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Small towns and decentralised development in Ghana

Theory and practice

George Owusu¹

Abstract

The implementation of Ghana's decentralisation programme has involved the strengthening of district administrative capitals, defined in this article as small towns, as focal points for the socio-economic development of districts. Government and donor resources have therefore been directed at improving the infrastructure of these centres, in order to enable them to cope with their increased functions and to perform their new role more efficiently. Though district capitals have been recognised as important in the implementation of the decentralisation programme, few studies have been done on the role and the linkages between these centres and their hinterlands (districts) as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy. This article provides a model for the role of district capitals and their linkages with their respective districts under the decentralisation programme; it also operationalises the model in the form of a case study of a district and its capital. The article stresses the usefulness of using district capitals as stimuli to district development, but notes that the desired goal can probably only be achieved by genuine decentralisation policies backed and powered by local participatory democracy, both in the political and economic field.

Keywords

Decentralization, Towns, Urban development, Rural-urban relationships, Regional development/planning, Local government, Administration structure, Theory formation

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Introduction

The literature on urban geography and regional planning has witnessed considerable growth in the study of small towns and their role in regional rural development over the last three decades, but lacks both theoretical concepts and practical applications. These theories have largely been drawn from the broader field of urban and development studies, and to a large extent have formed the basis of national urban development policies aimed at modifying existing settlement structures in developing countries, particularly in Africa, which were found to be uncondusive to national socio-economic development. In a broad sense, the key goals of these applied models and theories do not differ greatly from the broader societal goals of socio-economic development. These broader 'societal goals typically include promoting economic growth and efficiency, improving equity and reducing poverty, preserving environmental quality and maintaining national security' (Richardson 1981: 270).

Though many studies have been done on small towns and rural-urban interactions in developing countries, few such studies have been undertaken within a decentralised political, administrative and economic context. Since 1988, Ghana has adopted decentralisation policies, which have involved the transfer of resources and power to the district level. This has resulted in several initiatives from government and donor agencies specifically targeting district capitals (small towns)², such as the introduction of the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF), a constitutional provision allocating 5% of the total national revenue to District Assemblies. Other examples include the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme's Urban V projects targeting roads and sanitation problems; European Union (EU) micro-projects, and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)/Ghana government (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development) project in selected districts in the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions, entitled 'Promotion of District Capitals (PRODICAP)'. It has also been the policy of central government and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLG&RD) since the late 1980s to provide each district capital with a specific range of amenities such as electricity, telephone connections, district referral hospitals, portable water supplies, a model secondary/technical school, and all-year accessible road links (CSS 1995). This

² In Ghana, an official definition of a small town does not exist, but only the definition of a town. Small towns are defined here as settlements with populations of between 5000 and 50,000, and this typically includes district capitals, usually surrounded by predominantly rural populations. The terms 'small town' and 'district capital' are used interchangeably, unless otherwise stated.

has strengthened the district capitals' role as focal points for the economic and social development of their respective districts.

Notwithstanding these investments, insufficient theoretical work has been done on the role of the district capitals within the present decentralised economic and political system to justify the continued allocation of national and donor investments to their development. As a result, an adequate evaluation of the strategy has yet to be undertaken. This article attempts to conceptualise the role of district capitals and rural-urban linkages through the formulation of a model, the 'District Capital-Centred Development Model', and explores its weaknesses by using a district capital (Dunkwa) and its hinterland (Upper Denkyira District) in the Central Region as a case study. The result could provide a basis for re-evaluating the strategy. It could also provide useful lessons for other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where similar strategies are being implemented.

This article is divided into two sections. The first section presents Ghana's decentralised planning and administrative system and the district capital-centred decentralised development model (DCDM). The second section looks at the operationalisation of the model. It starts with a brief overview of the physical, socio-economic and cultural setting of Dunkwa and the Upper Denkyira District (UDD), and then looks at factors affecting the operationalisation of the model in the case study district. The article finally concludes by emphasizing the need for a genuine decentralisation policy in Ghana.

Structure of Ghana's decentralised administration and planning

Ghana embarked on decentralised administration and development planning in 1988, in order to encourage greater local autonomy and participation and to achieve greater efficiency. This was given legal backing by PNDC Law 207, subsequently superseded by Chapter 20 of the 1992 National Constitution and later replaced by the Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462. Within this legal framework, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) was established under Act 479 and Act 480 as the apex organisation in the decentralised development planning system. The framework also determines the relationship between the NDPC and other planning bodies such as government ministries and agencies (NDPC 1996).

Ghana's local government system is described as a *fused or mixed system* combining the prefectural-style rule of traditional district administration, responsible to central government, with the democratic control, service provision and tax-raising powers of devolved local government (Naustdalslid 1992; Crook and Manor 1998; Eriksen et al. 1999). Under the law, District Assemblies (local governments) have overall responsibility for the development of the districts.

They have executive, legislative and deliberative powers, as well as administrative and technical support, to articulate the views and aspirations of the people within districts for effective development at local level.

The District Assembly (DA) is headed by a District Chief Executive (DCE), who is nominated and appointed by the national President with the approval of the Assembly. Two-thirds of the membership of the DA is determined by non-partisan local elections, and the other one-third by central government appointment. The central-government appointments are carried out in consultation with interest groups and individuals in the district. The members of the District Assembly are presumed to be people who represent the views and aspirations of local people and communities within the district. The highest working body of the Assembly is the Executive Committee. This body, chaired by the DCE, performs executive functions, establishes other committees of the DA, and delegates functions to them.

In all, 110 District Assemblies (DAs) have been established, consisting of three Metropolitan Assemblies, four Municipal Assemblies, and 103 District Assemblies (MLG&RD 1996: 11-12). District Assemblies in Ghana are either Metropolitan (large towns and cities with populations of over 250,000), Municipal (one-town Assemblies with populations over 95,000) or District (a cluster of small-sized/medium-sized town(s) and villages with populations over 75,000). Below the DA are the sub-district structures (Unit Committees and Area Councils), which are local organs of the DA with no independent powers (see Table 1). They are essentially consultative bodies (partially nominated) with no budgets of their own, and carry out functions as delegated by the Assembly or by Legal Instruments setting up the Assemblies (Naustdalslid 1992). Since the sub-district structures are very close to the people (in terms of level), their basic role of educating, organising and mobilising the people for development projects is very important. They also form the basis for problem identification and for the initiation and implementation of self-help projects at the local level (Laryea-Adjei 1998). The basic aim of these structures is to take decentralisation to the grass-roots level by involving local people in all decision-making processes.

Table 1: Sub-District Structures*

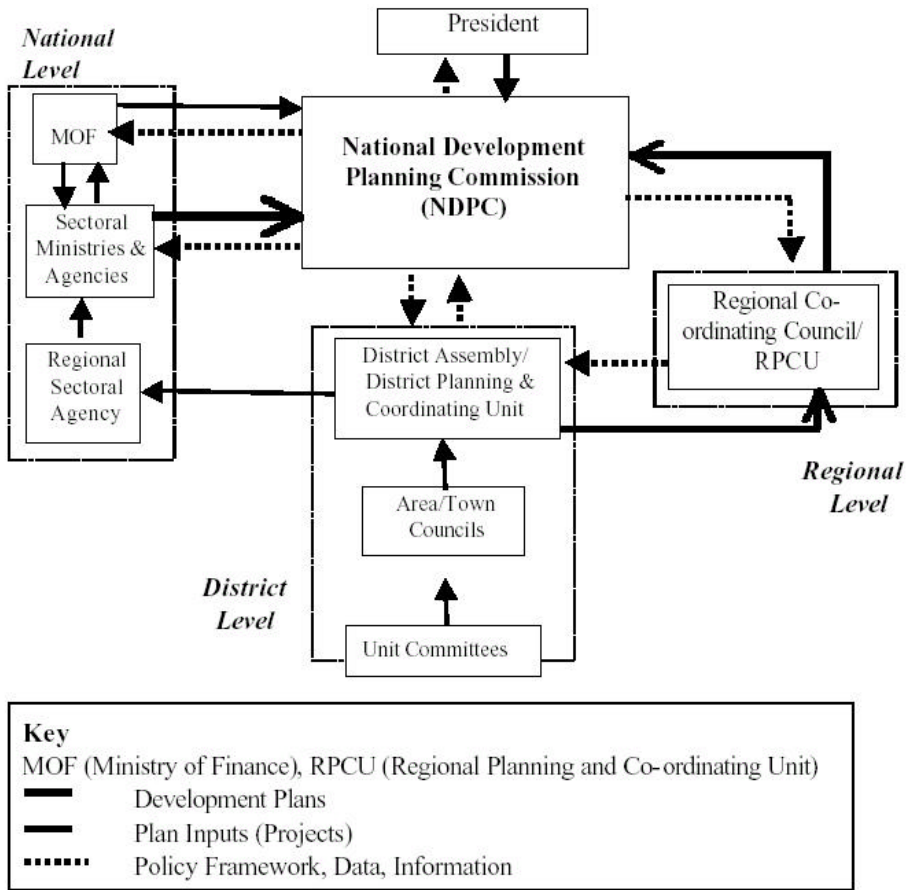
110 Metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies		
4-Tier Metropolitan Assembly (Population 250,000 and over)	3-Tier Municipal Assembly (Population over 95,000)	3-Tier District Assembly (Population over 75,000)
1. Metropolitan Assemblies (3)	1. Municipal Assemblies (4)	1. District Assemblies (103)
2. Sub-Metropolitan District Councils	2. Zonal Councils	2. Urban/Town/Area Councils
3. Town/Area Councils	3. Unit Committees	3. Unit Committees
4. Unit Committees		

*Unit committees are formed for populations of 500-1000 and 1500 in rural and urban areas respectively. Urban, Area, and Zonal councils are formed for settlements with populations above 15000, 5000-15000 and 3000 respectively.

Under the law, DAs have two sources of revenue – internal and external (the latter refers to grants from central governments). The internal revenue-generating source includes: rates (basic rates, property rates from landed property owners, and special rates imposed by the Assembly for specific areas and projects); fees (market tolls and related activities); licenses (hotels and restaurant operators, self-employed artisans, etc.); and trading services (trading activities undertaken by the DAs from which income can be derived) (MLG&RD 1996: 49–51). However, in many districts these internal revenue-generating sources are either inadequate or poorly developed due to the general poverty level and the underdevelopment of infrastructure and services. Therefore most DAs depend on government (external) revenue, particularly the DACF, for the implementation of their development projects.

To enhance the District Assemblies' administrative and technical capacity, they are supported by the District Planning Co-ordinating Unit (DPCU), which consists of skilled professional staff. The DPCU is also the channel through which data, information, development policy frameworks and planning guidelines are exchanged between the districts and the NDPC through the Regional Co-ordinating Council (RCC) and its technical body, the Regional Planning Co-ordinating Unit (RPCU). These regional bodies serve as intermediate co-ordinating and monitoring bodies between central government and the districts. The overall institutional framework of Ghana's decentralised planning and administrative system is illustrated in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1: The Institutional Structures of Ghana's Decentralised Planning System



Source: Adapted from the NDPC (1996)

Under the decentralised planning and administrative system, development starts with the communities and their representatives, the Assembly members, who identify their communities' needs. These needs are subsequently harmonised at the district level by the District Assembly (DA), and then forwarded to the regional level for further harmonisation with other district plans. Plans from all the regions and districts, together with sectoral plans from government's ministries and agencies, are harmonised and integrated into a national develop-

ment plan by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the apex of the development planning system. Under this approach, development planning starts at the community and district level - and finally ends there by way of implementation.

District capital-centred decentralised development model

Under the decentralisation programme, the transfer of resources and power from national headquarters to the district level has several aims. However, the basic goal is to enhance living standards in rural settlements and other centres at the lower level of the settlement hierarchy through the promotion of agriculture, stimulation of non-farm employment, enhanced accessibility to social services, and reduced migration to the cities and larger towns (GSS 1995). In a developing country like Ghana, dominated by agriculture and low incomes, it is difficult to see the fulfilment of the basic objective of decentralisation without simultaneous improvement in income among the rural population. One way of overcoming this is the enhancement of farmers' access to markets and other services through the district capitals. It can be argued that markets provide incentives to farmers to increase their efforts to raise production, since they provide the opportunity for farmers to sell their surplus produce. Thus strengthening and developing the market function of small towns is one of the measures to increase agricultural production (Rondinelli 1984; Wouden 1997; Karaska 1999). Furthermore, through the enhancement of farmers' access to markets and social services, subsistence farmers can become more productive and also choose to diversify their livelihoods. It is, however, recognised that for this to be effective other measures must also be in place, such as effective transport links, access to extension services and credits.

In theory, strengthening the district capitals' market functions should enable these centres to provide market access and other basic services to the rural agricultural hinterland population. This is expected to improve agricultural production and income, and thus reduce rural poverty. Increased income through increased agricultural production should lead to increased national income, generating demand for non-agricultural production and encouraging the development of small-scale industries, and consequently an expansion in employment. This process is expected to set in motion a continuous spiral of growth and development aimed at achieving broader national developmental goals of reducing poverty and improving equity, and promoting economic growth and efficiency. By this development process, district capitals are expected to serve as centres for the delivery of basic services such as health, education, water and environmental sanitation. They are also meant to provide opportuni-

ties for the marketing and processing of agricultural produce, and subsequently to reduce rural-urban migration to the large cities, particularly to Accra, Tema, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi. In addition, district capitals are to act as centres of diffusion and dissemination of modern technology and government policies.

It must, however, be noted that programmes on small towns are not exclusively aimed at small-town development, but also at strengthening rural-urban linkages, promoting agricultural development in small towns' hinterlands, and stimulating non-farm employment opportunities (Gaile 1992: 131; see also Baker 1997; Giraut 1997; Pedersen 1997; Douglass 1998; Karaska 1999). Arguing from this position, it can therefore be said that Ghana's decentralisation programme shares goals and objectives with the small-town programme, and that both programmes reinforce each other.

From the perspective of rural-urban linkages, strengthening small towns not only enhances farmers' access to markets and services, but also stimulates the demand for higher-order goods and services through higher income, which in turn results in the growth of district capitals. Theoretically, this should have a positive impact on labour and employment, and consequently on poverty reduction. It is argued that agriculture may be able to absorb a significant, though not sufficient percentage of additional labourers as it nears labour capacity. Many of the unemployed labourers can be expected to migrate to the major cities and larger towns already suffering from diseconomies of scale due to their rapidly growing population (Gaile 1992). Hence, the policy of decentralisation, when pursued in a developing country, should lead to the absorption of surplus agricultural labour in small towns, and hence reduce migration to the cities and large towns.

Within the framework of the decentralised and local government structure, the district capital and the rest of the district (rural) are to exist within a symbiotic framework – reinforcing each other's growth in achieving the overall development of the district. This approach involves looking at a wider socio-economic field – one that includes people and resources located in both rural and urban areas within the district. What is therefore perceived here is a two-way process of diffusion or transmission of development impulses, whereby the rural (hinterland) crosses the urban (district capital) or

3 Deagrarianisation refers to long-term occupational adjustment, income-earning reorientation, social identification, and spatial re-location of rural dwellers from strictly agrarian modes of livelihood. On the other hand, de-peasantisation refers to the shrinking of peasant populations due to the loss of their economic capacity and social coherence (Bryceson 2001: 194-195).

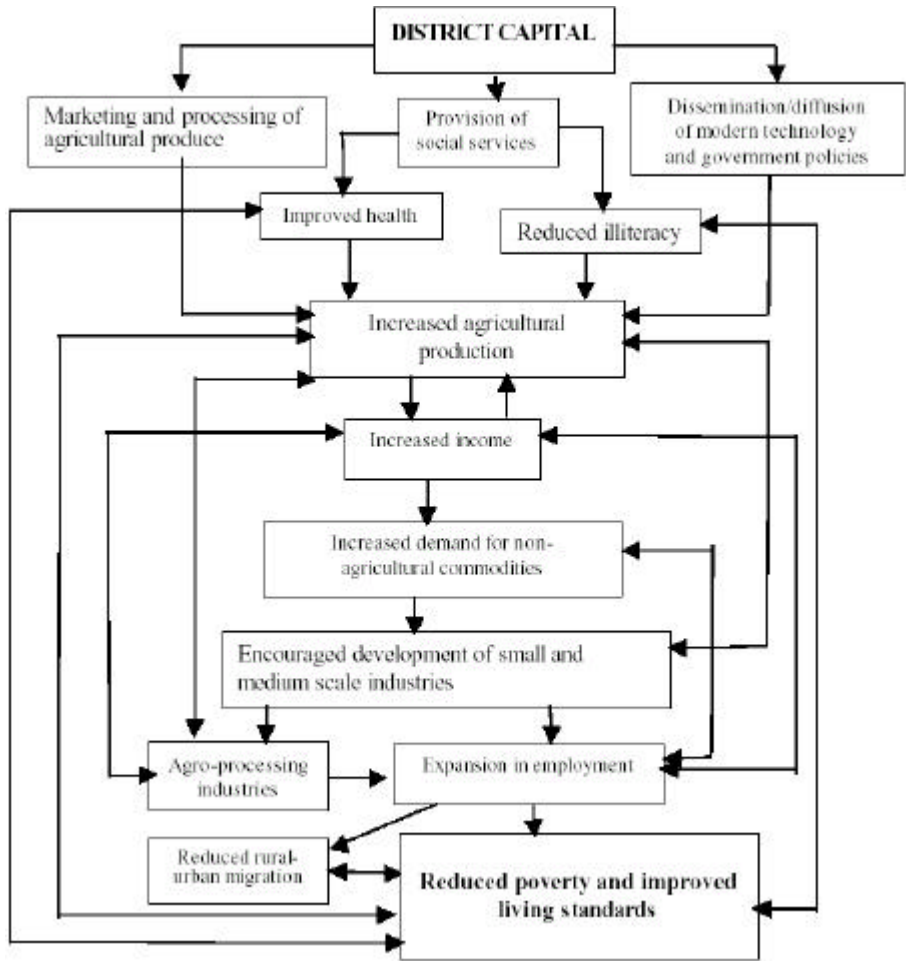
vice versa. This is because a development from below recognises the importance of local knowledge and resources from both rural and urban areas. Again, small towns draw on the resources of their hinterlands in order to develop. This view reinforces current thinking in regional development, viz. linkages both economic and social transactions between urban centres and rural areas, play an important role in the processes of rural and urban change. In addition, it supports the concept of *depeasantisation* and *deagrarianisation*⁴ (Rigg 1998; Tacoli 1998; Bryceson 2001), which is blurring the dichotomy between what is defined as 'rural' and 'urban' in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

From the above perspective, it is difficult to talk of urban areas exploiting and extracting surplus from the countryside, when 'rural' people have as much interest in a vital and dynamic industrial or non-agricultural sector as their 'urban' counterparts. Nor is it clear whether personal identities are rooted in specific geographical places and economic sectors (Rigg 1998: 515; Okali et al. 2001). Besides, the interactions between district capitals and their hinterlands are guided by active processes of participation and empowerment of local institutions, local people (residents of the district) and their representatives (Assembly Members), with a common interest in the well-being of the whole district. The above conceptualised development model, which I refer to as 'District Capital-Centred Development Model (DCDM)', is illustrated in Figs. 2a and 2b:

However, this model needs to be placed within a wider national and international socio-economic and political context as illustrated in Fig. 2b. In particular, within the context of a developing country such as Ghana, with a weak political and economic foundation, genuine politico-economic policies favourable to the provision of adequate infrastructure and support of decentralisation are required from the state to facilitate local participation and resource mobilisation. This is very necessary if the enhancement of rural-urban interactions and the creation of a vibrant local economy, stimulating both rural and urban production processes, is to be achieved in the interest of overall development. The active involvement of the state in local (district) development, notwithstanding the view of local autonomy under decentralisation, is essential to the model.

3 Deagrarianisation refers to long-term occupational adjustment, income-earning reorientation, social identification, and spatial re-location of rural dwellers from strictly agrarian modes of livelihood. On the other hand, de-peasantisation refers to the shrinking of peasant populations due to the loss of their economic capacity and social coherence (Bryceson 2001: 194-195).

Fig.2a: District capital-centred decentralised model

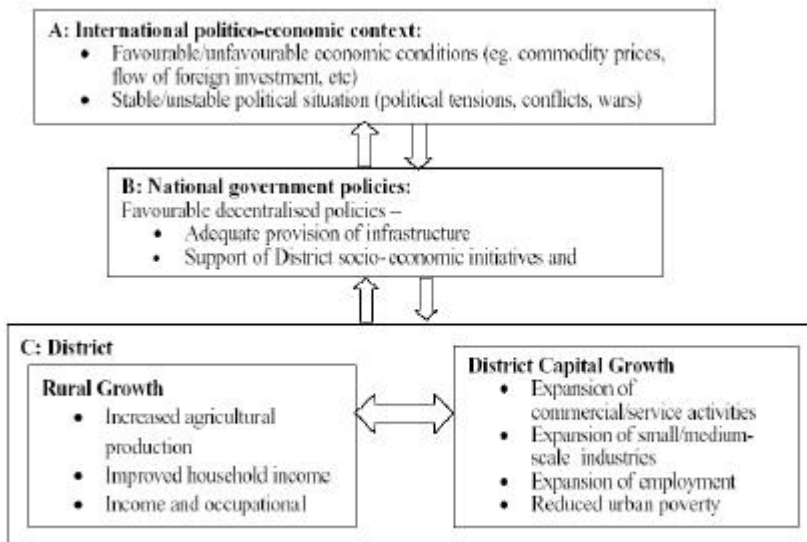


* A conceptualised model of the role of district capitals (small towns) in rural development under Ghana's decentralisation programme

To summarise this section, one may question whether this framework adds anything to existing models. The novelty of this model is that it is situated within a decentralised administrative and development planning framework, an approach little explored in the urban and development studies literature to date.

This framework is entrenched in laws, which confer extensive powers on local authorities regarding small towns' growth and the development of districts. The approach emphasizes the uniqueness of each district capital and its district in terms of the specific local opportunities for and constraints to development. Decentralisation therefore provides opportunities for development based not only on local needs, but also on the specific strengths and capacities of each district. Again, the area of influence of a district capital is delimited, not on the basis of the magnitude of functions performed, but rather as a politically-established spatial unit. Within this spatial unit, district planners, administrators and assembly members are to reach out to all parts of the district in terms of creating conditions for the effective access to and utilisation of services and facilities located in the district capital, since only by doing so will they be able to solicit the assistance of the people in the district.

Fig. 2b: Conceptualised model of rural-urban linkages



Like with other urban-centred development models, such as growth centre theory, the focus is to induce growth at the district capital by creating a favourable environment for attracting growth-minded entrepreneurs, creating capacity for innovations, and attracting capital from other regions, etc. Implicit in this is the tendency for the concentration of growth and investments

in the district capital. However, through the process of active participation and empowerment of residents and their representatives (Assembly members) in the district, there will be an equitable and fair distribution of resources between the urban and rural parts of the district. Again, local policy-makers and implementers are more likely to be aware of and sensitive to this tendency and more likely to formulate policies and strategies attuned to the needs of all residents in the district (Crook and Manor 1998). In addition, economic growth-pole through the trickling-down process is likely to be realised through effective accountability and utilisation of scarce resources by local officials. Burki et al. (1999: 3) present this argument as follows:

... devolving resource allocation decisions to locally elected leaders can improve the match between the mix of services produced by the public sector and the preferences of local population. Because local officials have better knowledge of local conditions and are more accessible to their constituents, they have the means and incentives to be responsive. Decentralisation, according to this argument, may also improve the management of public services since, through sheer proximity, local officials can be held more accountable for their performance (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne 1993).

Finally, whereas other models advocate the selection of a few potential growth centres as focal points for rural development, the centres selected under the DCDM cover the whole national area. Development is therefore more likely to spread fairly to all parts of the country, contradicting the notion of concentrated development in a few potential growth points, as advocated especially under the growth-pole and central-place theories. Under the approach advocated here, the role of central government will be to assist less-endowed districts to develop their potential resources to the fullest. This will allow relatively resource-rich districts to benefit fairly from their resources, rather than to have these exploited for the benefit of other districts and regions, especially the national capital. This ties in with a key requirement of the District Assemblies: 'to bring about integration of political, administrative and development support needed to achieve a more equitable allocation of power, wealth and geographically dispersed development in Ghana' (MLG&RD 1996: 12).

Operationalisation of the DCDM: the case of Dunkwa and the Upper Denkyira District

In this section an attempt is made to operationalise the model by using Dunkwa, the district capital of the Upper Denkyira District, as a case study. Dunkwa is given special focus in this article because as an old administrative centre dating

back to the early 1900s, it is assumed to have a relatively well-developed infrastructure and linkages with its periphery, which provides opportunities for analysing its growth and interactions over time. In addition, it was also assumed that the Upper Denkyira District Assembly (UDDA) would have a relatively large economic and commercial base, enabling it to mobilise local resources and revenue to facilitate the development of the district, a process envisaged under Ghana's decentralisation process.

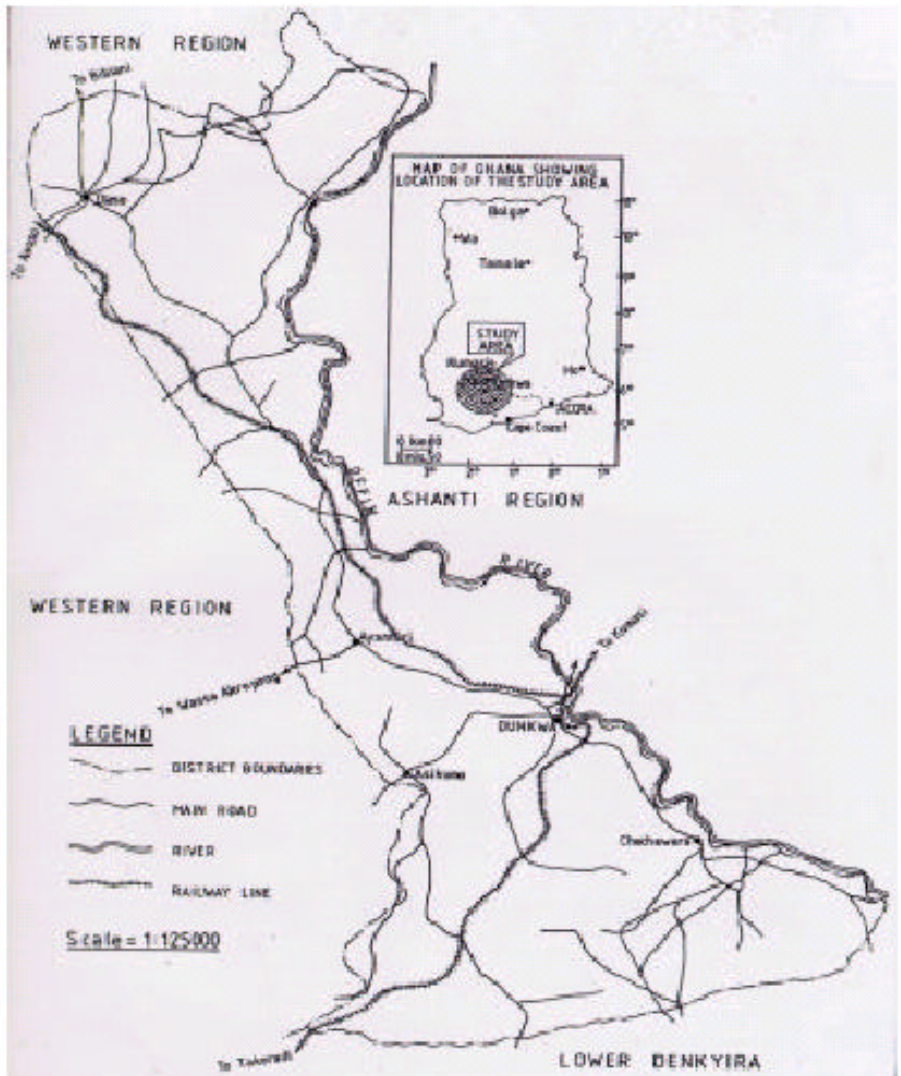
Dunkwa-on-Offin and the Upper Denkyira District

The Upper Denkyira District covers an area of about 1700 km² and is described as the 'outstretched arm of the Central Region, which projects into the Western Region and falls within the wet semi-equatorial climatic zone of Ghana'. The district is one of the 12 administrative districts of the Central Region. It borders the Western Region in the north and west, and on the Ashanti Region in the east. On its southern border lies Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira (THLDD), which has Twifo Praso as its district capital (see Fig. 3). The UDD was formerly part of the Western Region, but was incorporated into the Central Region in 1963 in order to keep the Akan ethnic group, Denkyira, in one region. The district then existed as Denkyira Twifo-Hemang District, with Dunkwa as the district capital. However, in 1988 it was divided into two districts, UDD and THLDD, as part of the implementation of the decentralisation programme. Since the division Dunkwa has continued to serve as the district capital for the UDD.

Physical accessibility

Road transport is the dominant means of transport in the district. Of the total road length of 186 km within the district, less than 20% has a bitumen surface. The UDDA Development Plan (2002: 2) stresses the need to improve the district's existing road network as well as to construct new ones, in order to reduce travel time and costs. A number of roads link Dunkwa with the rest of the district, but many of these are in a poor condition. On the other hand, Dunkwa has relatively good roadlinks to major centres such as Kumasi, Obuasi (all in the Ashanti Region) and Takoradi (Western Region). However, access to the Central Regional capital, Cape Coast, is poor because of the state of the road between Dunkwa and Twifo Praso. This situation has affected the functional and administrative relationship between the district and its regional capital on the one hand, and the rest of the Central Region on the other.

Fig. 3: Upper Denkyira District – location, key settlements, and transport routes



While the Ministry of Roads and Highways is responsible for all the highways in the country (including the UDD), the DAs are responsible for the maintenance of non-highways within districts (commonly referred to as 'feeder roads'). The feeder roads are basically the roads linking the various rural communities to the district capital, as well as to other settlements within the district. The central government's access to donor funds has enabled it to maintain highways linking major centres, whilst the poor financial position of the DAs has affected the maintenance and motorability of feeder roads.

District economy

The dominant economic activity in the district is peasant agriculture: It accounts for 54% of households income and employs well over 60% of the district's active labour force (UDDA 2002). The main crops grown are cash crops (mainly cocoa) and food crops (cassava, maize, plantain, and cocoyam). Peasant agriculture in the district is affected by several problems, including low productivity (due to the limited use of improved seedlings and technical know-how), marketing, insufficient access to credits for farmers and poor road network with corresponding high transport and travel expenses.

Gold mining is the second most important economic activity in the district (after agriculture). In the past the district witnessed the operations of many large gold-mining and prospecting companies, such as Dunkwa Goldfields Limited, Ayanfuri AGC Limited, and Cluff Resources Limited. However, these companies have either left or scaled down their operations in the district because of expired mining concessions or operational difficulties. On the ascendancy in the district are small-scale and illegal mining activities (popularly referred to as *galamsey*). While these mining activities provide much needed employment opportunities and other economic benefits, their destructive effects on the environment are also visible in many parts of the district. In some places, indiscriminate illegal surface gold mining activities render fertile agricultural lands unproductive. The UDDA (2002) has noted the failure of the Assembly to enforce mining regulations and to impose appropriate taxes on unregistered gold miners, citing its lack of capacity.

Commercial activities - mainly petty trading involving mostly women - are quite prominent in the district. These trading activities are carried out through daily and periodic markets, which can be found in most communities in the district. However, none of the markets in the district enjoy any significant level of patronage, except those in Dunkwa. These markets serve as trading outlets for agricultural produce and input, and also as places to access commodities produced elsewhere. Although no reliable data exist in the district on the number of people engaged in petty trading, the contribution of

women is well noted, particularly in the purchase and transportation of food-stuffs. Despite the major contribution of women's petty trade to the district's economy, the traders are confronted with poor transportation in terms of the road network and poor market infrastructure (UDDA 1996: 49).

The industrial base of the district is weak and underdeveloped. As in many parts of Ghana, there is hardly any linkage between industry and the dominant economic activity (agriculture). The absence of any significant agro-processing industry in the district implies that the greater part of local produce is not processed. This problem and others, such as the lack of adequate market access, contribute to the low agricultural production prevalent in the district, as farmers are constrained in their attempts to increase production.

The district's industrial sector is characterised by small-scale traditional craft, agro-based, and wood-processing industries. The processing of wood into furniture and other products is widespread and dominates the industrial sector of the district. In the past, two large timber-processing firms – Thompson Moir and Galloway (TMG) and International Hardwood Limited (IHL) - supported the district's wood industry, but these companies have collapsed over the past two decades because of operational difficulties. Other notable small-scale activities in the district include cassava processing, palm oil and kernel extraction, soap making, basketry, and bakery. The technology used in these industries is traditional and dominated by women. The production output is very low, as the scale of activity is small and has a very low capital base (UDDA 2002).

Population and services

The Akan ethnic group, Denkyira, are the indigenous people of the district. However, the presence of forestland for cocoa farming, gold mining, and government administrative services and institutions have attracted other ethnic groups into the district (namely Ashanti, Fanti, Akuapem, Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, and ethnic groups of northern Ghana origin), particularly into the district capital. Population influx and natural increase account for the continual growth of the district's population, which has increased from 34,011 in 1960 to 108,444 in 2000 (GSS 2002a). In 2000 the district's population of 108,444 represented about 6.8% of the total regional population of the Central Region (UDDA 2002).

Dunkwa is the only urban settlement in the district, and also the only area of population concentration. Its population of 26,215 in 2000 represented about 24% of the total population of the district. The next two larger settlements, Ayanfuri and Diaso, each have populations of less than 4000. Since its foundation, Dunkwa has been without competition from any urban centre of similar magnitude within a radius of several kilometres (Acheampong 1996). It has a

relatively well-developed infrastructure such as two secondary schools, two hospitals, a modern electronic telephone system linking it to other centres in Ghana and to the rest of the world, banks, retail and wholesale outlets, and relatively well-connected road and railway networks. In fact, with the exception of primary health care (PHC) services, basic schools, a senior secondary school at Diaso, and rural banks at Ayanfuri and Diaso, no other services are located in the district apart from those in Dunkwa. However, accessibility to these services in the district capital is limited on account of poor road networks, poor quality of services resulting mainly from the inadequacy of personnel, the introduction of user-charges on services, and low incomes in the district. These have had adverse effects on health and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, employment, and development in general in the district (UDDA 1996: 6).

Growth of Dunkwa

According to oral history Dunkwa was established in the early 1700s at the height of the Denkyira–Ashanti wars as a safe haven for the kings of Denkyira.⁵ Its growth was greatly stimulated by the attainment of the status of a colonial administrative centre and by the extension of the railway line to the town in the early 1900s. In particular, both oral and written histories indicate that the arrival of the railway line and the subsequent use of the town as a railway station was most significant. This opened up the Dunkwa area, making it a major commercial centre and entrepôt for goods from both the port of Takoradi (mainly imported European merchandised goods) and from the interior (mainly minerals, timber and cash crops) en route to the port for export (Acheampong 1996). The growth of the town was further enhanced by the establishment of gold mining and sawmill firms in the town in the mid-1900s.

Table 2 shows the population and growth rate of Dunkwa for various census years. The town's growth rates, like those of many other small and medium-size towns, have generally mirrored the fortunes of the national economy, pointing to the impact of macroeconomic processes and policies on small towns and their hinterlands (see Hinderink and Titus 2002; Ofori 2002). The town recorded its highest growth rate from 1931 to 1960, when the national economy was fairly stable and buoyant. The establishment of key firms such as Dunkwa Goldfields Limited (DGFL) and International Hardwood Limited (IHL) marked this period. This led to the creation of more jobs, and

4 Oral history by Nana Howard Kwadwo Manu, Abusuapinin (Family Head), Dunkwa royal family, 27 September, 2002.

hence to the attraction of large numbers of people. Analysing the migration trends in Ghana based on the 1960 Population Census, Grove (1963) classified Dunkwa as among a small number of towns marked by significant population gains.

The period of lowest growth (1970 to 1984) may have been due to the general decline in Ghana's economy from the 1970s until the early 1980s, when the World Bank/International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were launched. The past two decades of SAPs and economic liberalisation have seen the collapse of major industrial establishments in Dunkwa, resulting in huge job losses. This has had a significant impact on job opportunities and other related economic activities. Even though its industrial base has largely been eroded, the town continues to grow on account of natural population growth, the influx of galamsey and small-scale mining operators, the retention of services, and its administrative and commercial status.

Table 2: Population Growth of Dunkwa-on-Offin

Year	1931	1948	1960	1970	1984	2000
Population	3960	6827	12,689	15,437	16,905	26,215
Growth Rate (%)	1931-1948	1948-1960	1960-1970	1970-1984	1984-2000	
	3.2	5.2	2.0	0.65	2.7	

Source: UDDA (1996, 2002): Development Plan reports.

Rural-urban linkages: an overview

The analyses of the socio-economic, physical and cultural settings of Dunkwa and the UDD, as well as interviews conducted in the district involving 40 households in four rural communities (Buabin, Diaso, Asikuma and Asma camp), including market traders, private commercial transport operators, and key informants (District Planning Officers and Assembly members) - all these data suggest that the level and kinds of rural-urban interactions are limited. The overall responses indicate that movements of people between the district capital and its hinterland are not permanent migrations or relocations, but rather a cyclical flow: people go to the district capital to trade (sell/buy) on market days, and return to their villages during the latter part of the day. Other movements involve district capital-based traders going to the rural areas to buy foodstuffs at

the village market or the farm gate, and returning back to the district capital at the end of day.

Thus the market (trade) is the key mechanism by which the district capital (urban centre) interacts with the rural parts of the district. Even though there is some form of market in all communities within the district, the district capital's markets are the biggest, both in terms of volume of trade and patronage. The importance of the markets may be attributed to Dunkwa's centrality and its relatively large concentration of population compared to other market centres within the district. In addition, the markets attract buyers and sellers from places beyond the district, especially on Tuesdays. Even though the markets operate daily, Tuesdays tend to attract more buyers and sellers, as it is a non-farming day in most communities within the district and in nearby districts. As a result, farmers are able to leave the land and come to the market to buy and/or sell goods .

A study of Dunkwa and Twifo Praso markets by Owusu and Lund (2004, forthcoming) notes the important contributions the markets make towards the development of their respective districts within the context of the current decentralisation process. These contributions include revenue to the DAs, promotion of local agriculture, and employment and income generation, especially for women. Besides these contributions, the study also notes that the markets enhance the utilisation of urban services by the rural population. This is because services in Dunkwa, such as hospitalsbanking, telecommunications, and restaurants are patronised most on market days. There may be an economic motive behind optimising a single visit to the capital by using various services; on the other hand, it may be inferred that market patronage offers many people the opportunity to utilise urban services, which they would not otherwise have accessed. The markets also provide opportunities for social and cultural interaction between the rural population and the residents of Dunkwa. According to Owusu and Lund (see above), this arena for interactions provided by the markets gives meaning to the existence of a unified politically-administrated district, and enhances the co-existence of the different ethnic groups within the district.

Despite these contributions of the markets to the development of the district, they remain underdeveloped. According to Ghana's Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462, the location, administration and management of markets are the responsibility of the DAs. However, the lack of adequate resources and poor planning by the DAs have resulted in poor market infrastructure. In addition, access to the markets has been restricted by poor roads and high transport fares. As a result, the full potential of the markets has not been realised. This situation raises important questions about the operationalisation of the DCDM, the basic impetus of which is market-driven through the growth of agriculture and income. The inherent development constraints or weaknesses impeding the opera-

tionalisation of the model in the case study area, and by extension in other districts in Ghana, especially in the 'newly' created ones with weaker and poorer infrastructure, are discussed below:

Inherent weaknesses of district capital's production and service function

Like in many Ghanaian towns, economic activity in Dunkwa has been, and continues to be, dominated by commerce and services - activities not adequately adapted to the needs of the rural hinterland population. These activities to a large extent serve the needs of the town itself, especially its minor civil and public servants, and have little relevance to the dominant agricultural production processes in the rural areas (see Dickson 1980). It can therefore be argued that the development of the town and of the hinterland is only remotely connected. This situation is typical of many Ghanaian urban centres, especially the small and medium-sized towns with little or no industrial base linked to their hinterlands.

More importantly, small and medium-scale industries for agro-processing and other produce of the rural population have never existed in Dunkwa. In the past, when the town had a large industrial base (sawmills and gold mines), these were extractive or enclave economic activities, without any meaningful direct link with either the population and production processes in the hinterland, or with the general Ghanaian spatial economy. These industrial activities were outward-directed and export-oriented, and hence contributed very little to the overall district economy, except for the few job opportunities and associated purchasing power they generated for food crops from the rural hinterland. It is therefore no wonder that the collapse of these industries has not significantly affected the growth of the town.

Though the district capital markets provide outlets for food crops produced in the district, it is questionable whether this trade realises its full potential. Apart from the poor market infrastructure and access, the fragmented, unregulated and inefficient nature of the trade relations causes them to be 'by-passed' by more efficient traders operating from high-order centres such as Kumasi, Obuasi, Cape Coast and Takoradi. This results in competition, and the rural producers' desire for better prices manifests itself in a preference for traders from the higher-order centres, who generally offer better prices for produce, as was confirmed in rural household interviews. This implies that substantial surpluses produced in the hinterland are lost to destinations outside the district. If this situation continues, the growth and diversification of the hinterland economy will depend more on increasing marketing and employment opportunities in other regions than on the district capital (see Hinderink and Titus 2002).

The markets in the district capital and the rural-urban trade relations, however, remain a viable option for enhancing rural-urban linkages and for attempts to improve agriculture and to reduce poverty (see Owusu and Lund 2004, forthcoming). However, this will require concerted efforts by the DA, such as an effective tax system, which will allow the district to derive maximum benefits from this relation.; Improvements in market infrastructure and access are also necessary. Being the only urban centre with the largest population concentration within the district, Dunkwa remains the main market centre for foodstuffs produced in the hinterland. It is also the only centre within the UDD with reliable road connections to major centres, allowing the markets to attract buyers and sellers from distant places.

Effects of macro-economic policies and processes

This study highlights other research findings, which indicate that development at the rural hinterland or small town level derives impetus and momentum from macro-policies and macroeconomic processes at national and even international level, rather than from local impulses emanating from the towns (Hinderink and Titus 2002). For instance, throughout its history, the growth of Dunkwa has been shaped by exogenous factors such as the extension of the railway line to the town in 1902. As noted earlier the town's growth has always been influenced by the health of the national economy, (Aryeetey 1989 cited in Ofori 2002 makes similar observations concerning small and medium-sized towns in Ghana).

In recent years, the doubled-edged impact of SAPs on small towns has been well-noted. Whilst the SAP-induced programmes of aid flows, infrastructure provision through multilateral and bilateral loans and grants, and improvements in transport have had positive consequences for small towns and rural areas, their negative effects on social services provision and subsidies reduction have also been well documented. Even though there have been improvements in the transport and road sector, this has been limited to the highways linking major centres, which are under the control of the central government's Ministry of Roads and Highways. All of the highways linking Dunkwa are in a fairly good condition and accessible all year round. However, the same cannot be said of roads connecting the district capital to other communities within the district, since these feeder roads fall under the authority of the DA. These roads are in a poor condition, and many are not passable by motor car during the rainy season. Private commercial transport operators take advantage of this situation to charge high fares.

SAPs and falling world commodity prices have further exacerbated the already inherent weaknesses of the production and service functions of

the district capital. In particular, the collapse of key firms in Dunkwa has affected employment levels, and consequently purchasing power and commercial activities in the town. The unattractiveness of Dunkwa to its hinterland population as a location offering job opportunities is well emphasized in a study by the Dunkwa Office of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which is responsible for income tax collection in both the UDD and THLDD. Entitled '1999 Assessment of External Shocks and its profound Impact on Local Revenue Collection and Development', the study noted that the Dunkwa Office of the IRS is gradually losing its prominence as a major revenue collector for the region and the state. This must be attributed to declining world market prices for the respective output of its two most important contributors to revenue, viz. gold mining companies and Twifo Oil Palm Plantations Limited (TOPP). Not only were the companies not earning enough from their exports, but the falling world market prices have also resulted in labour cuts, and consequently in falling income tax contributions. Furthermore, the Report noted the ripple effect on local employment and taxes in the form of reduced volumes of contracts executed by local firms and businesses.⁶ In addition, the last two decades have witnessed the relocation of banks (Standard Chartered and Cooperative Banks) and wholesale outlets away from the town on account of operational difficulties. The loss of jobs has a direct impact on agriculture and on incomes in both the rural areas and in the centre, Dunkwa.

The social services available in Dunkwa would have had a much greater impact on the rural areas if they were affordable and accessible. (Other limiting factors can for the moment be left out of consideration.) However, the introduction of user charges under the SAPs, and high transport costs on the low-quality feeder roads between the district capital and its hinterland restrict access to these services. This is against the backdrop of low agricultural production and corresponding low incomes. It is therefore no wonder that most interviewees indicated that these services in Dunkwa are of little benefit to a large segment of the district's population.

Another macro-policy of significance is the influence of the cocoa season. Responses from interviews with rural household heads, private commercial transport operators and market traders indicate that interactions between Dunkwa and its hinterland increase during the main cocoa season (October to March). This period, which also coincides with the end of year festivities (Christmas and New Year), brings with it new economic activities due to increases in money supply resulting from the sale of dried cocoa beans. However, the influence of cocoa on the local economy is not dictated by local poli-

5 At the time of collecting data in 2002, no major mining company was present in the district.

cies, but is to a large extent shaped by the pricing and purchasing policies of the central government. It is the central government that determines the start and end of the cocoa season, even though farmers may have harvested their produce and may be ready to market it. It is also the central government that sets the price per kilogram/tonne of dried cocoa beans, irrespective of world market prices. Government policies on cocoa therefore contribute significantly to when and how Dunkwa interacts with its hinterland. In the words of a farmer and an ex-teacher at Asma Camp, "the close of the cocoa season somewhere in April is the period farmers find themselves in a difficult financial situation. When the cocoa-purchasing season is closed [by central government], farmers must keep the little beans they get from their farms". This situation affects not only the income and wellbeing of cocoa farmers, but also the wider local economy, and consequently rural-urban interactions.

Limited achievement of decentralisation

While the aforementioned constraints to the operationalisation of the DCDM could be described as fundamental and structural problems affecting district development and rural-urban interactions, the policy of decentralisation was formulated with the implicit or explicit intent to address these constraints. However, decentralisation has had a minimal impact on rural-urban interaction, and consequently on district development. In other words, Ghana's decentralisation illustrates the situation in many countries, where the programme promises so much but delivers very little in practical terms (see Ayee 2000a). While administrative decentralisation has taken the lead in the transfer of responsibilities to District Assemblies, fiscal decentralisation lags far behind. Not even the introduction of the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF), a constitutional provision allocating 5% of the total national revenue to the District Assemblies, has improved their financial resource base. The result is a mismatching of delegated functions and finances, a situation sometimes referred to as 'vertical imbalance' (Ayee 1995). Consequently, the District Assemblies have failed to institute programmes such as improved market infrastructure and access, road rehabilitation, and agricultural development, all of which are necessary for rural-urban linkages and district development.

The decentralisation programme is further hampered by the lack of clarity regarding functional linkages and operational coordination between decentralised institutions. Other problems include inadequate and inefficient staff, especially at the district level where, because of the lack of basic amenities and opportunities for personal upliftment, qualified personnel refuse to be posted. These problems confronting the decentralisation programme are most acute at the district level. Ironically, it is also at the district level that the

fruits of the decentralised planning system are most needed (MLG&RD 1996; Ayee 2000b). It should be noted that discussions on decentralisation and participatory development might seem a little removed from the discussion on small towns. However, decentralisation and participatory development are of central importance to the promotion of social and economic development within and around small towns. They are also very important in increasing the attraction of these centres for productive investment through enhanced quality of management and improved administration of resources and services (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1988: 12-13).

While the institutional structure of Ghana's decentralisation programme has been criticised as not genuinely decentralising power to the district level (see Naustdalslid 1992; Crook and Manor 1998; Eriksen et al. 1999; Ayee 2000b), a more critical problem is the partial or total lack of sub-district structures (Area Councils and Unit Committees) in many districts, even after 15 years of implementation of the decentralisation programme. According to the UDDA (2002: 39), the district has 8 Area Councils and 119 Unit Committees. However, these structures have not been fully established; many exist only in skeletal form and are hardly functioning. The sub-district structures, whose functions include revenue mobilisation, implementation of policies at the local level and community mobilisation for participation in the decision-making process, are critical to the successful implementation of the decentralisation programme. In particular, the virtual or total absence of these structures raises questions about the extent to which local people are involved in decision-making. This puts a question mark over the whole participatory approach, which is much emphasized under the programme.

With the exception of basic school-related projects (such as the construction of school buildings, provision of furniture and teachers' accommodation), few respondents in the Upper Denkyira District could identify any projects undertaken in their communities by the DA. Prior to the introduction of the DACF in 1994, the UDDA's recurrent expenditure averaged 75% of total expenditure, leaving only 25% for capital expenditure. The introduction of the DACF has improved the situation somewhat, but the amount of funds given to the DA is still very small in relation to their responsibilities.

The poor performance of the DAs has resulted in the increasing reluctance of local people to contribute more through the payment of basic rates and other taxes to the Assembly, which many view as doing very little or virtually nothing for them. For instance, basic rates (popularly referred to as the land poll) are one of the tax revenue sources available to the DAs under existing laws. Records from the UDDA indicate that the number of people in the district paying this tax dropped from 14000 in 1991 to 8376 in 1997. This is against the background of population growth of about 3% per annum, and

hence an increase in the number of potential taxpayers. The reluctance to contribute to the revenue base of the Assembly has been further compounded by the lack of transparency and proper accountability in the disbursement and general management of financial resources. In a focus group discussion, Assembly members blamed the problem of accountability and misuse of funds on weak institutional structures and on the lack of legal mandates to scrutinise and audit the records of finances of the Assembly. As one participant at the focus group discussion put it:

”Apart from implementing our decisions they [District Chief Executive, District Finance Officer and other civil servants of the Assembly] aren’t obliged under any law to tell us how they spend on projects. Basically we have no right to go into the accounting books of the Assembly even though we’ve a Finance Sub-Committee. We therefore take whatever they present to us.”

The state has been criticised for not providing enough financial and other resources to the DAs. The response of state representatives has been to cite unfavourable world market prices for primary commodities (mainly cocoa, gold and timber) and World Bank/IMF and donor regulations and restrictions, which prohibit it from determining an independent development policy. In his ‘2003 State of the Nation Address’ to Parliament, the President of Ghana stated these limitations in relation to the road sector; in reality, they apply to all sectors of the economy:

“...because we have to rely on donors and other multilateral agencies for almost all the funds for the development of roads, we are obliged to submit to and observe the varied procedures their systems require to ensure that their taxpayers’ monies are used efficiently ... This year, a total amount of almost two trillion cedis, the equivalent of about 250 million US dollars will be spent on road construction. Out of this amount, the Ghana government component is about 422 billion. In other words, only about 22% will come from our own resources.”
(www.ghanaweb.com 13 February 2003)

The case is made that in a developing country like Ghana, with weak common political structures and a history of political instability, central government controls (including on finance) are required to guarantee national unity and stability. However, a counter argument is that there has been as much mismanagement and instability at central level as there could possibly be at local level (Davies et al. 1994). In Ghana, this latter argument is supported by recent reports by the Accountant-General’s Department on corruption and misappropriation of resources in high places.

Lastly, the apparent dereliction of responsibility by the state ema-

nates from the contradictory outcomes of economic reforms and decentralisation. Even though donor agencies and their affiliates encourage decentralisation, this takes the form of fiscal decentralisation, where local provision of services is to be met from local revenue sources. Thus, as Slate (1989, cited in Ayee 2000a: 12) noted, decentralisation becomes a less than overt step on the way to increased privatisation, deregulation, and a roll-back of many of the economic, and in particular of the social, functions of the state. The implementation and imposition of these one-sided programmes on local people contradicts the participatory element of decentralisation (Mohan 1996). Again, the delegation of a large number of responsibilities from the central government to the District Assemblies has caused the latter to suffer from the same problems as the former, namely the absence or inadequate implementation of development programmes. Therefore, as long as the DAs are insufficiently able to raise and manage revenue, they are likely to provide insufficiently for the services needed in the districts (see Ayee 2000a). However, the extent to which external agencies and international socio-economic conditions are responsible for the underachievement of Ghana's decentralisation programme remains questionable, especially in the face of corruption and the lack of transparency in the management of resources at both the local and the national level.

Conclusion

According to the DCDM, the strengthening of the district capitals is not exclusively aimed at the growth of these centres, but also at strengthening rural-urban linkages. Other aims include the promotion of agriculture in the hinterlands and the stimulation of employment opportunities other than farming. It envisages that rural-urban linkages between district capital and rural periphery will have positive consequences for both spatial units, and hence for the overall development of the district. This development process is situated within a decentralised political and socio-economic framework, with active involvement of the people of the district and their representatives, as well as the pooling of resources within the district for the mutual benefit of both rural and urban development. It also emphasizes the uniqueness of each district capital (and district), and hence the need for considerable local input in designing the overall development strategy for the district.

Using a district capital, Dunkwa, and the Upper Denkyira District as a case study, this article found that rural-urban linkages critical to the operationalisation of the DCDM are very limited on account of factors largely outside the purview of local authorities and people. These factors include macro-

economic policies and processes at national level, inherent weaknesses of the small town's production and service functions, and the limited achievements of the decentralisation programme. More importantly, the limited impact of decentralisation is of significance, as it is regarded as a programme for addressing structural teething problems affecting the development of districts. So far its impact has been limited because of the many problems confronting the programme, especially central government reluctance to cede financial resources to the District Assemblies commensurate with the functions delegated to them.

The conclusion drawn in this article is that the envisaged autonomous district development, centred on the district capitals, will require the active involvement of the state. In other words, in a developing country like Ghana, with its relatively weak infrastructure and poorly developed participatory political structures, the rolling back of the state as a result of the macro-economic policies of the past two decades and the development strategy of decentralisation do not preclude the active involvement of the state in local development, at least in the short to medium term. This involvement should focus on the formulation of favourable national policies regarding the provision of infrastructure and support for socio-economic initiatives and mobilisation at district level. These interventions are required to enhance the level of district capital-rural interactions and overall district development, notwithstanding unpredictable international socio-economic and political circumstances.

While the discussion in this paper has focused on Dunkwa and the Upper Denkyira District, the experiences and responses are believed to mirror those of other districts in Ghana, especially among the newly created ones with weaker infrastructure and revenue bases. The conclusions here contribute to the debate regarding the direction of future development in Ghana. Though decentralisation is regarded as an autonomous development process, the nature of the constraints impeding rural-urban linkages and district development indicate that the state in Ghana has a crucial role to play in overcoming these constraints. A more genuine form of decentralisation is required, one in which the resources transferred to the District Assemblies are commensurate with the functions delegated to them.

Finally, what is obvious from the discussion in this article, is that the envisaged supportive roles of district capitals and their rural hinterlands in the overall development of districts can only take place when the required conditions for this development process are fulfilled at higher levels of decision-making and implementation. It is in establishing these conditions and stimulating these supportive roles that the main justifications are found for a planned effort at rural hinterland and district capital development. In real

terms, efforts should be made towards improving what Hinderink and Titus (2002: 388) described as the supply side of the rural hinterland economy, particularly agriculture, through improvements in market infrastructure and access by DAs. At the same time, the small towns' poorly developed public service functions vis-à-vis the needs of the rural hinterland population need to be upgraded. Central government's commitment to a genuine decentralisation programme is therefore a matter of crucial importance in this regard.

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Zusammenfassung

Die Umsetzung der verwaltungsmäßigen Dezentralisierung in Ghana setzt voraus, dass die Kreisstädte (hier als Kleinstädte definiert) zu Brennpunkten der Entwicklung in ihren Kreisen ausgebaut werden. Zuwendungen von Regierungs- und Geberseite sind darum gezielt dazu eingesetzt worden, die Infrastruktur dieser Zentren zu verbessern, damit sie ihre neuen Aufgaben möglichst effizient erfüllen können. Die Bedeutung der Kreisstädte für die Umsetzung der Dezentralisierung ist zwar durchaus erkannt worden, doch gibt es bisher kaum Untersuchungen zu den Verflechtungen und Wechselwirkungen zwischen diesen Zentren und ihrem Umfeld (dem jeweiligen Kreis), die es erlauben, die Wirksamkeit dieser Strategie einzuschätzen. Dieser Artikel entwickelt ein Modell zur Einschätzung der jeweiligen Rollenverteilung und Wechselwirkung zwischen Kreisstädten und ihren Kreisen unter der Dezentralisierung, und dieses Modell wird anschließend am Beispiel einer Kreisstadt und ihres Kreises vorgeführt. Der Artikel betont zwar, dass es sinnvoll ist, die Kreisstädte als Motoren der Entwicklung in ihren Kreisen einzusetzen, weist aber zugleich darauf hin, dass diese Strategie wenig Aussicht auf Erfolg hat, soweit keine echte Dezentralisierung stattfindet, die im Politischen wie im Ökonomischen die aktive Beteiligung der örtlichen Bevölkerung auf demokratischer Grundlage einschließt.

Schlüsselwörter

Ghana, Dezentralisierung, Distrikt, Stadt, Stadtentwicklung, Stadt-Land-Beziehungen, Regionalentwicklung/Regionalplanung, Kommunale Regierung/Verwaltung, Verwaltungsstruktur, Theoriebildung

Résumé

La mise en place de la décentralisation administrative au Ghana suppose que les villes chefs-lieux de district (définies ici comme petites villes) deviennent le centre du développement de leur district. C'est la raison pour laquelle les aides du gouvernement et autres donateurs ont été utilisées en vue d'améliorer les infrastructures de ces centres afin qu'ils puissent remplir leur rôle aussi efficacement que possible. L'importance de ces villes pour la mise en place de la décentralisation a été reconnue, néanmoins jusqu'à présent, peu d'études ont été menées sur les interactions entre ces centres et leur région. Celles-ci permettraient d'évaluer la pertinence de cette stratégie. Cet article propose un modèle d'évaluation du rôle réciproque et des synergies entre les chefs-lieux et leur district dans le cadre de la décentralisation. Ce modèle est ensuite appliqué à titre d'exemple à une ville et à son district. Si l'article montre qu'il est judicieux d'utiliser les chefs-lieux comme moteurs du développement des districts, il souligne néanmoins que cette stratégie a peu de chances de réussir, sans une véritable décentralisation qui inclue une participation politique et économique active de la population locale sur des bases démocratiques.

Mots clés

Décentralisation, ville, développement urbain, relations ville-campagne, développement régional/ aménagement du territoire, administration locale, structure administrative, formation de théorie