Collaboration is increasingly becoming popular in the field of development. The popularity of collaboration requires an understanding of how it manifests in the design and planning process in a decentralised local government system. The paper aims to find out whether or not decentralised local government authorities design and plan for implementation of collaborative initiatives as part of their medium term development plans and annual action plans. This is preceded by an exploration of the determinants for collaboration among local authorities. The paper uses qualitative approach to data gathering and analysis. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews administered to three local authorities in the Greater Accra Region. Qualitative analysis identifies organizational character and as key determinant for collaboration. The analysis does find deliberate design and plan for collaborative initiatives in the medium term development plans and annual action plans of municipalities in the study area. The paper suggests emphasis on joint design, co-financing and implementation of service infrastructure among local authorities that share administrative boundaries and economic activities.

Keywords: Collaboration, decentralised, local government system, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative governance has emerged as a particular mode of governance for addressing the challenges of development as well as improving the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. In the last few decades, the practice of governments and development practitioners involving citizens, communities and civil society in development discourse, public policy-making and service delivery has been on the increase. Zadek (2005) argues that collaboration has become popular in the lips of policy officials, bureaucrats, donors, development workers and civil society, and that there are literally millions of collaborative initiatives in the world today, “of every possible shape and colour, many localized and focused on specific issues, and a growing number operating at a national or international level”. The media landscape, statements of politicians, bureaucrats, aid agencies, and development practitioners are replete with calls for collaboration.

The popularity with which people talk about collaboration suggests that everyone wants to collaborate. The new and increasing expression of collaboration symbolizes a political challenge to the order of competition and control. Even those who do not want to collaborate want to be seen to be willing to do so. The hardcore architects of competition want to be seen as champions for collaboration. They have suddenly become aware that even the invisible hands of the market forces have their source to individuals and institutions who stand to benefit more from collaboration than they would otherwise derive from competition.

Today, collaborative initiatives abound in numerous areas, with multiple actors working together to deliver services or address complex problems. In the corporate world, for instance, mergers and acquisitions have become key part of the strategy for growth. Collaboration helps to enhance the capacity of cash-trap, non-viable and smaller companies to expand. A growing number of multi-actor initiatives such as coalitions of civil society organisations (CSOs) and inter-agency cooperation are emerging at the local and international levels to explore
and benefit from the new opportunities that collaboration offers. One of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa was Type II, which is an informal collaborative arrangements and partnerships. Although not a new concept, the Type II outcome formally underlined the importance of collaboration and partnerships as key mechanisms for achieving the goals of sustainable development (DARIMANI, 2011). Several international multi-actor collaborative initiatives emerged following the adoption of the Type II outcomes and include the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (EITI); the Extractive Industry Review (EIR); and the United Nations Global Compact. The numerous regional economic and political groupings such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) operate on the principle of cooperation and collaboration.

In Ghana, collaboration is popular in various sectors and issues. Politically, there is in place an inter-party advisory committee, a body which brings together registered political parties in Ghana to dialogue and provide advisory services on electoral matters to the Electoral Commission of Ghana. In the natural resource sector, there are a number of multi-sector platforms of individuals, private companies and relevant state agencies working together to address issues and concerns of the sector. For instance, there is the Annual Environmental and Natural Resource Summit organised in rotation among the Minerals Commission, Forestry Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency which brings together state and non-state actors to reflect, review and put forward mechanisms and strategies towards improving the performance of the natural resource sector of Ghana. The decentralization sector is equally abounded with collaborative initiatives. The national decentralization sector working group is a collaborative initiative that brings together development partners, individuals and representative of allied agencies in the decentralization to reflect and review the performance of the sector with the aim of improving upon performance.

The popularity and rise in collaborative initiatives is a simple derivative of the democratic expansion and consolidation sweeping through the continent of Africa including Ghana. The democratic expansion and consolidation provide frameworks and opportunities for the expression of citizenship culture as manifested in the freedom of speech, freedom of the media, social accountability and the practice of participatory decision-making and development. These manifestations have cumulatively empowered citizens to increase their demand not only for equitable and efficient service delivery but also improved participation and accountability of public and private institutions. Collaboration therefore becomes the logic of organizing collective action on scales proportional to the demands by citizens for equitable and efficient service delivery. Private corporations are implementing corporate social responsibility projects in collaboration with local communities, and central state agencies are working with citizens, non-state actors and multilateral institutions in evolving public policies and large-scale projects.

Further, the interdependence of community of actors has become evident in recent years and necessitates the collaborative actions and initiatives. On the one hand, the interdependence is mediated by the increasing application of information communication technology, sophisticated level of specialization, migration, trade liberalization and general economic integration. On the other hand, the challenges of development such as climate change and climate variability, the outbreak of diseases such as the recent Ebola in West Africa and the threat of terrorism provide compelling reasons collective efforts of National governments and a range of institutions and individuals. In sum, the logic of collaboration arises from the presence of issues that spill across the limits and scope of individual institutions and nations and the need to manage divergent and somehow conflicting interests. The issues in reference could be financial, skills, competencies, time and mandate. The need for timeliness of response to a disaster such as the twin-disaster of floods and fire which sad incident occurred on 3rd of June, 2015 in Accra Ghana would require collaborative actions to save life and property.

Collaboration therefore represents a strategic approach to addressing complex issues and delivering public goods and services effectively and efficiently. Zadek (2005) argues that collaboration serves as a means of managing political and economic risks associated with high societal expectations, often combining fears and concerns with diverse and substantial demands. Despite its popularity and wide spread application, collaboration does not necessarily lead to efficiency neither does it naturally resolve complex issues. A number of intervening variables are needed to make collaboration work its purpose and ensure effective and efficient service delivery. One of such intervening variables is the manner in which the collaborative initiative is designed.

Within the framework of decentralization in Ghana, a key mandate of metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs) is to "initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provide municipal works and services in the district" (Act 462). The main goal of the paper is to provoke and elicit discussion towards conscious design and planning for implementation of collaborative initiatives as part of the medium term and annual action plans of MMDAs. The objective of the paper is to find out whether or not MMDAs deliberately design and plan for collaboration in their medium term development plan and annual action plans. In pursuit of this objective, the paper begins by exploring the determinants for collaboration at MMDAs in Ghana.
Conceptualising collaboration

According to Ansell and Gash (2007), collaboration is a “governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.” This definition underlines the fact that it takes more than one actor to collaborate. The definition also attempts to formulate a criterion for collaboration, which includes the existence of a forum initiated by an actor, a group of diverse participants, and the subject matter on issue. However, the definition is restrictive by suggesting that collaboration can be initiated only by a public agency. Collaboration can, and indeed does take place outside the locust of the state, and exclusively initiated by non-state actors.

While Ansell and Gash (2007) use the term in the specific boundaries of the state, Donahue (2004) widens the boundaries by conceptualizing collaboration as “some amalgam of public, private, and civil-society organizations engaged in some joint effort.” Donahue definition does not seem to recognize collaborative initiatives, which take place exclusively of the public, or private sector or among civil-society organizations.

Zadek (2005) gives a more open-ended definition by referring to collaborative governance as institutional arrangements that involve deliberative multi-stakeholder collaboration in establishing rules of behaviour governing some or all of those involved in their development and, potentially a broader community of actors’. Zadek’s definition raises the standard of collaborative engagement by calling for “rules of behaviour” for the actors involved. Questions regarding leadership, responsibility, participation and accountability are always critical in any multi-actor relationships such as collaboration. For instance, who participates at what point in the collaboration, who set the agenda for participation, who account for the stewardship and should be held accountable are some of the key questions that the rules of engagement help to resolve in a multi-actor relationship.

The paper opts for a modified definition given by Zadek (2005) by conceptualizing collaboration as the grouping of actors with shared objectives whose relationship and conduct is guided by the specific interest of each actor and a set of collective principles and rules. The actors in reference could be individuals, organizations or nations brought together in pursuit of specific and collective interest. All actors involved in collaboration come with specific interests and the collection of these specific interests forms the basis for the collective or shared interest. The presence of multiple actors and interests means that the outcome of collaboration may not necessarily translate into equal benefits for all actors in the relationship. In fact the outcomes produced by collaboration may be good for some actors and bad for others depending on their location in the social and or economic hierarchy (Darimani, 2011). The apparent inequality created by social relations makes the principles and rules conduct critical requirements for collaborative relations.

Further, collaboration takes place for various reasons and at different levels and contexts. Actors may come together to collaborate in order to pull scarce resources to implement a project whose cost is beyond the reach of any single actor but which is a priority need of the actors and the population they serve per unit of time. Again, actors may come together to collaborate in order to improve upon their countervailing power, for convenience, for conflict resolution and peace building and for addressing an emergency situation. For instance, during international negotiations, all manner of groupings that share common interest are formed to improve their negotiating power against bigger groups. In the recently held climate change conference held in Paris in France, African Countries came together as a group with common interest in view of the stage of their development process. Another group known as Small Island States came together as a particular group that deserves particular recognition due to their size and location in the planet.

The scope and boundaries of collaboration mean that the concept is applicable to variety of issues and sectors. Within the context of this study, decentralization and local government is the sector in which the concept of collaboration is applied. The decentralization and local government sector presents one of the greatest opportunities and potentials for actors to come together in collaborative relations. Both collaboration and decentralization have pluralism of actors and bring together people and institutions across different sectors, social hierarchies and levels of government (local, regional, national, and international). For instance, the practice of providing and promoting security for citizens and the territorial integrity of Ghana operate simultaneously at the national, regional, and local levels, which involve some form of collaboration within and between central state agencies and local level structures.

Collaboration and decentralization

Since 1988, the core focus of the decentralization programme of Ghana has been the district assembly system of local government (Figure 1). This focus is grounded on the firm belief that the district assembly system of local government is an effective means for citizens’ participation, efficient service delivery and forms of development, which are consistent with the aspirations and priorities of local populations. The district assembly system of local government in Ghana comprises the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), four-tier metropolitan assemblies, and three-tier municipal and
district assemblies. The structural design of the system provides for horizontal and vertical collaboration. Within the locus of the state, vertical collaboration occurs between the different hierarchies of government i.e. a relationship between the central government, the RCCs and any particular MMDA or a combination of them. For instance, the transfer and reporting of the District Assembly Common Fund in Ghana is an exercise, which illustrates vertical collaboration between central state agencies, the RCC and MMDAs. Horizontal collaboration is a relationship that occurs between and among peers. The pooling together of resources by two or more MMDAs to deliver specific programmes or project is an example of horizontal collaboration.

The main goal and strategy of Ghana’s decentralization programme provide a framework for collaboration. The main goal of the national decentralization programme is to promote popular participation and ensure effective and efficient service delivery for poverty reduction and improved quality of life of the people. The strategy towards achieving this aim is to devolve power, responsibilities, functions, competencies and skills and resources from central state agencies to metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies. The demand for popular participation is recognition that certain functions are best performed by working with other stakeholders. Similarly, the process of devolution of power is a terrain of contestation, which requires collaboration to diffuse tensions and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. The Decentralization Policy Framework (2012) provides for public-private-partnerships (PPP) a framework within which initiatives that require collaboration between district assemblies and the private sector could be effectively and efficiently delivered. The revised National Decentralization Policy Framework (2015) is even more specific by making clear provision for “Inter-Service/ Inter-Sectoral Collaboration and Cooperation”.

One of the areas in which collaboration clearly manifests is security for persons, property and the territorial integrity of Ghana. While there is no clearly defined department for security services in the Local Government System, the provision of security brings together various institutions under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive. The Security and Intelligence Services Act, 1996 (Act 526) establishes a nine (9) membership District Security Council with the Chief Executive as the Chairman; the remaining members are the District Police Commander, the District Crime Officer, representative of the Internal Intelligence Agency, Customs, Excise and Preventive Service Officer in charge of the District, the Immigration Officer in charge of the District, the Fire Officer in charge of the District, and two persons nominated by the Chief Executive in consultation with the National Security Coordinator.

The focus of the paper is collaboration in the decentralized local government system of Ghana. Collaboration has the potential for ensuring efficient service delivery for local authorities that are faced with high demand for service delivery and yet are often challenged by scarcity and inadequacy of resources. Notwithstanding the fact that collaboration occurs in diverse disciplines, sectors, issues and levels, this paper considers the local government sector as the specific context in which collaboration takes place. Thus the district assembly is the front actor rallying around member assemblies for improved and efficient service delivery.

**Theoretical framework**

In this paper, Stephen Ross’ theory of Principal-agent is adopted as the framework for the analysis of
collaboration among MMDAs in Ghana. In his paper, “The Economic Theory of Agency: The Principal's Problem,” published in American Economic Review 63, No. 2, May 1973, Ross introduced the study of agency for analysing problems relating to compensation contracting and argued that agency was seen, in essence, as an incentive problem. In presenting this paper at the American Economic Association in December 1972, Ross made the point that the agency relationship is a universal principle in which there is commonality of goals and opposing interest, which he labelled the dilemma in the agency relationship. Thus while both the principal and agent would nominally be working towards the same goal they would not always share the same interests. The principal stands an opportunity for greater gains if the opposing interests are aligned. As a way of aligning the opposing interests, Ross argued for incentive for inducing the agent to produce maximum gains for the principal.

The theory operates on the belief that one actor (the principal) is capable of making decisions or taking initiatives that impact other actors (agents). Meckling and Jensen (1976), describe an agency relationship in which “one or more persons (the principal or principals) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision making authority to the agent”. Examples of notable forms of principal-agency relationship include employer (principal) and employee (the agent); President (principal) and his appointees (agents); and landlord (principal) and his tenants (agents). In each particular relationship, actors from both sides would normally share some common goals and dedicate themselves working towards the attainment of that common goal. At the same time, the actors in each particular relationship would have various opposing interests.

While the principal-agency theory was first presented as an economic theory and widely used in the business realm, its flexibility allows for application in different levels (micro, macro) and other spheres of research. In particular, the recognition of multiple actors and variety of opposing interests by the theory makes it relevant and applicable to the analysis of collaboration. Actors involved in collaboration pursue common goals in addition to their specific latent and manifest interests. However, these latent and manifest interests are expected to be regulated by norms, values and principles of the particular collaborative platform or initiative. Finally, one of the chief distinguishing features of the agency theory is the underlying recognition that it takes one particular actor to initiate the relationship. For instance, the employer-employee relationship does not happen by coincidence, rather a conscious effort from either party to establish the relationship. This relationship might have been established by a successful response of the employee to an advertisement by the employer seeking for specific skills and competences.

**Framework of analysis**

This framework (Figure 2) is established to relate the theory to practice and help explain how collaborative
initiatives start and operate. In constructing the framework, the paper relied on the theoretical foundation that while collaboration is a stage of multiple actors, the creation of the stage starts with a single actor. Again the interaction among actors on the stage is guided by specific individual interest, the collective interest and rules evolved by the actors for that purpose.

Each circle in Figure 2 represents an individual who may be a person or an organisation with mandate, functions and interest. The space available in each circle presents a range of opportunities for the individual actor to make choices in the delivery of its mandate, functions and interest. The individual actor may decide to collaborate with another actor or actors, or choose to work autonomously. X represents the autonomous space in each of the circles (i.e. where there is no collaboration).

It takes the convergence of specific interests (latent or manifest) of actors to effect collaboration. However, it takes a deliberate initiative of an individual actor (shown by each of the arrows) to translate the convergence of interests into practical collaborative relations. In other words, a mere coincidence of mandate, functions and interest does not automatically translate into collaboration in practice without a deliberate action on the part of one actor.

Y represents or symbolises collaborative relations between two individual actors. The bi-lateral collaborative relation is possible only because there is convergence of interests and the initial effort by one of the actors to translate that convergence into effect. The bilateral collaborative relation has the potential to undermine or reinforce the multi-actor collaboration.

The Z space in Figure 2 represents collaborative relation among three (3) individual actors. Again, the tri-lateral collaborative relation is possible only because there is convergence of interests and the initial effort by either an individual actor or one of the bi-lateral actors to translate that convergence into effect. The tri-lateral collaborative relation has the potential to undermine or already existing bi-lateral collaborative relation.

The central argument of this framework analysis is that it takes the convergence of interests to effect collaboration but the initial action by an individual actor, rather than mere coincidence of the interests, is required to translate the convergence into practice. For instance, the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462) defines the mandate and functions of metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies.

Under the Act 462, the mandate and functions of the MMDAs are common, which means a convergence of mandate and functions (interests) is achieved by the mere effectiveness of Act 462. However, to translate this autonomous convergence of (interests) into practice, a particular MMDA would have to take the initial and deliberate practical steps towards one or more MMDAs to effect collaboration.

The study area

Three municipalities namely La Nkwantanang, Ga East and Ga West in the Greater Accra Region were selected for the study. The Greater Accra Region has sixteen (16) assemblies; two (2) are metropolises, five (5) are districts and nine (9) are municipalities. The choice of Greater Accra Region was influenced by two practical considerations. The first was proximity; its closeness to the location of the researcher comes with ease of access to the field. The second consideration was the fact that the region, especially towns and cities proximate to the national capital, is likely to have relatively more pressure on social and infrastructural services due to population density and variability. People move into Accra and its suburbs with trading centres during the daytime to conduct businesses thereby putting pressure on social and infrastructural services. This relative pressure has the potential to influence collaboration in the face of scarcity of resources. The three municipalities were selected because they share land boundaries and have service facilities that are shared by their respective populations. La-Nkwantanang shares boundaries with Ga West Municipal to the west and Ga East Municipal to the North (Figure 3). La-Nkwantanang was carved out from Ga East Municipal Assembly in 2012.

In addition to the common boundaries, the three Assemblies also share service facilities. For instance, Ga East Municipal Assembly hosts a Final Disposal Site that services both Ga West and La Nkwantanang municipalities among other assemblies. This Final Disposal Site is one of the largest disposal sites in the Greater Accra Region. Also, the Madina market in La Nkwantanang Municipal Assembly serves as the economic nerve-centre for the three municipalities. Residents of the three municipalities share other facilities like clinics, schools and roads. These are potential triggers for collaboration between the three municipalities.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to explore the determinants of collaboration and how local authorities design collaborative initiatives for efficient service delivery. A multi-step processes was applied to identify and select the three municipalities in the Greater Accra Region for the study. First, the 16 MMDAs in the Greater Accra Region were purposely selected. Second, the three municipal assemblies were selected for the study. The three municipalities were selected because they share land boundaries and have service facilities that are shared by their respective populations. Ga East Municipal Assembly hosts a final disposal site that services both Ga West and La Nkwantanang municipalities. The Ga East Final Disposal Site is one of the largest and most
patronised disposal sites in the southern part of Accra. Also, the Madina market in La Nkwantanang Municipal Assembly serves as the economic nerve-centre for the three municipalities. Residents of the three municipalities share other facilities like clinics, schools and roads.

The study population comprises mainly the core staff in each selected municipality. The core staff includes the Coordinating Director, Planning Officer, Environmental Health Officer and the Engineer. These are staff with the capacity to respond to the study questions. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with the key informants and complimented with observation and review of relevant literature. The review of literature helps the researcher to obtain information on the background and service facilities in the three municipalities. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed and used to interview the core staff.

The data collected focused on areas of service delivery by MMDAs, the determinants for collaboration, design and planning for collaborative initiatives with colleagues MMDAs and other organisations, ways by which collaboration enhances efficient service delivery. Fieldwork was conducted from August to November 2015. Two research assistants were employed to follow-up and collect pertinent data from the three municipalities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaboration in practice at the decentralized local government system

One of the objectives of this study was to explore the determinants for collaboration at MMDAs in Ghana. The theoretical basis for exploring the determinants for collaboration is that one actor must take deliberate action to effect collaborative relations. To explore the determinants based on this theoretical framework, the starting point was to find out whether or not collaborative initiatives take place within the MMDAs. The study found evidence of various forms of collaborative initiatives at the level of the metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (Table 1). The platforms on which these collaborative activities take place include public fora, town hall meetings on specific subject matters, and joint delivery on specific service projects.

The officials of the municipalities largely agreed that collaboration takes place in various forms and between the Assemblies and various actors. One senior officer of the La Nkwantanang Municipal Assembly indicated that:

“As an assembly, we are working hard to reduce our dependence on central government for revenue and we need resources to manage the Assembly. Collaboration is one
Table 1. Forms of Collaborative Initiatives Found in MMDAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Actors Involved</th>
<th>Target Issues</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public-public</td>
<td>Collaborative arrangement between and among state institutions</td>
<td>State Agencies, Missions of governments and Inter-governmental institutions</td>
<td>Improved service delivery</td>
<td>DDF/FOAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private-public</td>
<td>Formal and informal arrangements between state actors and non-state actors</td>
<td>State Private Business Communities Civil Society/NGOs Inter-government Institutions Foreign Missions</td>
<td>Capacity building Participation Accountability Legal reforms Research</td>
<td>Social accountability Consolidated local government bill Citizens perception survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private for profit and non-profit</td>
<td>Collaborative arrangement between non-state actors involving non-profit civil society organisations and profit organisations</td>
<td>Private for profit organisations Charity organizations</td>
<td>Capacity building Services Supply of equipment</td>
<td>Workshops Grants Refuse disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private non-profit</td>
<td>Collaborative arrangement between and among non-profit civil society organizations and voluntary associations</td>
<td>CSOs NGOs OBOs Voluntary groups</td>
<td>Capacity Advocacy Countervailing power</td>
<td>LOGNET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>arrangement between two or more profit making organisations</td>
<td>Profit making companies</td>
<td>Cost efficiency Technology transfer Profit maximization</td>
<td>Zoomlion ESPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


thing that we need and do to raise resources for the management of the Assembly. So in the management of our markets, we collaborate with private contractors who assist us in generating revenues from our commercial areas. This is because we cannot talk about development without talking about resources. Resources should be number one and to be able to generate much revenue, we need to involve people and contractors who have that expertise and the know-how to assist us collect the revenue so that the Assembly can deliver the needed service and infrastructure development for the community".

Another senior officer from the planning Department of the Ga East Municipal Assembly also said:

"The Ga East Municipal Assembly collaborates with various stakeholders in the area of waste management, revenue collection, water supply and urban transport".

The evidence from the field shows clearly that collaboration takes place within the local government system in various forms involving a variety of actors with the Assemblies. Also, in the medium term development plans, each of the three assemblies documented a tall list of collaborators for the implementation of the plan. The obvious presence of collaboration requires an enquiry into the key determinants of collaboration.

Martí’n-Rodriguez et al. (2005) identified three broad levels of determinants for collaboration, which are interactional, organisational and systemic. The interactional relates to processes at work in interpersonal relationships within the collaborating team; the organizational refers to conditions within the organization which may promote collaboration, and the systemic determinant is about the external factors to the organization. In a study on the health care teams in Canada, Martí’n-Rodriguez et al. (2005) argue that the “success of initiatives to develop and consolidate collaborative practices depends on these three macro determinants”. Borrowing from Martí’n-Rodriguez et al. (2005), this study groups the key determinants of collaboration under interaction, organizational factors and systemic environment.

Table 2 shows that the determinants of collaboration reported by the three municipalities are present in each of
Table 2. Determinants of Collaboration in three Local Governments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Govt.</th>
<th>Interactional</th>
<th>Organisational</th>
<th>Systemic Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ga West</td>
<td>Expertise Familiarity</td>
<td>Cost Sharing, Greater Impact</td>
<td>GAMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experience Sharing, Mandate and Functions</td>
<td>Government Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Nkwantanang</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Increase Revenue, Employment Creation, Mandate and Functions</td>
<td>GAMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga East</td>
<td>Expertise Common Boundaries</td>
<td>Financial incentives, Mandate and Functions, Access to resources</td>
<td>GAMA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Darimani, 2015.

the three broad determinants put forward by Martín-Rodriguez et al. (2005). All the three municipalities in the study area reported more determinants from organisation than they did for interactional and systemic determinants. In other words, collaboration at the local government level in the study area is influenced more by the nature and character of the organisation than interpersonal relationships and external factors. This finding is consistent with the conceptual argument that the structural nature, mandate and functions of the local government system provide an already existing platform for collaboration.

At the interactional determinants level, expertise was found to be the key determinant fostering collaboration between and among municipalities with all three of them reporting on it. However, professional expertise is also known to be the cause of fragmentation, rather than collaboration, especially when individuals with the expertise tend to uphold their professional territories. Sicotte et al. (2002) in their study of interprofessional teams in Quebec community health centers have argued that the tendency to maintain professional territories is one of the factors hindering the development of collaborative relationships between professionals. The score for expertise by all three municipalities is recognition of the widespread distribution and interdependence of organizations and people on knowledge and skills. Staff of the district assemblies has been interacting at various platforms, and others have worked together in previous municipalities as colleagues, and have been separated only through national policy of postings. The frequent interpersonal interactions among staff of the various assemblies have fostered an understanding of their own professional differences and the need to pull these differences together to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of their mandate.

Implementation of the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) project was identified as the main external factor determining collaboration among the three municipalities. GAMA is a project funded by the World Bank to support the Government of Ghana’s efforts to increase access to improved sanitation and safe water supply in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area. The project, which has emphasis on low income communities aims to strengthen management of environmental sanitation in the GAMA. The project has four components namely: Component-1 involves the provision of environmental sanitation and water supply services to priority low income areas of the GAMA; Component-2 is the improvement and expansion of water distribution network in the GAMA; Component-3 is planning, improvement and expansion of GAMA-wide environmental sanitation services; and Component-4 is the institutional strengthening of municipal, metropolitan and national institutions.

Implementation of the GAMA has brought together eleven (11) metropolitan and municipal assemblies in the GAMA to collaborate in many areas. The assemblies are: Accra Metro, Adentan, Ashiaman, Ga Central, Ga East, Ga South, Ga West, La Dade Kotopon, La Nkwantanang, Ledzorkuku-Krowor and Tema Metro. Some of the specific areas of the project that determines collaboration are training and faecal sludge management. Training on environmental and social safeguards, procurement and contract management, financial management, and social accountability brings staff of these assemblies at various platforms. These platforms are collaborative platforms as they provide opportunities for sharing and spread of experiences and skills. The platforms also provide some triggers for collaborative initiatives due to the connections that people establish during the training events. The second specific determinant of collaboration among the eleven assemblies is in the area of waste management, in particular the disposal of faecal matter.

The second objective of the study was to find out
whether or not municipalities design and plan for collaboration in their medium term development plans and annual action plans. This objective was considered appropriate in view of the privileged role of municipalities as the planning authorities. The National Development Planning Commission has developed elaborate planning guidelines to assist MMDAs in their planning process. There is a full unit responsible for coordinating the planning through implementation to monitoring and evaluation. For the municipal assemblies this unit is known as the Municipal Planning Coordinating Unit (MPCU) and draws membership from various departments of the Assembly with the Municipal Planning Officer as the secretary.

The planning process usually starts with needs assessment through setting of goals and objectives, prioritisation of activities, schedules of implementation, budget and costing, review by meetings of the assembly and its sub-committees to approve the plan after which the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) also gives concurrent approval for the plans. One of the single most important public events during the planning process is the public hearing held to galvanise views about the plan. The entire planning process provides an opportunity for the assembly to identify, design, and plan implementation of collaborative initiatives.

The study found that all the three municipalities in the study area recognized the central role of collaboration in the planning and implementation of the three-year cycle medium term development plans and the annual action plans derived from the medium term plans. This recognition is evidenced by the list of collaborators specified in their medium term development plans. However, the study did not find evidence of conscious design and plan for collaborative initiatives and activities in the medium term development plans and the annual action plans. Respondents from all the three assemblies indicated “No” when they were asked whether their “Assembly ever design and plan a collaborative initiative with any organization in the last five years”. One senior officer from the MPCU of Ga East indicated that the Ga East Assembly had ever signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with La Nkwantanang Municipal Assembly on waste recycling. The MoU specifically stated the task for each of the two participating municipalities and the role of private sector financing. The study could not however access the MoU from Ga East Municipal Assembly. An MoU would normally provide broad framework for collaboration and set the tone for the design and implementation plan. The availability of an MoU does not therefore constitute the availability of a design and plan.

**Challenges for collaboration in practice**

The study found that designing and planning for collaborative initiatives by local authorities is not an easy task. Several challenges were identified to militate against the design and plan for collaborative initiatives and include inadequate capacity for resource mobilisation, the frequent modification of policy objectives in favour of political patronage, inadequate coordination of development planning data, boundary disputes, and differential priority setting.

MMDAs do not have adequate capacity to mobilise financial resources to design collaborative initiatives, particularly in the area of social services infrastructure. While MMDAs put up various social services infrastructure, those facilities are essentially donor funded or releases of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) all of which have strict guidelines that may not be conducive for collaborative design and implementation. The ability of MMDAs to operate autonomously is severely constrained by their inability to mobilise internally generated funds. As Hyden (2007) demonstrates in his study of decentralized governance in weak states, local authorities operate only with grants in aid from central government, which means that central government actors set the terms for how to use the funds.

The modification of policy objectives to allow for the functioning of political pronouncement tends to diminish the importance of design and plan for collaborative initiative at the local level. Elected officials like assembly members and members of parliament make pronouncements in public aimed at obtaining votes or maintaining them for them in the next elections. These pronouncements often include a mirage of promises that have the tendency to modify policy objectives of local authorities. One senior official reported:

“It has always been difficult when it comes to the selection of projects for implementation. Your bosses have already decided on the projects they want to be located in specific areas so you do not even have the time to design and plan with other actors”.

The mediating role by political office holders into the technocratic terrain does not provide enough respect for the rules and roles that are meant to enhance collaborative design of service delivery. There are also challenges regarding the coordination and sharing of development planning data among MMDAs. These challenges arise because all MMDAs are responding to the national standard policy and practice of planning within the same timeframe leaving little or no room or discourse among them. Data coordination especially by the MPCU and the Regional Planning Coordinating Unit (RPCU) is done at a time there is limited time for MMDAs to effectively engage in discourse. One senior official reported that the “unwillingness of assemblies to share data” is the major cause of lack of design and plan for collaborative initiatives. During the planning of the medium term development plans, all MMDAs are
expected to respond to standard guidelines of the NDPC.

Boundary dispute was identified as one of the major challenges affecting the design and planning for collaborative initiatives. Officers from all the three municipalities in the study area reported on the boundary dispute as a problem that inhibit design and plan for collaboration. Since implementation of the district assembly system of decentralization and local government, the creation of districts often comes with dispute about the name, location of capital and boundaries of the new district. This dispute over land boundary creates mistrust and makes it difficult to bring people from the disputing territories together let alone for them to dialogue on common projects.

Further, there is a challenge working with diversity of autonomous groups with different priorities that are time-bound. Despite the numerous opportunities and benefits provided by collaboration, many officers noted that each MMDA has a particular priority and target in each year making it difficult to canvass for the collaboration with others. One interviewee states that:

“Assemblies have different priorities, they also set different timeframes for meeting their targets, all of these and many others make working together quite challenging for everyone”.

Another dimension of this challenge is when the collaboration is extended to non-state actors such as private companies and non-governmental organizations. Some actors in the private and NGOs sector believe that progress can be very slow working with state institutions due to the bureaucratic processes involved. One NGO official explained that:

“dealing with government institutions is much more bureaucratic and slower than dealing with other NGOs or private profit organizations”.

Other challenges reported are apathy on the part of the population, differences in the priorities of individual assemblies and absence of guidelines for sharing benefits arising from collaborative projects. These challenges call for solutions for addressing them.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper concludes that collaboration among MMDAs in the study area takes place in various forms and the key determinant is the nature and mandate of the organisation. Rather than initiated and effected by a single actor, collaboration in the study area takes place by default, not consciously designed and planned. In other words, the autonomous convergence of mandate and functions of MMDAs stipulated by Act 462 was enough to effect collaboration. This is because the study did not find any particular municipality taking conscious and deliberate practical steps to effect collaboration with another municipality. This conclusion therefore rejects the theoretical argument that convergence of mandate and functions is not enough to effect collaboration without conscious and deliberate initiative by another actor desirous of collaboration.

In the spirit of continuity in ensuring and enhancing participatory decentralized planning, the findings of this paper brings to light the weaknesses of participatory decentralized planning at the horizontal level (i.e. among MMDAs). The findings also underline the importance of horizontal collaborative design and planning as strategy for effective and efficient service delivery among MMDAs that have limited capacity to mobilise internal revenue.

Within the context of public-public partnership and local economic development, the role of the Regional Coordinating Council in the harmonisation of planning and budgeting should emphasize joint design, co-financing and implementation of projects between MMDAs that share boundaries and economic activities. The deliberate effort on the part of the RCC and specific MMDAs to work together on identified service infrastructures would minimise and eventually eliminate the collaboration by default.

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