reflect the colonial legacies of commodification and ineffectiveness of the formal land administration systems (Rakodi and Leduka, 2004; Chimhowu, 2019) which have given rise to the informal land market. A case in point of this informality is the pricing of land in peri-urban Accra, which is largely determined by socio-spatial and political factors alongside the forces of demand and supply. Observably, these factors do not operate in isolation, but instead they are interconnected and influence land prices across the peri-urban communities.

Table 7.1 The range of prices of land in peri-urban Accra (source: fieldwork (2018), compiled by Divine Asafo, 2018)

Community	Price of land per plot (70 × 100 ft, in Ghana cedis, ₵)	Price of land per plot (70 × 100 ft, in US \$)
Oshiyie	6,000–20,000	1,245–4,166
Achiaman	7,000–35,000	1,458–7,291
Abokobi	9,000–40,000	1,875–8,333
Oyibi	15,000–55,000	3,125–11,458

Land sellers in Oyibi and Abokobi, for example, attributed the relatively high cost of land to the communities' increasing new developments, proximity to major trunk roads and Abokobi's political status as the municipal district capital of Ga East Area. In an interview discussion with the traditional authority in Abokobi, it emerged that the upgrade of Abokobi from a district to a municipal capital constitutes one of the major factors pulling new residents into the community. He argued that the community's political status is creating civil service jobs and other private employment opportunities, compelling people to relocate into the community.

In a more specific case, a land seller, whose opinion is shared by other land sellers, revealed that the high cost and increasing variation in land prices are due to a growing culture of land-grabbing, in which people invest in land with the intention of reselling it when the value increases, combined with the proliferation of local real estate companies. According to him the price of 70 × 100 ft land sold by these real estate companies is much higher than the price at which individual land sellers sell theirs. This influences individual land sellers to also increase their prices. Observably, the high cost of land by the real estate companies can be attributed to the provision of title and service plots in the market, which is hardly found with family and stool land. In Oshiyie and Achiaman, however, the relatively low cost of land compared to other study areas is attributed to their relatively small communities, which are also located far off trunk roads that connect the communities to the city of Accra.

More significantly, the price of land also varies within individual communities due to locational factors such as proximity to road networks and indigenous communities coupled with areas with high population densities. In an interview discussion land sellers from two different communities disclosed:

though Achiaman is one community, the price of land differs and depends on where it is located. Within the community, it cost between ₵20,000 and ₵35,000, and when it is along a road, I sell it between from ₵30,000 to ₵45,000. And for the ones located in newly developed areas, I normally sell it for ₵7000. (Land Seller, Achiaman, 2018)

our family land extends from the roadside inward and covers a very large area. So land within is sold for ₵15,000, and if it is roadside, it's ₵30,000 because builders in future build shops in front of their houses and make money. This is why we charge high when your land is close to the roadside. (Land Seller, Abokobi, 2018)

The high cost of land in locations such as ‘roadside’ is perceived to have potential economic values that offer residents future livelihood opportunities, reflecting the way speculative logics overlay development in these transitioning peripheries (see the Introduction). These narratives point to the socio-spatial factors shaping the economic value of land but, more importantly, the non-interference of the state in the peri-urban land market in Ghana (Anyidoho *et al.*, 2007). This is evident in several land reforms which have largely focused on tenure security, governance and spatial-planning rather than developments in the peri-urban land market. The most recent of these reforms is the LAP I and II, which restructured the administrative procedure of the Ghana Land Commission and led to the establishment of the CLS to ensure efficient delivery of land (see Gyapong, 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2016). Nonetheless, while land-ownership is largely controlled by the customary institutions, state control of the land market remains minimal. The consequence, therefore, is price hikes of land over time. The World Bank (2015b), for instance, revealed that land prices in Accra and Kumasi (the second most populous city in Ghana) have seen an increase from 460 per cent and 1,300 per cent within a decade, underscoring Citinewsroom’s (2018) figure of a 450 per cent increase detailed earlier. These figures are bound to increase when the land market does not benefit from any institutional regulation.

Changing land delivery channels

Land delivery in Ghana continues to be largely managed by the customary authorities (stools, family or clan heads) (Akaateba, 2019; Asafo, 2020). In recent times, however, the land market has seen the proliferation of new actors who constitute a new land delivery channel in peri-urban Accra. This development was evident in all the study communities as the traditional authority in Oyibi, for instance, revealed that land sales have become a lucrative business and almost everyone is presently engaged in it. The expression ‘almost everyone’ highlights the new actors involved in land delivery, including real estate companies, organisations’ welfare associations² (hereafter called associations), individuals, land agents and landguards who were non-existent in the past. To this end the study considers the new actors as secondary land delivery channels and the existing actors as primary land delivery channels. These actors have multiple social

agencies, which enables them to transfer land in peri-urban Accra (Rakodi, 2006). These social agencies include economic capacity (financial capital), trust and social networks with state institutions in the land market. In contrast, other actors such as landguards take advantage of their role as stewards of contested customary land to gain control in land delivery. A family head in Abokobi recounts how a landguard sold 50 acres out of the 150 acres of land he was contracted to protect. Commenting on the rise of secondary land delivery channels and their associated characteristics, an official in Ga East Municipal Assembly, which hosts one of the case studies (Abokobi), stated that the power to engage in land sales is no longer the sole obligation of chiefs and family heads; rather, individuals, groups and other organisations are all using different mechanisms such as money, trust and networks to sell land.

These social agencies translate to Ribot and Peluso's (2003) concept of bundles of power, which enables access and control of resources, in this case land. Significantly, although the control of customary land is entrenched in entitlements and inheritance, the social agencies characterising secondary land delivery channels affirm the argument that the delivery of peri-urban land in recent times is driven by economic power, social relations and negotiations (Arko-Adjei, 2011). Additionally, the ability of landguards to use illicit and unsolicited means such as threats, assault, coercion and violence to gain land control in peri-urban Accra is an indication of the ability of an actor to control resources despite not being supported by rights (Ribot and Peluso, 2003; William, 2013).

As previously stated, the state's non-participation in customary land delivery, combined with the strict and complex bureaucratic procedures involved in acquiring state land (Rakodi, 2006; Anyidoho *et al.*, 2007), accounts for the influx of new actors in the Accra peri-urban land market. These secondary land delivery channels serve as an intermediary between the primary land delivery channels and the land market (Rakodi and Leduka, 2004) purposely to create an active land market but, more importantly, to mitigate tenure insecurities. For instance, land agents serve as middlemen who either find clients for the primary land delivery channels or vice versa. This is similar to the case of individuals, but largely, the individuals are involved in the sale of their own land which they acquired through inheritance or purchase. Additionally, the associations and real estate companies acquire the land in the name of the

association or company and resell it to their members and clients respectively. This emerging practice is currently embraced by many people following the collective protection and land tenure security it offers to group members and clients (see Ehwi *et al.*, 2019). A daunting challenge associated with the aforementioned development is the increase in the cost of land in peri-urban Accra following the offer of titled and serviced land. This contrasts with the primary land delivery channels in peri-urban Accra, which are characterised by untitled, unplanned and unsecured land. Furthermore, the unregulated nature of this development has resulted in some real estate companies selling land fraudulently.

The operation of the secondary land delivery channels, largely based on trust and social values, positions the peri-urban land market as an effectively flexible and user-friendly entity in peri-urban Accra. A major element evidencing this is the varied payment arrangements, hereafter called *negotiated payments*, which allow buyers to pay for the cost of land in instalments. This payment arrangement has become necessary following the rather high market value at which land is sold in the study communities. During discussions with land sellers within the primary land delivery channel, it was disclosed that they offered one–six-month instalment plans to clients. In contrast, real estate companies and the associations had more flexible and structured payment terms of between twelve and twenty-four months. This means that individuals with monthly incomes can take advantage of these options to become landowners. A major impact of these characteristics of Accra's peri-urban land market is that it advances and extends access to land beyond the reach of the wealthy to the majority of people who would otherwise be unable to afford the full cost of land.

However, the negotiated payment plans by real estate and associations are costly due to the interest that accrues over the payment duration. These evolving land delivery channels, on the other hand, have created a more vibrant land market with evidence of different marketing platforms such as posters, websites, billboards, buildings and backs of vehicles for advertising land (see Figure 7.2). While these platforms create different avenues for the land market, the unregulated and mostly incoherent land information characterising such platforms create irregularities such as fraudulent land transactions in peri-urban Accra. Arguably, these negotiated payments and advertisement platforms do not merely reveal the evolving



Figure 7.2 Different platforms for advertising land sales
(source: Divine Asafo, 2018)

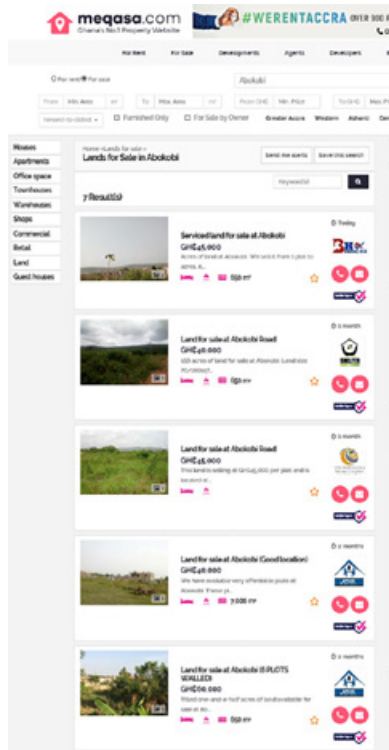


Figure 7.2 (Cont.)

commercial activities of the peri-urban land market but also highlight the competition between different actors in the land market in peri-urban Accra.

Land transformation and tenure (in)securities

Undeniably, the transformation of the land market in peri-urban Accra on the one hand is increasing access to land and on the other hand creating tenure uncertainties (see Wehrmann, 2008; Arko-Adjei, 2011; Asafo, 2020). These tenure uncertainties are underpinned by the rapid population increase and the sprawl of Accra, which have triggered the demand for land. In the four study communities,

this increase in the demand for land is being met by indeterminate boundaries, multiple ownership, largely untitled land parcels and ineffective land administration practices. During an interview discussion with a family head in Ashaiman, it was disclosed that the rising demand for land in the community has caused the value of the land to increase, compelling most landowning families to cash in. This development has triggered the indiscriminate sale of land by some chiefs, family heads and clan heads without following planning regulations. Besides, given that many of these lands in the communities are not properly demarcated, there are increasing sales of encroached land, which is causing complex tensions between both the buyers and sellers (see Asafo, 2020 for a detailed discussion on land conflicts in peri-urban Accra). In Oshiyie, however, chieftaincy dispute is deepening tenure uncertainties as two families are claiming ownership of the chieftaincy title, which underpins the control of stool land (Ayee *et al.*, 2008; Ubink, 2008). The implication of this for tenure is the multiple sales of the stool land to different buyers, which is generating intense conflicts between multiple buyers and sellers.

The breach of trust by some actors within the secondary land delivery channel is causing tenure insecurities and deepening existing ones. In one of the interview discussions with the traditional authority of Oyibi, it was revealed that many family heads and clan heads are entrusting their land in the hands of the secondary land delivery channels following the increasing trust they have built within the land market. Observably, the shift from primary to secondary land delivery channels highlights some degree of breakdown within the traditional institution, given its inability to keep up with the rapid evolution of the peri-urban land market (Lund, 2013). These secondary land delivery channels are expected to sell the land and reimburse the original landowners. Alternatively, due to rising land values, some secondary land delivery channels, such as real estate companies, purchase the land and pay off a portion of the purchase price, leaving the remainder to be paid later. However, on several occasions, some actors in the secondary land delivery channels (mostly land agents, associations and real estate companies) breach the contract by failing to pay off the land cost. Figure 7.3 illustrates how the breaches in the contract between these channels result in insecurities in the peri-urban land market in Accra. Anecdotal evidence from the field suggests that the negotiated payment mechanisms mostly

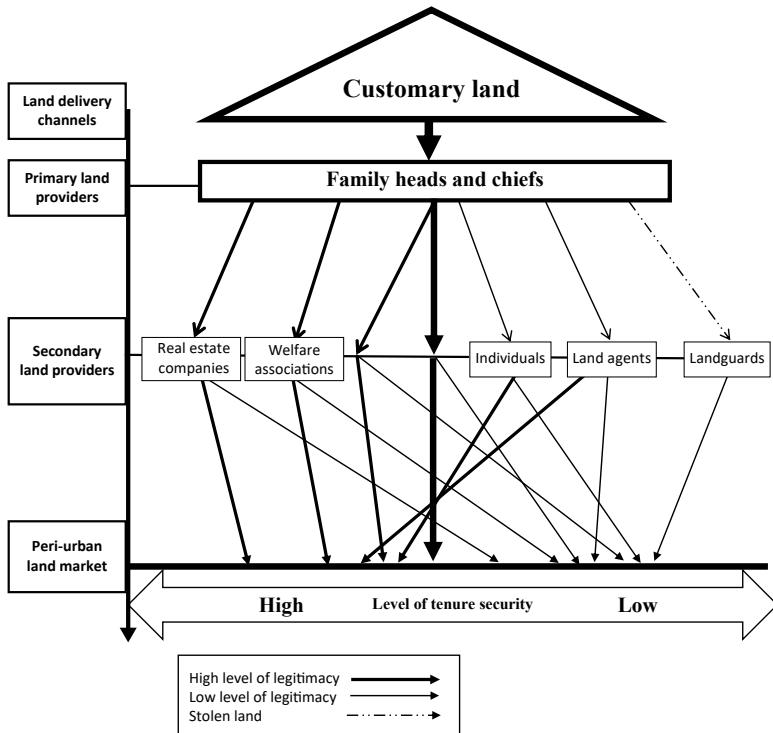


Figure 7.3 Land delivery channels and the issue of legitimacy (source: author's construct)

used in the sale of such land do not enhance the recoup of the capital investment as it sometimes takes up to two years for clients to finish the payment. That notwithstanding, some of these secondary land delivery channels deliberately breach the contract, leading to disputes between the original owners. This situation highlights new dimensions of multiple land sales as most original landowners resell the land to other clients. These circumstances have resulted in complex tenure insecurities deepened by landguardism and litigations in court, which usually take years to resolve.

The act of landguardism was found as one of the challenges increasing tenure insecurities in the contemporary transformation of the land market in peri-urban Accra. Landguards are primarily responsible for offering protection to contested land. By extension

of their activities, they also engage in extortion of informal levies such as ‘digging fees’ from housebuilders (see Bansah, 2017; Asafo, 2020). In most of the study communities, however, landguards were found to clandestinely engage in land sales (see Figure 7.3). Almost all actors who engaged landguards in the protection of their land recount how several parcels of the land have been sold without their knowledge. This has resulted in multiple sales of the same piece of land following the fact that the original owners do not have records of the land being sold. The consequence of this is a conflict that emanates between the original landowners and individuals who buy such land from landguards.

Conclusion

The land transformation in peri-urban areas in SSA continues to present significant opportunities for socio-economic investments, particularly in the area of housing. This has increased the demand for land and heightened commodification in peri-urban areas. In peri-urban Accra, Ghana, it appears the transformation of the land market has been shaped by colonial footprints and, recently, rapid and unguided urbanisation and the emergence of new actors. Consequently, the transformation of land in peri-urban Accra on the one hand is increasing access to land and on the other hand increasing tenure insecurities.

This study explored the transformation of the land market and its implications for tenure (in)security in peri-urban Accra, Ghana. Drawing on observations and interviews with key stakeholders in the land market, the study argues that the transformation of the peri-urban land market in Accra has resulted in a vibrant and more competitive land market. Indeed, despite the rising market value of land, elements of the land market, including the variation in land prices and the different modalities of payment for the land, have offered some flexibility for the majority of people to access land (Rakodi and Leduka, 2004). In Accra, where there is a rising housing deficit, a high cost of rent, coupled with the unlawful two-year rent taken by landlords, the peri-urban has become a new haven for people to escape the aforementioned urban challenges. Furthermore, the reliance on socio-spatial, political and locational factors, aside from the

forces of demand and supply in determining land prices, unearths the entrenched role of informality that characterises the peri-urban land market in Accra and speaks to some of the dimensions captured with the auto-constructed periphery logic detailed in the Introduction.

The study further submits that the several land policy reforms in Ghana which appear to ignore the regulation of the customary land market coupled with deep-seated complexities of customary land have created an avenue for different actors to gain control over land delivery in the peri-urban Accra. These new actors (real estate companies, organisations' welfare associations and land agents) leverage on the ineffectiveness of these issues to offer wide-ranging services such as registered and serviced land to their clients. Resonating with the idea of access theory, these actors gain control of the land market drawing on economic power, social relations, legal backing, trust and in some cases coercion (by landguards). This implies that understanding the transformation of the peri-urban land market and how different actors gain control requires looking beyond rights and taking into account the complex social agencies that drive these practices. Additionally, considering how these social agencies shape power relations in accessing land is paramount to understanding the political economy of peri-urban land and its associated conflicts (Lombard, 2016; Asafo, 2020). As indicated above, overall transitions in customary lands speak to what this book terms transition-ing peripheries, but it is evident how these transitions are shaped by speculative and auto-constructed logics too.

The overall conclusion of the chapter is that the flexibility and adaptability of customary land in peri-urban areas in SSA, especially Accra, reveal the diffusion of power to control land delivery shifting between multiple actors. This adds evidence to the fact that customary institutions, despite their dominant role in the land market, are gradually losing their power to control land in contemporary times, especially in the peri-urban. Certainly, the rather slow evolution of customary institutions to meet current land demands, especially in the peri-urban areas, constitutes a major factor in this situation. In the wake of rapid urbanisation, policy reforms and the influence of global systems (globalisation), closer attention to the transformation of the land market in peri-urban areas is critical in drawing positive outcomes, given the various socio-economic opportunities and challenges it presents. This chapter contributes an important focus on the

significance of land markets in shaping and driving change on African urban peripheries to this book more generally and offers an important site of urban comparison around questions of land, housing affordability, densification, governance and insecurity across these spaces.

Notes

- 1 A stool represents the seat of a chief of an indigenous state and represents the source of power and authority. Land owned and controlled by such a state is referred to as stool land (Yankson and Gough, 2000).
- 2 These are groups of employees in an organisation who come together to purchase large portions of land and subdivide it among themselves. Payment is mostly done in instalments.