ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intersection of urban governance and the politics of climate change using the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) of Ghana's Greater Accra Region as a case study. It explores how political dynamics, institutional arrangements, and actor interactions shape climate-related decision-making, policy implementation, and urban resilience efforts. The study advances urban climate governance scholarship by demonstrating how political patronage, institutional fragmentation, and donor-driven incentives interact to shape climate action in African cities. In particular, prevailing governance frameworks tend to privilege coordination and institutional capacity, while offering limited explanatory leverage for understanding power relations, political bargaining, and actor interests that condition climate action outcomes in practice. The study adopted a qualitative methodology drawing on in-depth interviews, and is theoretically framed by Climate Governance Analysis, Urban Political Ecology, and the Complexity of Joint Action frameworks. The findings reveal that climate governance in AMA is deeply politicized and fragmented. Political patronage and elite capture significantly influence land use and infrastructure planning, often at odds with environmental priorities. Despite the presence of multiple governance actors including municipal agencies, NGOs, and donor organizations there is limited political literacy among them, with most understanding climate change as a technical rather than a political issue. This weakens collective agency and limits transformative potential. The action arena is marked by overlapping mandates, informal relationships, and parallel donor structures, resulting in fragmented coordination and weak institutional ownership. State actors are driven by regulatory compliance and donor conditionalities, while non-state actors pursue visibility, funding, or commercial gain, leading to diverging interests and disjointed actions. The study concludes that effective climate governance in AMA requires rethinking institutional arrangements, enhancing political and technical capacity, promoting inclusive stakeholder participation, and reducing overdependence on external funding. The implications extend to public administration as a discipline, highlighting the need to embed climate governance, complexity management, and political economy analysis within theory and practice. This reconceptualization is critical for developing context-sensitive, sustainable urban governance systems in the face of climate change