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TRANSFORMING THIRD WORLD CITIES THROUGH GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE: FRESH EVIDENCE

Franklin OBENG-ODOOM

Department of Political Economy, University of Sydney, Australia
fobe7790@usyd.edu.au

Abstract
Many Ghanaians believe that introducing multi-party elections at the metropolitan, municipal and district levels would ensure the election of competent people to manage the urban or local economy. This belief is premised on the assumption that electorates are informed and would vote for competent politicians. Using the 2008 elections in Ghana, it is argued that only a minority of electorates vote on issues; the majority vote along tribal and party lines; and based on how "humble" a politician is or simply based on monetocracy. This means that introducing elections into the local government system would not necessarily lead to a transformation of the local or urban economy; greater local democracy is not the answer to the housing problem, sanitation crisis, unemployment burden and the poverty challenge. There may be the need for a new form of local democracy.
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1. Introduction

Good local governance or democratic decentralisation has become so widely accepted that it is almost dangerous to question its validity. According to the UNDP, "Sustained poverty reduction requires equitable growth—but it also requires that poor people have political power. And the best way to achieve that in a manner consistent with human development objectives is by building strong and deep forms of democratic governance at all levels of society." (UNDP, 2002, p.v). The UNDP has decreed that all who "detract" from its view are "wrong" (UNDP, 2002, p.v). In other words, democratic decentralisation must be glorified, accepted and implemented - without question. Such entrenched position is akin to the god-man relationship depicted in *Things Fall Apart* : 'Beware Okonkwo!', she warned. 'Beware of exchanging words with Agbala. Does a man speak when a god speaks? Beware!' (Achebe, 1967).

This international pressure and increasing urbanisation have forced many developing countries to accept democratic urban/local governance (Smoke, 2003; Olowu, 2001; Davey, 1993; McGill, 1998; Stren, 1991; Gilbert, 2006). Out of 200 countries globally, about 140 conduct multi-party elections

(UNDP, 2002) and some 81 countries—29 in sub-Saharan Africa, 23 in Europe, 14 in Latin America, 10 in Asia and 5 in the Arab States—have taken steps towards local governance (UNDP, 2003, p. 134).

One African country that is experiencing rapid urbanisation is Ghana. According to the latest edition[1] of *World Urbanisation Prospects*, the percent urban in Ghana (47.8) is higher than the percent urban in West Africa (41.7), sub-Saharan Africa (35.0) and Africa as a whole (37.9). The rate of urbanisation in Ghana between 2005 and 2010 is estimated to be around 3.54 per cent, lower than West Africa (3.77) and sub-Saharan Africa but higher than Africa (3.31) and the world (1.91). It is estimated that by 2010, more people (51.5%) will live in urban Ghana than in rural Ghana (48.5%) and by 2050 the share of the population living in urban areas (75.5%) will be about three times the share of the population living in rural areas (24.4%) (Department for Economic and Social Affairs [DESA], 2008).

In Ghana, cities are adored almost to the point of worship. People who live in the city are perceived as having "progressed" in life. Hence, in his song *Tuabodom*, Nkasei describes the "true story" of a group of students who had the rare privilege of being invited to visit Kumasi[2] for the first time. The songster describes the pomp and pageantry that welcomed the news. Led by their teacher, the students quickly compose a song …oh bow, oh rise…how big Kumasi is, oh bow, oh rise, we never knew that Kumasi was this big… Look at the streets, how smooth, how black….we are from Tuabodom but we are going to Kumasi[3]….To this song, they marched and danced and waved placards that read, "Kumasi, here we come"! The Australian demographer, J.C Caldwell who taught at the University of Ghana (1962-1964) observed that in Ghana, the place of the educated; is the city (Caldwell, 1969).

Yet, a recent assessment of Ghanaian cities concludes that the future of the Ghanaian cities is bleak. Ghanaian cities are plagued by high levels of unemployment, slums, traffic congestion, housing crisis and poverty (Obeng-Odoom, 2008). Can good urban governance improve the future of Ghanaian cities?

Existing studies that try to address this question have used the availability of local mechanisms (e.g. voice and exit mechanisms) and central-local relations as the main indicators for success (Yan, 2007; Martinussen, 1997; Crook, 2003). Others use the interactions between central governments, sub-national governments and civil society organisations. According to the UNDP, for example, "successful decentralization requires more than just certain political reforms—it also requires establishing a three-way dynamic among local governments, civil society and an active central government" (UNDP, 2003, p.137).

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[1] These statistics refer to 2005. There are no figures for 2008 even though "estimates" for 2010 are available.
[2] The second largest city in Ghana
[3] The song is in *Twi*, a local dialect but has been translated for the benefit of an international readership

All these studies take for granted that electorates vote for competent councillors who can best manage the city. Because of this gap in our knowledge, this paper uses – the factors that influence the choices of voters - to assess the claim that good urban governance can transform Ghanaian cities. First, however a brief overview of the local government system in Ghana is given.

2. The evolution of local government in Ghana

The first attempt at local governance in Ghana was perhaps the *indirect rule system* in which the British colonial masters handpicked some local chiefs to represent the colonial masters in the chiefdoms and kingdoms. The 1859 Municipal Ordinance established municipalities in the coastal towns. This was followed by the setting up of elected town councils for Accra, kumasi, Sekondi Takoradi and Cape Coast. Post independence reforms started with the passage of Act 54 of the Local Government Act, 1961.

It should be noted that all reforms to local governance in Ghana since 1859 maintained a *dual hierarchy system of local governance,* in which the central government had bodies at the local level who worked alongside the elected local government bodies. The Local Administration (Amendment) Decree, 1974, NRCD 258, however abolished the dual hierarchical structure and established a *single hierarchy model* that established monolithic structure (called district councils). The system however suffered severe setbacks like cronyism and further centralisation.

These weaknesses led to the 1988 reforms that sought to create a forum for development at the local level. It was given legal backing by the Local Government Law, 1988, PNDCL 207. Local governance has also been enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana;* which states that "Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralised" (240 (1)). The Act to operationalise article 240 is the Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462. In all, there are 170 local governments. Of these, 6 are metropolitan assemblies; 39 are municipal assemblies and 125 are district assemblies (Government of Ghana, 2008 for fuller version). Two key features of the local government system are pertinent to this paper:

a. Partisan Politics

The 1992 constitution bans all forms of partisan politicking at the local level. Article 248 (1) states that "A candidate seeking election to a District Assembly or any lower local government unit shall present himself to the electorate as an individual, and shall not use any symbol associated with any political party." This means that people interested in local government positions should campaign on non-partisan basis. The rational for this is that at the local level, there should be oneness and unity to

promote development. Also, non-partisan politics at the local level is believed to prevent the central government from victimising "opposition" districts. Notwithstanding this justification, the *status quo* prevents individual councillors to strongly pursue development agenda because of the absence of a political party backing (in terms of pressure to deliver, training etc) necessary to achieve a party manifesto accepted by the local people (Crawford, 2004). In practice, political parties fund the activities of "neutral" individuals who put themselves up for local elections; a point articulated by the four "leading" flag bearers at the recent presidential debate[4] in Tamale, Ghana.

b. Election versus Appointment of members

According to the Local Government Act, Act 462, 1993, 70% of local councillors must be elected and only 30 per cent appointed by central government. The spirit of the law is that central government would use its 30% mandate to provide "technocrats" in the local governments. The problem with Act 462 is that the 30% of the councillors (e.g. the mayor) appointed by central government are more powerful than the 70% elected by the people. Another issue is that because the most powerful person in the local government set up, the district chief executive (DCE) or the mayor is appointed by the central government, s/he is accountable to the central government not the local people. This *apriori* situation can be observed in the firing decisions taken by central government in recent times. The president[5] is on record to have dismissed 3 DCEs in 2003 and 12 other DCEs in 2007; both without giving reasons (Gomda and Zoure, 2007; GNA, 2003).

Many Ghanaian politicians believe that introducing elections and multi-party democracy at the local level hold the key to improving metropolitan, municipal and district management in Ghana. For example, The National Democratic Congress (NDC) states in the preamble of its 2008 manifesto that "[We will] Reform and Deepen Decentralisation and Local Government" (NDC, 2008).

Section 3.3 of the manifesto of the Convention People"s Party (CPP) reads: "We believe that "no decentralisation" means "no development". After nearly 16 years of democracy at the national level, it is time to bring democracy to the doorsteps of the people, too. People must have a direct say about who collects their garbage in their local communities; the quality of the roads they use; or the schools their children attend. At the moment, decisions on these issues are made by a few bureaucrats in Accra for distance communities around the country. All local officials must be elected by the people they govern so that they can answer to these people the same way national leaders respond to their national constituents. "Self-determination" must be taken to the grassroots" (CPP, 2008).

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[4] The debate took place on 12th November, 2008 at the Gilbert Centre, Tamale, Ghana.
[5] President John Agyekum Kufour (2001-2008).

Section 2.3. of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) manifesto reads: "We believe in decentralisation. Effective decentralisation is vital for good governance. It deepens democracy through greater grassroots participation. It makes for better planning and improves service delivery on account of proximity to the people. Our …government will review the administration of the District Assemblies with the ultimate goal of electing all the members of the Assembly as well as District/Municipal and Metropolitan Chief Executives. This gradualistic approach is to ensure that central government's overall development plans and those of the District Assemblies move in tandem" (NPP, 2008).

Ghanaian planners/mayors (Nuno-Amarteifio 2002) and academics (Prof. Gyimah Boadi, Gyimah-Boadi, 2008) also share the belief that introducing elections in the local government system in Ghana would improve urban management. Also forums organised in 2004 by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) in 24 constituencies for aspiring parliamentarians and voters showed that

"The overwhelming majority of participants, both candidates and the voting population, shared the view that local politics should be based on partisan choices i.e. the representatives at the local level, including the DCE [mayor] should be elected. These, they hope would make representatives at the local level accountable to the local people who are the final recipotory [sic] of authority, rather than the DCE being remote by virtue of him or her being responsible and accountable to the president " (CDD, 2004).

From the ongoing discussion, elections would lead to improvement in the management of Ghanaian metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies if *electorates* voted for *competent politicians*; proxied by*:* (a) issue-based voting: (as in voting based on the competence or track record of a candidate/manifesto of a candidate); (b) politically-informed electorates (as in how literate those with franchise are e.g. adult literacy rate, the number of people with radios, TVs, access to newspapers and internet) and (c) politicians who run issue-based campaigns; stating clearly their vision, manifesto and track record. These proxies are tested using the recently conducted parliamentary and presidential elections held on December 7, 2008 juxtaposed with the December 7, 2004 elections in Ghana.

3. Do Ghanaian electorates vote on issues?

Table 1 shows variations in the pattern of voting in Ghana. In 2004, the NPP "controlled" 6 out of the 10 regions (Western, Greater Accra, Central, Eastern and Brong Ahafo) while the NDC "controlled" the remaining 4 regions (Northern, Volta, Upper East and Upper West).

TABLE 1 COMPARISON OF VOTING PATTERNS IN GHANA (2004 AND 2008[6])

Region	Seats parliament	New Patriotic Party (NPP)		National Democratic Congress (NDC)		People's National Congress (PNC)		Convention People's Party (CPP)		Independent	
		2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008
Western	22	12	10	8	11			2	1		
Central	19	16	8	2	11			1			
Gt. Accra	27	17	9	10	18						
Volta	22	1	1	20	21						
Eastern	28	22	19	6	7						1
Ashanti	39	36	34	2	3						2
Brong Ahafo	24	14	16	10	8						
Northern	26	8	4	17	21					1	1
Upper East	13	2	4	9	8	2	1				
Upper West	10	1	3	7	6	2	1				
National Total	230	129	107	91	114	4	2	3	1	1	4

Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2008

However in 2008, the Ghanaian electorates changed the order of merit and gave 7 regions (Western, Central, Greater Accra, Western, Northern, Upper East and Upper West) out of 10 to the NDC[7]. Out of 230 constituencies, the NPP"s share has reduced from 129 to 107 seats; whereas the share of the NDC has increased from 91 to 114 seats.

Prior to the 2008 elections, the influential Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) organised two "presidential debates" for the four leading parties: NPP, NDC, PNC and CPP. There was a consensus that the CPP candidate, Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom was the most impressive. Even pro-NPP analysts like Anabel Charnock[8] of the Danquah Institute conceded this fact (Charnock, 2008). A veteran journalist commenting on one of the debates said:

"Now, for me – like most Ghanaians who have spoken on the debate – the man of the night was Kwesi Nduom. He showed a fair amount of knowledge about the subjects that were discussed on the night. Most important of all, Nduom won the "debate" because he didn"t spend time reminding us about how terrible the situation is. We know everything already. And we know who is responsible and Nduom showed great wisdom in refusing to play the blame game. Choosing rather to speak intelligently about

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[6] Results are only available for 228 (out of 230) constituencies. The results for the other two constituencies – Asutifi South and Akwatia- are being contested in court.

[7] In the 2008 run-off, the presidential candidate of the NDC, John Atta Mills won 8 out of 10 regions even though in the main elections, only about 3 weeks earlier, he had won 7 out of 10 regions. Many reasons account for this; however the increase from 7 to 8 in a matter of 3 weeks is further testimony that the Ghanaian electorates change their minds. (Note: the Brong Ahafo region that was won by the NPP in the main elections; fell to the NDC in the run-off)

[8] She however argues that there were different criteria for measuring the performance of the different candidates.

how he would resolve the problems helped him connect with many Ghanaians with optimism" (Dadzie, 2008).

But would the electorates vote who can best do the job? "Absolutely not! Most of those whose votes really matter – the rural, illiterate folk – do not care a hoot about debates. Some of them might have listened but they made up their minds long before the candidates agreed to "debate". Many others still don"t know the debate even took place" (Dadzie, 2008). However, a host of surveys conducted prior to the 2008 elections suggested that electorates would vote on issues. A survey conducted by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) suggested that "voters prioritised education, health and agriculture (in that order)" (NCCE, 2008). A survey by the Danquah Institute showed that "on the assessment of records in government, 1,361 of the respondents, representing 57%, thought the NPP had done better than the NDC, while 25% thoutht the NDC had outperformed the NPP. 14% thought both parties had done well." (Danquah Institute, 2008). Another survey conducted by the CDD suggested that though 69% of the respondents were happy with the management of the economy, the share of the supporters of the NPP had reduced from from 43 to 36 %. The survey found that the perception of corruption had soared. In the words of CDD, "Corruption at the presidency, according to the survey, had risen between 2005 and 2008 by 14 points" Despite the increase in corruption, the survey by the CDD showed that the NPP would win the 2008 elections though it would fail to get more than 50% of the valid votes cast. In other words the elections would go into a second round (CDD, 2008). Though the elections did go into a second round and the NPP won the first round as shown by the survey, it is doubtful whether the electorates voted on "issues".

First, Dr. Nduom (CPP) came a pale third after Nana Addo (NPP) and Prof. Mills (NDC). Dr. Nduom actually got slightly more than 1% of the valid votes cast (1.34%), though many thought he was the most informed and probably most competent of all the other candidates. Also in the Jomoro constituency for instance, the daughter of the first president of Ghana, Samia Nkrumah returned from Italy after a long stay away from Ghana to contest Lee Ocran who had worked hard in the constituency since 1979. One observer, Maximus Ojah (2008) commented that:

Samia was not even in the country until about 2 years ago. Many Ghanaians didn't know about her. We hear she speaks English, Arabic and Italian. Notice the absence of Fante, Twi, Ga, Hausa, etc in that sentence. How did she even communicate with her constituents? She claims to have gone to every nook and cranny to spread her message to voters. Did she go with a translator?

Ojah (2008) hypothesised that the people would vote for Samia because she is "obroni", that is "white woman" (note some Ghanaians believe that the white man/woman has a magic wand to cause

transformation). However, one of the most credible pollsters in Ghana, Ben Ephson conducted a poll in the constituency and asked the people of Jomoro whom they would vote for during the elections and why. The majority said they would vote for Samia with the reason that she is the "daughter of Nkrumah", they would want to be on record to be the people with Nkrumah's daughter as their member of parliament (MP)!. True to their words, on December 7, the people of Jomoro voted out the hardworking MP and gave the mandate to Samia Nkrumah. The defeated candidate complained that despite working hard to develop the area as an MP, the people had not appreciated his efforts. [He regretted that] the election in the constituency was not based on issues and records of the candidates (Ocran, 2008).

The NPP lost the 2008 elections even though on balance[9], the Ghanaian economy was doing well under the reign of the NPP. The proportion of Ghanaians living under the poverty line in 1998/99 (39.5%) declined to 28.5% in 2005/6. In urban areas[10], this reduction was as follows: urban coastal (31.0 – 5.5), urban forest (18.2 - 6.9) and urban savannah (43.0 – 27.6). In rural areas, the reduction disaggregates as follows: rural coastal (45.6 – 24.0), rural forest (38.0 – 27.7) and rural savannah (70.0 – 60.1). Extreme poverty also declined from 26.8 % to 18.2 % around the same time. Within this broad spectrum, poverty in female headed households declined by a bigger margin[11] (43 - 19 %) than in male headed households (55 – 31 %). Among food crop farmers, the poorest group of people in Ghana, poverty declined from 68 % in 1991/92 to 46 % in 2005/6 (UNDP, 2007). In the words of the World Bank, Ghana is "sub-Saharan Africa"s breaking story of poverty reduction over 15 years, with a decline in rural poverty as the largest contributor" (World Bank, 2007, p.45).

Arrogance[12] is widely believed to have cost the ruling NPP many of the seats it won in 2004. This arrogance was at the levels of individual MPs, party committees and national government. At the individual level the MPs preferred to lord their titles of "honourable" over the common Ghanaians (Atta-Boakye, 2008). At the party level, committees and functionaries had sometimes treated foot soldiers with contempt or "foot soldiers" had not been given "preferential treatment" to reward them for their sweat. In the case of Suhum, the supporters of the NPP threatened to vote "skirt and blouse" (that is an MP from a different party and a presidential candidate from another party, in this case NPP) because the executive committee had disregarded the candidate of the people (GNA, 2008). At the national level, ministers, special advisors to the president and indeed the president himself were deemed

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[9] There were some challenges like worsening social inequality; but there were also huge gains in many spheres of the economy especially the macro economy with relatively low inflation.

[10] In Accra, both poverty (increased from 4.4 to 10.6) and extreme poverty (from 1.9 to 5.4) worsened

[11] Period for comparison is 1991/92 to 2005/6

[12] This could be defined sometimes even as 'how a person speaks'. People in Ghana who speak with either American or British or any western accent may be deemed arrogant. Indeed the NPP candidate is widely perceived as arrogant simply because he is too confident and has a foreign accent! Similar allegations have been leveled against Dr. Nii Moi Thompson who also has an American accent.

arrogant. In a story, captioned, "..they are power drunk and arrogant" , the *Ghanaian Chronicle* recounts how ministers preferred to meet foreign dignitaries but gave excuses whenever local people wanted to meet them. The paper also recounts how a "mafia" group at the secretariat of the presidency thwarted efforts by "ordinary" people to meet the president (The Ghanaian Chronicle, 2003). In 2007, the minority side in parliament nearly boycotted proceeding in parliament because of the "arrogance" and "disrespect" of the Chief of Staff, Kodwo Mpianim; prompting him to apologise to the house (Daily Guide, 2007).

The Ghanaian electorates want humble politicians. After the elections, an open letter was written by one Kwabena Mprah to an MP (Asamoah Boateng) whose mandate had been withdrawn by the electorates:

Dear Sir,
On July 16, I published a piece in which I suggested to the President of the Republic of Ghana to dismiss you. In my article titled, "Please Sack this Kokonte Minister," I demonstrated to readers that you had become too <u>arrogant</u>. Sir, I had decided to keep my original letter secret till the day you come back home – the day you are reduced from an uncontrollable tax spender to a taxpayer! But alas, the day is here with us – you have been walloped! Mr. Minister, when you came down from Britain, you were very <u>ordinary</u>. You demonstrated that you were a <u>people"s man</u>! That was why my uncles at Mfantseman, loved you! Mr. Minister, …I heard you in an interview…you again demonstrated that your <u>arrogance was</u> simply unmatched. You told all Ghanaians in that interview that "they don"t understand English." Sir, a day after you were declared loser of the Mfantseman West parliamentary polls, I decided to speak to my uncles in the area. It would be instructive for me to quote my uncle for you, "Asabee was always with us, but as soon as he became MP and later minister, he became <u>so arrogant</u> – he carried himself <u>like a god.</u> So we just waited impatiently for the polls to show him who had the power" (Mprah, 2008, emphasis supplied).

Because of this obsession with "humble politicians", the NPP abandoned its much touted "campaign of issues" and after the main elections resorted to a campaign of begging to signify how humble they are. It has been reported in the press that leading members of the party followed ordinary fishermen to their workplace, the sea shore, and knelt down in the hot sand to ask for forgiveness. This was contained in a report carried by a radio station - Joy FM, "Tears as NPP leaders beg for votes" (Joy FM, 2008a). The out-going president also held press conferences after the elections to ask for forgiveness noting that they could have actually wronged the first round of electorates without knowing. Both the campaign director and campaign chairman of the NPP asked the electorates for forgiveness. The flag bearer of the NPP, Nana Addo has justified the campaign of begging suggesting that being submissive would win them more votes in the run-off (Agboka, 2008; Kwansema, 2008 for a narrative of the begging spree). Provoked by the begging spree, however one commentator observed that "they are begging to lead like a thief that has been caught for wrong doing already. Who in their right senses will allow someone to beg to lead them? Leadership is not begged for, it is worked for"! (Gogo, 2008).

Another dimension of voting in Ghana that runs counter to the argument of voting on issues is that electorates vote along tribal lines[13]. In popular parlance, it is believed that for places like Bantama, even if a monkey were put up and decorated with the colours of the NPP, the electorates would more enthusiastically vote for the ape than any competent person from another party. Similarly, it is believed that even if the NPP paved all the streets in the Volta region with pure gold, the electorates would still vote for the NDC. As one commentator has noted:

"Those who argue that even if NPP had paved Volta Region's roads with gold, they still wouldn't have voted for the party just don"t get it. Who says this is about roads and development projects? This is tribal politics, pure and simple, and the Asantes, Akyems and Kwahus are EQUALLY as guilty of it as are the Ewes. Just look at the figures from the constituencies where these tribes are dominant. Those Asantes who, for one reason or the other, didn"t want to vote for an Akyem just simply stayed away instead of voting for a Fante man they perceive as a proxy for the Ewes". (Amenyo, 2008).

It must be noted that though there is some truth that some regions like Ashanti are the "political World Bank" of the NPP and regions like Volta are the "Florida state" of the NDC, the situation is improving. For instance, the share of votes obtained by the NPP in Volta region in 2004 (14.26%) increased marginally to (14.98%) in 2008 and the share of votes obtained by the NDC in Ashanti region in 2004 (24.06) also increased quite significantly to (26.13%) in 2008 (Electoral Commission, 2008).

The changing terrain notwithstanding, tribe plays a major part in Ghanaian politics. Nearly all the 4 major parties in Ghana chose their running mates from the Northern region in order to win votes from the North. Also in the run-off elections, the flag bearer of the NPP, Nana Addo, dissolved his campaign team and put "key" people in charge of certain regions in order to win the votes of these tribes. One author has wondered, "Why did Akufo Addo deem it expedient to appoint Alan Kyeremanteng to head his presidential run-off activities in the Ashanti Region?" Analysing the situation, the author argues that "The appointment of Alan Kyeremanteng by Akufo Addo to head his presidential run-off campaign in the Ashanti region is a clever move, …It is an indication of Akufo Addo's determination to play and ride on Asante nationalism and fully harvest it to his own advantage …He is using Alan Kyeremanteng as an Asante pawn in a brilliantly conceived scheme" (Osei-Wusu, 2008). The NDC is alleged to have distributed leaflets in the central region with the Ghana map divided into the major regions and in each region was a picture of a president in Ghana's history emerging from the region. Since the central region had not as yet "produced" a president in Ghana's history, the NDC is alleged to have used the campaign slogan, "adzi wo fie a oye" meaning Fantis (people from central region) must vote for a Fanti

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[13] Note that in Ghana tribes subscribe to different parties. The NPP is widely believed to b an Akan party and the NDC, an Ewe party. So the point could be 'tribal/party lines'.

man to be president of Ghana (note the NDC candidate, Prof. Mills is a Fanti) (Ansah, 2008). In an interview with some residents in Cape Coast and reported under the caption, "why the Central Region voted that way", *The Ghanaian Times* reporter, David Yarboi Tetteh reported that though the people in the region were concerned with the high price of premix fuel for their fishing activities and high poverty levels in the region, the overwhelming reason for voting for the NDC candidate was because he was fanti (Tetteh, 2008).

Another factor that determines the pattern of voting in Ghana is how much money politicians can pay electorates. Analysing his defeat at the 2008 elections, the leader of the PNC, Edward Mahama in an interview with Joy FM, stated emphatically that "monetocracy caused my loss" He opined that "I lost the election because I didn"t have as much money as the other parties, not because Ghanaians wanted deliberately to deceive me; and you know and I know T-shirts and transport money played a major role in this election." According to him, in places like Yendi where he lost, the two leading parties tainted the elections with money; which meant the electorates did not vote on "issues" but on who paid the most money. He argued however that it is not the fault of the people but rather the poverty levels of the electorates (Mahama, 2008). Such beliefs are not new. In a pre-election environment watch report in 2004, the Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana (CDD) and the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) observed that "Allegations of "vote buying" have featured prominently in this year's primaries. We are unable to determine whether this reflects increased incidence or increased reporting." (CDD and CODEO, 2004, p.6). However, it highlights prevalence of worrying levels political corruption that could corrode the democratic process. Based on these findings, CDD and CODEO called on political parties to make every effort to discourage vote buying and other corrupt practices in their primaries. The authors of the report recommend that the EC, CHRAJ and other official anti-corruption bodies must investigate these allegations thoroughly and impose appropriate sanctions to deter such practices (CDD and CODEO, 2004, p.6).

4. Do politicians conduct their campaign on issues?

This question is moot because *apriori*, politicians would be expected to behave in a way to please the electorates in order to win their votes. However we need to consider the specific Ghanaian context. Ghana"s democracy is very well respected in Africa. The print and electronic media enjoy much freedom and try to keep the politicians to talk to the "issues". Ghana ranked second in Africa on the World Press Freedom Index. Worldwide Ghana ranks 31st in the latest ranking of countries by press freedom (Reporters Without Borders, 2008).Current affairs programs like News File, Front Page (Joy FM) and Good evening Ghana (Metro TV) have all helped to keep politicians on the "issues". Also the

existence of governance think tanks like CDD and IEA have also helped the situation as they (especially IEA) make available many platforms for politicians to talk about their strategies and plans for Ghana. The universities (e.g. KNUST) have also helped in making the politicians talk about their specific stance on major issues like energy. In the 2008 elections, all parties that contested had party manifestos which were duly launched. Thus, the politicians clearly had a vision – it is these, among others, that prompted *the Economist* to proclaim Ghana a redeemer of Africa's wretched democracy (The Economist, 2009).

There are however some setbacks. The NPP consistently embarks on "fear campaign" against the NDC using the fact that the NDC was born out of the PNDC (a military government with unimpressive human rights record). The NPP then links the leader of the NDC to the life chairman of the party (Jerry Rawlings who came to power in 1981 through a coup d"état and ruled till 1992 when he transformed himself into a civilian and won the much disputed 1992 elections) and concludes that the leader of the NDC (Prof. Mills) would only be micro managed by Chairman Rawlings. A vote for Mills, it is popularly said, is a vote for Rawlings. The NDC is often attacking the NPP/its leading members (including the leader, Nana Addo) of doing drugs, though no hard evidence is ever presented. Politicians are sometimes also caught using inability to make "beautiful speeches" as evidence of incompetence (this was a popular campaign against the ex president, John Kufour [2001-2008]) or a person"s temporary sickness as evidence of terminal illness (this was a popular campaign against the sitting president, Prof. Mills).

Overall, it appears Ghanaian politicians are fairly focused on issues[14]. Unfortunately, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Ghanaian electorates do not vote for politicians purely on grounds of competence. In fact those who vote on issues may be in the minority. With majority of the electorates voting along tribal/party lines or voting because of how much they have been paid or simply because they think one candidate is more humble than another. These conclusions should not be too surprising given that political literacy in Ghana is still low: net enrolment in secondary schools in Ghana as of 2005/6 was 40.9% though in urban areas, the figure was slightly higher (55%). Generally, the adult literacy rate is low (47.1%). As of 2005/6, only 53.8% of the population owned a radio set and only 31% of the population owned a TV set. The percentage of the population that owned a mobile phone was 19 (UNDP, 2007). According to the National Communications Authority of Ghana, only 0.016% of Ghanaians had access to the internet as of 2006 (Joy FM, 2008b). Perhaps, it is this high level of

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[14] There was a significant change in campaign approach after the December 7 elections that failed to elect a clear winner. During the run off, the parties (NPP and NDC) only run their campaigns based on insults, accusations and threats. The NPP swung from issue-based campaigning to 'begging campaigning' and campaign of 'fear'.

illiteracy that leads to high numbers of spoilt ballots during elections[15] (e.g. in 2004, 188,123 ballots or 2.13% of all ballots were spoilt; this increased to 205,438 or 2.4% of all ballots). In fact observers of the 2002 district assemblies elections were convinced that "The Electoral and other organizations involved in civic education must decentralize voter education. In other words, it is imperative that all aspects of voter education are extended to all parts of the country. It was clear that voter education was very low and poorly managed" (CDD, 2003, p.16)

5. Conclusion

Advocates of good governance believe that democratic local governance enables local people to elect the most competent politicians. Applied to urban governance, democratic local governance would enable urbanites to elect the best politicians to manage the city.

The premise for the latter conclusion – electorates elect competent candidates/ the most able candidates - may be flawed in the Third World; where electorates are still politically illiterate and poor; and hence do not vote necessarily on issues. In the case of Ghana, it may well be that electorates vote on issues; however such voters are in the minority. The majority of electorates vote along tribal and party lines; and based on how "humble" a politician is or how much the politician can pay for the electorates' votes. This situation has its roots in poverty and illiteracy; which are unacceptably high in Ghana.

The attitude of the Ghanaian voter has several implications for metropolitan, municipal and district management. Tribal politics is unlikely to feature in local government elections since in such elections the contestants are usually from the same tribe. However, moneycracy, *humility* and *partisan politics* are likely to dominate local elections. This latter point means that introducing multi party elections at the local level; and electing mayors for the metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies would not necessarily lead to a transformation of the local or urban economy. The Ghanaian electorates would not necessarily elect people who are committed to transforming the urban future of Ghana, therefore greater local democracy has no answer to the housing problem, sanitation crisis, unemployment burden and the poverty challenge.

The contradiction with greater democratic local/urban governance in the Ghanaian context is that it may revert the local government system to a model akin to the pre 1974 *dual hierarchical structure* in which

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[15] Particularly in the 2008 elections, the NPP has alleged that the 'spoilt ballot syndrome' was a strategy by election officials and its opponents to reduce the total number of votes it obtained. It is significant to note that the percentage of spoilt ballots could have saved Ghana a run off if those ballots had been properly cast (or were valid).

central government bodies worked alongside the local government at the local level; especially in the case where the local government is controlled by a party different from the party that forms central government. Given the heavy reliance of local governments on central governments for revenue *vis-à-vis* the winner-takes-all politics in Ghana, this latter scenario could plunge the local/urban economy into distress if political maturity is not exercised by central and local governments.

The path from good local governance to better cities and vibrant local economy is not linear (Smith, 2003). Though greater local democracy may not necessarily be bad, introducing it in an environment of poverty and illiteracy is only another way of installing the rich as lord of the poor. Hence, multi-party elections at the local level should not be romanticised and made to look like a magic word – *abracadabra*!

However, this scenario cannot be changed *merely* by reforms often touted by international bodies like the World Bank, Cities Alliance and UNDP (World Bank, 2003; Cities Alliance, 2008; UNDP, 2003) - capacity building for local government staff, improving legal framework for local governance, greater voter education and improving the relationships between local and (1) central governments and (2) civil society groups – because such reforms do not fundamentally change the drive for profit and the world city status syndrome hard wired into the current conception of good urban governance. To be sure, these reforms are adequate but not sufficient to take us from good governance to liveable cities; typified by ecological sustainability and egalitarianism (Stilwell, 1995, p.216; Smith, 1996).

To achieve this vision, we need "democratic socialism" (Stilwell, 1995, p.220); an alternative to capitalism which provides the appropriate nexus between markets and planning such that the productive system in society would be sensitive to consumer need; not corporate profit (Stilwell, 1995;Smith, 1996).

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