

**Kobina Mensah Mannoh, Ghana**



## **Effect of City Expansion on Peri-Urban Property Rights and People's Livelihoods: The Case of Peri-Urban Accra, Ghana**

In recent times most cities have seen their boundary limits extending uncontrollably resulting in urban sprawl. The problem is even more acute in developing countries where a growing number of the population is migrating into the urban areas; in so doing peri-urban land undergoes a lot of changes: in ownership, use and even land tenure system/property right regime. This informal land market leads to the exclusion of (poor) farmers from access to land, enriches “customary elites”, causes land conflicts and reverse development (Wehrmann 2002; 2005). To avoid exclusion of local farmers, peri-urban areas should keep their rural parts and not totally convert into urbanized areas.

This study is geared towards exploring means of managing peri-urban property rights with the view of preserving both the rural and urban aspect of the peri-urban life. By using the case study approach, a qualitative approach was chosen, primary and secondary data have been collected and a literature review been done.

A stakeholder analysis has also been done to critically look at the various stakeholders at play in the peri-urban areas of Accra, Ghana.

The results from both the field work and the literature review point to the fact that there is rapid conversion of peri-urban agricultural land to residential and industrial use. This has led to changes in the land rights of the members of the rural community who in most cases are the original occupants of the land. The existence of customary tenure in peri-urban Accra has deepened the wounds of these victims who are losing their land to urban expansion as most of their rights are loosely defined. Lack of knowledge of enforcing ones customary rights has also been identified as a canker among the rural lot of the peri-urban inhabitants. The study also identified that there is lack of planning in the area leading to reverse development, a situation where development precedes the provision of infrastructure and services.

It is a known fact that urbanisation is a phenomenon that cannot be stopped. However, it can be managed to ensure that both rural and urban life are preserved. Based on the findings, a series of recommendations have been made and these include: the need for a clear cut policy on peri-urban development, education on property rights, constitutional amendments to allow for customary freehold (a kind of perpetual interests granted to family members), encouraging high rise development, comprehensive land use planning, use of taxation to manage the allocation of land, commercialisation of farming and training in alternative income generation.

The peri-urban area is a necessary part of every urban existence and its preservation is imperative to both urban and rural wellbeing.

**Key words:** Peri-urban areas, land tenure, property rights, livelihood, urban sprawl, customary land tenure, (informal) land market, land conflicts, Ghana