



mapping accra

parks and public spaces

for mmofra foundation:

mawuena mensah
namata serumaga-musisi
latifah iddriss
amowi sutherland-philips
yaa asantewaa agyare

THE ISSUE

The variety of spaces in Ghana's capital city Accra, which may be termed parks, include natural, planted or open spaces set aside for public recreation, enjoyment, social interaction and information. However, government statements, the press, public opinion, research papers and anecdotal evidence would suggest that the city's park infrastructure is inadequate, often inaccessible, underutilized, undervalued and characterized by poor stewardship. Furthermore, indications are that with rapid urban growth, these public spaces are subject to aggressive encroachment or not being integrated in the new built environment. As parks are generally considered a vital part of the urban environment, an investigation of the history, status and public value of Accra's parks can be a useful evidence-based tool to inform policy and generate serious engagement between the public, government, developers and civic organizations.

PROPOSAL

Mmofra Foundation's child-centered mission is closely aligned to advocacy for public spaces such as parks, where children and families, particularly in Ghana's cities, can safely enjoy the many documented benefits of outdoor urban space. Our aim is to locate, describe, assess, inquire into and report on Accra's parks, beginning with formally designated park spaces as the first phase. In this report we will suggest other public open space examples that are typical around the city. In addition, whilst some literature - articles, reports, social media engagements and other records - pertaining to Ghana's parks and their use exists, it is important to gather and collate a selection of these for a usable overview of the current status of our formal parks, incorporating a range of public experience and opinion of these spaces.

The Government of Ghana stands in great need of robust civic participation in determining the allocation, role, oversight, maintenance and use of parks. The primary desired outcome from this report is increased knowledge about the current park situation in Accra, as well as recommendations for the way forward which could serve as an important spark for more effective engagement on parks between government, the public and the private sector in the near term.

TEAM

Esi Sutherland-Addy - Executive Director
Amowi Sutherland Philips - Project Lead
Latifah Idriss - Project Coordination and Technical Consultation
Namata Serumaga-Musisi - Project Coordination and Technical Consultation
Mawuena Mensah - Field Research
Yaa Asantewaa Agyare - Research and Analysis

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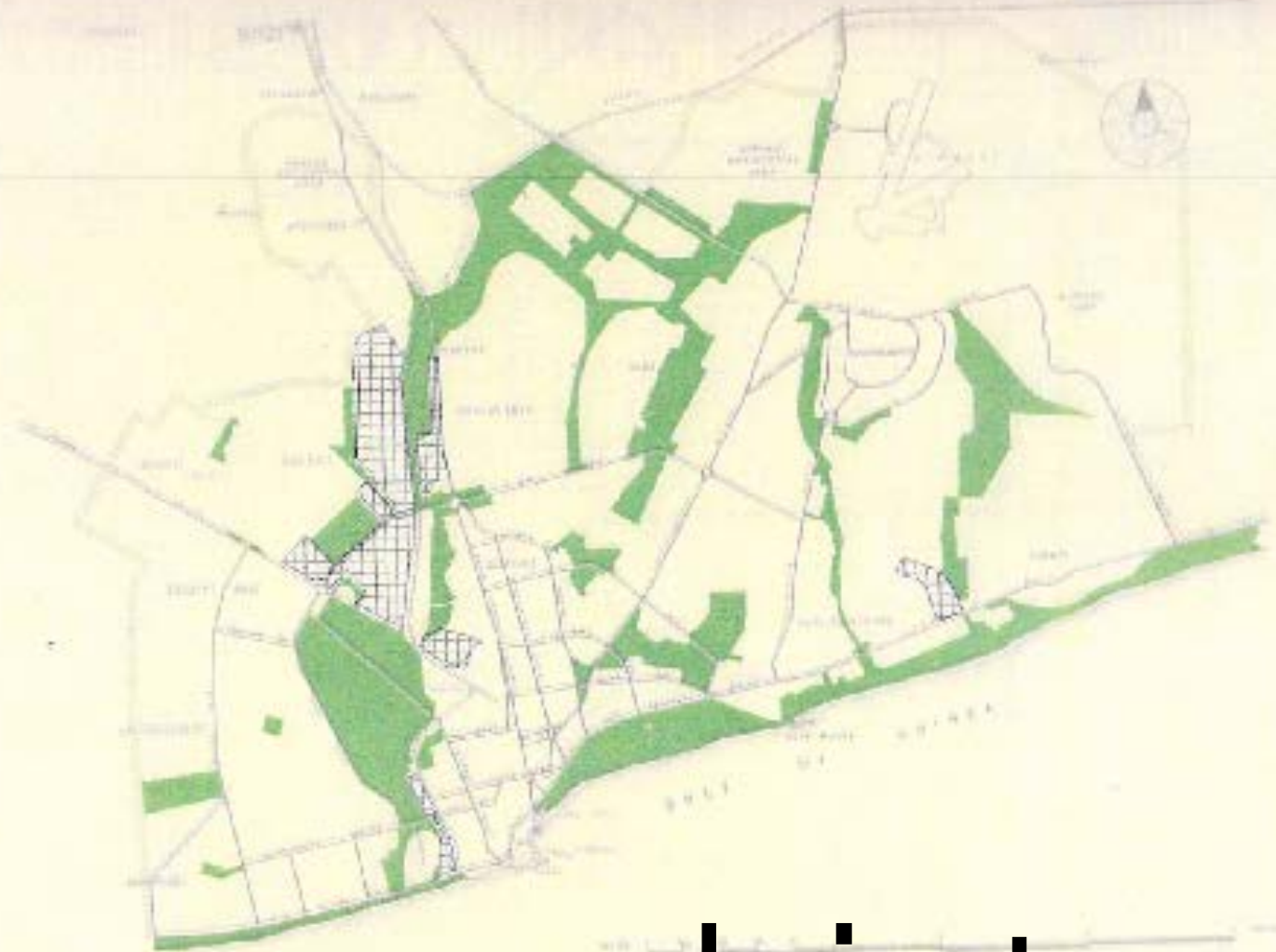


Diagram No. 11
Distribution of the
major open spaces and
industrial sites. The
open space pattern
shows the "green
wedges" and the im-
portant coastal area
which are described in
chapter three.

history

In 1958, the Accra Town Plan (first prepared in 1944) was reviewed and published – a comprehensive document, or set of rules perhaps, to guide Ghana’s newly defined capital, that was fast expanding with opportunity. With a total population of 4.75 million people at the time, about 500,000 resided in larger cities, like Accra and Cape Coast. The Accra Town Plan addressed the various facets required for a city to function. Such include the development and implementation of health services, housing and land tenure – still contentious to this day – educational facilities and open spaces and parks. As it pertains to our project, this introduction will briefly outline the history of Accra, and expand upon the aspects of the Town Plan that addressed the creation of open spaces and parks in the city, delving into what that meant at the time, the aspects still relevant today and where we have fallen short. As you can imagine, the creation of open spaces feeds into the overall health of a city. It allows for the aesthetic development of place, and the opportunity of city dwellers find solace and connection to the place they call home. As quoted in the Plan:

“A town which lacks open spaces...may be impressive by reason of its buildings, but it will almost certainly be lacking in those human qualities which can be preserved if the built-up areas can be seen in relation to land in its natural state...”

In a foreword written by then Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, he stated that as a newly independent nation, the standards of living in our major cities should improve. The Ministry of Housing also emphasised the importance of adopting locally acquired knowledge and context whilst doing so – an important principle in achieving sustainability.

history

Accra first developed as a coastal town when the Ga tribe originally migrated from what is now known as Nigeria in the 16th century. The first settlements were fishing villages in Ussher Town and Osu. By the late 17th Century, Accra had developed into the commercial district of Ghana, and the decision was made to move the seat of administration there from Cape Coast, thus making it our capital city. "With great power comes great responsibility", and Accra began to function as the major port distributing centre, attracting its citizens into new and exciting opportunity. It became crucial to develop a new Town Plan; a set of rules almost to guide the new city and manage resources.

Accra was fortunate to have open spaces dispersed throughout its landscape, and the drive to maintain them as a way to improve community life was woven into the Town Plan. They were imagined into the cityscape in a 'the world is your oyster' kind of fashion, with ambitious ideas on how they were to be utilised. The government owned huge swathes of land, and they prioritised retaining open spaces as building free zones, employing town planning control entities to enforce this during periods of rapid development.

Open spaces were described as a desirable feature of the city, allowing for relaxation and recreation for the wider community. Town planners also recognised the benefits open spaces brought to the micro-climate of a city, and their absence was seen to increase overall temperatures – not particularly ideal for a city so close to the equator. Classified into various difference categories, including major open spaces, parks, forest reserves, recreational centres and minor open spaces, they were projected to add to the character of Accra overall.

The major category included 'coastal strips' and 'green wedges'. Coastal strips are self-explanatory, and green wedges were created as physical boundaries to residential areas, to add special character to the city and disrupt the monotony produced by unbroken areas of development. There were no parks in Accra during this period; however, areas surrounding Independence Avenue were of special interest, and deemed parkland in character, imagined as places for children to play, and again to provide a contrast to the built environment. Figure 2 below identifies other areas in the city that were highlighted to develop parks in. The Achimota forest was seen as a useful resource, and an important landscape feature also. Recreational spaces, town gardens and open area developments were part of the minor category. Interestingly, there was also consideration for tree planting and the provision of allotments in selected open areas around the city.

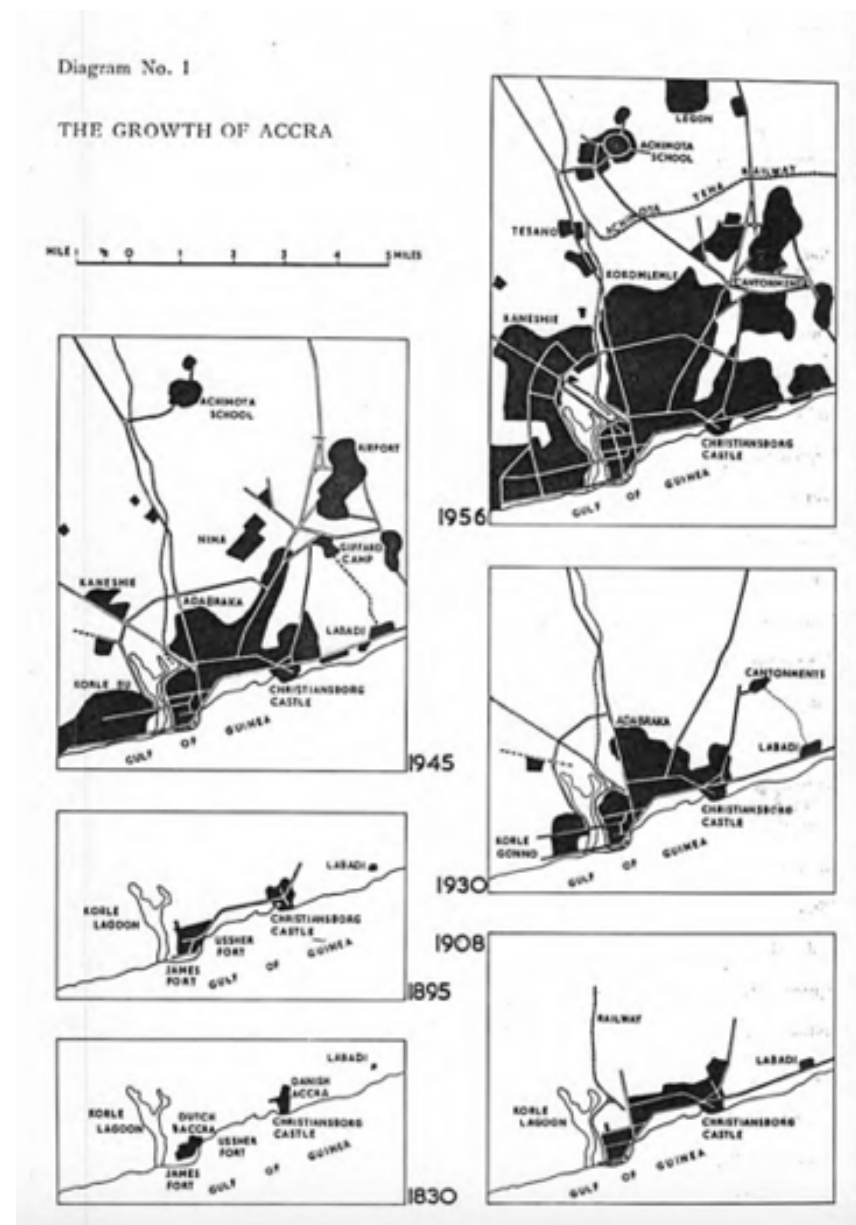


Figure 1 – The Growth of Accra (1830 – 1956)

The greatest demand for open space was for the public domain, and standards for the creation of these areas were laid out. Such include, a maximum distance of half a mile that a child should travel from home to their local playground, for example. Where this was not achieved, additional recreational spaces created within green spaces were seen as sufficient. Furthermore, 6 acres of land was deemed acceptable per thousand persons.

The following quote from the Town Plan on the maintenance of open spaces perhaps sets the tone for the remainder of this report:

“If adequate care and foresight continues to be exercised, there need be no shortage of open space since the basis for a very fine open space system to meet all the need of the community already exists.”

The added pressure of an increasing urban population for commercial and residential space was a trend which might help explain why, decades later, the outlook for parks and open spaces was so much less optimistic. In the 2015 article *Public Parks as an element of urban planning: a missing piece in Accra's growth and development*, the authors state that the areas mentioned in the 1958 Plan have been overtaken by other urban uses. They worry that “the continuing neglect in urban planning and community development is depriving citizens of a right to the city and its public spaces, and they identify adverse factors in the provision of public parks and green spaces such as “development pressures, undue political interference, a complex land delivery system and ad hoc planning” (Arku et al).

The end of the first republic under Nkrumah in 1966 to the 1970's saw political instability and marked economic decline in Ghana, with little consequent attention to the development of a public parks scheme. For the decade of the 1980's, it appeared that the government under J.J. Rawlings was prepared to give renewed attention to parks in the context of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Mrs Efua T. Sutherland, first Chairperson of Ghana's National Commission on Children, is credited with inspiring a “national voice for children”, and being a major influence in the government's decision to dedicate the centrally located space formerly known as Ridge Park in Accra, to the children of Ghana. It was through her determined efforts that the country-wide Park-Library Complex idea took off, and its flagship site at the Accra National Children's Park served to demonstrate how, in the words of architectural historian N.A. Wellington, “spaces could be creatively deployed to function as community environmental nodes ...for integrating playing and learning, especially for children”.

PARKS

Four areas near to the centre of Accra are suggested for reservation for future development as town parks. They are:—

- (a) *In the east*, the existing Independence Avenue parkland extending southwards from the Ridge Police Post to 28th February Road opposite the present Parliament House and stretching from the race-course in the east to Barnes Road in the west (50 acres). This area is vital. It is already acclaimed by all visitors as a most attractive feature of Accra and when the new Parliament site is developed between Rowe Road and 28th February Road this parkland will be of even greater importance in separating the legislative area from the commercial centre and in providing a highly suitable setting. The appearance of the area can be further improved by the ultimate removal of the vegetable gardens opposite the Government Boys' School, the removal of old fences and posts and dead or deformed trees and the continued planting of suitable specimen trees and groups of trees in an informal manner.
- (b) *In the north-east*, the area north of Castle Road between the Ridge Hospital and the Mental Hospital and including the two quarries (29 acres). This area, suitably landscaped would be extremely attractive. The steep ground near the quarries could be terraced and planted with trees and shrubs and the lake could either be drained or cleaned and made a feature of the park. This land, unsuitable for other forms of development because of its configuration is ideally sited for a park to serve the highly populated Adabraka area and the West Ridge. This is also a very suitable form of development of this land in relation to the two hospitals adjoining.
- (c) *In the north-west*, the area west of Hansen Road bounded on the north and west by the harbour railway line. This area includes an old disused Mohammedan cemetery the boundaries of which are not defined. The total area is 50 acres. Subject to the agreement of the Mohammedan authorities it is proposed that the more level south-eastern corner of this land should be used for school purposes and the steeper north and west sides as a public park overlooking the Odaw Valley. Open space has a special importance in this area in view of the very large number of people living in the old residential areas of James Town and Usher Town.
- (d) *In the west*, the open land surrounding that portion of Kowli Lagoon south of Guggisberg Bridge (43 acres). It is proposed that this portion of the Lagoon should be dredged in due course and that after the sea outlet has been enlarged the lagoon should be kept in a clean state fit for boating and swimming. This also depends on the implementation of the long overdue measures for the drainage of the Odaw Valley and also upon the carrying out of the foul drainage scheme for Accra. The banks of the lagoon could be suitably graded and planted with palms and other trees to give shade.

Figure 2: Identified Areas for Parks in Accra (1958)

Professor Wellington recalls how experts and practitioners in many fields came together to visualize and design elements of these children's parks as converging places for children of all backgrounds (charrette). Comfort Caulley-Hanson, who served as secretary to the GNCC during Mrs Sutherland's tenure, describes the Park-Library Complex Project as "the brain child of Efua Sutherland", and a "unique example of an integrated non-formal education programme...young architects and landscapers were invited to form a design colloquium to design model parks which use the cultural background of Ghanaian children as guidance" (Adams and Esi Sutherland-Addy).

The GNCC's inter-disciplinary method for creating children's park models resulted in these thriving public spaces, giving Ghana a pioneering role in the indigenous practice of physical and cultural child-centred urban space development in Africa:

- The National Children's Park, Accra (Renamed Efua Sutherland Children's Park)
- The Asanteman Children's Park, Kumasi, Ashanti Region
- The District Complex, Gomoa Assin, Central Region
- The Village Complex, Kyekyewere, Eastern Region
- The Neighbourhood Complex, Teshie Nungua, Greater Accra Region

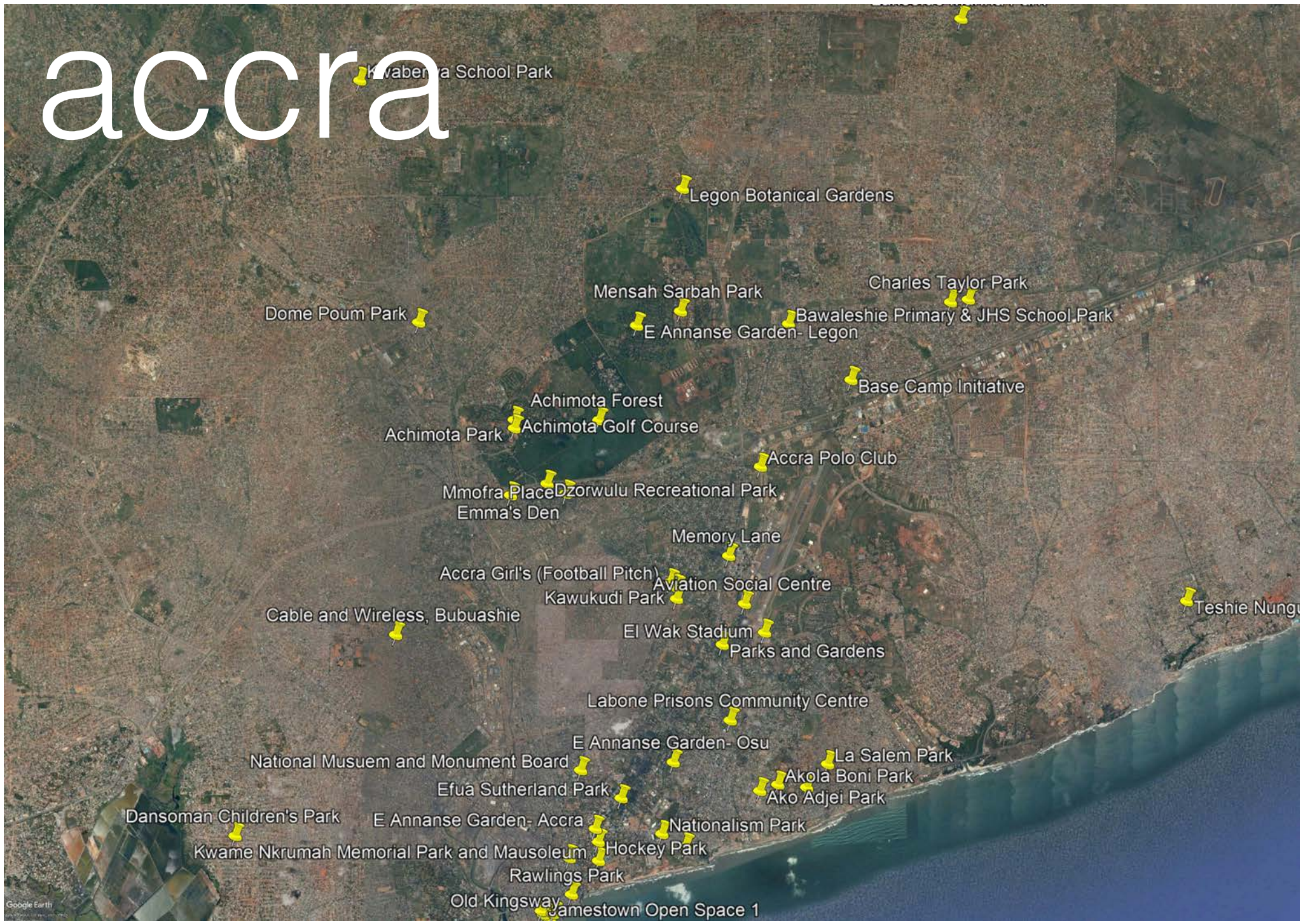
By the end of the 1990's, the decline in the promising children's park system was being noted in press articles whose titles reflected public dismay with the dramatic deterioration of all the parks, urban and rural.

Today, the implementation of what was then considered to be open space has perhaps waned, with minimal enforcement from the state to ensure that these areas continued to thrive. Accra is littered with uncompleted buildings in free, open spaces of land. The irony of it all is that there is a whole chapter of the town plan dedicated to addressing the problems and dangers associated with not ensuring that these open spaces are maintained. These issues pertain to preventing the use of open spaces for development and the built environment, the adoption of inadequate aforementioned standards, poor maintenance and general shortages of space.

Much is left to be desired in the way we not only view, but also utilise our open spaces, particularly our existing parks. The Mmofra Foundation has strategically placed itself in a position to ensure that these spaces are protected and enabled to function as what they were once envisioned to be.



accra





locations covered

It is difficult to define Accra's public parks, as there are a number of state custodians, either designated by law or policy - for example the Ministry of Women and Children are the custodians of Efua Sutherland Children's Park; Legon Botanical Gardens is under University of Ghana; school parks tend to be under Ghana Education Service, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum is under the National Commission on Culture; and the Department of Parks and Gardens have responsibility for many of Accra's parks and green spaces.

In order to perform a comprehensive study of Accra's parks, it was decided that we would work backwards, breaking down the functions of parks and then analysing the spaces that fulfil these functions. In doing so the team was able to ensure that both the formal parks, and some of the spaces that are not necessarily recognised as such were covered. Certain more informally defined parks - such as communal grounds - became representative of park typologies, while the more formal parks - such as Legon Botanical Gardens, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, and Efua Sutherland Children's Park, were recorded in their unique capacities.

The list of parks covered:

- Accra Girls, Nima Park
- Achimota Forest
- Adjiringanor Park
- Ako Adjei Park
- Akola Boni Park
- Asomdwee Park
- Aviation Social Centre
- Bawaleshie Primary School
- Charles Taylor Park
- Dansoman Children's Park
- Dzorwulu Recreational Park
- Efua Sutherland Children's Park
- El Wak Stadium
- Emma's Den
- Accra Hockey Park
- Jamestown
- Kawukudi Park
- Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, Museum & Park
- La Salem
- Legon Botanical Gardens
- Memory Lane Park
- Mmofra Place
- Nationalism Park
- Old Kingsway Building
- Parks and Gardens
- Rawlings Park
- Tam Park
- Teshie Nungua Children's Park

reading the signs

functions



middle aged
elders

kids

teens / YAs

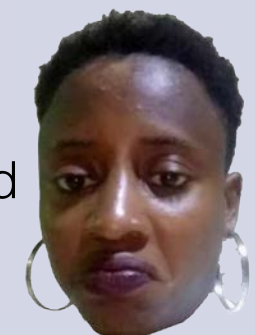
condition

accessibility

demographics

green cover

bad



ok



good





parks



kawukudi
park



kawukudi park

Park Area: 20,952.74 m²
Population [within 400m radius]: 10,629.62
Population [within 800m radius]: 38,886.44
Population [within 1km radius]: 59,559.32

Kawukudi park is a public park on the periphery of Nima, a densely populated middle to lower income neighbourhood in central Accra. It is an open field bordering a major intersection off the Kanda Highway housing a culture centre, library, eatery, 2 large and one 5-a-side football pitches, as well as a basketball court.

The park is over 30 years old, and in that time has been used for a variety of purposes. On any given day one will find youth and young adults making use of the various sports facilities. The park also serves as a major events ground for the communities of Nima, Maamobi, Kawukudi and surrounding areas - large cultural and religious gatherings, smaller community events, as well as sporting events take place on these premises.

The park is well used. There is a great sense of ownership of the space among members of the community who, among other things, use it as a hangout spot in the evenings.

There are plans to create a modern recreational centre in the space in the future, in a sense 'formalising' the function it already plays in the area.



demographics

People of all ages can be found in this park. It is located close to a number of schools, and so hosts a number of school children and teens in the early afternoon after schools close. Young adults gather here to socialise, and older people cool down here after work.

All members of the community are represented here during cultural, religious and other events.



green cover

The park is for the most part bare earth, save for the basketball court, and a few patches of grass. A few trees line the peripheries, providing some - but not nearly enough - shade.



accessibility

The park is free access, for the community and anyone else who wishes to use it, except when in use for events. There is little fencing, and what fencing there is was introduced in recent years. The library and cultural centre are easily accessed, when not in use by members of the community - usually elders and assembly members.

function

The park serves as a multi-purpose recreational centre, boasting a number of functions.

Sports

There are 3 football pitches and a basketball court; the latter has a few trees nearby which serve as shade for spectators.

Rest & Recreation

Many people can be found making use of the cultural centre, and socialising on the peripheries of the sports facilities, making use of the drinking spots, chop bars [small restaurants], and other facilities.

Events

Many events take place here, from cultural events, to funerals and parties.



condition

The park is well maintained by the community, who keep it swept and generally litter free. There is much potential to be seen - the experience could be enhanced by planting of lawn, and the deliberate creation of shade or planting of trees. Ablution facilities are needed.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**





nationalism
park



nationalism park

Park Area: 13,844.61 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 11,137.49

Population [within 800m radius]: 33,902.42

Population [within 1km radius]: 49,782.08

Nationalism Park is an official public park located close to the Central Business District of Accra. As part of the design for the capital of the newly independent Ghana, it forms part of the celebration of Ghana's sovereignty. It is surrounded by monuments to Ghana's independence, notably Black Star Gate, Black Star Square, Accra Stadium.

The park is a shaded, cool space often used for rest; people of all ages can be found sleeping on the worn benches at any given time. The space is popular among people on their way through the city, as it gives them brief respite from the heat and traffic. Some homeless people are known to live in the park.

The nationalism monument to the east of the park strikes a harsh contrast, a man-made, concrete and monument that is fenced off from the rest of the park and yet is in very poor condition. While young families rest under the trees of the main park, the monument is neglected and does not raise any interest in those passing by

Maintenance of this park appears to be sporadic, though somewhat regular. While the space is not manicured, the grass remains reasonably trimmed and the litter more manageable than one would expect in such as space.



demographics

The park is at a relative distance from residential areas, and sits in the middle of a busy road network; it is therefore understandable that children are not so visible in this space. Many older people have been observed, as well as young adults, many who are on break from their jobs in the nearby city centre.



green cover

The park is green, and well shaded by a number of mature trees. It serves as a green island in an area of the city that is quite aggressively urban.



function

The park serves primarily as a space of rest and simple recreation.

Rest

People can be found sleeping on the benches and in the grass at any time of day.

Tourism / Photography

Its proximity to major monuments and tourism icons makes it a stopping place for people visiting Accra. While its own monument is neglected and so not an attraction, locals have been seen to use the park for photoshoots.

Monument

A neglected monument sits on the east edge of the park. Visitors to the park do not seem to engage that space.

accessibility

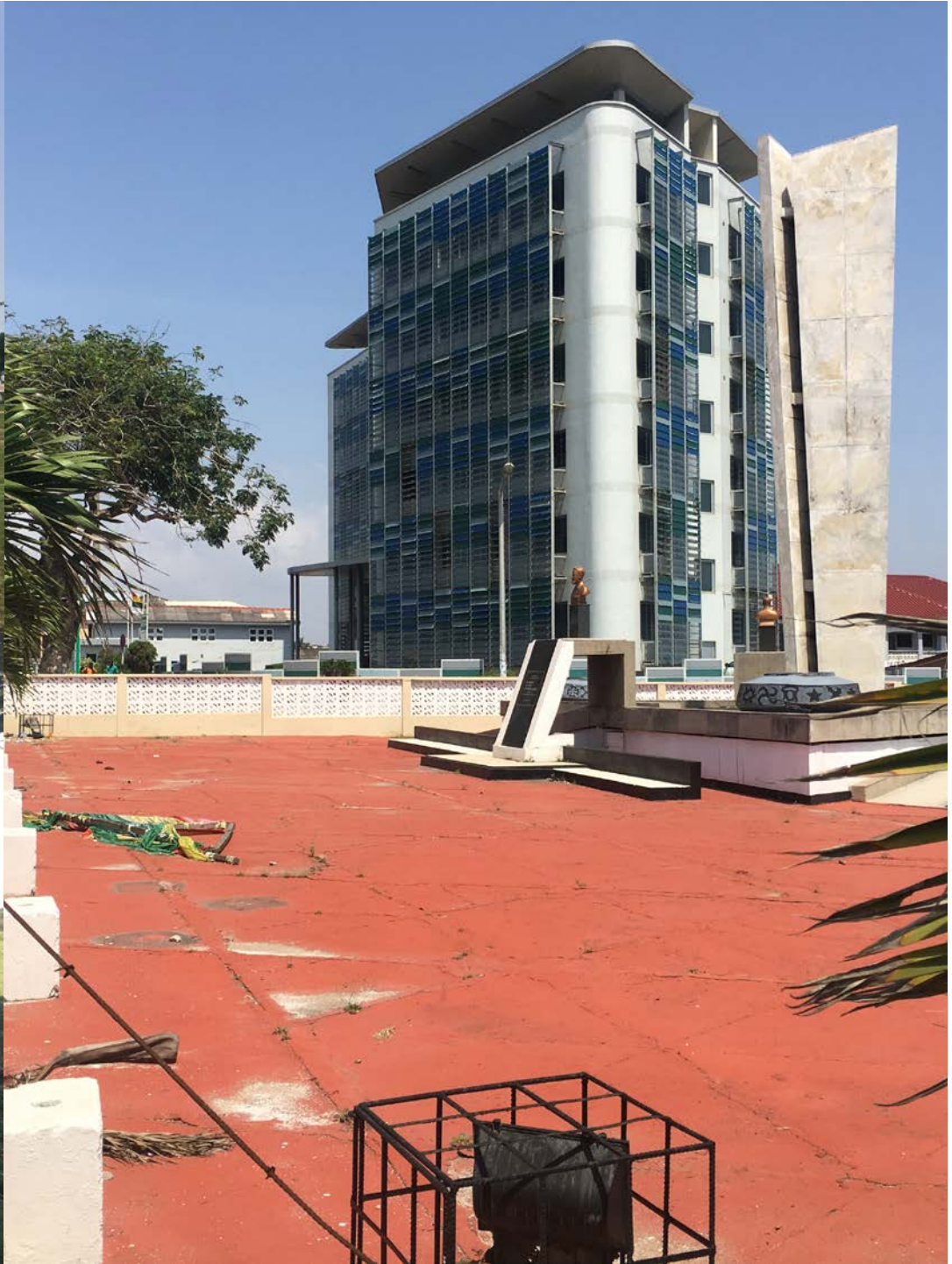
Access is for the most part easy and free, and people can visit the park at all times of day. The monument to the east of the park is fenced, however, and the gate remains closed.

condition

The park could be better maintained, as the grass is overgrown and the lack of waste disposal facilities makes it difficult to keep the park clean. That said, the park is pleasant, as is affirmed by the constant use.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**







asomdwee
park



asomdwee park

Park Area: 54,402.58 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 12,146.09

Population [within 800m radius]: 31,095.78

Population [within 1km radius]: 44,173.87

Asomdwee Park is an official public park located on the north boundary of the historical Osu [Christiansborg] Castle, a former Danish castle and former post-colonial government administrative centre. The park is the burial site of former Ghanaian President John Atta Mills.

The park is a stark expanse of land close to the ocean with minimal tree cover and few benches. There is a large pond to the north of the park, in which a number of geese are domiciled. The late Atta Mills' ostriches share the same space.

The south end of the park is the burial ground, a large, paved expanse leading to a hard monument. This is in stark contrast to the trees that line the road to park.

Asomdwee Park does not belong to the community; children play football on the street outside, families sit on the ground outside. Very few people venture inside the park, except for people on day trips and friends/acquaintances of the caretakers.

Maintenance of the park is minimal. On one visit the pond was clean and full of life; on another visit the pond was full of algae. There appears to be no sense of ownership of the space.



demographics

While the park should ideally be for all age groups, the lack of accessibility to the recreational aspects of the space has resulted in a space which mainly teens and middle aged adults feel free to visit. Elders and children tend to come with the specific purpose of paying their respects to the late president.



green cover

Green cover is quite extensive over the park, with the exception of the burial ground which is a stark area. The streets outside the park are well lined with trees, and as a result are more inviting for the public than the park.



function

The park serves primarily as a monument, as rest and recreation is discouraged.

Rest & Recreation

People can be found sitting on the pavement outside the park.

Tourism / Photography

Families come to the park to pay respect to the late President John Atta Mills. They do not stay for long, perhaps due to the lack of accessible rest spaces.

Monument

Late president John Atta Mills is buried in the park.

Animals

The late president's pet ostriches are kept in the park, as well as some geese and egrets.

accessibility

Access to this park is free. However the caretakers were seen to be chasing away children and teenagers, which could be part of the reason why many who visited the park opted to stay outside on the street. This restriction of access may be due to the fact that this is a burial ground, but it does render the seating areas and other facilities useless.

condition

The park is in relatively good condition. The ostriches and other living beings on site are looked after. That said, maintenance is lacking - the large pond filled with algae in the space of 3 months, and the gardens look a little haggard. The monument needs maintenance care.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**







elwak stadium

Park Area: 18,534.84 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 10,962.65

Population [within 800m radius]: 37,235.32

Population [within 1km radius]: 55,607.18

Elwak Stadium in the military area Thirty-Seven is an open stadium that is free to public schools and community sports clubs recognised by the organisation that runs the facility.

It hosts facilities for football, track, and other sports. While access is free, better shade would make the space a more attractive space for the general public to use between the sports usage. It does not have high usage except for when it is occasionally the venue for events such as music concerts.



demographics

This stadium serves the needs of local schools and sports clubs, meaning that the most common people found using it are teenagers and young adults.



green cover

There are no trees on the premises and the only green is the football pitch.



function

The park serves primarily as a sports facility, and occasionally hosts events.

Sports

People can be found sitting on the pavement outside the park.

Events

Music concerts are occasionally held on the premises.



accessibility

Access is free to this park, with priority given to community members like public schools and sports clubs.



condition

The stadium is old, but clean and in relatively good condition. The toilet facilities are functional and free, and all other facilities in order. More shade is required in order for this space to truly serve the needs of the community, which would increase usage of the space.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**



memory lane

Park Area: 6,327.75 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 11,735.48

Population [within 800m radius]: 36,479.58

Population [within 1km radius]: 53,625.46

Memory Lane Art Park is a private, gated park in the affluent neighbourhood of Airport. It sits at a junction on the main artery that is Liberation Road across the road from some of the most expensive real estate in Accra.

Access is approx. US\$5, making it quite steep in price - however the park is lush, green and very well maintained. When not in general use, the park is rented out for private events.

The location of the park and its lack of roadside parking makes it the kind of location that one visits with intent.



demographics

The location of the park means one must visit with intent. Middle aged people are the demographic most commonly found at the park, though this likely changes during private events.



green cover

The park is very lush and green, with lawns and rich shrubbery. The landscaping informs the design of the seating areas which are connected to each other by stone paths.



function

The park serves primarily as a rest and recreation space, and an events venue.

Rest & Recreation

While costly, the park is a welcome break from the traffic of Liberation Road.

Events

The park is rented out for private events.



accessibility

Entrance to the fenced premises is approx. \$5. The park is located in an area that is frequented by people who drive, and as such does not feel as accessible as other parks do.



condition

The park is very well maintained and run.

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**



mmofra
place



mmofra place

Park Area: 38,553.28 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 13,047.75

Population [within 800m radius]: 36,884.69

Population [within 1km radius]: 53,442.31

In line with its mission to develop programs in inspiring environments where children can benefit from play and outdoor learning, Mmofra Foundation (founded by children and park advocate Efua T. Sutherland) is the steward of the privately owned Mmofra Place, located in central suburban and commercial Dzorwulu, a mixed income, mixed use area served by this green shady open space. Mmofra Place is an advocacy space which shares design ideas for parks with Accra neighbourhoods.

The unique features of this park are its child-centered educational and cultural elements which lend it the character of an outdoor children's museum open to multiple community uses such as play, school field trips, blood drives, science exhibitions, food and film festivals, children's designathons, respite days for families living with disabilities, performances, vacation workshops, teacher retreats, volunteer building events and weddings.

Whilst entry to the park is pegged at an accessible fee of about \$1, the foundation also hosts a free inclusive monthly session open to children aged 4 - 15 for an educative day in a natural environment with such activities as reading, drama, art, dance, science/STEM exposure, hands-on making and diverse interactions.



demographics

Activities in the park are geared towards physical and imaginative play in nature by toddlers to older children. Events bring people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.



green cover

The park is very green as education in a natural environment is a founding principle of the space.



function

The park serves primarily as a play and educative space for children, as well as an events venue.

Play

Various components within the park are designed to engage children in a playful manner that encourages them to develop their motor and rational skills.

Events

The park is often rented out for private events.



accessibility

Access to the park is \$1 on most days. On the monthly Open Days days, free access is given to children of the community.



condition

There are groundskeepers at work on the park every day, and a management team to ensure all facilities are in order.

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**





adjiringanor
park



adjiringanor park

Park Area: 9,066.14 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 1,848.16

Population [within 800m radius]: 6,201.67

Population [within 1km radius]: 9,017.03

Adjiringanor School Park is located in the suburb of Adjiringanor, in the north of Accra. Like many other parks in the city, this park is the property of the adjacent school, who have opened it up to the community.

Parks such as these tend to be maintained by the school.

Adjiringanor Park has the added fortune of mature trees, that create an environment in which the community can relax.



demographics

This space is used by the children of the school, as well as by other members of the community.



green cover

This park has more green cover than many similar parks, with the inner 'courtyard' space being quite well shaded. The football pitch remains exposed and bare earthed,



function

The park serves primarily as a play and sports area for children, also opening up for use by the community.

Play / Sports

The children play in this area during breaks, and the school uses the park for sports events.

Rest & Recreation

The community use the shaded area for rest purposes, particularly in the evenings.



accessibility

The park is easily accessed as it has no perimeter fence, and charges no entry fee. The community respect is as being exclusively for the school during school hours.



condition

The park is in relatively good condition. While waste disposal is an issue, the school is making the effort to keep the area maintained.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**





efua sutherland
children's park



efua sutherland children's park

Park Area: 77,323 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 22,868

Population [within 800m radius]: 62,836

Population [within 1km radius]: 89,771

Efua Sutherland Children's Park is a large public park for children located opposite The National Theatre in downtown Accra. It was started in 1979 and known as Accra Children's Park or Ridge Park and later renamed after Ghanaian playwright and children's author, Efua Sutherland.

For a long time the park was a well used public space; generations of Accra children have spent weekends and outings playing in the green, on the ferris wheel, the train and using the other facilities available to them.

In recent years the park has fallen into a state of disrepair, and attendance has fallen. Most people who use the park today are going to events being hosted by people who rent the park.

The park is under constant threat of development, as it sits on prime real estate. Custodianship of the park currently lies with the Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection.



Mid 20th Century An earthquake prone zone left undeveloped by colonial government.

1960s and 1970s Ridge Park. Appears to be under the management of Parks & Gardens Department, Accra.

1980s Secured as National Children's Park through influence of Efua T. Sutherland during her tenure as Chair of Ghana National Commission on Children. Flagship model of "Children's Park/Library Complexes" initiated by Sutherland, including Kumasi Children's Park, and two or three more at community/village level (Gomoa area of Central Region, etc.). Park/Library complexes were developed through extensive multi-disciplinary consultations with educators, architects, planners, artists, engineers, etc.

1996 / 1997 Park renamed Efua Sutherland Park when Efua Sutherland passed away in Jan 1996

Late 1990s - 2000s Children's parks in Accra, Kumasi and all communities go into steep decline, generally described as being in "deplorable" state by 2000.

2007 Golden Jubilee Commemorative Landmark Project, a campaign to raise funds for the rehabilitation of Efua Sutherland children's park and other regional parks.

2000 - 2012 Intermittent calls in the press for rehabilitation of children's parks. Between 2009-2012 up to 5 separate MOU's appear to have been entered into between Ministry of Women and Children for private-public partnerships on the park

2012 Charrette and public conversation on urban space for children brings together concerned residents of Accra, some of whom were directly involved in the establishment of the children's parks in the 1980's. Prof. N.A. Wellington gave an oral historical account at the 2012 Charrette organized by Mmofra Foundation. There may be some info on the establishment of the children's parks in the chapters authored by N.A. Wellington and C. Caulley-Hansen in the book The Legacy of Efua Sutherland, Lynne Reimer publishers.

2013 Mmofra Foundation and Sutherland family requested a consultative meeting to facilitate the development of Park and save this sole green space in the city centre. Attending government agencies included the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection the Accra Metropolitan Authority (AMA), the Department of Parks & Gardens, the Attorney General's Department, the Ministry of Tourism, the Office of the President.

The issues were as follows:
1. Clearing the encumbrances of the park through the Attorney General's Department, making it possible for an international charette to be organised to design creative and affordable nature-based, culturally appropriate features to transform the park.
2. Bringing the proposals of Mmofra Foundation to the attention of His Excellency the President.

NB Four contracts that were executed on the park from 2010 to 2012. MGCSP /AG's department must address these or risk incurring liabilities. Forward movement is blocked by these encumbrances. Also, financing is a key issue.



timeline



demographics

This park ironically hosts few children, Most visitors to the park are either workers on lunch break, or people attending an event at the park. Children do not come by themselves to play, but tend to accompany an older person attending said events.



green cover

The park remains lush and green in spite of the lack of care. The old trees offer cool shade, and the grass cover is healthy.



function

The park serves primarily as an events venue.

Events

The park is often rented out for private events.

Play

The park is not fit for play until the play objects have been renovated and the lawns tended to.



accessibility

While entry is free to the fenced premises, people coming to the park are often discouraged from entering by security on the premises.

When events are hosted at the park an entry fee is charged.



condition

The park is in very bad condition. The grass is not cut often, structures are being built on the premises, the play objects and facilities are neglected and dangerous, and the caretakers are neither equipped, nor interested in taking care of the premises.

Mawuena says this park is: **BAD**





bawaleshie
school



bawaleshie school

Park Area: 7,910 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 11,096

Population [within 800m radius]: 38,866

Population [within 1km radius]: 59,487

Like many school parks, the Bawaleshie School Park is maintained by the school but used by the entire community. The grounds are used for sports and other school related events, but also serve as an events venue for community gatherings such as weddings and funerals.

Small vendors have set up around the park, offering refreshments to those using it, making an otherwise hot and bare space a community hub for socialising and community engagement. Parks such as these will often serve as polling stations during elections.

It is worth noting that the park is over 20 years old. While the infrastructure of the park may not be of a standard that reflects this, the community structure that centres on this park can be said to be indicative of the development of the past 2 decades.



demographics

While this space is primarily intended for use by the children of the school, it also belongs to the community. Children will use it more during the day, while weekends will find more diverse age groups in the space. This is common with school parks in Accra, and quite nicely places the school at the centre of the community.



green cover

There is no cover on this park. Canopies are rented for events on the weekends.



accessibility

As a community space it is free and easily accessed by the community. Permission must be sought before hosting an engagement on the premises, and payment must be made for use of the property for an event.

function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is often rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

School sports and community sports take place on the football pitch.



condition

While the park is very bare, the school and the park users respect the space and maintain it.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**



emma's den



Park Area: 2,351 m²
Population [within 400m radius]: 8,803
Population [within 800m radius]: 31,434
Population [within 1km radius]: 48,364

Emma's Den is a 2 year old private park in the suburb of Adjiringanor, designed to meet the growing need for play spaces in the city. As with Mmofra Place, this park serves as an indicator of the growing awareness of a need for outdoor space in the suburbs.

The park is geared towards child's entertainment, but also hosts events in the space.



demographics

This park is geared towards children.



green cover

There is no green cover.



function

The park serves primarily as an events venue.

Events

The park is often rented out for private events.

Play

Children's play.



accessibility

Access is limited in that payment must be made to access the premises.



condition

While it is a shame that the owners did not see fit to have some nature in this park, it is in good condition, and is clearly maintained.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**



ako adjei
park



ako adjei park

Park Area: 7,009 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 10,438

Population [within 800m radius]: 34,825

Population [within 1km radius]: 50,672

Ako Adjei Park is located in the middle of a quiet part of one of Accra's oldest neighbourhoods, Osu. Osu is historically a very community oriented area. The park lies adjacent to a large church and is within very short walking distance of a number of small traders and vendors. Even so, some street vendors often set up on the perimeter to serve people using the park.

The park is primarily a football pitch attached to the school that sits on the south border of the pitch. It also serves as an events ground for community events. The park also bears the overflow from the church, and sometimes serves as a parking lot for people attending services.

The park has not been developed in its 30+ years of existence, though it is rumoured that a Ghana Premiership League football match was once played here.



demographics

This is likely to change depending on the time of day or week one is observing. During the week school children use the space, with older children and young adults using the space in the evenings. Elders are often seen in the park before, during and after the weekend services at the adjacent church.



green cover

There are a couple of trees on the perimeter, which the street vendors have as shade for their trading spots.



function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is often rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

School sports and community sports take place on the football pitch.

Small Trade / Vendors

People set up to serve those who use the park and attend the adjacent church.



accessibility

As a community space it is free and easily accessed by the community. Permission must be sought before hosting an engagement on the premises, and payment must be made for use of the property for an event.



condition

While the park is very bare, the school and the park users respect the space and maintain it.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**





akola boni



Park Area: 3,825 m²
Population [within 400m radius]: 9,914
Population [within 800m radius]: 33, 863
Population [within 1km radius]: 48, 212

Akola Boni Park is a small park less than 1km away from Ako Adjei Park in Osu. It shares many characteristics with the former, with the exception that it is not attached to a school.

The park is over 30 years old and serves as a sports field for football, basketball and volleyball. The park is also an events venue for local gatherings and, in more recent years, an initiative by the Africa Film Society called 'Classics in the Park', where African films are projected outdoors.

This park does not have much in the way of infrastructure but is kept neat by the community.



demographics

It is mainly children and young adults observed in this park.



green cover

There is some green cover on the park, mainly towards the peripheries that back up against neighbouring properties.



function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is sometimes rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

Sports and community sports take place on the football pitch.



accessibility

As a community space it is free and easily accessed by the community. Permission must be sought before hosting an engagement on the premises, and payment must be made for use of the property for an event.



condition

The community has claimed ownership over this park for years. Its location reduces the risk of exploitation by venue seekers, and as such will not face the risks many of the other parks face.

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**



aviation
social centre



aviation social centre

Park Area: 20,858 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 11,011

Population [within 800m radius]: 38,472

Population [within 1km radius]: 57,150

In the 90's the grounds Aviation Social Centre was a melting point for youth culture. Accessibly located, it housed many sports and culture events making it trendy among teenagers and young adults. Despite its diminishing demeanour, the centre used to radiate the vibrant energy of its users.

A lot of institutions from schools, to sports teams, dance troops used the grounds for a plethora of events in-between culture, lifestyle and entertainment.

Unlike the former park under the custodianship of the community, Aviation is now privately run and owned.



demographics

People of all ages can be found here, though the elderly are more likely to be found when an event is taking place at the venue.



green cover

The space is relatively well covered with a number of mature trees, and the grass cover is good. The owners and custodians have created a space that is an increasingly important lung in this high-income, highly urbanised area where trees are being cut down at an alarming rate.



function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is sometimes rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

A number of sports facilities are available:

- Basketball
- Football
- Volleyball
- Tennis
- Gym



accessibility

Aviation is located relatively close to important transport routes. The facilities are free to the public except for when private events are happening on the premises.



condition

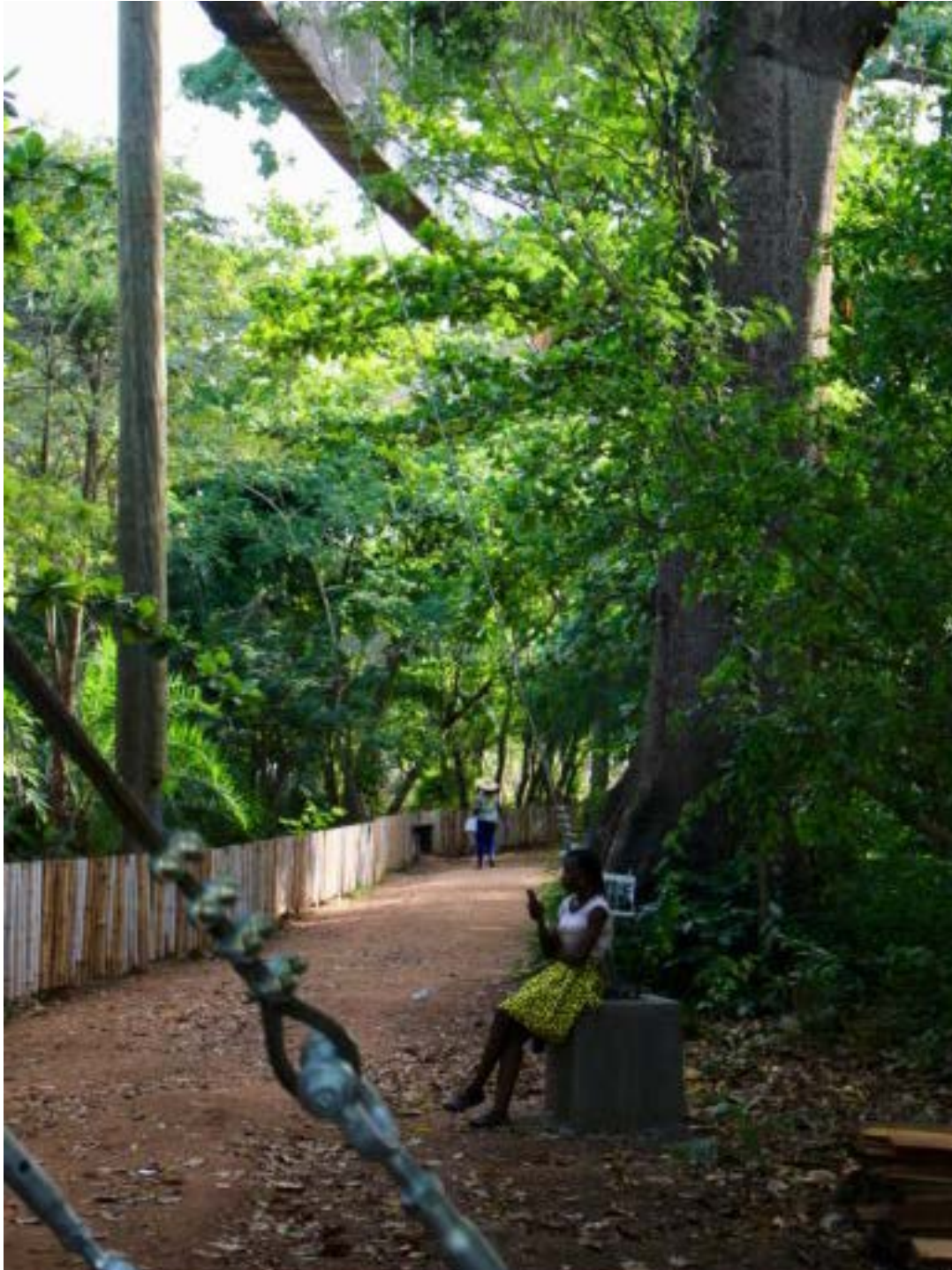
Aviation is recognised and respected for the space that it is. The public are respectful of the space

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**





legon botanical
gardens



legon botanical gardens

Park Area: 959,915 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 9,118

Population [within 800m radius]: 25,751

Population [within 1km radius]: 37,694

Legon Botanical Gardens was established in 1950. Nestled in the larger grounds of the University of Ghana's verdant reserve in the north of Accra, the privately run Gardens serves as meeting place for many locals, from those seeking more quiet grounds to those looking for more thrilling and dare devil escapades. Between the serene environment and the rope courses for children and for adults, the park also offers play spaces, vendors, a canopy walk and canoe rides in its dam, all introduced in the revamps of 2016.

The plethora of spaces the gardens holds makes it ideal and inclusive for larger groups of the population cutting across fitness level, function, activity and age.

The vegetative cover of the park is essential to the micro climate of surrounding neighbourhoods. The parks infrastructure continues to grow, offering more activities and catering to a growing number of locals looking forward to the respite nature brings.



demographics

All age groups can be found in the gardens, depending on where one looks. Children, young adults and middle-aged people can be found exploring the rope courses and the canopy walk. Elderly people have been seen walking through the more verdant areas.



green cover

Legon Botanical Gardens is extremely green, with a lot of rich, old trees and diverse flora. Vast stretches of grass can be found, even in the areas often frequented by the public. On the whole it is a very green space.



function

The Gardens serve as an events venue, with outdoor recreational facilities.

Rest & Relaxation

The parks offer a number of serene spaces to relax.

Events

Portions of the Gardens are sometimes rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

Visitors to the Gardens can entertain themselves in the rope courses, the canopy walk, canoe rides and other forms of play.

Tourism / Photography

accessibility

Access is hard to this privately owned Gardens - even to the University of Ghana community [the adjacent campus] community. Entrance is paid for the general public, and an additional fee is paid for use of facilities such as the rope courses, and the canopy walk.



condition

The park is in excellent condition. The Gardens boast a team dedicated to the cleaning, maintenance and general management of the grounds and the facilities.

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**





achimota
forest



achimota forest

Park Area: 2,606,961 m²
Population [within 400m radius]: 40,163
Population [within 800m radius]: 100,488
Population [within 1km radius]: 136,973

In the historically and geographically pivotal neighbourhood of Achimota, the forest is anchor to a lot of spaces carved out of the reserve like the hospital, golf course, and Achimota school campus, one of the most illustrious and well known schools for basic and secondary education in Ghana.

The basic school features a football field which was recently walled. When not being used by the school, the field is often engaged by local football clubs and used for events by the community. The secondary school complex tends to be more restricted, primarily serving the school. The grounds feature fields and parks for football, hockey, cricket, basketball and tennis though most of these fields have fallen to prey to neglect.

Within the reserve lies the sad remains of the Accra zoo, a neglected and under-resourced state-run facility under the custodianship of the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission. Paid entrance gives visitors access to emaciated animals and poorly maintained grounds.

The Girl Guide centre also located in the park is privately managed. The forest is closely linked to the outlines of the golf reserve, a large privately run space.



demographics

People of all age make use of the space, mainly for prayer purposes. Children are brought to the zoo.



green cover

Located in Achimota Forest and therefore very green.



function

The park serves primarily as a prayer ground and a zoo.

Animals
Poorly cared for animals live in the zoo.

Events
Some pentecostal churches have chosen this forest as prayer grounds

Play / Sports
The school field operates as a playground and a community football pitch.



accessibility

Access is paid to the facilities.



condition

While the forest is in good condition and the privately run portions of the forest are maintained, the poor state of the Zoo [under custodianship of the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission] and the animals living in it can not be ignored.

Mawuena says this park is: **BAD**





tam park



Park Area: 6,658 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 9,118

Population [within 800m radius]: 29,393

Population [within 1km radius]: 42,485

Tam Park is a community park located in the community driven neighbourhood of Labadi, to the east of the city centre. The park is over 20 years old, and is interestingly the only one observed to have experienced any sort of major upgrades; what used to be bare ground is now an astroturf football pitch, owned by and free to the community.

This park has been a vital core within the community for years, bringing them together in the evenings and over weekends.



demographics

The facility is mainly used by youth and adults.



green cover

There is no natural cover on the grounds.



function

The park serves primarily as a football facility.

Play/Sports

An astroturf football pitch.



accessibility

Access to the park is free for the community - it serves as a community centre.



condition

This park serves as a very good example of a space being 'upgraded' to serve the needs of the community.

Even without greenery,

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**



kwame nkrumah
park



kwame nkrumah park

Park Area: 24,177 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 12,207

Population [within 800m radius]: 33,868

Population [within 1km radius]: 49,598

Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, Museum and Park are a National Monument located on High Street in old Accra. The Pan Africanist leader is buried here, on the grounds where he first declared independence for Ghana in 1957.

A beautiful mausoleum houses Nkrumah's grave, and that of his wife Fathia. A museum sits behind the mausoleum. The rest of the grounds is a botanical garden and water feature, with a variety of trees and plants providing shade for those who visit.

It is interesting to note, though, that visitors to the park do not make use of the seating, instead opting to stand: by the statues of Nkrumah, by the mausoleum, and anywhere where good photo opportunities exist. The majority of these visitors are either tourists [local and international], or people arriving to take photos after a ceremony. This is perhaps due to the fact that entrance is paid.

The park serves as a welcome break from the heat and noise of the city, and would likely - if made more accessible - host a much larger number of people on a daily basis.



demographics

People of all ages are to be found on the premises, from school children on field trips to elderly people visiting the country. The park is a big draw for young and middle-aged adults who come to the park to take photos.



green cover

The premises have manicured lawns and a variety of flora and planting, much of which was planted by other African leaders who have in the past come to pay their respects to Kwame Nkrumah.



function

This park serves as a tourist attraction.

Monument

Kwame Nkrumah is buried here, and his mausoleum and statues are iconic forms in the Accra landscape.

Tourism

Beyond the monuments is the museum of Kwame Nkrumah's life, a draw for both local and international tourists.



accessibility

Access is mixed - Ghanaians pay Ghs3 [just over \$.050] while non-Ghanaians pay Ghs10 [approx. \$2]. This would explain why there are not as many people in the park as one would expect of a green space with benches in the noise and heat of central Accra.



condition

This park is well maintained, as both a garden and a tourist destination.

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**



BUECHA SAPIDA (AKYE)
This tree was planted by H.E. Lawrence
Kwabena Agye in the presence of the President
of Ghana on the occasion of his
official visit to Ghana on Nov. 3, 2009



charles taylor
park



charles taylor park

Park Area: 4,295 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 1,797

Population [within 800m radius]: 5,924

Population [within 1km radius]: 8,925

Charles Taylor Park is located in the neighbourhood of Adjiringanor, to the north of Accra. It has belonged to the local community for over 30 years, used by residents and the adjacent primary school for training and matches - mainly football as is the case with most parks of this type.

The large, green park is close to the main Adjiringanor Road, and is surrounded by multi-storey homes, apartments and commercial buildings. A petrol station lies to the south - development has left this park behind.

Maintenance of the park is poor and ownership or responsibility unclear; the grounds feature unkempt greenery littered with refuse.

This does not discourage or limit use of the grounds, which serve as a communal space for socio-cultural events like funerals and weddings. A makeshift corrugated metal washroom stands on the periphery.

Material on the park grounds suggest it is possible that an informal settlement once stood on a portion of the park.



demographics

All members of the community use this space.



green cover

Minimal green cover, and that which does exist is not maintained or managed.



function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is sometimes rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

Football is the main draw to the park.



accessibility

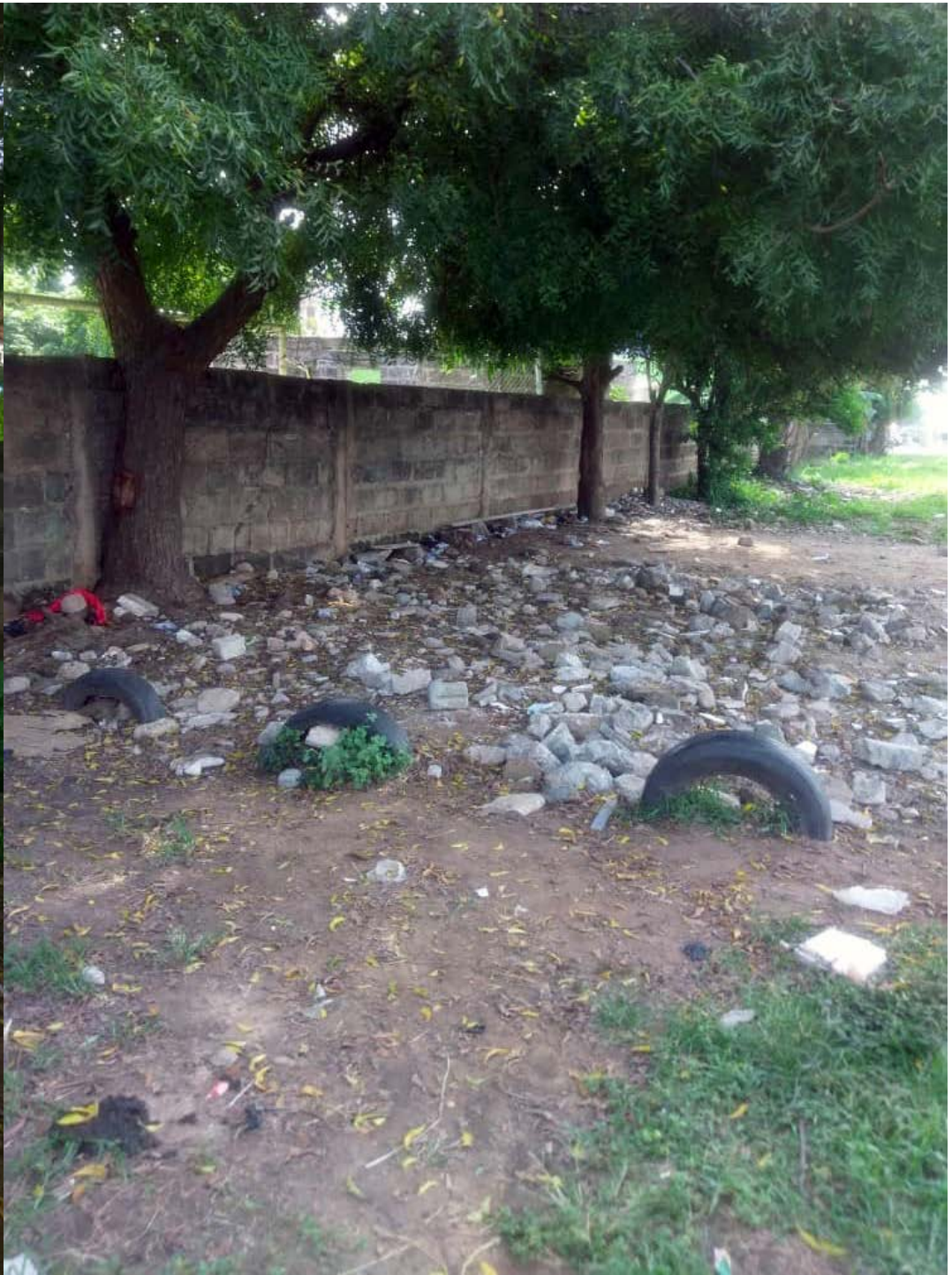
The park is close to a main transport artery. Access is free to members of the community.



condition

The grounds are neglected. Responsibility for the park is not clear; as such waste continues to accumulate and the greenery that does grow is overgrown.

Mawuena says this park is: **BAD**





mantse agbonaa



Park Area: 4,056 m²
Population [within 400m radius]: 7,175
Population [within 800m radius]: 17,286
Population [within 1km radius]: 25,318

Mantse Agbonaa - "Kings compound", is an open forecourt to one of the Ga palaces in the old neighbourhood of Jamestown. Home to the Ga people who were the first to inhabit the area, and remained here even after the migration of the European settlers to what is now Accra's CBD.

Mantse Agbonaa is an important grounds for many cultural and social activities. It frames many communal events from traditional festivals like Homowo, to social ones like parties, concerts, outpourings and funerals. The space is also used as a football pitch by members of the community and is a host to various informal gatherings.

The cemented court of Mantse Agbonaa is under the custodianship of the community. During events, the grounds are filled with tents that offer shade as the space is hardly surrounded by trees.



demographics

This space belongs to the community and so hosts people all of all ages. Youth and young adults play football, while elders play board games. Youth meet here to socialise. All age groups can be found here during events.



green cover

There are only two small trees on the grounds. They sit on the perimeter and serve as shade for the vendors who serve the people making use of the space.



function

Mantse Agbonaa serves primarily as a forecourt to the Palace, a community grounds, and a sports facility.

Events

The grounds host a number of community events - traditional and otherwise - as well as music concerts. The grounds are also available for rent for private events.

Play/Sports

Football is the predominant sport played on the grounds. Elders play boardgames under a small tree.



accessibility

The grounds lie adjacent to the main High Street in Jamestown, and are freely accessed by members of the community and the wider public. Access is also easy during events - any sort of restriction appears to be one agreed by the community using the park.



condition

The grounds are relatively well maintained, and serve as an anchor for the community. While there is not much to the grounds and there is litter here and there, it is for the most part a decent space ready to accommodate visitors at short notice.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**



jamestown
community areas

jamestown community areas

Park Areas: 46 m2 / 185 m2

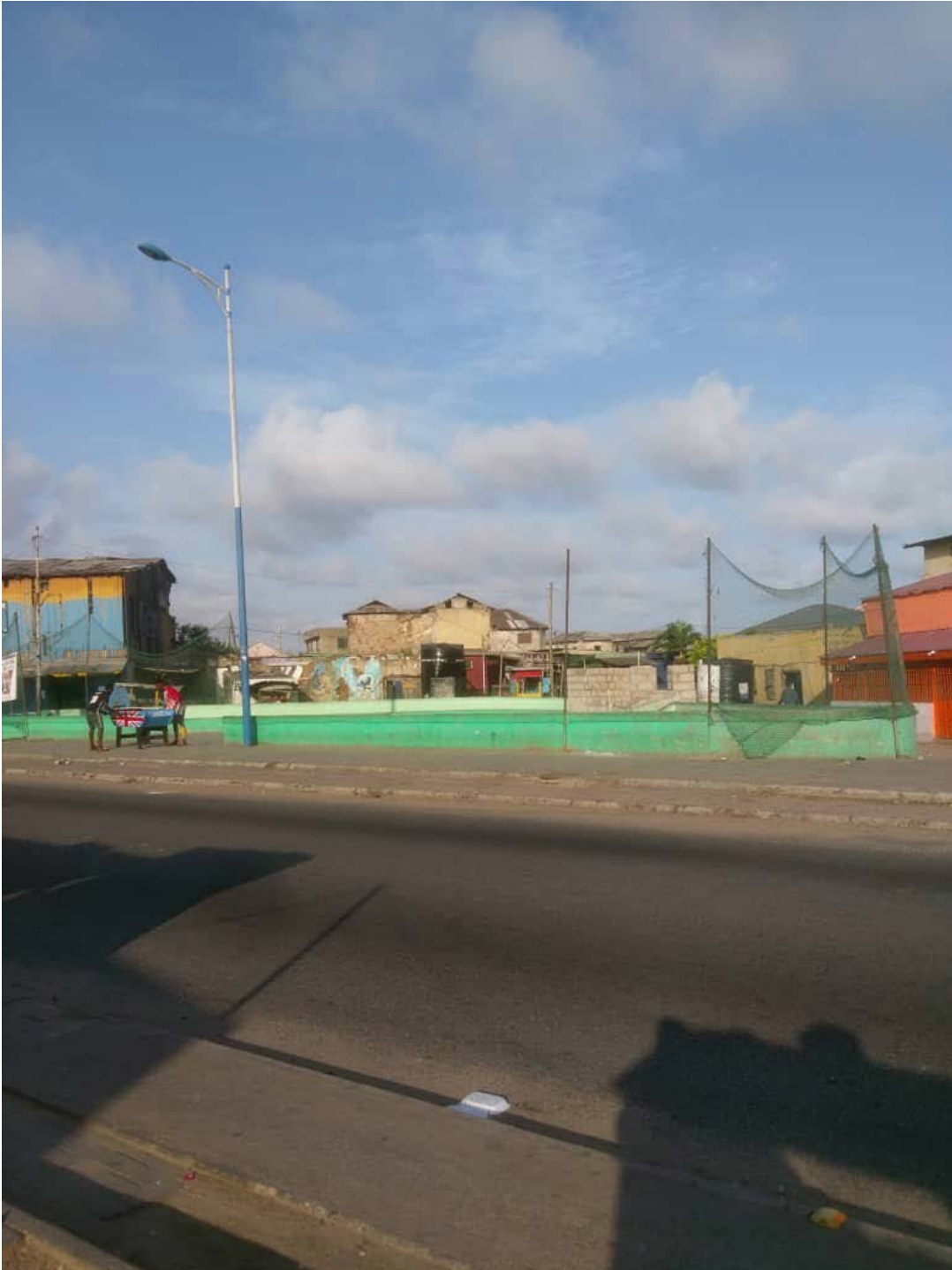
Population [within 400m radius]: 6,726 / 6,873

Population [within 800m radius]: 20,525 / 22,604

Population [within 1km radius]: 29,329 / 32,544

The neighbourhood of Jamestown is an incredibly community driven space. Anchored by the Ga people, it is steeped in culture and tradition. This is reflected in their use of space - public spaces are better accommodated and utilised than in other areas in Accra.

In Jamestown one will often find areas such as the one pictured, where the local community will have come together to occupy a traffic island or some such space to make a walled structure that





demographics

This space belongs to the community and so hosts people all of all ages. Youth and young adults play football, while elders play board games. Youth meet here to socialise. All age groups can be found here during events.



green cover

These spaces tend to be completely devoid of green due to their location - they are situated in within traffic islands, and in corners of blocks. The grounds will generally be paved, tarred or bare.



function

These areas belong to the community, and so for the most part function as community centres for various gathering and recreational purposes, and as events grounds.

Events

These spaces are frequently used for community events such as funerals, particularly on weekends.

Play/Sports

Football seems to be the most frequently played sport in such spaces.



accessibility

Access to these spaces is completely free.



condition

These spaces are simply maintained but well used. The communities tend to them, clearing litter and other issues before use.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**





accra girls
football park



accra girls football park

Park Area:

Population [within 400m radius]:9,537

Population [within 800m radius]: 36,162

Population [within 1km radius]: 55,626

Accra Girls Football Park is located on the opposite side of the highway bordering the perimeter of one of Accra's most illustrious girls' secondary boarding schools.

There is no clear ownership of the park, which sits between the road reserve and the property behind it. Members of the nearby community - use the park daily, sometimes an elderly imam saying his prayers, mostly football fans and shade seeking locals urging the late afternoon training and matches on, from beneath the shade of the mature neem trees

The football pitch is red, sandy earth bordered by trees on its interior flank. A portion to the south of that is well and intentionally planted with a variety of flora.

This park may soon be a thing of the past, as the owners of the land on the other side of the highway have in recent months chased away the vendors and kente cloth weaver who used to use the space, opting to erect chain-link fence as a deterrent measure.



Accra Girls (Football Pitch)

30



function

The park serves primarily as a sports ground, with a few middle-aged adults using the space to relax in the shade.

Rest & Relaxation

Elderly people from the nearby areas can be found saying prayers, and meditating in the shade.

Play/Sports

This is a popular football ground, and teams can be found training almost every day of the week.



demographics

For the most part one will find youth and young adults playing football on the grounds; they tend to play in the late afternoon / early evening. Elderly people are seen earlier in the day, praying and meditating in the shade of the trees lining the periphery.



green cover

A number of trees line the inner perimeter, casting a deep shade on the grounds. While the football pitch remains bare earth, the remainder of the property to the east of the pitch is grassed, with some parts of it covered in deliberately planted flora.



accessibility

The park is easily accessed, with no perimeter fencing shielding it from the motorway. The recent fencing of the land on the opposite side of the motorway is worrying, as it implies that access to this park may soon be withdrawn.



condition

Outside the flora to the east, design in this space is limited to the stones used as goalposts. This path remains relatively clear of litter and other debris.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**





dansoman
children's park



dansoman children's park

Park Area: 10,483 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 9,516

Population [within 800m radius]: 30,698

Population [within 1km radius]: 46,011

Dansoman is a bustling neighbourhood in Accra. Like many of the older neighbourhoods of Accra it is planned, meaning that elements such as public spaces were intentionally designed.

Unlike most spaces of its character - bare earth grounds with struggling patches of grass - Dansoman Children's Park features a lot of playground essentials from slides to swings. The park is surrounded by trees making it much more comfortable and scenic despite the lack of waste disposal systems.

The grounds serve as a community centre, used by children and young adults as a playground and social meeting space. It sometimes hosts events.

The park is maintained by the community.



demographics

While this park was intended for children, it serves as a socialisation space for most age groups. School children and adults alike use the space for social gatherings.



green cover

While the area is very verdant, there is not much grass.



function

This park functions as a communal social space as well as a playground.

Rest & Relaxation

The park is a calm social space for members of the community.

Play/Sports

Children make use of the playground.



accessibility

Access to the grounds is free to the public.



condition

The park is well used, and yet litter collection is not consistent, which spoils the potential ambience created by the green space. The play objects are not looked after either.

Mawuena says this park is: **BAD**





dzorwulu rec. park



Park Area: 2,309 m²
Population [within 400m radius]: 6,911
Population [within 800m radius]: 26,699
Population [within 1km radius]: 40,898

Dzorwulu Recreational Park is a private park nestled parallel to the Olusegun Obasanjo Highway. It is under the custodianship of Ghana Highway Authority and Accra Metropolitan Assembly.

The park is screened from the highway by a metal slat fence, a recent addition that was installed at the same time that gravel was introduced as a covering. There is no visible greenery, in sharp contrast to the nearby Mmofra Park and general verdant character of the Abelenkpe and Dzorwulu suburbs in which it sits..Access to the park is extremely limited, and at any given time one will find children playing, roller-skating and socialising in the dead end street outside it instead of inside it.



demographics

The park targets the younger members of the community. The facilities do not accommodate those who are not coming to play sports.



green cover

There is limited green cover in this park - that which exists is in place not to provide shade but as an aesthetic touch to the stark park.



function

The park serves primarily as a community sports park.

Play/Sports

Users of the park should be able to play a variety of sports, mainly basketball and football



accessibility

Access to the park is incredibly difficult - it is closed for the most part. The youth of the community for the most part find themselves unable to access the park itself and so use the street outside to skate, and an adjacent patch of bare land to play basketball.

A sign on the fence from the Highways Authority warns people to "Keep Off!!!"



condition

The park is in very good condition, however the community is unable to use it, often resorting to use of the space right outside it. A park that can not be used is not a functional park, and so

Mawuena says this park is: **BAD**



accra
hockey park



accra hockey park

Park Area: 14,017 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 14,338

Population [within 800m radius]: 42,200

Population [within 1km radius]: 61,986

Accra Hockey Park sits in the bustling energy of central Accra, the heart of the trade and economic development. It is adjacent to one of the biggest travel nodes in the city, Tema Station. The park comprises of a multi-storey building, bleachers and a hockey pitch.

The park hosts a league which engages both youth and master teams. Both the male and female divisions of the league train on the grounds. The bleachers - some covered, some not - that overlook the turfed field, usually vibrant with training athletes and community youth. The park appears to be a well used space with athletes in between sessions, coaches and visitors [some just seeking a moment of relief from the heat and traffic] perched under the refreshing shade of the roof casts over the bleachers.

Hockey is not a very widely played or watched sport in Ghana, and as such the facility is not too busy. On weekends, the building halls are rented out to churches for their Sunday services,



demographics

The sports facilities are used by youth for the most part. On Sundays people of all ages will make use of the space for Church services.



green cover

There is no natural cover on the grounds.



function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is sometimes rented out for private events.

Play/Sports

A hockey pitch and stands



accessibility

Access to the park is only restricted by security at the gate. The resident community appear have an easier time accessing the park than visitors do, though this may be because local residents arrive on foot..



condition

The park is relatively well maintained, with the basics covered. The bleachers show signs of wear, but the facilities are clean. The hockey pitch remains in decent-good condition.

Mawuena says this park is: **GOOD**





old kingsway
building



old kingsway building

Park Area: 172 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 5,824

Population [within 800m radius]: 20,960

Population [within 1km radius]: 33,239

The Old Kingsway Building sits in Jamestown, Accra. It was originally erected in 1904 as the first department store in Accra. While the land on which it stands owned by a local family, it really belongs to the community, serving as a church, football pitch, music video set, meeting area, events ground, storage space, community centre - depending on what time of day and week you enter the space.

The Old Kingsway is a dilapidated structure with no roof; its bounds are defined by the walls that still stand. Artists have decorated these walls over the years, murals serving as a backdrop to the community activities that take place, as well as a draw for tourists and other visitors to Jamestown.

While the structure and management could be defined as 'informal', the Old Kingsway is an anchoring space within the community, and as such is protected; it is likely to remain as it is for the foreseeable future.



demographics

People of all ages utilise the space, from the young adults playing football to the elderly ladies praying at 11pm.



green cover

There is no green cover in this space - as is the case for much of Jamestown. All shade and cover is artificial and worn.



function

The park serves primarily as an sports and events venue.

Events

The park is sometimes rented out for private and community events, both contemporary and traditional. The space is also used for church services, community meetings and other functions.

Play/Sports

The Old Kingsway is also a football pitch where the local league is played.



accessibility

The Old Kingsway lies along the Jamestown High Street making it easy to reach. Access to the park is free; though - as with many public spaces in Jamestown - responsibility is defined.



condition

The Old Kingsway building is a community-owned gem; it serves as a multi-purpose anchor for them. The community have not upgraded the space, but it is managed. The murals give it another dimension, making it more of an attraction than a makeshift park.

Mawuena says this park is: **OK**





teshie-nungua
children's park



teshie-nungua children's park

Park Areas: 3,750 m2

Population [within 400m radius]: 6,259

Population [within 800m radius]: 20,293

Population [within 1km radius]: 30,862

Mmofra Foundation was approached by the Teshie-Nungua Resident's Association in 2017; the Association had acquired the rights to the site, which in the past had accommodated a Children's Park and Library in this old, planned neighbourhood. Both the park and the library had fallen into disrepair and the park was now being used as a dumping ground and storage space for the local municipal office, while also serving as a makeshift training ground for a local youth football team and various fitness enthusiasts, and a prayer gathering ground for the Teshie United Muslims Association (TUMA).

With the residents association, the local community and support from Healthbridge Canada and UN Habitat, Mmofra Foundation assembled a team of architects, builders and artists who designed and implemented a first phase of the reviving of the park.

In the time since this phase was completed, the local MP Dr Bernard Okoe Boye has fenced the park, denying the community access and only opening it up for people with a connection to him. The play objects have fallen into disrepair due to neglect, the grass is overgrown, and the park in extremely poor condition.



function

The park was intended as a children's play area, and developed into a space in which all members of the community could play, train, relax, eat, pray, and more.

Play/Sports

People of all ages used to play football and take part in fitness activities.

Events

The park is sometimes rented out for religious events.

Relaxation

People used to take lunch break on the premises, some sleeping in the shade of the old tree to the north.



demographics

This space was originally used by all members of the community, from the children who would play sports and socialise within the space, to the adults taking their lunch break there, to the elders attending religious celebrations in the park. It had the potential to accommodate all members of the community.



green cover

Before the Mmofra-Teshie Nungua Residents Association intervention, this park was poorly covered, with less than 5 trees and sparse patches of grass that tended to be overgrown and weedy. After the intervention grass had been planted with intention, and there was the intent to plant more of the park. Since the park was closed to the public, the grass has again grown to over 15m height, the sand is overgrown with weeds, and the southern perimeter fence is now choked with overgrown hedge.



accessibility

The park is not open to the general public. The people who used to use make of the space have been chased away. The space is not in use.



condition

Before the intervention the park was not in good condition but was in good use. The intervention saw an increased use, with more children making use of the park. The Residents' Association took over maintenance. Since the locking of the park. The grounds have fallen into disrepair, with overgrown plants.

Mawuena says this park is: **BAD**



the way
forward



It became evident during the course of this research that many of Accra's Parks that survive and/or flourish are those that have been taken on by communities or individuals. The parks that suffer the most tend to be the ones under state management, and if they are rescued it is due to the interventions of the public.

A number of efforts from different individuals and groups have been made to create and protect parks in the city. The next logical step would be for a coalition of private bodies to be made, so as to engage state bodies in a structured fashion, researching the reasons why state run parks fail and offering viable solutions and policy proposals to be carried out under the supervision of the coalition.

In addition to this, the coalition would need to facilitate collaboration between the state and the various communities already creating their own parks, so as to be able to 'formalise' and develop existing community parks.

Mmofra Foundation is in the position to anchor these efforts with our technical background, accesses and experiences.

online conversations

A few organizations and groups across the country are contributing to the around green spaces and the environment in Ghana. The works of these groups is extremely critical to public information and education as it currently stand as the only form of activism and mobilization against state supported environmental destruction and disregard.

Recently, a lot of green spaces critical to ecosystems, environmental and public health have come under threat in Ghana, from the Atewa forest reserve to the sparse informal parks across communities. Below are some links to some of the movements surging the discussion of green spaces and environmental sustainability.

Atewa Forest

- <https://ghana.arochoa.org/projects/protecting-atewa-forest/>
- <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-50389602>
- <https://ghana.arochoa.org/>

Protecting Public Spaces

- <https://www.dw.com/en/accra-is-becoming-a-concrete-jungle-so-locals-are-building-their-own-parks/a-49730607>
- <https://thecityateyelevel.com/app/uploads/2020/01/Accra.pdf>
- <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Group-petitions-President-over-felling-of-trees-plants-at-Parks-and-Gardens-749261>

Climate and environmental activism

- <https://citinewsroom.com/2019/03/environmental-activists-besiege-africa-climate-week-conference-with-campaign/>
- <https://gyemgh.wordpress.com>

advocacy

Social Media

Since 2013, Mmofra Foundation has been the civil society organization most actively advocating for Ghana's parks on social media. The foundation's media team hosted a pioneering Twitter chat to solicit public comment and generate local and global awareness on Ghana's parks in general and the Efuia Sutherland Children's Park in particular. Hashtags generated for social media by the foundation include #parkchatGH #MyAccraPark #iwasapark and #talkingspaces. In recent years there is a more robust social media presence in support of environmental causes in general including such groups as Environment 360 and Young Reporters for Environment Ghana

Civil Society

In 2012, Mmofra Foundation hosted the first public conversation and charrette on urban public spaces for children in Accra. Evidence of parents and caregivers' attitudes to play was presented to support the general consensus of participants that Ghana's cities were failing to provide adequate child-friendly spaces even though their populations are predominantly young.



In 2013 Mmofra Foundation and Sutherland family requested and hosted a consultative meeting to facilitate the development of Park and save this sole green space in the city centre. Attending government agencies included the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection the Accra Metropolitan Authority (AMA), the Department of Parks & Gardens, the Attorney General's Department, the Ministry of Tourism, the Office of the President. The central issue was to clear the encumbrances on the park through the Attorney General's Department, making it possible for an international charette to be organised to design creative and affordable nature-based, culturally appropriate features to transform the park.

It appears that the park's vulnerability is in part due to the lack of clarity about which government agency exercises direct authority over the space



In 2017 Mmofra Foundation and FCA Ghana co-hosted Talking Spaces, a talk party at Mmofra Place park about urban public space in which the questions discussed included, "How can our public spaces address Accra's urban challenges?" and "What are the success stories of vibrant public space that we can learn from?".

In 2019 Eco-Conscious Citizens was formed largely in response to large scale felling of mature trees and the destruction of plants at the Department of Parks and Gardens in Accra. The group hosted an online campaign through the platform Change.org, petitioning the Ghana government to "preserve parks and gardens lands for the green economy". Eco-Conscious Citizens has also, amongst other actions established an annual Environmental Awareness Week

interviews



Awula Serwah
Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo
Robert Techson Cofie
Prof. Esi Sutherland Addy



awula serwah

co-founder, Eco-Conscious Citizens

I heard about the issue through a worker at Parks and Gardens Department.

My love of the environment and appreciation of the importance of trees and green spaces and the reasons why Parks and Gardens was set up in the 1960s as a Ministry under a Cabinet Minister caused me to mobilise to protect Parks and Gardens land.

We first went on a fact finding mission to verify the information. We saw building materials on the land and were informed that 140 trees had been felled and over 5,000 plants destroyed. We formed **Eco-Conscious Citizens** and started a campaign to protect the land from being built on, and did our best to raise awareness about what was happening at Parks and Gardens. We also started a petition to the President.

Eco-conscious Citizens are thankful for medial coverage that raised awareness about the importance of trees green and green spaces.

We were on Latenu Radio and Class FM to raise awareness on environmental issues. We also attended a planning meeting at the La Dade Kotopon Municipal Assembly to register our opposition to an application to re-zone a portion of Parks and Gardens land from Green Civic to exclusively Civic so that the multi-storey office could be built on Parks and Gardens Land. Thankfully the re-zoning application was unsuccessful. The Public responded by joining Eco-Conscious Citizens, asking questions on radio programmes, and signing the petition. We had over 3,500 signatures from Ghana and beyond.

So far attempts to build the multi-storey office building have stalled, but we have not yet received a reply to our petition. Eco-Conscious Citizens have asked for:

1. Assurances that Parks and Gardens Department land will be used for horticultural, botanical and/or environmental purposes only, that no part of the land will be appropriated for concrete buildings, and that the Department will be supported to fulfil the role for which it was set up.
2. That the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and Lands Commission be directed to publish a list of areas designated as public parks and open spaces in Accra, so that the citizenry is aware of the landscape of the commons, and open spaces are not appropriated to expand the growing concrete jungle.

We encourage Ghanaians to do all legally in their power to challenge environmental vandalism and the appropriation of green spaces to expand the concrete jungle. We support environmental campaigns including the Atewa Forest Campaign.

Eco-Conscious Citizens are instituting an annual Environmental weekend starting on World Environment Day to embed an appreciation of green spaces into the national consciousness

- <https://www.modernghana.com/news/934161/these-state-capture-vandals-have-gone-far-enough.html>
- <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Group-petitions-President-over-felling-of-trees-plants-at-Parks-and-Gardens-749261>
- <https://www.ghanacrusader.com/eco-citizens-fight-stealing-of-parks-and-gardens-lands/>
- <http://thedailystatesman.com/index.php/health/item/7525-fight-climate-change-save-ghana-s-green-spaces-say-campaigners>
- <http://theheraldghana.com/felling-of-trees-did-not-have-epa-permission-president-petitioned/>
- <https://allafrica.com/stories/201909120518.html>
- <https://www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/awula-serwah-brent-environmental-campaigner-turns-attention-to-threats-to-parkland-in-native-ghana-1-6354118>
- <https://www.harrowtimes.co.uk/news/18061874.former-mayoress-campaigning-prevent-concrete-jungle-ghana/>
- <https://wembleymatters.blogspot.com/2019/10/the-fight-for-environment-is.html>
- <https://www.dw.com/en/accra-is-becoming-a-concrete-jungle-so-locals-are-building-their-own-parks/a-49730607>

About Parks & Gardens Site

Park Area: 48,415 m²

Population [within 400m radius]: 15,472

Population [within 800m radius]: 44,067

Population [within 1km radius]: 63,908

The Issue: Attempts to re-zone a portion of the Department of Parks and Gardens land in order to build an office complex.

Over the years land belonging to the Department of Parks and Gardens has been appropriated for other use. In 2019, over 5,000 plants were destroyed and over 140 trees felled without the permission of the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], to make room for the construction of an office building.

Eco-Conscious Citizens is a group of environmentally-focused citizens in and out of Ghana who are concerned about our environment, and are campaigning to ensure that we live in clean, safe and healthy surroundings.



prof. akosua adomako ampofo

university of ghana community member

In this case the issue is the construction of a 4000-bed capacity annex for Commonwealth hall, the only remaining all-male student residence hall at the University of Ghana. This is the only hall without an annex, and it is also a fact that there is a shortage of student housing. However, the site selected for the construction of the annex is at the pinnacle of the main university avenue. Further, it proposes to increase the hall population 5-fold. Twenty-five members of convocation (the faculty and administrators make up convocation) have called for a special meeting, requesting the Vice-Chancellor to respond to 10 specific concerns (sent to you per email) how did you hear about the issue?

What caused you to mobilise to protect the space?

Our concern for the destruction of the aesthetic character of the University's main avenue, as well as the environmental impact and student well-being (see the convocation call)

What did you do?

One colleague sent a petition to the University Council, that asked for the project to be halted and an alternative site found. He raised over a 100 signatures, off line. Twenty-five of us have called for a special convocation. Our statutes allow for any 25 members of convocation to call for a meeting to discuss any issue of concern to the university community. The University has up to 7 days to call such a meeting and it is my understanding that it will be called on January 6, 2020.

How did the public respond to your action?

The public has not yet had a chance to respond as we are still working internally. However, both the petition to Council and the call for convocation meant interacting with diverse constituencies--and everyone we spoke to, once they had seen the perspective drawing of the planned addition to the existing hall (i.e. the annex) was of the view that the site was wrong for a project of this size.

What are your recommendations going forward?

All institutions, especially public institutions, have a responsibility to consider the effect of decisions taken today for future generations. If the decision-making appears to be short-sighted and have a harmful effect, it behoves stakeholders to request explanations and demand for alternative solutions to problems --solutions that enable a sustainable management (in this case) of the physical space but also the 'soul' of the institution. We should not imagine that decisions of this magnitude can be left to a few people. Anyone can ask questions and demand a change of course.

Fencing off of the proposed site begins, Nov. 2019

University of Ghana, Legon Campus
Accra

The Issue:

The Commonwealth Annex Development, University of Ghana Legon Campus

Over the years land belonging to the Department of Parks and Gardens has been appropriated for other use. In 2019, over 5,000 plants were destroyed and over 140 trees felled without the permission of the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], to make room for the construction of an office building.

robert therson-cofie



The Issue: The Rebuilding of and Subsequent Restriction of Access to a Children's Park and Library for Residents of Teshie-Nungua, Accra

In 2017 the Chair of Teshie Nungua Resident's Association, the late Nelson "Uncle Tim" Cofie, approached Mmofra Foundation, inviting Mmofra to support efforts to revive the abandoned Teshie Nungua Children's Park & Library. The library was derelict, and the park was being misused by the local authority as a mixing ground for bitumen and a dumping ground for confiscated billboards.

The park was still in use by members of the community, for sports, religious gatherings and small scale 'informal' trade. Mmofra Foundation collaborated with members of the community to rebuild the space, with support from Healthbridge Canada and UN Habitat.



prof. esi sutherland addy

How did you hear about the issue?

Efua Sutherland's Family had our eyes on the Park because we were asked permission by the Government to name the space after her in 1996. In thanking the Government we shared a summary of her ideas and our own projections on how the Park should be used and maintained.

I was approached by a businessman who claimed that he had been given the space to develop as a theme park and was likely to get government backing for financing the scheme. We thought that this would be financially, culturally and environmentally mistaken. We had to start an advocacy campaign right away. Generally we have had to keep our ears on the ground and to make intermittent interventions for the past 23years.

What caused you to mobilise to protect the space?

We consulted persons close to government to ensure that the integrity of the space was maintained.

In 2013 we lobbied for a workshop to be held under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. The Attorney-General's Department, The Accra Municipal Assembly, The Department of Parks and Gardens, Ecobank Ghana, The Office of the President and Mmofra Foundation were involved. The workshop was to identify the problems hindering the appropriate development of the Park and also to re-envision the space and its management. A number of issues stood out: Overlap of perceived jurisdictions by government agencies; encumbrances on the land with legal implications, lack of funds to manage the space. We made a presentation on green space in cities around the world, the importance of the Efua Sutherland Children's Park within the city and possible ways or reconfiguring the Park. Undertakings were made by the relevant agencies to collaborate to remove the jurisdictional overlaps and to tackle the encumbrances.

In 2017 no progress had been made, rather we were informed that a prominent state institution was to build its offices on 6 acres of the site. There were proposals to move the park to the Achimota Forest. We wrote protest letters to the agencies concerned and to the President of Ghana. The project was called off.

Under a Healthbridge sponsored Teshie Nungua Children's Park Project we held a public where the use We have since attended conferences with international participants on the question of urban green space and projected the Efua Sutherland Children's Park.

What did you do? How did the public respond to your action?

We did not take the mass mobilization route but the state of the Park has provoked media response and online discussions.

What are your recommendations going forward?

The Family should generate a public debate around the current state of the Efua Sutherland Park to assist in expediting action on the appropriate development and management of the space.

The Ministries of Gender, Children and Social Protection and Tourism should be requested to come clean with any pending proposals being considered for the development of the Park and submit these to scrutiny by a group of specialists including the Sutherland Family

The Issue: The Fight to Save Efua Sutherland Children's Park

Efua Sutherland Children's Park has been designated a public children's park since 1979. In recent years the park has fallen into great disrepair, with the play objects rusting from neglect in a space that is often not accessible to the public. Newspaper articles have reflected the public's dismay at the state of the park with descriptions like "unfriendly", "inappropriate use", "danger to health and safety", habitat for weeks and mosquitoes" and "poor sanitary conditions".

There have been many attempts to lease or sell the park to developers, or to appropriate it for government buildings. So far, these attempts have been blocked due almost entirely to the direct advocacy of Prof. Esi Sutherland-Addy, members of the Sutherland family, and Mmofra Foundation, relying on the still-effective influence of the legacy of Efua T. Sutherland.

recommendations

"The variety of spaces in Ghana's capital city Accra which may be termed parks include natural, planted or open spaces set aside for public recreation, enjoyment, social interaction and information. However, government statements, the press, public opinion, research papers and anecdotal evidence would suggest that the city's park infrastructure is inadequate, often inaccessible, underutilized, undervalued and characterized by poor stewardship. [...] As parks are generally considered a vital part of the urban environment, an investigation of the history, status and public value of Accra's parks can be a useful evidence-based tool to inform policy and generate serious engagement between the public, government, developers and civic organizations. [...] The Government of Ghana stands in great need of robust civic participation in determining the allocation, role, oversight, maintenance and use of parks. The primary outcome from this proposal is a report which will increase knowledge about the current park situation in Accra and will be an important spark for more effective engagement on parks between government, the public and the private sector in the near term."

- Mmofra Foundation, 2018

The above statement of the problem continues to hold, and is very relevant to large and secondary cities across Ghana. In 2020, the Government has identified decentralization and an increased focus on secondary/intermediate cities as the theme for Ghana's urban forum. Mmofra Foundation's child-centered mission continues to be closely aligned to advocacy for public spaces such as parks, where children and families, particularly in Ghana's cities, can safely enjoy the many documented benefits of outdoor urban space.

Local Government agencies such as Metropolitan Municipal Assemblies, and Civil Society organizations, will be assisted by more evidence-based briefs about the inventory and state of parks.

This evaluation project strongly suggests the need for a more equitable distribution of better urban amenities, not only within Accra but in secondary cities like Tema. There is the need to improve the number, quality and use of parks.

Accessibility must be improved, not just in distribution, but in direct access. A larger portion of formal parks must become open access for the general public.

Many of the parks surveyed - some of the formal, public parks included - are initiated by members of the public and/or private organisations. Local Government agencies such as Metropolitan Municipal Assemblies and the Department of Parks and Gardens could benefit from partnerships built with private bodies and civil society organisations to achieve this.

Maintenance and general upkeep of public parks is poor. The standard must be raised to meet that of the privately owned and / or managed parks.

There must be a deliberate drive to green Accra. Too many public spaces are without vegetation and shade, making public spaces in Accra difficult to enjoy.

acknowledgments

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Population Analysis: Gemmell E. Accra Park Mapping. Vancouver; 2019.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2429/73204>

Images: Mawuena Mensah
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Namata Serumaga-Musisi
Jemila Abdulai, Circumspecte [Legon Botanical Gardens]

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