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EDITORIAL

Planning, Governance and Sustainable Habitat Transformation in Africa

This Volume 21 Issue 3 of Africa Habitat Review brings together thirteen articles that address the interconnected challenges and opportunities shaping planning, governance and sustainable habitat transformation in Africa. The contributions span riparian management, land conflicts, informal settlement sustainability, urban renewal, access to nature and psychological resilience, student housing affordability, green city identity, vernacular architecture, community participation in development control, construction project performance, housing delivery, digital infrastructure and urban-rural linkages. Collectively, the papers demonstrate the importance of integrated planning, effective governance, context-responsive design, institutional coordination and evidence-based decision-making in advancing more sustainable, inclusive and resilient African habitats.

The article on *Riparian Zone Planning and Governance Challenges in Nairobi River Basin, Kenya: A Systematic Literature Review* identifies the major planning and governance challenges affecting riparian management in Nairobi City County. Guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), the systematic review synthesised 41 peer-reviewed articles, academic theses and official reports. Four planning-oriented themes emerged: institutional fragmentation, progressive physical encroachment, weak policy implementation and integrated planning interventions. The review reveals that Kenya's legal frameworks for riparian protection differ in specification and are inconsistently enforced, with degradation arising from fragmented governance, conflicting laws and weak enforcement. It provides an integrated planning and governance framework to guide sustainable riparian management in Nairobi and other rapidly urbanising cities.

The article on *Factors Influencing Land Conflicts in Tanzania: A Case Study of Iyumbu Ward, Dodoma* assesses the factors influencing land conflicts in Iyumbu Ward, Dodoma Region. Guided by Institutional Theory, the study employed quantitative and qualitative approaches, drawing on questionnaires and key informant interviews involving 98 households and selected key informants. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression and content analysis. The results identify corruption, rapid urbanisation, weak land-use planning, competing land uses and speculative land grabbing as factors influencing land conflicts, with rapid urbanisation, corruption and weak land-use planning emerging as statistically significant predictors. The study recommends stronger land governance, enhanced tenure security and community participation, improved land-use planning and anti-corruption measures.

The article on *Urban Quality Indicators for Assessing Sustainability in Informal Settlements in Mozambique: A Case Study of Nampula City* develops and applies a locally grounded approach for selecting, testing and prioritising urban-quality indicators in Namutequeliua and Muatala in Nampula City. A mixed-methods sequential assessment framework combined expert consultation through Delphi, prioritisation using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), and neighbourhood assessment using the Sustainability Barometer (SB). Service infrastructure received the highest thematic weight at 0.25, while both neighbourhoods were classified within the lower, potentially unsustainable range. Between 2017 and 2022, energy and transport dimensions improved, whereas water supply, waste and wastewater deteriorated. The resulting framework is intended to support evidence-based planning, prioritisation of investment needs and monitoring of upgrading interventions in informal settlements.

The article on *Sustainable Design of the Mousgoum Obus Hut in Cameroon: An Integrated QFD-AHP Approach* proposes an integrated multi-criteria framework for optimising the sustainable design of the Obus hut of the Mousgoum people while preserving local cultural identity. The study combines Quality Function Deployment (QFD) and the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to identify and prioritise technical,

environmental and architectural design criteria. Stabilised earth-based materials, bioclimatic orientation and cross-ventilation openings emerge as critical technical solutions for enhancing thermal comfort and natural ventilation while reducing environmental impact. Environmental and bioclimatic criteria account for 54% of overall importance, followed by material-related criteria at 30% and architectural criteria at 16%, with thermal comfort and ecological compatibility of materials emerging as the most influential parameters. The study demonstrates the value of an integrated QFD-AHP decision-support framework for promoting African vernacular architecture within environmental, energy and socio-cultural sustainability objectives.

The article on *Correlation Between Access to Nature and Psychological Resilience in Everyday Activity Spaces in Nairobi CBD* explores the relationship between exposure to nature and psychological resilience within everyday activity spaces in Nairobi's Central Business District. Drawing on 1,407 valid responses, exposure was established from places respondents frequently visited or deliberately avoided and mapped using QGIS. Exploratory factor analysis identified open spaces and street trees as two access-to-nature constructs, while PLS-SEM and generalised additive models assessed linear and non-linear correlations. Open spaces were negatively correlated with sense of coherence (SOC) and positively correlated with flourishing, while street trees were positively correlated with SOC. Moderation and mediation correlations further suggest that the relationships were shaped by users' exposure, socioeconomic status and perceptions, with SOC mediating relationships between the constructs and flourishing. The study highlights interstitial urban spaces as important correlates of psychological resilience.

The article on *Student Perceptions of Housing Affordability: Comparing University-Provided and Private Rental Accommodation at the University of Nairobi* compares students' perceptions of affordability between university-provided housing and private rental accommodation. Adopting a multidimensional understanding of affordability encompassing direct housing costs, indirect living expenses, housing quality, convenience and perceived value, the study used a mixed-methods cross-sectional design involving 83 students, complemented by key informant interviews with five university and private accommodation representatives. The results indicate that university-provided housing involved lower rental and transport costs, while students in private rental accommodation reported higher ratings for maintenance, physical housing quality and residential satisfaction. Differences in perceived affordability and value for money between the two accommodation types were statistically non-significant. The study demonstrates the multidimensional nature of student housing affordability and contributes comparative evidence to the Kenyan student housing literature.

The article on Green City Identity: *A Multidimensional and Multiscalar Planning Construct for Sustainable Urban Development in Nairobi* develops Green City Identity (GCI) beyond conventional ecological performance to encompass the ecological, spatial, experiential, social and institutional qualities through which urban greenness is created and experienced. An embedded mixed-methods multiple-case study integrated surveys, field observations, key informant interviews, GIS analysis and document review across 12 selected environments in Nairobi City County. Data from 383 survey respondents and 16 key informants were analysed across six dimensions of GCI. Social and Community Value Identity recorded the highest mean score at 73.77%, while Ecological Identity recorded the lowest at 67.46%. The findings support GCI as a multidimensional and multiscalar planning construct for sustainable urban develop-ment.

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