New urban horizons in Africa

A critical analysis of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana

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Abstract
African cities increasingly aspire global recognition and this has prompted a rapid transformation of the built environment in many urban locales. This thesis provides empirical and conceptual insights into this recent trend through a critical analysis of contemporary land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana. More specifically, this thesis examines the prevailing discourses on desirable urban development amongst urban planners and policy makers in this city region; how and by whom certain city visions are integrated into the built environment; how certain marginalised groups (represented by ‘informal’ street vendors and former residents of an ‘informal settlement’) respond to dominant city visions; and the socio-spatial consequences of contemporary urban interventions.

The present thesis is based upon three qualitative case studies of transforming urban areas in the Greater Accra Region. The methods used include semi-structured interviews, observations and policy analysis. Theoretically, this thesis combines critical urban theory, the governmentality perspective and post-colonial urban theory to examine different aspects of the processes behind changing land uses and their consequences. The three cases are analysed in separate papers and discussed together in a comprehensive summary.

The first paper analyses the logics behind a state-led demolition of a centrally located informal settlement. The paper shows that ‘conflicting rationalities’ exist between marginalised residents of informal settlements and state actors regarding their understanding of Accra’s built environment. While the demolished settlement constituted a place of affordable housing, place-specific livelihood strategies and sociability to the former residents, state authorities perceived the neighbourhood as problematic and made use of market-driven, ‘generative’ and ‘dispositional’ rationalities to justify the demolition and make space for new urban developments.

The second paper explores the everyday governance of informal street trade in Osu, a rapidly transforming inner suburb of Accra. The paper highlights the important role played by individual landowners in the regulation of street trade in public space and demonstrates that street vendors, state authorities and landowners express ambiguous attitudes on the contemporary and future presence of informal trading in Accra due to prevailing aspirations of making Accra a globally recognised city.

The third paper analyses the planning and materialisation of Appolonia City, a new satellite city under construction in peri-urban Accra. The paper demonstrates that far-reaching processes of privatisation in terms of land ownership, urban planning and city management are taking place through this project. Appolonia City has been enabled by state- and traditional authorities, together with the private developer, on the basis of multiple rationalities. The paper suggests that Appolonia City will become an elite development in contrast to the project’s stated goal of social sustainability.

On the basis of the aggregated findings of the three case studies, this thesis concludes that a strong ‘global city’ ideal informs contemporary urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region; that the privatisation of communal land plays a key role in enabling (new types of) urban intervention; and that the needs of the urban poor are largely disregarded in these processes.

Keywords: African cities, urban redevelopment, urban informality, urban land use, urban planning, spatial governance, new cities, evictions, socio-spatial segregation, qualitative case studies, fieldwork, critical urban theory, governmentality, post-colonial urban theory, Accra, Ghana.

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Department of Human Geography
Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm
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I want to express my sincere gratitude to the many people that have supported me throughout the writing of this thesis. First of all, I want to express my deepest appreciation to all the interviewees who shared with me their perceptions and experiences regarding urban development in the Greater Accra Region, including the street vendors in Osu, the former residents of Mensah Guinea, state officials at various ministries and departments, politicians, traditional leaders, representatives of non-governmental organisations and employees at private urban planning and development firms. This research would not have been possible without your participation – me daase.

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Stockholm, 24 January 2020

_Lena Fält_
List of papers

Paper I

Paper II

Paper III
Contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 1
   Aim and research questions..................................................................................................... 3
   Thesis outline......................................................................................................................... 4

2. Accra – a city undergoing rapid transformation ................................................................. 6
   Urbanisation and increasing competition over land .............................................................. 7
   Urban policy in Ghana – a historical overview ..................................................................... 18
   Contemporary land use policy and planning in Ghana ......................................................... 22
   Urban planning in Accra from colonial times until today ..................................................... 25
   A summarising note on a shifting urban policy landscape .................................................. 29

3. Travelling city ideals and urban change in Africa and beyond ......................................... 30
   Urban policy and planning on the move ............................................................................... 31
   Global actors and ideas shaping contemporary urban Africa ............................................ 35
   Land tenure diversity ............................................................................................................. 38
   Conflicting rationalities between formal and informal land use? ........................................ 41

4. Urban transformation in Africa through the lenses of critical urban theory and governmentality ................................................................. 44
   Critical urban theory ............................................................................................................ 44
   A governmentality approach to urban development ........................................................... 49
   Power and knowledge .......................................................................................................... 50
   Spatial rationalities ............................................................................................................... 53
   A synthesising note on theory .............................................................................................. 55

5. Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 57
   A collective case study of urban transformation ................................................................. 58
   Semi-structured interviews .................................................................................................. 62
   Observations and policy analysis ......................................................................................... 65
   Fieldwork ............................................................................................................................... 67
   Getting to know the field ....................................................................................................... 67
   Studying the demolition of Mensah Guinea in retrospect ..................................................... 69
   Examining the micro-politics of spatial regulation in Osu ................................................... 73
   Researching Appolonia City – Ghana’s new satellite city ..................................................... 75
   Analysis of material .............................................................................................................. 76
6. Overview of papers ................................................................. 79
  Paper I .................................................................................. 79
  Paper II .................................................................................. 79
  Paper III ................................................................................ 80

7. Discussion ............................................................................. 81
  Conflicting rationalities regarding current land use changes in the Greater
  Accra Region? ....................................................................... 81
  Multiple actors and various powers behind urban interventions in the Greater
  Accra Region ....................................................................... 86
  Socio-spatial consequences of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region ...... 93
  Collective case study findings in synthesis ........................................... 95

8. Conclusion ............................................................................ 96

9. Sammanfattning på svenska .................................................... 99

References ..................................................................................... 103

Appendix ...................................................................................... 116
List of figures

Figure 1. Gbawe, a rapidly growing peri-urban area in the Greater Accra Region. ........................................................................................ 8

Figure 2. Statement on a wall in central Accra declaring that the land is not for sale. ....................................................................................... 9

Figure 3. Gated community in central Accra........................................... 10

Figure 4. New high-rises in Osu, Accra. .................................................. 11

Figure 5. New high-rise under construction in Osu, Accra. .................... 12

Figure 6. Advertisement for Appolonia City in Oyibi, the Greater Accra Region. ......................................................................................... 13

Figure 7. Informal settlement in central Accra. ....................................... 15

Figure 8. Old Fadama, Accra’s largest informal settlement. ................... 15

Figure 9. Street trade in central Accra. .................................................... 16

Figure 10. Street trade in Osu, Accra. ..................................................... 17

Figure 11. Street trade in Osu, Accra. ..................................................... 17

Figure 12. Map locating the three case study sites in the Greater Accra Region. ......................................................................................... 60
1. Introduction

The built environment of urban Africa is undergoing rapid transformation today. Ambitious city projects – including new satellite cities, the redevelopment of entire inner-city districts, and large-scale expansions on the urban fringes – are materialising across the continent at a pace never seen before (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer, 2018; Myers, 2015; Watson, 2014). Attempts to formalise and/or displace informal settlements, to remove (informal) street vendors from public space, and to construct symbolic ‘world-class’ buildings further add to urban interventions that are changing the socio-spatial environment of many African cities today (Pieterse, 2008).

An important explanation behind this development is the recent entrance of international investors into local property- and infrastructure markets (Watson, 2014). While international investors previously perceived urban Africa as unattractive, African cities are increasingly seen as places of business opportunities given the continent’s high rates of urbanisation, its growing middle-class and its relative high levels of economic growth (Goodfellow, 2013; Bekker & Fourchard, 2013). Transforming urban landscapes in Africa are thus closely connected to emerging narratives that ascribe urban Africa to be ‘on the rise’ (Côté-Roy & Moser, 2019; Watson, 2014).

Contemporary processes of urban transformation in Africa are also increasingly informed by globally circulating urban norms, and the ideal of the ‘global city’ – also known as the ‘world-class city’ – seems to inform many recent urban (re)development projects across the continent (Myers, 2015; Watson, 2014; Bekker & Fourchard, 2013). This urban ideal encourages city administrations to create internationally competitive urban environments and it carries a strong belief in the ability of the free market to generate desirable urban development paths. In addition, this ideal is often associated with notions of ‘good governance’ and ‘sustainability’ (Robinson, 2011). Shimmering high-rise buildings, central business districts, shopping malls, and waterfront developments constitute material signs of urban progress according to this model (Amin, 2013; Pieterse, 2008; Huyssen, 2008).

Overall, however, urban visions, strategies and plans influenced by the global city ideal constitute a palpable contrast to existing urban realities in Africa (Myers, 2015). While recent urban visions imagine future land uses as being formally organised, existing land uses are largely characterised by
‘informality’, which implies “a state of deregulation, one where the ownership, use, and purpose of land cannot be fixed and mapped according to any prescribed set of regulations or the law” (Roy, 2009b, p. 80; see also Parnell, Pieterse, & Watson, 2009; Kyessi, 2002). These informal characteristics of urban land use, together with the continent’s high rate of urbanisation and low pace of industrialisation, imply that the preconditions for urban planning and development in Africa are different from those in the global North, from where the global city ideal originates (Schindler, 2017a). Prevalent poverty, inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services, and striking socio-economic inequality further add to the differences in preconditions for interventions in the built environment of urban Africa compared to those in the global North, as do differences related to the role and functions of the state (Ibid.; Watson, 2009b).

Previous research on how the global city ideal proliferate and materialise, the actors involved in these processes, and the physical and social outcomes thereof has, however, largely focused on cities in the global North (see e.g., McCann & Ward, 2011; Newman, 2012; Cochrane, 2007; Brenner & Keil, 2006). Less is known about how globally circulating urban norms, including the global city ideal, imbricate and articulate with local processes in southern contexts, and African cities are particularly understudied in this respect (Huyssen, 2008; Robinson, 2002; 2011; Watson, 2009a; 2014). Given the long-term socio-spatial effects that the recent trend of urban transformation in Africa most likely will have, more research is needed on how globally circulating urban norms are (re)produced, modified and challenged in local processes of changing land uses in cities across the continent, how power operates in these processes, and the socio-spatial consequences thereof. The role played by international investors in these processes also deserves more academic attention.

Recent trends of urban transformation in Africa also raise questions regarding the relevance of dominant urban theory originating in the global North for explaining urban processes elsewhere. While some read recent urban trends in Africa as a sign of predestined planetary capitalist-driven urban pathways (Brenner, 2009; Wyly, 2015), others urge us to question universal explanations of urban development and pay attention to the particularities of different urban experiences, not least regarding cities in the global South that are still underrepresented in urban theory (Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Myers, 2015).

In this doctoral thesis, I seek to contribute with empirical and theoretical insights into the recent trend of urban transformation in Africa through a critical exploration of how contemporary visions of urbanity are formulated, implemented, and challenged in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana.
Aim and research questions

Given the recent trend of urban transformation in Africa, this thesis has two aims. First, this thesis seeks to critically analyse the processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region with a focus on how urban land use changes are governed. More specifically, this thesis examines the prevailing discourses on desirable urban development amongst urban planners and policy makers in the Greater Accra Region; how and by whom certain city visions are integrated into the built environment; how certain marginalised groups (represented by ‘informal’ street vendors and former residents of an ‘informal settlement’) (re)produce, navigate and contest dominant city visions; and the socio-spatial consequences of contemporary urban interventions. Second, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on how contemporary processes of urban transformation in Africa could be theorised in a global context.

The present thesis builds upon three case studies of recent urban land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, as follows: 1) the demolition of the centrally located Mensah Guinea informal settlement and the future redevelopment of the area, 2) the everyday regulation of informal street trade in the rapidly transforming inner suburb Osu, and 3) the planning and construction of Appolonia City, a new satellite city in peri-urban Accra. Each case illustrates a specific process of land use transformation with its own constellation of spatial government and is analysed in a separate article. Taken together, the cases illuminate broader configurations of spatial governance in the Greater Accra Region by shedding light on dominant city visions and how they are contested, how and by whom these visions are integrated into the built environment, and the socio-spatial consequences thereof.

In line with the aims of this thesis, the following sets of research questions have guided this thesis:

1. **City visions**
   What are the dominant city visions amongst urban planners and policy makers in the Greater Accra Region and what are the political and spatial rationalities behind them? In what ways do these visions relate to other cities and the ‘global city’ ideal? How do these visions relate to informal land uses? How do marginalised groups in the Greater Accra Region (re)produce, navigate and contest dominant city visions?

2. **Urban intervention**
   What actors drive and partake in the process of translating and implementing dominant city visions into the built environment? What is the role of the formally assigned local planning authorities in the governing of urban land use? How do the residents and traders who informally use land engage in the governing of these spaces?
3. Socio-spatial outcomes

How have marginalised groups in the Greater Accra Region been affected by recent urban interventions? How has the recent trend of urban transformation informed broader processes of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion in the Greater Accra Region?

These sets of questions are addressed in the three case studies and analysed in the respective papers; however, the focus differs among them. Paper I explores the spatial rationalities behind the demolition of a centrally located informal settlement and examines how different state and non-state actors took part in the process that led to the intervention. This paper also analyses how a selected group of former residents of this settlement was affected by the eviction, and how former residents and civil society actors reacted to the eviction note. Paper II, in contrast, delves into the more mundane everyday practices of spatial governance through an analysis of how informal street trade is regulated in Osu, an inner suburb of Accra that rapidly is transforming from being a residential area to a mixed land use neighbourhood. The paper draws attention to the multiple actors and rationalities involved in the governing of informal land uses in this locale. Paper III consists of a case study of the ongoing planning and construction of a new private satellite city named Appolonia City. The paper investigates the actors who have been involved in the planning and implementation of this new city and how responsibilities for infrastructure and services have been divided between private actors and state authorities. Furthermore, it analyses the multiple and partly conflicting rationalities behind this urban megaproject and elaborates on the socio-spatial consequences of the project.

Together, the three cases provide insights into broader formations of spatial government and how power operates in contemporary processes of urban land uses changes in the Greater Accra Region. Based on this aggregated knowledge, this thesis attempts to critically engage with the rather polarised academic debate on how to fruitfully theorise contemporary transformations in urban Africa.

Thesis outline

This comprehensive summary (the ‘kappa’) is organised as follows: chapter two presents the context of the study sites by attending to the social, spatial and material characteristics of the Greater Accra Region; the history of urban policy in Ghana; and more specifically, how urban planning practices have developed in Accra over time. Chapter three presents and elaborates on relevant literatures for this thesis that attend to urban policy mobility, emerging trends of new global connections in urban Africa, (urban) land tenure in the
global South, and lastly, informality and planning in southern cities. **Chapter four**, in turn, elaborates on how critical urban theory and the governmentality perspective are combined in this thesis to provide insights into various aspects of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region today. **Chapter five** presents and discusses the qualitative methods used in this thesis and the ethical considerations of the research project. The three articles that form part of this compilation thesis are then summarised in **chapter six**. Thereafter follows an extended discussion in **chapter seven**, which elaborates the aggregated findings from the three papers and relate them to previous studies on transforming African cities in a global context. **Chapter eight** presents the conclusion of this thesis. A Swedish summary of this thesis is presented in **chapter nine**.
2. Accra – a city undergoing rapid transformation

Accra, the capital of Ghana, is an interesting case to study with regard to contemporary urban transformation in the African context. Like many other African city regions, the Greater Accra Region is urbanising rapidly, and its cityscape is undergoing a drastic change due to the many recent urban projects initiated by private (international) real estate firms, state-led city interventions, and incremental informal developments.

Ghana’s reputation as a peaceful, stable and democratic society, in combination with its strong economic growth during the early 21st century – which was given an extra boost when oil was discovered in the country in 2007 – have created a strong interest amongst international actors to invest in infrastructure and real estate in the country’s capital region. The World Bank’s upgrading of Ghana’s income level from ‘low-income’ to ‘lower middle-income’ status in 2011 further added confidence amongst international actors that investments in Accra’s built environment is a safe bet.

Urban development and spatial planning have also recently received much attention within Ghana’s state apparatus. In 2012, Ghana adopted its first national urban policy (NUP), which was followed up by the inauguration of a new planning authority in 2016 and new planning legislation. The Government of Ghana is thus actively seeking to strengthen the institutional framework that formally governs urban development paths across the country. By doing so the government anticipates to both raise the standard of living in Ghana’s cities and attract investors to these environments, which in turn will enable urban Ghana to “better compete within the West African region and globally” (Government of Ghana, 2015, p. 14).

Importantly, the recent attempts to strengthen the formal urban planning apparatus and the increasing number of private developments must be considered against the background that Accra is a city where the majority of the population live in informal settlements that are often characterised by inadequate housing, infrastructure and services (Gillespie, 2016; Grant & Yankson, 2003). Hence, informal developments have a great impact on broader land use patterns vis-à-vis planned state and private-driven developments. It is also worth noting that the Greater Accra Region is an area with a complex land tenure system where land can be owned by traditional authorities, families,
individuals or the state, which further informs how and where urban interventions occur (Asabere, 1981, p. 388f.).

Accra is thus an interesting city to study in terms of African urban transformation in a global-local and formal-informal nexus. In the sections that follow, I introduce the social, spatial and material characteristics of the Greater Accra Region, how urban policy in Ghana has evolved since the colonial era until today, and more specifically how spatial planning frameworks and practices in Accra have developed during the same time period. The purpose of these sections is to contextualise the case studies of urban transformation in Mensah Guinea, which represents a state-led demolition of a centrally located informal settlement; Osu, a residential neighbourhood in central Accra with a high presence of ‘informal’ street trade that is rapidly, yet plot-wise, redeveloping into a mixed use area that houses many international companies; and Appolonia City, a large-scale private-led development in a peri-urban greenfield location.

Urbanisation and increasing competition over land

The Greater Accra Region has experienced rapid urbanisation during the last few decades. Between 1985 and 2000, its population increased by 66 percent, and while the expansion rate has decreased since then, the population continues to grow by approximately 3.5 percent annually (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 225). Accra’s population growth is mainly the result of net in-migration and the reclassification of peri-urban villages to urban status (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 225); however, natural population increase also adds to the growth (Yankson & Bertrand, 2012, p. 26). According to the latest census, the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) was home to approximately 4 million people in 2010 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 51), a number that has most likely increased since then. The GAMA consists of fifteen local government assemblies, which are classified as metropolitan, municipal or district assemblies (MMDAs) depending on their population size. The Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), the most central district of the GAMA, had an estimated population size of 2.2 million people in 2018 (AMA, 2019).

The Greater Accra Region’s population is diverse in terms of ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group in Ghana, the Akan, makes up approximately 40 percent of the population in the capital region whereas the Ga-Dangme, the ethnic group that has historically resided in and around Accra, makes up 27 percent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 62). Non-Ghanaian citizens make up approximately three percent of the Greater Accra Region’s population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 60). Approximately 73 percent of the population in the capital region belong to Christian faith communities whereas 12 percent
are affiliated with Islam. Like many other African cities, Accra’s population is young; it is estimated that 56 percent of its population’s age is under 24 years (Rubin & Didier, 2013).

The GAMA is the region in Ghana with the lowest incidence of poverty, and the poverty level has decreased in the region during the last decade (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018, p. 11, 13). However, Accra is a city characterised by deep inequality, and a large proportion of the population live in inadequate housing, often with unsatisfactory infrastructure and services (Grant, 2009; Gillespie, 2016). A large proportion of Accra’s workforce further makes a living in the informal economy, often under precarious working conditions (Gillespie, 2016).

The rapid urbanisation of Accra has increased the population density of the city “from 167 [people per square kilometre] in 1960 to 1,235.8 [people per square kilometre] in 2010” (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 52). This change has resulted in a higher population density in the city centre and, more prominently, urban sprawl where new neighbourhoods, rich and poor alike, are emerging in the city’s hinterlands where communal services and infrastructure are poor or non-existent (Owusu, 2012; Doan & Oduro, 2012). Certain peri-urban areas, such as Gbawe, Kasoa and Mandela, have seen their populations grow by 30 percent on an annual basis since the 1970s (Owusu & Oteng- Ababio, 2015, p. 317) (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Gbawe, a rapidly growing peri-urban area in the Greater Accra Region.
The growing population has increased the pressures placed on land in the Greater Accra Region, and land conflicts have become increasingly common (Barry & Danso, 2014). Statements on buildings and walls declaring that the land and/or property is not for sale have thereby become a common feature of Accra’s built environment (see figure 2).

Ghana’s dual land tenure system, in which both customary and statutory land tenure is recognised by the 1992 constitution, makes land ownership and land use rights complex issues. Barry and Danso (2014, p. 359) explain that “illegal occupation, unplanned development, ownership insecurity, and multiple sales of the same piece of land” constitute common land disputes in the country. Most of the land within the GAMA is of customary tenure and held in custody for local communities by traditional authorities. However, in central parts of Accra traditionally inhabited by the Ga-Dangme, the heads of extended families make up the custodians of the land, and members of those families can obtain occupancy rights (Yeboah, 2008). Nevertheless, recent trends indicate that traditional authorities increasingly bypass their historical role as custodians of community land and sell it “opportunistically to migrants or corporations to advance individual or corporate interests, abandoning their fiduciary obligations to subjects and kin” (Ibid, 359, see also Obeng-Odoom, 2016). There are strong indications that this practice has, in turn, decreased the security of tenure for community members (Oduro & Adamtey, 2017).
Private real-estate firms belong to the numerous actors interested in acquiring land within the GAMA, and their presence is on the rise in the region (Achaempong, 2019, p. 224). When acquiring land in Accra, real estate firms generally register their property at the city’s Lands Commission office to obtain security of tenure through the statutory land tenure system. Private real-estate firms mainly target “the high end of the housing market”, which implies that they construct “housing which only upper-middle-income and high-income households living in Ghana and abroad can afford” (Ibid, 210). The number of gated communities both within the city and along its periphery is also increasing (Gaisie et al., 2019; Asiedu & Arku, 2009; Grant 2009; Achaempong, 2019; Owusu & Oteng-Ababio, 2015) (see figure 3). These gated communities have “strictly controlled entrances and private security” and are run by private actors (Achaempong, 2019, p. 210; see also Grant, 2005). The gated aspect allows “select elites to detach themselves from the traditional city” (Owusu & Oteng-Ababio, 2015, p. 319), and Accra is increasingly described as an “enclave” city (Grant, 2005, p. 663). Today, gated communities constitute an estimated three percent of Accra’s housing units (Arup, 2016, p. 21).

Figure 3. Gated community in central Accra.
New retail spaces, including shopping malls, are also rapidly being developed along the major roads of the city, and a “global CBD [Central Business District]” is emerging in Osu, Cantonments and Airport City due to the “influx of both globally connected and foreign companies” (Gaisie et al., 2019, p. 4). This development implies that old residential areas are being transformed into mixed use or business quarters where land and property prices are escalating and poor populations are being displaced (Achaempong, 2019; Owusu & Oteng-Ababio, 2015). These changes also impact on the built environment of Accra where high-rises are increasingly altering the historic low skyline of the city (Adarkwa, 2012) (see figure 4 and 5). The transformation of Osu from a residential area to a mixed use central business district is studied in paper II, with a focus on how informal land uses in the form of street trade is governed at the present juncture of changing land uses.

International investments in real estate and business locales constitute an important explanation for the recent construction boom in the Greater Accra Region, and they include capital flows from both large investors and remits from the Ghanaian diaspora (Obeng-Odoom, 2011). International investments in Ghana are clearly centred on the capital region; 82 percent of Ghana’s foreign direct investment between 1994 and 2017 was allocated in Accra (Gaisie et al., 2019, p. 4; see also World-Bank, 2015).

Figure 4. New high-rises in Osu, Accra.
Indeed, international investments play an important role in the three cases of urban transformation studied in this thesis, as elaborated in the three papers and in the discussion section of this comprehensive summary.

Two new privately initiated cities have also been planned for the Greater Accra Region: Hope City and Appolonia City (see figure 6). These projects are part of the recent trend of new city building across Africa that is introducing new urban forms and governance structures to the continent (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer, 2018). Hope City, a vertical high-tech city, was to be developed by Rlg Communications, and Ghana’s former president, John Dramani Mahama, participated in a sod cutting ceremony in 2013. However, the project has still not moved ahead, and the megaproject will most likely not be implemented (personal communication with stakeholders, 2014). Hope City thus seems to be one of Africa’s many “urban fantasies /…/ [that] are unlikely to materialise” (Watson, 2014, p. 227). Appolonia City, however, is now under construction and the development will house 80 000 inhabitants in a decade from now, if it proceeds according to plans. This urban megaproject is led by Africa’s largest real estate firm, Rendeavour, which currently is building new cities in five African countries (Rendeavour, 2020).
Appolonia City constitutes an intriguing case of new city building in Africa and I analyse the planning and implementation of this megaproject in paper III as it makes up one of the three case studies of this thesis. The focus of the paper is on the processes that have enabled Appolonia City to materialise, how responsibilities for infrastructure and services in this new city are divided between Rendeavour and state authorities, and what the socio-spatial outcomes of the development might be.

Despite the ongoing construction boom, the market has not managed to meet the increasing demands for housing that have followed the city’s rapid population growth (Gillespie, 2018). The role of the state in housing provision is also minimal; relying on the population and housing census from 2010, Acheampong (2019, p. 2010) reports that only 2.2 percent of Ghana’s total housing stock is directly provided by the state. Increased competition for urban land has therefore worsened the housing market situation, and in particular, low-income households face difficulties finding a decent home in the city that they can afford (Yankson & Bertrand, 2012). The city’s housing deficit increased from approximately 250,000 units in 2001 (Grant & Yankson, 2003).
to an estimated 500,000 units in 2011 (Gough & Yankson, 2011). Furthermore, the city’s existing housing stock is characterised by “increasing overcrowding, declining building quality and declining access to services” (Yankson & Bertrand, 2012, p. 27; see also Owusu & Afutu-Kotey, 2010). Figures from Ghana Statistics also demonstrate that access to basic infrastructure – including water, sanitation and health care – has worsened in the capital during the first decade of the 21st century (Yankson, 2014 at the National workshop on Urbanization; see also Obeng-Odoom, 2011, 2012). Today, Accra is thus experiencing a “housing crisis” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 64; see also Acheampong, 2019).

Accra’s housing deficit has largely been “tackled through the development of unauthorised housing” (Yankson & Bertrand, 2012, p. 29). It is estimated that half of all houses constructed since the 1980s lack building permits, which implies that they are unauthorised by the local planning authorities (Yeboah, 2000, p. 99, in Yankson & Bertrand, 2012, p. 28). The unauthorised housing stock in Accra includes high-quality buildings constructed by wealthy actors; however, most of it consists of substandard buildings that serve low-income households (Gillespie, 2018). These low standard housing units are often agglomerated into ‘informal settlements’, and in 2011, the AMA reported that it had 78 informal settlements within its jurisdiction (Crentsil & Owusu, 2018, p. 3). Informal settlements provide housing for a large share of Accra’s population, and estimates suggest that 60 percent of the city’s population live in such settlements (Obeng-Odoom, 2011, p. 388; see also Adaween & Jørgensen, 2012) (see figure 7). Accra’s largest informal settlement – Old Fadama – alone accommodates approximately 80,000 inhabitants (Farouk & Owusu, 2012) (see figure 8).

Because of their non-compliance with planning regulation and building codes, informal settlements have repeatedly been threatened by demolition since at least 1979, yet actual demolitions are rare (Gillespie, 2017, p. 983; see also Nyametso, 2012). However, in 2014, the approximately 3,000 residents of the informal settlement Mensah Guinea were forcefully evicted by local authorities. This event is thus an interesting case of state intervention in the built environment of Accra, and I analyse the process behind this eviction, its effects on a selected proportion of the former residents and the authorities’ future ambitions for the area, in paper I of this thesis.

The competition for land in the city also affects urban livelihoods. Accra’s rapid population growth has not been accompanied by comparable levels of industrialisation, and formal employment opportunities are limited. A large share of the population thus makes a living in the informal economy; estimates on the size of that proportion range from 48 percent (Adaween & Jørgensen, 2012) to 70 percent or more (World Bank, 2014, p. 14; Arup, 2016, p. 18). The people who engage in Accra’s informal economy make up a diverse group and include workers in different types of businesses located in various places in the city (Adaween & Jørgensen, 2012).
Figure 7. Informal settlement in central Accra.

Figure 8. Old Fadama, Accra’s largest informal settlement.
However, most visible are the street vendors, who can be found in public spaces across the city and who often occupy space without formal authorisation from the local planning authorities. Informal traders can be roughly divided into itinerant and stationary vendors depending on whether they have a fixed selling spot – and both groups are common sights in Ghana’s capital (Bob-Milliar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011) (see figure 9 and 10).

Street vending makes up an important livelihood strategy in the Greater Accra Region that occupy a diverse group of vendors (in terms of gender, age, and education background), who provide a broad variety of goods and services (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008). As such, working conditions and income levels vary greatly within this group (Ibid.; see also Lindell, 2010 for a general note on the differentiation of informal street vendors). However, according to Ghanaian legislation and local policies, informal trading is illegal because of its unauthorised use of (public) land and street vendors are sporadically evicted from public space by AMA’s task force. Indeed, eviction notes written by AMA, and other local authorities, on containers, kiosks and other types of structures used by street traders is a common sight in the Greater Accra Region (see figure 11). Understanding how street trade is governed is thus an important aspect of transforming land uses in this city region, and paper II of this thesis consists of an analysis of the actors and logics involved in the governing of informal street trade in the rapidly transforming inner suburb Osu.

Figure 9. Street trade in central Accra.
Figure 10. Street trade in Osu, Accra.

Figure 11. Eviction note on informal shop in Osu, Accra.
In sum, the Greater Accra Region is an urbanising area where land uses rapidly are changing in many locales. This capital region now experiences an influx of international investors who are (re)developing both central and peri-urban land, targeting the middle class and elite groups. Hence, new luxury, often vertical, developments are replacing the old urban landscapes dominated by traditional compound houses. At the same time, informal housing and trading are elements that are increasingly present in the urban fabric of this city. The contemporary trends of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region thus seem to align with Owusu and Oteng-Ababio’s (2015, p. 324) claim that:

Ghana is likely to produce an urban society with two faces. There will be, on the one hand, worldclass cities with solid infrastructure and services, along the visions of Hope City that will be inhabited by the middle and upper classes, and, on the other hand, teeming cities composed of informal settlements overwhelmed by the pressures of excessive congestion, inadequate sanitation and waste management, and poor housing that will mainly be inhabited by lower-income groups and the poor.

This thesis seeks to add further insights into contemporary processes of urban change in the Greater Accra Region by analysing the city visions at work in this region today, how and by whom these visions have been integrated into the built environment, and the socio-spatial consequences thereof. To better understand the contemporary processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region, I find it important to place the analysis in a broader historical context of urban development (cf. Byerley, 2013); thus, the next sections address how urban policy has evolved in Ghana since colonial times and how spatial planning in Accra has developed during the same time period.

Urban policy in Ghana – a historical overview

The first legislation directing town planning in Ghana was passed by the British colonial administration in 1892 and updated two years later with regard to larger urban agglomerations (Dickson, 1969, p. 265). This legislation, the Towns Ordinance, enabled the colonial government to acquire land for public works, to collect taxes, and to intervene in urban communities to improve the health and sanitation situation (Ibid.). According to the Towns Ordinance, physical planning was considered to be a means by which to “order and regulate the environment” in the “self-appointed mission of the colonialists in ‘civilizing’ the natives” (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a, p. 138). However, it was not until the end of the First World War that the structuring of Ghanaian cities by the colonial regime began to develop in terms of a “large-scale and really determined effort” (Dickson, 1969, p. 265). The spatial organisation of Ghanaian cities during the colonial era was largely directed by racial segregation, and
planning efforts were primarily aimed towards the European residential and business districts of cities (Larbi, 1996; Adarkwa, 2012) and the facilitation of international trade (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

The colonial administration also introduced a monetary land market in Ghana by acquiring land from traditional authorities to establish castles and forts along the coastline in exchange for gold (Obeng-Odoom, 2016). In the pre-colonial era, land was not regarded as a commodity but as a social good held in trust for the community by traditional leaders. Land users were further “regarded as custodians of the land for the dead and those yet not born” (Nyamey, 2012, p. 89). However, by the late 19th century, the monetary land market had been widely acknowledged in the country (Obeng-Odoom, 2016). At that time, legislation encouraging the registration of land deeds was also introduced (Ibid.).

A few decades later, in 1945, the colonial administration passed a new legislation for urban planning, the Town and Country Planning Ordinance (CAP 84), which remarkably remained in use until 2016. This legislation was based upon British planning legislation and sought to provide for “orderly and progressive development of land, towns and other areas, to preserve and improve their amenities and for related matters” (CAP 84, VII - 2907). Thus, it aimed towards both spatial order and the provision of basic infrastructure in the cities of Ghana, in an attempt to ‘modernize’ Ghanaian society. In practice, however, Njoh (2007, p. 63) has argued that the focus of this law “primarily [was] on controlling and regulating the development of planning schemes, layouts, plot sizes, and zoning, inter alia”. These attempts were further directed towards the areas where British officials lived and worked, and “benefits to the masses were merely trickle-down effects” (Acheampong, 2019, p. 32).

Ghana became independent in 1957, and the first government, led by Kwame Nkrumah, sought to implement socialism in the country and aspired to achieve economic development through state-led industrialisation (Adarkwa, 2012). While the decades that followed independence were politically instable, with several political shifts and coups, the state-led economic development agenda remained relatively stable until the 1980s (Njoh, 2007). Accordingly, a number of development plans for the nation were formulated during the 60s and 70s – all with a clear ambition of economic development through industrialisation and nation-wide developments of infrastructure and services, including transport, education and health facilities (Larbi, 1996; Adarkwa, 2012; Acheampong, 2019). While Larbi (1996, p. 195) has noted that “land-use planning and development control were in essence non-existent” in these plans, they certainly propelled detailed land use planning in some places. For instance, the planning and construction of Tema and Akosombo, two new townships, came out of Nkruma’s national plans for economic development (Acheampong, 2019). These townships were built in connection to the construction of Tema harbour and Akosombo dam to house the workers of these large-scale infrastructures, and they “had several facilities including well
laid out roads, planned neighbourhoods and communities, sewer lines and communication links” (Adarkwa, 2012, p. 10). The decision to prepare land use plans for these, and other, areas was made by the Minister of the Town and Country Planning Department after consultation with local authorities, in line with the centralised Designation of Planning Areas procedure (Acheampong, 2019). This indicates that spatial planning was largely a centralised state-practice during the first decades after independence. It is important to note that while Tema and Akosombo were planned and materialised, the political instability after independence in general undermined spatial planning activities in Ghana during this period (Ibid.).

In 1983, Ghana entered into the International Monetary Fund’s structural adjustment programme (SAP), and this marked the end of the previous state-driven development approach. Liberalisation policies were enforced, and it has been argued that it was at this point that Ghana saw the “official birth of neoliberalism” (Obeng-Odoom, 2012, p. 91). Chalfin (2010, p. 6) has captured the drastic macro-economic reforms of Ghana at this time:

> Here, as later tried elsewhere in the developing world, market logics lay at the crux of reform with the Government of Ghana disavowing industrialization, subsistence provisioning, state enterprise, and other tenets of the developmental state in exchange for the supposed allocative guarantees of competition, comparative advantage and the market’s invisible hand.

Public-sector spending was thus reduced, and the privatisation of public infrastructure and services was encouraged, which included a reduction in state spending on housing provision from 10–12 percent to 1–2 percent of the national budget (Arku, 2009, p. 264). Various tax reductions were also introduced for real estate developers and those purchasing housing from real estate agents (Ibid.). Another consequence of the reduction in government spending was the loss of formal employment opportunities and an increase of informal livelihoods:

> [S]elf-employment in small-scale businesses and petty trading became the source of livelihoods for individuals affected by the labour retrenchments as well as new entrants into the labour market. Thus, although self-employment had long existed, the period immediately after SAP saw a significant increase in the size of this sector. (Achaempong, 2019, p. 274)

Land registration was another important ingredient of the SAP, and, in 1986 the Land Title Registration Law was passed “to satisfy the demands of the local and international business community” (Thurman, 2010, p. 15). This legislation replaced the earlier voluntary land deed registration from 1962 with a “compulsory registration of interests in land” (Obeng-Odoom, 2016, p. 668, emphasis in original) and strengthened the statutory land tenure system. Dur-
ing this time period, more and more attention was further given to urban development specifically, in contrast to the previous emphasis on the nation state. Specific urban programs were developed as part of the structural adjustment programs, which aimed to improve urban infrastructure across Ghana (Adarkwa, 2012).

As part of the broader agenda of liberalization, a decentralization policy was approved by the Government of Ghana in 1988, which aimed to rescale power relations between the national and local level of state administration in favour for the latter (Ahwoi, 2010, p. ix). Since the introduction of this policy, Ghana’s formal spatial and socioeconomic planning system has been structured on three levels encompassing central, regional, and local government. In turn, local government has taken the form of metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs), depending on the population size of the individual jurisdiction.

The decentralisation policy was soon supported by new legalisation; the Local Government Act (Act, 462) was passed in 1993, and the National Development Planning (System) Act (Act 480) was approved one year later. These laws became “the institutional framework for planning and define[d] the nature and scope of the activity for close to three decades” (Acheampong, 2019, p. 45). These laws declare that the MMDAs are the state bodies responsible for spatial- and development planning; while regional and national planning offices have coordinating functions (Gaisie, et al., 2019). They further articulate that two local departments share the main responsibility for urban planning: the Development Planning Department and the Town and Country Planning Department. The former is responsible for the important task of preparing the short-, medium-, and long-term development plans for all cities in Ghana. However, spatial plans and strategies, such as physical layouts of the city, have not been part of these overall city strategies due to the bureaucratic separation between development planning and physical planning. Acheampong (2019, p. 5) thus concludes that “the System Act of 1994 envisaged and entrenched a new planning tradition that was inherently aspatial from the national level to the local government level”. The practice of spatial planning was thus pinioned:

Its functions were limited to the preparation of local sub-division plans and development control by under-resourced district TCPDs, which had no connections legally and/or administratively to the local governments they were mandated by 1945 Town and Country Planning Ordinance (CAP 84)—an obsolete piece of legislation—to work for. (Acheampong, 2019, p. 5)

This restriction of spatial planning informed how the built environment of Ghana’s cities developed during the decades that followed; Grant & Yankson (2003, p. 72) have argued that “most buildings [were] erected prior to official inspection” and yet, they were “allowed to stand, resulting in a fragmented,
unorderly urban environment”. Adakwa (2012, p. 23) has further added that a “lack of professional personnel, financial resources and political commitments” amongst local authorities reduced their ability to direct and control urban developments at this time. Hence, in general, urban plans were not mutually aligned. The emphasis on (socio-)economic development planning at the expense of spatial planning was also mirrored in the restructuring of urban planning curricula at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) at this time, in which the previous programs in physical planning were replaced by programs in so-called development planning (Acheampong, 2019, p. 47).

Contemporary land use policy and planning in Ghana

At the beginning of the 21st century, the general neglect of spatial planning practice in Ghanaian cities was questioned, and in 2007, the central government established the Land Use Planning and Management Project (LUPMP), which “aims at enhancing the institutional, legal, technological and human resource capacity of the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD)” (Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority, 2019). The LUPMP consists of a new three-tier model for planning, which requests the preparation and/or updating of spatial plans at the national, regional and local scale.

Locally, each district must develop a spatial development framework (SDF) that formulates a long-term (15-20 years) spatial strategy for “achieving defined social, economic and environmental policy goals and objectives of local governments” that is in line with the overarching goals of the regional and national spatial frameworks (Achaempong, 2019, p. 109). SDFs are guiding but not legally binding. In contrast, structure plans (SPs) are legally binding documents that define the permitted land uses in the district according to specific zones “including residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use areas, major open spaces, agricultural areas and areas for upgrading and regeneration” (Achaempong, 2019, p. 110). Local plans (LPs) are also legally binding and act as “the primary instruments of development management at the level of towns, neighbourhoods and specific sites” (Ibid.). Local plans include land use specifications of individual parcels and should be in line with the zoning in the SP. Building permits are only to be given to developments that adhere to local plans1 (Ibid.).

In 2012, a few years after the establishment of LUPMP, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development published Ghana’s first national urban policy (NUP) framework, which seeks to take a comprehensive hold on cities and to coherently guide future urban development across the nation.

1 For an extended discussion on regulatory, incentive-based, and fiscal planning instruments in Ghana, see Achaempong (2019: 192ff.).
That document is both a sign of the (nation) state’s recently increased interest in urban development and an indication of the new direction of urban planning whereby the previous focus on socioeconomic development is now complemented by a strong emphasis on spatial planning. The new urban policy broadly engages with urban development and aims to:

…promote a sustainable, spatially integrated and orderly development of urban settlements with adequate housing and services, efficient institutions, sound living and working environment for all people to support rapid socio-economic development of Ghana. (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 3)

These aims highlight that the whole urban population shall benefit from the urban condition; this message recurs several times throughout the document. Already in the prologue, the following is stated:

This National Urban Policy document makes a bold statement to promote socio-economic development of Ghanaian urban centres – a development process which is all-inclusive and takes account of the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. /…/ it makes far reaching proposals in an Action Plan for implementation in order to arrest rising inequalities in socio-economic and spatial terms and advance towards sustainable development. (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 12)

This policy thus explicitly targets “disadvantaged and vulnerable groups” and seeks to prevent inequalities in cities. According to the NUP, private actors are important in realising the aims of the policy, and it therefore seeks to “[i]nvolve relevant state and non-state agencies and institutions in the governance of cities and towns” (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 21). More specifically, it aims to “[p]romote public-private partnerships as alternative source of funding for urban infrastructure and services”, “[p]rovide a congenial environment for private sector delivery of affordable housing”, “[p]romote the provision of social or low-income rental housing through public and public-private partnership arrangements” and “[u]ndertake the servicing of land for private development and recover the cost by a levy of service charges from beneficiary landowners and development charges from beneficiary developers” (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 28f., 2012b). As such, the NUP aligns with the national public–private partnership policy that was passed by the Ministry of Finance in 2011 that aims at “leveraging public resources with private sector resources and expertise in order to close the infrastructure gap and deliver efficient public infrastructure and services” (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2011, p. i).

Alongside the broad development agenda and the focus on private-led development, a strong emphasis on physical planning and spatial order stands
out in the national urban policy in comparison to previous official documents
on (urban) development. Part of the aim of the policy is to promote “spatially
integrated and orderly development” (Ministry of Local Government and Ru-
rnal Development, 2012a, p. 3). Among the 17 urban challenges/problems
listed in this policy, two explicitly relate to the unplanned character of Ghana-
ian cities and identify 1) “Land-use disorder and uncontrolled urban sprawl”
and 2) “Urban poverty, slums and squatter settlements” (Ibid, 15f.). While the
first “problem” clearly indicates spatial disorder, the second focuses on unreg-
ulated – perceived illegal – land uses as squatter settlement “refers to housing
that is either the result of illegal occupation or has been developed in an un-
authorized fashion” (Ibid, 10). This definition, which is coherent with Ghana-
ian law, implies that that the majority of the urban population’s homes and
livelihoods are represented as ‘illegal’ in the policy and therefore should be
removed, which also happened to the informal settlement of Mensah Guinea
that is analysed in paper I of this thesis. Interestingly, these formulations are
partly at odds with the support to the informal economy articulated in the same
document. The NUP explicitly states that strengthening the informal economy
is an important aspect in attempts to propel “urban economic development”
(Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 24). There-
fore, this policy seeks to:

v. Change official attitude towards the informal enterprises from neglect
to recognition and policy support.
vi. Ensure that urban planning provides for the activities of the informal
economy.

vii. Build up and upgrade the operational capacities of the informal
enterprises.

viii. Improve funding support for the informal economy.²

The NUP’s view of the informal economy (which often takes place through
informal land use) is thus separated from its disparaging attitude towards in-
formal settlements even though the two spheres often work interactively. As
such, the NUP indicates ambiguous attitudes towards urban informality, which I will discuss further in the case study on the governing of informal
street trade in paper II (cf. Acheampong, 2019).

Objective five of the NUP substantiates the desired orderliness and reads
as follows: “To ensure effective planning and management of urban growth
and sprawl, especially of the primate cities and other large urban centers”
(Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 22). Addi-
tionally, in the concluding chapter of the policy, the spatial aspect of urban
development is emphasised: “Government policies and investment programs
will be coordinated and they will have a spatial dimension” (Ibid., p. 30).

² Four out of eight strategies of “urban economic development” are directed towards support of
the informal economy (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012a, p. 24)
The new national urban policy thus seeks to change the imbalance between socioeconomic and spatial development and aims to merge these fields by emphasising the importance of spatial planning. This attempt is further consolidated in the recent Land Use and Spatial Planning Act of 2016 (Act 925), which “establishes processes to regulate national, regional, district and local spatial planning, and generally to provide for spatial aspects of socio-economic development” (ClientEarth, 2019). As such, it overrides the old Town and Country Planning Ordinance (CAP 84) that directed urban planning in Ghana between 1945–2016. The new planning legislation seeks to update the planning framework in Ghana by:

…using the combined terms *land use* and *spatial planning* to suggest a deliberate attempt to institute a new tradition of integrated and multi-scale planning that delivers wider socio-economic and environmental development imperatives with the traditional design and regulatory function of town planning. (Acheampong, 2019, p. 50, emphasis in original).

In practice, this update implies that the city development plans prepared by the local government must now include a spatial strategy of development, which is a new approach. The new planning legislation also opens up the legal possibility of creating “private towns” in line with the national urban policy’s emphasis on the need for private-led urban development (Government of Ghana, 2016, p. 68ff). This legal opportunity is now used in the planning and materialisation of the new private urban megaproject Appolonia City, which I discuss in paper III.

In sum, recent policy and legislation on urban planning indicate that the official discourse on urban development increasingly focuses on spatial order, even though it also conveys a strong emphasis on the improvement of living conditions for the urban poor. The policy also emphasises that the state should function as a facilitator of urban development and that private actors should be the main drivers of urban change. However, it should be noted that there may be an extensive gap between urban policy on the national level and what is actually being practiced and implemented on the ground in different urban locales. Thus, in the next section, I explore how urban policy and planning practice have played out in the Greater Accra Region from colonial times until today.

Urban planning in Accra from colonial times until today

Accra was designated the capital of the Gold Coast in 1877 by the colonial power, and in a few decades, the former fishing villages developed into one of the busiest ports in the region (Dickson, 1969, p. 259f). The population grew rapidly, and although population statistics are lacking for the capital’s
first decades, it is known that the population tripled from 20,000 in 1911 to 30,000 in 1931 (Ibid., p. 261). The growing population increased the demand for coordinated infrastructure within the city, and in 1885, a “sanitation and general improvement policy” was approved (Ibid., p. 259). Among other things, this policy “involved the provision of street lighting by means of paraffin lamps, the cutting of drains, the opening of cemeteries, the elimination of garbage from the streets, and the provision of clean drinking water” (Ibid.). Based on this policy, changes were made to the built environment; however, the majority of Accra’s population did not benefit from these interventions. Racial segregation constituted one of the main features of Accra’s spatial organisation throughout the colonial era, and while the Europeans enjoyed high-quality infrastructure and services, most areas inhabited by Ghanaians were largely ignored by the colonial administration, and subsequently, these areas did not benefit from investments in the urban infrastructure (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a; Grant & Yankson, 2003). Specific city districts were designed and built for the European population, and open spaces were further created to separate these areas from those inhabited by the Ghanaians (Grant & Yankson, 2003). Dickson (1969, p. 298) has described the situation in the city during the early 20th century as follows: “[o]utside the European quarter Accra was a large sprawling mass of decent and slum buildings, with the latter erected hastily by immigrants from the rural areas. The need for replanning was urgent”. However, to some extent, the colonial power also intervened in the areas inhabited by the Ghanaians. For instance, several market places were built during the 1920s, slum areas were “cleared”, and new quarters were built on the outskirts of the city to accommodate the evicted people; however, these projects were rejected by the target group (Ibid., p. 299). Additionally, new townships that were “replanned for orderly settlement” were constructed in the suburbs of Korle Bu and Achimota (Ibid.).

The first master plan for Accra was developed in 1944 by the British architect Maxwell Fry, who also initiated the Town and Country Planning Ordinance (Njoh, 2007, p. 63). Accra’s first master plan focused on improvements in basic infrastructure and services as it was “aimed at providing water, markets, slaughter house facilities, lighting, sanitation and streets for the city” (Larbi, 1996, p. 199). The city continued to grow during the first half of the 20th century, and in 1948, the population reached 133,000 people; thus, the demand for infrastructure and basic services was high (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a, p. 57).

Fry’s master plan was soon revised by Trevallion and Hood, and “Accra: A plan for the Town” was passed in 1958 by the newly independent state administration of Ghana (although formulated by the former colonial administration) (Larbi, 1996). At this time, the population had increased to more than 280,000 inhabitants (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a, p. 67). The new version of Accra’s master plan was more comprehensive than its predecessor, and it “…had all the features of a master plan in terms of detail, site specificit and
inflexibility” (Larbi, 1996, p. 199). For different reasons, most of this plan was never implemented, and Larbi (1996, p. 198) has argued that “[t]he post-independence planning and development of Accra followed the colonial pattern”, which implied that the former European areas, now in the hands of the Ghanaian state, continued to take advantage of urban planning initiatives while customary lands remained neglected. The newly independent state also made a lasting impact on the central part of the town through the construction of large-scale modernistic monuments symbolising independence, such as the Independence Square and Independence Arch (Hobden, 2014). However, Larbi (1996, p. 200) concludes that, overall, the areas that needed “planning and development control most” were those ignored by the formal planning system (see also Rain et al., 2011).

Although the Trevallion and Hood plan was largely ignored in practice, it remained the principle document that officially guided physical development in Accra until 1992 when a new strategic plan was approved for the Greater Accra Region (Larbi, 1996, p. 199). This new strategic plan was developed by the Ministry of Local Government in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (now UN-Habitat), and it is still the principle document that formally guides urban development in the Greater Accra Region. In this plan, the previous plan and the general principles of master planning are rejected:

The [previous] plan was neither affordable nor flexible, and oriented primarily to physical development. /…/ There is now a need for more flexible and resource-based plan for Accra. Such a plan, referred to as strategic, has become common throughout the world. A strategic plan differs from the traditional master planning in that greater emphasis is placed on economic and social planning. (Ministry of Local Government, 1992, p. 3, emphasis added)

Thus, in contrast to the previous master plan, the strategic plan of 1992 purports to be more flexible, stating that “adjustments can be made for factors which were unforeseen or arise at the time of implementation” (Ministry of Local Government, 1992, p. 4). Further, the spatial dimension of urban planning is downplayed in favour of non-spatial strategies of (socio-)economic development. A liberal logic is strongly present in the plan, which assumes “that the programmes put in place for a more democratic government, decentralization, streamlining administration, restructuring and privatization of state run concerns will continue” (Ibid.). Furthermore, the plan states that “[t]he private sector is expected to play a major role in implementation of the plan” (Ibid.). Interestingly, this plan was developed by the national state in collaboration with international actors, which is in contradiction to the national decentralisation policy on urban planning implemented during the 1980s.
Like its predecessors, the strategic plan from 1992 made few lasting impressions in Accra’s built environment (Grant & Yankson, 2003), and Cobbina and Darkwah (2017, p. 1229) have argued that the inefficient planning system in Ghanaian cities has contributed to the negative effects of rapid urbanisation in the Greater Accra Region, including “increased urban poverty, transportation challenges, traffic congestion, uncontrolled informal activities, poor sanitation and mushrooming slum development”. Therefore, they continue, “urban planning has failed to create liveable and functional cities in Ghana” (Ibid.).

Today, the strategic plan from 1992 is perceived as old and non-suitable for directing contemporary urban development (AMA Director of physical planning, interview 2015). Therefore, and in line with the new national directives on spatial planning produced within the LUPMP, a new plan for the GAMA is in the pipeline, and all structural and local plans within the AMA are scheduled to be updated during the upcoming years (Ibid.). Until then, formal decisions on land use changes in Accra are made on an ad hoc basis by the local planning authorities (Ibid.). These decisions should be in line with the main mission of the local government, which is to improve the living conditions in Accra by providing basic services, especially targeting the poor (AMA, 2014).

A more specific priority for the planning departments today is to combat the increasing intensity of informal settlements and street trading in Accra. Hence, recent policies and by-laws have been produced by the AMA to counteract informal land uses. In 2011, the AMA enacted a by-law that prohibits unauthorised structures and petty trading in the city (AMA, 2011). Additionally, the city’s yearly development plans between 2014 and 2017 emphasise that local authorities must make an effort to remove “unauthorized structures /…/ traders and squatters” from the streets and further urge the prosecution of “traders and residents who violate the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) bye laws” (AMA, 2014-2017). To date, however, local authorities’ attempts to counteract informal land uses have not been successful.

From the above, it follows that the actual staking out of the direction of urban development in the Greater Accra Region today is not done primarily by urban planners at the local government level as the legislation stipulates. Instead, as the three case studies of this thesis illustrate, the actual governing of contemporary land use transformations involves a multiplicity of actors, including planners at different scale levels within the state, traditional authorities, private (international) real estate firms – including large-scale urban developers such as Rendeavour – and not least urban landowners and citizens.
A summarising note on a shifting urban policy landscape

The historical overview of the policy landscape relevant for spatial governance in the Greater Accra Region demonstrates that policies and guidelines for urban development have drastically shifted during the last century. While the colonial administration put forward a specific agenda on how to plan and develop cities within their territories, in accordance with strict spatial and segregational guidelines, the post-independence state prioritised development programs at the national scale and did not place great emphasis on either urban development or the spatial dimensions of planning and development. In the 1980s, the official agenda shifted again, and alongside drastic liberal macro-economic reforms, urban development was again emphasised. Master planning, which had proved unsuccessful, was rejected, and strategic planning was introduced as the new approach to urban development. Economic growth, international competition and the marketisation of public services and goods became the guiding principles within this strategic planning agenda. While the spatial dimension of urban development is present in the policy documents of this era, the focus was on (socio)economic development, and the development planning offices – not the physical planning offices – were responsible for the formulation of city strategies.

The policies and plans concerning urban development from the colonial era through today have had a limited effect on the actual development of Accra’s built environment (Owusu, 2012; Grant & Yankson, 2003). This lack of state control over the built environment has recently been problematized in Ghana, and the spatial dimensions of urban planning are today emphasised together with economic growth agendas and poverty alleviation discourses. New legislation and policy seek to create “multi-level integrated planning”, which implies that the socioeconomic and spatial dimensions of urban planning must be better integrated (Oteng-Ababio & Grant, 2019, p. 2).

It is too early to tell how recent urban policies and plans will play out in the Greater Accra Region. What we know is that the Greater Accra Region is a rapidly urbanising city region, in where land tenures and land uses in many places now are changing. The Greater Accra Region is experiencing an increase in both luxury development projects (often initiated by private investors) and poor informal settlements (Gillespie, 2016). The recent urban expansion of the city, which is informed by local and global forces, has thus created “an extremely unequal urban geography” (Gillespie, 2017, p. 979). How urban visions are formulated and translated into urban environments today are thus imperative for the future urban form and life of this city, and thereby constitute an important field of study.
3. Travelling city ideals and urban change in Africa and beyond

This thesis is based on the premise that Accra, like most other African cities, must be understood as a city that is deeply involved in processes of globalisation. As Grant (2009, p. 7) writes, “cities in Africa, like Accra, have not been left out of globalization”; in fact, “there is a widening, deepening, intensification and growing impact of global connections on the local economy and on local engagements with the world beyond”. This insight, I argue, is highly relevant for the analysis of contemporary urban transformation across Africa, and I therefore situate my analysis of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region in a wider context of globally circulating city ideals and urban practices. Accordingly, I adopt a relational and territorial understanding of land use (governance) that is in line with the recent theorisations in the policy mobility literature (McCann and Ward, 2011; Healey & Upton, 2010) and historical accounts of the international dissemination of architecture and urban planning ideals, policy and legislation (e.g., King, 1980, 1984; Saunier, 1999; Home, 1997; Jackson & Oppong, 2014). Basically, the difference between relationality and territoriality could be described as a “focus on connections” versus a “focus on places”; however, importantly, these approaches are not in conflict, but, rather, they work dialectically (Massey, 2011, p. 3).

Furthermore, inspired by the emerging ‘southern turn’ in urban studies – which seeks to destabilise the dominance of Euro-American cities in the urban (planning) scholarship (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Robinson, 2002; Roy, 2009a; Pieterse, 2008; Simone & Pieterse, 2017) – I consider southern cities such as Accra to be urban environments from which we can develop urban theory and our understanding of emerging forms of ‘global urbanisms’. As several scholars working with urban Africa have pointed out, dominant urban theory (developed in the global North) has limitations in explaining recent trends of urban transformation in the global South, including the roles of diverse land tenures (Ghertner, 2015), traditional authority and religion (Rakodi, 2010), informality (Watson, 2009b; Roy, 2005), and the often contradictory and elusive positions of civil society and state actors in relation to urban development paths (Watson, 2009b) (see also Schindler, 2017a, and Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Accordingly, calls have been made for the construction of new, or updated, theory that explicitly builds upon southern experiences. Roy (2009a, p. 820), for instance, argues that “the centre of theory-making must
move to the global South; there has to be a recalibration of the geographies of authoritative knowledge”. This shift, it is claimed, would not only improve our understanding of southern cities, but “could enhance the understanding of cities everywhere” (Robinson, 2002, p. 532; see also Roy, 2009a; Schindler, 2017a; Harrison, 2006). The project of new theory-building from the South is still in its infancy (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; see also Rosa, 2014), yet this ‘turn’ has provided urban studies with a much needed problematization of the universal explanatory power of urban theory developed in the global North. It has also pointed to the importance of incorporating ‘southern’ literatures, often linked to the (post-)development field, in urban (planning) studies (Watson, 2009b; see also Harrison, 2006).

This thesis sympathises with the need for theory that is developed in the context of southern cities – a need that increases by the day given that the future urbanisation largely takes place in the global South (United Nations, 2018). However, I do find that theories and concepts developed in the study of western cities may have explanatory power also in southern cities if they are carefully contextualised. I thus agree with Roy (2009a, p. 820) that the urgency for southern theory is “not an argument about the inapplicability of the EuroAmerican ideas to the cities of the global South” (see also López-Morales, 2015; Lemanski, 2014). Furthermore, as Harrison (2006, p. 320) has noted, “all major postcolonial theorists have borrowed heavily from critical traditions in Western thought”. Hence, I attempt to apply what Harrison (2006) refers to as ‘border thinking’, i.e., the usage and hybridisation of theory building derived from the global South and North, to understand contemporary trends of urban change in the Greater Accra Region.

Below, I elaborate on some of the recent literature that has helped me frame my study on urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region in a global-local nexus, including writings on 1) urban policy mobility, 2) emerging trends of new global connections in urban Africa, 3) (urban) land tenure in the global South, and 4) informality and planning in southern cities.

Urban policy and planning on the move

Since urban policy makers constantly borrow ideas and models from places elsewhere, “urban policy is always, also, national and global policy” (Pieterse 2008, p. 165). This is not a new phenomenon or insight; however, “the overall scope, pace and intensity of transnational urban policy transfer activity has increased significantly over the past two decades” (Harris & Moore, 2013, p. 1504), which is important for understanding contemporary processes of urban change across Africa. Importantly, the transfer of urban policy from one place to another is never straightforward, but, rather, it is a process of negotiation and hybridisation (Ibid.; McCann & Ward, 2011; Temenos & McCann, 2013).
Healey (2011, p. 190) explains that “the lesson from research and experience is that the technique [of urban planning] could not just be extracted from its context of invention, uprooted and ‘planted’ somewhere else”, and she therefore urges researchers and practitioners to be sensitive to the “origin narrative” of planning ideas that travel. How travelling policy ideas are taken up in different contexts must further be seen as a political process, and it is therefore important to ask who the actors behind a certain policy or city ideal are and how the implementation in specific contexts will turn out and influence different groups in society (McCann & Ward, 2011; Temenos & McCann, 2013).

The policy mobility literature describes how the circulation of urban (planning) ideals on a global scale is enabled by transfer actors, such as politicians, activists, public officials and consultants, who meet in the contexts of “conferences, fact-finding study trips, consultancy work, and so on” (McCann & Ward, 2011, p. xiv). In these meetings, which could be of a formal or informal character (Robinson, 2011), powerful “mental maps of ‘best cities’ for policy that inform future strategies” are created and dispersed (McCann & Ward, 2011, p. xiv). Understanding what constitutes the ‘mental maps’ of desirable urbanism in Africa is an imperative task, I argue, if we are to better understand contemporary processes of urban transformation, and their possible outcomes, across the continent. Special attention must further be directed to the power relations involved in the creation, circulation and implementation of urban policy, or as Robinson (2011, p. 28) puts it, we must “explore the spatial and power-laden processes that support certain proximities or distancing in the world of policy formation which enable certain ideas to be invented, put into motion, and appropriated or not”.

Urban planning constitutes an important practice whereby ideas on the urban future are formulated, reformulated and contested, which ultimately informs the forms and functions of the built environment (although partially, and in concert with other processes). In general, Hall and Tewdwr-Jones (2011, p. 3) conceptualise the practice of planning as follows:

[P]lanning as a general activity is the making of an orderly sequence of action that will lead to the achievement of a stated goal or goals. Its main techniques will be written statements, supplemented as appropriate by statistical projections, mathematical representations, quantified evaluations and diagrams illustrating relationships between different parts of the plan. It may, but need not necessarily, include exact physical blueprints of objects.

Urban planning, in turn, “refers to planning with a spatial, or geographical, component, in which the general objective is to provide for a spatial structure of activities (or of land uses) which in some way is better than the pattern existing without planning” (Ibid.), which is the basic definition of urban planning that I use in this thesis. Importantly, I further understand urban planning
as being highly political, in line with Yiftachel and Yakobi’s (2003, p. 677) argument on planning in Israel:

[Planning policies, land policies, and development policies, despite their common representation as ‘technocratic’ or ‘neutral’, are central tools with which dominant ethnic and social groups work to preserve their urban dominance.

Here, as in most conceptualisations of urban planning, planning is implicitly understood as a state practice. However, this activity can take different forms, and it usually involves both state and non-state actors. Indeed, it has been increasingly common across the globe that urban planning is conducted by private consultants in collaboration with state agencies (Abram & Weszkalnys, 2013). Moreover, the individuals and communities that informally occupy urban land at times mimic state practices and plan their own settlements according to specific regulatory principles, which also constitutes a form of urban planning (Nielsen, 2011). Importantly, and independent of the actors performing urban planning, this activity can further be defined as a technology of rule that seeks to inform urban forms and populations and that, in turn, reflects wider power relations in urban politics (Kamete, 2013a).

Healey’s (2011) reflection on urban planning is also thought provoking. To her, urban planning is yet another idea that continually travels on a global scale and which frequently changes costume. Healey (2011, p. 189) basically describes planning as “a project for shaping urban and regional/territorial futures” but argues that its meaning is ever changing and context-dependent. This is an important point as it creates space for context-specific conceptualisations of urban planning activities. Healey (2011, p. 202) thus convincingly argues that planning should not be understood as:

…a discrete object or thing, like a wheel or a seed, with a recognizable form and materiality. It is an evolving, fluid, mental concept, constructed from the meanings given to it in all kinds of special locales and the encounters and tensions between these.

Healey (2011, p. 202) further claims that the former dominant understanding of planning as a pragmatic tool for “modernization” is rightly questioned by the academic community at large. However, such dismissal should not lead to a rejection of the transformative power of the planning process per se; I agree with Healey that “the engagement with forms of urban development and the search for ways of promoting the flourishing of the many not the few in relation to wider environments” must continue (Ibid.). Accordingly, urban planning is also a normative orientation (Ibid.). I further share Healey’s (2011, p. 199f) position that the normative goal of urban planning should be to facilitate “co-existence in the shared spaces of complex urbanized societies” and the “liveability and sustainability for the many, not the few”. The state plays an
important role in this endeavour, not least given its sovereignty in terms of planning legislation; however, this thesis emphasises that it is important to include a broader spectrum of actors in analyses of urban planning practices and transforming land uses. Hence, the three cases studies of this thesis pay attention to the formal planning taking place at local government, but they also identify and analyse the role of other actors engaged in the governing of urban land use (changes); including state actors at other scale levels, private development firms (in particular, the international urban developer Rendeavour); traditional authorities, individual landowners, civil society actors and urban citizens.

Importantly, in many cities – not least southern ones – urban planning practices have “served to exclude the poor” (Watson, 2009a, p. 151; Watson, 2009b, 2016; Devas, 2001), in contrast to contributing to “the flourishing of the many” (Healey, 2011, p. 202). Indeed, state-led urban planning practices have often targeted the areas and interests of elite groups while ignoring the locations and interests of poor populations (Kamete & Lindell, 2010; see also Yiftachel and Yakobi, 2003, p. 689), which largely has been the case in urban Ghana as discussed in chapter 2. Hence, across the global South, urban planning practices have contributed to the creation of “urban spaces [that] are increasingly marked by deeper lines of spatial fragmentation, social and economic segregation, and of course inequality” (Pieterse, 2008, p. 143). This situation has been explained by the financial, political and institutional shortcomings of state-led urban planning, which have their roots in colonial planning practices including colonial perceptions of order and disorder (Adarkwa, 2012; Edensor & Jayne, 2012; Watson, 2009b; Swanson, 2007; Odendaal, 2012; Myers, 2011).

In many colonialised African cities, including Accra (as accounted for in the previous chapter), the neighbourhoods built by and for the colonisers were formally planned in line with European planning practices and conceived of as modern, ordered and clean. The areas inhabited by Africans were in contrast often excluded from formal city plans and perceived by the colonisers as unordered and dirty (De Boeck, 2011, see also Swanson, 2007 for a similar discussion on Latin America). The colonisers also introduced European planning law in many African states, and in many places these laws are still intact or only marginally revised (Watson, 2016). Importantly, historical “[p]rocesses of diffusion were never smooth or simple: the ideas themselves were often varied and contested, and they articulated in different ways with the contexts to which they were imported” (Watson, 2016, p. 536). Moreover, much implementation of urban planning ideals, practices and laws that were disseminated by colonisers to the colonies failed and the “post-independence period unfolded in a planning void with urban settlements developing in a spontaneous and nontransparent manner” across Africa (Grant, 2015, p. 297). Thus, contemporary state policies favouring the elites and the formally planned urban life must be understood from a historical post-colonial perspective.
(Byerley, 2013), and it is therefore important to ask questions regarding the meaning of concepts such as ‘order’ and ‘disorder’, respectively, and how they might be formulated in other ways (Edensor & Jayne, 2012; Scott, 1998).

Global actors and ideas shaping contemporary urban Africa

The new trend of globally entangled urban projects across Africa (as well as other southern contexts) – including the building of new cities, the redevelopment of central areas into central business districts and international sports events – indicates that the actors, rationalities, practices, and normative framings of urban planning are undergoing change across the continent. While detailed studies on these processes still are rare, existing research indicates that several parallel processes underpin these transformations.

First and foremost, urban Africa has witnessed a growing number of international investors in urban real estate during the last two decades, which has created “highly visible booms in property development” (Goodfellow, 2017, p. 786; Zoomers et al., 2017; Watson, 2014; Grant, 2015; Côté-Roy & Moser, 2019). These ‘booms’ are partly materialising through large-scale urban development projects that include the construction of new satellite cities and the redevelopment of whole inner-city districts (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer, 2018; Grant, 2015; Côté-Roy & Moser, 2019; Zoomers et al., 2017; Abubakar & Doan, 2017). Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo are just a few examples where new cities are being developed today. Rwanda and Ethiopia, in turn, are examples of African states that now seek to regenerate the central areas of their capital cities (Watson, 2014; Yntiso, 2008; Herbert & Murray, 2015).

The recent inflow of international investors into urban Africa’s real estate markets, and their involvement in large-scale urban projects, indicate that new forms of urban governance are crystalizing across the continent. Public-private partnerships have become increasingly common, however; the new government arrangements prompted by the presence of international investors are context dependent and more research is needed to gain insights on how they play out in different locales (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer, 2018). In this thesis, I seek to contribute with knowledge on the governance arrangements behind Appolonia City, Ghana’s new satellite city, which deviates from many other megaprojects in urban Africa through its private form, i.e. it is not governed through a formalised public-private partnership. However, as I elaborate in paper III, both state authorities and traditional authorities have played important roles in enabling this private city to materialise.
Recent investments in urban Africa are also channelled into local property markets on a smaller scale through the (re)development of individual buildings and quarters (Steel et al., 2019). The case study on Osu, Accra, presented in this thesis is a good example of how international (and national) investments may prompt a step-wise redevelopment of an existing urban area. Like new urban megaprojects in Africa, this type of plot-wise development also raises questions on how urban land use changes are governed today.

Both large- and small-scale investments in urban Africa are further connected to land transactions, where both international investors and state actors acquire land to make space for new urban developments (Zoomers et al., 2017). These processes are however understudied since the ‘global land rush literature’ has largely focused on rural land transactions. It has thus been argued that the urban land question in Africa deserves more academic attention in relation to the recent inflow of international investments into these environments (Ibid.; Steel et al., 2019). In this thesis, I seek to contribute to this literature and suggest that private investments is an important factor behind changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region today. I further attempt to demonstrate that the relatively new practice of formal sales of communal land enables new actors to take a leading role in current land use changes in Greater Accra, which is elaborated further in paper II, on Osu, and paper III, on Appolonia City.

Second, African national governments increasingly aspire global recognition of their (capital) cities and many states have recently developed new urban policies that are supposed to help them achieve this. The number of African states with national urban policies increased from very few just a decade ago to 17 in 2015, while another five countries are in the “process of national reflection on urbanisation” (Turok, 2015, p. 351). Ghana is one of the countries that recently presented a national urban policy, its first in history, as discussed in chapter 2. These recent national policies, as well as other articulations of urban aspirations, are largely informed by the increasing flow of globally circulating city ideals, as elaborated above. For example, the high priority given to the ‘urban question’ within the global sustainability agenda has implied that urban inclusivity has become a guiding principle in many national urban policies (Parnell, 2016; Watson, 2009a). Recent policies and plans in the Greater Accra Region, and Ghana more generally, do to some extent replicate this narrative on urban sustainability, as indicated in chapter 2 and the three papers of this thesis.

Another prominent reference in recent national urban policies in Africa is the ‘global city’ (see Watson, 2009b; Bekker & Fourchard, 2013). The concept of the ‘global city’ was coined by Sassen in 1991 in an attempt to theorise the “strategic components of the global economy rather than the broader and more diffuse homogenizing dynamics we associate with the globalization of consumer markets” (Sassen, 2005, p. 40). Sassen compiled a list of specific (economic) features that must be met for a city to be classified as ‘global’ and
thereby distinguished from other ‘peripheral’ cities. The number of headquarters of multinational firms, the presence of international finance institutes and the intensity of communication services, for instance, figure as indicators in the classification of global and non-global cities (Merwe, 2004). The narrow focus of the ‘global city’ perspective on specific economic processes, as well as its concentration on a few urban centres, including London, New York and Tokyo, has been criticised as it designates the vast majority of cities in the world, in particular those situated in the global South, as of marginal (economic) importance from a global perspective (Robinson, 2002). This is an important criticism; yet more important for this thesis is critics’ increasing awareness of how the concept of the ‘global city’ has been taken up by city authorities across the globe who actively seek to achieve ‘global status’ based on the criteria established by this theory (Pieterse, 2008; see also Robinson, 2008).

A growing body of literature is addressing how the concept of the ‘global city’ has transformed into a city ideal (more or less in line with the original characteristics outlined in the theory) whereby “inter-urban competitiveness [is] becoming the key to economic growth and prosperity” (Sheppard et al., 2015, p. 1949). The ambition to become a globally (or at least regionally) competitive city increasingly informs urban development in the global South (see, for instance, Acuto (2010) on Dubai, Goldman (2011) on Bangalore, Ghertner (2011) on Delhi, Roy (2011a) on Indian cities, Flowerdew (2004) on Hong Kong, and Parnreiter (2002) on Mexico City). However, with the exception of South African cities (see e.g. Lemanski, 2007; Harrison, 2006), little is yet known on how the ‘global city’ ideal plays out in different African contexts (for an exception, see Myers, 2015 on Nairobi). This thesis therefore sets out to make a contribution to critical studies on how the global city ideal is (re)produced and/or challenged in African cities through an analyses of the motives behind changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region. The way in which international investors, (national) urban policy and recent discourses on urban sustainability are invoked in these processes is also part of this endeavour. Importantly, I am not attempting to explicitly trace or follow policy circuits; however, I acknowledge that places and actors elsewhere are important in the contemporary imaginings of Accra’s future and that global-local relationships must be incorporated in the analysis of transforming African cities.

A concept that I find helpful in the analysis of urban global-local relationships is that of ‘worlding practices’ as articulated by Ong (2011), who seeks to capture the contemporary global entanglements of Asian cities and nuance the dominant representations of southern cities as ‘backward’. According to Ong (2011, p. 13):
[Worlding practices] are constitutive, spatializing, and signifying gestures that variously conjure up worlds beyond current conditions of urban living. They articulate disparate elements from near and far; and symbolically re-situate the city in the world.

Importantly, these practices are not restricted to binary understandings of “class, political, or cultural divides” (Ong, 2011, p. 12). A worlding city is thus one that 1) incorporates and/or contributes to globally spreading urban models and/or 2) compares itself to other cities and/or 3) creates new solidarities with actors elsewhere. Hence, the advocating of a specific urban model (for instance, the Singapore housing model), referencing to other cities in the development of urban strategies (Dubai is a good example of an often referenced city), and transnational networking amongst the urban poor (such as Slum Dwellers International) constitute worlding practices (Roy, 2011b). This understanding of global urbanism opens up for conceptualizations where (southern) cities, and urban citizens, are seen as agents actively involved in the “doing” of globalisation and not merely the product of it (cf. Massey, 2004, 2011). In this thesis, the concept of worlding is used as a heuristic for approaching how various visionary formulations of Accra’s future relate to places elsewhere. The concept explicitly figures in the paper on urban transformation in Osu, where in which I study the worlding practices of both state actors and street traders; however, worlding practices are also implicitly present in the studied processes of urban transformation in Mensah Guinea and Appolonia City.

While the sections above have focused on the importance of global entanglements for how urban development takes place, the local political context is of course of fundamental importance for how globally circulating policies play out in specific places (Temenos & McCann, 2013). To better understand current land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, I find the literature on (southern) land tenure and various conceptualisations of the interfaces between urban planning and informal land use to be important fields of study (outside the dominant urban theory building), and I address them individually below.

Land tenure diversity

Access to land is a prerequisite for housing, service provision and livelihoods; hence, local land tenure arrangements are very important in the socio-spatial organisation of society. In addition to providing populations with a basis for their basic needs, land also holds an “emotional dimension” that is entangled with “group identity” (Lombard & Rakodi, 2016). Given the high pressure on land in urbanising African city regions and the emerging trend of international investments in (peri-)urban land, the land question will be decisive for the
future development of African cities (Steel et al., 2019), Accra included. While investments in the built environment of African cities are much needed to improve living standards (Grant, 2015; Watson, 2009b), recent (re)development projects often entail the erasure of existing land uses without sufficient considerations of the effects on former land users. Hence, it has been argued that the line between ‘development’ and ‘land grabbing’ embedded in contemporary land use changes across urban Africa is a fine one that deserves greater attention (Steel et al., 2019).

As stated above, land tenure is an important component in the governing of land use change, and it can be defined as “a social relation involving a complex set of rules that governs land use and land ownership” (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012, p. 2). Payne and Durand-Lasserve (2012) emphasise the “importance of cultural, historical and political influences, as well as those of technical and legal systems” in understanding land tenure (Ibid., p. 7). Therefore, tenure security is “a matter of perception and experience as much as a legal issue” (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012, p. 6). Importantly, “[p]roperty rights may vary within, as well as between, tenure systems” and it is “therefore possible to have a high level of security, but restricted rights to use, develop or sell land, or a limited level of security, but a wide range of actual rights” (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012, p. 2). This assertion implies that (in)secure tenure can be achieved both through individual property rights and communal land tenure. Hence, land use policy and regulation are relevant (Steel et al., 2019) although it is important to emphasise that “informal land delivery mechanisms may have greater social legitimacy than formal systems, leading to complex and contested relationships between the two” (Lombard & Rakodi, 2016, p. 2686). Land tenure is thus a complex issue, which may be tricky to study given the multiple layers of formal and informal mechanisms involved.

Prior to colonialism, African land was generally collectively owned: it was “held under customary land tenure, whereby the ownership of the land was vested in a collective (whether family, a lineage or a clan) with members of the political community having rights of usage” (Gough & Yankson, 2000, p. 2486; see also Peters, 2009). Land was thus not considered to be a commodity but, rather, a social good. However, the colonisers introduced a parallel western individualised land tenure system in many African states, which has had long-lasting consequences. Today, customary land tenure often co-exists with individualised statutory tenure systems (Ibid.; Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012). Ghana is an example of a country with complex land tenures that include both customary and statutory tenure.

Statutory individualised land tenure systems have been argued by the influential economist de Soto (2000), and others, to provide land tenure security and efficient land use because they “make possible the transferability of property and thereby the participation of the poor in credit and financial markets” (Roy, 2005, p. 152). Hence, a strengthening of statutory land tenure has taken place in many African cities, often through support from the World Bank, and
Numerous land titling projects have been implemented across the continent since the 1990s (Chimhowu, 2019). Several scholars thus argue that “it is clear that globalization has tended to reinforce statutory tenure systems based on Western preoccupations with the rights of the individual” (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012, p. 3; see also Shih, 2010). These rearrangements of land tenure have potentially contributed to the recent increase of international investors interested in urban land in Africa (Steel et al., 2019). However, “there is increasing evidence that titling is both difficult to implement in many urban situations and does not deliver all the benefit claimed for it” (Lombard & Rakodi, 2016, p. 2689; Peters, 2009). Efforts to upgrade informal settlements through land titles programs have indeed proved unsuccessful in many African cities, although South African cases constitute important exceptions (Grant, 2015). In some cases, the formalisation of informal settlements has also deepened inequality by displacing the most vulnerable groups that originally resided in those neighbourhoods (Roy, 2005; Peters, 2009). The formalisation of street trade has also left some traders worse off, as indicated in previous studies on urban informality in Ghana (Spire & Choplin, 2018; Adaawen & Jorgense, 2012). Hence, it is important that analyses of changing land tenures and land uses acknowledge how these processes relate to land use values, wealth (re)distribution and unequal property ownership (Roy, 2005).

Some scholars claim that “land distribution is more equitable in public and customary tenure systems” compared to individualised tenure as land use rights in the former systems are not (necessarily) based on economic transactions (Ghertner, 2015, p. 554). This claim has however been questioned by scholars who argue that traditional authorities often abuse their role as the custodian of community land, which implies negative consequences for individual community members as well as for society as a whole (Yeboah, 2008; see also Peters, 2009). Given the “incredible variability of practices” that are included in the concept of customary tenure (Chimhowu, 2019, p. 898), it is probably not possible to draw general conclusions on the functioning and outcomes of customary tenure versus statutory tenure since these arrangements are always context dependent.

That said, a general trend across Africa is how customary tenure systems are undergoing processes of “neoliberalisation”, implying that they are becoming “more legible to both local markets and related processes of economic globalisation” (Chimhowu, 2019, p. 897; see also Peters, 2009). Ghertner (2015, p. 553) even claims that we are now witnessing “the elimination of the very possibility of non-private forms of tenure” on a global scale. The truth of this claim is debatable, yet it is important to take into account ongoing transformations of customary tenure in line with market logics in analyses of contemporary land use changes in urban Africa. There is also a need for studies on how urban citizens, and marginalised groups in particular, respond to changing land tenures in their cities through different forms of adaptation, negotiation and/or resistance (cf. Steel et al., 2019; Lindell et al., 2016).
The selection of case study areas in this thesis includes different land tenure arrangements, and the collective case study suggests that customary land tenure increasingly is transformed into statutory tenure in the Greater Accra Region, in line with the claims in previous research (see e.g. Chimhowu, 2019, Peters, 2009). These shifting land tenures, in turn, seem to be an important factor behind changing land uses, as illustrated in paper II on urban transformation in Osu and paper III on the materialisation of Appolonia City. I thus agree with previous studies that the land (tenure) question is of high relevance for understanding contemporary processes of urban change in Africa and beyond.

Conflicting rationalities between formal and informal land use?

Related to the literature on land tenure is the ongoing debate on informality. The definition of informality is disputed; however, it is widely accepted that urban land use in the global South is largely characterised by informality, which implies “a state of deregulation, one where the ownership, use, and purpose of land cannot be fixed and mapped according to any prescribed set of regulations or the law” (Roy, 2009b, p. 80; see Lindell, 2019 for a recent review of contrasting perspectives on informality). Hence, formal spatial plans and building regulations prepared by state authorities, such as masterplans, land use plans, zoning schemes, and high zones, are largely bypassed in many southern cities. This is also the case in the Greater Accra Region, where the majority of the population make use of informal land uses, as elaborated in chapter 2. Informal land use can occur within both statutory and customary land tenures.

Informal land use is practiced by all income groups (Roy, 2005; Ghertner, 2011; Gillespie, 2017); however, low-income groups make up the largest proportion of informal land users in southern cities because of the widespread incidence of relatively poor informal settlements and street trading activities. The high prevalence of informal land use in most southern cities distinguishes them from northern cities (Schindler, 2017a). Hence, urban informality is a constitutive factor of cities in the global South, which a number of concepts have sought to capture, including ‘actually existing urbanism’ (Shatkin, 2011), ‘occupancy urbanism’ (Benjamin, 2008), ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ (Bayat, 2000), and ‘incremental infrastructure’ (Silver, 2014).

The magnitude of informal land use in Africa’s cities implies that urban planning, including visioning and formal interventions in the built environment, always must relate to informal land uses. According to Shatkin (2011, p. 80), “worlding practices of planners [in the global South] are a direct response to actually existing urbanisms, which pose a challenge to the vision,
legitimacy, and authority of master planning”. Similarly, Watson (2009b) conceptualises the encounter between informal land uses and formal planning schemes as a ‘clash of rationalities’. According to Watson (2009b, p. 2260), formal state-driven planning in the Global South is driven by aspirations of “modernity”, which seeks to govern urban citizens through “techno-managerial and marketised systems”. In contrast, informal everyday life (including informal housing and informal work) is directed by the basic needs of those living in a state of marginalisation, i.e., the rationality of survival (Ibid.). Watson thus claims that formal city plans and actually lived-in cities are based on two conflicting rationalities, and she further argues that the gap between the two logics is increasing. Therefore, Watson calls for more in-depth analysis of the ‘interface’ between these rationalities to find “alternative approaches to planning” that are not hostile to urban populations dependent on informal land uses (Watson, 2009b, p. 2259). I make use of the concept of conflicting rationalities in paper I to illustrate the conflicting understandings regarding the qualities of the informal settlement Mensah Guinea that existed between the former residents of the informal settlement and the state authorities who eventually demolished it. In that case, state actors clearly expressed rationalities in line with Watson’s (2009b, p. 2259) description of “techno-managerial and marketised systems of government administration, service provision and planning” to push forward a demolition of the settlement, while the residents articulated rationalities of “survival” to remain in place. However, the paper on Mensah Guinea also demonstrates that the former residents claimed their right to this land on the basis of other logics, such as their historical rooting in the area and through legal claims.

Kamete (2013a, 2013b) further demonstrates that from the perspective of urban planners across Africa, informality is often understood as an abnormality although the majority of the continent’s urban population lives and works through practices of informal land uses. Accordingly, he states that informality “does not fit in their [the planners] vision of what is normal in the urban sphere”, and authorities therefore actively seek to counteract informal structures and practices, such as informal settlements and street vending, often through the criminalisation of these practices (Kamete, 2013a, p. 645). The underlying reason behind this, Kamete continues, is because informality is handled as a solely technical issue, i.e., as a failure of the formal planning system while the political aspects of informality are neglected. He further argues that this technocratic handling of urban informality is highly problematic as it ignores broader political questions of inclusiveness and social justice; in line with Watson (2009b), he calls for alternative pro-poor planning policies that do not criminalise informality (see also Roy, 2005).

While the approaches to informality and planning described above provide important insights into the differences between formal and informal land uses in southern contexts, these analyses have been criticised for their dichotomist
assumptions on what counts as formal vis-à-vis informal (Lindell, 2010; Myers, 2011; Roy, 2005, 2009b). Yiftachel (2009b, p. 250) suggests that informality should be conceived as a ‘gray space’ that is “neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today’s urban regions, which exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans”. As such, gray spaces are often positioned between “legality/approval/safety” and “eviction/destruction/death” (Yiftachel, 2009a, p. 89). Roy (2009b) goes further and conceptualises informality as a form of rule strategically employed by the state. She argues that the state both produces informality through its practices of (land use) classification and makes use of informal practices in its administration (Ibid.). In line with that argument, studies have shown that both real estate and street trade often are governed by legally ambiguous and contradictory arrangements (Ghertner, 2011; Tucker, 2017; Devlin, 2011). For example, houses that lack formal building permits and/or violate existing planning schemes might be sanctioned by the state if they fit into larger development agendas (Ghertner, 2011). Hence, too distinct a separation between planning and informality risks hampering our understanding of how urban development actually play out in cities characterised by informality, and more research is needed to better determine how the state, together with other actors, engages in the (re)production of urban (in)formal land uses. In paper II, I elaborate on the concept of ‘gray spaces’ and suggest that, in contrast to the case of Mensah Guinea, multiple and ambiguous understandings and practices related to informal land use (in the form of street trade) are present in this central city area.

Relatedly, monolithic understandings of the state are also problematic, which Robinson (2008, p. 74) notes in her analysis of South-African cities where “[d]evelopmentalist and growth-oriented urban policy agendas have been brought together in the complex political environments of these cities”. Focusing on urban planning in African cities, Watson (2009b; 2012) similarly recognises that western assumptions on the workings of the state and civil society must be questioned in African contexts. Therefore, she suggests that existing urban planning theory must be complemented by critical (post-)development studies that focus on themes such as informality, inequality and social networks (see also Harrison, 2006 for a discussion on the benefits of combining conventional planning theory and postcolonial theory). In this thesis, I attempt to conceptualise state actors and informal land users in a nuanced way, and elaborate on how both conflicting and converging rationalities are articulated within and between these groups.
4. Urban transformation in Africa through the lenses of critical urban theory and governmentality

The previous chapters have illustrated that the urban transformation of Accra, like the processes of urban change in other rapidly urbanising cities in the global South, must be analysed in the nexus between global and local processes. While globally circulating city ideals and international investors play important roles in shaping urban development in Africa today, local (land) politics – including diverse land tenure systems and place-specific configurations of informal and formal land uses – are also of great importance in directing how cities develop across the continent (Watson, 2016). Hence, any conceptualisation of ‘global urbanism’ must account for both global processes and local particularities. As many scholars have acknowledged, these conceptualisations must also be based on a broad range of cities – and not limited to the western cities that today dominate urban theory – in order to better explain urban development paths in different parts of the world.

However, how to theoretically frame contemporary urban developments in the global South is a highly contested subject. On that issue, two main strands can be identified: the Marxist/structural approaches and the post-colonial/post-structural schools (de Satgé & Watson, 2018). While these schools of thought often are positioned against each other, on the basis of their ontological differences, this thesis argues that a combination of theoretical perspectives is useful in the study of urban transformation in Africa and beyond.

Below, I elaborate on how critical urban theory, which has emerged from structural approaches, and the governmentality perspective, which is oriented in the post-structural schools of thought, are drawn together in this thesis to shed light on various aspects of contemporary processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region.

Critical urban theory

Critical urban theory adopts a structural approach to urban development and focuses on the “world-wide patterns of capitalist urbanization and their far-
reaching consequences for social, political, economic and human/nature relationships” (Brenner, 2009, p. 206, emphasis added). This theoretical perspective thus centres on how capitalist markets shape urban environments and their tendency to (re)produce socio-spatial inequality and class power. Furthermore, critical urban theory explicitly seeks to “excavate the emancipatory possibilities that are embedded within, yet simultaneously suppressed by, this very system [i.e. ‘modern capitalism’]” (Brenner, 2009, p. 203), and thus calls for alternative urban development paths.

While originally developed to analyse and critique urban developments in the global North, today critical urban theorists argue that it is an “urgent task” to explore how “contemporary forms of neoliberal capitalist urbanization are unfolding across the North/South divide” (Brenner & Schmid, 2015, p. 162, in Myers 2018, p. 236f). This claim is based on the assumption that processes of neoliberalisation are streamlining urban development across the globe. While the definition of the term ‘neoliberal’ is debated, it usually centres on the following characteristics of state restructuring as listed by Jessop (2002, p. 461):

1. Liberalization – promote free competition
2. Deregulation – reduce role of law and state
3. Privatization – sell off public sector
4. Market proxies in residual public sector
5. Internationalization – free inward and outward flows
6. Lower direct taxes – increase consumer choice

The recent conceptualisation of global urban development under the umbrella of a neoliberal ‘planetary’ urban condition (Brenner, 2013) has, however, received criticism (Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Schindler, 2017a; Oswin, 2018; Ong, 2007, 2011). For instance, Ong (2007, p. 3) problematises the conceptualisation of neoliberal capitalism as an unstoppable “economic tsunami that is gathering force across the planet, pummelling each country in its path and sweeping away old structures of power” and questions its “fixed set of attributes with predetermined outcomes”. Scholars within the southern turn of urban studies further put forward the claim that “urbanization is more than an expression of global capitalism” and seek to study the interplay between specific urban contexts and global processes without a priori assuming that neoliberalism is the main driver of urban development (Schindler 2017a, p. 48; see also Ong, 2011; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). A common viewpoint is that the theoretical lens of neoliberal critique must “be ‘provincialized’ in order to create intellectual space for alternative ideas that may be more relevant to cities where the majority of the world’s urban population now resides” (Parnell & Robinson, 2012, p. 593). Relatedly, underlying assumptions in critical urban theory on the workings of the state and civil society have been challenged by scholars studying southern cities who have demonstrated the contradictory
and elusive positions of these two sets of actors (Watson, 2009b). The fact that the current rapid urbanisation of the global South is not accompanied by high levels of industrialisation, as generally was the case when northern cities urbanised, has also challenged assumptions in critical urban theory on the relationships between workers and capital (Schindler, 2017a).

In an attempt to meet this criticism, critical urban scholars have put forward the concept of ‘variegated neoliberalisation’ to emphasise that neoliberalism is a process that plays out differently in different contexts (Brenner et al., 2010). This concept has been adopted in various southern contexts, and Shatkin’s (2017) study on the ‘real estate turn’ of Asian cities is a good example of an analysis that seeks to illuminate how ‘neoliberalisation’ plays out in concert with other locally based processes (see also Bénit-Gbaffou et al., 2012 for a discussion on neoliberal security models in Southern African cities).

Still, ‘variegated neoliberalisation’ assumes a priori that neoliberalism is the main driver of urban development globally, and I concur with the sceptics regarding this grand narrative given the multiple and diverse trajectories of urban change on a global scale (Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Myers, 2018). Hence, I do not take (variegated) neoliberalisation as the point of departure for analysing urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region. Nevertheless, I find the wider critical urban literature useful in analysing and problematizing contemporary land use changes in this city region given the privatisation of urban infrastructure and services that is taking place today, the increasing inflow of international investors in urban real estate, the (speculative) commodification of urban land, and persistent urban inequality. As López-Morales (2015, p. 564) contends, “we do need some generic theoretical categories (regardless of the geographical location where they were first formulated) to bring urban debates within useful parameters”, and critical urban theory “currently help us confront the injustices of capitalism through relatively shared spaces of debate”.

A critical urban approach has also proved useful in a number of previous studies on Ghanaian cities that analyse structural adjustments and urban forms (Yeboah, 2000); structural adjustments and urban housing (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001b); foreign investments in urban milieus (Grant, 2009); urban employment, inequality and poverty (Obeng-Odoom, 2012); the emergence of ‘oil cities’ (Obeng-Odoom, 2009, 2013); the urban informal economy (Grant, 2009); urban displacements (Gillespie; 2016; 2017); public-private partnerships in urban infrastructure and services (Post & Obirih-Opareh, 2003); urban housing (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a; Grant, 2007); and urban transport (Obeng-Odoom, 2010).

I make use of specific concepts derived from critical urban theory to illuminate certain aspects of urban transformation in the three case studies of this thesis. In the study on the demolition of the informal settlement Mensah Guinea, the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2005, see also Gillespie, 2016; 2017) illustrates how the (increasing) rent gap between
the existing land value (of the informal settlement) and the future land value (of the planned luxury tourism enclave) constitutes an important explanation of the demolition. Moreover, the concept of ‘urban revanchism’, introduced by Smith (1996), is used in the same paper to highlight how authoritarian elements of the state, informed by market-logics, sought to criminalise poverty to legitimate the demolition guided by the logic that the “city’s image” should not be “compromised by the visible presence” of marginalised groups (MacLeod 2002, p. 602; see also Swanson, 2007, for an elaboration on the relevance of this concept in southern cities). I acknowledge that “[c]ontextual stretching” may lead to the “loss of conceptual rigour” (Maloutas, 2011, p. 39), and therefore emphasise the need to contextualise specific interventions that resemble revanchist practices. In the paper on Mensah Guinea I thus highlight that urban displacements have a long history in Accra, and that the demolition of Mensah Guinea was not only the result of neoliberal policy but also the urban planning legacy from colonial times. It is also important to note that the analysed evictions in both Mensah Guinea and Osu occurred in a policy environment that was not revanchist per se, given the strong emphasis in the recent NUP on improving the living conditions of the urban poor (see chapter 2). I also follow scholars who have used critical urban theory to develop new concepts that speak specifically to contemporary developments in southern cities. Goldman (2011), for instance, has studied the attempts of the Indian city Bangalore to become a ‘world-class city’ and concludes that this endeavour has profoundly transformed the city’s governance structures. He argues that land speculation has become the main business for Bangalore’s city administration and shows how this ‘speculative governance’ has resulted in the privatisation of urban publics and the displacements of large portions of the population (cf. Harvey, 2012). Goldman also demonstrates that a plethora of actors including local business elites, international finance institutions, bilateral aid agencies, Indians living abroad, international non-governmental organisations, elites of urban bureaucrats and officials pushed this world-city agenda forward, and most of these actors had clear international connections. According to Goldman, “the magnitude, speed, and the overarching aura of legitimacy of these new governance endeavours locally and worldwide” motivates the new concept of ‘speculative urbanism’, which refers to contemporary capitalist-driven urban developments in the global South (Goldman, 2011, p. 575).

Speculative urbanism has further been employed to explain recent urban trends in China (Li et al., 2014), Cambodia (Nam, 2012), South Korea (Shin & Kim, 2016), and Southeast Asia (Zhang, 2017). According to Watson (2014), many African cities are also undergoing processes of urban transformation similar to those of Bangalore, in which city administrations engage in land speculation and international property firms take the lead in (re)developing large tracts of (peri-)urban land. This development, she states, “seems to
post-date the 2008 financial crisis”, and more research is needed to better understand the “new ways” in which “global economic forces are interacting with local African contexts” (Ibid., p. 216; see also Steel et al., 2019). This thesis takes on this call and seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role played by contemporary forms of speculative governance in contemporary land use changes in the Greater Accra Region. I explicitly elaborate on whether the demolition of Mensah Guinea was the result of ‘speculative urbanism’, and this question is also implicitly present in the other two case studies. While land speculation is part of the explanation to ongoing land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, the magnitude of state speculation on land is certainly not on the level of Indian speculative governance given the limited amount of land owned by state authorities in the Greater Accra Regions (most land in this region is owned by traditional authorities, as discussed in chapter 2).

I also borrow Herbert and Murray’s (2015) related concept of ‘privatized urbanism’ to describe the far-reaching privatisation of urban land, infrastructure, services and city management that is happening within the project of Appolonia City (see also Murray, 2015). Privatized urbanism is a concept developed on the basis of South African experiences of city-wide private-led urban developments where international capital plays a pivotal role. The city scale is an important marker of this conceptualisation, and, as such, privatized urbanism is different compared to smaller private developments such as gated communities. Murray (2015, p. 514) further emphasises that privatized urbanism implies a drastic recasting of power relations between state authorities and corporate real estate interests as it creates urban enclaves that are more or less “immune from outside [including state] interference”. As discussed in paper III, Appolonia City is a good example of the new urban form of ‘privatized urbanism’ in Africa. However, the emergence of ‘privatized urbanism’ in Ghana differs from the South African examples and, indeed, similar developments in Asia (see Shatkin, 2017) given the important role played by traditional authorities in enabling this urban form (through the sale of communal land and through an official partnership with the developer).

While critical urban theory constitutes an important theoretical framework for this thesis, I acknowledge that, used alone, it risks undermining important place-based (non-market oriented) explanations for urban development paths in the Greater Accra Region by glossing over contrasting logics and positions that may be present in contemporary processes of land use change (see Parnell & Robinson, 2012). This thesis therefore combines critical urban theory with the governmentality perspective to better explain how urban land use changes occurs on the ground in the Greater Accra Region and how capitalist and other logics interact in the governing of urban transformation at the present juncture.
A governmentality approach to urban development

The term governmentality stems from a merging of the words government and rationality and accordingly attends to the rationality of government, or, in other words, how specific sets of knowledge(s) and mentalities more or less systematically inform people’s thoughts and actions in distinct directions (Dean, 2010). The governmentality perspective thus draws attention to how power works through certain rationalities and moralities, and it rejects monolithic explanations of how institutions such as the state and the market function (Foucault, 1991, p. 102f; Dean, 2010, p. 16; Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 174), which is in line with the questioning of universal theory by post-colonial urban scholars (e.g., Robinson, 2006). By applying a governmentality perspective to processes of spatial governance in the Greater Accra Region, this thesis seeks to provide a nuanced analysis of 1) the type of reasoning and taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin urban policy and interventions in the built environment in this city, and 2) the multiple actors who participate in consolidating and translating these visions into interventions in the built environment.

The term governmentality was coined by Michel Foucault during the late 1970s to capture the new regimes of power that became dominant in Western liberal societies during the 19th century that targeted the well-being of the population (Foucault, 2007). Since then, the term has been developed by several social scientists (e.g., Dean, 2010; Rose & Miller, 1992; Rose, 1999), and it has proved fruitful in studies on the governing of urban space in both the global South (e.g., Legg, 2007; Watson, 2001; Kamete, 2012; Lindell et al., 2019; Nielsen, 2011; Ghertner, 2011) and the global North (e.g., Flyvbjerg, 1998; Dikeç, 2007; Huxley, 2007; Raco & Imrie, 2000; Osborne & Rose, 1999). While the governmentality perspective was developed on the basis of place-specific shifts in the art of governing in Europe, McKee (2009, p. 469) argues that “[it] is a mode of analysis that lends itself to any context involving the deliberate regulation of human conduct towards particular ends”. Indeed, the governmentality perspective’s attention to local constellations of power, its non-fixed assumptions regarding the location of power, and its emphasis on the connections between power and knowledge make this framework useful in contexts other than that of its origin. Similar to the scholars above, I thus find the governmentality perspective useful for analysing the governing of land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, as will be elaborated further below.

Foucault (2001) sought to demonstrate that the identification of problems in society that must be addressed is central to any regime of power, and accordingly argued that the act of governing must be seen as a problematising activity (see also Murray Li, 2007b). This problematising activity is not limited to the state apparatus but engages society as a whole. This activity is thus closely related to what Foucault terms ‘regimes of truth’ that within given socio-historical contexts restrict the “nature of what can be said, on what terms
and invariably, by whom” (Allen, 2003, p. 26). What the analytics of governmentality seeks to do is to question the basic principles, or truth claims, of government’s problematising activities, which is achieved by a critical reading of the often taken-for-granted political rationalities and governmental techniques used to put forward specific agendas (Rose & Miller, 1992). Following these lines of thought, I understand the governing of land use (change) in the Greater Accra Region as a problematising activity whereby multiple actors, including but not limited to urban planners within the state, are “linking problem definition[s] to action toward desired ends” (Lake, 2017, p. 240). The broader analytics of governmentality, with its focus on the power-knowledge nexus and the multiplicity of rationalities and actors involved in the art of governing, has further informed the formulation of my research questions and the methodological and analytic approaches that I adopt in this thesis. Below, I further elaborate on the governmentality perspective’s take on power and its usefulness for socio-spatial analyses.

Power and knowledge
Foucault (2007, p. 156, emphasis in original) states that “there exists no single power, but several powers” and describes society as “an archipelago of different powers”. For him, power is dispersed and relational; “not homogenous and totalizing” (Murray Li, 2007b, p. 276; Lemke, 2002). The dispersed and relational nature of power implies, Foucault (2007, p. 158) argues, that the state apparatus should not be prioritised in the analysis of power. Instead, “small regions of power – such as property, slavery, the workshop and also the army” must be analysed if we are to gain a deeper understanding of how power – including the state apparatus – works in specific time-spaces (Ibid., p. 156).

The governmentality perspective thus seeks to break down the binary between the state and civil society and emphasises that power both works through the governing of others and the governing of the self (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 174; Foucault, 1991, p. 102f; Lemke, 2002). As such, it is very useful in contexts such as the Greater Accra Region where state actors are limited in their governing of urban land uses (and in the provision of infrastructure and services) and where a number of actors exert impacts on urban transformation processes.

The term government is used within the governmentality literature to refer to alliances between state and non-state actors who seek to “administer the lives of others in the light of conceptions of what is good, healthy, normal, virtuous, efficient or profitable” (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 175; see also Foucault, 1991, p. 102f). These conceptions are formed through discursive practices that could be defined as “the statements which provide a language for talking about something”, and which further “serve to restrict the number of things it is possible to say about different topics and areas of study” (Allen, 2003, p. 23, see also Hall, 2001). Government thus primarily seeks to guide
the ‘conduct of conduct’, which implies that it “act[s] on the actions of subjects who retain the capacity to act otherwise” (Murray Li, 2007a, p. 17). Hence, governmentality as a form of power is always incomplete as target populations might act in directions not confirmative to dominant perceptions of desirable behaviour (Ibid.). Power enacted in the form of governmentality thus differs from the sovereign and pastoral powers Foucault discussed in his earlier works, which refer to disciplinary and faith-based powers, respectively. While Foucault first discussed these different forms of power in relation to different time periods in particular European settings, he later underscored that non-coercive forms of power such as governmentality often co-exist with disciplinary and faith-based powers. Hence, as Murray Li (2007a) has emphasised, violence or the threat of violence often make up part of contemporary governmental strategies that seek to inform people’s thoughts and actions in a given direction in addition to attempts to govern at a distance.

In other words, power as governmentality can be defined as the “outcome of the affiliation of persons, spaces, communications and inscriptions into a durable form” (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 184). Such power is thus the effect of socio-material assemblages that in a specific time and place manage to influence people and things in a distinct direction (Ibid.). In contrast, domination is constituted by “asymmetrical relationships of power in which the subordinated persons have little room for manoeuvre because their ‘margin of liberty is extremely limited’” (Lemke, 2002, p. 53).

In this thesis, I suggest that power as governmentality is important in shaping different actors’ perceptions of what counts as desirable urbanism, which in turn inform how urban interventions play out. The three case studies of this thesis all demonstrate that various actors express a desire to make Accra globally recognised, on the basis of several logics. I argue that these aspirations played an important role in enabling the large-scale urban (re)developments of both Appolonia City and Mensah Guinea, and the stepwise transformation of Osu, by informing the mentalities of state actors, traditional authorities and real estate firms. Moreover, the case study on street trade in Osu further indicates that these mentalities partially shape the subjectivities of marginalised street vendors, who often express their practices as ‘out of place’ in the city centre of Accra.

However, the governing of land use change is not only a question of governing the conduct of conduct. In both Mensah Guinea and Osu, land transformations were enforced through acts of domination when homes and trading facilities were demolished against the will of the concerned residents and traders. Hence, the governmentality perspective only partly explains the governing of urban transformations. However, since the workings of both power and domination are informed by specific knowledge(s) and mentalities, it is still important to examine “how thought operates within our organized ways of doing things, our regimes of practices” (Dean, 2010, p. 27, emphasis deleted). The link between power and knowledge is thus central; it is “not possible to
study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them” (Lemke, 2002, p. 52). Indeed, governing is closely related to different fields of expertise that are used for specific ends, such as “education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement” (Ibid., p. 175). By studying political rationalities and unveiling authoritarian truth claims, the analytics of governmentality can help unveil the “conditions of a consensus or the pre-requisites of acceptance” (Rose & Miller 1992, p. 175).

The term rationality specifically refers to the knowledge, constituted in social relations, which translates specific claims into “a matter of fact”, which in turn, makes up the basis for government action (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 184). It should be noted that political rationalities also comprise moral validations for government interventions (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 175). The concept of rationalities allows me to analyse the logics behind different types of contemporary and future imagined land uses in the Greater Accra Region and how various groups may differ in their perceptions of what a desirable urbanism entails. Furthermore, it opens up for a nuanced analysis of neoliberal (or advanced liberal) logics, which does not assume neoliberalism as an omnipresent structure with predetermined outcomes, but which understands neoliberalism as “a set of maximizing rationalities that articulates particular assemblages of governing” (Ong, 2011, p. 4). An understanding of neoliberalism as a political rationality thus differs from conceptualisations of neoliberalism as state restructuring that aims to “reduce[ing] [the] role of law and state” (Jessop, 2002, p. 461). Foucault (2008, p. 132) thus argues that “[n]eoliberalism should not /…/ be identified with laissez-faire, but rather with permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention”. What neoliberalism as rationality does, according to Foucault (2008, p. 323), is to present market logics as suitable also for “domains which are not exclusively or not primarily economic”. Hence, Foucault (2008, p. 148) contends that:

[The] multiplication of the ‘enterprise’ form within the social body is what is at stake in neolibera[l] policy. It is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, into what could be called the formative power of society.

(Foucault, 2008, p. 148)

Foucault (2008) further demonstrates that neoliberal rationalities work on different scales; they both guide the organisation of the macro political economy and the conduct of individuals. On the macro-scale, neoliberal rationalities seek to inform legislation and policy in such a way that they enable market logics to inform various parts of society (Foucault, 2008). Neoliberal rationalities directed towards the conduct of individuals, in turn, assume people to behave in accordance to market principles, by adopting principles of “enterprise and production” (Foucault, 2008, p. 147). As such, these rationalities work on the subjectivities of individuals and groups.
This thesis’ focus on dominant city visions implies that the neoliberal rationalities I identify at work in the Greater Accra Region mainly target an urban macro-scale. As such, these rationalities seek to apply the “dynamic of competition” to the land use patterns of the city at large (Foucault, 2008, p. 132). This theme is implicitly or explicitly discussed in all papers of this thesis. In paper III, I also make use of Rose and Miller’s (1992) take on neoliberal rationalities as “advanced liberal rationalities” when I discuss the planned built environment of Appolonia City, which explicitly seeks to be a competitive environment. This project is also initiated and constructed by a private developer, which is in line with the logics of the enterprise. Additionally, this thesis identifies neoliberal rationalities that seek to inform the conduct of Appolonia City’s future population, as discussed in paper III.

It should be noted that neoliberal logics in urban Ghana are not the answer to the problem of a bureaucratic welfare state, or “too much government”, as in the European and American contexts discussed by Foucault (2008, p. 319). In Ghana, in contrast, neoliberal rationalities are articulated as an answer to the current limited capacity of the postcolonial state to govern the built environment of its cities. That this solution resembles neoliberal logics formulated elsewhere is not surprising given the neoliberal logic present in many globally circulating city ideals (see chapter 3).

Importantly, however, neoliberal rationalities co-exist with other governmental logics, and the governmentality perspective actively seeks to highlight the “the multiplicity of power relations and practices within the present” (Brady, 2014, p. 13; see also Foucault, 2008). Ong (2007, p. 3) thus suggests that we should conceptualise neoliberalism as “a logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts” where it is combined with other logics, which leads to different outcomes in different places. I follow these scholars and suggest in this thesis that neoliberal urban rationalities in the Greater Accra Region co-exist with other rationalities, including rationalities of survival (Watson, 2009b) and various spatial rationalities (cf. Huxley, 2006). The next section elaborates further on the conceptualisation of spatial rationalities, which is of importance given this thesis’ explicit focus on spatial planning practices.

Spatial rationalities

The importance of space for the working of power was acknowledged by Foucault (1986, p. 252) who stated that “[s]pace is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power”. Since then, governmentality scholars have sought to develop the spatial aspects in the analysis of the art of government. Huxley (2008, p. 1647), for instance, explains that space “is inseparable from government” because “projects of gov-
ernment imagine spatial and environmental causalities, draw up plans and programmes that deploy spatial techniques, and aspire to produce spatially specific conducts, even as they provoke counterconducts and counterspaces”.

In a similar vein, Elden (2007, p. 578) states that “[t]erritory is more than merely land, but a rendering of the emergent concept of ‘space’ as a political category: owned, distributed, mapped, calculated, bordered, and controlled”. Here, urban planning as a strategic practice that seeks “to provide for a spatial structure of activities (or of land uses)” (Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2011, p. 3) constitutes an important expertise that explicitly seeks to govern space and thereby human activity and conduct. Urban planners thus make use of governmental technologies, that is, the methods used by government to translate certain rationalities into programs and plans that can be implemented in the social, political, economic or spatial sphere to either change or retain the status quo of a societal phenomenon (Rose & Miller, 1992). Kamete (2013a) further explains how urban planning practices create a normalisation of certain urban environments and conducts that then become benchmarks for all urban spaces. In urban Africa, this process has enabled the discursive construction of poor informal neighbourhoods as abnormalities, often coupled with strong immoral connotations (Ibid.).

Huxley (2006) further develops the spatial dimension of governmentality by introducing the analytical concept of ‘spatial rationalities’, which refer to the socially constructed bodies of knowledge that inform policy and action related to the spatial organisation of the city by linking physical environments with the “conduct of subjects”. By exposing and analysing the knowledge and norms that underpin the spatial remaking of cities, the concept of spatial rationalities enables the unpacking and problematisation of the taken-for-granted assumptions and practices that direct urban development (Ibid.). Hence, this concept has the potential to provide insights into the various knowledge bases that underpin the contemporary rapid transformation of urban land uses across Africa. I use the concept of spatial rationalities, together with Huxley’s (2006) categorisation of generative, dispositional and vitalist spatial rationalities (see paper I for an elaboration on these specific rationalities), to explore and critically examine the multiple agendas of urban development that motivated the demolition of Mensah Guinea in central Accra, and in the comparison of the findings from the three papers in the discussion of this comprehensive summary.

While the governmentality perspective offers a number of useful tools for a nuanced analysis of urban transformation, its focus on local practices makes it limited in connecting the art of governing in one place to similar government arrangements elsewhere (Springer, 2012). The governmentality approach thus delimits efforts to create a platform for dialogue across space regarding processes of urban transformation and how they may (re)produce urban inequality. This in turn delimit the possibilities for building international networks of solidarity (Lópes-Morales, 2015). Moreover, a too strong analytical focus on
governmentality risks missing other forms of power that are at work such as domination. It is therefore imperative to combine analyses of how certain rationalities are formulated with the study of actual interventions, which implies that ethnographic methods are needed (Murray Li, 2007b; McKee, 2009; Brady, 2014). In addition, some scholars have argued that the governmentality perspective pays insufficient attention to “how the exercise of power is linked to social inequalities of race, class and gender” (McKee, 2009, p. 475). In the studied cases of land use change in the Greater Accra Region, it is evident that domination through “property power” (Bidet, 2016), enabled by capitalist land and property markets, have a strong influence on how contemporary urban transformation unfolds and how different socioeconomic groups are affected by these changes; I thus find it useful to combine the governmentality perspective with critical urban theory.

A synthesising note on theory

Several characteristics of Accra’s ongoing urban transformation, such as the encouragement of private-led urban development in policy and legislation, the increasing influx of international capital invested in the built environment, land speculation, and the displacement of marginalised groups from central parts of Accra, correspond to critical urban theory’s emphasis on the streamlining effects of neoliberalisation on cities across the globe (e.g., Brenner et al., 2010). I remain sceptical about the omnipresence and pre-determinism of neoliberalism present in much of the writing within critical urban theory; however, this theoretical framework has provided me with perspectives that highlight the importance of capitalist markets in contemporary urban development and specific concepts – urban revanchism, accumulation by dispossession, speculative urbanism and privatized urbanism – that help me explain certain aspects of urban transformation in the specific case study sites and relate them to urban developments elsewhere.

Importantly, however, the cases analysed in this thesis demonstrate that there is considerable variation in how Accra’s socio-spatial transformation plays out in different locales. The three cases show that a broad variety of actors engage in staking out the direction of urban change in this city region and that the current market-oriented development path is intertwined with other logics of government, including rationalities of survival that prioritise the use values of land over market values and the rationality of spatial order which not necessarily is linked to market-oriented forms of government. Following Ferguson (2010), I thus find that simply stating that Accra’s urban transformation is ‘neoliberal’ does not explain or illuminate much in terms of how, and by whom, urban change occurs. I have therefore turned to Foucauldian understandings of power for a conceptual framework that enables me to
attend to the messy and at times contradictory governance constellations that steer land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, including the conflict between inclusive city ideals that seek to cater to the needs of marginalised groups and rationalities seeking maximum economic growth. More specifically, I find the governmentality perspective useful because of its attention to local constellations of power, its non-fixed assumptions on the location of power, and its emphasis on the connections between power and knowledge.

I acknowledge that the combination of theories with structural and post-structural orientations gives rise to a number of tensions. As argued by Barnett (2005, p. 8), these perspectives “imply different models of the nature of explanatory concepts; different models of causality and determination; different models of social relations and agency; and different normative understandings of political power”. However, I argue that both critical urban theory and the governmentality perspective add important insights into the contemporary processes of urban transformation in Ghana, and following Springer (2012), I find it useful to merge structural ‘top-down’ perspectives with the post-structural attention to local constellations of power.

Importantly, I also relate my analysis to the southern turn of urban theory and the recent literature on urban informality and land tenure diversity elaborated in chapter 3. These writings have enabled me to think of Accra as a worlding city as worthy as any other (western) city to be part of burgeoning debate on emerging ‘global urbanisms’. These literatures further indicate the importance of placing informal urbanism and land tenure at the centre of the analysis of transforming African cities. While my theoretical framings partly diverge in their ontological groundings, the combination of critical urban theory, the governmentality perspective and ‘southern’ urban theory has, together with extensive qualitative fieldwork, allowed me to pay attention to how a variety of actors and a multiplicity of rationalities, including both neoliberal and non-neoliberal, are involved in globally informed local processes that shape the contemporary direction of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region.
5. Methodology

In this thesis, I use a qualitative methodology to explore and analyse contemporary processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region, with a focus on the contested politics of urban land use. Based on a constructivist understanding of reality as being socially constructed (see Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 24ff.; Birks, 2014), the present thesis seeks to examine how different actors engage in the social construction of urban visioning in the Greater Accra Region, the translation of these visions into the built environment and the socio-spatial consequences thereof. In addition, this thesis draws on critical theory to highlight how these constructions (re)produce socio-spatial inequality and injustice (Dutta, 2014) based on a belief in the emancipatory potential of knowledge production (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 144ff.). This epistemological orientation implies that interpretation has been at the centre of the research process. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p. 10) explain this perspective as follows:

The research process constitutes a (re)construction of the social reality in which researchers both interact with the agents researched and, actively interpreting, continually create images for themselves and for others: images which selectively highlight claims as to how conditions and processes – experiences, situations, relations – can be understood, thus suppressing alternative interpretations.

As such, my methodological approach opposes positivistic stances that seek to obtain objective knowledge and rejects “[a]n assumption of a simple mirroring thesis of the relationship between ‘reality’ or ‘empirical facts’ and research results (text)” (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p. 9). Indeed, I understand qualitative research as a relational power-laden process whereby knowledge is (co)produced through interactions between the researcher and the ‘agents researched’ (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). Hence, I agree with Whatmore (2003, p. 90) that empirical materials “are produced, not found, and that the activity of producing them is not all vested in the researcher”.

The importance of interpretation in this methodology demands a reflexive research strategy whereby one carefully reflect on the social context one is part of and how this context, and ones positionality within it, informs the research process (Davies, 2012). Throughout this research project, I have thus
sought to reflect on the outcomes of the decisions made within the project, the kind of material that has been generated in it and how I have interpreted it. An important aspect of this reflection has centred on my positionality as a privileged white female PhD student from Sweden doing research in Ghana. While the exact impact of my positionality in this research project is impossible to assess (see Rose, 1997; Axelsson, 2012), I still find it important to reflect on my role in the research process and I will return to this issue when I describe the methodology in more detail below.

Based on the general understandings of qualitative research discussed above, I adopted an abductive research strategy for this project whereby I have oscillated between my empirical material and theory to develop arguments regarding the cases I have been studying (see Aspers, 2007, p. 216; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 4). This process of oscillation involved different types of interpretation including the continuous reading and interpretation of previous research, a first immediate interpretation of the material produced during fieldwork, a systematic reading and interpretation of the generated material following each fieldwork (including a layer of interpretation that focused on the (in)justices of land use governance), and the creative interpretative process of writing-up the project (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 271ff.).

A collective case study of urban transformation

This thesis builds on three case studies of transforming urban sites in the Greater Accra Region: Mensah Guinea, Osu and Appolonia City. These sites constitute what Stake (1995, p. 3) terms instrumental cases, which implies that they were selected to achieve a “general understanding” of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region in addition to obtaining in-depth insights on the particularities of transformation in each case. Together, these cases make up a collective case study that provides an aggregated understanding of urban development in the Greater Accra Region, with a focus on the governing of urban land use changes (see Stake, 1995, p. 3f.).

Case studies are common in urban studies, and Watson (2016, p. 548) argues that this approach is much needed in the study of urban planning in the global South:

To understand /…/ how planning interventions impact positively, negatively or are hybridised to suit particular local contexts, requires /…/ in-depth, grounded and qualitative case study research on state–society interactions and the ‘dispersed practices of government’.

The usefulness of the case study approach lies in its ambition to “retain a holistic and real-world perspective” and its incorporation of multiple sources of material into the analysis (Yin, 2014, p. 4). The case study approach is thus
well aligned with the argument on the need for situated knowledge that is present in the theoretical framework of this thesis as articulated within the governmentality perspective and the ‘southern turn’ of urban studies. Stake (1995, p. xi) describes the case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. The collective case study presented in this thesis thus seeks to provide insights into how urban land use is transformed and governed in the Greater Accra Region (= the case) at a time when global urban ideals and international investors increasingly inform the development path of African cities (= important circumstances).

The search for and selection of individual cases in the Greater Accra Region were made through an ‘information-oriented selection’, which aimed “to maximize the utility of information from small samples and single cases” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). Hence, to obtain a deeper understanding of contemporary urban trends in the Greater Accra Region, in line with the aim of this thesis, I sought to include diverse cases of urban transformation in the collective case study (see Stake, 1995, p. 6). Mensah Guinea, Osu and Appolonia City were thus chosen as examples of rapid urban transformation informed by globally circulating city ideals that differed in terms of their locations, previous and imagined future land uses, land tenures and government arrangements. In short, Mensah Guinea represents a state-led urban intervention in a centrally located informal settlement; Osu is a stepwise developing neighbourhood in central Accra, which houses a high number of street traders and increasingly attracts real estate investors, and Appolonia City is a large-scale private-led development in a peri-urban greenfield location. The case study locales are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

The selected cases range from an ordinary-yet-critical example of urban transformation (Osu) to extreme cases of urban change (Mensah Guinea and Appolonia City), as will be evident in the extended introductions to the individual cases below. Importantly, this variation crafts a balanced collective case study that enables a general understanding on dominant city visions, how such visions are translated into the built environment and the socio-spatial consequences thereof in the Greater Accra Region (cf. Stake, 1995, p. 6).

Mensah Guinea is the name of an informal settlement located next to the beach in central Accra that was demolished by local authorities in September 2014 with the support of traditional authorities. The settlement had existed since the late eighteenth century and it had, at the time of the demolition, a population of approximately 3 000 people, most of whom were poor. The demolition was officially commenced in the name of public health; however, the state’s plan to redevelop the area into an international tourism enclave with hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities and shopping opportunities also played an important role in this intervention. Informal settlements such as Mensah Guinea are common in Accra; and while their presence is debated, state authorities generally ignore their presence.

59
The demolition of Mensah Guinea thus constitutes an ‘extreme’ intervention against this type of urban land use, which makes it a suitable case to study since “extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied” (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 229).

Osu, in contrast, represents an incremental transformation of a residential neighbourhood into a mixed land use area where global aspirations are highly present. In this area, traditional compound houses, small ‘spots’ serving local alcohol in the junctions, and street vendors selling everyday goods are found next to luxury apartments, international banks, up-market restaurants and exclusive stores. This area is thus a place where informal and formal structures and activities exist side-by-side, often intimately interlinked. The transformation of this area engages a multiplicity of actors including the state, private development firms, traditional authorities and not least ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ residents and workers. My focus has been on the governing of public spaces that are used by street vendors without formal permission from the authorities.

Figure 12. Map locating the three case study sites in the Greater Accra Region. Map by Vasiliki Tsoumari. Copyright: OpenStreetMap.
Osu is considered to be a ‘critical case’ of urban land use transformation in this thesis because of its mix of informal and formal land use, which is characteristic of the city at large, and its recent influx of international real estate investors. Hence, how (in)formal land use (change) is governed in Osu is likely similar to processes of urban transformation in other mixed neighbourhoods in central Accra (see Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230f).

Appolonia City, the third case, is a planned new city under construction in Kpone-Katamanso district, which is part of the Greater Accra Region. This megaproject is led by the international development firm Rendeavour, a company specialized in large-scale infrastructure projects across Africa. Appolonia City is described as “a Fully Master Planned, mixed-use and mixed-income urban development” that eventually will house 88,000 people divided into 22,000 buildings (Rendeavour, 2014a; 2014b). Rendeavour acquired the land where Appolonia City is now being constructed from traditional authorities in 2012. The project is designed as a private city where the planning, construction and future maintenance is carried out by Rendeavour and its subcontractors. Local and central government bodies support the project. The project is divided into four phases, and the whole city will be built during a period of 10-to-20 years.

Appolonia City is also considered an ‘extreme case’ of urban transformation although in a way that is different from that of Mensah Guinea. While Mensah Guinea is an example of an extreme type of urban intervention in an existing urban environment, Appolonia City is an example of an urban environment planned and built ‘from scratch’, which takes place on largely unbuilt land. This point implies that Appolonia City can provide important insights into contemporary urban ideals since, in this case, the planners did not have to take any existing built environment into consideration in their urban visioning. This urban intervention also deviates from how urban planning generally works in Ghana in terms of the project size and the prominence of an international development firm in a city government arrangement; hence, it is illustrative of planning procedures in flux.

These case studies provide important insights into the particularities of how land use change is governed in different parts of the Greater Accra Region and emphasise the variation of land use governance within this city region. Analysed together, these cases also generate aggregated knowledge on the dominant discourses on what counts as desirable urban development and ‘good’ urban planning practice in the Greater Accra Region, how state and non-state actors partake in contemporary processes of urban transformation in the region, and the implications of the socio-spatial outcomes of this transformation. This collective case study has further the potential to inform the development of urban theory, from a southern context, as case studies make up important building blocks in “the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 227).
The next sections introduce the methods used to conduct the three individual cases studies followed by a description and reflection upon how the fieldwork and analysis evolved over time.

**Semi-structured interviews**

To gain insights into how various actors and groups engage in contemporary processes of urban change in the Greater Accra Region, their opinions on these changes and the consequences thereof, I found interviewing to be the most rewarding method within this research project. Interviewing is often described as “an excellent method of gaining access to information about events, opinions and experiences” (Dunn, 2005, p. 80; see also Valentine, 2005). Indeed, interviewing gave me a good understanding of the multiple, sometimes conflicting, perceptions of contemporary spatial, material and social transformations in Accra that exist between and within certain groups. The material generated during the interviews thus helped me interpret how city visions are formulated within different groups of urban actors, how and by whom urban intervention occurs in the Greater Accra Region and the socio-spatial outcomes of these interventions. Moreover, interviewing different actors provided insights into the underlying rationalities and power relations of these processes.

All interviews were semi-structured, and while some themes reoccurred in most interviews, the interview guidelines were adjusted to the individual respondents. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to influence the direction of the dialogue within the given framework, which opened up topics and themes that I did not initially recognise as being important (Willis, 2006, p. 144 ff.). For example, the importance of individual landowners in the governing of informal street trade taking place on state-owned land in Osu emerged out of the insights provided by the interviewees.

In total, more than 175 semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of this research project: approximately one-fifth with practitioners, policy-makers and politicians active at different scale levels in the state administration, and roughly two-thirds with street vendors and the residents of an informal settlement. Interviews were also conducted with staff at Rendeavour, the international development firm behind Appolonia City; traditional authorities in Appolonia village and central Accra; and representatives for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and research institutes engaged in issues concerning urban development (with a focus on organisations working in and/or with informal settlements).

In seeking to understand urban planning practices from the perspectives of the state, I focused on interviewing officials, not politicians, and I therefore did not capture the relationships between party politics and urban planning. I
initially contacted several departments working with issues related to urban planning by going to their offices, introducing myself and requesting interviews with relevant personnel. In general, I was first directed to the head of the department, who I often managed to interview (sometimes several times). Only after meeting with the head of the department was it possible to interview employees; hence, the heads of departments acted as gatekeepers (see Valentine, 2005). When interviewing officials, I always ended the meeting by asking if they could introduce me to more officials who I could interview to learn more about various planning practices. I thus practiced a snowballing technique of finding interviewees, which worked out well. The same procedure was used in contacts with traditional authorities, civil society organisations, private developers and researchers. Interviews with state actors and key informants from NGOs, research institutes, traditional authorities and development firms usually lasted from one-to-two hours.

The selection of interviews with street vendors in Osu was organised on the basis of their geographical location. In a structured manner, I interviewed all of the vendors present in a given area during daytime during the days I spent in the field. In Mensah Guinea, it was not possible to select interviewees in a similarly structured way since people were not present at their homes at the same time and since I did not want to conduct fieldwork during the evenings due to darkness. Instead, I approached the small settlement in the area during daylight hours on workdays and on weekends, and I sought to interview the people present at that time. My field assistant, a male Ghanaian master’s student in geography who grew up in Accra and who speaks Ga, Twi and English, was often present during these interviews and helped me introduce myself in interview situations. He also contextualised the information produced during the interviews afterwards, when needed. The interviews with street vendors and residents usually lasted for half an hour. Several key informants, including local informal leaders of both the residents and traders, were interviewed several times. The full list of interviewees is provided in the appendix.

I explicitly asked for informed consent before starting every interview (see Dowling, 2005, p. 21). Before doing so, I explained to the participant what the research was about and how her or his ‘narrative’ would be handled within the research project. Most often, this introduction occurred face-to-face during my first meeting with the respondent. At times, however, state officials and employees at Rendeavour requested a written description of the research project in advance, and in these cases, I sent them a summary via e-mail before our meeting. When introducing the project, I carefully explained that participation was voluntary and that the interviewee could end the interview at any point (Martin & Flowerdew, 2005, p. 4). I also explicitly informed the interviewees that they would not gain economically by agreeing to participate in the study. Furthermore, I explained to all interviewees that the information provided during the interview would be used for research only and that I aimed to publish my research in academic journals. Street vendors and evicted residents were
guaranteed anonymity to avoid their getting into trouble because of the opinions expressed in the study (Brydon, 2006, p. 27). When I interviewed state officials, traditional leaders, representatives for private firms and civil society organisations, I asked for permission to cite them in their capacity as a representative of that organisation. This decision was motivated by the important roles played by these specific institutions in the processes of urban transformation and was agreed to by all participants.

The majority of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. I always asked if the interviewees agreed to be taped, and I respected the preferences of the few who declined. Although transcription is a time-consuming process, the possibilities it provides for in-depth readings of the interviews afterward and for quoting motivated this choice (Valentine, 2005). The transcripts were sent to the respondents upon request.

It is generally assumed that the researcher is the one in charge in interview situations as she or he structures the meeting in accordance with her or his research agenda (Valentine, 2005). However, the balance of power in interview situations can also turn out to be the opposite, not least when senior politicians, officials and business leaders are interviewed (Mullings, 1999; England, 2006). For me, interviewing government officials and representatives of the international development firm Rendeavour was indeed a very different experience compared to interviewing street vendors and evicted residents. In the interviews with government officials and representatives of Rendeavour, I often had to prove that I was worthy of their time. My positionality as highly educated, with a master’s degree in urban and regional planning, gave me authority in these situations and helped me build rapport with this group of respondents. It is also plausible that my whiteness and affiliation with Stockholm University, as well as my collaboration with the University of Ghana, had an impact on these respondents’ decisions to participate in the research (cf. Mullings, 1999). At times, my ‘professional’ positionality prompted the interviewees to ask me for practical advice regarding their work, and while I was willing to discuss these issues with them, I always emphasised my positionality as a student and learner when this happened. I also experienced that my self-representation as a female student positioned me as a ‘non-threatening’ researcher, which resulted in at least some respondents being very relaxed during the interviews (cf. Mullings, 1999).

When interviewing the street vendors and evicted residents, I presented myself differently (see Mullings, 1999 on the importance of self-representation). Of course, I still introduced myself as a PhD student from Stockholm University; however, I usually downplayed my previous education and emphasised that I wanted to learn about the interviewees’ experiences and opinions (cf. Mandel, 2003, p. 202). The few phrases that I learned in Twi as well as my (limited) knowledge of the local culture, and food in particular, helped me to break the ice in many situations when I sought to interview street vendors and the residents of informal settlements (cf. Mandel, 2003, p. 202). The
presence of my research assistant, who was born and raised in Accra and who spoke both Twi and Ga, also helped me make contact with this group of respondents. Most likely, some of these interviewees participated in the research because of their expectations of future financial or material assistance that my position as a white, female, highly educated research student aroused (although I always carefully explained that they would not receive these types of benefits).

It is important to note that while it is possible to distinguish between the different types of respondent, individual interviews within the same category of interviewees also turned out differently; some officials were thus sceptical of talking to me while others gave me a warm welcome. The same was true amongst the vendors and evicted residents. One should thus not take the effects of ones positionality as given (cf. Mullings, 1999). Of course, the positionality of the respondent is also an important factor in how the interview proceeds; depending on where in the internal hierarchy of a social context an interviewee may be positioned, the ability and willingness of sharing certain information might differ.

I will return to some of my meetings with the respondents in the upcoming section in which I reflect on how the three case studies proceeded in the field. For now, I mainly want to emphasise that the possibilities and challenges one faces in the actual research situation depend on the power relations at play in each meeting (in line with a Foucauldian understanding of power) (see Rose, 1999). My experiences of interviewing different people in the Greater Accra Region thus align well with Thrift’s (2003, p. 106) description of fieldwork as “a curious mixture of humiliations and intimidations mixed with moments of insight and even enjoyment”.

Observations and policy analysis

The interviews were complemented by observations at conferences, workshops and public meetings related to urban development in the Greater Accra Region including the Ghana National Urbanization Conference in 2014, Cities Alliance’s start-up workshop in 2015, and Slum Dwellers Internationals’ neighbourhood meeting in Osu 2015. These events helped me identify what Foucault (2001) termed the ‘the problematizing activity of government’ with regards to how different actors discussed contemporary urban development including government officials, politicians, international actors and development firms. These events also gave me an indication of the main actors involved in the official urban policy discussion in Accra/Ghana today. The observations I made at conferences, workshops and public meetings were not planned in advance. In contrast I often learned about them in interview situations with state officials, or in meetings with researchers, up close to the event
and then asked the organiser if I could participate (see Stake, 1995 on the importance of flexibility during fieldwork).

Observations were also conducted in the three case study locales, in order to give me additional descriptive material on the built environment in these places, including their different land uses, building types, trading facilities, and how people used these places (see Kearns, 2005 on complementary observation). While I only visited Appolonia City and Appolonia village a handful of times, I spent a large amount of time in Osu, as well as Mensah Guinea, walking around, socialising with people and observing everyday life. For safety reasons, the large majority of these observations took place during the day or early evenings, and my material thus does not mirror land uses at night. Field notes were taken both during observations and afterwards.

Policy documents related to urban planning and future visions for urban development in the Greater Accra Region and Ghana make up the third category of material. Policy documents and city plans constitute important parts of the official discourse(s) on desirable urban development in specific time-spaces (cf. Shore and Wright, 1997). Hence, the recent policy documents National Urban Policy and the related Urban Action Plan from 2012, the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act from 2016, Ghana Urbanization Report by the World Bank from 2014, the 2014 draft of the National Housing Policy, the 2010 draft of the Decentralization Policy Framework, and the Focus areas for Accra Metropolitan Assembly between 2014 and 2017 have been used to enable an identification of how the urban is problematised and the solutions suggested by different actors (cf. Foucault, 2001). Older policy documents such as Accra, a plan for the town from 1958 and the Strategic Plan for the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area from 1991 were used to enable an understanding of how urban policy has changed over time. The structure plan and the first local plan for Appolonia City were also analysed to examine contemporary planning ideals.

Importantly, I always analysed the content of these policy documents in relation to actual planning practices and existing land uses as there is always a gap (intended or unintended) between policy and practice. By triangulating the findings from the policy analysis, the interview transcripts and the field notes, I brought different types of material into the analysis of the individual case studies of this thesis and thereby enabled rich and rigorous analyses of contemporary changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region (see Wisker, 2008, p. 231; and Valentine, 2005, p. 112 on the importance of triangulation). The material and findings of each case study have also been triangulated against each other to give insights into the collective case study of the complex processes of urban transformation and urban land use change in contemporary Greater Accra and the rationalities and actors involved in these processes.
Fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out during the following five periods:

1) Six weeks in May and June 2014
2) Four weeks in February 2015
3) Ten weeks in September – November 2015
4) Four weeks in November – December 2017
5) Three weeks in March 2019

Most material was generated during fieldwork two, three and four since the first fieldwork was used to get to know the field and the last visit aimed at filling-in some gaps in the material. The three cases were researched in parallel during the fieldworks even though each period of fieldwork mainly focused on one or two cases. I found that dividing the fieldwork into blocks was highly beneficial as it allowed me to reflect on my findings in between the visits and because returning to the field often involved the receipt of a hearty welcome from the interviewees, which opened up new avenues for research.

In striving for transparency, and in line with the reflexive approach that I have sought to adopt in this thesis, I find it worthwhile to describe and reflect at length on how the research process proceeded, including some more detailed examples of meetings that I had with the informants in the field and the difficulties I faced when writing this thesis.

Getting to know the field

An exploratory field study was conducted in the Ghanaian cities of Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi during six weeks in May and June 2014. The aim of this fieldwork was to obtain an overview of the contemporary status and direction of urban development in Ghana, with a focus on the actors, roles and functions of urban planning. Most of the time was spent in Accra where I sought to ‘get to know’ the city and to establish contacts with institutions and organisations of relevance for this study, such as government offices, NGOs, universities and research institutes. I also spent one week in Sekondi-Takoradi as I had heard that major developments, including a new city, were taking place in this city region because of the recent discovery of oil close by.

During the exploratory field study in Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi, semi-structured interviews were conducted with physical planners, development planners, and other officials who worked with urban development within the state administration at the city-, regional- and national levels. Interviews and conversations were also held with representatives of NGOs working with urban issues, private development firms, media officials, academics, and street vendors threatened by evictions at one specific street in the Osu neighbourhood in central Accra. The main aim of these interviews was to obtain a deeper
understanding of contemporary ‘hot’ issues within urban planning circles, how planners perceive the contemporary status of Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi, their visions for their city’s future, and ongoing major (re)development projects. In total, approximately 25 interviews were conducted, and the majority of these were taped and transcribed.

The interviews were complemented by guided, and unguided, walks in neighbourhoods of different socioeconomic status across Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi. To ‘be there’ in the places that are the focus of the study provides important insights since it “…obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation” (Clifford, 1983, p. 119). These walks gave me an invaluable understanding of the actual materiality of different parts of the city and enabled me to better understand and follow arguments about different parts of the city described by my interviewees, including discussions on (the need for) (re)developments.

Material was further produced through participatory observation in a national workshop on urban development in Ghana, which was organised by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in collaboration with the World Bank and the Swiss Government. This occasion illustrated well the dissemination of urban policy between countries and cities as well as the powerful role of intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank in such processes. This event also gave me insights into how both the Government of Ghana and the World Bank problematise contemporary urban development in Ghana and the solutions that they prescribe.

I also went along with the ‘task force’ of the Osu sub-ward during one morning when they drove through the streets of Osu controlling for unauthorised buildings, which gave insights into how the city authorities in practice seek to control urban space and counteract the presence of informal buildings and kiosks on a daily basis. This type of observation gave me indications of how officials in their everyday work make decisions about which buildings without permits are to be removed and which are to be ignored (although I probably would have needed weeks in that car to truly gain a grasp of the intervention logic). By chance, I also observed this procedure from the other side when I was conducting an interview with a vendor on a small street in Osu, Accra. During the interview, the task force entered the community and began to mark all small kiosks that were selling food, clothes and other commodities with red paint, stating that the owners had to remove their businesses. To see the process of eviction notification from both perspectives provided important insights into the local struggle over urban space. However, I also realised that being seen with the ‘wrong’ group could delimit my future attempts to gain access to different actors and hence maintained a very low profile during these occasions and chose to hold off engaging in further participatory observations with the task force.

In addition, written material such as planning schemes, strategic plans, policies, books, and maps were collected during the exploratory field study,
which demanded footwork since most of these documents are not available online. An audio series of interviews with stakeholders engaged in urban development that had been broadcast the previous this year by the Accra-based radio station CitiFM and videos promoting the new satellite city “King City” outside of Sekondi-Takoradi also added to the material generated during this period of fieldwork.

The exploratory study gave me a basic understanding of urban development and city planning in Ghana, with a focus on the capital Accra, which highlighted relevant and interesting themes to include in this research project. I decided at the end of this fieldwork to focus my research on developments only in the Greater Accra Region and thus opted out of conducting further fieldwork in Sekondi-Takoradi. This decision was motivated by the practical difficulties of doing fieldwork in two cities located more than 220 kilometres apart and the fact that the planned new city outside of Sekondi-Takoradi was paused.

The insights from the exploratory fieldwork influenced the design of the full research project and constituted the basis for my exploration and analysis of the rationalities behind city visions and urban planning practices in the Greater Accra Region and the translation of these into the built environment. The insights gained through this fieldwork also enabled me to identify two intriguing, yet very different, cases of contemporary urban transformation in Accra to include in this thesis, specifically, 1) the stepwise redevelopment of the inner suburb Osu and 2) the planning and construction of the new satellite city named Appolonia City.

Upon my return to Sweden, I continued to follow Ghanaian news online. In September 2014, I read that a centrally located informal settlement had been demolished and the people evicted. Just a few months earlier, the local government planners in Accra had told me that evictions seldom happen in this city; thus, this urban intervention raised a number of questions: What kind of area was this? Why was it demolished? How did the eviction process proceed? How were the people living in the area coping with the consequences of the eviction? What were the future plans for the area? It was difficult to obtain information about the eviction from Sweden, and the media reports were limited. Therefore, when I planned my second fieldwork, I decided to spend the first days trying to find out more about the eviction and thereby learn more about the contemporary spatial governance of central Accra and the socio-spatial consequences of this particular eviction.

Studying the demolition of Mensah Guinea in retrospect

The second fieldwork took place during four weeks in February 2015, approximately four months after the demolition of Mensah Guinea. I went to the area where the settlement used to be located on my second day in the field and realised that people still lived in the area. After talking informally to some of
the people in the area, I decided to put more effort into trying to understand
why this eviction had occurred, what actors had been engaged in the eviction
process, the role played by urban planning at different scale levels of the state,
and how the former inhabitants were coping with the aftermath of the eviction.

During my first visit to Mensah Guinea, it became obvious that most people
in the area did not speak English, and I therefore contacted my field assistant
who knows the local languages Ga and Twi and began to plan for semi-structured interviews in the area with him. In parallel, I also contacted urban planners and other state officials who work with urban development in Accra and
made appointments for interviews in which I took the opportunity to both discuss and learn about general aspects of contemporary urban planning practices
within the state and to specifically ask questions about the case of Mensah
Guinea. I also contacted NGOs whose work relates to the living conditions in
poor (informal) urban areas to learn about how they reacted upon the demolition of Mensah Guinea.

In total, 15 former inhabitants of Mensah Guinea who still lived in the ad-
jacent area were interviewed, including the self-appointed community leader
who I interviewed twice. The community leader gave me important background information on the history of the area and its political links to local
government. Furthermore, he acted as a gatekeeper by introducing me to the
community and thereby legitimising my presence (although his company
might have made certain individuals or groups hesitant to talk with me). The
meetings with other respondents focused more on their personal experiences
of the area and the eviction. I visited the community several times per week
and approached the interviewees without making prior appointments. Several
people were sceptical when I first approached them, and some associated me
with the real estate firms that had showed interest in investing in the area be-
cause of my whiteness. However, when I explained who I was and that I
wanted to learn about their experiences and thoughts on the eviction, most
were willing to share their experiences with me.

I sought to interview the former inhabitants one-by-one; however, my pres-
ence created curiosity in the small community, and on several occasions, I
ended up conducting group interviews. This approach was challenging since
it became more difficult to direct the interview in accordance with my inter-
view guide. Furthermore, the group interviews generated less detailed state-
ments on how individuals had coped with the aftermath of the eviction. How-
ever, the group interviews led to interesting discussions amongst the partici-
pants on how and why the eviction had occurred and how they now coped
with everyday life as a community. Being flexible and able to adjust to unex-
pected interview situations was imperative in this study, and when situations
turned out differently than I had planned, I always sought to be open to the
possibilities they provided (see Stake, 1995 on flexibility during fieldwork).

What I found to be most difficult during these interviews was asking the
respondents detailed questions on their contemporary situation as only being
there and seeing their housing condition in itself made it obvious, on an emotional level and on an intellectual level, that these people were in a very difficult situation. Here, my field assistant was very helpful and insisted that these questions were important, and my understanding of the challenges they faced indeed deepened when they described their situation in their own words. Another difficult experience was meeting the informants’ requests that I speak with the local government on their behalf. My positionality as a white researcher gave rise to expectations amongst the respondents that I could negotiate with local government on their behalf. I repeatedly explained that I could not do that; however, at times it became emotionally and intellectually difficult. While researchers may openly ‘take sides’ in land use conflicts and choose to collaborate with local resistance groups during the research process (see Gillespie, 2016), this was not considered to be an option in this project as it would have ruined, or at least diminished, the possibilities of learning about how planners and state-officials perceive and understand urban development in Accra. I believe that insights from various perspectives into the struggle over urban land use are imperative to understand contemporary processes of urban transformation in Africa, and I therefore opted for a research strategy that gave me insights from as many actors as possible.

Another challenge was to find time for the interviews. As I approached the interviewees in or in proximity of their homes, many were busy taking care of children, cooking, doing the laundry, drinking beer or socialising with friends. Hence, many interviews became a bit rushed at the end when the interviewees indicated that they had no more time for me. In a few cases, I initiated the contact at one time and then returned later when it better suited the interviewee. Still, most of the interviews did not last for more than approximately half an hour, and I learned to introduce the most important questions directly after the initial ‘ice breaking’ talk to obtain as much material as possible from even the shorter interviews.

To generate knowledge on the perspectives of different state bodies in the case of Mensah Guinea – and the general urban development agenda in Accra - I interviewed urban planners and officials in the city administration at the Department of Physical Planning; the Works Department; and the Development Planning Department. Based on the interviews with the state officials, I soon realised that the central state was also engaged in the redevelopment plan of Mensah Guinea despite the strong decentralisation policy in Ghana that articulates that urban planning is to be located at the local level. Hence, I also interviewed the project leader of this new urban development, an official based at the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts. During these interviews, most often, I began with more general questions on contemporary planning priorities and their approach to informal settlements and business activates, thereafter introducing the questions on Mensah Guinea with a focus on the reasons behind the demolition, the eviction process and the future plans for this area (a strategy to which Dunn, 2005, p. 85, refers as “funnelling”).
Convincing state officials to talk about this specific case was not easy, and it was certainly a balancing act to ask critical, yet not too critical, questions about the case. While the large majority of officials that I met during my fieldworks were professional and polite, on several occasions I also encountered what I would call highly inappropriate invitations from male officials, and, as a consequence, I refrained from doing follow-up interviews that might otherwise have enhanced the research. In one case, I asked my (male) field assistant to join me when conducting a follow-up interview to avoid ‘jokes’ and comments on my appearance and sexual invitations.

A third category of informants was constituted by staff at NGOs, grassroots movements and research institutes who work in poor, often informal, neighbourhoods. To learn more about how civil society actors positioned themselves in relation to the demolition of Mensah Guinea and urban development in more general terms, I interviewed representatives of Amnesty International Ghana, the Slum Union, Housing the Masses, the People’s Dialogue on Human Settlements, Global Communities, Labour Research and Policy Institute, and the Institute of Local Government Studies.

While I had imagined that employees of these organisations would have much to say about the demolition of Mensah Guinea, I learned during the interviews that these organisations had not paid much attention to that particular event. This finding meant that many of the questions that I had prepared for the interviews became irrelevant. However, their lack of interest and/or response to the eviction was in itself very interesting, not least given their self-expressed political programmes and agendas opposing (forced) evictions. Nevertheless, I found it difficult to ask the right questions that would enable a better understanding of why they had not taken action. One of the organisations explicitly expressed hostile attitudes against the former residents of Mensah Guinea, which surprised me and led me to re-evaluate my pre-understandings of these actors as progressive and in support of protections of those living in informal settlements.

I returned to the community during my third fieldwork to learn how the place had transformed since my last visit and realised that not much had changed. People were still living on the beach, and the land where Mensah Guinea had been located was still empty. I also managed to get in contact with the two competing traditional authorities of Osu-Klottey and thereby complemented my previous research on the eviction with the perspectives of the traditional authorities.

Interviewing the traditional authorities presented specific challenges both before and during the interviews. First, while according to the text books, there are supposed to be only one traditional authority in a neighbourhood, I soon learned that Mensah Guinea was located in an area where two competing traditional authorities exist. I therefore decided to contact both of them. A non-partisan assemblyman who represents Osu-Klottey in the AMA, whom I had interviewed several times, helped me to set an appointment with one of them.
The assemblyman also informed me that, according to the (informal) rules, one must bring a gift consisting of liquor and money when meeting the chief, which implied an ethical dilemma as I had decided to not pay any of my informants for their time (although, on several occasions, I offered drinks and snacks to informants during interviews). As I was very thankful to the local assemblyman who had arranged this meeting, and he stressed the necessity of the gifts, I finally decided to behave in accordance with the norms and arranged for the liquor and the money after a short consultancy with my field assistant. I had requested an ‘informal’ meeting with the chief; however, the interview turned out to be a very formal arrangement where the chief and his whole assembly – 14 men in total – gathered in the meeting hall of the traditional palace. Hence, the meeting followed certain ceremonial acts, including the handing over of the gifts. While ethically questionable, this gift undoubtedly enabled the generation of material that otherwise would have been very difficult to access. To interview the chief with his whole assembly present, in a setting where a huge table created a tangible physical distance between us, implied several restrictions to the possibilities of establishing a relationship of trust during the interview situation. However, it also provided insights into the collective character of the traditional assembly. My questions were about their stance and role in the demolition of Mensah Guinea but also about how they envisioned the development of central Accra in the future.

I was also interested in gaining a better understanding of the traditional authorities’ relationship with the (local) government; however, due to the conflict between the two competing traditional authorities in this area, these questions turned out to be highly sensitive, and it was not easy to determine their actual role in contemporary urban development projects. This conflict also implied that it would be difficult for me to meet with the other local ‘chief’ since the local assemblyman who initially promised me to arrange meetings with both authorities later turned out to be afraid to be seen in the ‘wrong circles’. Finally, I did manage to get in contact with the other chief and again ended up in a formal meeting situation with him and his assembly in an impressive meeting hall.

Examining the micro-politics of spatial regulation in Osu

My third fieldwork was conducted over ten weeks from September to November 2015, and the primary focus of that fieldwork was the ongoing transformation of Osu. I scheduled a few appointments with urban planners at the city administration and the Osu-Klottey sub-ward office during the first weeks of the fieldwork to learn more about their role in the transformation of Osu. The officials at the central administration offered interesting perspectives on Osu in relation to the larger city while the interviews with the officials at the sub-ward were especially valuable in the generation of material concerning actual
everyday maintenance and the implementation of planning directives. In parallel, I contacted one of the assemblymen in Osu-Klottey, and he guided me through ‘his’ neighbourhood. This walking interview provided much information on the history of this part of town, the socio-spatial inner divisions of the neighbourhood and the challenges and advantages of that area. Thereafter, I conducted 10 broad pilot-interviews with residents in different parts of old Osu, including poorer and more wealthy quarters, to obtain a preliminary idea of how the people living in this area perceived the built environment and social conditions as well as their relationships with the local government.

During one of the interviews with an official at the sub-ward, I was told that the small kiosks on a particular road in Osu were to be given an eviction note during the upcoming days, and I decided to follow this process to better understand how urban transformation, including encounters between the informal and formal city, actually plays out in real time. After a few unsuccessful attempts to locate this particular street (which had no formal name at that point in time), I finally found the place and began to conduct interviews with the affected people. Most people on this street knew English; however, my assistant joined me most of the time and translated whenever necessary. During the rest of the fieldwork, I visited the street several times per week and was thereby able to follow the eviction process – including the multiple rumours that circulated around it – through my interactions with the people threatened by displacement. When leaving the field in November, I had managed to talk to almost everybody who was working or living in the kiosks marked for demolition: 14 people in total. A few of them became my main informants who regularly updated me on what was going on.

During these weeks, I also conducted follow-up interviews with the staff at the sub-ward to obtain their perspective on the turning points in the eviction process. With time, I learned more about the local dynamics and the multiple actors involved in the power-laden process of transforming this particular place, and I contacted other relevant actors including those at the adjacent school, the local church, the business man who had bought a plot along this street and who actively pushed for the displacement of the kiosks, the assemblyman, and the elderly committee – including the cultural tutor – of this area that is affiliated with the traditional authorities. The generated material gave me detailed insights into the local politics of urban transformation and the blurred categories of urban informality versus formality in this particular place.

During my fieldwork in Osu, I was intrigued by the question of why the kiosks on this particular street (together with a few others) in Osu were to be removed while the kiosks on parallel streets were ignored by the local state authorities. The explanations given by the local government were not convincing, and I therefore decided to talk to more kiosk owners in the adjacent area to hear their view on local land politics and their perceived risk of eviction. Thus, in addition to the first interviews conducted with the kiosk owners who
had been given an eviction note on one specific street, another 65 interviews were conducted with kiosk owners in the larger area: 38 of these were with kiosk owners whose kiosks had not been marked for eviction, and 27 were with owners of kiosks that had been marked for eviction. During these interviews, I tried to learn from the kiosk owners on what grounds evictions by the local government are carried out, how the owners relate to the risk of eviction, the measures that they take to avoid the risk of eviction, who pays what fees (to governments and landlords) and the relationships between the shop owners and the landowners / residents. Since these interviews were carried out in the kiosks during working hours, most of the interviews were short and usually lasted between 10 and 30 minutes. However, these interviews gave me important insights into the situation of the ‘informal’ kiosk owners in this particular part of town.

During this fieldwork, I also complemented my material on Osu by interviewing a few politicians who are active in the Osu-Klottey area to learn how they resonated with the contemporary and future status of this area and how they perceived the presence of street trade. These interviews included the Member of Parliament (MP) representing the sub-ward and local partisan and nonpartisan politicians working in the subward.

The interviews with the traditional authorities described in the section on Mensah Guinea were also valuable for my research on the regeneration of Osu as both these areas belong to the same traditional authorities. During these interviews, I also posed specific questions about how the traditional authorities perceive the presence of informal traders in their jurisdiction. In addition to these interviews, I also interviewed one of the local chiefs and one of the cultural tutors in the neighbourhood.

Researching Appolonia City – Ghana’s new satellite city

I began to investigate the construction of the new city Appolonia City during my second fieldwork by visiting the construction site and interviewing representatives from the development firm, residents and the elderly committee in the adjacent village. These meetings gave me important insights into the planning process of the project, the type of city they wanted to build and how the project was governed.

The plan for the third fieldwork was to continue doing research on Appolonia City; however, the fieldwork did not work accordingly. While the staff at Rendeavour, the private development firm that is constructing Appolonia City, had welcomed me to their office during my first field work, this time they postponed our meeting week-by-week for more than two months, and in the end, I never got the chance to interview them on how the project had proceeded since my last visit. While they always replied to my e-mails and calls in a polite way, my interpretation of their constant postponing of our meeting was that they did not want me (or possibly any researcher) to examine their
project in detail. Since the relationship and division of responsibilities between Rendeavour and the local government was part of this research, I also sought to interview planners in the Tema municipality where Appolonia City was located at this point in time (later, Tema was divided into several districts, and Appolonia City came to be under the jurisdiction of Kpone-Katamanso district). While I managed to reach the ‘right’ person at Tema municipality – the project leader for Appolonia City – in the end, we never met as his (and, with time, also my own) schedule became very busy. Due to these difficulties in interviewing important stakeholders of Appolonia City, I also postponed my planned interviews with the residents of the village adjacent to Appolonia City. This fieldwork illustrates the difficulties that researchers can face when conducting research that involves producing material with private firms (cf. England, 2006).

During the fourth fieldwork, however, I finally managed to arrange some follow-up interviews with the developer, although I did not get the chance to interview members of its directorate. I also went along to the project site together with one of Appolonia City’s sale officials and a potential customer and could then observe how the project had proceeded on site. I also interviewed the chief of Appolonia village twice to learn more about the history of the village, the transaction of traditional land to Rendeavour and how the community perceived the project. These interviews were rewarding but did not provide as much information about the land transaction as I had hoped for since it was the late father of the chief who had made the agreement with Rendeavour in 2012. I also interviewed competing traditional authorities in Tema who questioned the authority of the current chief and criticised how the traditional authorities had handled the development of Appolonia City. Moreover, interviews were conducted with the retired planning director of the Tema Metropolitan Assembly who was in charge of the approval of the Appolonia structure plan and its first local plan, state officials in the Kpone-Katamanso district where Appolonia City is now situated, and the director of the regional planning office in Greater Accra. Informal discussions were also held with officials at the Ministry of Works and Housing. Due to time limitations, and the insight that Appolonia is being built on land that was not actively used by the village at the time of the land transaction, I decided to not interview more residents of Appolonia village within this research project. However, I interviewed the assemblyman from Appolonia village to obtain some understanding of how people in the village had reacted to the project in general.

Analysis of material

The transcribed interviews, policy documents, media reports, planning schemes, field notes and other relevant documents produced during the five
fieldworks were analysed and triangulated through qualitative interpretation and coding. A first interpretation of the material had already been performed in the field. Then, in Stockholm, the materials were systematically read through and “open coded” - implying that the materials were sorted into different thematic categories (cf. Davies, 2012; Crang, 2005). Most of the coding and sorting was performed in the software Nvivo, where it is possible to highlight sections from a text and then place them into a node, i.e., a thematic category. The categories identified during the open coding were relatively broad and included, for instance, ‘informality’, ‘the new urban policy’, ‘evictions’, ‘networks and collaboration’, ‘housing’, ‘future visions’, ‘land tenure’, ‘planning priorities’, ‘speculative practice’ and ‘problematisations of the urban condition’. These categories were the outcomes of my interpretation of a careful reading of the empirical material and sometimes informed by the theories and concepts used in this study. Interview sequences and other text sources often relate to more than one category, and when this was the case, the material was placed into more than one category (see Davies, 2012). I also sorted the materials in different folders in accordance with their relevance for the three individual case studies.

After the initial open coding, I selected the themes that were the most important for this study and carefully read through the material in these categories one-by-one. During this reading, sub-themes were identified and related to each other and to relevant theories and concepts in the literature on urban planning and informality in Africa, urban Africa’s new global connections, travelling urban policy, land tenure in the global South, critical urban theory and the governmentality perspective. The critical approach of this project also implied that I sought to interpret and reflect upon how certain urban visions and practices (re)produced and/or challenged socio-spatial inequality and injustice (cf. Dutta, 2014).

As this thesis builds upon multiple periods of fieldwork, both the open coding and the sequential division of the material into sub-themes were done in multiple rounds, usually following each period of fieldwork. The reading and coding of the material resulted in the identification of patterns of conflicting and converging understandings around urban development issues, how urban interventions played out in practice and the consequences thereof. The results of this analysis have been presented in the three papers of this thesis and discussed in the concluding chapter of this comprehensive summary.

Importantly, who we are and where we come from influence our interpretation of the world, and it is therefore important to try to critically revalue the pre-understandings one carries into the research process, including how one interprets the empirical material. This task is of course not easy (see Rose, 1997), and it might be even more complex when fieldwork is conducted in a context that is not familiar to the researcher. To help bridge the contextual differences between my hometown of Stockholm and my research sites in the
Greater Accra Region, it was invaluable for me to regularly discuss the material generated in the research project, and different possible interpretations of it, with my field assistant and friends in Ghana who are more familiar with that specific context. Moreover, and in line with the governmentality perspective adopted in this thesis, I sought “to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening” when writing up this thesis (Stake, 1995, p. 12). The careful and systematic interpretation and triangulation of the material makes the analysis rigorous, yet it is important to remember that the material presented in this thesis is partial and informed by my interpretations of the described events, statements and power dynamics (cf. Rose, 1997; Mullings; 1999).
6. Overview of papers

Paper I

**Abstract** African cities are growing and transforming at an unprecedented speed and recent studies indicate that market-driven logics increasingly inform the governing of urban space across the continent. This paper explores this claim by analysing the spatial rationalities at work in the struggle over urban space in contemporary Accra, Ghana. Based on an in-depth case study of a state-led displacement of a marginalized informal settlement in central Accra that took place in September 2014, the paper demonstrates that the ongoing urban transformation of this city must be understood as an outcome of multiple spatial rationalities rooted in the local urban history but also influenced by globally circulating urban ideals. While a market-driven rationality is clearly present in the state’s justification of the eviction, also ‘generative’ and ‘dispositional’ rationalities are used to legitimize this urban intervention. The paper further illustrates the conflicting rationalities between the state and the urban poor, emphasising how the former residents of the evicted settlement perceive of their former home as a place of opportunities in terms of livelihood strategies, sociability and affordable housing.

Paper II

**Abstract** Recent studies on ‘urban informality’ emphasise the role of the state in the production and governing of ‘gray spaces’. This paper contributes to this body of research by emphasising the *multiple* actors involved in the governance of informal land uses and their ambiguous positions on how these spaces should best be understood and approached. Based on an in-depth case
study of ‘gray’ trading spaces in central Accra, I show that individual landowners in the vicinity of trading spots play a crucial role in the governing of roadside trading, together with state actors and traders. Furthermore, traders and state actors are both engaged in ambiguous ‘worlding practices’ that, on the one hand, envision Accra as becoming a city where street trade is eradicated, while, on the other hand, street trade is considered to be an opportunity for urban (economic) development. These varied perspectives imply that neither traders nor state bodies are uniform actors and that these groups are not necessarily positioned against each other.

Paper III


**Abstract** New cities are increasingly presented as a “quick fix” to contemporary challenges of rapidly urbanising African cities. A growing body of research has, however, questioned the appropriateness of these megaprojects on the basis of their governance structures, underlying planning principles and target groups. Yet little is known about the local constellations of government that enable and/or hinder these megaprojects to materialise. Drawing on the notion of governmentality, this paper seeks to deepen our knowledge on how particular new cities in Africa are governed and the rationalities behind them. Through an in-depth case study of Appolonia City – a new private satellite city under construction outside of Accra, Ghana – the paper demonstrates how this project has reached its recent stage of implementation through a specific constellation of government that includes state actors at all scale levels, traditional authorities and private developers. The engagement of these actors is based upon multiple rationalities, including an advanced liberal rationality that emphasises the superiority of private-led urban development; spatial rationalities that seek to form ‘world-class’ environments and subjects through a strong emphasis on urban formality and ordered aesthetics; prospects of economic profit-making; and assumptions on how the ‘mixed city’ model can provide sustainable and inclusive urban milieus. These rationalities partly conflict and Appolonia risks become yet another elitist urban megaproject despite its stated aim of creating a sustainable and inclusive urban environment. There is thus an urgent need to (re-)politicise the urban question in Africa in order to enable future city developments that benefit the many and not the few.
7. Discussion

The aim of this thesis is to critically explore and analyse processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region, with a focus on how urban land use changes are governed. The study is based upon three qualitative case studies of transforming urban sites in this region, as follows: 1) the demolition of the centrally located Mensah Guinea informal settlement and the future redevelopment of the area, 2) the everyday regulation of informal street trade in the rapidly transforming inner suburb Osu, and 3) the planning and construction of Appolonia City, a new satellite city in peri-urban Accra. The three cases have been analysed separately, as indicated in the paper overview in chapter 6. In this chapter, I analyse them together in an attempt to elucidate broader processes of transforming land uses in the Greater Accra Region. This analysis is structured around the three main themes that guide this thesis, which are as follows: a) contemporary city visions in Greater Accra and the rationalities behind them, b) how and by whom these visions are implemented in the built environment, and c) the socio-spatial outcomes of contemporary land use changes – importantly, it should be noted that these themes are closely interrelated. The analysis compares the findings of the three cases, relate them to previous research and theory, elaborate on their implications for policymakers and planners in Ghana and beyond, and provide suggestions for further research.

Conflicting rationalities regarding current land use changes in the Greater Accra Region?

I suggest in this thesis that the ambition to obtain global recognition is an important factor behind contemporary land uses changes in the Greater Accra Region today. As demonstrated in the three papers of this thesis, global recognition in this context implies the possibility of attracting international investments and tourists to the city but also the creation of a built environment with living standards comparable to those of other prosperous cities in the world. From a Foucauldian point of view, this ambition can be read as an effort to formulate an answer, or solution, to the present challenges that this postcolonial society face in terms of urban development (cf. Foucault, 2001), an answer that, in turn, builds on specific rationalities (Foucault, 2007). Hence, I
understand the ambition to transform Accra into a ‘global city’ partly an effect of power in the form of governmentality (Ibid.).

More specifically, I identify three dominant spatial and political rationalities that underpin how state officials and employees at private development firms envision Accra’s future. First and foremost, I suggest that a rationality of visible spatial order guides the mind-sets of urban policymakers (cf. Scott, 1998). This dispositional rationality connects visible order with modernity and it is nontolerant to informal land uses (cf. Huxley, 2006). As such, spatial form and aesthetical attributes are prioritised over other logics of social life in Accra (including informal land uses). This spatial rationality is highly present in the plans for Appolonia City, where land uses are fixed according to different zoning categories, street layouts are based on repetitive logics and informal land use is condemned. Furthermore, this rationality seeks to foster ‘modern’ law-abiding urban subjects who will not tolerate informal land uses in this new city. In Mensah Guinea, state planners partly motivated the demolition of the informal settlement on the basis of what they perceived as a lack of spatial order in the neighbourhood. Moreover, a master planned city enclave will be built on the land where the settlement used to be located; hence, the rationality of spatial order is also highly present in this intervention. Similarly, in Osu, the perceived need for spatial order is important in the governing of urban space and is used by both local state actors and landowners to rationalise the eviction of street vendors occupying roadsides and walkways.

Huxley (2006, p. 775) has argued that the dispositional spatial rationality aspire to produce ‘eutaxic’ (well-ordered) spaces that in themselves will return the evil of chaotic bodies and behaviours to the morality and beauty of order”. As such, this rationality prescribes spatial order as a prerequisite for prosperous city life. This type of reasoning has been present in Accra since (at least) colonial times (Njoh, 2007), and, following Huxley (2006), I do not see the dispositional rationality identified in the Greater Accra Region as primarily based on a neoliberal logic, although at the present juncture, it works hand-in-hand with neoliberal rationalities, as indicated below.

Second, I argue that urban visioning in Accra’s urban policy circles is largely based on a rationality that equates urban development with economic growth and that further conceives of the middle and upper classes as potential carriers of modernity in contrast to the urban poor, who are seen as obstructers of development. Hence, this rationality seeks to form built environments that engender economic growth. Appolonia City is a case in point, as the project explicitly seeks to “sustain and accelerate Africa’s economic growth” through the construction of a built environment that will live up to “the aspirations of Africa’s burgeoning middle classes” (Rendeavour, 2019). The marketing of this new city and the price levels of property within its borders further manifest that the project is mainly built for wealthy groups even though the project claims to be an ‘inclusive city’. The private developer also expresses that all Ghanaians who want to live in this new city can do so as long as they have
self-discipline and work hard, regardless of the high pricing of property within the development. This implies, indirectly, that the developer perceives poverty as the effect of individual conduct, a conduct they do not want to see in Appolonia City.

The redevelopment of the informal settlement of Mensah Guinea into a tourism enclave is also partly motivated by assumptions with regard to how the planned redevelopment of the area will contribute to economic growth by creating job opportunities and attracting international tourists. In this envisioned urban future of the area where Mensah Guinea used to be located, there is little space for marginalised groups. Indeed, local state officials express hostile attitudes towards the former residents of Mensah Guinea by implying that they were criminal, irresponsible and unhygienic. In Osu, the dominant aspirations for new developments with the right ‘modern’ aesthetics (i.e., spectacular high-rises) are similarly motivated by their perceived attractiveness for new investments, while the urban poor, including street vendors, are seen as obstacles in this sense.

From the above, it follows that urban policy makers in Ghana often seem to understand urban life primarily through the logic of the market, and therefore find it important to prioritise economic growth – and to make Accra become globally competitive – in urban projects. Therefore, I suggest that the rationality behind Accra’s economic growth agenda is based on logics that view the city through the lens of what Foucault (2008, p. 132) termed the “enterprise” form, in line with neoliberal rationalities.

Third, I seek to demonstrate that contemporary urban ideals (re)produced in the Greater Accra Region by state officials and employees at private urban development firms are largely based on a strong preference for private-led urban development. This rationality thus focuses on what actors should lead processes of urban change. The strong preference for private-led urban development has been present in urban policy documents since the 1980s, when the liberalisation of the Ghanaian economy began, and it was further strengthened in 2016, when new legislation created opportunities for the planning and construction of private cities, as elaborated in chapter 2.

In the three cases studied, both civil servants and private developers articulate that private actors are more efficient and better suited to plan and implement urban (re)development projects, compared to state agencies. With regards to Appolonia City, representatives of Rendeavour and civil servants at local- and central state authorities express that the private form of this new city – which includes land ownership, planning, construction and future maintenance – is desirable. Additionally, in Mensah Guinea, the central state’s recent initiative to redevelop the beach area (including the former informal settlement) into a tourism enclave will be based on a public-private partnership, given the assumption that private developers are better suited than state actors to conduct such a large-scale urban project. In Osu, the regular approv-
als of private-led redevelopments that violate planning regulation further suggest that local state actors trust private actors to develop the city in a desirable direction. The eviction of street vendors in Osu on behalf of a private entrepreneur – who offered to upgrade the public alley outside his plot by his own means in return – suggests that the local state seeks to facilitate developments carried forward by private actors also on a smaller scale.

Similar to the rationality behind the urban economic growth agenda, I argue that the preference for private-led urban development constitutes a neoliberal rationality based on the assumption that urban development should be governed through the ‘enterprise’ form (Foucault, 2008, p. 132). It is worth noting that the governing of society through the logics of the enterprise does not imply that the role of the state is diminishing (Ibid.). In contrast, this thesis emphasises that state authorities play important roles in the governing of contemporary urban developments, a theme to which I will return to further below.

Importantly, urban policy makers in the Greater Accra Region do not make up a homogenous group, and the three dominant rationalities elaborated above are indeed challenged at times. Hence, with regards to informal land uses – which clash with the rationality of spatial order and the neoliberal rationality that perceive these practices as hinders for economic growth – the national urban policy actually seeks to support the informal economy (which largely takes place through informal land uses), given its importance for the functioning of the cities of Ghana. Some interviewed state-planners in Accra also partially frame informal land uses as productive spaces in need of state support. The dominant neoliberal rationalities are also challenged by other logics. Hence, the alleviation of urban poverty and socio-spatial inequality is a present theme in urban policy, not only as an implicit trickle-down effect of general economic growth but also as a field of state intervention. State actors, thus, formulate in different ways that they should play an active role in the provision of service and infrastructure for marginalised groups to counteract socio-spatial inequality, which contrasts the ‘enterprise form’ of urban governance. Some interviewed state planners further perceive collaboration between state authorities and informal land users as a way forward to improve the urban milieu, including informally used land. This understanding differs from the dominant focus in urban policy on private-sector led urban development (with minimal state interference) and the widespread hostile attitudes towards informal land uses in urban policy circles.

In Appolonia City, a project highly informed by neoliberal rationalities, Rendeavour also postulates that this new satellite city will be a socially sustainable urban environment where the needs of all income groups, including the urban poor, will be met, even though further elaboration on how this will be done is lacking. Similar statements are also made by state authorities, for instance in the NUP and in AMA’s official mission, and they resemble what Huxley (2006) terms vitalist spatial rationalities, which seek to develop urban society on the basis of holistic understandings of urban life. AMA also used a
generative spatial rationality, which connects the health of a population to its physical living environment, to motivate the demolition of Mensah Guinea. Importantly, however, the rationalities that coexist with and/or challenge the three dominant rationalities that guide urban interventions in the Greater Accra Region today are not at the centre of urban policy discussions, and they are often overridden in practice, as I will discuss further in the section on urban interventions.

The marginalised groups included in this study, which are a group of former residents of Mensah Guinea and street vendors in Osu, both (re)produce and challenge the dominant rationalities that steer urban interventions. In the case of Mensah Guinea, the former residents of the demolished informal settlement primarily remember the neighbourhood as a place that offered affordable housing, livelihood opportunities and important social networks. Mensah Guinea was, for them, a place of opportunities and a place they called home. State actors, in contrast, describe Mensah Guinea as a problematic unruly setting with low living standards, which constituted a threat to the city as a whole. Hence, in this particular case, state actors and the former residents clearly hold onto what Watson (2003, 2009a) terms ‘conflicting rationalities’ that understand the city on the basis of different logics.

In Osu, however, street vendors occupying state-owned land partly share the spatial rationality of urban order that persists in Accra’s urban policy circles. The interviewed vendors express support for an orderly city and further perceive the area’s new high-rises and shopping mall as important symbols of development. The rationality of spatial order further leads many of these traders to find their own presence in the city (centre) to be problematic, even though other livelihood opportunities are scarce. This finding indicates that the “mass dream of the world class city” that Roy (2011, p. 326) has identified in India is also present in urban Ghana. Furthermore, while Roy demonstrates how India’s emerging middle-classes increasingly buy into this city ideal, this thesis adds that marginalised groups, such as the street vendors of Osu, also partake in the (re)production of ‘global city’ aspirations.

Importantly, however, this thesis also highlights that most street vendors in Osu maintain that they have no other possibilities of sustentation than to work informally on public land. Their presence on the streets of Accra can thus be read as a materialised signifier of a rationality of survival that certainly conflicts with the dominant rationality of spatial order in this city (cf. Watson, 2003). The general acceptance of street trade by local landowners in Osu further indicates that other logics, related to community building and solidarity, inform the governing of informal land uses on the neighbourhood scale. The case study on informal street trading in Osu thus suggests that binary understandings of how state authorities and marginalised communities engage in urban visioning, or worlding practices, must be nuanced (cf. Roy, 2011; Ong, 2011). However, this finding does not imply that the unequal power relations between various groups in society, such as those between vendors and state
actors in Osu, should be overlooked. The conflicting rationalities present in the case of Mensah Guinea, and the actual urban interventions studied in this thesis – including the eviction of informal land users in both Mensah Guinea and Osu and attempts to exclude low-income groups from Appolonia City – indeed demonstrate the importance of not masking or downplaying unequal power relations between different groups in rapidly transforming cities such as Accra, a point I develop further below.

Multiple actors and various powers behind urban interventions in the Greater Accra Region

This thesis analyses three different processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region. In the case of Mensah Guinea, urban land use changes materialised through the demolition of an informal settlement located on state-owned land, which will make space for the construction of a luxury tourism enclave that will be realised through a public-private partnership. In Osu, residential areas are increasingly being replaced by mixed land uses and both (international) formal businesses and informal street trade are present in the area. Appolonia City, in turn, constitutes a large-scale private-led development that takes place in a peri-urban greenfield location and constitutes an example of the recent trend of new cities in Africa (see van Noorloos & Kloosterboer, 2018). Below, I highlight and discuss what actors are engaged in the studied processes of urban change, how different forms of power informed these developments, and the usefulness of critical urban theory and the governmentality perspective for analysing these processes.

According to Ghanaian law, local planning authorities are supposed to direct the overall pathway of urban development; however, this thesis demonstrates how the local authorities in the Greater Accra Region primarily work and act reactively to initiatives taken by the central state and non-state actors, in similarity to state-led urban planning in India (Roy, 2009b, 2011c). This situation is not new; the assigned state authorities in Ghana have had limited control over urban developments since the colonial era, as discussed in chapter 2. However, what is new today, I argue, is that private actors – including international investors and developers, as well as individual (newly appointed) landowners – play an increasingly important role in how urban transformation unfolds, which is in line with the dominant rationality that favours private-led urban development.

In the case of Mensah Guinea, the central state, not the local authorities as the law indicates, was the initiator of the large redevelopment scheme that seeks to transform the beach area where the informal settlement was located into a tourism enclave. This case, thus, illustrates a reshuffling of state power and indicates that the (re)development of Accra is seen as a national interest
today, which requires exceptions to the decentralisation policy of urban government discussed in chapter 2. Importantly, the redevelopment of Mensah Guinea is further based on the premise that the project will be materialised through a public-private partnership, which is in line with neoliberal rationalities that consider the enterprise form to be the most suitable for urban government.

In the other two case studies, I demonstrate that non-state actors explicitly staked out the direction of contemporary land use transformation, which also involved the privatisation of communal land. Appolonia City is planned and developed by Africa’s largest real estate firm, Rendeavour, who explicitly aims for minimum state interference in its urban projects. Rendeavour is also the owner of the land where the city is being built, which previously belonged to local traditional authorities. The materialisation of Appolonia City is, thus, an illustrative example of the privatisation of urban land, urban planning and city management that is now taking place in urban Ghana, a process captured by Herbert and Murray’s (2015) conceptualisation of ‘privatized urbanism’. This thesis thus confirms that ‘privatized urbanism’ is now emerging in African cities outside of South Africa, where this urban form was first identified.

Additionally, in Osu, private actors largely drive the direction of the rapidly transforming built environment; however, here, transformation goes about plot-by-plot through initiatives taken by individual landowners. Osu used to be a residential area where land was owned collectively by extended families; however, it has recently transformed into a mixed land use area with a high presence of international companies and real estate agents. When family land is being sold to new landowners in Osu, this usually implies a shift from traditional tenure to individual statutory tenure; i.e. the privatisation of land. The pressure on land resources is high in the area; however, as many families are unwilling or hesitant to sell their land, it is difficult for investors to obtain large tracts of land, which partly explains the plot-wise transformation of the area. This case highlights that small-scale land acquisitions are important in current processes of urban change in African cities, next to large-scale acquisitions like the one in Appolonia City.

The studied eviction of street vendors on a particular street in Osu is related to the shifting ownerships and land uses in the neighbourhood. Street trade has generally been accepted in the area (under certain premises) through informal regulatory frameworks that involve the extended families who own most of the land in the area, the local state, and the traders occupying state-owned roadsides and walkways. However, the influx of new landowners, transformed land tenure and shifting land uses seem to threaten the presence of street trade in Osu. The studied eviction was indeed requested by a new landowner who had transformed a former residential plot, previously owned by an extended family, into a warehouse on land now under statutory tenure.

On the basis of the collective case study of land use changes in the Greater Accra Region, this thesis confirms that private actors, including international
investors, play an increasingly essential role in directing the contemporary transformation of African cities (see Watson, 2014; Goodfellow, 2013). However, this thesis also stresses that this situation has been facilitated and supported by other actors, including state authorities. Urban policy and legislation in Ghana has, since the 1980s, worked to enable and encourage private-led urban development, as elaborated in chapter 2.

State authorities also implicitly or explicitly supported the land use changes requested by private actors in the three cases studied in this thesis. In Appolonia City, the local state enabled the project in its present form to materialise by approving the structure plan, as well as the first local plan of the project, with no demands on major revisions. The project was approved even though the local state realised that the project faces the risk of becoming an elite enclave that does not cater to the needs of marginalised groups (which urban (re)development explicitly should do according to the NUP). The central state has also played an important symbolic role in the project’s realisation through public support, including several presidential visits to the construction site.

In Osu, the local state supports individual landowners’ plot-wise redevelopment of the area into a mixed neighbourhood, even though it contrasts the old but legally binding local plan that designates Osu a residential area. As mentioned above, the local state also approved the request by a newly established formal business to remove the street traders working on ‘his’ street by evicting them. This eviction illustrates how the upgrading of the physical environment (and the needs and desires of one formal business) was prioritised over the livelihoods of those working on the street. The local state did not evict the traders on other streets in Osu during the study period; thus, it seems that the individual request was decisive for the eviction to occur.

In Mensah Guinea, the local state intervened in an existing urban milieu by demolishing an informal settlement located on state-owned land. This intervention was not the direct effect of redevelopment plans initiated by private actors; however, as discussed above, an important motive behind the demolition was to enable the construction of a luxury tourism enclave in that location through a public-private partnership. In both cases of eviction, property was destroyed, and the affected residents and workers were not compensated. However, it is important to note that the scale of the two evictions varied; in Mensah Guinea, a whole settlement was demolished, and an estimated 3000 people were evicted, while the eviction of street vendors in Osu was directed towards a specific street where approximately 20 vendors were displaced (while street traders on other streets were untouched).

From the above, it follows that the local state acted in concert with the central state and/or private actors to make space for the middle and upper classes (including international tourists and the Ghanaian diaspora) and their interests in the three cases studied. The local state, thus, disregarded the immediate needs of the affected marginalised groups when supporting these developments. The neglect of the needs of marginalised groups that are dependent on
informal land uses is also evident in the local state’s different responses to planning violations within the three cases. In both Mensah Guinea and Osu, the authorities descended on informal land uses by marginalised groups, while they adopted a more benevolent response towards the newly constructed villas in Appolonia City that also lacked building permits. I thus suggest in this thesis that the local state’s response to planning violations in the Greater Accra Region depends on who the landowner is, the status of the violator and whether the unlawful development suits the current global city vision, which resembles the results of studies on state approaches to informal land uses in India (Ghertner, 2011; Roy, 2011a/b) and Israel (Yiftachel and Yakobi, 2003).

Importantly, the studied processes of urban transformation have also been enabled and/or supported by traditional authorities, who have explicitly backed the land use changes in Appolonia City, Mensah Guinea and Osu. Indeed, Appolonia City would not have been made possible without the sale to Rendeavour of the communal land held in custody by the traditional authorities of that area. The traditional authorities of Appolonia village are also an official partner of the project and support it in public, for instance, through ceremonial acts. In Mensah Guinea, the traditional authorities officially supported the demolition of the informal settlement, and they hold positive views of the planned redevelopment of the central shoreline. Indeed, these authorities express a general support for replacing old neighbourhoods in central Accra with high-rises, even though such a development risks pushing out a large proportion of the existing population. Regarding street trade, the traditional authorities in Osu eventually plan to remove those practices from central Accra; however, they are aware that it is not currently feasible given the importance of street trade as a livelihood strategy. The traditional authorities, thus, did not support the eviction of street traders that took place in Osu; however, neither did they criticise it. However, the cultural tutor working in the neighbourhood – who is affiliated with the traditional authorities at the neighbourhood scale – encouraged the eviction. This support, in turn, gave the intervention some legitimacy amongst the residents in the area, who perceive the cultural tutor as an important moral authority.

On the basis of the case studies of Appolonia City and Osu, this thesis gives support to Chimhowu’s (2019) recent claim that customary tenure in many African cities increasingly is replaced by statutory tenure (see also Ghertner, 2015). I further suggest that this privatisation of communal land is an important factor in contemporary processes of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region. As most of the land in Ghana is held in trust by traditional authorities, the recent privatisation of communal land, as well as the articulation of urban visions amongst these authorities, is likely to have important implications for the wider processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region. The privatisation of communal land and the role of traditional authorities in contemporary processes of urban redevelopment thus deserve
more academic attention in Ghana and beyond (cf. Steel et al., 2019; Zommers et al., 2017).

Finally, I want to highlight that local populations also play important roles in the spatial governance of Accra. The studied groups of former residents of Mensah Guinea and street vendors in Osu have both managed to occupy prime space in central Accra for decades which, in itself, demonstrates the agency of these groups in terms of accessing and holding onto urban land through practices referred to by Benjamin (2008) as ‘occupancy urbanism’. The case of Osu further illustrates how the spatial regulation of informal street trade is largely based on negotiations between traders and individual landowners, in which the local state intervenes only when called upon, even though the trade takes place on state-owned land. Through these negotiations, vendors have often managed to occupy street space for decades with the approval of neighbourhood landowners. This finding suggests that Schindler’s (2017b) argument that private landowners in urban India play an important role in the regulation of informal land uses in public space is also valid for Ghanaian cities. Furthermore, the case study on informal trading in Osu suggests that individual landowners may play important roles in these processes, in addition to the importance of homeowner associations emphasised in Schindler’s work (Ibid). The broader implication of these findings is that analyses of (in)formal land use should not be restricted to the actions of state-actors and those using land informally.

In both Osu and Mensah Guinea, the local state eventually descended on informal land uses. The evicted populations studied in the two areas reacted differently to the eviction notes they received. In Mensah Guinea, no protests were organised, and the demolition proceeded as planned, which could partly be explained by the short time-notice of the intervention and the low socio-economic status of the population. In Osu, in contrast, the vendors protested loudly and used a wide repertoire to resist the announced eviction, even though the protests remained local in scope. Through various means, these vendors managed to postpone the eviction by several months; however, their properties were ultimately destroyed by the local authorities. Various groups of marginalised informal land users thus seem to have different capacities to resist eviction. However, importantly, being able to protest is not the same as being in a position to stop or change the direction of contemporary urban processes of transforming land uses.

In line with the governmentality literature, the cases analysed in this thesis amply demonstrate that multiple actors are involved in the practices of spatial governance in the Greater Accra Region. This collective case study also shows that the constellations of actors that govern land use changes vary considerably within this city region. In Appolonia City, Rendeavour is the main driver of land use change; however, the project would not have been enabled without support from the traditional and state authorities. In Mensah Guinea, the local government carried out the demolition of the informal settlement; however,
this intervention was initiated and pushed forward by the central state and was officially supported by the traditional authorities. Furthermore, this demolition would most likely not have occurred if private investors had not been eager to invest in land and property in central Accra. In Osu, individual landowners drive contemporary land use changes plot-by-plot. Sporadic evictions of street vendors in the area are further enforced by the local state.

The variety of actors involved in the governing of contemporary land use changes in the Greater Accra Region suggests that the starting point for analyses of urban transformation in Africa should not be limited to the relationship between urban planning conducted by the state and existing land use(rs) (cf. Watson, 2012). In this respect, I find that the governmentality perspective offers highly valuable insights. The governmentality framework also helps us to appreciate how urban interventions are made possible and conducted because of certain rationalities that hold sway in specific societies. I thus suggest that the redevelopment of central Accra’s shoreline – including the land where Mensah Guinea used to be situated – into a luxury tourism enclave, the construction of the new satellite city of Appolonia City, and the plot-wise redevelopment of Osu (and the eviction of street vendors in the area) are interventions that are intimately linked to the dominant rationalities of urban development in the Greater Accra Region that were elaborated in the previous section. Other rationalities are also informing these developments, as elaborated earlier; however, this collective case study did not find any radical alternative to the ‘global city’ ideal articulated locally. Accordingly, I found no evidence that the demolition of Mensah Guinea nor the construction of Appolonia City have resulted in bold acts of resistance, and the protests against the eviction of traders in Osu did not express a more systematic critique against contemporary land use changes in Accra. Moreover, this study did not find that either the demolition of Mensah Guinea or the construction of Appolonia City have been questioned in the national news media or by local civil society organisations. The indication of silence from society as a whole regarding these interventions suggests that the general perception in the Greater Accra Region is that these developments are needed and/or desirable, and as such, the global city ideal generally seems to be taken for granted (cf. Rose & Miller, 1992).

However, in this thesis I also attempt to demonstrate that the power at work in the studied cases of urban transformation is not limited to specific rationalities that guide how people perceive and act on the built environment of the city. While the evictions in Mensah Guinea and Osu can be partly explained through an analysis of the rationalities behind these actions, the displacements themselves were not examples of governing at a distance, but rather acts of dominance; hence, in these cases, power in the form of governmentality was limited in steering actual urban land use changes (cf. Murray Li, 2007b). These cases of domination further illustrate the unequal power relations that exist between various groups in Accra, particularly between marginalised groups using land informally, on the one hand, and state actors and traditional
authorities on the other. While the studied marginalised groups, state actors and traditional authorities, to some degree, share an ambition of making Accra a globally recognised city, in practice, the state-led evictions implied acts of violence that left the affected populations in very difficult situations. As such, these urban interventions, in effect, illustrate how “a clash of rationalities” is playing out in the Greater Accra Region today (Watson, 2009b, p. 2259).

I find that critical urban theory provides important insights into these acts of domination through its explicit focus on how socio-spatial inequalities and injustices are (re)produced through exploitative processes of capital accumulation that take place in urban property markets. Indeed, economic resources constitute a form of power that may act on urban environments directly, i.e., not from a distance. This “property power” is different than power as knowledge, which is the focus of the governmentality literature (Bidet, 2016, p. xi). Indeed, the case of Appolonia City demonstrates the powerful position international investors occupy in shaping contemporary processes of changing land uses in contexts such as the Greater Accra Region where state authorities are in great need of new urban investments. Hence, the financial resources of Rendeavour enables them to put forward an urban megaproject that targets elite groups, in contrast to the directions of the national urban policy in Ghana. The planning and construction of Appolonia City is, in turn, motivated by a perceived rent gap between the previous market value of the land and the expected market value of it as a built-up environment and the developer explicitly seeks to make economic profit by constructing this new city. Additionally, in the case of Mensah Guinea, the rent gap between the land value of the informal settlement and the expected land values in the case of redevelopment seems to be an important explanatory factor behind the demolition of the settlement. This speculative land practice, together with the short eviction notice, the lack of compensation to affected residents and state actors hostile attitudes towards the marginalised population, also shows that this intervention shares many of the characteristics of urban ‘revanchist’ interventions that have taken place elsewhere, in which the urban poor are removed to make room for more profitable land uses (e.g., Smith, 1996; MacLeod, 2002; Swanson, 2007).

Hence, while the governmentality perspective provides important insights regarding the knowledge and mentalities underpinning recent developments in the Greater Accra Region, critical urban theory adds insights into the logics and power of capital accumulation, which – at times violently – also inform these processes. Hence, as argued for in chapter 4, I find a combination of critical urban theory and the governmentality perspective useful in the analysis of contemporary processes of urban change in Africa.
Socio-spatial consequences of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region

The interventions in the urban milieus of the three case study sites are all examples of developments that largely neglected the immediate needs of the urban poor. In Mensah Guinea and Osu, the evictions of people using the land informally were enforced to make room for practices of more resourceful groups – tourists in one case and a newly established formal business in the other. Evictions thus clearly reconfigure who can use land in specific locations, and for what purpose, in central Accra today. Some evicted people in the study managed to find a new (informal) place in the same neighbourhood; however, none of them were happy with their new location, and they witnessed extremely harsh living conditions and increased difficulties making enough money to survive after being displaced. This thesis thus confirms that evictions of informal settlers and street vendors imply highly negative consequences for those affected (cf. du Plessis, 2005). Furthermore, this thesis shows that socioeconomically marginalised groups who use land informally are in a weak position to hold onto their land if/when other actors aspire to ‘develop’ those places, even though they have been occupying them for decades. The recent influx of international real estate firms and the increasingly individualised land market in the Greater Accra Region seem to worsen the situation of those dependent on informal land uses. In line with the extant research (Kamete, 2013a; Watson, 2009b), I thus find the technical/legal approach used by the local government in these interventions to be highly problematic and argue that the situation and needs of those dependent on informal land use must be more centrally located in urban planning discussions and practices.

In contrast to the two inner city case study sites, Appolonia City is a greenfield project, and I did not find that its realisation directly affects the land use patterns of local populations, in contrast to similar projects elsewhere that have resulted in the displacement of local communities (see e.g. Noorloos & Klosterboer, 2018; Côté-Roy & Moser, 2019). However, the elite character of this city project suggests that it aspires to primarily house middle and high-income groups, which implies that economically weak groups will be largely excluded from this emerging urban environment. The strict policy on informal land use further serves to keep marginalised groups out of the city. The exclusion of economically weak groups, in turn, implies that Appolonia City risks increasing socio-spatial segregation within the Greater Accra Region. If the project proceeds as planned and becomes a city on its own, it may even fuel processes of socio-spatial segregation on a new scale, i.e., between cities (cf. Watson, 2014). The form of ‘privatized urbanism’ exemplified by Appolonia City further raises questions about the state’s responsibilities in terms of provision of infrastructure and services to urban dwellers. Hence, the implications
of the role taken on by Rendeavour as a “pseudostate agency with the administrative powers of a municipality” (Murray, 2015, p. 518) necessitates further research as the project progresses.

Taken together, the three case studies of this thesis contribute with insights into how transforming land uses in the Greater Accra Region today, in different ways, contribute to an unequal redistribution of land and property, which suggests that socio-spatial inequality will increase in the region. I thus find the dominant rationalities of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region problematic, since they generally turn a blind eye to the populations in most need of urban upgrading. Hence, I suggest that the dominant rationalities must be altered to prevent future urban interventions from disfavouring marginalised groups and instead enable “liveability and sustainability for the many, not the few” (Healey, 2011, p. 199; cf. Ferguson, 2010). Moreover, exploitative processes of capital accumulation in local land- and property markets must be more strictly controlled in Greater Accra. The state, at all scale levels, has an important role to play here and must put more effort into translating its pro-poor policies into urban interventions. The ongoing updating of all spatial plans in Ghana offers an opportunity for reflection on how this can be accomplished. An important aspect in this scenario is for state actors to rethink how they can and should approach informal land uses to enable affordable and secure access to land, in good locations, for socioeconomically marginalised groups. Episodic evictions of marginalised groups that informally occupy land are certainly not a long-term solution to conflicting interests of land use since it does not end informal land use (it only moves it somewhere else), and it puts the urban poor in a very difficult position (cf. Adaween & Jørgensen, 2012). This thesis thus agrees with Watson (2016, p. 543) that it is of fundamental importance for (state) planning to “work with informality”. This stance is partially acknowledged within the state apparatus, and the physical planning department in Accra has indeed begun to develop new ideas for how to handle informal land uses. One promising idea that has been discussed is to classify public spaces, such as walkways and open spaces, as ‘adaptable spaces’ that will allow for multiple land uses, including street trading (see also Acheampong, 2019: 285). In this instance, previous research has emphasised the importance of including target groups, i.e., marginalised informal land users, in the reformulation of zoning regulations to ensure that new approaches actually benefit them (cf. Pieterse, 2008; Acheampong, 2019). The expressed willingness amongst street vendors in this study to collaborate with state authorities on land use management constitutes a potential opening in this regard.

Another way for the local state to ensure that urban interventions are not neglecting the needs of the urban poor is to use their legal planning monopoly to put more pressure on private developers to provide for multiple income groups in new residential projects, especially within larger developments such as Appolonia City (see Abubakar and Doan, 2017, and Acheampong, 2019 for a similar discussion). Previous studies further indicate that land taxation might
prove to be a useful tool in impeding land speculation while simultaneously providing the state with income that can be used to support marginalised groups in accessing urban land (Obeng-Odoom, 2016; Acheampong, 2019). The small proportion of land still owned by the Ghanaian state in the Greater Accra Region could also, at least in part, be earmarked for the needs of marginalised groups.

Importantly, it becomes clear from a governmentality perspective that changes in urban policy and state intervention prerequisite the altering of the dominant rationalities and practices in urban society at large. Hence, how non-state actors, such as traditional authorities, urban citizens, civil society organisations as well as urban scholars, perceive and problematise contemporary land use changes are also highly important for the future development of the Greater Accra Region. Indeed, it seems that the needs of the urban poor must be taken more seriously into account by all actors engaged in urban development to halt processes of socio-spatial segregation and to create a more socially just city. This finding implies that the questions regarding the unequal distribution of land, infrastructure and services within this capital region deserve more attention, both in public debate and amongst urban scholars.

Collective case study findings in synthesis

As elaborated above, a number of commonalities appeared across the cases and they provide an indication of the broader formations of spatial government present in the Greater Accra Region and how power operates in these processes. These commonalities can be summarised as follows: 1) a strong aspiration to make Accra a globally recognised city informs contemporary urban transformation, 2) landowners are the main drivers of urban change and the privatisation of communal land plays a key role in enabling (new types of) urban intervention, and 3) the needs of the urban poor are largely disregarded in these processes. However, the cases analysed also demonstrate that there is considerable variation in how the general features of Greater Accra’s socio-spatial transformation play out in different locales. Indeed, the geographical location (city centre versus peri-urban setting) of the transforming site and the place-specific tenure arrangements and (in)formal land uses are relevant for understanding how the studied processes of land use change have materialised. Hence, the present thesis demonstrates that the contemporary land use changes in the Greater Accra Region is largely market-oriented, but emphasises that spatial governance configurations include multiple state and non-state actors and various spatial and political rationalities.
8. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to provide knowledge of the understudied recent trend of urban transformation in Africa through an analysis of contemporary processes of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana. More specifically, I have attempted to contribute with insights into the dominant city visions articulated in Greater Accra today and the rationalities behind them, the constellations of actors that partake in the governing of urban interventions in this city region, the power at work in these processes, and the socio-spatial consequences of transforming land uses.

I have argued that the recent processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region are largely informed by a ‘global city’ ideal that is based upon a spatial rationality of urban order (cf. Huxley, 2006) and neoliberal spatial and political rationalities that view the city through the lens of an enterprise (cf. Foucault, 2008). These dominant rationalities are to a great extent blind to other existing logics of urban life, including informal use of land. Still, a plethora of actors, including state authorities, traditional authorities, private development firms, individual landowners, and, to some degree, marginalised street vendors, are motivated by these rationalities. Transforming urban land uses are also informed by other, sometimes conflicting, logics. In this thesis, I have identified generative and vitalist rationalities (Huxley, 2006), as well as rationalities of survival (Watson, 2009a), at work in the processes of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region. However, the impact of these rationalities on the actual urban interventions studied was limited. Hence, I suggest that the broad support for the ‘global city’ model in the Greater Accra Region, on the basis of the specific rationalities mentioned above, has been decisive for the recent trend of urban transformation in this city region, including the evictions of informal land users and urban (re)developments that target elite groups. This finding demonstrates the workings of power in the form of governmentality. The nuanced illustration of how the ‘global city’ ideal articulates locally in the Greater Accra Region presented in this thesis contributes to the emerging literature on how new urban visions inform urban development in Africa today. Similar studies in other African contexts are needed in order to provide a better picture on how globally circulating urban norms imbricate with local processes of urban change in other parts of the continent.
Furthermore, I have argued in this thesis that multiple actors are involved in the governing of land use changes in Accra through the (re)production of dominant rationalities of urban change and through practices that directly inform how and where urban interventions are carried out. The broader implication of this finding is that urban planning should not be conceptualised as merely a (local) state-practice but as an art of governing that includes multiple place-specific actors. While the local authorities are formally assigned to guide urban development in Ghana, this thesis has uncovered that these actors are not the main drivers of urban transformation in the Greater Accra Region today. The local authorities partake in the spatial governance of this city through the approval of planning schemes and building permits, and through sporadic evictions of informal land users. However, the three case studies of this thesis have indicated that landowners are the primary drivers of changing land uses in the Greater Accra Region today.

I have further suggested that the recent privatisation of communal land has allowed new actors, including international investors, to become landowners and thereby take a leading position in contemporary processes of urban land use change. Hence, traditional authorities (and extended families) play important roles in enabling new urban developments in Greater Accra through the formal sale of communal land. This thesis thus adds to previous studies that traditional authorities – in addition to state authorities and private investors – can play an important role in the processes of land speculation that increasingly inform urban development in Africa (cf. Watson, 2014; Goodfellow, 2017). The ongoing privatisation of communal land in the Greater Accra Region identified in this thesis further gives support to the recent claim that customary tenure is diminishing in many African cities (see Chimhowu, 2019). The consequences of the transformation of customary land tenure to statutory tenure – in particular for urban citizens who previously enjoyed use rights of communal land, but also for the development of cities at large – deserves more academic attention.

From the above, it follows that changing land tenures and new (international) investments are important factors in the recent transformation of the built environment in the Greater Accra Region. I have further argued that contemporary urban interventions in the forms of evictions and elite developments constitute acts of domination, in which marginalised groups have limited possibilities of informing changing land uses (cf. Lemke, 2002). These acts of domination are, in turn, informed by practices of land speculation and it is evident that actors with strong economic resources exert considerable influence on contemporary processes of urban transformation. This implies that contemporary processes of changing land uses are not limited to power in the form of governmentality. I therefore find that a combination of critical urban theory, the governmentality perspective, and the literature within the ‘southern turn’ of urban studies is useful in analyses of the complex processes of urban transformation in Africa today.
In terms of the socio-spatial consequences of recent urban trends in the Greater Accra Region, I have argued in this thesis that the studied urban interventions are targeting and/or benefitting urban populations that are already relatively well-off. In two of the cases, changing land uses also involved the eviction of marginalised informal land users, which implied severe consequences for the affected populations. Hence, while the studied processes of changing land uses contribute with new housing, infrastructure and services, it seems that the recent trend of urban transformation in Greater Accra is doing little to improve the living standards of marginalised populations. This, in turn, suggests that we can expect socio-spatial segregation and inequality to increase in the Greater Accra Region.
Den här avhandlingen syftar till att kritiskt undersöka nutida stadsomvandlingsprocesser i Accraregionen, Ghana, med fokus på hur förändringar i stadens markanvändning styr. Mer specifikt undersöker avhandlingen vilka stadsideal som är dominerande bland stadsplanerare och beslutsfattare, hur och av vilka aktörer dessa stadsideal implementeras i den byggda miljön, hur marginaliserade grupper (representerade av informella gatuförsäljare och boende i informella bosättningar) förhåller sig till rådande stadsideal, samt vilka de socio-spatiala konsekvenserna blir av nutida interventioner i den byggda miljön. Avhandlingen avser också att bidra till pågående diskussioner kring vilka teorier som är lämpade för att förklastra och förstå nutida stadsomvandlingar i Afrikska städer.


Avhandlingen bygger på tre kvalitativa fallstudier av nutida processer av förändrad markanvändning i Accraregionen: 1) rivningen av den centralt belägna informella bosättningen Mensah Guinea och den planerade nybyggnationen på området, 2) styrningen av informell gatuhandel i den centralt belägna stadsdelen Osu som snabbt utvecklats från ett område primärt bestående av bostäder till ett område av blandstadskarakter, samt 3) planeringen och upp förandet av den privata satellitstaden Appolonia City strax utanför Accra. Varje fall illustrerar en specifik stadsomvandlingsprocess och analyseras i en
enskild artikel. Tillsammans utgör fallen en kollektiv fallstudie som belyser hur förändringar i markanvändning styrs på ett övergripande plan i Accraregionen. Fallstudierna diskuteras tillsammans i den övergripande diskussionen i avhandlingens kappa.

De tre kvalitativa fallstudierna bygger på sex månaders fältarbete i Accraregionen. Mer än 175 semistrukturerade intervjuer har gjorts inom ramen för den kollektiva fallstudien. Respondenterna utgjordes i huvudsak av kommunala, regionala och statliga tjänstemän (som arbetar med stadsutvecklingsfrågor), politiker, informella gatuförsäljare i Osu, tidigare bosatta i den informella bosättningen Mensah Guinea, anställda vid privata byggbolag (främst den internationella byggherren Rendeavour som står bakom Apollonia City), samt representanter för lokala organisationer i Accraregionen som jobbar med frågor gällande informella bosättningar. Utöver intervjuer har upprepade observationer gjorts i de tre studerade områdena, samt vid konferenser och möten relaterade till stadsutveckling i Accraregionen. Policydokument och planskisser för de tre områdena har kompletterat intervjuer och observationer. Intervjuer, observationer och textanalys har triangulerats för att uppnå en analys med hög trovärdighet.


Artikel II analyserar stadsomvandlingsprocesser i det centralt belägna grannskapet Osu, som nyligen omvandlats från ett bostadsområde till ett område av blandstadskaraktär. Artikel II fokuserar på hur informella markpraktiker i form av gatuhandel styrs i detta område och uppmärksammar att flera aktörer och rationaliteter är involverade i denna process. Artikel II belyser den viktiga roll som enskilda markägare spelar i regleringen av informell gatuhandel på offentliga platser och pekar på hur privatiseringen av samägd mark i

**Artikel III** består av en fallstudie av planeringen och uppförandet av Ghanas nya privata satellitstad Appolonia City. Artikeln undersöker vilka aktörer som varit involverade i planeringen och genomförandet av detta urbane megaproyekt och hur ansvaret för infrastruktur och service har fördelats mellan privata aktörer och statliga myndigheter. Vidare analyserar artikeln de många och delvis motstridiga rationaliteter som motiverat detta ambitiösa stadsbyggnadsprojekt. Artikeln visar att förverkligandet av Appolonia City har inneburit en långt dragen privatisering av mark, stadsplanering, infrastruktur och samhällsservice. Detta har möjliggjorts med hjälp av kommunala, regionala och statliga myndigheter, traditionella myndigheter och av den internationella byggherren som leder projektet. Dessa aktörer är involverade i projektet utifrån följande rationaliteter: a) en avancerad liberal rationalitet som betonar att stadsutveckling bör drivas av privata aktörer, b) rumsliga rationaliteter som betonar vikten av ett formellt organiserat och estetiskt tilltalande stadsliv och som eftersträvar stadsmiljöer och subjekt i 'världsklass', c) möjligheter till ekonomisk vinst, och d) antaganden om hur blandstadsmodellen kan skapa hållbara och inkluderande urbana miljöer. De här rationaliteterna står delvis i konflikt med varandra och artikeln visar att Appolonia City riskerar att bli en elitistiskt och exkluderande stadsmiljö i kontrast till projektets målsättning att bli en socialt hållbar stad.

Sammantaget visar avhandlingen att nutida stadsomvandlingsprocesser i Accraregionen är starkt influerade av rumsliga rationaliteter som eftersträvar spatial ordning och neoliberal rationaliteter som söker styra staden utifrån en marknadslogik. Tillsammans har dessa rationaliteter gjort att ett starkt 'globalstadsideal' fått fäste i Accraregionen, vilket visar hur kunskap och makt är nära sammanflätade i enighet med governmentality-perspektivet. Andra rationaliteter cirkulerar också i stadsutvecklingskretsar, men de har inte haft någon större genomslagskraft i utfallet av de studerade stadsomvandlingsprocesserna.

Avhandlingen som helhet visar också att flera aktörer är involverade i styrrandet av nutida stadsomvandlingsprocesser. De aktuella aktörerna är kommunala, regionala och statliga myndigheter, traditionella myndigheter, enskilda markägare, privata byggherrar, organisationer inom civilsamhället och (in)formella markanvändare. Detta innebär att stadsplanering inte bör förstås som en praktik begränsad till myndighetsutövning, framför allt inte i en Afrikansk kontext. Vidare visar avhandlingen att den pågående privatiseringen av samägd mark i Accraregionen har öppnat upp för nya markägare, inklusive internationella byggherrar och investerare, att ta en ledande position i nutida stadsomvandlingsprocesser. Detta innebär att markägande utgör en viktig
maktfaktor bakom förändrad markanvändning. Makt i form av markägande har spelat en avgörande roll i rivningen av informella bostäder och vräkningen av informella gatuhandlare, och har vidare möjliggjort storskaliga stadsbyggnadsprojekt utformade för elitgrupper. Den här avhandlingen föreslår därför att en kombination av kritisk urbanteori, governmentlity-perspektivet och post-kolonial teori är användbar för att skapa en bättre förståelse för de komplexa processer som nu omformar stora delar av det urbana Afrika. Slutligen visar avhandlingen att nutida stadsomvandlingsprocesser gynnar redan välbärgade grupper, medan behoven hos marginaliserade grupper inte blir tillgodosedd. Detta tyder i sin tur på att den socio-spatiala segregationen i Accraregionen kommer att öka framöver.
References


Appendix

Several people were interviewed multiple times; they are marked with an *. Gender is reported in parentheses: (m) = male; (f) = female. Informal dialogues are not listed.

State officials and politicians (paper I, II, III)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Institutional Affiliation</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly</td>
<td>Former Mayor of Accra (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly</td>
<td>Retired planner A (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly</td>
<td>Retired planner B (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly</td>
<td>Retired planner C (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Ringway Estates</td>
<td>(Non-partisan) Assembly member (community leader)* (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Kinkawe sub-ward</td>
<td>(Non-partisan) Assembly member (community leader)* (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Lands Commission, Public and vested land management division</td>
<td>Surveyor* (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Physical Planning Department</td>
<td>Director* (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Physical Planning Department</td>
<td>Deputy director (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Physical Planning Department</td>
<td>Physical planner A (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Physical Planning Department</td>
<td>Physical planner B (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Physical Planning Department</td>
<td>Physical planner C (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Social Welfare and Community Development Planning Department</td>
<td>Director (m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Urban Roads Department  
   Engineer (m)
15. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Works Department  
   Director / City engineer* (m)
16. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Works Department  
   Chief building inspector* (m)
17. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Osu-Klottey sub-ward  
   Community developer (f)
18. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Osu-Klottey sub-ward  
   Director (f)
19. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Osu-Klottey sub-ward  
   Building inspector A* (m)
20. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Osu-Klottey sub-ward  
   Building inspector B (m)
21. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Osu-Klottey sub-ward  
   Building inspector C (m)
22. Ga Mashie Development Agency  
   Development planner project director* (m)
23. Greater Accra Region, Town and Country Planning Department  
   Director* (f)
24. Kpone-Katamanso Assembly  
   Chief engineer (m)
25. Kpone-Katamanso Assembly  
   Surveyor (m)
26. Kpone-Katamanso Assembly  
   Physical planner (m)
27. Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development Unit  
   Director (m)
28. Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts  
   Director pf projects (m)
29. Ministry of Local Government, Town and Country Planning Department  
   Physical planner A (m)
30. Ministry of Local Government, Town and Country Planning Department  
   Physical planner B (m)
31. National Democratic Congress  
   Local politician (m)
32. Parliament of Ghana, Klottey Korle Constituency  
   Member of Parliament (m)
33. Sekondi-Takoradi Metro Assembly, Metro Development Planning Department  
   Development planning officer (m)
34. Sekondi-Takoradi Metro Assembly, Metro Physical Planning Department  
   Physical planning officer (m)
35. Sekondi-Takoradi Region, Town and Country Planning Department  
   Director (m)  
36. Tema Metropolitan Assembly, Town and Country Planning Department  
   Former Director (m)  
37. Osu Klottey Municipal Assembly  
   Appointed Director (m)  
38. Osu Klottey Municipal Assembly  
   Building inspector* (m)  

Members of traditional authorities (paper I, II, III)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Appolonia / Tema</td>
<td>Chief + three of the members of the traditional council (all male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Appolonia</td>
<td>Chief Appolonia village* (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Osu KinkaWe</td>
<td>Chief / President of the Osu Traditional Council + 12 traditional council members (all male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Osu Mantse</td>
<td>Chief / President of the Osu Traditional Council + 13 traditional council members (all male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Osu Mantse</td>
<td>Cultural tutor (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Osu Alata</td>
<td>Local chief (m)</td>
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Appolonia City – private developer, elderly council and inhabitants of Appolonia village (paper III)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>Rendevour Development Firm</td>
<td>Marketing and communication officer (f)</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Rendevour Development Firm</td>
<td>Real estate advisor (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Rendevour Development Firm</td>
<td>Marketing Associate (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Rendevour Development Firm</td>
<td>Chief Financial Officer Ghana (later CEO) (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Kpone-Katamanso Assembly, Appolonia</td>
<td>(Non-Partisan) Assembly member (community leader) (m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
50. Appolonia Elderly Council  
   Member A (m), B (m) and C (m)  
51. Appolonia village  
   Inhabitant A, B, C, D  
   (two male, two female)  
52. Appolonia village  
   Inhabitant E (m)  
53. Appolonia village  
   Inhabitant F (m)  

Non-governmental organizations and research institutes  
(primarily paper I)  

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<td>54.</td>
<td>Amnesty International, Ghana office</td>
<td>Employee (f)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Global Communities, Ghana office</td>
<td>Senior Knowledge Management Officer (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Housing the masses</td>
<td>Executive director (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Institute for Democratic Governance</td>
<td>Executive director (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Institute of Local Government Studies</td>
<td>Project manager (Urban Back-up Project Initiative) (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Labour Research and policy institute</td>
<td>Researcher (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Slum Union</td>
<td>President + secretary (both male)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>the People’s Dialogue on Human Settlements, Slum Dwellers International Ghana</td>
<td>President (m) + administrative staff (f)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Others  

<table>
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<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>University of Ghana</td>
<td>Professor A (m)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>University of Ghana</td>
<td>Professor B (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>64.</td>
<td>Ghana Home Loans (bank)</td>
<td>Sales official (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>Prime-Stat SVC LTD.</td>
<td>Director, Physical planner consultant (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>Prime-Stat SVC LTD.</td>
<td>Physical planner consultant (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>Radio City FM</td>
<td>Journalist (m)</td>
<td></td>
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### (Former) inhabitants of Mensah Guinea (paper I)

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<thead>
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<th>Residents</th>
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<tr>
<td>68-82.</td>
<td>Former residents of the settlement still living in the adjacent area (15 people: 6 male, 9 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>Informal community leader* (m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Street vendors, inhabitants and landowners in Osu (paper II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84-97.</td>
<td>Kiosk owners* on street A where kiosks were marked for eviction (14 people: 7 female, 7 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-125.</td>
<td>Kiosk owners on adjacent streets to street A where kiosks were marked for eviction (27 people: 18 female, 9 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126-163.</td>
<td>Kiosk owners on adjacent streets to street A where kiosks were not marked for eviction (38 people: 26 female, 12 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164-167.</td>
<td>Property owners and inhabitants on street A and adjacent streets (1 female, 3 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168-177.</td>
<td>Inhabitants in 'old Osu' (10 people: 7 female, 3 male)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>