![Green Infrastructure Lab logo]

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STUDENT RESEARCH

The Social Construction of Urban Green Infrastructure: Exploring Perceptions of Urban Land and Views of Property in Sub-Saharan African Cities For Climate-resilient Settlement Transformation.

SYNOPSIS

This research examines the relationship between the socio-political dimensions of urban land and climate-resilient settlement development in Sub-Saharan African cities. Drawing on a political ecology lens, this study aims to explore human perceptions of urban land and its ownership, and the interconnection with green infrastructure integration in urban settlement development using Accra, Ghana, as a case study. With rapid urbanisation and heightened climate risks, an understanding of the construction of urban landscapes becomes imperative for designing practical and sustainable climate-resilient strategies in the context of diverse land ownership and tenure systems in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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OBJECTIVE

The study aims to explore perceptions of urban land and property ownership and how this affects the integration of green infrastructure for climate-resilient urban settlement development.

METHODOLOGY

The study will adopt a case study design and use mixed qualitative methods, including community focus group discussions, institutional interviews, and field observations.

ESTIMATED RESEARCH LENGTH

3.5 years

BACKGROUND

Recent extreme global environmental change impacts have underscored the urgent need to address climate change impacts in cities due to their role as economic centres and high population density (World Cities Report, 2022). Human activities have caused these profound changes to the global environment.

Sub-Saharan Africa, despite low global carbon emissions, faces significant climate risks, exacerbated by its rapidly growing urban population, projected to nearly triple by 2050. The burgeoning urban population has implications on land, its use, and the development of the urban form, necessitating effective urban and territorial planning to mitigate anticipated negative social, economic, and environmental consequences (World Cities Report, 2022). Enhancing the resilience of urban settlements is vital to bolstering cities' adaptive capacity to climate change.
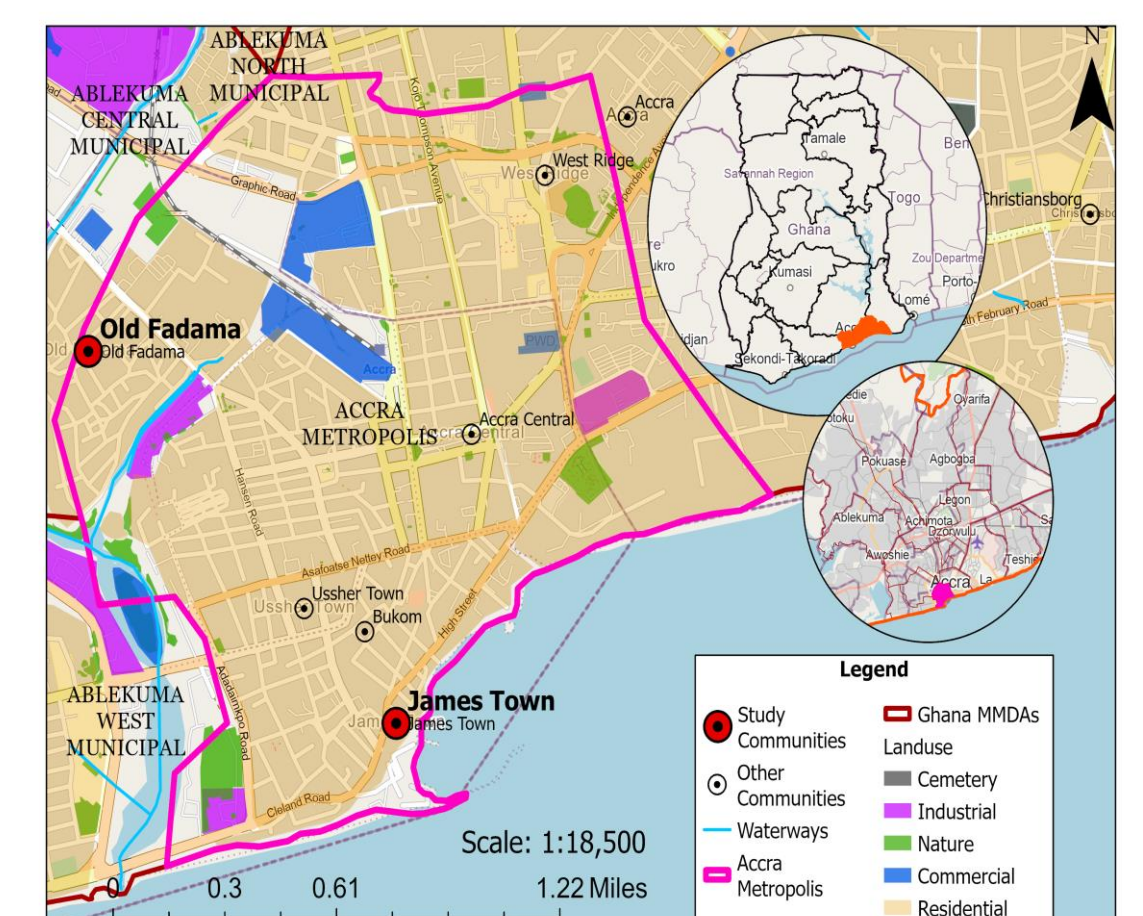
STUDY CONTEXT

Fig.1 Map of the Accra Metropolitan Area in the context of Ghana.

EXPECTED RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

The research will have both theoretical and policy significance. Theoretically, it contributes to knowledge by challenging the conventional treatment of urban land as a homogenous physical object in urban planning, emphasising its socio-political dynamics and integration into climate resilience efforts. Drawing on Mitchell et al. (2015) and Enemark (2010), it argues that urban actors' perceptions of urban land and property ownership shape urban environments and resilience. On the policy front, considering that the future of humanity is undoubtedly urban, the insights from the study will inform practical and sustainable resilience strategies, addressing the depletion of ecosystem services and climate risks such as floods and urban heat. By highlighting the social dimension of urban land and its connection to green infrastructure development for climate resilience, the research contributes to achieving sustainable development 11 by supporting the design of context-specific resilience strategies. Its insights are transferable beyond the study areas, benefiting cities in Sub-Saharan Africa and similar contexts globally.
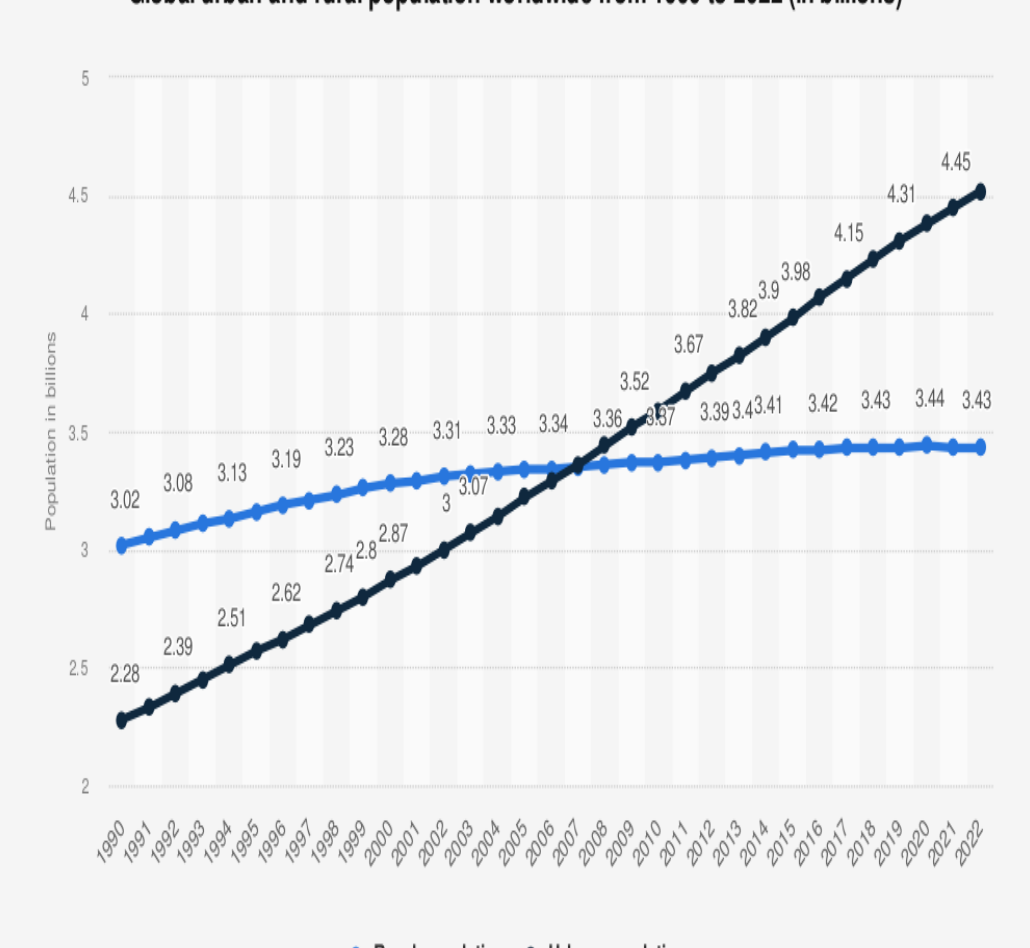
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