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Reframing Corporate Real Estate as a Strategic Catalyst: Leadership Cognition, Organizational Culture, and Digital Transformation in Ghanaian Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The impact of organizational culture and the perceptions of the senior management on the strategic management of corporate real estate in Ghana institutions are the focus of this paper. The interpretivist approach was employed for this qualitative study. This, however, entailed the use of semi-structured interviews with 12 leading executives across the tertiary, public, and private sectors. The collected data were thematically analyzed using NVivo software. The study's findings suggest that corporate real estate as a strategic resource has not been institutionalized at large due to cost-based decision-making, unprofessionalism, and bureaucracy. Notwithstanding, organizational culture also plays a great role in the implementation of SCREM. The culture, which is based on authority and risk aversion, hinders innovation and collaboration, whereas participatory and learning-oriented culture enhances strategic integration. The significant success enablers were identified to be the leadership cognition, communication, and cross-functional engagement. Digitization, sustainability, and performance metrics were established to be the future requirements of changing CRE into a strategic asset. This paper therefore recommends institutionalizing policy, leadership training, and digital reforms to ensure that CRE is a source of productivity, sustainability, and national development. On the whole, the study provides empirical data in Ghana and develops the SCREM theory by integrating cognition, culture, and governance in the institutions of developing economies.

Keywords: Corporate Real Estate Strategy, Digital Transformation, Emerging Economies, Leadership Cognition, Organizational Culture, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing acceptance of Corporate Real Estate (CRE) as a strategic resource has sparked a novel discourse on the impact of managerial cognition and organizational culture on its management and integration within institutions. In Ghana, where both public and private institutions are struggling to utilize available resources and improve performance, there is a lack of studies on the alignment of leadership perceptions, organizational culture, and strategic CRE management (SCREM) (Duodu, 2025). Corporate real estate is also

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typically one of the most significant assets in institutional portfolios. Still, its capacity to make the organization competitive, sustainable, and innovative is often compromised by a lack of strategic awareness and cultural orientation in operational thinking (Glatte & Schneider, 2016; Bocken & Geradts, 2019). The importance of the study, hence, lies in demonstrating how the attitudes and cultural orientations of senior management influence the strategic use of real estate assets. This field is essential to transforming organizations and driving national growth in emerging economies.

Although the world has come to realize real estate as a strategic enabler (Gavrikova et al., 2020; Beckers & Driessen, 2017), the current research on the topic in the developing contexts demonstrates that there is still a knowledge gap in the study of how leadership cognition and cultural dynamics define the CREM results (Gadafi et al., 2023). Existing studies within Ghanaian organizations primarily focus on maintenance practices, paying little attention to cognitive and cultural factors that affect strategic alignment (Ntene et al., 2020). This gap underscores the need to explore the joint influence of managerial perceptions and cultural orientations on the contribution of CRE to organizational strategy and performance.

This study examines the influence of top management attitudes and existing organizational cultures on the integration and success of strategic corporate real estate management practices. In particular, it evaluates leaders' perceptions of the strategic significance of CRE, examines how organizational culture can support or disrupt SCREM initiatives, and suggests strategies to change perceptions of value-based management of real estate and organizational culture, aligned with best practices that leaders can implement. The paper draws on the Upper Echelons Theory (Bekos & Chari, 2025), which examines the association between managerial cognition and organizational performance, and the Strategic Alignment Model (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006), which posits that business strategies can be projected onto those of CRE. Studies informed by these theoretical perspectives make both empirical and theoretical contributions to the research by providing a country-specific interpretation of SCREM in Ghana. Its findings are likely to guide institutional changes, leadership interventions, and policy measures to improve the strategic value of real estate in Ghana's changing organizational environment.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: a literature review; a discussion of the study area and the methodology applied; a presentation and discussion of the results and findings; policy, research, and practice recommendations; and, lastly, the conclusion of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper seeks to explore how top management perception and corporate culture affect the strategic alignment of corporate real estate management (CREM) in the limelight of emerging economies including Ghana. It worth noting that, this discussion is grounded on theories of leadership cognition, cultural values, and institutional conditions to determine their influence regarding the positioning of real estate as a part of the strategy of an organization. The review seeks to bring together the world and local perspectives on how the mental models and organizational norms of leaders can make the corporate real estate either a strategic tool or just a method of implementing operations. Such lessons play a vital role in ensuring that a context-based CREM model is developed to match property decisions with institutional goals. Through the lens of management, cultural orientations, and governance structures, organizations can become more productive, sustainable, and value-creating in the long term, thereby repositioning corporate real estate as a source of innovation and competitive advantage within the institutional environment in Ghana.

Perceptions of the Senior Management and the Alignment of the Strategies in Corporate Real Estate Decisions

Senior management's cognition is decisive in shaping the perception and positioning of corporate real estate (CRE) within an organization's strategy. According to the upper echelon theory, the interpretations of the value of top executives are influenced by their mental models, experiences, and worldviews, and, in turn, by their decision-making in CRE (Bekos & Chari, 2025). In situations where leaders perceive real estate as a cost only, it tends to be withheld in strategic planning and, therefore, cannot be used to bring innovation and competitiveness. On the contrary, executives who consider CRE a strategic asset make it part of their corporate strategy to drive productivity, brand reputation, and resilience over the long term (Gavrikova et al., 2020). The way top managers perceive real estate assets is an influential factor that determines whether CRE becomes a reactive operational issue or a change agent for organizational transformation and responsiveness.

The strategic importance of CRE in improving organizational performance is well-established worldwide, and CRE decisions have led to productivity gains, cost optimization, enhanced corporate image, improved employee satisfaction, and greater sustainability (Chang et al., 2021). The findings of a study conducted by Beckers & Driessen (2017) on how real estate and institutional strategies can work together reveals spatial flexibility, academic excellence, and stakeholder satisfaction increased. In the context of underdeveloped countries, such as Ghana, Gadafi et al. (2023), however, discovered that universities do not consider CRE as a strategic issue; rather, they are more willing to spend their resources on maintenance. This kind of mindset impedes many institutions from utilizing real estate as one of the long-term competitive advantages, innovation, and value creation.

The perceptions of managers are one of the determining factors in how resources are distributed, and decisions related to property are made within organizations. Some perceptual biases that contribute to underinvestment in property maintenance and sustainability programmes include short-termism, aversion to costs, and an overemphasis on visible costs (Ntene et al., 2020). Being viewed as non-strategic, CRE will invest in the shortterm operational needs as opposed to infrastructure renewal or portfolio optimization; moreover, such decisions misalign the value of assets and make the institution incapable of aligning real estate with the core business priorities (Konowalczuk & Ramian, 2014).

The fact that leadership commitment and effective communication are essential towards strategic alignment in CRE management is also important (Marbun et al., 2023). Research by Beckers et al. (2015) pointed out that, credibility to the CRE as a strategic area and organizational buy-in across departments are brought about by leadership support. Transparent communication between the executives and the units of the estate management is meant to assist in ensuring that the decisions about the property are based on the larger institutional goals as indicated by Amos and Boakye-Agyeman (2023). This alignment enhances accountability, enhances the role of CRE in corporate planning as well as enables cohesive decision-making, which binds space, people, and performance.

Ghana is a country with contextual and structural obstacles to strategic integration of CRE due to the institutional context. The lack of youthful interdepartmental collaboration, lack of strategic awareness, and hierarchical leadership styles contribute to the lack of connection between the intent of the policy and its practical implementation (Gadafi et al., 2023). The narrow operational perspective has prevailed in most institutions that still use maintenance policies rather than developing holistic CRE strategies. The lack of professionalism in property economics is associated with inadequate budgetary allocation, and the lack of top management involvement contributes to the issue. These perceptual and structural boundaries should be addressed to put CRE back as a strategic enabler in Ghanaian higher education and to make property decisions more active in supporting institutional missions and long-term competitiveness.

Organization Culture and Mediation of Real Estate Strategy Implementation

Organizational culture is a vital factor in the application of Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM) strategies because it determines how physical evidence and spatial planning reflect an institution's identity and strategic purpose. The conceptual model of culture presented in Schein (2010) is a three-level model that views culture as a set of artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions (Khaddour, 2025; Hattangadi, 2017). In CREM, artefacts are represented as spatial arrangements, design aesthetics, and workplace symbols that reflect management priorities. Its espoused values, i.e., innovation, accountability, and collaboration, are converted to space-planning choices, e.g., by choosing open-plan offices or service hubs that are integrated and encourage interaction. The activities and customs of the culture shape the use of space and behaviour in the workplace (Murphy, 2024). Companies that appreciate teamwork usually create common work areas and flexible spaces where people can communicate and remain innovative. By contrast, individuals who have hierarchical orientations are more likely to have closed offices that strengthen the structures of their authority (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023). According to Hipolito (2020), the ethical, innovative, and customer-responsive dimensions were identified as the most prevalent cultural characteristics of real estate practice, and training, emotional intelligence, and responsiveness were identified as direct benefits for operational efficiency and client satisfaction. Therefore, culture determines how employees use, personalize, and communicate in work environments, thereby defining the functional and symbolic levels of CREM effectiveness.

Culture is also an enabling or discouraging factor to strategic change. It has been demonstrated that inflexible, authoritarian, or collectivist cultures impede reform and flexibility by centralizing decision-making and frowning upon experimentation (Khalilov, 2023). On the other hand, adaptive spatial strategies, agile asset management, and sustainability-oriented transformation are possible within a learning-oriented culture characterized by openness and reflection (Barbieri et al., 2025). In Ghana, the public sector's organizational culture is more authority- and compliance-based, leading to slow decision-making, risk-averseness, and weak accountability in real estate and asset management (Kong et al., 2018). Research into Ghanaian educational institutions and ministries suggests that subordination to authority inhibits interdepartmental cooperation, hindering the CREM integration and optimization of value. By aligning senior management's perceptions and organizational values with spatial and facility strategies, real estate functions become strategic assets that reaffirm institutional performance and long-term value generation. Management perceptions and culture can be integrated with strategic CRE frameworks only by employing management insights and analytical skills, which involve examining and linking diverse information sources, such as case studies, to a broader set of facts (Bampers et al., 2017).

Managerial perceptions and organizational culture as part of strategic corporate real estate management (CREM) provides a powerful prism to comprehend the organizational behaviour of the new economies, including Ghana. The abstract union is developed on the Strategic Alignment Model and the CREM Value Framework (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006) which is devoted to the compatibility of business strategy, real estate choice, and organizational functioning. Strategic alignment is a process which aligns internal processes and capabilities with strategic intent of the organization. In the meantime, the CREM Value Framework defines CREM as a valueoriented business that spurs business performance in terms of costs, workforce, and sustainability. One of these theories combined is that, the perception of leadership affects the interpretation of real estate strategy, but the culture affects the approach of the real estate strategy to be exercised (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006). Leadership thinking and the common cultural standards influence the strategic position of the property in achieving institutional goals in this manner.

In reality, perception and culture interact to affect CRE decisions, particularly investment, sustainability, and workspace design. Studies such as Nase & Arkesteijn (2018) have shown that leaders of a clan culture or adhocracy culture are more focused on an employee-centric approach, well-being, creativity, and flexibility. However, culture of markets or hierarchy leaders focus on cost reduction and control. Prioritization towards sustainability and innovation is influenced by the perception of the senior managers in Ghanaian institutions towards real estate as an expense or a strategic resource (Doku and Agarwal, 2016). Where the management values physical production and short-term cost reduction, sustainability initiatives and flexible work architecture are pushed to the periphery and limit the transformative quality of CRE in developing institutional competitiveness. Institutional and environmental moderators also affect these dynamics (Tian et al., 2020). Regulatory, governance, and socio-economic constraints are moderating variables that convert perceptions into strategic CRE results in Ghana (Armah et al., 2011). The alignment between strategic intent and real estate execution is usually distorted by bureaucratic inertia, political involvement, and variable construction costs (Fathani et al., 2024). The institutionalization of global best practices in CREM practices is also impeded by weak enforcement of planning regulations and limited access to sustainable construction technologies in Ghana, both in the public and private sectors. Local contextual reinterpretation is therefore necessary to adapt global

CREM models to local contexts. Western models, though strong, tend to presuppose the abundance of resources, transparent governance, and stable markets, which are not entirely reflected in most African economies (Tamasiga et al., 2023). This makes models like the value framework by Lindholm localised to account for resource limitations, limited information infrastructure, and cultural preferences regarding power and group decision-making (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006).

Finally, management perceptions, organizational culture, and institutional realities have to be incorporated into a context-specific strategic CREM framework for Ghana. Ghanaian institutions can create CRE systems that are not just reactive or imported, but contextually clever, by understanding the cognitive and cultural filters leaders use to make sense of real estate strategy. A framework of this kind must focus on participation in the decision making process, sustainability under pressure, and alignment between national development priorities and the institution's real estate policies. Such localized integration can improve strategic agility and long-term value creation in Ghana's institutional real estate sector.

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METHODOLOGY

Influence of Senior Management Perceptions and Organizational Culture on Strategic Corporate Real Estate

Management in Ghanaian Institutions: an interpretivist research paradigm was adopted to examine how leaders in the major sectors in Ghana conceptualize and apply Strategic Corporate Real Estate Management (SCREM). The proposed paradigm was deemed appropriate to the phenomenon being studied, strategic management of corporate real estate, which is a socially constructed and context-specific phenomenon that is subject to leadership cognition, to the institutional norms and organizational culture. The interpretivist stance provides the fact that subjective experiences and organizational facts have a role to play in the interpretation of SCREM practices, and the only available means of revealing the hidden perceptions, meanings, and institutional behaviours is the qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design applied in this paradigm was qualitative, where comprehensive information on how managerial attitudes and cultural orientations affect alignment of real estate management with the institutional strategies was obtained. This approach was essential in learning how the top managers know, appreciate and incorporate the strategy of real estate within the tertiary, government, consultancy and agency settings in Ghana.

Purposive sampling was applied to select the sample that had some personal experience in property administration, facilities management, logistics, human resources administration, and policy planning. With this said, these participants were interviewed face-to-face (12 times). This figure was not against the sampling requirement of a qualitative study, according to Hennink & Kaiser (2022). They pointed out that the process of saturation might be attained with a limited set of interviews (9-17). It should be mentioned that this figure guaranteed extensive coverage both in the private and the public sector as Ghana has a wide range of organizations. The respondents under the category R1-R12 were sampled in tertiary institutions, government agencies, state owned enterprises, privately owned consultancy firms, and ministries or agencies. Individuals were principals, Directors of Works and Physical Development, Finance Officers, Registrars, Chief Directors, Corporate Real Estate Consultants and Policy Analysts as indicated in Table 1. These were the different ranks of management such as the executive heads of strategic planning and institutional administration, the external consultants as well as policy researchers. This diversity allowed the research to evoke a difference in leadership views and cultural situations of different institutions and evaluate their influence on SCREM practices. The use of such diverse participants was critical in the generation of a multi-sectoral interpretation of the cognitive and cultural determinants of strategic corporate real estate management in Ghana in conformity with past research that emphasizes the importance of diversity in the leadership in interpreting the organizational strategy.

Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection instrument since it was the only one that I could use to explore the lived experiences of the subjects and this was quite within the objectives of the research. The initial contacts with the respective institutions showed the consent and willingness of the participants to take part in the study. Interview sessions were then scheduled at a good time and then held either physically or through the internet. The interviews were conducted between 45 minutes and one hour in majorly English language, though some of the participants used the local dialect where a necessity arose. Interviews were taped with the consent of the respondents and lengthy field notes were taken to note down the contextual observations and nonverbal communication. Data collection was done until thematic saturation occurred, which is when no additional data were collected throughout the interviews (Morris, 2015).

Interpretation of the recorded interviews was verbatim and interviews in other languages were translated to English to create a uniformity. In order to ensure the credibility and reliability of the information, the transcripts were verified by the means of the member checking, during which the chosen respondents were requested to read some of their interviews to make sure that they are accurate and contextual (Birt et al., 2016). The verified data were then entered into NVivo 12 software to code and analyze them in a systematic way, in terms of themes. The analysis was based on the five-step model of Morris (2015). It started with the acquaintance with transcribed interview data using the iterative reading to make sure that it is accurate and understood. The second step was to develop first codes with NVivo annotations. These comments pointed at important points that were helpful in the code generation. Thereafter, similarity between codes into categories. The relationships and patterns in the data were also well considered in this categorization process, thus, the findings could be well represented. Moreover, these initial code groups were critically refined further into coherent themes as the analysis progressed and these themes were able to effectively capture the essence of the data. The fourth phase, which involved the definition and naming of final themes, was done with a lot of precision, making sure that it was in line with the overall trends that this data set showed. This led to a final report which not only gave the themes but also stated its relevance to the overall objective of the research hence giving a sound representation of the findings of the qualitative analysis.

Ethics were highly observed in the course of the research. The interviews were voluntary and all the respondents were informed of their consent prior to the commencement of the interview. It also included anonymity and confidentiality in terms of covering personal and institutional identity and reporting the findings by coded numbers, e.g., R1-R12. All the data received were stored in a secure location and were utilized in academic purposes only. As per the general ethical guidelines of conducting a study, the participants were told that they could leave the study anytime without facing any penalty. This research design was very useful in terms of offering a strong theoretical framework on which the roles of the senior management perceptions and organizational culture in the strategic management of corporate real estate in Ghanaian institutions could be examined. Having the respondents being integrated in their different institutional backgrounds allowed the study to adopt a holistic perspective of the interaction between strategic thinking, institutional values and institutional administrative structures in influencing the real estate governance. The combination of the interpretivist philosophy and rigorous qualitative analysis renders the study insightful in the way in which both the cognitive and cultural factors combine to determine whether corporate real estate is operated as a cost centre or mobilised as a strategic enabler. Overall, this was a credible and contextually aware methodology in terms of evaluating the change in Ghanaian institutions toward a more strategic and value-oriented model of corporate real estate management, and made a good contribution to the emerging literature on SCREM in emerging economies.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings locate corporate real estate as an acknowledged but under-institutionalized facet of Ghanaian organizations. Top management is aware that space, property, and portfolio decisions determine identity and performance, yet internal processes consider the estate a support cost. This gap in recognition-execution resonates with evidence from the world and region that the culture and managerial cognition of managerial accounting dictate whether the real estate management of corporations (CREM) is a value generator or a cost centre. Constructing the argument based on Upper Echelons Theory and the Strategic Alignment Model helps explain why incremental rhetoric does not translate into strategic routines. Leaders establish the tone through the presence of mental models, which is followed by organizational culture, facilitating or blocking the implementation of the CRE strategy.

i. Corporate Real Estate Perception by the Senior Management

Real estate was continually characterized as under-leveraged in terms of strategic consequence by the participants. The recognition that facilities determine identity and capacity is consistent with CREM value systems assigning property to productivity, image, and resilience (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006; Beckers & Driessen, 2017; Chang et al., 2021). The quotes portray cognitive salience minus institutional follow-up. R1 stated that, *"the institutional identity and expansion capacity of real estate stipulate our real estate. Lack of adequate facilities reduces academic excellence to mere rhetoric*, and R2 added that *"the most easily seen investment is physical infrastructure. Still, these are not given the same strategic consideration as finance or human capital"*. Such a trend represents what Konowalczuk and Ramian (2014) refer to as a bias in planning that underestimates the advantage of assets. It is also a reflection of the Ghanaian higher education situation, where the CRE is still more of a maintenance than a strategy-based focus (Gadafi et al., 2023).

The image influences governance budgets and policies. R3 found that *budgetary decisions continued to view estates as overheads rather than as strategic enablers*, and R4 explained how short-term cost control displaces value creation. These are highly identified impediments to strategic CREM in new settings, such as short termism and cost aversion (Ntene et al., 2020; Amos & Boakye-Agyeman, 2023). But there are indications of reframing. R7 said that the clients were interested in the productivity-enhancing properties of portfolios rather than simple protection, which aligns with recent research on CRE as a tool for innovation and organizational ambidexterity (Gavrikova et al., 2020; Beckers et al., 2015). Leadership communication is important: when executives communicate CRE as the institutional vision, alignment improves, consistent with evidence that communication is an instrument of strategic legitimacy and cross-unit buy-in (Marbun et al., 2023; Beckers et al., 2015).

An Organizational Culture and Support of SCREM

The statistics indicate that culture is a determining factor between will and action. Renewal is sluggish in bureaucratic, risk-averse cultures, and it undermines collaboration, as do dialogic and technically collaborative cultures, which bolster the quality of decisions. R4 typified a stratified bureaucracy in which state decisions proceed at a slow pace. R5 acknowledged that we continue to operate under old procurement standards, under which it is understood that the process of renewing estates is excruciatingly slow, and R11 went on to state that facilities teams are viewed as maintenance rather than strategic partners. These descriptions can be correlated with research on the culture of control in the public sector in Ghana, where compliance and central authority often prioritize the costs of cross-functional coordination and timeliness (Kong et al., 2018). They also align with cultural theory, which posits that artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions influence spatial decisions and behaviours in the workplace (Hattangabi, 2017; Khaddour, 2025; Murphy, 2024).

The opposition to transparency is culturally patterned. R6 remembered that, in the introduction of digital asset tracking, some departments were reluctant to embrace it, fearing that greater transparency would reveal inefficiencies. These responses align with evidence that inflexible or authoritarian cultures suppress learning and experimentation, thereby limiting the adoption of data-enriched asset management and sustainability practices (Khalilov, 2023; Barbieri et al., 2025). On the other hand, R9 characterized open sessions on space use, which fostered trust and allocation, a micro practice that was associated with the characteristics of user-centric CRE plans (Nase & Arkesteijn, 2018). The general impression is that of disjointed support, in which rhetoric trumps routines, a relationship that current research knows to be the cause of strategic CREM in developing contexts lacking actual operation (Gadafi et al., 2023; Ntene et al., 2020).

Changing Attitude and Cultural Orientation

The institutional inertia became the primary obstacle to the introduction of strategic CRE. According to R2, it is more difficult than it may seem to change how leaders think about property, whereas R1 said that the executives are content with the old, safer models. These revelations are consistent with the Upper Echelons perspective, in which managerial thinking is a selective perceiver of information and action, necessitating specific learning interventions to reestablish frames (Bekos & Chari, 2025). R6 found areas of capability shortage, with many executives knowing budgets but unable to understand asset portfolios. The suggestions made by participants included sensitization of leadership, multi-disciplinary, and performance measurement that places estate results on display. R8 proposed that leaders will be interested in monitoring KPIs that indicate the estate's performance. This is in line with alignment research, which associates the structural embedding of CRE measure with the uniformity of strategic behavior unit-by-unit and across time (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006; Beckers et al., 2015; Amos & Boakye-Agyeman, 2023). The need to reform governance is also consistent with evidence that the institutional environment moderates the returns to corporate investment and environmental initiatives. In most African contexts, weak rule enforcement, bureaucracy, and political interference distort implementation (Tian et al., 2020; Armah et al., 2011; Fathani et al., 2024). These results, thus, substantiate a two-fold agenda. Change the choice architecture by using KPIs, cross-functional forums, and board-level CRE visibility.

Future Perspective and Recommendations

When it comes to the future, the respondents converged on integrating CRE functions into strategy, supported by data and a focus on sustainability. R12 demanded a solution that would replace maintenance budgets with evidence-based portfolio optimization. R3 requested a national guideline to avoid improvisation of the institutions. R5 had expected such reporting lines linking property units to the executives' boards. R7 predicts BIM and GIS as tools for tracking, valuation, and planning. Sustainability was put in terms of economic rationality. R9 cautioned that institutions that do not take green design into account will fall behind. R10 focused on executive role-modelling, arguing that sustainability is driven by policy intent. When the Vice-Chancellor is a crusader for efficient use of space, then all the others would be doing the same. These futuristic roles are consistent with the latest literature, which associates digitalization, user experience, and sustainability

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with CRE value, especially when resources are limited and long-term performance is a key factor (Bocken & Geradts, 2019; Gavrikova et al., 2020; Barbieri et al., 2025). The policy aspect plays a critical role in Ghana. It can be institutionalized through clear guidance, periodic CRE audits, and capacity building to reduce variance arising from project improvisation (Duodu, 2025; Armah et al., 2011).

The article advances a context-sensitive combination of managerial cognition and organizational culture for SCREM in emerging economies. The Upper Echelons Theory explains why leaders who hold estates as strategic design systems find it easier to achieve resource alignment, convey expectations, and justify cross-functional cooperation. The Strategic Alignment Model explains that value arises when structures and processes reflect strategic intent, such as when KPIs reflect space efficiency, user outcomes, and sustainability, and when property units are involved in enterprise planning (Lindholm & Levainen, 2006). The cultural lens introduced by Schein can be used to explain the immobilization of transparency and the importance of open, trust-building cross departmental distribution practices (Hattangabi, 2017; Khaddour, 2025). In the Ghanaian institutional environment, the input is the empirical demonstration of the interaction of cognition, culture, and governance to sustain CRE at a transitional phase between recognition and realignment. CRE visibility should be institutionalized at the highest level by leaders, and portfolio KPIs that link space to mission outcomes should be adopted. Finance, planning, and estate organizations ought to convene regularly with clear decision-making authority. Information asymmetry can be minimised through the use of digital asset registers and regular space audits, provided that change management addresses perceived threats to accountability. Reforms and rebuilding of procurement in property economics will hasten the renewal circles. The concept of sustainability must be presented as productivity insurance rather than a discretionary cost, given that employee experience and environmental performance are associated with institutional performance (Chang et al., 2021; Amos & BoakyeAgyeman, 2023; Bocken & Geradts, 2019).

All in all, the findings and the literature led to a single message. Ghanaian institutions are recognized for their strategic approach to corporate real estate, but the routine by which this is operationalized has yet to mature. The gap will require the re-frame of leadership, the culture based on transparency and cooperation, and governance tools that will translate will into repeatable decisions. This combination is not merely possible but also timely due to the performance, sustainability, and resilience pressures that have become the major markers of institutional success in emerging economies (Gadafi et al., 2023; Lindholm & Levainen, 2006; Gavrikova et al., 2020).

Study Implications on Policy, Practice, And Research

The paper emphasizes the need for a national policy framework that clearly positions corporate real estate management as a strategic tool to enhance performance and nation-building. Ghanaian institutions are major holders of real estate. Nonetheless, the absence of a coherent policy strategy has given way to inconsistent management practices, disjointed accountability, and low organizational conformity to strategy. This may be bridged through an elaborate national framework that gives clear guidelines on how to value assets, integrate sustainability factors, and facilitate the digitalization of estate data.

The formulation of a National Corporate Real Estate Strategy, which includes property management as a component of development planning, should be at the top of the agenda for government ministries and other regulatory authorities. Such a policy ought to characterize systems of governance in which estate management is to be direct, set performance standards for property performance, and include periodic audits to guarantee transparency. Including CRE metrics in institutional performance measures would encourage leaders to view space as a strategic resource rather than a recurring expense. The other important policy implication is that the leadership capacity development in property economics and strategic real estate management is institutionalized. Executive leaders in both the government and corporate worlds tend to be ill-equipped with the intellectual and analytical capabilities needed to decipher real estate intelligence. The leaders' ability to incorporate property strategy into corporate planning can be developed through targeted training programmes, executive short courses, and national workshops. To standardize learning, disseminate best practices, and connect policy with research-based evidence, the Ministry of Works and Housing should set up an annual National CREM Training and Research Forum in collaboration with higher institutions of learning.

Also, there is the need to institute policies that would promote the digital revolution in real estate governance. The digital asset registers, spatial databases, and GIS-based monitoring platforms will be developed, which will improve the transparency, real-time decision-making, and less corruption and asymmetry of information.

Sustainability of the CRE policies will also be considered so that the conservation of energy, green design, and life-cycle costing will be obligatory provisions in the institutional infrastructure decision-making process. These reforms would not only enhance performance but also make sure that the management of real estate in the country is in line with the national sustainability and resilience goals.

Lastly, there is a requirement for policy coherence among the real estate, education, and financial sectors. The policies of institutional real estate would not operate independently but are supposed to be aligned with budgetary regulations, procurement policies, and educational infrastructure policies. The coordination mechanism will also be cross-ministerial among the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Works and Housing to ensure that resource allocation, capital expenditure, and space planning decisions are made with a single strategic purpose. This would bring a sense of accountability, maximize government spending, and make real estate management a core component of the Ghana institutional development agenda.

The study is also useful at the organizational level as it equips the strategic leaders with ideas on how they can transform their strategic awareness of corporate real estate into tangible results. The first is the institutionalization of the estate governance structure, which is directly connected to the executive leadership. Strategic planning committees should also be represented in the property unit, and reporting lines need to be taken to the highest levels of decision-making. This openness will mean that real estate factors are taken into account in early budgeting, academic planning, and operational strategy. In a bid to create a common accountability system that fosters interdepartmental cooperation and de-siloing, a cross-functional estate committee may be formed comprising finance, planning, and facilities departments.

Second, firms ought to include real estate performance indicators within corporate scorecards. The measures to be monitored and reported on a regular basis are space utilization, occupancy cost ratio, energy efficiency, and user satisfaction. Linking these indicators to executive-level performance indicators can be motivating for an executive investor in property investment, based on data. The routine space auditing and utilization reviews will also be used to detect inefficiencies and help to take a more thoughtful approach to allocating resources.

Third, a digitized and data-based strategy is essential for the efficiency of operations. The implementation of integrated building information modelling (BIM) systems, computer-aided facility management (CAFM) software, and GIS platforms can enhance data accuracy and enable proactive maintenance. These technologies lessen the need to keep records manually and make the asset lifecycle more transparent. The organizations, too, can have an internal data group or can have the digital estate officers to manage and read such systems.

Application of the cultural factors is also important. Leaders must strive to change their organizational culture in order to promote transparency, collaboration, and constant improvement. It would be possible by carrying out regular interdepartmental conferences on space utilization, workshops on jointly made decisions, and making the reports on the performance of the estates completely available. Leaders should be role models; by the executives publicly showing the strategic relevance of CRE, it socialises the estate role and facilitates a wider buy-in at the departmental level. Change management should deal with fears of transparency by reformulating data visibility as an efficiency-facilitator and not an accountability issue.

The financial practices also need to be reformed. Institutions should use life-cycle costing and value-based investment models as opposed to short-term expenditure models. Maintenance, which is a value-preservation rather than cost-cutting strategy, leads to sustainable asset renewal and long-term performance. The leaders should be in a position to develop property reinvestment funds, funded by annual surpluses or partnership programmes, to support unremitting asset improvements without overreliance on external funding. Another way of developing the capital is through the use of public-private partnerships (PPP), which is a collaboration with the private sector without losing the long-term strategic results that remain controlled by the institution.

Lastly, the use of sustainability and resiliency when making property choices can lead to increased productivity, low operating costs, and a better institutional reputation. The introduction of energy efficiency, green building design, and environmental performance measures in CRE strategies would make property management consistent with institutional missions and global sustainability best practices. This is, in an actual sense, translating to being more attentive to the low-carbon footprint of materials, the introduction of newfangled energy systems, and adaptable spaces that can be reshaped to suit emerging academic or operational needs.

The findings identify several research gaps that future scholarly research on strategic corporate real estate management in emerging economies can address. To begin with, quantitative analyses are needed to model the relationships among leadership cognition, organizational culture, and CRE performance outcomes. In the future, measurement frameworks and structural equation models can be developed to further examine how leadership attitudes and cultural variables influence the integration of real estate strategy and institutional effectiveness. This kind of research will shift the discussion from descriptive knowledge to an empirical one. Second, longitudinal research designs would be required to appreciate the development of perceptions and cultural transformation with time in organizations that have adopted strategic CRE practices. The dynamics of change and the most critical levers of change or resistance can be understood by following the changing institutions before and after the intervention (new policies, digital tools, leadership interventions).

Third, scholars should investigate variation in CREM practices across sectors by comparing the interpretation and application of strategic real estate principles within institutions such as universities, hospitals, and government agencies. These kinds of comparisons will highlight contextual details and nourish industry-specific models that capture heterogeneity of organizational missions and governance models in Ghana and other such economies.

Fourth, comparative international research may be conducted to compare institutions within Ghana with those in other emerging markets in Africa and Asia. The studies will be able to establish the convergence and divergence trends in leadership cognition, culture, and governance in terms of CREM maturity. Intercountry comparisons would increase the generalizability of the theory and assist policymakers in developing adaptive models that embrace both global and local realities.

Fifth, future research should focus on digitalization and the incorporation of sustainability into CREM. The role of digital technologies in transforming asset visibility, predictive maintenance, and energy optimization has not been fully researched in the Ghanaian context. Similarly, the practical advice on integrating environmental and economic goals can also address how to operationalize sustainability commitments in resource-constrained settings.

Lastly, there is a need for cross-disciplinary research of real estate, management, and policymakers. This complicated intersection of leadership behaviour, culture, and built environment management requires a multiperspective question. University-government agency collaboration and research on professional organizations can yield practical models and policy instruments that directly inform practice. To formalize such cooperation, a national CREM research observatory could be designed in one of the large universities, and the current data collection and benchmarking, as well as policy advisory services, could be archived.

Overall, the implications of the study indicate that strategic corporate real estate management is not a technical or operational problem but a governance and leadership issue. The awareness should be converted into action, which requires structural change, cognitive restructuring, and cultural shift. Policies should make CRE an acknowledged national strategic resource; institutions should operationalize it with good governance, strong metrics, and up-to-date technology; and researchers should continue producing evidence to improve and contextualize best practices. The relationship between these regions will be central to the extent to which the Ghanaian institutions will be able to transform the real estate in its current form, a foundation of assets, into an active platform of productivity, sustainability, and national development.

CONCLUSION

The study explains Strategic Corporate Real Estate Management (SCREM) in Ghanaian institutions as dependent on the cognitive orientations of top management and organizational culture. Granting that leaders have come to accept Corporate Real Estate (CRE) as a strategic asset, yet inflexible operationalist approaches to doing business, bureaucratic cultures, and ineffective governance practices are obstacles to their total alignment with institutional strategy. Grounded in the Upper Echelons Theory and the Strategic Alignment Model, cognition regarding leaders' strategic intent and implementation is shaped by culture. A positive synergy between these dimensions yields transparency, collaboration, and data-driven decision-making in real estate governance. The study's findings indicate the importance of refreezing leadership through targeted executive education, introducing internal measures of CRE performance, and adding digital tools to make leadership more responsible and sustainable. By way of integrating CRE in the strategic planning, a culture of support, which is open, innovative, and cross-functional dialogue, is necessary. To this end, real estate repositioning as a maintenance process can be transformed into a strategic enabling process only through the unity of policy, effective leadership, and laws that reflect evolving cultures. This, we believe, will enhance resilience, output, and national growth of the institution, helping to create a more developed and context-sensitive framework for SCREM in new economies.

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