

LIGHTS ON, LIGHTS OUT: THE ELUSIVE PROMISE OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY  
AND ELECTRICITY PROVISION FOR THE RURAL POOR UNDER  
DECENTRALIZATION IN GHANA: 1992-2008

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Lights on, Lights out: The Elusive Promise of Public Service delivery and Electricity Provision for the Rural Poor under Decentralization in Ghana

By

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Electricity is a ubiquitous element of modern life. While it is elusive for many in the developing world by all accounts Ghana has achieved a successful rate of electrification and outpaced many states in sub-Saharan Africa. As a country widely admired for its democratic governance, economic growth and relative stability, the benefits of ample sources of hydropower and other forms of electric energy have not accrued to the rural poor as the target population of decentralized electrification programs. Previously dismal electricity access prior to the early 1990s led to the pursuit of electrification initiatives to power the country more efficiently and equitably. Under a mantle of decentralized institutions-thought to produce optimal outcomes for public service delivery of goods like electricity and water, access for the rural poor *has* improved. Yet questions of how political decentralization and market oriented power sector reforms have structured electricity access for the rural poor remain under explored. Since the completion of this study, a 55% access rate substantially increased to 66%. This dissertation argues that though Ghana has made remarkable progress in electricity provision, the merits of

decentralized electrification initiatives have yielded *differential* benefits for the rural poor who comprise a significant bulk of the country's population. I maintain that under a decentralized institutional framework, thought to be inherently ideal for societies in transition, successful service delivery of electricity reflects uneven outcomes for the rural poor evident in the political capture of local institutions charged with utility provision. This dissertation is significant because it focuses on electricity access as an *inconspicuous* but critical socio-economic component for large numbers of people in the developing African world. Virtually taken for granted in advanced, industrial and post industrial world, the quest for equitable, and affordable access in developing, emerging economies like Ghana in many ways represents a microcosm of the public-private battleground to reconstitute the state's role in the economy, through a neo-liberal agenda of electric power reforms.

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This dissertation is the culmination of multiple efforts of shaping and retelling, to produce what I hope is an interesting account of how particular institutional processes and public goods access have structured the lives of the rural poor. But just as importantly, it is the product of my advisor and mentor Dr. Irving "Lenny" Leonard Markovitz whose immeasurable feedback, tireless support and patience, helped to bring this project to fruition. I am not sure any words can fully capture the immense debt and token of gratitude that I owe him for pushing me to think critically about the research questions and puzzles I ask in this study. Without remaining steadfast in support of this study, providing constructive criticisms, meticulously reading several drafts and helping to simplify my arguments, this study would not have been possible.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Decentralization and Public Service Delivery in the Fourth Republic	62
Chapter Three: The Historical-Institutional Context for Electrification and Power Sector Reform in the Fourth Republic: 1992-2008	122
Chapter Four: The Unfolding Nature of the Rural Poor, Rural Development and Public Service Delivery of electricity in Post Independent Ghana	160
Chapter Five: The Numbers Game: Quantifying Access and Regional Differentiation In Electricity provision in the Fourth Republic	196
Chapter Six: Conclusion	219
Addendum	247
Appendix 1:	249
Appendix 2:	251
Appendix 3:	267
Appendix 4:	270
Appendix 5:	271
Bibliography:	273

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Map of Ghana	xiii
Table 2: Public Service/need based factors	96
Table 3: Revenue Inflow and Outflows to the DACF	97
Table 4: Rural Electrification Questionnaire Results	102
Table 5: Towns and Capitals Electrified through the NES Scheme	104
Table 6: Other Projects Executed 1989-2001	104
Table 7: Completed Projects under the NES Scheme	110
Table 8: Ongoing Projects under the NES Scheme 2001-2008	110
Table 9: Financial Performance of the VRA 1997-2002	133
Table 10: Financial Performance of the ECG 1997-2002	133
Table 11: Generation mix	134
Table 12: Private electricity projects in developing countries	146
Table 13 Electricity sector reform in selected sub-Saharan African countries	147
Table 14: Energy Intensity of Public and Private Power Generation	150
Table 15: Electricity Consumption in selected African countries	151
Table 16: Preponderance of IPPs across selected African countries	151
Table 17: Growth in Energy Consumption 1990-2000	153
Table 18: General Benefits of Electricity According to the Millennium Development Goals	165
Table 19: List of electricity and Rural electrification Projects	190
Table 20: Access to Electricity in Ghana on a Regional basis	205

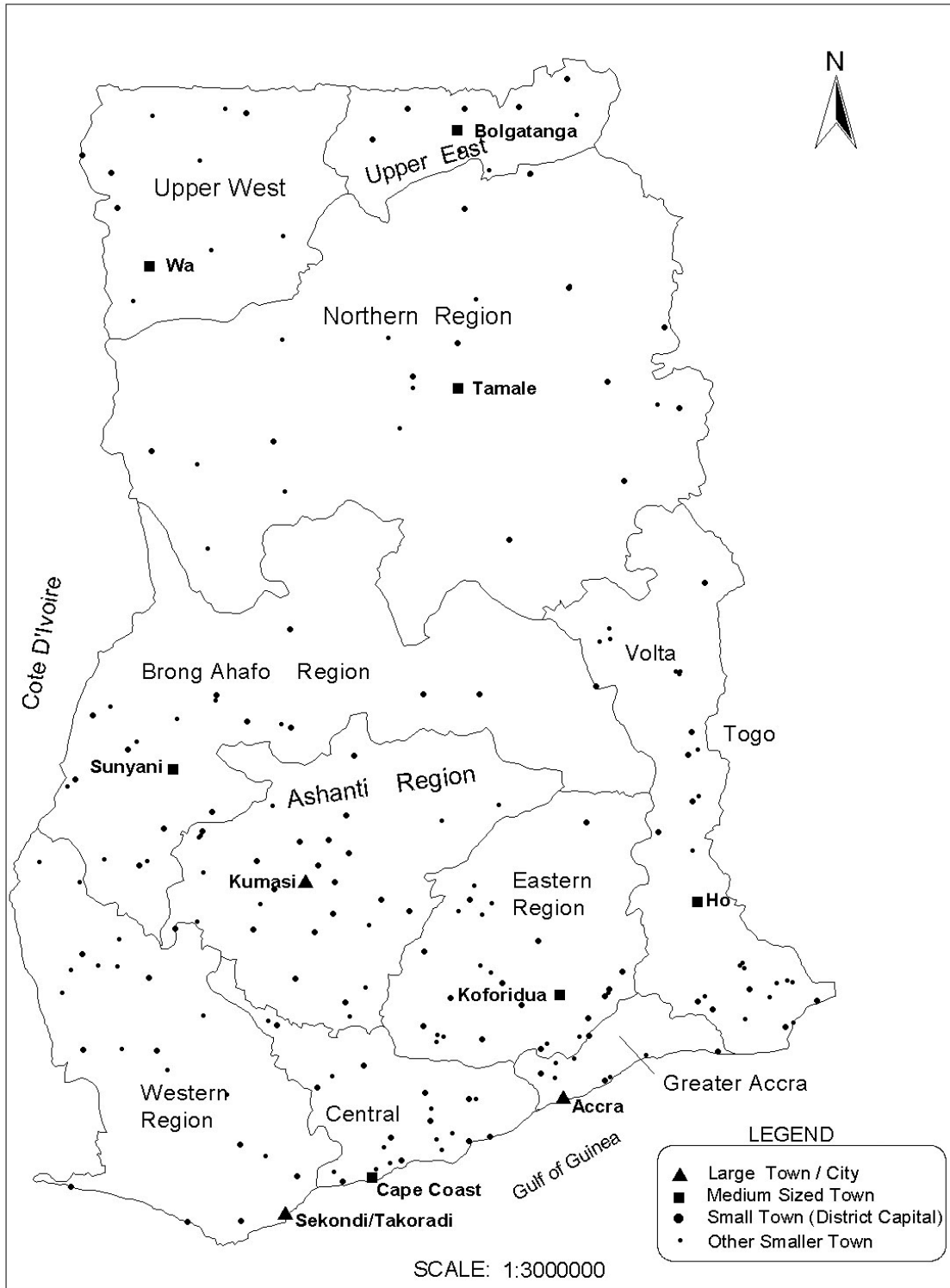
Table 21: Election Rates of Electrification Access for Ghana's ten regions	207
Table 22: Lorenz curve	210
Table 23: Regression variables	211
Table 24: Difference between Observed and Expected electrification rates	212
Table 25: Scatterplot matrix	214
Table 26: Regression Results	215
Table 27: Morans I	215

## List of Acronyms

CDD-Center for Democratic and Development  
CIDA-Canadian Institute for Development  
CPP-Convention People's Party  
DA-District Assembly  
DACF-District Assembly Common Fund  
DCE-District Chief Executive  
EC-Energy Commission  
ECG-Electric Company of Ghana  
ERP-Economic Recovery Program  
GDP-Gross Domestic Product  
GONGOs-Government Owned Non Government Organizations  
GNP-Gross National Product  
HIPC-Highly Indebted Poor Country  
IEA-Institute for Economic Affairs  
IFI-International Financial Institution  
IMF-International Monetary Fund  
IPP-Independent Power Producer  
ISSER-Institute for Social, Statistical and Energy Research  
LDCs-Least Developed Countries  
MDGs-Millennium Development Goals  
MFEP-Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning  
MFJ-Movement for Freedom and Justice  
MOE-Ministry of Energy  
MP-Member of Parliament  
NDC-National Democratic Congress  
NED-Northern Electrification Department  
NES-National Electrification Scheme  
NGO-Non-Governmental Organization  
NLC-National Liberation Council  
NLM-National Liberation Movement  
NORRIP-Northern Region Rural Integrated programme  
NPP-National Patriotic Party  
OECD-Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development  
OFY-Operation Feed Yourself  
PNDC-Provisional National Defense Council  
PUE-Productive Uses of Electricity  
PURC-Public Utilities and Regulatory Commission  
PP-Progress Party

PRSP-Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers  
REP-Rural Electrification Program  
SAP-Structural Adjustment Program  
SHEP-Self Help Electrification Program  
TUC-Trades Union Congress  
UGCC-United Gold Coast Convention  
UFRD-Urban Functions in Rural Development  
USAID- United States Institute for Development  
VRA-Volta River Authority  
WB-World Bank  
WAPP-West Africa Power Pool

## MAP OF GHANA



Source: George Owusu : <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i2a3>.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

For any modern state to thrive and expand economically, a reliable supply of electricity is essential. Indeed, energy represents one of several key inputs that complement socio-economic development (Johansson & Goldenberg, 2002; Davisons & Sokona, 2002). Despite ample hydropower, other sources of electric energy and decentralized electrification initiatives, the rural poor have not managed to benefit as expected<sup>1</sup>. With three successful electoral transitions and model governance since 1992, the livelihoods of many Ghanaians have improved in the past decade, yet the question of how electricity access as a *micro but important socio economic component* has affected the rural poor is not sufficiently addressed in the development literature.<sup>2</sup> Since roughly fifty six percent of Ghanaians reside in rural settlements and of this number roughly 80% are classified as poor, they are the primary focus of this study. First, this study argues that the laudable success of a formerly 55 percent, and current 66 percent electrification rate has yielded *differential* benefits<sup>3</sup> for the rural poor who comprise close to 60 percent of a population of 24 million. Second, though decentralization appears ideal for societies in transition and is thought to produce optimal outcomes in the realm of public service delivery of goods like electricity, particular institutional processes have entrenched attempts to capture the political

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<sup>1</sup>Sahn & Sarris (1991) and others find that a precise definition of poverty is subject to debate, but borrowing from their conceptualization, the rural poor will typically represent a smallholder household representative of a class that has been identified as poor or vulnerable. The term “rural poor” can also denote people who face considerable difficulties in meeting basic livelihood needs, and may subsist on non-farm sector labor and self-employment and in some cases. In Ghana, the rural poor make up some 60% of the total population and because their living conditions are significantly inferior in comparison to urban areas (Institute for Economic Affairs, 2004, p. 33), they form the primary focus of this study.

<sup>2</sup>Significantly, since the completion of data analysis, the electricity rate is now at 66%, up 11 percentage points. For most of sub-Saharan Africa, electricity has taken on a public goods element due to poorly functioning markets See Banful (2008).

<sup>3</sup> See “The Implementation of the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRSII) 2006-2009), Annual Progress Report (2006) Government of Ghana, 2007; Kankam & Boon, “Energy delivery and utilization for rural development: Lessons from Northern Ghana”, *Energy for Sustainable Development 13* (2009). Nygaard, “Institutional options for rural energy access: Exploring the concept of the multifunctional platform in West Africa”, *Energy Policy*, 38 (2010), Sebitosi & R. Okou, “Re-thinking the power transmission model for sub-Saharan Africa”.

support and co-optation of the rural poor<sup>4</sup>. The scholarly contribution of this study is that it reveals how the conception of electricity as an almost invisible element of rural development has structured the domestic political environment in ways that heighten central government authority under an institutional framework of decentralization; and pitted against a neo-liberal agenda of energy sector reform, this development informs a continuing dialectic of the role of the state in the economy. This study also demonstrates how current electricity outcomes reflect *responsive government* and attentiveness to the rural poor, despite unevenness in provision. As a country recognized for its model governance, and on the cusp of further development economic gains, this poorly understood but critical component of rural welfare remains inconspicuously addressed as the country shifts forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps more revealing is how local institutions under a decentralized political framework have not produced far-reaching outcomes in public service delivery of electricity. Instead this function has largely culminated under central government initiatives.

Decentralization aims to devolve political, administrative and fiscal power to local levels with the intent of more participatory, more nuanced development outcomes that includes service provision of public goods.<sup>5</sup> For many scholars, decentralization has possibly enhanced stability by giving different regions and population groups a meaningful stake in the political system... (Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Final Report and Summary of Findings, September 2010, p4). This study reveals how the goals of decentralization coalesced with public goods provision of electricity under a period of political reform that began in the early 1990s.

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<sup>4</sup>Co-optation is defined as a process in which individuals or groups are brought into beneficial relationships with the state, making them dependent on the state for certain rewards (O'Neil, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> The goals of decentralization are subject to debate, however the United States Institute for Aid and Development (USAID) contends that there are three important goals decentralization can help promote—particularly of interest to stakeholders domestically and in the international community. They include stability or security, democracy, and development which includes service provision (USAID Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Final Report and Summary of Findings, September 2010, p2)

Borrowing from a USAID comparative assessment of decentralization, this study supports the notion that “the most propitious environments for decentralization programming will be where the political incentives of leading actors align with the interests of donors and other actors promoting decentralization”(Ibid, 2). Accordingly, this study reveals how conflicting institutional processes under a neo-liberal framework of minimal state intervention enhanced incentives for elites to use timed and sequenced decentralized electricity initiatives as a “public good.” Indeed, I explore this development in the wake of populist and post-populist politics that renewed interest in a marginalized but untapped rural class in the post 1992 period. The pursuit of *partial* power sector reforms not only offers a critical vector of a highly and perhaps hyper-politicized public good, but also reflects the extent to which shifting political realities evolved in the post 1992 period. Consequently, as a rather unexpected outcome, this study demonstrates how the circumvention of neo-liberal power sector reforms, pro-poor policies accounts for the ‘success’ and conversely gaps in access for the rural poor as well as the political impetus of rural co-optation. Inadequate capacity at local levels and difficulty in mobilizing material resources to meet demands such as service provision has encouraged clientelistic behavior and rural patronage. As the findings of a USAID report on the comparative assessment of decentralization in Africa observes,

“the observed lack of capacity is unremarkable...the relative underdevelopment of the local state exists for multiple reasons-first African states simply have long records of centralization, fiscal weakness, and reliance on predatory or clientelistic mechanisms for rule. Most states depend upon the cooptation of local agents-whether elites or traditional authorities-and their incorporation into patronage networks. In this context, the construction of local authority was informal and operated through mechanisms that run parallel to organized local government...” (2010, p 32)

It is only apt to place observed absences of strong capacity in the context of political incentives and time horizons since inadequate capacity at local institutional levels call into question the

extent of success of decentralized service provision<sup>6</sup>. These observations prompted the following questions. This dissertation questions why the transformation in access, successful outcomes in electricity provision and model democratic governance have not yielded more successful outcomes for the rural poor; why and how this resource reflects a public/goods aspect; and what explains lagging service delivery despite ample sources of hydropower, particularly in the post 1992 period when the country returned to civilian rule? Why did presumably abundant hydropower and the largest man-made dam failed to produce favorable outcomes for rural electrification given the socialist policies of the country's prolific and first president, Kwame Nkrumah? What accounts for more progressive outcomes of rural electrification under the country's second president K.A. Busia, whose administration espoused minimal government and largely eschewed Nkrumah's interventionist government policies? What does decentralization in *theory* as opposed to *practice* reveal for countries with a large constituency of rural poor, who possess institutional outlets for political empowerment, but remain economically marginalized? What can we expect in similarly oriented countries and what lessons can Ghana offer for other states in sub-Saharan Africa? How can neo-liberal oriented power sector policies that require limited intervention in industry in general and in the energy and mining industry more specifically work in concert with political decentralization when electricity functions as a public good and effective tool for political co-optation?

I explore these questions by teasing out political, rural development and energy sector challenges in early post independent Ghana, after the 1957, when hydropower development and electricity initiatives emerged in a series of development plans. I examine the record of decentralization in Ghana particularly in the post 1992 period, the consequences of stabilization

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<sup>6</sup> USAID Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Final Report and Summary of Findings, September 2010, p32)

and structural adjustment policies in the context of power sector reforms and their effect on the rural poor. By exploring the reach of neo-liberal power (electric) sector reforms under a lens of political economy, this study reveals the extent to which partial compliance, pro-poor and rural electrification policies inadvertently produced a triumph of responsive governance in Ghana. Indeed, the political incentive of regime survival under subsequent governments unsurprisingly reveals a political calculus of maintaining regime support that helped to produce. As a Ghana desk study documents, opposition parties clamored for decentralization and while hopes were raised with alternation of party power in 2000 and 2008, these parties which formerly advocated decentralization suddenly appeared (sic) to have less motivation to decentralize when they control the center” (USAID Comparative Assessment Report, September 2010, p 8)

As Ghana emerged from the shackles of colonial power into independence in 1957, hydropower offered Ghanaians a thrust for hope and promise of development. The charismatic, prolific and socialist minded Kwame Nkrumah (1957-1966), the country’s first president commissioned the continent’s largest hydropower project to fulfill the aims of modernization and industrialization. Ultimately, fulfilling these objectives proved tumultuous. During the tenure of the country’s second president, these objectives proved more successful as did electricity provision for the rural populace. But while electricity was identified as a key goal in several development plans beginning in the 1950s, the failure to furnish rural society with electricity set the stage particularly in the post 1992 period, for a rural strategy of political co-optation and institutional capture of district assemblies through central government control of decentralized public service delivery.

Using national and sub-national units of analysis, this dissertation focuses on Ghana as a consequence of the country’s abundant reservoir of hydropower, relative stability and growing

influence on a regional and continental scale. The electricity divide in much of sub-Saharan Africa calls for an in-depth inquiry into what is for many, an erroneously invisible element of economic development. The reasoning here is simple: if a ubiquitous element of daily living is disparate or inaccessible for rural population, the bulk of whom are poor in Ghana, their access to other goods and services are also diminished. Indeed, their chances for further marginalization in the economy increase. As the country's economy of scale proliferates, cities face an ever-growing force of urbanization, and demands for goods and services. Such transformation is likely to heighten citizen engagement and shape the electoral contours of future elections as demands for even more effective government accountability, and electric energy management increase. With economic growth expected to reach double digits in the coming years through oil production and investment (Thaker, 2010, p80), this study offers a timely assessment and deconstruction of a largely obscured socio-economic and livelihood component for the rural poor as a significant segment of Ghana's population. What's more, Ghana offers unique insights for governance and democratizing states on similar trajectories due to its concrete articulation of decentralized service delivery. District assemblies or the local decentralized institutions are the focus of this study as intended vehicles for local development and transformation in the provision of community needs such as electricity provision, educational development, and commercial linkages since the 1990s.

In recent decades, decentralization has gained currency among scholars, donor agencies, and national governments because of several virtues ascribed to it: effectiveness, responsiveness, accountability, empowerment and development.<sup>7</sup> It is understood to transfer functions and competencies in a program of administrative decentralization and decentralized planning, to

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<sup>7</sup>Mike Oquaye, *Politics in Ghana 1982-1992: Rawlings, Revolution and Populist Democracy* Accra, Ghana: Tornado Publications, 2004, 256.

transfer means and resources to local government through a program of fiscal decentralization.<sup>8</sup> When advocates refer to decentralized authority, *devolution* is understood to comprise an essential element of this process, which involves the conferment of powers and performance of functions without overarching reference to a central authority (national government).<sup>9</sup> As a process that delegates central government power and authority to local level institutions, decentralization was widely encouraged during the 1990s by international financial institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Precise measurement of decentralization remains difficult given a wide range of meanings in various political contexts, which makes its application open to interpretation. However it refers to a process whereby power from national or centralized government is devolved to local institutions. Perhaps for similar reasons, it remains difficult to ‘qualify’ successful service delivery of public goods under decentralized institutions. In any case, decentralization was promoted across the globe; and advocates of decentralization viewed it as a panacea to over bloated bureaucracies, mismanagement, corruption, and poor governance in sub-Saharan Africa. At the end of the 1980s, Ghana represented a state in search of new political solutions. Amid pressures for a return to civilian democratic rule, it was widely presumed that decentralization would mitigate a panoply of problems including most notably, state-society relations. As a result, the pursuit of a constitutional, representative, democratic government after a decade of military-dictatorship, led to the emergence of political and economic changes that included plans to reform public administration and revisit decentralization (Adamolekun ed, 1999; Haruna, 2003).

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<sup>8</sup>Kwamena Ahwoi, *Local Government and Decentralisation in Ghana*, Unimax Maxmillan: Accra Ghana, 2010

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>10</sup>Decentralization has several definitions and is used here to refer to “a deliberate change in the organization of government involving the transfer of powers from the centre to units of government and administration at lower levels.” From “Decentralised Administration in West Africa: Issues and Training Implications.” Proceedings of Workshop, 1-8 March 1987, Lagos, Nigeria, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, cited from Ocquaye, 2004.

With three successful electoral transitions since 1992, Ghana is frequently showcased as a model of democratic governance for sub-Saharan Africa. Its institutions are widely perceived to be fair and transparent, elections have run smoothly, civil society is thriving, an independent press proliferates and ordinary Ghanaians can express criticism of government without fear of a reprisal. But as a state,<sup>11</sup> with one of the best democratic records in West Africa (Thaker, 2011, p 80) the relationship between political capture, and how co-optation can produce successful but uneven outcomes despite inadequate capacity in public service delivery of amenities and the consequences of under decentralized institutions are all but ignored.<sup>12</sup>

Under an institutional framework of decentralization, the empowerment of local-rural communities and marginalized groups like the rural poor is claimed to produce optimal outcomes in the realm of public service delivery or in economic and livelihood components like electricity. By focusing on how electricity provision, a component of basic living standards is uneven for the bulk of the rural poor in Ghana, despite decentralized Self-help and Rural Electrification Schemes adopted in the 1990s, I tease out key institutional processes responsible for the unusual political outcomes observed in this study. One of the starting points for my analysis centers on how the pursuit of electrification programs in the early post-independent period of Ghana came to structure the political machinery of co-optation, timing, sequencing and resultant political business cycles in post-transition return to civilian rule in 1992. As a USAID comparative assessment of decentralization notes, “a longer term dynamic calculus matters” (2010: 33). But the pace of underperforming state owned energy sectors and limited electric energy supply coalesced with neo-liberal power sectors reforms across the globe. By restructuring the power

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<sup>11</sup>In the context of this study, local institutional actors refer to district assemblies, which were created as part of efforts to adopt decentralization in Ghana beginning in the late 1980s.

<sup>12</sup>As Peter Fuseini Haruna (2003) observes, Ghana adopted reforms that instituted a more mixed economy and decentralized public services to improve its mode of governance, in “Reforming Ghana’s Public Service: Issues and Experiences in Comparative Perspective” *Public Administration Review*, Vol 63, No. 3 May-June 2003 p343

sector, neo-liberal actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund hoped to liberalize tariff settings, and encourage private capital to rehabilitate existing utilities and institutional practices, which had hampered generation and transmission capacities.

### **Research Objective**

My research objectives are three fold: 1) this study searches for possible connections between the progressive, but illusive electrification efforts of Kwame Nkrumah, whose administration espoused a socialist, interventionist approach, and the more successful outcomes (although insufficient) under the second president, K. A. Busia's minimalist government as well as the far reaching but incongruent results in the fourth republic or post 1992 period; 2) Despite a successful national electrification rate of 66%, what explains uneven access for the rural poor in lieu of targeted initiatives under a framework of political decentralization? 3) Under what conditions can market oriented neo-liberal power sector reform, benefit the poor when poorly functioning market conditions exist and electricity provision has taken on public-goods status? I ask these questions because electrification policies began with the promise of abundant hydropower and the completion of the Akosombo dam in 1966 under the helm of Nkrumah, who identified this resource as critical to the county's economic and industrial development.

Despite well meaning attempts of subsequent administrations to provide ample electricity to the entire country, most if not all failed to articulate a 'comprehensive electric energy schema until the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Kwabena Mensah and Patrick Smith note, "Ghanaians could be forgiven for experiencing a sense of déjà vu when listening to successive governments explain their strategies to tackle the country's chronic shortage of electric

power.”<sup>13</sup>This study chronicles the reasons for an absent foci of electric energy provision in the early post independent period, found to be largely due to political upheaval and frequent regime change. My research findings demonstrate that though Nkrumah’s efforts were promising, Busia accomplished more by using a carefully crafted “social justice” lens, and measures of co-optation that aimed to reduce disparities between urban and rural people. My findings show that incompletely conceived energy values, diminished political capital, pre-occupation with centralization (see Schiffer, 1970) and the sheer scale of economic transformation obscured Nkrumah’s efforts. I also find that the connections between the early post independent regimes of Nkrumah, Busia and succeeding administrations in the post 1992 period are rooted in path dependent outcomes.

Essentially, when rules and norms become established patterns of behavior, they structure actor choices and future institutional outcomes. Known as path dependence, this process refers to decision-making mechanisms in which the present and future depend on the history of past actions and when self-reinforcing dynamics are present (Ibid, 29). Douglas North (1990) observes too that, path dependence is a way to conceptually narrow choices and link decision-making through time. As Mokyr (2002) finds, institutional structures produce different outcomes and certain distinct factors define the trajectories of national and local institutions. Perhaps significantly, path dependent institutional outcomes represent the persistence of routines and institutionalization of habits and practices (Nelson and Winter, 1982). Institutional path dependence may be viewed as the “preeminence of sub-optimal norms, regulations and rules in

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<sup>13</sup>Special Report, Ghana: “Some Electric Power but No Glory” in *The Africa Report*, February/March 2010, No 21, p. 50. Presently many of the country's newspapers like the Daily Guide, The Daily Graphic, The Statesman and a plethora of others continue to highlight the country's electricity gaps, dissatisfaction with the performance of the Electricity Company of Ghana which supplies electricity to domestic consumers which represent just a few of the intermittent problems facing the Electric Energy Sector.

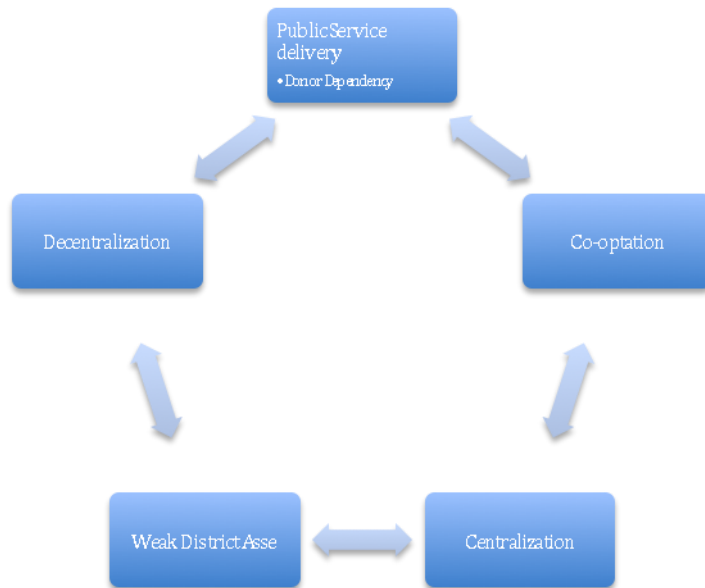
the face of better alternatives (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2000; Woerdman, 2003 cited from Oyeyinka and Oyelaran, 2006: 29). Indeed, this reasoning offers a plausible explanation to the puzzle of uneven development of Ghana's power sector institutions, distribution of and access to electricity from the early post-independent period through the 1990s, given inadequate and sub-optimal planning that began with the completion of the Akosombo dam in 1966. With unstable political rule and numerous coup d'états that began in the 1960s with the last occurring in 1981, it is little wonder that by 1990, only 15% of the population had access to electricity. Consequently, the inadvertent 'lock in' of choices potentially offers new insights of how shifting priorities under a political framework of decentralization produced a dynamic of rural preference and group 'capture' beyond the populist rhetoric.

My research findings also reveal how the institutional capture of district assemblies by central government and pressures for political legitimacy under a democratic transition proffered new preferences and a shifting dialectic about the nature of political access, incorporation and public goods. A ever-changing political landscape shaped by external financial actors and institutions required a renegotiation of state society relations that could only be effectively managed through careful placation. In the wake of these developments, strategic timing in provision and inception of electricity projects became key to the success despite 'mixed' outcomes for the rural poor. In virtually every election period for the years 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, newspaper articles stories featuring electrification projects demonstrate patterns consistent with a political business cycle and the discretionary nature of provision (see Appendix 2).

As a consequence, this study explores the role of market-oriented power-sector reform that emerged in Ghana during the 1990s and examines the efficacy of this new framework for

rural constituents through observed electricity outcomes. I examine the political outcomes associated with the transfer of authority from the center (central government) to district assemblies at a critical juncture of political transition that began in 1988/89. Ultimately, this study demonstrates how a weak district assembly system facilitated and became essential to the political capture of the rural poor by the ‘center’. The study also establishes how these developments emerged as a consequence of legitimacy and accountability challenges as a response to democratizing processes. As a member of parliament noted, “People are now demanding accountability in development: water, sanitation, electricity. They want their communities developed.” This study also explores the implementation process of the first electrification initiative-the National Electrification Scheme and how a Rural Electrification initiative emerged as a social justice project (Ocquaye, 2004, p. 478) in the post 1989-period of political, administrative and fiscal decentralization.

I use the model conceptualized below to depict what I believe has structured the relationship between public service delivery, donor dependency, and a decentralized political framework or weak district assembly system. As an outcome of political decentralization resulting centralization of key institutional functions and co-optation also captures the complex institutional relationships that affect public service delivery and subsequent discrepancies in electrification outcomes.



### Statement of Argument

Essentially this study views the transformation of electricity access from 15% at the beginning of the 1990s to most increased rate of 66% as a significant achievement given the poor record elsewhere in the region. But the expansion of access has not managed to accrue to the rural poor as we might expect.<sup>14</sup> In some ways, public service provision of electricity operates much like a bargaining chip to borrow from Onoma (2010) that ironically reflects more responsive government. By highlighting the consequences of shifting hierarchies of power implicit in the simultaneous pursuit of political decentralization, democratization and neo-liberal institutional preferences, this study highlights the triumphs and limits of the Ghanaian state to the

<sup>14</sup>An original percentage of 55% was obtained from the Deputy Director of Power at the Ministry of Energy in Accra, Ghana, February 2009, however at the time that data analysis concluded for this study in February of 2011, a further increase was determined.

ubiquitous paradigm of ‘minimal government.’<sup>15</sup> Optimal provision of electricity to all groups in society was one of several important objectives articulated since the early post independent period and an explicit goal of succeeding governments in the post 1992 period. But the transformation of access and decentralized electricity initiatives has not resulted in more widespread access especially for the rural poor. However, this study assumes the commitment of succeeding governments in the post-independent period to providing equitable access of electricity and fulfilling the electorate’s demands for goods and services. A particularly salient issue in this study establishes how attempts to capture the rural poor have paradoxically produced more responsive government as electoral outcomes have increasingly coalesced around service delivery of electricity and public goods provision. In the analysis that follows I will demonstrate key parts of my argument as addressed in this study.

The causal relationship between domestic and international institutions can hardly be overlooked and provides both exogenous and endogenous explanations for the political phenomena observed in this study. First, my findings reveal that despite being at the forefront of decentralization (Reddy, 1996) insufficient material resources, inadequate financial capacity of the country’s local government or district assembly system have contributed to central government hegemony or political authority under political decentralization. This has culminated in “fits and starts” of electricity initiatives aimed at reducing disparate outcomes for the marginalized rural poor.

I demonstrate how new alignments between public, government and external actors or “trustees” of development facilitated measures of co-optation through public service delivery of electricity under political decentralization and democratization processes. In using public service

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<sup>15</sup> Political decentralization is used to here to denote the creation and maintenance of sub-national elections and structures (USAID Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Final Report and Summary of Findings, September 2010: 18)

delivery of electrification as a yardstick of successful devolution of institutional authority to district authorities (decentralization in practice), I document the findings of mixed success of electricity delivery through a rural electrification questionnaire I administered to energy officials, newspaper articles obtained from the Office of Public Records and National Archives, interviews with members of parliament and energy officials as well as quantitative data analysis.<sup>16</sup> Almost half of my questionnaire respondents, for example, rated the latest ‘decentralized’ electrification (a Self-Help Electrification Program) initiative in terms of access as poor or fair, and sixty-seven percent of respondents (19 total) found that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's policies reduced the scope of government in terms of economic expansion and programs geared toward rural development. The same number found that WB and IMF policies limited domestic autonomy and rated their response as “moderate”<sup>17</sup> or moderately high. Significantly, newspaper article (see Appendix 2) headlines obtained from 1992 to 2008 confirm the correlation between the political factor of rural co-optation, discretionary provision and a political business cycle given the announcement of electricity and rural development projects in virtually every election year: that is: 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008. Interviews with members of parliament, officials from the Energy Commission and the Ministry of Rural and Local government also offered ambivalent assessment of decentralization and electricity provision and noted considerable challenges in aiding the rural poor. Others shared their opinions about the political consequences of disparate access despite notable progress from a previously dismal access rate of 15% in the early 1990s.

Second, the implementation of partial power sector reforms and subsequent lifeline tariff policy for the poor paradoxically accounts for the current success rate of 66% in the post 1992

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<sup>16</sup> The ‘mixed’ success of electricity initiatives is taken to mean frequency in provision, affordability and quality since electricity provision is not always constant.

<sup>17</sup>For this question, respondents were given a choice of ‘low’, ‘moderate’ and ‘high’

period.<sup>18</sup> This contradiction is remarkable given that comprehensive power sector (neo-liberal and market oriented) reforms should ostensibly provide wider market choices and even lower prices for domestic consumers. But on the contrary, halting reforms have supported political incentives of succeeding governments to cushion consumers like the rural poor, which I find is a powerful explanatory variable for co-optation. To borrow from Akonor (2004), I assume that Ghanaian governments will pursue cost benefit policies as a logical political calculation. Hence the pursuit of a lifeline electricity tariff policy for the poor, *partial* power sector reforms, are logical choices for governments bent on regime survival. Consequently, discretionary electricity access is accounted for through these variables. My analysis also demonstrates the inherent difficulty in adopting full-scale market oriented power sector reforms *which involved deregulation, privatization, subsidy and tariff removal* for states engaged in decentralization and democratization processes.

Third, my findings reveal that the weak capacity of district assemblies charged with service delivery reflects the consequences of political decentralization and the central government's reluctance to share power and resources (Asante, 2011, Decentralization Workshop, American University). The mechanisms of political decentralization typically involve sub-national elections at three levels-that is at the local or municipal, district and regional levels (USAID Comparative Assessment Report, September 2010, p19). As the "Blue Book" or "District Political Authority and Modalities for District Level Elections" a guide for decentralization stipulated in 1987, the functions of assemblies were to include the provision of electricity or utility services among a range of other activities (see Ahwoi, 2010, p41). Conversely, my research has also revealed that dependency on external aid and an ambiguous

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<sup>18</sup> Given that electricity access remains abysmally low for much of sub-Saharan Africa with many countries registering 20 or even 30%, 66% represents substantial success.

institutional terrain occupied by donor partners and non-government organizations in rural development have also contributed to weak 'agency' of district assemblies and growing centralization of national government responses in this regard. An “ownership” crisis in rural development and poverty reduction approaches highlights an uneven power dynamic between government, donor authority and non-governmental organizations. What’s more, these external actors appear to have taken on a “trusteeship” role further limiting the autonomy and scope of local institutional actors (district assemblies) and agency in service delivery in important ways.

Fourth, though the now increased (66%) rate of electrification suggests that more than half of the population has access, social economic indicators such as population size, agricultural income, mean annual income etc., and subsequent data analysis employed in this study display patterns inconsistent with official Ministry of Energy (MOE) data across the country’s regions.<sup>19</sup> Although current and updated figures of regional access are indeed much higher than originally forecasted, the quantitative findings of this study (see Chap 5) nevertheless reveal uneven electricity distribution across all ten regions of the country, including urban areas, calling into question- the extent of access in urban and rural areas. In a surprising outcome, data and electoral analysis since the last election in 2008 reveals that the highest regions with electricity access happen to be ‘swing regions’ or administrative areas with large numbers of undefined voters and party loyalists as well a political business cycle of electricity provision in the post 1992 period. An equally fascinating revelation is that the Greater Accra typically a solid base of support for the National Patriotic Party (mostly composed of urban, commercial, business interests) is both a swing region and ostensibly the region with the highest percentage of electricity access. The presumed success of wider electricity access and provision outlined in official reports of the

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<sup>19</sup> After the completion of data analysis for this study, it was determined that the MOE updated access rates to 66%. However there is no breakdown of percentages for urban or rural areas of the country’s ten regions.

Ministry of Energy is of considerable import given the mixed outcomes of decentralized electrification and rural electrification programs that my findings reveal. In political business cycles, politicians manipulate macroeconomic instruments to win elections. Though the political business cycle literature remains debatable for some given early models which essentially viewed voters as naïve and shortsighted, (see Nordhouse, 1975, MacRae, 1977; Tuftle (1978), McCallum and Bennett (1978), Beck (1982), Rogoff and Sibert (1988) and McCallum (1978) have argued instead that voters are rational and reward capable political incumbents.<sup>20</sup> Drazen (2000) argues that models based on the manipulation of economic or monetary instruments to boost voting or electoral outcomes are unconvincing especially in regard to developed countries. Monetary opportunistic models outlined by Nordhouse, for instance assume that an incumbent would induce an inflation-unemployment cycle or expansionary macroeconomic policies. For a developing country that was hailed as a 'star' adherent of structural adjustment in during the 1980s and beyond, such measures were generally unavailable despite the periodic circumvention of strict conditionalities (see Akonor, 2004).

I share the view of Rogoff and Sibert (1988, cited from Akonor, 2004) that voters need not be myopic for political business cycles to occur, since it is only rational for the economy to matter. However, while the marginalized poor in developing sub-Saharan countries are likely to be myopic given tenuous livelihood/economic circumstances, gains in democratization visible in the freedom of press and to an extent civil society have mitigated the short-sightedness of the public memory. This explains the utility of public goods and measures of co-optation as less destructive forms of evolving patronage and part of the political business cycles. Where public resources vastly overshadow accumulation potential from weak private markets, access to the

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<sup>20</sup>For example, there are a range of theoretical and empirical disagreements over the explanatory power of opportunistic and partisanship models that emerged over the past 25 years to account for pre-electoral spending trends in monetary and fiscal policy (see Drazen, 2000, for example).

state (via political positions) is the key factor driving national and sub-national competition. Indeed once in power, incumbents tend to increase their dominance by expanding patronage networks and suffer minimally from diminishing electoral returns from poor governing performance.<sup>21</sup>

In any case, the success of opportunistic pre-electoral manipulation may be partially valid at least in the developing country context given the assumption of imperfect information about an incumbent's performance. It is for this reason that expansionary policy preceding an election signals or functions as an indicator of competence (see Rogoff, (1990) and Rogoff and Sibert (1988). I find that fiscal policy pre-electoral manipulation offers a more plausible model, particularly for developing countries as Drazen also (2000) observes. As he notes, a fiscal cycle is especially strong in developing countries and as Gonzalez (1999a) found, political cycles are strongest in countries with intermediate levels of democracy with Ghana arguably a contender in this regard. Under the assumption of voter rationality, Drazen raises the critical question of why voters would respond to pre-electoral manipulation-and the answer for developing countries is an easy and perhaps logical one. For one, the signaling effect is well known and as Drazen cogently states, "a government signals its 'type' by taking actions that worsen the budget situation with the notion that only someone who is very competent would put himself in that situation."<sup>22</sup> In any case, in the post-colonial, contemporary period the use of "chop money" or public goods as a critical component of political business cycles is viewed by many Ghanaians, as a regular or institutionalized feature of politics. In order to further demonstrate my argument, I offer analysis of critical institutional elements that inform decentralization and public service delivery while addressing the theoretical issues raised in this study, which follows below.

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<sup>21</sup> USAID Report: Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Final Report and Summary of Findings September 2010, p 21.

<sup>22</sup>"The Political Business Cycle After 25 Years." *NBER Macroeconomics Annual*, Vol. 15, 2000, 100

## **Democratization, Decentralization, and Public goods**

This study emerges out of the nexus between the critical processes of democratization, decentralization and neo-liberal power sector policies posed in juxtaposition to public service delivery, the energy industry and minimal state involvement that intersected to produce important consequences as the country embarked on ambitious plans to achieve middle-income developed status in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Democratization refers to the institutions that facilitate or guarantee the ability of citizens to determine social and economic structures and frames accountability of the state to the public (Sorensen, 1993). It involves political empowerment at the local level, limited government, and competitive elections. The level to which states attain democracy (Vanhanen, 1988) and the multiple interactions processes, shifting and negotiated agendas characterize ‘democratization’. In short, it refers to the institutionalization of political power exercised directly or indirectly through participation, competition and liberty as critical components required to establish the foothold of democracy.<sup>23</sup> Because Ghana moved to end repressive dictatorship and usher representative government at the end of the 1980s into the 1990s, I discuss how a changing political and economic landscape created formidable challenges for former military dictator J.J Rawlings. Indeed, these critical and multifaceted processes required striking bargains with sections of society that included rural people.

As a result of new political alignments between public and private actors, democratization will almost inevitably be hindered by an inability of the state to deliver public goods (Grugel, 2002, 180) and by ambiguous institutional spaces informed by the increasing internationalization of external financial institutions and actors.<sup>24</sup> How do nascent democracies

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<sup>23</sup>In Dahl’s (1971) a democratic system is one that is completely or almost completely responsive to the preferences of its citizens; for theories of democratization, see Lipset (1959), Weber, Durkheim (1964) and Rustow (1970) etc.

<sup>24</sup> Governments are treated as public actors, while the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as international institutions act as private actors.

navigate the inherent tension between central government hegemony and decentralization while ensuring political legitimacy and survival? I explore this question by chronicling the tenuous politics of transition, impact of structural adjustment policies that conditioned the political transition to democracy during the early 1990s, and efforts to re-centralize important elements of decentralization and public service delivery under a mantle of ‘limited government.’

Many studies claim that democracies do a better job than non-democracies in improving the welfare of the poor (Boone, 1996; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Dasgupta, 1993; Franco, Alvarez-Dardet, & Ruiz, 2004; Lake & Baum, 2001; McGuire, 2001; Moon & Dixon, 1985; Przeworski et al., 2000; Sen, 1981, 1999; Siegle, Weinstein, & Halperin, 2004; Zweifel & Navia, 2000 cited in Ross, 2006, p. 860). As Ross (2006) notes, these claims are supported by existing political-economy models, which observe the tendency for democracies to produce more public goods. But few theories of democratization or approaches to decentralization address the tenuous process in countries that embark on both. Nor do any theories offer convincing ideas about how fragile states navigate public service delivery under conditions of neo-liberal engagement, a reduced scope for the government in the economy, dependency on donor aid and political decentralization. In fact few offer meaningful analysis about the ways in which the pursuit of democratic practices, clamor for public goods amid austerity measures coalesced to produce paradoxically more responsive government despite uneven outcomes of electricity provision for the poor.

The model of democratic governance that emerged in Ghana emphasized a decentralized institutional framework intended to do just that: to improve public service delivery, raise standards of living and reduce the numbers of those living in squalor and poverty, especially in rural areas using district assemblies as agents of individual community needs and transformation.

And it is not accidental that policies of rural acquiescence emerged in tandem with the political framework of decentralization in the post-1992 period.<sup>25</sup> Some argue that rural co-optation was simply the result of the electoral business cycle, political parties and incumbent governments who used discretionary spending to secure votes.<sup>26</sup> But in the context of neoliberal concepts about the role of government authority in the economy, others contend that the decentralization program ran concurrently-and in some respects in harmony-with ongoing liberalization measures linked to reducing the role of the state.<sup>27</sup> Another view suggests that systematic differences between younger and older democracies are driven by the inability of political competitors to make credible pre-electoral promises to voters (Keefer, 2007). Indeed, Keefer contends that “the inability of political competitors to make credible promises to citizens leads them to prefer clientelist policies to under-provide non-targeted goods, over-provide targeted transfers to narrow groups of voters and to engage in excessive rent seeking” (Keefer, 2007, p 804). Others argue that these tactics reflected exclusionary politics and public discontent with negative consequences that resulted from the structural-adjustment policies, which the Rawlings’ pre-transitional military regime judiciously implemented.<sup>28</sup> Speeches by Rawlings and public news addresses at the end of the 1980s, nonetheless, embodied an interest in inculcating decentralized authority as a vehicle for service delivery. This political aim included plans to reduce regional disparities and poverty by according local institutions with administrative and presumably fiscal authority as vehicles for economic transformation.

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<sup>25</sup>Here decentralization refers to the transfer of authority or responsibility from the center or central government (decision making apparatuses) to local governments or semi-autonomous organizations (Bergh, 2004). It is not certainly new to Ghana, with experiments with this form of governance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>26</sup>See Oelbaum, 2002

<sup>27</sup>David Simon, Duncan F. M. McGregor, Kwasi Nsiah-Gyabaah, Donald A. Thompson Poverty Elimination, North-South Research Collaboration, and the Politics of Participatory Development *Development in Practice*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), pg. 46

<sup>28</sup>See Green, 1995 & 1998

If conventional wisdom is right, it is no surprise that younger democracies are likely to experience negative outcomes in this regard. Consequently, Keefer and Vlaicu's (n.d.) analysis, although only indirectly tested (due to the inability to measure candidate promises to voters effectively), may help explain the tendency of young democracies to pursue high discretionary and targeted spending, given the ability to fulfill credible promises to *only* small segments of a population. The literature acknowledges that governments that have recently transitioned to democracy are likely to have low credibility with voting populations, which may lead to a vicious cycle in which expectations for patronage are heightened, thus producing the phenomenon of *clientelist democracies* (Keefer, 2007, p. 806). While some have expressed skepticism at this notion, it is feasible that popular perceptions of patronage and political returns to the few persist in new regimes, simultaneously leading to expectations of 'more of the same' despite heightened hopes for political and in many cases economic change.

The use of decentralization for effective governance centers on the belief that popular participation is essential if projects are to be realistic and receive local support (Akonor, 2004). With a range of functions that includes promotion of economic development, productive infrastructure, municipal works and services, budgeting, finance and administration, the increasing number of districts should signal decentralization in motion. But in societies that are institutionally weak and offer few incentives for civic participation besides the potential gains from clientelist networks, the benefits may become ambiguous. Political accommodation of economic classes or groups in society is certainly a regular and unsurprising feature of many, if not most, political systems. Size matters and because the number of electoral areas depend on the size of district assemblies as established by the National Commission for Democracy, central or national government capture of local government/district assemblies functions has been greatly

facilitated. In essence, a weak district assembly system has provided a rationale for *re-centralization and reformulation of public delivery of services* like electricity as the exclusive terrain of national government and hence facilitated the *targeted* public goods provision of electricity during electoral cycles. One could argue that such developments reflected neo-patrimonialism, or the award by public officials of personal favors, both within the state and in society; typical examples include licenses, contracts and projects.<sup>29</sup> Certainly this feature is present in all polities. But as Bratton and Van de Walle (1994) observe, the difference lays in the form it has taken in state lauded for the extent of its democratic governance.

On another note, this variable may help to explain the difficulty of curbing the implicit problem of diffuse political power as an avenue for institutionalizing mechanisms of co-optation in focus areas (e.g., education, feeder roads, transportation, healthcare facilities, etc.) that district assemblies would normally deliver. As Bratton and Van de Walle note, would be leaders of neo-patrimonial regimes typically want to use a transition as an opportunity to include themselves in the new rules of the political game. One method is the use of populist ideology and rhetoric, as illustrated in the pre-transition military oligarchy of Rawlings, which faced popular protest and a crisis of legitimacy and had to subsequently quicken the pace of a “managed” transition.<sup>30</sup>

A second, complementary strategy involves the inculcation of weak institutions that on the one hand offer accountability and a measure of transparency, while masking the unavoidable conclusion that these institutions are unlikely to effectively constrain past institutional practices (Weithal & Luong, 2008). As Grugel notes, “democratization offers an opportunity to reform the

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<sup>29</sup>See Joseph R. (1987). *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*. New York: Cambridge University Press. As cited in Bratton, M. & Van de Walle, N. (1994). Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa. *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4, p. 458.

<sup>30</sup>Indeed, Bratton and Van de Walle note that in the variant of neo-patrimonial regimes like Ghana and Nigeria, efforts to shore up grassroots support are often hampered by lack of organizational ability, which means that managed transitions often start from above.

state, but after a transition, institutions usually continue to operate within cultural traditions and parameters (2002: 176) In fact, the powerful incentives of such political actors within a regime—in this case, members of the Rawlings’ government—were so strongly directed by societal pressures and economic expectations in the quest to maintain political power. Therefore, weaknesses in the newly created district assemblies offered a legitimate and politically useful conduit for discretionary outcomes in the post 1990 period. My participant interviews substantiate as much as does a 2009 poverty-reduction strategy paper released by the International Monetary Fund. As the report noted, the collection of internally generated revenue in the district assemblies remains at a dismal 14 percent. The report also observed that only two out of ten regions are able to generate a fifth of their total revenue accruals. More worrying are further observations in the report which noted the “persistent weak capacities of district assemblies to generate adequate levels of internal revenue needs to be addressed through training programs on modalities for enhancing the level of internally generated revenues, effective monitoring of performance and the institution of an appropriate incentive schemes including the enforcement of appropriate penalties”<sup>31</sup>

Efforts to inculcate decentralized institutions signify more than perfunctory attempts to mitigate potential ethnic conflict or reshape institutional authority. They represent an effort to reduce the scope of state responsibility while providing a legitimate institutional locus for central governments to accord political, administrative, and to an extent fiscal authority for local development outcomes. Indeed under a decentralized planning and administrative system, economic development was thought to begin with communities and their representatives, as well as the Assembly members who identified their communities needs”<sup>32</sup>. By making these

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<sup>31</sup> See Ghana: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2009, p. 31

<sup>32</sup>See Owusu, 2004, pg. 170

structures salient at the grassroots level through the involvement of local people in decision-making processes<sup>33</sup> Rawlings hoped to accord greater financial responsibility and local development to communities themselves—especially in rural areas. These efforts, however also served as an important means for political machinery of mobilizational politics apparent in public service delivery of amenities like electricity for disadvantaged rural poor

Two central problems encompass the tenuous application and successful consolidation of this form of governance. The first, as Haruna (1996) observes, is the failure to understand and appreciate the complexity of decentralization. The concept itself is often associated with the provision and administration of financial and material resources- that is, with creation of districts, construction of office buildings and recruitment of officers.<sup>34</sup> An official associated with the District Assembly Common Fund whom I interviewed noted this very problem. Second, the development of local leadership with able skills, requisite knowledge and professional competence to bear responsibility for devolved administrative tasks has received insufficient attention to date. Crook (1998) for example, explains that it didn't take long for people to realize that the leadership and managerial competencies of personnel at the local level in Ghana were low, thus contributing to poor performance (p348). Likewise, Joseph Ayee (1996) highlights how central government officials throughout Ghana's contemporary political period used a decentralized system to exploit (local) political interests (as cited in Mckwartin, 1995). Haldenwarg (1993) contends "decentralization is fundamentally an instrument for stabilizing a political system in crisis...as a bid to resolve legitimacy and stability crises faced by PNDC (Provisional National Defense Council)." It is telling that he notes how the Provisional National Defense Committee (military government of Rawlings: 1982-1991/92) had assumed an aura of

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 168

<sup>34</sup>Ministry of Local Government, 1996, as cited in Haruna, 1996, p. 347)

permanency, as the longest-serving government in Ghanaian history.<sup>35</sup> The regime may have as early as 1983, set in motion plans for decentralization, as part of an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) aiming only to decentralize a few government ministries and, perhaps more importantly remove certain responsibilities from the center to the grassroots to make local people share in the cost of government (Ocquaye, 2004, p. 251). Though Rawlings intended for the assemblies to function as a conduit for mass participation, Ocquaye (2004) notes:

The view was that professionals and others of the elite, who live in the cities, could not effectively represent the interest of the people. In a rent seeking fashion, instead of mobilizing the people for development based on self-help, these representatives became conduits for making demands on central government, thus helping to create clientelistic relationships. (p. 251)

Additionally, at the turn of the decade (1990), the political incentives of the Rawlings PNDC government reflected political survival and an interest in maintaining central government authority under democratization and decentralization. As Ayee (1996,) notes, consequent efforts at maintaining power required rigorous efforts to re-centralize the state despite an elaborate system of councils, sub-committees, district planning coordination units and a local government service act which delineated expectations and functions of district assemblies. While recentralization has strengthened government performance and produced more effective responses to local issues in many countries, Ghana's experience reflects opposite outcomes. Consequently, it comes as little surprise that an official from the District Assembly Common Fund (where monies are allocated by the central government for use at the district levels) noted that administration of the fund has been very successful and stated that, "honestly, if it had not been for the fund, a lot of the districts would be in darkness, especially senior secondary schools. Some agree that decentralization helped to redress inequities in resource allocation through the District Assembly Common Fund, which each District may use as it sees fit for development at

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<sup>35</sup>See Chazan, 1989

the local level. But Haruna (2003) and Ayee (1997) both note that social and political interest groups have taken advantage of decentralization to integrate state and society in a manner that promotes their own development. Though this process created a participatory locus for ordinary people in rural communities to articulate their preferences (Ayee, 1997), the bureaucracy was also blamed for adjusting too slowly and for resisting the decentralization process (Ahwoi, 1992).

Social contract theories from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Olson and others espouse the view that citizens give up some rights in exchange for protection and in return for provision of collective goods and other services from the state. An important observation of this study is that poorly functioning markets induce the provision of goods like food and electricity to take on a public goods aspect, which require intervention by government.<sup>36</sup> For this reason, the provision of public or collective goods often operates in far more complex terms than we might expect. In the next section, I briefly discuss the consequences of structural adjustment policies, which set the stage for co-optation in service delivery of electricity as an effort to placate the negative outcomes associated with this economic framework.<sup>37</sup>

### **Ghana's experience with Structural Adjustment**

As a more or less compliant pupil of structural-adjustment policies, which sought to correct severe internal and external imbalances, rampant inflation, overvalued exchange rates, import tariffs, liberalize trade and cut social programs during the 1980s, the political repercussions were profuse. Despite a cocktail of contentious policies, the problems of persistent poverty exacerbated by the socially regressive structural adjustment programmes and associated aid

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<sup>36</sup>See Afua Banful (dissertation) "Essays on the Political Economy of Public Goods Provision in Developing Countries, Harvard University, 2008, 4

<sup>37</sup> The term 'co-optation' is used to denote

conditionalities imposed by the international financial institutions IFIs) were nonetheless accepted, even by the IFIs themselves (Mohan et al. 2000 cf Simon, McGregor, Nsiah-Gyabaah and Donald A. Thompson, 2003). Though poverty reduction strategies (PRS) devised in tandem with structural adjustment policies aim to include national governments as much as possible, their autonomy has frequently been compromised. As Simon et al note, “these PRSs are supposed to be formulated by governments through a process of wide-ranging consultation with civil society over the broad strategy and individual sector papers, to enhance local 'ownership' and acceptability. However, the key economic and political conditionalities remain intact....”<sup>38</sup>

In tandem with structural adjustment, the pursuit of political decentralization offered a legitimate means for meeting donor requirements of transparency, institutional accountability, and the presumable diffusion of power and authority in reformed sub-national government or district structures. But as I demonstrate, these circumstances along with a tenuous economic environment also allowed for targeted and discretionary spending for public goods like electrification, which emerged as a salient issue for rural voters. Stein (1997) in fact suggested that it is difficult to overlook the impact of adjustment on real wages, income, nutrition, health etc. on the rural poor who were “net buyers of food (128). While Geest (1994) argued that the adjustment process and development were not only inherently conflicting processes, long-term development had to be viewed through a social justice lens to produce sustainable economic growth.

### **Minimal Government under Decentralization**

I posit that under tenuous economic circumstances and “minimal government” or a neo-

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<sup>38</sup> David Simon, Duncan F. M. McGregor, Kwasi Nsiah-Gyabaah, Donald A. Thompson, “Poverty Elimination, North-South Research Collaboration, and the Politics of Participatory Development” *Development in Practice*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), p 42

liberal oriented framework, the “trusteeship” role (see Whitfield, 2006) that donor partners appear to have adopted has diminished state autonomy and encouraged governments to placate negative outcomes through rural electrification (and decentralized) projects or co-optation. Concomitantly, each of these elements facilitated discretionary public goods provision under the requisites of minimal government-amid dependence on donor aid. On one level donor dependency encourages the rationalization of stops and gaps in poverty and development projects since they depend on the pace of external actors.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, democratization and the consequent participatory locus and empowerment of ordinary citizens heightens demands for public goods and services that governments attempted to fulfill through subtle measures of co-optation.

### **The impetus for Populism and Decentralization in Practice**

I draw from Huntington’s (1968) analysis that social and economic changes occurring in developing or emerging states forced a rapid expansion of political participation and political demands that made new bases of political associations and institutions difficult to construct. Amidst widespread pressures to introduce political reform and repair an ailing economy, powerful incentives emerged to co-opt key groups in society to maintain political support. I attribute this development to the threefold increase in district assemblies (structures created as part decentralization and intended to assist in the delivery of local services) from an initial number of 66 at the end of the 1980s to the current number of 170, in spite of weak financial, administrative, human resource and development capacity. As Ofie-Abagye, Director of the

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Stops and gaps’ in poverty refer to a project by project’ preference which has been used along with the need for fiscal austerity and donor funding as a rationalization for ‘incremental’ development

Institute of Local Government Studies, noted in a 2009 Ghana Center for Democratic Development symposium, “the expansion in the number of districts, changing demands, and expectations of district assemblies have brought in their wake challenges of fulfilling the establishment for each district quantitatively and qualitatively” (15). Subsequently, it comes as little surprise that the National Electrification Scheme (NES) and accompanying Rural Electrification Program (REP) emerged as the result of efforts to bolster the eroding legitimacy of Rawlings’ populist politics. As such, the REP became an effective and visible instrument of accommodation and discretionary power, filling a void left by the weak district assembly capacity. By the same token, neoliberal policies advocated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund produced deleterious consequences in austerity measures that required the country to scale back social programs, cut government jobs, reduce social expenditures and, in effect, reduce the size of the state. Conversely, these measures produced strong incentives to cater to rural areas and use of discretionary funding to maintain a stable political base of support in the Fourth Republic.

In theory, decentralized political systems empower citizens in their ability to undertake decisions that impact their communities and livelihoods. Decentralization then is expected to increase the number of public goods, services and other resources at the disposal of all groups, especially those who are marginalized (see Oquaye, 2004). But a dichotomy between theory and practice is especially evident in Ghana, where decentralization has come to function as a system of “divisible benefits” to be conferred on rural interests. I find that the announcement of communities expected to receive electricity abounded particularly in 1992 a critical year for political transformation (see appendix 2). After a return to civilian rule and installation of political parties in 1991 and 1992, the use of discretionary power and impetus for rural

acquiescence by succeeding governments emerged resolutely to transform Ghanaian politics. This phenomenon was present at various points in the nation's volatile, but rich political history. But the populist orientation of the former military dictator is at best, an incomplete explanation. Instead, this study advances the view that the rapid pace with which societal demands for political and economic change emerged at the end of the 1980s both internally and externally accounts for the tenuous circumstances that faced the Ghanaian state. Consequently, precarious economic conditions and political reform required reorganizing state/society relations and the adoption of an appropriate form of governance suitable to the Ghanaian or African context. This development reveals a great deal about the politics of access for the rural classes and the consequences of "electioneering" (Norris, 2004). Akonor (2004) for instance, cites numerous instances where discretionary power was used to secure rural acquiescence, or support particularly in light of neoliberal measures and IMF conditionalities that required a scaling back of the state. Indeed, this process began during the transition to civilian rule amid preparations for elections in 1992. Akonor notes that, "the PNDC (Provisional National Defense Council) was concerned about securing the support of labor unions and other important sections of the electorate, such as rural dwellers and became noncompliant through excessive expenditures directed to these groups" (2004, p.166). Green (1995) also notes that in 1992, one hundred towns and villages were supplied with electricity through the national grid, as well as 20 district capitals (cited from Akonor, 2004, p171). Additionally, improvements in water supply, feeder roads and school construction were used as other forms of rural patronage (Green, 1995, p. 578-580). In telling fashion, the finance minister at the time, Kwame Peprah, noted, "We must resist the temptation to play political football with the economy in an election year. Populist demands, populist rhetoric, blackmail threats, wildcat strikes all combined to wreak havoc on the progress

of our economic forward march during the two previous elections in 1992 and 1996.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Moving beyond Populism: The New Politics of Decentralization**

While one could argue that the targeted use of discretionary power was primarily instrumental for the populist National Democratic Congress party/government of Rawlings, this practice continued when the National Patriotic Party came to power in 2000. Because the Rawlings administration embodied the first truly populist and civilian government in a country where democratic processes were absent for decades, it is possible to argue that succeeding parties would be driven to follow similar tactics to secure the *majority vote*, and this is partially true. Once particular norms or political practices are in regular use, they induce path-dependent outcomes or become institutionalized (North, 1990). For example, Banful (2008) found in her study of public goods provision in developing countries that beginning in the 1990s, district assemblies that supported government policies received more allocations for administrative funds than district assemblies that did not. She observed this trend for the years 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004, all election periods. Though Banful finds that the influence of politics in disbursement of a district assembly common fund (for the purpose of assisting all the DAs) decreased over time—I believe this practice was supplemented by localized patronage systems and discretionary or interval public goods provision of electricity. When one considers how decentralization aimed to reduce ethnic friction, promote inclusion, encourage participation, while granting autonomy to local groups in decision making and development outcomes, her observations are all the more cogent. To be sure, this is reflected in the changing electoral map of the 1996 and 2000 elections (Friday, 2007), which revealed high rural voter turnout. In any case I explore the extent to which political decentralization diffuses overt clientelism and instead localizes measures of co-optation

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<sup>4</sup>Ghana Budget, 200, p83 cited in Akonor, 2004

through selected public goods provision of electricity.

### **“Ownership” and Measurement of Public Service Delivery under Decentralization**

As an aid-dependent country with over fifty percent of the budget comprised of donor aid, considerable autonomy in rural development approaches and public service delivery is widely relegated to the NGO sector. In the process of an ‘ownership’ (that is government autonomy of domestic economic policies and interventionist approaches, e.g. service delivery and public goods) crisis, succeeding administrations attempted to circumvent the authority of IFIs. But Ghanaian dependence on donor aid simultaneously reinforces centralization, and a weak local government system, apparent in fiscally challenged district assemblies, which Ayee (1996) observes. As a senior advisor for the Canadian Institute for Development Affairs (CIDA), Barbara Murray, concludes, “...successive central governments have found political convenience in ambushing the decentralization process to provide a platform for central government hegemony and political patronage.” Conversely the state has been criticized for not providing enough financial resources to the DAs. In the face of such criticisms state representatives cite World Bank and IMF regulations as well as donor stipulations.<sup>40</sup> As a result, this study measures the extent to which decentralization evinces success of state-led service provision in the realm of electrification schemes for rural areas. It also evaluates the consequences of discretionary provision of electricity under the auspices of market oriented power sector reform.

#### **Key Concepts**

Decentralization of functions formerly undertaken by central or national government involves grassroots mobilization, citizen participation, and the creation of institutions outside

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<sup>40</sup>George Owusu. “Small Towns and Decentralised Development in Ghana: Theory and Practice: *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2004) p 189

ministries, which are legally vested with responsibilities within the totality of government.<sup>41</sup> The Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC or militarist dictator government of former flight Lieutenant J. J Rawlings from 1981-1992) decided to adopt decentralization for several reasons. First, as Ocquaye (1992) notes, the PNDC stated its intentions to ensure that development sprang from the rural areas. In light of economic problems that plagued the country during the 1980s, the pursuit an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) attempted to mitigate the effects of severe economic malaise, when cocoa prices, mounting inflation and other intractable problems that befell the country. Indeed, the PNDC appears to have viewed decentralization as a means of mobilizing resources, human and material, at the local level. Third, decentralization was perceived as an optimal fit in the search for an indigenous form of democracy that departed from the western ideal Rawlings viewed as unsuitable in the African context.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, decentralization was thought to increase the number of public goods, services and efficiency with which they are delivered at a lower cost.<sup>43</sup> It is for these reasons that decentralization informs the analytical context of this study and is treated at length in the second chapter.

Usually, a combination of democratic contestation and institutional restraints on government's discretionary executive authority is said to improve governance quality substantially.<sup>44</sup> Discretionary power (public provision) refers to the use of material or financial resources to supplant *outright* political patronage. I use it here to connote a subtle form of patronage that is supported in a legitimate institutional context of decentralization. In Ghana as in much of sub-Saharan Africa, the use of discretionary power is as old as the inception of the

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<sup>41</sup> Kwamena Ahwoi, *Local Government & Decentralisation in Ghana*. Accra: Unimax MacMillan, 2010 p19

<sup>42</sup> See Mike Ocquaye in *Politics in Ghana 1989-1992, Rawlings, Revolution and Populist Democracy*, Ghana: Tornado Publications, 2004, p252

<sup>43</sup> See D.A. Rondinelli. "Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries," *International Review for Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 47, 1981 p22-42.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Alence, "Political Institutions and Developmental Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 42, No. 2 June 2004 p179

state there. Its usage became acute during the 1990s, when new regimes sought the use of public goods like water, electricity, and feeder roads to secure political support. I use the insights of Streeten (1997) who suggested that a participatory locus along with pro-poor support in “enlightened” dictatorships, not only produced a sense of empowerment, it offered potent platforms for co-optation. Since most forms of participation require central government support (Streeten, 1997, p202) political pressures can be used to benefit the poor through the vote<sup>45</sup>. I contribute to this analysis by suggesting that discretionary or interval provision of public goods is a logical choice for a transitioning, democratizing state where the bulk of the population constitutes the rural poor. Concomitantly, the unfolding nature of the rural poor is taken to signify the evolving potential for empowerment under decentralized institutional governance and as the target group for rural development approaches.

Neo-liberal processes treated broadly represent the cornerstone of programs advocated by international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They collectively emphasize little to no intervention by governments in the economy, and were dutifully adopted by Rawlings PNDC government during the 1980s and beyond.<sup>46</sup> This neo-liberal creed or ‘Washington consensus’ entails free markets, macro-economic and fiscal discipline (Stiglitz, 2003) and is claimed to promote growth and welfare for all (Haggard, 1990).

Agency is taken to mean the exertion power and influence to bring about change at the level of the individual, the household or larger collective; and agency has much to do with sources of influence and directions of power (Awuah, 1997, p402). The term populism is used to denote an anti-elitist political perspective that aims to accord the general populace decision-making or greater autonomy in economic and political institutions or decisions. It is highlighted

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<sup>45</sup>Paul Streeten, “Non Governmental Organizations and Development”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 554, 200

<sup>46</sup> See Arthur Bofo, 2007

at length because of its political resonance in the fourth republic.

### **Significance of the Study**

Killick (1989) found that a balance between state intervention, market forces, private and public action/cooperation was necessary for meaningful economic outcomes. While this balance is in flux for democratizing states, Ghana's achievements under decentralization are not to be understated in terms of the participatory locus that has afforded many Ghanaians a voice and measure of "agency" in articulating economic interests. But the view of past and current administrations who depict district assemblies as key stakeholders in effecting favorable economic outcomes—but ill equipped to tackle service delivery and rural development are telling admissions as the country hurtles forward in its plans to attain "middle income" developed (country) status. This study is significant then because it reveals how electricity access as a largely microscopic element of development informs the capacity and success of responsive government in an era where service delivery of public goods is increasingly paramount. It is logical for national governments to diffuse cleavages that would otherwise pit urban against rural constituents and mitigate divide and conquer tactics by carefully navigating identity politics or ethnicity. The weak capacity of district assemblies amid their increasing number suggests the need to understand both the limitations and perhaps necessary tactic of rural co-optation as a strategy for cohesive state-society relations.

In spite of a mixed record of implementation and effectiveness in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana's adoption of political decentralization amid the important and difficult process of democratization offers important and overlooked insights on how fragile societies undergoing a political transition may unwittingly undermine democratic institutional norms in the process of striking bargains with sections of society. Significantly, it

reveals how democratic governance became coterminous with service delivery and in the wake of measures to capture the rural vote of the poor. This study sheds light on the nature of “limited ownership” in rural development as anti-poverty measures and public service delivery of electricity, which make a neo-liberal critique of market-oriented reforms of power sectors essential. Energy research has typically focused on the resource curse, an unfortunate consequence in countries where rich mineral resources like oil, diamonds, gas, copper, and gold produce economic stagnation and negative political outcomes such as authoritarian or non-democratic regimes. But the more pressing impact, particularly in developing countries, of the relationship between decentralization thought to produce better outcomes in rural economy and the problem of unregulated rural development under this institutional process-has not been fully addressed in the literature.

One of the most serious problems the new government in 1992 hoped to address was the nation’s aging electric energy system, gaps in provision and startlingly low rate of access in rural areas (15% in 1990). With Ghana geared to attain middle-income developed country status by 2020, the country’s leaders acknowledged that investment in energy was required for economic growth and expansion. As Charles Wereko, President Kufuor’s (2000–2008) former energy advisor, noted, “if we want to make middle-income status in ten or even 20 years, we have to increase energy use by at least 20-fold” (“Some Electric Power but No Glory,” 2010, p50).

During the 1990s, vast gaps in electric energy provision, blackouts and frequent power outages led to the emergence of a national electrification scheme as a bid to restructure the country’s energy policy. With substantial gaps in electricity access, protracted plans for a multi-sectoral strategy for rural development a higher ratio of rural poverty levels impelled a responsive by succeeding administrations (39% for rural and 11% for urban according to World

Bank figures). Since more than 60% of the population lives in rural areas (World Bank Report, “Proposed Fifth Poverty Reduction Support Credit” 2007) these figures support the notion of electricity as a key driver of economic growth and development, and the ability to power the country’s industrial, commercial development (Guide to Electric Power, 2001).

Electric energy sector losses, mounting technical and operational problems prompted Ghana to pursue neo-liberal power sector reforms. But Ghana’s adoption of partial power sector reforms to reduce sector losses and ostensibly widen the field of independent power production to increase access, offers a stark irony. As this study will demonstrate, it is ahead of many of its neighbors because of the *partial* nature of reform, not necessarily because of the reforms themselves. By utilizing a life-line tariff policy designed to provide access to the poor, the progress of the country’s electrification schemes have more to do with rural co-optation and a political business cycle where electricity provision has become synonymous with public goods.<sup>47</sup>

It is only in the past decade that scholars began to examine specific policies, management of electricity sectors in developing African nations and the costs for the rural poor in particular. This research trend is attributable in large part to a wave of studies that emerged to address market-oriented reforms of power (electric) sectors and the record of service delivery in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, Karekezi (2002), Wamukonya (2003) Sebitosi and Pillay (2005) and Williams and Ghanadan (2006) examined reasons for continuing disparities in electricity access for the rural poor in sub-Saharan Africa. Karekezi (2002) for example, addressed the mixed impact of power sector reforms for the poor, and questioned the pragmatism of the wholesale acceptance of power sector reform by African governments. While Karekezi observed

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<sup>47</sup> Although this study uses decentralization as a framework for analysis of electricity delivery in rural areas, it does not examine decentralized state delivery of this resource in any particular or specific region, city, town or village. While there is great utility in studying individual or multiple districts or towns, the potential for varied outcomes increase, as does the margin of error for empirical observations given the complex interlinkages between electricity, rural and urban economy, income generation and resource endowment within each of the country’s ten regions.

notable increases in generation capacity, he found that limited access for the poor indicated persistent challenges insufficiently addressed in developing states. In citing the oft-ignored issues of transmission and distribution, he argued that urgent attention be paid to both. Though Karekezi viewed power sector reform efforts of African states as substantial, Wamukonya (2003) argued that the reform model essentially reflected a contested process that led many governments to question the wisdom of undertaking reform.

Indeed, the tremendous loss of autonomy and virtual political suicide in pricing reform and removal of subsidies would likely produce discontent and a backlash. As Wamukonya found, many policies left countries worse off socially and economically than before reform. Sebitosi & Pillay (2005) found that a multifaceted confluence of factors contributed to substantial gaps in access to electricity for the poor and attribute the “subdued role of the-would be recipients” as part of the problem (2044). Though most of these studies consider the impact of market oriented power sector reforms on the rural poor, none contextualize these changes under the realm of decentralization or democratization which makes this study all the more significant because it calls into the question the benefits of local representation within district assemblies, political empowerment, and access to public-private goods that are assumed to be more readily available for marginalized groups under decentralization and a “minimal state,” that democratization accords.

This oversight is significant, given that access to any resource, public or private, is unequivocally political. Gore (2008) has observed that policymaking when taken in tandem with electrification efforts can only be understood as a deeply political process. As Sebitosi and Pillay (2005) observe... “at community level infrastructure and services like electrification are often erroneously treated as commodities. In this regard electrification becomes an end rather than a

means. In African politics it doubles as the proverbial ‘carrot and stick’: rewarding politically friendly communities and denied to communities that are perceived to be politically hostile.”<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore as a comparative assessment of decentralization report notes (USAID, September 2010),

“ infrastructure construction is often one of the tasks offloaded to SNGs (sub-national governments or DAs despite the fact that this involves capital investments that central governments have more capacity to make. It is a politically attractive strategy for the center where service provision is poor and resources are lacking to relinquish responsibilities while spending less and maintaining a firm hold on key levers of control such as hiring and salaries, thereby holding local governments hostage with conditional intergovernmental transfers.”

## **CONTRIBUTION**

This study offers empirical insights about the irony of successful electricity delivery and the differential benefits for the rural poor amid extensive political and administrative decentralization in Ghana. As an often over-looked component in the multilayered and intricate process of development in the developing world, electricity access has structured domestic politics in ways that reflect the contradictions of political progress, tenuous linkages between external trustees (donors and international financial institutions), national and local institutions and equitable distribution of public goods. Despite the relative absence of contentious ethnic friction, my research findings support the notion of rural co-optation, in the number of electricity projects and a project-by project culture evident for no other years besides election periods: 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 (except for 2007, which was incidentally a year of severe energy crises and power rationing). The results of a questionnaire administered to energy officials from three institutions demonstrate ambivalent opinions about the progress of electrification initiatives and the capacity of district assemblies to carry out electric energy

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<sup>48</sup>In “Energy services in sub-Saharan Africa: how conducive is the environment? *Energy Policy* 33 (2005) p2045

programs. Critical qualitative and quantitative evidence discussed in the fifth chapter note an outcome of *mixed* success in decentralized electrification initiatives that in essence represent ‘central or national government’ imperatives.

The current success of Ghana’s electrification rates represent an achievement that is absent for much of sub-Saharan Africa. However, this outcome has more to do efforts to placate negative outcomes associated with electricity tariffs, subsidy removal and competitive pricing than the initiatives or actions of the district assemblies themselves. Public opinion surveys completed by rural constituents in Ghana and compiled by Afrobarometer offer high assessment of national officials in regards to public service delivery. This is at odds with extensive media and newspaper reports of dissatisfaction with the pace of development and capacity of district assemblies in meeting community needs (i.e. basic services, amenities and rural development). Empirical observations also indicate that official rates of electrification show substantial divergence from data results mapped and calculated using several social indicators, which highlight discrepancies across several regions, including the Greater Accra area<sup>49</sup>. On the other hand, in depth interviews with members of parliament revealed that self help (decentralized initiatives) electrification schemes have widely been successful, driving what I believe is a fallacy of responsive district assemblies, and in short the merits of political decentralization. With waiting lists and increasingly vocal requests from rural communities, the appearance of politically empowered citizens and well functioning districts are offered as evidence of successful decentralization at least on the part of the Ministry of Energy.

A number of studies explore in varying degree, reasons for disparate energy access and challenges in the modern energy systems and institutions of African countries. They include

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<sup>49</sup>This region represents the most urbanized of all ten regions, however there are pockets of poverty and rural areas within the region.

Banful's (2008) exploration of public good provision in developing countries like Ghana using a primarily economic analysis. Agbemabiese (2002), focuses on sustainable energy paradigms while chronicling the development of energy systems from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. Others like Berko (1997) offer useful insights into the problems that crippled energy institutions and prevented the emergence of favorable outcomes in the way of electric energy efficiency. Akankpegli (1992) examines the consequences of incomplete penetration of decentralization for rural development in the Northern region, a historically marginalized section of the country. He finds that inadequate service provision reflected urban bias, inadequate revenue generation and poor mobilization among other factors.

It is quickly apparent from these examples that few studies explore the role of decentralization, democratization and power sector reform under a context of a neo-liberal policies that determine the scope of government involvement in structuring public service delivery to particular groups in society. Indeed, none besides Naab (2005) offer more than a cursory exploration of the impact of decentralization and local governance on service delivery, or combined analyses of timing and sequencing in terms of the onset of decentralization to uncover what I believe is a critical oversight. At best, Banful, (2008) explores public goods provision through a primarily economic analysis while Naab's (2005) explores the role and effectiveness of both decentralization and local governance of district assemblies. Both studies unfortunately do not fully address the nuances of decentralization, re-centralization and donor dependency in structuring public service provision under a neo-liberal context.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. The next section briefly outlines the relationship between electricity and rural development to provide a context for the former as a component of poverty reduction, as well as income generation and livelihood approaches under

the latter, which are treated in a subsequent chapter. This is followed by a discussion of historic inequities of electricity access and an overview of hydropower development. The next section examines the influence of class and ethnicity as explanatory variables for inequities in access. Further sections detail the research design of this study, data collection, and a chapter overview.

## **1.2 Electricity and rural development**

Why is electricity access an important resource and a good beyond its use for lighting and household appliances, and is there any connection between access and economic livelihoods of the rural poor? Electricity can meet a diversity of human energy needs, compared to other forms of energy like biomass and wood fuels and represents the most visible component of public service delivery. However, there are currently no discernable linkages between decentralized electrification schemes and rural development initiatives within Ghana's district assemblies that could provide a boost to the income generating activities frequently identified in efforts to reduce poverty and improve basic living standards of the rural poor. This represents a significant drawback and demonstrates the gap in addressing these important aspects that inform the plight of the rural poor.

A number of studies demonstrate that access to reliable and affordable electricity in rural areas holds the potential to improve the provision of social (public) services like health and education (Haanyika, 2006; Wamukonya, 2003). Where infrastructure such as roads, water supply systems and social services are available in rural areas, electrification can result in direct economic benefits (WEC, 1999). In sub-Saharan Africa, established linkages between energy and the millennium development goals (MDGs) render it critically important to address challenges and prospects for energy-service provision (Karekezi, 2002a; Karekezi & Majoro, 2002; Modi, 2004; Modi et al., 2005; Porcaro & Takada, 2004). Though electricity may not be

an innate feature of capitalist production, it has become an essential one, providing a dynamic platform to build new production systems and products that lend themselves to the rapid pace of change in contemporary global markets (MacDonald, 2008) While access to electricity in itself is not a panacea for the economic and social problems facing Africa, the supply of this resource is believed a necessary requirement for Africa's economic and social development (IEA, 2002).

Electricity is not only an important indicator of modernization and basic standard of living; it is connected to rural growth and income generation for the rural poor in a number of ways. Because some 80 percent of Ghana's rural population (56%) is poor and electrification has been identified in the country's poverty-reduction strategy papers throughout the past decade. I include it within the broad framework of rural development and attendant approaches. Rural electrification functions as a critical input for raising living standards, by indirectly stimulating rural employment through the expansion of cultivated land. Even though its impact on industries may be less pronounced than in the agricultural sector, its productive uses include many components like blacksmithing, agro-processing, milling, and tailor shops—all of which remain critical sources of income generation for the bulk of Ghana's agricultural classes.<sup>50</sup> Rural electrification can exert an impact both on the structure of rural communities and within rural households; rural-urban migration, population growth, education and literacy are all structural characteristics of communities that can be affected by it.<sup>51</sup>

In spite of these benefits, uneven access to electrification in rural areas is seldom included in the larger context of socioeconomic development. In previous decades, few if any rural development approaches envisioned the productive uses of electrification for income generation and agriculture (i.e., storage of crops after harvest) beyond its utility for industry,

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<sup>50</sup>Barnes, 1988, p12

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, p13

lighting and a few other domestic uses. It is only in 2004 that the Ministry of Energy began to focus on the productive uses of electricity or PUE in line with Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy papers. This project based initiative emerged with World Bank assistance to develop synergies between poverty reduction, wealth creation and rural electrification programs<sup>52</sup>. In a testament to poor supply and disparate access, the report noted that power outages and high utility bills significantly affected the productive use of energy, by reducing profits for example, in the service sector, communication, and trading sectors.

### **1.3 Class and ethnicity as intervening variables?**

Do issues of class and ethnicity account for differences between official rates of access for the country's ten regions and observed outcomes? If a 66% access rate is a success and yet rural areas and the poor have not benefitted as we might anticipate, as my quantitative analysis (see Chap 5) illustrates, are explanations of class and or ethnicity salient? In post modernist interpretations, the hybridity of the African working class is assumed while ethnicity and culture are deemed more determinant of social behavior than class membership (Bhabha, 1995). One reason for this development lies in the informalization of the African political economy- a trend that began in the late 1970s. Ruth First (1983) argued that African patterns of development created a hybrid class of peasantry characterized by a mixed rural and urban identity.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, patterns of urban and rural differentiation would bear little if any import for leaders intent on political capture of particular groups in society. In general, class analysis and popular resistance as Cliffe, Bujra and Szeftel 2004, recognize has fallen on hard times.<sup>54</sup> The problem with post structuralist, post modernist analyses is that concepts such as the nation, class, and

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<sup>52</sup>Draft Report on the Productive Uses of Electricity Project, 2004

<sup>53</sup>See Lipton (1968) for more on changing urban rural identity formation

<sup>54</sup>Cited from David Seddon and Leo Zeilig, *Class & Protest in Africa: New Waves*, Review of "African Political Economy" No. 103: 13, 2005

even the state, are neglected in favor of discourse, language and symbolism. As a result, issues of exploitation, class formation and struggle cease to be analytical constructs or even objective realities (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005, p 13)<sup>55</sup>. Seddon and Zellig observe how an emphasis on identity, indeterminacy, complexity and performance is treated for example in Werbner, 1996; Wordy, 1998; Mbemebe, 1991; Manor, 1991). These are valid observations and the authors argue that in lieu of ongoing working class struggles and popular protest, post-colonial identities that displace class, (the third wave), class analysis remains salient. For Seddon and Zeilig, the heterogeneity of classes is not to be offered as a reason for their ‘political decay’ but instead reflective of capitalism in flux.

It is immediately apparent that despite an “engagement” flux that characterized the peasant or rural class, the economic self-interest of rural producers shifted from a concern with primordial identity and parochial issues to a greater awareness of how they fared relative to other social groups.<sup>56</sup> As Morrison notes, Ghana’s top leaders each earned their status from differential access to education and financial capital... they and their cohorts were a class apart; they were intellectuals, professionals, merchants and military leaders (Pickney, 1972). During the early post independent period, the amalgamation of different groups set party lines and loyalty, with national leadership structuring recruitment. However, after the breakup of the UGCC and Nkrumah’s creation of the CPP, a two-way pattern of recruitment emerged, while old cleavages remained along with a new generation of politicized “claimants” for Nkrumah (Morrison, 2004, p424). After this period, the three military regimes in Ghana’s history more or less reflected these

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<sup>55</sup>As they note, more valid categories of youth, class, gender, ethnicity and religious identities are deemed more valuable for analysis. This is evident in the works of Mbemebe, 1991, 2001; Bayart, 1991, 1993)

<sup>56</sup>Mikell (1989) finds that peasants began to see themselves as citizens of a larger nation from the 1950s onward, even if they were “unequal participants when compared to elites and urbanites . . . but that the problem for rural producers is that once politicians rose to power, they used authoritarian tactics to dominate them” (p458).

cleavages.<sup>57</sup> The two regimes that came after—namely, those of Acheampong (1972-79 and Rawlings (1982-92)—were different in that neither could claim privileged class; rather, they represented the first generation intensely influenced by Nkrumah’s ideas. But as Morrison states, “the stability of recruitment belied a circumscribed base, the functional two parties, incumbency aside, had insufficient organization and other resources to advance their recruits, so that office seekers must possess independent means to campaign, injecting a self selected, class element into the process” (Morrison, 2004).

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of ethnicity has exerted considerable influence in contemporary Ghanaian politics and structured rural development outcomes<sup>58</sup>. This factor is reflected in ethnic tensions between two dominant ethnic groups in Ghana, Ashantis and Fantes, over land tenure, expansionist ambitions, and domination over their southern counterparts.<sup>59</sup> For example, as two primary and powerful ethnic groups among approximately one hundred, long-standing conflict and war over land, political power and other resources remain a source of conflict that has periodically erupted since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite a continual Ashanti-Ewe rivalry (Asante, 2004) and occasional ethno-regional conflicts, the Ghana has managed to avoid the severe violence of neighboring countries like Togo and Nigeria (Asante, 2004).

On the other hand, during the post colonial period, local dominant classes that developed within the bureaucracy and later took them over mitigated potential conflict by developing stable relations with urban workers. They also maintained good relations with the dominant rural classes through clientelism or personal and kinship networks. For example, during the 1980s the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC)- or ruling regime, acted aggressively on behalf of

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<sup>57</sup>According to Morrison (2004), “the leaders of the 196 coup reflected the class and liberal ideological biases of the Danquah-Busia faction, dubbed the National Liberation Council or NLC.”

<sup>58</sup>See Markovitz, 1977 and 1987; Young, 1982; Morrison, 1982; Nugent and Lentz, 2000; Lentz, 2006; Fridy, 2007.

<sup>59</sup>See [www.Ghanaweb. Home Page/history/pre-colonial.php](http://www.Ghanaweb.Home Page/history/pre-colonial.php) Accessed 2010.cited in Asante, 2004.

the rural areas by creating a constituency integral to Ghana's economic livelihood in the cocoa-growing areas. These groups included emergent militant mobi-squads, independent labor groups known as *nnoboa*, and institutionalized labor groups that bridged local, regional and national interests by reshaping agricultural output such as the People's Defense Committees and Workers' Defense Committees.<sup>60</sup> In the midst of these developments, relatively cohesive state societal relations were established. But while open class conflicts were largely absent during this period, some groups aired their grievances at the prevailing PNDC government. Yet as Konings (1986) notes, overextended state resources limited peasant mobilization (Killingray, 1987, p564) so that by the mid-1980s, *only* urban and elite groups were criticizing Rawlings's policies, complaining that they had seen their standards of living diminish even as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund praised the regime. But cocoa farmers and other agriculturalists supported Rawlings, despite suffering intermittently throughout the 1980s (Mikell, 1989). However despite these changes, ethnicity and class differences did not become flashpoints in state-society relations as might be expected, nor did disparities in material resources and elements like electricity inform group or class struggles/conflict.

While the intersection between power and the class dynamic (Markovitz, 1987, 1977) is central, political conflicts seem likely to reflect diverging economic interests between resident social strata and not simply ethnicity or territoriality, as scholars have argued (Mikell, 1987, p473).

Indeed, for MacLean (2004) the potential for ethnic conflict in Ghana (in contrast to neighboring Cote d'Ivoire) is mitigated by participation among ethnically heterogeneous local church, and other associational groups. In her estimation, district assemblies enabled a diversity of represented voices to emerge, which rendered local political institutions and capacity for conflict resolution much stronger. As a result, the potential for ethnic conflict is more localized in stark

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<sup>60</sup>Gwendolyn Mikell. (2008). Peasant Politicisation and Economic Recuperation in Ghana: Local and National Dilemmas. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, p. 456

contrast to Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>61</sup> In the wake of a widely recognized participatory locus of district assemblies, MacLean's contention that clientelist networks appeared to be more localized may help explain why issues of access are difficult to attribute exclusively to an urban/rural divide. However they have played a factor in recent elections, which I demonstrate in a later chapter. To be sure, the unit committee (82%), the village chief (55%) and the District Assembly (24%) were all cited most frequently as the most important locales for development<sup>62</sup> which lends credence to the idea that ethnic friction has been more muted because it occurs on a more localized than national level-thus diluting potential for dangerous conflict over public goods. Additionally, Whitfield (2009: 623) convincingly argues that democratic stability in Ghana survived the intensity of the 2008 elections because of a de facto party system, which cuts across ethnicity, urban-rural status etc.

This is why cleavages between urban and rural voters go beyond the arbitrary boundaries of class or ethnicity (Lentz & Nugent, 2000). Nonetheless, the *relationship* between electoral systems and ethnicity offers insight into Ghana's institutional development and evolution of group interests.<sup>63</sup> For example, a prevailing framework offered for managing plurality features two competing solutions that include majoritarian rule and consociation power sharing.<sup>64</sup> Both refer to Lijphart's (1999) seminal work in which he offers two models to determine whose interests should prevail when people in a society are in disagreement over who should rule. The majoritarian answer says that institutions can encourage the creation of a strong government backed by a majority of citizens, while the consensus option aims for inclusiveness and active

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<sup>61</sup>See Lauren Morris MacLean in "Mediating Ethnic Conflict at the Grassroots: The Role of Local Associational Life in Shaping Political Values in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 December 2004 p609

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, p606

<sup>63</sup>See Asante, 2004, Lijphart, 1968 & 1977; Bangura, 2001; Norris, 2004, etc.

<sup>64</sup>See Asante (2004) for the pitfalls of these approaches and Norris (2004) on the role of cultural modernization and its impact on rules, cleavages and the size of electoral systems.

participation of diverse groups to encourage consensus in policymaking. Consociation is thought to accommodate ethnic divisions and according to Asante (2004):

Majoritarian reform encourages vote pooling and moderation while supporting adversarial politics; while consociation or powers sharing arrangements accepts ethnic parties as given and seeks to promote plurality not within the contending; under the List proportional representation (PR) type- parties draw up a list of ranked candidates, corresponding to the number of seats to be filled in parliament. Here electorates vote for parties and not individual candidates and popular votes gained are proportional to the seats allocated in parliament. AV and STV are the main mechanism for the promotion of plural or moderate parties (preference or alternative vote (AV), the single transferable vote (STV). Analysts who favor majoritarian government generally opt for AV. The STV is a proportional system that gives scope to smaller parties .

It is evident then, that the connection between electoral systems, power, class and ethnicity are contested, complex, multi-faceted aspects of the political process that continue to frame expectations for performance and accountability.<sup>66</sup> By the same token, each of these elements operates within the confluence of a neo-liberal framework, struggles for political legitimacy and power under a decentralized political system coexist albeit uncomfortably.

#### **Section 1.4: Research Design**

Nineteen formal interviews were conducted with an array of individuals from various institutions. They include current members of Parliament from the NDC and NPP, two dominant political parties in the country, and from the Ministry of Rural and local government. An interview also took place with a district assembly member from the Greater Accra municipality. I interviewed officials from the Energy Commission, an independent observatory institution, and from the Volta River Authority, a governmental institution that focuses on the management of the Akosombo dam. I also conducted three informal interviews over a two-year period with the former mayor of Accra, Nathaniel Amartyefio and with the Chief Operating Officer from the Public Utilities and Regulation Commission, Mr. Kwame Pianim and Mr. Essendoh from the

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<sup>66</sup> Indeed members of parliament from the country's main and strongest political parties (the National Democratic Congress and the National Patriotic Party) noted in interviews. By the same token, each of these elements operates within the confluence of a neo-liberal framework, struggles for political legitimacy and power under a decentralized political system.

Energy Commission. Interviews at both institutions sought to determine relevant actors, uncover historic and contemporary reasons for disparities and detail the process of NES and REP implementation and reform efforts in the power sector.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the Director, Deputy Director and other relevant officials at the Ministry of Energy to create a detailed account of the process of implementation of the NES, REP, SHEP and how rural areas were designated to receive electricity, which areas were given priority etc. Records of debates on electricity access for various districts were also obtained from Parliament. Additionally, various energy officials in the above above-named institutions completed twenty questionnaires. The questionnaire was administered with the help of a research assistant and former reporter for TV One -Mr. Asante Danquah who covered matters of Parliament. I targeted officials at the Ministry of Energy, the Electricity Company of Ghana as the most prominent of institutions for the purposes of this study to gauge perceptions of hydropower development, the National Electrification Scheme, Rural Electrification and Self Help Electrification Programs. Some 25 to 30 questionnaires were placed in mailboxes or directly handed to the respondents at their offices and later collected by the research assistant. Documents were perused at the Office of Public Records and National Archives for newspaper articles and information on how dominant the political parties, the NPP and NDC, approached the project of national electrification scheme as the first of three initiatives and accompanying phases in the post 1989 period. Moreover, I examined material from the Institute for Social, Statistical and Economic Research (ISSER) to determine how regime change guided implementation.

I operationalized the concepts of interval provision, and rural co-optation by chronicling the progress of electricity provision from 1992 to 2008. Under the years observed for the study,

the number of electricity projects and rural development initiatives emerged primarily during elections years (except for 2007\* which was marked by an electric energy crisis). Neo-liberal power sector reforms were largely adopted in the developed, industrial world in the late 1980s and strongly encouraged in the developing world during the 1990s and I chronicle their adoption in Ghana to demonstrate how the requisites of global market liberalization of electric power sectors intersected with decentralization to produce discretionary provision. The phenomenon of re-centralization is documented through the decentralization literature that I address in the second chapter as well as development (donor) partner observations, and numerous sources that I use to illuminate reasons for discretionary provision and measures of co-optation. I also demonstrate why and how dependency on donor aid is significant. First, the country's continued dependency is evident in a national budget supplemented by roughly 50 percent of donor aid which constrains domestic autonomy and accords a kind of "trusteeship" role (see Whitfield, 2006) that impacts the scope of government in the economy. Second the use of economic constraints and donor dependency has been used intermittently as rationale by succeeding administrations in the fourth republic to justify limited service delivery, as I will show in the subsequent chapters.

Specifically, evidence for observed outcomes that support the argument of this study are drawn from quantitative analysis (regression analysis is used to measure inequality) that measure observed rates of electricity against several indicators which depict uneven distribution contrary to official Ministry of Energy figures. These results are discussed in the fifth chapter.

Structured and unstructured interviews with members of parliament and energy institutions, questionnaires, newspaper articles offer additional evidence of ambiguous progress towards electricity provision for rural areas. They also demonstrate a correlation between the political

business, cycle, public service delivery, continuing centralization and co-optation of the rural poor. For example, newspaper articles obtained from two major newspapers from 1992 to 2008 clearly show that a political business cycle and discretionary provision are at work.

### **Chapter outline: organization of chapters**

Because decentralization has come to represent a pivotal strategy in the country's development plans-outlined in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and Vision 2020 goals, chapter two explores the effectiveness of public service provision of electricity as a policy objective for rural constituents in Ghana. The chapter argues that despite particular gains made since the country adopted decentralization, the institutional process and form of decentralization underway in Ghana reflects mixed success, which I operationalize in terms of public service delivery of electricity. Significantly, questionnaire responses from energy officials from three institutions: the Ministry of Energy, Energy Commission and The Electric Company of Ghana indicate considerable ambiguity in perceptions of public service delivery of electricity, district assemblies' performance, and decentralized delivery measured through the results of a questionnaire filled out by officials from the Ministry of Energy, Energy Commission and The Electric Company of Ghana.<sup>67</sup> For instance, questionnaire responses indicate mixed perceptions public service delivery of electricity, district assembly capacity and a dichotomy of ongoing decentralization efforts in political and administrative terms. Indeed over half of the respondents rated the capacity of district assemblies in meeting electricity needs as *moderate*. However in-depth interviews with members of parliament, key officials in government, a former District Common Fund Administrator (responsible for distributing revenue to the assemblies) and observations in the literature reveal stark concerns about the financial capacity of DAs. As the

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<sup>67</sup>All three represent important energy institutions and there are six public and eleven private institutions that comprise the energy sector.

chapter finds, an over-dependence on the fund and inadequate mechanisms for individual district revenue accrual remains endemic. Of additional import is the inherent contradiction between the Self help electrification programs espoused as successful decentralization in motion, insufficient capacity to implement local development initiatives and central government ‘hegemony’ as the locus for execution.

The chapter finds perplexingly enough that surveys of rural constituent administered by Afrobarometer cited a high degree of satisfaction (65 percent) with their local as well as national representatives that can only be explained by efforts of national representatives to co-opt rural citizenry. In spite of these observations, the transformation of access is significant. As numerical data provided in the chapter shows, the numbers of towns under the National Electrification, Self Help Electrification and Rural Electrification Schemes is noteworthy. The rates of access almost ten fold from several hundred communities at the turn of the 1990s to several thousand communities three years ago. But definitive views from development or donor partners about prevailing sentiments of government officials who privately advance a ‘project based approach’ to service delivery reveal a shocking admission that district assemblies cannot be relied upon to deliver proper services. It is for these reasons that the chapter concludes that the transformation of success is attributable to interval, discretionary provision, rural co-optation and institutional capture of local institutions or district assemblies.

The chapter is divided into two parts: in the first half, I provide a theoretical discussion of democratization, decentralization and the various components that underpin the argument of this study. In the second half, I examine the actual processes, outcomes and political history of decentralization in the country. In delineating the process and implementation of decentralization in political, administrative, fiscal terms, the chapter argues that the ostensible success of

electrification represents a cumulative effect of incremental or interval measures since the 1990s that has obscured the perpetuation of targeted public goods provision of electricity. In order to understand the context and emergence of rural preference during the early 1990s, I highlight the nature of legitimacy and accountability challenges before and after the return to civilian rule. The chapter sheds light on how the pursuit of decentralization amid a political transition can heighten public or constituent expectations of public goods. But it also demonstrates how particular institutional aspects simultaneously produced a triumph in overall access and regional differentiation. Following Shiffer's (1970) work, I analyze the nature of local administration and national development plans under decentralization in the mid-1990s and beyond to determine the degree of effectiveness of the National Electrification Scheme and Rural Electrification Program.

Chapter 3 offers an in-depth examination of the performance of the country's electric energy sector before and after 1989, including generation, distribution and transmission challenges; outcomes of national, rural and self help electrification initiatives; and the impact of market oriented-power sector reforms. It highlights the challenges of achieving symbiotic institutional relationships between energy institutions and consistent electricity provision. The dichotomy of access between Nkrumah who promoted rural electricity initiatives and Busia who managed to accomplish more for rural constituents is remarkable for two reasons. First, Nkrumah was largely responsible for the completion of the Akosombo dam-indeed despite the political and financial costs to his regime, he pushed for its completion. Second, as a transformational figure who mobilized and unified the masses who included youth movements, local scholar unions and illiterate, elementary school-leavers (Austin, 1964) it is unfortunate that political cleavages and divisive politics prevented the implementation of comprehensive electrification of the country. As a member of parliament noted, rural communities perceived to

be anti-government were made to suffer: “it’s all politics, but also there was a time that places, regions, districts that did not support Nkrumah suffered for lack of electricity-the unfortunate thing is that it has not died out, it was worst in the past but it persists.”<sup>68</sup>

The chapter argues that in the post 1992 period, uneven electric energy policies intersected with the politics of this period (i.e. decentralization and public goods clamor) to produce political incentives to address inequities in provision. Accompanied by donor requisites of power sector reform, the country shrewdly undertook *partial power sector reforms*, which ironically accounts for the transformation of access and differential benefits for the rural poor. The circumvention of full scale neo-liberal oriented power sector policies that would require the removal of subsidies and tariffs and adoption of a “life line tariff or socially advantageous tariff aimed at the rural poor offer significant evidence of targeted provision to the rural poor. Significantly, an interview with a prominent energy insider revealed that as late as 2008, power sector reforms remained *partial* in nature—by only adopting limited reforms-in the removal of some subsidies, shift in pricing structures while maintaining the state ownership of a key energy institution, the Volta River Authority. These measures raise further questions about the nature of the country’s successful transformation in access and efficacy of pro-privatization policies promoted for developing countries. The chapter also finds that incongruent patterns of energy usage, energy production and the use of indigenous energy sources for cooking and lighting, for instance (biomass and woodfuels) contributed to lackluster electrification efforts-for the rural poor. Combined with operational problems of generation and transmission as well as high sector/revenue losses, power sector reforms were abandoned for incremental measures because of the political costs to regimes in the post 1992 period. In fact, the chapter contends that these circumstances facilitated rural-co-optation due to the reluctance of government to undertake

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<sup>68</sup>Personal Communication 2009

energy policies that would impact the rural poor-as the locus for co-optation and political support. Ironically, the partial implementation of liberalization in the electric energy sector produced the transformation of success and conversely disparate access through discretionary provision, which are quantitatively illustrated in the fifth chapter. Moreover, given that neo-liberal power sector and market oriented reforms have been widely touted in developing countries for at least two decades now, the decision of the Government of Ghana to undertake limited reforms reflects the continuing public/private battleground (between national and IFI priorities) and struggles against the reconstitution of state authority in the economy.

The fourth chapter addresses how we can conceptualize the relationship between electrification, rural development and poverty reduction efforts. By linking service delivery of electricity to poverty reduction and rural development strategies, I determine how diminishing central government authority and a lack of ‘ownership’ by local and national actors alike, contribute to observed outcomes in discretionary power aimed at the rural poor. As a result, the chapter argues that as a formerly and heavily indebted country, the tenuous terrain of adjustment and neo-liberal framework broadly conceptualized, has inconspicuously limited the autonomy of both district assemblies and central government. In the process the latter has sought to circumvent the authority of donors in the realm of service delivery and rural development. I support this with evidence of a preference for a ‘project- by- project approach as indicative of ‘lack of ownership’ to support the primary contention of this study. Other discoveries in the chapter briefly highlight newspaper headlines that demonstrate the emergence of rural preference in rural development projects that emerged as the country returned to civilian rule. The chapter provides key archival data samples that establish the harried pace with which electricity and rural development projects took off beginning in 1992.

As a logical outcome of this period, the chapter reveals in line with Banful (2008)'s study of public goods provision that the political conditions present in the country made it all the more logical for succeeding government to allocate resources, funds, projects and public goods to areas and groups that would ensure political returns. Additionally, in a bid to reverse urban bias that existed in previous decades, the provision of public goods like electricity offered a logical, rational strategy for a government concerned with regime survival in the midst of austerity measures and a tenuous economic environment. The discretionary, *timed* and *sequenced* provision of electricity are in fact what led many rural constituents including the poor to utter the popular slogan, 'no electricity no (political) power.

In the fifth chapter, I discuss the results of data analysis, which yields surprising outcomes across the country's ten administrative regions. The chapter argues that the increasing saliency of electricity access as a public and much politicized good is evident in patterns of regional differentiation, and the 'politics of interpretation' in successful service provision which informs the stark dichotomy between public and MOE's notions of successful outcomes in the electrification projects since the 1990s. The cumulative result of my statistical analysis suggests that there are issues beyond demographic and economic characteristics of the regions that determine the level of electrification. Most significantly, the regions with the highest rates of electricity in recent election since 2000 including the most recent one in 2008 have also had the highest numbers of swing voters (voters with not particular affiliation to either of the country two main political parties, the National Democratic Congress and National Patriotic Party). For example, the Greater Accra region unexpectedly has become a swing region and subsequently records the highest electricity rates out of all ten administrative areas of the country. In the appendix 2, I chronicle the political business cycle of electricity provision beginning from 1992

when the country returned to democratic rule. For virtually each election year, that is 1992, 1996, 2000 2004 and 2008, electrification projects commenced for these years *only*. The exception is 2007, when the country experienced a lengthy energy crisis and subsequent power or electricity rationing. Other findings are also notable. First, there are marked disparities between the official MOE reports of commendable progress (66%) and the uneven distribution mapped using regression analysis and after measuring for levels of inequality in electricity provision. Differences between observed and expected (official) electricity rates were also considerable. Of remarkable significance is that the Greater Accra region revealed surprising disparities. Even when allowing for the strong likelihood that the affected areas were likely rural, they dispel the notion of widespread access for the rural poor who reside in the outskirts of the region.

Based on the partial implementation of power sector reforms, the sixth chapter concludes that optimal outcomes in service delivery of electricity defined as equitable, consistent and affordable electricity provision under a neo-liberal framework are inherently difficult to undertake due to the political costs to regimes under conditions of democratization and are thus likely to be offset by co-optation. The rest of the chapter discusses key findings, theoretical contributions, quantitative findings, additional contributions and implications of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Decentralization and Public Service Delivery in Ghana's Fourth Republic**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the relationship between democratization, decentralization, the consequences of minimalist oriented governance in the economy and contradictions for public service delivery in the fourth republic. New democracies almost always face the challenge of how to cater to the plurality and the cumulative interests of society while ensuring legitimacy and capacity of institutions. The re-emergence of decentralization in Ghana constituted a decisive step towards reconciling this challenge. During the late 1980s, the pursuit of political

decentralization, aimed to empower local communities by arming them with the ability to identify development needs while holding local and national leaders accountable, to usher people closer to participatory democracy.<sup>69</sup> As a plethora of countries including Ghana inched ever closer to civilian rule and embarked on an institutional process of democratization, a new focus on good governance principles and neoliberal reforms, which sought to restructure the role of the state in the economy emerged. Integral to the neoliberal conception of “good governance” was a minimal, “neutral” and accountable state.

These conceptions produced the highly controversial neoliberal structural adjustment programs and conditionalities that many African nations including Ghana followed per the requisites international financial institutional assistance (IFIs). Not the least of which included a reconstitution of public and private domains, liberalization, privatization, and public sector reform (Ayers, 2006). This chapter finds that the process and practices associated with (political) decentralization in Ghana reflect mixed outcomes, which are evident in public service delivery of electricity. The gains of political decentralization include decision-making ability, a participatory locus and devolution of power to district assemblies to empower marginalized groups like the rural poor.

However, these noteworthy advances obscure the tenuous and multifaceted nature of public service delivery of goods like electricity as well as the presumed benefits of a minimal state amid the process of democratization. Following Banful’s (2008) observations of conditions under which particular resources like electricity take on a public good aspect as a result of imperfect markets conditions, I argue that the limited capacity of local government which I operationalize using the scope of public service delivery of electricity obfuscates the dichotomy of the uneven access for the poor and the overall success of decentralized electricity schemes.

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<sup>69</sup> See Aikins, 2007, 5.

For Ayee (1996; 2003) and Ninsin (1996), decentralization of institutional power not only bolstered efforts at rural co-optation, it was the logical choice for a country in transition but nonetheless produced ambiguous outcomes. By exploring the inception of democratizing processes, impetus for decentralization, the country's previous experiments with political decentralization, and the structure and precarious outcomes of the district assembly system, I contextualize the ambiguous success of electrification initiatives for the rural poor. To provide a context for these important elements and relationship between each of these variables, I highlight the evolving terrain of governance, and the emergence of decentralization as a way to address poverty and the broad aims of decentralization in Ghana.

The findings of the chapter are considerable and two contradictions are apparent. Though ministry of energy officials promoted self-help electrification projects as indicative of the transformation of access and progressive decentralization, this development likely created a conflict of interest between central government hegemony in determining district initiatives and in maintaining a locus of rural co-optation. The results of a questionnaire I administered to gauge opinions about rural electrification efforts carried out by district assemblies report only 'moderate' success in district assembly capacity. Yet some 68 percent of respondents rated the performance of DAs highly—a puzzling contradiction given numerous reports and privately held views of government officials that districts cannot be relied upon to deliver services (water, public health, electricity, potable roads etc.) in respective communities. Supporting evidence from an Afrobarometer survey taken to measure rural constituent opinions on government performance and other variables suggest co-optation during political business cycles. Indeed, high levels of satisfaction with government performance (2005) are plausibly related to measures to co-opt this group given widespread complaints in the media and newspapers that are rife with

complaints about weak performance of the DAs. These results are used to offer insight into the factors or variables this study to explain the transformation of access from 15% in 1990 to the current 66%, but more importantly *mixed outcomes* for the rural poor.

An unmistakable dichotomy between energy official perceptions of success of “decentralized” electrification initiatives—which are really in essence ‘centralized’ and remarks from interviews highlight continuing lags and surprisingly high ratings of district assembly capacity in assisting with electrification. These observations, which emerged in questionnaire results are addressed in a later section and also demonstrate ambivalent opinions of success. Good governance involves many aspects, including accountability, legitimacy and responsive institutions—understood as norms and actions around which actors’ expectations converge. At a micro level, accountability is said to involve enhancing government responsiveness to public pressure by strengthening local participation and NGO involvement.<sup>70</sup> An important component of changing governance and the development discourse is decentralization, which involves the demarcation of political power, and administrative functions on a more localized and participatory level. It is considered a macro-micro linkage that includes the promotion of civil society and local government, which can be held to account more easily than national government because of easier access to decision-making and participation.<sup>71</sup> But as I will illustrate in this chapter, these assumptions do not square with the realities reflected in Ghana. Arguing that the democratization project pushed by Western powers propagates political transformation with the idea of a minimal, “neutral” state, the liberal public sphere, and liberal “self,” Ayers illustrates how these goals interfaced ambivalently with weak institutional capacity in Ghana. Consequently this chapter seeks to examine the record of decentralization by using

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<sup>70</sup> See Ayers, “Demystifying Democratisation: the global constitution of (neo) liberal polities in Africa, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 27, No. 2 2006, p329

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p329

public service delivery of electricity as a yardstick of success.

The pursuit of political decentralization aimed to quell ethnic and other societal cleavages. By exploring the precise nature and form of decentralization that emerged, as well as the structural issues of public service provision, this chapter reveals the structural underpinnings of rural accommodation and its evolution since 1992. Newspaper headlines from 1992 alone underscore the urgency and demand for service delivery and amenities particularly in rural areas. To illustrate, some thirty articles cover the inception of power projects commissioned in various districts, and initiatives of citizens to raise funds for electric power and development projects such as in Akuapen South district assembly, Attrankwa, and Tetrem citizens. Others cover the incumbent government's effort (the National Democratic Congress party) in the early 1990s to improve rural development. With a constituency focused on mostly rural areas<sup>72</sup> this chapter explores the social and political consequences of decentralization and resultant expectations.<sup>73</sup> Because both processes emerged in 1988, decentralization and electrification are deeply intertwined.

### **Framework of the chapter**

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. First, I offer a conceptual framework of decentralization to provide a context for the form pursued in Ghana. I follow this with a discussion of the impact of democratization to lay bare the political dilemmas that faced a fragile government in the shift to decentralized political power (that is from national to local), the requisites of a minimal state under a neo-liberal framework and the struggle to redefine the role

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<sup>72</sup>Ghana remains overwhelming rural with some 70 percent of the population residing in rural areas.

<sup>73</sup>Huntington (1968) argued that the slow development of political institutions coupled with rapid social change could lead to political decay, instability and even violence in developing societies because of the incongruence between adequate resources and infrastructures in society and the mobilization of new groups in society. This argument is instructive here because the process of decentralization, by aiming to localize development initiatives and create political structures directly accountable to the people, heightened the expectations of rural citizenry who looked to the post-1992 government(s) to solve their problems.

of government in the new economy, and in service delivery. This is followed by a section that explores the politics of transition and structural adjustment at the turn of a decade (1990), when the Rawlings' Provisional National Defense Committee or military oligarchy sought to establish a non-Western, indigenized form of representative government. Next, I explore the impetus for populism and decentralization in practice to account for the kind of political priorities that came to shape the mode of implementation in Ghana. However, I move beyond a discussion of populism to discuss the "new politics of decentralization" in resource management that emerged. Another section addresses the significant and perhaps unprecedented impact of "ownership" and measurement of public service delivery under electricity outcomes. The rationale for this discussion emanates from role of development partners or donors and to an extent NGOs in structuring public service outcomes through the redefinition of state authority and assumed role of a minimal state under decentralization.

In the second half of the chapter I discuss the political history of decentralization to contextualize and account for specific institutional norms that emerged and shaped political priorities particularly at the beginning of the fourth republic. I contend that the political priorities of survival amid difficult economic circumstances shaped the political impetus for decentralization, and the resulting structure of the district assembly system in the post 1992 period. To understand the institutional challenges of decentralization, I explore the early bureaucratic responses and chronicle the attenuating circumstances of political change. I also examine the impact of the district common fund as a yardstick for fiscal decentralization in relation to the district assembly objectives-most notably public service delivery. Accordingly, the financial allocation system for district assemblies is highlighted to demonstrate the ongoing challenges of service delivery that include the productive uses of electrification of DAs.

Additionally, the chapter discusses the consequent emergence and outcomes of the National Electrification Scheme (NES), and resultant decentralized REP & SHEP or the Rural Electrification Program and Self-Help Electrification Program (SHEP) to highlight the degree of progress and outcomes for the rural poor within the scope of public service delivery. Furthermore, I discuss the drawbacks of decentralization in practice. The last section addresses the political, fiscal, and administrative limitations of decentralization.

## **Section 2. Conceptual Framework**

The concept of decentralization has existed for over 50 years (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). It refers to the process by which efforts of people are united with those of government authorities to improve economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. This complex process involves two essential elements: first, the encouragement of participation by the people in efforts to improve their standard of living and second, with as much reliance as possible on their own initiatives (United Nations Seminar on Community Development, 1975). The first wave of post-WWII thinking on decentralization began in the 1970s and '80s, and focused on deconcentrating hierarchical government structures and bureaucracies.<sup>74</sup> The second wave began in the mid 1980s and was broadened to include power sharing, democratization, and market liberalization to expand the scope for private sector decision-making (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). As a result, local government was envisioned as the focus point for all development decisions, including rural development and decision-making processes (personal communication, 2009).

In the 1990s, decentralization was viewed as a way of opening government to wider

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<sup>74</sup>See United Nations development Program and World Bank, "country Re-Engagement, 2003 Note: UNDP/World Bank Somalia," 2003 p. 1

public participation, and Ghana was one of many countries to adopt this perspective. However, the decision to pursue decentralization produced notable contradictions since Naab (2005, p3) observes that “the arguments in favor of centralizing decision-making seem direct and compulsive compared with the more distant pleas for decentralization; funds and qualified manpower for performing development tasks are scarce and it seems logical to place their control in the hands of a few top leaders.” The literature distinguishes between three forms of decentralization: deconcentration, delegation and devolution (Rondinelli, 1999, p. 2; Parker, 1995). Deconcentration refers to the process by which the central government disperses responsibilities for certain services to its regional branch offices, without any transfer of authority to lower government (Litvack et al., 1998, p. 4) and is considered the weakest form of decentralization (Bergh, 2004). Delegation refers to the process whereby the central government transfers responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to local government or to semiautonomous organizations that are not wholly controlled by the central government but are ultimately accountable to it.

Meanwhile, devolution occurs when central government transfers authority for decision making, financial allocations and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government (Bergh, 2004). As a result, devolution represents the strongest form of decentralization because, as Bergh notes, it constitutes the most direct link with democracy. It is also sometimes referred to as political decentralization (Kauzya, 2007). But skeptics like Bardham and Mookherjee, (2006) are doubtful about the connection between decentralization and democracy, preferring to focus on the potential for improvement in government performance (cited by Aikins, 2007, p9). On a separate but related note, political decentralization involves the re-demarcation of district and sub-district administrative boundaries, the establishment and empowerment of local government

structures and the promotion of advocacy and popular participation at various levels of decision-making (Ahwoi, 2000).

### **Section 3: Democratization, decentralization and public goods**

Democratization aims to transform domestic politico-economic processes and in prevailing neo-liberal conceptions, is informed by norms of accountability, transparency, legitimacy, consensus, participation, pluralism etc.<sup>75</sup> But as a result of new alignments between public and private actors, democratization will almost inevitably be hindered by an inability of the state to deliver public goods (Grugel, 2002, p180) and by ambiguous institutional spaces evident the increasing internationalization of external financial institutions and actors. Various studies recognize the multifaceted difficulties that often face states that recently transitioned to democracy.<sup>76</sup> Because the struggle to facilitate the expression of citizens within the context of a political history continues to be framed by an authoritarian bureaucratic culture and centralization of key institutional functions, efforts to fulfill democratization have resulted in tenuous circumstances (Whitfield, 2005). As Haruna (2003) found, Ghana's reform efforts are hindered by a centralized bureaucracy, which has subsequently limited public service through a "carrot and stick" policy. Indeed the fiscal austerity that accompanies neo-liberal policies and democratization has complicated fiscal independence of district assemblies, which remains largely reliant on the central government assistance through the district assembly common fund.

Though democracies are assumed to do a better job than non-democracies in improving the welfare of the poor<sup>77</sup> and there is ample evidence that democracies fund public services at a

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<sup>75</sup>See Alison J. Ayers, "Demystifying Democratisation: the global constitution of (neo) liberal polities in Africa" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2 p322-323.

<sup>76</sup> I used the term 'nascent' for Ghana and the rest of sub-Saharan African because as is well documented, western democracies have consolidated democracy for several centuries.

<sup>77</sup>See Michael Ross, "Is Democracy Good for the Poor?" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 4 Oct 2006 860. Also see the works of Boone 1996; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Dasgupta 1993; Franco Alvarez-Dardet, and Ruiz 2004; Lake and Baum 2001; McGuire 2001; Moon and Dixon 1985; Przeworski et al. 2000; Sen

higher level than non-democracies<sup>78</sup> it is not obvious that these infusions of money reach the poor nor is it obvious that they produce better social outcomes (Ross, 2003, p860). Addressing weak capacity in institutional governance and delivery of public goods while meeting economic expectations are critical in this regard. It comes of little surprise that tenuous institutional processes and economic shortfalls can generate populism, since clientelism effectively provides tangible benefits such as votes, political support and acquiescence (Whitfield, 2005: 180). Indeed, Weyland (1996) observes how clientelism can lock people into structurally unequal exchange relationships, which become a vicious cycle that prevents the creation of a substantive democracy capable of moving beyond inefficiency and populism (Grugel, 2002, p. 180). If democracies produce better outcomes for low-income families than countries that transition from non-democratic to democratic rule, we should observe improvements in infant and child mortality rates. But Ross finds that they do not (p860). Naab (2005, p3) observed in his dissertation on *Decentralization and Democratic Local Governance in Ghana: Assessing the Performance of District Assemblies and Exploring the Scope of partnerships* that, “when the state itself is still young and insecure, most ruling groups would like to insulate the local administration from any political influence except their own.” Set against these notions, the populist oriented policies which emerged in potable water provision, schools, road repair and even electricity proved critical in securing rural political support after the country returned to democratic rule in 1992.

A series of studies acknowledge that decentralization can potentially improve local government to produce and enhance participatory norms and more efficient development strategies as Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema 1984, Wunsch & Oluwu (ed) 1990, and Crook 1994

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1981, 199 Siegle, Weinstein and Halperin 2004; Zweifel and Navia 2000 etc.

<sup>78</sup>(Avelino, Brown and Hunter 2005; Brown and Hunter 2004; Gerring, Thacker and Alfaro 2005; Kaufman and Segura-Ubierno 2001; McGuire, 2006; Stasavage 2005a; Tavares and Wacziarg 2001)

observe. However, by 2006, an IMF report not only found significant gaps in economic performance and off-course targets, it found significant reasons to redefine the processes of decentralization. Political decentralization had progressed, according to the report, but administrative and fiscal decentralization had not.

Institutions matter a great deal in participatory political systems as Grofman & Lijphart (1986) (1984) observe. Many studies including Crook and Manor (1998) measure the institutional performance of a few countries, including Ghana, by examining the participation of citizens in the process, conceived as the active engagement of citizens with public institutions through voting, electoral campaigns, either individually or through group activity. As is well known, different political systems create incentives or disincentives that consequently determine the level of responsiveness of elected officials to their constituents (Reynolds, 1995, as cited in Wells, 1997). When Ghana formally returned to civilian rule, key features of the electoral system shifted, with far-reaching consequences. Thus, the choice of electoral system and formula were significant. During the drafting of the new constitution, a Committee of Experts recommended a system of proportional representation to convert votes into parliamentary seats. However, Rawlings managed to defeat this proposal, instead opting for a single-member, plurality-based electoral system (Wells, 1997, p 212) in its' unitary state. This type of system was strategically sound, since "single-member districts and plurality rule are noted for their ability to encourage politician linkage with voters at the local level (Herbst, 1993, as cited in Wells, 1997). Single member district systems are also believed to increase the responsiveness of politicians to their local constituents for the simple reason that they, more than anyone else, will control their leaders' political futures in the next election (Wells, 1997, p 213). This type of electoral system also tends to favor a two-party system, effectively crowding out smaller and weaker parties to

produce remarkably resilient democracy and stable relations between the NDC and NPP. Conversely, most forms of proportional representation have the opposite effect—for example, Wells notes that, “under this system party leaders nominate lists of candidates to stand for election in multi-member districts. Come election day, voters cast their ballots for parties rather than individual candidates, legislative seats are then filled to form each party’s list in proportion to that party’s share of the vote” (Wells, 1997, p213). Predictably, and as Barkan notes (1995), proportional representation tends to weaken the political link between representative and constituent—likely because it makes candidates more likely to devote their time, resources and attention to the party officials who determine their political fate, rather than individual voters (Widner, 1994b, p55). As the country’s newly minted president, one could subsequently argue that Rawlings followed conventional wisdom in choosing single-member district representation and plurality rule because this would not only produce political rewards, it enabled rural voters to hold their parliamentary representatives accountable (Wells, 1997: 213). Therefore by creating district assemblies, he could cite participatory norms and representation-both donor requirements.

In *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Dahl (1971) explored the various conditions that seemed to either favor or impede transitions to a polyarchic regime.<sup>79</sup> Dahl’s analysis is instructive, as the PNDC government joined the tidal wave of sweeping democratization across the globe (through a series of radio chats to televised events) to transform government structures responsive to the preferences of its citizens. Bratton, Lewis, and Gyimah-Boadi (2001) examine the link between support for democracy and adjustment policies in Ghana, as well as the nature of a dual transition, as the country’s shift to democracy in the post-1992 period coincided with the

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<sup>79</sup>Dahl defines “polyarchy” as a system in which a regime has been substantially popularized and liberalized, becoming highly inclusive and open to public contestation.

adoption of a market-based economy. They find among that numerous factors, that ordinary Ghanaians supported democracy as a form of governance and hoped for an end to adjustment policies.

Neoliberal assumptions equate decentralization practices with popular participation and subsequent empowerment of citizens. It is thought that popular participation can yield beneficial outcomes in enabling citizens to articulate their preferences, for example in terms of community development. The extent of popular participation in rural development projects then, is critical to understanding the progress of decentralization and its link to rural electrification. As Crook and Manor (1998) note, “the real difficulty facing district assembly members in their relationship with constituents derives from an unacknowledged contradiction between their official duty to encourage self-help projects and their duty to mobilize resources for assembly-led development”. A member of parliament stated, “the center is very reluctant to give up power control” (2009 personal communication). Another member of parliament noted that, “while many assembly representatives and their constituents turned to self help as an alternative to waiting for assembly-managed development, it was viewed as a *shortcoming* of the assembly, not as a triumph of the decentralization policy” (anonymous source, personal communication, 2009). And the more successful assembly members were at developing self-help projects, the more they undermined the legitimacy of assembly taxes and their own role as representatives of a district-level institution (Manor, 1998, p783). As I will demonstrate in a succeeding chapter (four) there is an need to question and unpack the role of participation in enabling marginalized groups like rural people to effect change in their communities and livelihoods, but without a frank examination of what this means under the political framework of national government power (re-centralization) and weak institutional capacity of district assemblies, the vagaries of participation

become obvious.

### *Public Goods*

Ostensibly, the “new public management” movement of the 1990s that emerged in wealthier countries shaped the way international development organizations and reform-oriented public officials in developing countries, and donor agencies began to think about what governments should do and how they should perform (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007, p. 2–4) by adopting a public-management approach, that focused on making government mission-driven rather than rule-bound, and results-oriented... (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007, p4). This approach arguably included how to approach public goods provision. Under a 'modified' orthodox adjustment perspective the neo-classical theory of public goods was used to explain the problems of development in Africa (Stein, 1997, p136). According to the theory, public goods are goods where the consumption by one person does not exclude the amount available to another, since the price system cannot allocate them efficiently it is often assumed that states are needed to choose a level that will be socially optimal.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, this remains particularly critical for Ghana and other countries where electricity provision has taken on a public goods aspect and is also viewed as central to income generating activities in rural areas.

#### **Section 4: Ghana’s experience with Structural Adjustment**

With a failing economy, scarce commodities and unprecedented hardship, and the expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria in 1981, widespread discontent was inevitable. Structural adjustment policies broadly called for cutbacks in social programs and fiscal austerity measures. Under this framework, Ghana adopted an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in 1982 to reduce high rates of inflation and improve production capacity, which was expected to yield significant

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<sup>80</sup>Stein, 1997, p36; Also see Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: public goods and the theory of groups*, 1977

improvement along with market-oriented reforms begrudgingly embraced by the PNDC. Unfortunately, the ERP did little to assuage the difficulties most Ghanaians faced during this period. Combined with clamors for political change and an increasingly tenuous political environment, the National Commission for Democracy held public symposia and seminars on the possibilities for a new political system in 1986. On December 31, Rawlings announced that “modalities and guidelines...for the district council elections” would be released by July 1, 1987. Consequently, his *District Political Authority and Modalities for the District Level Elections* became a focal point of public attention (Green, 1995:148). By the end of 1986, some 29,000 parastatal workers had been redeployed and the civil service shed 15,000 jobs (Ewusi, 1988, p 46). To curb inflation, the government also adopted an extremely restrictive monetary policy and placed a credit squeeze on economic activity (World Bank, 1987, 4). Taken together, these measures together caused an increasingly flailing regime to reevaluate its political and economic strategies for bolstering support.

Nonetheless the regime came to be regarded as a “star pupil” by the World Bank for the extensive implementation of its policies. Hutchful (2002) finds that Ghana’s status as a ‘star pupil’ originated with the considerable extent to which it implemented adjustment policies. Essentially, he argued that while the Bank lauded the country as a neoliberal success, it did not understand the political process or the PNDC’s motivations and the nature of its success. In any case, reform efforts stalled in 1993, months after Rawlings reshaped the PNDC into the NDC and multiparty democracy. Hutchful (2002) asserts that, while foreign aid and prescriptions for economic recovery helped to promote reform efforts, domestic politics and interests were paramount in stifling further reform.

As he further notes, “...leverage of foreign aid had been “often exaggerated; in the face of entrenched domestic interest groups, leverage could be exercised only

at the margin, making a difference “only in the cases where there is close contest among interested (domestic groups). In several important areas, donors’ support for reform made little difference.”

The ERP adjustment program provides an important context for understanding these themes, which were alternatively shaped by increasing government concerns for efficiency and the PNDCs’ willingness to conduct relations with society only on its own terms (Green, 1996, 137). As a result, attempts to reconfigure state-society relations prompted the Rawlings regime at turn of the decade to create new governance structures that would be accountable to the people while configuring new ways to maintain political support. The structure of the new system was essentially grounded in reformed local government via regional coordinating councils, district assemblies, sub-metropolitan district councils, urban, zonal, town and area councils with a district secretary and chief executive possessing final authority over decision-making.

Various cleavages became apparent at the district level with confusion over who should implement or execute the decision of DAs—since the district administration, the executive committee, or the district secretary (DS) contested the district assembly for supremacy (Oquaye, 2004, p265). Indeed, Gyimah-Boadi and Rothschild referred to this process as an “administrative jungle” (Boadi & Rothschild, 1986). As they note, the district secretaries were charged with ensuring “that DAs operated within the framework of central government policy (Boadi & Rothschild, 1986, p105). In regards to the same issue, Oquaye (2004) observes:

This gave him tremendous powers since the DS was not only the head of the District and the link between the center and the locality but also the chairman of the DA’s executive committee. As a political appointee who held his position at the pleasure of the PNDC, the DA was also the most important member of the DS but (emphasis) was not accountable to the local people. The fact that he was theoretically an ex-officio member, revealed the gap between theory and practice in peoples power implementation. As leader of the revolutionary organs throughout the District, the DS was in a very strong position. This was heightened early in 1992, when it became clear that every DA was to become the *de facto*

campaign manager for Rawlings in the latter's bid for president. (p263)

This development set a precedent visible in the most recent elections of 2008 when the current National Democratic Congress (NDC) government sought to “buy the rural vote” with the sudden appearance of potable water, electricity, roads, etc., which appeared in many regions where it was felt the party needed to secure political support. Initially, in the 1991/92 period Rawlings instituted a ban on political parties, believing that they were a sure way to polarize effective governance and stymie local participation and representation. After a referendum revealed the desire of Ghanaians for a political party system, Rawlings had little recourse but to accede. Yet the re-emergence of a party system exhibited polarization along historic and ideological rivalries reimagined in the fold of newly formed political parties.<sup>81</sup> For example, the NPP and the NDC developed as dominant and contemporary political rivals that mimicked the Nkrumaist and Danquah/Busia rivalries (CPP and PP parties respectively). This historic schism, allowed for the political party penetration of rural areas, which ironically facilitated decentralization in the years to come (Green, 1995; Bawumia, 1997).

### **Section 5: Minimal Government under Decentralization**

The extent of donor or IFI influence on the domestic policy front illustrates a reconstitution of public and private domains.<sup>82</sup> For example, the interaction between the heavily dependent Ghana and IFIs came to structure domestic autonomy in less than ideal ways while producing contradictions in state prerogatives to attend to the poor. As Whitfield notes, “the zeal of donors to involve ‘civil society’ in policy discussions produced a divide between consultative processes and constitutional representative processes, between formal and informal institutions. Indeed Markovitz (1999) notes that the frequent use and merits of ‘civil society’ as an end all in

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<sup>81</sup>See Minion K. Morrison for more on the nature of historical and ideological rivalries between political parties in the 1992, 1996 and 2000 elections.

<sup>82</sup>See Whitfield, 2005; Ayers, 2006.

the African context is frequently misguided and exaggerated.

Under a minimalist state- oriented purview, decentralization of power from national government involved the transfer of political authority from the center (Ministry of Rural and Local government official, personal communication, 2009). Local government thus became the focal point for all development decisions. The creation of Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy papers not only aimed to reduce poverty and usher economic development in marginalized areas of the country like the Northern, Upper Eastern and Upper western regions, it renewed interest in the decentralization process.<sup>83</sup> The tenets of decentralization also included: i) performance of legislative and administrative duties, development planning, service delivery and budgeting; ii) creation of sub district councils and unit committees to create greater access to political authority and restructure resource allocation; and iii) serving as a resource-sharing mechanism between central and local governments (Ahwoi, 2001, p2) Each district would be headed by a District Chief Executive or DCE along with a District Secretary. The DAs were to exercise political and administrative authority in their districts and supervise all other political and administrative authorities. They were also given a comprehensive development role apart from usual municipal functions (Oquaye, 2004, p255). Membership in each DA ranged from about 50 to 100, according to population, and could be divided into three categories: i) two-thirds of assembly members were elected by universal adult suffrage and a simple majority system that represented the electoral areas within the district; ii) the remaining one third were appointed by the PNDC in consultation with traditional authorities, local interest groups and revolutionary organs; and iii)

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<sup>83</sup>These regions are marked by a high percentage of agriculture, have low percentages of industry and comparatively lower median incomes and electrification rates than the country's other seven regions For instance in the Upper East region, only some 30% of a population of close to 2 million have access to electricity Note that this rate reflects the official figures provided by the Ministry of Energy. The mean annual income is the second lowest for all the regions numbering at 616 Ghana cedis etc. The Upper Western region also has a similarly low electricity access rate of 31.95% and a mean annual income of only 602 Ghana cedis.

the DA who was both the political and administrative head of the district was directly appointed by the PNDC (Oquaye, 2004, p255). This created an interesting power dynamic because, as Oquaye notes, the District Secretary wielded tremendous power as a conduit between the PNDC and the assemblies, which was to have significant consequences (Ibid, 255). It is quite plausible that Rawlings used his populist stronghold to co-opt the DCE and anyone below to make certain that the locus of important powers rested with central government. As it were, subtle remarks in my interviews with some members of Parliament suggest so. Second, limited autonomy of district assemblies precipitated a strong participatory element for citizens whose administrative capacity and inner workings reflected path dependent outcomes that continued well after Rawlings left power in 2000. Moreover, the Rawlings regime came to be viewed as the “electrification government.”

### **Section 6: The impetus for Populism and Decentralization in Practice: Decentralization for Whom?**

In theory, a decentralized political system places increased decision-making ability at the disposal of ordinary citizens (Oquaye, 2004) and can increase the number of public goods and services at a lower cost (Rondinelli, 1981, as cited in Oquaye, 2004, p256). But it appears that popular understandings of local government functions are steeped in the country’s traditions of centralized public administration” (3) and government officials even in the fourth republic (post 1992 period) also share similar opinions (see Murray, 2009). Concomitantly, the focus on rural people is not accidental: as a state largely perceived to be in crisis at the turn of the 1990s, rural constituents became the logical recipients of co-optation in part due to the populism of former Flight Lieutenant Rawlings who steered the country from a military dictatorship to civilian rule in the early 1990s. It is for these reasons that incremental development policies or “project by

project” orientation emerged, for example in the three electrification schemes that aimed to lift rural peoples out of poverty. To borrow from Claude Ake’s assessment, “development projects, with the material resources they make easily available, become a viable source of tremendous political power” (Ake, 1991). As Botchway notes, it is not unusual for socio-political struggles to be generated around the control of “development” projects, because it is through the implementation of these interests that governments claim to exhibit concern for the people (Botchway, 1998).

Bates (1981) offered intriguing explanations for the ability of African governments to pursue interests detrimental to the rural majorities. He found that individual costs of collective action fuelled factional conflicts and resulted in few inclinations to participate in collective action. With past and present governments resorting to the “conferment of divisible benefits,” to satisfy private rural interests, rural development projects become instrumental in creating a system of spoils, thereby maintaining a measure of rural political support. Thus Bates’ characterization is largely valid because his description of African agricultural policies, class formation and the problematic nature of state development are applicable to many African countries.

The planned transfer of authority to district assemblies appears to have created an conducive environment to favorable state-society relations<sup>84</sup> intricately linked to strategies for rural coalescence. This development was two-fold: first, the PNDC’s apparent commitment to decentralizing power stemmed from a wish to improve efficiency. Second, the effectiveness of soon-to-be-revamped institutions was tied to a desire for political longevity. Green (1996)

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<sup>84</sup>Green’s dissertation (1992), “Structural Adjustment Reform, Politics and Government Political Projects: A Comparative Study of PNDC Ghana and the District Assembly Decentralization Policy,” University of Delaware, has more on how the PNDC used the newly created district assembly system to organize and restructure state-society relations in ways that created distributional gains via political projects.

concludes that, “even as the PNDC was trying to build a new concept of the state, a new system of government society relations—through adjustment provided an opportunity to condition the form that the PNDC chose for the new state. But society had different ideas, and the demands for parties and democracy prevailed—with the rejection of government’s macro-political project ... breakdown in government autonomy in 1990 and 1991, and politicization of what had always been political took place” (Ibid, 239).

Conceived as a solution to Ghana’s political-development vacuum, decentralization offered viable opportunities as a vehicle for service delivery and a mandate to Ghanaians.<sup>85</sup> Authorized in the 1992 constitution, Local Government Act 462 provided the blueprint for a local government system to function as a vehicle for the rural development that hitherto had been quite absent (except for fits and starts in the Nkrumah and Busia administrations). According to one interviewee, it was only after Act 462 that the “strongest basis for local government system and vehicle for rural development was conceptualized” (anonymous source, personal communication, 2009). The Act not only laid the basis for decentralization, but outlined a comprehensive plan for the “planning functions for the district assemblies” (Local Government Act 462, 1993).<sup>86</sup>

Hutchful observes that a consensus emerged among the echelons of leadership in the pre-1992 period that recognized how key, but weak policy-making and institutional structures required reform. However, the PNDC regimes showed little interest in doing so. Two confidential informants noted that well in the post-1992 period, district assemblies remained considerably weak. The International Economic Affairs organization became one such

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<sup>85</sup>Former official for the Ministry of Local and Rural Development personal communication, 2009

<sup>86</sup>Though the respondent suggested that the basis for rural and local development stemmed from Local Government Act 462, the document is not entirely clear on the specific mechanisms for rural or local development to stem out of the district assemblies (Local Government Act 462, 1993).

organization to emerge in the period preceding regime change in 1992 and it provided a forum for politicians to discuss and articulate their political platforms.

Additionally, Hutchful (1998) finds that a desire to achieve regime survival was the key impetus for reform rather than a belief in market principles during the late 1980s and beyond. The vagaries of structural adjustment policies that faced increasing resistance by a recalcitrant public meant that the regime faced little choice in mitigating negative economic outcomes on an urban workforce in the midst of locating new bases of political support. As Hutchful states, “unlike many African governments, the regime in Ghana preferred to manipulate macroeconomic instruments and to work within, rather than against, adjustment in order to increase its own power and enhance its fiscal base” (Hutchful, 1998, p206). In fact, the extent to which the country pursued adjustment policies is almost unparalleled; but it barely managed to balance the requisites of adjustment while avoiding a political catastrophe in the midst of an already fractious political environment.

The government retained significant control over budget allocation, staff appointments and salaries while devolving a range of decision-making powers to local development (Naab, 2005, p6). Also the large number of newspaper articles in 1992 that detail development initiatives of district assemblies are a testament to widespread initiatives that the NDC government took. Perhaps as an indication of “re-centralization” to come, it became the policy of the central government and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLG & RD) in the late 1980s, to provide each district capital or small town (Owusu, 2004) with a specific range of amenities like electricity, telephone connections, district referral hospitals, portable water supplies, etc. (GSS, 1995, as cited in Owusu, 2004, p166).

Given the scale of political transformation required for donor support which included a

“rolling back” of the state, post-transition governments in the fourth republic likely recognized the political gains that public goods could afford in the midst of economic grievances and a decentralized political framework. In fact, as several interviewees noted, central government devolution of financing, planning and budgeting of functions to the district assemblies created a situation in which projects like electrification were carefully calculated to ensure political legitimacy and staying power of particular parties in the central government. For example, a member of parliament and former Minister of Energy from the NDC party noted that the “government realized that [energy and development] was needed. It was part of national policy. Somewhere along the line it should have come naturally; government should realize that we should give opportunity to rural communities to develop” (personal communication, 2009).

<sup>87</sup>But he later noted that “People delude themselves into thinking that there is no politics in it, but what is politics after all? Whatever the nature of politics, it permeates every level, so many elections, and politics of local government. I go campaigning for people ...I belong to a certain political persuasion and I kind of imbue them, go in there and do the kinds of things I suggest.” (member of parliament for the NDC party, personal communication, 2009). Another interviewee noted that:

The pace is very slow; we have a long way to go. Let me tell you one thing: we always mention finance as number one. Blame it. If we strategize properly, we can reduce the number of areas that lack it. Finance will always be a problem. We use money as an excuse. It is a question of priority. When you have a list of development things you want to do, some have multiplier effects, ripple effects. It is a question of priority and political exigencies. (member of Parliament and the NDC, personal communication, 2009)

On the other hand, the steady increase in district assemblies from an initial number of 66 to 110 to 170 is arguably a hallmark progressive decentralization. Conversely, the

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<sup>87</sup> It should be noted that political upheaval that began in the post independent period after Nkrumah’s tenure as president and economic malaise contributed to the limited scope that domestic energy provision received.

institutionalization of weak capacity given inadequate skills, human resources, and self-generated source of revenue are unfortunate developments. Indeed the most recent but former district fund administrator during the second term of President Kufuor (2004-2008) Mr. Joshua Nicol and former key official Mr. Agbe from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural development noted in discussions during the summer of 2009- the debilitating outcomes associated with this unfortunate reality. This outcome may be unsurprising given that Crook and Manor (1998) illustrate the nature of path dependent processes in previous state experiments that reveal a picture of overly dependent local councils on the central government for finance and technical assistance. After nearly two decades, the same processes are evident in district assemblies that struggle to find institutional complementarity with central governments. In fact, this institutional dilemma is what makes democratizing states fragile and prone to disorder, disorganization and neo-patrimonial relationships.

Though Mr. Ahwoi, PNDC Secretary for Local Government envisioned the DAs as a unique opportunity for Ghanaians to develop their own areas since “the majority of rural Ghanaians were more interested in local matters than in national politics” (Africa Report, 1989). Nevertheless, local government reform suffered setbacks due to the creation of new districts. Not only did local officials exhibit little interest in reforms, but the creation of new districts was approached with derision and skepticism because of the potential diversion of funds and focus to the new areas. For instance, for many within the civil service, this development appeared contradictory, since the PNDC planned an expensive decentralization program to increase material support at the local level while reducing support for the districts.<sup>88</sup>

To develop and tailor an indigenous political system suitable to the African context (see

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<sup>88</sup>See Jonah, 1989, as cited in Green, 1995, p 142. According to Jonah, the cuts in support for local government were part of the World Bank’s prescriptions to reduce the scope or span of central government.

Oquaye, 2004), required that political actors address the ethnicity question. Thus subsequent attempts to mitigate the influence of ethnicity stemmed from a desire to avoid fractious politics, mobilize large numbers of constituents, and maintain political power. A political environment devoid of ethnic politics was desirable so that future regimes could more easily capture the support of target groups. While I certainly don't suggest that ethnicity was absent, I maintain instead that political gains required bargains with society less reflective of personalism with the use of subtle forms of co-optation that would not be readily apparent. Therefore it is for these reasons that an increasing number of districts proliferate.

It is not surprising then that decentralization was fashioned as a political instrument to stabilize a political system widely agreed to be in peril and to secure some of the political objectives of the government (Ayee, 1996). Ninsin (1996) also found that the district assembly decentralization program was part of a larger phase to institutionalize PNDC rule and was, for Ninsin, part of the regime's "*mobilization strategies*." Anyimadu's (1993) exploration of agricultural development under the PNDC and specific projects and donor requirements found that the character of the reform process caused the PNDC to rush reforms in order to meet conditionality deadlines. The fact that district assemblies ultimately fulfilled the PNDC's aims is not surprising (Ayee & Ninsin, 1996, as cited in Green,). This might explain the placement of 22 departments under the control of DAs, a change called for in the 1988 Local Government Law:

A district Assembly shall in the discharge of its functions establish the departments and organizations specified in the First Schedule; and...the staff of the Assembly shall include officers of the District Administration except the District Administrative Officer, and all Civil Servants and Public officers in the district who are employees of the departments and organizations referred to in section 29 of this Law (PNDCL 207, 1988, p17)

This law in effect abolished the separate identities of the departments and organizations, whose functions overlapped with those of the DAs and fused them together to promote the development

of districts (Ayee, 1997). Nonetheless, Ayee finds that at the national, regional and district levels the bureaucracy was unable to perform the functions allotted to them because of implementation problems, failure to submit appropriate budgets, the failure of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MFEP) to process district inputs in preparation for a national budget, as well as the failure to decentralize the civil service—an important part of the process. As a result, the “line ministries” or bureaucracy were all located in Accra, while their deconcentrated offices, located in the 10 regions and the then-110 capitals, were unable to implement the roles assigned to them in terms of human capital and financial resources. This encouraged further centralization of political authority and left many district assemblies bereft of the political will to carry out their functions as expected. As Ahwoi (2001) notes, “At the inception of the policy, it was recognized that Ghana did not have the culture of decentralized management, and that a centralized public administration system left the sub-national levels very weak and totally dependent on the center for policy making, programming, budgeting and implementation, which was incompatible with the new policy.” With few effective mechanisms and resources to strengthen devolution of authority to the district assemblies, a fractious political environment, created opportunities for the incumbent regime and newly minted National Democratic Congress to capitalize from.

### **Section 7: Moving beyond Populism: A New Politics of Decentralization?**

In recent years, a number of scholars (i.e., Larson and Ribot, 2004; Ribot & Larson, 2004; Baviskar, 2004; Manor, 2004) have explored the role of decentralization by tracing the use of natural resources by local governments/institutions- for example in relation to the management of watersheds, water resources and forests. Case studies of Bolivia, Indonesia, China, Brazil and Cameroon consider the following factors: first, the extent to which central

governments have decentralized authority over natural resources to local governments or other sub-national entities; second, the relations between these local-level entities and the population; and third, the effects of these processes on local peoples and natural resources (Ribot & Larson, 2004, p2).

While decentralization of natural-resource management is still in its early stages in many countries, these authors contend that problems like the central government's resistance to devolve power, and issues of accountability among local entities receiving such powers contribute to already onerous process. Their observations are cogent for Ghana, where the benefits of the Volta Lake and Akosombo dam remain contentious given the incessant gaps in electricity access for domestic consumers. Intermittent problems with water levels and overall management of the Akosombo dam are related to continued gaps in efficient provision and even wastage in electricity delivery (former mayor of Accra, Mr. Nathaniel Amarteifio personal communication, 2008). According to Simon, et al (2003, p46) "as in other countries, there has been something of a mismatch between DA powers and responsibilities on the one hand, and available resources." For all these reasons, district decentralization has received mixed reviews, with planning and environmental/natural resource management records particularly disappointing (cf Simon et al: Porter and Young 1998). On a larger note, Bergh found that participatory mechanisms may obstruct the potential benefits of this process when used to establish a plethora of local institutions that compete with or substitute nascent democratic processes. Because these institutions are often based on problematic notions of "community," and frequently have limited downward accountability, Bergh believes that they are often captured by local elites or are manipulated by central government officials (Larson & Ribot, 2004, p5-6).

## **Section 8: “Ownership” and Measurement of Public Service Delivery under Decentralization**

As the “social compact” (Dubash, 2003) shifts from the state to markets (or to international power producers and exporters), the role of government in public service and enterprises is a critical one. While the government of Ghana values the resources NGOs bring to help meet the 'service delivery gap' it seeks to circumscribe their role to the sphere of social welfare.” Additionally, as massive inflows of aid accrue to NGOs, the NGO sector has become a new arena for accumulation, especially for African elites (Gary, 1996, p163). Although beyond the scope of this chapter, these developments suggest a complex picture of state and NGO conflict bolstered by attempts to co-opt not just NGOs but the poor-especially the rural poor-given the plethora of “aid dependent culture in Ghana.”<sup>89</sup>

Two processes can be observed in the relationship between governments and NGO sector in Ghana, which hinge on service delivery, rural development and poverty reduction in Ghana. For instance, Ian Gary (1996) argued that in an era of structural adjustment and neo-liberalization, the African state (using Ghana as a case study) was being undercut from above and below—in the competition for power and resources. Conversely, the African state has sought and at various times successfully co-opted and controlled a growing NGO sector. As Bebbington (1993) succinctly notes, governments appeared more often than not, motivated by the desire to gain access to NGO funds, than by a desire to make NGOs monitor NGOs they fear as political competitors, to accountable the rural poor (p25).

Service delivery is a critical component of district assembly functions and an important

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<sup>89</sup>See Gary (1996) on the difficulties of delineating differences between local/indigenous, foreign international NGOs and their activities. For a discussion of typology of NGOs see Bratton (1989) and Fowler (1992) which include CBOs-community based organizations, service or intermediary NGOs, international and relief organizations-which tend to be foreign.

objective in the country's decentralization objectives. But a perusal of living standards within the districts reveal uneven service provision in terms of community facilities, uneven spending levels, amid many more examples (cited from Aikins, 2007-thesis;Ye and Canagarajah, 2002) As one component, electricity represents a both a functional element for use in lighting, heating, cooking etc. and in some cases as an economic input for example in business or industry or small/medium enterprises. In short, it is a multidimensional resource that governments have attempted to make accessible through public service delivery-after the inception of National Electrification, Rural Electrification schemes.

Concerns about the negative impact on the poor led to the creation of a “lifeline tariff” for those with difficulties paying their utility bills, despite donor outcries. Perhaps most significant about this development is the political salience of access for the rural poor. Indeed this tariff is a social one, priced well below the cost of supply and targeted at poor and low-income households. The philosophy underpinning the lifeline tariff is that electricity is an essential service, rather than a luxury and people of low income should not be deprived of it (Edjekumhene et al, 2006). Yet some find weak evidence to support the notion of increased economic activity in communities benefiting from the scheme.<sup>90</sup> Poorly integrated local economic sectors, lack of access to capital for small and medium enterprises and poor vertical and horizontal coordination between district assemblies and central government cripple communities seeking to improve their welfare through the use of electricity. As an official in the VRA and engineer for the NES noted:

Generally, it has made an impact, the primary use for lighting [...] but it is not used in high-growth industries, in factories. In rural electrification you hardly get factories established because of electrification. The corn mills, which have no means for diesel motors attached, they convert it, and they buy the electric power for the rural electrification. It is difficult to confine it in terms of income, but in

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<sup>90</sup>See Foley (1990) who argues that the economical benefits of rural electrification are spurious.

terms of lifestyle of the person, the poverty level, it has an impact. (Personal communication, 2009)

Despite enduring skepticism of the productive uses of electricity or PUEs, the Trades Union Congress, a powerful voting block for many decades deemed energy critical to labor and commerce. Together with the Association of Ghana, the group commissioned a study, to identify emergent problems in the energy crises of the late 1990s (AGI Report, p7). But weak linkages between the various administrative departments of the district assemblies prevented cohesive communication and innovative solutions for generating revenue for the purposes of service delivery in the communities that the DAs serve.

## **PART II**

### ***The Political history of decentralization in the post-independent period***

After Ghana became independent in 1957, Nkrumah showed little interest in devolving central government functions and power to local institutions. The country became a one-party state under Nkrumah's Convention People's Party, and the central government's penetration of local administrative development put an end to rationally organized, autonomous local authorities. When confronted with growing social discontent, the Nkrumah government responded with noticeable centralization of control (Schiffer, 1970, p74-75). Later, the National Liberation Council (NLC) deposed Kwame Nkrumah and assumed control from 1966-69 until a civilian president K. A. Busia was installed as president. Planning committees were created in all of the country's regions with planning officers appointed in each regional office to address programming for regional development and execute development projects like electrification outlined in the national plan and budget. Although the NLC regime took the recommendations of the World Bank a step further by creating planning units in various ministries, a preoccupation with planning at the national level resulted in little regard for rural communities (Grayson, 1975,

p127). A second military regime (1972-78), which deposed President Busia, encouraged centralization of national government- thus limiting the scope for local governance and autonomous functions even further. Grayson attributes this startling development to the tendency in many parts of the world and on the continent for politicians and civil servants to funnel “as many public funds as possible through their own hands” (Ibid,127).

With stagnant growth, dependence on agriculture, flailing exports of mineral resources, inflation and other economic problems, it is remarkable that these broad tasks were attempted at all, given the absence of adequately trained local authorities. Nonetheless, the 1967 Mills-Odoi report represented the first genuine step towards decentralization. Subsequently, the commission that produced it and was responsible for overseeing the process found excessive centralization of both authority and resources (Ibid,127). The Report noted the heavy concentration of senior public servants in Accra with field work left to relatively junior officials elsewhere; alongside anonymous accountability, excessive fragmentation of government functions rendered the coordination of related activities difficult and as a consequence the local government system became virtually ineffective and bordered on collapse.<sup>91</sup> It was hoped that decentralization of the management of public affairs would increase efficiency and decision making as well (Ibid, 128). But actual mechanisms to move this process further fizzled with political upheavals and economic downturn.

In 1982, the PNDC regime appeared interested in decentralization, but it wasn't until the end of the decade that concrete steps were taken to push the country closer to decentralization. According to Green (1992), one of the first measures the PNDC government adopted was a three-tiered system of councils would form the basis of governance that would include

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<sup>91</sup> Kwamena Ahwoi, *Local Government and Decentralisation in Ghana*, Unimax Maxmillan : Accra Ghana, 2010, p19

area/town/village councils, district councils and regional councils (138). As he observes, “the current system of administration was believed to stifle initiatives in the districts with central financial control deemed too rigid and frustrating for district programs.” (Green, 1992, p138). As Green notes, “it was almost immediately clear that the scheduled reforms would not proceed as planned” (Green, 1992), so much so that PNDC officials made charges of bureaucratic sabotage (Gyimah-Boadi, 1986, p276). Gyimah Boadi observes, it was not surprising for PNDC officials to encounter resistance from bureaucrats, who after all wielded a great deal of power and were reluctant to give it up. Other difficulties stemmed from plans to reorganize the ministries so that they would work properly once decentralized. To this end, a new Public Administration and Decentralization Implementation committee was launched in 1983, to be headed by the PNDC Secretary for Local Government (Gyimah-Boadi, 1986, p140).

#### *Early or Initial Responses of bureaucracy to decentralization*

The extent of disillusion and bureaucratic response to decentralized governance during the 1990s offers a sobering view of enormous challenges that state officials faced. The remarks of a minister of local government are not only disquieting they are stark indications of central government hegemony and struggles for authority in the midst of decentralization:

Decentralization has not taken place in Ghana. The reason largely is that the bureaucracy . . . particularly the top management personnel, is not in favor of decentralization. Every impediment has been placed in the way of implementing the decentralization programme. Top civil servants do not want to know. Some have deliberately confused it with an exercise in deconcentration.<sup>92</sup>

Confidential sources support the notion that the bureaucracy was slow to adapt to the provisions of decentralization authorized by local government Act 462. As Ayee has repeatedly pointed out (1996, 1997, 2003), the decentralization program aimed to involve local areas or

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<sup>92</sup>In Ayee’s words, deconcentration was taken to mean the “authority for the discharge of specified functions to the staff of a central government ministry or department at the local level to make administrative decisions on behalf of the central government or authority” (Ayee, 1997, p37).

communities in the development of rural areas. In the 1988-89 period, local government units along with the district assemblies were given some 86 functions and charged with planning, finance, budgeting, infrastructural development and security supported by legislative instruments (Ayee, 1996 p38). However, underneath these explicit objectives lay “the politics of decentralization” (Ibid). Ayee, Green et al, also argued that decentralization attempted to resolve the legitimacy crisis inherent in the military regime of the PNDC government, whose members hoped to demonstrate to donors more open and democratic politics. It wasn't until 1987/88 that substantial efforts signaled tangible steps towards creating a district and reformed local government system. Also, the PNDC's early attempts to create institutions of decentralization during this period produced the “blue book” or blueprint for local government and accompanying structures like the district assemblies, which represented a crucial step toward local and participatory governance. Ghana's local government system emerged as a *fused* or mixed system, combining the prefectoral-style rule of traditional district administration responsible to central government with local control, service provision and tax-raising powers of devolved government (Naustdalslid, 1992; Crook & Manor, 1998; Eriksen et al., 1999, as cited in Owusu, 2004, p167).

#### *District Assembly Common Fund*

A District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) was created in 1994 to provide financial assistance to the district assemblies. But it is indicative of the prevailing authority of central government and symbol of district assembly dependency under decentralization. The rationale for statutorily setting aside funds for the district assemblies to draw from, rested on the notion that fiscal autonomy at the district level would lead to fiscal responsibility and transparency. It was thought that the proximity of residents to their local administrators would foster keener

interest in the utilization of funds and engenders more effective checks against financial mismanagement and fraud (IEA Monograph Number 3, 2002): The DACF was expected to help districts and ultimately citizenry decide on what local development initiatives to focus on. The fund was set up to support the revenue base of all the assemblies in Article 252 of the 1992 constitution, with 5% of all government revenue paid into the fund in quarterly installments. In practice, however, allocation was to be based on tax revenue and not total revenue (IEA Monograph Number 3, 2002, p4). The current percentage is 7.5% and additional legislation in Act 455 created the role of financial administrator for the fund, a person appointed every four years (DACF administrator, personal communication, 2009). But a Member of Parliament noted that “the common fund is what I would call an interventionist provision. It is so small and cannot really do much. Yet paradoxically, district assemblies rely on it as an exclusive source of revenue which means that the essence of decentralization cannot be realized when most money is spent or originates at the center” (Member of Parliament, 2009). As a the former DACF administrator appointed during the Kuffuor administration (2004 ) noted:

We need to convince government that if you are really pushing decentralization, then we should push a lot more to the districts so that they can decide what to do with the funds. Also, as a formal institution maybe we lack the capacity in the districts on the “know side.” We need to focus our attention on training people to take over, but unfortunately the core functions are handled by the central government, so the districts don’t take training as a core function, they think that should be done by central government. (Former DACF administrator, personal communication, 2009)

Another Member of Parliament from the National Patriotic Party (NPP) noted that:

The district assemblies have been playing vital roles in the rural electrification program. They normally, in collaboration with the Members of Parliament, take inventory of communities that need electricity and forward such information to the Ministry of Energy. There are many reported cases where district assemblies have come to the aid of communities, which cannot pay for the low-tension poles [a requirement for being connected to the national grid]. The challenge the district assemblies face is the problem of finances. For this reason, it is central

government that decides what number of communities within a district assembly will be connected in any of the programs and program-phases. And again, it is the size of district assembly's common fund in any particular year that determines how many communities and by how many low-tension poles that the assembly can assist (Ministry of Energy Official personal communication, 2009).

Rather significantly this Member of Parliament's remarks about the central (national) government's exclusive authority to determine the number and sequence of communities to be put on the grid offers further insight into the extent of centralization under a presumably decentralized system. Indeed, while rural and self help electrification schemes represent *decentralized* initiatives, DAs remain overwhelmingly fiscally dependent on the national government for funding such initiatives-which hardly largely affords the kind of agency that one would expect as outlined in the literature.

Represented below is a tabulation of public service/need based factors ranked according to several indicators\* The table below outlines the formula for allocation and distribution of resources from the Fund each year.

## **Table 2**

*Source: IEA Report, Number 3 2002*

In theory, district assemblies are responsible for the generation of income to fund development or community initiatives. However, poorly managed districts do not encourage self-generating revenue or effective administrative and material functions. In the case of newly created districts, these problems are acute. Regional differentiation too has encouraged political opportunism and co-optation of vulnerable and marginalized portions of society. Yet it has also

Need Factor	50	To address need imbalances in the delivery of services like water, education etc.
Responsiveness Factor	5	For motivation of districts to generate revenue
Equalizing Factor	35	A portion of the fund is distributed evenly among all 110 districts & for development expenditure
Service Pressure Factor	10	For compensation of urban areas for over-utilization of facilities as measured by population changes

created vicious cycle of overdependence on the central government. Although this formula seemingly provides adequate financial resources for all of the districts (the number of which continued to rapidly increase) not all aspects of their development plans qualify for DACF funding. This consequently affects how much districts receive (IEA Report Number 3, 2002). It also leads to more politicized and partisan outcomes as Gyimah Boadi recently observed in a symposium on decentralization held by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development in 2009. It is plausible that substantial increases in DA disbursements to the DAs- 49.5% during the 1994-1995 period and by 23.3% during the 1995-1996 period functioned as a political expedient tool for capture of voting areas, as Ayee and others suggest. That is, even if we bear in mind the fact that Ghana's economy grew during this period, one cannot help but observe that these years preceded election periods or the political business cycle. The Institute for Economic Affairs, an influential think tank, found that the corresponding increases in cedis were exponential: 109.6 percent and 44.3 percent; in dollar terms, inflows grew by 84.6% during the 1994-96 period; and

in cedi terms growth was 202.6 percent. The Institute's report further noted that in aggregate terms, record surpluses for the DAs in two of the three years for which records are available. Total inflow and outflows of (from the Office of the Administrator of the Fund) represented in the Ghanaian currency or cedi and dollar terms during the of fiscal decentralization and dollar terms are indicated in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Revenue Inflows and Outflows to the DACF**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Total inflows (cedi bn)	27.0	56.6	81.7
Total outflows (cedi bn)	16.6	59.0	78.8
<b>Surplus/ Deficit (cedi bn)</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>(2.4)</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Total inflows (US\$m)	17.55	26.26	32.39
Total outflows (US\$m)	10.80	27.39	31.24
<b>Surplus/Deficit (US\$m)</b>	<b>6.75</b>	<b>(1.13)</b>	<b>1.15</b>

*Source: Auditor General's Report 1994-1996*

Armah (2003) notes that from 1993 to 1999, the Auditor General's reports identified disturbing trends in the management of public accounts. For instance, those reports reveal instances of wasteful expenditure, extravagance in the administration of financial resources, poor standards of accounting despite previous criticism and the tendency to transact financial activities without regard to applicable rules. In short these instances of fiscal mismanagement speak to some of the problems subsumed away in advocating the merits of decentralization. A key former official with the Ministry of Local and Rural Government noted that:

Monitoring and evaluation is not good enough; let's face the fact that we have not

been good enough in monitoring and evaluating what is happening down there [in the district assemblies]. No evaluation mechanisms of programs are put there. What is the effectiveness of those programs put there? What is the financial use of finance, funds, and all these things—is there duplication (of initiatives)?

These drawbacks likely affected electrification efforts, despite interviews with two key officials in the Ministry of Energy that suggested otherwise. Even so, the Auditor General's report as well as Armah (2003) found that such activities produced a number of consequences. At the national level, revenue shortfalls translate into increased domestic borrowing and higher inflation. But their impact has perhaps been more debilitating on the sub-national or district level. Armah observes that at the sub-national level, the effects of reduced liquidity and alternative often illegal, mechanisms to finance the district assemblies are rife. Indeed, illegal mechanisms have been used to finance district assemblies extend to electrification efforts, and there are many instances of districts put on the electricity grid ahead of schedule which are corroborated in Parliamentary sessions.

Article 252 (2) of the Constitution and Section 2 of Act 455 both stipulate that Parliament shall allocate no less than 5% of the total annual revenue of Ghana to the DACF. Since the enactment of Act 455 on July 5, 1993, the findings of the Auditor General suggest that disbursements have not only fallen short of that stipulated amount, they are often delayed at both stages of release (from the Ministry of Finance to the DACF and then from the DACF to the DAs). Ironically, disputes over allocation of the DACF represent a relatively small portion of government revenue to the DAs that remains contentious, which I observed in heated discussions on the radio during a trip to Ghana, in August 2009.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, this problem is the result of the failure of the district assemblies in several cases to deduct a mandatory 5% withholding tax

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<sup>93</sup> Though 5% may appear statistically insignificant, access remains contentious due to politics. While constitutionally mandated, there are subtle indications that vote buying may be one of several factors responsible for timely disbursement.

from the salaries of employees, which would otherwise contribute to DA revenue, but instead reinforces a vicious cycle of dependency.

On a different note, the issue of arrears and uses of the fund have surfaced in parliamentary discussions of the DACF in terms of late disbursement and the fiscal dependency of the DAs. An MP from the NDC brought up his concern with the dependency syndrome emerging in district assemblies. As Mr. J. D. Mahama, a member of parliament from Bole noted “with the operation of the Common Fund over the years, some districts are beginning to develop a dependency syndrome. And because they know that a certain amount of money is going to come regularly as a result of the Common Fund, they are not doing too much in terms of generating their own revenue at the local level (Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, 2003, p730).

What are the implications of these findings? For one, the capacity of district assemblies to effectively mobilize, manage, and equitably distribute internally generated revenues are vital prerequisites for fiscal decentralization. But ensuing weak internal-revenue and tax-collection mechanisms reflect continuing difficulties in establishing a culture of taxation-producing a perennial headache for central and local government authority. At the same time, central government provides few measures to support fiscal autonomy for the district assemblies, further limiting the ability of public service personnel to fulfill their objectives or undertake local government initiatives. As Gyimah-Boadi (2009) notes, “district capacity to initiate, plan, implement and monitor local government remains weak . . . regional capacity to generate resources internally is extremely weak and reliance on the DACF is very high.” (p7). Additionally, the alienation and marginalization of rural constituents in district assembly meetings in some regions, may explain the resistance to taxation (Ayee, 1996).

The table on the following page reflects the results of a questionnaire, which measures perceptions about the capacity of the Akosombo dam, a primary source of hydropower; a Self Help Electrification Scheme- a decentralized component of public service delivery; and the capacity of district assemblies in meeting this objective etc. In short, the results indicate ambiguity in perceptions of district assembly success and capacity to carry out effective service delivery. The questionnaire was distributed in the summer of 2010, with responses obtained from the Ministry of Energy officials and the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). One drawback of the survey is that it only reflects the response of a member of parliament, however fifteen interviews were conducted with members of parliament in the summer of 2009.<sup>94</sup> Several points are worth noting. First a numerical scale from 1 to 10 was provided with respondents asked to rate their answers according to the following criteria. 1-3 denoted poor; 4-5 fair; 6-7 good; 8 very good and 9-10 excellent. Of the eight respondents from the Ministry of Energy three rated the success of Ghana's Self Help Electrification scheme (question no.3) as “poor.” One respondent from the Ministry of Energy left this question blank, while four others rated it “fair” or a score of 4-5. Both sets of responses suggest that SHEP as a multi-phased, decentralized initiative of the district assemblies has not been successful as it should be, despite official statements from Ministry of Energy officials and accompanying documents that offer optimistic projections of the program since its inception in the late 1990s. The fifth question relates to the capacity of district assemblies in public service delivery of electrification and depicts a mean score of 5.4. Of particular significance is question number five, which tallied a high percentage of satisfaction with district assembly performance. As it were, 68% of the respondents (nineteen in total) rated

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<sup>94</sup>I should note however that at the time that the this survey was administered, many members of parliament were absent. However, copies of the survey were left in postal boxes by a research assistant with only one returned. Therefore the remainder of the respondents came from the Ministry of Energy and Electricity Company of Ghana- the ECG.

the performance of the district assemblies in assisting with Self Help and Rural Electrification Schemes relatively highly. This is rather since DAs face numerous financial constraints in meeting administrative, fiscal and development responsibilities.

For the sixth and ninth question, respondents were asked to rate their answers according to three categories: “high, moderate or low.” Each of these responses was abbreviated to reflect *h* for high, *m* for moderate and *l* for low. It is interesting that 13 respondents rated the effectiveness of devolution of authority to the DAs and Ghana's decentralization initiative as *moderate*; while four respondents circled *low* and the remaining two provided a rating of *high*. This corresponds with empirical studies of Boachie-Danquah (2000); Naab (2005); Banful (2008) and others who cite successful devolution of authority to sub-national governments. For the ninth question, nine respondents rated the capacity of DAs to meet financial and material needs of their respective communities as *moderate*, while another 9 respondents rated their responses as *low* and one as *high*-indicating a split in perceptions. Given widespread observations both in interviews and in the literature of enduring challenges of district assemblies in meeting their objectives, this is an interesting discovery. It suggests a dichotomy in expectations, and standards of operation and perhaps even ambiguity of ongoing decentralization efforts and the nature of capacity building.

**Table 4**

<b>Rural Electrification questionnaire</b>																				<b>mean</b>
1. How has the Akosombo dam, a significant source of hydropower & electricity been managed since the beginning of the 1990s?	6	4	8	4	5	5	4	4	5	6	8	8	5	4	4	7	5	5	6	5.4
2. How successful has the Rural Electrification Program been since its inception in the 1990s?	7	4	5	3	8	5	4	5	3	8	1	5	6	5	3	8	1	8	7	5.7
3. How would you rate the success of Ghana's Self Help Electrification Scheme, which emerged in the early 1990s?	6	3	7	5	3	3	M	5	5	5	1	6	6	2	4	4	8	5	8	5
4. How connected is rural electrification to income generation and rural development outcomes?	7	4	6	6	1	2	3	6	8	3	1	7	1	5	5	5	4	1	5.4	
5. How would you rate the capacity of District Assemblies in assisting with rural electrification and the self-help electrification scheme?	6	2	5	3	3	4	3	6	6	6	9	6	1	6	6	9	8	7	6	5.4

6. How would you rate the effectiveness of Ghana's decentralization program and devolution of authority to district assemblies?	m	m	m	m	l	m	m	m	M	l	H	M	L	m	h	M	L	m	m	N/A
7. Has the politicization of electrification in the 4 <sup>th</sup> republic helped advance rural electrification?	7	2	6	2	5	2	6	4	2	4	7	9	2	5	2	8	7	3	6	4.7
8. Have the WB and IMF's policies reduced the scope of government in Ghana in terms of economic expansion and programs geared toward rural development?	m	m	m	m	m	h	L	m	M	m	M	H	L	m	m	M	H	h	m	N/A
9. How would you rate the capacity of District Assemblies in terms of financial and material capacity to address the needs of communities/	m	m	m	l	l	L	m	m	L	l	H	M	L	m	l	M	M	l	l	N/A
10. How would you rate Ghana's overall performance in terms of electrification?	6	4	7	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	7	8	6	5	6	5	7	6	7	5.8

### *The National Electrification Scheme*

The National Electrification Scheme represents the first interventionist, public service effort of government since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. This project was created in 1989 by the NDC government, under the helm of the Ministry of Energy (MOE). It was a national directive that aimed to close the electricity gap between urban and rural areas. It also aimed to extend the electrical grid to all parts of the country over a 30-year period, from 1990 to 2020. At the beginning of the 1990s, only 15 percent of the total population and 5 percent of the rural population had access to electricity (MOE document, 2006). With a five-phased scenario envisioned, the NES evolved to become a Rural Electrification Program (REP).

The goals and objectives of NES were six-fold: 1) poverty reduction, primarily in rural areas; 2) increasing socio-economic development of the nation; 3) increasing the standard of living in primarily rural areas; 4) creating small- to medium-scale industries in rural areas; 5) enhancing activities in other sectors of the economy like agriculture, health, education, etc.; and 6) creation of jobs in rural areas and reduction of high influx of rural-to-urban migration (Ministry of Energy document, 2008). From 1995 to 2000, the NES implemented the first two phases, which resulted in the electrification of thirteen district capitals of the ten regions, as well as the electrification of 407 towns and villages on route to the district capitals. Under these

projects, 13 district capitals were connected to the national grid (Ministry of Energy document, 2008). In the first few phases, the NES scheme was central to the electrification agenda, but the impatience of many rural communities dissatisfied with the pace of target dates, pushed the government to develop a new program, the Rural Electrification Program (REP), which later became the Self-Help Electrification Programme (SHEP).

According to two engineers for the NES scheme who work for the Volta River Authority-an energy institutions, “There is a lot of lobbying. The chiefs and the opinion leaders, they lobby and lobby and lobby” (2009). With a long list of communities waiting to be put on the national grid, public officials in district assemblies and members of parliament are often under great pressure to deliver.

Presently, the figures for electrification through the NES are as follows.

**Table 5**

*Towns and Capitals Electrified Through the National Electrification Scheme*

Region	District Capitals	Other Towns	Totals
Ashanti	---	15	15
Central	2	64	66
Eastern	--	42	42
Volta	2	54	56
Western	3	93	96
Upper West	3	10	13
Brong Ahafo/ Northern & Upper East	13	129	142
TOTAL	23		407
			430

*Source:* Ministry of Energy, 2008

**Table 6***Other Electrification Projects Executed 1989-2001*

Projects	Years	District Capitals	Others	Total	Region
Juabeso Bia Project	1992-94	1	33	34	
Western Hohoe/Jasikan Project	1993-95	2	31	33	Volta
Dodowa-Kordiabe-Agomeda grid ext	1993-95	0	8	8	Gt.
Accra Ashanti Region Project	1993-95	4	48	52	
Ashanti Eastern Region Project	1993-95	2	24	26	Eastern
JICAI Project	1989-90	2	29	31	Ash-Central
JICAI Project	1993-95	2	19	21	Gt.Acc
Volta Region Project	1996-1998	0	13	13	

*Note:* There are 10 regions that comprise Ghana; district capitals refer to towns with populations of 5,000 or more.

*The Rural Electrification Program (REP)*

What is meant by the phrase rural electrification” varies between countries and tends to change over time (Foley, 1990). At an early stage rural electrification entails provisions to major provincial towns, and at later stages it involves supply to remote villages, or towns (Foley, 1990, p9). In Ghana, this has meant putting outlying towns, small villages and surrounding areas on the grid. However, declining rainfall, droughts and effects of global warming prompted the country to expand access in other ways—for example, in thermal energy. Over the past decade rural communities have clamored for it as a means of transforming poverty and drudgery into progress and development (Foley, 1990, p11).

This trend was precipitated in large part by the political instability during the 1980s, when succeeding governments (military and otherwise) attempted to electrify rural and remote

areas. As one interviewee noted:

It was only when the macro-economy and currency stabilized in the mid-80s that electricity consumption began to increase. You know liberalization and stabilization happened around the same time, because this is what the World Bank wanted. It was then that income started to grow again. Trade started to flourish and there was trade in and out of exports to some extent. Barriers were dropped and a lot of imports came in. But this flourishing of economic activity was reflected in the consumption of electricity. You know, income got higher, households, businesses got started and there was a spread of wealth, if you like, in rural areas. (Former head of VRA, Personal communication, 2008)

Many officials within the Ministry of Energy have given the country high marks for quality of electricity access and for rates of access that exceeds many of its neighbors. As a VRA official and engineer for the NES informed me,

I have had the privilege of doing a little bit of work outside Ghana, and when you do comparisons in the sub-region, Ghana is way, way ahead of most other countries. Most of them, when you go to their capital and then you leave the capital, there is nothing else in terms of electrification. We have been able to cover all the regional capitals, the district capitals, all the major towns and villages have been covered, so the impact has been very, very great (personal communication, 2009).

Nonetheless, it is of considerable import that since the NES began, virtually all of the funding came from donor countries like Canada, Japan, and India. Indeed, several of these donors contributed to electrification of marginalized areas for decades by making forays into neglected areas and jumpstarting income-generating activities for micro or small enterprises utilizing electrification.<sup>95</sup> With the agricultural, mining and service sectors of the Ghanaian economy accounting for about 75% of the country's GDP, the question of who benefits from electrification, urban semi-urban citizens or rural or semi-rural ones is critical. With population growth and economic expansion driving the growth of the electric-power industry, revelations concerning electricity wastage by utilities and poor quality in provision sorely require attention.

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<sup>95</sup> Examples include the countries of Japan, Canada and France etc.

Concurrently, the existing structure of energy knowledge has obscured the relationship between current and future energy needs to daily livelihood requirements of the rural population.

Additionally, a disconnect between perceived benefits of electrification and the multilayered linkages of rural development compound this further. With different domestic and international actors claiming to represent the poor (Whitfield, 2008), and competing approaches for how to improve their plight through public goods and service provision, the exact configuration between electric energy and poverty reduction are unclear. As a result, one is forced to consider whether equitable access to electricity is possible for rural populations that largely rely on wood fuels, amid a power-sector framework that privileges industrial users and the wealthy residential consumers. Energy commission predictions that biomass will continue to predominate in these areas until 2020 and possibly beyond are also troubling given the pace of the country's economic development and quest to attain middle income country status. Indeed, the problem of electric energy inequities—that is, inequities in supply to various sections of rural/urban constituents—is reflected in low consumption rates of the former. For instance, In 1998, urban households consumed an average of 1,597kWH<sup>96</sup> of hydroelectricity, compared with an estimated 47 kWH by rural households (Turkson & Amadu, 1999). Agbemabiese (2002) draws on the approach created by the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy (CEEP) to explain this anomaly:

While recognizing that the bulk of Ghana's electricity is hydro-based, an Equitable Hydroelectric Energy Consumption (EHEC) rate has been developed and utilized as a

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<sup>96</sup> It is of considerable import that electricity usage measured in kilowatts per hour—that is for every hour of use, a kwh equals 1,000 and usage is determined by multiplying hours of usage. The disparities between rich advanced countries and developing nations are stark. For instance, U.S domestic usage for 2009 totaled 3,741 Billion Kilowatthours (kWh) in 2009, Source: U.S Energy Information Administration.

measure of the distribution of energy consumption. Estimated at 550 kWh household/year, this indicator demonstrates and measures the existence and extent of inequality in allocations of hydroelectric energy services between rural and urban sectors . . . It is clear that rural households are well below their equitable quota of energy services from hydroelectric sources, while urban households have exceeded theirs by large amount.

For Agbamasiese (2002, p281), “an ongoing rural electrification program based increasingly on thermal complementation resulted in a modest increase in the rural share of total electricity consumption only; the amount of service received by the sector remains minor.” In fact, only a third of the population succeeded in securing for itself the bulk of the financial, technological and material resources since the mid 1960s, in part because this elite has appropriated modern energy services in far excess of what principles of equity would allocate, an idea corroborated by one participant in an unstructured interview (anonymous, personal communication, 2009).

On another note, the Rural Electrification Program—a decentralized but otherwise centralized initiative has offered lucrative political opportunities. By making electrification “rural” and arguably populist in character, the NDC could distinguish its brand of politics from the NPP and other parties on the political scene. This not only made sense, it was a logical approach for a country where a significant percentage of the population constituted the ‘rural poor.’ This also meant that the party could extend its reach into the rural areas on the strength of Rawlings’s populist appeal and through decentralized structures intended to give a voice to the people, in particular the disenfranchised rural class that had supposedly been neglected in the past. As a member of Parliament stated (personal communication, 2009):

That coincided with the creation of DAs. Rawlings had spoken of grassroots governance—governance that touched the lives of people—so there was a continuing cry for electrification, roads and water you know. So this was the way of satisfying the populist aspirations and secondly applying the decentralization in

1988 as a means of ensuring development and for that matter electrification was linked to decentralization and gave it a new impetus. The link between the electrification program in 1988 and decentralization program cannot be overlooked. It is very important when you appreciate the decentralization program, which had at its essence development of localities.

Ayee notes elsewhere, the fact that national budget resources were consistently kept in central hands, despite budget laws, lends credence to the idea of a public relations hoax (Ayee, 1996, p. 49-50). As he further notes:

The history of decentralization in Ghana since independence has been characterized by deliberate and conscious machination of the center to control the sub national units either to promise its patronage or use them as support bases. The result is that the country has had what one might refer to as centralized decentralization. (Ibid)

In the section that follows I highlight the transformation of access and nuances of what access has meant for rural communities.

#### *Self Help Electrification Program (SHEP)*

Growing impatience with the pace of electricity provision particularly in rural areas prompted the Self Help Electrification Program (SHEP), which Ministry of Energy officials proudly tout as another decentralized effort stemming from the districts themselves. As the third decentralized effort of public service delivery, it was to be a self-directed, self initiated impetus from districts. It developed as a complementary program for communities that wanted to receive electricity ahead of schedule and were able to purchase the electric poles, which many could not afford. According to a MOE document, communities could be connected to the electricity grid under this program, if they were within 20km from an existing 11 kV or 33 kV substation that supplied electricity to a district capital and surrounding areas, and took the imperative to provide the low-voltage poles required for connectivity. What explains the emergence of a third electrification program? From both formal and informal conversations with interviewees as well

as the questionnaire administered to officials from the MOE, Electricity Company of Ghana SHEP appears to have been configured as another “mobilizational tool.” A key reason that SHEP has been successful, as a strategy for rural co-optation, is that it rests primarily on the “community spirit and self sufficiency” (Member of parliament, personal communication, 2009). While district assemblies are designed to operate on a nonpartisan basis, a panel of experts in a 2009 symposium entitled “Reflections on Ghana’s Decentralization Program: Progress, Stagnation or Retrogression,” cited significant and increasing instances of partisanship. Additionally, off-the-record or informal conversations with officials at the MOE collaborated this development as well. For example, politicians and members of parliament can choose to facilitate the provision of poles at election time, so that district assembly members relate their readiness to be put on the grid to them, and the politicians in turn relate these requests to the Ministry of Energy.

To get a sense of what the electrification scenario looked like before the commencement of the NES in 1989, only about 480 communities in the entire country were connected to the national grid (MOE document, 2008). As of 2006 3,200 towns in total were connected, with 2,100 implemented under SHEP. As a result, accessibility rose from 15% in 1989 to 43% as accounted for in the 2000 population census (MOE document, 2008). To a considerable extent, the numbers of towns connected to the grid under SHEP represents a commendable achievement indicative of progressive political and administrative decentralization since district assemblies have largely coordinated the efforts of getting the poles together through a pooling of resources by communities themselves. As a key government official from the Ministry of Energy noted:

I think the success has to do with two things: We started with NES and the plan was the electrification of each district and all communities along the path to the districts. And then there was a real interest in a lot of communities to have electricity . . . It has really made a difference in economic activities, especially in

remote areas. It completely changes economic activities. I can tell you for one thing that a community that got electricity all of a sudden had young men and women engaging in commercial activities, some of them opening sound studios, opening cold stores, garages, . . . computer centers. And I think that comes with economic development; we just took an intensive review and it was found that there were disparities in . . . some regions at 80%, some at 90% some as low as 30%, some at 33, some at 50%. I can tell you from my own personal experience in villages that it brings innovation (personal communication, 2009)

Table 7

*Completed Projects under the National Electrification Scheme*

Project Package	No. of Towns
a) National Electrification Project (NEP)	430
b) Other Projects	405
c) SHEP1	50
d) SHEP2	250
e) SHEP3 Phase 1	170
f) SHEP3 Phase 2	480
Total of Completed Projects under NES	1,785

*Source:* NES document, 2008

Table 8

*Ongoing Projects under the National Electrification Scheme (2001-2008)*

Project Package	No. of Towns	Completed
a) SHEP3 Phase 3	700	665
b) SHEP4 Phase 1	193	118
c) Electrification of Volta Lake Resettlement Townships	144	144
d) EU funded Electrification Project (Western Region)	108	108
e) Electrification of Nyinahin and 23 other towns	24	24
f) Electrification in the Amansie West District	10	10
g) Other Electrification Projects	564	449
h) Electrification in the West Akim District	31	20
Total On-going Projects under NES	1, 774	1, 538

*Source:* NES document, 2008

The first phase of SHEP was implemented from 1990 to 1991, with the second phase, or SHEP 2, implemented from 1992 to 1994. Some 250 communities were connected to the national grid (Institution, date). While the third stage, or SHEP 3, began from 1994 and was divided into three additional phases due to the large number of towns on target for electrification, with the first stage beginning in October 1996 and culminating in December 1998. Under this

phase, about 170 communities were electrified and connected to the national grid. In the second phase, which was completed in 2000, 480 communities gained access. In all, 700 communities were earmarked for connection to the national power grid under SHEP 3 and it appears that these projects were completed by 2008. Currently SHEP is in the fourth phase, which remains ongoing and 2,500 communities have been selected throughout the country to benefit from it. Clearly substantial progress has occurred as a result of these multi-phased initiatives, but rates of access for rural poor remain closely guarded by officials from the Ministry of Energy. As the next section demonstrates, the drawbacks of political decentralization in terms of capacity and autonomy of DAs in carrying out their various functions call into question the nature of the progressive rates of electrification.

### **The Drawbacks of Decentralization**

The ambiguous interpretations of decentralization particularly in the African institutional context have arguably facilitated the disquieting outcome of ‘centralized decentralization’ and more specifically in the way that certain resources can take on a public goods element. Despite fits and starts and continued unevenness in adoption of “best practices” for decentralization, a number of African countries, including Zimbabwe, Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa, view “decentralized governance” as a suitable mode of authority in which poverty reduction interventions can be conceived, planned, implemented and monitored (Kauzya, 2003). Though some 63 developing countries with populations of more than 5 million are actively pursuing political decentralization, the record of success remains mixed (Helmsing, 2001 cited from Aikins, 2007, p6-7).

In the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy and Vision 2020 goals decentralization is referred to as a framework for outreach, rural development and implementation in all 170

districts. Ghana has made important strides in governance, which is evident in civil servant commitment to efficient and transparent institutional processes. But it has become clear that continuing aid dependence and national budgets largely supplemented by World Bank and IMF concessionary loans have entrenched the role and domestic involvement of international financial institutions (IFIs) in questionable ways, producing as Whitfield (2005) argues, the role of the trustee.<sup>97</sup> In many ways, the extent of donor or IFI influence on the domestic policy front produced a reconstitution of public and private domains.<sup>98</sup> For example, the interaction between the heavily dependent Ghana and IFIs appears to structure domestic autonomy in less than ideal ways while producing contradictions in state prerogatives to attend to the poor. As Whitfield notes, “the zeal of donors to involve ‘civil society’ in policy discussions produced a divide between consultative processes and constitutional representative processes, between formal and informal institutions for operationalizing participation”<sup>99</sup>This is also evident in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, (recommendations for poverty reduction by economic experts at the World Bank) consultative process between donors, the Ghanaian government and civil society groups aimed in part at reducing the plight of the rural poor.

#### *Limitations of political, fiscal and administrative decentralization*

Moreover, political, fiscal and administrative limitations of decentralization illustrate the extent to which central government hegemony over fiscal derived functions have in fact, encumbered district assemblies and local government. A principal limitation as a USAID report notes is that “many of the devolved responsibilities are either unclearly assigned to sub-national governments (SNGs) or are inadequately funded” (2010, p26). As it were, the appointment of

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<sup>97</sup>Lindsay Whitfield, “Trustees of Development from conditionality to governance: poverty reduction strategy papers in Ghana, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43, 4 (2005), p 660.

<sup>98</sup>See Whitfield, 2005; Ayers, 2006.

<sup>99</sup>Whitfield, 2005 p653

district chief executives by the president, has added to an already fractious political process on a local-institutional and national level. As Kojo Asante of the Center for Democracy and Development noted that “democratic political decentralization remains elusive and that non partisanship of the local government tier of national politics continues to be a facade as political parties and traditional leaders informally support and sponsor candidates for local government elections.” While partisan politics is officially banned in the country's constitution it has unsurprisingly infiltrated DA elections and decision-making (Gyimah-Baodi, 2009).

Alternatively, the worrisome emergence and perpetuation of conflict is reflected in the relationship between members of parliament-who represent non voting ex officio members of the DA s constituencies and DCEs ‘coordinating secretaries who head central government agencies within the districts. This is also evident between presiding members (or the 'speaker' of the DA who is elected by the DA) and the DCEs; between DA s and district level central government ministries and departments; and between DCEs and local chiefs (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009 from symposium paper). Consequently, these circumstances have sapped much needed energy and political will from the district assemblies. Another glaring consequence of political decentralization is that while 30 percent of DA members are appointed by the president to ensure that districts do not lack technocratic skills (in the event that popular elections of the majority of DA members fails to produce individuals adequately equipped with such skills) the DAs have hardly produced technocrats-instead political activists and local notables ( Gyimah-Boadi, 2009, p 6-7).

Although the creation of the District Assembly Fund represents a remarkable component of fiscal decentralization, it is conversely a tool of central government predominance that limits the sub-national government capacity in producing effectual project or development outcomes.

These challenges have enabled “the center” or national government considerable leverage in the realm of service delivery. Indeed the recentralization of key audit responsibilities at the DA level with the passage of the Internal Audit Agency Act 568 is a testament to ongoing “recentralization” of important functions. Additionally legal and functional contradictions do not augur well for administrative decentralization as Ofei-Aboagye, 2009 (Center for Democratic Development symposium paper) notes. This is particularly acute for the provision of public service and the kind of standards that are acceptable or expected. As she notes, “fitting the local government act with sectorial laws, regulations and balancing a general competence with adequate obligations that make clear what local government must do in essential/core public services or standards of service performance” is critical (p21). The “way forward” as is often used in policy circles in Ghana. But issues of agency, continuing gaps in capacity building and self sustaining mechanism that truly reflect decentralized elements s require more attention that is currently given.<sup>100</sup>

Other contradictions are also evident in public opinion surveys that capture opinions regarding the effectiveness of decentralized institutions and responsiveness of both local and national representatives. For example, an Afrobarometer survey taken in 2005 noted that 65% of Ghanaians were satisfied with the performance of Parliament. The survey also noted that, “a majority of Ghanaians felt they were able to command the attention of their elected national and local representatives. Those who expressed this view with regards to their local representatives (assembly members) were comparatively higher (63 percent) than the proportion sharing similar opinion about national representatives (MPs), 55 percent” (Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 20, 2005). Unfortunately no recent surveys reflect changes in public approval of parliament. But

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<sup>100</sup>For example, even though a self- help electrification scheme initiated almost a decade ago suggests a decentralized effort, the ministry of energy in coordination with members of parliament from various districts and regions largely coordinate efforts to provide access in communities without it.

these results are at odds with a plethora of newspaper articles and that chronicle dissatisfaction with public service delivery and the response of political administrations to electricity provision.

Ghana remains a country where just under 40% of the population lives in poverty, and a quarter of the population lives in extreme poverty. Per-capita GDP is estimated at \$390 and the country ranks 129<sup>th</sup> out of 175 countries, according to a 2003 United Nations Development Fund Human Development Report. Consequently, the high rate of satisfaction with the government among Ghanaians only makes sense if one considers the role of political co-optation. The largely participatory function of DAs is acknowledged by Ahwoi (2010) and by the Center for Democratic Development (2010). Just last year, Barbara Murray, a Senior Governance Advisor for CIDA-PSU acknowledged that government officials believe that municipal and metropolitan district assemblies are “not ready, do not have the capacity, or cannot be relied on to deliver proper services, a rationalization that is used to justify inaction or used to argue the merits of a project-based approach”.<sup>101</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to illuminate prevailing explanations for the practice and outcomes of decentralization amidst the processes of democratization. It has sought to offer alternative explanations for how the country embarked on efforts to restructure state-society relations through a new configuration of power through political and administrative decentralization. This chapter has addressed the ways in which new alignments between public, government, and external actors or “trustees” of development, facilitated measures of co-optation exemplified through public service delivery of electricity which accounts for the measured success for the country at large. Indeed borrowing from Grugel (2002) who observes how new alignments between public and private actors is inevitably characterized by an inability to deliver

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<sup>101</sup>Decentralization Symposium, Center for Democracy and Development, 2009

public goods, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate how Ghanaian governments have navigated this process through interval provision of electricity.

Owusu (2004) recognizes that the pursuit of economic reform, subsequent scaling back of government intervention in the economy and adjustment policies have produced difficult development choices in an era of minimal oriented government in the Fourth Republic. And yet a number of interviewees from the Energy Commission officials, Volta River Authority officials, and some members of parliament noted that voters appear increasingly aware of the sophisticated ploys used during the political business cycle. During the elections of 1992 and 1996, concessionary spending increased, much to the chagrin of the World Bank (Akonor, 2004), and much of it was used to pacify voters in a string of projects aimed at providing roads, clinics, electricity and water provision. In recognition of the growing role that public service delivery plays in the domestic political environment, voters have responded by demanding more from district assembly and parliamentary representatives- producing a growing dilemma for state-led and local government service provision.

The role of the government is central to both the speed and character of political decentralization in Ghana in harnessing hydropower for both domestic and industrial use. But poor horizontal linkages between agencies or administrative departments within the DAs (agriculture, sanitation, energy, education, etc.) and inadequate communication compound the problem of effectiveness and in some cases produced a duplication of efforts. In others perspectives, inadequate vertical coordination are also a significant challenge. As one interviewee remarked, “They (DAs) do not talk to each other”.<sup>102</sup> So while the DAs have come to present a vehicle for service delivery, absent or insufficiently trained personnel and bureaucratic constraints debilitate the quality of local governance. Arguably, this situation has

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<sup>102</sup>Former official with the Ministry of Rural and Local Government, personal communication, July 2009

led to what Ayee (1996) has called “centralized decentralization.” As an MP from the Western region notes, “Central government is now playing the role of bringing about growth. But again, because it is top-down, the impact has been slow and far between. It is telling that in a decentralization symposium held two years ago, a development partner/donor admitted that government officials regularly stated that municipal district assemblies could not be relied upon to deliver proper services. Indeed this was offered as an explanation for espousing a project based or targeted discretionary approach that further debilitates opportunities for capacity building and a political culture of self help-as envisioned for example with electricity provision.

Cox and McCubbins (1986) as well as Banful (2008) found support for the notion that incumbent governments will tend to invest in areas that assure political returns—that is where support is the greatest. Anthony Downs offers the view largely evident in many developing countries that politicians will often maximize their welfare by selling policies for votes. While Banful (2008) argues that this tendency decreased over time in Ghana, I attribute Banful’s perception of decrease in discretionary provision to ‘incremental’ steps as an ‘indirect’ strategy of co-optation influenced by the requisite of reduced government in an era of neoliberal policies.<sup>103</sup>

It is no accident that the autonomous development of districts was vigorously sought to bolster fiscal and administrative decentralization. Indeed the welfare gains often assumed to be present where fiscal decentralization is underway is questionable particularly for the rural poor. Driven by political exigencies, both processes were compromised from the beginning, yet they produced far-reaching consequences. For one, they produced the rural voters’ rallying cry of “no electricity, no power”—an important turning point in government-society relations and in the prevailing rural co-optation approach. As one government official who worked for the VRA and

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<sup>103</sup> Evidence for this assertion is noted in the newspaper headlines obtained from 1992-2008 (see appendix 2).

was directly involved with the NES scheme informed me, “The impact [of electricity] is so much that, for instance . . . we go to some communities just before the elections to put up some signs, posters, or some things. And it is no good, because they see the importance of it and they think somehow it is politically, you know, tied to the assembly” (VRA official, personal communication, 2009). An ostensibly aware rural constituency is illustrative; with media outlets, newspapers and the radio operating as focal points and possible vehicles for mobilization. Indeed, as a former official for the Ministry of Local and Rural Government observed, “On radio you hear people saying, politicians have brought us poles again, so when is the electricity coming?” The visible increase in the number of district assemblies, despite their questionable capacity to function, suggests that the pursuit of sub-optimal strategies of public service delivery is intentional—as some of my interviews suggest.

Consequently, efforts to restructure local government both before and after the return to civilian rule in 1992 functioned as a clever device for mobilizing rural support. As Wells (1997, p199) notes, “the primary engine was not only Rawlings’s apparently deep-rooted beliefs in grassroots democracy but in the ability to engineer the assemblies in ways that allowed him to increase his popularity in the countryside.” According to Wells (1997) although internal and external actors pushed the government to accept decentralization,

Rawlings recognized that this turn of events afforded him an important opportunity to strengthen his relationship with the rural sector . . . thus democratization afforded him an extraordinary opportunity in the search for a reform coalition in the countryside and made a number of strategic choices designed to maximize the political participation of political parties. (p208)

These strategies are not new and Green (1995) notes too, that rural bias in development policy and political strategies date back to the late 1980s (578), when farmers and agricultural producers became beneficiaries of Economic Recovery Program (ERP) policies. For example,

rural farmers and cocoa producers benefited from rising cocoa and food prices largely propelled by government policies (Green, 1995, p 578)<sup>104</sup> Indeed, this important variable remained strategic at the dawn of the Fourth Republic. With government-appointed representatives in district assemblies, it is no wonder that the NDC was able to do well in the 1992 elections. As it stands, the district Chief Executive's helped to strengthen the NDC's position with "every means available to them" (Jeffries & Thomas, 1993, as cited in Wells, 1997, p210). With substantial economic and political disillusionment, domestic development solutions were ardently sought to meet donor requirements of political reform. These prerogatives came to mesh well, and in a bid to make drastic reforms palatable for the public voters were offered public goods such as electrification, clean water and feeder roads. Thus, electrification emerged as an implicit tool of co-optation used by successive government in the post 1992 period regardless of political party affiliation. A full two-thirds of members of 15 members of parliament interviewed in 2009 acknowledged this as much (personal communications, 2008, 2009).

In sum, these developments suggest a desire to perpetuate mobilizational politics or "electioneering" as a form of political capital by the country's dominant political parties: NDC and NPP. Combined with the problem of institutional performance, quality and efficiency, rural residents resist taxation and electricity bills more intensely now than ever. In fact, growing public perceptions of malfeasance, corruption and even misappropriation in energy distribution for electricity abound. In January 2011, *The New Crusade Guide* acknowledged such frustrations with the headline, "Electricity for all in 2011"-when will the Joke and Deception End! Other newspapers like the *Daily Guide*, *The Daily Graphic* and *Daily Searchlight* regularly carry

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<sup>104</sup>Despite observations (for instance, Green, 1995) that the switch from urban to rural bias is to be expected with a largely agrarian, rural population, the scope of political maneuvering was shrewd and perhaps unparalleled in that it included seemingly genuine political ideology espoused by all of those interviewed about the nature and purpose of decentralization.

stories about the ECG-the Electric Company of Ghana chronicle perceptions of corruption and poor service (in part owing to a switch from credit meters to prepaid ones).

It is for these reasons that the outcomes of electrification though meritorious offer mixed success for the rural populace including the rural poor, despite of a commendable rate of electrification. Most significantly, questionnaire results document ambiguity in perceptions about district assembly capacity, success of electrification schemes, hydropower and even rural development outcomes from energy officials. These results also indicate a stark disconnect between the touted success of electrification for the bulk of rural areas, devolution of power to district assembly or sub national governments and the visible constraints that impede their objectives.

Another development that emerged in recent years, as the former Mayor of Accra noted, is that many Ghanaians view service delivery as the exclusive responsibility of the state. One informal interviewee noted that the government cannot get people to pay for services. But the question of who pays is the paradox: citizens expect quality service delivery of water and electricity yet sacrifice quality as a result. Paradoxically, even as greater responsibility now falls to the district assemblies, the actual capacity to carry out and implement development projects lags, in financial, material and infrastructural terms. Finally, a critical factor to consider is that the very structure of decentralization creates national and local compromises. Yet how subsequent governments balance the intrinsic contradiction of self-governing but fiscally dependent district assemblies will likely determine the capacity for mitigating future domestic conflict associated with a possibly mobilized rural electorate.

### **Chapter 3: The Historical-Institutional Context for Electrification and Power-Sector Reform in Ghana: 1992-2008**

#### **Introduction**

When asked about the circumstances and impetus for rural electrification schemes a prominent member of the National Democratic Congress party noted that, “the political will was not in place until 1992.”<sup>105</sup> In this chapter, I determine the extent to which power sector reforms

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<sup>105</sup> Member of Parliament, 2009. In fact a noted energy insider remarked in my interview with him that the partial

successfully reduced electric energy gaps, particularly in rural areas. I argue that the intersection between historically uneven policies in the energy sector and the politics of the post 1992 period encapsulated in the clamors for economic change, accountability, public goods delivery and efforts to counter an urban bias produced the political will to address inequities in electricity provision. I also argue that the consequently *partial implementation of* power sector reforms paradoxically produced overall success for the country and conversely, differential benefits for the rural poor. This chapter advances the view that the decision of subsequent governments in the post 1992 period to circumvent comprehensive power sector reforms accounts for the success of state led decentralized electrification initiatives (National Electrification Scheme and Rural Electrification Program) and decentralized schemes (Self Help Electrification Program and accompanying phases). These policies arguably represent a triumph of democratic governance for the rural populace, because concerns about this segment of society reflect more responsive governance. The chapter also finds that implicit concerns about social equity or access for the poor explains the resistance of subsequent government to adopt full scale market oriented reforms of the electric energy sector. Indeed a lifeline tariff policy that keeps the price of electricity well below market value is offered as evidence by Edjekumhene et al (2003) of measures to placate a resistant public. I maintain that the partial nature of power sector reforms represents a *logical choice* for a shifting economy marked by the increasing salience of service delivery since it has allowed governments to reap political gains and support from the rural populace.

This chapter explores the nature of institutional relationships within Ghana's energy sector, market oriented reforms of the power sector, and the consequences of targeted rural electrification programs that aimed to reduce the electric energy gap. By contextualizing the

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nature of power sector remained in place as late as 2008

historical development of Ghana's energy institutions, I hope to illuminate just how particular groups like the rural poor have benefited from electricity service provision. As a central public service issue, electric energy provision is often identified by members of Parliament as critical to poverty reduction efforts and economic development-in the sense of income generating activities. In this regard, a former Minister of Energy, Honorable Joseph Kofi Adda remarked in 2007, "The nation's future in the energy sector is driven by a policy that is rooted in the overall development agenda of reducing poverty and becoming a middle income nation by 2015"<sup>106</sup>. Despite heavy investments in hydropower and more recently thermal power, as well as efforts to move beyond electricity provision through grids, Ghanaians do not always enjoy regular or more efficient provision of electricity in urban or more importantly rural areas.

A prevailing view among policymakers and energy officials is that electricity is a key indicator of minimum standards of living, an economic input for income generation, and rural development. But measures to restructure the power sector to improve access and rescue underperforming energy institutions demonstrate an inherent tension between neo-liberal expectations for performance and efforts to provide public service delivery for the bulk of the country's mostly rural population. Consequently, this chapter examines the structural underpinning of Ghana's energy institutions and the relationships between them *in the context of closing the electric energy gap*.

### **Framework of the chapter**

To understand the factors underpinning the fits and starts of electricity provision, and political co-optation that pressures for power sector reforms induced, I explore the institutional context of hydropower, the predominant source of electricity in Ghana; and the generation and transmission system. I draw attention to patterns of distribution, generation and transmission, to

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<sup>106</sup>Statement to Parliament, June 6, 2007

uncover the precise nature of electric energy problems the country encountered in the post independent period, beginning in 1957. I address the role of various energy institutions in shaping access and discuss the politics of internal versus external generation. The relationship between electrification, infrastructure and performance of industry, continuing constraints and challenges for overall provision are also considered. Also, the role of privatization and market-oriented policies address the impact of overall access-particularly for rural areas. This section offers observations about relevant changes within the power sector and outcomes for the rural poor.

### **Section 1: Background History of Energy Generation in Ghana, the Akosombo Dam, and the Volta River Project**

Though electric energy provision under a decentralized political framework has produced small triumphs for the rural populace owing to populist measures, political business cycles and timed/sequenced projects, the performance of key energy institutions cannot be overlooked. In spite of an uneven history of hydropower generation, beginning with the Akosombo Dam (from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s) the country was well poised to provide electricity to all ten regions of the country based on data analysis conducted in this study.<sup>107</sup> After the overthrow of Nkrumah and Busia, political instability, frequent regime change and deteriorating economic conditions prompted a decline in the performance of Ghana's energy institutions. Disruptions in quality and quantity became the norm, with priority reserved for urban areas and a few industrial users. As of 2000, indigenous energy comprised of 90-95% with only 5-10% generated by hydro energy (Strategic National Energy Plan 2006-2020), Main Report, *Energy Commission*, July 2006).

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<sup>107</sup>Total electricity demand before the construction of the Akosombo Dam cannot be determined because of the dispersed nature of the supply resources and constrained nature of electricity supply during this period. See the Institute for Social, Statistical and Energy Research, 2005, p17

Electrification was identified as a key input for industrial and agricultural development starting with the Second Development Plan (1959-1964). The political vision of modernization and industrialization (largely through aluminum smelting) that the dam promised, failed to materialize owing to partisanship, political instability, and frequent regime change. Prior to independence, colonial administrations did little to electrify the country except in key areas like parts of the Cape Coast and Accra, where significant commercial or economical activity was centered. However, efforts to develop the country's first hydroelectric project were first promoted by Sir Kitson, who noticed the potential for electrification while on a voyage down the Volta River.<sup>108</sup>

In 1955, the Volta River Preparatory Commission found hydropower essential for the development of the aluminum industry, with the secondary aim of providing electricity to “as much of the country as possible” and to “provide an abundance of cheap electricity to industry”. As a newly independent country that hoped to encourage development through self-sufficiency and reliance on its own natural resources and manpower, the importance of the dam as a symbol of independence and economic hope can hardly be overstated. The optimism of this period was largely inspired by nationalist fervor and hopes for economic development that Kwame Nkrumah and other key figures spurred in pro-independence movements. But the ensuing realities of poor economic planning, infrastructural deficits, financial and administrative resources, and weak institutional configuration complicated the emergence of coherent development strategies capable of complementing vital economic inputs like electricity.

The history of generation is divided into three periods with the first characterized by isolated generation facilities and low rates of electrification. The second period comprises the “hydro years” (1966-1980s) when the Akosombo Dam was built in 1966 and the Volta Lake

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid

constructed (ISSER, 2005, p17). During this period, demand for electricity increased dramatically and in fact exceeded the capacity of the Akosombo with the construction of the Kpong hydroelectric power plants, completed in 1982. These developments provided an additional 160 megawatts to existing hydroelectric capacity (ISSER, 2005, p19) and in the mid-1980s efforts to increase generating capacity commenced. In the third phase of energy development, the Takoradi thermal power plant was built to lessen the vulnerability of the power system given insufficient rainfall and resulting low inflows into the Volta Lake. While thermal plants helped meet the shortfall in supply (ISSER, 2005, p16, 20), halts nevertheless continued. As the former Minister of Energy, Honorable Kofi Adda noted, “the revolutionary rhetoric in play did not facilitate the use or generation of funding needed to secure extra generation capacity . . . following droughts during this period” (Statement to Parliament, 2007).

To supplement current generation, the Bui hydro project was commissioned many years ago. It is located on the Black Volta, on the border between the Northern and Brong Ahafo regions, approximately 150 kilometers upstream of the Volta, and is expected to provide 10 per cent of the country’s present energy requirements of 1700 megawatts.<sup>109</sup> Unlike the Akosombo dam, which primarily supports hydropower generation, the Bui project includes an irrigation component for up to 30,000 hectares of land.<sup>110</sup> It is slated for completion sometime this year, although it is not clear that Synohydro, the Chinese construction company building it will indeed be completed by the end of the year.

### *Distribution*

Uneven gaps in distribution over the past few decades demonstrate the maladies of provision for predominantly domestic consumers. Though consumers in the distribution system

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<sup>109</sup>Daily Graphic, April 20, 2007

<sup>110</sup>Ibid

are typically categorized as either industrial, commercial or residential customers, the former represent the primary recipients of electricity.<sup>111</sup> The distribution system is made up of poles and wires in neighborhoods and underground circuits (ISSER, 2005, p. 13) along with electricity substations, which are fenced yards with switches, transformers and other electrical equipment. These substations connect the district capital (town) with surrounding areas that are usually rural. From conversations with Ministry of Energy officials and from official reports citing the achievements of the NES, one gets the impression that the connection process from district capitals to surrounding towns has been more or less seamless since the energy crises of the late 1990s. But periodic electric energy shortfalls some two and half years ago and minimal efforts of the Ministry of Energy's efforts in 2007 to allow independent power producers (IPPs) to develop and operate power plants offer further evidence of continuing gaps.<sup>112</sup>

## **Section 2: Energy Institutions in Ghana**

In the section that follows, I examine the functions, capacity and effectiveness of several institutions to account for how institutional weaknesses and disjointed policies impact electricity provision. There are six public and eleven private but less influential institutions that comprise the country's power sub-sector. They include the Ministry of Energy (MOE), the Energy Commission (EC), Public Utility Regulatory Commission (PURC), the Volta River Authority (VRA), Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) and the Northern Electricity Department (NED), a subsidiary of the VRA. The MOE essentially formulates energy policy, while the EC constructs

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<sup>111</sup>ISSER, 2005, p 12; Apart from residential consumers who are considered small users, other consumers include nonresidential and small industrial users, known as special load tariff customers (SLTs) such as offices, banks and other small businesses (ISSER, 2006, p. 1).

<sup>112</sup>The IPP initiative emerged in the past decade and represents part of the country's efforts to privatize the power sector as part of power sector reform and improve access. Some of these IPPs include Cen Power, Shenzhen group, from China, Ranhill Consortium, from India and Brazilian Consortium (ISSER, 2005, p. 13)

energy policy and is every bit involved in planning, technical regulation and monitoring. The PURC regulates electricity tariffs and the VRA has the sole responsibility for electricity generation and transmission. The PURC is noteworthy for its autonomous, self-regulating status. It regulates the whole energy sector in addition to water and telecommunication sectors and has ensured expanded electrification through the application of a performance of a performance based tariff adjustment mechanism.<sup>113</sup> In this formulation, the performance of the utility is partially based on the assessment of its technical performance, and on the basis of the number of new connections. According to some observers efforts of the PURC along with other government initiatives may have contributed to higher rates of electrification.<sup>114</sup>

### **Ministry of Energy**

The Ministry of Energy, formally known as the Ministry of Mines and Energy, is essentially a government-run ministry that regulates the electric energy industry and formulates energy policies (Energy Commission Report, 2006 p1). It is headed by a minister of cabinet rank and comprised of a technical department, which is made up of a former Energy Board secretariat (Berko, 1997, 87). Within the technical department is a Division of Power, which a director and deputy director head. This Division is responsible for regulating the operations of institutions within the electric power industry (Ibid, 87). More importantly, it sets target dates for electrification, construction of grids and the country's electrification schemes. Additionally it is responsible for the promotion of efficient energy practices, the productive use of electric power, and for the direction, coordination and development of hydroelectric prospects for major river basins within the country (Ibid, 6).

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<sup>113</sup>See Stephen Karekezi and John Kimani, "Status of power sector reform in Africa: impact on the poor", *Energy Policy* 30 (2002) 935

<sup>114</sup>See Gbone, W., 2001. Power Sector reform in Ghana. In: Karekezi S. Kimani, J., Wangeci J. (Eds), AFREPREN Occasional Paper No. 5: Power Sector Reform in Africa—Proceedings of a Regional Policy Seminar, African Energy Policy Research Network (AFREPREN) Nairobi, p26-34.

Additionally, the MOE sets tariffs for local power consumption and distribution and uses performance contracts to monitor the efficiency and quality of the electric utilities as well as approve investment programs of utilities (Ibid, 87). Despite its well-defined responsibilities, the Ministry of Energy's status as a regulator has not always been apparent. According to Berko (1997), it lacks the expertise, funding and institutional capacity to regulate the industry effectively, which resulted in an inability to adequately regulate or play a supervisory (Ibid, 88). Indeed, one former VRA official contends that the Ministry of Energy is not only poorly run, but lacks staff with appropriate expertise and knowledge, and thus offers few incentives for high performance (anonymous, personal communication, 2009).

### **The Electric Company of Ghana (ECG)**

A second energy institution is the Electricity Company of Ghana or power utility responsible for distribution in the Southern portion of the country comprised of the Greater Accra, Ashanti, Central, Eastern, Western and Volta regions. The Northern Electricity Department was initially responsible for distribution in the Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and West regions (Energy Commission, 2006, p. 1). However this changed under reform measures almost a decade ago to focus exclusively on the Northern region. Three major acts of legislation account for the establishment of the industry (Botchway, 1998, p76), which include the Volta River Development Act (Act 46), the Electricity Act (Act 48), both of 1961, and the National Energy Board (PNDC Law 62) of 1983. The effect of these laws and accompanying apathy transformed the electric industry into a virtually unregulated monopoly, according to Berko (1997, p. 77). As he observes, over time the industry established their own rules and regulations designed to suit their operations and activities. The end result produced the development of an essentially supply-oriented system tailored for industrial users, which

marginalized domestic consumption and contributed to disparities in electric energy provision.

### **Northern Electricity Department (NED)**

A third institution-the Northern Electricity Department is a subsidiary of the VRA and was created in 1987 through a loan from the United States via the World Bank for the Northern Grid Extension Project in 1986 (Berko, 1997, p95-96). Most of the NED's customers are residential with few industrial customers (Ibid, 96); which is likely the result of the region's marginal status. The department has self-regulating status through the VRA and is responsible for expansion works, billing and consumption levels. Despite this level of autonomy, my conversations with energy officials reveal continuing gaps in provision and access, likely the result of poverty and disparate economic activity in the region. It was believed that the northern region needed its own generation and distribution system because of the region's marginalization and great distance from central substations and district capitals. Thus the NED emerged as a component of the National Electrification Scheme and the VRA became a vertically integrated monopoly in generation, transmission and distribution of electricity (ISSER, 2005, p39). In spite of these developments, access to electricity in the primarily rural northern region remains glaringly disparate. The region's marginal, and in some cases "exotic" or "mysterious" status often means that when local government or public-service personnel are posted to remote district assemblies there they view their assignments as a form of punishment, according to Gyimah Boadi (2009). And this likely has contributed to regional inequities in living standards and possibly economic outcomes since it remains primarily agrarian.

### **Volta River Authority**

The VRA was established in 1961, through the passage of a Volta River Development Act (Act 46); but it was also charged with the construction of the Akosombo Dam, a power station

near it, and the resettlement of communities adjacent to the dam (ISSER, 2005, p18). The power authority identifies consumer load requirements to find economically and technically feasible ways to address electricity needs (Berko, 1997, p 91). Although it operates under the MOE (formally the Ministry of Mines and Energy) through Act 46, the VRA possesses a mandate to regulate itself—giving it a monopoly in generation and transmission. Because the President serves as Chairman of the Board empowered to appoint a Chief Executive for the VRA, institutional autonomy is weak and subject to political manipulation. But Berko (1997) notes that, in contrast to other ministries, the VRA did not have the kind of bureaucratic difficulties that one might expect, likely the result of the President's presence as a board member.

The VRA holds a high-voltage transmission network infrastructure consisting of 3,670 circuit kilometers of 161 kV lines, 133 circuit kilometers of 69 kV lines and 35 associated substations. In 1987, the government of Ghana extended the VRA's mandate to include distribution in the northern part of Ghana, which led to the creation of the NED as a subsidiary and as part of arrangements to expedite the northern grid extension and system reinforcement project (ISSER, 2005,p39). On the other hand, the VRA operates as a quasi-enclave within Ghana enjoying a high degree of autonomy (Edgjekumhene, Amadu, & Brew Hammond, 2003, as cited in ISSER, 2005). It sells power directly to large industrial consumers and neighboring countries, which paid in hard currency.

The power authority has performed well technically and financially, but ECG suffered high system losses (20%) and poor service quality (Williams and Ghanadan, 2006) Other problems include 1) inadequate and outdated infrastructure; 2) underinvestment and underfunding; 3) managerial problems; and 4) low tariffs and an inability to collect bills from residential customers, all of which have led to unreliable supply, high system losses, long

outages, unsustainable debt and significant social issues (*State of the Ghanaian Economy*, 2002) Wastage has also plagued the industry, as the former mayor of Accra, Mr. Nathaniel Amarteyfio noted in an informal interview. Additionally, many rural customers are increasingly reluctant to pay for an erratic supply of electricity. The Center for Policy Analysis (CEPA), notes that these problems contribute to further deterioration in performance by the industry. When ISSER's *Guide to Electric Power in Ghana* was published in 2005, the authors noted that no significant investments had been made in the company's distribution network over the past ten years, resulting in unreliable supply and periodic extended outages. A 2001 management audit of the operations of the ECG, supports these contentions, noting that although "the company had a sound record in system planning, the company (sic) represented an electric utility in crisis" (ECG Management Support Services, 2004). In the absence of consistent and stable collection rates, it is little wonder that ECG and NED operations have experienced losses of 26% and 30% per annum, respectively (ISSER, 2005, p40).

**Table 9**

*Financial Performance of VRA 1997-2002 (in billions-cedi)*

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Operating Profit/Loss	61.2	18.7	79.2	257.9	220.0	582.5
Net Profit	58.6	105.2	283.2	983.3	329.7	1,269.1

*Source: Volta River Authority VRA, Annual Reports and Accounts for 1997-2002*

**Table 10**

*Financial Performance of ECG, 1997-2002 (in billions-cedi)*

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
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Operating Profit/Loss	33.9	6.0	17.3	13.6	152.9	85.3
Net Profit/Loss	80.9	27.5	79.2	394.0	110.1	380.5

*Source:* Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), Financial Statements for 1997-2002

### **Section 3: Issues of Transmission Versus Generation Capacity**

The relationship between generation capacity and transmission illustrates how energy sector policies have privileged urban and industrial consumers. Though generation capacity was assumed to be ample after the completion of the Akosombo Dam in 1966, a 15% access rate for the entire country and resultant electrification schemes in 1990 suggested wide disparities between generation and transmission capacity. But according to a former head of the Volta River Authority; the transmission system was sufficient enough to sustain the country’s energy needs and he contends that resulting gaps in electrification were the result of low demand. As he notes, “the transmission system was adequate for the country’s requirement, but the country just did not use it” until the late 1980s, when the Economic Recovery Program and injection of capital and donor funds helped to strengthen the economy.<sup>115</sup>

Power plants are typically located at one point, while electricity must be moved from that point to the consumer (ISSER, 2005, p4) Ghana’s transmission system is composed of an interconnected system of lines, distribution centers, control plants and substations that connect the district capital to nearby towns (ISSER, 2005, p4). According to ISSER, as of December 2003, the existing transmission system comprised of 36 substations and approximately 4,000 circuit kilometers of 161 kV (a kilovolt is a unit of power in an electric circuit or substation that power a town or district capital) and 69 kV lines including 129 km of double circuit 161kV connecting to Togo and Benin (ISSER, 2005, p. 4). If plans for expansion continue (buoyed by the construction of a Bui dam slated for completion later this year) the generation mix would

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<sup>115</sup>Personal communication, 2008)

look like the following.<sup>116</sup>

	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option3</b>
Hydropower	39-41%	46-49%	44-46%
Thermal	51%	43-46%	41-43%
Nuclear	0%	0%	3-8%
Renewables	8-10%	5-11%	7-8%

**Table 11: Generation mix**

Though the dam has six power-generating turbines, generation and distribution remain critical challenges that are reflected in residential electricity arrangements. As ISSER reported in 2006, “The major characteristic of residential electricity arrangements are a “compound house” phenomenon, which essentially entails a number of households living in a compound and sharing basic amenities like a single electric metering system”.<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, infrastructural development—that is the necessary inputs for development of commercial and industrial areas have not borne out as envisioned. Some observers in the electricity industry argue that limitations in electricity services delivery to consumers are both technical and infrastructural in nature (ISSER, 2005). As one former energy official argued, while electrification in itself did not move the country any closer to the economic development envisioned in the Nkrumah era, it remained a vital input in complementing strategies that took off in the 1980s. Consequently, it comes as little surprise that later efforts to reduce the electricity gap particularly in rural areas included a focus on developing productive uses (e.g. income generating activities).

The transmission infrastructure built to supply electricity to the entire country was neglected until 1988. A prominent official from the Volta River Authority (VRA) informed me that this had little if any bearing on rural expectations from the government and more to do with

<sup>116</sup>Strategic National Energy Plan 2006-2020, Energy Commission Main Report, July 2006

<sup>117</sup>Institute for Social, Statistical, Energy Research, Report-Guide to Electric Power 2006 p1

growing incomes.<sup>118</sup> However, at this point in the interview, I had not yet asked about rural co-optation. Nevertheless, almost ten years later, it became clear that network problems and inadequate access spurred pressures to reform the transmission system. According to an industry insider, partial power-sector reform measures involved setting up a office to monitor transmission and introducing competition to drive down costs, improve efficiency and quality of service and facilitate open access (personal communication, 2008). Yet, reportedly as late as 2008, implementation of comprehensive power sector reforms remained absent. In 2006, the VRA was set to implement other mechanisms that would improve supply and lower costs. As I was informed by a significant individual from the VRA:

The fact of the matter was that VRA had built these 500 megawatts of thermal and we were only getting 50% of this. How are we going to fix this? What are we going to do to get this fixed? I probably spent two months on this, coming up with a plan. When I got there, they had a measure called partial availability, just sitting there. But how much of it is running every day? You want it to be around 90 percent. When I got there it was around 40 percent. The year after I left [2006] it had dropped... we made some operational fixes. It was a combination of partial fixes and operational fixes. We had to figure out . . . Again, because I am an outsider; I could make some decisions without [politics getting in way]. (anonymous, personal communication, 2008)

Other measures included the unbundling of the sector with public-private partnerships, a single transmission utility to be publicly owned, creation of distribution zones and the establishment of a transparent regulatory regime (ISSER, 2005, p34). To this end, two regulatory bodies were established in 1997 to supervise electricity service provision: the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC), established under Act 538, was to be responsible for rate determination and monitoring quality (ISSER, 2005, p28). The second regulatory body, the Energy Commission, was established under Act 541 as the licensing authority for electricity utilities, with further statutory responsibilities for technical standards and indicative planning

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<sup>118</sup> Personal communication, VRA official 2008

(ISSER, 2005, p28). Both institutions emerged because of rising inequities in provision, intermittent shortages and mounting frustration of domestic consumers in both urban and rural areas.

#### **Section 4: The Politics of External Versus Internal Access in Electric Power**

Ghana represents the second-largest producer of electric energy in West Africa after Nigeria, in terms of generation capacity and consumption. In 2001, the total regional electricity consumption was 31.8 terawatt hours (TWh) with Nigeria comprising 14.6 TWh or 45.8%, Ghana at 8.8TWh and 27.8%, and Cote d'Ivoire at 3.0 TWh and 9.4%; of some roughly 234 million potential consumers of electricity in the region, only about 33 percent have access to electricity (ISSER, 2003, p7). However, domestic access to consumers, especially the rural poor is uneven, despite significant headway and a price-distorting program of electricity subsidization sold to residential consumers, which is paid for with tariffs on industrial consumers. These tariffs average at about 4.5 to 8 cents per kilowatt-hours (kWh), but are too expensive to motivate high levels of commercial and industrial usage. In ISSER's *Guide to Electric Power in Ghana*, the authors noted that, "industrial customers subsidize residential consumers, further hampering the development of an industrial base that can compete in regional and global markets and fuel economic growth." What explains this anomaly? In both structured and unstructured interviews, energy officials noted that utilities failed to adequately improve their operational capacity in terms of efficiency. Other perspectives evince the view that utilities need to improve their efficiencies in order to be financially sound and lower tariffs for consumers of electricity, (ISSER, 2005, p7) which would heighten the risk of dwindling support from rural areas.

#### **Section 5: Privatization and Power Distribution and Generation: The Impact of Market Liberalizations in the Developed World on Power Sector Reforms and Restructuring in Ghana**

Market oriented reforms of power sectors for developing states in sub-Saharan Africa show only partial success in countries that have chosen to adopt them. As I demonstrate in this section, the neoliberal assumptions of thriving markets, competitive energy sectors and greater efficiency have not culminated in significant revenue, nor boosted commercialization in terms of a range of independent power producers. Instead, by ignoring the political lessons of structural adjustment policies, tenuous circumstances for state-society relations, and the widespread view of electricity as a “public good” to be supplied by government, these reforms facilitated co-optation by government unwilling to bear a heavy political price. In effect, privatization of energy institutions aimed to produce a scenario in which the state which would retain a regulatory role only (Girod & Percebois, 1998, p25). But, ‘a country ownership syndrome’ (Pineau, 2007) or a mostly donor imperatives plagued efforts to reform the country’s electric-energy paradigm, which I maintain helped to structure discretionary provision and provide a rationale for the slow or halting progress on donor assistance.

In the industrialized world, the promise of a public, vertically integrated, centralized power system is a reality—people have reliable and affordable power and the problems facing these countries are those of a mature system (Dubash, 2003, p144). The United States, for instance, allowed independent power producers to sell electricity to investor-owned utilities—a significant shift that demonstrated how independent generators could be integrated into a grid system and unraveled the notion that the utility sector was a natural monopoly (Hirsch, 1999, as cited in Dubash, 2003). Consequently a number of other countries like Chile and the United Kingdom began to promote private competition in the energy market, while others followed suit from the 1980s and beyond.

However, developing countries faced a different set of problems. In the 2000 census, for

instance only 17 percent of Ghana's rural population had access to electricity (ESMAP, 2006, p 9). For many decades, the electric utility industry in sub-Saharan Africa was state-owned. Prior to 1997, the Government of Ghana and state-owned electricity utility organizations combined operational responsibilities with policy and regulatory issues. But during the 1990s, power-sector reform emerged in developing countries as part of externally driven, macro-economic structural adjustment policies that called for the elimination of state-led development paradigms in favor of open and free competitive market economies (UNIDO, as cited in Wamukonya, 2003, p1274). Accompanying policies focused on liberalizing the energy, technology and infrastructure sectors (Williams & Ghanadan, 2006, p816-818). These ideas took root as a consensus in development thinking and cooperation broadened. The objectives included: 1) poverty reduction as a primary objective of development; 2) the idea that economic growth was best achieved through the private sector; 3) a role for government, in helping the private sector flourish, etc. (Schulpen & Gibbon, 2002, as cited in Wamukonya, 2003, p1272).

After a series of energy crises and intermittent power outages during the mid-to late-1990s prompted discussion of reform to streamline processes within the sector, the Ghanaian government sought to overcome the limitations of the previous institutional blueprint. Indeed, the Ministry of Energy (MOE) indicated in a policy report that power sector restructuring would attempt to make utility companies more efficient in their operational capacities, and aim for greater transparency and independence in utility companies—especially in regards to tariff setting (Energy Commission Report, July 2006). Likewise, macroeconomic and fiscal crises led efforts to implement a wide range of structural-adjustment programs with the goal of reducing public spending and increasing private capital flows into economies (Williams & Ghanadan, 2006, p. 816-818). Consequently, in 1994, the government of Ghana issued a Statement of Power

Sector Reform to indicate that electricity reform would take place. This action was largely spurred by the World Bank's indication that it would discontinue its funding of electricity-supported projects in developing countries.

As Dubash notes, these trends represented a broader political framework of reform during the 1980s and '90s that included an expanded role for private corporations and a renegotiation of the appropriate role of the state in economic activity that led developing countries towards markets and away from state-led activity (Dubash, 2003, p147). The prevailing wisdom held that the injection of private capital would rehabilitate existing installations and lead to the creation of new power plants (Turkson, 2000, as cited in Turkson & Wohlgemuth, 2001). As a result, major international lending banks and development agencies promoted a policy prescription for developing countries that included privatization of state-owned enterprises (Beder, 2003, p 275). African states like Ghana, South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe subsequently sought to capitalize on the promise of sizable profits from privatization and commercialization of their power sectors. However, Beder asserts that these policies benefited international financial institutions, often at the expense of local business and undoubtedly the poor; since the incentives to construct and operate energy infrastructure in developing countries favored foreign investors rather than third-world governments.

As a consequence, the newly minted New Democratic Congress (NDC) government began electricity reform in 1993, the same year the World Bank announced its plans to encourage (or push) countries to liberalize their electric-energy sectors. This impetus emerged as a result of donor fatigue from a decade and a half of concessionary financial support and interest in reallocation of funds to other sectors. It was thought that governments would mobilize large amounts of capital necessary to develop and sustain the power sector (Dubash, 2003, p144). One

area of reform initiated at this time was epitomized by the introduction of competition in supply and the encouragement of private-sector investment, which necessitated transparency in regulation, leading to the development of a sustainable electricity industry (Dubash, 2003). In the “Statement of Power Sector Development Policy” (1999), the government outlined plans “to shift emphasis from the country’s traditional reliance on multilateral organizations to finance existing power utilities; with the aim to encourage nontraditional sources including direct investment by private investors to participate in power sector development”.

In 1997, a restructuring plan was approved which opened generation to competition, and introduced concessions to end market segmentation by retaining regulation on small consumer tariffs while allowing large customers to be served directly by generators (Williams & Ghanadan, 2006, p828). However, this reform plan was never implemented, because of opposition from a subsidiary of Kaiser Aluminum, which sought to maintain a sweetheart deal with VRA. In fact, the VRA argued that unbundling of the power sector would weaken the VRA as a competitor in the proposed West Africa Power Pool, a regional arrangement to increase electricity access (Williams & Ghanadan, 2006, p828). The breakup of the country’s monopoly as noted earlier, resulted in little substantive action. And although the PURC and EC were created as part of efforts to examine industry practices, ensure equitable tariffs, and establish effective pricing mechanisms, little came of efforts to fully privatize the VRA, which remains government controlled and subject to politicization.

Other analyses found that western multinational corporations sought investment in developing countries as a source of new markets because profit opportunities declined in affluent countries, especially in traditional areas such as primary industries and manufacturing. This development combined with the Asian Development Bank’s recommendation in the mid-1990s

that electricity industries be restructured to introduce competition and reorganized into corporate, commercial entities, prompted interest in a number of states. For instance, South Africa's efforts to attract foreign investment by privatizing its national utility in the 1990s resulted in unemployment for large numbers of people. In preparation for partial privatization of Eskom—the national electricity provider in the country eliminated subsidies, and household bills in the poorest areas increased by up to 4 percent, at the same time, bills for industrial consumers fell by 15 percent (Karekezi & Kimana, 2002, p287). As Stern (2000) argued, the sustainability of a “commercialized, unbundled utility depends on the establishment of effective and autonomous regulatory institutions, whose success depends on possessing and developing a regulatory memory (p148).

Power sector loans too, were contingent on government commitments to introduce competition and private participation (ISSER, 2005, p25). Because of the poor state of the power sector in many countries and low expectations of profit, borrowing countries were in a bind—to attract capital, the sector had to be in good health (Dubash, 2003, p147). These measures were also triggered by a supply crunch due to the drought that reduced the output of Ghana's predominantly hydro system (more than 90% of net generation) in a context of rapidly rising demand (Williams & Ghanadan, 2006). When the Government of Ghana approached the World Bank for assistance in financing new thermal generation to complement existing capacity, it was asked to increase tariffs, remove barriers to private participation and plan for comprehensive reform (William & Ghanadan, 2006 p50, 56).

In any case, subsequent tariff increases and the partial removal of subsidies to make utilities more competitive produced huge financial losses, in part the result of subsidies left in place to avoid a political backlash from the electorate. Indeed, Edjekumhene et al (2003) blames

a stalled reform process on the inability of the regulator, and by extension the Government, to take critical decisions that would impact harshly on the general populace.<sup>119</sup> Essentially, in the view of a largely rural populace tariffs are too high, while utilities and investors seeking to recover costs believe they are not high enough. As Edjekumhene and Dubash (2002) conclude, “a climate of economic uncertainty may be a nearly intractable obstacle to applying a profit-making model to the electricity sector of a poor country.” In spite of suggestions like establishing “fixed rates or charges” for the poor and a potential role for private-sector participation, it is unlikely that electrification in rural areas would significantly improve given the profit motive (Karekezi & Kimani, 2002, p935).

After a series of tariff increases, only a third of long-run marginal costs in 1993 were recovered. Nonetheless, after 1992, the Government of Ghana introduced a lifeline subsidy of 50 kWh per month, which was increased to 199kWh per month in 1994 and then lowered back to 50 kWh in 1998 after a tariff review by the PURC (Ejekumhene et al, 2006, p26). Following concerns about access for the poor, a lifeline philosophy emerged with a Canadian consulting firm suggested that it was politically expedient for governments to do so. According to this philosophy, electricity is an essential service rather than a luxury and people of low income should not be deprived of it; and 50kWh is deemed adequate to serve rural customers and urban poor (Ejekumhene et al, 2006, p25).

These developments and the largely stalled process of electricity reforms support the notion of rural co-optation after all increases in tariffs would unduly affect the rural poor that comprise the bulk of the population.<sup>120</sup> As Edjekumhene and Dubash (2002) and Edjekumhene

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<sup>119</sup> Energy Sector Management Project-World Bank-ESMAP, *Ghana: Sector Reform and the Pattern of the Poor: Energy Use and Supply* (ekhumhene, Ishamael, Amaka-Otchere, Akosua B. K. & Amissah-Arthur, Harriette 2006.

<sup>120</sup> Although Karekezi & Kimani (2002) 932 note that “on closer scrutiny, it appears that the majority of the poor may be adversely affected by hikes in electricity tariffs, if and only if, the country’s electrification levels are

et al (2003) observe, further reforms in terms of transmission, pricing reform, changes to the rates of subsidies and tariffs largely stalled, leading some to speculate that the government is reluctant to make critical decisions that would impact harshly on the general or what I would argue *selected populace* (ESMAP, 2006, p27). By all accounts a “project by project” political culture emerged to produce political instrumentalism that Botchway (1998) observed. As he notes “development projects” served to bring home vividly to the rural people in particular the political power of the state and its officials in making available the public good.” Indeed the ability of the incumbency to use resources for this purpose is noted by Nugent (2001). Whether owing to a credit squeeze, the continuing impact of adjustment policies, Nugent finds that “observers of the political scene commented on the fact that there were relatively few development projects to point to by comparison with 1996.”<sup>121</sup>

In any case, the rate of electrification more doubled from 1988 to 2003, from 23 to 50 percent (Government of Ghana, 1999, p11). As a high ranking NDC member of parliament noted in the summer of 2009, “the political will (to undertake electrification) was not in place until 1992.” Without the introduction of industrial and commercial tariffs, most of the 180,000 to 200,000 ‘lifeline’ customers would have indeed lost the use of electricity because of an inability to pay (Government of Ghana, 1999, p. 11). Other structural changes endeavored to create competition in supply, transparency in the regulation of sector operations, effective commercialization of operations of electricity utilities and encouragement of private investment in the development of the electricity sector (ISSER, 2005, p34).

In many democratic governments, emerging liberal business elites who replaced former military rulers and party bureaucrats tended to see market reform as a decisive break from the

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relatively high-possibly implying that both the poor and non poor electrified.

<sup>121</sup> See Dr. A. Afrifa, ‘Inside the mind of the Ghanaian voter (III),’ *The Chronicle*, 16-17 August 2000

statism of the old guard. Indeed, many governments felt compelled to accept that the rewards of tapping into the expanding flow of international investment outweighed the risk of abandoning the old state-utility model (Williams & Ghanadan, 2006, p836). Indeed, Nugent (2009) noted members of the old guard (Rawlings PNDC military regime) used the very same model they previously criticized to reap the gains in private sector contracts and lucrative deals that accorded the power and status, much to the chagrin of casual observers.

The consequences of these developments are hard to miss, especially when viewed through the lens of globalization. Hira (2003) examined the dynamics of the forces of economic globalization<sup>122</sup> on the energy sectors of the southern cone. Using energy policy frameworks in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil he addresses the effects of globalization on states, consumers, and corporations. One of his conclusions is that in spite of globalization, developing countries are not helpless victims. In a new age of convergence, economic outcomes are shaped by regulation, and in turn, the energy sector. Since the 1990s, many countries liberalized their power sectors and opened them to private competition. But Hira concluded that the benefits of privatization of electric and gas markets are not as clear-cut as pro-privatization adherents assert. He argued that the benefits of privatization are likely to be extremely inequitable, for instance along the lines of producing versus non-producing countries, poorer and wealthier populations (Hira, 2003, p68). This observation is quite relevant for countries with high numbers of rural and economically underprivileged populations who might easily be exploited by private producers and utility companies.

For example, when restructuring and privatization transfers control of vital resources and services to transnational corporations, new burdens for the poor are generated in unanticipated

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<sup>122</sup>Defined as the closer integration of economies and elimination of rules and regulations in many developing countries to stabilize the flows of volatile money in and out of countries (Stiglitz, 2002), as well as convergence in finance, labor, technology, etc.

ways (Hawkesworth, 2006; Stiglitz, 2002). For example, a West African Power Pool (WAPP) regional electricity power agreement created a few years ago may increase energy trade and promote foreign investment in the electricity sector. If lucrative, this arrangement could save the region \$3.5 billion over 20 years.<sup>123</sup> Yet electricity markets in Western Africa remain weak, despite a planned regional power pool project that includes Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Niger. Since these states are not currently equipped to create strong institutional frameworks like Southern Cone countries that have managed to secure a measure of autonomy from both international and domestic forces through regulatory policies in their energy sectors, the benefits for the former are questionable especially since it is not possible at this juncture to create similar environments. For instance, Argentina created ultra-competitive conditions for foreign investors in electricity while maintaining close ties to the gas market, and Brazil has attempted to create a competitive domestic market in which its own state companies are favored (Hira, 2003, p 69). Despite the increasing expansion of electricity markets in these states, and the noticeable privatization of power sectors, issues of equity are essential to the welfare of rural residents who stand to be further marginalized, in terms of cost concerns and social safety nets. It is unclear how residential customers would benefit from such schemes, particularly in regards to rural electrification initiatives. Furthermore, attempts to make information accessible to the public through the passage of the Ghanaian Freedom and Information Act in recent years appears to have done little good, despite a literacy rate of 65% (At a Glance: Ghana, 2009).

Configuring the impact of market liberalization on electric energy policies may enable us to unpack the processes of state regulation and autonomy in national electrification schemes and the accompanying infrastructure. But understanding the changing dynamic of political actors and

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<sup>123</sup>Institute for Social, Statistical and Energy Research 2006, p8

institutional change is equally important. While Herbst (1993) focuses primarily on the politics of reform in Ghana, his discussion of the antagonistic and problematic relationship between the government and private sector as a central difficulty for the state is persuasive for approaches to the energy sector, deregulation and economic growth.

**Table 12**

*Private electricity projects in developing countries, 1990-1997*

	Projects	Total investment (1997 US\$)
East Asia and the Pacific	165	49741
Europe and central Asia	112	10436
Latin America and the Caribbean	169	45311
Middle East and North Africa	10	6721
South Asia	57	16799
Sub-Saharan Africa	21	2040
Total	534	131048

*Source:* Izaguirre, 1998, as cited in Wamukonya, 2003.

**Table 13**

*Electricity sector reform in selected sub-Saharan African countries*

Country	Operators in generation	Competition in distribution	Private role source	Main electricity integration	Vertical Access (2005)
Ghana Horizontal	3 distributors 55%	No	Yes	H+T	
Vertical					(2010)
Angola	Empresa	Yes	No	T	No

20%						(2003)
Botswana	Distribuição BPC	No	No	T+I		Yes
37%						
Mozambique	EdM	Yes	Yes	H+I		Yes, but 2
6%						
Namibia	4 Regional Elec distributors	Yes	Yes	H+I		Firms in G No,hor
34%						
vertical						
Unbundling						
South Africa	ESKOM	Yes	No	T		Yes, but
70%					(1995)	many small-D firms
Zambia	CAPC+ZESCO	Yes	Yes	H		Yes, but 2
19%					(1999-2000)	big firms
Zimbabwe	ZESA	Yes	No	H+I		Yes, but 2
27%						firms

*Note:* TR= transmission, G= generation, D=distribution, H=hydro, T=thermal, I=import

*Source:* A. Estache et al, 2008.

## Section 7: Electrification, Infrastructure and Performance of Industry

The relationship between electrification, infrastructure, the performance of industry and small and medium enterprises is a significant one with the potential to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor. Electricity is a critical component of infrastructure and is vital for structural growth and performance of firms across sub-Saharan Africa. Physical infrastructure includes water, energy, telecommunications, transport systems, affect economic processes in myriad of ways (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006, p113). The technical attributes of infrastructure include “scale, indivisibility, multiple use and general functions,” separate it from other forms of capital (Ibid, 113). Indeed, frequent power outages force firms or industries to acquire standby generators. Ibid, 114) observes that in most African countries, agricultural and industrial production is constrained by inadequate backward linkages to exploit agricultural raw materials, often located

within inaccessible but rich rural communities. This remains a challenge for Ghana, a country that draws substantial revenue from agricultural output. More importantly, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka recognizes that such processes make up a complex of backward and forward linkages that are taken for granted in dynamic industrial environments. Infrastructure affects three broad groups, which include firms, industrial systems and consumers (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006). Spatial or geographic concentration by firms or business is critical since the provision of public utilities like transportation and communication induce strong externalities and directly impact factor prices (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006, p114) as well as growth and revenue. Inefficient infrastructure becomes central for enterprise under two conditions: 1) when its absence compels optional provision, which can place a financial burden on firms and place major impediments on new investments; and 2) when inadequate national infrastructure makes networking among firms impossible or extremely difficult—for example, when transaction costs are high and communication is hindered either by poor telecommunications or frequent power outages (Ibid, p 114).

A cogent question to consider is how firms or businesses respond to fluctuations in infrastructural deficiencies. If firms invest extensively on the acquisition and maintenance of private infrastructural services, then, what of marginalized populations? Viewed this way, the severity of spillover effects, belie a 66 % electrification rate. Consequently, it comes as little surprise that inefficient electric-energy provision produces lower yields and higher costs for both industrial users, but more important domestic consumers.

There is a direct correlation between energy intensity and productivity, with the former defined as energy consumption per unit production output (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006, p. 127). Though the precise nature of electricity linkages to productive uses is spurious for some, energy

officials identify it as critical. Noting that electricity gaps have left produced onerous circumstances for populations elsewhere, Mr. Emmanuel Asafo an engineer and official for the Volta River Authority stated that “countries like Burkina Faso and Cote D’Ivoire do not have the electrical infrastructure that Ghana has and there is a correlation.”<sup>124</sup> Firms that relied on a public utility as their primary source of energy experienced an increase in energy intensity and decline in productivity. Similar trends were observed for some small and medium-sized firms that combined both public and private sources of power supply (Ibid,127). Oyelaran-Oyeyinka’s table below illustrates how the energy intensity of a firm is a function of its supply. The table also shows electricity costs per unit for the national grid, for small, medium and large engineering firms over the five-year period from 1994 to 1999. (Ibid, 127)

**Table 14**  
*Energy Intensity of Public and Private Power Generation*

A	B	C	D	E	F
Firm and Energy Size	Energy Intensity	Energy Intensity Generator	Total Energy Intensity	% Electricity Cost Per Unit Output	% Share Generator Cost Per Unit Output
I. **	0.261	1.58	1.85	15.4	84.6
II. *	227.7	13.6	196.0	92.0	8.0
III. **	410	239.6	596.8	64.0	36.0
IV. *	93.5	293.8	450.0	25.7	74.3
V. ***	19.7	231.3	240.0	8.0	92.0

<sup>124</sup>Personal communication, 2009

VI. ***	0.40	1.76	1.83	33.0	67.0
VII.***	0.63	1.40	2.03	24.3	75.7

\*=Small \*\*=Medium \*\*\*=Large.

Source: Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006.

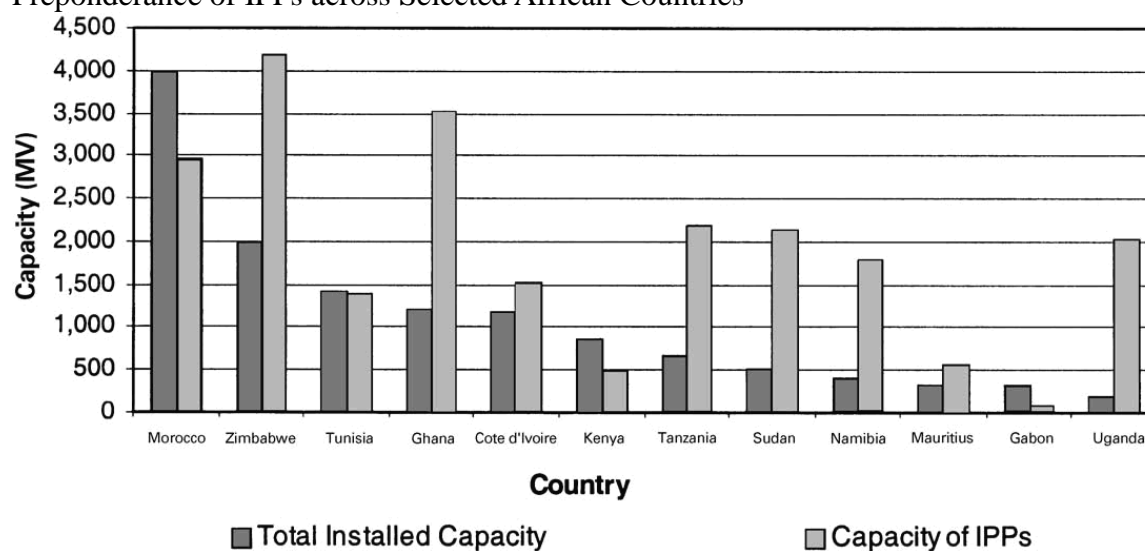
Despite differentiation in public infrastructure, it is clear from the tables below that electric energy consumption remains a significant challenge, not just in Ghana but elsewhere on the continent. Indeed, power supply remains uniformly inadequate across African countries, except in relatively industrialized states like Mauritius and South Africa (Barnes, 2007) As Barnes (2007) observes, many African countries have not successfully implemented rural electrification because of inadequate national development models, which can be attributed to nascent infrastructure. For small and medium enterprises, functioning as income generating vehicles that rely on electricity as an infrastructural input, the challenges are acute.

**Table 15**  
*Electricity Consumption in Selected African Countries*

Country or Region	KWH per capita (1997)
Angola	63.9
Benin	43.2
Cameroon	180.7
Congo (Kinshasa)	120.4
Congo (Brazzaville)	197.2
Cote D'Ivoire	181.3
Ethiopia	21.4
Gabon	752.2
Ghana	275.8

Kenya	128.7
Mozambique	46.8
Nigeria	84.0
Senegal	207.2
Sudan	48.5
Tanzania	54.3
North Africa	729.9
South Africa	3800.2

Table 16  
Preponderance of IPPs across Selected African Countries



Source

Section 8: Constraints and Continuing Challenges

Although levels of electrification in rural Ghana far outpace those of neighboring countries like Cote'd'Ivoire, Benin, and Togo, full electrification remains elusive for the bulk of rural society who are poor. Most households that can afford to pay for electricity are located in densely populated urban areas and according to one interviewee, "Sometimes one half of a house has access and the other does not"<sup>125</sup>. Widely recognized challenges currently facing Ghana's energy sector include: 1) rapidly growing demand for energy by all sectors of the economy and growing population; 2) the risk of fundamental imbalance between energy productions and

<sup>125</sup> Anonymous, personal communication, 2009

indigenous resources, evident for all major energy forms; 3) high levels of end-use inefficiency, culminating in waste of final energy forms; 4) inefficient pricing of energy services; 5) operational inefficiencies of the utilities leading to high losses and consequently increasing the cost of supply and distribution; 6) over-reliance on wood fuels, which could threaten the forest cover; 7) failure to exploit solar energy, which is relatively abundant; and 8) inadequate investments due to lack of capital (Strategic National Energy Plan 2006-2020, 2006, p. 23). Despite these constraints, energy officials remain optimistic about the prospects of electrification for the entire population and noted that efforts were underway to utilize solar energy in the coming decade.

Though other power supply alternatives like wind and solar energy are likely to materialize in the future, rural residents are likely to continue their reliance on wood fuels for cooking and lighting (Strategic National Energy Plan, 2006-2020, 2006). According to a 2006 Energy Report by the Energy Commission, 90-95% of indigenous power use stems from wood fuels or biomass, 5-10% comes from hydroelectric power and less than one percent from solar energy. These trends are expected to continue raising further questions about access and the ostensible benefits that electrification are said to afford for the rural poor.

Table 17

*Growth in Energy Consumption (1990-2000)*

Fuel Type	% Growth Per Year
Gasoline	1.5-4.0
Kerosene	0.2
Diesel	1.2-1.3

LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas)	14.0
Electricity	10
Firewood	2.5-3.0
Charcoal	3.0-5.0

*Source:* Quaye-Foli, 2002, as cited in ESMAP, 2006.

Disruptions in access for the commercial sector and electricity crises since the late 1990s offers additional insights into continuing gaps that are widely assumed away in recognition of the country's overall success in electrification. As output fell significantly in the manufacturing industry, and small-scale enterprises and services were profoundly affected, Ghana's industrial and commercial sectors bore the brunt of the 1998 power crisis. Production costs rose as many companies procured power generators to fill the electricity gap (ESMAP, 2000, p8). Indeed, profitability and productivity fell as companies laid off workers while reducing the hours of others. However, the following year, Rawlings' government announced plans for increasing the country's power supply over the period from 1998 to 2002. But emergent increases in electricity tariffs and ineffectual management of the crisis confounded efforts to avoid energy crises, which occurred intermittently until 2007. The Association of Ghana Industry and Trades Union Congress, made two observations in a 2000 workshop that provide firsthand evidence of the impact of electric energy on their industries and operations. First, despite the Volta River's capacity and efforts to increase generation and transmission, power supply to end-users continued to be characterized by low reliability and poor quality. Troubled electricity provision also affect small-scale enterprises (a critical source of income for the rural poor) and the steel industry, among others. The result is that labor and production was negatively affected lending further support to the notion of electricity as a key economic driver.

## **Section 9: What Have Market Reforms and Liberalization of Power Sectors Meant for the Rural Poor?**

Adequate and sustained transmission of electricity to rural communities depends on autonomous regulatory institutions under a framework of decentralization that can offer independent and objective assessment that ties electricity provision to economic livelihoods that can support the rural poor. Karekezi and Kimani (2002) find that despite the merits of liberalization of power sectors and decentralized rural electrification projects, these initiatives have not worked as expected—becoming instead an “avenue for the collection of additional revenue for utilities and the Treasury with little to show for in terms of expansion of electrification”. Their analysis suggests that a closer look at the consequences of reform is sorely needed. Wamukonya (2003), too, argues for an approach that considers not only the impact of power sector reform in the economy, but addresses reform “recipes” which are usually based on the socioeconomic systems of developed countries and in need reexamination (p. 1285). This is also supported by Williams and Ghanadan’s (2006) contention that “despite fundamental differences in motivations and conditions, non-OECD reform policies were largely based on the theoretical analysis and policy recommendations of economists concerned principally with deregulation in US and Europe . . . as well as a high degree of uniformity in expectations about reform goals and processes” (p821). Unsurprisingly, developing countries within sub-Saharan Africa chose to adopt piecemeal reforms, preferring unsustainable subsidies and low tariffs to protect economically vulnerable populations.

While Ghana is at the forefront of transparent processes<sup>126</sup> in terms of pricing reform, it does not appear that a balance has been achieved between cost recovery for power utilities and

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<sup>126</sup>As Edjekumhene and Dubash (2002) note, power-sector reform in Ghana helped to usher in a transparent governance system for the power utilities, with the PURC incorporating several principles of good governance in its structure and functions. (Edjekumhene and Dubash, 2002, as cited in ESMAP Technical Paper 097/06, 2006, p31)

protection of customer interests, despite tariff increases and adjustments (Edjekumhene et al, 2006: 24). To be sure the decision to reform the electricity sector in Ghana with World Bank assistance and conditionalities resulted in the Government of Ghana assuming primary control of the process and preferring to implement its own prescriptions (Edjekumhene et al, 2006, p19). Ostensibly, these measures were taken to allow for domestic autonomy. Yet pricing reform and a lifeline or “social” tariff targeted at poor and low-income households have not noticeably reduced the energy gap. It is quite possible that “gradualism” or incremental efforts to stretch the co-optive impetus that electrification affords accounts for this outcome. In any case future outcomes remain far from clear, but it is likely that in the years to come, electricity affordability will depend on the extent to which economic growth and stability accrue to the bulk of the population as well as how many IPPs emerge and their pricing systems.

Additionally, the so-called “socialization of loss” is significant. In effect, governments make considerable concessions that allow independent power producers (IPPs) to distribute and transmit electricity to industrial and more importantly, domestic populations. The controversy surrounding this development is embodied in the idea of rigid take-or-pay contracts that reduces the scope of autonomy while ensuring high costs for governments (Dubash, 2003, p147). With Ghana and over twenty countries, at various stages of initiating or implementing reform of their power sectors, Karekezi and Kimani (2002) question the seeming blanket acceptance of power power-sector reforms as inherently beneficial. In this view, the benefits of IPP distribution are weighted against issues of equity particularly for the rural poor given the logical removal or at least substantial reduction in electricity subsidies to garner more profits. Furthermore, Karekezi and Kimana (2002) argued that these pricing systems downgrade the quality, capacity, and reliability of electric energy systems and thus require reassessment in the current models

proffered particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Though Ghana has only partially implemented them, succeeding administrations and energy officials I interviewed mentioned the government's plans to pursue further power sector reforms-which is not only puzzling but ambiguous given drawn out *partial implementation*.

## **Conclusion**

For a country that should be thriving from several energy sources that include the Akosombo and Kpong dams, the relationships between generation, transmission and distribution of electric energy and the primary institutions that govern the power sector in Ghana remain uneven. Indeed, the weak autonomy of the VRA, and lack of adequate manpower, skills and incentives to perform within the MOE have resulted in a lackluster response to the country's electrification gap, in tandem with frequent regime change and political instability. These developments were partially reversed in the 1990s as the Rawlings' NDC government attempted to implement the National electrification scheme and later Rural electrification Program.

This chapter has found that the irony of Ghana's much lauded progress in its rate of access lay with the partial nature of market oriented, neo-liberal oriented power sector reforms (in place as of 2008) and conversely the unevenness of outcomes and energy policies. The limited scope of implementation should give pause to the much-heralded neo-liberal power sector reforms presumed to generate profits, rescue ailing energy and utility sectors, and drive down prices through competitive policies. This finding is significant for two reasons: first, the commendable rate that Ghana has managed to achieve relative to its neighbors and other states in sub-Saharan Africa calls into question the merits of a pro-privatization approach given the absence of truly competitive markets for other goods and services and large numbers of African populations unable to link themselves productively to the economic arena. Borrowing from

successful models from countries like Chile and Australia, privatization was expected to introduce competition into ailing government monopolies. Yet experts remain skeptical. For these reasons, energy values and how states define them potentially shape the future of energy sector relationships as well as external actor-or private power production that link national energy objectives to decentralized initiatives to assist rural people in the process. Second, a one-size fit-all, policy implicit in the structure of market oriented power sectors remains problematic since African states face a different set of problems from the mature, developed power sectors of the West. As long as local perceptions of an energy or electricity ‘social’ compact persist, governments are likely to disavow liberalization of electric energy regimes and perhaps limit the ability of independent power producers to operate.

Prevailing views hold that governments in developing countries aim to use electricity as part of a broader “social compact” (World Bank, 1988) with the implicit understanding that subsidies would make electric power more affordable and accessible—which in turn, is presumed to propel key sectors of the economy forward.<sup>127</sup> As Dubash notes, the social-compact approach has yielded some success, for example in India, where the provision of subsidies resulted in cheap electricity that boosted agricultural productivity and created a new class of privileged farmers who wanted such policies to continue (Dubash & Chella Rajan, 2000). Though Dubash finds that the problems inherent in the utility sectors of developing countries have more to do with the failure to implement the public-utility approach practiced in the North, myriad quandaries facing these countries makes comparisons difficult in terms of the current realities in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa. As the “social compact” (Dubash, 2003) shifts from the state to markets (or to international power producers and exporters), the role of government in public service and enterprises will be critical dynamic to consider.

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<sup>127</sup>See Dubash, 2003, 144

With a number of scholars (Wamakunya, 2002; Dubash; 2003 et al) urging caution in the wholesale adoption of market-oriented reforms of electric-energy sectors, and arguing that it is not yet clear that the poor in particular benefit; others argue for a sustainable-development approach to combat ailing power sectors and lack of competition. Recent studies suggest that corruption in private utility production is an emerging, yet poorly understood and serious problem in light of elite capture of energy benefits, which are alarmingly common (Auriol & Blanc, 2009). If these trends are any indication, they portend grave consequences for programs like rural electrification and local private investment in utilities.

It is safe to conclude that any additional reforms undertaken will require careful scrutiny and delicate balancing act between decentralized institutional structures, market oriented power sector policies, specific measures underpinning these processes, and group interests which remain paramount in nascent democracies. On the other hand, the clash between lagging capacity of energy institutions, marginal status of the northern region and donor initiatives require new solutions particularly from sub-national governments. With an entire institution devoted to electric energy provision in the Northern region, the continued marginalization, development challenges, and uneven access speaks volumes about the treatment of the rural poor of which the region largely comprises.<sup>128</sup> Significantly, the trusteeship role that the donor and development community is increasingly playing, calls into question the future of power sector reforms given that external actors are providing to a considerable extent, public goods provision of water, roads, food security, electricity (Murray, 2009). What this means for public and private spaces is anyone's guess. But it is clear that greater inclusion of the rural poor under electricity provisions may involve further hurdles given the murky role of independent power producers. Most

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<sup>128</sup> The Northern region incidentally has one of the third lowest rates of electricity access at some 43% (source, MOE)

importantly, inadequate dialogue between the district assemblies and the rural populace on the question of equity, pricing reform, and agency in determining optimal outcomes for their communities under a political decentralized framework require urgent and renewed attention.

## **Chapter 4: The Unfolding Nature of the Rural poor, Rural development and Public Service**

### **Delivery of electricity in Ghana's Fourth Republic**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine the role of electricity provision under broad institutional

frameworks of rural development and to a limited extent poverty reduction efforts under decentralized service delivery in the post 1992 period when Ghana returned to civilian rule. Statistical evidence suggests that electricity consumption is strongly correlated to wealth, while gaps in electricity strongly correlate with extreme poverty and those living below \$2 per day.<sup>129</sup> Ghana remains a largely agricultural economy despite an emphasis on industry. Indeed, agriculture accounts for 31.7% of the country's gross domestic product, 18.9% for industry while 49.5% accounts for services.<sup>130</sup> With almost 52 percent of the Ghanaian population defined as poor, public services will be critical in the years and perhaps decades to come. An invigorated focus on rural development and poverty reduction strategies, which emerged with seeming urgency during the 1990s, was in large part supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. These efforts aimed to create and support income-generating enterprises and activities in rural areas. Rural development, it seemed was to become a major focus of economic policy in the Fourth Republic. Though extreme poverty<sup>131</sup> in the country declined to 27% in 1998-1999 producing further reductions appears elusive.<sup>132</sup>

This chapter argues that weak public service delivery of electricity is inconspicuously affected by external conditionality requirements and weak autonomy over rural development and poverty reduction approaches. Conversely, the circumvention of donor authority by national governments and the increasing reliance on non-governmental organization sector (which exerts considerable influence in Ghana) reflects an ongoing and contentious struggle to retain a locus of autonomy that support uneven outcomes. The dependence on intergovernmental transfers (District Assembly Common Fund) not only limits sub-national autonomy (district assemblies)

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<sup>129</sup> Institute for Economic Affairs, 2002, as cited in Wolde-Rufael, 204, p1108.

<sup>130</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, December 2010, p4

<sup>131</sup> Extreme poverty refers to those living below the poverty line of US\$292 per year

<sup>132</sup> See Edjekumhene, Amaka-Otchere & Amissah-Arthur, 2006, p5.

since transfers tend to be conditional or directed by the center and public service provision is inhibited at the local levels.<sup>133</sup> Governmental autonomy as used here denotes the ability of the state to make decisions independently of external actors—that is donors. It is evaluated in the context of rural development and to a small extent, poverty reduction strategies that attend to the poor. Ownership is closely related concept and refers to actual capacity and implementation of policy directives (see Whitfield, 2005; Ayers, 2006). By linking the evolution of rural development approaches to public service delivery, this chapter demonstrates how ambiguous service delivery outcomes and a lack of 'ownership' especially by local institutional actors<sup>134</sup> potentially debilitate and limit more favorable outcomes for the rural poor in the Ghanaian economy. Appropriately, this chapter examines the relationship between rural development and poverty alleviation efforts to uncover potential synergies in service delivery of electricity as a 'livelihood' component. Though the chapter only offers a cursory treatment of the productive uses of electricity in rural development, for example in income generating activities, this chapter nonetheless places public service delivery of electrification squarely within a politics of poverty-reduction and rural development frameworks that emerged in the mid-1990s with donor support.

### **Framework of the chapter**

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. In the first section, I chart the course of rural development approaches adopted in the post-independence period. By examining rural developments over the course of several decades, this section searches for congruent patterns to identify threads of continuity or discontinuity between public-service provision of electricity and rural development. Section 1A charts the relationship between poverty reduction approaches and structural adjustment to determine how the rural poor fared under particular policies. The second

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<sup>133</sup> USAID Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Final Report and Summary of Findings, September 2010, p65

<sup>134</sup> Institutional actors are taken here to mean district assemblies.

section examines the history of, and rationale for rural electrification in the post-independence period. Additionally, the third explores synergies between rural development and rural electrification and questions whether existing approaches have produced meaningful outcomes for the rural poor. The fourth section highlights disparities between rural and urban areas, and seeks to account for patterns of marginalization in electric energy use. Furthermore, the sixth and final sections explore the discretionary treatment of electrification in the push for the rural vote and potential consequences of a mobilized rural class, followed by a conclusion.

### **Section 1: Rural Development Perspectives and Approaches**

Rural development is usually defined as government intervention in rural economies to raise productivity and improve the welfare of rural people (Busia, 1995; Gyampo, 2007, p29). This process typically includes actions taken by local, national or international agencies to increase production and improve the quality of life in the rural areas (Gyampo, 2007). With frequent regime change and political instability spanning several decades, rural development lagged considerably in virtually all ten regions. However, in the post independent period successive governments attempted to tackle the objective of rural development by launching programs for rural employment and initiatives to support food production-(e.g. Operation Feed Yourself). Rural development concerns also emerged in lieu of efforts to transform Ghana from a low-income to a middle-income country by 2020, and these plans were articulated in the National Development Policy Framework and the National Development Planning Commission in 1994 (Ghana Institute for Economic Affairs, 2004, p33). As mentioned in the first chapter, approximately fifty six percent of Ghanaians reside in rural settlements and of this number roughly 80% are classified as poor. Because their living conditions are significantly inferior in comparison to urban areas (Ibid: 33). Rural development schemes took center stage in donor-

initiated efforts to combat endemic poverty and regional disparities in the country's ten regions. Accordingly, a focus on development of regional economies and renewed interest in agricultural productivity emerged with a concentration on linkage effects. For example, the transfer of resources from agricultural to non-agricultural sectors in the form of food, raw materials, capital, labor, provide was deemed critical to marketing, storage, processing, transport and other goods and services (Ibid, 32). As a result, the post-1992 period reflected a new interest in addressing rural development gaps through the provision of electricity as an infrastructural input in urban and rural areas as well. By identifying gaps in particular services, it was hoped that newly created district assemblies could tackle these burgeoning problems. Consequently, adequate availability of and access to relevant rural goods and services became a critical component of rural development (Ibid, 32).

As an early model for rural development, an agropolitan approach-first introduced by John Friedman and M. Douglass in the 1950s aimed to correct regional and rural disparities arising from the pursuit of growth-pole strategies in developing countries.<sup>135</sup> It called for the pursuit of planning that "must be decentralized, participatory, and deeply immersed in the particulars of local setting", which was a departure from top-down, centralized approaches that positioned the state at the center. As the country moved away from centralized to decentralized decision making norms in the post-1992 period, governments sought to promote self-help initiatives like electrification. But since political elites were reluctant to cede much control to the lower tiers of government, significant reorientation in a top-down approach occurred only incrementally.

Robert Price (1977) argued that development was possible via bureaucratic organization, but that kinship, individual identity and expectations worked to disrupt modern bureaucratic

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<sup>135</sup> Institute for Economic Affairs-Ghana, 2004, p65.

norms and values. Bates (1981) however, offered intriguing explanations for the ability of African governments to pursue interests detrimental to the rural majorities. He noted that because the individual costs of collective action were usually too high owing to repressive tactics such as fuelling factional conflicts, few were inclined to participate in joint action. With past and present governments resorting to a “conferment of divisible benefits,” to satisfy private rural interests, rural development projects became instrumental in creating a system of spoils, thereby maintaining a measure of rural political support. Bates’ characterization is largely valid because his description of African agricultural policies, class formation and the problematic nature of state development remains applicable to many African countries.

### **Section 1.a *Perspectives on Poverty and Adjustment***

The problems of uneven development produced a plethora of work on poverty beginning with Gunnar Myrdal, W. A. Lewis and Hans Chenery among others (Bryceson, 2004, p621). But approaches to combat the predicament of the rural poor were also recognized by African governments, donors, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations. The latter in particular sought to address the plight of the rural poor within a neoliberal framework that required a reduced scope for the state. For example, during the 1990s, the World Bank brought the problem of poverty into closer focus in a document entitled *1990 World Development Report: Poverty* where it pledged commitment to reducing the scourge of poverty (Hanmer, Pyatt and White 1997 cf Bryceson). As a consequence, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) emerged as part of a global framework premised on the belief that poverty could be eradicated. The MDG aimed to promote 'participatory' projects that would give agency to local voices, amid a process of decentralization that a number of countries embarked on, among many others. For example, the table below illustrates the various benefits of electrification.

**Table 18***General Benefits of Electricity According to the Millennium Development Goals*

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (MDG-1)	Refrigeration Better cooking methods Faster fuel gathering Irrigation through pumping Job creation*
Achieve universal primary education (MDG-2)	Allows for study after dark Attracts teachers to rural areas Allows for use of latest media Frees up children's time from household and other chores to attend school
Promote gender equality and empower women	"Traditional" women's tasks (MDG-3) become easier Lighting on streets makes travel safer Access to education may increase as time spent cooking or gathering fuel and water decreases Reduces indoor air pollution
Reduce child mortality (MDG-4)	Permits access to better services and improved hospitals Reduces indoor air pollution Frees up time for parents to spend with their children Allows for better water and effluent treatment stations
Improve maternal health (MDG-5)	Enables access to better services and improved hospitals, including operating theaters Refrigeration increases the number of tests and medications/vaccines that can be stored Allows for use of electronic equipment for pre- and post-natal care and monitoring
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG-6)	Allows for better-equipped medical

facilities  
Local clinics can be  
equipped with modern  
treatments and vaccinations  
due to refrigeration

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Ensure environmental sustainability (MDG-7)

Potential renewable sources of  
electricity can be developed.  
Deforestation and soil erosion can be  
reduced

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Bond (2006) finds that concrete strategies required for helping the poor and reducing poverty, which essentially entailed privatization of basic services like water and electricity produced deleterious consequences contrary to the Millennium development goals. In the wake of structural adjustment and neoliberal policies, the subsequent backseat that Bryceson argues took place in regards to poverty efforts in developing countries led to contending solutions for the agrarian poor.

The Ministry of Energy contends that electricity provision has its productive uses (e.g. improvement in economic livelihoods). But weakly functioning rural markets and inadequate backward, forward, labor, horizontal, vertical and institutional linkages between national and local, decentralized structures limit favorable outcomes for poverty reduction and economic livelihoods expansion. Faced with an urban sprawl and growth in deagrarianisation (see Yaro, 2006; Bryceson, 2004; Bryceson1999; Bryceson, 1996<sup>136</sup> many of the country's regions local governments have neither the resources, differentiated frameworks, nor adequate proper capacity to provide public services for markets to thrive. Indeed Yaro (2006) concludes in his study of livelihood activities in rural Northern Ghana that homogenizing rural strategies that fail to pay attention to differentiation in socio economic terms not only neglect the reality of rural societies,

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<sup>136</sup>Many interview participants-that is members of parliament and even energy officials conceded the need for creative solutions to combat the growing problem of rural flight in a bid to stem urban overcrowding.

but they misinform policy (Amare, 1999). He maintains that when the role and process of modernization is considered, its “influence on social relations contains repercussion for the poor. Additionally, inadequate resource flows-like network redistribution from the non-poor to the poor and destitute portend negative repercussions for both groups, further destroying the economic base of the area and encouraging more out-migration (152). In the realm of adjustment, for instance, power can be used to deprive people of the rights of access to productive resources. To some extent, this occurred in the 1990s after the advent of decentralization; and while Sally Burrows (1992) depicted the somewhat rapid growth of rural towns, which remarkably outpaced growth projections, their success was in large part attributable to NGO support. definitively

Despite a recurring trade in-balance which produced severe deterioration, donors were nonetheless willing to reward Ghana for being what Hutchful (2002) terms a 'star pupil of adjustment. In the midst of periodic non-compliance (see Akonor, 2004) the debt level more than tripled to \$4.6 billion with crucial debt to export levels quadrupling to 4.36 from 1980-1993 (p137). Combined with significant inconsistencies between adjustment and poverty reduction, an anti-orthodoxy approach emerged to explain market failures that extended beyond the public and private goods distinctions.<sup>137</sup>

In the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century much of the literature on rural development was framed through the lens of dependency, liberal, neo-classical and neo-liberal tenets. In the wake of case studies that documented declines in peasant commodity, agricultural production and diversification of non-farm or agricultural activities, degrarianisation<sup>138</sup> and 'depeasantisation' are

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<sup>137</sup>Stein, 1997, p 137

<sup>138</sup>Deagrarianisation is defined a long term process of occupational adjustment income earning reorientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away fro strict peasant models of livelihoods (Bryceson, 1996). Depeasantisation on the other hand is a process whereby the economic capacity and social coherence of

terms that came to characterize this process. Consequently, agricultural labor displacement and an eroding rural agricultural base caused policymakers to reexamine the terms under which structural adjustment and neo-liberal policies affected the rural poor. As Yaro (2006) argues, the marginalization of the rural poor as a consequence of spatial, capital, infrastructural and market limitations were more complex than currently acknowledged. To illustrate, Abdulai and Crole Rees, 2001; Barrett et al, 2001, Bryceson 2002, Canagaraja et al, 2001). Hill (1963; 1998) offer evidence of livelihood diversification to refute the notion that during the early post independent period, Ghana lacked an undifferentiated small peasantry. In doing so they chronicle how various activities that small cocoa famers were involved and how capital accumulation became possible. Yet Yaro (2006) argues against perspectives that suggest an “invariable move from agricultural to non agricultural activities.” This may account for why rural development officials in the Ministry of Rural and Local Government offer ambiguous conceptions of spatial and infrastructural components for district level development-preferring to leave those to the DCEs in attendant areas that exhibit mixed success of adjustment and neoliberal policies. As Bryceson (2004) notes, “a rural livelihood strategy coalesced after two decades of economic liberalization policies, which is related to early studies of survival and coping strategies in drought prone areas of the Sahel, where the high risk of harvest failure prompted the rural population to engage in a variety of non-agricultural activities.

Consequently as African peasant farmers elsewhere began to experience the constricting effects of structural adjustment on their commodity production, a wider need for coping strategies emerged. The concept of a rural livelihood approach developed with the recognition that farming households that were increasingly resorting to income diversification to secure their

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peasantries are being progressively undermined-that is they unravel communities and the international policy climate is directly linked to this reversal (Bryceson, 2004)

economic needs (Ellis, 2000). But even though donors joined the chorus and moved to operationalize what they understood as the livelihood strategies concept (Carney, 1999; Gordon, 1999) few connections have been made between resource endowments or the vulnerability of rural people by African governments. Ongoing criticisms of district assembly capacity, regional and district differentiation in factor and resource endowments make such identification of backward and forward, horizontal, vertical or institutional linkages to mitigate their circumstances all the more critical.

For more wealthy households, an accumulation strategy is likely to yield positive outcomes. But vulnerability to climatic fluctuations of the market and agrarian calendar push poor households to pursue non agrarian income earning activities in “easy entry, already saturated markets especially at times of the year when local purchasing power is depressed due to agricultural cycles. Consequently over time income diversification may exacerbate rather than improve inter-household economic differentiation (Bryceson, 1999).<sup>139</sup> Nonetheless, a “sustainable rural livelihood” approach that supports the drive of African rural dwellers for income diversification stresses the importance of reducing poor household vulnerability, although long-term strategies are virtually ignored.<sup>140</sup> Ultimately, this perspective does not capture the “nitty-gritty” of such processes in terms of local spatial, social and institutional linkages that in many cases obscure the pursuit of non-farm livelihood approaches. As Bryceson cogently observed, the sustainable rural livelihood approach's ahistorical, non-sectorial approach sidesteps the implications of fundamental changes in rural dwellers agricultural commodity production and social dynamics within rural communities and households. And arguably

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<sup>139</sup>For example Berkvens (1997) and Collier and Gunning (1997) illustrate how diversification impacted households negatively by diverting labor and capital away farming and gains of specialization that occurs through spreading risks in multiple income generating activities

<sup>140</sup>See Deborah Bryceson, “African Rural Labour, Income Diversification & Livelihood Approaches: A Long Term Development Perspective” *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 26 No. 80 1999, p174.

electricity is one vital component. This calls into question the sustainability of rural livelihoods for broad sections of today's African peasant population (1999, p174) especially under decentralized rural development, largely monitored by the donor and development community (NGO). Even the innovations of cane and rattan weavers in rural Ghana-as “creative adaptations to market opportunities, innovation and entrepreneurship (Spring and McDade, 1998) are a miniscule part of rural development. But unfortunately this approach doesn't necessarily account for the sometimes discontinuous, dis-equilibrating circumstances that face the rural dweller especially when taken in lieu of rural flight and urban overcrowding.

Nevertheless Hyden (1986); Scott (1985); Berry (1984a); and Klein (1980), observed how peasant communities utilized an “exit” option to minimize their participation in the national economy. In this view, rural dwellers were depicted as remarkably resilient in their ability to navigate changing national and rural economies. What remains less well known and difficult to capture is the dynamic relationship between rural and national political economies and the structural articulation of policies (Dei, 1992) especially relevant to Ghana's ongoing decentralization effort. In Dei's study of the economic strategies of Ayirebi people (farmers in a rural village) in Ghana, he found that an initial self-help orientation and community based venture was motivated by an urgency to meet basic social needs. They were also assisted by the state's interest in supporting and prioritizing rural investment in cash cropping by offering high farm produce prices and other material incentive for rural economic production (p45). Dei's conclusion that Ayirebi farmers likely viewed state adjustment as uncertain and changeable explains their desire to cling to old alliances. This also helps to explain how regime interests and political co-optation evolved as well as how Rawlings was able to maintain popular support despite a decade of tenuous circumstances even for farmers who periodically weathered

disastrous fluctuations in market prices for their farm products.

Locating the anchors of rural development in Ghana is not easily identifiable given the plethora of non-governmental organizations and indomitable donor presence for several decades now. There are approximately 1168 non-governmental organizations registered in Ghana.<sup>141</sup> The country's relative stability, openness to foreigners and comfortable living conditions have attracted aid oriented organizations whose target population include the rural poor and objectives aim to provide public goods like clinics, education, running water and in some cases electricity.<sup>142</sup> The activities of donors and aid organizations are typically viewed as positive elements in developing countries. So it is unsurprising that generous aid and various development projects are enthusiastically welcomed in recipient countries and Ghana is no exception. However, a long-term institutional presence has worked to limit domestic ownership of important decisional processes, most visible in district assembly autonomy. A number of studies for example demonstrate how rural-development outcomes often work sub-optimally in countries marked by lengthy donor presence. According to Helleiner (2001, p536) foreign assistance accounts for approximately fifty percent of the national budget in Ghana. But extensive donor assistance and neo-liberal oriented poverty reduction strategies, raise the troubling question of 'national ownership and by extension rural development (Bond, Unwin, 2004; Bond, 2006; Whitfield, 2008; Ayers, 2006). Indeed, these policies call into question the efficacy of good governance principles and appropriate scope of government to external donor power. Even when rural dwellers possess key economic inputs like land ownership and capital- all potential catalysts for rural development, absent infrastructure and unpredictable market forces can produce negative outcomes.

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<sup>141</sup>African Media Development Initiative: Ghana Context, 2006

<sup>142</sup>The Canadian International Development Association-CIDA and JICA-Japan International Cooperation Association are a few examples among many others.

Baker and Pedersen (1992) observe how centralization, weak devolution prevent a viable bottom-up approach that could deliver regional development from small towns especially in lieu of top-down power dynamic. If devolved power to local institutions has not effectively empowered district assemblies in fiscal and material terms (human resources), the pursuit of effectual public service delivery of goods like electricity and the larger goals of rural development are all the more tenuous. Building on Johnson's (1970) observations on the use of spatial distribution of cities to spur regional and rural development, Rondinelli and Ruddle (1978) advocated the creation of small and medium or intermediate-sized urban centers that would be diffused through the national space (as cited in Busia, 1995, p57). Using Rondinelli's prescriptions, USAID created a rural-development framework called Urban Functions in Rural Development (UFRD), which was initially promoted in emerging economies and developing countries during the 1970s and '80s. This approach failed for a variety of reasons, notwithstanding trickle-down assumptions underlying an unmistakably neoclassical framework (Busia, 1995: 58). Instead, UFRD efforts improved conditions in urban, rather than in rural, areas and produced higher incomes in the former (Ibid, 58).

The self-help, self-reliant values approach that Rawlings promoted with the inception of district assemblies in the late 1980s facilitated a participatory element in a number of respects. In early 1992, for example, Ghanaian newspapers were replete with stories about how citizens served as partial architects for transformation of their communities. In the Eastern region, citizens in Apeguso, a rural town in the Asuogyaman district endeavored to raise funds for a power project. In the Ashanti region, residents embarked on a power project in Achinakwim in the Ejisu-Juabeng district. In another example, Tetrem citizens in the Ashanti region initiated and took part in development projects. In short, a plethora of newspaper articles document how some

rural communities are providing materials for power projects (like poles). But these remarkable efforts have not yielded much in terms of a “snowball” effect and so the gains of these efforts quickly dissipated. Indeed, the capacity to generate regional resources and the politically messy process of nominating metropolitan, municipal and district chief executives underscores the gap between ideals and practice<sup>143</sup>. This observation was in fact noted by most if not all participants in a symposium on the progress of Ghana's Decentralization Program. In fact, filling positions and locating individuals willing to relocate to the “hinterland” or rural areas remains a continuing challenge-well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ofie-Aboagye, symposium paper, 2009). Collectively, these constraints demonstrate the limits of a “minimal” state that espouses a participatory element on the local level without adequate resources that build self-sustaining communities that clamor for public services/goods like electricity.

### **Participation and Rural Development**

On another note, Streeten (1997) questions the assumption that participation for the poor is key, particularly where the operations of NGOs are concerned. He argues for closer attention to be paid to who takes decisions at what level as well as sequencing in terms of the links between governments, NGOs and affected communities. For Streeten, participation of local peoples and the rural poor is exaggerated. As a result, he called for a rethinking of the role of participation. In the quest to empower the poor and marginalized, to become agents rather than spectators or even passive recipients of benefits, the objectives of participation though vital are not always clear as Streeten notes. For donor partners and NGOS the dilemma over whether to focus on service delivery or encourage participation is a matter that requires greater scrutiny and further clarification. For example, since participation can take many forms determining the

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<sup>143</sup>Gyimah-Boadi, symposium paper on the progress of decentralization, Center for Democracy and Development 2009, p7

appropriate model for any developing country is essential. Furthermore, to call for participation is much too vague—instead a bottom-up initiative emphasized by NGOs should be accompanied or complemented by central, provincial or local government action of the top down kind as Streeten calls for while avoiding the populist fallacy (1993, p205).

### **The Duplicity of Decentralization: A state centric model**

As Smith (2001:167) notes, “since latching onto the concept of decentralization in the 1980s, donor agencies and many countries have been struggling to make it work...the deception lies in the term's simplicity...when the questions of what and how are raised, the issue becomes quite a vexing one.” In lieu of numerous services and development gaps that district assemblies continue to face, development partners or donors and increasingly NGOs have moved in critical ways to fill this gap. The demand for services and marginalization and neglect of remote-often rural areas has prompted many to channel their resources to fulfill this aim. As a result, the interventions of development partners or donors often reflect the use of budgetary or financial support mechanisms, which inadvertently structure co-optation or political capture by leaders while providing a legitimate rationale for incremental efforts. Smith’s observations are explained by the contention of Galvin and Habib (2003) who find that “although donors claim to support community oriented decentralization, in practice they promote state-centric decentralization. Not only does this reinforce the institutional bias of government, it undermines the original motivation and rationale for decentralization.”<sup>144</sup> It is little wonder that decentralized public service delivery took on a state-centric focus that is inimical to the delegation of authority. Cheru (2006) finds that the poverty reduction strategy papers suffer a number of constraints that most notably include the need to accord more ownership to national governments, and more

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<sup>144</sup> In “The Politics of Decentralisation and Donor Funding in South Africa’s Rural Water Sector” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 29, Number 4, December 2003 p865.

participatory-results oriented strategies to help governments adopt more pro-poor policies. It is especially revealing that Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, Mali and Zambia have all taken steps to broaden the scope for participation of various stakeholders (Cheru, 2006), while Ghana, surprisingly has not. For instance, this became apparent with the revelation that the involvement of sectorial ministries, legislators, decentralized administration, and civil society groups in the PRSP formulation process was demonstrated to be less than satisfactory. For example, Ghana and other governments rushed the process in order to reap the maximum benefit from debt relief under the enhanced HIPC Initiative (Eurodad, 2003; McGee, et al, 2002: 6; Flack & Landfald, 2001; Koudougou, 2002: 27). A key official formerly with the Ministry of Rural and Local Government identified inconsistencies in policy monitoring and more significantly the dangers of duplication in promoting rural development efforts. To this end, Cheru's (2006) observation that "Ghana, as one of the best managed economies in Africa, illustrates the problem. Centrally and in the ministries, government lacks in-house capacity for policy analysis and monitoring. This is a paradox since Ghana is one of the few African countries endowed with numerous research institutions, think tanks, local consultancy agencies, and policy-oriented NGOS. Yet no efforts are made by government to utilize existing knowledge and capacity outside government." (Building and Supporting PRSPs in Africa: What Has Worked Well so Far? What Needs Changing? Source: Third World Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2006).

Questioning whether budget support programs of donors and NGOs are the answer to reducing poverty, Unwin (2004) argues that this approach not only hurts the poor, it obscures issues of social equity in dispersal. Aided by an erroneous model of development, neo-liberal budget support programs adhere to the notion that 'absolute' poverty can be eliminated through

economic growth. The financial and accountability risks are well known.<sup>145</sup> Allocating large sums of money as part of a long term strategy to combat poverty and encourage economic growth contributes to political co-optation—particularly when political elites in home countries use “development projects” to enhance their political capital-it reifies donor dependency. Osei (1999), for example found that the an enduring legacy of economic dependency is connected to the failure to adopt far-reaching policies that would effectively restructure society. In framing these circumstances through the lens of the colonial period, he demonstrates how institutions inherited from the British colonial power stymied development. But Gocking (1999) criticized this analysis suggesting that Nkrumah’s efforts to industrialize the country through the Volta River Project and attempts to build infrastructure and public services offers evidence of a “radical” departure from colonial policies. Unfortunately, Nkrumah’s efforts did not go far enough and were ultimately derailed by political turmoil and disjointed policies. Moreover, the consequent donor dependency that began in the 1980s and culminated into the 1990s is akin to a “trusteeship” role that Whitfield (2006) contends further marginalized the plight of the rural poor.

The proliferation of NGOs in Ghana and in many states across sub-Saharan Africa is indicative of a neoliberal agenda and reflective of the rollback of the state (Fowler, 1992a, Beggington, 1993, Bratton 1989, 1990a, Copestake, 1993, Gary 1996). As Fowler notes, the World Bank's strategy for poverty reduction entails helping the poor to obtain the means and opportunities they need to become productive within a national policy framework. The comparative advantage of NGOs should make them ideal institutions to assist in this endeavor (1991b, p56). But two processes can be observed in the relationship between governments and

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<sup>145</sup>DFID, *Managing Fiduciary Risk when Providing Direct Budget Support*, London: DFID, 2002b: [http://62.189.42.51/DFID stage/Pubs/files/fiduciary/pdf p118](http://62.189.42.51/DFID_stage/Pubs/files/fiduciary/pdf/p118)

NGO sector in Ghana, which hinge on service delivery, rural development and poverty reduction in Ghana. Ian Gary (1996) argued that in an era of structural adjustment and neo-liberalization, the African state (using Ghana as a case study) was being undercut from above and below—in the competition for power and resources. Conversely, the African state has successfully co-opted a growing NGO sector. As Bebbington (1993) succinctly notes, governments appeared more often than not motivated by the desire to gain access to NGO funds, than by a desire to make NGOs monitor NGOs they fear as political competitors, to accountable the rural poor (25).

### **NGOs and Rural Development**

During the 1980s, NGOs were viewed with skepticism by Rawlings Provisional National Defence Committee-military regime. In the 1990s, however, NGOs were viewed more favorably in lieu of their ability to soften the blow of adjustment to a reduced public sector. As Denkabe (1993, p88) noted, the advent of a reduced public sector produced expectations that NGOs would support development by according priority to regional and district administrations initiatives. In keeping with this observation, the then director of NGO affairs at the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, Bridget Katsriku, noted that “ the government values the resources NGOs bring to help meet the 'service delivery gap' but at the same time wants to circumscribe their role to the sphere of social welfare.” Furthermore, as massive inflows of aid accrued to NGOs, the NGO sector represents a new arena for accumulation, especially for African elites (Gary, 1996, p163). Although beyond the scope of this chapter, these developments suggest a complex picture of state and NGO conflict and ‘aid dependent culture in Ghana along with attempts to co-opt the latter as well as the rural poor.’<sup>146</sup> The political co-optation of NGOs is evident is in the various

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<sup>146</sup>See Gary (1996) on the difficulties of delineating differences between local/indigenous, foreign international NGOs and their activities. For a discussion of typology of NGOs see Bratton (1989)and Fowler (1992) which include CBOs-community based organizations, service or intermediary NGOs, international and relief organizations-which tend to be foreign.

ways that the Ghanaian state, according to Gary (1996) sought direct and indirect ways of controlling the sector and through the creation of GONGOs. As a creation of national governments nominally independent but operating under government control, Ghana is one of many countries that utilizes GONGOs to divert resources meant for 'legitimate NGOs'. This has involved the adoption of various means to counter and appropriate some of the funds flowing to NGOs (Ibid, 154). In short, an extensive NGO and donor presence in Ghana limits the extent to which district assemblies exercise a meaningful locus of budgetary control and authority over rural development and poverty reduction goals that are part and parcel of domestic “ownership” of these elements. This reflects a glaring gap between the said prerogatives of decentralization and district assemblies as conduits of self reliant, self help development initiatives that Rawlings once espoused in the prelude to democratization and return to civilian rule in 1992.

## **Section 2: Rural Electrification**

Rural electrification and its attendant benefits (for use in cottage and rural industry) are considered promising for rural development (NDPC, 2006; Barnes & Foley, 2000; Wolfgang, 1978; Peprah, 2008) Grid electricity is still the preferred method for providing rural electrification since it allows people to use standard electrical equipment and appliances without any practical constraint on the quantity of electricity consumed. But in remote, rural areas this approach is difficult to use (Peprah, 2008: 128). Foley (1990) and others argue that electrification is indispensable, but not instrumental for development in rural areas.<sup>147</sup> However, from the

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<sup>147</sup>Prevailing arguments in studies such as Foley’s (1990) and even among some members of parliament argue that the relationship is spurious. However, the contention here is that though other inputs and factors are needed—like the intersectoral linkages that Peprah (2008) alludes to—electrification is more than a functionality as acknowledged by 18 interview participants from institutions ranging from Parliament to the Ministry of Energy to the Ministry of Local and Rural Development. Given the preponderance of articles about energy in many of the country’s newspapers, electrification remains not only a hot-button subject but also a politicized one. Moreover, Anwobor’s (2005) findings in his study of GA districts-both GA west and GA east—that electrification is not and cannot bring about “desired socioeconomic development in rural areas” is called into question by with the testimony of a former district chief executive and current district assembly member that electrification has indeed improved the livelihood

industrial revolution in Europe and America to the ongoing and rapid industrialization of countries like China and India, and the multi-billion-dollar electronic industry of the Western world, electric power transformed society in innumerable ways (Wolfgang, 1978; Yergin, 1982; Moroney & Dieck-Assad, 2005). Tsai (1989) considers it nearly ubiquitous and essential in terms of economic growth and development. Others like Ciscar (1997) contend that access to electricity is a basic human right as along with access to clean air, water, shelter and food. The ways it can improve the livelihoods of the rural poor are numerous: carpenters enjoy band saws and mechanized equipment, power looms replace hand looms and electric motors take the place of oil-powered machines. Furthermore, it has availed blacksmiths with power hammers and metal workers with power pressing machines (United Nations, 2006).

The role of energy values is likewise important. Understanding how a particular country defines them can shed light on local conflicts as well as on distributional policies and political processes. To understand the role of energy values, one need only explore the course of electrification as an important resource and symbol of development in the history of Ghana. The Akosombo dam, built in 1966 to supply hydropower for aluminum smelting and domestic use also emerged as a powerful symbol of progress and industrialization. In spite of a tenuous political process that almost derailed the completion of the dam—owing to initial financial constraints and disputes between the Nkrumah administration and Busia’s Progress Party over the dam's utility—the promise of hydropower later resonated as a both a political tool and unfulfilled legacy, as one Energy Commission official noted (anonymous, personal communication, 2009). The perception that the Volta River Project and the Akosombo Dam

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of residents and that local residents often approach the assembly for the soonest dates for setting them up on the grid. This is closer to the view of Foley (1990), who notes that “rural electrification on its own does not cause development: but where the necessary conditions are present, it has a major impact on the form that development takes; and can also provide a stimulus to economic activity especially in the service sector.”

offered few returns or benefits for rural electrification (and for development in general) caused political infighting and internal disillusionment (Boahen, 1975; Osei, 1999).

### **Section 3: Synergies and Dissonance in Rural-Development Outcomes and Electrification in the Post-Independence Period**

To understand how electricity service faltered in the post-independence period, this section illuminates how the political configuration of power produced continuity in outcomes. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, British colonial administrations accorded little priority to rural development. Rural areas were mostly relegated to agricultural production and extraction of natural resources. Urban areas on the other hand, were significantly developed because of the colonial preference for comfort and convenience. It was only in the independence period and thereafter that rural development emerged on the national agenda of Nkrumah, Busia and subsequent leaders in the contemporary period.

The first statement linking economic development to electrification was made during discussions of the proposed construction of Volta Lake. Before Nkrumah's tenure as head of state, the Convention People's Party (CPP) envisaged Volta Lake not only as an impetus for industrialization but as a transport link between the northern and southern regions of the country; it was also thought that the increased agricultural production through irrigation would increase economic capacity (Annan, 1993). Thus Nkrumah's social policies were guided by the ultimate aim of universal free education and health facilities, combined with quality water and sanitation, affordable housing for all and wide access to electricity. Armed with these basic human rights, there would be no limit to the development of Ghana (Shillington, 1992, p6). Yet Mikell (1989) notes that Nkrumah liquidated the cocoa cooperative societies, groups of relatively wealthy and stable farmers, because he sought to centralize control of cocoa marketing and to use rural

resources to industrialize and create a coherent economy. These cooperatives and other cocoa organizations failed to mediate some of the economic differentiation (Hill, 1963).

Under a Second Development Plan (1959-64), large sums were allocated for rural housing, electricity, education, health, sanitation and water supplies, but these were subsequently neglected as urban areas received priority (Boahen, 1975; Osei, 1999). Given an unstable political climate and unclear energy goals, little was done in these years to expand Nkrumah's electrification goals, which in any case focused on urban areas. Moreover, the provincial interests of chiefs, as well as linkages among transnational corporations, party functionaries, law-enforcement agents, local businessmen and state bureaucrats fuelled corruption and a loss of legitimacy for the Nkrumah regime. For example, the pursuit of import-substitution policies encouraged rent seeking through control of import licensing and rationing of foreign exchange, which invited corruption and inefficient allocation in resources (Haggard, 1990). Following the coup that toppled Nkrumah's government in 1966, a military regime or the National Liberation Council in turn ousted each of the three successive NLC chairmen (Lumsden, 1980). As a result, rural conditions deteriorated in the 1970s as the price of cocoa fluctuated widely (Mikell, 1989; Chazan, 1989).

K. A. Busia's tenure (1969-1972) as president marked the beginning of the Second Republic. In a bid to ensure political survival, Busia sought to appease the masses of the poor through a "social justice" program that included rural development and consequently rural electrification. For example, approximately one hundred communities were linked to the grid during this period. On matters of rural electrification, Busia was an adept politician, using the Progress party (PP), an opposition group that had broken from the ranks of the CPP to emphasize

the supply of electricity in its manifesto during political business cycle.<sup>148</sup> Through the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation, excess power and water was gleaned and Busia's home region of Brong-Ahafo saw more rural electricity projects undertaken than any other region. Other projects, including transport, communication, and health care, were implemented and the communities in which they were undertaken developed a strong sense of identification with the Progress Party. Though Busia appeared to adopt some liberal tenets like minimal government (Chazan, 1983), he merely modified Nkrumaist socialist-style policies like the provision of electricity, roads, water, etc., intended to preserve the bureaucratic core.

Subsequent governments made few attempts to elicit local views on economic problems or on local development, or on electricity provision except for Acheampong's Operation Feed Yourself (OFY), which nevertheless failed to produce significant results (Mikell, 1989). Growing discontent with the Busia Administration and mounting economic problems resulted in a second coup d'état by the military government of General Acheampong (1973-1978), and during this period little progress was made to expand Busia's electrification program. This is primarily because Acheampong's Supreme Military Council was marked by endemic corruption, despite promising policies for the agricultural sector (Lumsden, 1980; Jeffries, 1982). Remarkably, few if any electrification plans emerged for rural areas in the succeeding governments of Lt. Gen Frederick W. K. Akuffo, or in the brief return to democratic government during Hilla Limann's (1979-1981) tenure. A precarious economy and fundamental political crisis (Rothchild & Gyimah-Boadi, 1986), prompted the country into further instability with the resulting coup in December 1981 when Jerry Rawlings deposed Limann.

The next two years proved economically disastrous and the military oligarchy of

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<sup>148</sup>One can argue that the stressing of electrification as a political issue created a precedent that Rawlings followed when he initiated plans for regime transition in 1989 and announced plans for district assembly elections in 1988.

Rawlings, and economic deterioration of the economy combined with fiscal austerity left little room for rural development or attendant economic inputs like electrification. For example, in the mid- to late-1980s, politically active Ghanaians withdrew from political life (Hutchful, 2002; Green, 1998; Rothchild & Chazan, 1988) in what would come to be known as the “culture of silence”—a politically repressive period. In a second coup orchestrated by Rawlings via the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), a populist agenda and radical nationalist economic program emerged and aimed to “assail pockets of privilege” (Chazan, 1989). This initially progressive period offered opportunities for rural voices to emerge and demand synergistic policies that would link rural development outcomes to electrification as a “soft infrastructural input.” With Rawlings’s creation of revolutionary grassroots organizations and attempts to stabilize the economy through administrative controls and mass mobilization (Lewis, 1996; Chazan, 1992; Green, 1998 etc.), such action was possible. But the Rawlings regime later resorted to authoritarian measures to curb 'excessive' mobilization, to avoid “an unstable” political environment. In a bid to reverse what he termed “excessive” mobilization and restore monetary and fiscal control to a spiraling economy, Rawlings utilized repressive tactics to silence opposition. Consequently, the resulting “culture of silence” helped to mute opposition to Rawlings’s structural adjustment policies, which entailed heavy liberalization of the economy and privatization of state industries.

The creation of an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) during the 1980s sought to provide basic services, alleviate the economic crisis, and in turn dent internal opposition. Initially, cocoa farmers were delighted with the emphasis on rural empowerment since it appeared that rural actors and social systems would take center stage in Rawlings’ economic objectives. Indeed the success of these policies became apparent in higher agricultural yields and

subsequent rural mobilization (Mikell, 1989). But market orientations and neoliberal reform efforts shifted the emphasis from rural producers to rural organizations that were structured not surprisingly, in ways that lent support to the government (Mikell, 1989, p194). Unfortunately, history has not borne out Mikell's prediction that the PNDC's need for political support and heightened rural production would help youthful, educated and elite groups gain control of economic and political decision making in rural areas.

In many accounts external pressures by donors and international financial institutions on a weakened regime (as well as some internal opposition to structural adjustment policies) pushed Rawlings to begin political reforms, with local elections used as a first step to shore up his legitimacy beginning in 1988. This period has been interpreted (Chazan, 1989; Hutchful, 2002; Boafo-Arthur, 1999, 2007) as one in which Rawlings drew on the strength of his popular appeal, a fragile economy and a belief in his sole ability to steer the country on the right course. Boafo-Arthur (2007) asserts that Rawlings drove the NDC to ensure his succession as head of state and indirectly perpetuate his rule under the guise of a democratic constitution. The decision to hold local elections did not reduce criticism of Rawlings's regime or attract much urban support as it was intended to do. Instead, by subjecting his regime to the type of scrutiny he'd imposed on his predecessors through his orchestration of coups d'états, he encouraged demands for more formal political liberalization (Chazan, 1992). Thus the dominant mood among Ghanaians at the end of the 1980s reflected a hunger for the substance of democracy, rather than piecemeal measures (Robothan, 1988; Bentsi-Enchill, 1987).

#### **Section 4: Shifting dynamics of a urban-rural dichotomy and patterns of electric energy use**

What explains persistent disparities between the urban and rural populace? The reward

system in Ghanaian society is such that it pays to be closer to the source of the supply system, which is usually in an urban area. Additionally, highly specialized service providers such as lawyers, doctors, bankers and teachers have a variety of economic, cultural and social reasons for wishing to work in major towns. There are also political reasons for previous urban bias. Because political power is concentrated in the professional classes in the major towns, the political pressure that rural populations were able to exert was considerably weak in the pre-1990 period.<sup>149</sup> Subsequently, as Ayeetey-Attoh (1988, p21) notes “development planners were concerned with disparities, resulting inequalities in and between, regions because the persistence of poverty in specific areas is . . . one of the most critical problems facing planners and policy makers in the developing world.”

A number of studies address the development of an urban/rural dichotomy. Burayidi (1993) for example examined the impact of a major irrigation project constructed to address rapid urbanization and to improve rural conditions in northeastern Ghana, and found that other inputs were needed to stop the rural-to-urban outflow. Howard-Matthews (1986) examined the rural development goals and policies of four countries including Ghana and found that “historical conditions centered on the political relationships among export farmers and the ruling coalition supported the formation of a rural lobby influential enough to undermine the rural development objectives of the coalition”. In a study of agro-business and agricultural industries, White (1983) identified a lack of participation by rural dwellers as a primary factor in the weak performance of rural development. Chambas (1980) found that the center’s pursuit of its own interests, in tandem with similar behavior by wealthy landholders and peasants greatly compromised rural

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<sup>149</sup>This is probably valid until the post-1992 period when Rawlings’ NDC party reversed the trend towards urban bias by pandering to the rural areas where most of the population resided, much to the chagrin of urban populations. In fact, in the final tally of votes in the 1992 and 1996 elections, Rawlings and the NDC were able to garner most of the rural vote with a smaller percentage of urban residents voting for him.

prerogatives for the poor. Other perspectives (Appiah-Baiden, 1997) pointed to financial causes including the commercialization of development banks like the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), which was intended to be a rural bank and source of credit and for agricultural production. Appiah-Baiden's analysis implies that poor coordination among other reasons hindered the ability of the ADB and other rural-oriented banks to make adequate returns on their investments and thus limited the amount of credit available to those who needed it the most.

On another note, patterns of energy use offer insight into spatial urban and rural differentiation as well as the gap between both classes. Both the urban and rural poor are affected by energy pricing and electricity tariffs, which are also unfavorable to small and medium enterprises (Kebede & Dube, 2004, p3). Becker, Hamer and Morrison (1994) observe that while nearly all-African countries seek to restrict urban growth rates, few have succeeded. But the bulk of domestic usage is concentrated in urban areas. For example Gyampo (2007) notes that the Accra-Tema and Sekondi-Takoradi regions account for the bulk of electricity available and in use in Ghana for both domestic and industrial consumers. As Annan (1993) argues, how government decision makers chose to define or explain development consequently determines the country's development goals and priorities, the knowledge and technology required (either locally or externally) to achieve them. Similarly, Quaye (1996) argues that taking the term "development" for granted obscures the actual process of development as an arena of negation and struggle, which has produced unintended outcomes that greatly affect structural and institutional disparities. He attributes disparities in northern Ghana to this process using the example of the Northern Region Rural Integrated Programme (NORRIP). For Gyampo (2007), there are two chief causes of gross disparities between urban and rural areas. First is the privileging of urban or industrial districts like Accra, Tema, Koforidua, Cape Coast, and Kpando during the 1970s. In

later years, areas such as Kumasi, Sunyani, Sekondi-Takoradi, Winneba, Kibi and Keta received similar treatment. All of these districts are located in the southern region, the more developed area of the country. Second, production-related structural inequalities between rural districts influenced the persistence of disparities. However, these are not as clear-cut as the North/South and rural/urban boundaries. Because rural districts are primarily tied to subsistence agricultural production, they are at a disadvantage in terms of export commodity production and as recipients of services/goods like electricity are understandably targets for political opportunism.

A common thread in my interviews was the use of the “capacity” to describe the pressures of migration from rural and to urban areas, difficult economic prospects, and a yearning for trappings of city life including access to electrification and education. For example, one MP remarked that:

There are regional and spatial disparities. Poverty, for instance, is still high in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions. Whereas relative poverty in the other seven regions of Ghana declined, the same cannot be said of the three aforementioned regions in the north of Ghana. Urban incomes continued to lead, thus sustaining the tide of rural-urban migration . . . [As long as] the wide rural-urban dichotomy remains, rural-urban drift will continue. An emerging feature, however, is that a greater part of Accra, which is considered to be metropolitan, registered a high level of poverty. The urban dynamics and pressures on the lives of rural immigrants cannot be ruled out. Given the foregoing, it is not difficult to say that the development-policy strategy is not working and for that matter it would be difficult to meet the rural development goals. Rather, the policies are spurring on more and more rural-urban drift.<sup>150</sup>

An interview with the former head of the rural policy unit for the Ministry of Rural and Local Government revealed that no comprehensive rural-development policy exists to police Ghana’s growth and poverty reduction—a startling disclosure in light of the passage of local government Act 462, which was designed to promote rural development. It is no surprise then that a project-by-project culture emerged—for example in electrification.

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<sup>150</sup> Anonymous, personal communication, 2009

The limited capacity of DAs and the duplicitous nature of the district assembly system has been so glaring that another Member of Parliament remarked that:

Both Rawlings and Kufuor placed a high premium on energy, in terms of rural electrification, thermal power generation, and the politics of petrol. But in terms of commitment and foresight for bigger power capacity expansion, Kufuor's administration had a little edge over Rawlings. He [Kufuor] went in for the second major hydroelectric dam [the Bui Dam] in Ghana. Because of their heavy dependence on central government finances, the districts are unable to take policy decisions that will bring growth. Until the assemblies are able to generate their own incomes, the decision to take radical reforms in prevailing rural development in Ghana will remain a mirage.<sup>151</sup>

### **Section 5: Governments, Electricity and the Rural Vote: “No Electricity, No Power”**

More than ten years ago, the donor community and critics within Ghana worried about the politicization of adjustment and missed financial targets (Botchway, 1994). With the consequential rural bias that emerged in the 1980s as a result of “negative structural-adjustment policies which alienated the urban classes—business-labor, capitalist and workers, rural producers became the beneficiaries and locus for political support. As a result, the PNDC shifted its focus from urban to rural areas and institutionalized this impetus through decentralization. In a survey of voters who participated in the 1988 elections for district assemblies, Busia (1995) found that 64% were rural and 36% were urban. This represented the first time that any regime in post-colonial Ghana commanded such extensive support from rural classes, and as a result the regime could, in Busia's words, “lay claim to having gone beyond previous regimes in incorporating previously excluded areas into the political process” (Busia, 1995, p215). To illustrate, he cites Rawlings' broadcast to the nation in 1987:

“We are acknowledging the historic debt of the nation to the farmer and have thus repudiated the monstrous injustice of a past in which we virtually ran the machinery of the state on the tired backs on the rural producers and provided little

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<sup>151</sup> Anonymous, personal communication, 2009

of their basic needs.

While rural bias is certainly not new (it dates back to early 1980s),<sup>152</sup> newspapers like the *Daily Graphic*, *Daily Guide*, and many others frequently carry stories about electrification, and this indicates the level to which electricity remains salient. As an Energy Commission official associated with the NES and SHEP informed me in July of 2009, “in the last 10 to 15 years a lot of attention has been given to rural communities to make an improvement in living standards.” The government (NDC) tried to stop the rural to urban flow by creating rural electrification policies.” After a decade of tenuous economic and political conditions, rural areas became a key win for the NDC party, which was not expected to do well. This same official noted that the NDC government came to be known as the “electrification government” and that “electrification had become a political tool so that no government could afford to take for granted; if not, they wouldn’t be around” (anonymous, personal communication, July 2009). Should the rural class become more politicized it will be interesting to view the course of mobilization, collective action and linkages they make, if any, with the urban poor. The table that follows below demonstrates the pace with which electricity and rural development projects took center stage in 1992-the year that Ghana returned to civilian rule and its first election in over a decade.

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<sup>152</sup>Daniel Green (1995?) cites the World Bank’s (1991) observations that “in 1987-1988, the PNDC government established a redistributive pattern of raising rural incomes with ever ever-higher cocoas producer prices while increasing its own revenue via increased petrol prices paid primarily by urban consumers” (p578 ). Green notes that the government used this early policy to solidify its hold on power using the Assembly system by allocating some 117 seats in the 260 260-seat consultative Assembly, which that drew up the Fourth Republic’s constitution. This strategy later helped in securing important policies beneficial to rural areas like such as the District Assembly Common Fund’ alluded to in an earlier chapter.

**Table 19**

<b>REFEREN CE</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>	<b>HEADLINE DESCRIPTION</b>
NP. 1/162	03/01/1992	Back	Kusa near Fomena in the Adansi West District embarks on Dev. program
"	04/01/1992	6	Nkonya South branch of JFM Inaugurated.
"	"	7	Development through mobilization
"	"	8	Osenase Power Project
"	"	"	Mehame Electrification Project
"	"	8 – 9	Trede citizens raise funds for project
"	09/01/1992	7	New power transformer for Aboso
"	"	8	Akyem – Apapam power project
"	"	"	Drobo to enjoy electricity
"	20/01/1992	8	Maase electrification project
"	21/01/1992	Back	Nsutam completes first phase of power project
"	31/01/1992	Back	19 villages in Amansie East undertake power project
"	04/02/1992	Back	Wasa Nkran undertakes Dev. Projects
"	05/02/1992	Back	10 communities receive PAMSCAD assistance
"	06/02/1992	"	Four areas to benefit from power project
"	07/02/1992	"	Self – help remains vital element in Dev.
"	12/02/1992	"	Botoku starts Dev. Project
"	15/02/1992	"	Set up funds to finance small scale project
"	"	"	8 communities to tap power from National grid
"	18/02/1992	3	Assembly initiates C28.8m Dev. Projects
"	19/02/1992	3	Ada holds rally in aid of electrification
"	"	Back	Adantia starts Dev. Project
"	"	"	PAMSCAD assistance for 10 communities
"	22/02/1992	Front	Public demand improved services
"	"	3	Assembly to complete project
"	"	8	\$545m invested in water and power supplies
"	26/02/1992	Front	Rural phone system to cover 42 districts
"	03/03/1992	5	Lack of amenities hinder rural Dev.
"	"	Back	Sekyere Nsuta - Atonsu Kroye Kuo raises funds in support of the electrification project
"	05/03/1992	3	C157m Kumasi street lighting project starts
"	07/03/1992	Back	Farmers raise funds for Dev. Projects
"	09/03/1992	3	Assemblies have enhanced Dev.
"	13/03/1992	Back	Pewosika undertakes power project
"	17/03/1992	"	Tsiame power project
NP. 1/162	27/03/1992	5	Solar power light up Rural area

Green (1996) observes that “of ten agreements signed with the World Bank since 1993, many were directly or indirectly usable for rural development purposes: including national livestock

services, national electrification, education, etc.” Rawlings’ immense political capital and donor-support explains his ability to satisfy various classes in society like the agrarian poor, which had enormous implications for Rawlings’ ability to appease a previously ignored rural constituency in the country. In fact, succeeding governments appeared more willing to invest funds and resources in areas that ensured political and most likely economic returns (Banful, 2008). As Banful observes, “being risk-averse, politicians therefore invest more in areas which will give them an assured return; that is, they allocate resources favorably to areas where they are assured of a win” (Banful, 2008). Consequently, Rawlings and the NDC were pioneers of a rural-based approach that for the first time reversed an urban bias that had been part and parcel of development efforts, despite a policy focus and a Ministry of Local and Rural Development that suggested the contrary.

According to a report from the Ghana Institute for Economic Affairs, decentralization was pursued as a way to tighten the grip on regional and local institutions. Because the district chief executive functioned as both chairman of the powerful executive committee at the district level and as a political appointee, the office of the DCE functioned as a mechanism of political control and did little to further the objective of decentralization (Institute for Economic Affairs, 2004, p47). Others noted that after decentralization began, little change was seen within the strongly centralized system of a unitary republic (Gyimah-Boadi, 1993. Green (1996) noted that the structural-adjustment process begun in the post-1992 period resulted in the politicization of state projects like electrification, while redistributive policies provided material benefit at key political moments. Furthermore, Green asserts that a political business cycle was at work during the elections of 1992 and 1996, during which the NDC government publicly argued before rural

audiences that government monies were better spent in the rural areas.<sup>153</sup>

The political machinery of rural co-optation was personally visible on a visit to the country in 2009. In numerous rural areas along the road to the northern region, the logos/party symbols of the dominant political parties were highly visible and placed at strategic points. Such symbols remind rural constituents of the principle of “reciprocity.” That is, in exchange for political support, voters in rural areas can expect to be rewarded in numerous ways-which reify patron client relationships. Though members of parliament and district chief executives have much to worry about come election time, my findings indicate that most are unsullied by accusations of political posturing. Instead, district assemblies serve as useful conduits to gauge levels of discontent and development concerns of rural areas. In any case, rural voters across the country now utter the popular slogan ‘no electricity, no power,’ suggestion the politically salient issue of public service/goods provision. As number of interviewees in parliament established, rural voters are vocal enough to ensure the defeat of MPs who fail to implement projects like electrification or secure dates when their community will be connected to the grid. However, Afrobarometer surveys on perceptions of accountability of both local and national representatives, participation and public service delivery are telling. On the one hand, 26% of rural and 24% of urban residents surveyed (out of 1197 randomly chosen) report that it is *very difficult* to obtain the following services: water, electricity, telephone, while 29% of urban and 26% of rural report that it is *difficult* in the 2004-2005 period. Of both groups surveyed yielded 46% of urban and 45% rural dwellers report *never given a bribe* for piped water, electricity or phone service; yet out of housing, electricity, water supply, orphans/street children/homeless children (each ranked under government services)-education ranked at the top for urban and rural priorities-both 15 and 14% respectively; while only 4% of urban and 3% rural people ranked it as

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<sup>153</sup>See Green, *The Politics of Adjustment*, 1995.

an important problem the government should address. However, 63% of urban and rural respondents believed that politicians *always* made promises simply to get elected.<sup>154</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Though Nkrumah and Busia, attempted to connect rural development approaches and income generating activities to electricity provision, their efforts did not produce far-reaching outcomes for the rural poor. Instead a structural ‘lock in’ of choices informs the subsequent gaps and discontinuity in public service provision and through efforts to co-opt sections of society most notably in the post 1992 period. Despite abundant hydropower and the powerful symbol of “self sufficiency and progress” that the Akosombo Dam offered, both leaders missed opportunities to clearly articulate the country’s energy values. Considering the near-ubiquity of energy use and the indispensability for growth, standards of living and development, Busia’s social-justice approach and Nkrumah’s socialist approach would likely have raised the standards of living of rural areas if vertical and horizontal linkages to rural industry were supported in development plans. Instead, the years leading up to the Fourth Republic were characterized by the neglect of electrification in rural areas and overall, even though Busia did more for electrification than Nkrumah. In current times, the failure to view and utilize electricity as a soft infrastructural input critical to public service/good for rural industry and small and medium enterprises means that potential opportunities for income generation may be squandered. Key members of parliament and officials interviewed in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Commission recognize the need to develop inter-sectorial linkages to electrification and encourage economic activity in rural areas and consequently reverse the tide of rural flight. However doing so would require a dynamic shift in the paradigm of rural development and weak

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<sup>154</sup> Round 3, Afrobarometer Survey in Ghana,2005-compiled by Edem Selormey, Joseph Asunka and Daniel Armah-Attah).

district assembly system.

This chapter found that as a component of rural development and poverty reduction strategies, electricity provision for the poor is compounded by lack of “ownership ” and weak autonomy under efforts to build a “minimal” state to support decentralization. Where central government resorted to creating a system of spoils to maintain rural support, rural development projects have been incremental and discretionary. The consequences for the rural poor extend to the incremental provision of electricity and demonstrate the need for more effective vertical and horizontal linkages that combine livelihood approaches, potential income generating activities and rural development approaches. More importantly, an exclusive reliance on donor aid, a substantial NGO presence, inadequate ownership of rural development approaches and outcomes, particularly where district assemblies are concerned have complicated national and local (district assembly) responses to public service delivery of key amenities like electricity. Indeed, the participatory locus for local institutions expected under political decentralization, structural adjustment and neo-liberal policies have not borne out as envisioned. To be sure, continuing difficulties in filling positions and relocating individuals willing to live in the “hinterland” unwittingly produced gaps in the capacity of district assemblies to fulfill development and service oriented objectives.

Under the Millennium Development Goals the plight of the poor received renewed attention, but at the same time neo-liberal policies called for a ‘minimal’ state, which heightened political capture. Indeed Gary (1996) noted how African elites sought to tap into the NGO sector as a source of accumulation in the midst of this process. By using development projects to enhance political capital on a domestic front, DA capacity and upward mobility of the rural poor are compromised. Perhaps significantly, the conclusions of an Afrobarometer briefing paper on

Popular Opinions on Local Government in Ghana (2008) found that “there is a considerable dissonance between Ghanaian understanding of the public service delivery responsibilities of local government authorities and the statutory ones.

If long-term poverty reduction and rural development are to be effectively accomplished, one of the first steps towards this objective should involve a re-conceptualization of electricity access and 'trusteeship' role that external actors like NGOs play. Long-term rural development and poverty reduction goals are suitable and even necessary, as is donor and NGO assistance-in-democratizing, transitioning countries. But the strategies implicit in current approaches unduly politicize access to public goods critical to rural development in ways that are neglected in the literature and by development partners (donors). Thus, the predisposition towards markets and efforts to integrate economies and energy systems invite us to consider how the state navigates its efforts to ensure public interest, while organizing economic life in a globalizing environment that carries unmitigated risks for the poor.<sup>155</sup>

Enduring service delivery challenges in an expanding economy illustrate how access to electricity is exceedingly central to the broad goals of equitable and sustainable rural development for Ghana's rural poor. Electricity represents more than a broad component of modern economies. It is not only intimately connected with the digital age and telecommunication, but to macro-micro processes that potentially connect the rural poor to small and medium enterprises that can propel them from the drudgery of rural life to an improved existence. Though Ghana can boast of substantial progress in improving rural development outcomes, it is hoped that ongoing electrification efforts eventually yield the kinds of outcomes that move disadvantaged rural communities towards a model that accrues aggregate benefits-

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<sup>155</sup>See Navroz, K. Dubash, “Revisiting electricity reform: The case for a sustainable development approach”, *Utility Policy* 11 (2003) 148

particularly for the poor.

## **Chapter 5: The Numbers Game: Quantifying Access and Regional Differentiation in Electricity provision in the Fourth Republic**

Rural electricity access signifies more than securing electric poles or simply putting communities on the grid. It entails equity in pricing, affordability, and regularity in provision for the entire population. A 66% access rate in this West African nation is undoubtedly significant for a continent where large numbers of people lack electricity. However, this figure though admirable does not capture the nuances of what I term a “numbers game” or the fluidity of “access” in interpretation. This chapter contextualizes the dichotomy of national success in electricity outcomes in regional differentiation and uneven access. This chapter argues that the heightened saliency of electricity provision is evident in the regional differentiation and a “numbers game” that correlates with voting outcomes. More significantly, and to borrow from the Fridy’s (2007), Morrison (2005) and Whitfield’s (2009) analyses of electoral outcomes in the Fourth Republic, this chapter finds that the highest regions with electricity access are in fact “swing” regions. Using electrification data obtained from the MOE after 2008 (election year), I outline the results of those findings to explain patterns of regional variation.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to discuss patterns of regional differentiation in access rates and what this means in the context of the rural poor. Secondly, to unpack the nature of this study’s quantitative findings that offers puzzling but paradoxical evidence of success and conversely disparities. This chapter will demonstrate that differences between observed and expected (official) electricity rates are considerable. Of remarkable significance is that the

Greater Accra region reveals surprising disparities. If we consider that the region represents the most developed this finding dispels the notion of widespread access for the rural poor who reside in the outskirts of the region. Moreover, if the reports of high urban poverty levels are valid, the lower than expected access rate for the Greater Accra area would make sense under this context. As it were, regression results point to disparities between *observed* and *expected* rates of electricity provision. Likewise, I attribute these unexpected results to social, economic and demographic factors, outlined in this study, which also support the notion of regional differentiation and not convergence in electricity outcomes as original MOE documents suggest.

In the section that follows, I trace key historical moments in the development of electricity provision to provide a political context for incongruent provision. The second section builds on the first to discuss how voting alignments inform regional differentiation and arguably public goods access. Additional sections discuss the quantitative findings of this study, research implications, including the relationship between poverty, electrification and income generation and offers conclusions.

### **Electrification in early Post Independent Ghana**

Since the post independent period beginning in the 1960s, the history of electrification in Ghana has been uneven. In spite of efforts by the country's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, to use the Akosombo dam as an impetus for industrial development and rural electrification, the political fallout from negative environmental effects, economic consequences of Volta resettlement efforts and ambiguous benefits to rural communities (Hart, 1980) complicated future responses to electrification gaps. Acheampong's (2002) analysis of the eco-social history of the Anlo-speaking peoples-part of an Ewe national grouping located between the Volta and Mono rivers is instructive. The political impact of coastal erosion, which shaped Anlo-Ewe

expectations about political inclusion and exclusion, was also influenced by frequent changes in government in the post independent era. Indeed this development resulted in a lack of continuity in environmental policy as new governments attempted old experiments that failed to halt coastal erosion. Acheampong's analysis also informs the development of harbours and dams, as well as the ways in which political authority shaped environmental, demographic processes and arguably regional differentiation in electric energy outcomes.

The Akosombo dam was described as a panacea for the country's insufficient power supply, even though the World Bank suggested that the power project's lifespan would be a mere 60 years (Barnes, 1966). Built by Henry Kaiser, an American aluminum company, the Akosombo dam became a reality with the support of Kwame Nkrumah (Volta River Project statement by the Government of Ghana, 1961). It was the largest single infrastructure project in Ghana at the time, and one for which the Nkrumah government lacked sufficient revenue to finance (Dzorgbo, 2001, p152). However, after an elaborate negotiation by the government coupled with the intervention of President Eisenhower of the United States, the Kaiser Aluminum Company agreed to underwrite part of the Volta project on the condition that it be permitted, in the form of a consortium with Reynolds Aluminum, to utilize about two-thirds of the electrical power generated by the project for smelting aluminum in Ghana (Ibid, 152). Although preparatory reports outlined ambitious plans in the mid 1950s aimed to usher industrialization with subsequent completion of the Volta River Project and Akosombo dam, the vision of large-scale industrial transformation fell short of expectations. Indeed, the enthusiasm of a young nation to become industrialized within a relatively short time—within Nkrumah's regime—generated its own problems since human and material resources were overestimated by the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) government (Ibid,162).

Consequently, the promise of hydropower viewed as a fulcrum for economic and industrial development proved elusive. The failure of early post-independence leaders to articulate an electric energy framework conducive to the country's electrification needs and a populist impulse led to the re-emergence of electric energy concerns only in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whether due to economic malaise, ruinous economic policies or the precipitous decline in the price of cocoa—a major export—Ghana's first 25 years after independence were marked by negative economic growth, which some attributed to a causal factor of low demand and utilization of electricity. Nonetheless, electricity was available primarily in urban, commercial areas, with the bulk of the country's rural population relying exclusively on wood fuels or biomass as a primary source of energy for cooking, heating and lighting.

This is unfortunate given that “Nkrumah's tenure was one that we might term an empire state—it had a lot of money and at the same time the country had the VRA—by Kaiser, the US—which gave (sic) Nkrumah the opportunity to provide (sic) rural electricity under the colonial government.”<sup>156</sup> After his ousting and a brief interim period during which the military or National Liberation Army governed, the country's second president, K. A. Busia, proved more successful in his attempts to provide access to rural areas. As part of his plans to push rural development, he charted a path for infrastructural intervention that emphasized roads and electricity. What's more, a Member of Parliament suggested that, “Busia appreciated a lot more the essence of rural development (personal communication, 2009). He gave Ghana the first minister of rural development and put emphasis on rural development. “ It is remarkable then that while Nkrumah espoused the “champion of hydropower development,” Busia proved much more successful in providing electricity to rural townships perhaps as a consequence of political exigencies that were necessitated by an adoption of liberal oriented policies.

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<sup>156</sup>Member of Parliament, personal communication, July 2009

As this study finds, although the country's first and second presidents-Kwame Nkrumah and K.A. Busia (1969-72) both articulated extensive plans for rural electrification, few benefits materialized from their efforts. I find that incongruent energy values and diminished political capital account for the difference in access under the country's first and second presidents. During Nkrumah's tenure from 1957-1966, political discontent with the pace of economic and political change and ensuing social cleavages led to a politics of confrontation (Hutfchful 1979; Ocquaye, 2004, p 11). It was not uncommon for individuals, groups and localities to vie for representation and control over various structures of government, which began after a decisive break with Danquah/Busia camp--two leading intellectuals and founders of the UGCC-United Gold Coast Convention. Subsequently, Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party and Busia's Progressive People's party came to reflect ideological and personal struggles for power that arguably spilled over into public goods provision. In any case, further political upheavals, several coup d'états and a lack of institutional continuity produced glaring gaps in access, with few attempts to fully electrify the countryside until the early 1990s. It was only until then that renewed efforts to utilize the country's hydropower sources for electricity resumed in earnest.

To fully contextualize the politics of rural preference, public good access as well as electricity provision requires careful scrutiny of voter alignments since the post independent period. With a political sphere that centers on the country's two dominant political parties--the National Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress, Whitfield (2009: 623) argues that "elections are competitive because of the de facto two party system, in which both the NDC and NPP serve as credible oppositions. The parties mobilize voters and political elites around two political traditions" reinvented in the fold of a J.B. Danquah and Busia partnership-

contenders for post independent leadership and Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party.<sup>157</sup> For example Whitfield (2009) finds and Morrison (2004) observes that, "by 1956, clear partisan lines had developed, known as the Nkrumah and Danquah-Busia axes: the one populist and state interventionist and the other liberal-mercantilist with its own tinge of interventionism." Nkrumah and his supporters preferred political mobilization, populism and state intervention and as it were, the NDC leadership led by Jerry J. Rawlings in the post 1992 period appeared to reflect some of the sentiments of the former.<sup>158</sup> In similar fashion, the socialist oriented Rawlings utilized a rural strategy that included heavy infrastructural development over a period of almost two decades (Lindberg and Morrison, 2005, p577). Indeed, one can argue that the NDC reflects a populist, working class-heavily dependent on rural constituencies.<sup>159</sup> As Nugent (2001, p410) noted, "in the two previous elections, the NDC played a full hand very astutely. It was aware that it was not especially popular in the cities, where structural adjustment had produced the greatest pain, but it also knew that the elections would be won and lost in the countryside. Hence, the NDC concentrated its efforts there, and made a special pitch for the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions, which had been historically marginalized."

The full compass of party competition, and regional strongholds for both parties are expertly captured by Whitfield (2009).<sup>160</sup> The parliamentary seats won for each party in the 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008 elections show remarkable trends. In the 2000 elections, which the NPP won, the Greater Accra, Eastern, Brong-Ahafo, and Ashanti regions were strongholds for the

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<sup>157</sup> See Lindberg and Morrison (2005); Morrison (2004?) and Fridy (2007) for more on electoral landscape in the Fourth Republic. It should be noted that Rawlings never outwardly declared his support for Nkrumah's policies—only hinted at it.

<sup>158</sup> Staffan I. Lindberg and Minion K. Morrison, "Exploring voter alignments in Africa: core and swing voters in Ghana", in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43, 4, 2005, p577

<sup>159</sup> NPP party supporters however, have tended to hail from the business, commercial and urban interests or elite a rural or urban class divide.

<sup>160</sup> According to Whitfield, "some regions are considered strongholds for each party because they contain large numbers of core voters and there is not much competition, p 623.

NPP. However, for the NDC, the Volta, Northern, Upper West and Upper Eastern regions featured as strongholds for the party. Perhaps as a nod to ethnicity, the Volta region has typically supported the NDC because Rawlings, who essentially established the party, hails from the Ewe ethnic group situated in that region. But while President Atta Mills (2008-), a member of the NDC hails from the Central region, an area of support for the NDC party, it has become a swing region. In the 2004 elections, the NPP and NDC's strongholds remained the same. Despite remarkable continuity in voter alignments, with core voters comprising 82 percent of the electorate, floating voters comprised 18% as Lindberg and Morrison (2005) establish (cf from Whitfield, 2009, p632). A number of fascinating observations are apparent, particularly since the 2008 election. Whitfield (2009) noted that,

In the 2000 elections, the central, western and Brong-Ahafo regions functioned as swing regions since elections have been close there and because these regions determined who won in past elections. It was the NDC's poor performance in the Central and Western regions that cost it the 2004 election. Similarly, the party's dramatic turnaround in the Central and Greater Accra regions in 2008 forced the NPP to a presidential runoff and ultimately won Atta Mills the presidency. There were also very close races in the Western and Brong Ahafo regions, with NDC catching up but NPP still in lead. . . The Greater Accra became a swing region in the 2008 election and probably cost the NPP the election given that it is a region with the highest number of voters. In sum, the presidential outcome in 2008 was determined by Central, Western and Greater Accra regions (Whitfield, 2009, p634).

The losses of the NPP party are illuminating for two reasons. First, it had not fulfilled promises made to urbanites in the 2000 election; secondly, in 2006 and 2007, the country faced a series of power supply problems that resulted in power rationing (Ibid, 635). More significantly, the NPP made several new investments in energy, but it was too early for voters to see the benefits of those actions, and utility prices continued to rise (Ibid, 635, 636). This is perhaps the most glaring instance of *unevenness in* electricity provision and the questionable success of the

country's decentralized electricity initiatives. If the Greater Accra region with the highest number of voters and urban residents expressed concerns about improvements in electric energy production as Whitfield (2009) suggests, it is a reasonable assumption that there may not be a convergence towards uniform access as new MOE figures suggest, despite notable success for the country overall. Consequently, the data findings and articles headlines listed in the appendix substantiates *uneven* access in Ghana's administrative regions. In the table below, rates of access for all ten regions are tabulated using various indicators that will be discussed below.

In the section that follows, I highlight the quantitative findings of this study, which reveal that in spite of "official" or observed rates of electrification now at an increased rate of 66% is more complex than we might assume. After measuring against several economic indicators disparate access a number of observations become conspicuously apparent. The first table lists percentages of access for all ten regions obtained from the Ministry of Energy. At first glance, the Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions are the only regions with remarkably low access rates and the figures for all ten regions indicate an overall or national access rate that is 66% and quite significant. After comparing the regions with the highest rates of access to electoral outcomes (that is, how each region voted-either NPP or NDC,) since 2000, it appears that the Greater Accra Region with 80%, the Central Region with 70% and the Eastern Region with 61.5% have been swing regions. There may be no statistical correlation between the percentage of access and electoral outcomes but the connection appears significant nonetheless.

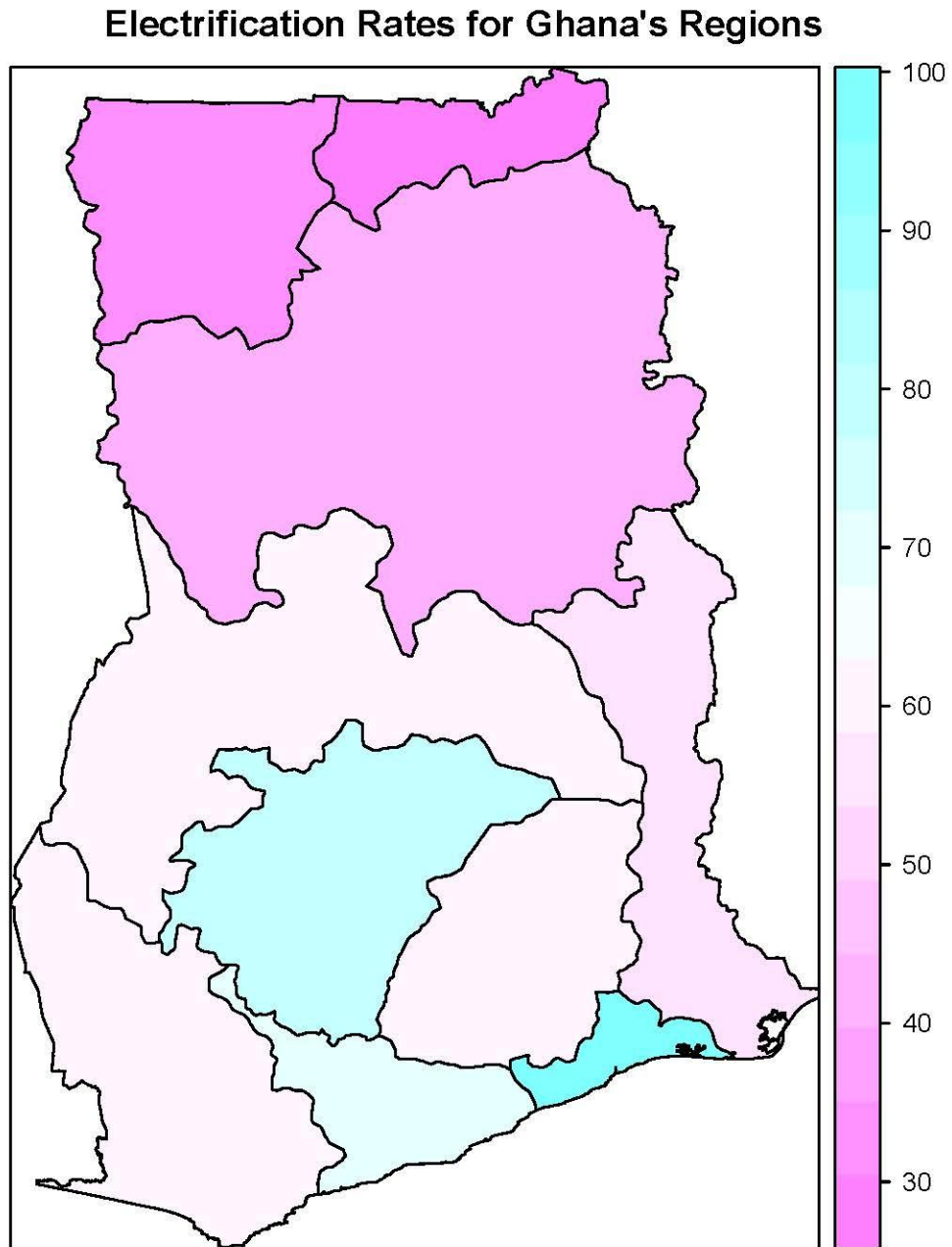


**ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY IN GHANA  
ON REGIONAL BASIS  
(BASED ON POPULATION)**

REGION	ACCESS RATE
GREATER ACCRA	95.77%
ASHANTI	80.07%
CENTRAL	70.09%
BRONG AHAFO	62.53%
EASTERN	61.56%
WESTERN	59.34%
VOLTA	58.35%
NORTHERN	43.62%
UPPER WEST	31.95%
UPPER EAST	30.34%
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>66.49%</b>

*Page 1*





The table above plots the raw electrification rates for each of the ten regions.

However, directly below is a plot that provides electrification rates for Ghana's regions. After reading numerous stories in the course of my research trips to Ghana beginning in 2007, I became curious about conflicting reports of widespread access in my conversations with energy

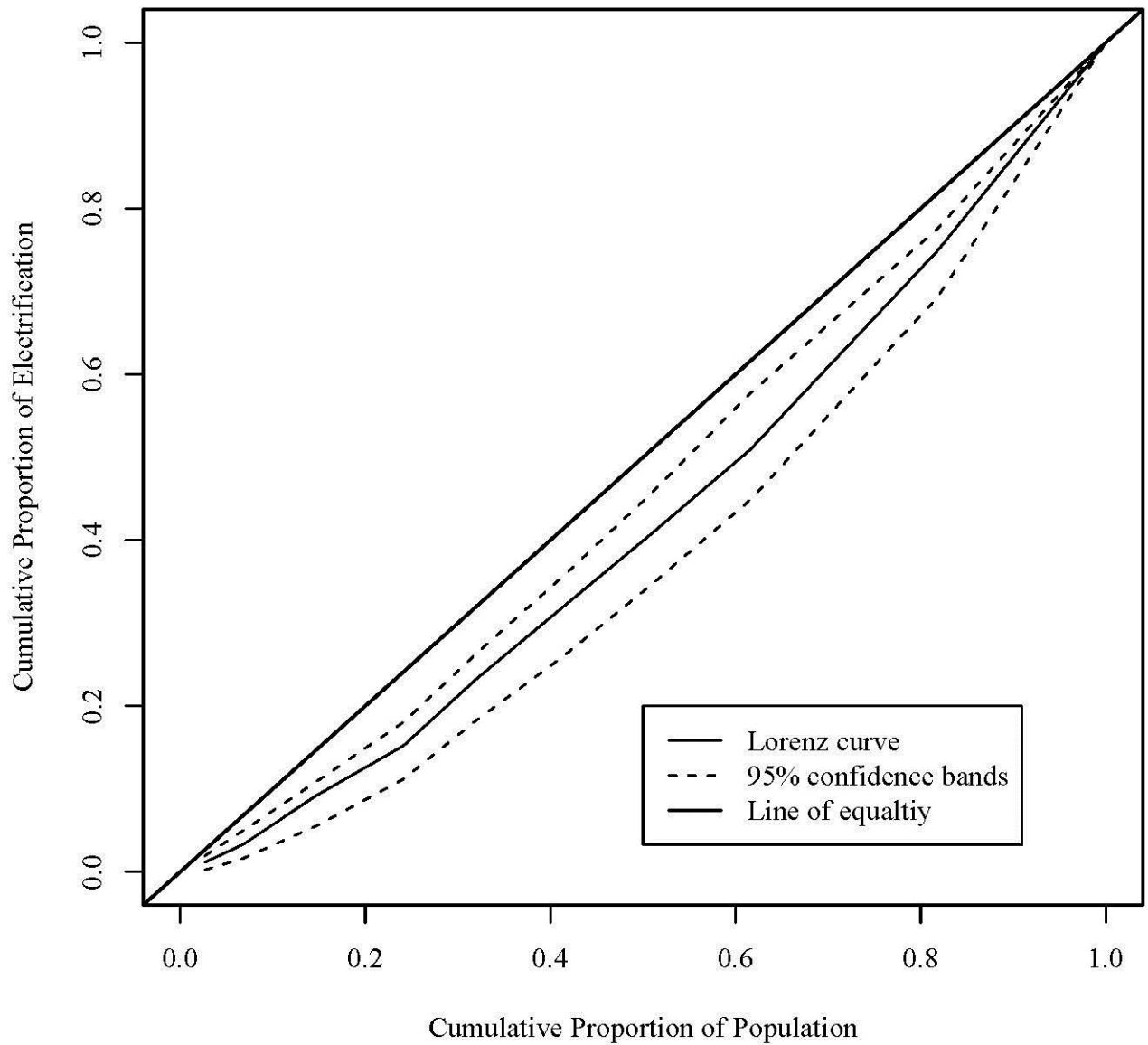
officials and in the newspaper headlines that frequently suggested otherwise. My own experiences of outages and reports from family and friends suggested persistent disparities, which I observed depended on locale. *This also supports the notion of unevenness and differentiation in access.* Even within the capital city of Accra, access has tended to vary. In the more privileged areas of Accra, for example in Eastern Legon, or Osu, residents receive better access than say areas like Kokomlele, Dansoman or Amanfro-all outskirts of Accra, where some family members live (to name just a few). It is also significant that the use of generators is prevalent. It is for these reasons that I sought to quantify these observations using existing electrification rates tabulated by the Ministry of Energy for each of the ten regions. I should mention that these figures although seemingly straightforward were difficult to obtain, and I only received them through a research assistant with personal connections to a Deputy Minister of Energy.

This study unequivocally acknowledges the successful transformation in electricity provision and access, but questions the extent to which the rural poor have benefitted as 80% of the rural populace. It has sought to determine and deconstruct a lifeline tariff policy intended to make access possible for those who cannot afford it. If electricity distribution varies even for a city like Accra, what more of its outlying rural counterparts? What does decentralized public service electricity through the current Rural electrification and Self-help schemes mean for the rural poor? While neither the data here nor MOE documents offer a breakdown of access rates for urban versus rural areas, the variation across regions strongly suggests patterns of regional differentiation and not necessarily a convergence toward widespread access. Consequently, after receiving “official rates” of electrification for each, I decided to test for the actual distribution to understand the nature of disparate access more accurately given the disconnect between the

Ministry of Energy's optimism and public perceptions reflected in Ghanaian media, newspapers and my personal observation of frequent disruptions and load shedding in 2007 and 2008. If the electrification rates were distributed evenly across all ten regions, the Lorenz curve would follow that line.<sup>161</sup> But here we see that the Lorenz curve is below the line of equality indicating that electricity is indeed not distributed evenly across Ghana's administrative regions. The Lorenz curve is computed by ranking the regions according to level of electrification (taken here to be the electrification rate multiplied by the population), then the cumulative level of electrification and the cumulative amount populative (i.e., each region's contribution to the total population) are calculated. These two cumulative sums are then plotted against one another to create the Lorenz curve.

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<sup>161</sup> The Lorenz curve can also measure income inequality



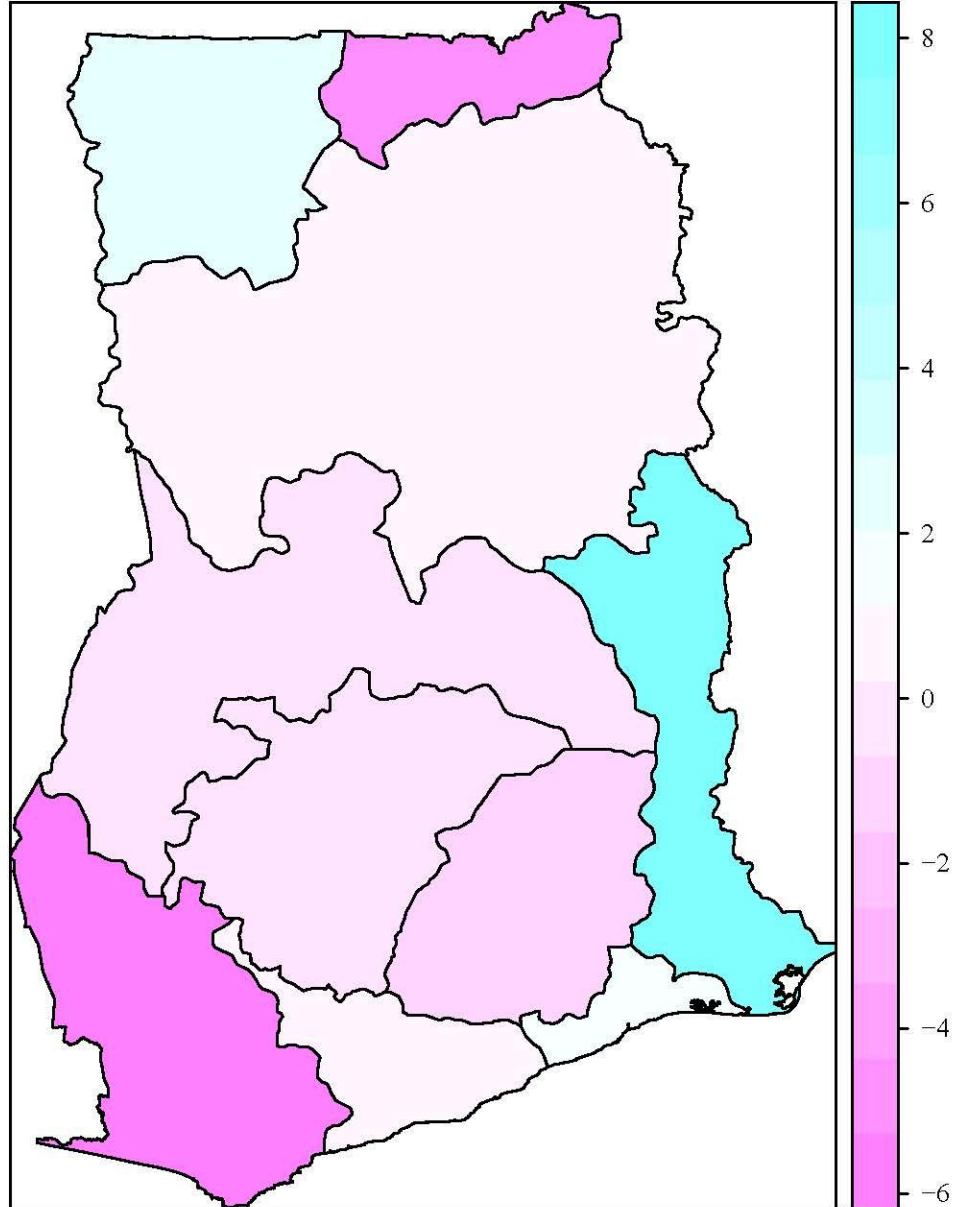
I fitted a regression model with covariates capturing social, economic and demographic characteristics of the regions, and used the fitted values of the regression model to calculate the Lorenz curve. This has several advantages over using the raw data. First using a fitted model

allows for probabilistic inference on the Lorenz curve, as outlined in the next paragraph, and also the discrete nature of our spatial data may inject artificial concentration in the raw data. Since the Lorenz curve is below the line of equality this indicates evidence of unequal distribution.

However, I should note that these quantities are also subject to random variation, and so to further substantiate evidence that the distribution is not equal, I calculated 95% confidence bands by simulating 1000 draws from the regression model, calculating the Lorenz curve for each of the draws and evaluated the quintile function at .025 and 97.5, to produce a 95% confidence band around the Lorenz curve. The total area of the confidence band is also below the line equality, indicating that, at the .05 level, the Lorenz curve is below the line of equality, which consequently explains unequal distribution. This also refutes assertions by prominent members of parliament and officials in the Ministry of Energy that I interviewed that electricity access is not politicized.

	elect	pop	area	purban	pagric	pindust	incpercap	inchh	pwageinc
elect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
pop	0.861851	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
area	-0.28296	-0.0338	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
purban	0.914692	0.780583	-0.50044	0	0	0	0	0	0
pagric	-0.84699	-0.74266	0.631796	-0.91646	0	0	0	0	0
pindust	0.869	0.962633	-0.26228	0.87209	-0.87144	0	0	0	0
incpercap	0.917217	0.739065	-0.07241	0.775803	-0.59324	0.692637	0	0	0
inchh	0.720368	0.657615	0.303572	0.533455	-0.33685	0.562593	0.868654	0	0
pwageinc	0.823141	0.650126	-0.51809	0.953559	-0.88714	0.785225	0.686421	0.516542	0

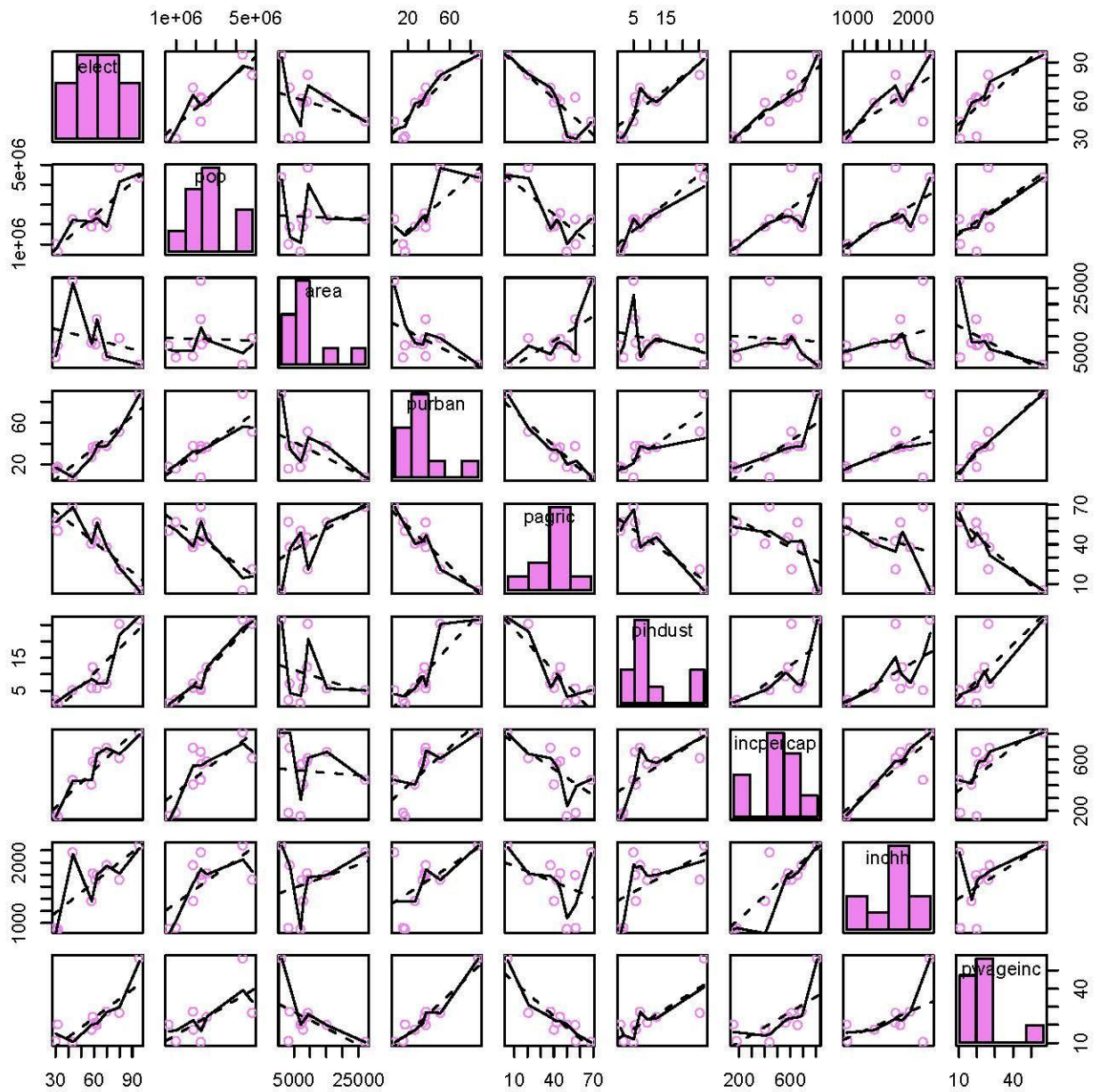
## Difference Between Observed and Expected Electrification Rates



In the next plot given above, we can see observed versus expected rates of electrification. After using a regression model in juxtaposition to the data, we can calculate the expected rate and compare it to the observed rate based on figures from the MOE. The significance of this plot is that it shows us regions that have higher, lower or equal electrification rates in accordance

to social, economic and demographic characteristics of the regions, which were tabulated. These indicators include population, percentage of urban residents in each region, percentage of people engaged in agriculture and industry, mean annual income and percentage of in-migrants. The difference between the observed and expected rate of electrification is significant particularly for the Greater Accra region, which represents the most urbanized region of the country and site of the country's capital. I find this outcome surprising given the official MOE rate of 95.77%. Frequent newspaper articles in the Daily Guide, the Daily Graphic and Daily Searchlight among others often highlight intermittent outages even for wealthy sections of Accra (for example in East Legon) are substantiated by this revelation. However, I recognize that the Greater Accra region contains rural areas, which could explain irregularities depicted in the map. Nevertheless, I suggest that the political factors of rural capture and sequenced provision are explanatory variables that account for these findings. Additionally, the Volta and Upper Western regions appear to be the largest beneficiaries of electricity, surprising and rather unexpected observation.

### **Scatterplot matrix**



I also include a scatterplot matrix of all the variables in the dataset used. Here we can explore the inter-relationships among the variables used by looking at the row and column corresponding to given variables to visualize the relationships.

Regression Results				
Term	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	p-value
(Intercept)	2.07E+01	4.46E+00	4.64	0.00354
Population	6.44E-06	1.72E-06	3.747	0.00954
Per Capita In	5.66E-02	1.06E-02	5.349	0.00175
Area	-6.20E-04	2.05E-04	-3.018	0.02345
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1				
Residual standard error: 4.552 on 6 degrees of freedom				
Multiple R-sq Adjusted R-squared: 0.9499				
F-statistic: 57.87 on 3 and 6 DF, p-value: 8.053e-05				

The regression model here indicates a sample of variables used to calculate the Lorenz curve and the observed versus expected map.

### Moran's I

Moran's I	Data	Residual	
Obs	0.5017777	-0.0829278	
Exp	-0.1111111	-0.1111111	
p-val	0.00151288	0.876195	

This table summarizes spatial correlation of electrification rates across Ghana's regions. The first analysis of raw electrification rates shows substantial spatial correlation. The second analysis depicts the residuals of the regression analysis with no evidence of spatial correlation. Thus I conclude that the observed correlation in electrification is due to social, economic and demographic factors. Note, that this is speaking to the \*correlation\* between regions and not the rate of electrification itself, which nonetheless illustrates how these results can exacerbate regional inequalities. In short, electricity access is not only incongruent, actual rates offer a picture of persistent disparities, even when historically marginalized regions like the

Northern and to a lesser extent the Upper Eastern region are accounted for. In tandem with newspaper articles obtained from the Office of Public Records and National Archives, the independent variables of “political influence and a political business cycle” provide evidence of uneven provision. For virtually every election year<sup>162</sup>, beginning in 1992,<sup>163</sup> 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008-electricity projects were featured regularly in the newspapers, which are noted in the appendix 2.

### **Implications of research**

The implications of this research are considerable. Not only is electrification multifaceted and complex, the precise nature of economic linkages, productive uses of electric energy and the relationship to demographic and economic indicators and actual impact are not well understood and will require further research. However as one small step, this study represents an attempt to correct current and prevailing misconceptions about the nature of electricity access for the rural poor under public service delivery under decentralization. Second, there is an emerging consensus in policy circles that expanding energy delivery without adequate attention to productive uses or vertical and horizontal linkages required for income generation yields little by way of socio-economic development (Chambwera & Folmer, 2007; Kirubi et al., forthcoming; Sebitosi & Pillay, 2007).

Under conditions of political transition, the simultaneous pursuit of democratization and decentralization is likely to yield precarious outcomes for public service delivery of goods when governments are donor dependent<sup>164</sup> which can inadvertently encourage a “project based culture that undermines the agency of district assemblies. It comes as little surprise that donor

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<sup>162</sup>There is one exception—electricity articles appear for 1998—a year marked by power cuts, electricity rationing and an ongoing energy crisis from the year before.

<sup>163</sup>Newspaper articles for the 1992 period and election year are featured elsewhere—in tandem with featured stories on rural development.

<sup>164</sup>A country that derives at least half of its national budget from external aid is considered donor dependent.

dependency and long term oriented poverty reduction strategy papers invariably bolstered 'gradualism' for example in the 30 year plan for electricity provision and poverty reduction framework that emerged in the 1990s. Banful (2008) argued that political tendencies to allocate resources in district friendly areas declined over time, but it is possible that an incremental, community-by community culture reconstituted the visibility of co-optation.

*A. Poverty, Electrification and Income Generation: A Valid relationship or Spurious One?*

With the bulk of the country's poor in rural areas, high levels of poverty in Ghana and other sub-Saharan African countries are reflected in energy-consumption patterns (Karekezi, 2002, p915). Indeed, there appears to be a correlation between GNP per capita and energy use per capita (Karekezi, 2002, 916). Yet attempts to reach economic growth targets without sufficient energy supplies are inadequately addressed in national policy frameworks. The nature of African institutions and the problems faced in generating outcomes that encourage development are well known. But the ways in which decentralization and minimalist government can structure service delivery of public goods, backward and forward linkages like information disclosure, water, paved roads, income generating activities, skills and manpower as well as appropriate institutions to help rural citizens usher development are inadequately understood. As Dr. Kwaku A. Danso of the Ghana Leadership Union recently asked, "one may justifiably ask the Deputy Minister of Communication, what the heck does he mean by "all communities will be connected to the national grid," (by 2011)? Does the young deputy Minister know what this means, and can he break down the number of districts in Ghana that do not have electricity, explain the component steps and procedures and cost to generate electricity and deliver to communities?"<sup>165</sup> These questions highlight the increasing qualms of the public expressed in the Ghanaian newspapers like the New Crusade Guide, the Daily Searchlight, the Daily Graphic and

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<sup>165</sup>See The New Crusade Guide, Vol 2No. 200 Dec 30, 2010

others. Many of these stories are startling in lieu of the progress that the Ministry of Energy claims it has ostensibly made in provision.

While debates about the relationship between electrification and income-generation are far from settled, rural communities in Ghana rightly view electricity as a central amenity of modern life (see appendix 4). Some suggest a weak relationship to productive uses of electricity (PUEs) but others argue that the degree to which this energy source reduces labor intensity or physical labor is considerable. As one interviewee noted in tandem with practically every interview:

Electrification has changed rural lifestyles in Ghana generally. For the few individuals who are engaged in non-farm work (and depend directly on electricity for their work), say operating drinking bars, corn-mills, garri and palm oil/palm kernel mills, selling iced water, video centers, tailoring, etc., I will say, their incomes have improved.<sup>166</sup>

Another noted that electrification was related to the larger scheme of development in a couple of ways, saying that “if you go to a rural area, drinking, mills and other economic activities help the development of community centers . . . it’s really a catalyst for development”.<sup>167</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In sum, Ghana’s goal of attaining middle-income status by 2015 and current capacity of the country’s power sector to satisfactorily perform generation, transmission and distribution is promising despite requiring reevaluation. As a larger issue Ghana has attempted to enter a globalizing world through market liberalization (Aryeetey et al, 2000) with uneven consequences for various groups in society. Meanwhile these policy reforms do not appear to have had a uniformly beneficial effect on the poor and other vulnerable groups.<sup>168</sup>The success of various

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<sup>166</sup>Anonymous, personal communication, 2009

<sup>167</sup>Ibid

<sup>168</sup>Bussolo & Round, 2006, p143.

electrification schemes including decentralized initiatives, are cause for optimism and tribute given the dismal rates and quality of access in much of sub-Saharan Africa. The observed or overall percentage for the nation represents success and implies that much of the rural populace has access and this is certainly indisputable. However, disparities within the Greater Accra region, the most urbanized of all ten and site of the country's capital raise interesting questions for access in areas where the rural poor reside. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that given the correlation between swing regions in the recent elections and regions with the highest rates of access (which were calculated using data compiled in February 2010, after the last election of 2008) patterns of regional differentiation are indeed valid. Furthermore, this observation invites us to consider how the politics of interpretation frames public perceptions of access, at least in newspaper headlines and the notable dichotomy between the former and overall patterns of success in structuring public discourse in regards to service delivery.

## **Chap 6: Conclusion**

How is it that a West African state widely hailed as model for stable democratic governance in much of the continent managed to achieve an impressive rate of electrification and at the same time disparate outcomes for its rural poor-the bulk of the country's rural population? Why did the promise of electricity provision for the entire country after independence dissipate in spite of the progressive efforts of the country's first president-Kwame Nkrumah under whom the largest hydropower project-and Akosombo dam was completed? What explains the record of more advances in the numbers of townships supplied with electricity under Busia's tenure as president and advocate of limited intervention/liberal policies in the economy? Why hasn't the onslaught of a decentralized institutional framework produced more successful outcomes in the arena of public service delivery of electricity despite the transformation of access since the 1990s? What can we expect in similarly oriented countries and what lessons does Ghana offer for other states in sub-Saharan Africa? Though some studies tackled these questions in part, few have convincingly done so. Consequently, this study set out to bridge this gap and to argue that the transformation of access from a dismal 15% in 1990 to the current rate of 66 percent while commendable has yielded differential benefits for the rural poor. This dissertation has suggested that under decentralization thought to produce better outcomes in rural development and service delivery of goods like electricity, uneven benefits for the rural poor and institutional capture of local institutions charged with utility provision accounts for the observed success and conversely differential benefits for the rural poor. The paradox of national success of electricity initiatives is also reflected in the partial nature of neo-liberal power sector reforms.

This dissertation is significant because the case study of Ghana offers valuable empirical observations for much of sub-Saharan Africa, where the electricity divide is virtually ubiquitous.

By focusing on what many have deemed a ‘success story’ this study has attempted to systematically investigate the contradictions of political decentralization, neo-liberal agenda of electricity sector reform and the intersection between public service delivery and the quest to inculcate a minimal state in the economy. As an important but almost inconspicuous component of modern life, electricity provision is erroneously assumed to play a marginal role for the rural poor, but this study has maintained that it structures their lives in critical ways. The quest to improve economic livelihoods, provide access to modern goods and services, encourage citizen engagement, natural resource management of hydropower and electricity provision, and equitable access to this micro-macro component is in many ways a microcosm of contested public/private battleground to reconstitute state authority especially in emerging economies.

The scholarly contribution of this study is that it reveals the ways in which the obscurity of electricity provision for the rural poor reified central government authority under an institutional framework of decentralization and neo-liberal agenda of energy sector reform. The latter in particular informs a continuing dialectic of the role of the state in the economy. Furthermore, as a critical but inaccurately perceived micro-component of rural welfare and development, electricity access for the rural poor until now remained inadequately addressed as further economic and political gains propel Ghana forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One of the conclusions I reach is that a political business cycle of electricity provision began in 1992 when the country returned to democratic rule. For each election year beginning in the fourth republic, that is 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, electrification projects were commissioned for these years *only*. The exception is 2007, when the country experienced a lengthy energy crisis and subsequent power or electricity rationing. The quantitative findings of the previous chapter illustrate surprising contradictions in access. First, there are marked

disparities between official MOE reports of significant progress (66%) and uneven distribution mapped using regression analysis with resulting regional differentiation in percentages of access.

As a conclusion to my study, this chapter fulfills the following objectives. First, I summarize the key findings of this study including the theoretical arguments offered in support, of the main argument. Second, this chapter situates further contributions of the study.

### **I. Key findings of this study**

The first chapter accounted for why electricity efforts under Nkrumah were less successful than under Busia. It appears that Nkrumah's attempts to adopt socialist policy produced dismal failures while Busia's social-justice approach, which aimed to improve standards of living for the rural populace in particular, also yielded better but insufficient outcomes since hundreds more communities were put on the grid. The clash between Nkrumah's heavy handed, interventionist and later socialist approach and Busia's market oriented policies produced disjointed efforts that affected the pace of industrial development going forward. Though electricity was identified as a key economic input-via the Akosombo dam and Volta River Project, conflicting political frameworks limited the promise of hydropower. The chapter suggested that optimistic, but poorly conceptualized energy values obscured Nkrumah's efforts. As it were, Ministry of Works documents noted difficulties and hinted at the potential politicization of rural electrification schemes at independence (Ministry of Works document, 1957). Busia's administration with its staunchly liberal economic stance did more for rural electrification than Nkrumah, because the latter laid the institutional groundwork for electricity schemes. Armed with more political capital, electricity projects were able to commence in a more effective manner. After his overthrow and subsequent political upheaval, succeeding administrations had little capacity to power the country, owing to absent demand, as one

interviewee from the VRA opined (anonymous, personal communication, 2009). This is a plausible argument given that the country experienced a lengthy period of economic malaise (Chazan et al, 1988). On the other hand, Nkrumah appears to have squandered an opportunity to use his political capital to effectively connect electrification to infrastructural planning and a social compact. After much wrangling over dam costs, public ambivalence amid other pressing economic concerns, Akosombo almost featured as a national symbol of self-sufficiency in an era in where many developing countries and their citizens struggled to define themselves in the post-colonial context. Despite becoming an extension of the national psyche, the promise of hydropower ironically yielded little for rural populations in the nationalist period and in the fourth republic. Unsurprisingly, energy values suffered from neglect in later administrations. Yet the role of energy values and how a state defines them deserve greater attention and certainly inform the political choices that early post-independent leaders faced as well as future outcomes in electricity provision.

The second chapter established that service delivery of electricity, which took on a public goods aspect reflected mixed ‘success’ despite numerous advances in the transfer of various functions to district assemblies. The chapter attributed the differential benefits of electricity access and ‘presumed success’ of a 66 percent access rate to weak district assemblies, created to fulfill the functions of district planning, development, utility services and many others. In support of the chapter’s argument, the chapter established that the ‘center’ or national government remained reluctant to give up political control. Two contradictions became apparent: though ministry of energy officials promoted self help electrification projects as a evidence of the transformation of access and progressive decentralization, this likely created a conflict of interest between central government hegemony in determining district initiatives and in

maintaining a locus of rural co-optation. Also key to this analysis are the observations of members of parliament who noted that political considerations permeated the decision of the incumbent government of Rawlings (1992-2000) to pursue energy and development related issues.

Most significantly, the chapter illustrated how the transformation of electricity access was not matched by the reported 'moderate' district assembly capacity in a rural electrification questionnaire that I administered to Ministry of Energy officials and other individuals from related institutions. Indeed, the noted dependency syndrome (on the district common fund) and inadequate mechanisms for independent revenue accruals suggest a strong disconnect between questionnaire responses in which roughly half of the respondents rated the capacity of DAs to meet financial and material needs as *moderate*. Even more questionable are the numbers of respondents-some sixty-eight percent who rated the performance of district assemblies in assisting with Self-help and Rural Electrification Schemes highly. Furthermore, others rated the capacity of district assemblies in public service delivery of electricity as approximately fair/good (mean score of 5.8). If the observations of a donor partner from the Canadian government are correct, government officials privately view district assemblies as inadequately equipped to delivery proper services. Yet Afrobarometer surveys of rural constituent opinions of service delivery, local and national government accountability suggested high levels of satisfaction (65 percent) with government officials that are likely attributable to rural co-optation.

Moreover, my questionnaire results offer contrary opinions, which raises the question of who may be held to account for the transformation of electricity access. As the data I provided shows, the numbers of towns under the National Electrification, Self Help Electrification and Rural Electrification Schemes have been considerable. In fact, the rates of access increased

almost ten-fold from several hundred communities at the turn of the 1990s to several thousand communities as of three years ago. While the transformation of access is indisputable, it is also evident that new alignments between public government, external actors as ‘trustees’ of development contributed to efforts of succeeding governments to co-opt the rural poor through interval and targeted provision of electricity in the post 1992 period. I also argued that the consequential implementation of *partial* power sector reforms ironically accounts for the success and conversely, differential benefits for the rural poor.

The argument of the next chapter advanced the view that the uneven historical development of the country’s energy institutions intersected with the politics of the post 1992 period in which clamors for socio-economic change and political legitimacy became central concerns that produced the political will to pursue public goods delivery of electricity. The partial adoption or circumvention of liberalized, market oriented power sector reforms came to inform the transformation of access which I argued also represented a logical political choice for a regime pressed to reinvent itself. As the chapter found, an imbalance between energy production and the use of indigenous energy sources such as woodfuel and biomass inadvertently contributed to lackluster efforts to fully power the country (in addition to political upheavals in the post independent period). Operational and technical problems led to high losses and ironically to power sector reforms that were consequently abandoned in favor for incremental changes. By adopting limited or piecemeal reforms which required complete restructuring, elimination of electricity subsidies and the introduction of independent power producers to economically vulnerable populations, sections of the rural poor could be protected by the life tariff, for instance. Neo-liberal power sectors reforms are perceived to be beneficial in reforming countries, yet as Edjekumhene et al, 2006) noted, there is little indication that a balance between

cost recovery for utilities and consumer interests have been met. Consequently, the limited adoption of market oriented electric energy policies represents a logical strategy despite continuing gaps in provision and access for the rural poor.

The chapter also discussed the adoption of a pro-poor, lifeline electricity tariff or politically advantageous electricity tariff for an otherwise marginalized group. Indeed, as much as the heralded reforms restructure and transfer control of vital resources and services to independent power producers and transnational corporations, they also generate burdens for the rural poor (Hawkesworth, 2006; Stiglitz, 2002). The political consequences of these burdens have in large part driven the pursuit of otherwise inimical policies at least in the view of donor partners and IFIs that helped to bail out the poorly performing energy sector in the country during the 1990s.

In the fourth chapter, I established that service delivery of public goods like electricity had been affected by a 'new conditionality' of external institutional (IFIs & NGOs) involvement in rural development further producing inequities in public goods provision of amenities like electricity. The consequences of these developments in the contemporary political period inform political struggles between national government, donor partners and non-governmental organizations that wield considerable power. In some ways, a shifting dynamic of power and struggles over appropriate authority has moved into the realm of service delivery where the latter has filled the gap in some communities (Decentralization Symposium, Center for Democracy and Development, 2009). As a result, a discretionary, project- by- project culture shaped in part by donor funding, has helped to produce disjointed sub-optimal approaches to rural development and amenities like electricity while inadvertently limiting the capacity and autonomy of decentralized institutions or district assemblies. The analysis of Claude Ake (1991) who

suggested that development projects came to signify a tremendous source of political power is key to my contention that this bolstered co-optation measures made possible by the simultaneous devolution of power to district assemblies and the resulting weakness in capacity. As the chapter found, a weak district assembly system provided a rationalization for what some deem as the growing centralization of various departmental functions, which in turn facilitates political co-optation of the rural poor. My research also revealed that the actions of past and present governments to satisfy private rural interests via rural development projects worked to produce political instrumentalism whereby a system of spoils became indispensable for maintaining rural political support.

In arguing that weak public service delivery of electricity was affected by the new conditionality or 'reform ownership', the chapter discussed key elements of this development. Although decentralized institutions are noted for self-reliant, self-sufficiency norms that ostensibly encouraged a participatory locus and articulation of political preferences by rural constituents, the reconstitution of public-private domains in rural development appeared to have rendered limited outcomes in terms of pressures for greater capacity building in district assemblies. Participation is often showcased as a hallmark of democracies, yet the interventions of donor partners and their accompanying authority over budget allocation and other financial support mechanisms structure the state or government authority in ways that inadvertently support state-centric authority under decentralization. On another note, numerous newspaper headlines indicated the emergence of rural preference and indeed a political business cycle that began in 1992 (chronicled more completely in the appendix). The chapter also revealed in tandem with Banful's (2008) observation that it was a logical strategy for succeeding governments to allocate resources that would produce political returns. Given an urban

preference that permeated much of the post independent period, except perhaps in the 1980s, it is little wonder that favorable agricultural policies which aimed to secure the support of agriculturalists in the mid 1980s along with public goods provision of electricity in the 1990s had rural voters uttering the slogan, “no electricity no power (political). In this regard, the interval, discretionary nature of this provision is evident in the percentage (almost a third of those surveyed-26% of rural people surveyed reported difficulties in gaining access to electricity.

The fifth chapter discussed the quantitative outcomes of electricity provision using data obtained after the 2008 elections, which demonstrate patterns of regional differentiation. Indeed, contrary to patterns of convergence in electricity rates that were established in the most recent MOE documents, data analysis found that regions with higher rates of access are now swing regions. By arguing that the saliency of electricity provision as a public good correlates with regional differentiation and a “numbers game”, the chapter contributed important insights for how high rates of access could demonstrate both success and disparities, especially since the Greater Accra region is not only a swing region, but has a high incidence of urban poverty and presumably has the highest rate of electricity provision according to MOE power sector.

## **II. Theoretical Implications of the study**

The persistence of routines and inadvertent ‘lock in’ of political choices can structure future political outcomes in ways that reinforce decision-making mechanisms and behavior of political actors in complex ways. Rooted in historical institutionalist approaches and referred to as path independence, institutional actions can structure national and local institutional trajectories (Mokyr, 2002) while producing sub-optimal norms or regulations (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2000). The continuity of Busia’s ‘social justice’ lens as a platform for public goods provision is arguably connected to the implicit social compact of state intervention and political

mobilization (see Lindberg & Morrison, 2005) that emerged following Rawlings' populist rhetoric from 1992-2000- especially since his administration was popularly referred to as the 'electrification government.' Poorly conceived relationships within and between the energy sector not only structured responses to rural electrification efforts first conceived in the early to mid 1950s, they obscured the creation of clear energy values in succeeding administrations and led to significant disparities until 1990. This is unfortunate given that the country's first president-Nkrumah, observed in a Ministry of Works document that "it has been the policy of my Ministry from the start to develop this rural electrification scheme in consultation with the regions in such a ways that it is mostly likely to have success." In documents from the Ministry of Works in the years preceding independence, technical and financial difficulties were reported lending further credence to path dependent outcomes in uneven generation, transmission in general synergies within the energy sector leading up to the fourth republic.

*A. The Ties that Bind: democratization, decentralization and public goods delivery*

Newer democracies unsurprisingly face daunting challenges in meeting the political preferences of electorates. In the developing world, they must also meet the expectations of external actors (donors) and donor conditionalities, placing them at a further disadvantage. As a process informed by accountability, legitimacy, consensus, participation and pluralism, democratization will often entail heightened expectations from an electorate and the pressures to deliver by ruling regime. But as pointed out by Grugel (2002), new alignments between public and private actors inevitably hinder a democratizing state's ability to deliver it promises (e.g. public goods). Combined with ancillary practices of the previous regime and for many African states, an authoritarian bureaucratic culture, the norms and institutional mechanisms required for building a new political culture will often be thwarted or contested. In democratic systems,

governments fund public service at higher levels than non-democratic systems (Ross, 2006). By riding on the promises of political goods to the plurality, the ‘conditionalities’ of austerity measures in donor dependent states will often affect regime survival in ways that inadvertently produce the use of political goods, clientelist practices and co-optation to fulfill them (see Przeworski, 2000; Boone, 1996; Bueno de Mesquita, et al, 2003, Dasgupta, 1993, etc.).

In 1963, the United Nations observed in *Community Development and National Development* two agents in the process of change: the people and their government, combined with a decentralized political system to increased decision-making ability becomes possible for ordinary citizens. Consequently, the pursuit of political decentralization at the dawn of the 1990s was largely conceived as a solution to this dilemma. In particular, the potential to produce more efficient development strategies (Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1984; Wunsch, 1991 and Crook, 1994) tailored to individual district or community needs appeared timely and appropriate. The creation of district assemblies under the umbrella of reformed local government aimed to accord various development functions including service delivery to local communities. It was hoped that a participatory locus would produce political empowerment for marginalized groups such as the rural populace. While decision making mechanisms would promote a level of involvement conducive to favorable service and development outcomes according to community needs. The structural issues of public service became salient as Ghanaians sought better living standards and amenity provision.<sup>169</sup>

### *B. The Role of structural Adjustment*

Perhaps more importantly, efforts to reconfigure state society relations amid new public/private alignments between government, external donor partners and non governmental organizations have inconspicuously structured service delivery of key goods and services in the

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<sup>169</sup> See Appendix 2 for a list of newspaper articles that chronicle this development from 1992 to 2008

Ghanaian economy. The redeployment of civil servants, restrictive monetary policies, in short a reduced scope of government in the economy as a consequence of adjustment policies and floundering political support at the end of the 1980s forced the hand of the PNDC or Rawlings military regime. Consequently, the subsequent manipulation of macroeconomic instruments and periodic non-compliance with donor conditionalities (see Akonor, 2004) were logical political choices. Notably, this study established that pricing systems for electricity which took on a public goods aspect due to imperfect or poor market conditions produced a niche for NGOs- further complicating the weak capacity of district assemblies ostensibly charged with utility provision. Despite continuing debate, I suggested that a political business cycle in electricity access became evident in the post 1990 period. Using the analysis of Rogoff and Sibert (1988) I advanced the idea that myopic considerations are not necessarily irrational given the tenuous economic livelihoods of the rural poor who constitute a significant bloc in Ghanaian society. Pre-electoral fiscal expansionary policy I found offered potent reasons for the observed *timing and interval provision of electricity*. Indeed as Drazen (2000) observed, the ‘signaling’ effect sends potent signals of ‘competency.’ Despite a freely functioning press, open criticism of politicians, and well informed voters, the subtle and in some cases overt use of ‘chop’ money or more commonly development projects operate as signaling effects and standard features in Ghanaian politics.

### *C. Minimal Government and central government hegemony under a decentralized institutional framework*

I documented the extent of central government hegemony by exploring the extent to which donor or IFI authority structures domestic political choices through neo-liberal power sector policies/reform and a reconstitution of public and private domains (see Morrison, 2002).

Indeed, it is for these reasons that in a bid to reverse urban bias and mobilize political support rural constituents emerged as the logical beneficiaries. Hence, development projects and a project-by project culture became tremendous sources of power around which socio-political struggles centered (Ake, 1991). It is no wonder that the subsequent regimes beginning with Rawlings are referred to in the context of electrification provision (Interview with Energy Commission officials, 2008). Furthermore, in light of the precarious economic outcomes that exacted a precipitous toll,<sup>170</sup> the PNDC regime faced little choice in mitigating negative economic outcomes.

#### *D. Ownership and public service delivery*

As the social compact shifts from states to markets (Dubash, 2003) the increasingly public goods component of NGO activities call into question the extent of district assembly agency. It is widely acknowledged that inadequate access to capital, limited district revenue and poorly integrated sectors and departments, helped to compound vertical and horizontal coordination. Massive flows of aid to NGOs and the emergence of these non state actors as arenas for accumulation by political elites (Gary, 1996) not only inform public service delivery, but say a great deal about the perpetuation of central government authority under a framework of decentralization. Throughout the dissertation, this study has maintained that despite concrete and progressive steps taken to institute mechanisms that reflect decentralized norms and institutions, the threefold increase of district assemblies has not signaled strong fiscal or development capacity as presumed. Instead, institutional capture and reliance on the district common fund demonstrated excessive dependence evident in the clamor for higher percentages or allocations.

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<sup>170</sup>As Staffan I. Lindberg and Minion K.C. Morrison in “ Exploring voter alignments in Africa: core and swing voters in Ghana” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43 (2005) note the structural adjustment programs that the PNDC “vigorously implemented during the 1980s, had greatly reduced opportunities for neopatrimonial politics. The introduction of competitive electoral politics according to both authors diminished possibilities for neopatrimonial politics: p581-582.

Ironically, the common fund represents an ‘interventionist approach’, normally expected to do very little, yet relied upon as an *exclusive* source of revenue by district assemblies. As a result, reports of fiscal mismanagement, use of illegal mechanisms to finance district assemblies, inadequate evaluation of the use of funds (see Armah, 2003) which also extend to electricity delivery are stark examples that call into the question the merits of district assemblies as decentralized institutions.

### III. Further Contributions

This study makes important empirical insights that illuminate the twin phenomenon of advances and drawbacks of public service provision of electricity in Ghana. Successful service delivery of public goods like electricity in ethnically diverse and democratizing states is not possible without co-optation and patronage. The merits of privatization and market-oriented policies that offer domestic consumers of electricity a wider pool of independent power producers, affordable rates, and more efficient delivery are indisputable. But promoting a panoply of policies that inadvertently produce deleterious effects on political regimes that must continually strike bargains with particular sections of society are counterproductive. The failure to allow for, or create institutional mechanisms that mitigate these circumstances accounts for the *partial* nature of electricity sector reforms in developing sub-Saharan states. The case study of Ghana illustrates that while the benefits of electricity access are *differential and uneven*, the partial implementation of power sector reforms is a *logical and optimal course of action* for a state that must navigate the tenuous terrain of public/private spaces in service delivery, national policy and under a neo-liberal agenda or framework. This study, it is hoped illuminates the ways in which natural resource management, citizen engagement, and the new ‘conditionalities’ implicit in the electric power sector paradigms have structured public-private domain of

domestic political authority and challenged assumptions about a seemingly inconspicuous component of economic development. By charting the contradictions of ‘success’ and a continued electricity divide in what many recognize as a model state in sub-Saharan Africa, this study has demonstrated how the vagaries of power sector reforms, political decentralization, external donor and IFI authority as trustees of the neoliberal agenda continue to configure an important indice of rural life and agency. These developments are significant because they reflect the indomitable foray of neo-liberal and in many ways, illiberal reach into the lives of the rural poor, who remain marginalized despite the political gains of empowerment, and more responsive local and national representation under decentralized institutions.

As Leys (1998) observes, the stipulated reform of electricity and mining sectors in economic development policy constitute an important component of the Washington “consensus, a set of economic policies that are often defined as ‘neo-liberal’, in that they emphasize the superiority of markets to deliver the most efficient distribution of resources.<sup>171</sup> This consensus promotes the tenets of privatization, liberalization and minimal state involvement in industry (Haselip & Hilson, 2005: 88). Although the privatization of state assets and public services has been a conditionality of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for decades now (World Bank, 1993), there is an inherent conflict between minimal involvement in industry which assumes away a substantial locus of power and authority that states are loathe to give up particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. And Ghana is no exception in attempting to circumvent the authority of international financial institutions (see Akonor, 2004). Moreover, because of its importance as a key public service, governments of LDCs have often kept energy tariffs unrealistically low for political reasons<sup>172</sup> As result, Ghana has achieved a laudable rate of

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<sup>171</sup> See Leys C. 1998. *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*. James Currey, Oxford

<sup>172</sup>See Gabrielle, A. 2004. *Policy alternatives in reforming energy utilities in developing countries*.

electrification, but the extent to which the rural poor have benefitted when measured against various social indicators demonstrate ambiguous outcomes in terms of pricing, affordability, vertical and horizontal linkages that boost their livelihoods.

*B. Timing and Sequencing as intervening factors*

Timing, sequencing and discretionary provision offer potent explanatory factors for uneven and incomplete electricity access for the rural poor. This was corroborated as much in in-depth interviews with members of parliament as well as by USAID reports on decentralization (2010). In fact, during the course of my interviews, it became apparent that it was not uncommon for some projects to be halted while others began, which speaks to unevenness of implementation, group and possibly sectional interests of MPs, as well as political patronage. For example, parliamentary discussions in June 2004 about the timing and implementation of the current SHEP 4-Phase 1 programs shed light on a problem not addressed among the MPs I interviewed, that is, the problem of certain communities being privileged over others for political reasons.

In this session, the Deputy Minister of Energy not only spoke positively of the NES but of all four phases of the SHEP. But another Member of Parliament noted in response the issues of timing and disruptions among some communities being connected to the grid. He asked, “ Mr. Speaker, I would want to ask the Hon. Minister for Energy to tell us why and how communities in Navrongo Central and Gomoa East, which are on the same phase as the communities mentioned in Nkwanta constituency were fast-tracked and connected to the national grid, while funds had not yet been found for the phase”<sup>173</sup> In November 2003, members of parliament raised

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Energy Policy 32 (11) 1319-1337  
<sup>173</sup>Parliamentary Debates, 2004 154

similar issues in discussion of marginal communities.<sup>174</sup> For instance, during a parliamentary session in July 2003, one MP mentioned to the Minister of Energy that, “contracts under SHEP 3, Phase 3 projects in the north were terminated and the materials like poles and wires collected from some communities”.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, energy insiders acknowledged that some communities were privileged over others—with some moved ahead of schedule or even halted. In contrast, this Minister of Energy, four members of parliament interviewed, refuted the idea that electrification had been politicized. As one of the MPs noted, “there can be no politicization of electricity—I see nothing funny about people sitting in the dark. We want to make sure that the economy flourishes. This government would not tolerate anything like that”.<sup>176</sup> Yet a prominent MP insisted that this issue has become and remains politicized.

Initially, the heightened discontent that likely prompted co-optation could be dismissed as mere clientelism or patronage. Banful (2008) corroborated this in part through her exploration of public goods provision in developing countries from the 1990s onward when funds to district assemblies that supported government policies received more allocations for administrative funds than district assemblies that did not. These trends were observed for the years 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004—all election periods. Though she finds that the political influence of disbursement of the district common fund decreased over time, this study has demonstrated the opposite outcome.

Borrowing from MacLean’s (2004) analysis of the decline in ethnicity and class conflict in structuring state society relations, this development mitigated potentially societal conflict to produce localized patronage systems through *selected public goods provision of electricity*. Indeed, donor dependence and intermittent economic problems in the 1990s provided a rationale

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<sup>174</sup>Parliamentary Debates, 2003b 677-684

<sup>175</sup>Parliamentary Debates, 2003, 201

<sup>176</sup>Anonymous, personal communication, 2009

for discretionary provision, which helped to inadvertently obscure and transform these anathemas into less visible forms of patronage. Thus the confluence of Ghana's adjustment experience, and an ensuing neo-liberal framework that limited government intervention in the economy encouraged private sector involvement, market oriented reforms of key sectors and the "political suicide for certain issue areas like electricity helped to inform the ostensible success of electrification. Perhaps significantly, the relative absence of ethnicity in structuring public service delivery is arguably connected to the fiscal constraints of sub-national governments across all regions, which appears to have rendered electricity provision as a cross cutting issue. This may not only explain why urban-rural cleavages are not as heightened as we might expect, but also general complaints in the newspapers and across Ghanaian society.

### *C. Participation, Empowerment and Collective Action?*

Governments will act in the public interest only if there are pressure groups behind it.<sup>177</sup> What factors explain the lack of agency in demanding equitable public service delivery since the dawn of the fourth republic by the rural poor who comprise the bulk of the country's population? In the absence of collective action, wide disparities in districts and regional differentiation offer reasons for governments to cite economic constraints in the midst of donor dependency and argue for project-based orientation for public service delivery (see Murray, 2009). Given the opposition to Rawlings' policies in the 1980s and a wave of popular protest movements that swept the globe including Ghana, the muted responses of rural classes since this period is surprising.

While Ghana can boast of a rich culture of resistance and indigenous civil society groups, resistance to political co-optation particularly during political business cycles (Ghana

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<sup>177</sup>See Killick, Tony. *A Reaction Too Far: Economic Theory and the Role of the State in Developing Countries*. London: Overseas Development Institute, 1989

International Economic Association interview) and collective action has been relatively absent since the 1990s. But from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the country produced various indigenous civil society groups that exerted considerable political influence over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1980s, patterns of resistance to adjustment policies were visible and in 1990, pressures for democratization from groups like the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ), the Trades Union Congress-a powerful group and other professional and church groups highlighted the capacity for group interests/mobilization.

On the other hand, a plethora of non-governmental organizations that operate in Ghana have frequently encouraged self-reliance and a participatory locus in the communities they assist. To a considerable extent, their activities invoke the themes of participation and decentralization. However what does this really mean in the context of outcomes for public service delivery and how can the voices of the mobilized poor effect change particularly where their preferences are concerned? As Streeten (1997) contends, participation and decentralization are sometimes used more as slogans than as a carefully thought out strategy. As a result he asks, “What is the purpose of participation? Is it personal satisfaction, work enrichment, greater efficiency, greater effectiveness in achieving desired results, community development, the capacity to make decisions or a change in the distribution of power or of economic and social benefits, and if a means to what end? What if there are conflicts between objectives?”<sup>178</sup> As Simon, McGregor, Nsiah-Gyabaah and Thompson cogently note,

More generally, there is now also growing recognition that purely bottom-up, local, grassroots initiatives-no matter how progressive, participatory, or even autochthonous-are often limited in their empowering impact if they become entirely inward looking and localist. This is because these processes provide no method of engaging with (thereby isolating themselves from) the external decisions and forces at the local, regional, national, and global levels that provide the contextual political,

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<sup>178</sup> Paul Streeten, Nongovernmental Organizations and Development. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 554, The Role of NGOS: Charity and Empowerment. Nove 1992, 200-201

economic, and socio-cultural matrix within which the locality or community is embedded (2003, p46).

Certainly the processes of decentralization and democratization have produced a participatory locus that is evident in Ghana (Ocquaye, 2004; MacLean, 2004, Crook and Manor, 1998), but participation remains inadequately linked to local institutions or the broader nature of patron client system at the national level-despite scholarship that acknowledges the role of clientelist networks in Africa (Bayart, 1993; Hyden, 1983).<sup>179</sup> If as MacLean suggests, Ghanaians conceptualize their rights as citizens in terms of public goods that the state provides such as social services or the construction of roads, a more village centered governance along with district assemblies reinforces a localized patronage system. Consequently, the lack of agency on the part of rural peoples is a foregone conclusion. This also helps to explain the impetus for weak capacity of district assemblies (Ayee, 1996; 2003 et al)

#### *D. Decentralization for Whom?*

Barbara Murray, a Senior Governance Advisor with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA-PSU), a group that has undertaken numerous electrification projects notes that, “many DP projects and initiatives at the local level were not prompted in response to calls for administrative or political reform but rather needs for services: water, roads or food security.” This is a striking statement given that utility provision is one of the functions that district assemblies are tasked with performing.

Mr. George Kyei-Baffour, the former president of the National Association of Local Government noted in a symposium on the progress of decentralization that:

Successive central governments have found political convenience in ambushing the decentralization process to provide a platform for central government

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<sup>179</sup>See Lauren Morris MacLean in “Mediating Ethnic Conflict at the Grassroots: The Role of Local Associational Life in Shaping Political Values in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 December 2004, p609

hegemony and political patronage. This unhealthy development has adversely affected the momentum of Ghana's decentralization process. It has also dented the enthusiasm and confidence of the mass of our people in governance and development at the local level (2009).

In recent years, a number of newspaper stories from *The Daily Graphic*, *The Statesman*, *The Daily Dispatch* and several others have chronicled the problems of the ECG and VRA that include connectivity to the grid and ongoing challenges of quality and access. Also surprising are Afrobarometer public-opinion surveys completed over the past two years, which found that over 50% the populace were satisfied with their local representatives (presumably district assembly members). In fact some 65% were satisfied with the performance of members of parliament. Given continued clamor for better access in the country's newspapers, such high rates of satisfaction can only be explained by co-optation and the use of discretionary projects like electrification.

On a separate but related issue, the new role of NGOs in public service delivery in Ghana reflects a neoliberal agenda and reflective of the rollback of the state. As several scholars like Fowler contend, the World Bank's strategy for poverty reduction entails helping the poor to obtain the means and opportunities they need to become productive within a national policy framework with the use of NGOs to assist in this endeavor (1991b). But in the relationship between governments and NGO sector in Ghana, which hinge on service delivery, rural development and poverty reduction has produced limited ownership of these processes. Ian Gary (1996) for instance argued that in an era of structural adjustment and neo-liberalization, the African state (using Ghana as a case study) was being undercut from above and below—in the competition for power and resources.

Another problem is the capacity of district assemblies to address community problems including amenity services, which actively undermines local institutions in effecting agency

among a plethora of poverty-reduction programs and financial assistance from donors and outside institutions. As Ofei-Aboagye , Director of the Institute for Local Government Studies notes, there is a “tendency of some development programs to ignore assemblies and undertake direct implementation in the localities, thus robbing local authorities of opportunities to build local capacity and develop a sense of ownership.” Indeed, the advent of decentralization in the 1990s led some development partners to focus on this component in their various poverty-reduction or service-oriented projects, further undermining the “ownership” of these important processes under decentralization. It is little wonder that Ghanaian leaders have sought “re-centralization” which lends further credence to the contradictory outcomes that the process of decentralization, democratization and a neo-liberal agenda have produced.

*E. The Efficacy of power sector reforms: A Dream Deferred?*

Prevailing wisdom under neo-liberal power sector reforms holds that the injection of private capital should rehabilitate existing utilities and create a thriving electric energy sector. As a consequence, major international lending banks and development agencies promoted a policy prescription for developing countries that included privatization of state-owned enterprises (Beder, 2003). These policies, for instance represented a broader political framework of reform during the 1980s and '90s that expanded the role of private corporations and involved a renegotiation of the role of the state in economic activity. However, Beder and other scholars have noted how these policies benefitted international financial institutions, often at the expense of local business and always at the expense of the poor; since the incentives to construct and operate energy infrastructure in developing countries favored foreign investors rather than third-world governments. Consequently it comes of little surprise that developing countries attempted to circumvent these prescriptions, which amounted to political suicide for many. It is for these

reasons that some countries abandoned power sector reform or only implemented them partially. Thus Ghana began a policy whereby electricity access became a component of a “social compact” approach (World Bank, 1988) with the adoption of a social tariff and subsidies designed to make electric power affordable for the rural poor deemed to propel key sectors of the economy (ISSER, 2005).

In the course of my research, it became evident that the benefits of privatization of electric and gas markets are not as clear-cut as pro-privatization adherents assert. Not only are the benefits of full privatization likely to produce further inequities, they can also debilitate access for the poor. For example, Hawkesworth (2006) and Stiglitz (2002) observed how power sector reform and the transfer of services and resources to transnational corporations under privatization can generate new burdens for the poor in unanticipated ways. If the “social compact” implicit in lifeline tariff policies that make electrification possible for the rural poor possible shifts from the state to markets in Ghana, the future role of government under such circumstances will be critical. Even though regional power sharing arrangements aim to address this possibility, it is not at all clear that the rural poor would benefit.

Moreover, as countries like Ghana move closer to expanding independent electricity generation, outcomes for the rural poor will be significant. How equity in pricing and quality of access are approached in rural areas where private providers will ostensibly operate are anyone’s guess. As it stands, affordability and pricing equity are beyond the concerns of electricity utilities (Ramani, 1992, as cited in Haanyika, 2006, p2981). Haanyika (2006) points out that the adoption of autonomous rural electrification authorities, used in Asia during the 1960s, represents a possible alternative for Ghana. While hardly new, the main function of these authorities would be to act on behalf of the government in planning, organizing and financing of rural

electrification programs. Such an approach would entail resource management, capacity building for rural electrification and preparation for national rural electrification plans in conjunction with rural communities and rural development agents (Haanyika, 2006, p. 2989). Though laudable, it would severely undercut and undermine the role of members of parliament and their political leverage. While Ghana has mostly managed to escape electric energy conundrums facing countries like Nigeria, it still faces a number of potential pitfalls that raise further questions about the future role of the state in public and private utility production and public-service delivery.

Additionally, the future and sustainability of a “life-line” tariff policy that makes electricity more affordable for the poor is questionable.<sup>180</sup> An important observation from one interview revealed that rural electrification has enhanced community participation, because of “the extent to which communities themselves have to contribute in terms of procurement of low-tension poles—even when they cannot afford it— but it is not a pro-poor programme”.<sup>181</sup> Though current subsidies and tariff rates are remarkably low and continued losses plague the Volta River Authority and Electric Company of Ghana, the latter can still be competitive and work for the well being of the poor at the same time (Evans, 2006 in OECD, 2006, p250). In the economically disadvantaged North, for instance, far more communities could be connected in areas like Tamale, a metropolitan area where gross disparities remain.

If a pro-reformist argument is valid, the existence of more efficient and profitable electricity and mining sectors in developing countries should lead to improved national welfare and provide benefits to impoverished communities. Yet a growing number of researchers argue that reforms in both sectors of industry have translated into few benefits for both the indigenous

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<sup>180</sup>Botchway (1998) and Ake (1991) demonstrate how “development projects” emerged so that officials could use this visible and cogent issue area to demonstrate the reach of the state.

<sup>181</sup>Anonymous, personal communication, 2009

subsistence groups and host governments. <sup>182</sup>The extension of privatization and market-oriented pricing policies-requisites of neoliberal norms have produced questionable outcomes. For example, Njeri Wamukonya (2005) concludes that power sector reforms in sub-Saharan Africa have not met intended objectives of securing investment, moving towards more competitive markets or rural electrification. While state owned utilities have been partially unbundled in some African countries including Ghana, ownership and management largely remain under state control and understandably so. Meanwhile, it is increasingly evident that rural electrification may not yield optimal financial outcomes under market-oriented policies and hence can only be undertaken by the public sector or with public sector assistance.<sup>183</sup>

The lessons from Ghana's adjustment experience not only suggest that structural adjustment and development are conflicting processes (Geest, 1994). In the process of inculcating neo-liberal reforms that minimize government involvement and privatize or devolve certain functions to local institutions, weak capacity or poorly functioning markets will likely produce pressures to redefine certain processes and goods in a 'social justice lens' and cause developing states to undertake measures contrary to neo-liberal expectations. This is why electricity provision has emerged as a flashpoint for national government and for the bulk of Ghana's rural poor. Since pricing systems cannot allocate them efficiently without causing a domestic outcry, it is assumed that states will need and seek to choose a level that is socially optimal (Stein, 1997).

The inability to cushion vulnerable populations, amid uneven terms of trade for the small producer or enterprise portends negative outcomes for the rural populace in Ghana and further

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<sup>182</sup>See James Haseliip and Gavin Hilson,. "Winners and losers from industry reforms in the developing world: experiences from the electricity and mining sectors in *Resources Policy* 30 2005, p 91

<sup>183</sup>Njeri Wamukonya, "Power Sector Reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 50 (Dec. 10-16) 2005, p5302.

marginalization. While markets can at least marginally lift all boats, they can also sink them, and their partial integration amidst weak institutions and economic instruments can create additional problems (Wolf, 2006). Though Ghana has resisted “blanket acceptance” of power-sector reform, partial market-oriented power-sector reforms are still insufficiently understood, in no small part due to gaps in data. Current power arrangements, including regional power pools, offer the potential to mitigate risks associated with private power production and yet few details have emerged about the nature of these groupings. Given that an impending boom of private power producers may transform the electric-energy sector, with no guarantees that service quality will necessarily improve in rural areas, regional efforts are all the more critical. However, if rural political mobilization emerges, public-service amenity provision may be redefined. Such a development, would speed up rates of electrification thus enabling the country to reach its target rate ahead of a scheduled date of 2020.

With these challenges in mind, it is critical that the Ministry of Energy and the Energy Commission consider new perspectives to weigh the extent of market-oriented reforms of Ghana’s power sector along with the spillover effects, backward and forward linkages for rural development. The inequities of infrastructural investments also represent an important component that is partially to blame, along with a deficit in decision- making. As MacDonald (2008) argues, electricity has become an integral part of all capitalist activity and we can understand the inequities of its availability and affordability by looking at the neoliberal model within which it operates.<sup>184</sup> As more countries in sub-Saharan Africa look to integrate their economies and power sectors via electric energy networks (i.e., the West African Power Pool and Southern African Power Pool), the consequences of what MacDonald calls “electric capitalism” portends grave consequences. Indeed, MacDonald refers to the situation as a “recolonization of

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<sup>184</sup>For more on his argument, see MacDonald in *Electric Capitalism*, 2008, p11

Africa.” As Haanyika (2006) observes, case studies on electrification in Africa by the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (2004) demonstrates that market-oriented reforms of the power sector reduced the rate of rural electrification substantially. Though power-sector reforms are not unique and are part of a global shift towards privatization and globalization, the pivotal importance of the electricity sector as a driver of the economy makes these developments particularly critical.<sup>185</sup> The perennial problem noted by Wamukonya is that “reformers caught at various stages of development of the power sector are particularly vulnerable to change-especially those with high levels of poverty, high unemployment and low levels of electrification; it also becomes relatively easy to see how mismatched agendas or confluence of factors can produce further difficulties for rural populations.”<sup>186</sup> On another note, politician promises of access and delivery only serve to deepen the perception that governments have the responsibility to cover this amenity in full. As a result, Ghanaians are increasingly questioning the logic of paying for electricity. Indeed, the former mayor of Accra explained to me that poor zoning laws make sabotage relatively easy. Two engineers for the NES noted that in some areas, it was common for parts of a house to have electricity while other rooms would not. Frequent reports of partial access to electricity in one half of a neighborhood even in urban spaces suggest that this problem is endemic and not simply a few isolated incidents. Though public service delivery is ostensibly a hallmark of decentralization, uneven benefits despite the transformation of access means that Ghana will remain embedded in the perpetual dance of interventionism and disengagement. How rural people resist the “lights on, lights out” scenario and how governments navigate the tenuous terrain of neo-liberal oriented governance, will most certainly inform the loss of authority under these arrangements. But the need to strike bargains

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<sup>185</sup>Wamukonya, 2003, p1279

<sup>186</sup> Ibid

with the rural poor as a broad section of Ghanaian society under a decentralized state is sure to determine the tapestry of Ghanaian politics and role of the state in public service delivery for years to come.

## **Addendum**

When Ghana gained independence in 1957, the mood of the country was euphoric. Although Ghana faced many daunting development challenges as a young nation (republic), the promise of political and economic advancement was undeniable. As the head of state and widely respected, transformational figure, Kwame Nkrumah inspired optimism and hope across much of the continent particularly since Ghana represented the first African nation to gain independence. The course of history saw Nkrumah's initial fortunes plummet as political infighting commenced among the country's nascent political parties-Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party (CPP), the Peoples Party (PP) led primarily by K. A. Busia, a political stalwart and rival who became the second president and a vanguard of critics including traditional authorities or leaders-that is chiefs). After Nkrumah's ouster in 1966, Busia's tenure as president which ended in 1972 in a coup d 'etat much like his predecessor. In the years leading to 1981, military councils were largely in charge of the country. But in the short- lived third republic of Hilla Limann, (from the Peoples National Convention) a well-intentioned but ultimately ineffectual leader, economic returns proved illusive. Following his ouster by Former Flight Lieutenant J.J Rawlings, the country was ruled in a military dictatorship style until the end of the 1980s when mounting economic problems, inflation, unemployment, domestic unrest, clamors for democratization and the prerequisites for donor assistance forced the hand of Rawlings. In 1992, the country finally returned to civilian rule with Rawlings elected as president of the Fourth republic. Since then, the country managed to successfully establish itself as a model of democratic governance with three successful and peaceful transfers of power. As the choice for President Obama's first visit to sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana's mounting status as a country to watch in the coming decade and lucrative oil discoveries several years ago) promises to further propel the country ahead of its

neighbors and beyond. It is for these reasons that public service delivery of key amenities like electricity will be increasingly critical in closing the gap between regional differentiation in resources endowments like electricity access, and in quelling rural flight and bolstering domestic confidence among Ghanaian constituents including the rural poor. Thus the real triumphs of public service delivery lays not in how far the country remains ahead of many of its neighbors in electricity delivery or that the rural poor have benefitted. Rather it is the possibilities for *further transformation* that the rural poor offer as game-changers simultaneously receptive and resistant to the politics of rural capture. In an electoral landscape in which swing votes are increasingly salient and up for grabs, the rural poor stand to function as agents of change in a political economy where services will likely serve as a gauge for electability and good governance.

## **Appendix 1**

My familiarity with the history and political culture of Nigeria, as well as my experience living there for ten years, presented a potentially rewarding case study. However, endemic corruption and bribery at all levels of government and sensitivity to researchers are significant factors that would have made data collection difficult, despite personal connections. The severity of problems afflicting Nigeria's electric energy industry and its institutions, as well as the political sensitivity would likely have tainted in-depth interviews and other research efforts.

It is for these reasons that I decided to focus instead on Ghana, a country to whom I am also connected through family ties as well as the social resonance of electric energy issues that fill newspapers and ordinary discussions in the streets of Accra, the capital and elsewhere in the country. Additionally, the country's adoption of political decentralization in the return to civilian rule and, most importantly, the co-optation of rural voters through an exclusive policy of rural preference informed the choice of Ghana as a case study. In short, Ghana was appealing as a case study because it presented a particular set of circumstances that set it apart from other hydro-producing countries. For example, its relative political and social stability, access to public records, officials and libraries and a number of institutions would facilitate my research.

The literature review, undertaken through several library databases, has yielded few comprehensive analyses of market-oriented reforms of power sectors and their impact on rural electrification programs or on the rural poor. Consequently, my study reviews Ghana's political, the NES and REP, and the outcomes of these electrification programs. I also examine government white papers and legislative documents that pertain to electrification policies. A series of documents from the Ministry of Energy, Volta River Authority, the Energy Commission and Parliament were acquired and examined for their relevance to the ongoing

Rural Electrification Program. Additional documents were obtained through contacts met over the past four years in Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

## Appendix 2

While some articles feature problems with power provision or power cuts, they also indicate the saliency of electricity provision. NP designates newspaper, NP1 refers to the *Daily Graphic*, while NP4, refers to the *Ghanaian Times*.

DOCUMENT REFERENCE	DOCUMENT DATE	DOCUMENT PAGE	DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION
<b>1996</b>			
NP1/178	March 26	Back	ECG to extend power to 42 towns
NP1/179	April 25	Page 7	Bawdie, Enchi to get electricity
NP1/179	June 28	Back	115 communities to benefit from power project
NP1/180	August 10	Back	Agona Nyakrom power project commissioned
<b>1996</b>			
NP4/130	January 5	Back	Ohawu power project commission
NP4/130	January 15	Page 9	Atadanwomase spends ₵16.7m on project
NP4/130	January 16	Page 9	Fomena pools funds for electricity
NP4/130	January 20	Back	Church backs Agona Nsaba's project
NP4/130	January 24	Back	41 Dormaa communities to get power
NP4/130	January 31	Page 9	Wusuta embark ₵287m for electricity
NP4/130	February 12	Back	4 Assin communities to benefit from ₵50m power project
NP4/130	Feb 23	Page 6	Tongo North Assembly extends power to communities
NP4/130	March 5	Page 9	Afedume works towards ₵120m power project

NP4/130	Mach 18	Page 3	5 East mamprusi communities to enjoy electricity
NP4/130	March 19	Page 3	Loan agreement for E.R. power project before House
NP4/130	March 21	Back	Bui Hydro – electric dam, a firm reality
NP4/130	March 26	Page 3	ECG, Atlas sign power pack
NP4/130	April 10	Page 9	Logba Tota Spends ₺40m on projects
NP4/130	April 10	Back	GHPC gets \$326M for Tano power project
NP4/130	April 20	Page 7	Ehi purchases 90 poles for power project
NP4/130	April 26	Page 7	Abira completed phase 3 power project
NP4/131	May 8	Back	Manhean appeals for power
NP4/131	May 10	Back	Menji power project commissioned
NP4/131	May 21	Page 7	Atesikrom bags ₺5m for power project
NP4/131	June 28	Front	3 rivers identified for hydro-power projects
NP4/131	June 28	Front	VRA awards contract for power to 3 regions
NP4/131	July 18	Page 9	2 companies bid for VRA projects
NP4/131	July 24	Back	100 power poles for Asante Akyem communities
NP4/131	August 10	Back	₺20m power poles for 28 west Gomoa communities
NP4/131	August 19	Back	₺61 bn. Released for power project in W.R
NP4/131	August 22	Back	Japan provides \$4.7m for electrification project

NP4/131	August 29	Back	¢562m voted for power for Asuogyaman communities
NP4/132	September 4	Page 7	Assembly assists Agona Nkum on power project
NP4/132	Sept. 10	Back	Akim Akroso erects 215 poles for power
NP4/132	Sept. 14	Pg. 9	New Fluorescent launched
NP4/132	Sept. 14	Back	Studies on streams for power begin
NP4/132	Sept. 24	Back	7 Northern Regional district capitals to enjoy power
NP4/132	Oct. 1	Back	VRA, US company to manage thermal plant
NP4/132	Oct. 7	Back	President commissions Bole power project
NP4/132	Oct. 11	Back	3 Adaklo communities bal ¢10.1m for power project
NP4/132	Oct. 18	Back	New Edubease power project commissioned
NP4/132	Oct. 21	Back	¢168m Kwabre, power project commissioned
NP4/132	Oct. 22	Back	President commissions ¢120m Manso Hawanta power project
NP4/132	Oct. 25	Back	Jejeti power project commissioned
NP4/132	Oct. 26	Back	President commissions ¢900m Adeiso power project
NP4/132	Oct. 30	Back	Akrofu power project at stand still
NP4/132	Oct. 31	Back	17 Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam communities to enjoy power
NP4/132	Nov. 4	Back	Nkroful power project commissioned
NP4/132	Nov. 8	Pg. 3	Ajumako to enjoy power in 1997
NP4/132	Nov. 9	Back	Breman Asikuma power project commissioned
NP4/132	Nov. 11	Back	Komenda power project commissioned

NP4/132	Nov. 16	Back	Dzodze connected to the National and
NP4/132	Nov. 18	Back	Kraboia Coal tar buys poles for power
NP4/132	Nov. 21	Front	President commissions ₵1.5 bn Shai electricity project
NP4/132	Nov. 22	Back	504 communities to enjoy power in 997
NP4/132	Nov. 23	Back	Ayensuako receives ₵20m electric poles
NP4/132	Dec. 2	Back	President commissions power project at Odoben
NP4/132	Dec. 5	Back	Breman-Beedum buys ₵1.6m for power project
NP4/132	Dec. 6	Back	Tchimantia gets power
NP4/132	Dec.13	Back	Government provides 105 districts with power
NP4/132	Dec. 16	Back	60 power poles for 2 W.R communities
NP4/132	Dec. 16	Back	Boama raises ₵3.5m in aid of power
NP4/132	Dec. 18	Front	16 hydro power sites identified
NP4/132	Dec. 18	Back	Turbines for thermal plant delivered
NP4/132	Dec. 20	Back	Oda Kotoamso to finance power project with farm cash
<b>1998</b>			
NP4/136	Jan. 2	Back	University of Ghana solar street light commissioned
NP4/136	Jan. 3	Back	Nsuta opens ₵10.2m on power project
NP4/136	Jan. 14	Back	1,400 communities to enjoy power
NP4/136	Jan. 16	Front	Power for remaining 14 district capitals
NP4/136	Jan. 17	Back	Thermal Plant begins operation

NP4/136	Jan. 19	Front	VRA orders out in power consumption
NP4/136	Jan. 22	Pg. 7	Abaam embarks on power project
NP4/136	Jan. 24	Pg. 3	Special dispensation for Tema Industries
NP4/136	Feb. 2	Front	Electricity tariffs out
NP4/136	Feb. 3	Back	Kpoeta raises ¢6m for power project
NP4/136	Feb. 7	Front	Power crisis, Cote D'ivoire to bail Ghana out
NP4/136	Feb. 14	Back	VRA to construct Bui Dam
NP4/136	Feb. 16	Front	¢7m power cables stolen at Apam
NP4/136	Feb. 19	Back	VRA to re-appraise Bui Dam Project
NP4/136	Feb. 23	Front	Volta Lake at lowest level ever
NP4/136	Feb. 23	Front	Akosombo Dam to shut down if
NP4/136	Feb. 23	Front	Use 4 solar energy to be encouraged
NP4/136	Mar 7	Back	¢8.7m ECG wires stolen
NP4/136	Mar 10	Front	ECG re-designs power supply
NP4/136	Mar 12	Back	VRA signs energy pact
NP4/136	Mar 14	Back	Government out with power supply action plan
NP4/136	Mar 20	Front	ECG forced to cut more power
NP4/136	Mar 24	Back	US to fund power barges in W.K.
NP4/136	April 7	Front	Emergency power plant for Harbour
NP4/136	April 14	Front	Utilities commission angry with ECG
NP4/136	April 17	Pg. 9	ECG: Billing system has been the same
NP4/136	April 23	Front	No energy crisis in future
NP4/136	April 23	Back	Developers expose to solar energy

NP4/136	April 26	Pg. 5	26 more towns to get power
NP4/136	April 27	Front	Rural power programmes not cause for energy crisis
NP4/136	April 27	Pg. 3	Mines Ministry signs pact for 70 mega watts
NP4/136	April 27	Back	Solar energy project for Mamprusi district
NP4/137	May 4	Back	Likpe-Kururantum Dam project
NP4/137	May 14	Back	Rainfall stabilized Dam's level for 3 days
NP4/137	May 23	Back	15 Ajumako communities enjoy power now
NP4/137	May 25	Back	US firm to help produce more power
NP4/137	May 28	Back	Tema Metropolitan Assembly votes ₵599.8m for street lights
NP4/137	June 2	Back	Kpassa pays ₵12m for solar energy
NP4/137	June 4	Pg. 9	2 communities accuse ECG of bad deal
NP4/137	June 5	Back	Government secures \$10m for power project in Upper East
NP4/137	June 6	Back	"Kofi Pare" raises ₵5.4m for school electricity
NP4/137	June 12	Back	₵300 Tanofield power project commences
NP4/137	June 13	Pg. 7	Wusuta acquires 160 poles for power
NP4/137	June 13	Back	GNPC to supply Tebrebe Goldfield with power
NP4/137	June 19	Back	₵6.1m power plant for Mfantiman Assembly
NP4/137	June 19	Back	13 communities to enjoy solar energy
NP4/137	June 24	Pg. 3	VRA, ECG apply for tariff increase
NP4/137	July 3	Pg. 7	Agona Rural Bank gives towards power project
NP4/137	July 3	Back	Krachi opts for VRA as power

NP4/137	July 11	Front	Energy crisis to cost nation ₵200m
NP4/137	July 13	Front	Akosombo still empty
NP4/137	July 17	Front	US energy team in to help solve power crisis
NP4/137	July 18	Back	VRA, US firm sign pact to develop power
NP4/137	July 25	Pg. 9	Ghanaians to pay more for power
NP4/137	July 25	Pg. 9	₵1.8m for Asuafa power
NP4/137	Aug. 5	Front	Power cuts are over for Industries
NP4/137	Aug. 19	Front	How Burkina Faso Dam affects Volta Lake
NP4/137	Aug. 19	Back	VRA, ECG urge to remove waste
NP4/137	Aug. 25	Back	Mining firm helps 6 communities on power project
NP4/137	Aug. 28	Front	Ghana-Czech in joint power talks
NP4/138	Sept. 2	Front	Power tariffs up
NP4/138	Sept. 9	Pg. 9	7 arrested for illegal re-connection of power
NP4/138	Sept. 10	Back	Czech shows interest in Bui Dam
NP4/138	Sept. 10	Back	Krara bags ₵1.4m for street lights
NP4/138	Sept. 16	Pg. 9	Power supply to nation is now regular – ECG
NP4/138	Oct. 14	Back	Bolga Assembly spends ₵150m on power poles
NP4/138	Oct. 17	Back	VRA opens bid for solar sub-station
NP4/138	Nov. 19	Pg. 9	Renewable energy sector development under discussion
NP4/138	Nov. 20	Pg. 3	Government to encourage private interest in power sector
NP4/138	Nov. 21	Back	GNPC focuses on power from natural gas

NP4/138	Nov. 28	Back	Bonsu embarks on ₺24m power project
<b>2000</b>			
NP4/143	Jan. 12	Front	More power from Takoradi
NP4/143	Mar 10	Front	AGI, TUC seek ways for reliable electricity supply
NP4/143	Mar 30	Pg. 9	VRA to supply power to 2 Burkina Faso towns
NP4/144	May 6	Pg. 13	Kome communities protest about
NP4/144	May 9	Pg. 9	IFC invests \$41m in Kipevu power project
NP4/144	June 30	Pg. 3	ECG owes VRA ₺265m
NP4/145	July 1	Pg. 13	W. Africa power grid suggested
NP4/145	July 8	Pg. 13	Twedie street lights under rehabilitation
NP4/145	Aug. 11	Pg. 3	66 VR. Communities to get power
NP4/145	Aug. 26	Pg. 12	Sissala Assembly votes ₺260m for power projects
NP4/145	Sept. 9	Pg.12	8 Gomoa West communities to get power
NP4/145	Sept. 11	Pg.10	Electricity company losses ₺200 bn in 6 months
NP4/145	Sept. 18	Pg. 9	New Fluorescent launched
NP4/145	Sept. 20	Pg. 3	Bolga Police retrieves stolen power roles
NP4/146	Oct. 23	Pg. 12	Jawra Assembly spends ₺255m on power
NP4/146	Nov. 2	Pg. 3	Customers owe ECG ₺270 bn
NP4/146	Nov. 4	Front	Veep commissions Amanfrom power project
NP4/146	Nov. 14	Pg. 3	President inaugurates Takoradi Thermal power project today
NP4/146	Nov. 15	Front	Takoradi Thermal power commissioned

NP4/146	Nov. 23	Pg. 13	500,000 communities enjoy electricity under SHEP
NP4/146	Dec. 4	Pg. 3	Thieves stealing installed power poles at Ajumako
NP4/146	Dec. 6	Pg. 3	President commissions Ridge Hospital Extension Project
NP4/146			
<b>2004</b>			
NP4/161	Jan. 30	Front	Volta communities get ₺27 bn power project
NP4/161	Feb. 11	Pg. 13	Electricity (ECG) to improve revenue collection
NP4/161	Feb. 12	Pg. 10	German Envoy hands over solar electricity
NP4/161	Feb. 19	Pg. 6	How productive is the concept of productive use of electricity
NP4/161	Feb. 23	Front	Power goes to Nyinahin area
NP4/162	March 4	Back	Bush fires destroy 72 electricity poles
NP4/162	March 6	Pg. 15	204 communities join power grid
NP4/162	March 9	Pg. 3	Lawra communities soon to join power grid
NP4/162	April 22	Back	Bomaa receives street bulbs power cuts
NP4/163	May 3	Pg. 4	Abelemkpe protests against power cuts
NP4/163	May 11	Pg. 3	1,069 communities to get power this year
NP4/163	May 14	Front	Electricity meters produced locally
NP4/163	May 24	Pg. 4	Frankadua gets ₺1.6 bn electrification project
NP4/163	June 9	Front	Thermal project gets \$60m support
NP4/163	June 19	Pg. 3	Who maintains streetlights?

NP4/164	July 15	Pg. 13	VRA provides electricity for settlement towns
NP4/164	Aug. 18	Pg. 4	KMA to produce power from landfill site
NP4/165	Sept. 6	Pg. 14	Central Region customers owe ECG ₵30 bn
NP4/165	Oct. 9	Pg. 14	New standard labels for electrical appliances
NP4/165	Oct. 12	Pg. 3	Legon to enforce ban on electrical appliances
NP4/165	Oct. 30	Pg. 9	Energy is crucial to nation's development
NP4/166	Nov. 9	Pg. 3	Solar power for 3 Dangbe schools
NP4/166	Nov. 11	Pg. 4	₵2 bn to improve power supply to C.R. towns
NP4/166	Dec. 4	Pg. 4	Special system to check power usage on campuses
NP4/166	Dec. 20	Pg. 7	Renewable energy use in Ghana when do we start?
<b>2008</b>			
NP4/197	Jan 15	Pg 13	Kosoa streetlight damaged
NP4/197	Jan 19	Pg 31	ECG pledges uninterrupted power supply
NP4/197	Jan 23	Pg 19	6m energy saving bulbs distributed
NP4/198	Feb 5	Pg 4	2 new energy products launched
NP4/198	Feb 5	Pg 28	Conserve energy and pay less
NP4/198	Feb 16	back	Motorway lights not functioning
NP4/198	Feb 20	Pg 12	Review ECG reliability status
NP4/198	Feb 21	Pg 22	45 communities in Upper West communities to be connected to national electricity grid
NP4/199	Mar 4	Pg 4	Osagyefo to barge to begin giving power soon
NP4/199	Mar 5	Pg 23	ECG insists on pre-paid meter policy

NP4/199	Mar 25	Pg 17	Agreement for Bui power project land signed
NP4/199	Mar 27	Pg 25	Akraman gets electricity
NP4/200	April 9	Front	Motorway lighting project suspended
NP4/200	April 10	Pg 25	KMA'S''waste-to-energy project to commence
NP4/200	April 17	Back	Kosoa streetlights develop faults
NP4/200	April 19	Front	Kpong power project begins
NP4/200	April 23	Back	VRA explains power outages
NP4/200	April 23	Back	Motorway lighting project resumes
NP4/201	May 2	Pg 16	Thermal plant, must not affect environment
NP4/201	May 14	Back	Traffic lights to be repaired nationwide
NP4/201	May 21	Pg 22	New electricity transformer to boost business at Hohoe
NP4/201	May 21	Pg 23	GT. Donates electric poles to T' poly
NP4/202	June 25	Pg 26	High voltage electricity consumers to pay more
NP4/204	August 19	Pg 22	Chirano Gold Mine connects electricity to 2 communities
NP4/204	Aug 25	Pg 28	Energy supply critical to achieve middle – income status
NP4/204	Aug 30	Pg 17	Govt. moves to reduce power cost for the poor
NP4/204	Aug 30	Pg 19	8 communities in Amansie East to get electricity
NP4/205	Sept 1	Pg 7	Ghana lauds India for supporting energy sector
NP4/205	Sept 1	Pg 16	Govt. advised to expedite process for Atomic Energy
NP4/205	Sept 1	Pg 19	ECG replaces stolen cables in mpraeso
NP4/205	Sept 13	Pg 19	MP inaugurates street light project in Kaleo

NP4/205	Sept 15	Front	Maintaining street lights: we can't cope
NP4/205	Sept 18	Pg 26	Sugarcane can supply electricity
NP4/205	Sept. 22	Pg 26	4,000 megawatt power pledge is no mere talk
NP4/205	Sept 25	Pg 7	Church funds power project at Hungua
NP4/206	Oct. 3	Pg. 34	Construction of Bui Dam commences this month
NP4/206	Oct. 16	Pg. 22	Electrification of Twifo Hemang communities almost completed
NP4/206	Oct. 18	Pg. 3	Nuclear power policy advocated
NP4/206	Oct. 23	Pg. 7	New body to handle power transmission
NP4/206	Oct. 23	Pg. 27	Juale, Pwalugo power project
NP4/206	Oct. 31	Pg. 4	ECG needs \$1 bn to expand operations
NP4/207	Nov. 1	Pg. 17	Energy managers update knowledge
NP4/208	Dec. 2	Pg. 10	VRA assures of constant power
NP4/208	Dec. 4	Pg. 2	Phase 2 Bui Project begins
NP4/208	Dec. 8	Pg. 11	Power follows at Mo
NP4/208	Dec. 9	Back	Thermal Plant for Kumasi
NP4/208	Dec. 17	Pg. 3	ECG begins local shedding
<b>2008</b>			
NP1/270	Jan 4	Back	Street lights for Begoro
NP1/270	Jan. 8	Back	Electricity for 500 communities
NP1/270	Jan. 21	Pg. 53	ECG assures of power supply
NP1/270	Jan. 23	Pg. 29	ECG assures Kumasi of stable power supply

NP1/270	Jan. 24	Pg. 28	Bushfires destroy power poles
NP1/270	Jan. 31	Pg. 20	Bushfires burn power poles
NP1/270	Jan. 31	Pg. 28	West Akyem retrieves incandescent electric bulbs
NP1/271	Feb. 4	Pg. 14	Pursue other sources of energy
NP1/271	Feb. 7	Pg. 34	Two solar products launched
NP1/271	Feb. 7	Pg. 36	700 wooden electric poles to be replaced in V. R.
NP1/271	Feb. 7	Pg.43	Group to protest electricity tariff luke
NP1/271	Feb. 18	Pg.47	5 communities to link to national electricity and
NP1/271	Feb. 29	Pg. 29	Tamale residents worried about frequent power cuts
NP1/271	Feb. 29	Pg. 31	Private sector worried over poor utility services
NP1/272	Mar. 4	Pg 24	More power from Osagyefo barge soon
NP1/272	Mar 7	Pg 29	No frequent power outages in Tamale
NP1/272	Mar 10	Pg 11	Solar powered street lighting system launched
NP1/272	Mar 14	Pg 20	ECG spends €30.000 to replace conductors
NP1/272	Mar 20	Pg 49	Govt. acquires land for Bui Dam project
NP1/273	April 1	Pg 21	2 projects inaugurated at Akraman
NP1/273	April 2	Pg 20	Work on Osagyefo barge progresses
NP1/273	April 3	Pg 23	Possible solutions to Ghana's energy problem
NP1/273	April 3	Pg23	Wasting solar power and God's time
NP1/273	April 11	Pg 29	ECG to replace stolen conductors in cape coast
NP1/273	April 14	Pg 20	Regulate used electrical appliances imports
NP1/273	April 14	Pg 24	Ghanaian invents power generating equipment
NP1/273	April 19	Front	Private power project ready to kick off

NP1/273	April 22	Front	No load shedding
NP1/273	April 22	Pg 25	VRA explains intermittent power outages
NP1/274	May 6	Pg 15	Africa's energy problems
NP1/274	May 6	Middle	Two to draw law on renewable energy
NP1/274	May 6	Pg 31	Govt. to improve access to power supply
NP1/274	May 7	Back	Govt. finances solar systems for rural areas
NP1/274	May 12	Pg 32	Streetlights for cape coast
NP1/274	May 21	Pg 30	GT. Support T' – poly lighting project
NP1/274	May 21	Pg 31	VRA, ECG deny local shedding
NP1/274	May 27	Front	Bui project progressing
NP1/274	May 29	Pg 29	ECG replaces old meters
NP1/274	May 30	Pg 24	“Let's tap all energy potential
NP1/274	May 30	Pg 29	“Restore Tamale streetlights”
NP1/274	May 31	PG 23	85 communities in W.R. to get electricity
NP1/275	June 12	Pg 28	Wa East communities to get electricity
NP1/275	June 18	Pg 24	Interruption of power
NP1/275	June 19	32	Cuba to support energy sector
NP1/275	June 19	Pg 54	Kasoa residents to use ECG pre-paid meters
NP1/275	June 23	Pg 19	Veep secures €360m project to boost electricity
NP1/275	June 25	Pg 29	Emergency load shedding in twin – city
NP1/276	July 2	Front	Power plant for valco
NP1/276	July 9	Pg 20	6 communities to enjoy electricity
NP1/276	July 9	Back	More communities to enjoy electricity

NP1/276	July 9	Back	Sunon Asogli power plant course to meet deadline
NP1/276	July 10	Back	Energy commission yet to license 5 power plant
NP1/276	July 15	Pg 24	Use energy bulbs to save power consumption
NP1/276	July 15	Back	Communities at Bui Dam project site resettled
NP1/276	July 17	Back	30 waterfalls to save Akosombo identified
NP1/276	July 23	Back	Hydro studies on 3 rivers updated
NP1/276	July 25	Pg 29	Rehabilitation of Tamale traffic lights begin
NP1/276	July 26	Back	More communities connected to grid
NP1/276	July 29	Back	MOU (memorandum of understanding) signed on for hydro – projects
NP1/277	Aug 8	Pg. 21	H Thermal insulated buildings put up at Bui
NP1/277	Aug 11	Front	China approves \$562m for Bui project
NP1/277	Aug 15	Pg. 24	Provide meters for compound houses
NP1/277	Aug 22	Pg. 26	GREL donates electric poles to 4 communities
NP1/277	Aug 27	Back	Bagre Dam spillage will feed Volta Lake
NP1/277	Aug 28	Pg. 35	SHEP 4 kicks off in Western Region
NP1/277	Aug 28	Pg. 50	Ghana has potential to harness wind power
NP1/277	Aug 29	Back	Hasten passage of Nuclear Energy Bill
NP1/277	Aug 29	Back	Breakthrough in local power generation
NP1/277	Aug. 30	Pg. 3	Water company extends power to Busumase
NP1/278	Sept. 6	Pg. 15	Ghana, Switzerland sign pact on power extension plan
NP1/278	Sept. 16	Back	GAEC (Ghana Atomic Energy Commission prepares for nuclear plant)

NP1/278	Sept. 19	Pg. 31	ECG incurs ₵9m loss
NP1/278	Sept. 25	Pg. 29	Street lighting project begins in Sekondi/Takoradi
NP1/278	Sept. 27	Pg. 18	Minister tours energy power project in Tema
NP1/278	Sept. 27	Pg. 22	Work progresses on Bui Hydroelectric power project
NP1/279	Oct. 4	Pg. 23	Akyem Eshiem, Bantama now enjoy power
NP1/279	Oct. 20	Pg. 40	Work on Bui Power project progresses
NP1/279	Oct. 21	Pg. 24	Ghana needs more power
NP1/280	Nov. 5	Pg. 21	Street light for Akyem Swedru Achiase
NP1/280	Nov. 5	Back	Electricity project for 31 communities inaugurated
NP1/281	Dec. 2	Pg. 13	VRA, ECG assure stable power supply
NP1/281	Dec. 4	Front	Bui Project in 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase

### Appendix 3

#### Rural Electrification Questionnaire

Electricity is indispensable to modern life and is used as an index to measure standards of living in the global economy. The provision of and access to electricity is not only a central economic input, it is indispensable in myriad ways and yet inaccessible to millions of rural residents across Africa. But over 50% of Ghana's population has access to electricity, a remarkable feat in comparison to other developing countries. During the 1990s, Ghana embarked on a major national and rural electrification initiative aimed at closing the energy gap. As Ghana attempts to achieve middle-income status within a decade, electrification access remains critical. This questionnaire is intended to provide insight into the economic, political and transformative impact of rural electrification and the connection to rural development in Ghana. The purpose of my study is document and uncover the reasons underpinning the relative success of Ghana's electrification schemes in comparison to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently I aim to contribute to the development discourse by tracing and comparing energy values in countries similarly endowed with hydropower on the continent. After almost two decades since the inception of the National Electrification Scheme, it is central to examine its impact on rural areas in terms of infrastructural growth, rural development and income generation. This survey is anonymous and I kindly ask that you take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire. All information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and assistance.

**Administered by**  
**NaaBorle Sackeyfio, PhD Candidate**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**City University of New York-The Graduate Center**

**Rating scale: 1-3 denotes low; 4 to 5 denotes fair; 6 to 7 denotes moderate; 8-10 excellent or high**

1. How has the Akosombo dam, a significant source of hydropower and electricity been managed since the beginning of the 1990s?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
2. How successful has the Rural Electrification Program been since its inception in the 1990s?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
3. How would you rate the success of Ghana's Self Help Electrification Scheme, which emerged in the early 1990s?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
4. How connected is rural electrification to income generation and rural development outcomes?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
5. How would you rate the capacity of District Assemblies in assisting with rural electrification and the self-help electrification scheme?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
6. How would you rate the effectiveness of Ghana's decentralization program and devolution of authority to district assemblies?  
High              Moderate              Low
7. Has the politicization of electrification in the 4<sup>th</sup> republic helped advance rural electrification?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
8. Have the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s policies reduced the scope of government in Ghana in terms of economic expansion and programs geared toward rural development?  
High              Moderate              Low
9. How would you rate the capacity of the District Assemblies in terms of financial and material capacity to address the needs of communities?  
High              Moderate              Low
10. How would you rate Ghana's overall performance in terms of electrification?  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

## Appendix 4

### Interview Questions for members of Parliament

1. If I may ask, which one of Ghana's ten administrative regions do you represent (which constituencies do you serve)?
2. Who led the impetus for the National Electrification Scheme and why?
3. Were there particular groups pushing for it? Did it come from constituents?
4. Can you describe how the NES worked in your region; how do you rate the success NES nationally and in your region?
5. How would rate the DA system and decentralization?
6. What kind of feedback do you get in regards to electricity provision from your constituents in your region? Has there been politicization?
7. What are your views on rural development since 1989? Has it progressed much or stalled?
8. How would you describe the relationship between electrification and rural development?
9. Has electrification led to an improvement in rural incomes or infrastructural development ?
10. How would you rate impact of district assemblies?

### Interview with administrator of District Common Fund

1. What is your opinion on how the district common fund has been administered?
2. Has it worked well within the framework of decentralization?
3. What are your views on how funds are distributed among the DAs?
4. As the administrator of the DACF, what kind of challenges and rewarding experience have you had?

### Interview questions for Energy commission

1. How would you describe your role as an official in the energy commission? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. What is the overall role of the energy commission in regards to the provision of electric power?
3. As an independent agency what is the commission's relationship like with government officials or parliamentary members?
4. How well do you think the government has performed in regards to electrification particularly in rural areas?
5. What do you think about the National electrification Scheme ; how effective has it been?
6. How effective has the self-help electrification been in your opinion?
7. Do you think that that the government's multi-pronged strategy of development is linked to electrification?

## **Appendix 5**

### **List of Interview participants (formal and informal)**

1. Member of Parliament, NDC party
2. Member of Parliament, NPP party
3. Member of Parliament, NPP party
4. Member of Parliament-NDC-and Speaker for the NDC party
5. Member of Parliament, Deputy Speaker, NDC party
6. Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Energy
7. Member of Parliament
8. Member of Parliament and Minister of Energy
9. Member of Parliament, ranking member for NPP; Committee of Mines and Energy
10. Member of Parliament and NDC Minister
11. Member of Parliament, NPP
12. Member of Parliament, NDC
13. Member of Parliament
14. Member of Parliament
15. Member of Parliament
16. Technical Director, Ministry of Energy
17. Deputy Director of Power, Ministry of Energy
18. Director, Energy Commission
19. President/Head, Institute of Economic Affairs (Ghana)
20. Former Head, Volta River Authority
21. Volta River Authority Official and National Electrification Scheme Engineer

22. Volta River Authority Official
23. District Assembly official, Amasaman Municipal District Assembly-Ga West and former District Chief Executive
24. Official-Ministry of Rural and Local Development
25. Administrator, District Assembly Common Fund
26. Chief Executive Officer, Public Utilities Regulatory Commission
27. Former Mayor of Accra

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