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Urban planning challenges in a 'chiefly' city from a collaborative and communicative planning lens

Abdulai Abdul-Hamid¹, Bernard Afii Akanpabada Akanbang², Ibrahim Yakubu³, Millicent Awialie Akaateba⁴

¹Department of Land Economy, KNUST

²Department of Planning, SDD UBIDS

³Department of Planning and Land Administration, UDS

⁴Department of Urban Design and Infrastructure Studies, SDD UBIDS

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ABSTRACT

The ability of urban planning in sub-Saharan Africa to regulate land uses to achieve harmony and ensure sustainability remains a dream, and this ineffectiveness is partly anchored on the duality of institutions of land ownership and governance. Through the lens of collaborative and communicative planning, this study discusses the context-specific challenges that arise out of urban planning practice under the culturally revered institution of chieftaincy. A case study research design was used as the strategy of inquiry. The target population were divisional chiefs, secretaries of chiefs, physical planning officers, land surveyors, and private land developers. Fourteen (14) key informants, consisting of five divisional chiefs, two secretaries of the divisional chiefs, two physical planning officers, one development control officer, two land surveyors, and two private land developers were sampled. The study used three main data collection methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Content analysis was used to conduct document reviews while thematic analysis was used to analyse key informant interview data. Facilitative leadership of MMDAs, resource capacity of the MMDAs to execute their mandate, conflicting and self-seeking interests of key actors, unequal balance of power between key actors amidst the nonexistence of strong civil society organisations in support of urban planning, and ignorance and indiscipline behaviour of landowners and lessors were identified as the underlying causes of the problems of urban planning from a collaborative and communicative planning lens. The study brought to the fore the need to emphasise partnerships and collaboration and adherence to the tenets of collaboration by the relevant stakeholders if the practice of planning were to deliver efficient and effective development in Tamale.

1. Introduction

Urban planning plays a critical role in the development of liveable and sustainable settlements (Akanbang, Akaateba & Korah, 2021; Yeboah & Shaw, 2013). Since settlements are an aggregation of individuals, economic, social, and cultural realities with diverse considerations, the nature of settlement development can impact negatively or positively on its various dimensions and ultimately on the quality of life of its inhabitants. Urban planning, the process through which controlling and enabling tools are used to order the use of space in human settlements in a way that facilitates economic efficiency, convenience, sound environmental quality, and aesthetic beauty and enables urban settlements and cities to serve a critical role as engines of growth and development (Akaateba, Huang & Adumpo, 2018), is critical to the incorporation of the socio-economic needs and aspirations of people into development efforts (Ngetich et al., 2004). It has a significant influence on defining the limits of urban areas' ability to adapt to population development (Forkuor, 2010). This is because effective urban planning allows a city to accommodate more people than is averagely permissible since they ensure the judicious and harmonious use of land (Mutiarra et al., 2008). In general, urban planning coordinates the utilisation and development of land with the view to

making the city a superior place to live and work (Yachori, 2017).

In many sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) cities, the ability of urban planning to regulate land use and achieve harmony, curtail urban sprawl, and ensure sustainability (Berke & Conroy, 2000) remains a dream rather than a reality. Amidst the failure of western-oriented planning approaches to make a significant impact in cities in Africa, there is growing recognition and interest in collaborative planning. Collaborative and communicative planning have emerged as approaches to effective planning especially in dual land administration contexts like Ghana because they envisage planning as a multidisciplinary and multifaceted action involving many actors and stakeholders (Choi & Robertson, 2019; Brisbois & de Loë, 2016; Vodden, 2015). Particularly in Africa, collaboration and communication are seen as being able to provide a context-responsive approach to urban planning (Anafo & Takyi, 2021). Increasing urbanisation and its associated consequences have complicated the planning decision making processes in many African cities, requiring a cogenerative problem-solving and collaborative consensus-building approach (Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2004) rather than a competitive interest bargaining approach (Healey, 2003). Privatisation of planning services

and outsourcing of its functions to private consultants (Sokol, 2012; McCann, 2001) across Africa means that more players are introduced into the urban planning space and therefore the need for collaboration. Ghana operates a dual land administration regime where state and customary systems of ownership run concurrently (Ibrahim, 2021; Ubink & Quan, 2008; Kasanga & Kotey, 2001). Chiefs and family heads who, under customary tenure, hold land in trust for the people wield strong traditional, political, and economic authority over the land, which city planners and government land administrators cannot contain (Forkuor, 2010). As such, the landowners freely dispose land to developers provided that such land is within their traditional boundaries, despite the provision in Article 267 (3) of the 1992 Constitution, which provides that “There shall be no disposition or development of any stool land unless the Regional Lands Commission of the region in which the land is situated has certified that the disposition or development is consistent with the development plan drawn up or approved by the planning authority for the area concerned”. Per the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) and the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925), MMDAs are planning authorities with the mandate to develop and/or approve schemes for all settlements within their jurisdictions. However, due to financial constraints on the part of MMDAs to prepare planning schemes, landowners have over the years usurped the role of state-legislated agencies by preparing their own schemes, in many cases without the approval of MMDAs (Akanbang, Akaateba & Korah, 2021).

Thus, through the lens of collaborative and communicative planning, this study discusses the challenges that confront urban planning practise under a culturally revered institution of chieftaincy, which wields considerable influence over land, the underlying drivers of these challenges, as well as their consequences on the quality of growth and sustainable development of cities. Though several scholars have devoted research efforts to understanding urban planning in a collaborative governance framework in SSA, there has seldom been attention paid to the challenges associated with the practice of urban planning in contexts where chiefs wield considerable power in the management of land (Rutherford, 2017; Akaateba, 2018). While studies on the need for collaborative planning and the challenges thereof have been undertaken in other geographic contexts (Choi & Robertson, 2019; Brisbois & de Loë, 2016; Vodden, 2015; Howlett, 2009), such studies in the Ghanaian setting are limited, especially within the context of regulating land use (Akaateba et al., 2018).

The aim of this article, therefore, is to examine the challenges of urban planning in a city where chiefs wield considerable power and authority in the ownership and management of land resources. The paper answers two interrelated questions: First, what are the main challenges associated with local plan preparation and implementation management in Tamale? Second, what are the underlying causes of these challenges from a collaborative and communicative planning lens? The paper is presented in six sections. The first section presents an introduction, while section two reviews theoretical literature on collaborative and communicative planning. Section three describes the study context and the methods

employed to answer the research questions. The fourth section presents the results of the study, while section five discusses the results presented in section four. The final section provides a conclusion for the study based on the findings and discussions.

2. Theoretical review

2.1 Collaborative and communicative approaches to urban planning

Land is a fundamental but contested input in the urban planning process. This is essentially because land has varied competing, complementary, and conflicting uses, often with actors and stakeholders having varying degrees of interests, power, and influence underlying land use decisions. Increasing urbanisation and its associated consequences have complicated the planning decision-making processes on the use of land to derive maximum benefits for city development, especially in the developing world. These complications have further put urgency on the need for effective and efficient urban planning (Takyi & Weigel, 2016). Over the years, collaborative and communicative planning has responded to the need for a more context-responsive approach to urban planning (Anafo & Takyi, 2021). Urban planning processes, hitherto, were entirely top-down and technocratic endeavours, grounded on rational comprehensive thinking and revolving around architectural and landscape design (Anafo & Takyi, 2021; Graham 2016). The practice of planning has evolved over time from a focus on procedural approaches, including transactive planning (Friedmann et al., 1973), deliberative planning (Forester, 1999), and collaborative planning (Healey, 2003). This shift has promoted participation and democracy in urban planning processes (Anafo & Takyi, 2021).

Innes and Booher (2004, p. 426), in their effort to reframe public involvement, call for a different dimension of participation, effectively embodied in the many visioning initiatives that have played out based on collaboration between “a fluid network of interacting agents”, including citizens, interest groups, businesses, non-profit organisations, public officials, and planners. To them, one of the key underpinnings of the collaborative model is that “while education of the public is essential it is not participation if it does not include the education of the agency”. This concept of two-way education reflects the co-production model of community knowledge, as outlined by Corburn (2003) in the context of environmental planning.

Unlike traditional public participation systems that breed a one-way flow of information, collaborative models of participation encourage a “cogenerative learning process” based on “joint fact finding” and “joint problem solving” (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 426). Communicative planning, as noted by Healey (2003), is based on “collaborative consensus-building” rather than “competitive interest bargaining” (Healey, 2003, p. 30). According to communicative planning theory, planning is an “interactive process” that plays out in the realm of governance, which Healey articulates as an “attempt at the collective management of common concerns about co-existence in the shared spaces of urban regions” (Healey, 2003, p. 104; 2006,

p. xiv). The process-oriented focus of communicative theory, as outlined by Healey (2003; 2006), is similarly echoed by Forester (1999, p. 26), who argues that planners are “deliberative practitioners” whose work revolves around “the joint search for...how we shall live together”. The aim of the deliberative practitioner is to view participatory planning as a pragmatic reality rather than an empty ideal (Healey, 2006). It is worth noting that collaborative and communicative planning is underpinned by principles including the existence of a vibrant civil society organisation to pressurise state and non-state actors to act responsibly and the democratic behaviour of human beings to reach consensus and coordinated action through communication (Watsan, 2002). Principles such as facilitative leadership, inclusiveness, context driven approaches, trust, regulated flexibility, transparency, and accountability have been variously identified to facilitate the success of collaborative processes in urban planning (Akaateba, Akanbang & Korah, 2023; Ibrahim, Akanbang & Laube, 2020a; Emerson et al., 2012; Ansell & Gash, 2008). Ground rules provide impetus to the regulation of collaboration (Emerson et al., 2012; Ansell & Gash, 2008), while facilitative leadership mediates the collaborative process (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Similarly, Anafo and Takyi (2021) identified negotiation, accommodation, and consensus building as key ingredients of fruitful collaboration while Innes and Booher (2004) highlighted dialogue, networks, and institutional capacity as critical parameters for the success of collaborative planning. In tandem with these principles, Healey advocates for an “institutionalist” approach that emphasises interactions among a group of institutions in terms of “governance capacity” and “structural driving forces” (rules and policies) (Healey, 2003, p. 103). We find Healey’s institutionalist approach a useful lens to analyse and interpret the challenges of urban Planning in Tamale Ghana as it permits an investigation into the way in which local agency and structural factors at different levels of customary land administration and statutory land use planning operate and influence urban planning outcomes. Thus, anchored on Healey’s institutionalist approach and drawing on the principles and success factors for collaborative planning identified in the literature and depicted in Figure 1, we analysed the problems encountered in local plan preparation and implementation in Tamale, Ghana, to determine the extent to which the identified factors and forces facilitate or hinder planning practise in the Metropolis.

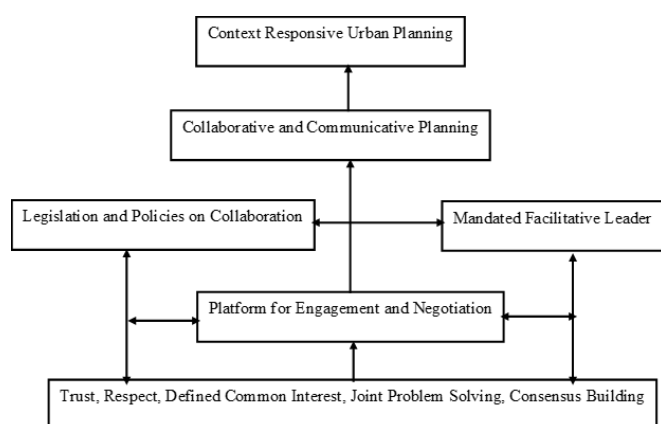


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for collaborative and communicative planning in urban settings

Source: Authors’ construct, June 2023

One of the main criticisms of communicative planning theory is the excessive focus on process and the corresponding understatement of substance and outcome (Sokol, 2012). Beauregard (1984, p. 258) notes that communicative planning theory is “devoid of any substantive consideration of the actual consequences that planners produce through their work”. Fainstein (2000, p. 472) offers a similar commentary, contending that communicative planning is “a procedural ethic without substantive content”. In direct response to this criticism, Healey (2003, p. 111) asserts that “substance and process are co-constituted, not separate spheres”.

Over the past few decades, there has been a fundamental “restructuring” of urban planning, characterised by an ongoing privatisation of planning services and the outsourcing of its functions to private consultants, including coordination and supervision of collaborative planning processes (Sokol, 2012; McCann, 2001), further calling for enhancing collaboration and communicative processes in planning. The need to examine collaboration in contexts where individuals wield enormous power under weak public architecture for accountability and control systems and under-resourced local authorities is urgent to help in the understanding of underlying factors hindering collaborative planning to achieve sustainable outcomes, especially in emerging cities in the global south.

2.2 Overview of urban planning in Ghana

Urban planning functions in Ghana are grouped into three main categories: plan preparation and management, regulation of planning, and policy formulation (Fuseini & Kemp, 2015). Land Use and Spatial Planning in Ghana is entrusted to the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) through the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA), which was established by Act 925 (2016). The ministry ensures the planning and management of the physical development and growth of human settlements in the country by preparing spatial and land use plans and administering of controls to ensure that human settlements function as healthy places for residence, work, and recreation (Frimpong, 2019). The ministry also provides various forms of planning services to public institutions as well as private individuals and organisations (Frimpong, 2019).

The Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925) was promulgated to respond to the limitations of planning legislation prior to its enactment. The Act makes provision for urban planning based on a three-tier planning system, involving the preparation of Spatial Development Frameworks—an indicative plan showing visions of future development over a 15–20-year period; - Structure Plans; and Local Plans with due diligence to self-organisation. This law presents a bottom-up approach to planning, thereby adhering to the tenets of collaborative and communicative planning. For regional-level planning, each Regional Coordinating Council forms a Regional Spatial Planning Committee

(RSPC) as a technical committee of the Regional Planning Coordinating Unit (RPCU) in each region. The committee is chaired by the regional minister, with the regional head of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority serving as secretary.

The RSPC provided under Act 925 is to develop a Regional Spatial Development Framework for the region in consultation with the district assemblies as part of the spatial development component of the Regional Integrated Plan. The law also mandates the RSPC to adjudicate on appeals or complaints resulting from decisions, actions, or inactions of the District Spatial Planning Committee of the District Assemblies, and where required, they also prepare sub-regional or multi-district spatial development frameworks for two or more districts within the region.

At the district level, the Physical Planning Department (PPD) is the technical wing of the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) responsible for developing planning schemes and Local Plans for the district, towns, and neighbourhoods at the local level. The PPD prepares and implements Structure and Local Plans. Unfortunately, recent rapid urban growth, low capacity of the department, lack of institutional coordination, political interference in planning practices, and the complex land tenure system have rendered these plans ineffective in managing the growth and development of Ghanaian cities (Akanbang, Ibrahim & Yakubu, 2021; Cobbinah & Korah, 2015; Fuseini & Kemp, 2015; Boamah et al., 2012). Although some have argued that the haphazard development of cities is often attributed to poor enforcement of development control due to limited resources (Tasantab, 2015; Boamah et al., 2012), it is becoming increasingly clear that even if planning institutions were fully equipped in terms of power and resources, they would still not be able to effectively control the patterns of urban development because of the linear spatial plans that ignore self-organisation and effective public participation (Anafo & Takyi, 2021; Innes & Booher, 2004). Besides, in cities where multiple traditional authorities wield almost equal levels of power and control over different sections of urban land, the regulatory and control functions of urban planning become less effective, and cities tend to be less functional.

3. Study context and methods

3.1 Study context

Tamale Metropolis is one of the 14 districts in the Northern Region. It is in the central part of the Region and shares boundaries with Sagnarigu Municipality to the West and North, Mion District to the East, East Gonja to the South, and Central Gonja to the South-West. The Metropolis has a total estimated land size of 646,90180 sq. km (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Geographically, the Metropolis lies between Latitudes 9°16 and 9° 34 North and Longitudes 0° 36 and 0° 57 West. There are 115 rural and urban communities in the Metropolis. Most of the rural communities have a large expanse of land for agricultural activities and serve as the food basket for the people in the area (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). However, these communities still lack basic social and economic infrastructure such as good road

networks, school blocks, hospitals, markets, and recreational centres, thereby hindering socio-economic development, poverty reduction, and increasing the general phenomenon of rural-urban migration (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Figure 2 shows the map of the Tamale metropolitan area in both regional and national contexts.

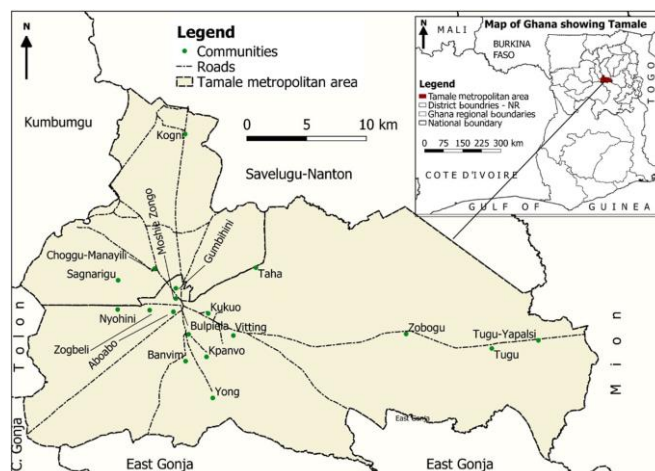


Figure 2: Map of Tamale Metropolitan Area

Source: Authors' own illustration, June 2022

Over the years, Tamale has always experienced rapid population growth, and this is mainly due to polygamous marriages, improved health facilities, and a high rate of teenage pregnancy among the youth (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The Metropolis had a population of 374,744 as per the 2021 Population and Housing Census. There were 185,051 men (49.4% of the population). This shows that there are more women than men in the Metropolis (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

Figure 3 illustrates the population growth trend of Tamale from 1907 to 2010.

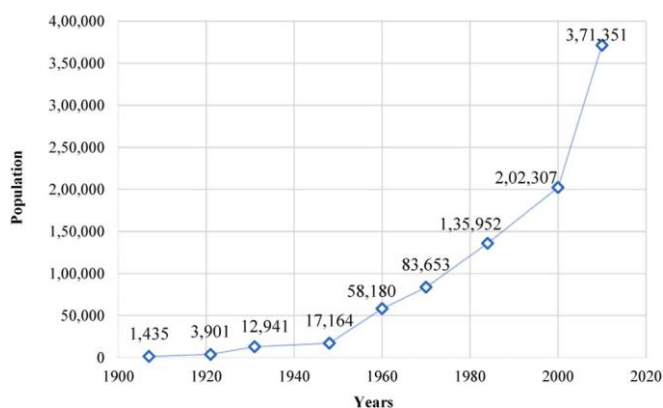


Fig 3: Population growth of Tamale, 1907–2010.

Source: MacGaffey (2007); Yakubu (2021)

One of the reasons for choosing Tamale for this study is the fact that the area is endowed with abundant land resources (646,90180 sq. km), but this has not prevented frequent land litigations in the area. As reported by the Statutory Planning

Committee, close to 325 land disputes were recorded in the first quarter of 2021, and this has even led to the stagnation of a lot of development projects in the area.

Also, Tamale is considered a 'chiefly city' consisting of a revered traditional authority system that possesses certain customary rights to manage land on behalf of the people. These customary rights require their full participation and collaboration in the planning and disposal of land resources in the area. There are over 40 chiefs and sub-chiefs in Tamale, out of which nine (9) are divisional chiefs who have their own sub-chiefs that manage areas on their behalf. The divisional chiefs include the *Banvim lana* (Owner of Banvim), *Yong Dakpema* (Spiritual leader), *Guma Naa* (Spiritual leader), *Vitting lana* (Chief of Vitting), *Tamale Dakpema* (Spiritual leader), *Gulpke Naa* (Yaa Naa representative in Tamale), *Kalpohin Lana* (Chief of Kalpohin), *Lamasheu Naa* (Chief of Lamashegu), and *Nyohin Dana* (Chief of Nyohini).

The study is significant because poor urban planning and management often leads to poor physical development and environmental conditions (Gyogluu, 2006), and poor environmental conditions result in diarrhoea, malaria, and other sanitation-related diseases, as highly observed within the Tamale metropolitan area (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The study also intends to contribute to the growing knowledge of the various issues of urbanisation and sustainable urban development.

3.2 Methods

A case study research design under the qualitative research approach was used as the strategy of inquiry. The design was chosen because it is suitable for analysing and understanding in detail the intricacies and complexities of the challenges of urban planning in Tamale (Teegavarapu, Mocko & Summers, 2008; Creswell et al., 2007). The nature of the study objective also influenced the choice of this design. The target population of the study was divisional chiefs, secretaries to chiefs, physical planning officers, land surveyors, and other private land developers. These informants were purposefully drawn for the study because they are major players in the planning, management, and use of land resources in the Metropolis. All forty divisional and sub-chiefs in the metropolis were targeted for key informant interviews. The divisional and sub-chiefs exercise stewardship over land in their respective jurisdictions. However, only five of them were interviewed after the principles of saturation and completeness were satisfied (Burnard, 1991). The sample size is therefore made up of 14 key informants, comprising five divisional chiefs, two secretaries of the divisional chiefs, two physical planning officers, one development control officer, two land surveyors, and two private land developers. The secretaries were targeted because of their role (mostly for administrative purposes) in land allocation to prospective developers. As key institutions for land use planning and management, it was also vital to target the PPD, the Survey and Mapping Division (SMD), and the Development Control Unit of the assembly, hence the interviewing of the physical planning officers, land surveyors and a development control officer. Private developers were also targeted since they

suffer from or benefit from the shortfalls or effectiveness of urban planning.

Due to the adaptability of the case study design with regards to the choice of methods, the study used three main data collection methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. With the help of an observation sheet, a structured observation on urban planning practices was carried out. During interviews with each of the divisional chiefs, site visits were made to areas where intense local planning activities were ongoing. Through these visits, various practises such as the re-demarcation of lands by some chiefs (see Figure 5), the indiscriminate selling of lands to private developers (see Figure 6), and the establishment of shop containers along road buffers (see Figure 7) were observed. Pictures were also taken to serve as confirmatory evidence for the data collected. These observations established a rich wellspring of data that permitted the researchers to gain a more profound comprehension of the different practices related to urban planning in Tamale.

Beside the interviews and the observations, existing policy documents and publications relevant to the subject matter were also analysed. These documents included the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925), the new Spatial Planning Model Guidelines 2011, and the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936). These documents were analysed to reveal the legislative and institutional framework for urban planning in Ghana. Also, copies of local plans and minutes of Metropolitan Statutory Planning Committee (SPC) meetings were obtained and analysed to unravel the urban challenges of the Metropolis as well as triangulate with information received from interviews and observation.

To allow for easy triangulation of data from the various sources, data collection and analysis were undertaken concurrently. Immediately following each interview, the field notes were typed, and at the end of the entire data collection exercise, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researchers (Creswell et al., 2007). Content analysis was used in the analysis of data from document reviews in line with the key questions explored in the study. Issues that emerged from document review related to the study were noted and integrated into the results of the issues that emerged from the analysis of the key informants and observation data. The analysis of the data from the key informant interviews was also done in tandem with the objectives of the study. All issues relating to an objective were pulled together and presented together with the results of the analysis of the documents reviewed and the observations. Respondents' insights were incorporated throughout the results section to illustrate key points that presented policy relevance and required critical analytical attention. The results were further subjected to manual thematic analysis to reveal the themes that emerged from the study in relation to collaboration and communicative approaches to urban planning.

4. Results

4.1 Stakeholder Collaboration in local plan preparation in Tamale

The introduction of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925) was to revise and consolidate the laws on urban planning, provide for sustainable development of land and human settlements through a decentralised planning system, ensure judicious use of land in order to improve quality of life, promote health and safety in respect of human settlements, regulate national, regional, district, and local planning, and generally provide for spatial aspects of socio-economic development and related matters. In the case of Tamale, a collaborative and communicative process is adopted in the preparation of local plans due to the diverse interests and roles of different stakeholders in the process. The local plan preparation is usually triggered by the traditional authority because the PPD has no financial capacity to do so; hence, the beneficiaries, who are usually the chiefs, initiate the process and bear the cost. In an interview with a key informant of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA), he narrated:

“In Tamale, land use planning begins with the chief initiating the process by writing to the PPD of the assembly and requesting planning service for an area under consideration. The PPD, by law (Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 Act 925), is the body responsible for land use planning at the local level. After the traditional authority has formally written to us, the department then engages in the sensitization of the various stakeholders in the area on the processes and the need for a Local Plan to be prepared for them. After this, the Survey and Mapping Division (SMD) of the Lands Commission will survey the area and produce a base map for the PPD to proceed. This can be handed over to a private survey consultant, but it is very rare. The PPD then relies on the base map submitted by the SMD to prepare the local plan, recognizing the boundaries of the area. When the PPD finishes with the preparation, what is left is the approval, and it is the Spatial Planning Committee (SPC) that approves such plans. The SPC is a committee of the assembly chaired by the mayor of Tamale with the Physical Planner of the assembly serving as secretary. When the local plan is approved by the SPC, what is left is the implementation and that is where sometimes most of the problems arise” (Interview with Physical Planning Officer, 20.06.2022).

The process outlined by the physical planner highlights the diversity of stakeholders involved in local land use planning in line with the requirements stated in Act 925, 2016. While the process appears very collaborative, there are various challenges it poses to urban planning in the Municipality, and these are discussed in the ensuing sections.

4.2 Urban planning challenges in Tamale

The mandate for regulating spatial planning in Ghana is entirely in the hands of the Land Use and Spatial Planning

Authority (LUSPA), with support from other bodies such as the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). At the local level, this mandate is entirely in the hands of the PPD of the assembly. The PPD prepares local plans at the instance of the various landowners and traditional authorities as established by Act 925 and Act 936. The study, however, realised that these processes and procedures are not greatly adhered to by the key stakeholders resulting in urban planning challenges and practices such as: resizing legally planned plots to maximise the number; conversion of public open spaces for residential and commercial uses; and road buffers being converted into commercial shops.

4.2.1 Non-adherence to the principles of collaborative and communicative planning

The study revealed that most landowners in the city engage the services of surveyors and planners to prepare local plans without the prior knowledge of the PPD. What most traditional authorities in Tamale do is seek the services of a surveyor from the SMD to do demarcations to meet their interests without necessarily passing through the PPD for the formal processes of subdivisions to be done. Thus, most planning is undertaken under a client-agency relationship between chiefs and surveyors rather than a collaborative relationship involving all key actors. The process of local plan preparation that captures client-agent relationship was presented by a key informant as follows:

“Even though the mandate for urban planning rests with us, the law allows for the engagement of consultants, but even with that, the Terms of Reference (ToR) ought to emanate from this office. This is because any plan that is prepared without the knowledge and approval of this department is illegal. There have been instances where a lot of plans have been disapproved because the necessary processes were not followed and the right people were not involved. All these plans were not approved because, once they are approved, they become legal documents, and if there is a case in court, they will not invite any surveyor or the lands commissioner to provide the plan, but they will rather write to our department requesting for the plan and enquiring on when the plan was done and when it was approved. Not too long ago, we were here, and an agent from Accra prepared a plan for one of the chiefs. The chief brought it, and then I asked him, what is this? He was fumbling, so I quickly told him the plan would not work. I called the secretary to that chief and told him: You know the processes of preparing local plans, so why did you engage in this practise? He couldn't say a word, so I made them know that the plan would not work, and subsequently they requested that we re-plan that area for them, which was done somewhere in 2015” (Interview with Physical Planning Officer, 20.06.2022).

This narrative from the informant illustrates the lack of collaboration between the chiefs, who are the landowners and the planning officials, who are the technocrats. A further probe to ascertain the validity of this finding resulted in one

of the key informants indicating during an in-depth interview as follows:

“Personally, I don’t really write to the PPD whenever I am preparing a local plan. What I do is that I just go straight to get a surveyor to do certain demarcations and layouts without necessarily passing through the PPD. Although we know it is highly illegal, it has been the practice for some time” (Interview with Chief, 22.06.2022).

Disregard for the provisions of Act, 925 (2016), which require all stakeholders to be actively involved in the planning process, has created many bottlenecks in the physical development of the metropolis. In a community called ‘Yong Duuni’, a suburb of Tamale, it was observed that plot boundaries were not clear and there were no provisions for public land uses such as roads, open spaces, and other essential services (see Figure 4).



Fig 4: An illegally planned area at Yong Duuni in Tamale

Source: Field survey. Picture taken on 22.06.2022

According to the PPD, this community has no approved local plan, and all residents who tried to document their plots were not successful because the area has not been planned based on the planning guidelines and standards. The PPD further indicated that the phenomenon of chiefs developing their own schemes without recourse to important stakeholders and actors is a common practise in the Metropolis, making residents in communities such as Banvim and Yong unable to acquire statutory documentations of their land prompting security of tenure issues in such areas.

4.2.2 Resizing legally planned plots to maximise the number

Another planning anomaly observed in Tamale is where chiefs and their agents unilaterally demarcate plots in approved plans into smaller sizes to increase the number of plots. A key informant had this to say about the practise.

“Sometimes it is so disgusting that after we have finished the entire process of local plan preparation and handed over the plan to the chief, he will later engage a quack surveyor to reduce the sizes of some of the plots which in his view are larger than normal,

to maximise the number of plots in the area. This causes serious problems in relation to the spatial development of Tamale” (Interview with Physical Planning Officer, 20.06.2022).

The position of this key informant resonates with another, who also narrated as follows:

“A few months ago, I was contacted by a chief in Tamale to do the re-demarcation of a certain area, although that area was legally planned and demarcated by the PPD and SMD, respectively. Even though this practice usually creates problems, our traditional authorities are not willing to put a stop to it. The unfortunate incident is that when you try to advise them, they will neglect you subsequently, and I am not also willing to be neglected because that is where we mostly get income to take care of our families” (Interview with Land Surveyor, 21.06.2022).

The informant also stressed the need for a transparent and participatory process of local plan preparation, as the lack of total participation by some key stakeholders is worrisome and often results in some negative practices. To him, collaborative and communicative planning is the way to go, as it will fully involve all the stakeholders in the process from start to finish. During a site visit by the team of researchers, the resizing or re-demarcation of a planned area was observed around the Kaladan redevelopment area in Tamale. A discrepancy was observed between what was on the official site plan prepared by the PPD and what was seen on the ground (see Figures 5a and 5b).



Figure 5a: Planning scheme of Kaladan redevelopment area.

Source: PPD. 13.11.2022

From Figure 5a, plot number 83 (shown in light yellow) was subdivided into 83 and 83A (Figure 5b) without following due process. Plot number 83 was an area allocated as a mast where MTN Ghana put up its network pole. However, the chief of the area was of the view that the size of the plot was too big for that purpose and hence engaged the services of a surveyor to resize it into 83 and 83A, without considering the health implications associated with living close to a telecommunications network transmitter. Further inquiries revealed that plot number 83A had not been captured by the PPD or the Lands Commission. Even though that plot has yet to be developed, there is a high likelihood that even if it is, it will be demolished by city authorities. On further probe from the Physical Planning Officer on whether the conduct of physical planning in Ghana is guided by certain standards in relation to plot sizes and as to whether the reduction in plot sizes was justified by the landowners, he responded in the following excerpt:

“We do have minimum and maximum standards as to how large plots should be in the country, but that depends on the type of land use and the area under consideration. My brother, even if we have minimum and maximum standards for plot sizes in Ghana, no landowner has the right to illegally reduce plots that they consider to be above the maximum space standard or increase one that they think is below the minimum standard. We are professionals in what we do, and we take into consideration all these factors during the planning process, so that cannot be a justification for engaging in this practice” (Interview with Physical Planning Officer, 20.06.2022).



Figure 5b: Survey beacon of resized plot number 83 in Tamale

Source: Field survey. Picture taken on 22.06.2022

The response of the physical planner shows that there are entrenched positions among the different actors in the urban planning process. Under collaborative and communicative planning, negotiation, accommodation, and consensus building are key ingredients of fruitful collaborations. The posture of the physical planners should be that of effective communication, not fault-finding, to get those actors who may not be adequately informed of the theoretical and philosophical basis of planning guidelines and principles to appreciate the issues at stake. The response of the surveyor earlier shows that, even though he or she appreciates the need to adhere to planning guidelines, they are likely to condone

with chiefs to perpetuate an illegality and to continue to remain in the good books of chiefs so that they can continue to rely on them for services that come with economic and social benefits. Thus, self-seeking interests are at play in the urban planning and management process.

4.2.3 Conversion of public open spaces for residential and commercial uses

Closely connected to the resizing of plots is the conversion of public open spaces for residential and commercial uses. Land use plans mostly designate lands for several public uses, such as open spaces, road expansions, playgrounds, and sanitation sites. The study, however, identified that some chiefs and other landowners in Tamale engage in the practice of re-planning or re-demarcating lands that were long ago allocated for various public uses. The traditional authorities bring in surveyors to subdivide lands that were hitherto allocated for various public uses. This phenomenon can be blamed partly on the assembly due to their inability to acquire and own these lands as mandated by the law (Act 936). A key informant confirmed this finding as follows:

“The rate of lawlessness in Tamale is so high that some chiefs would just get up someday, probably because they are in dire need of money, and contract a surveyor to re-demarcate an area that has been reserved for road expansion or even school expansion, just to sell them out to acquire some money to meet their needs” (Interview with Development Control Officer, 21.06.2022).

This phenomenon has been in existence for some time, and it is practised by both the chiefs and their secretaries, though most of the time some of the secretaries do so without the prior knowledge of their chief and claim to be unaware of such practices. The narrative from the informant above is further strengthened by the view of another key informant, who said:

“Go to town and see. We have reserved land for open spaces and other public uses, but people have encroached on those lands because the chiefs sold the land to them. This is making urban planning and, for that matter, orderly spatial development very difficult. However, we cannot entirely blame the chiefs for such actions because some of the secretaries engage in this practise without the foreknowledge of the chiefs” (Interview with Development Control Officer, 21.06.2022).

The narratives above show that competition resulting from selfish gains and laxity on the part of the Metropolitan Assembly regarding physical planning undermine the effectiveness of urban planning. A situation was witnessed where an area reserved for road expansion was parcelled out by the chief of the area for use as an auto mechanic shop (Figure 6).



Fig 6: A reserved land for the expansion of road being allocated to a prospective developer

Source: Field Survey. Picture taken on 22.06.2022

There was also a situation where an area earmarked for sanitation was allocated by a chief for both commercial and residential purposes, creating urban planning problems in that area. This compelled the residents to resort to the indiscriminate disposal of domestic waste, as narrated by an informant:

“We are suffering in this area because the chief has sold the space that was hitherto earmarked as a sanitation site. These days, where to dump waste is a problem, and it has led to indiscriminate disposal by almost all the residents in this area except a few who are able to afford the door-to-door waste collection services. This is a serious problem that I think needs to be resolved as soon as possible” (Interview with Private land developer, 21.06.2022).

The practise is so serious that almost all open spaces have been re-demarcated for either residential or commercial uses, to the extent that there are no open places for outdoor social events such as naming ceremonies, weddings, funeral performances, etc. Most residents usually block one side of a neighbourhood access road for these activities (see Figure 7) to take place, creating huge traffic whenever that happens.



Fig 7: A wedding ceremony staged on a road in Tamale

Source: Field Survey. Picture taken on 22.06.2022

4.2.4 Road buffers converted into commercial shops

Conversion of public spaces for other uses is predominant in the central business district, where road buffers for future road expansion have been consciously encroached upon with the help of some chiefs and their agents. Such lands are used for commercial purposes, explaining why there are many retail outlets along the streets of Tamale. The study further revealed that the sizes of such lands range between 1/16th and 1/8th of an acre and are purchased at a minimum cost of about US\$350.00. As a confirmation of this practice, a key informant during an in-depth interview narrated:

“... even what annoys me the most is the practise where some chiefs usually demarcate lands along major principal streets of Tamale with the aim of selling them out for people to establish their businesses. Just check in town and see how retail containers are lined up along the streets; it’s so bad, my brother” (Interview with Private land developer, 21.06.2022).

Further interviews with a development control officer for Tamale as well as a chief validated this finding. The development control officer expressed disappointment at the way things are going on the streets of Tamale due to a myriad of negative practices affecting effective urban planning. The chief also narrated:

“These days, there is keen competition for land, especially at commercially advantageous locations. So, what we do is that whenever there are available spaces along the streets, to avoid competition and conflict, we engage a surveyor to demarcate those portions so that we can allocate them to prospective businesses. We don’t normally involve the PPD because it is not something that we should let them waste their time and resources on” (Interview with Chief’s secretary, 20.06.2022).

Some of the chiefs who engage in this practise are of the view that they are preventing conflicts over any available land along major streets in the study area. By so doing, they engage in a practise that challenges urban planning and an orderly development process. Effective collaboration would have found a context-responsive solution to putting road buffers to maximum use. Figure 8 shows how road buffers have been converted into commercial shops.



Fig 8: Road buffers converted into commercial shops

Source: Field Survey. Picture Taken on 22.06.2022

4.2.5 Cost of local plan preparation

By Act 925, 2016, the preparation of planning schemes involves bringing on board all relevant stakeholders that matter in the planning process. This comes with an appreciable level of monetary cost, which is usually borne by the chiefs due to the limited resource capacity of the PPD, which by law is mandated to conduct planning at the local level using certain established guidelines and principles. The fact that the chiefs, as custodians of land, bear the total cost of any local planning puts them in a position to always initiate or trigger the process. This demotivates them from engaging the PPD due to an existing arrangement where the PPD holds back a percentage of residential plots to defray administrative and other costs associated with plan preparation. An excerpt from an in-depth interview with an informant further strengthens the finding:

“In terms of payment for the preparation of local plans, it depends on the chief. If the chief has his own money and wants to make a local plan for his area, when he engages the surveyors, he normally pays them. What they do is that the surveyors will come and calculate the number of plots that could be produced from the area and then charge based on that. When he pays the surveyor, it means the surveyor has nothing to do with the land when he finishes. Of late, it has become the norm that the chiefs pay with plots because most of them do not have the money to pay in cash” (Interview with Chief’s secretary, 20.06.2022).

The narration by the informant resonates with another participant who tried to explain the mode of payment for the preparation of local plans. He said:

I also make available a significant number of plots for the various institutions that handle the local plan preparation process. This serves as the cost for the preparation of the local plan” (Interview with Chief, 22.06.2022).

This finding was validated when the physical planner was captured narrating who bears the cost of local plan preparation in Tamale and the country. He said:

“Ideally, per Act 936 (2016), it is the responsibility of the Assembly to ensure that our communities are well planned, so they are supposed to initiate plans, but unfortunately, it is the landowners who would rather initiate the process because the cost of local plan preparation is very expensive and the Assembly does not have the capacity to do so. To the assembly, why should they bear the cost of something that they do not own?” (Interview with Physical Planning Officer, 20.06.2022).

The study revealed that the agreed-upon sharing formula when a local plan is prepared at the invitation of a chief is 10:1, which means for every ten residential plots in the plan, one plot goes to the PPD. This ratio applies without recourse to differences in land values in different parts of the city, where the chief might not be able to raise money to pay for

the cost of plan preparation. Most of the chiefs have problems with the sharing formula, which has resulted in the numerous challenges confronting urban planning in Tamale. Since the cost is totally borne by the traditional authorities, if some of them get to realise that preparing a local plan without necessarily involving the mandated authorities will be less costly, they resort to such means.

4.2.6 Delays in local plan preparation

Closely linked to the cost of planning is the issue of delays because of the processes involved in local plan preparation. The study identified that the formal processes of local plan preparation are bureaucratic and time-consuming and this contributes to the current challenges of urban planning in Tamale. Some chiefs do not often trust the process, prompting them to resort to illegal practices that challenges the smooth conduct of urban planning in Tamale as supported by the following vignette by a chief.

“The procedure for preparing local plans is bureaucratic and time-consuming and they don’t even involve us in the process. If I know there is a back door that can easily get my land planned, why not? I will be very glad to engage in it” (Interview with Chief, 22.06.2022).

A physical planner supported the claim that the processes of local plan preparation in Ghana involve a lot of time by stating clearly that most of these chiefs usually want an initiated local plan preparation process to be completed within the shortest possible time, which is not realistic due to the limited staffing capacity of the planning department. The delays associated with the process are mainly tied to the limited staffing capacity of the various planning agencies, as evidenced in a staffing analysis conducted on the PPD of TaMA (see Table 1).

Table 1: Staffing analysis of Tamale metro physical planning department

Category of staff	Number required	Number existing	Backlog
Physical planning officer	5	1	4
Assistant physical planning officer	5	1	4
Technical staff	10	5	5
Total	20	7	13

Source: PPD, TaMA. June 2022

According to one of the officials who participated in this study, Ghana's population is rapidly increasing, yet the number of planners employed to undertake planning activities continues to remain constant. All they do is replace the ageing or retiring staff (evidenced from Table 1), and it is not good

for us because it slows down the process of local plan preparation.

5. Discussion

5.1 Towards Collaborative Urban Planning in Tamale

The empirical case study of the challenges associated with urban planning in the study area raises issues that relate to the principles of collaborative and communicative planning.

Facilitative leadership: Facilitative leadership has been variously identified in the collaborative planning discourse as being crucial for the success of urban planning processes and practises. The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) indicates that the Assembly is supposed to lead local plan preparation but requires that ordinary residents within the jurisdiction of a local government be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes (Anafo & Takyi, 2021). However, several factors, such as resource constraints, have limited this function of the MMDAs (Yachori, 2017). Consequently, chiefs initiate the preparation of plans (Kuusaana & Eledi, 2015; Yeboah & Shaw, 2013; Aribigzola, 2008;) in their jurisdictions, in many cases without the knowledge and active participation of the city authorities and citizens. As a result, some of the chiefs engage in practices that challenge urban planning in the city.

Platform for engagement and dialogue: interaction and dialogue according to Healey's institutionalist approach (Healey, 2003), are critical to collaborative and communicative planning. As noted also by Watson (2002), communicative and collaborative planning are hinged on interaction and dialogue with and among interest groups, generating ideas and articulating them, debating differences, and forging consensus. Thus, the absence or ineffectiveness of a platform for enabling this interaction is a major setback to collaborative and communicative planning. As noted by Tasantab (2019) and Yeboah & Obeng-Odoom (2010), collaborations with chiefs during urban planning can prevent conflicts and confusion later, as it has been revealed that some chiefs sell land for purposes contrary to planning schemes. The availability of such a platform is instrumental for building consensus, joint problem solving, transparency, and accountability, which according to Ibrahim et al. (2021); are key tenets of collaborative and communicative planning.

Conflicting and self-seeking interests: The challenges of effective urban planning in Tamale discussed earlier can partly be attributed to the conflicting and self-seeking interests of city authorities and landowning chiefs. Such egoistic tendencies have made it difficult for negotiation, dialogue, and consensus building, which are key success factors for collaborative planning, to thrive and facilitate tenure-responsive land use planning. Such conflicting and self-seeking interests also obstruct collaboration and communication and perpetuate practices that negatively affect the city's growth and development, as observed by Akaateba et al. (2021). The case of Tamale is compounded by the plurality of chiefs who wield enormous power and control over different sections of the city. Chiefs are so highly revered in Tamale that their decisions are rarely challenged. The absence of vibrant civil society organisations in the urban

planning space in Tamale means that chiefs cannot be pressured to act responsibly, a key ingredient for effective communicative planning (Watsan, 2002). The deliberate allocation of reserved public lands by the traditional authorities in their area of jurisdiction and the conversion of road reservations and buffers into commercial shops are also connected to the self-seeking interests of landowners. As observed by Kuusaana and Eledi (2015), chiefs, out of their personal interest, try to make good use of any available land they deem income-generating, which explains the continuous rise in land litigation cases in Tamale (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Collaborative consensus-building rather than competitive interest bargaining (Healey, 2003) is the approach to responsive urban planning. As noted by Ibrahim et al. (2021), a defined common interest is fundamental to effective collaboration.

Capacity of legislated institutions to play their critical role: The capacity of the city authorities to implement their critical role in leading the preparation of planning schemes emerged as a key issue for the effectiveness of collaborative and communicative planning in Tamale. Although Act 936, mandates the Assemblies as the local planning authorities, this mandate has suffered a drawback as the cost of the process has been shifted to the chiefs, giving them the power to initiate local plan preparation in their area of jurisdiction (Akanbang et al., 2021; Anafo & Takyi, 2020; Kuusaana & Eledi, 2015;). The fact that the chiefs usually initiate the process of local plan preparation sometimes puts them in a position to explore available alternatives that can help minimise the cost involved in the process. They engage in several practices that deviate from the formal processes of local planning in Tamale. This in turn challenges the potential benefits a successful planning regime seeks to achieve. As planning authorities, the Assembly should live up to its responsibility of preparing planning schemes for all areas under its jurisdiction. Making provision in the law for landowners to be able to prepare schemes for their areas is an invitation to the current situation, where planning provisions are bluntly flaunted in the city. What moral authority does the Assembly have to force a chief to comply with planning provisions when it is the incapability of the Assembly that is causing the chief to step in to prepare the scheme? Related to the negligence of a key stakeholder to perform its critical role is the delay in local plan preparation by the PPD. As noted by Yachori (2017) and Akaateba et al. (2018), delays in the preparation of base maps by the SMD due to financial, logistical, and personnel constraints prolong the period of plan preparation, creating an avenue for unauthorised practices in cities. The urban planning process should therefore be an interactive process (Healey 2003; 2006), where both the beneficiaries, and the technocrats are privy to what is going on to appreciate the duration of the process. This will manage the expectations of the beneficiaries who see the process as time-wasting and cumbersome.

Unequal power balance between city authorities and landowners also affects the city's planning and development. Land ownership, according to the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, is entrusted to the stool or skin to be managed by the traditional authorities on behalf of the people. Article 267 (1) of the constitution states: "All stool lands in

Ghana shall vest in the appropriate stool on behalf of and in trust for the subjects of the stool in accordance with customary law and usage.” This provision from the 1992 constitution empowers the chiefs as owners of land, while they are limited in their power over the use of land, which is the responsibility of MMDAs (Akanbang et al., 2021; Yeboah & Obeng-Odoom, 2010). As noted by Akanbang et al. (2021b), even though chiefs do not have power over the use of land, they are so powerful that a civil servant at the MMDAs would not be able to challenge their authority when they overstep their boundaries. The ideal will be to have both power over ownership and use of land in one authority (the government or MMDAs). However, the conduct of the government over the management of land has over the years not been transparent and accountable enough to be entrusted with this dual responsibility. The way forward is capacity development for MMDAs to be able to perform their responsibilities, as well as a strong civil society sector to be able to hold MMDAs and landowners to account for their stewardships, as proposed by Watsan (2002). In addition, actors need adequate knowledge to be able to effectively engage and participate meaningfully in collaborative arrangements. Thus, capacity development of all actors in the urban planning process to enable them to engage meaningfully in the process as well as imbibe positive attitudes towards urban planning is required to enhance the quality of urban planning in the city. This is because, as noted by Gyimah et al. (2006) and Akaateba et al. (2018), the increasing demand for land for several uses due to the continuous population growth of Tamale and ignorance has resulted in a high level of indiscipline on the part of landowners and lessors. Some chiefs and private developers do not really know the processes involved in planning the use of land or the avenues to collaborate with city authorities in land use planning. Thus, a combination of the weak resource capacity of the PPD and the limited knowledge of collaborative land use planning make meaningful participation of stakeholders in local plan preparation and implementation difficult in the Tamale Metropolis. Actors need adequate knowledge to be able to effectively engage and participate meaningfully in collaborative arrangements. Thus, capacity development of all actors in the urban planning process to enable them to engage meaningfully in the process as well as imbibe positive attitudes towards urban planning is required for enhancing the quality of urban planning in the city.

6. Conclusion

The study provides insights into the underlying bottlenecks of urban planning in Tamale, an urban ‘chiefly’ city, from a collaborative and communicative planning lens. Collaboration and effective engagement are fundamental to resolving complex issues, especially those involving land on which multiple actors with varying degrees of power and influence operate. Collaborative and communicative planning requires certain vital ingredients to help in the planning and management of cities and to make cities the engines of growth. We observed in this detailed case study that the conflicting and selfish interests of the different actors constitute a major hindrance to the effectiveness of urban planning in the city. We situate all the urban planning

problems (resizing legally planned plots to maximise the number; conversion of public open spaces to residential and commercial uses; and conversion of road reservations and buffers into commercial shops) in breach of the principles of collaborative and communicative planning and affirm Choi and Robertson’s (2019) assertion that ineffective collaboration with landowners results in the creation of many negative urban planning practices. We complement the collaborative and communicative planning literature in relation to urban planning by stating that the presence of a platform (facilitative leadership) to champion collaborative planning is vital to effective and sustained urban planning and management. Additionally, the ability of key actors, the MMDAs, to play the critical role of leading the preparation of planning schemes is paramount to the success of collaboration and to the effectiveness of urban planning in Ghana. Ignorance and indiscipline in the part of actors on adherence to laid-down urban planning practises affect collaboration and therefore the quality of city planning and management.

Effective collaborative and communicative planning mandates institutionalising a structure that promotes the interests of the state, the community, and individuals at the same time, which is often an uneasy task due to the conflicting interests of different stakeholders. This can only be attained if there is a strong capacity among the various planning actors, especially the MMDAs, to play their key facilitative leadership role as well as lead the preparation of planning schemes in their jurisdictions. The chiefs, citizens, and lessors should also receive comprehensive education on urban planning processes as well as the benefits of appropriate urban planning practises and the dangers of inappropriate urban planning practises. Inclusive planning approaches such as participatory mapping, co-production, and community-driven planning initiatives should be explored to empower residents to actively participate in urban planning processes. Civil society organisations geared towards urban planning, management, and development should be established by planning professionals to champion appropriate planning standards and practises across secondary cities in Ghana. These civil society organisations are critical to ensuring a balance of power among the key actors (chiefs and MMDAs) in urban planning amidst the complex arrangements for land ownership and land use that we have in the country. The study also recommends the establishment of town and neighbourhood planning committees as part of the structure of physical planning at the local level to provide a suitable platform for the active engagement of residents in the planning process. This committee should meet quarterly to review physical development in their towns. We further recommend that future research focus on examining the role of the urban planner and/or civil society organisations in co-production and community-driven planning initiatives that seek to promote the public good.

7. References

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