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**Transnational communities, policy
processes and the politics of
development: the case of Ghanaian
hometown associations.**

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Abstract

Ghanaian hometown associations based in London, which engage with developmental issues in their towns of origin, are a new type of multi-level, transnational social network which loop from South to North to South. To what extent does the transnational character of the networks and policy communities involved have an impact on policy processes and the policy outcomes themselves? It is concluded that the transnational dimension has only a very limited impact either on such associations' mode of interaction with policy communities, or on their ability to penetrate decision-making processes. Such transnational actors operate within the logic of a national level political system which has managed to project itself overseas, and are immersed in the same political and governmental forms of engagement. This paper suggests that, whilst the real importance of political connections has to be acknowledged, the effectiveness of such networks could be strengthened through more engagement with UK donor, governmental and civil society groups interested in development, and through harnessing the expertise of expatriate professionals.

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1. Transnational policy processes, non-governmental actors and development: the research questions and the research framework

This study of a number of Ghanaian hometown associations forms part of a larger comparative project which focuses on how non-governmental public actors (NGPAs) engage with multi-level policy processes which bridge Southern and Northern contexts. An increasingly important feature of national level governance in the South is its extensive involvement in transnational policy networks and communities, through which new agendas and interests are inserted into the policy process. These networks are not all North-South; many are now running from South to North, setting up loops of influence and exchange and creating networks of political influence at local, national, international and transnational levels of action. Ghanaian hometown associations based in London provide a clear example of one type of transnational action built on social networks which loop from South to North and back into the South.

Our theoretical approach to studying transnational policy processes is drawn from Peter John's work, which suggests that 'policy community' models (including the notion of specialised epistemic communities) overemphasise the stability and incrementalism of the policy process, and do not sufficiently address how agendas and discourses are 'disrupted' or changed, or how changes are 'selected' (John, 1999, 2003). The driving mechanism for selection of policy ideas in John's model is the interaction among 'policy entrepreneurs', interests and power structures or institutions. The model combines notions of bargaining within an institutionalised power structure with an account of how ideas play a role in change. This is particularly appropriate to the new forms of engagement experienced by transnational NGPAs, where networks are uncertain and dynamic. The new NGPAs are most often seeking to break into established policy communities, both at the level of national governments and within established international organisations. Often they do not succeed or are excluded, and the model must allow for that.

Our emphasis on policy outcomes also seeks to go beyond the normative emphasis of much of the literature on transnational advocacy networks, and to look at policy implementation as a form of sustainable engagement by NGPAs, which are only successful if they are involved in the feedback and learning processes of governmental policy outputs.

This model of the policy process led us to pose the following key research questions:

- To what extent are these new NGPAs able to penetrate and disrupt established communities and their agendas? What determines whether they are rebuffed /excluded, listened to, or co-opted ?
- What makes them more or less effective in influencing policy outcomes—in other words, what leads to their ideas or agendas being selected? Are the strategies of policy entrepreneurs and the bargaining context crucial?
- Under what conditions do they achieve more sustained engagement with the policy process and policy implementation, and thus change the character of governance itself? Are there any key determinants producing feedback processes, or are policies simply the result of ‘backward mapping’ (post hoc rationalisations)?

It was hypothesised that certain key factors would be important in determining the answers to the above questions, most notably:

- The regime context, meaning both the institutional setting and the broader political regime. It can be assumed that the structure of political opportunities determines the political calculations and strategies adopted by NGPA actors, as well as the outcomes of attempts to change those constraints.

- The character of the NGPA's North–South transnational linkages; to what extent do they facilitate the activities of the NGPA in their targeted policy community or network?
- The character and type of membership of the NGPA, and hence the type of policy entrepreneurs it can sustain.

The research strategy was empirical and process-oriented; each case study attempted to illuminate the policy process through tracing the history of particular issue campaigns or policy initiatives and the particular institutions they engaged with.

2. Transnational communities: a theoretical perspective on hometown associations

Ghanaian hometown associations which have overseas members and activities in the UK, Western Europe and the USA are, it may be argued, excellent examples of what are now called transnational communities in the new literature of 'transnationalism'. Like similar associations of migrants from other parts of Africa, Central America, or South Asia, their distinguishing feature is that they are communities which 'forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Basch et al. 1994, p.7) and sustain 'multiple identifications and sites of political engagement (Henry and Mohan, 2003). More than that, they in effect lead 'dual lives' and, unlike diasporas of the past, are not comprised of exiles who have lost contact with a romanticised homeland, but have continuous contact through their activities and businesses; they straddle their host and home countries in a living 'transnational social space' (Adamson, 2002). Portes defines them very narrowly as people who 'make a living' out of their transnational activities (particularly small business enterprises which rely on exploiting north–south links) but others argue there are 'many ways of being transnational' including political and developmental activities aimed at influencing the politics and policies of their home societies (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999; Ostergaard-Nielson, 2001; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002).

In the case of the Ghanaian associations, it is also important to note that they are not primarily a product of migration (unlike many 'identity groups' formed by migrants or exiles overseas). The hometown associations found in Western Europe or the USA are primarily extensions of associations which have existed for some time in Ghana, some going back to the early twentieth century. Recent migration to Europe or the USA has simply facilitated the formation of overseas branches. The overseas branches are seen as another way of increasing flows of resources and influence to bolster the strength of the parent organisation and the community it claims to represent.

Older notions of 'diaspora' or studies of international migration do not really capture these new characteristics. Diaspora studies tend to be predominantly concerned with issues of culture, identity and relations with host or receiving societies and assume the permanence of migrant communities who nevertheless seek identification with an 'imagined homeland'. Longings for Africa amongst a diaspora which was a product of forced migration underpinned a long history of Pan-Africanist movements in the New World, as well as newer concepts of a 'Black Atlantic' (Zack-Williams and Mohan, 2002). More recent work looks at the developmental implications of the 'new diasporas' of post-Structural Adjustment emigrations from Africa, and the exile politics of conflict-induced migrations, but still uses the notion of diaspora (Mohan and Zack Williams, 2002). International migration studies on the other hand, whilst more focused on development issues have looked mainly at the economics of remittances, or the issues of how to reverse brain-drains and the problems of 'return' (see Ammassari and Black, 2001). Yet neither sending remittances to family nor even purchasing land or house 'back home' can adequately characterise what contemporary transnational communities have become (Portes, 1997). As Mohan and Zack Williams point out, the focus on 'return' is perhaps misplaced; modern migrants from West African and other poor countries who have established themselves in Europe now tend to 'circulate' rather than return permanently, even if they cling to notions that they will eventually 'retire' to their original home.

The transnationalism approach therefore focuses more realistically on the political economy of these circulating linkages and asks: what can explain these notions of transnational citizenship which underpin a continuing sense of obligation to distant home communities (Henry and Mohan, 2003)? Do globalising economic forces facilitate transnational business networks, and do they also allow people to lead 'dual lives', involved in the politics of a society which they still see as home even though their main livelihood is derived from residence in the North?

3. Ghanaian hometown associations and the policy community: institutions and processes

The regime context: Ghanaian political institutions and non-governmental actors

After the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah's independence regime in 1966, Ghana experienced 26 years of political instability and economic decline, alternating between short periods of weak electoral democracy and unstable military regimes plagued by internal divisions and violent counter-coups. Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings' radical military regime which took power for the second time in 1982 nevertheless managed to stabilise itself and, after adopting an IMF-backed Economic Recovery Programme, was able to halt the seemingly inexorable decline of the state and the economy and begin the painful process of recovery. This led in 1992 to a 'paced transition' to civilian rule in which Rawlings himself was able to stay in power as an elected President backed by a party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Although the transition elections were marred by allegations of malpractice and challenged by the disappointed opposition to Rawlings, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Ghanaian multi-party democracy has consolidated itself in three subsequent general elections, including a peaceful change of government in the 2000 elections. The NPP consolidated its 2000 victory in 2004, but the current opposition NDC is strong in terms of Parliamentary seats so that electoral competition is genuine and well balanced and a third NPP victory in 2008 is by no means guaranteed.

Ghana can now be described as a reasonably stable, constitutional democracy with a strong Presidential system of government and competitive elections. The two main parties are not simply opportunistic coalitions for winning elections but represent strongly rooted social and historic divisions in Ghanaian society which are reflected in both their ideological rhetoric and their regional power bases. The current governing party, the NPP, has the strongest historic identity, being a direct organisational descendant of Ghana's original nationalist movement, the United Gold Coast Convention, which split with Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples

Party in 1949. Known as the Danquah-Busia tradition, the party in the 1950s and '60s brought together the 'old elites' of southern Ghana - intelligentsia, professionals and businessmen - with the neo-traditional elites of the southern Akan kingdoms and Ashanti. The current NPP regime still presents itself as a defender of traditional values, chieftaincy and local autonomy, combined with a pro-business economic nationalism and an appeal to the professional and middle classes including the established or main stream Christian churches. Its regional power base is Ashanti, although it is important to understand that Ghanaian politics is not simply fractured along ethnic lines. The NDC, on the other hand, created to ensure the election of Jerry Rawlings in the 'transition to civil rule' elections of 1992, still presents itself as the bearer of the Rawlings radical populist tradition and defender of the 'subaltern' classes in society. In practice the long years of IMF-inspired economic policies, and its conversion into a conventional electoral machine in the 1990s have long since blunted its radicalism. But Rawlings' focus on rural poverty and inequality led him to construct an electoral coalition of poorer regions and marginal groups, so that the NDC's power bases are the Volta Region, the two Upper Regions and the North as well as the poorer parts of the coastal south.

Ghana has a respected and independent Electoral Commission, an independent judiciary and a constitutionally entrenched Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice whose rulings have been respected by government. Although the government controls the main TV channel and dominates the main daily newspaper, there is a large and growing independent mass media including commercial TV, many local FM and national radio stations and independent newspapers which are free and open. There has been a revival of civil society groups and advocacy NGOs alongside Ghana's older, more established associational life of local development or youth associations, ethnic associations, Trade Unions, professional associations and an extremely strong and growing sector of faith-based organisations (mainly Christian but with some important Muslim groups) .

Nevertheless, the political system remains dominated by a powerful, directly elected President and the state bureaucracy. The President can appoint Ministers from both Parliament and outside Parliament, and Parliament's role in scrutiny of the executive and in policy making is still quite underdeveloped, despite the creation of specialist Parliamentary Committees. More importantly, electoral politics and policy making are still dominated by neo-patrimonial logic—patronage distribution to individual power brokers and communities which support the governing party, or which the governing party wishes to recruit (see Booth et al., 2005). Competitive elections have, if anything, served to strengthen the notion that the main job of elected representatives is to compete to bring home development projects and jobs for their constituencies (as in American 'pork barrel' politics), although as noted above party loyalties can cut across this logic when it comes to the direct Presidential elections.

The budgetary process is still run by Ministers and bureaucrats behind closed doors, and expenditure controls and real expenditure patterns remain extremely opaque and arbitrary (Killick, 2005). Policy in areas such as timber exploitation (one of Ghana's main foreign exchange earners), land reform and business development is run by political and bureaucratic insiders and individuals or groups who are part of an inner circle of loyal supporters. Moreover, the public service itself—the main line Ministries and field administration—is still in a state of crisis caused by over 20 years of economic decline and Structural Adjustment Programmes. It is under-resourced, poorly staffed, underpaid and demoralised, and all attempts at public service reform have thus far failed to make much difference

It should also be noted that Ghana is still a very poor country (officially one of the HIPC group) and highly dependent on continuing aid packages and debt relief from both the multilateral agencies and bilateral donors. Thus the local offices of the World Bank, ADB, DFID, FAO, GTZ, USAID etc form a 'donor community' which is very much part of the policy making process at the highest levels. This

has a particular impact in ‘social sectors’ such as Health and Education, as well as infrastructural projects and urban development.

At the local level, the institutions which are most relevant to groups such as home town or development associations are the local government authorities, the District or Metropolitan Assemblies, and the local offices of service Ministries such as Education or Health. But NGOs, including church charities, and donor agencies are equally important (some might say more important) actors for local development policies and outputs. In what sense do these institutions work within local ‘policy communities’ which home town or other development associations could be part of, or seek to join?

The District and Metropolitan Assemblies (DAs and MAs) were set up in 1989 as part of the Rawlings’ government’s decentralisation reforms, which were inspired by populist ideas of direct participation and ‘no-party’ peoples democracy. They are a mixed system of decentralisation in that they combine locally elected Assemblies (two thirds elected, one third government appointees) with decentralisation of the main-line Ministries to District level, under the control and supervision of the DAs. The DAs have overall responsibility for government services and development in their Districts and are supervised by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. They were incorporated into the 1992 Constitution and are now governed by the Local Government Act of 1993. But even in the era of multiparty politics, they remain officially non-partisan — using party affiliations in local elections is banned - and the control of central government is maintained very closely through government appointment of the District and Metropolitan Chief Executives (subject to a vote of approval by the Assembly). These officials are government (and hence governing party) loyalists, yet they are also the Chair of the Assembly and of the Assembly’s Executive Committee, rather than the locally elected Presiding Member. The most senior civil servant in the District answers to the Chief Executive.

The DAs also remain dependent on central government for the bulk of their development funding which comes from the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) (a set percentage of general government revenues) which is distributed according to certain formulas which earmark proportions for various sectors. The DACF is controlled by a central government agency, the Office of the Common Fund Administrator and actual disbursements are made by the Ministry of Finance which strictly monitors the application of guidelines (Ayee, 1995). But MPs have an annual Development Fund allocated from the DACF, which they can use as they see fit for local development initiatives, for which they can then claim credit. Such a system clearly reinforces the notion that MPs should be developmental patrons (a popular use for the MPs' fund is scholarships for local pupils to go to secondary school or University).

Evidence from a series of studies of the Assemblies shows, however, that on the whole they are not very responsive to local constituents or their needs, even though democratic participation has improved (see Crook and Manor, 1998; Crook, 1999; Crook, 2003). The no-party system of representation still pushes DA elected representatives (Assembly Members or AMs) into working primarily as delegates for their particular communities. This puts more power into the hands of the government-appointed Chief Executive who, in situations of scarcity, has to act as arbiter and patron of the claims of competing communities. In addition, the general lack of resources or revenue is compounded by the fact that they do not have authority over two key agencies of developmental relevance – the Ghana Education Service and the Ghana Health Service, even though they are supposed to provide the infrastructure for these services. The same applies to electricity and water services.

Policy on development at the local level is therefore still a matter for the officials and an inner group of elected and/or nominated Assembly Members (AMs) who have the ear of the Chief Executive. In matters which concern the DA, NGPA campaigners wishing to participate in or influence local development policy may have to use the vertical mediation of Assembly Members representing their

particular communities; but it is frequently the case that local politics may determine which communities are most favoured by the Chief Executive and his/her inner group. In fact the representative system may be by-passed in favour of direct dealing with the Chief Executive. In matters which involve gaining the permission of, or allocation of resources from the Education or Health agencies, NGPAs must deal with the officials of bureaucratic agencies who are not immediately accountable to any democratic representatives, unless the Member of Parliament is especially active and influential and can bring central government or ruling party pressure to bear. The same is true for the resources offered by NGOs and donors; access to these is again a matter of specialist knowledge and contacts, and the ability to negotiate the requirements of these agencies. Nevertheless the formal structure of democratic representation and elections remains as a potentially powerful source of access and influence, as yet underutilised.

Ghanaian hometown associations as transnational actors: history and politics

The Ghanaian 'hometown association' is a form of social organisation which has deep historic roots in Ghana's various societies, going back to pre-colonial and early colonial times. Colonial rule incorporated into one polity a wide range of African states and 'acephalous' or segmentary social formations. British policy consolidated (or in some cases bolstered) these political identities through the institution of the Native Authority which gave local government powers to the chiefs, who became a powerful 'neo-traditional' elite. In traditional society particularly in the southern or Akan-speaking areas, the commoners or 'youngmen' had their own organisations (*asafo* or *asafo companies*) whose functions were partly military, and partly to do with monitoring the performance of the chief. During the colonial period these organisations became involved in constant battles with the chiefs and formed a dynamic element in local politics. Some Ghanaian scholars point to these organisations as the origin of a number of associational developments in the twentieth century (Addo-Fening, 2003; Owusu, 1989).

In the first place, at the level of the traditional polity (e.g the Asante Confederacy, the Akyem Abuakwa Kingdom, the Fante Union, Dagomba Kingdom) Youth Associations of local Western-educated elites were formed from the early 1900s onwards; their mission (they claimed) was a progressive one: the 'social and economic development' of their states or societies more broadly defined. They disclaimed any political ambitions or role, but their influence was such that with the rise of nationalism they rapidly became key players in the nationalist struggle and, as party competition developed, the largest of them (e.g. the Asante Youth Association) became identified with particular political parties. Nevertheless they continued to claim that their *raison d'être* was the unity and development of their home states. Nowadays these associations are misleadingly referred to as 'ethnic' associations, especially when they claim to represent a whole language or cultural group such as the Asante, Ewe or Ga, but in one respect this usefully distinguishes them from the lower level, educated youth groups who emerged from the traditional associations within a particular town or community during the 1930s and 1940s. These groups called themselves either youth associations or 'development' associations, and ideally they described their function as bringing together all the most influential elements in the town together with the chief in the pursuit of 'communal aggrandisement'.

As Dunn and Robertson note the most deeply rooted 'moral communities' in Ghana (beyond the extended family) are built on local loyalties to peoples' home towns (Dunn and Robertson, 1973, p.40). Politics is conceived as the pursuit of individual and corporate advancement calculated in terms of the economic and demographic growth of one's home community. The rhetoric of communal unity should not, of course, always be taken at face value; local politics is frequently factional, chiefs have always been challenged, and in the 'revolutionary' period of Rawlings rule, youth associations in many cases formed the cadres for Committees for Defence of the Revolution (Owusu, 1989). Nevertheless, it was quite logical that local development associations would seek to use the influence of all the 'citizens' of their community including particularly those who had left to become successful through education, business or politics. Once electoral politics

had developed in Ghana—in the 1940s, well before independence - the strong presumption that voters in Ghanaian elections would vote for the local ‘favourite son’ (or increasingly, daughter) constantly boosted the importance of winning the favour of these associations. It is quite common for those with political ambitions to either cultivate the local development or youth association, or to form one, or even become a ‘leading light’ in one, building up a track record of service to the community with perhaps some successful development projects to point to. Voters will vote for someone who is both trusted to represent the community, and who seems to have a good prospect of being a successful patron. Hence the attraction of more successful citizens who are seen as having good connections at higher levels of politics and society.

The extension of home town associations and networks to overseas Ghanaian migrant communities since the 1970s and 80s has been therefore a perfectly natural step, alongside the equally strong family ties maintained by Ghanaians when they travel to work and reside outside their home communities. Accra and London are equally ‘foreign’, but the potential for resource mobilisation and connections from those with an overseas base has come to seem, at least to those who remain in Ghana, very attractive. Modern communications technology may make it easier to sustain these contacts with members of social networks in Western Europe or the North America; but the technology does not cause or explain such a phenomenon. Nor does the experience of migration itself, although much is written about the impact of welfare networks, exclusion and discrimination in strengthening identification with one’s homeland, or the impact of ‘labelling’ by host communities on the formation of new, home-based identities. These ties existed already and perhaps what is new derives from the sheer scale of the recent Ghanaian emigration to Europe and North America, and the consequent ability to find large and viable overseas communities of people, all from the same town or area, in cities like London, Hamburg, Toronto or Chicago.

Before Ghana’s disastrous economic decline during the 1970s, which culminated in the economic collapse of 1982-3, Ghanaian emigration to Europe and North

America had consisted primarily of small numbers of professionals and students. Unskilled and semi-skilled people including traders have, of course, always migrated to neighbouring countries in the West African region. The economic crisis, however, followed by the austerity years of the Structural Adjustment Programme, gave an enormous 'push' to emigration. By the end of the 1990s it was estimated that between 10% and 20% of the population had emigrated – although this was after around 1.2 million Ghanaians had been expelled from Nigeria in 1983-4 (Van Hear, 2002). Many later drifted back or went to other parts of the region or to South Africa. Those who went to Europe and North America continued to be mainly skilled and professional people but in much larger numbers – for instance two thirds of the doctors trained between 1995-2002, and 20% of all trained nurses (ISSER, 2002). But these skilled migrants have been joined by increasing numbers of poorer, less well educated Ghanaians, who have managed to get to Europe through a variety of routes: joining relatives through the well established 'chain of migration' process; new international church community links; student overstayers and 'illegals'; and multi-stage journeys using brokers and other forms of illegal entry (Akeyeampong, 2000; Peil, 1995; Van Hear 2002). No accurate figure for the actual number of Ghanaians now living in the UK is available; one scholar used 2001 Census figures to suggest that there were 55,537 UK residents 'born in Ghana', but this is almost certainly an underestimate given the large numbers of informal and illegal migrants (Bump, 2005). The amount of money being sent to Ghana as remittances from Ghanaians in Europe and North American gives a more accurate impression of the scale of the migration: in 2002 formally recorded private remittances of \$680 million were the equivalent of more than one third of the country's merchandise exports, and visits by overseas Ghanaians accounted for 27% of all 'tourism' earnings (ISSER, 2002).ⁱⁱ

Ghanaian governments, especially since 2000, have now recognised the economic and political importance of the Ghanaian 'diaspora' and have developed a number of policy initiatives aimed at encouraging investment, return of skilled personnel, or sustaining a continuing commitment from those who stay overseas,

to financial and political support for those 'back home'. Following the Dual Citizenship Act of 2002 (which allowed Ghanaians to keep their Ghanaian nationality with that of their adopted country) a Non-resident Ghanaians Secretariat was set up and the Ghanaian High Commission in London has an office dedicated to keeping in touch with the Ghanaian community in the UK, through a website, newsletter and a programme of events (see Henry and Mohan, 2003; Bump, 2005). And the NPP government (against fierce opposition from the NDC) pushed through an amendment to the electoral law in 2006 which will enable overseas Ghanaians to vote in elections. This is not unconnected to the fact that, during its long years in opposition to the military and then civilian regime of Jerry Rawlings, the NPP was sustained and funded by its overseas supporters, who remain an important element in its support base even now. Many of the larger overseas Ghanaian associations in the UK and USA, particularly those with a regional or big city membership base, are in practice party sympathisers and supporters, even if this is not their ostensible purpose. But these overt political manipulations, whether coming from the government or from parties, also provoke a reverse reaction; many hometown associations deliberately eschew or deny any political connection for fear of the divisive consequences and try to sustain their original commitment to community development.

4. The case studies: transnational policy processes in action?

Two examples of Ghanaian hometown associations with overseas connections were chosen for extended study: the Peki Union (PU), based in Peki, Volta Region, and the La Mansaamo Kpee (LMK), an association for the development of the La quarter of Accra, the hometown of one of the indigenous Ga- speaking groups of the capital city. Some selected episodes from the activities of these associations are analysed below.

The Peki Union

Peki is a small town in the southern part of the Volta Region, with a long history as the centre of a traditional Ewe kingdom established in the nineteenth century after leading a revolt against its overlord, the Akan kingdom of Akwamu. The British allied with them as part of their campaign to block Ashanti expansion to the south east in the later part of the century, and British suzerainty over the whole 'southern Ewe' area was recognised by the 1890 Heligoland Treaty (Nugent, 2002, 21). Under colonial rule, its king was recognised as a Paramount Chief by the British. It was one of the first areas of what is now modern Ghana to become Christianised through the work of the Bremen Pietist missionaries from 1847 onwards. The 'golden age' of Peki was during the early colonial times of the 1920s-30s, when its educated elites and its church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, were leading elements of the Gold Coast African elite, and it flourished economically through cocoa cultivation. It became noted as an educational centre, building on the work of the EP Church which was dominated by the southern Ewes of Peki and Anlo (Nugent, 2002, 124).

The Peki Union was formed in 1924 and helped to establish the Peki Secondary School in 1957. But since the 1950s, with the decline of cocoa cultivation, the area has experienced a long economic decline, especially after a new road to the north by-passed the town (Meyer, 1999).ⁱⁱⁱ It is now an extremely poor and deprived area, dependent on a barely viable traditional agriculture and migrant remittances. There are no industries or commercial agriculture (a state farm and processing plant from the 1970s closed down in the 80s) and few employment

opportunities. Politically, the area (like most of the Volta Region) was strongly loyal to Jerry Rawlings throughout the 1980s and 90s, and voted 80-90% for NDC, although it does not seem to have benefited from being on the government side for so long. The current MP for South Dayi Constituency (which covers Peki and three other smaller traditional areas) is Dr Ampofo, an NDC member elected in 2000 and re-elected in 2004.

The Peki Union (PU) is a 'federation' of so-called 'town' associations which are based on the set of linked settlements which form Peki – the capital being Peki-Blengo. The PU has a President, Vice President, Secretary and an Executive Board elected at a general meeting of the Town Unions which is called the PU National Council. Each Town Union (TU) sends three representatives, the Chairman, Secretary and one other elected member to the National Council. Primary membership is through the Town Unions which set their own dues. Assistance after family bereavement and permission to be buried locally depend on your 'good standing' with the TU. But dues for the PU are only paid by members who have moved away from Peki, whether to Accra or overseas. The current President of the PU, who is a substantial businessman, lives in Accra, in common with very large numbers of Peki citizens, who more often meet in Accra than in Peki. The President has clearly had political ambitions in that he contested for the NDC nomination in the recent 2004 elections but was beaten by the current MP, Dr Ampofo. He then stood against him as an Independent, gaining 13.5% of the vote in a three-way contest which considerably reduced the NDC majority.^{iv}

The PU branch in London is run by a President with a Secretary and Executive. The President until this year was Isaac Afflu, one of the founder members of the PU in London, which was started in 1989 (he came to Britain in 1981). Although it is clearly run quite formally, with files and accounts, he admitted that like most Ghanaian associations, it is very difficult to get people to pay a regular subscription, so most money is raised for specific projects back home. Members will turn up for social events (dances at Easter and Christmas etc) at which 100 to

200 people could be present, and money can be raised then. But 'business meetings' only attract a handful. The fact that the social ties and sense of community of the Peki people remain strong and vibrant is due in no small part to the EP Church which has a main centre in East Dulwich (south London). Services are conducted in a mixture of Ewe and English by the Pastor and the church attracts a large congregation each Sunday of not just Pekis but Ewes and other southern Ghanaians from all over London. The willingness of the ex-President and many of his family and friends to travel every week from Thamesmead and east London to East Dulwich (not an easy journey) is a testament to the attraction of the church as a meeting place where people can enjoy worship in a familiar idiom, sustain friendships and exchange news. It is the EP Church which is the driving force in a campaign to support the building of an Ephraim Amu Memorial Concert Hall in Peki-Avetile, the kind of project which can be supported with unanimity by all Pekis and southern Ewes.^v

The London PU members themselves are not by any means all 'elite' professionals; there are some doctors, lawyers and accountants (who may individually donate substantial sums) but many are health workers, public service clerical workers or those doing menial jobs which are way below their qualification level (especially if they were qualified teachers in Ghana). The ex-President himself (who is now semi-retired) works as a civil servant for the Home Office even though he is a qualified Company Secretary. He says he visits Ghana about every two years, and his children visit too, as their grandmother and other relatives still live in Peki.

The PU in Ghana has been involved in number of development issues over the past few years, the most politically significant of which was the successful campaign to get the government to create a new District Assembly for the Peki area in 2004, called South Dayi, which is coincident with the Parliamentary constituency. The Peki grievance was that after 1973 they had been incorporated into Kpandu District which has its capital at Kpandu town. As one of their traditional rivals, Peki people claimed they were excluded or even discriminated

against by those who ran the Kpandu District Assembly.^{vi} Peki pride was also at stake; they felt that both their traditional status and their historic importance as a centre of education and Christianity, recognised during the colonial period, fully justified District status for the area. Underlying these arguments, of course, was the economic one; the creation of a District brings an injection of resources (services, infrastructure, salaries, allocation of government development expenditure) which can give a real boost to a poor area. The government itself explicitly recognises that creating new Districts for very deprived areas is a way of putting resources into poverty alleviation.^{vii}

Most participants in the new District campaign assumed that in the Ghanaian political system it was necessary to appeal directly to the highest authorities, starting with the President himself, to get approval for such a policy.^{viii} According to the London PU President, the campaign was launched during the Limman government period (1979-82) when they had a good high-level political connection, namely the leader of the majority party in Parliament, Mr C.C. Fitih, from Peki. But this campaign was cut short by the overthrow of the Limman government by Jerry Rawlings in 1982. Further appeals were made to the President (Rawlings) during the 80s and 90s, the latest being a petition from the PU, Traditional Council and the chief of Peki (known as the Dei-Ga) which the then District Chief Executive (DCE) of the Kpandu District delivered personally to the 'Castle', but to no avail. Yet oddly enough, considering the area's rock solid support for Rawlings throughout the 90s and in the 2000 elections, it was under the new NPP government that Peki got its wish granted, after a formal process to consider the creation of new Districts administered by the Ministry of Local Government. A Committee was set up in October 2002 under the Chairmanship of Captain Effah-Dartey (retd.), the Deputy Minister of Local Government, which proceeded to take evidence from 72 petitioners around the country, travelling from region to region. At the end of the process, the Committee recommended to the President and the Electoral Commission that 28 new Districts be created, of which one was South Dayi.

The decision was surprising in a number of ways: first, as noted, it was the grant of a public and political benefit from the NPP's President Kufuor to an apparently die-hard opposition area; second, the new district hardly met the normal, officially published criteria which the Committee was supposed to apply to district creation. The normal requirement is a minimum population of 75,000 together with some degree of economic viability and geographical integrity. Yet South Dayi's population in 2000 was only 36,278 (Ghana, Ministry of Local Government, 2006) and it cannot, unlike some districts in the Northern or Upper Regions, be considered geographically remote or inaccessible.^{ix} How can the decision be explained? The relevant decision-making or policy group is quite clear: it was the President with his advisors from the Ministry of Local Government, which included top officials, the Minister and the Chair of the Committee on the creation of new districts, Deputy Minister Effah-Dartey. The Committee itself included a 'special assistant' (Obeng Busia), a representative from the office of the Vice President (Miss Hajia Rukoya), and Kwasi Ankomah, President of the National Association of Local Governments. Officials of the Electoral Commission (EC) also played a key advisory role; the EC not only implements decisions on demarcation of new districts and constituencies, but also advises on the details of borders and location of district capitals.^x All of the key officials from the Ministry of Local Government and the EC were involved in the Parliamentary Committee on Subsidiary Legislation which drew up the Legislative Instruments for the new districts (Ghana, Parliamentary Debates, 2004, 25 June 2004, cols. 548-615). It was this group of high level political leaders and officials which the Peki campaigners had to engage with and influence.

The Peki accounts of how the campaign was run and why it was successful are all coloured by the fierce rivalry between the MP and the PU leadership, which developed after 2000 over the NDC Parliamentary nominations. This rivalry reached new heights of vitriol when the campaign coalition fell apart over the issue of where the new district capital should be, a dispute which nearly lost them the new district at the final hurdle. Initially, it is clear that the campaign included the PU itself, the former MP Dr Ababio (1992-2000) and the new MP Dr Ampofo,

the former DCE of Kpandu , and the chiefs of Peki and the other three minor traditional areas – Kpeve, Tongor and Kpalime.^{xi} The PU presented a lengthy Economic Plan for the proposed District to the Effah-Dartey Committee, drawn up by a consultancy company and sponsored by the German Embassy. The Committee was apparently impressed by the strength and quality of the Peki presentation.^{xii} Most accounts agree that the Pekis were able to build on a particular sympathy that President Kufuor was supposed to have for the area, variously attributed to Peki's 'Akan' cultural connections and history, his admiration for Ephraim Amu, and his friendship with particular elite individuals from Peki (both medical doctors) who were NPP sympathisers. The MP also suggested that his own Prempeh College old boy status had some influence; Kufuor is a 'Prempeh boy'—although of a much older generation—and one of Kufuor's former teachers was from Peki. The Minister of Local Government at the time was also a Prempeh classmate of the MP.^{xiii} Such connections no doubt helped with access to the President and with the likelihood of gaining a sympathetic hearing. President Kufuor did indeed visit Peki three times in the 2001-4 period, which was interpreted as a sign of favour, although unlikely to have been decisive when the hard political decisions were being made.

From the government side, the evidence suggests that the NPP and the President saw the Peki district issue as an opportunity to perhaps gain an NPP foothold in the otherwise solid NDC monolith of the Volta Region. The NPP has always been sensitive to accusations that it is an 'Ashanti' party, and to win a Parliamentary seat in the Volta Region in the 2004 elections would have been a step towards broadening its base. It may be surmised that the NPP hoped that giving the area its own District would help it to win the constituency for its own candidate to win. In pursuit of this aim, the President was prepared to override the difficulties associated with the formal criteria for new districts. It is true that government spokesmen had already hinted, during Parliamentary discussions on the new district policy, that the population criteria were in the process of being revised and that districts could be given to areas that had sparse populations but were very large geographically with problems of remoteness and poverty. The Electoral

Commission claimed that South Dayi is not unusual as other new Districts with small populations were created; but these are all large territories in the Upper West or Northern Regions.^{xiv} Peki, however, is neither large geographically nor remote; the only other special justification offered was that the complexity of the traditional areas and their rivalries was such that the new District had to be confined to its rather restricted geographical area.

That the political criteria were decisive is suggested by the activities of the NPP in relation to the Parliamentary elections; the MP was apparently approached to either 'cross the carpet' or stand down in the 2004 elections in return for the granting of a new District. He claims that he refused such an unworthy deal; and that he subsequently campaigned (as NDC) in the elections on the basis of his success in getting the new District. In fact the victory he claimed was distinctly tarnished by a further twist in the policy process, which had led to disillusion on the part of the Peki chief and the PU with new District: this was the government's decision to make the capital of the District not Peki but Kpeve, a small town on the border of the area which is the centre of one of the other rival traditional communities. Thus neither the NPP nor the MP himself obtained the expected benefits from the new District decision; the NPP failed to win the seat from NDC (either by defection or through improved popular support in the election itself), but the MP saw his majority much reduced due to loss of support from the Peki core area and the Independent candidacy of the PU President.^{xv}

Why had the government made such a decision, which negated the anticipated political pay-off from the new District? The evidence from government sources is very clear; the Effah-Dartey Committee, the Ministry and the Electoral Commission all feared the potential for ethnic unrest in the area, not just because of Peki's uncomfortable relations with the other minority groups in South Dayi, but because of a long running land dispute with a neighbouring Ewe chieftaincy called Tsito which had paralysed agricultural development and led to many deaths over a number of decades.^{xvi} It was felt that to make Peki a District capital would be seen as provocative to their adversaries in the land dispute as well as to other

minority groups. The government authorities also believed that all the Peki petitioners, including the Peki chief and the other minority chiefs, had agreed that the capital could be “wherever the President chose”. When the Pekis reacted angrily and in public to the Kpeve decision, the government actually withdrew the new District offer unless they all signed a written agreement to accept Kpeve as the capital— an action whose validity was later denied by the Peki chief and the PU. Most interestingly, it would seem that the President right to the end wanted to give the Pekis the capital town so as to consolidate the political gains of the move; but he was persuaded by the other policy makers that this would not be prudent. The MP and other sympathisers played a key role in that they persuaded the government policy makers, perhaps rashly, that getting the District itself was the important issue, and that the general agreement to accept Kpeve would stick. The MP had not reckoned, perhaps, with the extent to which the PU President would use the decision as part of his campaign to either gain the NDC nomination or, when that failed, as a weapon in his Independent election campaign.

The legacy of all these disputes over the new District in terms of their impact on the development policy process in the District Assembly has been distinctly negative. The current major concern of the PU is to persuade the government to move the District capital to Peki where they consider that by tradition and by economic logic it should be. The newly appointed District Chief Executive of South Dayi is of course an NPP loyalist who regards the PU campaign with some distaste as disruptive and unhelpful and hints at ‘political motivations’. In fact, she does not regard the PU as a useful development partner and rejects what she sees as its overblown pretensions to be the ‘sole mouthpiece’ of all Pekis, on a par with the traditional authority and with a right to be consulted on every development policy or project. This of course is bad news for the development of effective civil society participation in the operations of the new District Assembly, given that the DCE tends to see all town development associations and NGOs as potential political troublemakers.

The other recent initiatives of the PU have included providing equipment and support for the Peki Senior Secondary School (known as PESCO) and the hospital (both in dire need of upgrading), trying to revive the defunct state farm as a private enterprise, and attempting to persuade the University of Maryland in the USA to site a new West African regional educational facility in Peki. This latter campaign is based on the fact that some Peki citizens work at the University and a Peki consultancy company has done some work for them; but it has made very little progress.

The contribution of the PU in London to these campaigns has followed two distinct strategies. The problems of the Secondary School were brought to the attention of the ex-President when he visited Ghana a few years ago (he is an old boy of the School) and he organised a specific collection amongst PU London members to buy 20 reconditioned computers from Computer Aid. They were then shipped to Ghana and on to Peki by liaising directly with the Headmaster, and the MP for the area, who organised the tax relief and customs clearance. The initiative came through these personal and political contacts rather than through any engagement with the Ministry of Education or the GES. Back in Ghana, it seems as though the MP took most of the credit for the initiative. More recently, the London PU has initiated a scheme to provide secondhand textbooks to PESCO, and the ex-President attended PESCO's 50th Anniversary celebrations in Ghana in June 2007 to deliver contributions. PESCO itself has an active 'old boys' or ex-pupils' association (the PESCONIANS) with international branches and a website (www.pesconian.org) with which the London PU has connections. But it is significant that relations between the PU, the MP and the District authorities were so bad that no local PU representatives turned up to the launch of the PESCO anniversary fundraising campaign in February 2007.

It is also evident that visiting political dignitaries from Ghana have an effect on the activities of the migrant associations, as perhaps the government hopes. The next project of the London PU is to join a campaign to subscribe to a fund to raise

educational standards throughout the Volta Region; this campaign was launched by the MP for Ho (the Regional capital) when he visited the EP Church in London.

With regard to the new District Assembly campaign, the London PU under Afflu's Presidency worked through the MP and the PU Secretary in Accra, mainly through writing letters and supporting the general petitioning strategy. But the London PU has been careful until now at least, not to seem associated with any one political party or another; it was agreed they would reject requests for support and funding from all candidates in the 2004 elections. Only after the MP was re-elected in 2004 did they congratulate him and offer to work with him again. This stance is clearly a product of the fragile nature of the association's life in London; unlike in Ghana, where peoples' careers and interests are really at stake, the London Ghanaians have little to gain and everything to lose if they get divided by 'politics', since maximising the support of everybody who lives in London or the UK is what matters. One particular problem (not peculiar to the London PU) is that overseas Ghanaians are highly suspicious about what happens to donations sent back to Ghana, unless they can be reassured that the money will not be misappropriated. Thus any hint of 'political' overtones to the funding raises alarm bells. The London PU is embarrassed by the political wrangling which has damaged relations between the PU and other governmental, political and educational elites in the District. Of course, this whole stance could change if a new PU leadership in Peki sees a real advantage in overtly throwing in their lot with the ruling party and the London branch follows suit. This will depend in turn on the nature of the ambitions of those who run the association; are they looking only to retire peacefully or at least have a permanent home back in Ghana to which they can return at will, or do they have ambitions to succeed in business or politics (the two are linked) through their UK-Ghana connections, before they get too old?

The La Mansaamo Kpee (LMK)

The La area of Accra is an ancient indigenous settlement to the east of the city populated by one of Accra's Ga-speaking groups. LMK was founded in 1979 by a

group of around 20 well educated graduates from La; one of those founding members, Mr J.K Ollenu, is the current Chairman of the Council of the Association. He is now an independent business consultant, after a career as a Development Economist in the Ministry of Finance. The elite connections of the original association were good: Mr Ollenu's elder brother was the renowned Ghanaian jurist and judge, Nii Amaa Ollenu (after whom the LMK's private school in the area is named), and, during the PNDC era, they could claim connection with various top political office holders and a member of the Bank of Ghana Monetary Policy Committee.

The organisation of the LMK is based on the eight 'clan quarters' of the La traditional area, each of which contains a number of clan houses (extended family compounds). This gives them a strongly rooted basis in local society, making it in many respects a quasi-traditional organisation. The clan quarters are in effect localised patrilineages, divided into family compounds with a 'leading family' for each quarter. The clan houses meet on Sundays, and representatives of the clan houses meet as the LMK every week (Saturday mornings) in a General Assembly. There is an Executive Council (elected annually at an AGM of all members) which manages the day-to-day operations of the association together with specialist subject committees. There is in fact a permanent Secretariat with offices in La which employs a full time administrator and secretary. Membership can be either individual or through the clans.

The LMK is undoubtedly one of the best run and most effective of Ghana's hometown/development associations as evidenced both by its longevity and by its concrete achievements in the area. Probably the core of its continued viability is the La Community Bank (LCB) which was set up in 1987 with the help of Barclays Bank and seed capital from the African Development Fund of the USA and the UNDP. In 1995 the ADF provided an additional grant towards the cost of computerisation and basic infrastructure and staff training. Initial permission to create the bank as a 'rural bank' needed two years of political lobbying through PNDC high-ups close to Rawlings before the Bank of Ghana was persuaded to

grant a licence (obtaining the support of P.V.Obeng, Rawlings' closest advisor at the time, was apparently the crucial breakthrough). The next struggle was to get the Bank upgraded to 'community bank' status, which would enable it to offer more services and larger loans, provided it had larger working capital, but again the Bank of Ghana proved difficult to persuade, a phenomenon which the LMK leadership found surprising; the Chairman attributes it simple jealousy and suspicion of the Bank's success. Their next objective is to achieve the status of a fully recognised commercial bank.

The LMK is the LCB's largest single shareholder with 20% of the Preference Shares as of 2005, and the LMK claim that 33% of the ordinary share capital is owned by La people (including apparently many of the New York La community) (La Community Bank, 2005). The clan house representatives who meet on Saturdays are Bank shareholders. It has been very successful in encouraging local people to bank and save with it, and has also launched LACOSAVE, a 'susu' or circulating loan fund scheme for poor people in the local community which can be opened with only 5000 cedis.^{xvii} The scheme, which enables people to obtain regular short term (three month) loans of up to twice their contributions, has been very successful in helping the development of small businesses in the neighbourhood, mainly street traders ('table top') and kiosks or stores. The Bank is also a source of development loans and donations through the La Development Fund, funding such projects as public toilets, scholarships, and educational buildings and equipment for the La Presbyterian Secondary School and the LMK private school.^{xviii} The loan recovery rate of over 90% is extraordinarily high for Africa, or indeed any poor developing country (Yankson, 2000).

Other notable LMK projects include the La Vocational and Technical Training Centre sponsored by the Dutch donor organisation ICCO, the LAMEF scholarship fund, the primary to Junior Secondary 'Nii Amaa Justice Ollenu' School, public toilets (which charge a small fee) and the La Maternal and Child Welfare Clinic which is supported by the Ministry of Health. The ultimate ambition is to turn this into a fully- fledged medical centre and hospital once the current building is

completed. La remains nevertheless a poor and extremely overcrowded, densely populated area of the city with appalling sanitation and water supply problems, major health problems and lack of formal employment.

Most of the LMK's successes have been due to its ability to deal with and access international donor organisations (both national and multilateral), as well as locally based NGOs, although the Bank also required high level governmental support. It has also been good at developing projects which generate revenue as well as consume it.

Its relationships with the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and the local offices of the Sub-Metro District have, however, been less fruitful, partly due to the extreme resource crises experienced by the authority since the 1980s, and the ever worsening situation of the city's public infrastructure (see Ayee and Crook, 2003). LMK representatives have served on the AMA as government appointees, and the current Executive Council Chair of the LMK serves on the new La Dadekotopori Sub-Metro District. But they express scepticism about the ability of the AMA to help them, having participated in two funding initiatives which required partnership with the AMA: an EU Micro-Projects grant, and a Social Investment Fund initiative for Poverty Alleviation offered by central government through the Ministry of Finance. In both cases the necessary financial arrangements and counterpart funding failed. Half of a 200 million cedis grant from the EU Micro-Projects Fund for the hospital project, for instance, has been received but according to the Chairman the LMK has been trying for two years to get the AMA to release the second tranche. Personal appeals to the MCE and attempts to use the good offices of elected politicians have all failed and the organisation has more or less given up – “Why waste time phoning any more?” in the words of the Chairman.

More significantly, perhaps, they are unusual in that not only do they resolutely refuse to ally with any political organisations (they even remained aloof from Rawlings Committees for the Defence of the Revolution—CDRs—in the 1980s

and early 90s) but they refuse to engage in supporting or allowing themselves to be used by any elected representatives including the non-partisan Assembly Members. In their experience, politicians only want to be associated with LMK so as to claim credit for any development work. They particularly fear the divisive effects of political alliances, given that it is known that the clan houses themselves do not all support the same parties. Thus for the LMK to be associated with a particular party would, according to the Chairman, lead to splits and eventual destruction.

In fact the LMK has a highly jaundiced view of party politics, which makes for a generally frosty relationship with AMs, parties and MPs. As in the case of Peki and generally in Ghanaian local politics there is a structural reason for this. Two key political officials, the District or Metropolitan Chief Executive and the MP compete for political authority with each other and with the District Assembly representatives. They also compete for popularity and the support of constituents through their success as bringers of development projects. Rather than collaborating over local development programmes there is therefore a tendency to see the success of others at gaining a development project for their area as a threat to their own position; and they are especially jealous of non-governmental groups who achieve success independently of their patronage. This rivalry has assumed a particularly acute form in La, where the NDC MP admits that he does not work with the LMK because they 'leaked' some of his development ideas. He is suspicious of their operations, accuses them of being covert political supporters of the NPP and says he prefers to organise projects with a Ga ethnic association called 'GaDangbe'. The LMK, in return, has little time for the MP, pointing to his use of DACF Development Fund to buy hundreds of plastic chairs for the clan houses for their meetings as a waste of public money. The Assembly Member for New Mantiase ward (an NPP sympathiser) is equally suspicious of both the MP's tendency to spend his DACF money without reference to anybody else and of the LMK's independent stance, which he attributes to their private sources of funding – "They get their funds from elsewhere, so why are they always asking the AMA for money?"

The LMK's fear of divisive influences even extends to the traditional chieftaincy, the La Mantse; although they engage with the traditional authorities and seek their collaboration after a campaign has been launched they avoid involving the chiefs directly in the affairs of the association. This is because they want to avoid any association with chieftaincy disputes, which have become more frequent lately due to the current revival of chiefly authority over land in the highly competitive and lucrative Accra land market. So the LMK engages with the government and the donor communities on its own terms, using its own abilities and contacts and approaching officials directly where it can.

The overseas supporters of the LMK are most active in New York and Toronto, with London so far operating only at an informal level. The New Yorkers send regular amounts each year to support the LAMEF, and the Toronto people are led by a Municipal Waste Management engineer from Peel Region, Ontario. In London, the Ghana High Commissioner was one of the first Patrons of the association but after he left the London branch faded away. Now, a senior medical consultant in London is attempting to revive the La connection by starting a campaign to fund the completion of the new clinic and deal with some of the local health issues. Negotiation with the Metro District Health Authority over the future of the clinic and hospital is something he has the expertise to take on, as the La General Hospital currently supplies the staff for the clinic which is a 'satellite' of the Hospital. If the new hospital is to be a public- private partnership, then seconded staff would have to be attracted as well as registration issues dealt with.^{xix} But the LMK's disillusion with public authorities is such that they are currently thinking of a purely private partnership to get it finished and operational. He describes the London association as very informal – a network of friends and contacts who meet occasionally – but is clearly a man with the commitment, education and resources to develop an effective action after visiting Accra regularly over the past three years.

Both the London and Toronto contacts admitted in interviews that the key problem (as with the overseas Peki Union) is overcoming peoples' fear that any money collected will be misused or disappear.^{xx} The Chairman of the LMK in Accra is also aware of this problem and is addressing it by not only making accounts available but by developing a website on which what is being done can be shown in real time. It is also evident that both the Canadian and British contacts have their own ideas about the problems of La and what needs to be tackled to sustain a more effective attack on poverty and urban decline—particularly in the area of water supply, sanitation and job creation. But at the moment the overseas LMK supporters tend to influence policy only indirectly, through visits to Accra and by their success in raising money for projects decided by the LMK in Accra.

5. Conclusions

The political context and contrasting strategies of transnational hometown associations

Any locally-embedded or grassroots NGPA seeking to influence or participate in local human development policy in Ghana has to confront two quite distinct policy communities: the official one of political and governmental institutions, and the more diffuse world of the international donor and NGO community. The official policy community, linking local with national levels of decision making, is dominated by political patronage networks which, since 1992, have become increasingly driven by the electoral logic of elected officials and party loyalties. Competitive party politics as found in Ghana provides a context which is very different from that faced by international policy advocacy NGOs. It is still a relatively opaque or 'non-transparent' world dependent upon access to the right people and the vertical accountabilities of politicians to their client communities, but not one which is closed to those who know how to play the political game. The donor world is perhaps more closed except to those who have the special skills and knowledge on how to access it: predominantly highly educated and well organised elites with international experience or connections. It is not clear how the two worlds intersect, if at all.

The experiences of the two hometown associations studied illustrate two quite contrasting strategies. The Peki Union, in spite of its attempts to maintain a stance of political neutrality and to claim representation of the whole community, has engaged fully with the political patronage and party/ governmental system in spite of the misgivings of its overseas members. It has in fact been exposed to politicisation. In some respects this has been effective as evidenced by their success in getting government to create a new District Assembly for Peki. But in other ways there has been little to show by way of investment in local human development over the past 20 or more years, and they are vulnerable to exclusion and even hostility when the party regime changes. The change from NDC to NPP in 2000 for instance, has changed the relationship between the PU and the

District governmental authorities in quite negative ways, given the hostility of the NPP District Chief Executive to the PU, and the PU itself has been split over the political activities of its officials. If the NDC were to win in 2008, the relationships could change again. Even the District Assembly victory was undermined by the PU's inability to influence central policy makers' decision on the location of the District capital, thus robbing Peki of one of the main benefits expected from the new structure.

The LMK, on the other hand, after initial successes at the highest levels of the political system, has deliberately focused on the donor and NGO community, perhaps out of a realistic despair over the lack of real resources at the disposal of local government bodies, but also driven by a genuine concern to avoid the risks and divisions associated with patronage politics. They prefer to limit their political engagement to the very highest authorities. They have achieved more by way of real development initiatives than the Peki association, and they show how successful policy entrepreneurs can be, who think strategically and have the knowledge and skills to by-pass political blockages and seek other routes. But there are real limitations to this especially in the more consolidated democratic electoral system of Ghana, and they provoke the jealousy and even hostility of local political authorities who could easily block their strategies.

In both cases, however, the transnational dimension of attempts to engage with development policy seems to have had little impact, either on their mode of interaction with policy communities, or on their actual ability to penetrate decision-making processes. The overseas members seem to have supported modes of engagement determined locally in Ghana without much attempt to develop their own inputs. The overseas contributions have been limited to raising some funds with the exception of the expert medical help offered to the LMK. To some extent, this finding suggests that the tendency in the transnationalism literature to predict a complete 'transformation' of migrant identities and inter-state relations is somewhat exaggerated (see Basch et al., 1994; Cohen, 1997; Kriesberg, 1997; Kekk and Sikkink, 1998; Sikkink, 2002);^{xxi} on the other hand it confirms what

might have been predicted from a strict reading of the more cautious and limited definitions of transnationalism offered by scholars such as Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999) or Al-Ali and Koser (2002). The kinds of connectedness which have developed between Ghanaian overseas migrants and their pre-existing hometown associations are so close that what goes in London or Toronto is an almost unmediated extension of the Ghanaian political system to another extra-territorial setting. The transnational actors have more or less had to accept the terms of a national level system which has managed to project itself overseas. In other words, being an 'overseas' branch doesn't add any particular value other than the ability to raise money—although even this should not be exaggerated given the difficulties experienced.

It might be objected that both of the cases selected are from areas outside the ruling party circle and in one case not willing to play the party game. It is true that more powerful, pro-NPP groups in London particularly those from Ashanti or the Eastern Region probably have more success in getting their agendas through at the local level and gaining substantially better outcomes. But they are still using the same modalities of engagement – utilising political patronage networks and the clientelistic relation of elected politicians to their communities. Their transnational character and resources are not bringing a qualitatively different set of resources or approaches to the process. If they have especially powerful personal contacts these are to do with their insertion into party and related business networks not their 'overseas' character.

Change might come however, if the transnational actors start learning how to engage with the international donor community at the international or extra-territorial level. Some of the LMK's supporters have the potential to do this, but it is only just beginning. And such associations may be too small to exercise that kind of clout which is why some scaling up is likely in the transnational realm of action. Both kinds of change may accelerate when a younger generation of transnational association leaders emerge (current leaders are predominantly older men in their 50s/60s)—although there is considerable debate in the literature on

other transnational communities about whether transnationalism itself will survive amongst second or third generations of migrants (Portes, 2001, p.189; Levitt, 2001, p.212).

6. Policy implications

Working with democratic party politics

In common with the other studies in the project, the Ghana hometown cases demonstrate the crucial importance of 'regime context'. No NGPA in Ghana, least of all a hometown association, can ignore the context of competitive party politics within which development policies both local and national are made and implemented. This is a very different context from those faced by international advocacy coalitions, or those operating with authoritarian national governments. But it is nonetheless especially difficult for organisations whose very existence is based on a rhetoric of community unity and who claim to represent the collective interest of the whole community. Party politics (amongst other things of course) tends to divide communities. How should a hometown association with transnational connections deal with this dilemma?

- It may be suggested (with due deference to those who know their own political system better than the authors) that it is very risky to try to ignore politics altogether; the jealousy of political actors should be recognised and some kind of pay-off offered from successful partnerships. Private and external donor-focused strategies can be very effective but can also be limited or even destroyed by the power of government to obstruct and block. Government disposes of resources (both financial and regulatory), which need to be tapped. Success achieved in the private sector can be used to lever government support if necessary. Associations can also use their community rootedness to act as vote- brokers, just as the chiefs have done for a long time.
- 'Not ignoring politics' still leaves the dilemma of partisanship; to identify with a party where there is balanced competition risks splitting the hometown association and turning off overseas members. It could be argued that it depends how dominant a party is in the locality. A totally dominant party has to be worked with, and if it is out of power nationally

then the whole community has to use this to 'bargain' with national politicians (as happened with the South Dayi District, with admittedly only qualified success). Otherwise, a hometown association that wishes to remain independent has to play a very clever balancing game, which not everyone can do, especially when it comes to attempting to bargain with popular support; or, as in the case of LMK, it must be successful at bypassing local politics and going straight to the top.

The value of the overseas connections

The Ghana studies illustrate how important and indeed dominant the 'Southern' base of a socially rooted NGPA, despite much inaccurate rhetoric about the inevitability of 'Northern dominance'. But for the Ghanaian hometown associations it might be suggested that more Northern influence would be beneficial. How can the overseas branches of the hometown associations move beyond being just subordinate fundraisers?

- The overseas branches could add a lot more to the development process if they broadened their activities and appeal within the host society in the UK or elsewhere. There is a popular charitable interest in overseas development both within church communities and NGOs as well as local governments which could be tapped through collaboration. The focus on a particular community is very effective, on a par with twinning or 'adopt a school' or 'adopt a family'. Connections with bigger international donors could also be built, especially by younger generations of well educated Ghanaians in the UK who are interested. The example of the Atorkor Development Foundation is a good example here.
- The expertise of overseas Ghanaians with professional or business knowledge could be more generally harnessed in order to influence policy goals in relation to development and economic planning. For instance, more realistic policies on commercial agriculture in areas such as Peki could be developed; health, water supply and sanitation could be

approached in different ways and given different priorities with the right expertise (e.g. Atorkor's emphasis on preventative medicine rather than building more hospitals). Professional Ghanaians could also engage more easily with officials and technocrats in the relevant Ministries, where there are officers very willing to respond to good and well-funded initiatives.

- Being realistic about politics means also using the political connections of overseas Ghanaians if they can be found and harnessed.

Nonetheless, transnational migrants remain suspicious for two core reasons:

- Reluctance to contribute is partly due to mistrust of associational leaders and political authorities back home. Greater transparency through website information, videos and opportunities for visits can help.
- Distrust is also, more fundamentally, a function of increasing distance from the homeland, both psychological and generational. The latter is perhaps an inevitable process as migrants establish new lives and new social networks. Some no doubt want to escape from the expatriate Ghanaian scene altogether. They can only be brought back in through the same processes as might be devised to attract UK sympathisers; scaling- up to appeal to a broader interest in African development problems and charitable impulses.

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ⁱ This paper was originally presented to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies International Workshop: 'The impact of transnational non-governmental public actors (NGPAs) on policy processes and policy outcomes: translating advocacy into

sustainable policy engagement' held at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, 11th – 12th September 2007. The Workshop was funded by the ESRC-NGPA Programme and the Commonwealth Foundation.

ⁱⁱ Later calculations published in 2004 put the 2002 remittances total at \$1.4 billion – considerably more than one third of export earnings (Quartey and Blankson, 2004).

ⁱⁱⁱ The soils of the area were too poor and lacking in shade to sustain cocoa cultivation in the long term (Nugent, 2002, 54).

^{iv} The results were: NPP 36.2%, NDC, 50.2% and Independent, 13.5% in a very low turnout of 34.3%. In the Presidential election the NDC candidate, J.E.A Mills obtained 85.8% of the vote in an 86% turnout. (Figures provided by the Electoral Commission of Ghana).

^v Amu is a nationally revered musician (his image appears on the 20,000 cedi note) who composed the unofficial (but very popular) Akan national anthem and during his lifetime was a major figure in the headquarters of the EP Church in Peki. The campaign is supported by the current MP in his 'Business Plan for the area, as a possible tourist attraction.

^{vi} Kpandu was part of German Togo before the First World War, which consolidated its 'difference' from Peki during the complex rivalries over Togoland reunification and Ewe irredentism in the 1950s .

^{vii} Capt. Effah-Dartey, Chair of the Committee on Creation of New Districts praised the government's policy as a way of bringing infrastructure and development to remote, poor or inaccessible areas which were previously part of very large Districts (Ghana, Parliamentary Debates, 2004, 25 June 2004 cols 548-615). See also interview with Capt. Effah Dartey, 31 Jan 2007, and interview with Prof Afari-Gyan, Chair of the Electoral Commission, 5 February 2007. According the Minister for Local Government in 2002, the 'overhead' cost of creating a new District was at least 10 billion cedis (Ghana, Parliamentary Debates, 2002, 29 Oct. 2002, col 537).

^{viii} This is a relatively accurate perception in that officials from the Ministry of Local Government and the Electoral Commission involved in the process said that the final decision on District creation is a matter of Presidential prerogative. Indeed the Minister for Local Government Mr Kwadjo Baah-Wiredu, confirmed this in Parliament (Ghana, Parliamentary Debates, 2002, 26 Nov 2002 col. 1589).

^{ix} The 2007 population is projected to be around 41,000.

^x Interview with Professor Afari-Gyan, Chair of the EC, 5 Feb 2007.

^{xi} The Peki chief claims traditional suzerainty over these areas but they were elevated to 'Paramount' status by Kwame Nkrumah and then downgraded leaving a legacy of claim and counter-claim about their true status. Peki accounts for just over 50% of the total population of the District.

^{xii} Interview with Capt. Effah-Dartey, 31 January 2007. The petition was drafted by the former President of the PU Mr Kum, an Accra lawyer.

^{xiii} Interview with Dr Ampofo, 1 Feb 2007. In Ghana, as in England, 'classmate' links developed at a select group of elite private or semi-private boarding schools underpin influential networks in business and politics.

^{xiv} Central Gonja and Gonja West for instance.

^{xv} The NPP candidate, it might be noted, was the brother of the PU Secretary.

^{xvi} The Ghanaian government was particularly sensitive to local ethnic issues at that time due to an armed conflict in the northern kingdom of Dagbon in 2002 which had resulted in the assassination of the Dagomba king (the Ya-Na) and necessitated a local State of Emergency with extensive Army and Police presence.

^{xvii} At present exchange rates this is about 25 pence.

^{xviii} Interview with Mr Ollenu, 23 May 2006; interview with General Manager of LCB, 1 June 2006

^{xix} For a private hospital, registration has to be pursued through the Private Hospitals and Maternity Homes Board in Accra.

^{xx} Another very successful hometown association run by another doctor in London, the Atorkor Development Foundation (a small town in the Volta Region) reports exactly the same problem. Most of the money raised for their new Primary Care Health Centre has been raised through the charitable work of two churches, the Chelmsford Central Baptist Church and the Stanley Park Evangelical Church, Carshalton. The London doctor who runs the Association is actually the chief of the town, which helps overcome the mistrust to some extent! (Interview with Dr S Adjorlolo, 25 April 2007)

^{xxi} Work which goes beyond international migration to focus on broader transnational groups such as Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) or Transnational Social Movement Organisations (TSMOs) is especially prone to use the language of transformation, e.g.: TANs 'seek ... to transform the terms and nature of the debate' (Kekk and Sikkink 1998, p. 201) or are 'restructuring world politics' (Sikkink, 2002, p.302); TSMOs are said to be challenging the status quo of various agendas, from both a progressive and a reactionary viewpoint and are creating a 'planetization' of popular discourse (Kriesberg, 1997; Cohen, 1998)