A photograph of a woman in a colorful patterned dress walking through a narrow alleyway in a slum. She is carrying a child on her back. In the foreground, several chickens are visible on the ground. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the left side.

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Negotiating the Slum

Understanding the
Human-Spatial Dynamics
of Nima, Accra

Author: Kristijn van Riel
Supervisor: Dr. Lothar Smith

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The picture on the cover was taken and generously provided by Lothar Smith.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AMA = Accra Metropolitan Assembly
 QOL = Quality of life
 SAP = Structural Adjustment Program
 SSA = Sub Saharan Africa
 SWB = Subjective well-being
 SWLS = Satisfaction with life survey

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Executive summary

The purpose of the present thesis is to contribute to the developing body of knowledge and methods to study urban poverty, in order to inform and support future research and governance decisions. Rapid urbanization in large parts of the world, while the locus of poverty is increasingly shifting towards the urban centers, is causing a 'slumification' of some of the world's largest cities. This occurs perhaps to the most alarming degree in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa. As a consequence, urgent action is needed from researchers and policymakers to respectively understand the forces behind these trends and attempt to resolve these pressing issues. The main ambition of this thesis is to expose the relationship between the physical and spatial characteristics of a slum environment on the one hand, and the quality of life of its residents on the other, for which it zooms in on Nima, a poor, very densely populated, and heterogeneously composed neighborhood of Accra, the

capital of Ghana. The theoretical foundations lean on concepts of urban poverty, slums, livelihoods and quality of life. The conceptual model seeks to synthesize these perspectives, but also to make a conceptual contribution. The thesis combines methods from social and planning disciplines, in order to arrive at a broad understanding of the processes occurring in slum areas. This way the thesis aspires to criticize, but at the same time also to complement some of the more narrowly focused methods used in the popular discourse on urban poverty, currently dominated by large organizations such as The World Bank and UN-Habitat. The thesis tracks the development of Nima and Accra through a dynamic process of growth and migration, and frames this development in its geo-political context. In a spatial analysis, Nima is investigated from a technical perspective, describing the spatial and physical aspects of the research area. In the subsequent quality of life analysis, the residents' perceptions of their life and their life space are the subject of scrutiny. When these two separate analyses are combined and compared it becomes clear that the relationships individuals have with their environment are much more complex and meaningful than the popular discourse on slums and urban poverty account for. The dense street pattern and proximity of the houses in Nima seem to support a strong identity of place and social cohesion, which has important social implications. Despite being designated as a slum area, both the physical environment of Nima as its residents demonstrate important developments that indicate that upward mobility is occurring. It is clear that the residents of Nima are not just preoccupied with 'surviving', but they are equally actively trying to improve their quality of life. For many of them, Nima plays an important part in this. The main contribution of the thesis lies in showing that the combination of different disciplines and perspectives to analyze a complex relationship such as that between residents and their environment, can lead to important insights and a broader understanding, which could be valuable in informing decisions of governance and planning.

I. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

"I was born in a slum, but the slum wasn't born in me." – Jesse Jackson, American civil rights activist and Baptist minister

In the 20th century the world population has exploded, from approximately 1.6 billion people in 1900 to around 7 billion today. Most of this growth took place in the Global South. Currently around half of the global population resides in urban areas, and the majority of a predicted population increase of more than 2 billion over the next 30 years is likely to happen in and around cities of the developing world (Cohen, 2006). The UN-Habitat 2004 report demonstrated an alarming rise in urban poverty; in many of the poorest countries the share of urban poor has grown faster than the general speed of urban population increase. Cohen (2006) argues therefore that reaching the United Nation's goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, as stated in the Millennium Development Goals, will likely depend for a considerable part on how cities are governed in the developing world.

The main factors contributing to the rapid expansion of city populations are: natural increase of population, rural-urban migration and incorporation of bordering villages into expanding cities. Because many cities in the Global South are currently outgrowing their infrastructure at a phenomenal rate, popular belief among policy makers is that their growth must be stopped or limited in some way. Hardoy, Mitlan and Satterthwaite (2001) however, point out that in general there is an economic logic to the pattern of urbanization. Cities can provide important opportunities for the economic and social development of its citizens, if properly governed. Cities typically have their origin in some form of economic and geographic advantage over the surrounding areas. Therefore, historically they have always constituted centers for economic growth, modernization and employment opportunities, and continue to be so, especially in the developing world where the bulk of the production processes are still concentrated in and around cities. A higher density of people is also seen to relatively reduce the cost of providing infrastructure and basic services per person, and is considered to help limit people's stress on ecosystems. Although large

amounts of poverty exist in cities around the world, generally, urban citizens still benefit from better access to education and health care, not to forget many primary services like electricity, water and sanitation, compared to people living in rural regions (Cohen, 2006). But with the considerable increase of absolute poverty in urban areas in large cities around the world, these benefits that have long been taken for granted, are being criticized by some authors (e.g. Bockerhoff & Brennan, 1998). Certainly there are very large differences in the specific characteristics and the speed and intensity of the urbanization process between individual cities, regions and countries, to which such generalized descriptions cannot do justice. Countries on the African and Asian continent are, for instance, a lot more rural in character, and in terms of livelihood provision more reliant on agriculture than countries in Latin America. Because of the large potential for urbanization they still hold, the speed of urbanization is predicted to be highest in Africa and Asia over the next 30 years (Cohen, 2006). But even though cities around the world display an immense variety in their characteristics, history, functioning of economies, amounts of infrastructure and formal planning and growth patterns, many of the challenges that cities face are remarkably similar. Cohen (2006) observes that typically when a city grows, it becomes more diverse. In every city exist comparatively wealthier and poorer areas, but in most developing countries, the poorer areas can draw on drastically lower amounts of basic services and infrastructures. These living environments are plagued by insufficiency of sewerage and solid waste disposal, low quality housing and limited access to clean drinking water, which often results in severe ecological and health challenges. These are the developing world's slums.

It is generally expected that Sub Saharan Africa will be confronted with the biggest development challenges of the major regions in the world. Perhaps the fundamental difference in the process of urbanization is that, in contrast to rapidly growing cities in Asia and Latin America, most African cities have been economically marginalized from the current globalized financial system. The World Bank (2000a) emphasized that between the years 1970 and 1995, the urban population of African countries on average increased at a rate of 4.7 percent per year, while the GDP per capita decreased by 0.7 percent annually. Unlike in many Asian countries that have experienced similar urban growth rates, urbanization on the African continent was not

complemented with industrialization. The World Bank concluded therefore in the '1999/2000 World Development Report' that "cities in Africa are not serving as engines of growth and structural transformation. Instead, they are part of the cause and a major symptom of the economic and social crisis that have enveloped the continent" (p. 130). In such a poor macroeconomic context, with little direct foreign investment, it is understandably difficult for governments to deliver sufficient infrastructure and basic services. In 2003 it was estimated that around 72 percent of the African urban population was living in seriously deprived, or 'slum' settings (UN-HABITAT).

According to UN-Habitat (2009a) however, Ghana's democratic system and economy have advanced significantly in the last 20 years, which resulted in greatly reduced national rates of poverty. Ghana is presently the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) that was able to effectively reduce hunger and poverty rates by 50%, one of the main Millennium Development Goals, from 5.4 million malnourished people in 1990 to 1.9 million in 2005 (UN-HABITAT, 2009a). As Ghana's capital, Accra is an eclectic and diverse city that exhibits both signs of prosperity and development, but also of dire poverty and human struggle. It is the locus of processes of rapid growth and diversification, and attracts vast amounts of migrants from Ghana's rural areas but also from many other African countries. The majority of its growth and diversification is largely concentrated in Accra's informal or 'slum' neighborhoods, such as Nima. Nima, classified by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) as a slum neighborhood, is located close to the center of Accra, and has continuously attracted large amounts of migrants since its establishment around the 1930s. It is presently one of the most diverse and densely populated areas of Accra, but it is also stigmatized as a dangerous area with poor living conditions. I argue that Accra, and more specifically Nima, because of the mentioned dynamics, provides an interesting context to perform a study on urban poverty and its effects on quality of life.

1.2 Research motivation

Because of the urgency and the scale of the challenges many African cities are facing, in terms of soaring urbanization rates and demographic diversification, met with failing infrastructures, inadequate service provisions and generally low economic performance, and these often in less governable informal economies. If we are to

avoid major human catastrophes in the coming years and decades, I consider it a responsibility to contribute to a better understanding of the processes in these cities, and contribute to a body of knowledge that can help to inform better urban planning and policy decisions in the future.

I have found there is little research focus on the interface between the physical and spatial aspects of life in urban poverty and the sociological aspects, that also combines different methods of inquiry to allow an understanding of different aspects and scales of context. Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001) contend that there is only a limited amount of research available on the effects of severe material deprivation on quality of life. Arabindoo (2011) adds that much of research on urban poverty assumes that the social category of urban poor matches exactly the geographical entity of a slum. He argues that it is therefore necessary to carefully expose and map the diversity and dynamics of urban poverty, and how it relates to the geo-spatial environment. I seek to respond to these often overlooked aspects in the literature with this thesis. I believe that future research can benefit from an interdisciplinary approach to this topic, and wish to demonstrate its value.

As noted in the introduction, the need for intervention is becoming more urgent for large parts of the rapidly urbanizing African continent, but also for many other parts of the world. The practical use for a better understanding of poverty and its relation to the urban environment is self-evident. As many governments and planners seem powerless to effectively intervene against rising poverty rates, it is important that their strategies and decisions are informed by an accurate and rich understanding of the challenges and opportunities present. I trust that praxis can also benefit from more interdisciplinary operation, if supported by the right frameworks and I hope to contribute a little to such developments.

1.3 Problem Statement

The main focus of interest in this thesis is the relationship and interaction between individuals and their environment, in a context of the discourse on urban poverty and slums. I propose the following main research question:

To what extent do spatial and physical conditions of the neighborhood of Nima, Accra, influence the quality of life of its residents?

The neighborhood Nima, Accra provides the context in which to understand the specific processes and dynamics in this relation, from which I will investigate the life-space of the urban poor. It is not the entire case of Nima which will be under investigation. It provides the setting, but the starting point is rather the understanding of dynamics that link residents to Nima and to affiliated parts of Accra through local or global processes. In breaking down the main research question, the following dimensions require individual attention: urban poverty, spatial and physical conditions of the environment and quality of life. In focusing on these dimensions I have come up with the following sub-questions:

How do we measure the quality of the physical and spatial environment of Nima?

What constitutes quality of life and how do we measure it?

How do residents of Nima perceive their physical and spatial environment and how do they relate to and interact with it?

By answering these questions separately it is possible to develop an understanding of the physical, spatial and social dimensions of life in Nima and how these dimensions relate to each other. In a final sub question, I synthesize and link up to the main question:

How does this interaction with and perception of the environment influence their quality of life?

1.4 Approach

This thesis for the master Human Geography at the Radboud University, Nijmegen, is situated in the context of rapidly urbanizing cities in the developing world. This research focuses on the influence of spatial and physical conditions on the quality of life of urban poor. The neighborhood of Nima – Accra, the capital of Ghana – serves as the context for this case study. The theorization of urban poverty and the slum, and a literary study on the topic of urbanization in Ghana will provide the necessary framework upon which to build further understanding of the relation between

environment and residents in this context. For this exploratory research I use a mixed method approach.

This thesis will be structured in the following way: The first chapter, the introduction, presents the urgent situation of increasing urban poverty in the Global South, and highlights the need for a more profound understanding of the complex relation between the urban poor and their environment. Subsequently I propose my research questions. In the second chapter, I will propose the conceptual framework. First I theorize the concepts of urban poverty, livelihoods and the slum. Subsequently I propose the 'quality of life' framework after which I distinguish several themes on which to focus the tools of analysis. In the third chapter, I will explain the methodology, how it is operationalized, and discuss the tools and methods of analysis. In the fourth chapter I theorize the African city Accra so we can frame the neighborhood Nima in the larger geo-political context. In the fifth chapter I will discuss the empirics. First I will briefly portray the neighborhood Nima, and render an image of the environment how I experienced as a temporary resident of Nima. Afterwards, this chapter branches in three sections, representing the distinct perspectives I used to examine Nima that will locally embed the theory. The first section is a descriptive technical analysis where I investigate the physical and spatial aspects of the research areas. The second section looks at the interrelations between residents and Nima from a more sociological point of view, based on quality of life measures. The final chapter provides the synthesis, where the different perspectives are combined, compared and where I bring this together in a discussion. Next I present some of the limitations of this thesis followed by recommendations, and a final main conclusion.

II. Theorizing poverty

In this chapter I review some of the literature that is relevant to the topic of this thesis. I introduce and explain the most important concepts and frameworks. Following this, in the final section, I provide my own conceptual framework, which serves to structure the contributions of this thesis. It borrows from the literature, and attempts to synthesize, but also to contribute to and clarify my own perspectives on the literature.

2.1 Urban poverty

Poverty is conceived by the World Bank (2000b) as a multidimensional form of deprivation, encompassing material deprivation combined with little access to education or healthcare, high levels of vulnerability and little political agency or empowerment. The World Bank argues that it is crucial to consider a broad range of dimensions of poverty because the dimensions significantly influence and support each other. Each of these aspects considerably influences an individual's well-being, as it limits the elemental freedoms that allow an individual to lead a life on his or her own terms.

Presently a third of the total urban population is estimated to be poor, and one in every four persons affected by poverty lives in an urban environment (Ravallion, Chen, & Sangraula, 2007). Even though the share of urban poor did not change significantly the last decade, Ravallion (2001) demonstrated that, on average, the poor are urbanizing faster compared to the total population. Therefore poverty is expected to gradually become more of an urban problem. According to Baker (2008) however, a global shift to a majority of urban poor is not projected to happen before 2040, so the majority of the poor will remain located in rural areas for at least some time. She does emphasize that some of the challenges surrounding urban poverty are very distinct from rural poverty and require urgent attention.

Poverty encompasses numerous different characteristics, and displays a high diversity across regions, countries and even within the same city. Baker and Schuler (2004) note that there are also commonalities, and certain features are more prominent in urban areas compared to rural areas. The following are some of the

major concerns around urban poverty raised in the literature:

For instance, the commoditization of the economy influences urban populations more directly than the rural population, which makes urbanites more reliant on the cash economy, and more vulnerable to its volatile nature. In cities the poor are also more prone to living in overcrowded environments. Because of the often precarious location of settlements and the higher densities, urban poor are on average more exposed to environmental hazards and pollutants, which results in major health risks. Also the results of natural disasters, such as earthquakes or floods, are generally more severe in urban areas. Because of higher densities and diversity connected to large-scale migration, and the resultant social fragmentation, urban residents can rely less on community-based social security mechanisms, generally present in rural areas. Additionally there is wide agreement that crime and violence are also much more prevalent in urban areas.

2.2 Livelihoods

In this thesis I investigate the relationship between residents of the neighborhood Nima and their environment to understand how these residents behave in relation to this environment, how they interact with it and how it influences and is part of their day to day lives. This relation, I argue, depends largely on how people are able to utilize their environment to their advantage in improving their well-being. This is why we need to examine the livelihoods framework.

The acknowledgement that poor households in urban or rural areas generally depend on more than one activity to generate income for their maintenance, has spurred interest in livelihoods approaches from both research and policy angles. According to Carney's (1998, p. 4) definition a livelihood encompasses "the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base."

According to Rakodi (2002), the livelihoods framework is valuable, because, next to providing conceptualizations of 'poverty', it also addresses several other important issues. There is a general recognition regarding the central mechanisms, even

though different authors may shift emphases and diverge on exact conceptualizations. I will discuss some of the most important concepts of this approach in the next section.

2.2.1 Poverty, deprivation and well-being.

Deprivation occurs when people are to a certain degree hindered in their abilities or functions. Challenges arise, however, when attempting to measure the non-monetary aspects of deprivation, and comparing them with monetary aspects (Maxwell, 1999). The poor have been demonstrated to perceive income deprivation as an important factor when considering their well-being, but there are different components of poverty that may be equally significant and that may counterbalance variations in income (M. Moore, Chondhary, & Singh, 1998).

Households maintain a so-called portfolio of assets, including tangible assets, such as money, foodstuffs, property or skills, and intangible assets, for instance status, influence on people or authorities, or grants to facilities and services. They make choices about how to employ their portfolio, and these strategies are determined by the kind of portfolio and their capability to discover and make use of existing opportunities. The goal of these strategies is effectively “to cope with and recover from stress and shocks, by stinting hoarding, protecting, depleting or diversifying the portfolio; to maintain or enhance capability and assets; and to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation” (Rakodi, 2002, p. 6). This way, poverty can be defined as a situation marked by a scarcity of assets, an incapacity to gather and/or sustain a diversified portfolio and an absence of alternate possibilities to manage stress and shocks. In the worst case, households have no choice but to employ strategies that permit them to subsist with no opportunity to improve their well-being (Rakodi, 2002).

As mentioned before, not many households in developing countries can sustain themselves by relying on just one commercial activity. The livelihoods concept, according to Rakodi (2002), therefore provides room for the diversity of activities undertaken by a household to guarantee their subsistence and improve their situation.

2.2.2 Household strategies

The livelihoods framework recognizes that poor households adopt particular livelihood strategies as a way to improve their livelihoods.

First of all, what is a household? The household is defined by Rakodi (2002, p. 7) as “a person or co-resident group of people who contribute to and/or benefit from a joint economy in either cash or domestic labour.” She notes that the household is generally regarded as a stable and easily defined unit, but argues that it often is not. A household is subject to evolution, and as its members age, power configurations also change. Additionally, particularly poor households often note a flexible composition, with some members (i.e. extended family, friends) joining or dropping out of its influence on a regular basis because of necessity or opportunistic motivations (Rakodi, 2002).

The term strategy is used as a way of returning agency to the poor, instead of their representation as powerless objects. Some authors, who argue that the poor are often limited in their control over their assets to the extent that it is difficult to speak of goal-oriented activities, have criticized this. They argue that most poor individuals are rather restricted to opportunistic reactions to developments in order to keep further impoverishment at bay (Rakodi, 2002).

Critics may argue that the focus on the analytical construct of household can hide individualistic behavior and decision making. Indeed, it is people that make decisions not households. Yet, it is the complex combination of power relations between people in the household and further linkages to larger social networks they are part of, that ultimately determines how decisions are made and resources distributed and used.

2.2.3 Assets & capital

Central to the livelihoods framework are the assets used by households or individuals to construct and support their livelihoods. These assets are affected by context, in terms of the vulnerabilities people and their assets are exposed to. Policies, and the interrelations between organizations and people influence their access to assets and the way they are used. The adopted strategies of individuals and households result in either increased or reduced well-being.

Livelihoods approaches recognize that the poor often do not have money or savings, but they do have other types of assets at their disposal, material and non-material in

nature. Together these assets constitute a stock of capital that increases income but is never fully spent upon usage (Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). Rakodi (2002, p. 10) adds that capital “can be stored, accumulated, exchanged or depleted and put to work to generate a flow of income or other benefits.”

Many authors divide capital at people’s disposal into the following five categories: human, social, physical, financial and natural capital. It should be noted that there is no single way of categorizing capital; this list should therefore not be regarded as exhaustive. Building on Carney (1998) and Rakodi (2002) these categories are briefly explained below.

Human capital includes the quality and quantity of resources at a households’ disposal relevant to its work productivity. The quantity hereby describes the amount of participants, and the time they can invest in productive activities. The quality then refers to the education, skills and health of the participants. Rakodi notes that low levels of education and skills more directly affect productivity in urban than in rural contexts.

Social capital can be described as the combination of all social resources on which people depend to improve their well-being. This includes networks at their disposal, connections they have to groups or associations, reciprocal relations based on trust they maintain and claims they have with civil or political institutions. Social contact only becomes capital when it is sustained and produces stores (for instance of trust or knowledge) that people can appeal to for their livelihoods, even if the social contact does not last. Social networks are commonly considered to be more fragile in an urban context, as a result of high rates of mobility and circulation and the heterogeneous composition of neighborhoods.

Physical capital comprises basic infrastructures, tools, equipment and material resources required for production their livelihoods. This can include means of transport, shelter, provision of water and energy, but also (communication) technologies or productive items or even domestic animals. Infrastructure is sometimes noted as a separate category, as it is generally created with public

investment instead of private, and it additionally serves a larger population than the individual or the household.

Financial capital indicates the collection of financial resources that people can rely on to diversify their livelihoods. This includes savings, investments, credit and remittances. In an urban context, because of an advanced commoditization of the economy, there is a stronger reliance of households on monetary income when compared to a rural context. Furthermore the access to healthcare and education, the acquisition of shelter or productive assets, the ability to mitigate shocks and stress are all directly or indirectly influenced by an individual's or household's capacity to gather financial capital.

Natural capital contains all natural resources that can be put to advantage for people's livelihoods, in particular common pool resources. This type of capital includes air, water, soil, plants, animals and other environmental resources. Because urban poor households are less dependent on their natural environment for food, water or energy provision, their direct access to natural capital is considered less vital compared to rural households.

As noted before these categories are not fixed nor are they exhaustive. Different authors have different ways of defining the categories. Furthermore, some assets cannot be unambiguously categorized in a single group. L. Smith (2010) provides the example of livestock, which can be seen as an investment, therefore grouped with financial capital, or rather as a productive asset categorized with physical capital and as it is also a source of increased status in many countries, it can be a social asset. For the present thesis, Bebbington (1999) makes a relevant distinction between assets. He distinguishes between assets that directly contribute to the maintenance of individuals, and those that generate meaning and add significance to an individual's life, this way contributing to choices over livelihoods. Because in this thesis we explore how the environment influences the quality of life of the urban poor through their subjective well-being, it is important to note that assets may influence perceived well-being and provide meaning differently between people.

2.2.4 Vulnerabilities

One of the critical characteristics of poverty is an increased exposure to the risks of disasters, stress and shocks. Additionally, the poor are generally ill equipped to deal with and swiftly recuperate from these shocks (Rakodi, 2002). In order to recognize the different causes of vulnerability, Carney (1998) highlights the need to investigate trends, shocks and culture.

For this thesis, I argue that the livelihoods framework can structure the insights into the relations between the residents, their activities and the context. I use the livelihoods concept to frame the productive relation of the residents of Nima with their environment. Instead of performing a detailed livelihoods analysis to reveal the extent of economic relationships between residents and their environment, I opt to use the framework as a canvas upon which to paint different pictures of relationships and different individuals. Furthermore, central in the livelihoods framework figures usually the unit of the household. I recognize that this is a valuable unit of analysis, however, for examining individual perceptions of the environment in a context of urban poverty, I argue that the individual as a unit of analysis is more appropriate.

This framework is valuable for explaining processes present in Nima in order to understand how people interact with their environment, and how the livelihood strategies are embedded in their surroundings. Since I did not perform a secure livelihoods analysis on Nima, it would be pointless to provide a detailed description of the livelihoods situation. However, it is useful to understand how the concepts relate to the empirical context of Nima. Many households in Nima, for instance, are fluid in their composition and flexible in their livelihood strategies. In terms of strategies, most households diversify their income in many ways, and it is not uncommon in Nima for an individual to have several economic activities. For instance, one young woman taught in a local school in the morning, after hours she was selling commodities outside of her home, and one day in the week she did private teaching to some children of a friend. It is even unusual to find someone, even children or retired people, who does not contribute to the household livelihood in any way. Many households in Nima also hold domestic animals as another way of diversifying income. Another important These are all part of the strategies that residents of Nima adopt to improve their livelihoods and their well-being. It is important for this thesis to

understand that the assets at one's disposal are embedded in their environment, they have a spatial factor, even if it is not explicit in the framework. Furthermore, the environment can simultaneously act as an asset and as a vulnerability, or rather have a positive or a negative influence on the livelihood of a household. The specific spatial and physical characteristics of Nima, its location close to Accra for instance, can be an asset to livelihood strategies, while the same location can also cause fewer education opportunities for your children, higher health risks and so on. These are all considerations people make, either consciously or not, when assessing their living environment.

2.3 Theorizing the slum

An interesting debate has emerged in urban studies about urban poverty and one of its most visible manifestations in the developing world; the 'slum'. The positions in politic and academic circles on the many issues facing cities in the Global South, can more or less be divided in two sides; the pessimistic or even apocalyptic perspective, and the uncontrollable optimistic perspective. As Herrick (2014) describes, this division is determined by the extent to which people consider cities and their inhabitants central to finding solutions to urban problems or rather that they embody the source of problems and are destined to fail. Similarly, the debate on slums can largely be divided into two camps. Traditionally slums were regarded as crowded, dangerous, unhealthy and unsanitary places to live in, a cancerous development that should be removed from city grounds and replaced with sturdier buildings and decent infrastructures. Despite the many apparent problems of living in these environments, many authors have recently started to recognize and emphasize the important opportunities slums offer to their inhabitants, and to the city. Bolay (2006) emphasizes that slums should not solely be regarded as an outcome of badly managed city planning, but should be accepted as a major new form of urban living, that is almost certainly here to stay. Therefore many authors stress the need for more research, to allow for a more profound understanding of the processes that drive the emergence and workings of these urban environments, in order to be capable of systematically and sustainably improving the situations for the inhabitants. In the next section, for this purpose, I will take a closer look at previous attempts in literature to

theorize the phenomenon that I have up to this point generalized and referred to as 'slums'.

Arabindoo (2011) suggests in his article "Rhetoric of the 'slum': Rethinking urban poverty" that slums became an operational substitute for analyzing and representing urban poverty, as the conceptualization of urban poverty remains dominated by the challenges of measuring it. Governments often choose to apply the more straightforward and easily quantifiable slum population as the key indicator of poverty. Determining a 'slum line' seems easier to operate than the much-contested 'poverty line'. Arabindoo (2011, p. 638) argues that similarly, research in social sciences has adopted the tendency to "overlay the social category of urban poor over the spatial terrain of slums anticipating a neat fit. Few actually go that extra mile to unpack qualitatively the heterogeneity of the urban poor and the spaces they inhabit." McFarlane (2009) stresses likewise that if we want 'slum theory' to be more than a space for intellectual dispute by academics, we must discard the 'spatial fix' that characterizes most studies on slums. Rather, he appeals for the establishment of a 'conceptually detailed topology' of the urban poor, for their social interactions constitute an elaborate network of connections and flows that are in no way confined to a single physical space.

It is, however, still difficult to find one general definition for the term slum. Arabindoo (2011) even calls the term slum itself problematic, as it originates from a specific situation in early industrial Great Britain, it evokes associations, which are unsuitable for deprived settlements in developing countries. The term slum is commonly used to indicate any poor urban settlement in a severely deprived state in developing countries, referring to a wide variety of very different urban environments across the world. To add to the ambiguity of the concept, virtually every country has its own working definition for slum, some definitions are very similar, but the differences can be important. Perhaps the most commonly used definition of slum-conditions is the one provided by UN-HABITAT (2006, p. 1):

a household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following; Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions, sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing

the same room, easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price, access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people, security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.

In popular speech, the terms slum, squatter area or informal settlement are often used interchangeably, making no distinctions between the delicate differences between them. Informal settlements can be defined by the absence of formal planning within these settlements, but they share many characteristics with both slums and squatter areas. Typically, informal settlements illegally occupy land, so in this sense they often qualify as squatter areas. Furthermore are informal settlements usually highly dense settlements, their residents housed in self-built constructions, created with local knowledge and traditional methods. As a result, informal settlements are generally characterized by densely packed small and improvised buildings constructed in various materials, by the ruin of local ecosystems and often by severe social problems; characteristics that are mostly associated with slums (Nawagamuwa & Viking, 2003).

If we allow the definition of UN-HABITAT to inform us, it would be concluded that large parts of Nima would qualify as slum settlement. Many of the residents will not share this view, and rather consider Nima a particularly vibrant, and integrated neighborhood of Accra. Because of the universal acceptance of the UN-HABITAT's slum-defining conditions, I am engaged to including these conditions in my framework. But as it is my intention to uncover a complex relation between spatial and physical conditions of Nima, and the subjective well-being of its residents, I am also encouraged to look further than these few given conditions. In this context I try not to take part in the debate of categorization. I will rather try to discover what it means to live in a neighborhood, designated by some as a slum, defined by its own particular conditions and not defined by its slum-ness. My intention is exactly to look into the relation between the conditions of the environment and the quality of life within the Nima settlement, regardless of its indication as a slum, squatter area or informal settlement.

2.4 Environmental conditions of quality of life

It was the Brundtland Report in 1987 (WCED, 1987) that first raised awareness about quality of life concerns when it defined sustainable development as “development capable of satisfying the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs.” The report’s mention of human needs reflects the necessity for development to not only serve and respect nature and the environment, but also to acknowledge and improve on human well-being. The World Health Organization Group (1994) defines quality of life of an individual as the “perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.”

In order to identify the environmental impact on human well-being, Moser (2009) appeals for research to look past single or separate consequences of environmental conditions, but to adopt a more inclusive view of humans’ relationship with their environment. She highlights that we expect our environment, particularly an urban one, to support multiple functions and carry multiple meanings, to offer security and enable production and reproduction of social relations. She continues that, because one setting can have different meanings for different people, to analyze the relation between people and their environment, an integrated approach that investigates the relation between objective environmental conditions and the subjective satisfaction of the individual with these conditions, could provide a more profound understanding what comprises quality of life.

To this purpose Moser (2009) adopts the expression ‘people-environment congruity’ to indicate the state achieved when a person is in harmony with his or her habitat, in terms of the possibilities it provides to realize ambitions and fulfill needs. Congruity between an individual and the environment is accordingly attained when an individual has a positive relation with the objective conditions of his or her life space and expresses satisfaction with this environment.

It is important to note that individuals’ anticipations and aspirations are socially constructed, therefore culturally defined and context specific. These human traits will always color subjective experience and consequently influence neighborhood satisfaction (Canter, 1983; Moser, 2009).

Furthermore, Giuliani (2003) introduces the attachment people have to their life space as an important predictor of neighborhood satisfaction. He uses 'place attachment' to describe a sense of affection people develop over longer periods of exposure to their social and physical surroundings. Moser (2009) similarly states that residents' connections to their environment, the sense of identification they experience to a place, play a crucial role in mediating their satisfaction with the environment. People who report weak ties to their neighborhood are more prone to report displeasure as a result of environmental disturbances (e.g. traffic noise), compared to people who report high place identity (Jonah, Bradley, & Dawson, 1981). Lévy-Leboyer and Ratiu (1993) established that a strong sense of neighborliness between residents can, to some extent, balance poor living conditions. Similarly, Donovan and Halpern (2002) demonstrated the importance of having a strong social network to an individual's life satisfaction.

2.4.1 Place

Whether it is through focusing on 'person-environment congruity', 'place attachment', 'place identity', or other concepts concerning people-environment relations, it is made clear that "it is not the objective quality of the environment, but the way people interact with it that provides the principal explanation for human well-being" (Moser, 2009, p. 354). (these frameworks highlight the importance of a more holistic understanding of both how people experience their environment and how it affects their daily life.)

In the context of understanding the interaction between people and their environment, Pellow (2001) points to the theoretical difficulty of locating the spatial and identifying how it is entangled with social interactions. Harvey (1996) argues that things, objects or artifacts, embody relations, and when linked to people they can become active. Pellow (2001, p. 60) further argues that "people socially produce their spatial environment, their places. [...] As the built environment is socially produced, it is an exemplar of material culture. Social values, roles, and behaviors are embedded in this spatial environment."

It becomes important to define what constitutes place. According to Kuper (1972, p. 420), place is a specific and bounded part of social space, which is "socially and

ideologically demarcated and separated from other places.” This leads her to observe that a place

“becomes a symbol within the total and complex system of communication in the total social universe. Social relations are articulated through particular sites, associated with different messages and ranges of communication... The importance of these sites is not only their manifest and distinctive appearance, but their qualifying and latent meaning. This can be derived only after studying both the social relations and the ideational of ordering places within the universe of the particular society or group with which one is concerned.” (Kuper, 1972, pp. 420-421).

Pellow (2001) explains that the delineations and associations with place strongly differ between individuals. It essentially depends on what and who the individual considers belonging to. Bourdieu (1984) adds that social interactions between people or groups are always embedded in the places that host their activities. The spatial arrangement of people is tied to their social and political position, and is not socially neutral. This means that residential configurations – residential densities, how space is used, divided and shared – are culturally produced and should be understood and studied correspondingly (Gabaccia, 1984). This becomes particularly significant if we consider Rodman's (1992, p. 640) observation that people in the developing world might have “more immediate and full relationships with place insofar as time-space relations are less fragmented and they retain more local control over their physical and social landscapes.” Because spatial practices and territorial divisions structure individuals' daily lives, it is important to investigate both social actors, who through intentions give meaning to their actions, and their socio-physical setting that supports the creation and regeneration of meaning (H. Moore, 1986; Pellow, 2001; Shields, 1991).

2.5 Quality of Life

Diener and Suh (1997) note that in policy making there is a longstanding tradition of mainly targeting economic indicators when evaluating societies. They argue that policies should be informed by, rather than neglect social indicators and subjective

well-being, as they could significantly improve understanding of quality of life within societies.

Brock (1993) describes three main theoretical approaches often used to determine the quality of life. The first approach defines the good life as dependent on normative principles that build on religious, philosophical or alternate structures. In this tradition, generally a wide range of social indicators are studied within a geographic or cultural space, based on objective quantitative data instead of on personal subjective experience of well-being. Much used social indicators include, for instance, infant mortality, doctors per capita or homicide rates. The second approach Brock describes, defines the good life rather in terms of preference, and the ability to acquire the things you desire. This approach assumes that, with given resources, people will choose the things that will improve their quality of life the most. The third approach follows from the realization that the relation between objective conditions and psychological well-being is not perfect. It rather focuses on individual experience and poses that if someone perceives his life to be good, it is presumed to be good. This tradition is rooted in the idea that it is valuable to directly investigate a person's own satisfaction with his life and with specific domains of life, within his own values and standards.

Politics generally focus on the second approach, because of the emphasis it puts on economic indicators. Diener and Suh (1997) warn that there are drawbacks to defining the quality of life based only on economics and the capacity of people to acquire the goods and services they desire. Economic development may hide other important societal problems, for instance high crime rates. Positive aspects for quality of life such as leisurely activities or a healthy environment might in some cases even be negatively correlated with economic development.

On the other hand, strong points can be made for the case of using mainly economic indicators. Diener and Diener (1995) note that correlations between economic and social indicators are often so high that many would conclude economic factors to be sufficient to predict quality of life, as they may account for up to 62 percent of the variance. However, even with incredible high correlations, economic and social indicators are not equal, and each can provide us with valuable information not included in the other. Furthermore, a significant quantity of variables shows a

nonlinear correlation with indicators like income. It is nonetheless evident that economic indicators can offer a first rough estimate of material quality of life (Ed Diener & Suh, 1997).

Just as depending solely on economic indicators to evaluate quality of life is problematic, using only social indicators might prove equally troublesome. Possibly the strongest objection against the use of social indicators is that they do not accurately reflect an individual's perception of well-being (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, Converse, & Rogers, 1976). People's experience of well-being is much more complex than can be explained using only descriptive social indicators which are based on external conditions. Similarly the approach that focuses on subjective well-being can also be criticized. Diener and Suh (1997) for instance, report low correlations between subjective well-being and objective conditions. They argue this can partly be explained by the capability of people to adapt to changes in their environment, and in their levels of available resources. Another main reason is that perceived well-being is not only affected by external situational conditions but also by internal dispositional characteristics, by an individual's personality.

Diener and Suh (1997) argue that the three approaches are methodologically and conceptually complementary. Because no single approach will cover the span of the subject, it is evident that an integrated approach using a combination of measures from these approaches will be necessary to examine the relation between well-being of residents and their environment.

2.5.1 Well-being models

Maslow (1970) provided the need-gratification theory of well-being, a valuable model to predict people's life satisfaction. This theory states that the "degree of basic need gratification is positively correlated with degree of psychological health. He provided a hierarchical structure of basic needs, in which physiological needs (food, water) are most fundamental, then safety needs (protection, shelter), love needs (affection, inclusion), esteem needs (self-esteem, autonomy) and finally idiosyncratic self-actualization needs which top the ladder. Maslow hypothesizes that higher needs become more important as lower needs are fulfilled, but also assumes that the fulfillment of higher needs generates stronger satisfaction than fulfillment of lower needs (p. 67). Veenhoven (1991) discovered a strong correlation between mean life

satisfaction of nations (as a whole) with their per capita gross national product (GNP). Furthermore he noticed a stronger correlation between a person's income and his/her life satisfaction in poorer nations when compared to wealthier nations. Many residents of lesser affluent nations do not have financial security or satisfactory housing, therefore physiological and safety needs are more likely to be of main concern than in more affluent nations. If income is mostly related to the fulfillment of physiological and safety needs, Veenhoven's findings point to a higher valuation of income when people in lesser affluent countries consider their satisfaction with life. Diener, Diener, and Diener (1995) supplement that subjective well-being also shows a clear correlation with human rights and societal equality. They argue that while income provides different ways to fulfill aspirations and desires, human rights and equality offer the liberty and opportunity to pursue personal ambitions.

What's more, several researchers have suggested that the kinds of ambitions people have may vary strongly across cultures (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1996). For instance in cultures that exhibit a strong sense of collectivism, people often share goals with other members of a collective. To accomplish an individual's goals then often means also meeting the group's needs and expectations. Oishi, Diener, Lucas, and Suh (1999) discovered that in countries with a distinct individualist culture, in which confidence and independency are highly valued, esteem needs have a more pronounced impact on satisfaction with life when compared to countries with more collective-based cultures, where self-critique and interdependency are more important. These findings imply that cultural factors may play a vital role in predicting national levels of satisfaction with life.

Oishi, Diener, Lucas and Suh (1999) summarize that in poorer countries, satisfaction with safety needs better reflect mean national satisfaction levels, where in wealthier countries, satisfaction with higher needs, such as love and esteem needs, will better reflect satisfaction levels. In addition, in individualist countries, esteem needs tend to have a stronger impact on life satisfaction than in more collectivist countries. This suggests that there is a common process that shifts the predictors once lower needs are fulfilled, but after lower needs are fulfilled, there is a larger disparity between countries with diverse cultures.

2.6 Conceptual framework

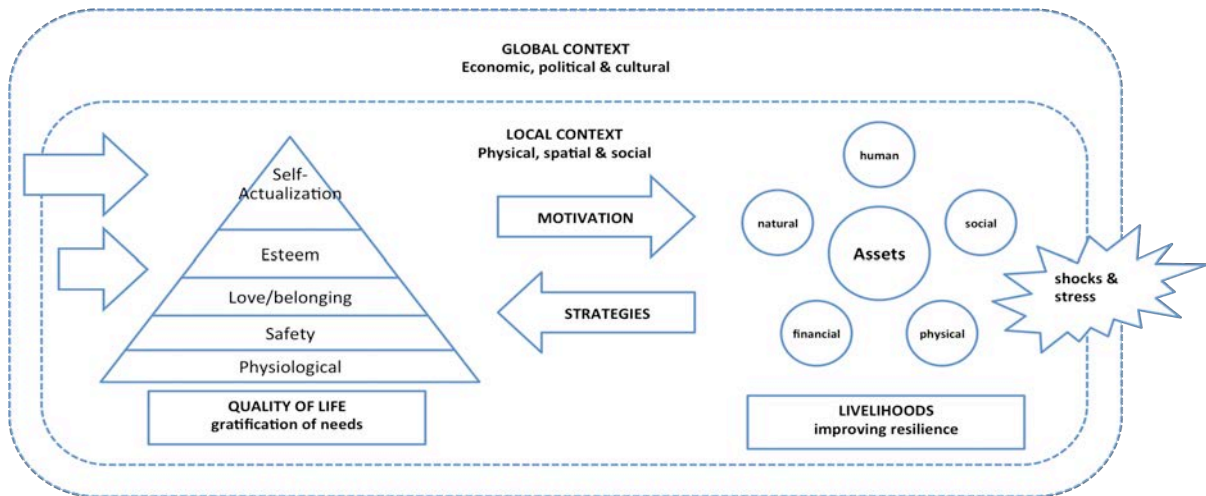


Figure 1: Conceptual framework, based on Maslow (1970) and de Haan, Drinkwater, Rakodi, and Westley (2002)

I propose to use a conceptual framework as the backbone of this thesis that borrows from several frameworks, most prominently the livelihood framework as presented by de Haan et al. (2002) and the need-gratification model of Maslow (1970). In my opinion and for the purpose of this thesis, the livelihoods framework, although certainly valuable for a broad range of analyses, focuses too much on the tangible aspects of quality of life. Assets are interpreted as tools utilized for productive purposes, which are through livelihood strategies converted into livelihood outcomes for a household (the security of food, health, water, shelter, education, community and personal safety), that then contribute to the well-being of the individuals of this household. The vulnerability context is seen as a range of factors that influences the degree to which households are facilitated or constrained in their efforts to improve their livelihoods. In the need-gratification model of Maslow however, we see that the livelihoods model focuses mostly on fulfilling the bottom of the needs pyramid, namely physiological and safety needs. This model makes sense from the priority-driven perspective of policy makers regarding dire poverty situations, but it consequentially fails to include some other aspects that comprise human well-being that are equally if not more important for leading a dignifying, meaningful life.

In this model, I make an important distinction between the local and global context. The local context is the life-space of subjects on the micro to meso level, the immediate physical, spatial and social environment, which they inhabit, and the conditions of which they embrace, adapt to and interact with in their daily lives. This

includes for instance the presence of infrastructure and services, spatial morphology and social institutions of the research area. It is on this level of abstraction that the popular discourse of slums by UN-Habitat is focused and which is the level of choice for most policy makers. The global context, rather, is the enveloping macro context, the economic, cultural and political environment that directly and indirectly influences all other aspects. It also encompasses for instance the specific history or demography of a place. The context on this level of abstraction is generally seen as only indirectly affecting well-being through the facilitation or restriction of livelihood strategies and outcomes. However, as important aspects of cultural identity and political freedom are regulated on this level, I argue that it is important to also understand the larger macro context that is embedded in the processes on a neighborhood and a human scale. Furthermore, I interpret assets more broadly, as tangibles and intangibles that can be adopted or mobilized in some way to fulfill needs that lead to an improved quality of life. The term strategy should therefore be interpreted broadly as both planned action and opportunistic reaction to changing conditions and impulses, or rather the regulation of interaction between different assets and the environment with the goal to improve the quality of life. The various needs of the individual, influenced by both local and global context, can be seen as motivating the process of asset acquisition and reproduction. Implicit in this last relation, but nonetheless crucial for understanding the dynamics of this model, is the lived experience of the individual, his or her perception of the quality of life (subjective well-being) and life conditions. These include his or her position in life, the assets at one's disposal, and the local and global context.

III. Methodology chapter

3.1 Research design

In the previous chapter I expanded on the relevant theory and provided a conceptual model that serves to structure the contributions of this thesis. But how do we continue, with the analysis of the highly complex relationship between individuals and their environment? In this exploratory research, I gave the different methodologies a central place in the investigation of these dynamic relations. The innovation will lie in the combination of two very different approaches, rooted in different disciplines, namely a more technical approach, a spatial analysis which focuses on the 'objective' conditions of the physical and spatial environment, and a more sociological approach, a quality of life analysis which focuses on the residents and their perceptions of this environment. In this chapter I explain how I operationalized these methods separately, after which I provide some reflections on the methods and data analysis.

3.1.1 Quality of life, satisfaction and subjective well-being models

As a way to measure the influence of the built environment on the lives of slum dwellers, I use a mixed-methods approach that comprises factors from the 'quality of life' (QoL) models and overlapping subjective well-being (SWB) models. The Aga Khan Development Network (2013) highlights the importance of using mixed methods for understanding complex relations. They contend that combining different complementary approaches can negate possible limitations of each approach. The use of qualitative methods can assist in the process analysis and interpretation of discoveries made with the quantitative methods, and can provide further explanation. So by coupling this assessment with 'objective', or at least independent, data acquired by mapping, literature and spatial analysis methods, I aspire to expose some of the complex relations between the built and spatial environment and subjective satisfaction levels of the inhabitants.

This study should demonstrate how slum dwellers evaluate and value their environment, and expose their individual priorities and aspirations. Felce (1997) argues that the concept of 'Quality of life' could provide a unifying model on which to

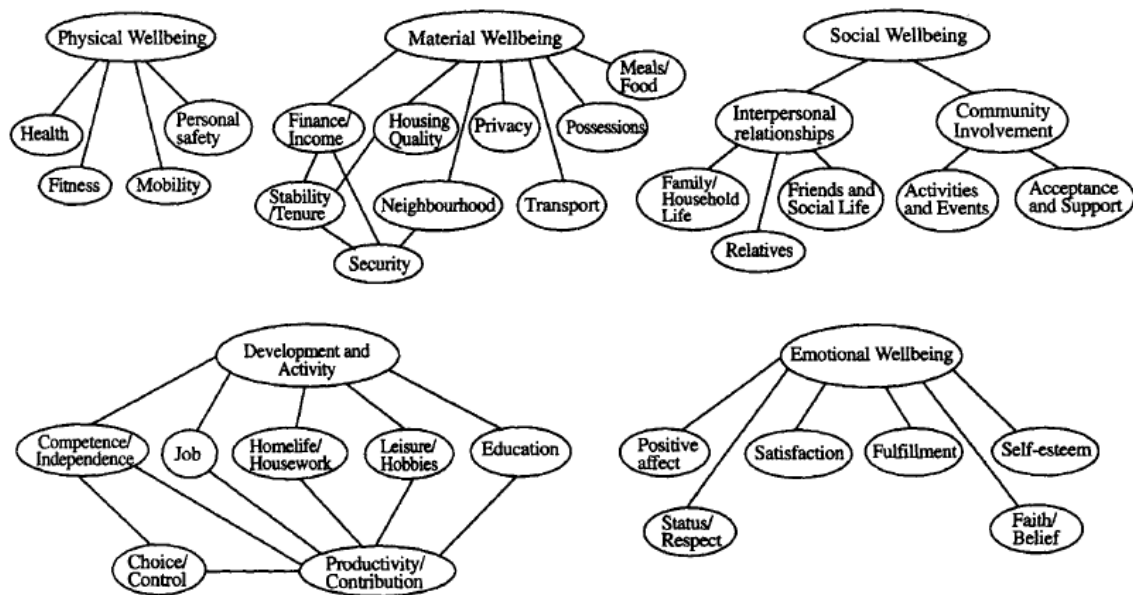


Figure 2: Quality of life domains. Source: (Felce, 1997)

ground and design goals for services and assess their impact on people's lives. I see a concept that can be adjusted and modeled to expose how the environment, directly or indirectly, influences people's lives. The model he proposes contains three elements that interact and together shape the quality of life; objective description of life conditions, subjective well-being or satisfaction with such life conditions and personal values or aspirations (1997). He proposes several life-domains that should be incorporated in a quality of life analysis, shown in Figure 1. I borrow from these aspects, but the specific aspects of life assessed in this thesis are selected from literature and related studies, based on my interpretation of what factors could be most relevant for the relation between environment and residents. These aspects can be either part of a direct relation, for instance housing quality or pollution levels, or elements that influence the relation through mediation, for instance via their effect on livelihoods.

3.1.2 Sample choice

I conducted 40 interviews with residents with various backgrounds. The participants were chosen in a stratified random sampling method, in which a distinction was made for location, age and gender. The selection was based not so much with the endeavor to achieve a representative sample of the entire population of Nima, but rather on ensuring that the sample included a wide range of people who live in Nima

and use its public spaces, in function of displaying the existing diversity in Nima. To this effect I chose the participants using a stratified random sampling method, where I made a distinction in location, age and gender.

I chose respondents from two areas of research, with distinctly different physical and



Figure 3: Satellite view of Nima, indicating areas A and B in red. Source: Author

spatial features. In Figure 2 I indicate these two areas (A and B) in red color. Nonetheless the specific features of which will be discussed in the empirical chapter. I picked 20 subjects who lived within Area A and 20 subjects who lived in Area B and were using (sitting in) the public space in the same area during the economically most active period, between 8 am and 3 pm. This ensured that the subjects were involved with the specific local context and the public space, but also improved my chances of securing an opportunity for taking the interview. The specific schedule was a consequence of the schedule made available by my interpreter. One could argue that the choice of time does provide a certain bias towards economically inactive individuals, as they would be more likely to be 'sitting' or 'doing nothing' in public space at this particular time of the day. However, many of the participants were occupying public space exactly for

economic reasons. This was especially the case in Area B on Nima Street, where almost everyone is involved with the shops in one way or another. After observation I

have reason to believe, however, that this is nonetheless representative sample of the people who live close to Nima Street.

I chose the subjects from two different age groups; namely 20 participants younger than 26 and 20 participants older than 39. This distinction was made in consultation with colleagues of the local NGO 'People's Dialogue' in Accra, and was based on local knowledge on cultural values and roles in Ghanaian society. Reaching the age of forty is a significant passage into adulthood and a sign of wisdom, both in men and women. The distinction intentionally provides a large interval, to provide a larger contrast while comparing the data in this small sample. This way the influence of age on perception can be observed more clearly. I further distinguished between gender, choosing an equal amount of female and male respondents in each age group. This was necessary to observe and compare the effects of gender on perception.

3.1.3 Comparability of results

It is difficult to compare general figures on quality of life for several reasons. First, there are numerous ways in which to quantify happiness. The method used in this work to quantify the happiness of interviewees, namely by using the 5 item Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) survey, is not necessarily the most common way to do so. The most elaborate database that collects data on happiness from surveys around the world is the World Database of Happiness by the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Veenhoven (2013), responsible for assembling and verifying the data, concurs that they included a study only if it used questions that were that were checked on face validity. The most common way of assessing general happiness used in the collected surveys is by posing the single closed question 'How happy are you in life?' or in a very similar phrasing. The SWLS employed for this research is more elaborate, but 1 of the 5 questions included is 'How satisfied are you with your life on a scale of 1 to 7?'. Therefore I believe it is appropriate to compare data from the database with results from this specific question from the survey I conducted.

3.2 Operationalization

I was inspired by the research undertaken by Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001) on the subjective well-being of poor inhabitants of several slums in Calcutta. The authors focused their research on three groups of people: residents of slum housing, sex

workers or prostitutes living in brothels and homeless people living in the streets of Calcutta. They first used a separate structured questionnaire, on household and individual levels, to provide representative quantitative data about certain key indicators. Afterwards they performed qualitative interviews with eighty-three people distributed between the aforementioned three groups. They were asked about their general satisfaction with life, and their satisfaction with a variety of life domains. During the interview, the respondents' general life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Ed Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). With this 5-part questionnaire the respondents make a cognitive measurement of their overall satisfaction levels on a 1 to 7 scale. This has been demonstrated to be a reliable psychometric instrument (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Next the participants had to rate their satisfaction with 12 life domains, namely material resources, friendship, morality, intelligence, food, romantic relationship, family, physical appearance, self, income, housing, and social life. Also, objective income and housing ratings were given to the subjects without knowledge of the income and housing satisfaction levels. Income scores were given according to reported household income. Housing scores on a scale of 1 to 5 were given by the authors, considering the constructive quality of the housing, crowding and access to public services. Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001) concluded that, even though the participants in general reported lower levels of life satisfaction compared to wealthier groups, they were actually more satisfied than anticipated. They argue that these relatively high satisfaction ratings might be attributed to an emphasis on the strong social relations they maintain.

To quantify subjective well-being and satisfaction with their environment, similar to the Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001) research, I combine a structured survey with a semi-structured qualitative study. For the survey, a structured questionnaire is used to obtain quantitative information for a selected range of indicators (see Appendix 1 for the complete questionnaire). Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to an hour, mostly dependant on whether the respondent was proficient in English or not. The participants are asked to rate their general satisfaction with life, by using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Ed Diener et al., 1985). Subsequently they are asked to rate their satisfaction with several life domains and aspects of their environment on a scale of 1 to 7. These indicators, and the 'objective' life conditions were selected,

based on intuition and models encountered in quality of life, livelihoods, slums and place making literature. In the last part of the questionnaire I inquired in more detail about the value or importance of elements in their environment for their social, spiritual or working life, and how it allows or confines them to lead their daily life.

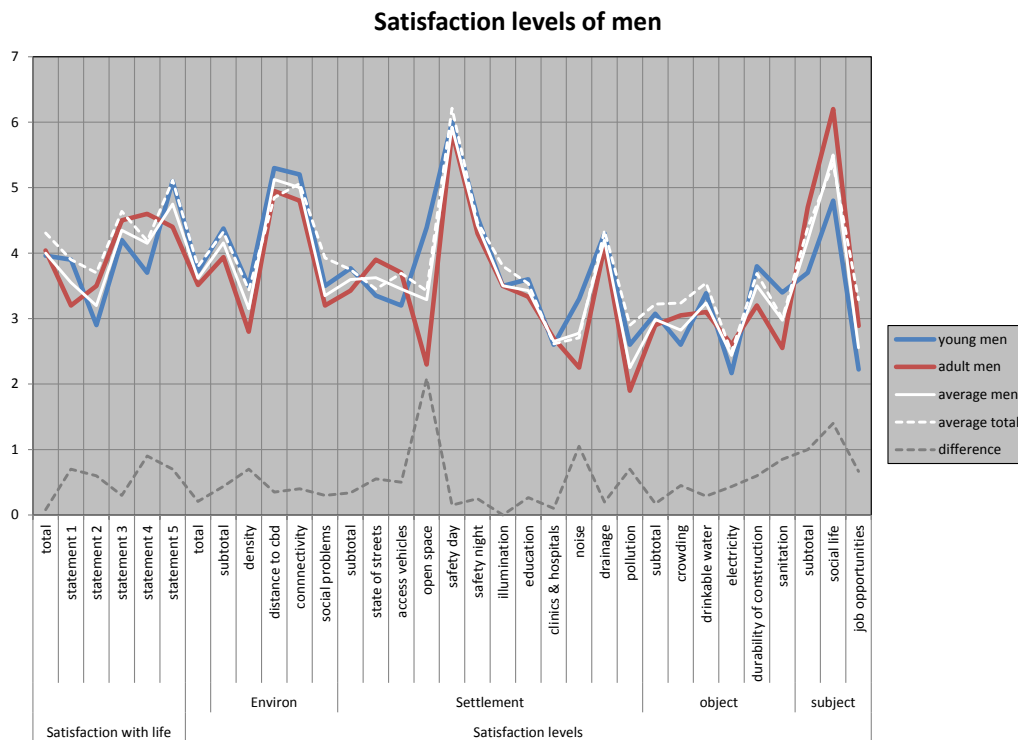


Figure 4: Comparison between satisfaction levels of young and adult men. Source: Author

3.2.1 Analysis

The results of both the survey and the open questions were classified in a spreadsheet file using Microsoft Excel software. The qualitative data – the non-numerical answers and additional comments made by the respondents – were added to the spreadsheet in coded notation. Separate spreadsheets were made, one that contained only the quantitative data and one only the qualitative data, for easier comparison. After the process of data classification, the data was compared. The distinctions of location, age and gender informed the comparison process, as I compared between the averages of respondents within these groups. For instance,

averages of respondents from area A were compared to these of respondents from area B, averages of male respondents were compared to averages from female respondents, and young respondents with adult respondents. In the finest grain, I compared averages of for instance young male respondents from area A with young male respondents from area B. These averages were then visualized in graphs for visual comparison (see example Figure 4, for all results see Appendix 2). This allowed for differences and trends to be noticed more quickly and directly. Afterwards numerical analysis in Excel revealed which of the conditions varied more than one standard deviation from the average.

3.3 Spatial analysis: space syntax methods

In their inspiring article “Space and exclusion: Does urban morphology play a part in social deprivation?” (Vaughan, Clark, Sahbaz, & Haklay, 2005) the authors investigate the correlation between urban morphology and poverty. This paper is part of an EPSRC study: ‘Space and Exclusion’ in which they use Geographical Information System (GIS) to layer historical data, contemporary deprivation indexes and space syntax measures of spatial segregation as a mixed-method approach to permit understanding of the spatial process involved in the creation and stagnation of deprived areas. Of particular interest to my own research is the combination of the space syntax and GIS approaches, which I came across in a number of articles related to the theme of spatial characteristics of urban poverty and slum areas.

According to its creators space syntax is “a science-based, human-focused approach that investigates relationships between spatial layout and a range of social, economic and environmental phenomena including patterns of movement, awareness and interaction; density, land use and land value; urban growth and societal differentiation; safety and crime distribution. Built on quantitative analysis and geospatial computer technology, space syntax provides a set of theories and methods for the analysis of spatial configurations of different kinds and scales. Space syntax can be used for instance to analyze the street layout of a neighborhood, but equally it serves to study circulation patterns within a building. Research using the space syntax approach has shown how movement patterns are powerfully shaped by spatial layout, how patterns of security and insecurity are affected by

spatial design and how spatial segregation and social disadvantage are related in cities.

According to Ismail, Bakr and Anas (2013) Space Syntax software such as Depthmap makes an analysis of the spatial arrangement of patterns. This spatial fabric can be represented by a network of axial lines, that break up streets in their longest possible straight 'street segments', and is examined by means of certain indicators, for instance the 'integration value'. 'Integration' calculates the amount of turns a hypothetical pedestrian will have to make to move from one street segment to any other street segment in the network, using the shortest possible track. The street segments in need of the smallest amount of turns in order to reach all other streets, therefore the most accessible, are called 'most integrated'. These segments are typically visualized with lines in warm colors, red or yellow. Street segments that are 'least integrate' or least accessible, are represented by cold colors, blue or green. So accessibility between street segments illustrates how much effort it takes for a pedestrian to find the way between streets and where spatial obstructions are (Ismail et al., 2013).



Figure 5: Local integration of London. Source: (Stonor, 2014)

Figure 5 shows the results of a spatial analysis completed on London in which 'integration' radius 3 is presented graphically. 'Radius 3' integration, routinely called 'local integration', calculates the integration but only up to three lines from each line in every direction. According to the founders, local integration has shown strong correlation with the spreading of pedestrian concentrations and therefore can successfully predict economic and social activity on the scale of the street (Vaughan et al., 2005).

To provide a more detailed description of the physical environment I complement the space syntax method with my own (technical) observations and documentation on Nima. This includes descriptions of the nature and use of different public spaces, the streets, other infrastructure and housing.

3.3.1 Reflections on methods and data analysis

Some reflections and side notes must be made on the methods and data analysis. Firstly, for the survey to deliver statistically significant results, that could be generalized to the wider population of Nima, a much larger sample would have been necessary than the 40 respondents used. This was, as a result of insufficient time and resources, unfeasible. I argue however, that the sample is sufficiently large and varied to get a general idea of the composition of the neighborhood and some of the processes going on in the research area.

Secondly, because of a language barrier with some of the respondents and the generally low degree of education of some of the respondents, the answers to some of the questions (especially the numerical quantification of their level of satisfaction with life and environment caused confusion) were subject to some form of interpretation, either by the author or the translator. This was remedied to some extent by regular probing and posing confirmatory questions. It is however impossible to guarantee one hundred percent accurate data because of this reason.

Finally, in this type of enquiry it is important to reflect on the effect of the profile of the author, as a Caucasian well-educated male, on the answers or perceptions of the respondents. It is possible that some of the respondents altered their answers to some extent, in order to please me, purport a more positive picture of their life or simply because they felt some things were no business of mine. I have encountered

no particular reason to suspect such an effect, however, it is necessary to be careful and aware of this when interpreting the data.

IV. Nima, a *zongo* neighborhood of Accra

In the previous chapter, I have explained the methods that are used to tackle the research question. Before we can continue to the empirical part of this thesis, it is important to frame Accra and Nima in its broader historical context, to understand the dynamics and processes that have lead to its current situation, and to expand briefly to issues of governance.

4.1 Accra



Figure 6: Urbanization of Accra.
Source: Author

Accra, chosen as the colonial capital of Gold Coast in 1877, has witnessed a strong growth in the last century (See Figure 6). This growth was largely a consequence of its position as the seat of government and the more liberal socio-economic policies, introduced in the country since the 1980s (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a). These policies focused mostly on urban areas, especially on the two largest cities, Accra and Kumasi, the regional capital of the Ashanti Region. This further consolidated asymmetrical development and enlarged the economic gap between rural and urban areas. Following the construction of a railway that connected the mining and agricultural sectors to the capital, Accra rapidly also became the economic heart of Ghana. Today it is an important center for manufacturing, marketing, finance, insurance, transportation and tourism. Around 30% of manufacturing activities in Ghana are established in and around Accra.

Greater Accra – with a population of just over 4 million people – constitutes a third, and together with Kumasi – with over 2 million inhabitants – they compose almost half of the 12.5 million urban Ghanaians (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Because

they dwarf all other urban centers in Ghana, both in size and significance, we can speak of Accra and Kumasi as 'primate cities' (UN-HABITAT, 2009b). The use of the word 'primate city' originates from Jefferson's (1939, p. 227) article "Law of the Primate City", in which he used it to indicate particular cities that dominate a country in terms of size and national influence:

Once a city is larger than any other in its country, this mere fact gives it an impetus to grow that cannot affect any other city, and draws away from all of them in character as well as in size. It is the best market for all exceptional products. It becomes the primate city.

In broader terms, Richardson (1977, p. Appendix 2) defined primacy as "a measure of the size of the primate city relative to the rest of the national urban hierarchy, or some portion of it". For the purpose of this thesis, it is most important to note that, because of their size, their political, economic and cultural importance, primate cities attract disproportionate amounts of migrants, hoping to secure jobs and improve their livelihoods, and therefore experience growth rates well beyond other urban centers in their country.

This is definitely true for Accra. It forms an important point of entry into West Africa, which warrants a constant injection of foreign capital into the city, visible in the recently emergent fast food restaurants, shopping malls, international banks, large office buildings, and gated communities in and around the capital. Accra currently demonstrates certain characteristics of the globalized city. However, other features of the city tell a very different story, notably the numerous neighborhoods that host enormous amounts of urban poor that have increasing difficulties to subsist. UN-Habitat (2009b) estimated that 58% of Accra citizens reside in harsh, congested and unhygienic conditions that they attribute to slums, often with little access to fundamental services such as water, sanitation and healthcare. The development of Accra has evidently vastly exceeded the capacity of many of its infrastructures, perhaps most visibly the waste disposal and drainage systems. Consequently the image of Accra is marked by scattered garbage, uncollected trash in overly packed waste containers and drains obstructed by rubbish. The uncollected waste ultimately ends up in pools, streams, drainage systems and other open spaces. This often

causes recurring floods during the wet season (Owusu, Agyei-Mensah, & Lund, 2008).

4.2 Urbanization in Ghana

4.2.1 Gold coast: the colonial period

To understand what forces set in motion a process of large-scale urbanization in Ghana, and ultimately shaped present day Accra, it is important to briefly allude to the way Colonialism and the introduction of capitalism transformed the Ghanaian landscape. Large parts of current urbanization on the African continent, along with many of its related issues, are considered to be rooted in the colonial episode of expansion (Miner, 1967; O'Connor, 1983). When the first European traders settled in Gold Coast, as Ghana was known before independence in 1957, they focused primarily on exporting gold from mines further inland and settled in towns along the coast to set up trading posts. During the seventeenth century several of these harbor towns became vibrant markets and powerful strongholds, protected by fortifications against competing European invaders (Arn, 1996). European commercial activities were concentrated in and around these fortresses, and sustained a central economic and political role until the nineteenth century. These fortifications often became more powerful than the traditional trade centers. Three of such forts were built on the coast of present-day Accra: Crevecoeur (later renamed Ussher Fort), James Fort and Christiansborg Castle (Osu Castle) (Pellow, 1991). With the colonization of the Americas and the emergence of plantation farming, overseas demand of cheap labor increased. Soon all of the European forts discovered the profitability of this new market and shifted their focus to the slave trade (Arn, 1996).

With the abolishment of slave trade in the early nineteenth century, concentration shifted again to other exportable commodities such as palm oil, cocoa, and later coffee and rubber. The elevation of these cash crops in Ghana was focused mainly in the Eastern and Volta Region, as it required rich, fertile soils. Because of its proximity to these areas, Accra became a primary location for the export of these products. This created a high demand for unskilled labor in Accra which was primarily met with imported labor from neighboring countries, such as Liberia, Togo and Nigeria but later also from the Northern Regions of Ghana (Arn, 1996).

The economic integration of Ghana in the capitalist global economy at the end of the nineteenth century further increased the demand for such cash crops. In the south this development led to a thriving economy while the arid Northern Regions were effectively left out. Further weakening of the non-cash crop agricultural productivity due to structural changes in the economy created a latent population in the rural hinterlands, ready for migration. This comparative impoverishment of the north, met with the economic progress, increase in labor opportunities and substantial wage gap with the south, set in motion a large scale rural to urban migration at the turn of the twentieth century. Many of these immigrants that came into the cities, failed to fit in the wage-labor force, and had to resort to employment in the informal economy of petty production and trade, to meet the consumer needs of the expanding work force. The first shift towards a capitalist economy, and its resultant emergence of a large wage labor force in Accra therefore ironically stimulated the creation of a non-capitalist informal economy (Arn, 1996).

4.2.2 Colonial urban planning

Even though colonial planning varied in mechanisms and execution, between regions and colonizers, the main objective was always to control local inhabitants and extract profitable products or any resources that would lead to an economic advantage (Cooper, 1983). Urban growth was perceived and treated by colonial administrations as an unwelcome byproduct of the effort to manage the provision of labor. This way exploitation became the objective of African urban development during colonial occupation (Mabogunje, 1990). Colonization in West Africa however was somewhat different in form of execution than in other parts of the world. Large-scale in-migration of white colonists was unfeasible, therefore urban development followed an even more rigorous application of an 'architecture of control', to maintain power over labor and export products. Much of Colonial development in West Africa therefore was focused on installing effective administration and implementing efficient means of modern transportation, such as railways and ports (Mabogunje, 1990).

The impact of colonial rule on social and physical space is most visible in the layout of colonial cities, generally ill adapted reproductions of city plans from the country of origin. In West Africa colonial cities were designed for a predominantly African population to form important connections in the network of the colonial export

economy (Mabogunje, 1970). The city was generally divided in three parts: a traditional or indigenous settlement, a European settlement and sometimes a 'stranger' settlement, occupied by immigrants from other colonial territories (King, 1976). During the final decade of the nineteenth century, the British constructed Victoriaborg in Accra, a planned and luxurious European quarter, strictly separated by a non-residential boundary from areas inhabited by indigenous residents and other African migrants. After independence when most of the British residents moved away, the African elite replaced the British in Victoriaborg and surrounding neighborhoods, which consequently stayed well maintained and serviced. Meanwhile the native and stranger settlements were neglected and stayed largely traditional, deprived of infrastructure or facilities and marked by poor environmental circumstances. This produced the socially and spatially fragmented Accra we can still witness today (Pellow, 1991). Therefore it is generally agreed that many of the problems emanating from urban development can be attributed to the way that Europeans isolated themselves from the traditional city center and later the informal settlements in the peripheries. In South Africa, the implementation of similar principles reached an apex in the institutionalization of apartheid (Mabogunje, 1990).

4.2.3 Capitalism reshapes Accra

At the city-scale, capitalist forces reorganized land use by ways of a rent- and value-maximizing land market. This process functionally divided the urban landscape into three types of space: space of production, where the actual processes of wealth creation occur; spaces of reproduction, reserved for restoration of the labor force; and space of circulation, where a relation between the two other spaces is established and negotiated (Dear & Scott, 1981). British intervention in the urban landscape consistently focused on investments in the production and circulation spheres and neglected the environmental and living conditions of the African population altogether (Mabogunje, 1990). This way the British increased the value of land in West African cities, which can to a large extent be attributed to constructing and sustaining a network of infrastructure, such as ports, roads, railroads, and telegraph lines, to support the export of products (Hart, 1982). The planning of roads and transport systems, especially the extension into peripheral urban areas, left more and more land within the reach of emerging capitalist modes of production

(Cazamajor, 1981; Obot, 1982). This has led to a rapid increase in real estate prices, which had the effect of pushing the urban poor out of central Accra. Urban planning and the underlying principle of commoditization of land have this way shaped most of the class struggles in West African cities (Mabogunje, 1990).

The process of zoning, or rather the division of a city in separate residential and work areas, created additional expenses for daily transportation (Gihring, 1982). The commute of the urban labor force gives a decisive pace to the movements within the city. In Accra, because of the abundance of pre-industrial neighborhoods characterized by very dense layouts, crowded housing, and narrow roads, vehicular traffic creates enormous congestion (Adefolalu, 1977; Ayeni, 1981). But even in places that have seen development of a modernized grid, planners strongly underestimated future importance of vehicular transport. Inevitably the road systems proved to be poorly equipped for the amount of vehicles using them (Mabogunje, 1990). Because of rapidly growing demand for public transport and the inability of the public sector to offer the required facilities, the informal sector filled the existing gap, in the form of privately owned minibuses ('trotros') driving on regular routes. Because of its commercialization, urban transportation is very expensive for the vast majority of urban residents, comprising sometimes up to twenty percent of the income of workers (Verneire, 1977).

When the pace of urbanization hastened during the 1930s and 1940s, the demand for labor also increased, both on the domestic and industrial market. But the provision of facilities for the labor force never managed to keep up with the demand for their services. Indeed the tremendous growth of Accra left the development and capacity of infrastructure far behind. This has led to the widespread collapse of infrastructure systems such as water supply, electricity and sanitation, which in turn resulted in the rise of a series of social and material hazards in large parts of the city (Maylam, 1982).

4.2.4 Post-colonial urban planning

Clear is that colonialism played a crucial role in the transformation of African economies and their integration into a global capitalist network. Mabogunje (1990) notes however, that in Ghana, as in most African countries, it failed to produce a sufficiently mature and encompassing state of capitalism. Consequently societies

became divided between traditional values and a colonial economy focused on capitalism. Along similar lines societies were divided in territorial conflicts between the capitalist and the working class, each in an attempt to secure a maximum of benefits from the urban environment for its members. In capitalist societies, the effort of the government to resolve these issues culminates in the institutionalization of urban planning (Cooke, 1983). The incorporation of urban planning into the official role of the government can also be seen as part of the effort to negotiate the conflict that emerged after World War II between nationalist forces and the colonial state.

These conflicts persist well into present day, their locus concentrated in cities (Mabogunje, 1990). Many critics have argued that cities have not been able to provide the necessary force in the transformation of African economies but rather have accentuated their external reliance and adverse social effects (Bardinet, 1977; Santos, 1971). The overwhelming impression is therefore, that post-colonial governments, through urban planning and policies, have been unable to produce any significant impact in the resolution of these issues. In Ghana, urban planners do not operate directly at the local municipal level, as in other Anglophone African countries, but they often work for zonal panels or ministries for the central government, which evidently does not improve their effectiveness (Mabogunje, 1990). The role of the post-colonial state in Africa has therefore come under increasing scrutiny (Hyden, 1983). Mabogunje (1990) argues that investigation of urban planning provides a valid access point into the assessment of the competence and legitimacy of post-colonial governments in Africa. He notes that “urbanization in Africa is a phenomenon whose structural dimensions are poorly defined and inadequately understood” (pp. 121-122) and that the often severe inadequacy of available statistical data is not supportive. These remarks aim to highlight the need for more investigation into African urban planning and policy, if we are to understand why it has largely failed to resolve many of the issues that plague Accra, and similarly many other African cities.

Mabogunje (1990) further describes a succession of three general approaches adopted by African governments to deal with large housing deficiencies and infrastructural defects. These range from a “statist” approach dominant from the early sixties to the mid seventies, to a “aided self-help” approach until the mid eighties, to an “enabling” approach, which is still the dominant approach in present times.

Notable is a reduction of responsibilities taken by the government from each step to the next, down to the present when their role is largely limited to provision and management of infrastructure.

Up to the 1970s urban planning by African governments mostly took shape in the form of large scale planning schemes, which generally included the clearance of slums from high-value central areas, the construction of new residential areas on the periphery or even the development of entire new towns. Within the first years of independence several large-scale proposals for the urban development of Accra were produced (Doxiadis Associates, 1963; Trevallion & Hood, 1958). The economic crisis that enveloped the continent in the 1970s, however, obstructed their completion and put an end to the economic feasibility of this scale of planning (Mabogunje, 1990). Under the influence of large economic organizations such as the World Bank, the masterplan approach has shifted to a more economic-oriented model. These schemes are characterized by the emphasis on short-term effects, a budget that functions as an investment plan and a general low concern for land-use planning. The aim is to invest public sector funds so as to stimulate the urban economy, produce job opportunities and profits, and improve social security (Mabogunje, 1990). The largest obstruction towards the expansion of infrastructure in these schemes is that the urban poor are not able to produce the returns needed to finance the offered services. The inclination of international donors, such as the World Bank, to insist on complete cost recovery as a constraint to funding infrastructural projects, even when providing for low income groups, further complicates this situation (Hayuma, 1983). In response a culture has arisen, in which urban residents try to appropriate illicitly as many services as possible (Cooper, 1983).

4.2.5 The creation of *zongo* areas

Migration is by no means a new phenomenon in these regions. For centuries the West African people have continuously migrated between different areas in the region, establishing quarters in towns where they would receive privileges and political rights from traditional authorities, to whose rules they were supposed to conform. Well into the 1800s, most migrants that arrived in Accra would settle in one of the seven traditional Ga settlements that constituted the city, and through inter-ethnic marriage they would be incorporated into the Ga population (Pellow, 1991).

At the end of the nineteenth century, however, this process went through significant changes when large amounts of Gold Coast soldiers of Hausa descent and Muslims looking for commercial activities settled into Accra. Many of these new migrants were, as opposed to earlier migrants, more inclined to preserve their cultural identities. Many settled with their families a bit to the north of Ussher town, where the Muslim population increased at a fast pace. Because of natural demographic growth, a significant rural-urban migration and a steady influx of Nigerian troops, in short time the central area of Accra was no longer able to house any more migrants (Arn, 1996). At the dawn of the twentieth century, these migrants did no longer assimilate into the Ga population. This was sustained by the British government and formally endorsed through the assignment of headmen among these strangers, even if they often had little to no real power. It was a common colonial strategy to divide local populations along ethnic lines, to guarantee their own power over the work force (Arn, 1996; Mabogunje, 1990).

Originating from traditional landownership, customary law in Gold Coast dictated a close connection between land possession and chieftaincy. It is the 'stool' or 'skin' - a term that symbolizes the position of a traditional chief and represents the collective authority of a community – that is the supreme owner of a community's land. The keeper of this stool or skin is a "trustee holding the land for and on behalf of the community, tribe, or family" (Ollennu, 1962, p. 6; Pellow, 1991). As opposed to the northern parts of Nigeria, in Accra the British were more inclined to endorse the authority of the Ga chiefs - the local people - instead of that of the newer Muslim communities (Hiskett, 1984). Because the British would acknowledge or even decide on which chief could represent the migrant communities, they made sure the relations between the migrant leaders and the British were more important than those between the migrants and the Ga establishment (Pellow, 1991). The migrant communities could organize their own internal hierarchical structures, but since the power of their headmen was not rooted in stool or skin, it was always subject to informal interactions with colonial and indigenous authorities (Works, 1976 [1972]). The Hausa could not seek real ownership of stool land because they were strangers, but they could carve up, redistribute and govern the land they received from the Ga families. This way the headman was subject to the rule of the British and the Ga, and

the residents of the community were under the rule of the headman. His jurisdiction was limited to his own people within the community and his legal ability to act was also restricted (Pellow, 1991).

The Colonial government offered an area to the northwest of Korle Lagoon to Muslim immigrants after World War I, which became known as Sabon Zongo. The word zongo means “stranger quarter” in Hausa language, and is used locally to indicate neighborhoods that consist of a majority of Muslim migrants. The term reflects the predominance of the Hausa language and dress, Islamic religion and education and the non-western cultural orientation in these neighborhoods. The zongo culture is perpetuated in the spatial structure and the abundant presence of mosques and Koranic schools (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012). For a long time Sabon Zongo remained the prime recipient of long distance migrants, until the emergence of squatter settlements after World War II (Brand, 1972). By the 1930s the urban core of Accra was so crowded that new immigrants looked for housing in areas in the periphery. Nima for instance, at that time still a largely open grazing area for cattle of a Fulani family, became a strong attractor for new migrants (Arn, 1996). Because of many similarities with other migrant neighborhoods like Sabon Zongo, Nima also became referred to as a zongo.

4.3 Nima

4.3.1 Introducing Nima

The name Nima means “peaceful resting place” in Arabic (Arn, 1996). This designation undoubtedly finds its origins in the early stages of its development, but the name does little justice to present day Nima, as it is an incredibly vibrant and lively neighborhood. The neighborhood of Nîma, is located directly north of the ring road, which forms its southern border, enclosed by the Kanda Highway in the east and the Odaw drain - generally referred to simply as ‘gutter’ - in the north and west. An administrative border is drawn over Nima Street, which divides the neighborhood in Nima East and Nima West, a division that is not recognized by residents. Nima can be described as a low-class residential neighborhood, housing 69,044 residents on 1.59 square kilometers of land, according to the 2000 National Population Census (AMA, 2006). The area is characterized by a congested urban fabric and incredible

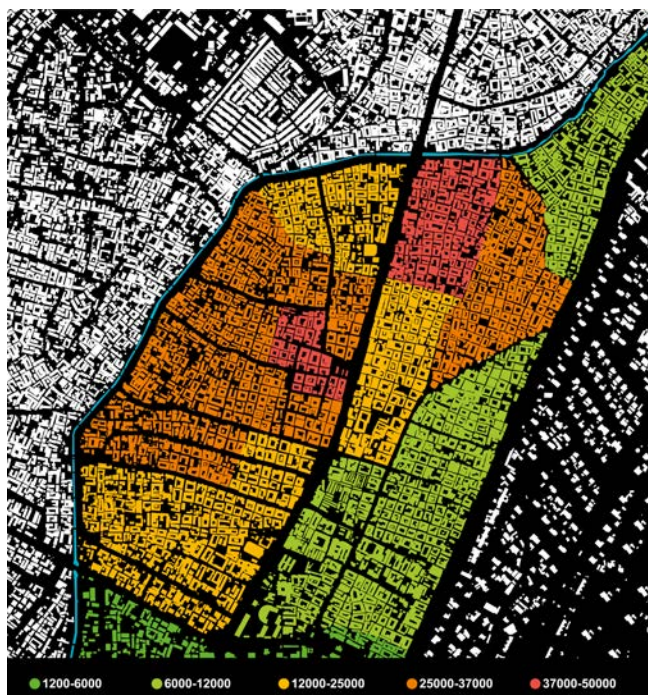


Figure 7: Residential densities of Nima in 1960.
Based on (Brand, 1972)

high residential densities. Figure 7 shows the residential densities in people per square kilometer in 1960, when the average population density in Nima was already 25 846 residents per square kilometer. By 2000 the average density had risen to a shocking 43 478 residents per square kilometer (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012). For comparison, the island of Manhattan, New York, had an average density of 26 833 residents per square kilometer in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau). Considering the

recorded steep increase in population and average density between 1960 and 2000, even without available recent data, it is safe to assume that in most areas density will have increased since 1960.

4.3.2 Migration to Nima

The land of Nima belongs to a Ga family, but it was leased to a migrant chief who divided and sold the land to migrants in 21 by 24 meter plots. Many of these first settlers quickly understood the economic opportunity of this land and bought a number of these plots to build rental houses. Before long all available plots were sold and subject to a disorganized construction craze that left few spaces undeveloped. During the Second World War, a segment of the Allied forces was stationed in the North-East of Nima, which provided economic incentives to attract migrants. Located between the military camp in the North and a European neighborhood in the South, it attracted mostly people for which these areas could provide job opportunities, such as cooks, stewards, laborers and prostitutes (Arn, 1996). After the war many of the discharged soldiers, most of them Muslims from the Northern regions, decided to settle here with their families. In 1954 independence and the new economic programs initiated by the Nkrumah government further increased the rate of migration to Nima (Arn, 1996).

Ever since, a steady flow of Northern migrants has continued to settle in the neighborhood, earning the neighborhood the term 'zongo'. This way it differentiates itself from other low-class neighborhoods like James Town, which has a mostly native population (Kang, Pescina, Quashigah, & Kumashie, 2010). The largest ethnic groups in Nima are Akan from the Ashanti region, Ewe from the Volta region and Mole-Dagbon from northern Ghana, comprising respectively 24.6, 16.3 and 16.1 percent of its population (Kang et al., 2010). Because a large part of the migrants originate from the predominantly Islamic Northern parts of Ghana and West Africa, the predominant religion in Nîma is Islam, followed by Christianity. Owusu, Agyei-Mensah and Lund (2008) pointed to the importance of Islam in Nîma, as it was the most cited motivation for people's residency in Nima, followed by family presence and economic reasons. Islam proved to provide strong behavioral and religious codes, and provided a foundation for local and transnational networks that can support visitors and outsiders in need. Consequently, Islam was also cited by locals as the main reason for the relatively low accounts of criminality in Nîma. This might prove to be a critical feature to understand the workings of Nima.

4.3.3 Urban Planning in Nima

On a 1949 Gold Coast Survey map of Accra, Nima was represented as just a name on an empty area on the outside of central Accra. Not even ten years later, on the 1957 version of the map, this area showed a vast disorganized grouping of buildings of different shapes and sizes. It showed no access roads or any indication of infrastructure in place. Because large parts of Nima were still located outside the municipal borders of Accra after the Second World War, when vast amounts of immigrants settled here, illegitimate appropriation and construction could occur on a large scale without fear of legal consequences (Brand, 1972).

When Nima was incorporated into the Municipality of Accra, and thus became subject to metropolitan planning, the administration realized that large parts of its physical development had grown beyond control. By 1958 the government had officially recognized Nima as a slum area, which was in need of immediate corrective action. Consequently, after installment of only a few public latrines, the government froze further development of Nima, awaiting the design of a new plan for its improvement. Meanwhile the main goal was to obstruct any further increase of population, and

lower land and property values, to minimize potential costs of compensation in case future plans required destruction on a large scale. This had little effect on processes of urbanization and further population increase continued, fueled by another wave of migration following independence and the new economic programs initiated by the Nkrumah government (Arn, 1996).

In 1971 a Christian organization called into life 'Operation Help Nima' to resist the likely demolition of houses. Together with the Department of Architecture at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology they devised an alternative scheme that provided an incremental approach to upgrading the neighborhood that would leave the communities unharmed (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012). This scheme was rather innovative in the political context of the time; five years before the United Nations raised first concerns about urbanization issues in the developing world at the HABITAT I conference in Vancouver in 1976, and large-scale slum-removal was still the norm. Consequently this scheme never saw implementation (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012; United Nations, 1976).

Instead the government adopted the more radical Nima-Maamobi Redevelopment Scheme in 1972. To reduce congestion in the area, Nima Street was created; a road that cuts a straight line through the heart of the neighboring communities Nima and Maamobi, to connect these areas to the ring road. Additionally, a number of houses were constructed in the settlement of Madina, approximately 10 kilometers to the north of Nima, to house some of the displaced inhabitants. The original plan called for an almost complete destruction of Nima and the replacement of the existing community with luxurious houses. This scheme would force out most of the residents, and effectively turn Nima into a middle class residential area. Fortunately for the residents, and for unclear reasons, any further execution of the scheme was discontinued in 1976 before the large scale demolition was initiated (Arn, 1996). The policies that were implemented as part of the structural adjustment programs during the 1980s to smoothen the progress of incorporation of Ghana into the global economy, resulted in the another wave of migration into Nima (Kang et al., 2010).

4.4 Demography and the position of youth

Accra, like many other cities on the African continent, experiences an overrepresentation of young people in its demographic composition. Approximately

56% of the urban residents is under the age of 25 (Accra Metropolitan Assembly, 2000). While young people represented the hope of Africa during the Nationalist movements of the optimistic 1980s, after the collapse of most African economies, the good reputation of young Africans took a turn for the worst. Currently young people in many African societies are blamed for numerous societal problems, and their idle presence and loitering in public space is often perceived as dangerous. Statistically this image is backed up by a disproportionate amount of young men in crime and unemployment statistics (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2003). The young generation perceives the situation quite different. They blame the elder generations for high unemployment – especially among young men – crumbling infrastructures and an economy in crisis. According to the youth, their parents and grandparents have failed their duty to provide them with a viable living environment. These oppositions create strong tensions, which are acted out in the public realm.

The story of young Africans is closely linked to a larger and dramatic shift of the African identity over the past decades, following the intensification of the economic and financial crisis, the erratic trajectory of democratization and political fissures that appeared at the end of the 1980s. Even at the level of the family, important changes in gender roles and in division of responsibilities have had a profound impact on African societies. As men could no longer provide for their families, their authority within the household also softened (Diouf, 2003).

Currently young people represent the largest share of the African population (Diouf, 2003). Their share has steadily been rising, this in stark contrast with the reverse situation in the developed world, where dropping fertility rates have led to a decrease in percentage of young people. African youth's present and future are situated at the intersection of local and global pressures. Because of this 'privileged' position, and consequently their ability to speak both the language of universal values and that of traditional African cultures, young people became the primary agents of change in African societies. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this Afro-optimism reached its peak in exercises of nation building, or what many call the 'nationalist project', in the wake of Colonial independence. The political and cultural ambitions of the nationalist project were twofold: to preserve traditional barriers between young and old, but at the same time to focus its strategies of economic development and national

emancipation on the youth. Youth became synonymous with the hope of Africa and came to represent “promises of restored identity, both national and pan-African, as opposed to colonial alienation and postcolonial forms of domination and subordination” (Diouf, 2003, p. 4). It is ironic, however, that young people could establish this position, only because they were imagined as being guided and controlled by adults.

4.4.1 Youth & violence

When political, cultural and economic modes of the nationalist project failed, and the African continent was enveloped by a financial crisis that has persisted since the 1970s, the consequences were particularly cruel to the youth. Suddenly, instead of symbolizing “the hope of Africa”, they became associated with violence, criminality, and decadence led by an uncontrolled sexuality that could harm society (Diouf, 2003). With the collapse of the nationalist project, young people have lost the prominent status as the national hope, but also the priority of state policies. This revealed itself in the deterioration of public institutions for education and health provision, as well as the emergence of vast amounts of young people in the public realm. The massive injection of young Africans into the public and domestic realms appears to have caused an unparalleled anxiety at the core of society, partly because of their ‘immoral’ pleasures and behavior, but also because of the violence they can trigger (Diouf, 2003).

According to Diouf (2003), these young people’s actions can be interpreted as the quest for a narrative that presents them with a space in which they can unleash their imagination. Instead of choosing a lifestyle that’s prepared for, arranged and produced by adults, young people prefer a life of subversive, uncertain activities on the streets and informal sources of income. These routines offer youths new ways to articulate their desires and to occupy the public realm. De Boeck (2009) observes that the increasing contrast between young and old, and the constant reformulation of authority, are projected onto existing gaps between public and private, modernity and tradition, politics and ethics, and even life and death.

As young Africans were excluded from spaces of power, labor, education and leisure, they resorted to the production of new forms of social space that explicitly demonstrated their difference. Mainly situated in spaces abandoned by the

establishment, on the margins of society and outside of dominant cultures, in spaces where emptiness and uncertainty rules, these were spaces that were begging to be appropriated, named and used. According to Diouf (2003), the purpose of these spaces, which defies the logics of societal rules and established conventions, is to act as public platforms for violent, artistic or spiritual expressions of a longing for identity and recognition. Often described as a space of criminality, recognized by some as a space of resistance, it is foremost the geography of the street, the periphery, borders, jungles and illegal territories. These are spaces where success exists outside of a universally accepted framework, often in a context of violence, where African youth can buy into a future on the global arena, which is otherwise denied to them (Diouf, 2003). In the wake of failed states and collapsing institutions, the streets have become a stage upon which youth can enact their resistance to the establishment (Giroux, 1994).

The reconfigurations of the self-image of young Africans is also clearly evident from the popularity of “revival” Christian movements and factions, most prominently Pentecostalism, and rather subversive forms of Islam often labeled as “fundamentalist”. Young Africans perceive religion as one of the last available means to support them during times of increasing adversity exemplified by the multitude of crises in contemporary African societies (De Boeck, 2009). These movements are strongly based on ideologies of rebirth, interpreted as both a way to purify themselves and to restore a lost past. Diouf (2003, p. 7) explains that this “religious present restores their dignity and speaks to them of a future that already exists.” It is therefore logical that these movements are appealing to young people “not only because they offer modes of being and belonging, but also because they construct new imaginations of the community and the individual” (Diouf, 2003, p. 7).

It is, however, sometimes difficult to argue against critique that some young Africans’ ways of self-expression lack a positive line, their only purpose to harm and destroy, without any ideological motive to back them up. It appears that with many young people idealism, nihilism and utter childish mischief do not mutually exclude each other. Any expression of these young people, however violent it appears, always exhibits a certain amount of playfulness (Diouf, 1996). Diouf (2003) agrees that it is hard to explain this ambiguous behavior without perhaps taking a closer look at the

site on which young people's sexuality, pleasure and violence are most visibly manifested, namely on their bodies and in the way they portray themselves in the public sphere. In many African cultures both distress and success are written on the body and can be easily read from the body, particularly with young people. It is also on the body that the culture of resistance is communicated. In this sense the body can be interpreted as a vessel that operates as a weapon as well as a text. If signs of resistance and counter culture can be seen primarily as a language, then the body must be the most important tool, and arguably the only tool at their disposal to express themselves in the public sphere. "Young people bear on their bodies, in their heads, and in their hearts the most gaping wounds and the craziest dreams and hopes of African societies" (Barthes, 1991, pp. 150-156). Young Africans, and their ambiguous representations of violence, foolishness, pleasure and sexuality, their simultaneous longing to return to their roots but also to break away from African history and reality, have come to symbolize an Africa on a difficult quest to find its pace and its identity.

4.4.2 Bases

An important element of the urban streetscape of Nima, is the mass of people moving about. Equally striking however, are the groups of loitering young people, young men in particular, sitting idly in the street. The meeting places they produce are referred to as 'bases' and have colorful and often symbolic names, such as 'Third World Base', 'Jamba Base', 'Gentle Base' and so on. In her article 'The Production of Young Men's Street Meeting Places in Accra, Ghana', Thilde Langevang (2008) reveals the importance of these meeting places in the lives of young people. She highlights the importance of recent research into how young people struggle for survival, respect and self-esteem through different methods than violence (e.g. Honwana and de Boeck 2005; Christiansen et al. 2006a). She presents these bases both as a symptom of the marginalization of young people, but at the same time as meaningful places produced in their struggle for survival and respect. According to Langevang (2008) the bases are evidence of how young people do not passively accept their marginalization, but invent creative ways to generate agency, by producing meaningful social space and alternate forms of organization.

As I have explained, young people in the street are generally imagined, either as likely victims of gangs or other risks, or rather themselves as a hazard to social order. Many schemes have therefore been devised to keep young people off the street (Malone, 2002; Rogers and Coaffee, 2005). However, the street continues to be an important arena for many young people to affirm, negotiate and challenge their identities, both in the Global North (e.g. Matthews et al., 2000) and the South (e.g. Gough & Franch, 2005; Winton, 2005).

Also in the domestic sphere, young people create increasing amounts of anxiety. They are often unable to establish a household of their own, so they stay at home where their mothers and grandmothers continue to support them, and also any children they foster. This way, especially young men are considered to be straining already limited resources, because of their limited contribution to the household chores (Clark, 1999). Often because of unemployment, young men find it difficult to amount to expectations of masculine identities at home (see also Gough, 2008a, 2008b). Furthermore, the house itself is often perceived as a space of exclusion, because the space in and around the home is structured and perceived as female territory, and spending excessive amounts of time here could further threaten their masculinity. Although women sit at bases from time to time, the base is perceived and structured as the domain of men. Perhaps then understandably, young men prefer sitting at the base to sitting at home (Langevang, 2008).

Because of this composite state of exclusion they experience, the base functions as a 'marginal space' for young men, a place they hold because "they lack the power to control other places" (Matthews et al., 2000:71). However, this marginal space often constitutes a central part in their lives, and presents a start and support for their daily actions, the significance of this is covered by the word 'base'. The base is a space that young people produce to challenge and confront the adversities they face. They appropriate public space and conceive it as their property, this way retrieving a sense of self-respect and independence (Langevang, 2008).

Massey (1998) notes that production of space is a significant factor in the conception of social identity. He conceptualizes space as "a complexity of interacting social relations", (Massey, 1998:126) and notes that we need to acknowledge that "individuals and social groups are constantly engaged in efforts to territorialize, to

claim spaces, to include some and exclude others from particular areas". This way, the appropriation and control of space are instrumental to the production and contestation of identities. The streets can be seen as a space in which young people can still declare some independence and exert some control.

The base, in its most essential form, is produced by the spatial concentration of the bodies of young men, "in the act of sitting down for conversation" (Weiss, 2004:215). The primary activity at the base is sitting, often used as a synonym for 'doing nothing'. Therefore it can be clearly distinguished from other places where they spend time, such as the cyber-café, the football field, the church or mosque. The base is where young men come when they have nothing else to do. There is a constant circulation of people coming and going, according to whether they have other commitments or not.

From the perspective of an outsider, because of this non-activity of young people sitting about in public space, the people occupying a base are perceived as either lost causes or even threats to social order (Corrigan, 1976). Langevang (2008) reports that although most bases are generally nonviolent, some have gained a reputation for provoking trouble and steering young men towards delinquent behavior. I argue that the actions of these few bases can be seen as strongly stigmatizing for young men, other bases and some of the actions associated with sitting at a base, such as smoking cigarettes and weed or drinking alcohol.

According to Langevang (2008), the networks that tie young people to a base are not mutually exclusive or delimiting. Most people will socialize with other bases, or even associate with several bases, in the same way that people are always "simultaneously part of different and sometimes overlapping networks of family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, football friends, school mates, religious affiliates and so on that they move between" (Hanson 2005; Simone 2005).

Langevang (2008) notes that these networks can play an important role in the survival strategies of young people and accommodate an intricate system of material exchanges. The complex logic behind these exchanges is based on compassion, responsibility and a sense of duty, but because "material exchanges, friendship and respect are closely connected in Ghana", these principles can hardly be thought of as separate. When someone in the network requires support, and one of his peers has

the means to assist him, he is expected to do so. By helping someone out, respect is showed to the receiver, and the donor in return is also demonstrated respect (van der Geest, 1997).

Langevang (2008, p. 239) demonstrated that bases constitute locally embedded relations through which young men “create personal bonds, socialize, and discuss and practise masculine identities.” They are meaningful places for young people that provide an important space for “negotiation and interaction” (Langevang, 2008, p. 239). Contrary to popular belief, bases do not represent a uniform counterculture, per definition positioned against adults and authority. They do not appropriate public space to intentionally provoke society, but rather as a part of an everyday strategy to fulfill their social and material needs, as well as strive for recognition as a part of society.

4.5 Security

A sense of security has been demonstrated to be a strong predictor of perceived neighborhood quality (e.g. Greenberg, 1999) therefore it is useful to explore this aspect briefly. Because of Ghana’s constant political stability since independence, and a relatively high GDP (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), Accra is generally considered as a safe city, certainly for West-African standards. However, accounts on security are highly ambiguous and contradictory descriptions are manifold, as many authors describe very different pictures. Joseph Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003, p. 14), for instance, argues that the spatial layout of Accra contributes to “disproportionate amounts of crime”, and make it a “sprawling ground for intense criminal activities.” Nima has long been stigmatized as one of the most dangerous and violent neighborhoods in Accra. To be able to give an account of the local fear of crime and whether or not the reputation of a violent Nima is accurate or deserved, we need to take a closer look at crime trends in Accra and around Nima.¹

¹ Because of the scarcity of available recent data, I was forced to draw on studies based on older statistics, for example the study on urban crime trends in Accra by Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003) which he conducted on statistics collected over the period between 1980-1996. Unfortunately it also does not provide specific data on crime trends in the Nima neighborhood, because Accra is divided between four Police Divisions. As a result Nima is included as part of the Nima Police Division, the largest of Accra, along with a number of similar areas like Maamobi and Kokomlemle, but also with neighborhoods

4.5.1 Crime statistics in Accra and Nima

According to Abotchie (1997), Ghana's urban centers went through an upsurge of crime rates in the late 1990s, only adding to the range of challenges facing a country going through a fast process of transition. Especially the number of violent crimes escalated rapidly. Crimes like murder, rape and armed robbery, which before 1990 virtually never occurred, were now described all over the media. In the years leading up to 2000, there was also an exceptionally high number of murder cases recorded in the Accra Metropolitan Area, of which most of the victims were women (Quist-Acton, 2000).

According to Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003), the Nima Police Division recorded the highest number of violent crimes, including murder, assault, intimidation and other incidents of injury caused. A disproportionate part of the recorded cases of family and neighborhood related violence, in other words when participants were related through kinship, housing proximity or contractual commitments, were documented in the central Ga areas and the slums of the Nima division, the largest of which is the neighborhood Nima. Even though these neighborhoods have very different demographic compositions - the Ga areas are composed mostly of indigenous Ga residents while the residents of slum areas around Nima typically have very diverse migrant backgrounds - they share certain physical characteristics, most notably a very high population density, both in terms of crowding (amount of people sharing a house) and the sheer number of residents per square km, a shortage of basic infrastructure and services, and a large amount of residents dependent on communally shared toilets and baths. Furthermore, the Nima Division ranked highest in narcotic, prostitution and soliciting offenses, which corresponds to the general negative image that is often portrayed of Nima.

Remarkable perhaps is that the Nima Division accounted for the lowest number of burglaries in Accra, and that burglaries were few on average in the slum areas of Accra. Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003) relates this to a high rate of unemployment in these areas and with Anderson and Bennett's (1996) argument that unemployment

with very different characteristics, like Legon or Kanda. For these reasons we will have to be cautious when interpreting the results of this study, but it might assist to draft a general image of crime distribution in Accra, and help establish the source of a negative reputation.

heightens local surveillance and social control. They further argue that in such areas, residents are more often present around the home, and always alert for suspicious people or thieves. Intuitively it seems logical that a higher density of people and proximity and familiarity between neighbors has a positive effect on social control, and therefore could account for fewer burglaries. I would argue that this is only the case if there is sufficient cohesion, sympathy and respect between neighbors.

4.5.2 Fear of crime

Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003) argues that crime does not happen in a vacuum but is committed within specific geographies, induced by complex interactions among social, economic, political, physical and psychological contexts. Jacobs (1965) already highlights the important effects of spatial layout and physical characteristics of a neighborhood on the susceptibility to crime. He argues that some areas seem “custom made for crime”, and holds cities’ planning traditions responsible for implementation with too little knowledge of patterns, attractors and generators of crime, effectively creating “unsafe city spots where vandals, robbers, and other street criminals ply their unnatural trades without fear of apprehension” (p. p.41). In addition, several other researchers have examined the relation between what Skogan and Maxfield (1981) called “signs of crime” in an area and the perceived sense of fear. Adu-Mireku (2002) summarizes that people are more prone to feeling vulnerable and afraid of crime if the environment displays certain signs of incivilities like prostitution, loitering and graffiti. These indicators would point to an increased likelihood of victimization and a perceived high crime rate, therefore producing an increased sense of fear.

Additionally, recorded histories of police brutality, low police performance and corruption, embedded a deep mistrust toward the police in the public’s collective memory. Earlier research indicates that public perception on the effectiveness of legal institutions, influences the perception of vulnerability to victimization (see for example van Kesteren, Mayhew, & Nieuwbeerta, 2000). Consequently these circumstances produced a heightened perception of crime and insecurity, leading to an unprecedented public fear and anger about police incompetence. Weber (1978) warns that when false claims of legitimacy of the powerful become visibly exposed to the public, the powerful can become one of the most fiercely hated targets of attack.

4.5.3 Vigilantism

Some of the more affluent sectors of society responded to this perception of increased crime rate by seeking refuge behind fortified islands of security, notably the numerous gated communities that have emerged around the capital. Meanwhile other parts of society have resorted to vigilantism and different means to protect themselves (Tankebe, 2009). Vigilantism can be defined as “the appropriation of the powers of legal institutions to punish law-breaking behavior by citizens (acting individually or collectively) who do not have the official legitimacy to do so” (Johnston, 1996; Tankebe, 2009). In many urban areas of Africa, it is common for residents to resort to vigilante violence or community militias to increase neighborhood security, rather than turning to official law enforcement for help. Black (1983) argues that the widespread resort to vigilante violence, as an instrument of social control, relates to more fundamental issues of legitimacy, that it indicates strong public suspicion towards the effectiveness and performance of the state and its legal institutions. Tankebe (2009) consequently reads two types of commands in the people’s resort to vigilante violence. The first point is one of self-help and crime control, vigilante often being considered as a direct outcome of persistent ineffectiveness of police. A second message communicated through vigilante violence is one of symbolic punishment directed at the police, rejecting their authority. This way it becomes a form of symbolic resistance and protest against the frequent discredit suffered in the hands of the police (Scott, 1990). Noteworthy is Smith’s (2007) argument that, although vigilante violence is usually executed by young people, to communicate their dissatisfaction with the suffered inequality and injustice, it is the ideological approval of the elders that encourages them to do so.



V. Understanding people-environment dynamics

5.1 Nima, a portrait

In the previous chapter I have provided a general background to the forces and dynamics that are present in and have shaped current Nima and Accra. In this empirical chapter I will investigate the relationship between the residents and their environment by first focusing on the physical and spatial elements of the environment, and subsequently focusing on the perspectives of the residents themselves. However, before we investigate further the specific physical and spatial aspects of Nima, I believe it is important to briefly project a general image of the neighborhood, in terms of the looks, feels, smells and sounds one encounters when visiting Nima. To this purpose I will briefly introduce some key features of Nima, provide an overview of the respondents' profiles and give a brief subjective account of my experience as a temporary resident of Nima.

5.1.1 Zongo

Nima is acknowledged as a 'zongo' area by many residents and non-residents alike. This type of stranger quarter is found in many West African cities and is generally recognized by a principally Muslim migrant population and Muslim culture. This is



Figure 8: A married couple in Hausa dress.
Source: Author

visible in the many mosques and Koranic schools (*makaranta* in Hausa) spread throughout the neighborhood. This in contrast to most of Accra, which has a predominantly Christian population (Pellow, 2001). The Hausa migrants, originally from Northern Nigeria, are not a majority of the population, however they have had a disproportionately strong influence on other residents of zongo neighborhoods in

terms of language, dress, religion, education and business. This characteristic of the zongo neighborhood is made tangible in Nima mostly through dress and language. The Hausa dress (see Figure 8) which is of a more austere nature than other Muslim

fashion present, is more widespread in Nima than in surrounding neighborhoods (but not comparable with original Hausa neighborhoods such as Sabon Zongo or Sukura, which are still considered more homogenous in ethnic composition). The Hausa language is much used in Nima (the recurrent shout 'baturé' which means 'white man' in Hausa was easily distinguishable from the usual 'obroni' (Twi) in the rest of Accra). The Hausa culture is prevalent, but through long periods of migration and exchange, it has mixed with many different traditions and practices (Pellow, 2001).

Brand (1972) describes zongos as neighborhoods that persistently stay more traditional than many other urban areas, and attract mostly low status migrants. These neighborhoods share many qualities with a village, where everyone knows their neighbors, the community is governed by a traditional chief, and property rights and ancestral ties remain highly important. To Hausa and other Northern ethnicities it is customary to own animals, consequently poultry, sheep and goats roam around free (see Figure 9) (Pellow, 2001). Holding cows on city grounds is no longer permitted, but often they are held discretely in open spaces inside the urban fabric.



Figure 9: Sheep are held in the heart of Abenassi. Source: Author

Nima does exhibit similarities with other zongos, but it is also a unique place, which is in many respects also distinctly urban, and is the result of mixed traditions and cultures. Most noticeably, it is much too big and too populated to really resemble a village. The variety in types of food sold in the street for instance, are evidence of the cosmopolitan nature of Nima, from typical

Ghanaian dishes such as Kenké or Fufu, to Hausa specialties such as Wagash or Tuo Zaafi, to dishes with Malian, Togolese or even Asian influences.

5.1.2 Residents of Nima

The research area has a very mixed demographic composition (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012). The most practiced religion is Islam, and the many small mosques are scattered all over the neighborhood. However, even if most Christian churches are located in the Southern part of Nima, near Nima Roundabout, and there are almost no churches in this area, Christians do live here in modest numbers. Six out of the

forty residents I interviewed were Christians, and the rest were of Muslim conviction. The most commonly spoken language among participants therefore was Hausa, a language that originates from the Hausa people that live in the north of Nigeria, but which is used as a common merchant language among West African Muslims. Most young participants however were sufficiently proficient in English to make a translator abundant. You can notice Nima has a very youthful population. The participants came from all walks of life, patronized a variety of jobs such as teacher, shopkeeper, petty trader, imam, social worker, footballer, politician, contractor and so on. A more detailed overview is provided in Appendix 3.

5.1.3 A temporary resident



Figure 11: View from atop Washing Base.
Source: Author

when opportunities arise he works as a painter with a friend, or as a carpenter with his half-brother. We lived in a small room, which was part of a family compound we shared with two of his half-brothers and their families, three other tenant's families and three single tenants, around 26 people in total, half of them children. However, over the course of the day, many other people visited the compound for different amounts of time, ranging from extended family members and neighbors,

Different to the research areas, the quarter where I resided for two months and two weeks was mostly populated by Ewe people, from the Volta Region and the Southern regions of Togo and Benin, most of which were Christians. I resided together with a young Togolese man, Noordeen Kokou Anonene, 22 years of age. He is a French teacher in a primary school next to Nima Roundabout, but



Figure 10: Kiosk and small square close to my temporary residence. Source: Author

to hosts of neighborhood children. This meant that, on the one hand there was never a dull moment and there was always something happening in the house, but on the other hand, until late at night there was never a moment of peace and quiet, and it was very difficult to find a moment to myself. The house had a small cubicle that was used for showering, but also for urinating during the day, but no toilet. Just like most of the residents in the neighborhood, we used a public toilet a few hundred meters from the house. Sometimes, to escape the commotion of the house, we sat on a balcony on the top floor of 'Washing Base', the building that housed public showers and toilets, just to read, chat and watch the people in the street (Figure 10). The evenings we often spent on a small open space close to the house, next to a small mosque. Here we would watch the World Cup games on a small TV screen in a kiosk, or just sit and chat with some of the neighbors and drink tea (Figure 11).

5.2 Spatial analysis

5.2.1 Research areas

I conducted the research in two separate areas, namely area A and B, both situated in the most densely populated part of Nima (see Figure 3). The boundaries of these areas correspond loosely with what Weeks, Getis and Stow (2010) label "vernacular neighborhoods". These vernacular neighborhoods are not based on enumeration areas or any official definition, but are defined rather by common recognition, usually based on an existing or historic landmark embedded in collective memory. As Accra has no comprehensible address system, it is these place names that people use to navigate around the city (Weeks et al., 2010).

Area A is situated in the northeast of Nima, enclosed by Nima Street to the west, a large open sewage drain generally referred to as 'gutter' to the north and Kanda highway to the east. The area is locally known as Abenassi, which means 'under the palmtree', referring to several palm trees that grow around an ancient water well in the heart of the neighborhood. It is the most densely built up area, with less than 30% of unbuilt space, this includes the streets and inner courtyards. I chose this area because it is unique in its residential density, its critical lack of open space and its inaccessibility to motorized vehicles.

Area B is the narrow strip that includes and flanks Nima Street, enclosed by Nima market in the South and the gutter in the North. It is locally known as New Alaska. In steep contrast to area A, this area is defined by its proximity to a wide paved street. Nima Street is the busiest street of Nima, and forms the neighborhoods largest open space. During daytime it is permanently congested, mostly because it connects two very populous neighborhoods to the ring road, and thus central Accra. Furthermore, it accommodates the market and an important public transportation node, it has a high concentration of mosques, churches and schools, and the majority of Nima's commercial activities are situated along Nima Street.

5.2.1 Services and infrastructure

According to the widely used UN-habitat standards, when a neighborhood suffers from inadequate service provision and infrastructure, more importantly the provision of water and sanitation, it should be considered a slum environment. Compared to other neighborhoods in Accra, the service provision in zongos has a long history of neglect by the authorities. According to Konadu-Agyemang (2001a) the lack of sanitation and waste management, and the resultant pollution levels since long threaten Nima's public health.

When Konadu-Agyemang (2001b) compared housing situations between 1954 and 1989, he did observe some improvement on a number of points. Firstly, without neglecting the current situation, which is still far from ideal, access to sanitation had improved over this time frame. Availability of piped water had significantly increased, from 24% of the households having access in 1954, to 83% in 1989, and similarly, also connections to the electricity grid went up from 62,5% to 85% over the same period (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012).

Konadu-Agyemang (2001b) notes that approximately 75 percent of households in Accra share toilet facilities. Although no accurate records for Nima could be found, this number will almost certainly be higher than the average for Accra. Many people of Nima either share a toilet and shower with the other residents of the house, often more than 30 people, or have no toilet facilities in the house, and therefore depend entirely on public toilets.

In the survey, I found that 62.5 percent of the respondents used public toilets on a daily basis, 27.5 percent shared a toilet with the other occupants of their house, and

only 10 percent had private toilets at their disposal. Both the users of shared and public toilets complained about long cues during peak hours in the mornings and evenings. Also the hygienic conditions of the facilities, especially the public toilets, were very unsatisfactory. Several residents complained that the toilets so unhygienic they had to change clothes after toilet use, because of the foul smell it left.

Water supply also proved to be problematic. Most of the households buy water for their daily use from private sellers. Many respondents complained about the unreliability of the water supply. During my stay in Nima, I found indeed that often some of the water mains would not function, or that they would be disconnected every day after a few hours of use. This would often lead to congestion at the points that still supplied water. Often, if we wanted to take a bath or do laundry, we had to wait in long cues and walk several hundreds of meters, carrying heavy containers of water.

5.2.2 Housing

Beall and Kanji (1999) note that housing is, apart from a basic human right, also an important asset deemed crucial for an active member of society. Furthermore, a house itself has significant market value, and it can foster economic activities.

The dominating housing typology throughout Nima is the compound house; a single story building arranged around a central open courtyard, its walls constructed with baked bricks or mud-bricks and a steel-plated roof in various states of disrepair. The image is usually framed by a large amount of antennas crowning the roof and a dangerously looking web of electrical cables tying electric poles to the surrounding buildings. In Abenassi the houses, built usually to maximize the plots of approximately 20 by 20 meters, separated by narrow streets, give shape to a slightly warped orthogonal grid. Most of the houses in our sample contained between 8 and 15 rooms, and generally housed as many different families. More rooms are often added inside the courtyard, further reducing the available open space. Many of these houses were originally built to accommodate the extended family, but as population pressure increased many owners opportunistically decided to accept tenants in spare rooms for the extra income it would generate.

Reminiscent of Islamic and traditional African customs, the courtyard house is believed to protect women from other men and outsiders. Even if the house is

generally shared with tenants, and often no longer is strictly private, the home remains an important space to many residents of Nima. Especially to women, the home is where they spend a significant part of their day. The house is therefore perceived as a feminine space. Men that hangout around the house too often are perceived as strange, feminine or a threat.

On and around the paved streets of Nima, particularly on Nima street, we can see that most of the compound houses have been replaced with sturdier concrete structures, often 2 or more, up to about 4 stories high. This new typology is able to accommodate valuable commercial space on the ground floor, and in some cases on the first floor, while still allowing for enough living space. There is a fair amount of construction occurring on and around the paved streets that bear witness of a process of gentrification that is slowly transforming the neighborhood. However this process has so far been largely limited to the areas directly adjacent to tarred streets, and most visibly around Nima Street. As Owusu et al. (2008) already noted, several banks and exchange offices have opened up offices on Nima street in the last few years.

Konadu-Agyemang (2001b) notes that, while it seems that general housing conditions have improved since the 1950s, houses have become drastically more crowded over the decades. The average house accommodated three times as many households in 1989 compared to 1954, while at the same time the average amount of rooms for each house declined. According to Konadu-Agyemang (2001b), Nima had an average occupancy rate of 49 persons per house in 2001. In the survey I conducted, the dwellings averaged 12 rooms, and housed approximately 38 people on average. These averages however, conceal significant differences between houses in the area. I found for instance that the average room accommodated three persons, but if we investigate further, a significant share of the respondents lived with six or seven in one room, and this number was just balanced out by a lucky few that had a room to themselves. Another demonstration of the high variance in the sample; the smallest house I visited housed four people in four rooms, whereas the largest house, appropriately named the 'Big House', contained 30 rooms and housed approximately 120 residents around several connected courtyards. This house had

numerous entrances and even had its own mosque. Effectively, in its layout, it was very much like a gated community for low-income residents.

The slum guidelines of UN-Habitat dictate that when four or more people are sharing a room, we can speak of overcrowded conditions, which increases residents' vulnerability in a number of ways: it can pose important health risks in terms of infectious diseases, threaten education levels as it hinders children's ability to study, it can provoke domestic violence and by taking away privacy it directly impacts people's sense of dignity (UN-HABITAT, 2006). We can state that, although certainly not everyone, large parts of the population of Nima are subject to overcrowding.

These high rates of crowding are partly a consequence of the large disparity between population growth and housing production in Accra in the last few decades. According to Adjei-Mensah (1998) the 30,000 housing units built in 1998, amount to only 21.4% of the estimated 140,000 annually required to meet the growing demand of the rapid expanding city.

Another key reason behind the overcrowding is the steep rise in housing costs, identified by Konadu-Agyemang (2001a) as a result of increased land speculation, produced by the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the 1980s and the resultant currency devaluation. The SAPs globalizing effects have also opened up the housing market to Ghanaians abroad and foreign companies, while at the same time pushing it out of reach for native Ghanaians because of the immense devaluation of their incomes. In the early 1990s the ratio of housing price to income was among the highest in the world, and this ratio is expected to keep rising, especially for middle and low income housing (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001a). This trend continues to attract lower income citizens and migrants to zongo or 'stranger' neighborhoods such as Nima, which still provide relative low cost housing opportunities.

5.2.3 The state of streets and issues of accessibility

Area A

The urban fabric of Area A is marked by very narrow short streets, that together form a complex network of cul-de-sacs and small open spaces. The maze-like character that reminds perhaps of the layout of traditional Nubian villages in the South of Egypt



Figure 12: Typical narrow unpaved alley without drain in Abenassi. Source: Author

is labeled by locals as ‘lungu-lungu’². The streets are on average so narrow - many of the streets are barely wide enough to walk two people side by side - that the entire area is completely inaccessible to cars, and even driving a motorbike here is considered hazardous. Because of the inaccessibility, it is difficult to transport heavy goods, such as building materials or equipment, into the area. It also makes it slow and difficult to evacuate people in a case of an emergency, for instance a pregnancy or an injury. When a victim has to be carried out to the road, this can take up to 30 minutes from the deepest parts of

the area. One of the residents noted that under unfortunate circumstances people have passed away, the long extraction time from Abenassi partly to blame because it kept the victim from being treated in time. Another reported problem is that when people die, the body of the deceased also has to be carried out to the road, through the entire neighborhood, for everyone to see.

Furthermore, the streets are generally unpaved, and have no or inadequate drains to collect the rain and wastewater (See Figure 12). Especially the torrential rains during the monsoon³ turn the roads into surging streams of dirty water and then into almost impassable slippery mud trails. Understandably this can interrupt day-to-day life in important ways as it prevents people from reaching their destination in order and in time. Because of the slippery trails, falling is a real risk, especially to the physically impaired, the pregnant or the elderly. I heard a particular horrific story, shared with me by a female respondent, about an infant that was dragged away in 2013 by the

² Lungu means ‘alley’ in Hausa language, the repetition serves to emphasize its

³ Southern Ghana has two rainy seasons, a longer one from March to July and a shorter one between August and November (McSweeney, New, & Lizcano, 2010).

rains and was thrown into the gutter, and was not seen again. This serves to emphasize just a portion of the sizeable risks for the inhabitants of this area.

An interesting development going on in parts of Nima, is that some of the residents organized themselves to incrementally improve the streets; Sometimes on their own initiative, sometimes under guidance and sponsorship of a community and/or religious group (note: this was shared with me on informal encounters with residents). If a street is in particularly bad shape, or when for instance an accident has taken place, sometimes residents come together to buy a few bags of cement and pave a part of the street, often upgraded with an improvised drain or sewer. Especially in the Northern part of Abenassi towards the gutter, significant parts of the alleys have become paved. This is one important way that residents demonstrate attachment to their environment by investing time and money into improving their physical surroundings.

Streetlights are spread throughout the neighborhood, on the open spaces, and some houses have lights installed on the outside of their homes, but many of the streets are completely dark or inadequately lit. Additionally, some respondents said that many of the streetlights do not work, and because of irregular power supply to the neighborhood, often people rely on portable light sources to find their way through the darkness. Because of inadequate lighting combined with a maze-like layout, with its small streets and many corners, and a low degree of occupation in the late hours, this area does reinforce a sense of insecurity at night.

Area B

Area B is centered on Nima Street, which is – the name provides a clue – the widest and most important street in Nima. It is paved over its entire length and equipped with wide concrete drains on either side, which have been covered for large stretches. This street is an important artery that connects Nima and Maamobi (a similar very populous neighborhood next to Nima) to the ring road around Accra, thus to most other locations in and around Accra. As aforementioned the street, along its two kilometer, houses a main transportation hub, a very busy market, the largest schools, churches and mosques of Nima, a large amount of shops and food stalls, and all of its banks. It can be said that most of the commercial activity in Nima is found on and

around Nima Street. It is perhaps not surprising that this area is incredibly vibrant and full of people during the day. It is as congested as streets come, and especially around the bus station and the market cars and small buses can be found clogging the streets, honking away throughout the day, and a mass of pedestrians swarming between the cars, paying them only slight notice. Area B is situated on the Northern end of Nima Street, bordering with Maamobi and the gutter. Consequently it is significantly less congested than the southernmost part of Nima Street that houses the market and bus station, although certainly still populated, and daily life is still centered on and around the street.

The area is relatively well lit, even when not all the streetlights work, it is significantly better lit than many other parts of Nima. There is generally street activity well into the night. The relative good visibility combined with a quasi-permanent presence of people in the streets supports a feeling of security, especially when compared to Abenassi.

5.2.4 Public realm

I argue that in the African culture the outside space holds more significance as a meeting space, than it does in Western culture. Particularly for men, it is important to be able to sit and spend time outside the house, as the home itself is perceived as a feminine space, where men should not spend too much time. Also because of the immense crowding in Nima – it is not unusual for 7 or 8 people to share a room – it is just unfeasible to occupy the home space at all times. Furthermore, celebrations of important life-cycle events, such as a births, name-giving ceremonies, marriages and funerals, are generally held outside to accommodate the large crowds they draw. All of this would imply that open space in Nima would be definitely missed in Nima. It is however interesting that none of the respondents explicitly noted lack of open space as a pressing issue. This requires further investigation.

Area A

Area A has a calculated total built up surface of approximately 70 per cent, leaving less than 30 percent open for circulation or for public and private outdoor spaces. It has virtually no green space, apart from a handful of solitary trees scattered



Figure 13: An open space inside Abenassi, appropriated by the residents. Source: Lothar Smith

throughout the area, most of which are palm trees that provide close to no shade. With such a high population pressure this situation can be considered as problematic.

On every open space or where the narrow streets widen a bit, people have gratefully made use of the space by installing

benches or small stores outside of their houses to sell food or offer a service (see Figure 13). The density of commercial activity is much higher than you would expect from a residential area. Even in the deepest parts of the area, far from general circulation routes, regular commercial activity is found.

Some spaces have remained vacant even though they are few and small. These are left-over spaces between the houses that have been built in very close proximity to each other, that have for some reason remained vacant despite tremendous population pressure. However they serve a multitude of activities. During most of the day, the larger spaces accommodate livestock, mainly tied up sheep and goats, and one of the spaces sometimes exhibited enormous bulls. The sheep and goats disappeared during the evenings into parts of neighboring houses. Where the bulls went nobody could tell me. Some of the spaces serve as playgrounds for small primary schools that are concealed between the houses, only discernable by the sounds of laughing and shouting children. The largest open space, is the square that contains the water well (Figure 14), and a few old palm trees, and from which the area derives its name. It is rather a sequence of several smaller open spaces, visually and functionally separated by small shops; one part is



Figure 14: The ancient water well in Abenassi. Source: Author

polluted by the bulls that are sometimes located here, another part where all the shops open up to is reserved for commercial activity, and the part where the well is situated is usually occupied by women chatting while doing laundry or waiting to buy



Figure 15: A Hausa name-giving ceremony inside Abenassi. Source: Author

water.

During the weekends the spaces and alleys are often the stage for wedding ceremonies or other popular festivities (see Figure 15). Hired tents are erected in the squares to provide some shade for the guests, food and drinks are provided by the hosts and music is played until late in the evening. Generally large parts of the neighborhood are invited.

Area B



Figure 16: Nima Street. Source: Noordeen Anonene

The main open space in Area B is quite evidently Nima Street, which widens and narrows at certain points along its length, leaving voids of public space between the buildings and the road (see Figure 17). The existence of Nima Street is also the main reason behind the significant lower ratio of built up versus open space in area B, respectively 53 and 47 percent. Most of this open space however, is absorbed by the street, traffic, shops and the informal commercial clutter on the pavement. This again leaves very little space for leisurely activities or ceremonies. Consequently there is a continuous rivalry between different users over the little space available, for instance between drivers and pedestrians, between hawkers and shop owners, between youth and adults and so on. Appropriation of a part of public

space does not go without some form of interaction or confrontation with other actors. This occurs continuously, but confrontations are generally based on rich social interaction and rarely lead to conflict. This interaction seems to make the street an attractive place to be seated, as many people prefer to sit in the busy street rather than in the more quiet alleys behind it. The street is an endless source of activities and excitement, a place of constant interactions between acquaintances and others. During the weekends, much like in Abenassi, where the road is broad enough, people will appropriate the space and use it for ceremonies, often blocking part of the road and creating even more congestion.

Kawokodi

Youth from both areas often seek out areas outside of Nima, in search of larger spaces or spaces that lay outside the public's view, for instance the football fields at Kawokodi. The amount and nature of open space within Nima is clearly inadequate. The scarce available space is fragmented into numerous very small spaces throughout the neighborhood, without



Figure 18: Kawokodi football fields. Source: Author

any larger open spaces for major outdoor activities. Therefore young people look elsewhere. A bit to North-East is a large patch of open land (see Figure 18), known to locals as 'Kawokodi' (this means 'give your-money' in Twi language, a reference to earlier times when it was reportedly a perfect place to get mugged). It is possibly also the closest space to Nima that would remotely qualify as a green space, with patches of green grass and collections of trees providing much appreciated shade. Several football and basketball goals have been installed, and every day towards the evening these fields are vibrant with youth, playing, watching the games or just hanging out. This is an example of a margin space that has been claimed by youth, and has gained real significance to many young people. This was apparent as several young

respondents explicitly mentioned Kawokodi as an important space in their lives, and a space they spend significant amounts of their leisure time.

Mosques

Islam performs an important supportive role for the social life in the neighborhood Nima. Its importance is evident from the sheer amount of mosques that are spread throughout the area. It is hard to give an account of the exact amount, but considering their modest size, most mosques only cater for a few dozen Muslims at a time, maybe a few hundred in total, it is safe to assume there are many. Most mosques are small, a single room with speakers mounted on the outer walls to call for prayer, hardly distinguishable from the surrounding houses. Some mosques, generally the ones closest to the few paved streets of Nima, are larger concrete structures often displaying some Islamic architectural features (i.e., small minarets, typical Islamic windows and doors and geometric decorations) that differentiate them from the surrounding houses. If it is not its physical presence, it is definitely the audible presence of mosques that reinforces the Islamic space, filling the air with Arabic vocals at specific times of the day. By calling for prayer five times a day, the Muslim religion also produces a distinct division of time, structuring the day for Nima residents.

One universal feature, in small and large mosques alike, is the seemingly ever-present group of men sitting about the premises, often wearing a Jalabiya, a traditional Muslim dress, and a prayer hat. They discuss all sorts of religious, personal, societal and economic matters. The imam performs an important role in the community, often being both a spiritual leader and a community leader to the residents, resolving small conflicts and counseling the residents on various aspects of life.

5.2.5 Morphology

We can observe on the local integration analysis in figure 19 that Area A is very poorly integrated in the street grid of Nima, by the blue and green colors of the axial lines on the graph, especially when compared to Area B, which is very highly integrated and well connected to the surrounding areas, reflected by the bright red, orange and yellow axial lines. There is a hard transition between Area A and Nima

Street in the West and Kanda Highway in the East, which visibly disconnects the area from the surrounding streets. From either Nima Street or Kanda Highway, the view towards of Abenassi is blocked by a dense row of houses, which is generally not perceived as inviting to strangers. Even though the urban fabric of this transition zone is permeable - entrance into the small streets beyond is not blocked - the density of the urban fabric, the combination of the narrow streets and the strong contrast between the openness of the broad bounding streets act as a barrier, or rather a filter that guarantees that it is mostly local residents that frequent these alleys.

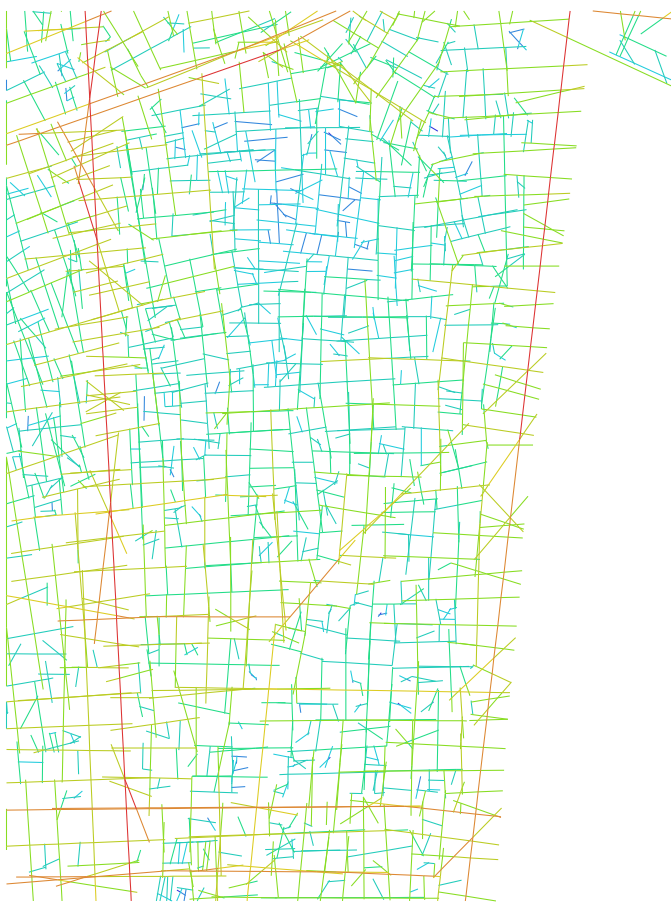


Figure 19: Local integration of Nima. Source: Depthmap

I argue that the resultant 'isolation' from the surrounding areas might have important implications for the area; I pose that social control is high. Because of the density and proximity of the houses, neighbors know each other well, and strangers are easily identified, and suspect intruders are easily spotted. One could question if this is really the case, high rates of circulation generally found in low-income migrant areas could certainly provide a certain amount of anonymity. The responses of many Abenassi residents however, are indicative of the presence of tight knit communities, only possible if

neighbors are familiar and interact with each other on a regular basis.

The same qualities however also influence the sense of security in a different way. Many concur that the inaccessibility and general chaotic layout of these small streets cause the police to stay away. The maze of streets forms an ideal network of getaway opportunities in case of flight, and at night these qualities can be perceived

as threatening. Several of the residents of Area A attested to certain degrees of lawlessness within this area, but it is mostly residents of Area B who complain of this phenomenon. There is a conviction among residents of other parts of Nima that it is residents from Abenassi that commit burglaries and assaults in other parts of the area, and afterwards run and hide in Abenassi where they are safe and protected by the community. Some have therefore blamed Abenassi as the source of Nima's bad reputation.

5.2.6 Conclusions

From a technical perspective, a descriptive analysis of these areas in Nima can lead to some important conclusions. We can witness an immense diversity within the neighborhood of Nima. The two areas that are the focus of this thesis are geographically adjacent, some characteristics are very similar but many are very different. Both these areas are subject to a number of different vulnerabilities but also manifest different opportunities for their residents.

Nima suffers from a general deficit in services and infrastructure, partly caused by an ongoing neglect by the planning authorities for low-income residential areas and zongo areas in Accra; a lack of drains in large parts of the neighborhood, an underperforming waste-collection system, the provision of water and electricity are problematic and fiercely inadequate sanitation are the biggest problems. The housing situation is equally worrying. Houses are often in bad condition, with leaky, moldy roofs and walls as a result, and many exceed the guidelines of UN-habitat for overcrowding. This in turn produces very high residential densities that place increasing pressure on already stressed infrastructures and services. These stress factors significantly increase the vulnerability of the residents in terms of health risks and lack of privacy and dignity.

However some developments must be noted that signify a gradual process of transformation taking place. Adjacent to paved streets, the low quality housing has largely been replaced with sturdier concrete buildings often two stories or taller. Additionally, several banks and exchange offices have been installed on Nima Street. The largest differences between A and B manifest themselves in the spatial layout of the streets, the resultant degree of accessibility for vehicles, the amount of pedestrian

circulation and the quality of the infrastructures. We can state that residents of Area A are subject to higher levels of vulnerability caused by the environment.

Both areas suffer from low quantities of public space, in the face of very large population densities, but for different reasons. Open spaces in Area A are small and few in number, but with generally only people of the immediate vicinity using them, they are relatively calm and ordered. However the spatial layout of Area A seems to be more accommodating for social cohesion. Open space in Area B is centered on Nima Street, where residents have much more competition from merchants, traffic and passersby for the use of public space.

5.3 Quality of life

5.3.1 Subjective well-being

To be able to measure the impact of the environment on the quality of life of individual residents, I will have to discuss how the residents perceive their quality of life. I used the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) to map out their subjective well-being. In this chapter I briefly focus on the results from the SWLS-survey analysis. I compared the scores of different residents of Nima to each other. In this chapter I will also investigate correlations between residents' scores on the SWLS and their satisfaction with specific aspects of the environment. From this process we can identify whether or not any of the measured aspects have a pronounced impact on the happiness of the residents.

5.3.2 National rates of happiness

Table 1 displays a semi-random⁴ sample of countries with their respective average scores on happiness and their respective GNI (Gross National Income per capita) coefficients as a proxy for national rate of economic development. The results are sorted on GNI. If we compare the African continent to other countries in the world, it is immediately clear that most of the African countries score very low, both on average happiness and the economic indicator. As noted earlier, a country's

⁴ Random because they are not chosen on scores of satisfaction, but rather to include a few countries on each continent. Semi-random because I deliberately chose to display more African and European countries as a frame of reference, because they display comparable economic conditions to respectively Ghana and the author's country of origin, Belgium.

economic development is generally seen as one of the strongest predictors of national rates of happiness. Ghana scores relatively high compared to other African countries. Its immediate neighbors Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and especially Togo score very poorly on happiness, equally reflected in very low GNI scores. The results reported for Accra are slightly higher than the national average, and remarkably, the results I retrieved in Nima are even higher still. It is of course too soon to jump to conclusions, these numbers may be biased for a number of reasons (see reflections on methods, Chapter 3) and such a small sample cannot be representative of a general population, however it could be a first sign that these so-called 'slum dwellers' are on average more satisfied than we would expect. The economic indicator seems to be a decent predictor of happiness on a national level. However, it is apparent that life satisfaction is a very complex concept. National averages tell only a small part of the story and the high average obtained for Nima gives us reason to investigate the

Table 1: A selection of countries with their respective GNI per capita and National average happiness index

results more closely.

Country	GNI*	Happiness**
Norway	102610	7,9
United States	53570	7,4
Canada	52200	7,8
Netherlands	51060	7,6
Germany	47270	7,1
Belgium	46290	7,3
France	43460	6,6
United Kingdom	41680	7,2
U.A.E.	38360	7,3
Saudi Arabia	26260	6,5
Venezuela	12550	7,5
Brazil	11690	7,5
Mexico	9940	7,9
Colombia	7590	7,7
South Africa	7190	5,44
China	6560	6,3
Egypt	3150	5,7
Nigeria	2710	5,7
Ghana	1770	5,2
Accra		5,82
Nima***		6,06
Vietnam	1740	6,1
India	1570	5,5
Côte d'Ivoire	1450	4,4
Laos	1450	6,2

Pakistan	1360	5
Sénégale	1050	4,5
Bangladesh	1010	5,3
Cambodia	950	4,9
Benin	790	3
Burkina Faso	670	4,4
Togo	530	2,6
Source: Based on *(World Bank, 2015), **(Veenhoven, 2011) and *** Author's findings.		

5.3.3 Influence of gender and age on subjective well-being

The influence of independent variables gender and age on perceived quality of life and on perception of the environment is unclear from previous research. I have found the relation between age and life satisfaction to be unclearly defined in this sample. The relation between age and satisfaction with the environment was similarly complex. Also gender in Nima, appears to have a more pronounced influence on the satisfaction with several domains of the environment than predicted in the literature. The distribution of satisfactions become more pronounced if we connect gender and age, and divide the respondents into a matrix of four categories, namely; young men, young women, adult men and adult women, and internally compare these groups. One group who proliferates itself with average higher satisfaction scores than any of the other groups are the adult women⁵.

Young men

The group of young men are on average the highest educated group, with most of them, 7 out of 10, having received secondary education and the rest at least finished primary education. On average they score the lowest on the SWLS questions. This

⁵ When selecting respondents of this category, we encountered mostly elder women selling prepared foodstuffs in the streets. However, two of the elder female respondents were shopkeepers on Nima street. Correspondingly they earned much higher wages (6000 and 18500 GHC per month, compared to a median of only 155 GHC per month) than respondents in other categories, of which I have failed to find comparable high earners. These wages certainly exclude them from the category of urban poor by UN standards. On the one hand, this serves to demonstrate the existing variety of incomes in Nima, and proves the point that Nima, described as a 'slum' community, is not only home to poor residents. However, they also reported much higher satisfaction with life and conditions than other respondents. Because of the small sample size, this disproportionate difference in satisfaction levels, shifted the balance considerably

pattern already hints at a cause for frustration among young men. The precariousness of their situation⁶ is reflected in low scores on SWB. A very low average score on satisfaction with job opportunities, both in young and adult men, is indicative of the reported pessimistic attitude towards finding wage employment, despite decent education levels. These low scores on SWB are however not reflected in low satisfactions with their environment. We can assume that their frustrations are therefore not aimed directly at the quality of their environment, but rather are caused by more structural problems in society.

Young women

Young women interviewed turned out to have enjoyed relatively high levels of education as compared to their male counterparts. They also score rather high on satisfaction with life questions and have the highest average score on the question concerning general happiness. However, they score the lowest average on questions about satisfaction with their environment. Most notably they score very low on satisfaction with density and safety in their neighborhood. This can be explained by a higher sense of vulnerability discussed in literature. They are very unsatisfied with levels of pollution and with the quality of their houses and score extremely low on satisfaction with sanitation. While they seem to be more affected by the quality of their environment, and report dissatisfaction with many aspects, this is interestingly not reflected in low levels of SWB.

Adult men

The elder men on average report very low satisfaction, both with their life and with their environment. Interestingly their average satisfaction with the quality and quantity of open space is very low, especially when compared to young men, who report high satisfaction with this condition. These low scores are not representative for their objective life conditions, especially when we compare them to their female counterparts, who score on average very high on most domains. What might give a clue to why they pertain such a radically different perspective from the adult women on their environment and their life, slightly more than half of the adult men report

⁶ Explained in Chapter 4

having no part in the economic activity of the household. I propose that perhaps some of these elder men feel they are becoming unnecessary, feel like they are stuck in Nima or have difficulties adapting to a changing environment.

Adult women

The group of adult women distinguish themselves from the other groups on many points. They have received by far, the lowest formal education, 7 out of 10 adult women having enjoyed no education, and only one adult woman successfully finished primary education. By contrast however, they rate their satisfactions with both life domains and environmental conditions the highest (with a margin). It must be noted that this group also earned the highest average wages. These patterns can almost not contrast more with the situation of young men, who displayed the almost complete opposite patterns. Interesting here is that adult women report on average high satisfaction with job opportunities and often even mentioned economic factors as a major draw to Nima.

Other observations

Interestingly, there are no significant differences between Christians and Muslims regarding satisfaction with life or environmental domains, other than one, but it might be significant; Muslim respondents were on average more than one standard deviation more satisfied with their social life than Christian respondents. This might point to a disparity between availability of a social platform in the muslim community and the in the Christian community. This makes sense considering the large majority presence of Muslims in Nima.

5.3.4 Open questions

“What are some of the things you like most about living in Nima?”⁷

⁷ The number between brackets is the amount of respondents that listed the given feature as an answer to the given question. More than one answer per respondent is possible. The total answers amount to 88, and the numbers should therefore be considered relative to the total. Categorization of answers was subject to interpretation, because of the open nature of the question, i.e. when a respondent answered “youth have no respect” I categorized this with “bad attitude and morals”.

To this question, most of the respondents reveal the existence of a strong social cohesion among residents, as is evident from a number of different aspects the residents addressed. A significant part of the respondents (10) explicitly mentioned the existence of a strong community as a positive aspect of living in Nima. One man mentioned that people help each other when times are hard and people need help. This was backed by a young woman who praised the neighborhood for the social security embedded in the social relations.

The word 'unity' (13) is very often used in conjunction with 'community'. One man explained unity; "People are the same in Nima, good manners, good Muslims." I interpret this as indicative of a collective identity that unites the residents under common social and cultural values. This is interesting, considering the reported ethnic heterogeneity of this area (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu, 2012).

A large part of the respondents (14) report that religion, and most notably Islam, is indeed an important and desirable aspect of life in Nima. The strong presence of Islam has been described in the literature to facilitate cohesion between residents in Nima. This is recognized by several residents in their answers. One man said Nima is attractive because it provides plenty of opportunities to pursue Islamic education and the Muslim community provides many activities for the residents. One of the imams noted that the mosques always attract a lot of people.

The existence of strong cohesion, a clear sense of community and uniting identity, may point to different explanations. Possibly the demographic composition of the neighborhood is more homogenous than we expected from the literature. This is possible, considering that Nima is seen as a more 'established' slum neighborhood of Accra, where the circulation of in and out migrants is expected to be slower than in comparatively newer informal neighborhoods such as Old Fadama. There is an indication that a social platform is present that connects and unites people from different origins in Nima. The existence of religion, both Islam and Christianity, as a social glue that binds people across boundaries of ethnicity and origin has been demonstrated by several studies of Nima.

Other residents talked about Nima as a place of economic opportunity (6) and of freedom (3). In informal conversation, several people revealed a general 'live and let

live' attitude among Nima residents. One adult man noted that "people will leave you alone in Nima, you can do the things you want, and people will not bother you."

This is interesting when seen together with the aforementioned argument that Nima seems to provide a social platform beyond those generally seen within ethnic networks. The residents found a way of living in such close proximity without creating too much friction. It could imply that solidarity among the residents is largely based on mutual respect and tolerance.

This same aspect was framed in a very different context by one of the primary respondents Avalon. When we were discussing the negative reputation of Nima, he said "the biggest problem is that the people don't recognize the problems. If they don't recognize the problems, how can we fix them?" referring to the way a criminal can disappear in Nima, and the community would protect him against the Police.

One of the most often mentioned positive features of Nima was security (10). Many people feel secure in Nima, for instance "because there are always people in the street" someone added, or because "people are respectful and have discipline", or because there are volunteers that patrol the streets. Perhaps it is possible to tie the sense of security to the first argument made about the incidence of a strong social cohesion. This argument is rooted in the observation that for this question, respondents in area A significantly more often mentioned community, unity, religion or security as positive aspects, than did respondents in Area B (respectively 36 and 12 times in total).

Finally, and certainly worth mentioning, more than a few residents referred to Nima with a sense of pride. For instance, several respondents stated that Nima is a place of hard working people (4). One man added that Nima teaches people to be tough. Another said people in Nima have respect and discipline, compared to other places in Accra. There were some residents that found the density (4) or diversity (4) of Nima its most positive feature. One woman said she was happy that there were always people around and always many things to do. Another woman noted "Nima provides you with everything you need, you can find almost anything in Nima."

These various remarks may indicate a sense of positive identification with specific features of the place Nima. Although this is certainly not the case for everyone – some respondents had nothing at all positive to say about Nima –most respondents

demonstrated some degree of positive attachment to their neighborhood. Interesting was also the ambiguous attitude towards a 'negative' reputation of Nima. People report there is a stigma on people of Nima, that outsiders believe they are dangerous, lazy, use drugs and alcohol or have bad morals. This stigmatization reportedly limits young people's access to formal employment, as one young man said "they will always prefer someone not from Nima." On the one hand, several of the elder respondents noted this reputation is a legacy from 'the old days' when Nima was a dangerous neighborhood, but that conditions have much improved. On the other hand, based on informal conversations with youth in Nima, I found that the same reputation provokes a sense of pride among young men. In many youth cultures being considered 'bad' is an attractive feature, and the term 'Nima boy' has certain connotations that link to Nima's negative reputation. It is therefore used by outsiders rather as an insult, but by Nima residents it carries a positive meaning.

"What are some of the things you like least about living in Nima?"⁸

There are, as is to be expected, also several sources of dissatisfaction among participants. To this question, many residents responded with complaints about the quality of their living environment, for instance the noise (9), the pollution in the streets (5), the absence of proper drains (2) and the persistent smell (1) were sources of distress to some residents. Inadequate sanitation (9) and lack of access to basic amenities such as water (3) were also very unpopular features with respondents. Also mentioned were the lack of paved roads and planning (4) in some parts of Nima, the low quality of housing (2), insufficient access to hospitals or clinics (2) and the low education of residents Nima (2). These are all aspects that are to be expected in a neighborhood labeled as a slum.

Complaints that directly relate to social problems were very prevalent in the answers (33 in total); the occurrence of crime and violence (16), the use of drugs and alcohol (9) and a general perceived bad attitude and ethics among residents (8). These complaints were often specifically addressed to youth as the main perpetrators.

⁸ See 1. The total answers amount to 79, and the weight of the numbers should therefore be considered in relation to the total.

Interestingly it was both youth (18) and adults (15) that highlighted these aspects as problematic, and the youth even slightly more often.

None (!) of the respondents specifically reported crowding as a negative aspect of their life in Nima. This can be considered significant, exactly because of the high occupancy rates reported in the former section.

“If you had the power (i.e. if you were elected as a member of parliament tomorrow) to change something about Nima, what would be the first thing you would change?”⁹

I introduced a sense of prioritization and a factor of pragmatism into the question. The same themes did emerge, but the opinions shifted slightly about the most negative aspects of Nima, and some aspects just disappeared.

The control of social problems was deemed highest priority, totaling 23 accounts, with drug-use (11) top priority, followed by bad morals (8) and violence and crime (6). Because of the explicit mention of political power in the question, many respondents shifted their focus towards aspects that concerned governance. Many respondents highlighted the need for improved sanitation (10), or stressed the need for some form of planning (12), including the implementation of access roads and drains, and the upgrading of housing. The resolution of issues concerning pollution (3) and noise (1) had low priority with most people.

“What are some of the places that are important in your daily life?”

The most mentioned important place by respondents was the mosque (15), followed by the home (12). Next were various outside spaces (11), such as the football fields to the North-East of Kanda “Kawokodi” (4), bases (4) or other open spaces and the street (3). Various indoor places were mentioned as important (6), among others the community center, cyber café and the betting station. Some of the respondents also found their workplace (4) and the market (4) an important part of their life.

“Where do you mostly spend your evenings or free time?”

⁹ See 1 and 2, The total answers amounts to 62, and the weight of the numbers should therefore be considered in relation to the total.

To this question, most of the respondents (29) answered with either inside or outside their home. Some responded with an outside space other than their home (13), for instance Kawokodi, Nima Street, or a base. 4 respondents noted that they spend their free time in the mosque or church.

Avalon: the Nima Neighborhood Watchdog Committee

I want to introduce Amadou Ibrahim Jebkle (2014), better known in Nima as 'Avalon'. He is an influential elder I met during my time in Nima, who was involved in the development of the neighborhood and, more relevant to this topic, was the founding member of the first taskforce in Nima, the 'Nima Neighborhood Watchdog Committee'. This idea he successfully exported to different neighborhoods in the area. This taskforce, made up of young men from the area, 'cleans the neighborhoods of criminals' and during some nights they patrol the area to improve general security. Himself born and raised in Nima, his parents were part of the first people to settle in Nima, so he considers it his responsibility to improve 'his' neighborhood. It is immediately clear from his attitude that he takes this responsibility serious. According to him, during the 1990s Nima possibly earned this negative reputation, when it was truly one of the 'toughest' neighborhoods of Accra. The work he did in Nima must have been dangerous; he showed me several impressive scars on his body and head that he acquired while he was on 'taskforce duty' during those years. Avalon explains that the negative reputation and the stigma it imposes, especially on young people, is currently one of the most damaging aspects about life in Nima. Many young people from Nima get rejected from formal jobs in the city if they confess to be from Nima. Avalon says the reputation is a big problem, and because people do not forget easily, improving a reputation is very difficult and takes a long time. Also the people do not recognize the severity of the problem, and by neglecting these issues they only make it worse.

He contends that there is a degree of lawlessness in certain parts of Nima, most evidently in and around Abenassi. As mentioned before, it is the densest part of Nima, and is completely inaccessible for motorized transport and unfrequented by police. According to Avalon, this makes it a perfect hideout for criminals. Corresponding to my findings, Avalon is proud to say that the sense of community in Nima is strong,

and neighbors assist each other whenever they have problems. He argues, that the crimes are not committed within Nima, but the violence is exported to other neighborhoods, and then the offenders come and hide in the community and know that they are safe. Avalon, because he is deeply rooted in these communities, and has extensive networks at his disposal, can successfully locate the criminals. With the taskforce, he goes into the community and identifies the offenders, and delivers them to the authorities.

He gave, in my view, a disturbing reason for why people would rather resort to sorting out the offenders themselves, than relying on official forces to do the sorting for them. According to Avalon, especially during elections, politicians bail out the most violent criminals, and pay them to intimidate community leaders, so they can convince the community to vote in a certain way. He noted that many of the people he personally assisted to put behind bars, had been released for similar purposes. This story seems to confirm the theory about self-help security and its relation to the perceived low performance and corruption of official authorities.

5.3.5 Conclusions

In the open questions, the respondents provided us a glance into what they perceive is important in their environment, in terms of perceived vulnerabilities they are exposed to or assets the neighborhood offers them, or the places within or around Nima that improve their quality of life in other, less tangible ways.

The answers seem to demonstrate the existence of social cohesion between large parts of the population. It seems however, that this cohesion is more pronounced in Area A than in Area B.

The answers also seem to confirm the earlier position that religion, and most prominently Islam, plays an important role in producing this cohesion and that the mosques provide important social platforms for Muslim residents. Also religion seems to be a more prominent feature of daily life in Area A.

The case of security is an interesting one. Virtually all the respondents have an opinion on security. Not only is a positive sense of security one of the most mentioned aspects (especially in Area A), at the same time, social problems such as crime and violence are most often mentioned as negative aspects too (also mostly in area A). It seems to indicate that the opinions on the same neighborhood are divided,

one part of the population that feels safe and protected by the community, and another part that feels vulnerable to forms of crime and violence. Whether this is because they are less embedded in the social fabric of the area or that it is other factors contribute to and influence these outcomes remains to be investigated. The source of these incivilities however is clear to most people: the people that harass and steal are the same (young) people that take drugs and drink alcohol.

We see that the most often mentioned spaces, considered 'important' to residents' lives, are the home, the mosque and the streets or open spaces close to the home. We see a clear division between men and women, where women often report spending most of their free time in and around the house and men spend it outside. For young men the most popular hangout are the bases and the football field at Kawokodi, and for adult men it is the streets and squares.

Many residents demonstrate in their answers positive identification with their neighborhood, and some display even a sense of pride for being a resident of Nima. This is however, certainly not the case for everyone, as there is a small minority of respondents that exclusively reported negative feelings about living in Nima. I have found no clear pattern among the negative respondents that could explain the difference.

VI. Discussion of the results and recommendations

In this final discussion chapter, I provide a synthesis of the previous chapters, where the different approaches and perspectives are brought together and compared, and the discrepancies and consistencies in the data stressed. After this I discuss some of the limitations of this approach, and subsequently present recommendations for researchers and policy makers. Finally I draw the main conclusions in an attempt to answer the research question.

6.1 Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to uncover and allow for the development of a broader understanding of the relationship between people and their environment in an urban poverty context. In the first part of this thesis, I attempted to break down the process that led to the global increase in urban poverty. I have then framed the geopolitical context that produced the conditions under which the neighborhood of Nima emerged. This way we have traced the origins of Nima through a long history of economic developments and migration.

The people of West Africa have travelled for centuries between the different countries, establishing enclaves in existing urban centers where they went, but this process has been thoroughly and permanently altered by the arrival of European settlers in the 17th century. The introduction of capitalism divided and polarized economies and increased economic incentives for migration in the impoverished rural areas, which set in motion a large-scale rural to urban migration in Ghana. Accra, as the nation's capital and its beating economic heart, became a primate city, and attracted disproportionate amounts of migrants, inducing an exponential urban growth. The urban planning principles implemented by the colonial government in Accra produced a fragmented city, segregated by neighborhoods; they planned luxurious areas to accommodate Europeans, traditional neighborhoods that housed the local population and 'stranger neighborhoods' for residents that had come mainly from other colonies. The provision of services and infrastructure in the traditional and stranger neighborhoods was consistently neglected, which further increased disparities between richer and poorer neighborhoods. After independence, efforts of planning by

postcolonial governments also failed to resolve many of the problems that afflict Accra's poor. Processes of globalization and the introduction of neoliberal policies since the 1980s have further weakened the state's ability to intervene in a decisive way. These external influences have further materialized the spatial segregation, for instance by producing a competitive housing market that pushed the urban poor out of central Accra towards more affordable informal neighborhoods such as Nima.

In Nima, Muslim migrants, most notably of Hausa descent, introduced a strong religious and cultural identity that provided a social infrastructure that was well equipped to accommodate new migrants. Thus, Nima became a strong attractor for migrants, mostly Muslims from the Northern Regions. During the first major migration waves, up until the 1950s, Nima was located outside of Accra's boundaries and not subject to the planning department's jurisdiction. As a result it was allowed to grow informally and develop without any planning or regulations. When Nima was incorporated into the Accra Metropolitan Area, the neighborhood was already highly congested and suffered from overpopulation and a lack of services and infrastructure. Plans for complete redevelopment of the neighborhood were blocked, and restricted to some smaller interventions, such as the installation of several public latrines, and the construction and paving of Nima Street. Large parts of Nima, however have seen little development and still suffer from squalid living conditions and inadequate service provisions.

Another important characteristic of Accra - and most African cities - is its demographic composition, which is marked by an overrepresentation of young people. Many of these young people, most notably the young men, are unsuccessful in finding wage employment. Especially in poorer areas such as Nima, it has led to large amounts of young men loitering in the streets, most of them dissatisfied with their situation. This situation has a profound impact on the perception of security in these areas. This resonates with the finding that zongos in general, but Nima in particular, suffer from a negative reputation among outsiders, which inflicts a stigma on its residents; zongos are being depicted as unhealthy, polluted, poor, and often dangerous or violent areas. In the case of Nima, residents told that this reputation is largely based on events in the past, and according to some of the elder respondents

the general situation has improved significantly in recent years. Its stigmatizing effects however, persist.

In the technical analysis, I confirmed that Nima does indeed suffer from a general deficit in services and infrastructure, largely caused by an ongoing neglect by planning authorities for low-income residential areas and zongo areas in Accra, but that these deficits are not equally distributed. Area A suffers in general from more adverse conditions than Area B.

The most important physical problems that plague Nima were identified; its generally polluted environment caused by an underperforming waste-collection system and lack of drains, its problematic provision of water and electricity, dramatically inadequate sanitation and poorly maintained and overcrowded housing.

Simultaneously, I observed many signs of development that point to a gradual process of transformation. Adjacent to the paved streets, the low quality houses have already largely been replaced with sturdier concrete buildings, often multiple stories high. Another indicator of progress are the banks and exchange offices that have opened on Nima Street over the course of a few years. But now also within Area A and other parts of Nima, away from the paved streets, there is evidence of slow improvement of the physical conditions, such as renovations and extensions of houses and the improvement of larger stretches of alleyways.

Both areas also suffer from low quantities of public space in the face of high residential densities, but the problems are different in character. Open spaces in Area A are small and few in number, but with generally only people of the immediate vicinity using them, and the atmosphere is calm and orderly. Public life in Area B is centered on Nima Street, the busiest artery of Nima. The residents therefore have much more competition from merchants, traffic and pedestrians for a place in the public realm. This means that activities in the public realm are generally accompanied by a lot of interaction and confrontations with other users. Youth from both areas indicate that they seek out areas outside of Nima, in search of larger spaces or spaces that lay outside of the public view.

When analyzing the physical and spatial environment, from a technical perspective, we can state that there are very large differences between the two research areas

that boil down to a set of vulnerabilities and assets specific to each area. If we allow ourselves to be informed by UN-Habitat's agenda, large parts of the neighborhood of Nima would be considered an unsustainable slum environment. However if we further draw on the observed perceptions and experiences of the residents, a different picture emerges, pointing at a more diverse scenario.

In line with what Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001) concluded in their research, if we compare the results with national averages, the respondents of Nima rated their own well-being higher than we would expect from so-called 'slum dwellers'.

We do notice however that, on average, the levels of satisfaction with environmental conditions were low. The respondents from Area A reported much lower satisfaction levels with the environment than their counterparts in Area B. What we see is a large discrepancy between satisfaction with life domains and satisfaction with environmental conditions, which is hard to explain based on the survey alone.

Based on regression analysis, there is no single environmental condition that has a significant correlation with the SWLS results. But if we group some of these conditions together we see that they do provide significant correlation. So none of the conditions alone provide an accurate prediction for satisfaction with life in this sample, but taken together they do. This might be significant.

When the population is divided into segments based on gender and age, a comparison between segments provides other interesting insights. What we see is that there are some significant differences in satisfaction levels, both with life domains and with environmental conditions, which are difficult to explain based on results from the survey alone. Therefore we must find explanations outside of the framework of these closed survey questions.

In the open questions, the respondents provided us with a glance of what they perceive as important in their environment, in terms of perceived vulnerabilities they are exposed to, assets the neighborhood offers them, or the places within or around Nima that improve their quality of life in other, less tangible but therefore not less valuable ways.

The open answers seem to demonstrate the existence of social cohesion between large parts of the population. It seems that this cohesion is more pronounced in Area A than in Area B. The answers also seem to confirm the earlier proposition that

religion, and most prominently Islam, plays an important role in producing this cohesion and that the mosques provide important social platforms for Muslim residents. Also, religion seems to be a more prominent feature of daily life in Area A than in Area B.

The matter of security is an interesting one. Virtually all the respondents have an opinion on security. Not only is a positive sense of security one of the most mentioned aspects (especially in Area A), at the same time, social problems such as crime and violence are most often mentioned as negative aspects too (also mostly in Area A). It seems to indicate that the opinions on the same neighborhood are divided; one part of the population feels safe and protected by the community, and another part feels vulnerable to forms of crime and violence. Whether this is because they are less embedded in the social fabric of the area or that other factors contribute to and influence these outcomes remains to be investigated. The source of these incivilities however is clear to most people: the people that harass and steal are the same (young) people that take drugs and consume alcohol.

We see that the most often mentioned spaces, considered 'important' to residents' lives, are the home, the mosque and the streets or open spaces close to the home. Furthermore, we see a clear division between men and women, where women often report spending most of their free time in and around the house, while men spend it outside. Young men attribute most importance to the bases and the football field at Kawokodi, and to adult men the streets and squares are most meaningful in their lives.

Many residents demonstrate, in their answers, a positive identification with their neighborhood. Many display a sense of pride for being a resident of Nima. This is however, certainly not the case for all subjects, as there is a small minority of respondents that exclusively reported negative feelings about living in Nima. These individuals did score particularly low on both questions on SWB measures and on satisfaction with environmental domains. I have found no further pattern among these respondents that could explain why they held a strictly negative image of Nima, which could indicate the reasons were of a more personal character.

6.2 Limitations

The main limitation of this research is perhaps the relatively small amount of respondents interviewed. This means it is difficult to generalize these findings to a larger population. Regression analyses, for instance, delivered no statistically significant correlations between any of the conditions measured, which can to a degree be attributed to the small sample size. I argue therefore that future research could benefit from a standardized method, performed on a larger sample of the population.

A further limitation is the high labor-intensity of this method, as it involves the collection and analysis of large amounts of very diverse data, which are difficult to compare and combine without a standardized and tested framework. This made it, in its current form, a rather bulky, slow method of analyzing a neighborhood, which will make it an unpopular method for busy policy makers under high pressure to produce results. I believe therefore that it is beneficial to invest in the development of a standardized framework that facilitates interdisciplinary research.

6.3 Recommendations

I would like to recommend further investigations into the relationship between the urban environment and quality of life, as a means to develop a broader knowledge base from which policymakers and urban planners can source their strategies and ideas. It is clear that this thesis has only lifted the proverbial tip of the iceberg, and many more aspects could be the subject of further scrutiny; for instance:

- Comparable research in different 'slum' locations, to see to what extent this interaction differs across different cultures and contexts;
- Follow up research on Nima, to introduce a longitudinal dimension of time into the equation, so as to track developments in the neighborhood and how this influences interaction between residents and the environment;
- Develop a standardized framework, or a toolkit to facilitate the integration of different methodologies in future interdisciplinary research;

Furthermore, there are several recommendations that can be made for policymakers and planners:

- Allocate resources also to facilitating the gratification of higher needs of the poor, in addition to supporting livelihoods and physical improvements.

- Allow room for bottom-up approaches in the process of neighborhood improvement, to allow policies to be informed by the needs and desires of the people they affect.

6.4 Conclusions and contributions

To conclude, it is crucial to return briefly to the definition of a slum. By UN-Habitat standards, large parts of Nima qualify as a slum environment. This in itself stigmatizes the neighborhood as a hopeless area defined by its poor residents and squalid living conditions with no prospect of improvement. This observation does no justice to the incredible diversity and the dynamics that it displays. By focusing only on the physical and economic aspects, it is easy to neglect that there are very different processes occurring in Nima, namely that there is clear upward mobility happening. This manifests itself in two distinct ways; we see internal mobility, people settling in Nima, improving their livelihoods, their environment and their well-being, and able to send their children to school and improve their futures. Furthermore, we also see external mobility, where people use Nima as a convenient temporary platform, to prepare for migration to another part of town or to another country, an intermediate stop on their migration-itinerary. From this perspective, Nima is mainly about 'location'. It suffers from poor living conditions, but it also provides an affordable location close to the center of Accra.

In order to look beyond the aspects that identify Nima as a slum neighborhood and to understand the way the environment influences the lives of residents, and their interaction with it, it is also important to reflect on the emotional attachment people have made to it. This takes us back to the concept of place-identity. Nima clearly has a specific identity; the neighborhood provides a certain social cohesion, a community in which people know each other, where there is a great deal of social interaction, which provides a certain familiarity, a shelter and safety against the social and economic hardships of life. Many of these aspects are supported and reproduced by the cultural and religious institutions, in particular Hausa and Muslim identities, that are strongly present in Nima and which identify it as a zongo. I argue that an individual's perception of his or her surroundings, depends largely on how this place-identity matches with his or her own. This is reflected in the way the term zongo is used by different people; many of the respondents referred to Nima or the zongo with

a sense of pride, but some others were strictly negative in their expressions, and outside of zongo areas the term is almost exclusively used with a negative connotation.

I do acknowledge the importance for policy makers to adopt an approach that focuses on a technical perspective, to be able to intervene in the physical environment in terms of infrastructure. However, this approach and perspective should be combined with a more profound understanding of the local context and livelihood dynamics, to grasp how the same infrastructure is used for different purposes by different people. Otherwise, possible interventions might end up not being used, or being used in very different ways as foreseen. This serves to underscore the importance of using a multi-focal, multidisciplinary approach to understanding poverty.

Furthermore, I argue that the current discourse on urban poverty has a tendency to focus too much on the tangible aspects of poverty. I believe this emphasis on gratifying the bottom needs of Maslow's pyramid, clouds important efforts that the poor undertake to fulfill their higher needs, even when their lower needs are only partially fulfilled, which allows them to lead meaningful, dignifying lives notwithstanding partly unfulfilled material needs. It sometimes seems that the poor are partially dehumanized, as if *they* would only care about their most primal needs, when in fact many studies have established that it is the gratification of the higher echelons of the pyramid, in terms of esteem, love and belonging, and freedom that provides the most profound satisfaction. I argue that there is a need to recognize the importance of providing for the whole range of needs as opposed to exclusively focusing on the lower ones, in both research and policy making. Researchers can develop a better understanding on how the poor gratify these needs, whereas policy makers should realize that their responsibility does not end when the lower needs of the poor are met.

These points serve to prove that through the adoption of a mixed methods approach to analyze the highly complex relationship between the environment of Nima and the quality of life of its residents, we were able to reveal a much richer picture of Nima and the processes going on than if we had relied on any one of these single approaches. The different perspectives adopted allowed us to highlight different

aspects of this complex interaction, and to reveal valuable information on the interfaces of the separate disciplines. This case serves to encourage the use of mixed methods analysis and interdisciplinary research in the fields of development, planning and geography. If we are interested in a quick, priority based approach to understanding an environment, this is probably not the right approach as it involves dealing with complex layers of data and meaning. However, because this topic deals with vulnerable, sensitive and rapidly evolving situations, it is key that interventions, in terms of planning and policies, are informed by a broader understanding of the challenges they are dealing with. In any case it is clear that the residents of Nima are not just preoccupied with 'surviving' but are leading meaningful lives while actively trying to improve their quality of life, and to many, Nima plays an important part in this.

VII. References

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VIII. Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Introduction:

My name is Kristijn van Riel, student at the Radboud University in The Netherlands. For my master thesis I am doing research on the relation between the environment of Nîma and quality of life of its residents, like yourself. To this effect I have constructed a questionnaire. I would kindly like to ask a moment of your time to participate in my research and answer some questions about your environment. I am currently working in a cooperation with the People's Dialogue and the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor, with whom I will share my results when I finish the research. This means that the results can find their way to future work performed by the NGO in the neighborhood of Nîma. I will guarantee that your name or any of your quotes will not be used in my master thesis, if you would choose to stay anonymous.

The questionnaire is structured into four parts. The first part of the interview will acquire general information, or a profile, on your household. Preferably the head of the household is included in this part of the interview, as he or she will be able to provide the most accurate answer to some of the questions. In the other three parts of the interview we will talk about perception, satisfaction and opinion. This part is strictly individual, therefore I would like to ask everyone except the chosen participant to leave for these parts of the interview.

For part one, as described before, I will ask you some basic questions about yourself and the household. For part two, I will ask you to rate your current satisfaction with your life. For part three, I will ask you to rate your satisfaction with several aspects of your environment. Finally, in part four, I will ask some open questions to which I would like you to answer with your opinion. I would ask you to answer all of these questions as honestly as possible. Before every part, I will explain in greater detail the purpose of the questions. Is this part of the explanation clear? Do you have any

further questions before we proceed to the questionnaire? Do I have your permission to record this conversation, for transcribing purposes?

1. Profile of participant:

Contact information:

- a. Name:
- b. Location:
- c. Telephone number:
- d. Age:
- e. Area:
- f. Gender:
- g. Religion:
- h. Highest form of education (primary, secondary or tertiary education):
- i. Current (predominant) occupation:
- j. Where do you perform this occupation? (inside/outside Nîma)
- k. Current monthly/daily household income:
- l. Size of household:

2. Objective conditions:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Location: | a. Who owns this land? (yourself, other private owner, municipality, other, unknown) |
| | b. Who owns this building? (yourself, other private owner, municipality, other, unknown) |
| Crowding: | c. How many sleeping rooms does this house contain? |
| | d. How many people live here on a permanent basis? |
| Drinkable water: | e. How do you acquire potable water? (individual tap, borehole, well, community tap or streetvendor) |
| | f. how much money do you spend weekly on water? |
| Sanitation: | g. What type of toilet facility do you use? (private, shared, communal or public) |
| | h. Is there a public toilet and shower in the immediate vicinity? |

- i. How much money do you spend weekly on using these facilities? (affordability)
- j. How many people share the facilities? (if unknown, how long do you usually have to wait?)
- k. Is this facility clean?

Electricity: l. What kind of connection do you have to the electricity grid?
(none, legal, illegal)

m. How much money do you spend weekly on electricity?
(affordability)

3. Satisfaction with life scale:

Following are 5 statements with which you may agree or may disagree. I would like you to rate your agreement with each statement by giving me the appropriate number according to your agreement on a scale from 1 to 7.

The 7-point scale is: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4=neither agree nor disagree, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree, 7= strongly agree.

- a. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- b. The conditions of my life are excellent.
- c. I am satisfied with my life.
- d. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- e. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

4. Satisfaction levels:

Following are a range of items I would ask you to rate your satisfaction with, on a scale of 1 to 7.

The 7-point scale is: 1= very low satisfaction, 2=low satisfaction, 3=slightly low satisfaction, 4=moderate satisfaction, 5=slightly high satisfaction, 6=high satisfaction, 7=very high satisfaction.

Low satisfaction means the item has a negative impact on your happiness and/or your daily activities. Moderate satisfaction means it has no noticeable impact on your happiness and/or your daily activities. High satisfaction means the issue has a positive effect on your happiness and/or your daily activities.

Items which apply for Nîma (Environ):

- a. Density of Nîma (according to the amount of people living in Nîma in relation to the amount of available space to accommodate people)
- b. Distance to CBD (according to perceived distance between Nîma and the center of Accra)
- c. Connectivity (according to perceived ease of travel using public transport to any of the areas outside of Nîma)
- d. Social problems (according to the occurrence of evictions, riots, crime, community violence or other in Nîma, if other, please specify)

Items which apply for your immediate surroundings (Settlement):

- e. Accessibility (according to the material and state of the streets during rainy season)
- f. Accessibility (according to the material and state of the streets during dry season)
- g. Accessibility (according to accessibility of vehicular traffic)
- h. Open space (according to the amount and availability)
- i. Open space (according to usability for recreational purposes)
- j. Safety (according to the perceived safety in the immediate vicinity during the day)
- k. Safety (according to the perceived safety in the immediate vicinity during the night)
- l. Illumination (according to amount of streetlights)
- m. Education (according availability, distance and affordability of schools)
- n. Services (according to availability, distance and affordability of health clinics or hospitals)

- o. Noise (according to amount and disturbance)
- p. Sewage (according to availability, state and disturbance)
- q. Pollution (according to amount, visibility and disturbance)

Items which apply for your house (object):

- r. Crowding (according to the amount of people per room in the house)
- s. Drinkable water (according to the availability and affordability)
- t. Electricity (according to reliability and affordability)
- u. Durability of construction (according to the used materials and state of repair)
- v. Sanitation (according to the availability and waiting time)

Items which apply to your person (subject):

- w. Social life (according to quality and amount of social contact with friends, neighbors and family)
- x. Working opportunities

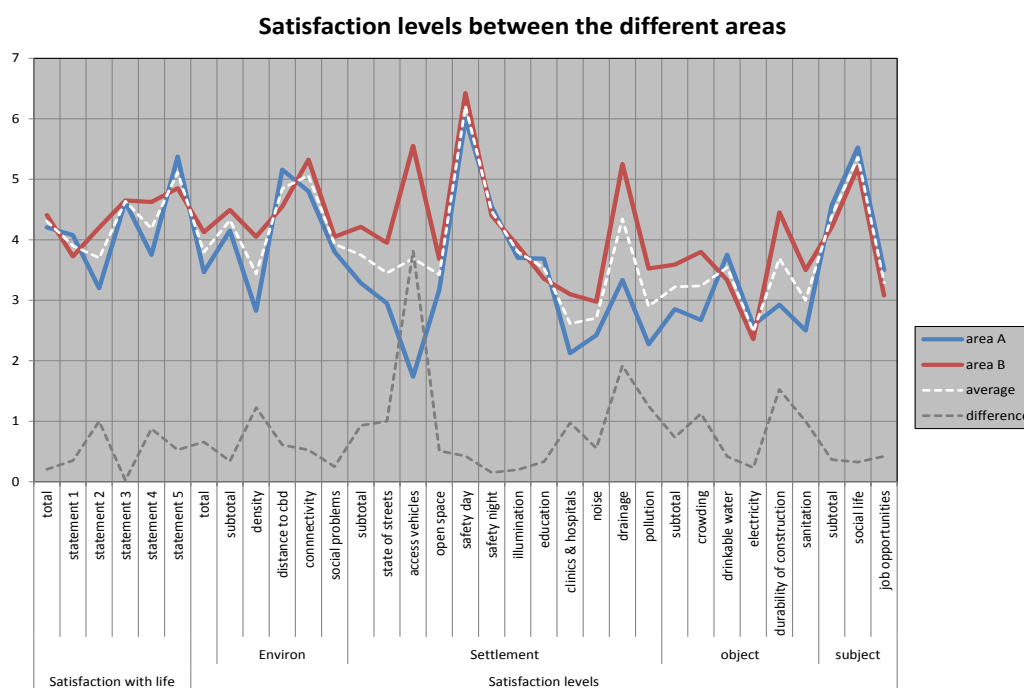
5. Open questions:

Now I will ask you several open questions to which I would like you to answer to your own perspective and perception. (These questions are composed as guidelines, the conversation may lead to changes or additional questions)

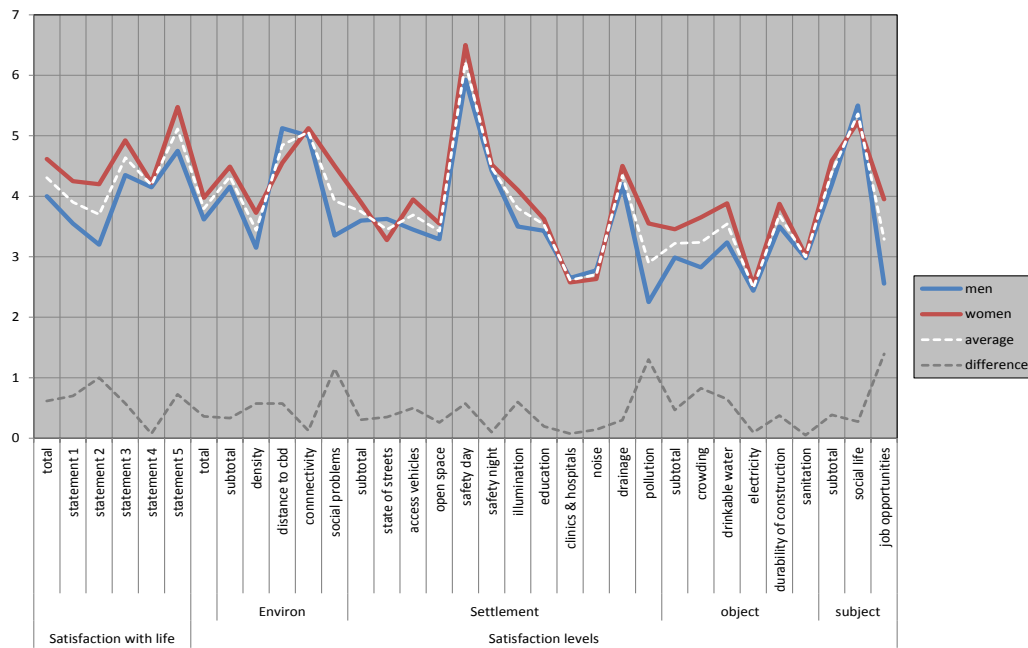
- a. What are the 5 conditions you like the most about living in Nîma?
(Can you put them in a hierarchical order)
- b. What are the 5 conditions you like the least about living in Nîma?
(Can you put them in a hierarchical order)
- c. If you could change something in the community what would that be? Can you arrange the next problems in order of priority: water, sanitation, drainage, sewage, housing, electricity, social space, security, other (please specify)

- d. What are the most important spaces/places in your life in Nîma?
- e. Where do you usually spend your free time?
- f. Where do you usually spend your evenings?
- g. How often do you meet with people outside of the household?
- h. How often do you leave Nîma? (daily, weekly, monthly)
- i. Where do you meet your (local) friends usually?
- j. How often do you spend time on square 1/2? (depending on the area)
- k. Why (not)?

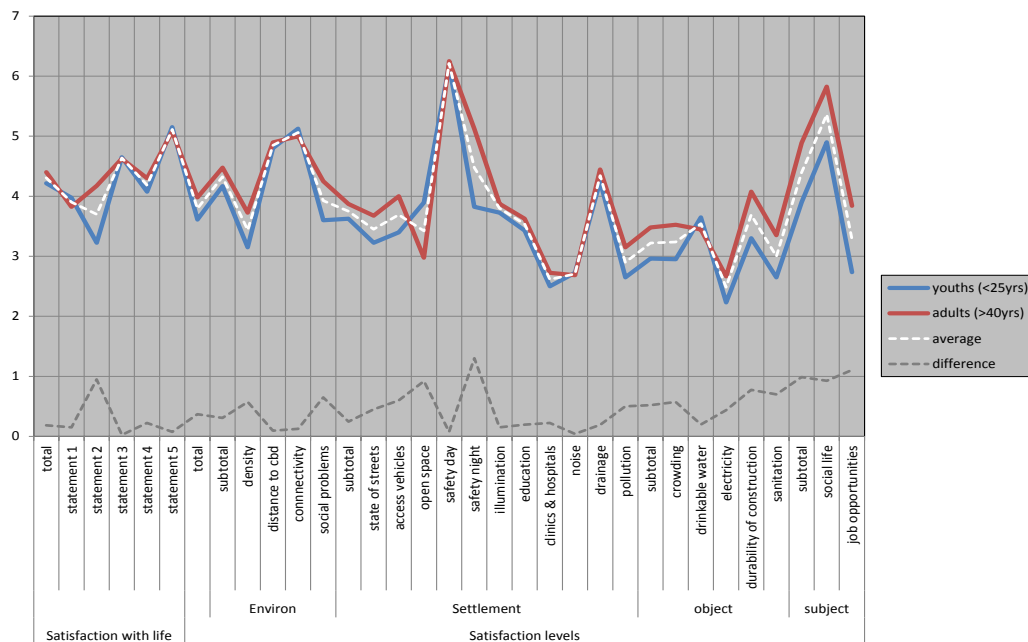
Appendix 2: Graphs of Satisfaction levels



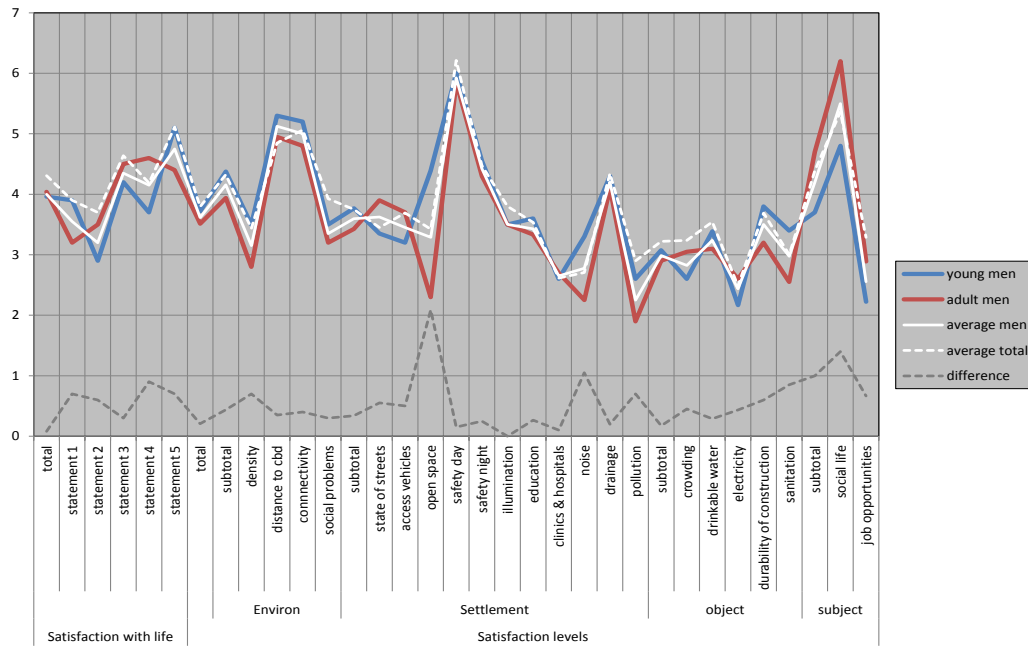
Satisfaction levels gender



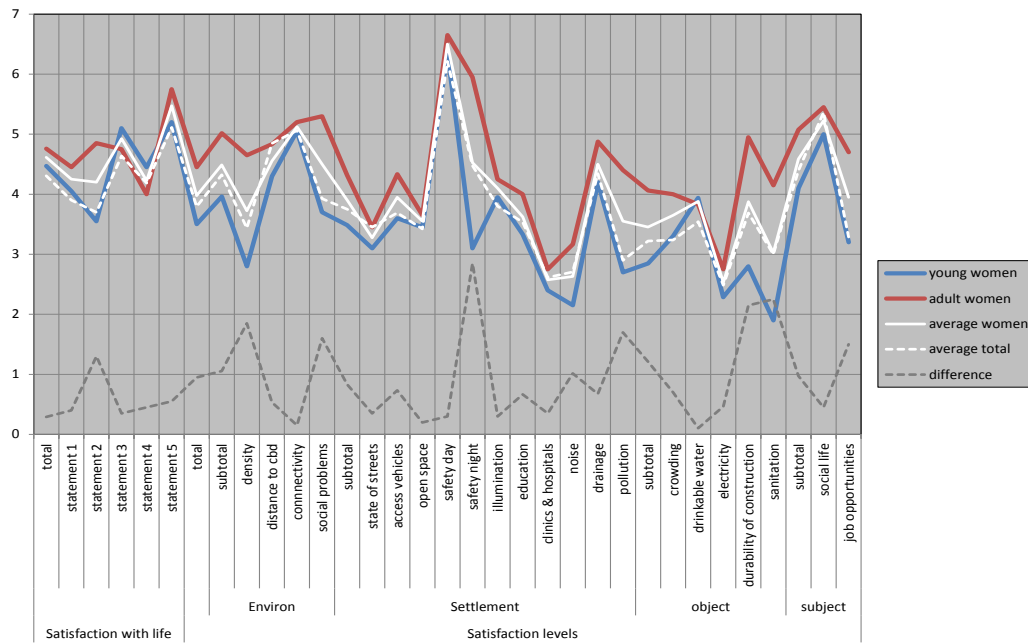
Satisfaction levels of different age groups



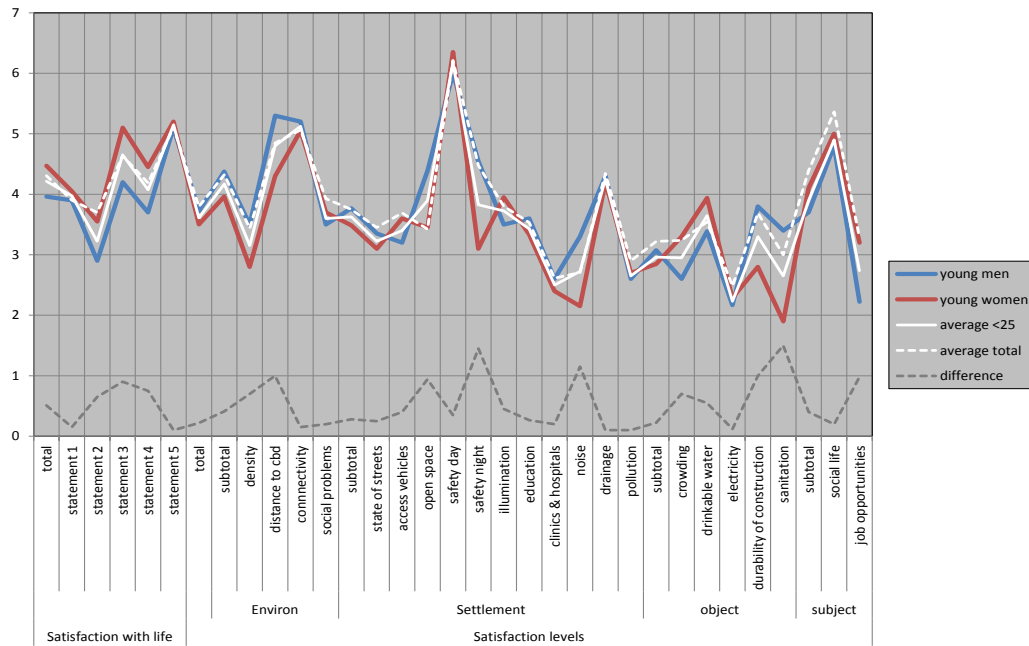
Satisfaction levels of men



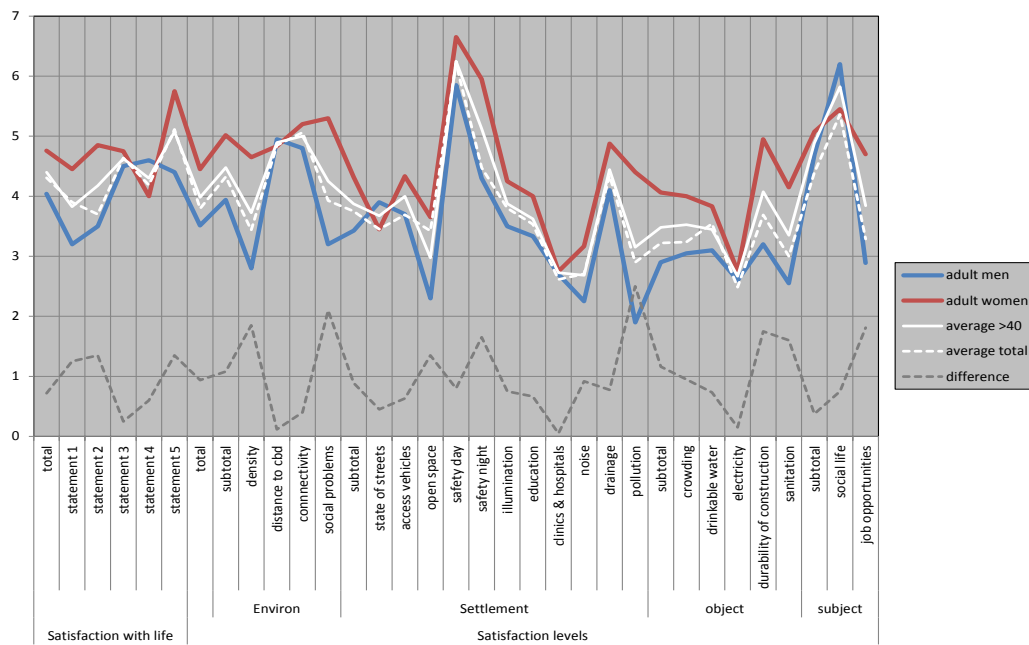
Satisfaction levels of women



Satisfaction levels of youths (<25yrs)



Satisfaction levels adults (>40yrs)



Appendix 3: Profiles of respondents

	total	%	area A	area B	youth	adults	men	women	young men	young women	adult men	adult women
Participants	40	100	20	20	20	20	20	20	10	10	10	10
Age (average)	42		41	42	22	61	41	42	22	23	61	61
Education												
none/literacy	7	17,5	5	2	0	7	0	7	0	0	0	7
koran school	9	22,5	2	7	2	7	5	4	0	2	5	2
primary/jhs ?! (ages 13-15)	11	27,5	5	6	8	3	5	6	3	5	2	1
secondary/shs (16-18)	11	27,5	7	4	9	2	9	2	7	2	2	0
tertiary	2	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
Income												
0-1,25 dollar/day	17	42,5	11	6	10	7	10	7	4	6	6	1
1,25-2 dollar/day	6	15	3	3	1	5	4	2	1	0	3	2
2-7 dollar/day	10	25	5	5	7	3	4	6	4	3	0	3
7+ dollar/day	7	17,5	1	6	2	5	2	5	1	1	1	4
Employment												
unemployed	1	2,5	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
retired/student/apprentice/vol	12	30	6	6	5	7	8	4	2	3	6	1
teacher	4	10	4	0	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	0
sales/petty trade/prepared for	14	35	6	8	7	7	3	11	3	4	0	7
store owner	3	7,5	1	2	1	2	0	3	0	1	0	2
other (taxi driver, drummer, footballer, contractor, ...)	6	15	3	3	4	2	6	0	4	0	2	0