RESEARCH ARTICLE

PARTICIPATORY AND INNOVATIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES TO PLANNING AND MANAGING URBAN GREEN SPACES TO TRANSFORM ECOTOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Community participation has been seen as an effective process towards implementation and sustainability of development projects. This research attempts to give proposals for improving the quality of urban green spaces in Kisumu city through public involvement. The objective of the study was to develop participatory and innovative design guidelines on urban green space planning that can support ecotourism transformation in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Data was collected from published documents, observation and questionnaires. The study found out that the public's opinions are not openly consulted before decisions on development are made and they are also not involved in the design process. Members of the public do have opinions about the general issue of urban greening, but they are reluctant to express them to the planning authorities or government. The study recommends the use of propaganda to increase public awareness about the environment, in order to protect green space actively. Neighbourhood associations should also be involved in urban green space management, in order to improve the daily management of urban green spaces. Lastly there is need to promote green space activities for ecotourism transformation, in order to incorporate the broader social force into the construction and management of urban green spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Involving citizens in public policy–making is high on the present political agenda. Despite the financial and technical criticisms (McCall, 2004), community participation within spatial planning has been applied in different countries with a varying degree and intensity of participation (Magigi and Majani, 2006). Participatory modes of planning and more institutional arenas for empowered participation have been witnessed more recently. This has created more venues for citizens to participate in issues that they care about. However, empirical studies demonstrate that the pattern of biased representation about who participates still prevails in the majority of new modes of participatory arrangements (Agger, 2012). Many participatory initiatives build on a perception of citizens as a homogeneous group with time on their hands, capable of understanding technical language and with articulatory skills. If planners do not reflect more carefully on how to reach different target groups or citizens, the result will be that few active citizens are included and many are excluded. An urgent challenge that many

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politicians, planners and scholars need to address is how to design inclusive participatory processes.

Problem Statement

Urban green spaces perform various functions and provide multiple benefits. In Kisumu city, most of these spaces are in bad condition or even used as dumping sites (Plate 1). Environment conscious plans calls for greater citizen participation in shaping the environment. This is important because many urban designs have failed totally as a result of continuity in poor management of urban green spaces. It worsens when local people are not responsible as they argue that the facility is not theirs. The overriding research problem can thus be stated that the loss of urban green spaces as a result of human activities is impacting negatively on the local livelihoods and ecotourism thus a need for mitigation measures through urban green planning.

Study Objective

The objective of this research was to develop participatory and innovative design guidelines on urban green space planning that can support ecotourism transformation in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Plate 1. Garbage Disposed within a Green Space in Kisumu City

Literature Review

Overview

Literature reviewed is aimed at identifying gaps from studies done by other authors. The main focus is on community involvement in land use planning. This has made it possible to come up with a conceptual framework from where linkage between community participation, urban green planning and ecotourism transformation is developed.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is emerging as a development path that can enhance environmental conservation (Goma, 2007), promote preservation of cultural heritage as well as provide an alternative source of sustainable livelihood (Hayombe *et al.,* 2012). This concept needs to be promoted by mobilizing the urban community to take initiatives to innovate and create sustainable livelihood in ecotourism. In ecotourism, the processes involved include all aspects of planning, developing, marketing and managing resources and facilities for this form of tourism (WWF, 2001). Ecotourism has become a significant topic in the tourism industry (Weaver and Lawton, 2007; Vincent and Thompson, 2002) and is recognized as a sustainable way to develop regions with abundant tourism resources (Weaver, 2001). Kisumu city in general has a high potential for ecotourism and as such, appropriate participatory strategies must be developed in order to assist in the design of sustainable green cities.

Urban green space planning aims at planning and transforming eco-tourism as an alternative livelihood within urban agriculture and food security complex. Fishing has been one of the resources of livelihood in Kisumu city and its environs and has great potential (Mairura, 2010), however, this resource has been declining over the years due to population and environmental pressures and calls for concerted efforts to provide alternative livelihoods (Hayombe *et al*., 2012). Eco-tourism, thus, becomes a key concept and needs to be integrated in the urban conservation strategy that includes planning and development of urban green spaces.

Community Participation

Agenda 21 clearly identified information, integration, and community participation as key building blocks to help countries achieve development that recognizes these interdependent pillars. It emphasizes that in sustainable development everyone is a user and provider of information. It stresses the need to change from old sector-centered ways of doing business to new approaches that involve cross sectoral co-ordination and the integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes. Agenda 21 emphasizes that broad public participation in decision making is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable development (Will, 2007). Community involvement is the process of seeking and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision (Mdunyelwa, 2008). The principle of community involvement holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process. Community involvement implies that the public's contribution will influence the decision. Community involvement is regarded as a way of empowerment and as a vital part of democratic governance.

The purpose of community involvement is to promote transparency, encourage openness in government and build ownership of development decisions as well as programmes and projects. Community involvement encourages citizens to be more engaged in the decision making processes that have an impact on their local community (UN-HABITAT, 2004). It serves to advance citizens' understanding of how government works and confers upon them the capacity to access governmental decision making processes. Community involvement provides the public with the opportunity to influence and participate in development and projects.

Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder participation can be a potentially useful vehicle to enhance the quality of governing system in urban green space planning process. In practice, to establish a functional structure to involve stakeholders is really a challenging task. This is because urban green space planning process takes place within a country context being influenced by historic and legal tradition, nature of administration, political ideology, legal and

institutional framework and defined policy. All the factors play determining role of how planning process is to be built and this set of factors can encourage or constrain stakeholder participation. Therefore, extent of success or failure of stakeholder involvement depends on nature of the process – role of government, institutional framework for stakeholder interaction, form of stakeholder involvement and local capacity and resources. This research finally argues that to overcome many of its limitations, stakeholder participation must be institutionalized and needs to be encouraged through making aware of its benefits. There is also a significant need for capacity building for dealing with land use management and urban green space planning issues. This should focus on professional educational programmes which could enable professionals to deal with the complex issues of decision making in the field of urban green space planning. Capacity building can broaden the scope of stakeholder participation and therefore, can offer an opportunity of sound land use management.

The Role of Stakeholders' in the Planning Process

Stakeholder participation, viewed as the process of inclusion of different actors is applied in urban green space planning exercises as well as in formal spatial planning exercises of the contemporary times. All the urban challenges abounding, there is need to understand the vital and indispensable role of grassroots institutions have to play in urban land management especially in a situation where public resources are inadequate and urbanization is on the rise. A landmark event in the evolution of participatory planning methodology and law in Kenya was the passing of the Physical Planning Act Cap 286 in 1996. The Act allows for participatory planning in plan preparation and implementation (GoK, 1996). There has been an increasing awareness in the role of community participation in planning projects. Like Kenya, community participation in spatial planning is well supported by the Town and Country Planning Ordinance Cap 378 Section 24 in Tanzania. It allows the residents of land that has been affirmed as planning area to prepare and submit the plan to planning authorities. The challenge is that these statutory rights bestowed on residents are not a common knowledge. The Physical Planning Act Cap 286 empowers the Director of Physical Planning to prepare Local Physical Development Plans. In sub-section three, the Local Physical Development Plans may be prepared for the general purpose of guiding and coordinating development of infrastructural facilities and services of an area (GoK, 1996). The County Physical Planning Office therefore represents the Director of Physical Planning on matters of land development within their area of jurisdiction. The City Planner and other County staff to ensure that the plans are implemented as per the plans and standards set are adhered to. This therefore means that there are two tiers of development authorities. The regulatory framework is conceived and executed mainly by the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development which is under the central government. The local authorities may instigate their own land use plans but the authority of endorsement and approval lies with the central government.

Community Participation in Ecotourism

Doxey (1976) documented the model of the local community's attitude to tourism with an initial euphoria being taken over by apathy, irritation, and eventually antagonism, which reveals the importance of community participation in tourism development. In the last two decades, much research has involved local participation. As Richards and Hall (2000:1) point out, "human communities represent both a primary resource upon which tourism depends, and their existence in a particular place at a particular time may be used to justify the development of tourism itself". The significance of community participation has been widely recognized in tourism research, and the participation of local people has come to be an essential condition of sustainability. Mowforth and Munt (1998: 240) argue that "the greater the degree of local participation, the better the project". Community-based tourism planning approach from a planning perspective was specially developed to emphasize the importance of community participation (Reid, 2003).

Eco-tourism and Local Development

Conventionally, tourism development initiatives "tend to focus exclusively on economic, commercial or environmental impacts"; whereas for local benefits, they "focus only on job creation and cash income" (Ashley, 2000: 6). These perspectives have been recently criticized by rural development researchers for their lack of concern about the rural poor and poverty. As a result, some contend that the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) should be employed to understand and analyze tourism in rural development (Ashley, 2000). Thus there is a growing view that the SLA is a perfect solution to all criticisms imposed on the so-called conventional tourism perspectives in rural development (Cattarinich, 2001). Tourism however, is not the same as other typically 'productive' rural sectors. Simply using the SLA framework to analyze tourism may over-formularize and oversimplify actual complexity and fail to provide a holistic understanding of rural tourism livelihoods (Cattarinich, 2001).

The rural poor are the producers in primary industries. They sell products on the market and gain some of the benefits. Consumers are typically outsiders who consume products while distant from their sites of production. Such consumption does not entail consumer's direct social-cultural influences on the rural poor and affect their social integrity. In tourism, producers are most likely outsiders like external investors, national or local governments rather than local rural residents themselves. In decision-making about how and where tourism will develop the local rural poor's voice is rarely heard (Reid, 2003; Richards and Hall, 2000). Thus local people are no longer the only 'sellers' but often their livelihoods and daily activity patterns constitute the core of the tourism product or destination experience. In terms of consumption, tourists, have to travel to the rural poor to consume tourism products. In coming from different environments the development and cultural divergence between guest and host ensures that social, cultural and ideological differences are often significant issues in tourism development and management. In fact, "the literature on tourism impacts has long since assumed a central position within the emergence of tourism research" (Hall and Page, 2002: 223). Tourism is therefore no longer a simple production-consumption phenomenon. It develops within a complex multi-stakeholder context which involves local

people, governments, enterprises, tourists and sometimes Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Consequently, it may be argued that tourism should not be treated the same way as other productive sectors in addressing livelihood strategies. Rather, tourism should be considered as a context from which the SLA is considered and viewed. These studies reveal that there is very little information on the size of the sector in terms of the proportion it contributes to the overall tourism income and the amount of investment that has gone into its development.

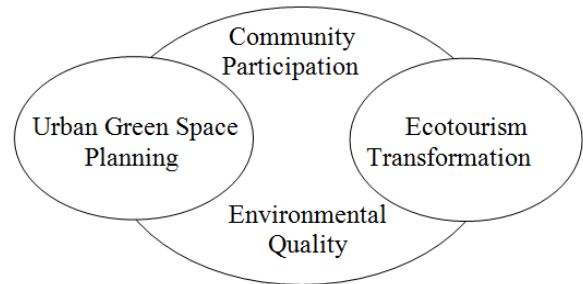## Eco-tourism and Green Space Planning

Mayaka and Prasad (2011) states that there appears to be systemic and strategic issues and challenges that may be undermining the competitiveness and sustainability of Kenya's tourism industry. Growth of tourism and the lack of resources to manage tourism are leading to persistent tensions between stakeholders and presenting long-term threats to the tourism industry (Macharia *et al.,* 2010). Overpopulation, changes in land use, poaching, deforestation, land degradation, conflicts due to unequal sharing of revenue, poor infrastructure and insecurity all contribute to these tensions. The popularity of ecotourism in Kenya has much to do with the search for a richer holiday experience by the guest (Okech, 2007). Kenya initiated some of Africa's earliest experiments in community-based conservation using park and tourism revenues and began the first efforts to systematically adopt ecotourism principles and practices in its national park system (Honey, 2008). Available information on ecotourism in Kenya reveals a lot about the institutional structure, distribution, innovations, stakeholders, management structures/models and the product (GoK, 2010). From the available literature, it is evident that very little has been done on the linkages which exist between ecotourism and green space planning and that is the main knowledge gap which this study intends to fill.

Conceptual Framework

This research is anchored on the concepts of community participation, urban green space planning and ecotourism (Fig. 1.). Proper management of green cities requires that the local community be involved in the planning process from inception to implementation. Castell, 2010 states that the terms participation and involvement are often used interchangeably in studies of things such as citizens participating in urban planning or residents managing shared spaces. Participating is more connected to events while involvement is more of a role. Urban forestry, urban agriculture and retrofitting as some of the component of urban green planning thus must be promoted. Urban agriculture and urban forestry will increase the acreage under greenery leading to improved environmental quality. Cities need to be planned to provide opportunities to enhance the livelihoods of the inhabitants. These includes developing means by which waste generated by cities can be turned to advantage, for example, through the production of organic compost for food growing purposes. Capacity building hence must be carried out to ensure that the local community is educated and get involved in this process.

Urban green space planning promotes ecotourism as it involves the planning of eco-cities, eco-sites, green infrastructure, green transport and green buildings for sustainable development to be realized. Sustainable development depends on the relationship between eco-tourism and environment. Suitable management for eco-tourism development is essential in order to conserve and maintain the biological richness of the area as well as enhancing the economy of the local people. Eco-tourism involves the participation of the local community to enhance their livelihoods. Eco-tourism, therefore, should be regarded as an important tool for sustainable development. The promotion of eco-tourism and urban green space planning will have a positive impact on livelihoods and lead to realization of environmental benefits such as reduced pollution which helps improve public health and absorption of green house gases. This is as depicted in Fig. 2.
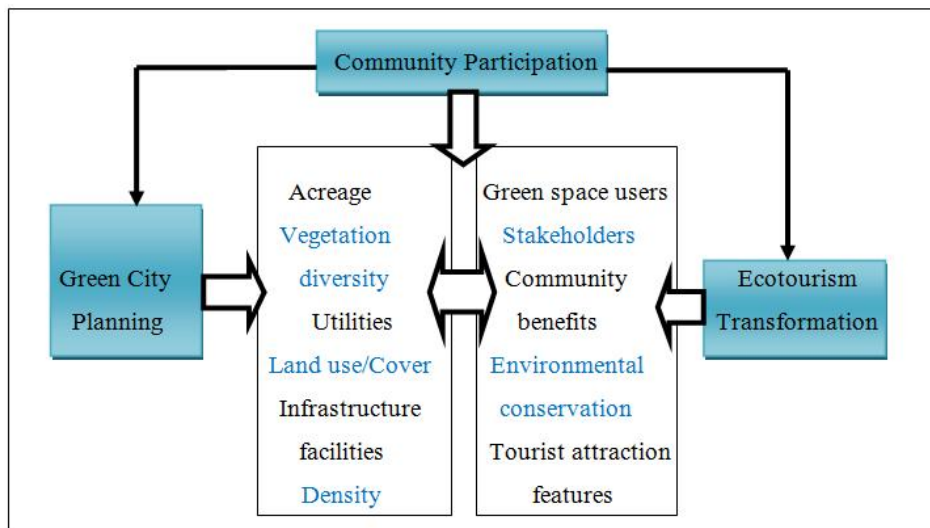

Source: Author, 2014

Fig. 1. Key Concepts in the Project

Public Participation in Urban Green Planning

This research finally argues that to overcome many of its limitations, stakeholder participation must be institutionalized and needs to be encouraged through making aware of its benefits. There is also a significant need for capacity building for dealing with land use management and urban green space planning issues. This should focus on professional educational programmes which could enable professionals to deal with the complex issues of decision making in the field of urban green space planning. Capacity building can broaden the scope of stakeholder participation and therefore, can offer an opportunity of sound land use management. Public participation in the planning and management of urban green space needs to be emphasized. Despite urban green space planning being a government activity, the construction and management of these spaces needs the participation of the government, the planners and the public. The public are the main user of the urban green space, whose opinions represent the society's needs. There environmental awareness is not yet very strong. In most cases, the public's opinions are not openly consulted before the decision on development is made. They are also not involved in the design process. One common way of communicating with the public is by introducing the project through billboards placed on the project site when construction starts. This is a requirement by the Architectural Association of Kenya as well as the planning authorities by laws. Even though there is no formal communication with the public in the design and construction process, the practitioners who design or develop urban green spaces think that they have many opportunities to communicate with the public. They also think that they know what the public likes. Many citizens do not care much about the general issue of urban green space development.

Source: Author, 2014

Fig. 2. Conceptual Framework

They care more about the issues that are closer to their daily life, such as housing, food, health care and income. In general, citizens' awareness is not high enough. People express their opinion only when it affects their own interest, for example, if a tree blocks the light. Interviews with a few citizens indicated that members of the public do have opinions about the general issue of urban greening, but they are reluctant to express them to the planning authorities or government.

In case of dissatisfaction, the public in most cases do not formally contact the planning authorities. Most of them do not seem much concerned about urban green space development. They think that it should be the government officials' problem, as the city's image is their image when they receive guests. Citizens are seldom involved in the planning, design and management of urban green spaces.

Summary

This chapter introduced the main actors involved in urban green space planning and development in Kisumu. It also presented the main processes of planning and development of urban green spaces, as well as the interaction among the actors during these processes. The analysis shows that public actors play the leading role in green space planning and development. Among these public actors, the top leaders are involved and have a strong influence on the decisions made. Interaction and communication across sectors and various city zones is not sufficient. Even though the planners and designers often communicate with the city leaders and public actors, there are conflicting opinions between these two groups of actors. There is a growing number of semi-public and private actors relevant to the context of green space, but they are not much involved in the planning and decision making. Very few NGOs are active in Kisumu, and they are not involved in green- space planning and development. Public participation is encouraged by the government and there are some formal channels for expressing public opinion. However, channels for involving the public at the early stages of the planning and decision making process
are missing. The public, on the other hand, does not seem very motivated to express its opinion. Thus, the process of planning and development of urban green spaces involves only a limited number of actors, mainly within the public sector. Other stakeholders and the public are far from having an influence on decision making.

Recommendations

The urban green plan should include the following suggestions for improving public participation in the implementation process of the urban green plan. These are:

- conduct a public survey in the urban planning and design process, in order to incorporate the public's will
- use propaganda to increase public awareness about the environment, in order to protect green space actively
- involve retired people in urban green space management, in order to improve the daily management of urban green spaces; and
- promote green space activities, in order to incorporate the broader social force into the construction and management of urban green spaces.

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