ANALYSIS OF THE SPATIAL INFLUENCE OF THE GHANA POLICE SERVICE IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

The efficacy of neighborhood crime prevention strategies in the 21st century appears challenged by competitive spatial and demographic expansions within a fluid medium of informality, globalization and neo-liberalization in the developing world. Hence, Africa’s and Ghana’s success in the global quest for safe and inclusive cities by 2030 is in doubt. This study explores how the Ghana Police Service, the local government service and the traditional authorities in defining boundaries contribute towards the global desire for safe and inclusive cities in the Kumasi metropolis. Thematic analysis of the lived experiences of 54 key informants, and 12 focus group discussions, as well as spatial analysis of police visibility in the Kumasi metropolis unraveled that, in a regulated vertical command structure, the police administrative boundaries, the local government boundaries and the respondents’ sense of neighborhoods are structurally and functionally disjointed in the provision of internal security. Hence, collaborations between the Ghana Police Service, the local government service and the traditional authorities in defining boundaries will induce the desired collective efforts for an all-inclusive safe built environment.

Keywords: Ghana Police Service, police visibility, demographic expansion, spatial expansions, Kumasi, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

The urban millennium, in the twenty first century, is associated with constrains and opportunities in the lives of urbanites within the developing world. Opportunities within the urban space abound more than ever (Turok, 2016; UN-Habitat, 2016). According to UN-Habitat (2016) contemporary cities serve as engines of social and economic developments, the highest employment embedded areas and the peak of the intersection of goods and services in the sphere of economies of scale and of scope. Thus, the significant contributions of the cities to socio-economic and political development warrants the need to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” as stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11). Even though some scholars questioned the accuracy of the data that suggest the current rapid rate of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa (Potts, 2012), the UN (2014) estimates that about 90 percent of the expected 2.5 billion additional urban populations by 2050 will reside within Africa and Asia. Consequently, the UN-Habitat (2015), asserts that the continuous increase in urban population and spatial expansion poses security challenges particularly within the developing world urban space. Ghana’s urban population structure, characterized by continuous growth, is in sync with the sub-Saharan African situation UN (2014). For instance, from an urban population proportion of 13.9 percent in 1948, Ghana’s urban population proportion became 56.1 percent of its total population in 2018 (GSS, 2018). Whilst in seven decades Ghana Had more urban population (56.1%) than rural population (43.9%), the global urban transition lasted more than two centuries (UNPD, 2014; Clark, 1998). In urban Ghana, “the increasing proportion of the urban population has resulted in uncoordinated congestion, a growth of informality, and dispersed physical development especially at the fringes – all with limited investment in in frasctructure” Bagson, 2018, p.10). On the other hand, the demand for the state led security system appears widespread in the Ghanaian context, but to overcome some of the internal security lapses in recent times, it requires a detailed study of specific cities’ characteristics in line with the location specific nature of neighborhood crime prevention strategies (Felson & Boba, 2010). In this light, the continuous and concurrent increase in population and spatial expansion of the city compels an analysis of the spatial influence of the Ghana Police Service in the provision of internal security in Kumasi - the most urbanizing city in Ghana’s urban hierarchy. This study offers a macro and micro level analysis of a snap shot of the administrative and command structures of the Ghana Police Service from the national level to the current distributive justice of police stations in Kumasi, conceptualizing policing as guardianship advanced in the Routine Activity Theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979).

The Routine Activity Theory (RAT)

Cohen & Felson (1979) in their RAT, contributed to the understanding of the probability of crime to occur following the changing lifestyle and social structure of the post industrial
For instance, by enhancing the spatial influence of the police, as capable guardians, the likelihood of crime to occur reduces even within the intersection of a motivated offender and a suitable target. The application of the RAT has been widespread not only for understanding crime events of terrestrial dimensions (Logan et al., 2006) but also in the limelight of cybercrime (Kigerl, 2012). Immediate environmental factors directly or indirectly influence the capacity of guardianship and therefore the occurrence or otherwise of crime. In a statistical analysis, Kigerl (2012) predicted that countries of higher probability of cybercrime are associated with increased usage of the cyberspace but limited capable guardians. The limited scholarly forethought on the utility of the RAT in understanding crime events in the developing world is loud enough to attract scholarly attention especially within the urban millennium. Ghana, characterized by the high rate of urbanization (Obeng-Odoom, 2010; GSS, 2013) as well as demographic and spatial expansions (Songsore, 2009) vis-à-vis increasing incidence of neighborhood crime (Tankebe, 2008), begs for clarification of guardianship as conceptualized in the realm of the RAT which this study pursues within the ambit of the mixed method approach.

**The study methodology**

The study adopted a mixed method approach to disentangle the complexities in the primary and secondary data used. Secondary data on the police numerical strength and the populations of Ghana was obtained from the Headquarters - Ghana Police Service, and Ghana Statistical Service respectively. Coordinates of the geolocation of all police stations/posts in Kumasi metropolis were collected as primary data using GPS device. In addition, visuals of the spatial expansions of the city in the years 2000 and 2016 were extracted from the Ghana district shape files; with support from the Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System (RS/GIS) laboratory of the University of Ghana. The images were extracted from Land sat imagery route https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/. To reduce the effects of clouds and other particulate matter on the quality of the pictures, the images were acquired in the dry season, except for the year 2000 where images in the wet season appeared better. The most suitable band combinations (Table 1) that appear next to the natural-like rendition of the spatial expansion of the city were used. The geolocations of the police stations/posts were then overlaid on the sprawling built environment, to give an estimate of police visibility within the city. In addition, a recognize visit to the local government representatives helped in the purposeful selection of 54 key informants who have established institutional knowledge on neighborhood population growth, boundaries and police visibility in their neighborhoods. These included: a lead person from each of the three main religions in Ghana: traditional African religion, Islam and Christianity; male and female youth leaders; four opinion leaders (2 male, 2 female); assembly persons and high ranked police officers in the Ashanti regional command as well as selected senior police officers of the Kumasi metropolis. Subsequently, a total of 12 gender-based, seven members each, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held in three different socio-economic neighborhoods (Lower-, middle- and upper-class) in tandem with the classification proffered by Adjei-Mensah and Owusu (2010). All interviews and FGD were audio recorded, after seeking consent of the interviewees and discussants, and transcribed verbatim to denote the narratives of the participants. Major themes were derived from the pool of narratives to reflect key informants’ lived experiences on the functionality of the current police command structure in the provision of internal security; the interplay of the police administrative boundaries, the local government boundaries, and the locals’ sense of neighborhood in the collective pursuance of inclusive and safe cities.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**The Ghana Police service command and administrative structures**

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Article 200) mandates the Ghana Police Service as the lead state organ in the provision of internal security supported by (non)state and quasi-state organs as elaborated elsewhere (Badong, 2008; Bagson & Owusu, 2016). However, the police service has experienced little structural changes since the colonial era despite some transformations in the Ghanaian social structure (Atuguba, 2007; Bagson, 2018). The outcomes of the operational structure of the Ghana Police Service transformed from dehumanizing operations in the colonial and military regimes, to attempts to integrate democratic community policing strategies in recent times (Atuguba, 2007). Notably, the concepts of community policing strategies are ironically being situated within a vertically stringent command structure as unravel in this study. The command structure is the hierarchical order in which the processes of law enforcement are pursued per the 1992 Constitution and the police service Act (Act 350, 1970). Currently, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) tops the command structure, supported by commissioners down to the constable – the least in the order. This study observed that, the
IGP is a service officer appointed by government but this nips the desire of service personnel to determine their own leader and increase suspicion of impartially of the IGP in law enforcement. The command and the administrative structures work collaboratively in line with Section one of the Ghana Police Service Act (Act 350, 1970). The Act states that “it shall be the duties of the police service to prevent and detect crime, to apprehend offenders and to maintain public order and safety of persons and properties”. This mandate of the service can be situated in the universal sense of guardianship as in the RAT (Cohen and Felton’s, 1979). The national headquarters, in Accra, tops the vertical administrative structure and the least administrative area of command being the police station/post. This is an unchanged administrative structure since the colonial era, as revealed by a senior police officer, which contrasts “the hopes of many Ghanaians that with political independence the police would undergo a fundamental restructuring – organizationally and ideologically” (Tankede, 2008, 68). The consequence is limited public trust and confidence in the current police structural arrangements. The officer added that the main function of the national headquarters is to coordinate all administrative units, which are geographically demarcated as in the current 13 regional headquarters, 55 divisional headquarters, 208 district headquarters, and 769 police stations/posts nationwide. At the national level, the police administrative demarcations do not exactly coincide with the decentralized local government administrative structure. For instance, the 13 regional commands and administrative boundaries are not in sync with the 16 political regional boundaries. Moreover, the Tema, Railway and Ports, and national headquarters are located in the greater Accra region because of the political and economic significance the region. Hence, the six new political regions are without substantive regional police headquarters. This situation violates the Security and Intelligence Agency Act (Act 526, 1996) that intends to safeguard the security of life and property within a region. Despite some support to the new regions to function as regional commands, the specific focus on a particular region to combat or prevent crime as per the location specific demand in crime prevention is lacking. Similarly, whereas the 55 police divisional headquarters are the embodiment of the district demarcations, the 208 police district headquarters fall short of the local government administrative demarcation (216) by 3.7 percent.

Analysis of the numerical strength of the Ghana Police Service from 1947 to 2017

Heterogeneous urban environments have challenged traditional norms and values based social control forms and necessity an impartial body – devoid of ethnic, religion, political among other biases to provide equitable public security services. This forms the philosophy of the police services - to provide security services irrespective of human affiliations. However, the rapid growth of Ghana’s population (GSS, 2018) stimulates a reflection over the ability of the Ghana police’s numerical strength to match up to the UN recommended standard of 1:500 police-civilian population ratio.

### Table 2: Trends in Ghana’s national population and police-civilian population ratio (1947–2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of Ghana (million)</th>
<th>Current police strength</th>
<th>Expected police strength</th>
<th>Police/population ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>8,020</td>
<td>1:1,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3,480</td>
<td>8,120</td>
<td>1:1,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>1:1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>19,410</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>1:438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>15,484</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>1:1,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>16,212</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>1:1,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>14,412</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>1:1,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>29,155</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>1:1,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>1:1,928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UN standard of police population ratio is: 1:500

Source: Adapted from Aning (2006), SITU (2014) and Tandoh (2017)

This development takes a toll on the proper functioning of the District Security Council (DISEC) as stipulated in Section 5 (1) of the Security and Intelligence Agency Act (Act 526, 1996). The members of the DISEC, include the District Police Commander, the District Crime Officer, among others, lacks adequate police representation in the council consequently limiting the police oversight responsibilities in the council. The core mandate of DISEC, as espoused in Section 9(b) of Act 526 (1996), states that “A DISEC, shall in relation to the district provide early warning to the Government of the existence or likelihood of any security threat to the district, to the country or to the Government”, appears compromised within the current arrangements. The inconsistent demarcations of boundaries between the police and the local government system have the potential to result in instances of overlap and gaps in the demarcations: A situation that emboldens the already existing inequality in access to state security services in the country (Tankede, 2008; Bagson, 2018). The third level of conflates, administratively, is the reportedly limited consideration accorded indigenes’ sense of community in the demarcation of police and the local government boundaries. Some scholars are elaborate in the importance of neighborhoods’ sense of community to crime prevention (Newman, 1996; Sun et al., 2004), but it appears evasive in the current administrative demarcation - an incentive of functionally disjointedness among key stakeholders. Further confounding mixed match boundaries is the uncontrolled physical development beyond the capacity of city authorities to provide services (Oteng-Ababio & Melara, 2014). According to ISSER (2009), large cities in Ghana carry the extra burden of providing services to spill over population beyond their boundaries. Hence, the next section examines the police-civilian population ratio from the national and Ashanti regional levels to the Kumasi metropolis.

Based on secondary data, this section examined the police-civilian population ratio of Ghana from 1947 to 2017 (Table 2). Even though there is a continuous increase in the police and civilian populations in the seven decades (Table 2), 88.8 percent
of the annual data points fell short of the 1:500 police-civilian population ratio. The worse ratio (1:1,485) was recorded in 1947 revealing that about 66.5 percent of the estimated population was not policed. Nevertheless, the ratio improved to 12 percent better than the recommended ratio in 1971. However, the next three decades (1971 - 2001) encountered a decline in the police-civilian population ratio to the second recorded worse ratio (1:1,283) in 2001 in which 61 percent of the total population was not policed. The second best recorded police-civilian population ratio (1:848) was in 2017 when 41 percent of the estimated total population of Ghana was not policed. At the Ashanti regional level, the synthesis estimates the level of decentralization of the police command and administrative structures, and the numerical strength of the police within the region and the metropolis. At the command and administrative levels, the Ashanti Region has: a regional police headquarters, 14 divisional headquarters and 34 police stations/posts. Available data shows that the Ashanti regional police administrative structure is manned by 3,938 police officers as at 2014 resulting in 1:1,213 police-civilian population ratio. Thus, 59 percent of the total population of the Ashanti Region was not policed (Table 3) which appears worse than the national proportion (46%).

Table 3: Proportions of the national and Ashanti regional populations not policed as at 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Police population</th>
<th>PCPR</th>
<th>Proportion not policed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>27,000,000*</td>
<td>29,155</td>
<td>1:926</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>4,780,380**</td>
<td>3,938</td>
<td>1:1213</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * 2014 national population; **2010 regional populations; PCPR = Police-Civilian Population Ratio

Source: SITU (2014) and GSS (2014)

Kumasi Metropolis is policed by four divisional police stations, eight district police stations manned by 1,238 police personnel and police-civilian population ratio of 1:1,644 (Table 4) in 2014. Meaning, 70 percent of the total population of Kumasi was not policed. An observation within three different socio-economic neighborhoods indicates that, apart from the middle-class neighborhood (Oforikrom), neither Ahodwo nor Aboabo-Kumasi representing the higher- and lower-class residential areas has no neighborhood police station respectively.

**Policing and sprawling urban space in Kumasi metropolis**

The study roughly estimated police visibility in Kumasi by first establishing the current spatial extent of the city and then superimposed functional police stations/posts in the spatial extent. Subsequently, narratives of the key informants and focus group discussions elucidated the consequences of the demographic expansions in the rapidly sprawling citiescape on the security of life and property in the contemporary urban development trajectories in Ghana. The rapid spatial expansion of the Kumasi metropolis (Figure 1) is attributable to its central geolocation in Ghana and the relatively good transport networks links to other regions and neighboring settlements. Figure 1 shows evidence of in-fill development within the city; the consequence of which is the roll back of the vegetative cover and the increase in the built-up area (Table 5). The vegetative cover of the city reduced (27%) between 2000 and 2016; whilst the built-up area and open spaces increased by 25 percent and 2 percent respectively. Evidence of conurbations of built up areas in the metropolis particularly towards the southern part of the city is obvious. Nevertheless, ribbon-type developments along the major roads, radiating from the central business district, characterized by commercial activities intermingling uncontrolled physical developments, informal commercial activities, which consequently creates congestion and undesired security implications as narrated by a key informant who sells along the street: “The overwhelming congestion within the city center and the high incident of theft and violent crime informed my decision to move out of the center, but the congestion has caught up with us and therefore the insecurity of the wares we sell is higher than before” (personal interview with 46 year old man, trader, Oforikrom, 14/03/2017). Physical developments behind the commercial activities along the major roads are residential apartments, which are limited in spatial planning, congestion and limited access roads. Such spatial development suggestively brings together suitable targets and motivated offenders demonstrating the potentials to stimulate crime events in the absence of a capable guardian as postulated by Cohen and Felson (1979). Conclusively, a seven member all-female focus group discussion in Aboabo-Kumasi agreed that the congestion within the residential apartments that are close to the streets serve as escape routes for criminals. Furthermore, the marginal increase in open spaces brings up a mixed-bag of urban experiences in Kumasi. Whilst the open spaces, including hitherto greenery spaces, serve as parking lots to both commercial and private vehicles within the central business district, open spaces also serve as an open market for street hawkers. Views expressed by a trader and resident of Oforikrom are in order: “Whereas the open space serves as a market place for the street hawkers, it is also a very risky place particularly for travellers who are not very familiar with the environment, their items such as phones, jewellery etc. are easily snatched or money taken from bags or pockets but I can assure you that it is always difficult to identify the offenders because of the congestions within the city” (personal interview with 52 year old woman, opinion leader in Oforikrom, 11/03/2017). The vehicular and human congestion in Kumasi is typically concentrated around Kejetia, central market, and the railway station area near to the Adum commercial street. Not only does this daily population dynamic encourage crime, cognizance of the 70 percent of the population not policed, it obviously narrows the gap between potential offenders and victims in an environment Amoako et al. (2014) indicate that 70 percent of the total land area of the CBD is occupied by commercial activities. The cityscape therefore increases anonymity which weakens the potentials of the limited police service to effectively combat crime. This is in line with earlier scholarly works that congestion encourages criminality (Owusu et al., 2016). Thus, Kumasi experiences co-occurrence of spatial expansion, densification of human and vehicular populations in an economically active urban space; an equivalent spread of police stations/posts will enhance police visibility. Noting the fact that police visibility does not necessarily guarantee no crime, the fact remains that, ordinarily, every police station/post should have the capacity (human and material) to adequately provide security even though a distressed stations/posts could call for reinforcement. Figure 2 illustrates the spatial distribution of police stations/posts in Kumasi metropolis as at 2014. In Kumasi, the police
Table 4: Police-civilian population ratio of Kumasi metropolis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>POP’2010</th>
<th>Current police strength</th>
<th>Expected police strength</th>
<th>Deficit in police strength</th>
<th>Police – population ratio</th>
<th>Population not policed (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>27,000,000</td>
<td>29,155</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>1:926</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>2,070,463</td>
<td>3,096</td>
<td>4,141</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>1:669</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumasi</td>
<td>2,035,064</td>
<td>1,238</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>2,832</td>
<td>1:1,644</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UN recommended police-population ratio is 1:500
Source: SITU (2014)

Figure 1: The expanding spatial extent in Kumasi from 2000 to 2016
Source: Bagson (2018)

Table 5: The spatial extent of Kumasi metropolis from 2000 to 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built up</td>
<td>95,354,493</td>
<td>149,531,710</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>112,220,960</td>
<td>54,079,183</td>
<td>-27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space</td>
<td>6,740,111</td>
<td>10,443,844</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214,315,564</td>
<td>214,054,738</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bagson (2018)

Figure 2: Spatial distribution of police posts and stations in KMA in 2014
Source: Bagson (2018)
stations/posts are more visible in and around the CBD demonstrating interest in policing the most economically active part of the city, but limited police visibility in most residential areas. As shown in figure 2, police stations/posts are sparse around the north eastern part of the city spanning from Tafo-Pankrono police station to the south eastern part near Kwame Nkrumah University of Science (KNUST) to Asukwa police stations. Beyond these settlements, no police stations/posts are sighted from Kentinkro to Emena and Atonsu among other fringe settlements. In the north western part of the city, Ohwim and Afrancho among other fringe communities also lack police stations/posts. It is therefore suggestive that the spatial and demographic expansions within Kumasi do not have equivalent distribution of police stations/posts. This is in tandem with Tankebe’s (2008) opinion that police services’ distribution in Ghana is spatially unjust and mostly favor the economically and politically influential people and confirms by an opinion leader in Ahodwo: “The absence of a police station/post within this neighborhood should not be the reason for the poor police visibility; we expect frequent police patrols even if it means the main road but not within residential apartments patrols that they [police] sometime do” (personal interview with 51 year old man, opinion leader in Ahodwo, 11/03/2017). The vehicular and human congestions, uncoordinated physical development planning and limited police visibility within the city of Kumasi facilitates the intersection of suitable target sand motivated offenders in the absence of a capable guardian. According to the routine activity theory such developments have a high tendency for crime to occur. Similarly, CBDs of limited spatial planning become a haven for crime (Darkwah & Cobbinah, 2014).

Conclusions and policy recommendations

Ghana’s quest to create and sustain safe and inclusive cities by the year 2030 (SDG 11) is supported by the Ghana Police Service under the auspices of the Police Service Act 350 (1970). The Ghana Police Service pursues this goal in a limited decentralized command and administrative structures compared to the more decentralized local governance structure. These limited decentralized structures affects the Ghana Police Service’s ability to champion the philosophy of democratic and community policing as the means of delivering on their mandate. Secondly, even though Ghana’s population increases with the numerical strength of the police service over the seventy years reviewed, its numerical strength is yet to meet the UN recommended standard of 1:500 police-civilian population ratio except in 1971. Hence, the study established that there has been inequality in public access to the services of the Ghana Police Service; noting the deficit in the numerical strength of the police service. Thirdly, the current spatial and demographic expansions within the Kumasi metropolis have overwhelmed the potential of police visibility within city. The study recommends that the Government of Ghana commits to truly decentralizing the police command and administrative structure to increase community participation in the provision of internal security as in the case of the local government decentralization drive. To improve police visibility within neighborhoods, police recruitment should be at the community level incorporating active participation of the local government and traditional authorities. This will not only enable the police to benefit from indigenous knowledge in the provision of security at the community level, community members will find the police as a part of them working in the interest of the larger community.

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REFERENCES


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