

A Theoretical Framework for Community-Led Urban Modification: Outdoor Mobility, Social Participation and Ageing in Kigali, Rwanda

J, e, a, n, d, e, D, i, e, u, U, w, i, m, a, n, a, ,, M, a, r, i, e, A, i, m, e, e, U, w,
a, s, e

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18542156>

| Abstract

Urban environments in rapidly developing African cities like Kigali can create barriers to outdoor mobility and social participation for older adults, posing risks to physical health, mental well-being, and social inclusion. While age-friendly urban modifications are needed, theoretical frameworks centring community-led processes within Sub-Saharan Africa are lacking. This article proposes a theoretical framework for understanding and implementing community-led urban modifications to enhance outdoor mobility and social participation for older adults in Kigali, Rwanda. It aims to integrate environmental gerontology, community participation, and African communal ethics into a coherent model for geriatric practice and urban policy. The framework was developed through a synthesis of existing literature and theoretical analysis. It adapts constructs from environmental gerontology, such as person-environment fit, through the lens of Ubuntu philosophy and participatory action research principles suited to the Rwandan context. Key insights: The framework posits that effective modification requires a cyclical process of community diagnosis, co-design, and iterative adjustment. Prioritising collective agency over top-down implementation is theorised to yield greater sustained benefit. A key theme reframes 'mobility' not merely as physical movement, but as a facilitator of social roles and intergenerational exchange. This theoretical framework provides a structured, context-

sensitive approach for conceptualising how community-led urban modifications can address geriatric priorities in Kigali. It offers a foundation for future empirical research and a guide for practitioners and policymakers. Future research should empirically test the framework's propositions in Kigali. Urban planners and geriatric health professionals should collaborate with elder councils to apply its participatory principles in neighbourhood modifications. ageing, mobility, social participation, age-friendly cities, community participation, environmental gerontology, Ubuntu, Rwanda This work contributes a novel theoretical framework that integrates African communal ethics with gerontological and participatory principles, addressing a gap in context-specific models for age-friendly urban development in Sub-Saharan Africa.
