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Solid waste collection in Accra: The impact of decentralisation and privatisation on the practice and performance of service delivery

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This study on solid waste collection in Accra provides an illustration of micro impacts of macro policies. It shows the impact of the government's decentralisation and privatisation policies on urban governance and environmental management in the Accra metropolitan area. Furthermore, the study shows a number of important elements such as large gaps between formal rules and actual practices due to the poor organisation of decentralisation and privatisation policies, inadequate fiscal transfers from the central government to decentralised bodies to match increased responsibilities, weak internal revenue mobilisation capabilities of the district assemblies, the tendency of the central government to interfere in purely local matters despite the decentralisation policy, the lack of effective urban governance and its effects on service provision, the distinctive role of the informal sector, the preference of consumers for private service providers and inadequate attention to environmental concerns in the development programmes. What implications do the findings have for the debate on decentralisation and privatisation? What policy suggestions (recommendations) could be derived from the study? Which areas might require new/additional research? The objective of this concluding chapter is fourfold. The first objective is to return to the research questions as spelt out in Chapter 1 and to show how these questions were answered. The second aims to link the research findings to the theoretical debate that has been summarised in the Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The third objective subsequently tries to indicate some policy lessons from the study on solid waste collection in Accra, focusing on what can be done to overcome the identified constraints. Finally, we aim to make suggestions with respect to areas for new or additional research, referring to themes that warrant further scientific inquiring.

9.1 Answers to the research questions

As spelt out in Chapter 1, this study is based on five research questions:

1. What is the magnitude and what are the major causes of the solid waste collection problems in the Accra metropolitan area?
2. What is the scope and what are the characteristics of the various public and private institutional arrangements for solid waste collection?
3. How do stakeholders perceive or respond to the arrangements in solid waste collection in terms of accompanying and conflicting interests at the various levels of organisation?

4. What is the impact of decentralisation and privatisation policies in Ghana on the nature and performance of various institutional arrangements for solid waste collection in the Accra metropolitan area?
5. How do the various institutional arrangements in solid waste collection contribute to urban sustainable development?

In the sections below, the answers to these questions are summarised.

9.1.1 Magnitude and major causes of solid waste collection problems in the Accra metropolitan area

For a considerable time, the volume of waste generated in Accra has outpaced the growth in resources for collecting the waste. The expenditures on waste collection by far outstrip the revenues from its user fees (see Table 8.2a, 8.2b and Figure 8.1). In some cases, the resources have been diminishing in real terms, when discounted against inflation. The negative variance underscores the magnitude of funding gaps, if the service was to rely solely on user fees from house-to-house waste collection. Poor cost recovery, inadequate funding and over-dependency on financial grants from the central government put the long-term financial sustainability of the system into serious jeopardy. Communal collection, otherwise referred to as the central communal container system, which accounts for about 70% of the total waste collection in the city and is still free despite the approval of a new set of rates for various classes of residential areas in April 2000, puts a severe financial burden on the local authority and affects its ability to pay waste contractors regularly, resulting in irregular and often unreliable services. User fees from the house-to-house services are not enough to pay for the entire waste collection in the city. This makes financial considerations the most obvious constraint to effective solid waste collection system in the city.

Though it is difficult to lay hands on the exact quantities of waste the city generates (due to discrepancies in the size of Accra's population and the poor records on waste collection by the AMA) *vis-à-vis* the available resources to address the problem, the fact that only about 60% to 80% of the waste is, in some way, regularly collected, with the remaining 20% to 40% not being regular collected or not being collected at all, speaks volumes of the magnitude of the problem.

Considering the extent of this problem, it is ironic that in the planning stages, the local authority pays inadequate attention to waste collection, which is the largest single item in its recurrent expenditures, in addition to being the most visible environmental problem and a potential threat to public health if uncollected. Planning in Accra is biased towards physical development and development control (albeit

very ineffectively) rather than the full range of aspects included in development. It still demonstrates a traditional view on the role of planning in urban development and a virtual neglect for the problems of service provision (see Adarkwa and Post, 2001).

The major causes of solid waste collection problems in Accra can be attributed to ineffective urban governance. This inadequacy translates into a vicious circle of waste collection problems, in which one problem affects or leads to another, reinforcing each other and perpetuating the problem. Four main dimensions can be distinguished in this respect:

- The failure to empower the district assemblies (*e.g.* AMA) due to shortcomings of the decentralisation policies, including poor cost recovery mechanisms and poor monitoring (see research question 4).
- A lack of involvement and participation of the community in the design of waste collection arrangements, a lack of civic responsibility towards waste collection and lack of trust in the local authority.
- A lax attitude among the residents and policy makers.
- A lack of concern for the environment (*i.e.* public health aspects, environmental deterioration and lack of attention to waste as a resource).

We will further elaborate these dimensions below.

The failure in policy design and implementation

Most policy suggestions for solid waste collection in Accra such as the pay-as-you-dump (PAYD) policy, have failed partly because policy makers have not been realistic. For instance, they incorrectly assumed that residents will pay according to consumption or as they dump their waste. They also adopted policies that were based too extensively on a law and order mentality (such as chasing street vendors from the street without finding ways to relocate them), which do not work in cities with weak administrations like Accra. This reflects the conventional public management perspective which believes that the local government rules and runs public affairs, while in fact informality rules. These policies do not link up with the current governance perspective of having stakeholders jointly work towards achieving collective goals. They do not sufficiently link to promising successful actions on the ground (such as self-organised house-to-house collection in parts of Adabraka, using waste pickers in areas where officially the communal collection system is operating) that could perhaps be scaled up so that it could acquire official approval. Local authorities have not worked in harmony with other actors and have not listened to and consulted with other stakeholders in the design of policies and arrangements that affect their lives. Other stakeholders therefore do not have a sense

of ownership of the policies and might care less for their success or failure. They continue to see services such as solid waste collection as a public responsibility.

Lack of involvement and participation of the community and lack of civic responsibility and trust

The residents are neither involved in the design of the institutional arrangements for solid waste collection, nor motivated to put in a great deal of effort or money. They are not incited to contribute because appropriate provisions to enforce the sanitary rules and regulations are not in place. The authorities do not stimulate individual households to uphold social and public obligations and to foster civic responsibility (Post and Obirih-Opareh, 2002). Furthermore, the state and its representatives are viewed with distrust (see World Bank's Poverty Assessment for Ghana, 1995 and 2002). The local authority continues to favour a top-down management approach instead of an urban governance approach.

A lax attitude

The problem of solid waste collection in Accra is not only due to inadequate resources to address the huge and escalating volumes of waste that result from rapid population growth, but also to the attitudes of residents. The lax attitude towards waste collection of some segments of the population – exemplified through free riding and indiscriminate dumping into open spaces, streams and river bodies (thereby degrading the environment and exposing the majority of the population to public health risk) – is the bane of solid waste collection problems in the city. Though a minority of the population could be responsible for the negative waste practices, this behaviour of the few can cause severe environmental degradation and public health problems which affect everyone. Effective waste collection is not an individual affair, but a collective responsibility of the residents and the authorities. Many reasons account for the lax attitude. Traditionally, solid waste collection has been a government responsibility, but the state has failed to deliver. The people are usually very clean when it comes to their own courtyards, but outside their premises waste enters the public domain and becomes a public responsibility (Van der Geest, 2001; Van der Geest and Obirih-Opareh, 2002; Post and Obirih-Opareh, 2002). A lot of people seem to care very little about how the local authority manages to collect the waste. Such a lukewarm attitude to waste removal constitutes one of the most important threats to any sustainable solid waste collection programme in Accra. In the urban setting, additional factors are:

- The social, economic and ethnic heterogeneity of the residents, which leads to lack of community spirit and social control.

- The sheer size and high population density in combination with the inability to remove waste from areas such as outskirts that are simply too far away – a practical consequence of residing in cities.

The lax attitude is not limited to only a minority of the population, but is also present among public officials in charge of solid waste collection in the city. Many well-meaning policies have failed partly because of a lack of commitment to get the job done. Some local authority officials seem to care very little about the de-humanising waste situation in many poor areas of the city such as “Sodom and Gomorrah” as compared to the attention they give to the rich areas. The local authority has failed to extend regular waste collection coverage to all the communities of the city, especially the poorly developed areas and the spontaneous extensions at the outskirts of the city. In addition, the local authority has been ineffective in the enforcement of its own bylaws, as well as in the supervision and monitoring of contracts and sanctions of offenders. This is partly due to conflict of interests and the cosy relationship of some officials with service providers. Some of the service providers are “friends” of the “big wigs” in the local authority, thereby hampering their control.

Furthermore, the lax attitude of some residents must be seen from the perspective of the strained relationship between the (local) state authority and the general public. The lax attitude is at least partly a consequence of the failure of the local government to perform well, without willing to admit it and change its approach. The people in poor areas think that the authorities do not care. This incites them to behave in negative practices such as the indiscriminate dumping of waste. In the urban setting, the role of waste management is passed on from the individual to the local authority since, unlike the rural areas, the individual cannot send his or her waste to the outskirts of the town.

Lack of concern for the environment

In Accra, the lack of concern for the environment in the plans and programmes of the local authority for solid waste collection is manifested in many areas. This includes (i) public health aspects; (ii) environmental deterioration; and (iii) lack of attention to waste as a resource. The system tends to focus more on narrow perspectives such as efficiency criteria, without due regard for environmental concerns. This study attests to the marginality of environmental concerns in the urban development practice. In Accra, urban environmental management does not really exist despite efforts to move in that direction through the Sustainable Cities Programme (see McGranahan *et al.*, 2001). The environment continues to be a closing item. At the local level, responsible actors only think in terms of service efficiency

and effectiveness. Moreover, effectiveness is narrowed down to removal of waste from residential areas without any concern for either the safety of its disposal, or the impact of disposal on the quality of the environment (*cf.* open dumping), or for possibilities for reducing waste flows or for diverting them through reuse, recycling and composting. The protests by residents in the Mallam and Kwabenya suburbs of Accra against the use of their land for waste dump and landfill sites respectively, underscore the official neglect of environmental impacts of the city on the built-in environment. Public health and environmental deterioration seem not to receive adequate attention in the local authority plans.

The fact that there is no integrated solid waste management approach in Accra shows a lack of attention to waste as a resource. Integrated solid waste management as a concept is an idea, which is still not practised. The contribution of reuse, recycling and composting as a contribution to urban sustainable development does not feature in policies and programmes of the local authority.

9.1.2 Scope and characteristics of the institutional arrangements for solid waste collection

There are four basic types of institutional arrangements for waste collection systems in Accra, namely (i) publicly provided house-to-house collection; (ii) privately provided house-to-house collection; (iii) publicly provided communal container collection; and (iv) privately provided communal container collection services. In rich areas where the house-to-house collection system operates, the service is comparatively more reliable with fewer interruptions and the service consumers pay the user fees regularly. These high-income areas have all the trappings for a house-to-house collection service: a good road network, accessibility to houses, a preparedness to use approved containers and a willingness to pay user fees. In general, all the institutional arrangements for house-to-house collection are viable for both the local authority and the private service providers because they have adequate cost-recovery measures. Most of the service consumers in the house-to-house collection system are satisfied with service provision. In contrast, and as indicated in the answer to the first research question, the communal container collection system, which operates predominantly in low-income and some middle-income areas and covers more than two-thirds of the waste collection system in Accra, is free and financially unsustainable for the local authority which bears the cost. It is characterised by communal collection points and communal containers and suffers from service unreliability and a lack of cleanliness. There is a general dislike of the current communal container collection system largely because of the low incidence of container sites and irregular collection. At the same time, the residents in low-income areas (Achimota, La, and Nima) acknowledge almost unani-

mously (100%) that they cannot afford the current rates of servicing in the house-to-house collection system. For an improved communal container collection system, however, most residents seem to be willing to pay ¢100 per day (1999 prices) without jeopardizing their acceptance and participation.

In terms of institutional arrangements, it is not only the communal container collection versus the house-to-house collection arrangements that indicate major differences, but also the public versus private arrangements. The public system usually has better technology, which it often receives from the central government and also from the donor community. The privately provided house-to-house collection services use all manner of vehicles, including power tillers and open trucks. However, the trucks of the better-funded private contractors such as Gee Waste and Daben Cleansing compare favourably with the public ones. Despite this difference, the private providers were found to offer good quality services, well attuned to the variation in the local situation (for more details see research question 5).

9.1.3 Stakeholders' perceptions and conflicting interests with regard to the arrangements in solid waste collection

There are three main stakeholders in solid waste collection, namely the local government authority, service providers and consumers. Each stakeholder has its own interests, which invariably influence its perceptions on how solid waste collection should be carried out. In Accra, the conflict of interest is obvious and self-evident. People have private interests in public institutions or services and no matter where and in whatever position they find themselves in a public sector, they do whatever they can to maximise their private interests and those of their families and relations. The personnel responsible for solid waste collection in Accra are no exception. The conflicting interests in solid waste collection as a 'public good' pose a policy dilemma for public officials. Officials want a clean environment, but do not put enough funding and effort into ensuring that. Service providers want high tariffs for their services in order to acquire more profit. Consumers, on the other hand, want a clean environment and regular collection of their waste, but they do want to minimise their contribution to that goal. Consumers prefer the private service providers, but fear that privatisation could lead to increased prices. Such conflicting interests among stakeholders hamper the performance of the institutional arrangements.

The problem is that nothing much is done to harmonise conflicting interests and to negotiate solutions. There is no proper management of the problem. Under current conditions, the local government should take the lead, but for various reasons (partly indicated below) they are incapable or unwilling to do so. The fact that there are few efforts being made to bring these interests together is another demon-

stration of the lack of effective governance. It is interesting to note that the franchise system in house-to-house collection provided an arrangement that linked providers and consumers (harmonising conflicting interests between these stakeholders) and performed very well, albeit from a narrow perspective of service efficiency and effective removal of waste from the areas concerned (*cf.* the broader sustainable development assessment).

In recent times, local private service providers have complained of the relatively lower rate of tariffs the local government authority set for them compared to what was paid to City and Country Waste Ltd (CCW) for similar services. The CCW was a joint Canadian and Ghanaian company which the central government imposed on the Accra Metropolitan Assembly in July 1999, and which was granted a monopoly status to collect waste in Accra. It operated until July 2001 when its contract was abrogated by the government. The local authority, on the other hand, decries the increasing costs of solid waste collection and its inability to shoulder the cost alone, particularly for the communal container collection system. The findings from the study show that partnerships, involving all the stakeholders, would be a better option out of this predicament. The study indicates that the public-private arrangements in solid waste collection have performed best, at least until one of the partners failed to deliver (*i.e.* the AMA failing to pay the contractors).

9.1.4 The impact of decentralisation and privatisation policies in Ghana on the nature and performance of the institutional arrangements for solid waste collection in Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)

The institutional arrangements that evolved in solid waste collection in Accra since 1992 and 1997 were a result mainly of the decentralisation and privatisation policies, respectively. More basic services have been transferred to local governments and the lower structures in the district assemblies. However, the operational difficulties that have characterised the partial implementation of the decentralisation policy in solid waste collection in the AMA demonstrate the fact that laudable as this policy might be, it does not clearly reflect issues on the ground. Moreover, though decentralisation has brought major institutional changes such as making the district assemblies the pivot and focal point of planning and development, public administration in the AMA, like in many district assemblies in Ghana, continues to be weak. Central government ministries, departments and agencies continue to wield tremendous authority and make spending decisions in a highly centralised fashion. As a result, local governments have little authority to make strategic decisions and few methods of raising the tax revenues they need to be effective, for instance, in

solid waste collection.⁹⁵ The correlation between funding gaps and poor service delivery, particularly in the areas serviced by communal container collection serviced is quite obvious. Better cost-recovery measures seem the only means to bring about improvement in the functioning of waste management services.

The findings also point to a big gap between formal rules and actual practices in all aspects of the solid waste collection policies. Decentralisation of solid waste collection in Accra was simply a matter of a de-concentration of responsibility from the centre to the sub-metros. Decentralisation did not achieve the expected results in solid waste collection because the problem was more one of inadequate funds to operate solid waste collection rather than centralisation per se. In the absence of adequate funding, the decentralised bodies (*i.e.* the sub-metros) performed poorly in solid waste collection. Unfortunately, though decentralisation promises to give more powers and responsibilities to the local level through participatory democracy and consultations, the communities have neither been involved in the design of the institutional arrangements for solid waste collection, nor have been sensitised and motivated to contribute to its successful implementation.

However, there is a clear distinction between the impacts of decentralising solid waste collection services to the six sub-metros constituting the AMA (*i.e.* the public administration of the service) and the impacts of privatisation of the service. The privatisation policy came in as the best available option, since it involves bringing in additional resources and private sector managerial thinking. Since 1997, the system of solid waste collection in Accra has undergone a fundamental shift from public to private provision. The transition was motivated by the apparent failure of the city's Waste Management Department to deal with the mounting problems of waste collection and the prevailing belief that the market would help to overcome these. The privatisation of solid waste collection has been a top-down exercise, decided upon by the local government, but with considerable influence being brought to bear by international donor institutions, notably the World Bank, in view of local government's incapacity to deliver the services adequately. The indigenous private sector was called upon to improve service performance. It is important to note that the local government's decision to privatise the service was not taken from a genuine belief in the potentials of privatisation – on the contrary: there was considerable opposition from within the local administration and the as-

⁹⁵ Though the district assemblies are free to raise taxes in specified areas, for political reasons the central government interferes and prevents the former from imposing the requisite taxes. A case in point are the user fees for solid waste collection in Accra that were approved by the central government in April 2000, but which it prevented the local authority from implementing because of the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2000.

sembly of the AMA – but rather because there was no other option available and because AMA's Waste Management Department (WMD) was put under considerable pressure from the central government and donors.

A striking feature of solid waste collection in Accra is the impact of extra-local pressures. There is a high tendency for central government interference in the affairs of the assembly due to the fact that Accra is the seat of central government. Furthermore, Accra is also the seat of the Greater Accra Regional Administration. Therefore, there is interference from these levels of government as well. In addition, the donor community that pushed for privatisation of solid waste collection (in exchange for technical and logistical support) has strongly influenced policies in Accra. However, political commitment to the idea of privatisation is still minimal and the administrative machinery is totally unprepared to guide such a process.

Though the contracting approach, in principle, enables the local authority to keep a firm grip on the entire process through specified contract performance measures, enforceable contract sanctions, rigid performance monitoring and cost accountability, this has not been fully realised in Accra. Furthermore, although privatisation of solid waste collection became official policy, the lack of appropriate provisions on the part of the local authorities proved to be the Achilles' heel. It was not so much poor performance by the private sector, but rather the AMA's endemic financial and managerial weaknesses that turned against the incipient local business class. An overzealous central government thought it could solve these shortcomings in a technocratic manner. Contrary to the widely admitted need for competition to make privatisation work, the state granted monopoly rights to a foreign firm. This intervention, despite possible gains in service effectiveness, is extremely costly and seems to be far beyond what local authorities and inhabitants can contribute.

9.1.5 The contribution of the institutional arrangements in solid waste collection to urban sustainable development

Until mid 1999, public and private modes of solid waste collection co-existed, enabling a systematic comparison between them. The findings show that privatisation has benefited consumers in terms of a wider coverage, higher frequency and more reliable services. A number of drawbacks have also been observed, notably worsened labour conditions and increased environmental dangers. The greatest flaw, however, is its lack of financial sustainability. This is related to the non-commercial nature of the service, particularly the social and political sensitivity of cost recovery in a poor country. The central government's decision (taken in 1999) to impose a private monopoly in solid waste collection in order to speed up the process and solve the waste collection problem in the metropolis once and for all is criticised by the

general public and policy analysts. This decision compounded the financial problems of the local authority, hampered the development of an indigenous business sector and failed to build on the potentials of a system that seemed very promising.

The most important financial problem service providers encountered in the privatised communal container collection service was tardy payment of their invoices by the AMA/WMD, leading to occasional interruption of services. The financial viability of the arrangements based on house-to-house collection is considerably better than that of the communal container collection system. In Accra, the allocative efficiency is poor in the areas using the communal container collection system, as this type of service still does not attract user fees. Allocative efficiency is substantially better if local contractors provide the house-to-house collection service. At the same time, the record of cost recovery was extremely good in the privatised house-to-house collection system, reaching a level of 95%. The private contractors are also more productively efficient than their public counterparts. In the communal container collection system, contractors are paid for each recorded trip of waste to the designated dumpsites, while in the house-to-house collection system the willingness of residents to pay their dues depends on whether they receive value-for-money. As far as service effectiveness is concerned, privatisation has produced mixed results in Accra. In the communal container collection system, the major reason for this is the irregularity of services leading to waste piling up at the container sites. There is a significant difference between communal container collection performance under public and private provision. Local contractors generally provide better services, probably because they are being paid according to the number of containers they actually transport to the disposal sites. This incentive is lacking in WMD operations.

Appreciation of the cleanliness of services (degree of littering) is considerably lower in the communal container collection system compared to the house-to-house collection system. In theory, the latter ensures effective removal of waste from premises, whereas the communal container collection service – especially in the event that services are unreliable and/or container sites are far removed from houses – incites people to dump indiscriminately. Across the board, privatisation has produced higher levels of employment within the sector, largely by the extension of services. At the same time, labour conditions in the private sector are inferior to those in government service where wages are lower, job insecurity is higher and non-wage benefits and facilities are fewer. In view of the high level of labour turnover it looks like employment in the waste sector in Accra is a last resort option. Waste collection workers in Accra seem to consider their job and labour conditions to be

worse than those of many other people with similar backgrounds. This helps to explain why labour turnover in the indigenous private sector is very high.

As Rondinelli and Iacono (1996) and Burgess *et al.* (1997) pointed out, private sector involvement in service provision raises issues of public interest and acceptability. The law supports all four basic arrangements in solid waste collection in Accra. Public outcry at the City and Country Waste's contract provides an excellent illustration of the legal and social legitimacy of institutional arrangements.

Illegal and unhygienic waste practices constitute a threat to public health and the environment. The communal container collection system is most likely to generate environmentally unsound practices. The inadequacy of collection points and containers, the irregularity of waste collection and the distance people have to travel to dispose of their waste encourage illegal dumping, constituting a potential source of environmental degradation and a public health hazard, especially for children (dumpsites frequently serve as playgrounds). Uncertainty about the responsibilities as regards the cleaning of collection points is another problem the system faces. Both the WMD truck drivers and those working for private contractors just lift the containers, without cleaning litter and spillage. The idea is that residents will be charged for the collective container collection service and, eventually, that AMA will collect rates from the households. Low frequency and the irregularity of solid waste collection also have a detrimental impact on public health and the quality of the environment. In the house-to-house collection system, people normally use appropriate containers. Poor public health inspection and a lack of sanctioning against sanitary offenders are additional reasons for these negative environmental impacts.

Furthermore, contractors predominantly use open trucks, but scarcely cover the waste with a net to prevent littering during transportation. Some private contractors and/or drivers active in house-to-house collection avoid going to the dump and paying dumping fees to the AMA by unloading their vehicles at unauthorised places. In such instances private gain ends up in public loss. Such practices exist due to weakness as regards public monitoring and sanctioning by the WMD. The authorities are primarily concerned with the effectiveness of solid waste collection in high-income neighbourhoods, but much less with the overall urban environment. Despite numerous complaints by residents in Accra about private contractors unloading their vehicles at unauthorised places, the offenders are never sanctioned.

Privatisation has definitely helped to improve solid waste collection output in Accra with about 70% of waste being collected by early 1999. The low-income settlements suffer largely from the paucity of container sites and containers provided

by the AMA/WMD, a problem that could not be offset by contractors merely charged with the removal of the waste from official vantage points. None of the institutional arrangements tries to link up with other domains of solid waste management, *e.g.* to move beyond waste collection and link it to other important aspects of solid waste management such as reuse, recycling and composting. The (local) government's attitude towards reuse, recovery and recycling of waste materials has usually been very ambivalent.

9.2 Linking the findings to the current theoretical debate

The Accra investigation produced quite a number of empirical findings. To assess the theoretical implications of these findings, the study has to return to the three theoretical angles of the study⁹⁶ as outlined in the Chapters 2 to 4, and to discuss them in terms of (i) drawbacks of decentralisation; (ii) better performance by private providers; (iii) the urban governance approach; (iv) the partnership approach; (v) guiding hand of the state; and (vi) neglect of the environment. The next subsections summarise the theoretical implications of the findings.

9.2.1 *The drawbacks of decentralisation*

The various decentralisation efforts – strengthening the district assemblies and creating sub-metropolitan assemblies within the Metropolitan Assemblies – have performed far below expectation. This is due to a lack of transfer of resources from the central government to the district assemblies and from the district assemblies to the sub-metropolitan assemblies, in order to match the transfer of responsibilities. In addition, departments such as the WMD do not have financial autonomy and continue to depend on the highly politicised allocative policies of the local authorities. These illustrate very familiar theoretical themes of impediments associated with decentralisation (Rondinelli, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2000; Bird *et al.*, 1995; Bennett, 1990, 1993; Smith, 1985, 1996, 1999; Wolman, 1990; Martin, 1993; Hesse, 1991; Hovrvath, 1994; Batley, 1996; Helmsing, 2000). The problem starts at the level mentioned first – the devolution to the district assemblies – as the factors that frustrate this process are passed on, in this case, to the sub-metros and the WMD. In Accra, two factors combine to explain the flaws of the reform. The first refers to the failure of the decentralisation policy in general, due to the inability to democratise state power in a manner that would create an opportunity for the majority of Ghanaians to take part in collective decision-making and acquire access to political

⁹⁶ The first of the theoretical debates addressed in Chapter 2 looks at decentralisation and privatisation within the broader development debate that at present is dominated by the principles of neoliberalism and from the perspective of the African state, particularly Ghana. The second one, addressed in Chapter 3, examines urban management, environment and partnerships in the African context. The third one, which is highlighted in Chapter 4, focuses on solid waste management.

authority. It has failed to empower the people through the district assemblies. It has failed to restructure the government machinery and reform local governments to take responsibility for local administration and development and to make public administration more efficient and responsive to local needs. It has neither been able to restructure the allocation of resources and reassign functions and responsibilities to the three levels of government (national, regional and district), in order to promote the efficiency of management nor promote local development with involvement of the people as a special pre-occupation to improve living conditions in all localities in the country. It has failed to provide adequate political guidance, remove administrative obstruction, ensure accountability and responsiveness, and improve fiscal performance. The lack of elaboration of local government laws in terms of new working procedures, etc. not only points to a lack of political guidance, but also results in confusion and battles of competence between various levels (the AMA and sub-metros; the WMD and AMA) which paralyses service delivery. Administrative opposition, a lack of financial independence (solid waste collection in Accra is funded partly by central government resources) and the fact that there is still no composite budget for the district assemblies, etc. compound these problems.

Secondly, Accra is the capital city, the seat of the central government and regional government, which implies a continuous interference from cabinet in local affairs (*cf.* CCW).

Our findings support the idea that for decentralisation to be successful, it requires genuine political commitment at the top as well as strong political guidance in its elaboration. However, the "silent coalition" of opposing forces reluctant to alter the power structure and the inheritance of authoritative and centralised governing – the administrative establishment (civil service), the ministries (including Ministry of the Local Government) – has managed to slow down the process of empowering the local assemblies. The same mechanisms frustrate decentralisation efforts within the district assemblies, where established elites find ample reasons to hold on to the limited power in their hands (see also Bayliss, 2001; Rondinelli, 1999, 2000; Wunsch, 1998, 2001).

9.2.2 Private providers perform better

The findings show that an overwhelming majority of consumers (*i.e.* 98%) in all localities prefer private service providers to the WMD. They also believe that private service providers perform better services than the public ones. The dissatisfaction about past governance performance translates into a strong pro-privatisation attitude. This is not only an opinion, but was supported by our findings on efficiency

and effectiveness gains through privatisation of solid waste collection, which support the general theoretical claims that the private sector performs better. The findings point to better performance by the private sector in terms of high rates of user charge collection in house-to-house collection (up to about a 95% success rate), improved cleanliness (*e.g.* by CCW) and higher productive efficiency. The ability of private contractors to work with very limited resources as compared to the public sector ones echoes familiar theoretical claims of private sector managerial capabilities, its dynamism and superiority over the public sector (Batley, 1994, 1996; Coindreau-Levine, 1994; Lee, 1997; Rondinelli and Kasarda, 1993; World Bank, 2001). Besides, the private providers are not bothered by political interference and seem to have less overhead costs, partly because these are externalised and carried by the AMA/WMD. However, the better performance by, and the comparative advantage of, the private sector largely come from savings on labour costs and partly from the use of very old vehicles and technologies that fit the qualities of the areas concerned.

The existence of public and private institutional arrangements in solid waste collection enables competition and comparisons of their performances. The findings also support the assertion that the inefficiency of the public sector in the provision of services has been the chief reason for pushing for privatisation (World Bank, 2001, 1994; Batley, 1996, 1994; Rondinelli, 1997; Martins, 1993). The findings show that competition helps to ensure quality at minimum cost (World Bank, 2001; IMF, 2001; Stiglitz, 2000; Walsh, 1995; Samuelson and Nordhaus, 1985) and support the fact that competition consistently reduces the cost of public performance and results in significant economic savings to the taxpayer. It results in better value and improves performance by bringing viable, responsive, innovative and cost-effective competitors (public and private) to the "table" (Styles, 2001). The findings also show that the process of competition provides an imperative for the public officials to focus on removing obstacles to better performance and greater efficiency. The objective is to focus on the most effective and efficient way of accomplishing the tasks, regardless of whether it is done by civil servants or contractors.

The findings show that the local private operators in Accra have proven that they are able to provide good quality solid waste collection services at comparatively low costs leading to high levels of satisfaction among consumers. This underlines the theoretical claim that the private sector has a comparative advantage in terms of productive efficiency and effectiveness. These advantages have been provided through the indigenous business class, a number of small to medium sized enterprises, utilising predominantly simple technologies and large numbers of workers. Very often, the potential of these local enterprises is insufficiently recognised by the authorities. This partly stems from their preference for dealing with big, mod-

ern businesses that satisfy basic legal standards, partly because they want to reduce transaction costs (having to deal with many small providers) (*cf.* Baud *et al.*, 2001; De Haan *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, in Accra (at least until 1999), entrepreneurs were free to arrange their own mix of labour input and technology usage resulting in a certain diversity of approaches well attuned to specific local circumstances. Furthermore, the companies involved, especially those providing house-to-house collection services on a franchise basis, were able to generate an acceptable profit. This attests to the flexibility of the private sector in solid waste collection. Providers are granted exclusive rights to the service in a particular area and residents are required to participate in the service.

The findings show that the desire of the private local contractors to work more to earn more revenue is not in dispute. With better tariffs and prompt payment for services, as well as effective supervision and monitoring by the local authority, the private sector performs well. This was demonstrated by the fact that by the end of 1998 and early 1999, the private local contractors were able to provide more than 70% of the waste collection services in Accra. The weakness of the private sector to deliver as expected in solid waste collection is often due more to the environment within which it operates rather than its capabilities *per se*. This study asserts that the conditions under which the private local service providers work in solid waste collection in Accra (low tariffs and tardy payments) do not make it possible for private local contractors to reveal their full potentials.

9.2.3 The urban governance approach

If 'governance' can be taken to mean, as Stoker (1998) suggests, the successful management of community affairs through a mixing of public, private and voluntary actors, then solid waste collection is an excellent case to test the working and adequacy of governance. Contrary to the idea of governance, policy development in Accra is still based on a conventional public management approach with the local government in the driving seat and acting as the prime initiator (*i.e.* a top-down approach). Other actors are not given a say in the planning and decision-making process (notably a lack of community participation), resulting in no sense of ownership. This study also testifies to the painful neglect of community participation in the design of privatisation policies. In both the rich and poor areas of the city of Accra, solid waste service providers are foisted on the residents without their involvement in decision-making. In Accra, the authorities have worked in the familiar top-down manner based on the assumption that the government knows what is best for its people. As a result, residents are not incited to develop a sense of commitment to the quality and sustainability of solid waste collection in their areas. Popular participation is crucial because the ultimate beneficiary of waste collection services is the consumer. It is especially im-

portant to consult them on the most appropriate method of collection in their area and the affordability of possible charges.

The transition to a new networking style of governing is by no means easy. Despite official commitment to the concepts of participatory democracy, the government and its representatives have difficulty in working along these lines due to the inheritance of authoritarian and expert-driven management practices and the lack of legal provisions for participatory planning. The authorities continue to dictate rather than to negotiate even though they are not really capable of effective dictating. In actual fact, the non-public stakeholders have already shown that public affairs are sometimes better arranged outside the public sector (*cf.* the early experiments with privatised solid waste collection without AMA's involvement: the waste pickers collecting waste and bringing it to the containers in Adabraka and the assemblymen organising for container site cleansing).

The findings of the study attest to the fact that solid waste management is no longer a (local) government monopoly, but a domain opened to various modes of public-private co-operation. In solid waste collection, public and private concerns and ways to address them come together because waste generation, which is a private activity, constitutes a public problem both in terms of health risks and environmental pollution. Such blurring of boundaries and responsibilities requires governance in which all the key actors and stakeholders come together in partnerships to achieve a common public goal. However, a major prerequisite for the transition towards governance is that actors trust each other. This brings us to the next issue, the partnership approach.

9.2.4 The partnership approach

Despite the fact that the majority of the people want privatisation of solid waste collection services, they simultaneously do not want the local authority to divest itself completely of its responsibility in solid waste collection. When public tasks are passed on to the private sector, safeguards have to be built in. Therefore, privatisation usually implies some kind of public-private partnership (Ostrom, 1996; Baud and Post 2001; Batley, 1994, 1996). The privatisation policy did not exonerate the local government authority of its constitutional obligations for solid waste collection in Accra (see also Batley, 1996). The findings show that solid waste collection continues to be a public good, which cannot be fully privatised and that the local government has to continue supporting financially, even after privatisation of the services. This is so because in poor countries, consumers cannot be charged according to their consumption, and not all the costs can be recovered.

The study attests to the importance and potentials of partnerships as an important tool in ensuring good governance of solid waste collection in the urban setting (see Baud, 2000; Baud *et al.*, 2001; Hordijk, 2001; Baud and Post, 2001; Post and Obirih-Opareh, 2002; Helmsing, 2000; Stoker, 2000, 1998). The findings show that the AMA as the public partner fell short in delivering its expected share of the bargain. The partnering did not lead to a gradual advancement of shared norms and mutual understanding, but reconfirmed mutual distrust. Rather than being credited for providing good quality solid waste collection at comparatively low cost, the local contractors were blamed for not succeeding in cleaning up the entire city. However, they only operated in specifically assigned parts of the city and only started economising on their performance in the communal container collection areas in response to the tardy payment by the AMA/WMD. To a certain extent, the fallacies of decentralisation bounced back on the partnering in solid waste collection in the sense that the commissioner of the service was unable to act as a principal. The AMA's endemic financial and managerial weakness, especially its inability to implement an appropriate system of cost recovery, made them lose control. As a result, the central government stepped in, albeit not only for unselfish reasons, but also as a convenient excuse to favour some of its political friends.

Obviously, the local private actors cannot compensate the shortcomings on the public side. Partnerships are based on the idea of complementarities: each partner brings in something unique and together this may produce synergy. It would be naïve to expect the private sector to defend the public interest. The indigenous contractors have not, for example, done anything to improve servicing in the most deprived residential areas. Furthermore, one should remember that their comparative success came at some cost, notably poor labour conditions and a lack of concern for the environmental aspects of solid waste collection.

The role of the consumers has been painfully neglected in the design of the privatisation policy. There is some reason to believe that the involvement of communities in the partnership would be beneficial. To take an example, residents in the middle-income area of Adabraka have themselves taken the initiative to upgrade the communal container collection system by hiring waste pickers to come and collect the garbage at their doorsteps and bring it to the container sites. Such initiatives have the advantage of being tailored to the needs of the people, rather than being imposed on them. The findings show that in order to select the most appropriate methods it is essential to give residents a firmer say in planning and decision-making.

9.2.5 *The guiding hand of the state*

The findings also show that the private providers perform better, notably with the guiding hand of the state. Public-private partnerships were troubled. They were overruled by central government. The local authority was not able to be financially sound internally without resorting to the central government. The public partner is usually seen as the caretaker of the public interest and the promoter of social acceptability. In principle, the contracting approach enables (local) governments to keep a firm grip on the entire process through specified contract performance measures, enforceable contract sanctions and rigid performance monitoring and cost accountability. It requires the authorities to have an effective monitoring and control system as well as the necessary means to cover the expenses incurred. However, in Accra, these conditions are not fulfilled: the local authority was not able to act as principal in public partnership arrangements due to the failure of decentralisation. The findings support various theoretical claims that partnerships in solid waste collection function best if there is trust between the partners, mutual accountability and leadership.

There will always remain a crucial role for the state to play in arranging for more sustainable ways of solid waste collection. The study found that in Accra, like in most cities in developing countries, market conditions for this particular public good are imperfect and many poor households are simply unable to pay according to their consumption. Furthermore, in addition to the need to subsidise the running costs of solid waste collection, the authorities will continue to bear the transaction costs of contract management and the costs of performance monitoring and investments in container sites, sanitary landfills etc. Finally, there continues to be a need for a public actor that sets standards for performance, public health, labour conditions and protection of the environment and that arranges for these standards to be upheld. Ultimately, ordinary citizens and their organisations have to see to it that authorities deliver their share in future partnering arrangements.

Moreover, the regulatory framework is flawed. There is poor site inspection and supervision, enabling the mixing of containers for solid and liquid waste which threatens the life of visitors and those living near the containers. This study strengthens the familiar theoretical theme that privatisation requires the guiding hand of the state to become effective, through stringent regulation, supervision and monitoring. A crucial role the local authority needs to fulfil involves protecting the public interest and promoting social acceptability. There is still lack of enthusiasm on the part of authorities to start working with the private sector and *vice-versa*, partly due to:

- a) a lack of trust and reluctance to work together;
- b) a public sector which is incapable of delivering its share and unable to act as a principal;
- c) a private sector does not defend public interests on its own accord so that environmental health and labour standards are not sufficiently protected and remain the responsibility of local governments;
- d) a local government neglect of community involvement in partnering.

9.3 Policy suggestions derived from the study

There are quite a number of problems that deserve swift action to ensure an improved and more sustainable waste collection system in Accra. Though the problems are many, we identified the major constraints to solid waste collection system in the city in Section 9.1 where we answered the research questions referring to the magnitude and causes of solid waste collection problems in Accra, all of which relate to lack of effective urban governance. Policy intervention, obviously, should target the elimination of these constraints. Action should therefore focus on:

1. The need to empower the district assemblies and address the shortcomings of the decentralisation policies (*cf.* Section 9.1.4). We will briefly indicate here for each of these elements the major reforms that are to be made. District assemblies should be empowered by (i) making leadership more independent from the central government; (ii) speeding up the adoption of rules and regulations to fit the decentralisation structure; (iii) speeding up financial independence of the district assemblies by granting a composite budget; and (iv) supporting district assemblies in their efforts to increase own revenues.
2. The integration of policy design and involvement, moving to a new style of governing that fosters widespread involvement of private and community actors in the preparation, planning, decision-making, design, implementation and monitoring of waste collection arrangements. This might increase civic responsibility towards waste collection and improve trust in local authority (*cf. Section 9.1.1*).
3. Fostering a positive change in attitude of residents and policy makers towards waste collection.
4. Making the system more viable by various financial and technical interventions.
5. Concern for the environment, including public health aspects, environmental deterioration and waste as a resource.

In the sections below, we will suggest possible ways or methods to overcome these problems through a number of policy recommendations.

9.3.1 Policy design and implementation

Policy must be realistic. It should link with the current governance perspective of having stakeholders jointly work towards the achievement of collective goals. Local authorities have to work in harmony with other actors and listen to and consult with other stakeholders in the design of policies and arrangements that affect their lives. This will create a sense of ownership. They should also link to promising actions on the ground that have been successful and could perhaps be scaled up to provide it officially. The local authority should implement things, which have already proved successful, such as franchising, contracting out fee collection and building on people's own initiatives, *cf.* Adabraka etc.). The enforcement of bylaws should perhaps be based on the closer involvement of communities, using community leaders and unit committees rather than officials who are underpaid and badly motivated.

9.3.2 Change in attitudes

A positive change in attitude towards solid waste collection among all stakeholders is the surest guarantee for a sustainable solid waste collection system in Accra. The general public must be sensitised to their civic responsibility in solid waste collection. This involves public education and awareness creation, in which the media have a unique role to play. Improved solid waste collection requires not individual, but collective and coordinated actions. Residents must abide by basic sanitation regulations. They must ensure that their waste is properly stored and kept away from roaming livestock and must desist from the indiscriminate dumping of waste and littering, which is a particular feature of the low-income areas. Local authorities should not condone and connive with activities that disrupt orderly collection, transportation and disposal of waste. Bylaws must be enforced vigorously; otherwise they are of no use. The mass media could help to educate and create environmental awareness and make the public aware of the effect of poor sanitation and waste management.

9.3.3 Supervision, monitoring, evaluating and coordination

The local authority must strengthen its supervisory, monitoring, evaluating and coordinating roles to increase the effectiveness of institutions and institutional arrangements for waste management in the metropolis. It should ensure better coordination between the WMD (the service performance sector) and the Environmental Health Department (EHD) responsible for health inspection, bylaws implementation and illegal practices by providers. Money has therefore to be set aside for proper inspection and equipping inspectors. This is the hidden or transaction cost of solid waste collection, which the local government authority must bear. Fur-

thermore, the local authority should also give residents a way of monitoring performance, for example through cleaning committees. Residents can play an active role through their community leaders, assemblymen and members of unit committees to monitor and evaluate the performance of waste contractors. Residents demonstrated their capabilities to play this role during the franchised house-to-house system when they demanded value for their money. Sound monitoring improves the quality of service and ensures that environmental standards are met. Lapses in monitoring enable some service providers and consumers to flout bylaws, labour standards, environmental regulations, health and ethical standards with impunity.

9.3.4 The viability of the system and increased funding

Inadequate funding is identified as one of the major causes for poor performance and the inability of the local authority to extend the coverage of the waste collection system to areas presently denied. The local authority could increase funding for its solid waste collection through the following mechanisms:

- a) Cost recovery.
- b) Instituting and implementing differential rates based upon area classification and affordability. It should encourage community participation in the design of the solid waste collection system, notably a right mix between service levels and costs. The rates should be adjusted upwards to take account of inflation over a period of time.
- c) Using better methods for collecting fees such as privatising it, engaging commissioned agents, daily or monthly payments, or including the bill in water or electricity bills, as is the case in many other (developing) countries.
- d) Sanctioning free riders.
- e) Extending house-to-house services (for which people are more inclined to pay).
- f) Fiscal discipline.
- g) Sourcing other taxable avenues.

We will elaborate these mechanisms in more detail below.

a Cost recovery

Funding is obviously one of the major conditions for improved solid waste collection in Accra. A major concern to policy makers is how to overcome the low revenue it derives from user fees for solid waste collection services. The consequence of the pay-as-you-dump (PAYD) policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s provides a unique policy lesson for the local authority with regard to the implications of full cost recovery measures. The study therefore suggests avoiding over-reliance on user fees, but also finding alternative sources to supplement or offset the low cost recovery of solid waste collection. However, the findings show that people are

willing to pay, albeit perhaps not the full costs, if services are reliable and adequate. Free riding can be prevented if appropriate institutional arrangements have been created (such as the franchise system) and provisions for accountability have been put in place. It could be prevented by social control or government control on the actions of people. This cuts across all segments of the population, including those in poor areas. The local authority should capitalise on this and organise reliable and adequate services. This, however, presents a problem of which should come first: the chicken or the egg riddle. A way out of this is for the local authority to take the lead and demonstrate a willingness to provide reliable and adequate services. This will enable it to collect user fees for its services. Then the local authority could take advantage of the willingness to pay to raise revenue, based upon affordability.

b Differential rates, affordability and community participation in the design of waste collection arrangements

The issue of affordability as regards paying for solid waste collection services illustrates a familiar social dilemma which the city authorities face when confronted with the real life situation of what to do to ensure sustainable solid waste collection. The public good nature of solid waste collection poses a policy dilemma to policy makers and city authorities, particularly those in poor developing countries. If non-payers are excluded, the payers will suffer the consequences such as reduced cleanliness and threats to public health. Solid waste collection requires collective action and not the action of individuals.

The local authority should also investigate the affordability of the rates in combination with the levels of service, with the community deciding on the most appropriate combination. Experiences from initiatives undertaken by some assemblymen in Accra who put attendants at waste collection points in Akweteman and Kaneshie to clean the area and to collect fees from users, could serve as a useful guide in the development of a more accountable community-based system, which uses community leaders to collect fees. Community leaders know the people very well and could keep track of non-payers. Consultation between the local authority and the community with regard to the design of waste collection system facilitates ownership of the process, which invariably contributes substantially to its performance.

c Better fee collection methods

A better method of fees collection should be put in place to guarantee the durability of the system. The findings show that the franchised house-to-house collection system for the private service providers proved to be very successful. The problem was with the public sector whose success rate in fee collection was not so success-

ful. The success for the franchised system was that the consumers could demand value in return for paying the fees. Following the withdrawal of the public sector from waste collection, it would be appropriate to return to the franchised system in which the service provider collects the fee itself. However, if the contract system is to continue, then commissioned private firms must be selected through open bidding to collect the fee on behalf of the local authority. A better user fee collecting mechanism must be established for areas where the communal container collection system is operating. This is where community leaders can play an effective role through educating their constituents. Commissioned agents can also be recruited from the ranks of members of the community to help in user fee collection. The unit committees could best handle this in their areas. The authority should beware, however, of introducing new avenues for enrichment, favouritism and patronage. Furthermore, the authorities will always have to recognise that people, especially in the poorer parts of the city, cannot pay according to their consumption and that they will have to subsidise. Besides, the authorities will continue to bear the transaction costs of solid waste management at city level such as for contract management, performance monitoring, etc.

d Sanctioning free riders

The inability of the local authority to sanction free riders to deter others perpetuates this negative practice. It also deprives the authority (or in the case of a franchised system, the public or private service provider) the means of raising the money needed to sustain the service. Offenders should be prosecuted in court, since if non-payers are excluded, the payers will suffer the consequences.

e Extending house to-house services

Major improvements in the cleanliness of residential areas will probably require the introduction of the house-to-house collection system across the city. However, the nature of the system – frequency of collection, technology choices and the rates to be charged – will have to be differentiated to reflect variations in prosperity. The local authority must extend the house-to-house collection system after consultation with the communities and consumers on the design of the institutional arrangement, including the user fees involved. As a start, the local authority could introduce house-to-house collection into all areas with a good road network and accessibility to houses such as in Osu, Adabraka, and James Town. This process could continue till all such areas are serviced through the house-to-house collection system.

f Fiscal discipline

Though solid waste collection is the largest single item in the recurrent expenditure in the overall budget of the local authority, performance on the ground is abysmal.

The low productive efficiency stems from objective problems on how the funds of solid waste collection are disbursed. Fiscal discipline is a *sine-qua-non* to improved performance. If the local authority were to use funds more prudently and plug leakages in revenue mobilisation, it could improve waste collection in Accra with the current level of taxation, when adjusted for inflation.

g Sourcing other taxable avenues

Since revenues from user fees continue to be inadequate to meet the whole waste collection system (see Table 8.2a, 8.2b and Figure 8.1), the local authority must identify more potential taxable sources, which it has not yet tapped. For instance, it could demarcate most of its major roads in the central part of Accra, including the central business area (CBA) and certain residential areas, as parking lots for fees at differential rates based upon the areas' classification. Part of the revenue from this source could be used to improve solid waste collection services in the city. Parking fees will also help to reduce haphazard parking and ease traffic congestion in the city centre.

9.3.5 Integrating environmental concerns in planning

Environmental neglect is another major problem facing sustainable approaches. Most of the policies tend to focus on socio-economic perspectives such as efficiency criteria and less on the environment, if at all. Sustainable development approaches in solid waste management mean that environmental considerations should also be brought to the forefront of any development and management programme. It should integrate waste collection with other domains of solid waste management, such as using waste as a resource for reuse, recycling and composting. It should pay a lot of attention to environmental health aspects in the planning and implementation stages.

9.4 Areas for new and additional research

The study suggests a few areas that are theoretically rewarding and or relevant to future policy. These are grouped into two levels: (i) general and (ii) Accra/Ghana.

General

- a) How can the inclusion of ecological concerns in urban policies, in general, and those regarding public service delivery, in particular, be fostered in accordance with an interpretation of urban environmental management that recognises wider responsibilities than simply those of the city and its residents?
- b) How can partnerships across the public-private divide defend the public interest or enhance urban sustainable development? More specifically: how can ideas concerning integrated solid waste management be promoted and how can

officials and policy makers be made enthusiastic about an approach that seeks to integrate socio-economic, public health and wider environmental concerns? How can the potential of partnerships across the public-private divide be promoted? How can such collaboration be expanded to include community actors and/or informal actors (waste pickers)? How can the factor that frustrates public-private collaboration within specific contexts be mitigated and potentials for synergy be enhanced?

- c) Under what conditions could public providers deliver the same quality of services as the private sector?

Accra/Ghana

- a) Why is (organic and inorganic) waste not more widely used as a resource? How can linkages between different domains in solid waste management system such as recycling, reuse and composting of (in)organic waste be integrated and promoted in Accra and other cities?
- b) Is the potential of using waste as a resource sufficiently understood in Accra and, if not, why not and in what respects? How can linkages between solid waste collection and recycling, reuse, and composting of waste be strengthened?
- c) What is the most appropriate mixture of production factors (technology choices) for solid waste collection in various residential areas, taking affordability into consideration?
- d) How best could cost recovery be organised in Accra?
- e) Should the sub-metros continue to have a role in the organisation of solid waste collection and, if yes, what role?
- f) How could community involvement in solid waste collection best be organised?

9.5 In conclusion

There is ample reason to engage in comparative research in order to further our understanding of the factors that are decisive in explaining the success or failure of decentralisation and privatisation exercises. Decentralisation and privatisation have become almost universally embraced policy devices. Their form and performance continue, however, to be shaped by local relationships and the whims of local politics, notably the attempts by the central government to restore its Accra power base and to help friends of the former regime into lucrative positions. The dynamics of privatisation of solid waste collection in Accra show that genuine political commitment to the idea, as well as political guidance of the process were sadly lacking. For the situation to improve, attention has to be paid to the creation of an enabling framework and appropriate regulatory provisions. Furthermore, much needs to be done to widen the social and political legitimacy of the reforms. Successful public-private collaboration requires a bottom-up approach and consultation with other

stakeholders on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Policies of decentralisation and privatisation may still be suitable for improving urban environmental management. Without basic institutional adjustments, sound financial mechanisms and changes in attitude it will, however, be impossible to prove their value.

