



# Investigating the purposefulness of development planning in Ghana through a political economy lens

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## Abstract

Newly independent countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) adopted development planning as a means to achieving their development goals, but there are doubts in the literature concerning the ‘genuine’ purposefulness of development planning in promoting local sustainable development. On this basis, we contribute to the planning literature by examining contemporary local development planning efforts through a political economy lens to empirically clarify the doubts in local development planning practices in Ghana, an SSA country known to have very long experiences of development planning in Africa. We used the mixed methods approach focusing on three (3) local planning agencies—the Bekwai Municipal Assembly, the Atwima Kwawoma District Assembly, and the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly—in the Ashanti Region, Ghana. We gathered that despite development planning at the local level satisfying formal statutory requirements, it is not purposeful, and symbolizes an “ideological fantasy”, a “repeated ritual”, and a “hypocritical approach” to local sustainable development efforts. The preparation and implementation of development plans (District Medium Term Development Plans) were characterized by inadequate funding, inadequate capacity, and limited stakeholders’ interest and support, making local planning interventions have very limited impacts on sustainable development efforts. Based on our findings, we argue that unless local-level planning is made apolitical and led by well-resourced technocratic bodies, Ghana’s development planning will continue as a statutory formality, rather than a means to advance local sustainable development efforts.

**Keywords** Development plans · Local government · Sustainable development · Ghana

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## Background of the study

On the global discussion desk, all countries are entreated to put in place measures and interventions that can enhance the well-being of their people (Dempsey et al. 2011; United Nations 2012, 2016). In doing so, it has come to the fore that countries will need one another's support to trigger inclusive growth and development (United Nations, General Assembly 2015). This is particularly necessary for emerging countries that lag in development compared to their counterparts in the Global North. "Think local, act global" has become a buzzword that has permeated contemporary development discourses (Lynch et al. 2019), reiterating the need for countries to form alliances/partnerships to forge forward sustainable development. Of emphasis is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Goal-17 "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" serving as a central point to harness efforts towards achieving the other SDGs (UNGA 2015). Sustainably promoting development across the globe needs a strategic approach, well-thought-through, and intense commitment to deliver—this has for the past decades, unfortunately, been missed in many countries in the Global South (De Gregorio 2015). In Africa, Asia, and Latin America for example, conflicts, poor leadership, and mismanagement of national economies, amongst others have impeded development (De Gregorio 2015; Brody et al. 2020; Fathia et al. 2020).

In the past, some scholars argued that countries across the globe will converge economically in the long run framed within an optimistic catchword "economic convergence" (Lin 2003; Rodrik 2011). Here, it was postulated that countries in the Global South will grow economically in a swift manner to catch up with the countries in the Global North—"sort of automatic progress" that will undeniably happen. Rodrik (2008), in examining this optimistic framing, 'punched' this "positivism development syndrome", opening perspectives that defeated the claim of automatic catch-up growth of developing countries. One such perspective is that igniting economic growth, and sustaining it are completely different, implying that emerging economies of Africa, for example, can ignite economic growth, but the means to sustain the growth is a big dilemma for such countries; hence, they may not possibly catch-up in economic progress vis-a-viz the developed countries (Rodrik 2008).

Several growth-driven discourses have since emerged aftermath, worthy of highlighting are the neoliberal interventions that were seen as a pathway for the development of emerging economies. In Africa and elsewhere, the Bretton Wood Institutions pushed for Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and Economic Recovery Programmes (ERPs) in the early 1980s to rescue and advance growth and development through neo-liberalism (Konadu-Agyemang 2018). However, the "so-called" neoliberal approach was a mess as it creatively destructed the economies of recipient countries such as those in Africa (See: Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Now, contemporary development discussions are generally centered on "Sustainable Development" and its accompanying goals that came to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that focused on developing countries. Within the spectrum of sustainable development, urban planning is seen as important in promoting sustainability (Meadowcroft 2002; Pinderhughes 2004; Bagheri

and Hjorth 2007). Naess (2001), for example, even before the conceptualization and the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 unraveled that “planning for a sustainable urban development must be oriented towards long-term goals and utilize knowledge about the environmental consequences of different solutions (...),” (p. 504). This revelation reconnects us to the prospects of development planning in sustainability discussions in Africa where countries seem to have relevant experiences. Taking into account the sub-Saharan African (SSA) region, since independence, countries have continuously prepared and implemented several development plans borne out of the critical need for rapid transformation of their economies (McMichael 2011; Lin 2012). Studies (Thompson 2015; Scottish Borders Council 2010; Obabori et al. 2007; Cullingworth and Nadin 2006) have emphasized the positive relationship between development planning and sustainable development, particularly, if the plans are drawn and implemented to address real aspirations and needs.

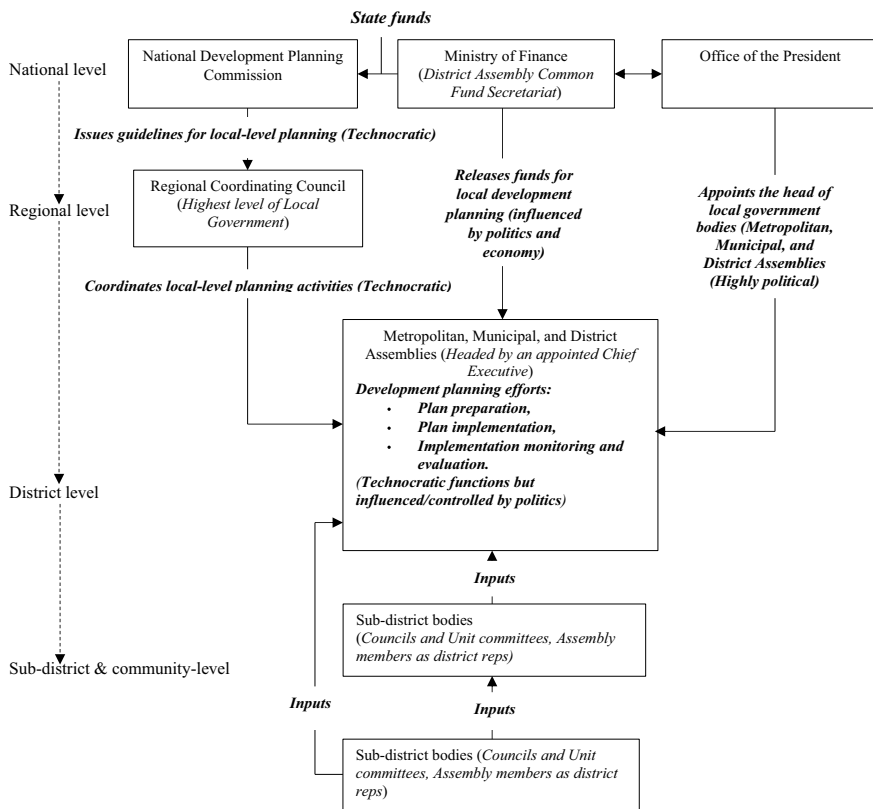
Well-structured development planning has yielded significant positive results in the Global North and the newly emerged countries of Asia. For instance, the “Asian Tigers” (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea) are often referenced to support the claim about the profound role of development planning in national development (Chow 2010; Abubakari et al. 2018; Dangayach and Gupta 2018). Through development planning, these Asian countries have achieved tremendous growth in their economies. However, the SSA region has few results to show from its several years of development planning practice (Okoli and Onah 2002). The region, Ghana inclusive, ranks as the poorest in the world (Chen and Ravallion 2010), despite its potential in using development planning to usher in and sustain socio-economic progress.

In Ghana, the political framework of development planning is such that local governments, the main technocratic “planning subjects” are responsible for drawing their respective development plans and implementing them through guidance and directives from the national government, usually to meet their political interest (Gyampo 2016; Cobbinah and Darkwah 2017). The directives from the national government are ensured through regional technocratic bodies and local governments’ politically headed appointees known as “Chief Executives” that regulate and monitor local governments’ technocratic officials’ activities to ensure their congruence to national governments—largely politics-driven bodies of the country. The economic framework of development also follows a similar approach to the political framework, however, funds known as “District Assembly Common Funds (DACF)” are released from national governments to implement development plans for local development.

At the national level, the National Development Planning Commission prepares the long-term development plans of Ghana as well as the local planning guidelines for district-level planning through an ‘implicit’ framework of sustainable development for which Regional Coordinating Councils play an intermediary role. The local planning guidelines are composed of sustainable development dimensions of (i) economic development, (ii) social development, and (iii) environment, infrastructure, and human settlement—for which district-level development plans are to be prepared and assessed (National Development Planning Commission 2020). As a result, all local governments (Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies)

are required, through their development plans, to build up the economic capacity of their local areas to improve economic fortunes and quality of life for all, while also managing its environmental resources for inclusive growth and development. This makes the operationalization of sustainable development implicit in the preparation, implementation, and management of medium-term development plans in Ghana. Moving forward, we believe that the National Development Planning Commission, through the support of the Regional Coordinating Councils should clearly link the preparation, implementation, and management of development plans to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level so that the progress of development efforts can be clearly tracked using the SDGs as a policy framework. This can help strengthen the link between plan implementation performance and sustainable development in Ghana. Figure 1 shows the political-economic framework of development planning in Ghana, highlighting the institutions involved in sustainable development planning efforts of the country.

This study uses a political economy lens to understand development planning at the decentralized level in Ghana. Political economy involves understanding the



**Fig. 1** A conceptualized political-economic framework of development planning in Ghana. *Source* Authors' construct, 2023. *Note* Broken lines show levels of government, and 'normal' lines indicate functions and relationships

relationship between economies and politics in policy and institutional change (Grindle 2001). In the context of this study, we draw on the political economy of local government to investigate the intersections between politics and economic conditions in shaping development planning efforts at the local government level in Ghana. We do that by unraveling political forces (the variable of partisan politics) and economic resources and allocations (financial resources and logistics as variables) that shape local sustainable development planning efforts. In doing so, we sought to understand how political behaviour tends to shape the implementation of development plans and the pursuit of local-level development planning. We therefore sought an answer to the question: To what extent are development plans implemented to ensure sustainable development at the local level in Ghana? Given this context, the objectives of the study were: (i) To examine the extent of implementation of development plans towards advancing sustainable development at the local level in Ghana, and (ii) To determine the factors that affect development plan implementation at the local level in Ghana contributing to sustainable development at the local level. Achieving these objectives can be useful in informing the discourse on the effectiveness of development planning at the local level, particularly in Ghana and the SSA region.

The use of a political economy lens in the study is implicit but justifiable based on the following reasons: first, local governments in Ghana usually have to conform to the “politics of planning” influenced by the national government; second, without the centralized annual common funds (DACF) released from national governments to local governments, the local governments would be constrained in implementing their development plans with their self-generating resources (internally generated funds—IGFs) for local development; and third, the application of a political economy lens in the context of “development planning” can provide a critical insight into the contributions and challenges of local development planning efforts (Abeyesuriya et al. 2019) as pursued in Ghana whilst also, providing a leverage ground for better approaches that can help transform development planning for positive outcomes on the economic wellbeing of Ghanaians, as in the case of the “Asia Tigers”.

Even though the study is limited to a few “planning subjects” in the Ashanti region contextually called “District Assemblies” in Ghana, the results are likely to reflect the conditions in other districts due to the similarity in characteristics including (i) dependence on central government transfers (DACF) for the preparation and implementation of development plans (Ghana Audit Service 2020); and (ii) their use of the National Development Planning Commissions’ (NDPC) guidelines for the preparation of the local development plans (NDPC 2013) in the context of similar political gaming environment where national governments push local development agenda in a strategic way of remaining as the incumbent for long within the framework of democratic governance. The NDPC’s guidelines are meant to ensure consistency in structure, and uniformity/homogeneity in the goals and objectives that are formulated to address common development problems. The next sections of the study cover an overview of development planning in SSA, the methodology, the empirical findings, our reflections on the findings and the way forward of the study, and the conclusion.

## Overview of development planning in SSA

Historically, the attempts at development planning in SSA date back to colonial development planning. This started in 1919 with Sir Gordon Guggisberg's 10-year Development Plan in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana (Tandoh-Offin 2013; Owusu-Amoah 2018). Vordzorgbe and Caiquo (2001) have argued that most colonial development plans were only public investment programmes that provided a shop list of projects and programmes. They further indicated that these attempts were uncommon in the SSA. The position of the scholars was because it was until the 1960s when most African countries had or were in the process of gaining their independence that development planning got spread in the region. Perhaps, this occurred because the newly elected leaders wanted to prove their capabilities to the West by ensuring deep economic and societal changes. Some of the development plans that existed around this period include Ghana's (1957–58, 1959–64, 1964–70 plans), Senegal's (1961–64 and 1965–69 plans), Nigeria's (1962–69, 1974–78 plans), Tanzania's (1964–69 plan), Kenya's (1966–1970; 1970–74 plans), Chad's (1971–80 plan), and Cote d'Ivoire's (at the time Ivory Coast; 1970–75 plan). However, most of these plans around the period (1960–1980) failed to see their implementation to the latter. Ali (2011) has indicated that aside from political instabilities, most SSA countries lacked the institutional capacity to deal with the unfamiliar practice of development planning since most of the local people were not directly involved in colonial development planning.

The failures of the immediate post-independence development planning ushered the sub-region into its next phase of development planning between 1980 and the late 2000s. This period saw the adoption of quasi-development planning approaches to perform specific functions. This started with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which centered on mitigating poverty and ensuring macro-economic stability through exports (Ali 2011). Contrary to expectations, SAP failed abysmally across the sub-region and rather led to a rise in unemployment; limited delivery of social services, lessened development of human capital; and a huge debt burden on countries (Sulaiman et al. 2014). Studies (Ahmed and Lipton 1997; Hunter et al. 2003; Imam 2007) allude that the failure of the SAP was caused by its partial implementation in most countries with the programme's sequencing also not done according to plan. As a result, there was a need for a new line of action which led to the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSS) in the early 2000s. The PRSS formed part of the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) aimed at ensuring the achievement of the development desires of development partners in developing countries. This Strategy, which started in SSA with four countries (Uganda; Tanzania; Mauritania, and Burkina Faso) became a necessity and a condition for receiving debt relief (Santiso 2001; Hunter et al. 2003). However, the CDF programme failed to achieve its overall purpose of poverty alleviation due to its externally driven nature by the time it ended in the late 2000s in the sub-region (Santiso 2001). Within the last two decades, most countries in the sub-region have reverted to long-term comprehensive development planning which goes beyond the skewed objective of poverty reduction and macro-economic

stability. Countries such as Kenya and Uganda have their vision 2030 and 2040 development plans respectively in motion. Ghana has also taken efforts to prepare its 40-year national development plan to guide development from all directions. With these, it was expected that development planning in the African Sub-region will see much success. Notwithstanding Abubakari et al. (2018) found in their study that long-term plans (for instance, that of Ghana) have since remained on paper in the sub-region as implementation has still not commenced as planned.

From the colonial days till the mid-1990s, development planning in SSA was highly centralized. This was characterized by the top-down approach where plans were prepared and executed at the national level and failed to meet local needs due to its porous participatory nature (Tandoh-Offin 2013). As a result, in the last two decades, SSA countries have emphasized decentralized development planning (Awortwi 2010). This is characterized by a more participatory bottom-up process with priority given to the grassroots. Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana are countries in the SSA with well-structured decentralized development planning (Ali 2011; Lopes 2013). Kenya since 1983, through its District Focus for Rural Development Strategy (DFRDS), has adopted a decentralized development Planning strategy. With the adoption of the Strategy, responsibility for identifying, planning, and implementing district projects rests with districts under the supervision of the District Development Committees (DDCs) and subcommittees at divisional and locational levels. Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) are also mandated to plan and coordinate the implementation of regional development activities. General policy and planning of multidistrict and national programmes, however, rest with the ministries (Ochoro 1993; Ashford et al. 2006). Also, since the year 1999 in Tanzania, policies and guidelines are developed at the national level by the Planning Commission but it is the Local Government Authorities that plan and implement these policies and provide services. In between the national level and the local level is the Regional Administration which acts as an intermediary in the planning process (Mongula 2006; Mollé and Tollenaar 2013). In Ghana, since 1996, local authorities including District/Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies are required to prepare Medium Term Development Plans (MTDPs) every four years based on the guidelines provided by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) (NDPC 2013). The MTDPs are submitted to the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) that harmonize these plans into Regional Medium-Term Development Plans (RMTDPs) and submit them to the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) at the national level. The NDPC then harmonizes these plans into the National Medium-Term Development Plan (NMTDP) (Tandoh-Offin 2013).

## Materials and methods

### The research intent and specific country choice in the SSA

In this study, Ghana is used as a case to assess the effectiveness of development planning in SSA, especially in the current dispensation of “sustainable

development” claims and the resurgence of interest in the contributory role of plan toward sustainability. Ghana’s choice is a deliberate one based on the following factors:

- (i) The country is regarded as the “pioneer” in the preparation and implementation of development plans in the SSA. It is the first country in the SSA to have attained its independence, and its first development plan, the 2-year Consolidated Plan (1957–1958) was seen to have spearheaded development planning in the SSA region;
- (ii) Beyond the SSA region, Ghana is part of the earliest countries (then colony) in the world to have adopted development planning (dating back to 1919) (Owusu-Amoah 2018); and
- (iii) Since 1996, development planning within the decentralized planning system in Ghana has largely been a statutory requirement. This aligns with Lopes’s (2013) claim that development planning is just a “pretending ideological fantasy” in developing countries especially those in SSA.

These aforementioned factors are thus seen to provide a leverage ground to examine the effectiveness of development planning in terms of its purpose beyond its statutory recognition. The National Development Planning System Act, 1994 (Act 480) of Ghana emboldens District Assemblies (Metropolitan/Municipal and District Assemblies) to prepare and implement Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) every four years. District Assemblies in Ghana that have existed since 1996, for instance, have prepared at least six development plans (Mensah 2005; Appiah 2016). These are the Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) for 1996–2000, 2002–2005, 2006–2009, 2010–2013, 2014–2017, and currently 2018–2021. These development plans contain economic, social, and environmental projects and programmes that result from the prioritized needs and aspirations of the people at the grassroots. The plans are thus intended to promote sustainable development of the local areas. From the perspective of Ali (2011), development planning in Ghana and the SSA region has not been a complete failure as some positive gains have resulted from it—an indication that after all, development planning can really “do something” for sustainable development in Ghana and the SSA region when purposely pursued just like what was done by the “Asian Tigers” (Abubakari et al. 2018).

### The focal districts in Ghana and their selection

The study was conducted in the Ashanti region which is located at longitude 0.15 W and 2.25 W, and latitudes 5.50 N and 7.46 N in the middle belt of Ghana. The use of the region was because it has the highest number (43) of local governments (Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs)) in Ghana (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development 2019). Of the 43 districts, one (1) is a metropolis, 18 municipalities, and 24 “ordinary” districts. Within the region, the study was conducted in the local government setting because it is at the local level that MTDPs are originally prepared and harmonized as NMTDPs at the national level (NDPC 2013). Three local authorities comprising a Metropolis, Municipality, and District—what Ortiz Escalante and Gutiérrez Valdivia (2015) refer to as

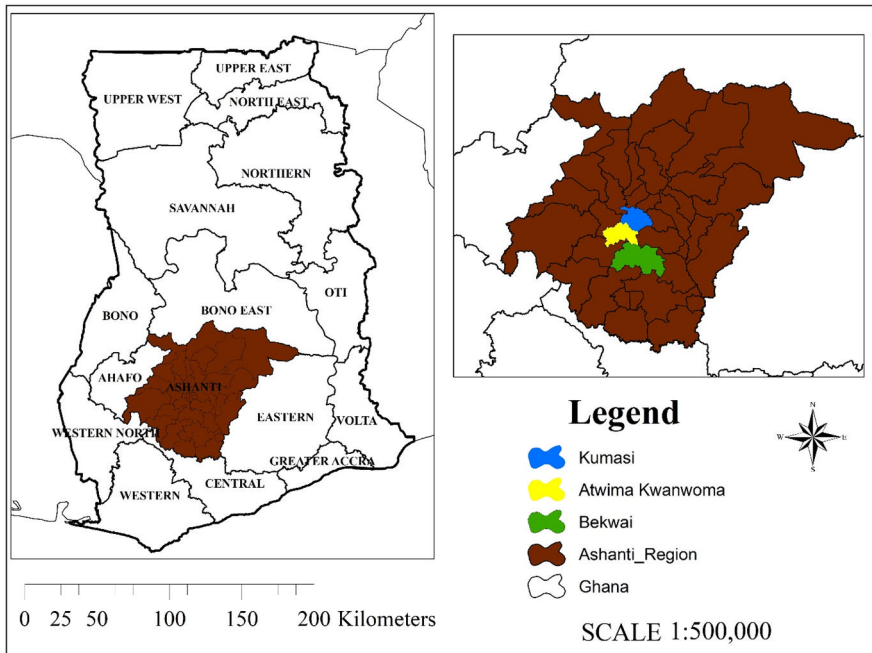


“planning subjects” that plan and regulate the development of “planning objects” (the citizens)—were selected. In Ghana, there is a unique classification such that local government areas with a minimum population of 250,000 are holistically considered “Metropolis”; 95,000 as “Municipality”; and 75,000 as “District”, though all these local government areas are also collectively referred to as “Districts” whilst local government authorities are generally considered “District Assemblies” (Government of Ghana 2003). This classification needs to be clarified to impede the possibility of ambiguity in our findings, and as well, justify the strategic selection we made to get a representation for the three levels of local government.

Bekwai Municipality and the Atwima Kwanwoma District were selected using the lottery approach. In the case of Bekwai Municipality, all 18 municipalities had the chance of being selected, however, through the lottery approach, Bekwai Municipality became the “lucky pick”. Similarly, for all the 24 “ordinary” districts, Atwima Kwanwoma District came out successful during the lottery approach. The lottery approach was done in a manner that the names of the districts (both municipalities and “ordinary” districts) were written on small pieces of paper, folded, kept in a cubic box, and shaken whilst the lead author was made to pick randomly from the box. On the contrary, Kumasi Metropolis was purposely picked as it is the only metropolis in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The planning subjects of the selected local areas therein called Bekwai Municipal Assembly (BMA), Atwima Kwanwoma District Assembly (AKDA), and Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) were engaged.

As indicated in Fig. 2, Bekwai Municipality is located in the southern part of the Ashanti region on latitude  $6^{\circ} 00'N$  and  $6^{\circ} 30'N$  and Longitude  $1^{\circ} 00' W$  and  $1^{\circ} 35'$ ; Atwima Kwanwoma District is located in the central part of the region lying on Latitude  $6^{\circ} 45' North$  and Longitude  $1^{\circ} 15'$  and  $1^{\circ} 46'$  West; and Kumasi Metropolis is located between Latitude  $6.35^{\circ}N$  and  $6.40^{\circ}S$  and Longitude  $1.30^{\circ}W$  and  $1.35^{\circ}E$ , 270 km north of Accra, the national capital of Ghana.

All the study locales—Bekwai Municipality, Kumasi Metropolis, and Atwima Kwanwoma—have similar biophysical characteristics as they are in one region, the Ashanti region. Their mean temperatures range from  $25.5^{\circ}C$  to  $32^{\circ}C$ , they feature bimodal rainfall patterns, and they are covered in wet semi-deciduous forests (Ghana’s Ministry of Food and Agriculture 2021). Therefore, all the studied areas are strongly in favor of agricultural practices; nevertheless, Kumasi Metropolis is the area that is urbanizing the fastest, meaning that land is becoming more and more valuable for construction and infrastructure development. The Atwima Kwanwoma area, which is growing quickly to join the Kumasi Metropolis as an urban agglomeration, comes next. The Bekwai Municipality has the slowest rates of infrastructure development, urbanization, and the shift from land-based agriculture to non-land-based livelihoods. Therefore, in contrast to Kumasi Metropolis and Atwima Kwanwoma, where the service economy predominates, the agriculture sector has represented the socio-economic transformation in the local economy of the Bekwai Municipality. Kumasi Metropolis’s local government receives the most internally generated funds for development due to the region’s rapid socioeconomic transformation; it is followed in line by the Bekwai Municipality and the Atwima Kwanwoma



**Fig. 2** Selected districts in national and regional context. *Source* Ghana Statistical Service (2014)

District, which has the lowest population and land area (for more information, see Bekwai Municipal Assembly, 2021; Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, 2021; Atwima Kwanwoma District Assembly, 2021). The Kumasi metropolitan area has the strongest finances (both internally and externally), followed by Bekwai Municipality and Atwima Kwanwoma District. This has ramifications for initiating, carrying out, and managing plans for sustainable development of these study locales.

### Research approach and data gathering procedures

This research is based on a case study design to study development planning issues at three districts of different levels in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The study used qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data were collected using a literature search checklist we developed to guide our document review. The checklist<sup>1</sup> was used in determining the compliance levels of the District Assemblies in terms of the implementation of projects and programmes in their Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) (2010–2013 and 2014–2017). The Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) come with a section dubbed “Performance Review”, and this section was essentially used in the

<sup>1</sup>Projects and programmes fully implemented (FI), partially implemented (PI), on-going (O), not implemented at all (N), implemented, or initiated outside Medium Term Development Plans.

document review. The Performance Review section provides a summary of the extent of the implementation of the past MTDPs per our checklist (degree of implementation compliance), as well as the major setbacks in terms of implementation failures to inform current and future measures of development planning. For instance, in the case of the 2014–2017 planning period, we were able to ascertain a summary of the degree of implementation compliance of the MTDPs of the selected districts for the previous period of 2010–2013. We augmented the secondary data extracted from the document reviews of the MTDP Reports of the selected districts with primary data.

The primary data were collected through two-round in-depth interviews to get the individual officials' accounts of the factors that influenced the compliance levels of their District Assemblies as well as perceptions and institutional support regarding the preparation and implementation of the MTDPs through a political economy lens. The planning and financial officials as well as key officials of other Decentralized Departments (Coordinating Unit, Waste Management, Transport/Urban Roads, Agriculture, Education, and Social Welfare and Community Development) at the three District Assemblies (Institute of Local Government Studies 2016) were purposively sampled, and their engagements were face-to-face interactions. This was possible through a good-fit researchers-respondents' planned data collection schedule prepared in 2019 during the lead author's MPhil research in Ghana. The use of purposive sampling was because the officials have their roles directly related to the preparation and implementation of MTDPs. The data collection schedule involved a two-round interview session in July (first one) and August (second round). The first round of interviews provided insight in terms of implementation performance, as well as additional data that helped us to reconceptualize recurring issues that relate to planning challenges. We then used such data as a leverage ground to conceive certain factors we measured on a Likert scale during the second round of interviews. For example, the factors affecting plan implementation were identified through prior sensing interviews in the first round.

A total of six (6) planning officers were interviewed, with two (2) from each District Assembly involving a Departmental Head and an Officer. For the Financial Officers, we engaged with three (3), with one (1) from each of the District Assemblies, whilst for the Decentralized Departments, we engaged with at least one (1) official from each District. In all, a total of 17 officials were engaged during the primary data collection (Table 1).

## Data presentation and analysis

Our data were both quantitative and qualitative. Therefore, in the analysis, the quantitative data were presented by using frequencies to assess the implementation performance levels of the three districts. In doing so, qualitative data representing the projects and programmes that were Fully Implemented (FI), Ongoing (O), Partially Implemented (PI), and Not implemented (N) at the end of the 2010/13 and 2014/17 planning periods were converted into numbers. The percentage of each of these numbers out of the total programmes/projects

**Table 1** Planning stakeholders and their availability for the study

Key stakeholders	Response level at each metropolitan, municipal, and district assembly		
	BMA <sup>a</sup>	AKDA <sup>b</sup>	KMA <sup>c</sup>
Chief executive	*	*	*
Coordinating director	*	✓	*
Development planning unit	✓	✓	✓
Finance department	✓	✓	✓
Waste management department	Non-existent	Non-existent	✓
Transport/urban roads	*	Non-existent	✓
Agric department	✓	✓	✓
Physical planning	✓	✓	✓
Health directorate	*	*	*
Education	✓	*	*
Social welfare and community development	*	✓	*
Total	5	6	6

Key: (✓) Responded (\*) Did not respond

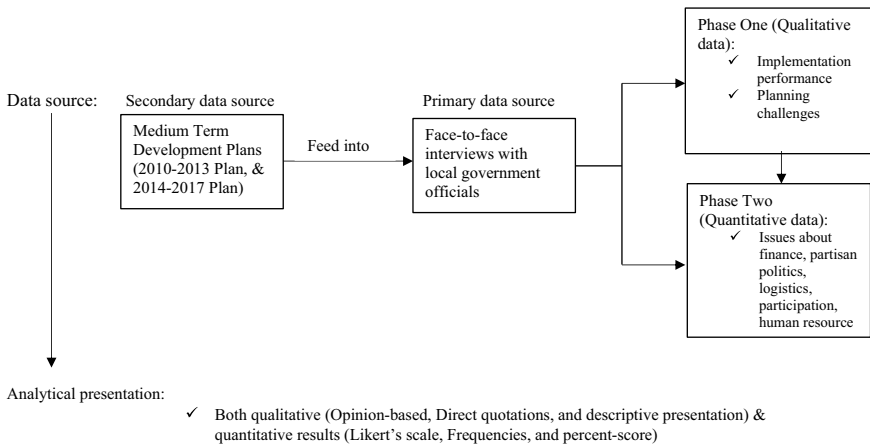
<sup>a</sup>Bekwai Municipal Assembly

<sup>b</sup>Antwima Kwawoma District Assembly

<sup>c</sup>Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly

implemented was then estimated. The analysis of data on the factors that affect plan implementation performance was done with the aid of a Likert Scale. Numerical values were assigned to a five-level Likert scale—Strongly Agree (2); Agree (1); Indifferent (0); Disagree (−1); and Strongly Disagree (−2)<sup>2</sup>—to ascertain the extent to which the officials agreed to general conceptualized factors identified in the first round interview session in terms of factors affecting plan implementation—finance, partisan politics and commitment, logistics, participation, and human resource. We also picked qualitative data on institutional support to generally capture how the national government should support local government officials in successful plan implementations. With these qualitative data, our analysis was based on themes from summarized key statements of the different officials from which we made inductive references to establish patterns and conflicts to support the other results gathered for the study. In respect of ethical obligations, we have anonymized our respondents using numerals to represent them in relation to quoted revelations. In Fig. 3, we have presented a framework wherein the lens of the results of our study is based for easy understanding of the study.

<sup>2</sup>We used “Mean” (Interval measurement) instead of “Mode” (ordinal measurement) for measuring the results of our Likert scale because the distances between consecutive points on the Likert scale we used were the same. For example, the distance between ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ is the same as the distance between ‘Disagree’ and ‘Indifferent’ measurements (see, for example, Chyung et al.’s 2017 arguments on the use of the Likert scale).



**Fig. 3** Study's method-results nexus framework. *Source* Authors' construct, 2023

## Results and discussions

We have presented our results in a synergic and logical manner by first considering the degree of implementation of the MTDPs of the selected districts under the caption “Performance Analysis of Plan Implementation”, before taking into account the factors that influence the performance “Factors that Influence Plan Implementation Performance Levels”, and finally, the support the local government authorities supposedly get to enhance implementation, “Stakeholders Support for the Medium-Term Development Plan”. The results for each district are lumped together to impede the possibility of comparison, which is not the focus of this study. This is because we take a holistic approach to present our results in a manner that reflects the nature of development planning that can have useful implications for other SSA and developing countries. We take a political economy reflection of these findings in the Discussion sub-section, considering relevant literature on development planning and sustainability nexus. This has also helped us to ascertain whether contemporary local development planning in Ghana is still a formality, or instead a transition to a purposeful approach.

### Performance analysis of plan implementation

We found that the implementation activities of the three District Assemblies have a mean fully implemented programme/project (FI) achievement rate of 60.83% for both the 2010–2013 and 2014–2017 planning periods, higher than that of on-going (O), partial implementation (PI), and non-implementation (N) recording a mean percent score of 19.40, 4.60 and 15.20 respectively (Table 2). The 2014–2017 planning period generally shows progress in the implementation performance of 2013–2017, albeit, at a slow pace, for instance, a 5.2% mean improvement for

**Table 2** Plan implementation performance by assemblies

Performance	MMDAs/year								
	2010–2013			2014–2017			2010–2013	2014–2017	Overall
	BMA (%)	AKDA (%)	KMA (%)	BMA (%)	AKDA (%)	KMA (%)	Mean value	Mean value	
Fully implemented (FI)	74.76	49.30	50.63	85.98	36.30	68.00	58.23	63.43	60.83
On-going (O)	6.80	43.80	5.85	5.61	36.30	18.00	18.82	19.97	19.40
Partially implemented (PI)	13.59	–	4.60	5.61	3.80	–	6.06	3.14	4.60
Not implemented (N)	4.85	6.80	38.92	2.80	23.80	14.00	16.86	13.53	15.20
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	~100.00	~100.00	~100.00

*Source* Authors' computations from the 2014/17 and 2018/21 BMA, AKDA, and KMA MTDPs

fully implemented projects and programmes (FI), and a 3.3% mean decrease in non-implemented projects and programmes (N).

However, beyond the figures, we identified that the District Assemblies have fully implemented projects and programmes that were not planned for. These projects and programmes are outside the MTDPs that have been prepared to truly capture local realities and needs. For instance, the officials of the Bekwai Municipal Assembly (BMA) unraveled in their 2010–2013 plan that of the 74.76% fully implemented projects and programmes, only 31.81% are projects and programmes that were planned for in that planning period. By inferences, the non-compliance to MTDPs may lead to a rise in the number of projects and programmes that need to be implemented for a planning period. This can stretch the limited financial resources available for planning as such resources are shared among so many projects and programmes, both planned and unplanned. The significant number of ongoing, partial, and non-implemented interventions can also be connected to non-conformity planning practice. During the interview sessions, the following were gathered from some officials of the District Assemblies:

“(…) they (Administration of the Assembly) do not see MTDPs as a priority. I will liken the MTDPs to formalism/formality and functionality. Functionally, do we implement the plan as we all agreed and approved to the latter? The level of importance attached to the plan is low. Generally, the situation is not good. It is just a formal requirement” (Planning Officer 1, July, 2019)

[2] “The preparation of the MTDP is not my problem but where I have a problem is the implementation. If you prepare a plan without implementing it, what is the essence?” (Planning Officer 2, July, 2019)

[3] “Do the Assembly really prioritize MDTPs and see it as the engine of the Assembly as they should? Most of these projects and programmes in plans are just put on paper to meet the requirements but their implementation is

something else. It is not our fault though, there are a lot of complexities” (Planning Officer 3, July, 2019)

[4] “(...) sometimes plans may be prepared for the next four years. When the District Chief Executive (DCE) goes to communities, chiefs there request for some projects and programmes which were not planned for but are implemented because the DCE wants to impress the people, and politically win their interest for his/her party. This happens more especially during pre-election period” (Planning Officer 2, July, 2019)

Since plans serve as the bridge between thought and reality and a means to an end and not an end in itself, preparing them without their effective implementation means pretending to plan. This problem has implications for mitigating the fundamental problems of the communities in the study districts since implementing plans partially means moving away from many real societal issues. This is more so because projects and programmes outlined in the MTDPs are formulated based on issues identified in communities as required by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) (NDPC 2015).

**Factors that influence plan implementation performance levels**

Finance, partisan politics and commitments, logistics, participation, and human resources are the conceptualized factors identified to influence the performance of District Assemblies’ MTDP implementation. As indicated in Table 3, the responses indicates a somewhat bi-modal situation with only two Officers in each case not strongly agreeing to ‘finance’ and ‘partisan politics and commitments’ as factors that that determine plan implementation levels. The results also attest to ‘participation’ as somehow important in affecting planning, and this underpins and justifies the essence of the decentralized planning approach embraced in Ghana. It was only ‘human resource’ which was generally disagreed to have an influence on the implementation performances of MTDPs.

Focusing on finance as one of the factors, we identified that the District Assemblies significantly depend on national level decentralized financial resources (District Assembly Common Fund—DACF) for the implementation of their MTDPs. Our analysis of the DACF released to the three District Assemblies

**Table 3** Agreement levels to factors affecting plan implementation at study districts

Factors	Extent of agreement													
Finance	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
Partisan politics and commitment	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2
Logistics	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
Participation	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	1	0	1
Human resource	1	-1	-1	1	0	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-2	-2	-1

Key: 2 = Strongly agree; 1 = Agree; 0 = indifferent; -1 = disagree; -2 = Strongly disagree  
 Source Computed based on Authors’ field survey (August), 2019

indicated major shortfalls in the amounts that were released to the Assemblies. For instance, for the 2010/13 planning period, Bekwai Municipal Assembly (BMA) and Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) could not get access to half of their budgeted DACF, with deficits of 52.7% and 52.67% respectively recorded. Though the District Assemblies are empowered by Local Governance Act, 2016, (Act 936) to generate Internally Generated Funds (IGF) to support themselves, the IGFs of the three District Assemblies were identified to be inadequate to meet Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) which are related to the projects and programmes of the MTDPs. IGFs were basically used to meet administration needs which are recurrent such as printing and stationery, fuel for vehicles, and meeting allowances amongst others. We identified a repetitive deficit in IGFs by all the Assemblies during the planning periods under study. Bekwai Municipal Assembly (BMA), for instance, recorded an IGF deficit of 42% in the year 2011 while Atwima Kwawoma District Assembly (AKDA) recorded a deficit of 47%, a deficit rate of AKDA was further recorded in 2016. Interviews with the District Assemblies' Finance Officers indicated the unwillingness on the part of the local people to pay their taxes such as property rates. According to the Finance Officers, ratepayers complain about how the rates are utilized and vent their dissatisfaction with service delivery from rates.

[1] "In this local government area, payment of local taxes is a big challenge. Many people swerve it despite our sensitization programmes on the necessity of the payment of taxes. Our tax collectors usually tell us that property owners for instance, complain that they don't see what the taxes are used for by us (...)" (Finance Officer 1, August, 2019).

On partisan politics and commitment as another factor, the study indicated a lack of political will and commitment to MTDPs. We identified a hegemonic power and control of the Chief Executives (DCEs) who are the political appointees and head the District Assemblies. The Chief Executives steer planning interventions in the direction of "political points" projects, which are usually visible whether or not they are planned for. From the foregoing and discussions, it could be said that though there appears to be a bi-modal situations with finance and partisan politics and commitments playing leading roles, it could be said that the issue of finance occurs within the framework of politics both at the local and national level. First, implementation of developments plans at the local level is largely hinged on the release of the DACF from the national government. Again, at the local level the politician (Chief Executive) appointed by the government of the day is the final spending officer of IGFs. With this, development planning becomes a 'see saw' game of politics directed by the politician who decides when, where, how and what to spend on. Again, as a result of the political dominance over, and fusion into technocratic planning practices, a change in government often leads to new agenda accompanied by new projects and programmes that unfortunately truncate planned projects and programmes of the previous administration, as attested by the Planning Officers. Usually, a change in government also comes along with the transformation of planning staff members: the officers are transferred to totally different District Assemblies, whilst new ones come in to replace them unexpectedly. Whilst the new ones are skillful and qualified, it takes some time for them to function well in



their new offices, which somewhat affects the implementation process of the MTDPs.

[1] “(...) well, we can’t do anything about the change of government. This is democracy. My concern as the Head of Planning in this Assembly has to do with the unexpected personnel transfers that accompany a change of government. When there was a change of government in 2016, some of my planning officers were transferred. This is not really a problem as the new staff members are competent and qualified. (..) just that government has to be circumspect in doing that as in most instances, new officers take time to settle in and effectively contribute to the planning process of the District Assembly (..)” (Planning Officer 2, August, 2019).

The above suggests that development planning and for that matter implementation of plans thereof is like a bird folded in the palm of its owner who decides the fate of the bird either by squeezing or releasing it. We therefore argue that the political economy within which development planning at the local level occurs is the major canker to development plan implementation in Ghana.

Further interviews with the officials suggested that they did not have enough logistics to effectively carry out plan executions. Our needs assessment of logistics indicated that BMA had a total respective deficit of three (3) and 31 vehicles and motorbikes; AKDA’s deficits indicate three (3) vehicles and 18 motorbikes; and KMA had a total deficit of eight (8) vehicles and 18 motorbikes to support their works. The logistical inadequacies were indicated by the Planning Officers to have negatively affected operations, effective monitoring, and supervision during the MTDP implementation.

### **Stakeholders’ support for medium-term development plans (MTDPs)**

The preparation of MTDPs is placed on the Planning Department of the District Assemblies, however, other departments including the Administrative Unit of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) at the national level are expected to support the process. First, the National Administrative Unit of DACF through the Decentralized Finance Department as well as the Coordinating Unit (Administration) of the Assemblies must release the requisite funds to support the tasks and processes involved in the preparation of the MTDPs. Second, the Planning Department is expected to be provided with all necessary data of the various decentralized departments (Agriculture, Water and Sanitation, Transport/Urban Roads, Health, Social Welfare, Finance, and others) that can be put together for comprehensive MTDPs. This also involves the Planning Department and other Departments engaging with Assembly members who bring on board community development issues in their respective electoral areas. This usually involves a series of meetings organized to solicit inputs from the Assembly members. In Ghana, the Assembly members represent the ordinary citizens at the district level depending on their electoral areas as part of the indirect participation component of the decentralized democratic framework of the country. Once MTDPs are prepared, implementation can be spearheaded, thus, effective plan preparations must give birth to

development plans that are realistic and feasible to implement for local-level progress. On this basis, it becomes expedient for all other departments (stakeholders) to support the Planning Department in the development of the MTDPs.

Engaging with our respondents, we gathered the following insights, first, in relation to expected support from national and local level Administration:

[1] When you are preparing the plan, they (administration) will not give you the needed support. And at the point when the plan is requested by the NDPC, you will see everybody asking and looking at the Planning Officer, where is the plan? Where is the plan? but they will not ask whether you were given the needed support. So you the planner, you have to find your way of preparing the plan though the resources may not be given to you. This is because you cannot tell them that because there was no money you did not prepare the plan (Planning Officer 1, August, 2019).

[2] Generally, releasing funds for preparing the medium plan is not easy because people prefer to put in money in tangibles than intangibles so that they accrue some credentials for themselves (Planning Officer, 3, August, 2019).

[3] Despite the MTDP being a very important document for the Assembly, the support given in terms of releasing funds for its preparation is generally negative (Planning Officer 2, August, 2019).

A critical look at all the key statements points to the fact that the major issue has to do with administrative support in terms of catalyzing the release of funds in MTDPs' preparations. Generally, we gathered from the interviews that despite the intended plan preparation activity approved by the national and local levels' Administration, releasing funds for preparing the plans becomes a problem. Either the funds are delayed, released in bits, or do not come at all. When this happens, preparing the plan is slowed down because the whole process must come to a halt until funds are released. This also affects the quality of the MTDPs, as perhaps, some important variables may have to be skipped due to inadequacy and intermittent flow of funds. We also gathered that the problems associated with the release of funds tend to affect the commitments on the part of the other stakeholders (for example, Officials of other decentralized departments, and Assembly members) who are supposed to support and participate in the plan preparation. This is because, when the various stakeholders go for meetings, they are not given their allowances and therefore stop attending meetings in connection to the preparation of the plan. Regardless of the release of funds, as gathered from our interviews, Administration still expects that the MTDP is prepared and would ask for it as and when it is needed. Therefore, the Planning Officials are compelled to sometimes find a way to prepare the plan. Resultantly, a plan which should have been prepared together with a team of Assembly stakeholders (e.g., decentralized departments at the Assembly) ends up almost invariably being prepared by only the Planning Department as mere formality and fulfillment of statutory demands. Second, in tandem with the expected support from the Decentralized Departments (Administration exempted), we identified key challenges (related to officials'

commitments) as claimed by the Planning Officers concerning the support from Decentralised Departments who are supposed to be part of the plan preparation. Whilst these challenges were accepted by the officials of the Decentralised Departments, they made a counterargument and explained the reasons behind their low commitments. Extracts of key statements from in-depth interviews are presented below.

[1] When you call for meetings to discuss issues with the MTDP, you find a few of the officials (including the heads) of the other Departments attending. At times it gets to a stage where everything is left to us (Planning Officer, 3, August, 2019)

[2] At times, getting the inputs from departments to be added to the plan becomes an issue. You will have to be on them and send several reminders before sometimes you get them (Planning Officer, 1, August, 2019)

A look at the views above suggests that the major issues with Decentralised Departments when it comes to their support during plan preparations have to do with attendance of meetings and submitting of inputs. Apart from that, we gathered from the Planning officers that the Heads of Decentralised Departments usually fail to attend community engagements with Development Planning Officers and Assembly members to discuss with communities their development issues. Counteracting these claims, the officials of Decentralized Departments when engaged attested that their attitudes were influenced by the negative perception, they have about the implementation of the MTDP. Key extracts are summarized as follows:

[1] Over the years we have been sending inputs and attending meetings on MTDPs. After the plan is prepared, you do not see too much happening with its implementation. What is then the essence of spending too much time on it (Officer 1, Decentralized Department, August, 2019)

[2] Sometimes I feel like it is of no use to give much attention to the preparation of the MTDP. Because when you know you are working on a document that will not be acted on, the motivation is low (Officer 2, Decentralized Department, August, 2019)

Whilst inputs from the officers from the Decentralized Department are relevant, one cannot skip the inputs of local communities, who are usually represented by Assembly members. Despite Assembly members expected to bring community development issues on board through a series of district-level meetings, it is expected that the Planning Departments go beyond to directly engage with some citizens in local communities that compose the local government areas. The direct support from local communities for the plan preparation is seen as very relevant as this can influence the smooth implementation of projects and programmes in the MTDPs—failure to do that will lead to a lack of local support for plans, especially during implementation. We gathered the following from our Planning Officers for the study, especially the challenges associated with community-level engagement in plan preparation:

[1] During community engagements, today you find a set of people coming... another time when you go, you find a different set. Because of that, discussions at meetings must always keep on repeating which causes unnecessary delays. (..) I can also say the interest in MTDP at the community level is the worst. It seems people don't care about whatever planning we are doing for their development (Planning Officer 3, August, 2019).

[2] Sometimes you will be having public engagements and you will see some of the local people passing by without even listening to what is going on, meanwhile, announcements were made. I think generally local people do not appreciate and understand the essence of planning (Planning Officer 1, August, 2019).

## Reflections on results and the way forward for planning

In sustainability discussions, the SDG-17 talking about partnerships to foster growth and development, first reiterates that the implementation of interventions (concerning the other SDGs) needs to be strengthened before global alliances can be feasible (See: United Nations General Assembly—UNGA 2015). Contextualizing this perspective in development planning discourses in Ghana will mean that first, we have to get our MTDPs implemented rightfully before we can even think of any form of partnership to spearhead sustainable development. Development planning has great potential in promoting growth (Obabori et al. 2007; Thompson 2015), but unfortunately, as gathered in this study, the several years of planning in Ghana (Owusu-Amoah 2018) seem not to have transformed our planning practices from “formality” to “purposefulness”—results that generally support that of Okoli and Onah (2002) who argued that planning has produced very minimal positive outcomes on countries of the SSA. Within the “economic convergence” literature, for instance, Rodrik (2008) in refuting the automatic “catch-up syndrome” that was claimed to be experienced by developing countries hinted that, perhaps, developing countries can ignite (economic) growth, but sustaining the growth is a great challenge. With the several discrepancies associated with local-level planning which serves as the basis for technocratically riding on development plans for sustainable development, one would not be wrong to say that the use of development planning to simply ignite (economic) growth is not working for us in the current context of “sustainable development” claims. And so, even if starting growth through planning is not working, how can it be possible to use planning to sustain growth if such is perhaps, ignited? The results gathered generally confirm that economic convergence is not possible for Ghana (and potentially others in the SSA) as Rodrik (2008) has ultimately confirmed in the economy-development nexus literature. Our results conform with the fact that development planning is ultimately a “white elephant” symbolizing “ideological fantasy”, and a “repeated ritual” with limited impacts on sustainable development. This is because the implementation of development plans is challenged by limited resources (funds, human resources), and institutional capacity. Again, plan preparation and implementation do not address the strategic development needs of the local populations. This is due to

the limited interest of stakeholders including local members, affecting the effectiveness of development planning as a tool for sustainable development.

We observed the extent of deficiencies through the political economy lens which seems to help capture the nuances that need to be ironed out. First, in relation to plan implementation performance analysis, we identified that fully implemented interventions far exceed on-going, partially implemented, and not implemented ones for all the planning “subjects” in the two planning periods considered. This sends a good signal that implementation-wise, local government entities can do great. We identified significant interventions (projects and programmes) that were forced on the District Assemblies as they were never part of the MTDPs, and these interventions, in the context of logistical constraints (as also supported by Mensah 2005; Appiah 2016) were ultimately fully implemented on the basis of partisan politics. Obviously, one can sense a great signal that for projects and programmes that are politically rewarding, funds are readily available and released, but for those that have political porosity, funds are kept in a trap; this revelation shows a strong synergic relation between the politics and economy of planning. The implementation of initiatives not initially thought of tends to suggest a fair plan implementation performance by all the study districts (Fully implemented projects with an overall mean of 60.83, and ongoing projects with 19.4), even though the study findings also point to such a situation as a lack of effective implementation. Scholars such as Rauws and De Roo (2016), and Van den Hoek et al. (2020) may argue that non-compliance to plans in implementation could be associated with agencies’ degree of adaptiveness, flexibility, and strategic approach to navigating planning complexities in the phase of dynamic conditions. However, in our study settings, we learned that using the political economy approach, the implementation of unplanned projects rather emerged through political forces that favoured the implementation of certain initiatives for political gains instead of planning agencies’ innovatively maneuvering complexities of development planning to promote an impromptu form of sound and sustainable development.

Delving deeper into the economic aspect of planning, we identified shortfalls in the DACF of the District Assemblies (see also Yeboah and Obeng-Odoom 2010; Akudugu and Oppong-Peprah 2013), and their intermittent release, whilst District Assemblies are unable to generate adequate financial resources internally to push for their growth leading to deficit budgets for planning. The DACFs are budgeted for in the national budgets, but as our findings further indicate, national-level administration has been reluctant to release the funds. As a third-tier government, District Assemblies do not have the power to compel national-level institutions to act right, and the NDPC, a national technocratic body is largely a “toothless bulldog” pressed up and down by sitting governments that appoint who to lead it. Technocratic planning is thus submerged in politics, with its practices not given the requisite attention (for instance, in terms of financial resources). As Abubakari et al. (2018) identified, even the NDPC’s 40-year development plan for Ghana (2018–2057) serving as a roadmap for (economic) transformation till now, lies on paper. The inability of District Assemblies to self-generate adequate funds is caused by the local members not being motivated to pay tax—“why should they pay tax to an ineffective institution?”—a common question lying in the minds of local members. As we gathered, the local members have not only lost interest in tax payments for

internally generated funds (IGFs) but also, the interest in participating in plan preparation and implementation as a sense of local “belongingness” and implementation commitments (Ali et al. 2012; Appiah 2016). Officials of other Decentralized Departments, as we have presented, generally have limited enthusiasm to participate in the development of MTDPs and subsequent implementations. Meanwhile, these are the key bodies who are on the grounds and can provide essential information for the preparation of the plans. Their loss of interest means inadequate information to support development plans to meet the development needs of the people towards promoting sustainable local development.

## Conclusion

This study analysed key issues of the implementation of development plans at the local level in Ghana, a SSA country. The Medium Term Development Plans (MTDPs), which serve as the embodiment of the programmes and projects at the local level were mainly used for this analysis in three study areas. It was found that local-level development plans were not adhered to as they were only partially implemented while other programmes and projects fully implemented were ‘foreign’ to the plans. Based on this, it is concluded that development plans are less likely to effectively contribute to sustainable local development.

Resource challenges (e.g. financial issues), limited institutional capacity, and partisan politics played a major role in the ineffectiveness of local-level development plans. While funds from national government delay, internally generated funds were also not enough due to the unwillingness of local population to pay. The funds obtained were also hardly committed to the plan as the political hierarchy that serves as spending officers prefer to invest in other projects and programmes off-plan but have the tendency of scoring them political points. This was not surprising as the preparation of development plans received less support as the plans are generally seen as bait to acquire national revenue (DACF) instead of commitment to implementation. With this, the study concludes that the political economy of local government in which development planning finds itself serves as a strong stumbling block to its effectiveness. First, local governments rely on support from central government financial support to undertake their implementation activities. Besides, the spending officer at the local level is politically selected. It could therefore be inferred that the issue of finance is somewhat political. The study concludes that planning should be separated from the local Assembly system and be made apolitical with an independent authority established to foresee local-level planning. Also, issues of limited resources and institutional capacity need addressing to help strengthen local-level development planning efforts in Ghana.

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**Data availability** The data for the study was mainly secondary, while primary data was mostly qualitative and organized through recordings which were later transcribed and presented in quotations in the analysis. The researchers therefore may not be able to provide a dataset as we believe the analysis clearly provides every data for the study.

## Declarations

**Ethical approval** The study was conducted at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana based on ethical approval obtained from the University as part of the lead author's MPhil studies. The authors have, therefore, ensured respect for protocols by informing all institutions that were visited with letters before embarking on the survey. Informed consent was also obtained before data collection was done. Participants have been treated as autonomous agents in the paper and they were not coerced or lured into participating in the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were also upheld, for example, we did not mention the names of persons who gave sensitive information per ethics requirements. This paper was curved out of the original MPhil Thesis of the corresponding author and therefore not submitted elsewhere or published by any other journal. In addition to the above, all individuals or institutions cited and referenced were duly acknowledged.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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