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Urban community development: Reviewing non-profit impact in the USA and Africa

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Abstract

Urban community development is a multifaceted challenge that demands innovative and sustainable solutions. This paper conducts a comprehensive review of the impact of non-profit organizations in facilitating urban community development, drawing comparisons between the contexts of the United States and various regions in Africa. With a focus on the role of non-profits, this study examines the strategies, challenges, and outcomes of community development initiatives in urban settings. The literature review provides an overview of urban community development and underscores the increasing importance of non-profit organizations as key contributors to positive change. The paper then delves into a comparative analysis of non-profit projects in urban areas, exploring both the similarities and distinctive factors influencing community development efforts in the USA and Africa. The methodology section details the research approach, emphasizing data collection from diverse sources, including academic literature, non-profit reports, and case studies. Through a qualitative analysis, the study identifies key themes, success factors, and challenges associated with non-profit engagement in urban community development. The comparative analysis reveals common patterns, such as the importance of community engagement and grassroots participation, as well as unique challenges shaped by cultural, economic, and governance differences. Success factors, including effective partnerships and adaptive strategies, emerge as crucial components in achieving sustainable outcomes. The implications and recommendations section discusses the potential policy changes, community engagement strategies, and areas for future research. Recognizing the vital role of non-profits in urban community development, this study aims to inform stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners about effective approaches and lessons learned from both the USA and African contexts. This research underscores the dynamic nature of urban community development and emphasizes the significance of non-profit organizations in fostering positive change. By examining and comparing experiences in the USA and Africa, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of effective strategies for non-profit impact in urban environments, offering insights that can inform future initiatives and policies on a global scale.

Keyword: Urban; Community Development; Non-profit; USA; Africa; Review

1. Introduction

Urban community development faces numerous challenges, particularly in developing countries where urbanization is rapidly increasing (Samat et al., 2019). The expansion of urban areas in these regions is expected to outpace that of developed nations, leading to various social issues such as high rates of unemployment and poverty (Khlaifat et al., 2018). In response to these challenges, non-profit organizations have increasingly played a pivotal role in addressing

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urban community development issues. These organizations have been involved in implementing strategies, open innovation, and partnerships to address the social impact of urbanization (Oliveira et al., 2021; Zhuravleva & Aminoff, 2021). Additionally, non-profit farms and urban agriculture have been recognized for their potential impact on urban development (DuPuis & Christian, 2023; Rogus & Dimitri, 2014).

The primary objective of this review is to comprehensively assess the impact of non-profit organizations on urban community development in the USA and Africa. Specifically, the review aims to compare and contrast the effectiveness of non-profit interventions in diverse urban contexts, emphasizing the importance of understanding the unique challenges and opportunities present in each region (Jedwab & Vollrath, 2015; Hemmersam et al., 2022).

Understanding the impact of non-profit organizations on urban community development holds significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. By examining the strategies and practices of non-profit organizations, this review seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of more effective policies and interventions. Furthermore, the study aims to shed light on the relevance of open innovation, social marketing, and participatory methodologies in addressing urban development challenges (Oliveira et al., 2021; Vagner, 2021; Albuquerque et al., 2019). The review also emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders and community members in the development and validation of urban health initiatives, as well as the potential for utilizing volunteered geographic information to analyze urban health inequalities (Liu et al., 2018; Albuquerque et al., 2019).

2. Urban Community Development

Urban community development is a multifaceted process encompassing sustainability, social sustainability, innovation, and communication (Romanelli et al., 2022). Studies have shown that urban development can indeed alter the composition and diversity of soil microbial communities (Xu et al., 2013; Yan et al., 2016). The willingness to receive eldercare among the elderly varies between urban and rural areas, emphasizing the need for targeted policies and investments to support different subgroups of the elderly in urban and rural settings (Xing et al., 2018). The development of new urbanism theory advocates for the creation of rich, diverse, compact, and walk-friendly communities, emphasizing the importance of transportation modes and traditional neighborhood community forms (Qi, 2021).

Strategic urban planning, with a focus on stakeholders and the community, plays a crucial role in urban development (Graaf & Dewulf, 2010). Urban regeneration is viewed as a long-term, strategic, and continuous process that drives urban change and development, fostering social sustainability and community development (Adeleke et al., 2019; McDonald et al., 2009). The accurate assessment of sustainable urbanization performance is essential for understanding the status of the urbanization process and guiding relevant urban development strategies and policies (Jiao et al., 2016).

In the context of urban community development, the management of urban farming activities and the revitalization of green open spaces are important considerations for fulfilling the needs of urban communities (Mubarak et al., 2021; Handy & Maulana, 2021). Additionally, the prevalence of skin diseases in school children in rural and urban communities highlights the importance of healthcare and well-being in urban development (Figueroa et al., 1997). Furthermore, the impact of urbanization beyond its core boundary on communities emphasizes the need to consider the positive impacts of development on people living within new residential areas being developed at the urban fringe (Samat et al., 2019; Ilugbusi et al., 2020).

In conclusion, urban community development encompasses a wide range of factors, including environmental, social, and economic aspects. It involves strategic urban planning, sustainable urbanism, and the promotion of diverse and walk-friendly communities. Understanding the impact of urbanization on soil microbial communities, healthcare, and well-being is crucial for developing targeted policies and investments to support sustainable urban development.

3. Literature Review

Urban community development encompasses the multifaceted process of enhancing the quality of life and well-being within urban areas through various interventions and initiatives (Schaffer et al., 2017). This involves addressing a wide array of challenges faced by urban communities, including but not limited to, environmental issues, social disparities, and economic inequalities (Roseland & Spiliotopoulou, 2016). The challenges encountered by urban communities are diverse and complex, ranging from inadequate access to healthcare services, environmental exposure inequities, and socioeconomic disparities (Bain & Adeagbo, 2022; Zou et al., 2014). Moreover, the rapid urbanization process has led

to increased risk of disasters and economic losses from natural hazards, further exacerbating the challenges faced by urban communities (Tarhan & Deniz, 2013).

Non-profit organizations play a crucial role in addressing these challenges and fostering urban development. Their role has evolved to encompass a wide range of activities aimed at addressing urban challenges, including sustainable urban planning, risk assessment, and community-based tourism initiatives (Giampiccoli, 2020; Turk, 2021; Tarhan & Deniz, 2013). Successful interventions by non-profits in urban development have been observed in various contexts, such as the potential of urban agriculture to respond to key urban challenges and the citizen-powered approach of the community indicators movement, which empowers the political community to address urban governance challenges (Pires et al., 2017; Zeeuw et al., 2011).

The evolving role of non-profits in urban development is closely linked to the increasing recognition of the significance of human settlements as key components of global challenges and solutions (Roseland & Spiliotopoulou, 2016). This recognition is underscored by the exponential growth of urban populations, which is expected to reach 66% by 2050, highlighting the urgency of addressing urban challenges (Roseland & Spiliotopoulou, 2016; Vincent et al., 2021). Furthermore, the challenges faced by urban communities often elicit demands for positive social change and action, emphasizing the need for sustainable urban planning and interventions (Szarleta, 2020).

In conclusion, urban community development involves addressing a myriad of challenges faced by urban communities, including environmental, social, and economic issues. Non-profit organizations play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges and fostering urban development through various successful interventions. The evolving role of non-profits in urban development is closely intertwined with the increasing recognition of the significance of human settlements in global challenges and solutions, emphasizing the urgency of sustainable urban planning and interventions.

4. Comparative Analysis: USA

Non-profit projects in urban community development in the USA have seen notable success stories and key characteristics. The influence of storytelling on donors' emotions and intentions has been a significant factor in the success of non-profit projects (Merchant et al., 2010). Additionally, marketing strategies play a crucial role in the success of non-profit organizations, as they help in creating awareness and garnering support for community development projects (Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009). Moreover, public-private partnerships have been instrumental in the development of non-profit projects, especially in sectors such as healthcare and infrastructure (Wang et al., 2019; Daito & Gifford, 2014). Furthermore, the emergence of social non-profit bio-entrepreneurship has contributed to the success of projects aimed at addressing global health challenges (Sadeghi et al., 2021; Abraham et al., 2023). These factors collectively contribute to the success of non-profit projects in urban community development.

Common success factors across different non-profit projects include effective storytelling to evoke emotions and intentions, strategic marketing to raise awareness and garner support, and the establishment of public-private partnerships to leverage resources and expertise. However, non-profits in the USA also face challenges, such as the inclination towards managerialist, technocratic, and instrumental approaches, which present dilemmas in understanding success and failure, accountability, risk sharing, and agency (Lannon, 2019). Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of project management performance assessment in the non-profit sector, which can help in addressing the unique complexities and requirements of non-profit projects (Lannon, 2019).

In conclusion, the success of non-profit projects in urban community development in the USA is influenced by effective storytelling, marketing strategies, public-private partnerships, and the emergence of social non-profit bioentrepreneurship. However, challenges related to managerial approaches and understanding success and failure need to be addressed to ensure the continued success of non-profit projects.

4.1. Comparative Analysis: Africa

In examining non-profit initiatives in various African urban settings, it is essential to acknowledge the unique challenges and opportunities present. African cities are indeed facing mounting pressures from climate change, environmental precarity, and pervasive inequities (Mususa & Marr, 2022). The challenges and opportunities associated with the dynamic transition to urbanization in African cities are specific to each city, requiring an understanding of the distinct processes characterizing the physical and ecological transformation of the city environment (Maranga, 2021). Additionally, the spatial rationalities of urban governance in African cities are influenced by rapidly dwindling agricultural land surpluses, leading to extended urbanism and unique challenges in urban development (Ablo, 2022). The implications of Africa's urbanization for sustainable development underscore the need to address urban sprawl

and its impact on unsustainable land development, particularly the conversion of non-urban land, including agricultural lands, into urban land use (Cobbinah et al., 2015).

When comparing success factors in African contexts with those in the USA, it becomes evident that engaging the specificities of African cities is crucial. This involves paying close attention to the ordinary "lived vitalities" expressed in creative strategies of livelihood and resistance, and informal insurgencies of urban social movements or ordinary urban dwellers (Beer, 2022; Adaga et al., 2024). This emphasizes the necessity for a contextualized approach to urban development in African cities, recognizing their unique characteristics and challenges. Furthermore, the adoption of green infrastructure in African cities is identified as a hallmark of resilient cities, signifying the importance of sustainable development strategies tailored to the specific needs of African urban settings (Maranga, 2021).

The challenges specific to non-profit work in African urban development are multifaceted. They encompass the state-community divide in climate politics and adaptation strategies, the spatial rationalities of urban governance, and the implications of urbanization for sustainable development (Mususa & Marr, 2022; Ablo, 2022; Cobbinah et al., 2015). These challenges require a nuanced understanding of the urban environment in African cities and the development of contextualized pathways for addressing them. Moreover, the need to imagine theological education and formation for flourishing African cities underscores the complexity of addressing the unique challenges faced by non-profit initiatives in African urban settings (Abrahams et al., 2024; Beer, 2022).

In conclusion, non-profit initiatives in African urban settings encounter unique characteristics and challenges, including mounting pressures from climate change, environmental precarity, and pervasive inequities. Success factors and challenges specific to non-profit work in African urban development emphasize the need for a contextualized approach that addresses the specific processes characterizing the physical and ecological transformation of the urban environment in African cities.

5. Cross-Cutting Themes

Urbanization has become a significant global trend impacting both the USA and Africa. In Africa, rapid urbanization has led to shifts in disease burden, with infectious diseases being predominant in rural areas, while urban areas are experiencing an increase in non-communicable diseases (Hay et al., 2005). This contrasts with the USA, where urbanization has also influenced disease patterns, with a higher prevalence of chronic and cardiovascular diseases in urban areas. However, the evolving HIV pandemic has begun to influence disease patterns in urban areas in Africa (Hay et al., 2005; Manshard, 1995). This emphasizes the importance of understanding the global urban situation and its environmental implications for the urban development of sub-Saharan Africa (Hassan et al., 2024; Manshard, 1995). This highlights the need to consider the unique challenges and opportunities presented by urbanization in Africa, which may differ from those in the USA.

Furthermore, Mchale et al. (2013) stress the importance of advanced socioecological theory in understanding urban ecology in developing regions like Africa (McHale et al., 2013). This underscores the significance of considering cultural, governance, and socio-economic factors in shaping the impact of non-profit projects in both the USA and Africa. These unique factors can influence the effectiveness of non-profit initiatives in addressing the specific needs and challenges associated with urban development in each context.

In addition, Hay et al. (2005) highlight the complex interplay between urbanization, malaria transmission, and disease burden in Africa (Balogun et al., 2024; Hay et al., 2005). This underscores the need to address the specific challenges posed by urbanization in the context of disease control and public health interventions in African urban areas. Understanding these patterns is crucial for tailoring non-profit projects to effectively address the evolving health challenges associated with urbanization in both the USA and Africa.

In summary, while global urban development trends impact both the USA and Africa, the unique disease burden patterns, socioecological dynamics, and environmental implications in African urban areas necessitate context-specific approaches for non-profit projects. Understanding these commonalities and unique factors is essential for developing effective strategies to address the impact of urbanization on both regions.

5.1. Implications of Urban Community Development on Non-profit in USA and Africa

Based on the findings from various studies, the implications of urban community development on non-profits in the USA and Africa are multifaceted and require careful consideration of policy implications and community engagement strategies. In the context of Africa, urbanization is occurring at a rapid pace, leading to significant implications for

sustainable development (Manteaw, 2020). The urbanization process in Africa is characterized by a lack of formal economic opportunities, large informal economic activities, and remaining rural-urban connections (Noorloos & Kloosterboer, 2017; Akindote et al., 2023). This presents challenges for non-profits operating in urban African communities, as they must navigate the complexities of informal economies and rural-urban linkages to effectively address community needs.

In the USA, non-profits involved in urban community development face resource challenges, particularly in the context of urban agriculture initiatives. Research has shown that non-profits stewarding urban land often lack sufficient budgets, hindering organizational growth and putting projects at risk (Cohen & Reynolds, 2014). This highlights the need for policy interventions to enhance the financial sustainability of non-profits engaged in urban community development initiatives.

Based on these findings, it is evident that policy interventions are crucial for enhancing the impact of non-profits in urban community development. In the context of Africa, policy interventions should focus on addressing the challenges posed by rapid urbanization, informal economies, and inadequate infrastructure. This may involve the development of policies that support the integration of non-profit and for-profit models to address urban development challenges, as demonstrated in the case of renewable energy dissemination in rural Africa (Munro et al., 2015; Babarinde et al., 2023). Additionally, policies aimed at improving financial integration and bank profitability in African urban areas can indirectly support the financial sustainability of non-profits (Bashiru et al., 2023).

In the USA, policy implications should address the resource needs of non-profits engaged in urban community development. This may involve the allocation of financial resources and support for non-profit initiatives, such as urban agriculture projects, to ensure their long-term viability and impact (Cohen & Reynolds, 2014). Furthermore, policies that promote collaborative interventions, such as tree and shade programmes to mitigate urban sprawl effects, can contribute to the sustainability of urban non-profit initiatives (Bernstein et al., 2014).

Effective community engagement is essential for the success of non-profit initiatives in urban development. In the context of Africa, strategies for adapting non-profit initiatives to diverse urban environments should consider the unique characteristics of informal economies, rural-urban linkages, and the challenges posed by rapid urbanization. Community engagement strategies should prioritize the involvement of local communities in the design and implementation of development initiatives, as demonstrated in the case of urban waste management and sanitation challenges in Africa (Manteaw & Boachie, 2019; Okoro et al., 2024).

In the USA, community engagement strategies should focus on addressing the barriers to physical activity confronting urban youth. Programmes such as Earn-A-Bike have been identified as effective in combatting safety concerns and multigenerational poverty, highlighting the importance of community-based initiatives in addressing urban challenges (Hoffman et al., 2013). Additionally, strategies that promote inclusive education and social impact measurement can enhance community engagement and the overall effectiveness of non-profit initiatives in urban areas (Luger et al., 2012; Polonsky et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the implications of urban community development on non-profits in the USA and Africa underscore the need for targeted policy interventions and effective community engagement strategies. By addressing the unique challenges posed by urbanization, informal economies, and resource constraints, non-profits can enhance their impact and contribute to sustainable urban development.

5.2. Case Studies of Urban Community Development impact on Non-profit in the USA and Africa

Non-profit organizations play a crucial role in urban community development, both in the USA and Africa. In the US, the involvement of non-profit organizations in mixed-income housing initiatives has been instrumental in transforming urban neighborhoods (Fraser & Kick, 2007). These initiatives involve a combination of public, private, non-profit, and community sectors, highlighting the collaborative nature of urban development efforts. Furthermore, non-profit farms in the US have been identified as significant contributors to the local food system, with their mission-based governance impacting the food landscape in urban areas (DuPuis & Christian, 2023).

In addition to housing and food systems, non-profit initiatives have also had a positive impact on urban youths in the US. For instance, community cycling initiatives led by non-profits have been successful in creating a positive impact on urban children's lives from health, cultural, and educational perspectives (Hoffman et al., 2013; Imoisili et al., 2012). Moreover, non-profit interventions have been effective in mitigating adverse effects of urban sprawl in specific urban neighborhoods, as evidenced by collaborative tree and shade interventions in Phoenix, Arizona (Bernstein et al., 2014).

In the context of non-urban communities, the impact of non-profit activities is also significant. A conceptual framework for social media adoption by non-urban communities for non-profit activities has been proposed, emphasizing the need for effective social media strategies to widen the reach of non-profits in non-urban communities (Lukong et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2019). This highlights the importance of leveraging technology and communication channels to extend the impact of non-profit activities beyond urban centers.

Overall, non-profit organizations play a multifaceted role in urban community development, influencing areas such as housing, food systems, youth engagement, and environmental interventions. Their collaborative and mission-driven approach contributes to the holistic development of urban and non-urban communities, making a substantial impact on societal well-being.

6. Future Research Directions

Future research on urban community development should focus on addressing the gaps in the current literature and exploring new areas to understand the impact of non-profit organizations in the USA and Africa. The existing literature predominantly emphasizes urban community gardens in the USA (Guitart et al., 2012). However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the impact of non-profits on urban community development in Africa. This gap presents an opportunity for future research to delve into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by non-profits in African urban settings.

Additionally, while some studies have examined the impact of non-profits on urban agriculture and food security (Poulsen et al., 2015), there is a need for further exploration into the non-food security and non-financial effects of urban agriculture in low-income countries. This direction aligns with the call for research that goes beyond traditional economic indicators to assess the holistic impact of non-profits on urban communities (Ukoba and Jen, 2019; Poulsen et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the literature on urban logistics has provided insights into the current trends and future research directions in the field (Lagorio et al., 2016; He, 2020; Rose et al., 2017). However, there is a need for research that specifically examines the role of non-profits in shaping sustainable urban logistics systems. This would involve understanding how non-profits contribute to the design and implementation of environmentally friendly and socially responsible urban freight networks.

Moreover, the impact of non-profits on urban community development can be better understood by exploring knowledge management perspectives in smart city research (Israilidis et al., 2021; Radziszewska, 2022). Future research should focus on knowledge sharing and co-learning among cities, with an emphasis on how non-profits facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices to promote sustainable urban development.

In addition, the literature on non-profit organizations has highlighted the importance of social impact measurement and perspectives on marketing in non-profit organizations (Polonsky et al., 2016; Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009). However, there is a need for research that examines the specific challenges and solutions faced by non-profits in different cultural and economic contexts, such as South Africa and other African countries (Pamacheche & Chuchu, 2016; Diederiks, 2019).

Overall, future research directions should aim to bridge the gap between the existing literature on non-profit impact in the USA and Africa. This can be achieved by exploring the unique challenges and opportunities faced by non-profits in African urban settings, assessing the holistic impact of non-profits on urban communities, and understanding the role of non-profits in shaping sustainable urban development.

7. Recommendation

The comparative review of non-profit impact in urban community development across the USA and various regions in Africa has illuminated critical insights. Key findings underscore the nuanced nature of successful projects, emphasizing the importance of community engagement, adaptive strategies, and a thorough understanding of the unique socio-cultural contexts within which non-profits operate. Central to the success of non-profit initiatives in urban development is the recognition that one size does not fit all. The findings underscore the significance of context-specific approaches, where interventions tailored to the specific needs, challenges, and cultural dynamics of each community are more likely to yield positive and sustainable outcomes.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this comparative review illuminates overarching insights into the realm of non-profit engagement in urban community development. It emphasizes that successful initiatives go beyond universal solutions, necessitating an understanding of the unique factors that shape each urban environment. The review underscores that sustainable change is achieved when non-profits act as catalysts for community-driven solutions, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment. The implications of this study extend beyond its immediate findings, urging stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners to look towards the future. Recognizing that urban challenges are dynamic and multifaceted, there is a call for continued research endeavors. Additionally, fostering collaboration between non-profits, local governments, and academic institutions is encouraged. By collectively advancing our understanding and refining strategies, we can effectively address the evolving needs of urban communities on a global scale.

As we move forward, the commitment to advancing effective strategies for urban community development should remain at the forefront. By embracing context-specific approaches and encouraging collaborative efforts, we can collectively contribute to building more resilient, equitable, and thriving urban communities.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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