

Accounting for Class and Feminist Political Economy: Questions Emanating from Ghana's Market PPPs

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Abstract

Capital, through neoliberal development, is finding spaces in the informal economy, which was traditionally unattractive for capital investment. Recently, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Ghana have surged given the increasing sovereign debt and economic crisis. Drawing on qualitative methods, and framed within a feminist political economy perspective, this paper examines the impacts of PPPs in a local market in Ghana and the ramifications for the women, the space, and the future of the market. We use the construction of some market structures in a market in Ghana built on a Build Operate Transfer PPP model to illustrate how local government's top-down decision-making processes exclude women, foist on them decisions that adversely impact their economic autonomy and social relations, and deepen the class structure among them. We detail the contradicting ways the market leadership and their followers differed in their responses to the project and how this difference led to tensions among the traders. By examining the local Assembly's political strategy to weaken the women's resistance to policies in the market through the allocation of sheds to commodity leaders, we also hint at the uncertainty of sustained collective mobilisation in the market which is open to many more neoliberal experiments.

Keywords: Ghana, Public-Private Partnerships, women, traders, resistance

Introduction

Development trajectories in Global South countries are continuously shaped by the increasing intervention of international financial institutions (IFIs). The type of economic model that will accelerate growth in these countries has been the subject of debate for decades. In Africa, neoliberal ideologies continue to shape economic development (Mawuko-Yevugah 2014). This, in conjunction with colonial experiences and legacies, has shaped economic policies and practices. The neoliberal development approach has become more entrenched since the implementation of the advice of the Bretton Woods Institutions, which basically limits the role of States in development (Awortwi 2011; Lynch and Crawford 2012). At both ends, the private sector and the State remain weak and unable to sustainably propel development at a fast pace. Resultantly, since the 1990s, there has been a push for both the privatisation of state enterprises and PPPs in key sectors of the economies.

PPP debates have not resolved the fundamental contradictions regarding such enterprises since they are sometimes described as financing models and other times as development instruments. Recently, partnership has been canonised in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), so that it is stated that Goal 17 seeks to “strengthen *the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*” to achieve the 16 other goals (refer to the SDGs). The private sector efficiency discourse dominates pro-market development narratives which have been pushed to the centre. This comes on the back of weakening state investment in infrastructure development despite the wide development gaps. Accordingly, the continuous ceding of public sector service delivery roles and infrastructure development to the private sector has become a feature that connects neoliberalism and increasing financialisation. As such, PPPs have become the offshoots of neoliberal processes occurring in the world economic order. While the roadmap and templates for PPPs have been global, the local macroeconomic context produces different contours in terms of impacts. Due to the wide ramifications of different forms of privatisation for economies and people, feminists have pointed to their unequal outcomes, particularly their implications for women and children (Prügl and True 2014).

As has been discussed elsewhere (see Torvikey and Ohene Marfo 2020), PPPs existed in Ghana long before their current global currency. The Ghanaian State used PPPs in the late 1960s and early 1970s to entice foreign capital to remain in the country following its economic crises. The purpose of PPPs at the time was linked to national projects in agricultural production, and this differs significantly from today's objectives. During the first phase of the Ghanaian State's involvement in PPPs, economic development was statist. Today, it is shaped by multiple actors including the State, IFIs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and bilateral and multilateral donors, among others.

Currently, PPPs have come on the heels of multiple misfortunes. Ghana attained a lower middle-income status in 2007, thus cheaper concessionary loans are no longer available, necessitating the use of a mix of financing models for infrastructural development, including PPPs. The implementation of partnerships within the SDGs framework coheres with the increasing number of PPPs in the country. For example, SDG 17 receives substantially more budget allocation than all other goals. It was 73,5% in 2019 (the total budget was GHS50,966 million) and 66% in 2020 (the total budget was GHS52,829 million). The corresponding percentages for SDG 4 (Gender Equality) were 0,6% in 2019 and 0,1% in 2020 (World Economic Forum 2021). The allocations for the SDGs show the Government's prioritisation of partnerships.

The critical point to note is that PPPs gained currency during periods of crises at both global and national levels, particularly on the heels of the 2008 fiscal crisis. Globally, the COVID-19 crisis has shown the need for the State to play a central role in the welfare of citizens to ensure access to services (Foli and Ohemeng 2022; Kinoti and Kelleher 2022). A group of African feminists, drawing from Africa's experiences of structural adjustment, financialisation of its economies, and the tightening of market reforms across the continent, reiterated these positions in a statement titled "African Feminist Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery." A section of the Statement reads,

We need solutions and COVID-19 has provided us with an opportunity to reimagine African political economies. This moment requires a pan-African response that creates an enabling environment for people and movement led economic work, including but not limited to cooperative and solidarity economics, to be given the support and space to flourish. ...The financial

crisis of 2008 was an acute rupture of globalisation and a reminder that unfettered markets cannot be the primary arbiter of wealth and economic distribution. Our states in all their imperfection are the tangible entities where we reside, produce, consume and eventually will be laid to rest (Statement by a Group of African Feminists issued in June, 2020).¹

This notwithstanding, the fiscal crisis of African countries has increased the renewed growth of PPPs. Ghana is currently reeling under a severe economic crisis with rising inflation, high taxation and soaring food and fuel prices. In fact, the World Bank 2022 Africa's Pulse report states that the country's currency, the cedi, was the worst performing in Africa against the dollar, having depreciated by 60% between January and October 2022 (Calderon et al. 2022). The country is drowning in debt with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 80% in 2022. In September 2022, Ghana approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the 18th time in its history.² Liquidity challenges have affected statutory payments and investment in infrastructural projects. The introduction of an electronic levy in 2022 has not yielded the revenue required to shore up the national treasury. The country's monetary and fiscal problems have been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine war. The multiple crises have implications for local government which depends on State subvention for infrastructural development.

In Ghana, the second-generation PPPs spanned the period between the late 1990s and 2018. They were mainly in energy, port, and ICT infrastructure development. However, over the past five years, local markets in urban cities, which are highly informal spaces, are gradually being constructed on PPP models. This is significant because markets are economic hubs for women (Aidoo 1985; Darkwah 2002; 2007) and informal spaces for women's economic autonomy and livelihoods. While there are multiple models of market construction in Ghana, with ownership of the space comprising local assemblies, individual traders, communities and other hybrid models, PPPs in markets are gaining currency. The Ghanaian State's colonial and post-colonial interests in markets are manifold. Economically, markets are places for the extraction of taxes and internal revenue mobilisation. Market women pay market tolls as well as fees for a business operating permit, VAT, and shop/stall allocation levies. Markets are therefore spaces where global, national, and local policies are experienced. It is

not surprising that traders are often scapegoated during economic downturns (Britwum 2013; Clark 2010; Robertson 1983). Markets are also sites for political engagement and activities and are incredibly attractive to the State. Given that market traders are active economic and political actors, their interests sometimes diverge from those of the State and sometimes from their women counterparts.

Since PPPs are within the local government ambit, we lay out the context for local assemblies' interests in developing markets with a PPP logic. Even more significant is that Ghana has passed the Public Private Partnership Act, 2020 (ACT 1039), described as:

An Act to provide for the development, implementation, and regulation of public private partnership arrangements between contracting authorities and private parties for the provision of infrastructure and services, to establish institutional arrangements for the regulation of public private partnerships, and to provide for related matters (Republic of Ghana 2020, 5).

ACT 1039 and the 2011 National Public-Private Partnership Policy are the formal guiding frameworks directing PPPs in the country. Despite the existence of these documents, however, we do not follow the technicist argument that the presence of a PPP law or policy will alleviate the ills associated with the model. In this paper, we use a Feminist Political Economy (FPE) lens to analyse the implications of PPPs in local markets in Ghana through a case study of the Dome Market in Ghana's capital, Accra. The FPE theoretical framework allows for an interrogation of the structure of power and how it intersects with existing patriarchal norms to subordinate women (Peterson 2005). We use this perspective to analyse decision-making processes in the context of the PPPs as well as the distribution of resources and their outcomes for the traders. The FPE framing provides a lens to analyse how women encounter the State that uses laws and policies to perpetuate inequality and structural violence. Cognisant of the power and structure of the market, we also relied on intersectionality as a framework to explore the varied ways different women experience and respond to the transmission of economic policies to the local level. We take from the concept of intersectionality espoused by Crenshaw (1989), which emphasises the need for Black women's experiences of policies to be viewed from multiple axes. It is by characterising women as embodying varied experiences and intersections that their marginalisation and privileges are made more apparent. In this case, both the

FPE and intersectional perspectives allow us to highlight the manifestations of the use of power, the distribution of resources in the market and their differentiated impacts on the heterogeneous groups of women traders.

Methodology

We approached the topic and data collection from multiple angles. In the early stages, we contacted a gender expert who works with development agencies to help us identify PPP projects to understand how such projects are executed before settling on markets. We were referred to some markets that were being developed through PPP models, which was intriguing because we always thought that PPPs were in capital-intensive sectors such as energy, transportation, and health. We selected the Dome Market, assuming that it would enable us to study PPPs in the informal sector, a sector that holds specific significance for women. We then reviewed literature on PPPs, local governance, and markets to understand their interconnections. We followed this with multiple visits to the Dome Market to observe and interact with traders and the leaders in the market. To emphasise, the market leaders (or market queens) are female traders chosen through democratically constituted means to govern commodity trade and the market trade in general (Katila 1997). The markets have a decentralised governance order expressed in commodity leaders who are named after the commodities they represent. For example, in Ghana's market, there is an overall market queen, along with, for example, a "Yam Queen", "Tomato Queen", "Plantain Queen", "Cassava Queen", and queens for other commodities traded in the market (Awo 2010; see Britwum and Akorsu 2017). Although researcher number two is a regular visitor to the market, the information we received prior to our research provided us with a new lens to reflect on the market space and its linkages to national and local level policy and decision-making processes.

Data collection started in November 2019, continued throughout 2020 and ended in January 2023. The phased segments were pre-COVID-19, the height of the COVID-19 crisis in Ghana in 2020, and the periods thereafter which are characterised by a cocktail of socioeconomic crises, namely rising sovereign debt, inflation and increasing costs of fuel and food. We designed the research using qualitative methods principles since we sought to answer *how* and *why*

questions (Tenny et al. 2022). We drew research participants via both purposive and snowballing approaches. Participants were selected based on their position and ability to provide relevant and key information related to PPP projects in the market. In some instances, we applied snowballing approaches to access displaced traders since they were no longer physically present in the market.

We used semi-structured interviews, which is the most common form of qualitative data collection tool (Jamshed 2014) with market women, some of whom hold market leadership positions, and PPP-displaced traders. The varied groups of respondents (market leaders comprising market queens and commodity leaders; traders occupying old and new market sheds; and displaced traders) enabled us to answer the PPP impact questions and how the affected women experienced the model. In addition to this, we conducted interviews with tenants of the PPP market shops/sheds to get a sense of the livelihoods of beneficiaries of the PPP project. We also interviewed relevant staff of the Ga East Municipal Assembly (GEMA) and the Dome Zonal Council which oversee the day-to-day running of the market. In total, we conducted 23 interviews. The research process was iterative since we interviewed many respondents many times during the research period.

To understand the meaning of space to the women and to explore the spatial dimensions of people's realities in relation to the PPP projects, we always walked through the market to make observations (Sontakki et al. 2019). The non-participant observation also enabled us to observe market happenings as well as progress with the construction and allocation of PPP sheds and shops. In addition, we conducted one focus group discussion with eight female traders in the market, three of whom had been displaced due to the construction of the PPP lockable shops. We also reviewed Ghana's 2011 PPP policy, the 2013 PPP Bill, ACT 1039, and the PPP contracts that the Municipal Assembly had signed with the contractors for the construction of the market shops and sheds.

We transcribed the interviews. A framework matrix was generated after transcripts were coded based on emerging themes from the transcripts and the literature, using computer-assisted software, NVivo 11 pro. The matrix provided a structural summarised data of coded transcripts systematically and thematically (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). The matrix also made it easy to see linkages across cases, providing a good means to ascertain the need for more data to support a particular theme (Gale et al. 2013).

The Structure of the Dome Market PPP

In Ghana, financing development projects intersects with a push for decentralisation of governance. The local governance structures, however, remain inadequately funded while local revenue mobilisation is low (Seidu 2018). Therefore, local government structures devise ways of mobilising resources to finance developmental projects, particularly those that drive revenue mobilisation (Crook 2017). This need drives how viable spaces of tax extraction are subjected to PPPs under the guise of modernisation. Data from the Ministry of Finance website shows that markets constituted more than 50% of PPPs listed in 2019 (Torvikey and Ohene Marfo 2020).

The Dome Market, located in the GEMA, is the biggest market in the municipality, making it a particularly important economic hub for revenue mobilisation and tax extraction for the Assembly. According to the Assembly and the traders, the market started when female traders took advantage of a railway line along a route used for carting food from rural areas in the Eastern Region and rural Greater Accra Region to the capital, Accra. Initially, the women sold their goods openly; later, they used umbrellas as protection against the vagaries of the weather. Those with resources, built kiosks and containers which they stationed along the railway line. The traders had autonomy over their individual spaces of trade. Urbanisation and increasing informality of work induced many more to join in trading activities, which resulted in congestion. To continue their trade in a safe environment, the women moved to a safer and more spacious area which the Assembly secured. Prior to the PPP project, the market, although managed by the Assembly, had a structure and trading space ownership similar to its original form. Thus, women continued to own and control the structures in the market and were not considered tenants although the Assembly leased the land and built some of the sheds.

In 2015, the Assembly decided to modernise and diversify the market, reduce congestion, provide a better road network, and organise the market for efficient revenue collection through a Build Operate Transfer (BOT) PPP agreement. Local financiers were contracted to build lockable shops and open sheds. The financiers were a mix of both unsolicited and solicited bidders selected by the Assembly. The seven financiers of the PPP infrastructure, all of whom were

men, built 209 units of lockable shops (ranging between 3 metres by 1.8 metres and 4.2 metres by 3.6 metres) and 100 open sheds. The PPP lockable shops have amenities that are not available in structures that the traders erected themselves. For instance, all the shops have electricity supply with individual meters, tiled floors and paved frontages and walkways. About 85% of the shops have hygiene and sanitation amenities. Although taps were provided, however, there was no running water and shop owners had to buy water from the Assembly's water tank in the market. In addition, sewerage and drainage systems were constructed. The amenities improved sanitation in the section of the market with the PPP infrastructure.

Per the BOT agreement, financiers of the project will own and operate the shops for twenty years, after which they will hand over the shops to the Assembly. The Assembly, however, retains the overall control of the management of the shops. The financiers also donated three lockable shops to the Assembly for its use and the cost was passed on to tenants. The main gap in the agreement was that the Assembly took no part in determining the cost of leasing the shops. This critical decision was thus left completely in the hands of the financiers. The Assembly was, however, in charge of the actual allocation of shops to tenants.

The GEMA also planned to build a total of 1,700 open sheds under the same BOT agreement, even though officials of the Dome Zonal Council estimated that there were over 3,000 traders in the market, the majority of whom are women. In 2018, 100 sheds were completed under a PPP and handed over to the Assembly for allocation to the women.

The Contradictory Incorporation of Women into Local Level Decision-making

The ethos of sustainable development requires that both women and men participate in developmental decision-making processes. At the local level, this is imperative since decentralisation is designed to provide citizens with the opportunity to participate in local governance processes. Regarding PPPs, decisions are both political and economic and require concerted efforts to integrate the views of the target beneficiaries and those affected. More importantly, women dominate markets traditionally. It is therefore crucial that women drive the discussion of

the restructuring of the market. However, the centralisation of political and economic decision-making which plays out at the national level was replicated at the local level. The decision to construct the shops and sheds in the market was first taken by the Municipal Assembly and the market leaders were consulted later. The market leaders confirmed their participation in meetings concerning the project but complained about their marginalisation, particularly through the side-lining of their suggestions and concerns about the project. For example, leaders participating in the consultations made suggestions about the project's architectural design. We interviewed the Market Queen who was in office when the project started, and she indicated that one of the contractors of the PPP shops sponsored a trip of market leadership to Kumasi to see examples of PPP shops he was constructing to inform their decision on a design. The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) also encouraged the women to bring their designs and upon their return, the leaders made their proposals.

The Market Queen said, "We proposed an "In & Out" kind of design for the shops meaning all the shops should have two sides, that is a sort of open back and front entrances. They should not have one open side." The lockable shops we saw in the market have one entrance only, however, and do not comply with the women's suggestions. The women did not receive an explanation for the design that was used.

The market leadership accepted the construction of the PPP shops. They justified the shop construction on the premise that that there were already open sheds in the market and therefore stores and shops could be built to diversify the market structures and traders. While they welcomed the construction of the shops, they pushed for the State, represented by the Assembly, to build more sheds to benefit their members since the shops constructed under the PPPs would be too expensive and beyond the economic means of many market traders. This position accounts for intersectionality, equity, and heterogeneity among the traders. The market leaders' acceptance of the PPPs as a means of modernising and diversifying the market cohered with the perspective of the Assembly on the subject. It also shows the co-optation of women into neoliberal agendas, which is not surprising given the women's frustrations with unsanitary conditions and insecurity in the market. Because of the State's inability to solve the multiple problems in the market, the women welcomed the development of the market,

but wanted it done using a model that centres on equity, considering the heterogeneity in resource endowment of the various traders. However, although the female leadership brought their own terms of engagement into the project, they were systematically ignored.

In contrast, another group of traders proposed ways the market could be built with PPP models that would better suit their needs. They argued for smaller and open sheds and for making the sheds accessible to many more traders. This group rejected the lockable shops. The women's concerns about the market design are legitimate because as they argued, the Dome Market is traditionally a foodstuff market with perishable goods such as plantain, tomato, cassava, onion, fish, vegetables, and fruits brought from farm gates. Before the PPPs, traders displayed their wares openly and sold them under umbrellas, in open containers and wooden shops. The traders argued that for pragmatic reasons, the items must be displayed in a way that allows fresh air to circulate around them rather than in lockable shops which generate excessive heat and would require energy for cooling at an extra cost. Additionally, reducing the size of the shops meant that many more women could be accommodated, which could also reduce dispossession. Furthermore, the rent for smaller shops would be lower than for bigger shops.

The contradictions in the design preferences between the traders and their leaders show fraught and inconclusive internal consultation processes among the women. While there were clear differences in the perceptions of market leaders and traders about which types of modern structures should be built, there were some commonalities in imagining what the market should look like. Both groups approved PPPs and an architecture that made the market more open, whether the structures were shops, stores or sheds. The market leaders wanted shops with both ends open and facing each other while the rank-and-file traders wanted smaller open sheds. Both groups highlighted the pre-existing traditional spatial arrangement of the market in their suggestions. However, the construction of the lockable shops did not take into consideration the suggestions of either group. Nonetheless, the District Engineer indicated that the 100 sheds, also built on the BOP model, were constructed based on the women's suggestion for open and smaller shops. The engineers have indicated that they learned lessons, from the mistakes, discussed earlier, in the construction of the lockable shops.

The decision-making structure accompanying the PPP projects revealed two important things. First is the hierarchical decision-making approach which has implications for the reception of suggestions from those lower down the hierarchy. This approach also has its attendant information asymmetry. For emphasis, the Assembly had already taken the decision about the PPP and the architectural design before informing the market leadership. Thus, the traders were not consulted individually or in their small cells as members of commodity associations. Secondly, the participation of the leadership was simply a formality and not based on a genuine effort to democratise the decision-making process. Furthermore, the women were incorporated into the modernisation trope and therefore accepted the PPP project without questioning the pricing of the shops. Although the traders highlighted affordability dimensions and their heterogeneity and differential socioeconomic positions in an attempt to push for equitable resource distribution, they did not translate this into direct negotiations during the consultation period.

Interviews with the Assembly officials showed that while modernisation of the market was presented as the reason for developing market PPPs, the Assembly did not disclose that it had more to do with diversifying the market away from its foodstuff focus. Diversifying the market has effectively gentrified the space and the PPP has been used as a financing vehicle to construct shops and shift the nature of the market to drive revenue collection. The effects of PPPs in the market could have been minimised, had the architecture and cost alternatives been considered to accommodate the different types of traders. However, since the model was built on maximising profit in the shortest possible time before the structures revert to the Assembly, it excluded many less-resourced traders who traditionally traded in the market. Moreover, our interactions with the GEMA revealed that diversifying the market through building high-cost rental shops was a political decision taken mainly by men at the Assembly. This is because at the time of making the decision, the Assembly structures the Assembly structures were dominated by men. Bigger market structures would ease GEMA tax collection burdens since the shops would pay annual Business Operating Permits (BOPs) in comparison to the more laborious daily toll collected from numerous traders in different spaces in the market. BOPs also enable the Assembly to estimate its local revenue mobilisation since the BOP is fixed and the structures registered. The Assembly's internally generated fund mobilisation rated BOP, Building Permit (BP) and Property Tax

as their three top revenue streams. Daily market tolls were rated low. This makes the huge market structures important for all three revenue streams. First, at the construction stage, the owners will pay BPs; then, upon completion, tenants will pay annual BOPs and owners will pay annual property rates. The tax structure makes PPP lockable shops and the infrastructure diversification an enormous incentive for the Assembly.

Leaders Accept, Followers Resist

Development models such as PPPs in spaces such as markets, with their class hierarchies and differences, expose the differentiated ways development impacts are experienced by people. In this section, we highlight the divisions within market leadership and among the traders regarding the PPP Project.

The different views from market leadership and affected traders on whether there was adequate engagement before the subsequent evictions is yet another area of tension between the groups. Traders interviewed posited that there was no consultation with either their leaders or the Assembly regarding the request for them to move to make room for the PPP project. As with the GEMA, the market leadership insisted that the traders at the site were consulted, and announcements were made for them to vacate the site to make room for the construction. With no compensation planned, the traders put up a fierce fight to protest their eviction. The Assembly used its ownership of the land and control of the market as weapons to evict the traders, but the process proved difficult, nonetheless. The Assembly then tasked the Market Queen to help placate the women so that they could be evicted. The Secretary of the Market Queen's Office recounted the experience at the time:

The Queen Mother talked to the traders, but she was accused of conniving with the MCE to sell the land. One of the financiers had started construction, but the traders destroyed all the pillars. City guards were deployed into the market to restore order, but they were unsuccessful. Police officers were called but the traders attacked them too. The Assembly called on the Market Queen again to intervene. And after several meetings, the traders agreed to allow the construction to commerce and sheds were built at the far end of the market.³

The brief description of events leading to the construction of the PPP shops shows the co-optation of the market leadership into the PPP as a development agenda of the Assembly. The hostilities in the market highlight some of the resistance that meets neoliberal projects of this nature. The statement above also highlights the tokenistic baits that are used to trap the oppressed into subordination. The proponents of the project and supporters of the PPP shops, including the Assembly, the Market leadership and the financiers, knew the needs of the traders in the market, namely sheds and waste disposal sites. They therefore provided these needs as a negotiated settlement to appeal to the women to accept the project. The Secretary continued,

...after those very first structures were constructed, the traders came to understand that the Assembly was not seeking to sell the site but was constructing sheds and shops for their own benefit instead. That was when every form of resistance against the construction of structures in the market stopped, making way for the construction of these other buildings you see in the market.⁴

The initial plan was to construct 21 open sheds in the market, but only eight sheds were constructed. In the end, many traders were displaced. The Assembly did not provide data regarding those so affected, but it had previously registered 3,000 traders in the market. In one of the seven PPP sites in the market, a displaced woman put the figure of affected traders at fifty. Since the many sites had varied numbers of traders, it will be difficult to estimate the actual number of displaced traders. However, if we guesstimate that fifty were displaced for each site, the estimated number should be 350. While this number might seem small, it refers to 350 families whose daily sustenance depended on the traders' presence in the market.

In terms of cost, the shops were expensive and at the time were going for GHS65,000 (USD5,417) and GHS40,000 (USD3,333) for 20 years, depending on the location, with intermediaries subletting shops at GH¢55,000 (USD4,583) for five years. We observed that many traders in the PPP lockable shops were from other more prosperous markets such as Makola. The displaced traders simply could not afford the shops. We were told that apart from the market queen, only one trader among the displaced rented one of the shops. The PPPs effectively changed the physical and the social form of the Dome Market through

its gentrification and “foreignisation” which also fit into the Assembly’s plan. One of the market leaders said, “since the traders cannot afford the huge rent, we have foreign traders coming for the shops and taking over the market.”⁵

Both the Assembly’s conceptualisation of development and the design of the PPP project showed an implicit intent to displace some traders from the market. Some of the traders who were interviewed accused the Assembly of using arson to force them to leave the site earmarked for the PPP shops. There were three fire outbreaks at one of the sites within a short span of time. We read this also as a neglect of fire safety in the market.

Social Dislocation in the Market

The construction of the PPP shops and sheds in the Dome Market worsened the already tense social relations due to the politicisation and fragmentation of the market leadership. Market Queens played important and efficient roles in the allocation of shops, integration of new traders and in collecting market tolls for the Assembly. However, prior to the signing of the PPP agreement, two Market Queens stationed in the market were both fighting for recognition and acceptance. One had been working as a Market Queen over the years and was involved in the arrangement and processes leading to the signing of the PPP projects, but she was not recognised by some factions in the market. The other, a member of the current party in power, who was later imposed by the GEMA, was deemed illegitimate by some traders. With a weakened market front, the GEMA was able to implement the project with little engagement with the women, resulting in the lack of accountability and transparency which displaced women who previously occupied the space used for the construction of the 209 lockable shops.

The crisis of polarised leadership has immense implications for the autonomy of traders, especially women, in terms of access to and distribution of economic resources. The PPP came with male elites as financiers and intermediaries who benefitted from the rent and exploitation of female traders. We argue that the Assembly’s use of financiers who built sheds and shops in the market, meant that, the latter owns parts of the market for the stated period of time in the PPP contract. The ownership structure has ramifications for the

social, political, and economic rights of the women in the market in the coming years if the agreement stands. Moreover, many occupants of the PPP shops are new to the market and do not know or understand the existing social relation dynamics because the shops were leased out by the financiers to whoever could afford them, and the market leadership had no control over space allocation. In determining the terms of payment, the decision makers were insensitive to the financial capabilities of the previous users of the space, as the fees surpassed the average annual turnover for many traders, particularly those who were displaced.

Besides, traders were expected to pay the rent amount in full and upfront. To avoid any protest against the pricing system, the Assembly issued allocation letters while the contractor had the lease agreement. It was no surprise that the office of the Assembly mentioned that although they are responsible for issuing allocation letters, they did not know some of the current tenants of the PPP shops. A further complication was that some of the occupants who leased the shops from the financiers also sub-let them under different terms of agreement although, according to the Assembly, the shops are not transferable. In one case, a trader rented one of the ground-floor shops from another person for GHS50,000 (USD4,167) for six years which was far beyond the going price, a complete contrast to the terms and agreement in the allocation letters.

The governance of the market space changed, with implications for the governance of the women as well as for interactions between the women and the Assembly. Traders are now accountable to the owners of the shops and not the Market Queens, and unsurprisingly, the new occupants have no allegiance to the governance regime in the market. This makes it difficult for the traders to integrate and organise a front to fight against the Assembly's decisions. It has also greatly affected the personalised economic relations that traders enjoyed in the market. Traditionally, traders who did not have the financial capacity to erect structures (kiosks and containers) in the market were able, at no cost, to sell in front of the structures that other traders had erected. Given that most new users of the PPP shops came from different markets, the displaced traders did not know them and had not been allowed to use the spaces in front of the new shops. They also did not know the financiers and could not contact them and have a payment schedule instituted. This forced some of them to stop trading in the market altogether while others resorted to hawking on the streets or resorted

to selling commodities that do not require much physical space. Many of the women complained bitterly about livelihood insecurity, as the Assembly did not undertake any re-settlement efforts for the displaced traders. Currently, all the 209 lockable PPP shops have been allocated and according to the Assembly, this has boosted their revenue base, which had dwindled due to the COVID-19 crisis and the leadership tussle in the market.

Women's Mobilisation and Resistance

In 2018, 100 PPP sheds were constructed and handed over to the Assembly for leasing on behalf of the financier. The Assembly proposed a rent of GHS9,000 (USD1,552,750) for a shed for ten years, constituting a GHS2 (USD0.17) daily rate, including sanitation costs. According to the Assembly, the construction of the open shed was a special project for foodstuff traders in the market. This was because the PPP shops were designed with a particular target group in mind—affluent traders who could afford the outright payment of the lease for shops as well as bulk payment of the annual business operating permits – and a desire to boost revenue collection. The Assembly found the daily market toll collection exercise laborious, and the amounts collected too meagre. The BOP payment by shop owners simplified accounting, administration of finances and revenue collection. A market leader who participated in revenue collection on behalf of the Assembly prior to the PPPs argued that the sheds were profitable and huge sums of revenue were generated for the Assembly. She therefore called for the Government to build more sheds while at the same time supporting the PPP shops. This shows that the sheds were not a liability to internal revenue generation; rather, there was a need to provide more of them.

Two main factors accounted for the traders' resistance to the PPP sheds. First, they complained about the cost of the ten-year rent for the sheds, which they said many could not afford. In any case, the ten-year rent requirement was a complete violation of the country's rent control law. The uncertainty of access to the market and their autonomy to trade propelled the women to vehemently resist the construction of the open sheds/stalls under the PPP arrangement. This notwithstanding, 100 sheds were constructed under the BOT PPP arrangement, but the refusal of the women to pay for the sheds meant that they were vacant

for over a year. It is worth noting that the women employed several resistance strategies. They refused a wholesale subsidy offered by the sitting Member of Parliament (MP) of the area which brought down the rent to GHS7,000 (USD583). They also lobbied both the former and current MPs of the Dome Kwabenya Constituency to force the Government to develop the market.⁶ They engaged in demonstrations and protests, petitioned the incumbent party's constituency and national offices, and reported the case to the presidency.

There is an important connection between the Dome Market politics and national politics. The Dome-Kwabenya Constituency is the largest in terms of voter population in the country. Its MP was the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) between 2021 and July 2022, before the president replaced her. She also was the Deputy Majority Leader in Ghana's 8th Parliament, the first female to achieve this feat. Between 2017 and 2021, a former MP of the Constituency became the Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana. The traders used these two people in powerful political positions within as their trump cards to make their demands. When the women reckoned that they could miss an opportunity to move into the sheds before the next election cycle, they mobilised resources to motivate the workers on site to speed up the work. However, both COVID-19 and the election afterlife slowed down the work. Yet, the women's resistance has largely been successful since they stopped the shed construction and bought an end to the PPP model for market development to an end.

In 2020, COVID-19 triggered a need to decongest the market as a measure to ensure social distancing and improve sanitary conditions. Hence, the 100 PPP sheds which the women refused to occupy on PPP terms, were allocated on a non-PPP arrangement. Although the allocation was within the remit of public health concerns, 2020 was also an election year; therefore, the allocation also enabled the State to score political points and the Assembly to fulfil the financial and legal obligations due to the break of the agreement with the financier. The women's refusal to accept the PPP sheds and the several strategies deployed, including threatening that they would not vote for the incumbent party but would back the opposition, yielded results. In 2020, the Ministry of Special Initiatives began the construction of 500 sheds in the market. By 2022, the 500 sheds had been roofed and plastered and a drainage system, pavements and walkways constructed. However, as of January 2023, the sheds had no electricity supply.

The construction of the sheds has since stalled due to the drying up of funds and the current economic crisis in the country. Moreover, the incumbent party won the 2020 elections and so there appears to be no urgency to continue the construction since political threats have withered. The government may be compelled to complete it in 2024 ahead of the election.

Market traders' resistance to state policies and urban development has been documented (see Asante 2022). In the Dome Market, there are thorny issues that will test the persistence of the women's resistance and the degree of success they will record. One important issue arising from the allocation of the 100 sheds is the political tactics that the Assembly employed. The sheds were allocated mainly to commodity leaders who numbered over 50. Thus, the sharing of the sheds was based on hierarchy and commodity leaders were considered first rather than the ordinary traders. The sharing arrangement was deliberate, politically motivated and executed to ensure that commodity leaders would be able to control their members in case of misunderstandings between traders and the Assembly. The aim was also to ensure that resistance to the Assembly's market policies was extinguished before it could fester. The struggles of the women indicate the political nature of the decision to modernise the market. As their voices become stronger and their resistance fiercer, the Assembly deploys strategies to nip resistance in the bud. These dynamics will shape the nature of resistance in the market in the future.

Social relations in markets are embedded in market class structure which shows in the differential interests of traders on matters of state policy that affect them (Campbell 1985). Class differences are intertwined with social and political affiliations. Traders' interests are also shaped by the type of commodities they sell, and the scale of trade. Robertson (1983) notes how the State favours wholesale over retail trade and thus fashions policies that have an inherent aversion for retailers and petty traders in ways that link their physical space use to their economic existence. The conflicting socioeconomic interests are linked to the class structure in the market and among women. These differences in many instances frustrate the implementation of State policies and programmes. We have demonstrated that the attempts by the State to subordinate the women's economic and social autonomy were met with fierce resistance.

Conclusion

We have fused intersectionality with FPE perspectives to show the complex ways women's interests interact with State politics and policies in Ghana. In doing so, we take seriously class dynamics that underlie the various ways women responded to the PPPs. We have highlighted two main areas of tension including acceptance of the PPP project. While the leadership suggested modification, the rank and file rejected the project outright. This shows the fragmentation of the ideas on the matter of development and how it should be carried out. More importantly, we have critically reflected on PPPs and their inherent characteristics as revealed in the intricacies of privatising a local market, and we attribute this process to a neoliberal restructuring of the economy and how it is experienced at the local level. The PPPs have subordinated women's economic autonomy through a process of entrenched patriarchal decision-making and politics at the local level.

We have shown that within the same structure, which in this case is a market, power and influence shaped how traders and their leaders responded to the PPPs. The state's contradictory role in mediation has been highlighted. In enacting these forms of economic orders, the state was seen as unleashing social and economic violence on certain categories of women. We have shown how different categories of women have responded to the PPPs, which are an outcome of a macroeconomy policy transmitted to the local level.

Female traders in Ghana have a longstanding relationship with the State, which in turn has a keen interest in markets. Markets are the nodes for women's economic empowerment and the building of social relations and safety nets. Therefore, women have an interest in State policies that affect such spaces and hence react in ways that show their active policy engagement. The State, on the other hand, extends its extractive policies to markets where taxation and allocation of structures generate revenue. At the local level, the Assemblies rely on local markets to generate revenue and therefore always seek innovative ways to do so. This said, the Assemblies do not have adequate finance to invest in capital expenditure, which compels them to search for alternative ways to develop their areas. PPPs have become attractive financing vehicles for cash-strapped assemblies to develop markets to enhance revenue mobilisation. This modernisation drive through PPPs is also situated in the State's inability to develop infrastructure to propel the economic vibrancy of the markets. In this

paper, we have highlighted the trajectory of PPPs in Ghana, especially at the local level, and how women experienced them in the Dome Market in Accra. The choice of the market type PPP is strategic because the markets are spaces for women's economic autonomy, accumulation, and survival. It is also a space where they encounter State policies that have a direct bearing on their livelihoods. By choosing markets at the local level, we have also shown the importance of women's economic spaces for local governance structures. The construction of shops for rent is profitable in Ghana, where the legislation on rent is not enforced.

We have shown that in its quest to implement the project, the Assembly's accountability and transparency were cast aside and the project was imposed on the women without adequate consultation. Furthermore, the project's decision-making processes subordinated traders, the intended beneficiaries of the project. Similarly, due to its profit-oriented nature, the project did not account for the heterogeneity of the women and their varied financial positions. Long after the projects, the Assembly still hounds women who were displaced without taking responsibility for their displacement. They are considered squatters and are constantly being evicted from and harassed at the insecure spaces they are using as their trading spaces within the market.

The completion of the project gentrified the market, caused social upheavals, and deepened the class structure while introducing new arrangements such as restrictions on space sharing between smaller traders and their wealthier counterparts. It has highlighted the efficiency ethos of such projects as the Assembly emphasised diversifying the market to enhance and simplify its revenue generation processes. Thus, we have shown how the equitable distribution of resources was affected even when the women fought to reverse the PPP model that was fast changing the social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions of the market. The women's resistance and the demands made on the State show their recognition of their citizenship, socioeconomic rights, and the State's responsibility for ensuring that they have access to the means for economic survival. Women's resistance to the project and their leadership's acceptance of it shows the intersecting ways development affects heterogeneous groups of women. The tensions between the leadership and the traders are situated in the broader intensification of neoliberalism's fragmentation of economic spaces and class conflicts. The Assembly's decision-making structure which is centred on the leadership also shows the failures of achieving democracy at the local level.

Endnotes

1. <https://africanfeminism.com/african-feminist-post-covid-19-economic-recovery-statement/>
2. [Why has Ghana's return to IMF provoked an outcry? | Africanews](#)
3. Female_Secretary to Market Leader_22/11/2019
4. Female_Secretary to Market Leader_22/11/2019
5. Female_Market Leader_22/11/2019
6. Political boundaries that are used for parliamentary elections and representation

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