

Community Participation in Urban Planning: The case of managing green spaces in Kumasi, Ghana

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Introduction

During the past two decades, there has been a paradigm shift from a rationalist approach to urban planning, where decision making process was controlled mainly by few technocrats, experts or government officials, to a more participatory approach which supports participation of wide-range of stakeholders including local people. According to UN Habitat (2010), this form of participatory planning is a departure from planning “for” the people, to planning “with” the people. The Agenda 21, a major blueprint that came out of the United Nations conference on environment in 1992, emphasised active participation of local communities as fundamental in achieving sustainable development, because it enables local planning authorities to develop strong policies that reflect the views of local people and also addresses wide range of social, economic and environmental problems effectively (United Nations, 1992). Similarly, the Brundtland Report, ‘Our Common Future’, recognises community participation as a critical effort in local development and in achieving sustainable development. It says that:

...the recognition of traditional rights must go hand in hand with measures to protect the local institutions that enforce responsibility in resource use. And this recognition must also give local communities a decisive voice in the decisions about resource use in their area (WCED, 1987, p.115-116).

Community participation in this context broadly covers the inclusion of local communities in planning decisions to enhance community development. In more simple terms, it is the involvement of local people or members of a given community in decision making process on matters that affect their wellbeing (Ribot, 1996).

In urban planning, community participation is considered essential for fair and representative decision-making in planning process because such participation helps in framing land-use plans to address various needs, problems and interests of communities to achieve more positive results (Mahjabeen et al., 2009; Sarker et al., 2008; Shrestha & McManus, 2005; Healey, 1998). It also helps planning authorities to get vital information and acquire experiences on community problems which can best be provided by local people themselves (Brody et al., 2003; Margerum, 2002; Healey, 1998). Its other benefits include creating a sense of ownership over community projects, and enhancing democratisation of the decision making process at the local level (Healey, 1997; Sager, 1994).

In Africa, and particularly in Ghana, Republic of South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda efforts have been made to strengthen community participation in planning systems as a means of giving local people a voice in local and national planning projects (Wilson et al., 2015; Okpala, 2009). Ghana, after

institutionalising a decentralisation policy in 1988 (Provisional National Defence Council [PNDC] Local Government Law 207), passed several laws to legitimise the involvement of local people and the general public in planning agendas. Notable among such laws were the 1992 National Constitution, the Local Government Law of 1993 (Act 462), and the National Development Planning System Act of 1994 (Act 480). With these arrangements in place it was expected that the local people would be actively involved in planning decisions by local planning authorities to effectively manage various urban resources such as urban green spaces which cover all vegetated public and private open spaces in urban areas such as parks, gardens, forests, trees, allotments and wetlands available for human usage (URGE Team, 2004).

Notwithstanding the various legislative arrangements put in place to promote participation of local people in the management of urban resources in Ghana, studies have shown that urban green spaces are rapidly disappearing from Ghanaian cities, especially Accra and Kumasi due to poor management practices (Fuwape & Onyekwelu, 2011; Langer & McNamara, 2011; Quagraine, 2011). The situation in Kumasi is worse since the city which was once given the accolade the garden city of West Africa has now lost much of its green spaces due to poor management practices (Adjei Mensah, 2014a, Asare, 2013).

This raises questions about the management of green spaces and how local people are involved in the management process. But studies that have been done on green spaces in Ghana and in Africa as a whole have done very little on the participation of local people in the management of green spaces (Adjei Mensah, 2014b, Quagraine, 2011). This has contributed to the creation of a knowledge gap on local people's participation in the management of green spaces and in governance practices that have hampered community participation. The aim of this paper is to assess the level of participation of local people in the management of green spaces in Kumasi city.

Given Ghana's rich experience in democratic governance and decentralised local governance system in Africa and the world at large, the findings of this paper provide good lessons for other African countries and beyond to strengthen the involvement of local communities in governance practices on natural resources such as green spaces. The paper also reveals some of the underlying inefficient governing practices that cause rapid deterioration of green spaces. Policy makers can dwell on these findings to take informed decisions to improve the management of green spaces in urban areas. The next two sections provide much theoretical background by situating the paper within Ghana's planning process, and communicative planning theory. Afterwards the methods used to collect data for the paper is provided. The paper concludes with a discussion on the participation of the local people in the management of green spaces in Ghana.

Planning process in Ghana

Ghana practices decentralised development planning system. The system at the national level has the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) at the apex. Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) are in charge of affairs at the regional level whilst the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are in charge at the local level (Sabbi and Adjei Mensah, 2016; ISODEC, 2004). This decentralised planning system (Figure 1) was designed to create effective political and public administrative machinery for inclusive development planning decision-making at both the national and local levels (Botchie, 2000). At the local level where the current paper is focused there is a tier-three local governance system for Municipal or District Assemblies and a four-tier governance system for the Metropolitan Assemblies (Adusei-Asante, 2012).

According to the Local Government Act (462), the participation of local people (ie sharing ideas, views and concerns on development in the localities) kick starts the whole planning process from the local level to the national level (Fig 1). A typical planning process in Ghana covers the following stages (ISODEC, 2001; Botchie, 2000):

- It starts with Unit Committees and Area/Town Councils interacting with community members (local people) to come out with social, economic and environmental problems facing the communities or neighbourhoods. The decisions arrived at are channelled to various sub-committees and sectoral departments for discussion by the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU).
- The sub-committees of the executive committee of the District Assembly sits and deliberates on the problems. Afterwards they define, prioritise and submit the concerns of the local people to the executive committee.
- The various departments of the District Assembly, sectoral agencies, and other functional agencies confer and collaborate with one another to prepare the district plan, taking into account the problems and concerns of the district as raised by the local people.
- The District Planning Co-ordinating Unit integrates and co-ordinates the district sectoral plans into long term, medium term and short term plans, and afterwards submit it to the executive committee for their inputs. After this, the proposed plans are subject to public hearing and roundtable debate by the General Assembly.
- The approved plans are then sent to the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) for co-ordination and harmonisation with the plans of other district assemblies at the regional level.

- The final document is sent to the NDPC, which is at the apex of the decentralised planning system at the national level, for the integration of such plans into national development plans and strategies.

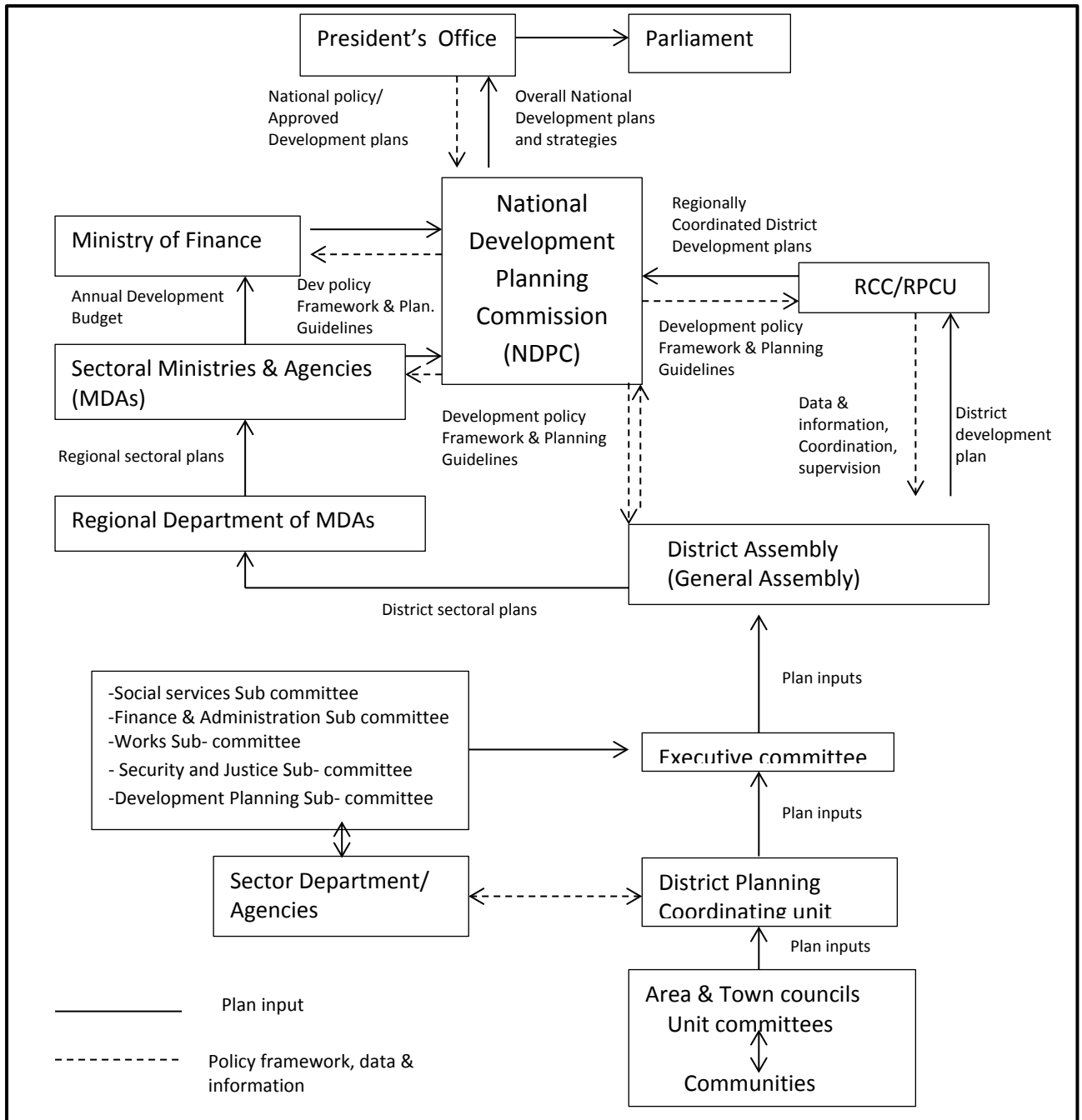


Figure 1: Decentralised planning framework of Ghana

Source: Adapted from Inkoom (2011); Agyemang (2010)

The above planning process takes decentralization to the grassroots level. It recognises the importance of community participation in the decentralised planning system of Ghana. As such it empowers the local people to

participate in all the decisions on matters affecting them; it also makes it obligatory for the MMDAs to integrate the views of local people in all planning decisions including issues on green spaces.

Communicative planning theory and community participation

The paper is underpinned by the communicative planning theory which focuses on shared or collaborative decision making process in which ideas of all stakeholders are respected. This theory is built on Habermas model of communicative action which supports the inter-actions between two or more actors to establish interpersonal relations through verbal means to reach some common definite conclusions. In this interpersonal relationship, the actors seek to reach a common understanding and to coordinate their actions through consensus and cooperation (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). In this regard, communication is essential in decision making process. Good communication is often open and power differences among the various participants are well regulated (Habermas, 1990a, 1990b). Hence, to communicative planning theorists, planning as a process should integrate the concerns of all stakeholders (including community members) and if the process is fair, good results are achieved (Healey, 1999; 1997).

At the core of the communicative planning theory is community participation in decision making process. According to Sager (2005), this is best achieved by making the planning process less vulnerable to manipulation and to other repressive power strategies that prevents the participation of local people. Similarly, Gunder (2010) also opined that decision making process described in the communicative planning theory should be undistorted, open, and be based on consultations which are not subjected to forced consensual agreement. In Forester's (1993, 1989) view, community participation is best realised by planners who are effective communicators, alert citizens or communities on the issue of the day, and encourage community-based planning actions.

Although participation of local people is very important in the communicative planning theory, but how to get the public involved in the decision making process is highly contested. This has generated a debate to which many scholars have come up with different models. For example, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation model is one of earliest that conceptualised the participation of the local people in a form of eight rungs having three broad levels: *nonparticipation* (manipulation and therapy), *tokenism* (informing, consultation, placation), and *citizen power* (partnership, delegated power, citizen control). This model provides a framework that distinguishes different levels of participation in any decision making process that involve citizens. The model, however, has been criticised on several grounds. For example, Tritter and McCallum

(2006) criticised the model for assuming a linear and hierarchical form which fails to emphasise the importance of the process and feedback loops. It is also criticised for eliminating the role of technical expertise of planners and on the assumption that citizen power will result in good planning decisions (Collins & Ison, 2006; Choguill, 1996).

With the shortfalls of Arnstein's model in mind, Kingston (1998) developed a six-steps ladder of participation which has the following levels: (1) *public right to know*; (2) *informing the public*; (3) *public right to object*, (4) *participation in defining interests, actors and to determine agenda*; (5) *public participation in assessing consequences and recommending solutions*; and (6) *public participation in final decision*. This model which is based on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and on Geographic Information System (GIS) principles suggest that internet-based technologies provide easy way to inform and engage the general public in decision making process, and hence brings them closer to a participatory planning system (Kingston et al., 2000). However, good knowledge in GIS, internet, and ICT required by the Kingston (1998) model makes its application less user friendly.

Contrary to both Arnstein (1969) and Kingston (1998) ladders of participation, Nobre (1999) designed a community participation ruler which proposed four level of community participation which are: *to inform*, *to consult*, *to discuss*, and *to share*. The first two levels (to inform and to consult) of this participation framework are classified as one-way system because they do not necessary ask for any particular feedback from the community. On the other hand, the last two levels (to discuss and to share) are classified as two-way systems that capture both the public's reactions and feeding of such data into decision-making process. In addition to the community participation debate is the Davidson's (1998) wheel of participation framework which conceptualises community participation in a form of a spectrum that has four main pillars which are inform, consult, participation and empowerment.

In spite of the weaknesses inherent in the models above, and their alternative approaches to community participation, a closer look at them found some common activities important to effective community participation. These activities are consulting local people for their views and concerns, informing them about various planning provisions, empowering them to undertake initiatives in their communities, and involving them in taking final decisions in all matters that affect their livelihood. Taking these views into account and looking at the planning process in Ghana, the Davidson's wheel of participation model (Figure 2) was adopted to guide the study. This model highlights the key features contained in Ghana's planning system to enhance community

participation such as consulting, informing, involving and empowering the local people in planning activities (Ahwoi, 2010; ISODEC, 2001; Botchie, 2000).

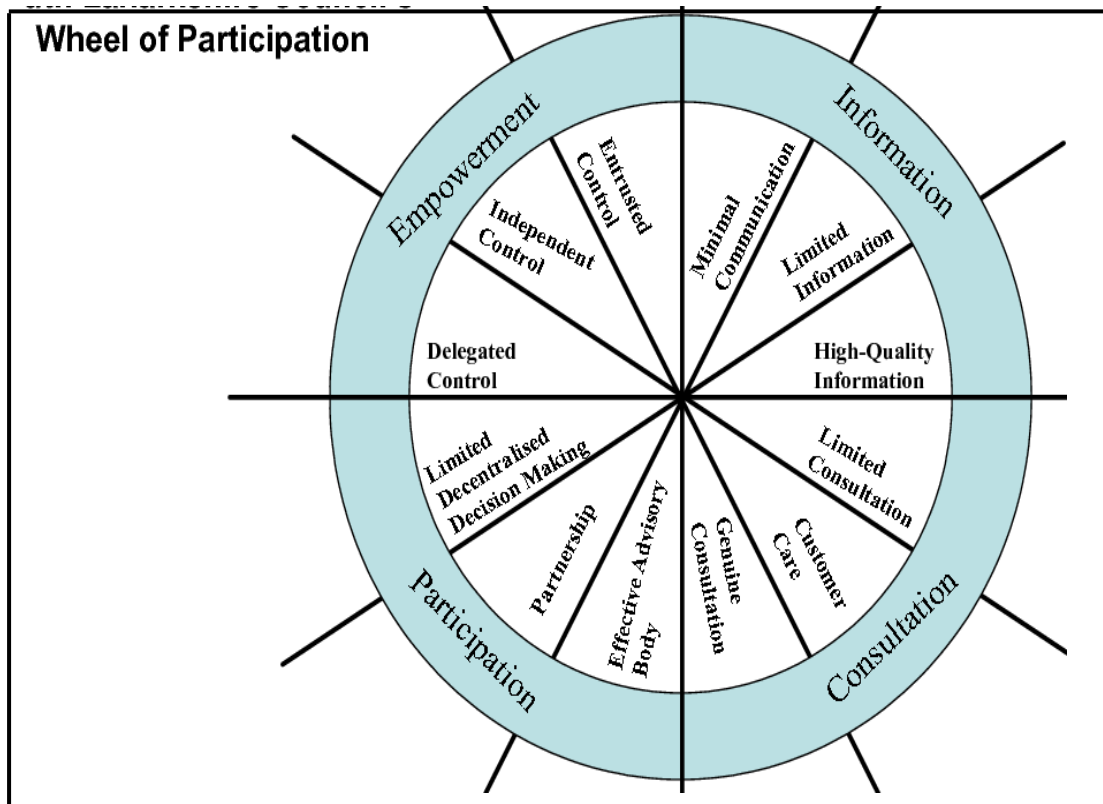


Figure 2: Wheel of participation framework

Source: Davidson (1998)

Materials and Methods

The study was done in Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana. Kumasi is one particular city that was designed to accommodate much green spaces (Adarkwah & Owusu-Akyaw, 2001; Quagraine, 2011). Thus in the 1960s the city was given the accolade the Garden City of West Africa due to much urban green spaces interspersed with physical developments (Quagraine, 2011). The city is now experiencing rapid depletion of its green spaces and this has made some scholars to challenge its garden city status (Adjei Mensah, 2014a; Asare, 2013). Kumasi is 270km north of Accra, the national capital of Ghana (Figure 3). It has a total population of 2,035, 064 making it the most populated city in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). It is located in the moist tropical semi-deciduous vegetation zone of Ghana which has favourable soil conditions that support farming and green vegetation. Five communities: Patasi, Danyame, Ahodwo, Nhyiaso and Amokom were selected for the study (Figure 3). This was because preliminary survey of the area found the selected

communities to initially contain most of the green spaces of Kumasi but now they are losing the green spaces due to several human-induced activities. This made the communities suitable places for the study to know why the green spaces are being depleted and the extent to which the local people are involved in the management of green spaces. The central business district (CBD) was also a point of interest for the study.

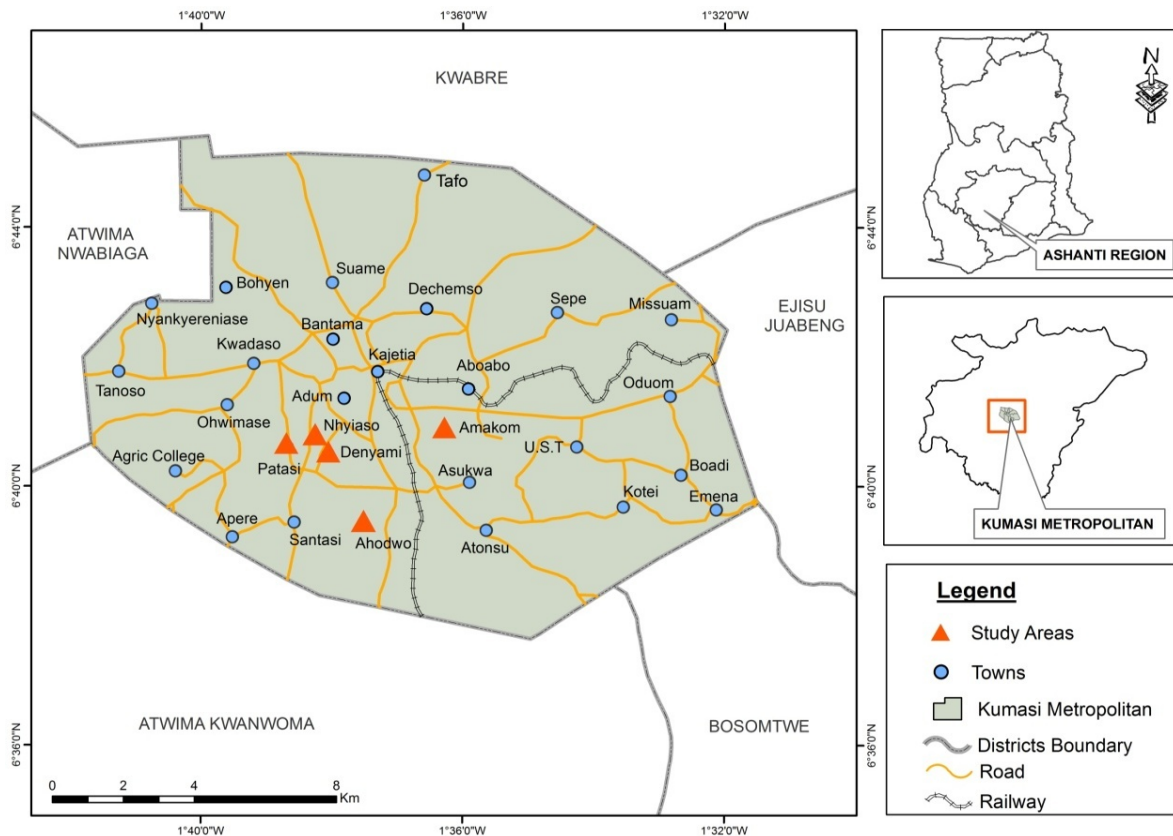


Figure 3: Map of Kumasi showing selected sites for the study

Source: Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Cape Coast (2013)

A combination of descriptive and explanatory case study approaches was used in the study. This enabled a comprehensive description of the state of green spaces in Kumasi and also provided possible explanations for what led to such condition (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2003). The study was purely qualitative in nature. It made use of a blend of data sources such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, personal observation, and documentary and archival data as recommended by Yin (2003). Four categories of people constituted the study's target population. These were the residents of the selected communities, city authorities, opinion leaders and officials of allied bodies on green spaces. The selection of the respondents was purposive (Mills et al., 2010) because those people served the purpose of the study. In all, 30 in-depth interviews with opinion leaders, city authorities, and representatives of allied bodies on green spaces and 10 focus group discussions with the local people of the five selected communities were conducted in the study.

Personal observations were also carried out on several green spaces to provide first-hand information about the current condition of these green spaces.

Consultation of local communities on green space initiatives

Under the consultation stage of community participation, city authorities or planning bodies are expected to consult the local people to seek their views and concerns, and then factor such issues into planning decisions to meet the needs of the people (Davidson, 1998). The decentralised town planning system of Ghana is supposed to use this form of participation (consulting local people) so that city authorities may come up with development plans that address problems of the local people. The responses from the focus groups discussions that were organised for the local people in the selected communities in Kumasi suggested that the level of consultation between the planning authorities of Kumasi and the local people is low. It came out that the unit committees and other sub-structures that had been mandated to hold consultations with the local people were not up to the task due to problems such as ineffectiveness of many unit committees, and lack of support from the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA). The discussants of the focus groups complained of little or virtually no consultative discussions taking place within their localities to solicit their views on problems affecting them such as conversion of green spaces to housing and commercial land-uses. A resident of the Ahodwo Community remarked as follows:

For the past five years, I can confirm of only three community fora taken place in this area for us to express our views on the well-being of this community. Even in those fora the problem of excessive encroachment of green spaces that was raised among other things has not received any attention as at now (Mr U, Ahodwo Community, FGD: 27/01/2013).

Another member at Danyame Community said this:

Our unit committee is not functioning properly. For a long period now, no community durbars or discussions have been organised to channel the problems of this community to the planning authorities of Kumasi (Mr T., Danyame Community, FGD: 17/03/2013).

A community member at Patasi Community had this to say:

This community is suffering from many environmental problems with destruction of green spaces being a major problem. However, we are not consulted for us to give our concerns and ideas to address this problem (Mrs Y, Patasi Community, FGD: 26/02/2013).

From the above comments, inadequate consultation of the local people has resulted in poor organisation of community fora which in turn have caused many communities not to have community action plans. By the

planning standards of Ghana, a community action plan is supposed to be a basic planning document (at the local level) from which the outcomes of consultative discussions with the local people are to be focused. This observation is a major problem in Ghana that hinders effective community participation as reported by Inkoom (2011).

The above observation points to the fact that poor consultation of local people on matters affecting their localities (such as the encroachment of green spaces) is a major problem in the decentralised planning of Ghana. This problem is synonymous to what Davidson (1998) calls minimal consultation which is stressed by the wheel of community participation framework. Poor consultation of local people has restricted the incorporation of local knowledge and experiences into planning decisions in Kumasi. According to Brody et al. (2003) and Healey (1998), the experiences and knowledge of local people about their communities are critical for effective urban planning since such experiences provide detail and rich information about problems facing communities which can best be provided by the local people themselves.

Informing local communities on green space initiatives

Informing local communities in the planning process is an aspect of community participation that deals with flow of information from planning authorities to the local people on planning decisions or initiatives. In other words, the planning authorities have to keep local people informed about planning decisions they intend to take. This has been highlighted in the WHO's Healthy Cities Project as vital because it helps to keep local people abreast with planning initiatives within their communities and enable them to participate in strengthening those initiatives (Heritage & Dooris, 2009).

The local people in the selected communities expressed dissatisfaction about the flow of information from the Kumasi city authorities to them. The sentiments expressed centred mainly on the city authorities keeping information on development projects to themselves or releasing such information only to a few prominent individuals. It was revealed that many green spaces in the selected communities such as nature reserves had been rezoned and released to private developers without prior notice of the local people. A Unit Committee member at the Nhyiaso Community had this to say:

Within the Ahodwo, Danyame and Nhyiaso communities, there used to be many green spaces but now most of them are no more. The Kumasi city authorities have rezoned most of these lands and released them for commercial and residential land-uses without informing the local people about such decisions. If the local people were briefed on those

initiatives at the initial stages of those projects we would have resisted because the green spaces gave us a lot of benefits (Unit Committee member, Nhyiaso Community, IDI: 15/12/2012).

Poor flow of information from the city authorities to the local people was very critical since it deviated from the statutory planning provisions of Ghana. For example, Section 3 of the National Development Planning Systems Act of 1994 (Act 480) makes it clear that planning authorities should inform local people (through public forum) on any proposed development plans to address the concerns of local people before such plans are implemented. In addition to this, Sections 12 and 14 of the Town and Country Planning Act of Ghana (CAP 84) oblige local planning authorities to place notices of intended initiatives on planning schemes in two daily newspapers and on public notice boards for a period of 2 months. These measures are to provide the local people information on planning initiatives within their area and allow them to express their views on such proposals accordingly. However, investigations from the field revealed that these legal provisions were not strictly adhered to due to the personal interest of some planning officials of KMA and disruption of the process by key personalities for their personal gains. It came out that the planning officials connive with some top personalities such as politicians and business men to rezone green space lands for different purposes and for the fear that the local communities will resist such initiatives, information on those projects are kept away from the local people. For example, one opinion leader remarked as follows:

Most of the green space lands in Ahodwo, Nhyiaso and Patasi communities are now used for different purposes. Some of these lands have been taken by politician and business men for their personal housing properties and commercial activities. The conversion of the green space lands to different land-uses was done without the notice of the community members. If members of the communities had prior information about such decisions they would have resisted them. Some planning officers conspire with key personalities to take such decisions without our involvement (Mr K., Opinion Leader at Ahodwo Community, IDI: 27/01/2013).

Another issue that emerged from the study was the sub-structures of the city authorities of Kumasi (unit committees and area councils) not keeping the local people informed of the development activities of the city authorities. According to the decentralised planning framework of Ghana, Unit Committees and Area Councils are supposed to serve as links between local communities and the city authorities, and to remain in constant

communication with the local people on planning agendas. Apart from their consultation mandate, they are also to keep local communities constantly informed of the activities of the city authorities through community fora and workshops. Observations from the study indicated that these sub-structures do not update or give the local people frequent feedbacks on the activities of the city authorities. The above findings suggest that the planning authorities uphold or keep much information on planning initiatives to themselves, denying the local people access to valuable information which does not augur well for community participation as asserted by Newman et al. (2004) and Davidson (1998). This problem has led to conversion of many green spaces in Kumasi to different land-uses since decisions on such initiatives are made by few top personalities secretly without the knowledge of local people.

Participation of local communities in decision making process on green spaces

In line with the wheel of participation framework which was guiding the study, the participation of local people in the decentralised town planning of Kumasi was assessed from two angles. These were the extent to which the local people are represented in the decision making process, and how the city authorities partner with the local people to undertake activities on green spaces.

The decentralised planning system of Ghana was instituted to enhance community participation in the planning process. However, the study revealed that participation of the local people was only confined to the bottom half of the decentralised planning framework. This was because at the top half of the decentralised framework at the district level (various sub-committees, executive committees and the general assembly) where much deliberation and final decisions on development projects take place, there are few or no representatives of the local people. It was realised that the residents of the selected communities had representatives mainly in the Unit Committees and the Area Councils. These were the lower sub-structures of the decentralised planning framework which are supposed to channel the concerns of the communities to the top structures for final decisions. This arrangement was of concern to the local people (Table 1).

Table 1: Responses by the local people on their poor representation at the top management level

<p>The planning decisions that the Kumasi city authorities take on this community often tends to fall outside the priorities of the community. This is because all such decisions are taken by top officials without the involvement of our representatives (Community member, Amakom Community, FGD:13/01/2013)</p>	<p>The Kumasi city authorities take us for granted. They take final decisions on development projects for this community without our active involvement (Assembly man, Patasi Community, FGD: 12/03/2013).</p>
<p>We are not involved in decision making at the top management level. This is because the current organisational structure for town planning cuts us off from decision making at that level (Assembly man, Nhyiaso Community, IDI: 18/12/2012)</p>	<p>The Kumasi city authorities often impose planning initiatives on us. This is due to the fact that such initiatives are deliberated upon and final decisions undertaken by only top officials without the involvement of our representatives (resident, Ahodwo Community, FGD: 27/01/2013)</p>

Source: Fieldwork (2013)

Green spaces such as parks and gardens were identified by the local people as among the major properties in their communities. Unfortunately, these spaces had not been recognised as such partly because the local people did not have representatives at the top-half of the decentralised planning framework who could press for the preservation of green spaces. In addition to this, there were problems of poor partnership between the city authorities and the local people in undertaking projects on green spaces. Many unsuccessful green space projects in Kumasi were found to have some connection with poor partnership between the city authorities and the local people. A notable example of such projects was the Kumasi beautification project which lacked the necessary contribution of the local people. For example, observations on the beautification project by Boadu (2010) were that it could not achieve the desired results for a long time due to factors such as poor partnership between the city authorities and other stakeholders, especially the local people, in executing the project. This revelation shows that the local people are not treated as major stakeholders in the management of environmental resources such as green spaces in Kumasi. This equates to Selman’s (2004) assertion that local people are treated as passive participants in landscape management in many developing countries because many decisions are taken without their involvement.

Empowering local communities to maintain green spaces

Matters of empowerment are strongly subsumed in collaborative governance and community participation. In Davidson's (1998) Wheel of Participation Framework, empowerment is an important level of community participation in planning process as it motivates local communities to self-facilitate projects in their areas to enhance their wellbeing. In this paper, the extent to which the local people were empowered by the city authorities to self-facilitate and maintain green spaces in their communities was the focus. Observation from the field revealed that the local people had limited rights to maintain green spaces in Kumasi. The government of Ghana through its local planning authorities and decentralised government agencies possessed all the rights or powers to control projects on green spaces. This hindered the active participation of the local people and to some extent made their involvement in the planning and management of green spaces questionable. For example, at Patasi, Danyame and Nhyiaso communities, personal observation and interaction with the local people revealed that some private developers had been authorised by the Kumasi city authorities to undertake housing projects on nature reserves and wetlands which the local people were against those projects (Figure 4). Due to limited rights of the local people in the maintenance of green spaces, several attempts made by them to halt the projects did not yield any positive results as those projects still continue to progress.



Figure 4: Projects which local communities are not empowered to control

Source: Fieldwork (2013)

A: Housing project on wetlands in Danyame Neighbourhood behind Danyame Primary School.

B: Housing project on nature reserve at "Mango Down" in Patasi Neighbourhood

The limited rights of the local people on green spaces were found to be the result of weak legal backing. The Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) and other legislations which support decentralised planning in Ghana do not delegate much power to the local people. Similar findings came up in a study by Shackleton et al. (2002) on eight (8) Southern African countries where central governments continue to dominate and control projects on the natural environment with little or no rights to the local people.

Furthermore, it also came to light that the local people do not often self-facilitate initiatives on green spaces. The only initiative that was found to be periodically undertaken by the local people in their communities was organising communal labour to keep their environment clean. Initiatives such as frequent tree planting exercises and preservation of the natural vegetation that could be engineered by the local people to enhance green spaces in their areas were conspicuously missing. The underlying reasons for this were lack of motivation of the local people to pursue that course due to their limited autonomy, inadequate support by the Kumasi city authorities (financial and logistics), and poor perception of the local people on those initiatives since they think such initiatives are the responsibility of the city authorities (Adjei Mensah, 2014c). Another important reason was the lack of educational campaigns by the Kumasi city authorities to upgrade the skills and knowledge of the local people on green space management practices. These factors had made the local people less empowered to undertake projects to maintain green spaces in their communities. This is contrary to Bonilla's (2013) observation on selected cities in Mexico where the local people were found at the forefront championing their own initiatives such as constructing local playing grounds to enhance green spaces in their communities.

Conclusion

Community participation in the management of green spaces was very low in Kumasi. There was poor consultation of the local people on conservation of green spaces in their communities. Various bodies responsible for organising such consultations (the Unit Committees and Area Councils) were ineffective and did not function as expected. There was poor flow of information from the Kumasi city authorities to the local people on matters concerning green spaces. Green spaces in the study communities were found rezoned and released by the Kumasi city authorities to private developers for different land-uses without the prior notice or idea of the local people. In addition to this, participation of the local people in terms of their representatives being involved in taking final decisions on green spaces was unsatisfactory. For instance, the participation of the local people was only confined to the bottom half of the decentralised planning framework (unit committee and area councils). They were not represented at the top half of the planning framework (various sub-committees,

executive committees and the general assembly) where much deliberation and final decisions on green spaces take place.

Furthermore, the level of empowerment of the local people to self-facilitate and control green space projects was poor. The Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) and other legislations which support town planning in Ghana do not delegate enough power to the local people to self-facilitate projects on green spaces. Much of such powers are retained by the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and other government bodies on green spaces. Poor empowerment of the local people together with inadequate financial support and logistics from the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly do not motivate the local people to put in much effort in preserving green spaces in their communities. All these findings defeat the purpose of the decentralised town planning system of Ghana which was supposed to strengthen grassroots participation in urban planning decisions. The local people were found to be cut-off from taking decisions on green spaces with their views and concerns not integrated in final planning decisions on green spaces.

In conclusion, it is suggested that to enhance community participation in the management of green spaces in Kumasi, some features of the communicative planning theory such as dialogue, consensus building, and facilitative leadership should be given much attention by the city authorities. On dialogue, the local people should be recognised as key stakeholders in the management of green spaces and hence be regularly consulted and informed on any planning initiative about green spaces within their communities. With respect to consensus building, decisions on green spaces should not be seen as the sole responsibility of city authorities. Such decisions should be based on consensus reflecting the common decisions agreed by all stakeholders including the local people who are often neglected in decision making processes. Lastly, the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly has to play a good facilitative leadership role by encouraging community-based planning actions as stress by Forester (1989). This will entail the city authorities partnering well with the local people on green space projects, ensuring that activities on green spaces are transparent and open to stakeholder discussions, while activities enshrined in various town planning regulations to promote community participation are also strictly followed.

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