

URBAN BLIGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF GHANA. A CASE STUDY OF EAST LEGON, ACCRA

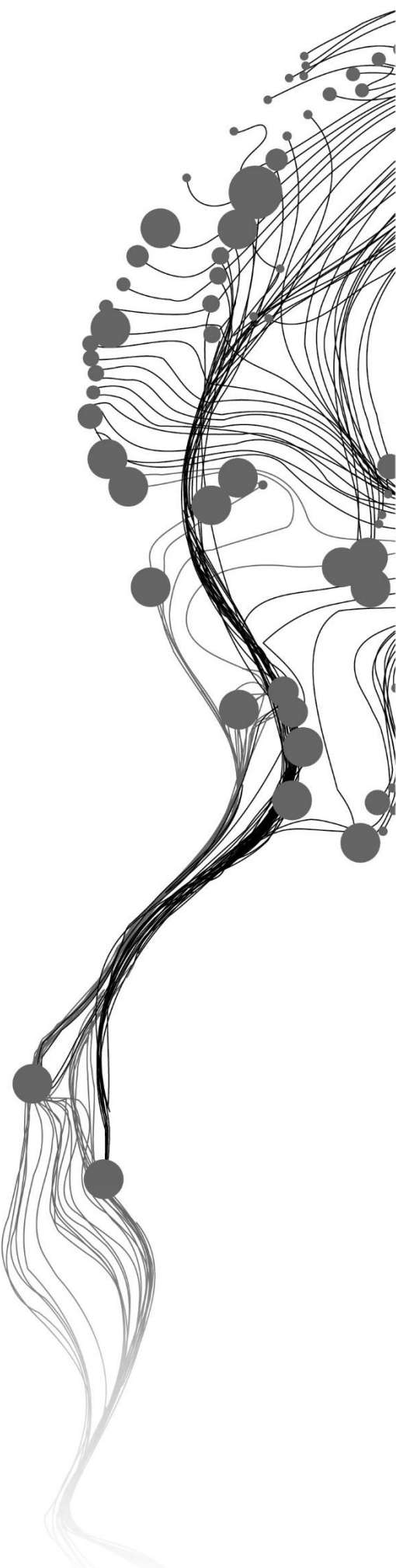
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JUNE, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Urban blight is a description of a city's deterioration. While the underlying causes of urban blight in the context of the Global North are known in the literature, there is a research gap regarding the root causes of urban blight in the Global South specifically in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. Given the differences in the property rights regimes and economic growth trajectories between the North and South, the underlying reasons for urban blight differ. A greater percentage of property holding in Sub-Saharan Africa is under the customary land tenure system. Additionally, it was observed that urban blight in the North evolved from a transformation of a once prime, and vibrant city to a deteriorated one. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa, prime urban areas are rather experiencing distributed pockets of the blight of which the underlying reasons are unknown. This study, thus, employed a qualitative method and case study approach to ascertain in-depth contextual reasons for urban blight in an economically prime urban area, East Legon, in Accra-Ghana. The criteria for the selection of the blighted properties were grouped into four main urban forms based on the stipulated standards in Ghana's Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016, Act 925. The four forms of the blight were a cluster of disordered settlements, vacant plots of land, dilapidated properties, and uncompleted/abandoned structures.

This study revealed that urban blight evolved in East Legon because of the establishment of a residential estate with modern urban infrastructure. This estate was established by the Government while the existing indigenous settlements were left in an unchanged state. The root causes of the blight in East Legon were found to be inadequate urban infrastructure, land tenure systems (people-to-land relationships), and socio-cultural values attached to real properties. Thus, it was discovered that there are major differences for the underlying causes of urban blight between the Global North and South. Nonetheless, the key similarity revealed was the economic reason of causing blight. Furthermore, while economic reasons are the primary driving force for urban blight in the North, in this study, the driving force was predominantly socio-cultural values attached to real properties. Therefore for future research, it is recommended that there could be a study on urban blight and neighbourhood governance from an institutional perspective to ascertain a balance of value systems in an economically prime urban setting within the Sub-Saharan African region.

Keywords: *Urban blight, economically prime urban area, values, land tenure systems*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
AWMA	Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly
GIS	Geographic Information System
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
LAS	Land Administration System
LC	Lands Commission
LUSPA	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly
PVLMD	Public and Vested Lands Management Division
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
USA	United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is one of the world's challenges as a result of the rapid urban population and development in the 21st century. De Vries and Voß (2018) argue that a greater percentage of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is related to land, yet contemporary land management practices are fraught with issues of varied value systems. The utilisation of urban space is relevant to a majority of policymakers due to the high demand of real properties (Owusu-Ansah, 2012; Mahama & Antwi, 2006). Despite the high demand for urban space which is mainly recognized as economic value to the government and businesses, other social values attachments to real properties stifle urban changes and developments in diverse ways (Livingston, Bailey, & Kearns, 2010; Manzo, 2003; Hay, 1998). The level of utilisation of urban space thus differs regarding perceptions, priorities and reasoning (Oluwagbemiga, Mohd, & Ismail, 2014). The deterioration of cities and its effect is a research area that has been receiving attention in urban studies (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018; Fol & Cunningham-Sabot, 2010; Haase, Bernt, GroBmann, & Mykhnenko, 2016). One of such descriptions of city deterioration is the urban blight notion.

The phenomenon of urban blight is not new but dates back from cities in the Global North. The economic decline after the industrial revolution era in the 19th - 20th century resulted in urban cities becoming economically vulnerable with industries collapsing, businesses decreasing and people losing their jobs (Pacione, 2009). Ultimately, these cities experienced physical and functional stagnation as real properties mainly residential and commercial types became obsolete with high vacancy ratios and a decline in maintenance (Gordon, 2004). Although several studies have investigated the causes of urban blight in the Global North, few studies of such nature exist in the Global South. Thus, the contextual reasons for urban blight is an on-going concern in contemporary urban research (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018).

1.1. Background and justification

In recent decades, most cities in the world, particularly in the Global South, are experiencing increasing demand for urban properties for various uses such as residential, commercial, and industrial. Despite the high demand for real properties; land and buildings, there are blighted properties in the form of vacant plots of land, abandoned structures, littered sites, and dilapidated buildings leading to the deterioration of cities in terms of physical beauty and functionality (Breger, 1967; Gordon, 2004). Weaver (2013), describes urban blight to be the underinvestment of real properties. Goldstein, Jensen, and Reiskin (2001) emphasize the interesting situation where parcels of land that can support useful developments in economically viable areas lie underused despite having great economic value. The current state of the art highlights the contextual reasons for urban blight which constitutes a major focus of research to understand and effectuate urban policies (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018; Fol & Cunningham-Sabot, 2010; Haase, Bernt, GroBmann, & Mykhnenko, 2016).

The terminologies used in describing the deterioration of cities differ from place to place including the descriptions used by urban scholars such as city shrinkage, urban decay, urban decline, brownfields, or urban blight. However, whilst on the one hand, Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez (2011) assert that these terminologies may mean the same thing with regards to cities' physical characteristics and functioning; Haase, Rink, Grossmann, Bernt, and Mykhnenko (2014), on the other hand, argue that the emphasis and concepts of the terminologies are developed from diverse contexts, times, theoretical frameworks, and

empirical backgrounds. For this study, however, the different phenomenon; urban decline, shrinkage, and decay, have been fostered into a mutual communication notion *‘urban blight’*. This is because the concept of urban blight is known in the urban policy of the study country, Ghana. The current Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925) gives a detailed description of the criteria and the role of the District Assemblies in tackling urban blight in their various jurisdictions (Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925), Section 103).

The genesis of urban blight is from the United States of America (USA) after the industrial revolution era in the 19th - 20th century (Pacione, 2009; Gordon, 2004). Additionally, the rapid expansion of the blight also affected cities in parts of Europe such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Ukraine among others. The subsequent economic decline in the 20th century led to a lot of cities becoming economically vulnerable with industries collapsing, businesses decreasing and people losing their jobs (Cuthbert, 2017 & Gordon, 2004). Similarly, a study conducted by Haase, Rink, Grossmann, Bernt, and Mykhnenko (2014), explained the phenomenon of urban blight in Germany and Ukraine. In both countries, Halle city in Germany and Makiivka city in Ukraine experienced deindustrialization which led to people moving to other economically thriving areas for job search. When businesses declined and people lost their jobs, the neighbourhood became less attractive to affluent residents and businesses. Besides, the affluent residents perceive a lack of or inadequate effectiveness of the local governments in satisfying the needs of the neighbourhood (Livingston, Bailey, & Kearns, 2010). Despite the level of deterioration in neighbourhoods, some residents may remain in the area as a result of low income. As explained by Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns (2010), low income restricts the movement of people out of deteriorated neighbourhoods. Thus some of the residents who remain in the deteriorated neighbourhoods for a long time develop some form of attachment to the place where mutual dependencies with other residents are established. Kleinhans, Priemus, and Engbersen (2007) describe the dependency to be living peacefully in the neighbourhood as well as maintaining and sharing common norms and trust with others in the area.

However, in the Global South specifically in Africa, many urban cities have issues relating to land use and development (Asabere, 1981) yet little knowledge exists regarding the emergence of urban blight. Urban blight is likened to the accelerated growth of urbanisation which is primarily caused by a high birth rate in the urban cities and rural-urban migration. Notably, most of these urban cities were previously indigenous settlements (Cobbinah & Aboagye, 2017). Although urbanisation is good and has caused modern land use and development in the African cities, the rapid urbanisation, on the other hand, has resulted in unsustainable development where the high population growth is unmatching the existing urban infrastructure especially housing (Getis, 2015 & Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, & Amoateng, 2015). Subsequently, the inadequate housing infrastructure has triggered the development of unauthorized structures leading to poor neighbourhoods that lack social amenities like water, toilet facilities, garbage bins among others (Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, & Amoateng, 2015). Neighbourhoods that lack basic infrastructure and are in disorder are also regarded as urban blight (Gordon, 2004; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Hosseini, Pourahmad, Taeab, Amini, & Behvandi, 2017). Remarkably, the most historic urban blight in Africa occurred in 1994, in South Africa. This was because of suburbanisation in the form of apartheid city. Initially, the suburbanisation was associated with a complex racial structure where a formerly white neighbourhood, Hillbrow, experienced “*white flight house abandonment*” leaving the area for the immigrants who had moved into the neighbourhood but had low economic status (Morris, 1994). Consequently, there were ineffective local government services because the immigrants refused to pay service charges and rents and were engaged in illegal activities such as shebeens¹. Therefore, this led to the physical and functional stagnation of the neighbourhood (Crankshaw & White, 1995).

¹ Informal settlements or establishments such as drinking bars

In summary, a comparison of existing literature reveals that in the Global North, cities become blighted due to affluent residents moving out to other areas, while in a greater part of Africa, rapid urbanisation is causing neighbourhoods to be blighted. Although some cities in Africa face urban blight as a result of the rapid urbanisation, notably, some of the cities still experience indigenous settlements which appear to be substandard due to the modern developments surrounding them.

1.2. Problem statement

The root causes of urban blight in literature stem largely from the perspective of the Global North, while the existence of such studies in the Global South is few. Urban studies have pointed out economic decline, population loss, suburbanisation as the main reason for blight in the Northern cities (Gordon, 2004; Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Haase et al., 2016). However, given the differences in the property rights regimes and economic growth trajectories between the Global North and South, the reasons for urban blight differ. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), landholdings and use practices are often intertwined in socio-cultural beliefs and practices, thus the real property is not a separate entity from people and families but constitutive and embedded in customary land tenure systems which form about ninety percent (90%) of landholding in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chimhowu, 2019; Abubakari, Richter, & Zevenbergen, 2019). Furthermore, urban blight in previous studies has been investigated from the entire neighbourhood level especially from old industrialized cities and marginalized areas (Hollander, Hartt, Wiley, & Vavra, 2018; Haase et al., 2014). Yet, urban blight does occur in distributed pockets within economically prime urban areas in the Sub-Saharan African region. There is, therefore, a research gap in understanding the main reasons for urban blight from the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) context.

Specifically in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003) argues that the city is knotted with cultural values, familistic, and social lifestyles as well as modernisation. Nonetheless, economically prime areas are noted for high-quality infrastructure with good neighbourhood characteristics such as business centres, shopping malls, entertainment centres among others. Owusu-Ansah (2012) emphasises that the quality of a neighbourhood in terms of location, social amenities, exposure to adverse environmental factors, and perceived safety play a significant role in determining property values for that particular area. Consequently, investors are willing to pay high prices for high-quality neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, many underutilized properties are unmatching the modernised urban areas because some stakeholders regard or prioritize the urban space or real properties differently (Mahama & Antwi, 2006; Oluwagbemiga, Mohd, & Ismail, 2014). While there is the possibility to leverage the blighted properties for the provision of modern housing or commercial development, some of these properties tend to stay in the same condition often for many years. The main reasons for such occurrences are unknown. Thus, the main question posed by this study is “how can the existence of distributed pockets of urban blight in an economically prime urban area in Accra-Ghana be explained?”

1.3. Research objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate the underlying reasons and the impact of distributed pockets of urban blight in an economically prime urban area, East Legon in Accra-Ghana.

1.3.1. Research sub-objectives

The following specific objectives were sought to achieve the main objective:

1. To identify the different forms of urban blight in the area.
2. To find out why urban blight exists from the perspective of various stakeholders.
3. To ascertain the impact of urban blight on land use and development in the area.

1.3.2. Research questions

The research questions that aided the achievement of the sub-objectives were:

1. **To identify the different forms of urban blight in the area.**
 - a. How has urban blight in the area evolved?
 - b. What is the distribution of the forms of urban blight in the area?
2. **To find out why urban blight exists from the perspective of various stakeholders.**
 - a. What are the possible causes of urban blight in the area?
 - b. What are the land tenure systems and their influence on the form of urban blight?
 - c. How do various stakeholders attach values to their properties and what are the reasons (if any)?
3. **To ascertain the impact of urban blight on land use and development in the area**
 - a. What are the effects (positive and negative) of urban blight in the neighbourhood?
 - b. In the case of negative effects, what are the development dynamics to address them?

1.4. Thesis structure

This study is organized into six chapters. First, chapter one which introduces the study. The chapter presents the background, the research problem, main objective, sub-objectives, and the research questions. Chapter two is a literature review where existing scientific information is analysed and evaluated regarding the main concepts of the study; the general notion and nuances of urban blight, the perception of urban blight from diverse contexts, criteria for selection of blighted properties and development dynamics of reducing the blight. Additionally, the conceptual framework is elaborated in this chapter. Furthermore, chapter three delves into the research methodology. This chapter presents the research design, operationalisation of the study, sampling techniques as well as the methods for analysing the data collected. Besides, for the choice of the study area, an overview and justification are given as well in this chapter. Also, the findings and outcomes of this study are presented and illustrated in chapter four. They are discussed with reference to the research sub-objectives and the research questions. Chapter five is about discussions of the results in juxtaposing with existing scientific literature. The final chapter, six, concludes the study with some recommendations for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses existing literature on the general concept and the nuances of urban blight, the causes from diverse perspectives, the methods for determining blighted properties, the effects, and the adopted development dynamics for addressing urban blight. Additionally, the conceptual framework is presented.

2.1. The concept of urban blight

A review of the literature reveals a large volume of published researches on the deterioration of urban cities. These studies have used diverse terminologies for describing the urban cities' deterioration such as urban blight, urban decay, city shrinkage, and urban decline. Often they study urban blight at different geographical levels either the city or neighbourhood level (Hidalgo & Bernardo, 2001; Galster, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Additionally, the concepts and emphasis of the terminologies are developed from diverse contexts, times, theoretical frameworks, and empirical backgrounds (Haase, Rink, Grossmann, Bernt, & Mykhnenko, 2014 & Breger, 1967). Yet, a careful review of the literature indicates that some researchers also use the terms without clear distinctions as they consider them to be synonymous. According to Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez (2011), these terminologies may mean the same thing with regards to cities' physical characteristics, functioning, and spatial ranges. Given this, the term "*urban blight*" was adapted for this study because it is a known concept stipulated in the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, Act 925 in the study country, Ghana. Previous studies have discussed the causes of urban blight from the Global North perspective. So far, however, there has been little discussion about the contextual reasons for urban blight in the Global South specifically, the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region.

The concept of urban blight evolved in the United States of America (USA) in the 19th - 20th century as a transformative pathway for many large cities (Cuthbert, 2017; Haase et al., 2014; Weaver & Bagchi-Sen, 2013 & Gordon, 2004, Pacione, 2009). The incidence of the industrial revolution in the 19th century caused an urban population boom where people migrated to the urban cities due to employment in the manufacturing industries (Cuthbert, 2017, Pacione, 2009). The succeeding economic decline in the 20th century led to the former vibrant and buoyant cities to deteriorate due to the malfunctions of the cities as they used to be. Gordon (2004) reports the use of the term as early as 1918 in Philadelphia where a planner described urban blight as an unbecoming district. This notwithstanding, different states in the USA fashioned their description of urban blight based on the peculiarity or uniqueness in their jurisdiction. For instance, Missouri state pronounced urban blight as overcrowding, inadequate light, ventilation, and lack of sanitary facilities in an area whereas New Jersey described urban blight to be abandoned industrial use, substandard, unsafe properties, and vacant lots. Also, California state added defective designs either interior or exterior to their description (Gordon, 2004). Given this, researchers have used different definitions and descriptions for urban blight thus acknowledging the diverse contextual reasons for the causes. The nuances of urban blight discussed in the literature are presented in table 2-1 below.

Table 2-1 A summary of some nuances of urban blight

The nuance of urban blight	Description & source from literature
An idea with regards to the use of real property	Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013) and Hosseini, Pourahmad, Taeab, Amini, & Behvandi (2017) describe urban blight as an idea in the minds of various stakeholders concerning the condition, use, and function of real property.
The lack of basic urban infrastructure	Urban blight is an element that is caused by a lack of infrastructure (Gordon, 2004; Hosseini, Pourahmad, Taeab, Amini, & Behvandi, 2017).
Neighbourhood disorder/lack of physical beauty	Many abandoned and deteriorated buildings in the area (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Geis & Ross, 1998) and Miekley (2008).
Results in physical stagnation	The attributes of urban blight are visually demeaning and aesthetically depressing. This could lead to stagnation of land use and development in an area (Bales, 1985).
The initial stage of urban decay	The severe phase of urban blight is used to describe the commencement of urban decay (Breger, 1967). Urban decay as explained by Fabiyi (2011) is the neglect of the built environment symbolized by poor urban dwellers unable to repair their old structures.
A contributing factor to slum	Urban blight is an element that results in a slum (Gordon, 2004). Also, Breger (1967) emphasizes that historically, slums were regarded as blighted areas.
Comparable to urban decline/shrinkage	Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013) and Hoekveld (2014) hold the view that the main causes of urban blight from the Global North perspective such as poverty, unemployment, and vacancy align with the factors of urban decline/shrinkage.

Source: (Author's construct, 2019)

As illustrated in table 2-1, it can be observed that urban blight is perceived differently by various researchers. Urban blight is described in terms of real properties and urban spaces. The real properties consider the land and buildings while the urban spaces concern entire neighbourhoods, cities or areas. The nuances, however, concern the different conditions, physical state, use, and development in urban settings which is deemed contextual according to the history, background, and theoretical frameworks.

2.2. Urban blight from diverse perspectives

This section considers the underlying causes of urban blight and the perception of values attached to real properties and urban spaces. The perceptions are considered from both the Global North and South.

2.2.1. The causes of urban blight

As already mentioned, Haase et al. (2014) argue that the emphasis and concepts of urban blight are developed from diverse contexts. Also, Breger (1967) emphasises that such differences may be due to the diverse historical, social, and cultural values of a country. Therefore, urban blight should be grounded in contextual urban geography peculiar to that city (Breger, 1967; Weaver & Bagchi-Sen, 2013; Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018). The diverse perspectives of the causes of urban blight from the Global North and South are expounded as follows:

Firstly, from the Global North perspective, apart from the USA where the urban blight concept evolved, European urban studies have associated the most prominent urban blight to have taken place in the United Kingdom (UK) also in the 20th century. It was revealed by Haase, Bernt, GroBmann, & Mykhnenko (2016) that the urban blight occurred in the major commercial and industrial hub cities such as Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Glasgow. These cities experienced a population decrease and economic decline caused by the collapse of well-patronized commercial activities and auxiliary industries. Subsequently, there was suburbanisation leading to the abandonment of the industrialized cities. Also, the case of Germany was likened to that of the United Kingdom (UK) which also evolved in the 1980s (Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Nelle et al., 2017). There was out-migration, deindustrialisation resulting in population changes in the cities. Nevertheless, in other parts of Europe; Poland and Romania, the cause of urban blight was found to be quite different. According to Haase, Bernt, GroBmann, & Mykhnenko (2016), urban blight in Poland and Romania were as a result of a decline in the natural population change; high death rates and ageing of the population in the country.

Secondly, from the Global South perspective, the existing literature reveals that in Latin American cities, Sao Paulo in Brazil and Guadalajara in Mexico, the causes of urban blight were similar to the Global North. Audirac, Cunningham-Sabot, Fol, and Moraes (2012) report that the causes of urban blight in these areas are a result of suburbanisation, deindustrialisation, and population loss. Similarly, in Africa, the most prominent cause of urban blight known is the suburbanisation in South Africa in 1994. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this was caused by a complex racial structure where a formerly white neighbourhood, Hillbrow, experienced an abandonment of houses by the white people. Subsequently, the area was occupied by immigrants with low-income status who were unable to keep the high standard of the area (Crankshaw & White, 1995; Morris, 1994). Additionally, a study conducted by Reckien and Martinez-Fernandez (2011) presented social factors to be the driving force for cities' blight in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region. The social factors given were hunger and epidemics like Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). However, no thorough explanations of the social factors were clarified in the study.

In sum, the causes of urban blight mentioned in literature are mainly deindustrialisation, economic decline, and population loss in the urban areas as a result of suburbanisation. The driving forces of urban blight alluded to the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region are social factors, yet no in-depth studies in that regard.

2.2.2. The perception of values attached to real properties

In this section, the values attached to real properties and urban spaces by the various stakeholders are discussed. This is relevant for the study because the stakeholders who use urban spaces perceive the area differently and the issues of urban blight may be influenced by the priorities and values attached to the real properties and urban space (Mahama & Antwi, 2006; Oluwagbemiga, Mohd, & Ismail, 2014; Weaver & Bagchi-Sen, 2013; Gordon, 2004; Breger, 1967).

According to Galster (2001), the four main stakeholders who make use of an area are households, property owners, business holders and the local government. The households use the neighbourhood through the occupation of residential units. Additionally, the surrounding environments like recreational facilities add some form of residential satisfaction and quality to the use of the neighbourhood. Business holders, on the other hand, occupy non-residential facilities yet obtain some monetary value in the form of profit. Besides, property owners occupy the residential properties themselves or rent the real property. Lastly, local governments mainly consume areas through tax revenues and provision of social amenities.

The explanations of the diverse values from the Global North and South are described as follows: Predominantly in the Global North, the primary values attached to real properties are economic and social. Economic value is mainly associated with urban investment where three of the aforementioned stakeholders of an area; business holders, local government and some the property owners make certain financial gains from the area. Somerville, Van Beekhoven, and Van Kempen (2009) emphasize that the economic structure of a country, real estate market, policies, as well as the level and nature of public goods and services, determine the economic fabric of an area. Additionally, the financially inclined stakeholders consider affluent neighbourhoods due to the area meeting their financial goals or obtaining psychological satisfaction as a result of the respect accorded them in living in a high-class residential area (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; & Livingston et al., 2008). Besides, Galster (2001) highlights that most of the residential neighbourhoods in the Global North are established through large scale construction. Nonetheless, the changes that occur afterwards are a result of how the stakeholders attach values to the area. Hidalgo & Bernardo (2001) therefore argue that the type and level of attachment placed on neighbourhoods and real properties differ in degrees and dimensions. When the level of social values exceed that of economic values, then the attractiveness of the neighbourhood and needs satisfaction are relatively assessed in comparison with other neighbourhoods by the financially inclined stakeholders (Hay, 1998). Ultimately, the decisions taken by the stakeholders affect the economic growth and development of the area, as well as the provision of public resources and services like recreational facilities by the local government. Other stakeholders who normally remain in deteriorated areas are those who attach social values to their urban spaces and real properties (Livingston et al., 2010; Hay, 1998 & Livingston, Bailey, & Kearns, 2008). According to Scannell and Gifford (2010), there are varied explanations for place and social attachment due to the cross-cutting nature of the notion in the fields of psychology, urban studies and environmental studies. In urban studies, however, place attachments are regarded as a strong emotional bond and sense of place that a group or an individual may have concerning a neighbourhood or a real property (Hay, 1998; Livingston, Bailey, & Kearns, 2008). The social values as inferred by researchers are emotional bonds and affections developed over time among residents in an area that results in strong networks and cohesion (Livingston et al., 2008; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Kleinhans et al., 2007). Besides, Kleinhans et al., (2007) argue that social value is a greater asset for local communities than well-established neighbourhoods especially for older people who have lived in the community for a longer time. Also, Livingston et al., (2008) agree that social value is paramount in homogenous neighbourhoods with common backgrounds than mixed areas. Nonetheless, Hay (1998) in his research in New Zealand discovered that rural residents in Banks Peninsula are deeply rooted in their culture and have emotional and spiritual sentiments for their tribal land, hence fewer movements to other attractive neighbourhoods.

Particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), cultural value is a predominant value in addition to the economic and social values in real property holdings. Notably, social and cultural connotations play substantial roles which are mainly associated with the customary land tenure systems (Chimhowu, 2019 & Arko-Adjei, 2011). Supposedly, almost all African urban cities were once traditional areas and have evolved into urbanized areas over time (Getis, 2015). In Ghana, urban development in the cities is also associated with rapid and unguided urbanisation caused by natural population growth and rural-urban migration. The resulting factors are housing deficits, haphazard and unplanned settlements (Getis, 2015; Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, & Amoateng, 2015 & Cobbinah & Aboagye, 2017). Therefore, urban frameworks are not well coordinated by the planning and the local government authorities. Contemporary residential neighbourhoods are developed by the Government through a partnership with Ghana Real Estate Developers Association-GREDA, private real estate investors (Anim-Odame, Key & Stevenson, 2006) yet with the existence of customary settlements (Cobbinah & Aboagye, 2017). Well-established neighbourhoods with good infrastructure such as electricity, roads and water tend to attract investors and affluent residents who attach economic values to the area. Owusu-Ansah (2012) argues that the economic

values of neighbourhoods are a result of the perceived optimal uses that these financially inclined stakeholders attach to properties and the neighbourhood. Somerville et al; (2009) affirm that the economic value of a neighbourhood largely depends on the appropriate land use and property development in the area. The local government, on the other hand, obtains revenue which according to researchers is the major source of revenue for the District Assemblies in Ghana (Owusu-Ansah, 2012; Asiama, 2006; Ayitey, Kuusaana, & Kidido, 2013). Furthermore, according to Owusu-Ansah (2012) and Anim-Odame, Key & Stevenson (2009), the prevailing circumstances of the real estate market as well as the demand and supply, determine the economic potentials of neighbourhoods. The high market potential of neighbourhoods occurs when there is high demand/pressure from potential users to acquire a property. Thus, financially inclined stakeholders tend to seek neighbourhoods that will yield high returns or meet their goals and aspirations in life. Nevertheless, other stakeholders such as the households and property owners are mostly not concerned about the economic value and modernisation of their neighbourhoods (Oluwagbemiga et al., 2014; Mahama & Antwi, 2006). Also, Oluwagbemiga et al., (2014) acknowledge that social and cultural values attached to urban space are because of area identity and belongingness. The cultural values are deep roots and spiritual ties in an area which is believed to be the customs and traditions of a group of people (Arko-Adjei, 2011; Chimhowu, 2019; Abubakari et al., 2019). Arko-Adjei (2011) highlights that the cultural values are usually unwritten yet the indigenes know that the land is for the living, the dead and future generations. Also, Abubakari et al. (2019) report that sometimes a property is named after an ancestor who established it as a form of respect for the dead. Thus, the indigenes could be against rapid urbanisation and modernisation of their area.

In summary, the key stakeholders who use urban spaces are noted to be households, property owners, business holders and the local governments. The level of use of urban space depends on the stakeholder's perception and cognition of values. In the Global North, a greater percentage of the residential properties are constructed on a large-scale by the government thus, low cultural values attached to residential properties but only for rural properties. On the other hand, in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), a greater percentage of the land including urban land is based on customs and traditions where it is believed that the land is for the living, the dead and the future generations. Thus, to understand the reasons for urban blight in the SSA context, it is imperative to ascertain the roots of urban spaces and the perceptions of the stakeholders since robust cultural values and their attachment to real properties are knotted together which may seem inseparable. Notably, there is a gap in the literature regarding cultural values in the urban settings and the role they play in influencing and impacting urban blight.

2.3. Criteria for identifying urban blight

This component of the literature review assesses the requirements and methods for identifying blighted properties. They include regulatory standards, forms of urban blight, and the methods which comprise spatial and non-spatial approaches.

2.3.1. Regulatory standards

Regulatory standards considered in this study are the land-use planning and tenure systems from both the Global North and South. According to Gordon (2004), the qualification of a property as blight is determined by the local government through land-use policies and regulations. Also, Williamson, Enemark, Wallace, and Rajabifard (2010) uphold that sustainable land-use planning is inculcated in land management. Land management as described by De Vries and Voß (2018) is an amalgamation of various fields which includes governance, economics, law, and socio-spatial relations on the use and control of natural resources within policy frameworks for a particular area. Hence, there is a need for a Land Administration System (LAS) in every country for the implementation of land management policies. Additionally, land administration is defined by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

(UNECE) as cited in Williamson et al., (2010), as “the process of recording and disseminating information about ownership, value, and use of land when implementing land management policies.” Subsequently, the global land community has developed a sustainable land administration perspective and this is shown in figure 2-1 below.

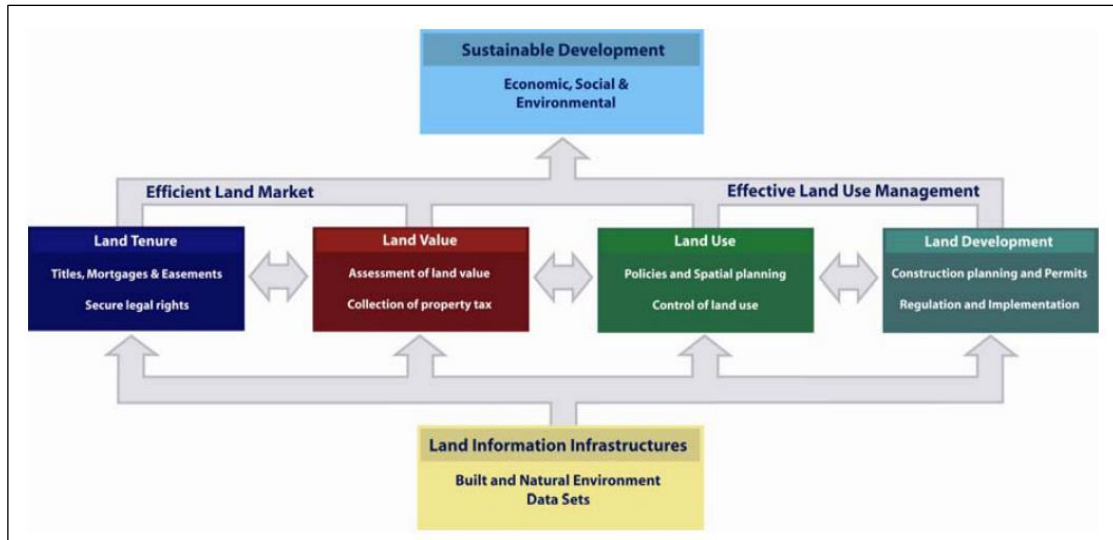


Figure 2-1 A global land administration perspective

Source: Enemark (2009)

As illustrated in figure 2-1, it can be observed that the Land Administration System (LAS) serves as the foundation for an efficient land market juxtaposing the effectiveness of land use management practices through the land administration functions. The four main land administration functions are land tenure, land value, land use and land development. Therefore, for instance, when there is a well-organised and structured land information infrastructure in a country, there would be records of property owners and the security of property ownership would be guaranteed. The secured land tenure would result in controlled land use which would guide the land development and eventually lead to an increased land value within an area. With the increased value, the property tax generated by the local government would also be positively affected. Thus, the four main land administration functions are interrelated. However, their effectiveness strongly depends on the efficacy of the land information infrastructure and land policies of a country.

Particularly in the Global North, Williamson et al., (2010) assert that it was a global economic collapse that awakened the developed economies to pay attention to land administration and the need to secure land information for an effective land market. Given this, the Land Administration Systems (LAS) have been firmly established with information infrastructures such as Information Communication Technology (ICT), Geographic Information System (GIS) and cadastral data models. De Vries and Voß (2018) gave the instance of Germany where the value of land increases because of the implementation of planning policies such as public amenities and plot allocations. Additionally, Zevenbergen (2002) highlights that the security of tenure in the developed countries is guaranteed either through deeds or land title registration. Thus, De Soto (2000) argues that the reason why developed economies can obtain investments and capital from their real properties is due to the formalized property system. The land information infrastructure efficiently regulates the land market through the four main land administration functions as illustrated in figure 2-1 above. Aptly, the land market determines the highest and best use of land in obtaining the optimum returns.

In the Global South, however, most countries do not have an integrated formalized system (De Soto, 2000; Zevenbergen, 2002). The Land Administration System (LAS) is in fragments where different organisations manage different aspects of the land administration functions. Yet, these organisations do not act in harmony which sometimes results in overlap and duplication of roles and responsibilities (Williamson et al., 2010). Also, some official agencies and the legal system in the developing economies still depend on colonial and roman law (De Soto, 2000). Principally, Ghana has dual systems of land tenure and registration: statutory and customary land tenure systems, as well as land title and deeds registration systems running concurrently (Abubakari, Richter, & Zevenbergen, 2018). The customary land tenure covers approximately 80% of the total land area in the country while the statutory covers 20% (Arko-Adjei, 2011; Kasanga & Kotey, 2001). Customary lands are communal which are deemed to have been obtained through conquest and are therefore managed by traditional authorities such as chiefs, family heads, skins and stools who hold the land in trust for their people. They are recognized as custodians of the land, thus given the paramount interest, allodial title. Besides, the indigenous people, family members, and subjects hold usufructuary freehold interest, but these customary interests are usually undocumented (Abubakari et al., 2019). Statutory land tenure, on the other hand, are public/state lands that are mostly obtained through compulsory acquisitions (Kasanga & Kotey, 2001) and managed by the Lands Commission (The Lands Commission Act, 2008). The mandate of the Lands Commission is given by the current Lands Commission Act 2008 and the 1992 Constitution of Ghana to advise the various stakeholders; the Government, local authorities and traditional authorities, on land policies as well as ensure sustainable land administration in the country (The Lands Commission Act, 2008). Furthermore, Abubakari, Richter, and Zevenbergen (2018) emphasize that the land title registration covers two regions of the country while the deeds registration covers the other regions, currently fourteen in number. The land title registration law came into effect in 1986 as a replacement of the deeds registration for better security of tenure. Yet, the land title registration does not register the customary interests such as usufructuary freehold (Abubakari, Richter, and Zevenbergen, 2018). Miller (2018) concurs that the land rights regarded in the land title registration are: freehold, leasehold, sublease and assignment. Given this, a greater percentage of the property owners especially those under the customary land tenure systems are outside the formalized property system (Abubakari et al., 2019). As explained by De Soto (2000), the formalized property system serves as a bell jar where only a certain group, usually the wealthy in the society, find themselves, while the rest of the citizens are outside the jar. Again, the indigenes with usufructuary freehold interest are resistant to register their interests since it would be converted to leasehold with the likelihood of them losing their perpetual tenure rights (Abubakari, Richter, & Zevenbergen, 2018). Additionally, access to land information identifying property owners and their interest in the property is difficult resulting in an inefficient land market. De Soto (2000) therefore argues that property owners in developing countries do not discover how to unleash capital from their property assets but are rather engrossed in relying on local arrangements such as community attachments in securing their property. Lastly, land transactions are not safeguarded because people breach or dishonour contracts by not complying with the rules and regulations inclusive of the land laws. Consequently, the land market in the country is ineffectively regulated (Mahama & Antwi, 2006).

In short, the regulatory system in terms of land administration influences the land use and development of an urban setting. The land administration system is firmly established in the North than the South. While the formalized property systems in the North are integrated with a secured tenure system that regulates and controls the land market, that of the South are fragmented and interlocked with complex land tenure and registration systems. Additionally, the weak land administration results in tenure insecurity which affects the land market and ultimately the land use and planning of urban areas.

2.3.2. Forms of urban blight

The forms and characteristics of urban blight are determined by the local government through land-use planning regulations and policies. Land-use planning is a system of controlling and regulating the use and activities on land for the present while still considering future land development (Enemark, 2009). The control comprises zoning, granting of permits along with protecting natural resources such as watercourses. The forms and characteristics of urban blight in the Global North and Global South specifically in Ghana are considered below.

In the Global North, Enemark (2009), argues that the land-use planning schemes and structures vary among countries which also reflects the local context and jurisdictional settings. Given this, the criteria for determining urban blight also differs. As mentioned earlier in section 2.1 above, Gordon (2004) emphasized that in the USA, different states described urban blight based on the peculiarity or uniqueness in their jurisdiction. Geis & Ross (1998); Miekley (2008); and Ross & Mirowsky (1999) also mentioned that there are various indicators of blight that are identified by residents in a neighbourhood. Nonetheless, Geis & Ross (1998) argued that the identification of blight is compared with an orderly neighbourhood evidenced by a quiet, secured, and tidy neighbourhood where the buildings are mostly in a good state. Additionally, Ross & Mirowsky (1999) and Geis & Ross (1998) in their studies grouped the indicators of blight into physical and social disorders. The physical disorders included: graffiti, vandalism, abandoned and noisy neighbourhood, while the social disorders were the use of drugs and alcohol by the residents in the neighbourhood, crime and mistrust among the residents. Although the forms of urban blight differ, generally, the forms of the blight common to the cities in the North are vacant lots, abandoned buildings, substandard and unsafe properties. These urban studies were concerned with identifying the hotspots of blight in particular jurisdictions and the effects to inform policy interventions such as urban renewal programs, the enforcement of land-use regulations and compliance with housing and building codes.

Particularly in Ghana, the enforcement of land-use policies and laws is also tackled by the local government. However, according to Cobbinah & Aboagye (2017), the local governments do not have full control of the enforcement as a result of the role played by the traditional authorities in regulating and managing their customary lands. They further explained that there is an inadequate collaboration between the local government and the traditional authorities. Besides, the current Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925) specifies the criteria for determining blighted properties by the District Assemblies irrespective of the land tenure system, either customary or statutory. Therefore, these criteria set the basis and measures in identifying blighted properties for this study. They include:

- a) *“irregularity of plots or parcels;”*
- b) *“Inadequacy of streets in the vicinity;”*
- c) *“Lack of access to plots or habitable dwelling within the area;”*
- d) *“Diversity of existing use which makes development control difficult or impossible;”*
- e) *“Incompatibility with”*
 - i. *“The existing or proposed use;”*
 - ii. *“The spatial development framework; and”*
 - iii. *“The structure or local plan;”*
- f) *“Adverse impact on the environment;”*
- g) *“Overcrowding leading to unhealthy population density;”*
- h) *“Lack of sanitation, drainage or appropriate service;”*
- i) *“High incidence of crime which has been confirmed to be attributable to the type of development; and”*
- j) *“Safety or restriction to the other authorised users.”}*

In summary, it is the role of the local governments to determine the forms and characteristics of urban blight but the criteria differ from place to place. Even within the same country, the description of blight can vary based on the uniqueness and peculiarity of the blight conditions in a particular area. Hence, the reason for the lack of general criteria in identifying urban blight.

2.3.3. Methods

The methods for identifying blighted properties are grouped into two; spatial and non-spatial.

2.3.3.1. Spatial methods

The spatial methods are usually associated with the quantification of the blighted properties (Weaver & Bagchi-Sen, 2013). For the developed economies, the firmly established land information infrastructure provides a database of every place inclusive of property owners, property values, vacancy ratios and household incomes (Hosseini et al., 2017 & Gordon, 2004). Thus, it is easy to ascertain blighted areas using the baseline information. For instance, Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013) in their study in Buffalo used the non-compliance of housing codes as the basis in correlation with socio-economic status (SES) data. Property addresses were generated which were then coded into Esri ArcGIS. Subsequently, a spatial clustering analysis was performed to determine the hotspots of blighted areas that would inform policy intervention such as the compliance of housing and building codes and urban renewal.

Particularly for the detection of deteriorated areas in the Global South, urban scholars apply remote sensing techniques using Very High Resolution (VHR) images (Kuffer, Pfeffer, & Sliuzas, 2016; Kohli, Sliuzas, & Stein, 2016). This may be partly due to the weak land information infrastructure that exists as already mentioned. Some of the methods used are object-based image analysis (Kohli, Sliuzas, & Stein, 2016), visual image interpretation (Bakx et al., 2013) and neighbourhood audit (Clarke, Ailshire, Melendez, Bader, & Morenoff, 2010). Also, the accuracy of the methods depends on the tacit knowledge of the researcher (Kohli, Sliuzas, & Stein, 2016). Nonetheless, Pratomo, Kuffer, Martinez, & Kohli (2017) argue that there are uncertainties regarding most spatial analysis on the detection of deteriorated areas because of some non-observable indicators such as land tenure.

2.3.3.2. Non-spatial methods

Urban scholars emphasize that urban blight is contextual which needs an in-depth understanding of the causes in a given locality (Breger, 1967; Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018 & Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Researchers who use this approach normally adopt subjective measures such as interviews using questionnaires (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Miekley, 2008). Some of the factors considered are physical and social disorders for the respondents to ascertain what is regarded as blight and non-blight (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999, Miekley, 2008). Also, Bales (1985) in his study adopted a visual approach in addition to the perceptions of the stakeholders likewise Breger (1967) who considered non-acceptance, real property, and depreciation as the main components of blight. Nevertheless, according to Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013), for policy intervention of urban blight, there is a need to quantify the blight.

In brief, a combination of both spatial and non-spatial methods provide a better understanding of the causes of urban blight with easier policy interventions. Yet, for this study since the blighted properties are distributed, the visual image interpretation and neighbourhood audit techniques of the spatial methods are considered in addition to non-spatial methods, interviews of various stakeholders.

2.4. Effects of urban blight

This section considers the positive and negative effects of urban blight to help understand the impact of urban blight on the land use and development of an area.

2.4.1. Positive effects

Firstly, blighted properties in the form of indigenous settlements ensure cultural continuity or preservation of heritage. The preservation of culture provides the rootedness, ancestral, and cultural connection between the living and the dead. According to Abubakari et al. (2019) in their study on the inheritance of landed properties discovered that possession of land exceeds the physical property but a rather spiritual and cultural identity for the landholders. Also, family members come together at the inherited place to perform certain rituals such as festivals, burials, and traditional marriages (Hay, 1998). Scannell & Gifford (2010) argues that these traditional rituals exhibit historical experiences and cultural values that are transferred from one generation to another.

Secondly, community bonds and social networks are established within blighted areas. Urban scholars assert that people usually get attached to places where they were born and grew up (Livingston et al., 2008; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Galster, 2001 and Hidalgo & Bernardo, 2001). According to Livingston et al., (2008) the elderly who have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time, tend to have stronger social networks and interpersonal interactions with other households while the younger ones have community bonds due to friendship and mutual dependency on others in the neighbourhood (Kleinhans et al., 2007).

Also, the provision of a sense of well-being and place is obtained in blighted areas. According to Hay (1998), blighted properties may serve as a sense of place where a person feels comfortable at home, secured and has a sense of belongingness which gives him a foundation for life especially where one was raised. Besides Fried (2000) as cited in Scannell and Gifford (2010) argues that the importance of the sense of place is to offer one an identity, protection, and safety that would boost his confidence and permit exploration in life. Herbert (2018) acknowledges that the sense of place could have a positive impact on squatters and illegal occupants in urban areas. Additionally, Manzo (2003) argues that the deteriorated neighbourhoods may serve as a haven for the residents despite the condition or state. Scannell & Gifford (2010) and Livingston et al., (2008) emphasize that people get attached to places that meet their needs and support their goals and aspirations in life. For instance, where it provides a sense of livelihood or it is close to their workplace.

2.4.2. Negative effects

The leading negative effect of urban blight is the high incidence of crime. As emphasized by most researchers, blighted properties are characterised by unlawful acts such as vandalism, graffiti, drug and alcohol dealings and other antisocial behaviours (Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Miekley, 2008; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Ross, 1996).

Again, urban blight could lead to conflicts and insecurity. Kleinhans et al., (2007) argue that a deteriorated neighbourhood can pose a threat to the social interactions between residents especially when there is no trust or there are disagreeing claims on the same space. This can lead to conflicts among residents resulting in the absence of peace and safety. Thus, a sense of nuisance is likely to be established in the area instead of a sense of place (Hay, 1998; Kleinhans et al., 2007).

In addition, one negative effect of urban blight is stigmatization. Affluent residents do not want to associate with people in deteriorated neighbourhoods because they are regarded as poor (Galster, 2001) or they lose their prestige (Breger, 1967). Sometimes they lack the respect and interest of people especially by the local government when an entire neighbourhood was constructed through a large scale and all the necessary services and provisions have been made but are not being maintained properly (Hay, 1998; Galster, 2001).

Furthermore, blighted neighbourhoods could be detrimental to individuals and communities especially when children are not nurtured with the right principles in life which could bring about social disorder, drug addiction and unhealthy rivalry (Livingston et al., 2008 & Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Fried (2000) as cited in (Scannell & Gifford, 2010) highlights that deteriorated neighbourhoods could breed inferiority complex and prevent people from pursuing new opportunities for their personal growth and development.

Also, urban blight negatively affects cities' neighbourhood quality and as such areas lose their aesthetics benefits. As already mentioned, when the level of social values exceed that of economic values, then the attractiveness of the neighbourhood and needs satisfaction are relatively assessed in comparison with other attractive neighbourhoods by the economically inclined stakeholders and they leave causing the area to be more disfigured (Hay, 1998).

Additionally, underutilisation of urban spaces which can affect cities' functionality, investments and tax rates as well as property values for adjoining properties (Breger, 1967). Consequently, there is a distress on the real estate market for that area which usually affects the other stakeholders that have economic values attached to their properties (Haase et al., 2014; Weaver & Bagchi-Sen, 2013). Ultimately, the provision of infrastructure and services in the area by the local governments are also affected as well as the quality such as public schools, parks, safety and security forces (Galster, 2001).

Lastly, pollution is seen as one of the negative effects that come with urban blight. Galster (2001) argues that blighted neighbourhoods affect the physical quality of the environment. Some of the settlements are overcrowded because of inadequate housing infrastructure. This leads to land, water, air and noise pollution where there is neighbourhood disorder such as indiscriminate garbage disposals (Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, & Amoateng, 2015; & Ross & Mirowsky, 1999).

In short, a comparison of the effects of urban blight on land use and development portrays more negative effects than positive effects.

2.5. Development dynamics

This part elaborates on some of the approaches that have been adopted in addressing urban blight.

2.5.1. Approaches adopted to address the negative effects of blight

Urban scholars emphasize that the elementary approach of addressing urban blight begins with land-use planning and zoning regulations coupled with the provision of basic urban infrastructure and public services (Gordon, 2004; Hosseini et al., 2017; Asabere, 1981). Also, contemporary approaches include among others urban renewal/redevelopment, joint partnerships, complete sale of property and upgrading. Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013) argue that measures of addressing urban blight are done on an arbitrary basis, subjective or are politically driven. The arbitrary basis may be on a random basis by the local government while the subjective driven ones mostly depend on the personal choices and decisions of the property owners such as renovations (Brown and Perkins, 1992 as cited in Livingston et al., 2008), complete sale of property (Hosseini et al., 2017) or joint venture with investors (Carey, 2005). For the politically driven measures, some governments either adopt tax policy exemptions to entice investors (Gordon, 2004) or enter into Public-Private Partnerships (Donaldson, Du Plessis, Spocter, & Massey, 2013). Additionally, urban upgrading projects consider the provision and improvement of existing basic urban infrastructure while providing security of tenure for the inhabitants. It was noted that urban upgrading projects also aim at regularizing the tenure of all the settlements to integrate them into the urban fabric. This could be done through community participation where all the stakeholders are involved

(Minnery et al., 2013). Seemingly, the involvement and the participation of all the stakeholders in the process of mitigating urban blight would reduce the displacement of the poor and marginalized (Gordon, 2004; Haase et al., 2014; Hosseini et al., 2017).

2.6. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was partially adapted from Coy (2006) on his study “*Gated communities and urban fragmentation in Latin America: the Brazilian experience*.” He explained that gated communities form a new quality neighbourhood creating a fragmentation of an area. He categorized this new urban fragment (gated communities) as an “*island of wealth*”, characterized by shopping centres, entertainment centres, business parks, and revitalized areas. However, the other fragment outside the gated communities was considered to be an “*ocean of poverty*” typically with informal activities, low-cost housing, and squatter settlements.

Given the above, the concept of urban blight for this study was considered slightly similar to the urban fragmentation concept exhibited by Coy (2006). While he considered an area divided into two fragments; one of a high-quality neighbourhood, while the other part is not, this study considers one area, an economically prime urban area regarded as a high-quality residential neighbourhood with distributed pockets of urban blight. The high-quality neighbourhood is considered as an “*ocean of wealth*” whilst the distributed pockets of urban blight is reflected as “*island of urban blight*”. The characteristics of the blight include a cluster of disordered settlements, vacant plots, dilapidated properties and uncompleted or abandoned structures. It is unknown why there is the occurrence of distributed pockets of blighted properties in a prime urban area, East Legon in Accra-Ghana. Ultimately, the general land use and development of the prime urban area would be impacted. This is illustrated in figure 2-2 below.

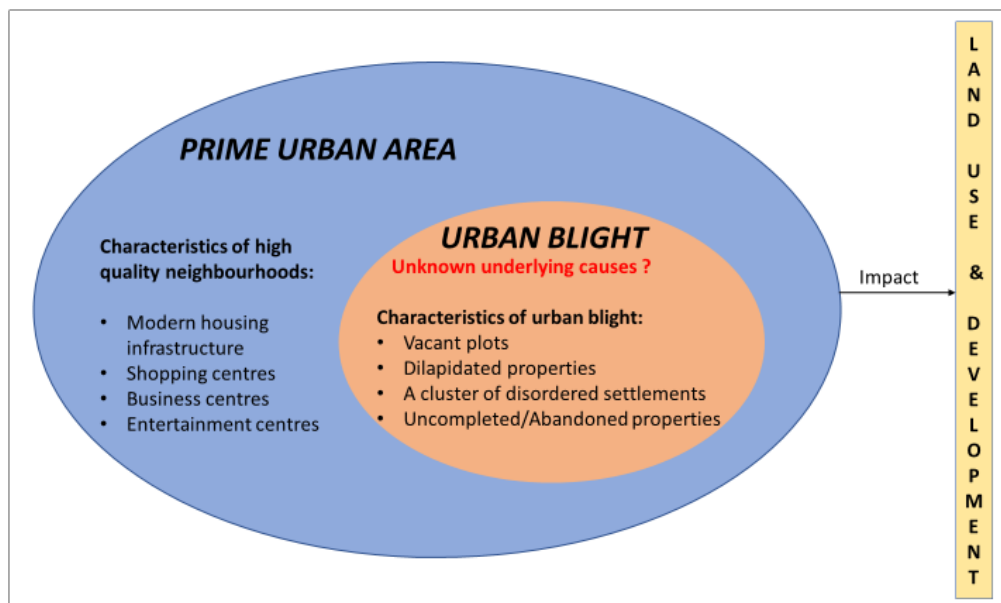


Figure 2-2 Conceptual framework partially adapted from Coy (2006), “*Gated communities and urban fragmentation in Latin America: the Brazilian experience*”

Source: Partially adapted from Coy (2006)

2.7. Conclusion

The upshot of the reviewed literature indicates that there is little discussion concerning the causes of urban blight in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) context. Notably, a greater percentage of the land in SSA is the customary land tenure system where the present generation regards the holding of the land as stewardship on behalf of the dead and future generations. Thus, there is a gap in the literature regarding how cultural values influence urban blight. Also, urban development in the Global North is mostly regulated and controlled by a firmly established land administration system which is not the case in the Sub-Saharan African region (SSA). Additionally, urban blight in the Global North has been considered from an entire neighbourhood level but it is unknown the reasons for the occurrence of distributed pockets of blight in an economically prime urban area which is regarded as a high-quality neighbourhood and inferred as “*an ocean of wealth*”. Therefore, the visual image interpretation, neighbourhood audit and interviews techniques are reflected to be the appropriate methods in finding out the reasons for the occurrence of the blight in the high-quality neighbourhood. Besides, the selection of blighted properties is based on the criteria stipulated in the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016, Act 925. Lastly, the causes and effects of urban blight from the Global North perspective may not be the same from the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), hence this study using a typical southern city, East Legon in Accra-Ghana.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section of the study expounds on the research design and operationalisation in achieving the main objective of the study: investigating the underlying reasons and impact of distributed pockets of urban blight in an economically prime urban area in East Legon, Accra-Ghana. An overview of the study area is also provided justifying why this area was chosen for this study.

3.1. Research design

A qualitative research strategy was employed for this study because the study aims at understanding the contextual reasons for urban blight in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region. The choice of the country, Ghana, is because its capital, Accra, is a modernised city that is experiencing urban blight. As stated by Clarke (1971), Accra is one of the coastal cities where urbanisation and modernity evolved because of colonisation. He further stated that because of the colonial architectural designs, the port cities in the region were more of Northern urban settings than Africa's indigenous settlements. Yet, Ghana is the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonisation in 1957, thus the premiere country to gain full control of urban planning and land management by an aboriginal government in the SSA region (Berry, 2009). Additionally, the concept of urban blight is known in Ghana's urban policy where the new Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925) gives a detailed description and criteria for identifying blight. Per the Act (Act 925), section 103, urban blight is described as "*A District Assembly may require: (a) an area comprising one or more properties to be acquired for redevelopment; or (b) an owner to redevelop the land to bring the land to a required standard if the District Assembly is of the opinion that, the current use of the land is not in conformity with the general standard of the vicinity as prescribed by the District Spatial Development Framework, structure plan or local plan.*" Therefore, with the above mentioned hints, the choice of Ghana makes the study an interesting one to be investigated to describe the Sub-Saharan African context (SSA) of urban blight.

Taking the above into consideration, a case study research approach was regarded as the most appropriate strategy for this research. According to Yin (2014), the niche of a case study research approach is to investigate a contemporary phenomenon which is labelled as "the case" in the real world. The book further explains that this research approach helps with an in-depth understanding of pertinent contextual circumstances associated with the case. Aptly, the chosen study area, East Legon in Accra-Ghana, would provide in-depth understanding and detailed descriptions of the perceptions of various stakeholders on the urban blight case. Besides, table 3-1 gives a summary of the research design matrix. Research design matrix as emphasized by Choguill (2005), renders a framework for the collection and analysis of data for a study.

Table 3-1 Research design matrix

Research questions	Data required	Data source and participants	Analysis method	Expected output
Objective 1: To identify the different forms of urban blight in the study area				
a. How has urban blight in the area evolved?	The evolution of urban blight in East Legon	Field data – Interviews with participants (experts and property owners)	Qualitative data analysis using Atlas.ti software	Evolution of urban blight in the study area
b. What is the distribution of the forms of urban blight in the area?	Aerial images 2016, 2018	1.Google Earth 2. Orthophoto	1. Visual image interpretation 2. Direct neighbourhood audit	Map showing the distribution of blighted properties in the study area
Objective 2: To find out why urban blight exists from the perspective of various stakeholders				
a. What are the possible causes of urban blight in the area?	Causes of urban blight	Field data – Interviews with all participants (experts, property owners, residents, real estate developers)	Qualitative data analysis using Atlas.ti software	Explanations for the causes of urban blight in the area
b. What are the land tenure systems and their influence on the form of urban blight?	Land tenure systems			The land tenure systems and how they influence urban blight
c. How do various stakeholders attach values to their properties and what are the reasons (if any)?	Values attached to properties			The perceptions of values attached to properties
Objective 3: To ascertain the impact of urban blight on land use and development				
a. What are the effects (positive and negative) of urban blight in the neighbourhood?	Effects of urban blight	Field data – Interviews with all participants (experts, property owners, residents, real estate developers)	Qualitative data analysis using Atlas.ti software	The effect of urban blight in the neighbourhood
b. In the case of negative effects, what are the development dynamics to address the blight?	Development dynamics			Development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight

Source: (Author's construct, 2019)

3.2 Operationalisation of the research

This research was conducted in three phases; research proposal/pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post fieldwork as shown in the operational plan in figure 3-1 and discussed further in the following sections from 3.2.1 to 3.2.3 respectively.

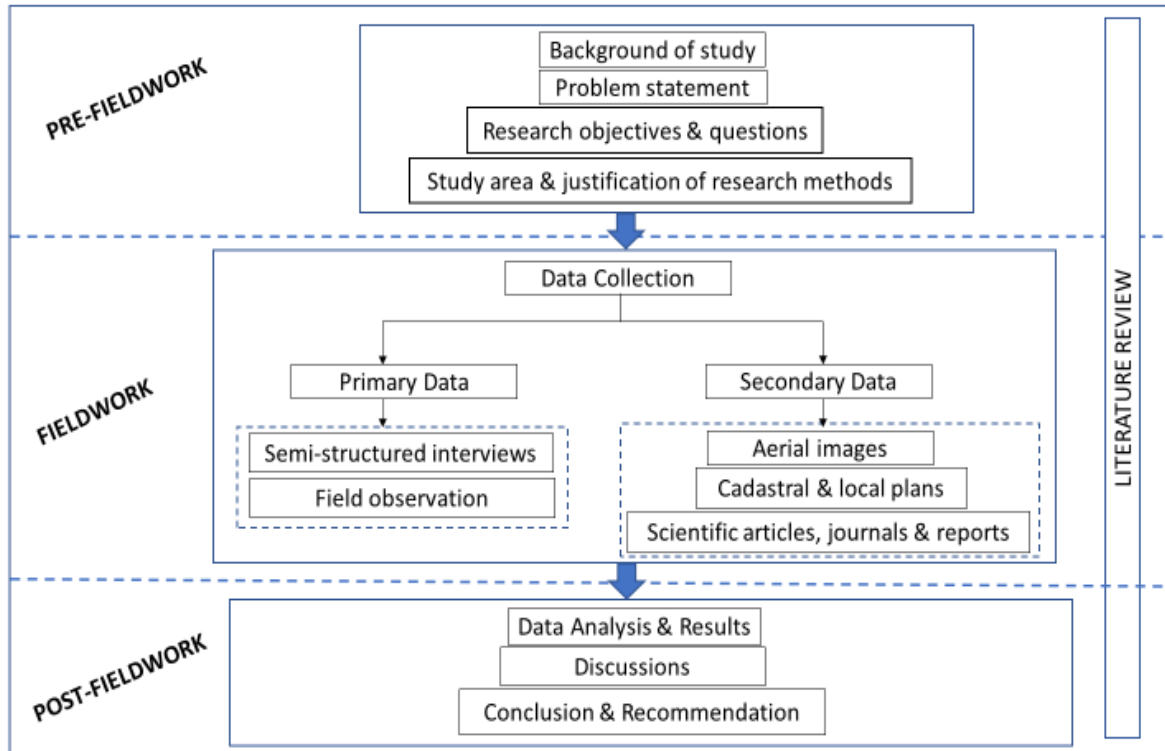


Figure 3-1 Operational plan of this study

Source: (Author's construct, 2019)

3.2.1 Pre-fieldwork phase

This phase of the research gave the background to the study, the identification of the research problem, literature review, and the research design for the study. Besides, a virtual neighbourhood audit was conducted using open-source software, Google Earth aerial image, to capture some of the blighted properties in the study area (see appendix 1). Clarke, Ailshire, Melendez, Bader, and Morenoff (2010) uphold that neighbourhood audit on the general land use of an area could reliably be conducted with Google street view since the viewer is given a virtual feeling of about 15m resolution. However, the limitations to this remote observation were the fact that it could give only the spatial perspective of the blighted properties which was significantly dependent on the spatial resolution. Additionally, the temporal aspect of the Google Earth aerial images ranged from 2007 to 2018 which did not depict the current situation on the ground as at the time of the research proposal; October 2019. Furthermore, the coverage was constrained because not all the streets and landed properties in the area could be viewed in the aerial images. Therefore, in obtaining a detailed description and contextual understanding of urban blight in the study area, direct field observations and data collection were needed in addition to the virtual neighbourhood audit.

Since the concept of urban blight has no standardised definition by urban scholars and social scientists as stated in the previous chapter, there are nuances of urban blight with diverse criteria for the identification

of the forms of urban blight. As already mentioned, in Ghana, according to section 103 of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925), the criteria for determining blighted properties are as follows:

- a) *“irregularity of plots or parcels;”*
- b) *“Inadequacy of streets in the vicinity;”*
- c) *“Lack of access to plots or habitable dwelling within the area;”*
- d) *“Diversity of existing use which makes development control difficult or impossible;”*
- e) *“Incompatibility with”*
 - iv. *“The existing or proposed use;”*
 - v. *“The spatial development framework; and”*
 - vi. *“The structure or local plan;”*
- f) *“Adverse impact on the environment;”*
- g) *“Overcrowding leading to unhealthy population density;”*
- h) *“Lack of sanitation, drainage or appropriate service;”*
- i) *“High incidence of crime which has been confirmed to be attributable to the type of development; and”*
- j) *“Safety or restriction to the other authorised users.”}*

This study categorized the stipulated criteria in the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925) into four forms of urban blight as shown in table 3-2. These categories were used in identifying the blighted properties for the virtual neighbourhood audit on the Google Earth aerial image and the same was adopted for the entire study. The four forms of urban blight used for the study were a cluster of disordered settlements, a vacant plot of land surrounded by well-developed properties, a single dilapidated property surrounded by well-developed properties, and an uncompleted/abandoned structure surrounded by well-developed properties.

Aptly, the visual image interpretation of the aerial image was based on tacit/local knowledge of the area and the assistance of the Google street view (see appendix 1). Thus, the selection of the blighted properties was based on visual image interpretation elements such as pattern, shape, and location or association. Also, Bakx et al. (2013) describe visual image interpretation elements as firstly, the pattern depicts the spatial arrangements of the buildings where there is a repetition of form, style, or relationships. For instance, areas with condominium buildings or gated communities have a certain trait of unison whereas clusters of the disordered settlement also have their form/style. Secondly, the shape takes into consideration the two or three-dimensional projection of the property (the Google street view assisted). Additionally, the shape helped to identify uncompleted/abandoned structures within the study area. Lastly, the location/association of the blighted property with regards to the surroundings helped to determine single dilapidated properties and undeveloped plots. Thus, vacant plots within the built-up area were easily found due to their undeveloped nature and proximity to the well-developed properties. Each form of urban blight is illustrated in a figure from figures 3-2 to 3-5.

The aerial views of the four forms of urban blight for this study

a) A cluster of disordered settlement

Figure 3-2 illustrates an aerial view of clusters of disordered settlement with blue dots. The selection of this form of urban blight is based on irregularity of plots, overcrowding, and lack of access to habitable dwellings.

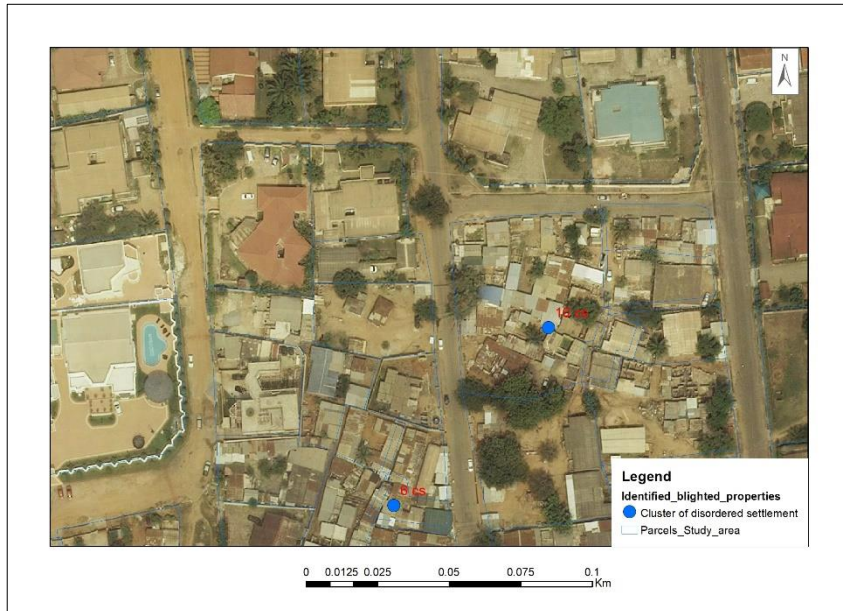


Figure 3-2 Aerial view of clusters of disordered settlements

Source: Google Earth 2018 & parcel plan from Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority

b) A vacant plot of land

The aerial view of a vacant plot of land surrounded by well-developed properties is shown in figure 3-3 below. The criterion for the selection of vacant plots of land is undeveloped nature.

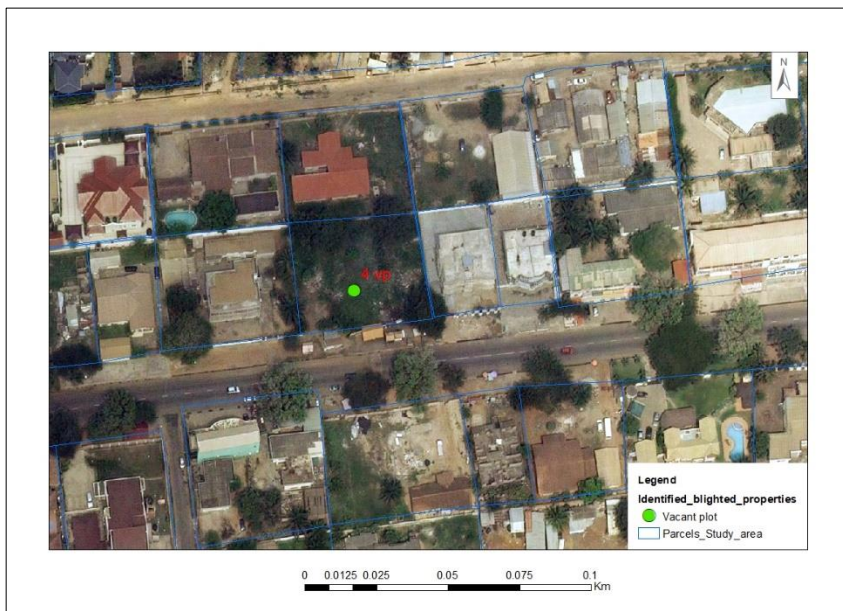


Figure 3-3 Aerial view of vacant plot of land

Source: Google Earth 2018 & parcel plan from Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority

c) A single dilapidated property

The selection of dilapidated properties is identified as old and obsolete properties located within a well-developed area as shown with red dots in figure 3-4 below.

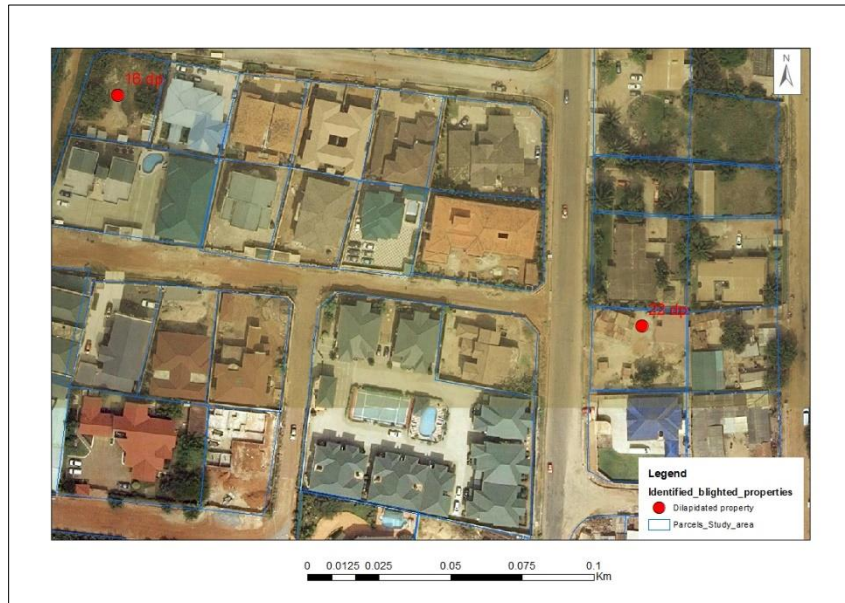


Figure 3-4 Aerial view of dilapidated properties

Source Google Earth 2018 & parcel plan from Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority

d) Uncompleted/abandoned structures

Figure 3-5 shows an aerial view of an uncompleted structure. The aerial selection is based on the foundations of building constructions on site.

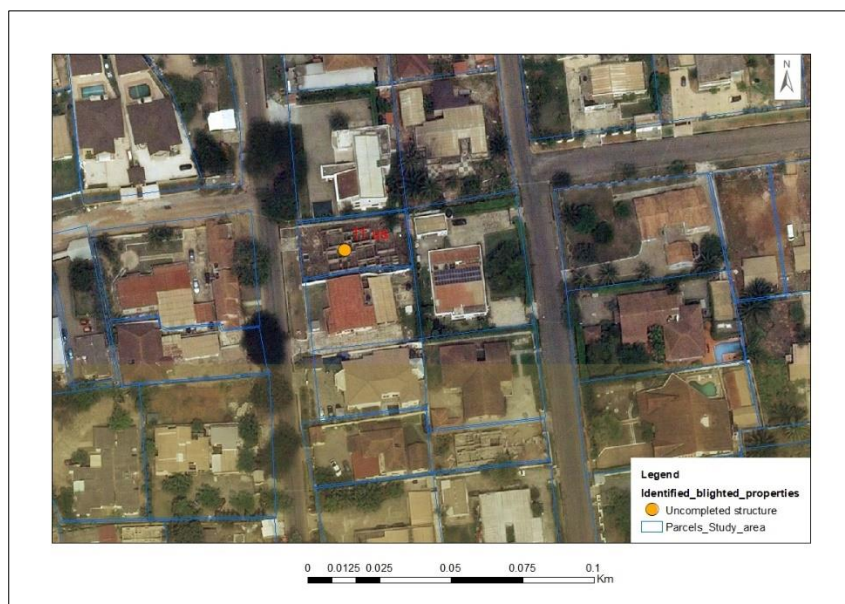


Figure 3-5 Aerial view of an uncompleted structure

Source: Google Earth 2018 & parcel plan from Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority

Table 3-2 A summary of the criteria for selecting blighted properties for this study

No.	Description of the form of urban blight surrounded by well-developed properties	Criteria according to the Land Use and Spatial Act 2016 (Act 925)
a)	A cluster of disordered settlement	<i>"Irregularity of plots or parcels"</i>
		<i>"Lack of access to plots or habitable dwelling within the area"</i>
		<i>"Safety or restriction to the other authorised users"</i>
		<i>"Overcrowding leading to unhealthy population density"</i>
		<i>"Lack of sanitation, drainage or appropriate service"</i>
b)	A vacant plot of land	<i>"Safety or restriction to the other authorised users"</i>
		<i>"Adverse impact on the environment"</i>
c)	Single dilapidated property	<i>"Incompatibility with the existing or proposed use; the spatial development framework; and the structure or local plan"</i>
		<i>"Diversity of existing use which makes development control difficult or impossible"</i>
		<i>"Safety or restriction to the other authorised users"</i>
		<i>"High incidence of crime which has been confirmed to be attributable to the type of development"</i>
d)	Uncompleted/Abandoned structures	<i>"Adverse impact on the environment"</i>
		<i>"High incidence of crime which has been confirmed to be attributable to the type of development"</i>

Source: (Author's construct, 2019)

3.2.2 Fieldwork phase

With the virtual neighbourhood audit conducted during the pre-field phase, some blighted properties were spotted and earmarked. This formed the basis for the preliminary survey of the study area during the direct field observation. The preliminary survey was to familiarize the various locations of the blighted properties and to ascertain the current status of the properties as at the time of the fieldwork; December 2019/January 2020. Also, Google map was used together with Ghana post GPS software (see appendix 2) for easy identification of the blighted properties to obtain and record the unique property addresses (property id) recognized in the Ghanaian system.

3.2.2.1 Data collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data as described by Kumar (2011) are data collected specifically for the study whereas secondary data are already existing or collected data which may be used for other purposes yet are necessary for this study. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the primary data from thirty (30) interviewees/participants during the fieldwork from December 2019 to January 2020. These interviewees/participants were composed of eight (8) property owners of the blighted properties, twelve (12) residents in the neighbourhood, two (2) employees/officials of real estate development companies, eight (8) directors/managers of institutions such as the Lands Commission (LC), Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA), Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly (AWMA) as presented in table 3-4. Additionally, field observation was used to gather primary data for the study. This involved purposeful identification of the current distribution of the blighted properties as well as paying attention to the interactions of the interviewees. Electronic devices; a digital camera, and an audio recorder were used to capture photographs

of some blighted properties and conversations with the interviewees respectively. Nevertheless, there were narrative recordings (jotting down of notes) where participants were uncomfortable with the audio recordings. To visually engage, stimulate the interest and understanding of urban blight by the interviewees as well as evoke deep reflections, a photograph showing the general description of the mixture of well-developed properties and blighted properties in the study area was used for the interviews (see appendix 3). Also, figure 3-6 shows photographs of the researcher interviewing some of the interviewees. According to Bryman (2012), the photo-elicitation method in qualitative interviews serves as an anchor to trigger, excite and evoke the thoughts, views, and perceptions of the interviewees to provide a meaningful context of the subject matter of discussion.

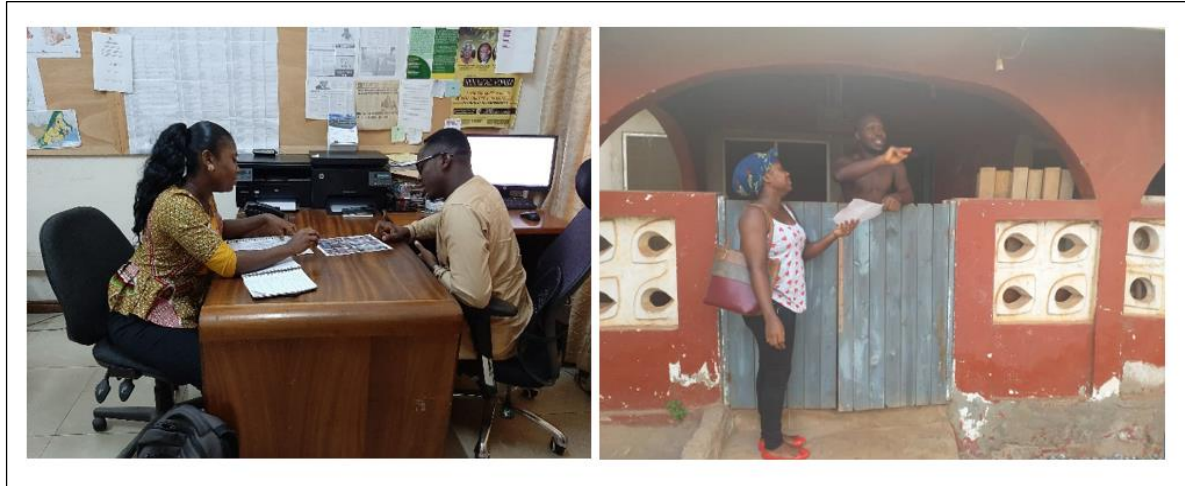


Figure 3-6 Photo-elicitation/interview sessions during fieldwork

Source: (Author: fieldwork, 2020)

Secondary data, on the other hand, were aerial images: Google Earth 2018, orthophoto 2016 and land use plan (local plan) of the study area from Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA) and Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) as described in table 3-3. The Google Earth image was selected based on the spatial resolution to help with the visual image interpretation of the blighted properties. Also, the orthophoto gave a better spatial resolution of 0.2m as well as spatial data already obtained by Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority in Ghana. Furthermore, the boundary of the study area (shapefile) was acquired from Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA) which was used to locate the study area on the aerial images. The Google Earth image was then exported as a kmz file and subsequently converted to kml files in ArcGIS software and georeferenced accordingly. Additionally, the land use plan assisted with the boundaries of the parcels which was very helpful in the visual interpretation of the Google Earth aerial image as shown from figures 3-2 to 3-5 respectively. Besides, secondary information was gathered from relevant scientific articles, journals, and reports.

Table 3-3 A summary of the secondary data for this study

Data type	Source	Metadata	
		Acquisition dates	Data description
Raster	Google Earth	2018	1. Spot image <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolution 0.5m WGS 84 / UTM zone 30N. EPSG:32630
	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA)	2016	1. Orthophoto <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolution 0.2m
Vector	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA)		Administrative boundary of Ghana and study area
	Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)		Land use plan

3.2.2.2 Sampling strategy

According to Kumar (2011), since the main aim of most qualitative researches is to explore or describe a situation or phenomenon, the issue of sampling is of little importance to ascertain the validity of the study. However, to explore the diversity of the phenomenon, a saturation point must be reached. He further explained saturation point to be a subjective judgement decided or discerned by the researcher, where he/she reaches a point in the data collection, and subsequently either he/she does not discover new information or any new data/information obtained is negligible regarding the objective of the study.

For this study, non-probability sampling designs; purposive and convenience sampling techniques, were adopted. A total of thirty (30) participants were interviewed as presented in table 3-4. Purposive sampling as described by Kumar (2005) is the judgement the researcher has with regards to who can provide the needed and required data for the research. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain expert knowledge where eight (8) managers/directors of the government institutions involved in land administration and land use planning in the country were contacted as shown in table 3-4. The institutions included the Lands Commission (LC), Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA), Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), and the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly (AWMA). The role of the Lands Commission which is made of four divisions is to ensure effective registration and land administration in the country. Also, the role of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA) is to plan, manage and ensure harmonious and sustainable human settlements whereas the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly categorised as local government authorities are to see to the development of the study area, East Legon, by providing essential infrastructure as well as account for rational growth and human settlements of the area.

More so, another sampling technique used is convenience sampling. This is also known as accidental sampling by some authors. Kumar (2005) describes convenience sampling as a technique based on suitability and ease of accessing the participants for a research study. Thus, a convenience sampling technique was used for this study which was based on the researcher's ease of accessing, contacting, and reaching the property owners, residents in the neighbourhood as well as staff/employees of the real estate development companies in the study area. The interviewees/participants were selected from their location (either close to or in occupation) of identified blighted properties as well as their willingness to be interviewed. In sum, eight (8) property owners, twelve (12) residents, and two (2) employees of real estate

development companies were interviewed under the convenience sampling technique as presented in table 3-4 below.

Table 3- 4 A summary of interviewees and sampling strategies

No.	Description of interviewees/participants	Sampling strategy	Total number
1	Residents	Convenience sampling	12
2	Property owners (Family Members)		8
3	Real estate developers		2
	Experts		
4	Lands Commission	Purposive sampling	
i	Public and Vested Lands Management Division		2
ii	Land Valuation Division		1
iii	Survey and Mapping Division		1
5	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority		1
6	Local Government Authorities		
i	Accra Metropolitan Assembly		1
ii	Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly		2
	Total number of interviewees		30

Source: (Author's construct, 2020)

3.2.3 Post fieldwork phase

The data collected during the fieldwork was analysed at this stage. The primary data collected via audio recordings were first transcribed into texts using Microsoft word documents. Subsequently, the transcribed documents were uploaded unto the Atlas.ti software where the documents were grouped according to the various participants (see appendix 4). Also, the texts were open coded to capture the information about the interviewees' perceptions. Bryman (2012) describes open coding as the process of analysing qualitative data where the researcher remains open-minded to generate as many ideas as possible as well as make meanings out of the data collected by breaking down, assessing, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorising the data. Consequently, the codes generated from the transcribed documents were grouped into themes (code groups) for addressing the research questions as shown in figure 3-7.

Code Manager				
Search Code Groups		Search Codes		
Code Groups	Name	Grounded	Density	Groups
Area characteristics (29)	area zoning	2	0	[The concept of urban blight]
Cause of blight (25)	assessment of property rate	2	0	[Role of Institutions]
Effect (20)	Assessment of property value	1	0	[Role of Institutions]
Investment (24)	atakpami building	11	0	[The concept of urban blight]
Land Tenure System (34)	atakpami buildings	2	0	[The concept of urban blight]
Mitigation strategy (28)	attachment	7	0	[Value attached to property]
Role of Institutions (41)	benefit	6	0	[Effect]
The concept of urban blight (27)	blight	6	0	[The concept of urban blight]
Value attached to property (14)	Blighted property	1	0	[The concept of urban blight]
	Cause	2	0	[Cause of blight]
	Cause of blight	59	0	[Cause of blight]
	cause of blight_security	1	0	[Cause of blight]
	cause of blight_state land	2	0	[Cause of blight]
	challenge_municipality	2	0	[Role of Institutions]
	challenges_municipality	1	0	[Role of Institutions]
	Change is optional	3	0	[Cause of blight]

Figure 3-7 Themes generated from the open coding using Atlas.ti software

Additionally, the secondary data obtained; land-use plan (local plan) and the aerial images were used for the identification of the blighted properties and generation of a map as shown in figure 3-8.

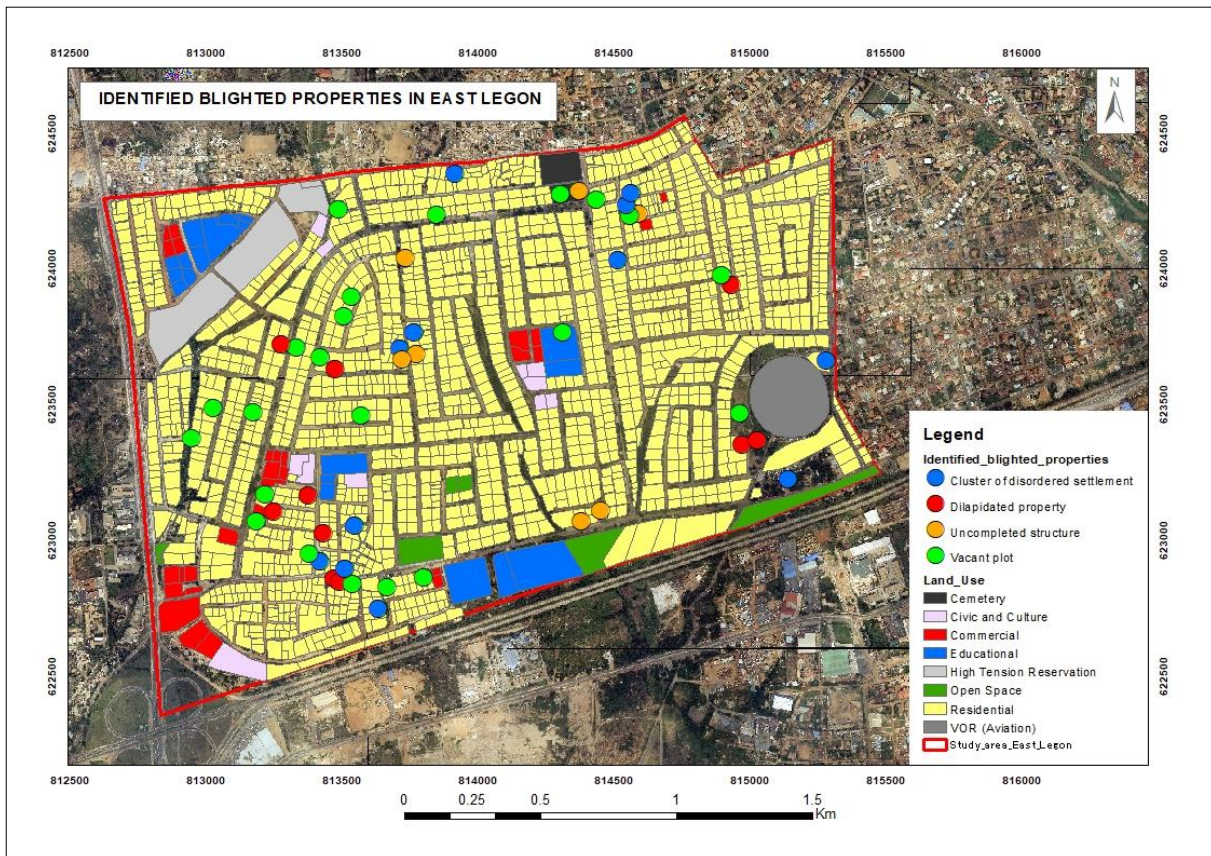


Figure 3- 8 Layout plan with identified blighted properties

Source: Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority & Google Earth

Figure 3-8 illustrates the dispersed nature of the blighted properties in East Legon. Also, from figure 3-8, it can be recognized that East Legon is a residential area with complementary uses such as commercial and educational. The identified blighted properties are located within the residential land use zones with the lead being vacant plots, followed by the cluster of disordered settlements, then the dilapidated properties. The uncompleted structures, on the other hand, are the least. Besides, more of the cluster of disordered settlements and the dilapidated properties are seen on the outskirts of the study area whereas the uncompleted structures are in the inner city. This shows that developments are taking place in the inner city of the study area more than the outskirts (outer edges). Finally, the vacant plots are dispersed all over in the study area.

3.3 Overview of the study area

Ghana has two kinds of governance; national and local. Whereas national governance oversees the nationwide growth and development, the local government is a decentralised administration system that concentrates on sectoral development. The then Local Government Act 1993 Act 462 now Local Government Act 2016 Act 936, together with the 1992 Constitution of Ghana established the local government assemblies, namely; Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (Asiama, 2006). Their responsibilities include providing basic education, environmental protection, and sanitation as well as public health. Additionally, they are to ensure the enforcement and implementation of spatial development frameworks, structural and local plans for sustainable development and human settlements within their jurisdictions. Currently, the country is divided into sixteen (16) administrative regions with two hundred and sixty (260) Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

Accra is the capital of Ghana covering an approximate land area of 225.67 square kilometres out of 238,533 square kilometres of the nation's land size. Accra was hitherto a fishing and farming village for the Ga traditional people but over the years has grown to become the most urbanized, populous, and heterogeneous city in the nation (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2003).

The study area

East Legon residential area is a first-class suburb of Accra which measures a total area of approximately 4.95 square kilometres and falls under the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly (AWMA). It is classified as a high-class residential area by the Assembly mainly due to the good infrastructural facilities within the area such as roads, water, electricity, and telecommunication systems as well as modern developments and major commercial activities such as hotels, banks, restaurants and business centres. Additionally, it is recognized as one of the most expensive residential areas in Accra with land values being quoted in millions of United States Dollars as a result of the influx of international businesses and expatriates (Anim-Odame et al., 2009). The area is about 11 minutes' drive to the country's international airport. Thus, the reason for the high demand for urban space in this area. Despite being noted as an affluent area with a high demand for urban space, the area is experiencing blighted conditions (Arguello, Ayele, & Blaustein, 2015). Some of these properties have been in blighted conditions for many years but have high economic potentials thus, a useful case study to explore the main causes and impact of blight on land use and development in the area. Figure 3-9 shows a map of the study area.

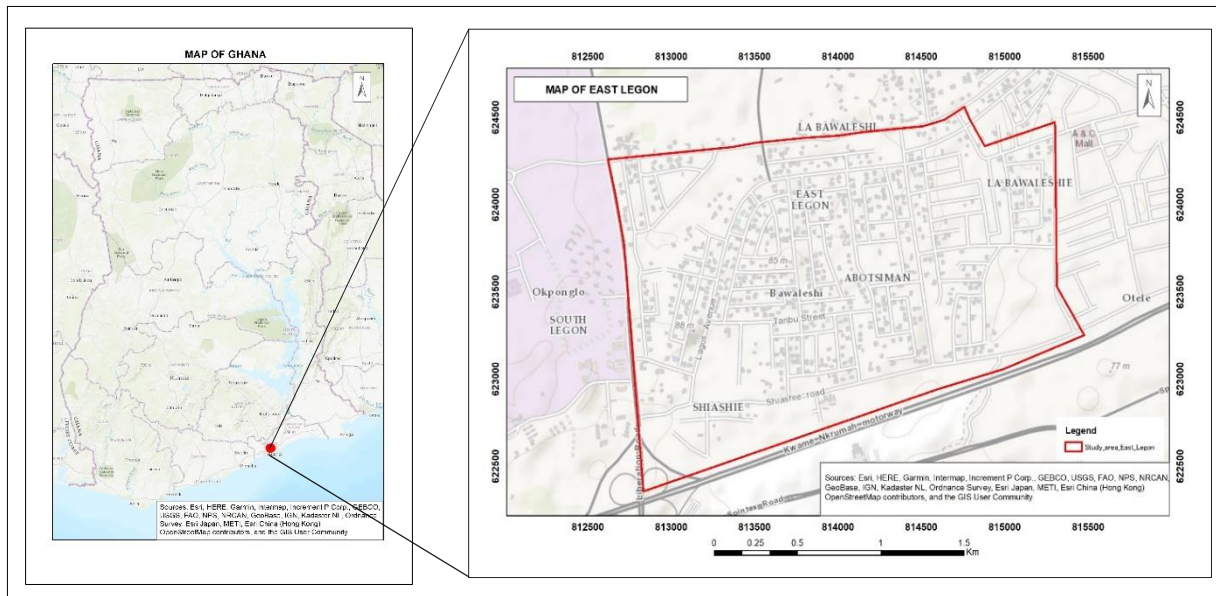


Figure 3-9 Map of East Legon, Accra-Ghana

Source: Esri Topographical Map & Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority

3.4 Ethical considerations

To ensure the legitimacy of the study, introductory letters were obtained from the University of Twente, Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation, ITC, authorizing the researcher to conduct the study in the chosen field and also to be accorded the needed assistance to collect the data. The introductory letters and student identification card (id) were made available to all participants. They were informed the data collected was for academic purposes and would be treated with confidentiality. Additionally, the researcher would make proper acknowledgement and references to the sources of data particularly the secondary data. For the primary data, the participants would be treated anonymously. Permission was sought from interviewees to audio record the interviews while notes/salient points were jotted down for those participants who were uncomfortable with the audio recordings.

3.5 Limitations of the study

Some of the properties earmarked as blighted properties especially on the Google map aerial image had been redeveloped during the fieldwork. Due to time constraints, property owners who had sold their blighted properties to investors to redevelop them could not be interviewed. Various reasons and the impact of the complete sale of properties were expressed by some of the interviewees. But the researcher did not get the chance to interview some of these property owners to seek their perspective and impact after the sale of their properties. Also, some property owners of vacant plots of land, as well as uncompleted/abandoned properties, were not found on site. Yet some of the caretakers who were found in the absence of the property owners were resistant to be interviewed as well as in giving out the addresses/telephone numbers of the property owners to be interviewed. Lastly, some real estate development companies were reluctant to participate in the study. Although the information gathered from the two firms were enough, much more information could have been obtained if more real estate investors were interviewed.

4. RESULTS

This part of the research expounds the outcomes and findings of the study. The local concept of urban blight from the perspective of the various groups of participants is first explained. Subsequently, the findings are interpreted and described with reference to the research sub-objectives and questions of this study.

4.1 The local concept of urban blight

The results of the interviews show that the concept of urban blight was perceived differently by the various groups of participants; experts, property owners, real estate developers, and residents of the study. Table 4-1 gives a summary of the local perception of urban blight by the majority of each group and explained further with pictorial views from figures 4-1 to 4-4.

Table 4-1 Local perception of urban blight by the interviewees from fieldwork

	Local perception	Interviewees/Participants			
		Experts	Property owners	Residents	Real estate developers
1	Aesthetics			√	
2	Indigenous buildings “ <i>atakpame</i> ”	√		√	
3	Squatter settlements “kiosks”	√	√	√	
4	Unripe investment				√

Source: (Author’s construct, 2020)

Table 4-1 illustrates the general perceptions of the participants represented with shaded portions and the sign (√). The analysis of the data collected reveals that the experts perceived urban blight from the prescribed standard of the study area. East Legon is classified by the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly as a first-class residential area because of its urban infrastructure. As stated by the physical planner of the Assembly, “*classification has to do with the level of infrastructures like electricity, water, road, and communication; the availability and the state.*” In addition to the classification, there is a general standard; the local plan of the area as shown in figure 3-8. The local plan specifies the land use and development of the area as well as indicates policies and specific proposals of the area. Besides, for state lands, the covenants in the lease documents/agreements also serve as a standard for the study area. Yet family lands that have been regularized by the Lands Commission also had the same lease arrangements and covenants. Consequently, indigenous buildings and wooden residential structures locally referred to as “*atakpame buildings*” and “*kiosks*” respectively were considered substandard buildings by the experts.

“*Atakpame buildings*”, as illustrated in figure 4-1, are mud houses made of red soils with high clay content which makes it ideal for building. The name originated from the Krobo tribe in Ghana, where in their dialect the red soil is called “*Kpa*” and to say stirred in the same dialect is “*ata me*” hence the name of the building “*Ata-kpa-me*.” The red soil is mixed with water and stirred by stepping or marching in the soil until a good smooth muddy paste is achieved. The paste is then rolled into balls of about 40 cm in diameter. Afterwards, the balls are placed one to another to erect the walls of the building. Additionally, heavy beams/logs are positioned at the corners or joints of the building to serve as pillars which also hold

the frame for the roof. Ultimately, the wall is dressed for painting. As articulated by one expert; *“none of them have come here to obtain a permit. When you go on-site and you see them, you see they are ancient buildings.”* It is believed by experts that property owners know their properties are blighted from the adjoining properties. One stated; *“so eventually you will find that you don’t belong here anymore.....When the Assembly deems it fit that what is there or your building is uncalled for, then we come in.”* Figure 4-1 below gives pictorial views of *atakpame buildings* shown with arrows and the beams/logs serving as pillars of the building also demonstrated with an oval shape. From the picture, it can be seen that the *atakpame buildings* are surrounded by high rise structures in the same vicinity.



Figure 4-1 Pictorial views of atakpame buildings from fieldwork

(arrow (↙) pointing out the atakpame buildings and the oval shape (○) showing the columns and beams

Source: (Author, Fieldwork 2020)

Also, from the property owners’ point of view, the blighted properties were mainly “*kiosks*.” A “*kiosk*” is the local term given to wooden residential structures. The kiosks’ structures were regarded as properties occupied by squatters who are not the rightful owners of the land. While some have the permission of the landowners to occupy the land, the majority of them do not have the landowners’ permission. Besides, the predominant ones are those occupying state/government lands especially the road reserves and riparian areas. As expressed by one property owner, *“in as much as we want to beautify Accra, we cannot compromise on squatters. Squatters are illegal settlers. Immediately you entertain them, it becomes difficult to evacuate them so don’t even start. When you drive on the motorway, it is an eyesore to see the kind of developments along this international highway. Trust me, most of these squatters create a lot of mess around because there are no proper convenient places, and most of the difficulties we face are because of these squatters.”* Information gathered on the field indicates that there are high inhabitants for the kiosks structures which makes them overcrowded. As mentioned by one of the occupants; *“one thing I have observed about our stay here is that we in the kiosks are the majority.”* More so, these kiosk structures lack social amenities like toilet facilities, water, and refuse dumps resulting in havoc where refuse is dumped haphazardly. Figure 4-2 gives a pictorial view of the structure of the kiosks settlement (the left side of the photograph).



Figure 4-2 Pictorial view of kiosk settlement from fieldwork (on the left)

Source: (Author, Fieldwork 2020)

Furthermore, the residents of East Legon perceived urban blight from an aesthetics outlook. That is, the exterior/physical appearances of properties were matched with other gorgeous properties within the same vicinity as shown in figure 4-3. As described by one resident; *“there are some nice developments and others that are not in a good state.”* Figure 4-3 demonstrates developments on the same stretch of a street where the left side shows urban blight and the right side shows high-rise apartment buildings. More so, another resident stated that some property owners of vacant plots usually put caretakers on their plots to safeguard their land while these *“caretakers also end up bringing others who are more like squatters.”* For the indigenous settlements, the residents noted them as old structures that need to be redeveloped.



Figure 4-3 Views of development along the same street (directly opposite each other) from fieldwork

Source: (Author, Fieldwork 2020)

Finally, real estate developers viewed blighted properties from an investment perspective where property owners of blighted properties knew their properties were blighted from the adjoining properties and use such as apartments and commercial activities like hotels and condominiums. Especially with vacant plots of land, one developer stated; *“the right investment is not yet in. The owner may have plans but it has not yet been materialized”* as shown in figure 4-4. Figure 4-4 shows two properties that share a common boundary (fence wall), yet one is developed into a residential apartment whereas the other is an undeveloped/vacant plot.



Figure 4-4 View of developed and vacant plot sharing a fence wall from fieldwork

In summary, the results of the study show that urban blight is a relative concept perceived differently by various participants. Accordingly, a property perceived as a blight for one person may not be a blight for another. Also, a property in a specific location, say A, may be considered to be blighted because it is compared with the immediate well-developed properties. However, the same property may be placed in a different location, say B, and may not be considered blighted because it is surrounded by similar properties. The local perceptions of urban blight are aesthetics/physical appearance, squatters who are mostly illegal settlers, and referred to as *“kiosks”* settlements as well as indigenous buildings that are locally known as *“atakpame”* buildings. The *atakpame buildings* and *kiosks* structures were considered substandard buildings by the experts while to a large number of the interviewed residents, they were regarded from an aesthetics point of view. Yet real estate investors perceived blighted properties as unripe urban investments. On a whole, it was believed that people could tell their properties were blighted from immediate surroundings; adjoining properties, and uses.

4.2 Identification of different forms of urban blight in the study area

This section addresses the first sub-objective of the study; to identify the different forms of urban blight in the area. The research questions tackled under this unit are: How has the urban blight in the area evolved and what is the current distribution of the forms of urban blight in the area? Section 4.2.1 focuses on the evolution of urban blight whereas section 4.2.2 illustrates the forms of urban blight in the study area.

4.2.1 Evolution of urban blight in East Legon

The evolution of urban blight gives a background of East Legon and how the urban blight in the area developed. The prevailing circumstances underlying the urban blight development are indigenous settlements and compulsory acquisition of the land by the Government. Additionally, some areas have been provided with infrastructure while others lacked social amenities and facilities. Historically, East Legon was a Ga traditional area where the occupants migrated from the Labadi traditional area. The village settlements that were in place or the original settlements were Shiashie, Okponglo, Abotsiman, and La Bawaleshie. As stated by one property owner (family member), *“Shiashie is the annex of the Labadi stool.”* However, the family members in these villages supposedly believe that it is easier for the annex villages to develop into modern settlements with high-rise buildings than the main traditional villages. Information gathered indicates that the current land value in the area is One Hundred and Fifty Thousand United States Dollars (US\$150,000.00) for a plot of 0.17 acres. This was expressed by the family member as, *“it is easy to develop in the annex than the native traditional area. There are more people in the native traditional area than the annexes. In the annexes, when there is a good offer, it can be considered. Shiashie land, the cheapest you can get is US\$ 150, 000 per plot. Right now the land is bought and developed into high rise structures.”*

Also, the Director of the Public and Vested Lands Management Division (PVLMD) of the Lands Commission gave the background of the study area. She reported that East Legon is a residential area that was established by the then Colonial Government in 1944. The area was compulsorily acquired by the Government as an extension of the International Airport zone. So initially, the acquired area was termed as Airport Extension. Subsequently, the Government carved a portion of the acquired land and created a residential estate. The estate was established for senior civil servants with the provision of infrastructures such as roads, electricity, and water. Accordingly, the plots were allocated and leased to the senior civil servants to construct the buildings themselves. About the covenants in the lease agreement, the lessees/leaseholders were to commence the construction of the building within the first year when the plot was allocated and complete the construction latest by the 5th year. To all appearances, East Legon at the outset gained the first-class residential area after the Government had established the estate. Information gathered indicates that the original/indigenous settlers were compensated for the loss of their land inclusive of farmlands. However, they were not relocated but were left to remain in the area since the Government was also establishing a residential estate per the advice of the committee that was set to counsel the Government appropriately. This was articulated by the Land administrator as; *“when the acquisition was done, there was a committee that was set up to look at this particular acquisition. They called it the Alomatu Committee. So they were the ones that interacted with the chiefs and the people and they recommended that once they are living there and it is also residential, what is the point in driving them out? They should allow them to be there because, with time, they will grow out of it.”* The land administrator, however, lamented that since the time of the acquisition, the indigenous settlements have not developed to meet the standard of the area as was anticipated. She expressed her sentiments affirming; *“it didn’t work because you realize that the longer you stay there, the longer you get attached to the land and you begin to claim rights to the land. And unfortunately for us, they are not even claiming the land just where they are but the other ones as well. I think it wasn’t a good decision. If they had found land elsewhere and relocated them, it would have been better. Because, if you move them out, then they know that you have taken them out of the system and they are no more there. But leaving them there, and for a very long time. Now the value of this land has gone very high and people want land and the demand is also high.”* Clarifications obtained from the land administration experts indicate that the indigenous people were left to occupy their properties in East Legon based on humanitarian grounds. Nevertheless, some of the indigenous people are claiming ownership over some other portions of the land as a result of the high demand for urban properties in the area. Consequently, they are selling those properties even though the Government through the Lands Commission only recognizes them as occupants of the land.

Yet, the local government experts believe that the evolution of urban blight in East Legon has come about as a result of urbanisation. Supposedly, every first-class residential area in the capital city, Accra, was once an indigenous settlement. This was expressed by the physical planner of the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly as *“if you look at the history of settlements, before the rich people settled in, there used to be indigenous people who were farmers, traders, who were the natives. So those places, we call them old towns. All those places used to be Ga villages and predominantly they used to be farmers.”* Information gathered indicates that before the rich and wealthy residents settled in the area, the indigenous people used to farm in those areas. For this reason, these first-class settlements were planned with infrastructures such as roads, electricity, and water. As described by the spatial planning officer at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly; *“unfortunately, developments have sprung up and have made these indigenous buildings to be in the centre of the city but the initial plan had them on the outskirts of the planned area. In other words, the area was planned around them.”* Apparently, the indigenous people were the first settlers but as a result of urbanisation and modernisation, they are currently being referred to as old towns and city villages. As declared by one expert; *“so I call those places city villages. It has to do with the problem of urbanisation. These people were there first, now they are part of the urban environment but life and everything is a village. So when you go left, you see a mud house, when you go right, you see a high rise structure.....Because they were there before developments caught up with them. So what we should be talking about now is how we should be improving the lot to make them catch up with what is trending.”*

In summary, East Legon became the first-class area after the Government established the residential estate. There were four villages in place before the establishment. Even though the landowners were compensated for the loss of their properties, they were left to settle in the area based on humanitarian grounds but with the hope that they will upgrade their properties to meet the current development of the area. However, it turned out not to be the case which seems to be the genesis of urban blight in East Legon.

4.2.2 Distribution of the forms of urban blight in East Legon

This addresses the research question; what is the distribution of the forms of urban blight in the area? The forms are a cluster of disordered settlements, dilapidated properties, vacant plots, and uncompleted structures as illustrated in figure 4-5 on the next page.

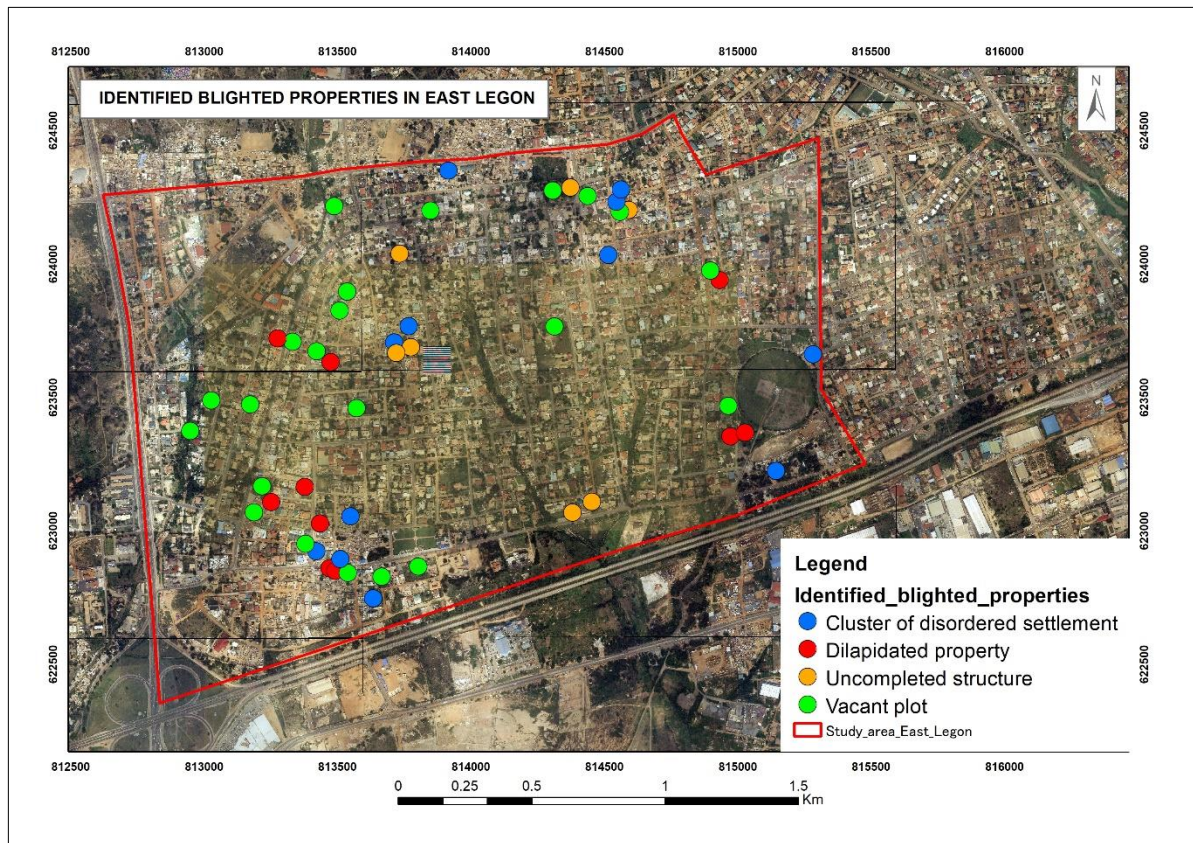


Figure 4-5 Forms of blighted properties in East Legon from 2016 Orthophoto

Source: Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority, Orthophoto 2016 & Google Earth, aerial image 2018

From figure 4-5, the blighted properties especially the cluster of disordered settlements are located at the outer edges of the study area rather than the inner city. This confirms the statement made by one of the experts, the planner at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, that planning with infrastructure was done in the inner cities whereas the indigenous settlements were left on the outskirts of the cities. From the identified blighted properties for this study, vacant plots of land were the lead, followed by the clusters of disordered settlements, then the dilapidated properties. The uncompleted properties were the least. Nonetheless, it was observed on the field that some of the identified uncompleted structures have been completed. Also, some dilapidated properties were being re-developed. Yet, the clusters of the disordered settlements which were mainly squatter and indigenous settlements often stayed in the same condition for many years.

4.3 The existence of urban blight from the perspective of the interviewees

This aspect of the study addresses the second sub-objective of the research; to find out why urban blight exists from the perspective of various interviewees. The research questions addressed under this sub-objective include: section 4.3.1 what are the possible causes of urban blight in the area? Section 4.3.2 what are the land tenure systems and their influence on the form of urban blight? Section 4.3.3 How do various stakeholders attach values to the current use of the property and what are the reasons (if any)?

4.3.1 The causes of urban blight in East Legon

From the perspective of the interviewees, there are five primary causes of urban blight in East Legon. They include economic reasons, inadequate enforcement of urban policies, land disputes, a weak land administration system and lastly, property owners are resistant to change. Other causes mentioned were

the intestate death of property owners without the knowledge of the family members in the case of private ownership, the lack of maintenance culture and the avoidance of the payment of high taxes.

4.3.1.1 Economic reasons

The study revealed that all the participants agreed finance is the main resource needed for the development and redevelopment of properties. While some property owners need capital either as individuals or as a family for development or re-development of their properties, others such as the speculators are expecting an opportune time to make some financial gains from their properties. According to the land administrator, some people do not have the financial viability to redevelop their properties especially the retired civil servants. She stated; *“I think economics is one of the reasons for urban blight. Because if you are a retired civil servant, you managed to build your three-bedroom house, you fenced it with a four feet wall and thereon, you don’t have money to do any redevelopment.”* It is believed that the lessees/leaseholders of the state land were once financially sound but after retirement, they have lost their financial capabilities. Having invested resources into the construction of their residences, some do not have the money to redevelop the property again. Thus, a real estate developer advised; *“I think investments should be encouraged in this country where the interest rate on loans should be reasonable for people to invest more.”*

For the indigenous buildings, however, the question that was asked was, whose responsibility is it to provide capital to redevelop the property? The indigenous buildings are predominantly family properties where the family head is responsible for managing the entire estate of the family. Accordingly, by virtue of being part of the family, each family member has the opportunity to use or occupy the property. Nevertheless, with regards to the redevelopment and maintenance of the property as was stated by one expert, *“the tragedy of the commons happens. Who should connect his resources into redeveloping the property?”* Seemingly, information gathered indicates that some family members with financial capabilities acted independently and preferred obtaining their personal properties for themselves and nuclear family lineage since any investment made on the family land does not belong to them but automatically becomes family property per the law. Invariably, the indigenous buildings are occupied by those family members who have not developed their residences and are unwilling to rent accommodation.

While some property owners do not have the financial means to redevelop their properties, the speculators wait for an opportune time to invest their properties. In the period of waiting, some do not put their properties in a good state which ends up becoming a blight. As expressed by one of the residents, *“for the speculators, they are like investors who want prices of the land to shoot up then they can sell at those prices. So mostly, they have a target and wait till they get it. Some of the property owners put caretakers on their land and the caretakers also end up bringing others who are more like squatters.”* The study revealed that mostly the vacant plots intended for speculative reasons were occupied by caretakers or squatters. Yet, one resident lamented; *“the undeveloped land makes the place dirty. People throw their stuff there because the place is already in a mess.....I will also blame the caretaker of the land. He doesn’t care about what happens on the land.”* Thus, it was advised by one property owner, *“for future investments, you need to keep the property nice and neat.”*

In summary, economic reasons cause blight where some may not have the means to redevelop the properties resulting in blight. Yet, others such as the speculators wait for an appropriate time. However, in the period of waiting, some do not keep their properties in a good state hence causing their properties to be blighted.

4.3.1.2 Inadequate enforcement of urban policies

The spontaneous growth of urban areas without guiding layouts and land use plans have resulted in urban blight in the study area. Additionally, inefficient implementation and execution of policies by the local government authorities have equally caused the urban blight in East Legon. The study discovered that

most of the unplanned settlements in East Legon caused the clusters of disordered settlements. These disordered settlements are characterised by lack of basic social amenities like toilet facilities, good waste disposal mechanisms, potable water, as well as good housing structure. Yet these properties are occupied by a greater percentage of the total population of the study area. As revealed by one of the interviewees, he stated; *“one thing I have observed about our stay here is that we in the kiosks are the majority.”* Information gathered points out that the squatters are the majority because most of them are migrants who are seeking for jobs in the cities.

Additionally, for the indigenous areas that were classified as clusters of disordered settlements, the experts expressed their concerns that not much can be done by enforcing urban policies in these city villages. The reason given was that they, the indigenes were the first occupants in the area and are also the customary landowners. Invariably, their settlements are also considered as spontaneous growth although the traditional authorities play a critical role in the land use and development of their jurisdictions. Thus, land use and developments are ahead of planning in Ghana where mostly planning schemes are prepared in areas that already have indigenous settlements. Nonetheless, these newly developed areas are usually planned with infrastructures around the indigenous settlements. The indigenous settlements, on the other hand, are left in their state sometimes without basic social amenities.

Although there are policies such as the local plans, there are no strict measures for the implementation by the local governments in this case the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly (AWMA). The study discovered that so far, the execution of the local plan is carried out by the workforce department of the Assembly. The main task conducted includes the halting of building constructions that have not obtained building permits from the Assembly as well as clearing and demolition of squatter settlements. Nevertheless, whenever the squatters are evicted from their places of abode and the cleared space is left vacant, the squatters always go back to settle there². According to the workforce officer, there was one such experience in early 2018 and he stated; *“you know there are recalcitrant people. Even when we cleared them, two (2) to three (3) days we realized some of them were putting up tabletops and pieces of the containers and kiosks that we had broken down. They were putting it together but we went back and cleared it again. So whoever is there now, no one has permitted them.”* Apparently, after clearing the place in 2018, as at the time of the data collection in December 2019, the squatters were still settled there. Another expert mentioned that the clearing of squatters is most effective when there is an actual development of the land to take place. Thus, the Assemblies predominantly demolished squatter settlements when there is an impending development. He stated; *“if you see an Assembly going after some squatters or slums within their jurisdiction, it means there is an upcoming development that has to give way for that development other than that they are left to live there.”* Also, other forms of urban blight such as the vacant plots and dilapidated buildings were left in their state by the Assembly. One expert lamented; *“the planning system is not working.....they are not enforcing the planning regulations and it bores down to leadership.”* Besides, the physical planner of the Assembly also mentioned that he is yet to see any District Assembly in the country enforcing urban policies with regards to urban blight aside the clearing of the squatters. He mentioned, *“but I am yet to meet an Assembly who has a bold decision of buying a blighted property.”* Per the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 Act 925, if the District Assembly thinks that the property is a blight, the property can be acquired by the Assembly for redevelopment including vacant plots.

In summary, the study gathered that even though the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 Act 925 has defined and given criteria in determining blighted properties, there is inadequate enforcement by all the Assemblies. Some of the measures taken are the clearing and demolition of squatter settlements. Remarkably, blighted properties with recognized property owners are usually not tampered with by the

² The squatters are mostly left to their fate. They are regarded as illegal settlers so they are neither relocated nor compensated for their loss.

Assemblies. Also, indigenous properties are left in their state since they are accorded the respect of being the first settlers and landowners. Yet the Government does not provide adequate infrastructure in these areas as well as alternative affordable housing for the squatters resulting in urban blight.

4.3.1.3 Land disputes

The study discovered that land disputes were one of the causes of urban blight in East Legon. The land disputes were mainly associated with land ownership. Ownership of land plays a crucial role as this determines who is the equitable possessor or holder of a property. Most often, conflicting land ownership rights arise when parties which could be individuals, family members, traditional authorities, and government institutions either between themselves in the same group or the involvement of different parties in different groups are in disagreement on a particular piece of land. Eventually, these conflicts result in litigation where the court is the final judge as to who is the rightful owner. Information gathered indicates that there is a backlog of land cases in the court. Some of the cases have remained unsettled for so many years. Consequently, court orders such as injunctions and prohibitions are instructed on the use and development of such properties in the lawsuit. The effect is that the properties become blighted especially for the vacant plots and uncompleted/abandoned structures. As was expressed by one of the residents, *“this vacant land you see here, there is litigation on the land. So in East Legon, if you see any vacant land, it is because there is litigation on the land.”*

It was also revealed by one of the family members that some family land disputes also end up in the courts. Primarily by the customs of the study area, the customary lands are supposed to be managed by the family heads. The study discovered that the family members are aggrieved with the current chief. The people complained that the chief was meddling with the land ownership of the area and was subsequently handling land matters inappropriately. One of the family members lamented; *“the family heads have currently taken the chief to the court so the issue is now in court. The chief has been noted to be interfering with the land system.”* Another resident explained that some blighted properties are a result of misunderstanding among family members. He declared; *“Even though Shiashie lands are family lands, mostly the people especially the brothers fight amongst themselvesThe land moves from generation to generation. One generation may be from one source, a father and his children. Sometimes the children are from different mothers and they also have their children. Since the lineage keeps expanding, it creates problems because the land ownership itself is not documented.”*

Furthermore, the study gathered that there was a land dispute between the traditional authorities and the Lands Commission. As mentioned earlier in this chapter in section 4.2.1, there were indigenous settlements before the Government compulsorily acquired the land to establish an estate. Information gathered reveals that the Shiashie family instituted a legal case against the Land Commission on grounds that the Commission was leasing portions of the family land to various institutions and individuals after the said compulsory acquisition in 1944. In April 1999, the High Court ruled the case in favour of the Shiashie family as the adverse possessors of the said land. Subsequently, an appeal was made by the Lands Commission and in June 2013 about fourteen (14) years afterwards, the case was overturned and ruled in favour of the Lands Commission. The latter judgment was based on evidence provided by the Lands Commission concerning the Certificate of Title for the compulsory land acquisition under the Public Lands Ordinance (CAP 134) in 1944. The Judge concluded that the earlier decision made by the court was wrong because the indigenous people were allowed to settle in the area based on humanitarian grounds. The insight obtained from the land administrator indicates that for fourteen (14) years of the litigation, court orders such as injunctions were placed on the land use and development in those particular neighbourhoods. Therefore on the part of the Lands Commission, they halted issuing of land for development. Ultimately, blighted properties were left in their blighted conditions especially the vacant plots and uncompleted structures. Furthermore, the land administrator added that land ownership is still a

contending issue facing the Lands Commission where currently, some families are claiming compensation for the loss of land at the time of the compulsory acquisition in 1944. She explained; *“I will say that a lot of families are coming up and we don’t know them. We too were owning this portion..... At the time of the compulsory acquisition, a publication was made and anybody who owned land there at the time showed up with their claims. So if you didn’t bring your claim then you are out of time. For so many years you come today and come and say that you own a portion.....I keep telling them that, I can’t help you, there’s nothing I can do about it. So you realize that when they find an empty plot then they will forcefully occupy it.”*

In summary, land disputes regarding land ownership cause urban blight. In as much as the lawsuits are to seek judgments and redress, there are backlogs of land cases at the court. Consequently, properties in contention become blighted since normally injunctions, prohibitions, and other legal orders are placed on the use and development of such properties. Regarding family lands, usually, disputes and litigations arise as a result of the expansion of the lineage counteracted by undocumented land records.

4.3.1.4 A weak land administration system

The land administration system concerning the processes and structures in managing and disseminating information about ownership and use of land in Ghana were regarded as ineffective. Consequently, people lacked confidence in the land administration system. Information gathered indicates that there are inadequate formal land records in the Lands Commission. Due to the inadequate land records, there is a lack of accountability by the property owners and users which subsequently leads to urban blight. For instance, some property owners in securing and safeguarding their properties prefer to rent the space to squatters or allow squatters to occupy the land. Seemingly, the squatters are meant to deter encroachers and adverse claims. As mentioned by one of the experts; *“East Legon is a hot place.....so the means of some of them protecting their land is to put some of these people on the land.”* Also, information collected shows that others prefer to raise a foundation and later abandon the project just to inform encroachers and others that the land has an owner. Consequently, the means of safeguarding and securing landed property in East Legon sometimes results in urban blight.

Another factor that contributes to urban blight is the lack of confidence in the land information system. This ultimately affects the land market and possible development dynamics of reducing blight. Information gathered reveals that there have been instances where property owners of blighted properties were ready to enter into a partnership with investors but encountered issues and withdrew from the deal. The land administrator associated this to the elder persons where they usually think investors would dupe them. She gave an instance where an old lady was approached by investors because of her blighted property. In the process of entering into a joint partnership with the investors, she was asked to append her signature on some documents. But she informed the investors she will be comfortable to do that after her lawyer has approved. Unfortunately, the investors went ahead to process the documents at the Lands Commission with a forged signature. As part of the land title registration/transfer procedures, a publication is made in one of the newspapers to serve as a notice to the general public. So it happened that there was a publication in the newspaper that the investors had the intention of purchasing this particular property. A friend of the old lady saw the publication and then called her to enquire if she was selling her property. So that was how she got to know that these investors were dubiously taking her property. Consequently, she does not want to enter into any partnership with any investor but rather stay in her blighted property as it is. Similarly, a resident expressed her experience where in the process of purchasing a blighted property in East Legon she had to conduct a search at Lands Commission to ascertain the true ownership but never had results so she abandoned it and to date, the property is still in a blighted condition. She stated, *“land ownership and proof of ownership is difficult in Ghana.....obtaining information on the ownership alone can take years.....the whole process is so cumbersome.”*

Furthermore, for the state land, only vacant plots are re-entered by the Lands Commission as a form of enforcing the covenant in the lease agreement. The covenant in the lease agreements are such that immediately the plot is allocated to the lessee/leaseholder, he is expected to start development within a year and complete the entire development by the fifth (5th) year. This was explained by the land administrator as *“so if we come across a vacant plot that this land was given to A and he hasn’t developed it, then that is a breach so we write to him to notify him that he needs to remedy the breach within a period or we will re-enter it.* Data gathered shows that after 10 years of the establishment of the Government estate, re-entries of vacant plots within the estate were made. Nevertheless, there are no strict measures for dilapidated properties within the estate. As was mentioned by the expert, they rather advise the lessees to re-develop the properties to meet the current trend. She stated; *“there are a few old people whom we have spoken to, to talk to their children to re-develop their property. The difficult part is you cannot force ityou can’t say much, just advise.”* On the other hand, for uncompleted/abandoned structures, the leaseholders were prosecuted with a lawsuit but this was seldom done.

Additionally, customary landowners in the study area are discouraged from registering their lands with the Lands Commission. The study gathered that because the indigenes are regarded as occupants by the Government, what the Lands Commission usually does is regularisation of the interests per the demand of the family members. However, the customary interests such as usufruct freeholds held by the family members are converted to leaseholds. Therefore, covenants in the lease arrangements with regards to land use and development of the land in the study area also affect them such as redeveloping the indigenous buildings and paying of ground rents³ to the Government. As expressed by the land administrator, *“these indigenous people are smart. He knows if he comes and gets the documents, then we are going to enforce the covenants in the lease. Then we will say he should rebuild. So if he is not ready to rebuild, then he will not come requesting for registration of his land. He will live in his atakpame like that.”*

In summary, weak land administration systems cause urban blight in the study area. The system is not transparent resulting in a lack of confidence in the land market. The elder persons interviewed, for instance, do not trust the land administration system since they think investors may dupe them. Some property owners prefer securing their land with the presence of squatters to deter encroachers and adverse claims. Others like the customary landowners get discouraged to register their interests because their interests are converted from customary to statutory interests and are compelled on what and how to use their land.

4.3.1.5 Resistance to change

The study gathered that people are resistant to change. Considering the time invested in the development of the building, the resources invested and the commitment already made in the property, it is difficult for the original property owners to change the blighted condition of their properties. Accordingly, the most important goal is to have a property of their own and a place of abode. For the indigenous properties, it was mentioned that most of them were old people who were not educated. Thus, they did not appreciate the investment aspects of real properties. As one of the experts explained, it is much easier for the youth to change the blighted conditions of properties than the elderly. As for the elderly, the condition of the property is of less importance to them as a result of the investment of their hard-earned money, hard labour and effort. Moreover, as at the time they were building, they might have built to suit the design and trend in that era. With the fast rate of development, their properties have now become obsolete but this will keep changing all the time. The question posed by some of the interviewees was “does it mean the

³ Ground rent – regular amount of money paid to the Government for the use of the land

property owners have to keep changing or redeveloping their properties to meet the current trend all the time?”

To sum up, property owners are resistant to change because of the commitment already invested in their properties. The condition of the property is less important as compared to owning a property. Especially with the elderly, as a result of the resources and dedication already invested, they are not convinced to make any changes to their blighted properties.

4.3.2 Land tenure system and their influence on the forms of urban blight

This part first gives an overview of the land tenure system in the study area. Subsequently, the identified elements of land tenure systems that influence the forms of urban blight in the study area are considered. They include; the duration and enforcement of tenure, the ease of transfer as well as the change of land use.

Overview of the land tenure in East Legon

Land tenure defines the relationship between groups or individuals with regards to land. The relationship determines access, rights, and duties on the use and development of the land. The dual land tenure systems in the country; statutory and customary, run concurrently in the study area, East Legon. Hence, property ownerships are classified either under the statutory or customary land tenure system. Information gathered indicates that the property owners under the statutory land tenure system were mostly individuals whereas the customary land tenure system was communal owned by families⁴. While the statutory land tenure system is managed by the government through the Lands Commission, the customary system is managed by the various family heads. Also, for the customary land tenure system, the duration, and enforcement of tenure are determined by the customs and beliefs of the people in the community. Notably, the family landholding type of customary land tenure arrangement is the practice of the indigenes in East Legon.

4.3.2.1 Duration and enforcement of tenure

The duration of tenure determines the legally valid period with which an individual or a group of people can hold or use the land. In the study area, the insight received with regards to the statutory land tenure system was that the initial period for the lease was ninety-nine (99) years between the Government (lessor) and individuals (lessees/leaseholders). However, currently, the duration of the tenure has been reduced from ninety-nine (99) to fifty (50) years for new leases as well as for the renewal of the original leases. The influence of the duration and enforcement of the statutory land tenure includes: first, for the vacant plots of land, the Lands Commission reduces the occurrence through re-entries. Per the covenant in the lease agreement, it is a breach of contract for the leaseholder not to develop the land for a stipulated time. Secondly, with regards to uncompleted structures, per the lease contract, it is expected of the leaseholder to complete the construction of his building latest by the fifth (5th) year of the commencement of the lease. Failure to complete the building construction is also a breach. Therefore, the lessees are prosecuted if otherwise. However, there are some portions of the state land like road reserves that are being occupied by squatters resulting in clusters of disordered settlements. These squatters are noted to be illegal settlers who do not have the permission of the Government/Lands Commission to occupy the land. Also, they usually do not pay any rent since they are noted to be illegal settlers. One of the experts explained; “*usually one person will put a kiosk then another will also put his before you realize, it has become a blighted area.*” Finally, regarding single dilapidated properties, the Lands Commission does not have strict measures for the covenants in the lease. Overall, as explained by the land administrator, the duration and enforcement of

⁴ Families are a group of people with a common ancestor.

the tenure to an extent helps in reducing the urban blight in the study area. She stated *“so when the lease expires and you are coming to renew, then we can use the clause in the covenant to get you to redevelop the property.....now we will say that the whole area, we would have to redevelop otherwise, no renewal for you. So you realize that 99 years of a lease is so long, so now Government leases 50 years.....which will soon expire then we can get the lessee to do the needful.”*

Particularly for the customary land tenure system, the duration and enforcement of tenure are determined by the customs and way of life of the people in the community. As already mentioned, the people practice the family landholding type of customary land tenure system. Given this, family members hold varying interests regarding the land/family property. The family head is the custodian of the allodial interest which means that he holds the land in trust for and on behalf of the family members. Therefore, he is responsible for decision making involving access, use, and development of the family land. Besides, the other members of the family by virtue of being part of the family have usufruct freehold⁵ interests. Hitherto members of the family were given portions of the family land to farm. However, due to the compulsory acquisition by the Government and urbanisation in the area, the family members do not have designated portions of the family land for their usage but currently share a common property; a family house. Thus, the usage of the family house is unrestricted to the family members. The influence of the duration and enforcement of the customary tenure on the forms of urban blight are as follows: First, it is worth noting that the usage of the family property by the family members has no expiration. Hence, there is a high tendency of the indigenous settlements as well as the dilapidated properties to remain in the same blighted condition for many years. As expressed by one of the experts; *“the issue is that as for our villages that is how our villages are..... I think they will forever be there. We have to find a way of upgrading them.”* Secondly, the study revealed that the squatter settlements under the customary land tenure are purposely for economic gains by the families. They rent the land to the immigrants who have come to the cities in search of jobs. As expressed by one of the property owners; *“oh we gave the land to them. They are renting the kiosks. Now we all want money so the little we will do to get some.”* Besides, one of the occupants of the kiosks gave an articulate account of his experience; *“but the land is not yours so definitely you have to pay. You didn’t bring your land from your hometown, you can’t stay on somebody’s land and not pay for anything. Whatever you are being told by the landowner to do, that is what is done so this is my container. I pay Two Hundred and Fifty Ghana Cedis (GHC250) and Three Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC300) for the other one per year. Some pay Five Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC500) and Six Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC600). It depends on the size of the kiosks.”* Furthermore, the study found that most of the vacant plots under the customary land jurisdiction were caused by litigation between the family heads and the current chief. The current chief who is responsible for community governance and not land governance is meddling in the management of the customary land. The issue is currently in the land court. Furthermore, it was found that uncompleted structures under the customary land tenure were those that were either a joint partnership with investors or complete sale to investors. The duration of tenure under these arrangements was not clarified to the researcher as this depended on the terms and agreement of the investment.

Summing-up, a comparison of the duration and the enforcement of tenure under the statutory land tenure system is different from that of the customary land tenure system. It was ascertained that the forms of urban blight under the statutory land tenure system, are addressed based on the covenants in the lease agreements. Given this, some of the forms of urban blight such as vacant plots, clusters of disordered settlements, abandoned properties are well managed through the enforcement of the covenants in the lease by the Lands Commission. However, under the customary land tenure system, there were no documents of tenure arrangements. Consequently, there is no specified duration and enforcement by the

⁵ Usufruct freehold is a right given to a family member to use and enjoy land/property for his/her lifetime.

family heads. Thus, the forms of urban blight under the customary land tenure system may stay in the same blight condition for many years.

4.3.2.2 Ease of transfer

The ease of transfer is the ability of the property owner to pass on the ownership right to another entity by way of gift, grant, inheritance, mortgage, or sale of the property. Under the statutory land tenure system, except the cluster of disordered settlements, all the other forms of blighted properties; vacant plot, single dilapidated property, uncompleted/abandoned structures may have less difficulty in transferring the property to another entity because of the formal recognition of the property owner, thus the security of tenure is assured. Given this, there can be an influence on the state and condition of the blighted properties. Besides, property owners can easily undertake investments with their properties or enter a joint partnership with investors due to the guarantee of tenure security. Also, a mortgage can easily be obtained from financial institutions with the proof of land title documents. However, as was advised by the real estate developer, investments should be encouraged in the country with reasonable interest rates. He indicated; *“I think investments should be encouraged in this country where the interest rate on loans should be reasonable for people to invest more.”*

Nonetheless, under the customary land tenure, there is not much ease with the transfer of ownership right. This is as a result of undocumented land records and inadequate clarity with the land rights arrangements. Customary lands are usually orally granted where land ownership rights are transferred from one generation to another. Property owners recognize their security of tenure by the local community knowledge. Also, for family lands, there is inadequate clarity on individual family member's rights and duties in the usage of the common property belonging to the family. As was explained by one of the interviewees, *“since the lineage keeps expanding, it creates problems because the land ownership itself is not documented.”* Furthermore, there are fewer motivations to undertake investments on the family land since an investor is not fully assured of his security. Information gathered indicates that families who enter into partnerships with investors or fully transfer their interests first regularize their interest with the Lands Commission for security and clarity of land rights and arrangements. Without the documents, it is difficult to provide evidence of interests as well as access credit from financial institutions for investments. Therefore, with regards to the customary land tenure system, there is no ease concerning the transfer of interest, thus, blighted properties are likely to remain in the same condition for a long time unless the family members themselves want the change.

In summary, it is much easier to transfer properties under the statutory land tenure system than the customary land tenure system. This is mainly due to tenure security, proof of ownership with a land title document as well as the clarity of land rights and arrangements with the statutory system. Ultimately, the ease of transfer also influences the state and conditions of blighted properties in the study area.

4.3.2.3 Change of land use

The change of land use refers to the transformation or modification of one form of land use to another. Although the land tenure system either statutory or customary plays a significant role in the change of land use, the ultimate decision-making is the responsibility of the local government. Besides, the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA) collaborates with the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in establishing planning schemes and local plans for various areas in the country. Hence for the study area, the control and monitoring of land use, as well as changes of use of the property is decided by the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly (AWMA).

Under both land tenure systems, state and customary, the property owners are supposed to apply to the AWMA for change of use. The clarification obtained during the study was that, under the statutory land tenure system, it is much easier to obtain a change of land use because the land is documented and it is within the planned area. The main thing considered by the Assembly is whether the change of use has any adverse effect on the other land uses. According to the spatial planner, as a result of the change of use, the local plans are supposed to be updated every five years. Mostly the changes are from residential to commercial yet civil and cultural land uses also change to residential uses when there is high demand. He narrated; *“East Legon per its onset was purely a residential area. But if you take the principal street like Lagos Avenue, every property has changed into commercial use. You will notice that the principal street has been congested but there is still pressure for more space for commercial activities.....Sometimes too it could be a bare land that was civil and cultural land use but when developments started coming in we noticed that we need more space for residential facilities so we quickly changed the use to residential.”*

However, under the customary land tenure system, it was established that the indigenous settlements were already in place before the area was planned. The planning officer mentioned that the area was planned around them and currently they do not have building permits for their properties. He stated; *“none of them has come here to obtain a permit. When you go on-site and you see them, you see they are ancient buildings.”* Given this, the change of use under the customary land tenure system usually is by a bilateral arrangement between the family and the investor. Nevertheless, investors prefer to be secured with their investments and would prefer to engage property owners who are willing to go through the formal process of registering their land and obtaining a permit from the local government. Information gathered indicates that property owners who do not go through the formal process are unable to change the blighted conditions of their properties. Hence, blighted properties under the customary land tenure system cannot easily be converted to another use.

Summing-up, the change in land use is determined by the local government. This is based on whether the change has an adverse effect on the adjoining uses. Also, properties under the statutory land tenure system have a greater percentage of change of use than properties under the customary land tenure system.

4.3.3 The perception of values attached to properties

This component of the study elaborates on the perceptions of the various groups of participants on values attached to properties. Besides, value is often subject to discretion and judgement on what is useful, worthy, and of importance. The values attached to properties as gathered by this study are economic, social, and cultural values.

4.3.3.1 Economic values

Economic value is an opinion of the monetary worth of a property which is also associated with the location and neighbourhood characteristics. East Legon is noted to be a high-class area with quality neighbourhood characteristics such as hotels, apartments, businesses, and entertainment centres. As expressed by one of the real estate developers; *“for the Lagos Avenue street alone, there are about ten (10) to fifteen (15) banks and commercial activities like major shops. This tells you that the place is a hot cake. You can find star hotels lined up that are close to the airport.”* Therefore, affluent and business people prefer to live and undertake investment activities in the area. Additionally, they employ the services of cleaners, security guards, watchmen, maidservants, and drivers who are sometimes migrants. Information gathered points out that these migrants also prefer to stay close to their workplaces to save some money for their well-being but do not contribute to the economic growth of the area but rather occupy substandard structures such as the kiosks. This was expressed by one of the experts as *“you realize that most of these migrants serve as servants to the*

rich people so they are close to them..... it started when Trassacco estate engaged people and the people wanted to live closer to them that is why you see most of these kiosks along the motorway.”

Consequently, the interviewees confirmed the prestige of living in East Legon as a high-class area. One of the occupiers of the kiosks stated; *“even we who reside in the kiosks, when you go out and you say you are from East Legon then people think you are rich.”* Another property owner also declared *“yes when you are in town and you mention that you are from East Legon, the perception people give to you is that you are from a wealthy area.”*

4.3.3.2 Social values

Social value for this study describes the importance placed on the area and real properties which are not monetary based. This includes the pleasure of living in a particular community or the satisfaction and contentment in enjoying the usage of a property by individuals or groups of people. Social values as the researcher was made to understand are hard to explain but are expressed with deep emotions and intense feelings. Family members in either nuclear or extended families have a sense of belongingness where an individual acknowledges a special affinity with relations. Consequently, attachments, bonds, and connections are established. Seemingly, this special affinity creates lasting memories for the users of a particular property especially when one was raised from infancy in that particular property. As explained by one expert, there was a case where a prominent man died and some years later his wife decided to sell the property because investors wanted to redevelop the property. The children, however, disagreed with their mother’s decision because that was their father’s house, their home and they respected the fact that they had memories of the time they spent with the family in the house. Ultimately, the property was not sold to the investor. Again, there was a blighted property that the relatively young family members confirmed that their maternal mothers had inherited the property and they wanted to keep the memories of their mother that is why they are still holding on to the blighted property. They explained; *“This building was put up by our maternal grandmother. Her name is still on it and even our water bills still have her name on it. She had the foresight to do it for her children, her female daughters, and built one at Dzorvilu for her male children too. So we have to preserve her memory for now.”*

Furthermore, another social value attached to properties was that some properties served as a bolster for life. Where members of the family could get a family property that is in town to live and go about their daily activities with less stress and traffic as compared to living in the peri-urban areas and travelling to the main city centre. It also serves as an easy start-up in life where for instance a young man growing up can have peace of mind to prioritize his life. As expressed by one of the family members; *“they can be in town and transact their activities and businesses, have a place to lay their heads and start life before they go and find their own places.....development is good but money came to meet human beings, not human beings meeting money. We value human beings and their livelihood, where they will lay their heads, go to work rather than somebody giving you money to take your property.”* Another family member also confirmed; *“I can’t move out to go and rent when I have a place to sleep. I can’t go renting.”*

Additionally, family members especially the extended families enjoy having family gatherings like family meetings and events like traditional marriages in their family properties. One of the family members declared; *“there should be a central point where the family will meet and deliberate on issues.”* The property serves as a family property and a converging point for all the family members.

Lastly, it was gathered that the area served as community comfort for the majority of the people living in the blighted properties especially the clusters of disordered settlements. They explained that even though the properties may not be standardized, they lived together in harmony as one big family. As was articulated by one of the interviewees; *“we live here as a family.....all my friends are here so we have become like*

a family.” Given this, people have community companionship and are comfortable with their settlements. One of the experts expressed; *“people get everything they want in the community so they will not trade it for money or economic gains.”*

4.3.3.3 Cultural values

Cultural values in this context refer to the traditional beliefs and a way of life of a people including their relationship to real properties. The values are regarded as spiritual sentiments and emotional attachments. It is believed that real properties give the family lineage and ancestral background of a person. For instance, family members residing in East Legon know their forefathers were the original indigenous settlers from the Labadi (La) community before the village was transformed into an urban area. Given this, they are also supposed to protect and preserve what they have inherited from their fathers to future generations. As was aptly put by one of the family members; *“we have stayed in what our grandparents built for us. We are also supposed to leave a legacy for the generations to come.”* Another family member also explained; *“when the property is there, it is immovableanyone who knows the family and wants to trace the family can easily do that because of the property such as somebody who has travelled overseas, he can easily locate the family.”* Spiritual sentiments, on the other hand, were expressed as places of worship like the shrines. People believe the shrine serves as a sacred place associated with divinity. Additionally, the chief’s palace was accorded the deference of community governance where the community’s well-being was sought.

In summary, property owners usually attach social and cultural values to their properties whereas some residents and experts attribute economic values to the properties and the area. The social and cultural values are not monetary based but intense feelings, spiritual sentiments, and emotional attachments. The economic values, on the other hand, are associated with the optimum use of the land to obtain the maximum financial returns.

4.4 The impact of urban blight on land use and development

This aspect of the study addresses the research sub-objective; to ascertain the impact of urban blight on land use in the area. The questions tackled under this sub-objective are: section 4.4.1 what are the effects of urban blight in the neighbourhood? Section 4.4.2 In the case of negative effects, what are the development dynamics to address them?

4.4.1 The effects of urban blight

In this section, the positive and negative effects of urban blight are considered. The positive effects include instituting the historical and cultural background of the area, the establishment of security, and the creation of companionship for the residents in the locality. However, the negative impacts gathered were aesthetics, underutilisation of properties, social inequality and tension, pollution, and insecurity.

4.4.1.1 Positive effects

- i. Instituting the historical and cultural background of the study area

For the customary landowners who own the indigenous buildings locally termed as *atakpame*, preserving the culture of the study area is of prominence to them. As mentioned earlier, East Legon was hitherto a Ga traditional area with four main village settlements. The urbanisation of the study area developed when the Government compulsorily acquired the land and carved some portion into the establishment of a residential estate with urban infrastructure. Nonetheless, it is believed that most urbanised areas in Accra have indigenous settlements as part of the urban setting. As expressed by one of the experts; *“when we take every urban settlement, you see the indigenous settlements as part of it.....you know these villages have always existed.....that is how they want to live*

their lives.” To all appearances, it has been understood that some of the indigenous people have settled to maintain their culture and traditional way of living. One of the residents responded; *“they see themselves as they are the owners of the land and they have been there for this long time. It is their property so they take it to be a normal phenomenon so even if you want to develop the place, they won’t contribute or participate to make it fruitful. They will just say, after all, we have been here already and we are okay.”* Consequently, there is a clear purpose of leaving a legacy for future generations. The customary land ownership serves as a basis for tracing one’s lineage and identity as it is believed that land is not only for the living but for the ancestors and future generations. The current generation holds the land as stewards. This was articulated by one of the family members, *“we have stayed in what our grandparents built for us. We are also supposed to leave a legacy for the generations to come.”* Therefore, the indigenous settlements are a means of preserving the culture of the Ga people in the study area. One of the experts stated; *“so it can give a perspective of how the area was looking in time past and how it is looking now”*.

ii. Establishment of security

Security, as explained in this context, means the state of well-being, and safety. For family members under the customary land ownership and squatters, the properties despite the condition provide security. The explanations as stated below.

Firstly, for family members, the properties serve as a form of a bolster for life. They have the opportunity to live in an urban area and go about their daily activities with less stress like payment of rent to other property owners. As stated by one of the family members, *“this is my family house. I can’t move out to go and rent when I have a place to sleep.....It is difficult to get a place to stay here in Accra so if the family has a house and there is a little room you can lay your head, why not?”* Another family member affirmed the latter statement. He stated; *“this is a family houseto cushion each member of the family in life, it serves as a starting point.....Human beings and their well-being are more important.”* Besides, mention was made of having to travel over long distances from peri-urban areas to the main cities because all the commercial activities and offices are clustered in the main cities of Accra. Given this, there are traffic congestions during the rush hours of the day. Again, one of the family members explained that he would prefer to stay in the family house than get stressed out every day to move from the office to a peri-urban residence. He stated; *“when you live in the outskirts, you have to drive over long distances in traffic to the main city. You have to set off very early in the morning.....I don’t want to go through that stress.”*

Secondly, another way of securing one’s self is by keeping a low profile and not exposing wealth. Some property owners mentioned that in the state of protecting themselves and their households, they need to safeguard their properties. One of the ways mentioned aside engaging the services of security guards and watchmen is to keep the exterior of the residence very simple. He stated; *“people look at the exterior of your house to see if there is something valuable. If you look at this building, you will think that there is nothing valuable inside.”*

Also, the study revealed that some community members within blighted areas are comfortable and satisfied with their stay. Particularly the indigenes and squatters, for them, life is easy in the locality with less competition. This was expressed by one of the interviewees as *“people are comfortable with where they are and content with the neighbourhood.....Prices of goods and services are relatively moderate as compared to other areas with the same goods and services.....they get everything they want in their immediate surroundings so they will not trade it for money or economic gains.....they wouldn’t want to leave.”*

Finally, the state of securing the future by some of the occupiers of the kiosks settlements. As already mentioned, for the occupiers of the kiosks under the customary land tenure system, they are renters/tenants. Information gathered indicates that some of the squatters are staying in the kiosks to save money to invest in their future. One of them revealed, *“most of us, not to say we cannot hire a house. Me for instance, not that I cannot hire a house but taking money say two years advance, and paying a single room is about One Hundred Ghana Cedis (GH¢100.00) per month, making Two Thousand Four Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC2,400.00) for the two years. How much will I use to purchase land, I can use part of the money to buy my own land.....So it is more like we are also building so we don't want to make more expenses.”*

iii. Companionship

Residents in the blighted areas feel friendliness and fellowship among themselves. There are no hindrances such as fence walls and gates dividing properties. Some of the interviewees expressed that the well-developed properties had fence walls, secured gates with barbed wire as well as dogs to deter strangers. Others have security guards and watchmen who would question you whenever you get close to their properties. One of the residents lamented; *“but what we see is they only think of themselves and fence their property leaving the others.”* However, with the blighted areas, there are no such hindrances. They could visit friends and loved ones without any impediments. Thus individuals and various family members establish a bond and attachment with one another. As expressed by one of the experts; *“so in terms of people in these settlements, there is some connection, some attachments and it is difficult to be broken.”*

In summary, the positive effects of urban blight predominantly affect the property owners of the indigenous settlements as well as the squatters. The customary landowners who are the indigenes have the purpose of leaving an inheritance since land is deemed to be for the ancestors, the present, and the future generations. Also, individuals felt the properties provided them with some form of security where their well-being was catered for. Besides, for the squatters, some were saving to establish their accommodation. Lastly, individuals in blighted areas had a sense of companionship in their immediate locality.

4.4.1.2 Negative effects

i. Aesthetics

The aesthetics concern the physical appearance and the exterior of a building. Thus, aesthetics affect mostly the residents in the neighbourhood and the experts. As mentioned earlier, East Legon commenced when the Government established a residential estate. The well-developed properties and gated communities were described by most of the interviewees as nice, beautiful, and having some kind of unison whereas the properties with blighted conditions were classified as not in a good state. One of the residents mentioned; *“they don't make the area beautifulbut when you get to the gated communities, the buildings alone and the uniformity speak for themselves that it is a beautiful area.....it makes the area nice and attractive”*. Therefore, the physical appearance of the blighted properties defaces the brightness and stunning design of the entire area.

ii. Underutilisation of properties

Underutilisation of properties in the context of this study is the state in which the properties are described in terms of their economic potentials. This negative effect affects some experts, residents, and real estate developers. East Legon is rated as a high-quality area characterised by modern residential facilities as well as commercial activities like hotels, shops, restaurants, bars,

and entertainment centres. The explanations given to the economic potentials of blighted properties are described as follows:

Firstly, the residents and real estate developers believe that blighted properties are not being used to their full potential. This is because the location and neighbourhood characteristics give high economic values to real properties. Information gathered indicates that blighted properties could reduce the value of the adjoining properties where the adjoining property is in a good state. One instance given was the sale of a residential property with an adjoining blighted property. The subject property although in a good state did not command the actual market price/value because potential buyers were uncomfortable paying that full market value with an adjoining blighted property. So eventually, the seller had to reduce the value to get a buyer for his property.

Also, the experts mentioned that the quality of an area determined the tax that was generated from the area. The area classification formed the foundation for property rate⁶. Although East Legon is classified as a first-class residential area, not all the properties qualify as such. Nonetheless, the classification of the area forms the fundamental base (rate impost)⁷ for the property rate. In addition, each property in the area is assessed differently (rateable value)⁸. The product of the rate post and the rateable value gives the property rate to be paid by each property owner to the Assembly. Thus, it was reported by the experts that the revenue generated from blighted properties is low which means that the properties are being underutilized although they have high economic potential. The physical planner further explained; *“for instance, there are two different adjoining properties with each property measuring an acre of land. Property A has developed his land into a high-rise structure consisting of 2 and 3 bedrooms. However, the other property B has atakpame buildings and chamber and hall self-contain. You realize that because property B has gone horizontal, it has taken more space but less productivity, that is underutilising the land.”* Furthermore, the study revealed that some of the property owners in the well-developed properties protested when the Assembly attempted to increase the general property rate of the area. The expert explained; *“In East Legon, I remember between 2004 – 2009, the Mayor of Accra had the aim of increasing the property rates. But the residents said they were not going to pay because we had classified them as a first-class area but they see some of these blighted properties in the area.”* Seemingly, the property owners were not enjoying the ambiance that is due to them as a first-class residential area due to the existence of the blighted properties.

iii. Social inequality and tension

The social imbalance affects the residents and property owners in the neighbourhood as a result of inequalities between the residents in the well-established developments and those occupying the blighted properties. Information gathered during the study reveals that there is a lack of companionship between the two groups: occupants of well-established developments and those residing in properties with blighted conditions. One of the interviewees responded; *“there is no uniformity because you see the clear demarcations or distinctions between the rich and the poor.”* Noticeably, the relationship that is usually established between the two groups is a master-servant or an employer-employee relationship. Property owners of the well-developed properties engage the services of the others, especially the squatters as their garden boys, watchmen, security guards, and maidservants. As expressed by an interviewee, *“you realize that most of these people also serve as servants for the rich people.”*

⁶ Property rate: An assessed value of tax levied on real estate properties by the local government authorities (Asiama, 2006)

⁷ Rate impost: A specified rate imposed on an area based on the classification, infrastructure as well as the social and economic status of the area (Asiama, 2006)

⁸ Rateable value: The replacement cost of a building at the time of the valuation (Ayitey, Kuusaana, & Kidido, 2013)

Furthermore, experts and property owners explained the tendency of privacy intrusion as a result of social imbalance. Where there are two adjoining properties with one being a well-developed property like a high-rise structure and the other a blighted one like a single storey, there could be an invasion of privacy. One of the experts explained; *“you have done your three bedrooms residential property which is like 30 years old and the next one close to you is a high-rise structure. They are looking into your house and whatever you are doing, they can see.”* Also, some of the property owners complained of discomfort with the new developments close to their properties. One of the property owners lamented; *“for the development close to this house, the disadvantage is the blockage of the road leading to this particular house. This road was used by everybody but now you have to use a longer route.....Also, they are blocking the fresh air we used to enjoy. We do not have comfort as we used to. If another high-rise structure comes up in front of us, we cannot receive the fresh air and even enjoy our privacy.”* Consequently, this creates some kind of social tension between the two groups of residents in the area.

iv. Pollution

Pollution in the context of this study is air and noise pollution which affects the residents and property owners in the neighbourhood. Data gathered shows that the kiosks lack basic social amenities like proper sanitation and toilet facilities. Consequently, this leads to improper disposal of waste which contaminates the environment and affects the health of the residents. As described by one property owner, *“these squatters create a lot of mess around”*. Moreover, some vacant plots were considered unkempt and associated with bush, weeds, and filth. Mention was also made of the fact that people dump refuse in these vacant plots. One of the residents explained; *“the undeveloped land makes the place dirty. People throw their stuff there because the place is already in a mess.....The heap of refuse will eventually create health issues for us all.”*

Furthermore, some residents and property owners complained of the squatters causing noise pollution through loud music and dance in the evenings. One of the property owners gave an articulate account of his experience; *“where there are squatters.....they can really disturb when they play their music. The others come around and dance and have fun. You cannot complain because of democracy and they are also the majority. At times you will be in the room and feel the vibration. This has a negative effect on us.”*

v. Insecurity

Some of the property owners and residents stated that there was some level of insecurity in the area whereas some others compared the level of security and crime in the study area to other areas and accepted that in comparison with other areas, the study area was more secured. One of the residents who compared with another area stated, *“I visited a friend the other time in another neighbourhood and by the time we stepped out of the house, my car had been broken into. I like this neighbourhood because I can park my car outside but it will not be broken into because of the security guards in the other house.”* Nevertheless, one of the residents who had experienced theft in the study area lamented; *“In this stretch, there are thieves around. Personally, we experienced theft of African clothes that were put in a locker. Security in this area is low. The rich only secure their places with security men and guards.”* It was observed that in the study area, some places are secured whereas others are not. The secured places in the study area are the well-developed and established areas with security guards and watchmen. Information gathered indicates that some blighted properties could serve as a hotspot for criminal activities. One of the interviewees gave an instance as; *“adjoining my property is a fitting shop. It could be a hotspot for thefts, armed robbers. They can jump from that spot to my place.”*

In summary, the negative effects of urban blight affect all the groups of respondents for the study: the residents, property owners, experts, and real estate developers. The residents were affected by the physical

appearance of the urban blight which defaces the stunning design of the area, the low value of the properties when their properties were close to blighted ones, the level of security as well as pollution. Also, the property owners were mainly concerned about the social inequalities and tensions in the area, the pollution as well as the level of security. It was revealed that the well-established neighbourhoods had tight security. Lastly, the experts and real estate developers regarded the underutilisation of properties in the area as a result of urban blight as the main negative effect.

4.4.2 Development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight

The development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight in the study area include a complete sale of the property, a joint partnership with an investor, redevelopment, and urban upgrading. Property owners may adopt all the approaches except the urban upgrading which is deployed by the local government authorities. The detailed descriptions are as follows:

i. Complete sale of property

The complete sale of a property is the absolute transfer of the property from a seller who is the property owner to a buyer, in this case, an investor. Concerns raised regarding the requirements, approach, and impact of the complete sales of properties are as follows:

Firstly, about requirements and approach of a complete sale of a property, it was found that most of the investors persuade property owners into selling their blighted properties by making huge offers that are irresistible while other property owners are willing to sell their properties but have not met the right investors yet. One of the experts mentioned that for property owners who refused investors who want to purchase their blighted properties, it is because they have not been offered a huge amount. He stated; *“time will catch up with them because they have not seen an offer that they cannot resist.”* He added that through his professional experience he has encountered investors who profess to him that there is no blighted property they want to acquire that they have not been able to do. Again, another resident confirmed the fact that investors lobby their ways to purchase blighted properties. She lamented; *“for this property, the investors tried so many times and developed tactics of marrying one of the family member’s daughters. Then they became in-laws to this family and later convinced them with huge sums of money which I heard was even more than the previous offer they made. The power of money and the fact that the investors have now become in-laws, like a family too, led to the purchase of this property.”*

Also, concerning the property owners who are willing to sell their properties but have not met the right investors yet, information gathered indicates that either they, the property owners, have their targets or their real properties do not meet the requirements of the investors. One of them declared, *“I was born here, I have a shop here too. I have lived here getting to 40 years so I want to relocate. I have had people expressing interest and making offers just that their offer is small. My target is One Hundred and Thirty Thousand United States Dollars (\$130,000) for start and One Hundred and Twenty Thousand United States Dollars (\$120,000) for the last price.”* Again, one of the renters of the kiosks described the terms and conditions made up by his landlords. He explained; *“people have approached them and they have been bargaining and negotiating but what they want have not been satisfied or no investor has met their requirement that is why it is still in the state in which it is. The requirement is huge.”* Besides, for the property owners whose real properties do not meet the expectations of the investors, it was revealed that the exact/actual location of their property does not meet investment criteria. Seemingly, the investors also undertake feasibility studies to know how beneficial the investment would be to them. One of the interviewees mentioned how one property was not meeting the investment criteria. He explained; *“there is a landlady right behind our property. She came to talk to us that she wants to sell her property. For her, she wants to move to another place. Just that our building here is being a stumbling block*

to the selling of her property. The prospective buyers prefer to buy the entire stretch of land including our property, so if we can consider it. But we didn't agree so the property is still there."

Secondly, regarding the impact of the complete sale of blighted properties, the study discovered that it was to the benefit of the investors more than the property owners. Information gathered revealed that the complete sale has rendered some property owners poor and marginalized which was expressed by a greater percentage of the interviewees. One of the residents lamented; *"what surprises me is that these people after taking the huge sums of money, you don't even see any difference with their livelihood. You see some in town and there is no improvement not to even talk about living better lives. So I always ask myself, where does all the money they make from the investors pass? The huge sums of money do not reflect on their lives at all."* According to the real estate developer, sometimes the money being offered is huge but may end up being a bad decision in the future. He explained; *"sometimes when the land is sold completely, the value may look huge in the present but may be of less value in the near future and future generations may never enjoy from the proceeds..... As for the youth, they think they are smart and need money for other things but the property is an investment. The land doesn't depreciate but rather appreciates so keeping land is the best investment. All you can do is get something on it that can fetch you some money if you think you need money."* Besides, some of the property owners confirmed that they know of other property owners who have regretted selling their properties completely. One of them stated; *"I have seen that those who sell their land become nothing in future, no land no money. As for the money, no matter how much you are given, if you don't invest it, it will get finished. And that is what happens to most of them. The money gets finished and they become worse off. Now either they have no property of their own or they are even unhappy where they find themselves now."*

In addressing the negative impact of the complete sale of properties which renders some people poor and marginalised, the land administrator hinted that the 1992 Constitution of Ghana mandates only a lease of state land and stool land types of landholding. The reason being that these types of landholdings belong to a large number of people such as the entire citizenry or a whole community. Hence, the consequences of a complete sale of a common property could be detrimental to a greater number of people than benefiting just a few.

ii. Joint partnership

The joint partnership in the context of this study refers to the ownership of a property by two parties, in this case, the property owner and an investor. Invariably, both parties agree to combine their resources to create some form of investment, hence each party having shares while maintaining their distinct identities. The study revealed that the joint partnership could be a safe approach for addressing urban blight on the part of the property owners. However, there could be challenges. Concerns raised regarding the positive effects and challenges of joint partnerships are described as follows:

Firstly, on the subject of the positive effects, all the participants asserted that the joint partnership is an appropriate development mechanism for the property owners in addressing their blighted properties. This is because the property owners still own part of the property and may be involved in the operations of the property. Sometimes they may not be directly involved in the day to day operations of the joint investment but they have shares that make them co-owners of the real property. One of the real estate developers admitted that joint partnership is mostly beneficial to the property owners because they still have a stake in the property of which future generations could also benefit. He stated; *"so I think it will be better to enter into a joint partnership where the developers will give the property owners a quota, say they may build and give the property owners*

rooms/apartments to also rent out, that is better than the complete sale.” Nevertheless, one of the residents mentioned that for joint partnerships to be beneficial to the property owners, they, the property owners, should be the ones to determine the type of investment and the requirements. He explained; “the property owners should be smart by proposing their terms and conditions with the family members and future generations in mind. They should consider investors who want to enter into a partnership that they can get their share like a residential or apartment building. With this, the people can enter into an agreement where they will give just a portion of the land so they can also keep the rest or the investor will develop the entire land and give them part of the building.”

Secondly, challenges regarding joint partnerships are non-adherence and non-compliance with the terms or signed contract of the joint venture. Information gathered indicates that the weak land administration systems and the ineffective land market affect the property owners. Some property owners would like to enter into a joint partnership with prospective investors who approach them but lack the confidence to do so. Some of the property owners who were interviewed have experienced issues or know of others who have encountered issues with joint partnerships. One of the property owners stated; *“I was here when a nice gentleman came and said he is making an offer for my property. He wants us to pull everything down. He will build and give us some money to rent a house then later after building, we will sit and he will give us like two (2) of the rooms. But later when I was calling him because I involved some people, he wasn’t picking the calls so I realized he was fake.”* There was another instance, as already mentioned, where a property owner was in the process of entering into a joint partnership with some investors but it turned out that the investors forged her signature. The property owner later found and terminated the agreement of the joint partnership. As a result, she is deterred from venturing into such transactions.

Furthermore, some of the experts also described challenges with the joint partnership. One of them mentioned that there was an instance where the contract for the joint partnership was signed between the property owners and the investors. However, when the commercial property was completed, the investors breached the contract because of the influx of potential well-to-do tenants: international businesses and banks. Seemingly, per the contract, the property owners were supposed to own the ground floor but due to the high demand for the office space for the ground floor, the investors had a change of mind. Consequently, another agreement was made and the property owners were given a substitute land in another location. Thus, the experts advised that for property owners to be secured in joint partnerships, they need to engage the services of professionals such as lawyers.

iii. Redevelopment

In the context of this study, redevelopment refers to the process of renovating the present condition of a building or constructing a new building by a demolition of the existing one. Redevelopment is usually undertaken by the property owners themselves, the local government authorities, and the real estate developers. The descriptions for each stakeholder in redeveloping properties that results in addressing urban blight are explained as follows:

Firstly, redevelopment on the part of the property owners was mostly renovations of properties. A greater percentage of the property owners that were interviewed asserted that they would prefer to renovate their blighted properties than sell it out completely to investors. Also, the land administrator mentioned that for the retired civil servants under the statutory land tenure system, they usually encourage them to redevelop their properties. She stated; *“You need to also encourage them to redevelop. There are a few old people whom we have spoken to, to talk to their children to redevelop their*

property. Even if they rent it out, they will recoup the money.” Additionally, one of the interviewees mentioned that gradually some of the indigenes are realizing the hidden value of the properties as a result of the redevelopments around them in the area. He explained; *“but they see that to their left, there is a high rise structure, behind, right side everywhere is redeveloping so they are compelled to also raise their building because their privacy is being invaded.”*

Secondly, for redevelopment on the part of the local government authorities, the study ascertained that per the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925), the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly (AWMA) has the authority to acquire blighted properties within their jurisdiction for redevelopment or require the property owners to redevelop his/her blighted property. However, information gathered reveals that it is only the clustered disordered settlements occupied by squatters that the Assembly enforces the law. Also, the study revealed that the squatters are often evicted to pave way for new developments. The physical planner at the AWMA, however, explained that even though it has been stipulated in Act 925, the implementation is difficult because land ownership plays a significant role in the use and development of land in the country. Particularly, the customary lands are managed by the traditional authorities and they are the landowners. Thus, the redevelopment of their indigenous properties is determined by them. He explained, *“For the Assembly when it comes to property ownership, we don’t deal with ownership so redevelopment of indigenous buildings is normally determined by the traditional authorities.”*

Lastly, the description of the redevelopment as a mechanism in addressing urban blight by the real estate developers. It was ascertained that some of the real estate investors also redevelop their properties to catch up with the current trend of the area. A real estate developer mentioned that some years ago their property used to be a hotel which became blighted and they had to renovate into an apartment facility. He explained; *“this property has been here close to 20 years. It has been renovated and rebranded to suit the current situation in the area. It used to be Kaitee hotel and was vacant for some time. Now it is Kate Court Apartment. For this apartment, it is more of a residential facility than a hotel. We rent for a day, month, and years but the hotel was not like that.”*

iv. Urban upgrading

Urban upgrading is usually undertaken by the local government authorities which involve changes in the conditions of blighted areas. The changes include the provision of infrastructures such as road and storm drainages, street lights, water supplies and waste collection to improve the well-being of the inhabitants. Also, there could be regularisation of tenure to secure the land rights of the inhabitants of the area. The stakeholders acknowledged that urban upgrading could have been the best option in addressing urban blight in the study area. However, contemporary upgrading projects are undertaken for political gains and sometimes done via Public-Private Partnerships. Some of the property owners lamented on a road reconstruction that was being carried out at the time of the fieldwork in December 2019. They reported; *“they brought the materials a long time ago about 2 to 3 months ago. It is because of the election that is why they hurriedly brought the materials but they brought the materials and that has been it. They are not working.....you know, leadership has not really helped.”*

Although urban upgrading is undertaken by the local government authorities, the experts expressed some of the challenges they also encounter in upgrading projects. It was gathered that some of the indigenes being local stakeholders do not participate in urban upgrading projects. A classic example was given by the experts as the regularisation of land rights. Currently, the Lands

Commission regularises the rights of the customary land tenure holders in the study area to secure their land rights but some of the local people are against it. However, according to the physical planner of the AWMA, for sustainable upgrading projects, there is the need to engage the local stakeholders for them to express their needs rather than imposing what in the opinion of the experts is needed by the local people. He stated; *“you know the issue is that you don’t determine problems for people. People would have to say that this thing is a problem for them.....good planning needs stakeholder engagements.*

To sum up, some strategies adopted to address urban blight are the complete sale of the property, joint partnership, redevelopment, and urban upgrading. All these methods have their benefits and challenges. Of the four development approaches, urban upgrading was deemed to be the most appropriate mechanism in reducing urban blight since it involves the provision of urban infrastructure and security of tenure yet that is not the focus of the Government. The joint partnership and redevelopment were ranked as good development dynamics in reducing blight but it was advised that professionals should be engaged for security reasons. Lastly, the complete sale of the property was regarded as the last option to reduce blight because it sometimes renders people poor and marginalised.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the data collected from the field which answered all the research questions developed for this study. Overall, it was found that urban blight is a relative concept perceived differently by various stakeholders. The key findings were that urban blight evolved in East Legon after the Government established a residential estate and provided urban infrastructure while the indigenous settlements were neglected. The five primary causes of urban blight ascertained were economic reasons, inadequate enforcement of urban policies, land disputes, a weak land administration system, and lastly, property owners are resistant to change. In addition, the study established how land tenure systems influence urban blight since the land tenure systems play a significant role in land administration and urban planning in the country. It was revealed that there are dual land tenure systems, statutory and customary, running concurrently in the study area. However, under the statutory land tenure system, blighted properties have a greater chance of improving into a well-developed structure because of stipulated covenants in the lease contracts and the ease of transferring ownership. Yet, under the customary land tenure system, there are no documents and records of tenure arrangements which makes it difficult for real property transactions, thus the likelihood of properties remaining in their blighted conditions for many years.

Furthermore, the study determined how values attached to real properties influence urban blight. This was based on the fact that a greater percentage of land ownership in the country, about eighty percent (80%) is under the customary land tenure system which concerns traditional beliefs and customs. Seemingly, under the customary land tenure system, land is regarded as an asset and an inheritance for future generations. The study found that property owners usually attach social and cultural values to their properties whereas some residents and experts ascribe economic values. Additionally, the study ascertained that there are positive and negative effects of urban blight on land use and development. The positive effects such as companionship and security mainly affect the indigenes and the squatters. On the other hand, the negative effects affect all the stakeholders in diverse ways. Lastly, current development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight were found to be a complete sale of a property, joint partnership, redevelopment, and urban upgrading projects. Of all the four approaches, urban upgrading was deemed the most appropriate approach for the benefit of all since it involves the provision of urban infrastructure in the entire area as well as security of tenure.

5. DISCUSSION

This part of the study is a reflection and a comparison of the results presented in chapter four and the reviewed literature in chapter two. The local context and perception of urban blight are first assessed with the general concepts and nuances of urban blight found in the literature. Subsequently, the contextual reasons and perceptions regarding blight are compared with the underlying causes predominantly established from the Global North. Furthermore, the effects, as well as the development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight are matched with the existing studies and adopted methods. Finally, this chapter concludes with key similarities and major differences between the Global North and South.

5.1 The concept of urban blight

To ascertain the diverse perception of urban blight in the local context, four main groups of stakeholders were considered for this study. They were residents who are households, property owners who own real properties in the study area, real estate developers who are investors and business inclined, and experts. The experts included officials in the Ayawaso West Municipal Assembly, Accra Metropolitan Assembly, the Lands Commission, and the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority as already stated in the previous chapter. The respondents for the study can be matched with a study conducted by Galster (2001) who described four types of users of neighbourhoods; households, businesses, property owners, and local government.

Additionally, the study revealed that the concept of urban blight is a relative concept that is perceived in varied ways by the users of the study area. It was discovered that what is considered as a blight for one may not be the same for another. Thus, the reason for the nuances of what is regarded as an urban blight by various researchers. Again, as stated by Gordon (2004) in his study on exclusive definitions of blight, the differences in the perception of urban blight by the various stakeholders create tension among stakeholders on what is accepted as urban blight. Remarkably, it was realized that the different perceptions given by the respondents of the study were based on diverse backgrounds such as culture, education, profession, and prevailing circumstances. This, therefore, aligns with the argument made by Haase et al (2014) and Breger (1967) that the nuances of urban blight are developed from diverse contexts and backgrounds. Also, it was discovered that individual properties were tagged as blighted in relation to the other well-developed properties in their same neighbourhood or immediate surroundings which is slightly similar to the findings of Geis & Ross (1998) that blighted properties are compared to orderly neighbourhoods. Urban blight in literature has been considered from the entire neighbourhood level mainly industrialised cities, old towns, and deteriorated neighbourhoods but not distributed pockets within a prevailing economically prime urban area.

5.2 Identification of different forms of urban blight in the study area

The section reflects on the sub-objective one, research question one of this study; the evolution of urban blight.

5.2.1 Evolution of urban blight

East Legon, hitherto consisted of four different villages. The Government at that time, 1944, compulsorily acquired the entire area but the indigenous settlements were left to settle in the area based on humanitarian grounds. The Government established a residential estate and provided infrastructures such as roads, electricity, and water abandoning the indigenous areas. Seemingly, the establishment of the residential estate triggered the urbanisation and modernity of the study area while the indigenes were left to their fate to develop their area to catch up with the modern trend of the area. The lack of basic

infrastructure in the indigenous areas caused the development of urban blight in the study area. This, therefore, agrees with the argument made by Gordon (2004) and Hosseini et al., (2017), that urban areas that lack basic infrastructure are regarded as blight. The genesis or evolution of urban blight in the study area, however, contradicts what is known in the literature. Existing literature has described the evolution of urban blight in the Global North as a result of a transformation of a once vibrant and buoyant urban area to a deteriorated one (Cuthbert, 2017; Haase et al., 2014; Weaver & Bagchi-Sen, 2013 & Gordon, 2004).

A careful reflection of the two scenarios of the evolution of urban blight in the Global North and South, particularly in the study area, shows an inverse correlation. In the Global North, a vibrant area transformed into a deteriorated one caused the earliest occurrence of blight whereas in the Global South, in the case of this study, urbanisation and modernisation transformed an indigenous area and caused the existing settlements to be regarded as the genesis of urban blight. Therefore, it can be concluded that urban blight is contextual as emphasized by Wolff & Wiechmann (2018); Haase, Bernt, GroBmann, & Mykhnenko (2016) and Fol & Cunningham-Sabot (2010).

5.3 The existence of urban blight

This part of the study deliberates on the causes of urban blight and the factors that influence the occurrence of blight in a city. Section 5.3.1 deliberates on the causes, section 5.3.2 considers the land tenure system and their influence on urban blight, while section 5.3.3 addresses the values attached to properties.

5.3.1 The causes of urban blight

A review of the literature gives the causes of urban blight to be an economic decline, deindustrialisation, population loss as a result of suburbanisation. The study also found the primary causes in addition to economic reasons to be non-enforcement of planning policies, weak land administration systems, land disputes and the property owners were resistant to change. The found causes in comparison with the literature are discussed as follows:

Firstly, the economic reasons for blight were associated with financial incapacities of some stakeholders. The study discovered that some of the stakeholders in East Legon are economically incapacitated to maintain or redevelop their properties which causes blight. This agrees with the statement made by Livingston et al. (2010) and Crankshaw & White (1995) that low-income residents do not maintain a good neighbourhood which leads to physical and functional stagnation. Also, it was ascertained that there are speculators who wait for an opportune time to invest their land but while in the period of waiting, they do not keep their properties in good condition resulting in blight. However, this is not frequently found in the literature. Overall, the economic factors for urban blight in East Legon do not fully agree with the economic reasons for urban blight in the literature. In the Global North, the economic factors for urban blight are as a result of the collapse of major industries and businesses in an entire urban area (Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Haase et al., 2016; Gordon, 2004). Yet East Legon is still a major city classified as a high-class area with well-patronized businesses and commercial activities. Also, speculation which sometimes results in urban blight is not an economic factor of causing blight in cities in the North.

Secondly, inadequate enforcement of urban policies by the local authorities causes blight in East Legon. The study gathered that planning in Ghana is done spontaneously where mostly land-use planning schemes are developed in an already existing settlement. Blighted properties with recognized property owners are usually not tampered with by the Assemblies especially the indigenous settlements that fall under the category of the clusters of disordered settlements. This confirms the statement made by

Cobbinah & Aboagye (2017) that the local government authorities do not have full control of the enforcement of planning policies in the customary areas leading to inadequate collaboration between the local government and the traditional authorities. Also, these clusters of disordered settlements lack infrastructural facilities and this concurs with the assertion made by Getis (2015) and Cobbinah & Aboagye (2017) that urbanisation in Ghana is rapid and unguided resulting in haphazard and unplanned settlements that lack basic infrastructure.

Furthermore, it was revealed that land ownership is the root cause of land disputes in East Legon which is causing blight because some of the properties have court orders such as injunctions. The non-documentation of ownerships especially the customary land tenure has resulted in disagreements within families, disputes between the families and traditional authorities, as well as contentions between the families and the Lands Commission which affirms the statement made by Kasanga & Kotey (2001) that the customary interests are usually not recorded and documented.

Also, a weak land administration system in the country causes urban blight. As already established in chapter two of the study, literature review, comparison of the Land Administration System (LAS) in the Global North and South reveals that the LAS of the developed countries are firmly established while that of the developing countries are fragmented and interlocked with complex land tenure arrangements and registration systems (Abubakari et al., 2018 & Zevenbergen, 2002). The results of the studies prove that there is a lack of transparency in the LAS which has resulted in an absence of trust and confidence in the land market. Seemingly, some property owners prefer securing their land with the presence of squatters. This, therefore, confirms the argument made by De Soto (2000) that property owners in developing countries are more engrossed in securing their properties by relying on local arrangements than discovering how to unleash capital from their properties. Consequently, the land market is not effective like that of the developed economies.

Lastly, the study gathered that some of the property owners were resistant to change as a result of the investment already committed to establishing their properties. The ownership and occupancy of a residential property outweigh the conditions of the property. This is mainly due to the housing deficit caused by the rapid urbanisation in the urban areas. Thus confirmation of the argument made by Getis (2015), that high population is unmatching housing infrastructure in the African region.

In brief, it was observed that the causes of urban blight in the Global North and South differ. Although the economic reason is a cause of urban blight in both North and South, the underlying economic factors could vary. Thus, justifying the fact that the reasons for urban blight are contextual and based on the peculiarity of a specific area.

5.3.2 Land tenure system and their influence on urban blight

Ghana is characterised by a dual system of land tenure; statutory and customary land tenure system. Since property ownership plays a vital role in the use and condition of properties, this study considered how the land tenure systems influence urban blight. The study area gives a classical case study because both land systems; statutory and customary land tenure, run concurrently in the area.

The study found that property owners under the statutory land tenure system were better secured with their interest due to the documentation of the tenure arrangements. However, those under the customary land tenure system did not have any documents to prove ownership. It was established that some families were resistant to go through the formal process of land title registration or even obtaining building permit because of the likelihood of losing their usufruct freehold interest to statutory leasehold as well as changing their indigenous structures to satisfy that of the local government. Thus, this confirms the

argument made by Miller (2018) and Abubakari et al., (2018) that the formal Land Administration System (LAS) does not recognize the customary freehold, hence a greater percentage of the property owners are outside the system. Similarly, De Soto (2000) branded the formal property system as a bell jar where only a certain category of people usually the rich find themselves in the jar (formal system) with the majority of people outside the jar. It is more likely that the forms of urban blight under the customary land tenure system would remain in the same condition for many years than those under the statutory land tenure system. Hence, the customary land tenure system influences the occurrence of blighted properties more than that of the statutory tenure system. The land tenure elements such as duration and enforcement of land tenure, ease of transfer as well as the change of use are some of the ways that the blighted properties are positively influenced to change to well-developed properties under the statutory land tenure system.

5.3.3 Values

Value systems were considered for this study because diverse beliefs, customs, priorities, and reasoning affect the level of utilisation of urban space and real properties (Oluwagbemiga et al., 2014). This study established three main values attached to properties. They include economic, social, and cultural values. These are compared with the literature and discussed below.

Firstly, the economic value that was ascertained was that East Legon is a first-class residential area because of the existence of infrastructural facilities which are also in a good state. As a result, real estate investors prefer to undertake investment activities such as the establishment of apartments and hotels in the area. This, therefore, agrees with the arguments made by Owusu-Ansah (2012) and Anim-Odame, Key & Stevenson (2009) that well-established neighbourhoods tend to attract investors and affluent residents who attach economic values to the area because of the propensity of obtaining high returns from their investments. Additionally, some residents and property owners in the study area confirmed that they were accorded the respect of living in a first-class residential area. A remarkable statement made by one of the interviewees was; *“even we who reside in the kiosks, when you go out and you say you are from East Legon then they think you are rich.”* This also justifies the assertion made by Scannell & Gifford (2010) and Livingston et al., (2008) that some stakeholders attach place dependency to their urban space because of the respect they earn from living in a high-class residential area.

Secondly, the social value attached to real properties was expressed as deep emotions and feelings. Some properties especially the family houses supported the well-being of the family members. The family members have a place to lay their head, which is in town and they need not pay rent for accommodation. Besides, they can go about their daily activities in a less stressful manner other than battling traffic congestion if they should commute every day from peri-urban areas to the main city centre. This concurs with the argument made by Manzo (2003) that blighted properties may serve as a haven despite the condition or state. Additionally, family members used their family house as a central point for meetings and family gatherings. This is in line with the statement made by Hay (1998) that indigenous residents solidify their place attachment with events such as traditional marriages and funerals. Lastly, the study gathered that the community gave comfort to the majority of the people living in the properties classified as clusters of disordered settlements. They, interviewees, settled that they lived in harmony as one big family. This, therefore, agrees with the argument made by Kleinhans et al., (2007) that social value is a great asset for local communities than the well-established neighbourhoods.

Finally, cultural values attached to real properties were the beliefs and way of life of the people. As explained by researchers such as Arko-Adjei (2011), Chimhowu (2019) and Abubakari et al., (2019) that cultural values are deep roots and spiritual ties due to the customs, beliefs and traditions of a group of people, the study also discovered that. It was revealed by the interviewed family members that the

indigenous settlements depict the historical background and ancestral lineage. Thus, there is a need to protect and preserve the properties inherited for future generations. This, therefore, confirms the assertion made by Arko-Adjei (2011) that although customary values are usually unwritten, yet the indigenes per their customs know that the land is for the living, the dead and future generations. Additionally, this study ascertained that some blighted properties are kept in remembrance of the dead as well as the trace or revelation of one's identity. This supports the findings of Abubakari et al., (2019) in his study on plural inheritance that sometimes a property is named after the one who established it. Also, in his study, he reported an interviewee who made a remarkable statement of building a statue in front of the family house in honour for their ancestor who established their family property because currently, the property is also being referred by outsiders in his name. Thus, giving credit and keeping the memory of their great ancestor.

In short, it can be observed that the Global South is characterised with robust social and cultural (socio-cultural) values and attachment to real properties which play significant roles in the use and development of properties.

5.4 The impact of urban blight on land use and development

This section considers the positive and negative effects of urban blight and the strategies for reducing the negative impact.

5.4.1 The effect of urban blight

The study gathered that the positive effects of urban blight mainly affects the indigenes and squatters. The indigenes have the purpose of leaving an inheritance and legacy for future generations. This matches the argument made by Scannell & Gifford (2010) that cultural values are transferred from one generation to another. Also, family members of indigenous settlements felt their well-being was secured because of the cushion they have received to prioritize their lives as well as go about their daily activities without stress. This agrees with the arguments made by Hay (1998) and Fried (2000) as cited in Scannell & Gifford (2010) that blighted properties serve as a sense of place which gives a foundation for life as well as boost one's confidence for life exploration. Again, the study agrees with the emphasis made by Scannell & Gifford (2010) and Livingston et al., (2008) that places meet people's needs and support their goals and aspirations in life. Additionally, there are community bonds and social networks in blighted areas and this aligns with the emphasis made by urban scholars on place attachments (Livingston et al., 2008; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Galster, 2001, Hidalgo & Bernardo, 2001 & Kleinhans et al., 2007). Nonetheless, the study found that some of the squatters had plans of securing their future with their own residence. Therefore, the renting of the kiosks served as the channel for their financial capabilities through savings. This, however, gives a positive attribute about squatters which is not frequently found in the literature.

The negative effects of urban blight were found to affect all the stakeholders of the area; residents, property owners, experts, and the real estate developers. Residents were mainly affected by the neighbourhood's aesthetics where blighted properties were regarded as defacing the stunning physical appearance of the area. This agrees with the statement made by Hay (1998) that the attractiveness of an area is weighed by the affluent stakeholders who tend to leave thus causing the area to be more disfigured. Also, the study gathered that there were social inequalities between the affluent residents and those living in the blighted properties. This confirms the arguments made by Galster (2001) and Kleinhans et al., (2007) that blighted property are usually stigmatized and can cause social imbalances between residents. Furthermore, it was revealed that blighted properties cause pollution. This confirms the observations made by urban scholars that blighted properties affect the environment because of the neighbourhood

disorder resulting in indiscriminate disposal of refuse (Galster, 2001; Cobbinah, Erdiaw-Kwasie, & Amoateng, 2015; & Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Lastly, the economically inclined stakeholders regarded underutilisation of real properties as the negative effects where the planning experts were much concerned about the low property rates. This confirms the statements made by Haase et al., (2014) and Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013) that the underutilisation of urban properties can affect cities' tax rates as well as the property values of adjoining properties. Ultimately, the real estate market in the area is distressed which affects the stakeholders who attach economic values to the urban space. Nonetheless, the study also discovered that the level of security at the well-established neighbourhood was high while the blighted areas were low. This is different from the statements made by some researchers that generally, blighted areas are characterised by high criminal activities (Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Ross, 1996).

In brief, a reflection of the positive and negative effects of urban blight in the Global North and South show similar impacts with slight differences. While the study area depicted a relatively high level of safety, blighted areas in the North are generally characterised by high criminal activities.

5.4.2 Development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight

The study gathered that some of the development approaches that result in reducing urban blight are; complete sale of a property, joint partnership, redevelopment, and urban upgrading projects. It was found that the real estate investors preferred the complete sale of properties while the property owners chose redevelopment and joint partnerships. Besides, the role of the government is to undertake redevelopment and upgrading projects which are sometimes done via Public-Private Partnerships. The diverse approaches confirm the argument made by Weaver & Bagchi-Sen (2013) that measures of addressing urban blight are done on an arbitrary basis, subjective or are politically driven. For the subjective ones like complete sale, the main effect ascertained was rendering the property owners poor and marginalized as was mentioned by some urban scholars (Gordon, 2004; Haase et al., 2014 & Hosseini et al., 2017). Also, it was found that the joint partnerships were not always successful as some of the investors sometimes breached the contract. This confirms the statement made by Carey (2005) that there can be unfavourable distractions in the joint venture. Furthermore, the study found that the upgrading approach was the most appropriate for the property owners since it would be done by the government with the provision of the necessary infrastructure and tenure security. Yet, that is not the focus of the government because their actions are mostly politically driven. This, therefore, confirms the statement made by Gordon (2004) that sometimes the government mitigates blight for their selfish interest. Overall, it was established that almost all the approaches have their pros and cons. Therefore, for sustainable developments dynamics, it was advised that the property owners should be sensitized by engaging the right professionals particularly for the complete sale and the joint ventures. Additionally, for the redevelopment and upgrading projects, the local stakeholders should be engaged and made to participate in the process to reduce its negative impact (Gordon, 2004; Haase et al., 2014 & Hosseini et al., 2017).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter concludes with key similarities and differences of urban blight between the Global North and South. It was ascertained that the primary similarity is the economic reason for causing urban blight. Finance is an underlying force that causes urban blight. Additionally, it was observed that the development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight in the South are similar to the mitigation strategies adopted in the North. However, a reflection of the major differences of urban blight between the North and South is summarized in tables 5-1.

Table 5-1 Major difference of urban blight between the Global North and South

Theme	Global North	Global South (Sub-Saharan Africa)
The evolution of urban blight	A transformation of a once prime and vibrant area to a deteriorated one.	Urbanisation transformed a once indigenous area (village) into a modernised area causing the existing settlements to be regarded as deteriorated and unmatching the contemporary setting.
Causes of urban blight	The three main causes of urban blight are economic decline, population loss, and suburbanisation.	The three main causes of urban blight are inadequate urban infrastructure, land tenure systems, and socio-cultural values attached to real properties.
Land tenure systems	Statutory land tenure is dominant in holding of real properties in a formalized land administration system.	Customary land tenure forms a greater percentage of property holding which are principally undocumented.
Values	The social values attached to real properties in urban areas are developed over time with other residents in the area.	Social and cultural values attached to real properties reveal one's identity and ancestral lineage.
Effects	The main positive effect of urban blight is social attachments resulting in a sense of place and strong networks .	The primary positive effect of urban blight concerns stewardship and preservation of culture by the present generation on behalf of the dead and future generations.
	The most important negative effect of blighted areas is high criminal activities.	The predominant negative effect of urban blight is aesthetics, defacing the stunning physical appearance and quality of the modern urban setting.

6. CONCLUSION

The main question posed by this study was “how can the existence of distributed pockets of urban blight in an economically prime urban area in Accra-Ghana be explained?” Thus the study aimed at investigating the underlying reasons and the impact of distributed pockets of urban blight in East Legon, Accra-Ghana. This section concludes the research with the author’s views on the study and recommendations for future research.

6.1 The general concept of urban blight

This study considered four main stakeholders as users of East Legon residential area. They included residents, property owners, real estate developers, and experts comprising local government authorities and government institutions responsible for land administration and land use planning in the country.

Urban blight appears to be a relative concept that is perceived differently by various stakeholders. Hence, it was confirmed that there is no standardised definition for urban blight. Generally, urban blight may be regarded as an unsatisfactory use of urban space or real property. Yet, the unsatisfactory manner is usually determined by the outsiders, that is the other stakeholders/non-residents, while the insider, the one using the real property may have other values that may be hidden from the other stakeholders who perceive it as an unsatisfactory use.

6.2 Summary regarding sub-objectives of the study

This part summarises the study concerning the three sub-objectives. They include:

Firstly, the identification of the different forms of urban blight in the area. The criteria for determining urban blight in Ghana are stipulated in the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 Act 925. However, this study categorized them into four forms of blight. The forms of the urban blight were; a cluster of disordered settlements, a vacant plot of land, single dilapidated properties and abandoned structure all surrounded by well-developed properties. Additionally, this study revealed how urban blight evolved in East Legon. East Legon hitherto comprised four villages which in 1944, the Government compulsorily acquired the area and later established an estate. The indigenes were left to settle in the area although they were compensated. The estate was planned with infrastructure and public services while the indigenous settlements were left unplanned. Yet there were expectations that the indigenous settlements will upgrade to meet the contemporary land use and development of the area. It, however, turned out not to be the case because these areas still lack basic infrastructure which is the genesis of urban blight in the area.

Secondly, to find out why urban blight exists from various stakeholders. The causes of urban blight for the study confirmed that urban blight is contextual which is peculiar to an area. The general causes of blight found were economic reasons, inadequate enforcement of urban policies, land disputes, a weak land administration system as well as some of the property owners are resistant to change. Since both customary and statutory land tenure systems run concurrently in the study area, the study ascertained how these systems influence blight in the area. It was discovered that the land tenure systems play a significant role in land use and development of the area. While the statutory system is formalized, the customary system is not. Thus, it was observed that the customary land tenure system influences the occurrence of blight more than the statutory land tenure system. Furthermore, based on the classification of East Legon as a high-class residential area, it is expected that all real properties would have economic values resulting

in optimum use. Nonetheless, some stakeholders attach social and cultural values to their properties based on personal, family, or community benefits other than economic values. Notably, it was established that every stakeholder attaches value to the real properties but it depends on the kind of value and what that particular neighbourhood also supports. For this study, the immediate well-developed properties in the vicinity determined whether a property was blight or not.

Lastly, to ascertain the impact of urban blight on land use and development in the area. The study found that urban blight has both positive and negative effects which also depends on the stakeholder. The positive effects found were instituting the historical and cultural background of the study area, establishment of security, and community companionship. The negative effects, on the other hand, were aesthetics, underutilisation of real properties, social imbalance, pollution, and insecurity. Therefore, some of the development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight were the complete sale of the blighted properties, joint partnerships, redevelopment, and urban upgrading projects. Yet, it was discovered that almost all these strategies have their pros and cons. Thus, for successful and secured land transactions, property owners could engage professionals such as lawyers. Additionally, there is a need for the engagement and participation of all stakeholders particularly those in the blighted areas for sustainable redevelopment and urban upgrading projects undertaken by the Government.

The upshot of this study is that urban blight in the context of Accra-Ghana specifically East Legon, was found to be a result of three main underlying reasons; inadequate urban infrastructure, land tenure systems (people-to-land relationships) and socio-cultural values attached to real properties. The core factors inducing these three main reasons are weak land administration systems, land disputes, and non-enforcement of urban policies. The study gathered that although the current Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 Act 925 provides the criteria and gives the local government the mandate to enforce them, this is seldom done. This was attributed to the major role played by the customary land tenure systems in the country. Furthermore, it was ascertained that urban blight has both positive and negative effects. Thus, to ensure a balance, there is a need for stakeholders' engagement and participation to decide on what will work best for the area in integrating socio-cultural values into the urban fabric.

6.3 Limitation of the study

The principal limitation of this study concerns the generalisation of land tenure systems and their influence on urban blight in the Sub-Saharan African region. For instance, in Ghana, under the customary land tenure system, there are three types of landholdings; stool, family, and skin. Therefore the influence of land tenure systems on urban blight recognized in this study may not apply to all areas because of the pluralistic and varied land tenure systems and practices in the region.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

This study has established that there is a remarkable difference in values attached to properties and the utilisation of real properties. For future research, it is recommended that there can be a study on urban blight and neighbourhood governance from an institutional perspective. This will look at the collective action of all the stakeholders and their roles in achieving a balance of value systems attached to real properties and urban spaces within the Sub-Saharan African region. Additionally, the results of this study can be extrapolated to other areas within the country or other Sub-Saharan African countries with different characteristics since land tenure systems differ from place to place. Again, further studies can consider a typical customary land tenure system or a statutory tenure system that is also experiencing urban blight and find out the reasons for the occurrence of the blight. Lastly, a study can be conducted on the role of socio-cultural practices in sustainable urban planning and land management.

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APPENDICES

1. Semi-structured interviews questions guide

I. To the Assembly – Physical planning and works department

My name is Sally A. Mireku, MSC student from the University of Twente, Netherlands. I am undertaking research titled *‘Investigating the urban blight phenomenon in prime cities in Ghana. A case study of East Legon, Accra.*

Urban blight has no specific definition by urban planners and social scientists but the concept was developed from the United States of America. Some describe it as an idea in the minds of various stakeholders, neighbourhood disorder, infill surfaces, a contributing factor to slum or stigmatized properties which affect the physical development of an area.

The purpose of the interview is to gather in-depth information and knowledge about the main reasons and impact of urban blight to assist various stakeholders to make urban properties functional for all. Information gathered and respondents interviewed will be treated with confidentiality. The interview will be in three parts: The underlying causes of urban blight, the effect and impact and the strategies for improvement.

Introduction

1. According to Arguello, Ayele, & Blaustein (2015), East Legon is classified as an affluent neighbourhood? Any reason for this classification?
2. What is your opinion about this photograph of East Legon? (see appendix 3).

Main questions

Causes

3. Why are there disparities with the physical development of this neighbourhood?
4. What is the local term used to describe these properties per your experience/profession?
5. Are there other forms/characteristics of this nature that you know of that exist in the neighbourhood?
6. What could be the reasons for the state/conditions of these properties?
7. In your opinion, are all these properties legally recognized by the Municipality?
8. How do the property owners influence the land use plan that is updated every five years?
9. To what extent, do(es) property ownership play a role in the condition(s) of these properties?

The effect and impact on land use and the development

10. How do these properties conform to the zoning regulations and building codes of the area?
11. How are developments controlled?
12. Is there a stipulated time for vacant plots of land to be developed?
13. What are some of the benefits these properties have on other land uses and residents in the neighbourhood?
14. What are some of the negative effects on other land uses and the residents in the neighbourhood? (for instance: are they willing to pay property rates to the Assembly?)

Development dynamics that result in reducing urban blight

15. What are the mechanisms for identifying the properties with such conditions?
16. What development approaches could be adopted to improve the state/conditions of these properties?

II. To the Lands Commission

1. According to Arguello, Ayele, & Blaustein (2015), East Legon is classified as an affluent neighbourhood? Any reason for this classification?
2. What is your opinion about this photograph of East Legon?
3. Apart from blight mentioned in the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016, Act 925, is there a local term for describing 'underused real properties in a prime urban area'?
4. What is/are the land tenure system(s) in the area? Any history behind the tenure systems?
5. How are the lands managed in the area?
6. Does the ownership type influence the blighted properties? If so how and why?
7. What are some of the values attached to the blighted properties by the stakeholders?
8. How often are the land records altered to reflect what is on the ground?
9. What are some of the pros and cons of the blighted properties on other land uses/users in the neighbourhood?
10. What are some of the possible ways of urban development that reduce urban blight?

III. To the property owners/renters

1. Are you a resident in this house/property?
2. How long have you been staying in this property?
3. How did you come to live here in this property?
4. Will you consider moving to another area or another property?
5. What if someone makes an offer to acquire this property, will you consider giving it out, why?
6. What are the benefits of living in this property?

The effect and impact on land use and the development

7. What about some advantages this property has on other land uses or neighbours?
8. Have you had complaints from other residents or been approached by a Government Institution because of the property? (payment of property rates, building spacing or landscape etc)
9. Do you have measures of addressing the complaints raised?

Personal Questions

1. Which property type do you hold?
 - a. State land [] b. customary land [] c. others, specify
2. What are some of the property rights you enjoy?
 - a. Use [] b. sell/dispose of [] c. rent [] d. mortgage [] e. others, specify

IV. To the residents

1. Are you a resident in this neighbourhood?
2. How did you come to live in East Legon and why?
3. Would you consider moving to another area?
4. What is your opinion about this photograph of East Legon? (see appendix 3)

Main questions

The causes of urban blight

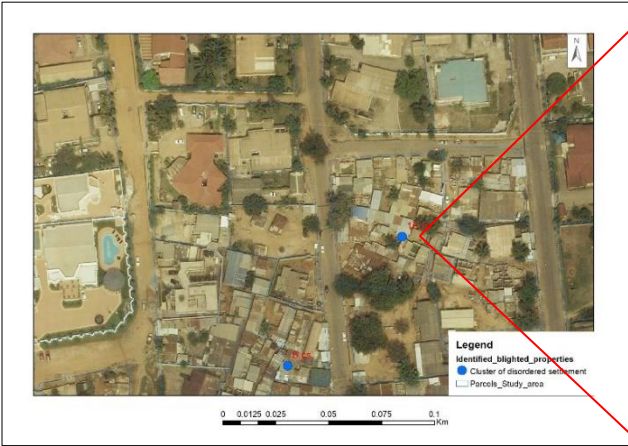
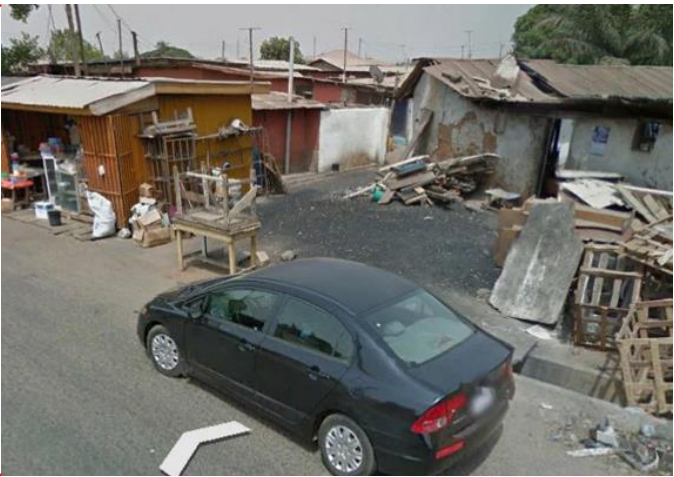


5. Why are there disparities with the physical development of this area?
6. Is there a local term used to describe such properties?
7. Are there other forms/characteristics of this nature that you know of that exist in the neighbourhood?
8. What could be the reasons for the state/conditions of these properties?

The effect and impact on land use and development

9. What are some of the benefits these properties have on other land uses and neighbours?
10. What are some of the negative effects on other land uses and neighbours?
11. How can the negative effects be reduced in your opinion?

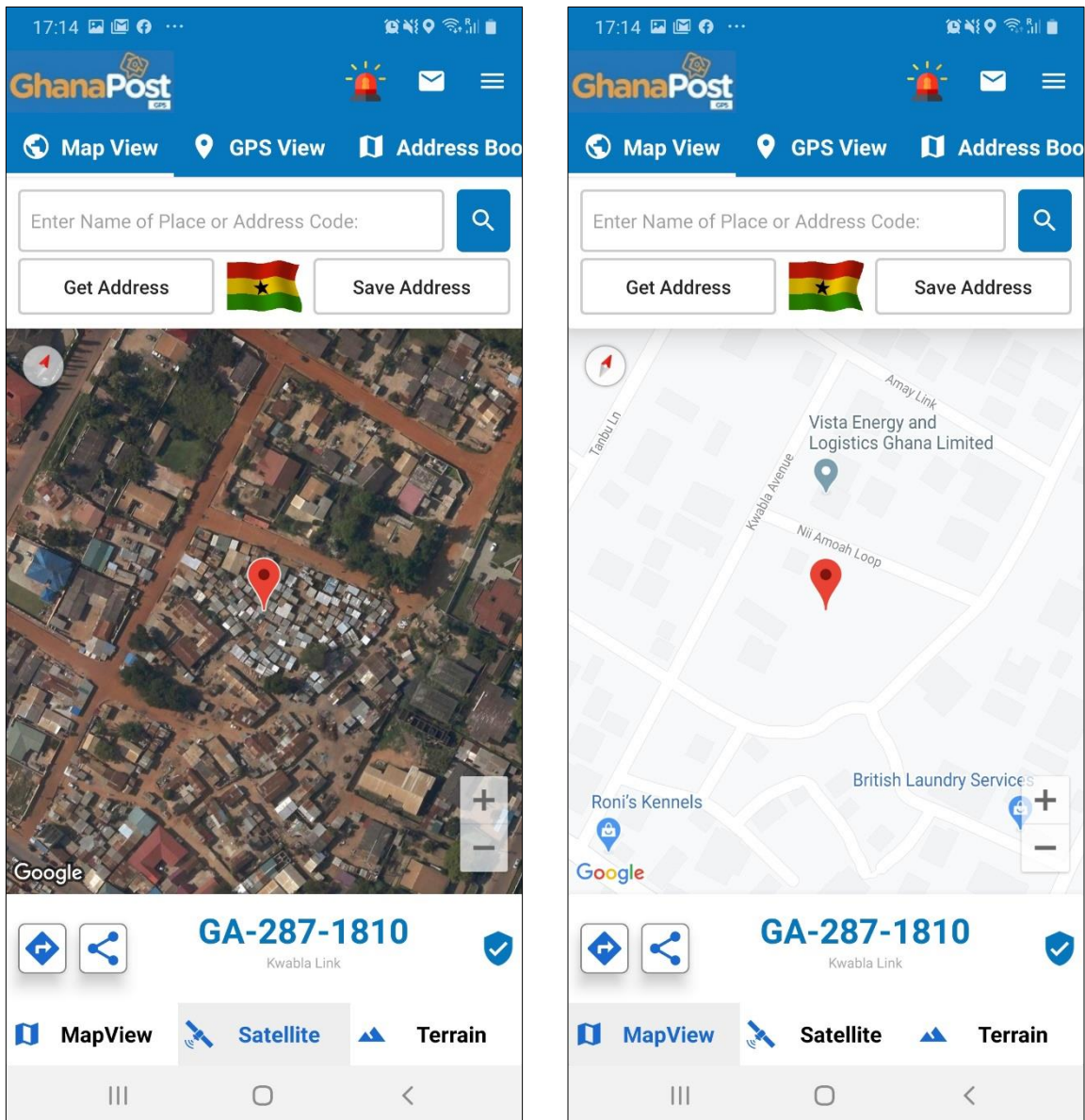
2. Figures

Appendix 1: Pictures showing blighted situation in East Legon

Forms of Urban Blight	Google Street View
a) Cluster of disordered settlement	
	
b) Vacant plot	
	

Forms of Urban Blight	Google Street View
c) Dilapidated property	
	
d) Uncompleted structure	
	

Appendix 2: Ghana Post Gps/Google Map used during the fieldwork



Appendix 3: Photograph used for the photo-elicitation/semi-structured interviews during fieldwork



Appendix 4 Transcribed documents grouped according to participants

THEISIS - ATLAS.ti

Manage Documents

File Home Search Project Analyze Import & Export Tools & Support Documents Search & Filter Tools View

Add Document(s) New Group New Smart Group Auto Coding Focus Group Coding Rename Document Delete Edit Comment Open Group Manager Open Network Word Cloud Word List Report Excel Export

Document Manager

Search Document Groups

Document Groups

- Lands Commission Officials (4)
- Local Government Officials (4)
- Property Owners (8)
- Real Estate Investors (2)
- Residents (12)**

Search Documents

ID	Name	Media Type	Location	Groups
D 26	25 LVD Head (F)	Text	Library	[Lands Commission Officials]
D 27	26 LUSPA (M)	Text	Library	[Local Government Officials]
D 28	27 Head Land Policy PVLMD (F)	Text	Library	[Lands Commission Officials]
D 29	28 SMD, Lands Commission (M)	Text	Library	[Lands Commission Officials]
D 30	29 Indigene_Property Owner (M)	Text	Library	[Property Owners]
D 31	30 Resident (M)	Text	Library	[Residents]

Comment:

Zero or multiple documents selected

Zero or multiple items selected