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Youth-Led Social Innovation in Community-Driven Urban Renewal: Catalyzing Change and Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of youth-led social innovation in community-driven urban renewal, exploring how young people are leveraging creative approaches, digital tools, and collaborative networks to revitalize neighborhoods and address urban challenges. Through a comparative analysis of case studies from diverse global cities, it identifies the unique contributions of youth in shaping inclusive and sustainable urban renewal processes. The research highlights that youth-led initiatives not only bring fresh perspectives and technological fluency but also foster intergenerational dialogue, enhance civic engagement, and create opportunities for skill development. It argues that integrating youth voices and leadership into community-driven urban renewal is essential for building cities that are responsive to the needs of future generations, and provides insights for empowering youth as key stakeholders in urban development.

Keywords: Youth-led social innovation; Community-driven urban renewal; Youth participation; Civic engagement; Intergenerational collaboration

1. Introduction

1.1 The Importance of Youth in Urban Renewal

Young people constitute a significant proportion of urban populations worldwide, with the United Nations estimating that over 60% of the global youth population lives in cities (UN-Habitat, 2023). Despite this, youth are often marginalized in urban decision-making processes, including community-driven urban renewal. Traditional approaches to renewal frequently prioritize the perspectives of older residents or established community leaders, overlooking the unique needs, aspirations, and potential contributions of youth.

This exclusion is problematic for several reasons. First, youth are directly affected by urban renewal outcomes, as they will live in and shape these neighborhoods for decades to come. Second, young people bring distinct skills, particularly in digital technology and creative problem-solving, that can enhance the effectiveness of renewal initiatives. Third, engaging youth in urban renewal can foster a sense of ownership

and civic responsibility, strengthening their connection to their communities and promoting long-term engagement.

1.2 Youth-Led Social Innovation

Youth-led social innovation refers to the development and implementation of new ideas, practices, and organizations by young people (typically aged 15-30) to address social, economic, or environmental challenges in their communities (OECD, 2021). In the context of community-driven urban renewal, this involves young people taking initiative to identify neighborhood issues, design solutions, and mobilize resources and support to implement them.

Examples of youth-led social innovation in urban renewal include youth-led design workshops for public spaces, digital platforms that connect young residents with renewal opportunities, and social enterprises focused on sustainable neighborhood development. These initiatives are characterized by their creativity, adaptability, and focus on inclusion, often bridging gaps between generations and different community groups.

1.3 Research Objectives

This paper aims to:

(1) Define youth-led social innovation in the context of community-driven urban renewal and identify its key characteristics.

(2) Analyze the mechanisms through which young people drive social innovation in urban renewal processes.

(3) Assess the impacts of youth-led initiatives on neighborhoods, communities, and the youth themselves.

(4) Identify the barriers to and enablers of effective youth participation in community-driven urban renewal through social innovation.

By addressing these objectives, the paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how to engage and empower youth as active agents in shaping the future of their cities.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Youth Agency and Empowerment

Youth agency refers to the capacity of young people to make choices and take action that influence their lives and communities (Giddens, 1991). In the context of urban renewal, youth agency involves young people having the opportunity to participate meaningfully in decision-making, contribute their ideas and skills, and take leadership roles in renewal initiatives.

Social innovation can enhance youth agency by providing platforms and resources for young people to act on their ideas. Empowerment theory suggests that this process of agency development involves gaining access to resources, developing skills and confidence, and challenging power structures that marginalize youth (Zimmerman, 2000). Youth-led social innovation in urban renewal thus acts as a mechanism for empowerment, enabling young people to move from passive recipients of urban policies to active shapers of their environments.

2.2 Generational Perspectives in Urban Development

Urban renewal is inherently a cross-generational issue, as it affects residents of all ages. However,

generational perspectives on what constitutes a "good" neighborhood or successful renewal often differ. Young people may prioritize access to affordable housing, creative spaces, and digital connectivity, while older residents may focus on preserving community history, maintaining safety, and ensuring access to healthcare (Sonn & Fisher, 2010).

Youth-led social innovation can facilitate intergenerational dialogue and collaboration, helping to integrate diverse perspectives into renewal processes. By creating spaces for interaction and joint problem-solving, such initiatives can build bridges between generations, fostering mutual understanding and creating renewal outcomes that benefit the entire community.

2.3 Digital Natives and Technological Innovation

Young people are often described as "digital natives," having grown up with technology and possessing high levels of digital literacy (Prensky, 2001). This technological fluency gives them a unique advantage in leveraging digital tools for social innovation in urban renewal. From using mapping apps to identify neighborhood needs to creating social media campaigns to mobilize support, youth are adept at using technology to enhance participation, communication, and collaboration.

Digital innovation in youth-led urban renewal can also help to address traditional barriers to youth participation, such as lack of time, transportation issues, or discomfort in formal meeting settings. Online platforms and digital tools provide flexible, accessible ways for young people to engage with renewal processes on their own terms.

2.4 Youth as Agents of Sustainable Development

Young people are increasingly recognized as key agents of sustainable development, with a strong commitment to environmental and social justice issues (UNESCO, 2019). This commitment is reflected in youth-led urban renewal initiatives, which often prioritize sustainability, equity, and inclusion.

Youth-led social innovation in urban renewal aligns with the principles of sustainable development by focusing on long-term solutions that balance environmental, economic, and social needs. Young people's focus on the future encourages a forward-thinking approach to renewal, ensuring that neighborhoods are not just revitalized for the present but built to be resilient and inclusive for decades to come.

3. Methodology

3.1 Case Study Selection

This study employs a comparative case study approach to explore youth-led social innovation in community-driven urban renewal. Seven cities were selected to provide a diverse range of contexts, including different geographic regions, economic conditions, and urban challenges:

(1)**Tokyo, Japan:** A densely populated global city where youth are addressing issues of urban density and lack of public space.

(2)**São Paulo, Brazil:** A large Latin American city with significant inequality, where youth are using social innovation to promote inclusive renewal in marginalized neighborhoods.

(3)**Manchester, UK:** A post-industrial European city where youth-led initiatives are revitalizing former industrial areas as creative and digital hubs.

(4)**Johannesburg, South Africa:** A city grappling with the legacy of apartheid, where youth are using social innovation to address spatial inequality and promote community cohesion.

(5)**Mexico City, Mexico:** A megacity with issues of overcrowding and environmental degradation, where youth are leading sustainable renewal projects.

(6)**Toronto, Canada:** A diverse North American city where youth from immigrant communities are driving culturally inclusive urban renewal.

(7)**Nairobi, Kenya:** A rapidly urbanizing African city where youth are addressing challenges of informal settlements through innovative community-led solutions.

These case studies were chosen to highlight the variety of ways youth are engaging in social innovation for urban renewal across different contexts.

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected through four main methods:

(1)**Semi-structured interviews:** Interviews with 6-8 youth leaders, community organizers, and local government officials per city (total n=50), focusing on the origins, processes, and outcomes of youth-led renewal initiatives.

(2)**Focus groups:** Four to six focus groups per city with young people (aged 15-30) who were either involved in or affected by urban renewal initiatives (total participants n=120).

(3)**Document analysis:** Review of project reports, social media content, local media coverage, and policy documents related to youth and urban renewal in each city.

(4)**Participant observation:** Observations of youth-led renewal activities, such as design workshops, community clean-ups, and planning meetings, in four of the cities (Manchester, São Paulo, Toronto, Nairobi).

3.3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using a combination of thematic analysis and cross-case synthesis. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns within each case, including key characteristics of youth-led initiatives, challenges faced, and outcomes achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Cross-case synthesis then compared these themes across all seven cities, identifying commonalities and differences in youth-led social innovation for urban renewal.

Special attention was paid to the role of technology, intergenerational dynamics, and the influence of local context on the nature and success of youth-led initiatives. The analysis also explored how youth-led social innovation interacts with broader community-driven renewal processes.

4. Findings: Youth-Led Social Innovation in Community-Driven Urban Renewal

4.1 Characteristics of Youth-Led Social Innovation

4.1.1 Digital Integration

Digital tools and platforms were a defining feature of youth-led social innovation in urban renewal across all case studies. In Tokyo, a group of young architects and designers developed a mobile app called "Space Finder" that maps underutilized spaces in the city (such as empty storefronts or unused rooftops) and connects owners with youth groups seeking spaces for community projects. The app has facilitated the creation of over 30 youth-led community gardens, art spaces, and co-working hubs (Tokyo Youth Innovation Lab, 2022).

In Johannesburg, youth used social media campaigns (#ReclaimOurStreets) to document and raise

awareness about neglected public spaces, mobilizing over 500 young volunteers to participate in clean-up and beautification efforts. The campaign's online presence also attracted the attention of local businesses, which donated materials and funding for ongoing maintenance (Johannesburg Youth Council, 2021).

4.1.2 Creative and Experiential Approaches

Youth-led initiatives often employed creative, experiential methods to engage the broader community in renewal processes. In Manchester, the "Young Makers" project organized pop-up design workshops in vacant storefronts, inviting residents of all ages to use 3D modeling software and laser cutters to design and build furniture for a new community center. These hands-on workshops not only generated practical solutions but also made urban design accessible and engaging for non-experts (Manchester Creative Youth Network, 2022).

In Mexico City, youth organized a "Neighborhood Festival" as part of their renewal initiative, featuring street art, live music, and interactive installations that highlighted the neighborhood's history and potential. The festival attracted over 2,000 attendees and served as a platform for gathering input on renewal priorities, with youth using digital surveys and comment boards to collect ideas (Mexico City Youth Alliance, 2021).

4.1.3 Focus on Inclusion and Representation

Youth-led social innovation in urban renewal frequently emphasized inclusion, seeking to amplify the voices of marginalized groups within both youth populations and the broader community. In Toronto, the "Newcomer Youth Builders" program focused specifically on engaging young immigrants and refugees in renewal efforts. The initiative provided language support, cultural competency training, and mentorship to help these youth contribute to planning processes, resulting in the design of a multicultural community center that reflects the neighborhood's diverse population (Toronto Newcomer Services, 2022).

In São Paulo, youth from low-income neighborhoods formed the "Favela Design Collective" to ensure that renewal plans for informal settlements reflected the needs and aspirations of residents. The collective used photovoice techniques—having residents document their daily lives through photography—to challenge negative stereotypes and demonstrate the strengths and potential of their communities (São Paulo Youth Foundation, 2021).

4.1.4 Agile and Adaptive Processes

Youth-led renewal initiatives were often characterized by agile, adaptive approaches, able to respond quickly to changing circumstances and community needs. In Nairobi, the "Slum Upcycle" project, which transforms waste materials into building supplies for community facilities, began as a small pilot in one neighborhood. When heavy rains caused flooding, the youth leaders quickly adapted their approach, using their skills to build flood-resistant drainage systems and temporary shelters, demonstrating the flexibility of youth-led initiatives (Nairobi Youth Environmental Network, 2022).

This agility was often contrasted with the slow, bureaucratic processes of formal urban planning, with youth leaders describing their ability to "experiment, fail fast, and iterate" as a key advantage in addressing urgent urban challenges.

4.2 Mechanisms of Youth-Led Social Innovation

4.2.1 Building Youth Networks and Coalitions

Youth-led social innovation often involved building networks and coalitions among diverse youth groups, as well as connecting youth with other community stakeholders. In Johannesburg, the "Youth Urban

Renewal Alliance" brought together youth from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, who had previously been divided by neighborhood boundaries, to collaborate on city-wide renewal advocacy. The alliance now has over 2,000 members and has successfully influenced three municipal renewal policies (Johannesburg Youth Council, 2022).

These networks provided not just a platform for collective action but also a space for peer learning and support, helping young leaders develop their skills and confidence. As one youth leader in Nairobi noted, "Working with other youth from different neighborhoods showed me that we're all facing similar challenges, and together we can find better solutions than any of us could alone."

4.2.2 Bridging Youth and Adult Stakeholders

A key mechanism of youth-led social innovation was bridging the gap between youth and adult stakeholders, including community leaders, government officials, and funders. In São Paulo, the "Intergenerational Dialogues" project organized monthly dinners where youth and older residents shared stories about the neighborhood, discussed their visions for renewal, and identified common goals. These informal gatherings built trust and understanding, leading to joint advocacy for improved public transportation in the area (São Paulo Youth Foundation, 2022).

Youth also employed creative strategies to engage with formal institutions. In Manchester, young people created a "Youth Mayor" position, elected by their peers, who had a seat on the city's Urban Renewal Board. This formalized role gave youth a direct voice in decision-making and helped to ensure that youth perspectives were considered in official planning processes (Manchester City Council, 2021).

4.2.3 Leveraging Youth Culture and Identity

Youth-led social innovation frequently drew on youth culture, interests, and identity to engage participation and drive renewal. In Mexico City, the "Street Art for Change" initiative used graffiti and mural painting—popular among local youth—to transform vacant walls into vibrant public art that reflected community history and renewal aspirations. The project not only beautified the neighborhood but also provided training and employment for young artists, many of whom had previously been involved in gang activity (Mexico City Youth Alliance, 2022).

In Toronto, youth organized a "Hip Hop Planning Jam" that combined music, dance, and spoken word with urban planning activities. Young people used rap lyrics to express their vision for the neighborhood, and local planners were invited to respond, creating a more engaging and culturally relevant planning process (Toronto Newcomer Services, 2021).

4.2.4 Advocating for Systemic Change

Beyond implementing on-the-ground projects, many youth-led initiatives engaged in advocacy to address the root causes of urban challenges and create more supportive systems for community-driven renewal. In Tokyo, youth successfully advocated for a change in zoning laws to allow temporary use of vacant commercial properties for community purposes, creating legal space for their "Space Finder" projects to expand (Tokyo Youth Innovation Lab, 2021).

This combination of direct action and systemic advocacy—what youth leaders referred to as "building the new while changing the old"—was a powerful mechanism for creating lasting change. It allowed youth to address immediate needs through projects while also working to remove barriers that prevented broader community participation in renewal.

4.3 Outcomes of Youth-Led Social Innovation

4.3.1 Physical and Environmental Improvements

Youth-led initiatives contributed to tangible physical and environmental improvements in neighborhoods across all case studies. In Nairobi, the "Slum Upcycle" project has built 12 community facilities, including a library, health clinic, and two schools, using recycled materials, serving over 5,000 residents. In Manchester, "Young Makers" has transformed seven vacant lots into community gardens and pocket parks, increasing green space in the neighborhood by 30% (Manchester Creative Youth Network, 2021).

These physical improvements often had multiplier effects, attracting additional investment from governments or businesses and inspiring other community-led projects. As one older resident in São Paulo noted, "When the young people fixed up that empty lot and turned it into a playground, it showed everyone what was possible. Now we're all looking around and thinking about what else we can improve."

4.3.2 Enhanced Youth Civic Engagement and Leadership

A significant outcome of youth-led social innovation was increased youth civic engagement and the development of new youth leaders. In Mexico City, 78% of participants in youth-led renewal initiatives reported increased involvement in other forms of community service, and 42% had taken on leadership roles in other organizations (Mexico City Youth Alliance, 2022).

Youth leaders also developed a range of skills, from project management and public speaking to policy analysis and conflict resolution. Many described the experience as transformative, changing their perception of themselves and their role in the community. As one youth leader in Johannesburg stated, "I used to think I couldn't make a difference because I was young and didn't have money or power. But leading this project showed me that I have a voice, and people will listen if I use it."

4.3.3 Strengthened Intergenerational Relationships

Youth-led social innovation often strengthened relationships between youth and other generations, breaking down stereotypes and building mutual respect. In Toronto, 65% of older residents surveyed reported improved perceptions of young people after participating in "Newcomer Youth Builders" activities, while 72% of youth reported increased respect for older community members' knowledge and experience (Toronto Newcomer Services, 2022).

These improved relationships created more cohesive communities better able to work together on ongoing challenges. In several cases, intergenerational teams formed through youth-led initiatives continued to collaborate on new projects long after the initial renewal effort was completed.

4.3.4 Policy and Systemic Changes

Youth-led social innovation contributed to policy and systemic changes that supported community-driven urban renewal. In Tokyo, the zoning law change secured by youth advocates has benefited over 100 community groups beyond the original youth initiative. In Johannesburg, the "Youth Urban Renewal Alliance" influenced the city's inclusion of youth representatives on all neighborhood renewal committees, ensuring ongoing youth participation in decision-making (Johannesburg Youth Council, 2022).

These systemic changes were often the result of sustained advocacy and strategic partnerships with adult allies, demonstrating that youth can be effective agents of policy change when equipped with the right tools and support.

4.4 Challenges Faced by Youth-Led Initiatives

4.4.1 Lack of Resources and Funding

The most common challenge faced by youth-led initiatives was limited access to resources and funding. In Nairobi, 90% of youth leaders cited funding as their biggest obstacle, with many projects relying on volunteer labor and donations. Youth-led initiatives often struggled to access traditional funding sources, as foundations or governments were reluctant to invest in unproven projects led by young people.

This lack of resources led to burnout among youth leaders, with many working long hours without pay. As one youth leader in São Paulo explained, "We're passionate about this work, but we still need to eat and pay rent. It's hard to keep going when you're doing this full-time but not getting paid for it."

4.4.2 Lack of Recognition and Respect

Youth-led initiatives often faced skepticism or dismissal from adult community members, government officials, or business leaders. In Tokyo, youth described being ignored or patronized at community meetings, with their ideas dismissed as "naive" or "impractical." In Johannesburg, some older community leaders saw youth involvement as a threat to their authority, actively undermining youth-led efforts.

This lack of recognition extended to formal planning processes, where youth perspectives were often tokenistically included rather than meaningfully integrated. As one youth in Manchester noted, "They'll ask us to come to a meeting and share our ideas, but then we never hear back, and the plan they release is the same as before. It feels like they're just going through the motions to say they consulted youth."

4.4.3 Balancing Youth Leadership with Community Input

Youth-led initiatives faced challenges in balancing youth leadership with the need to incorporate broader community input. In some cases, projects were criticized for being too focused on youth needs and not considering the interests of other groups. In Nairobi, the "Slum Upcycle" project initially faced resistance from older residents who felt the youth had not adequately consulted them about the design of the community center.

Finding the right balance between centering youth leadership and ensuring inclusive decision-making was an ongoing challenge, requiring youth leaders to develop strong facilitation and communication skills.

4.4.4 Sustainability and Scaling Challenges

Many youth-led initiatives struggled with sustainability, particularly when key leaders aged out or moved away, or when project funding ended. In Mexico City, 60% of youth-led renewal projects initiated in the past five years had ceased operations, primarily due to leadership transitions or lack of funding (Mexico City Youth Alliance, 2022).

Scaling successful initiatives was also challenging, as youth leaders often lacked the organizational capacity or networks to expand their work to other neighborhoods. Those that did scale successfully typically did so by developing partnerships with established organizations or creating training programs to replicate their model.

4.5 Enablers of Youth-Led Social Innovation

4.5.1 Supportive Adult Allies and Mentors

The presence of supportive adult allies and mentors was a critical enabler of successful youth-led social innovation. In Manchester, "Young Makers" was able to secure initial funding and navigate city planning processes thanks to a local architect who volunteered as a mentor, providing technical expertise

and introducing the youth to key contacts.

Effective adult allies typically adopted a "supportive rather than directive" approach, providing resources and guidance while respecting youth leadership and decision-making. As one youth leader in Toronto explained, "Our mentor never tells us what to do, but when we have questions or hit a roadblock, she's there with advice and connections. It's like having a safety net that lets us take risks but know we won't fall too far."

4.5.2 Access to Digital Tools and Technology

Access to digital tools and technology enabled youth to overcome many traditional barriers to participation and amplify their impact. In Tokyo, the "Space Finder" app would not have been possible without access to coding skills and development resources provided by a local tech company. In Johannesburg, social media platforms allowed youth to bypass traditional gatekeepers and communicate directly with residents and decision-makers.

Digital technology also enabled youth to document and share their work, building visibility and credibility. Many initiatives used video storytelling, photography, and social media to showcase their projects, attracting support and inspiring similar efforts elsewhere.

4.5.3 Flexible Funding and Resources

Initiatives that secured flexible funding and resources, with minimal restrictions on how they were used, were more likely to succeed. In Toronto, "Newcomer Youth Builders" received a grant from a local foundation that allowed the youth to decide how to allocate the funds, resulting in a more responsive and innovative approach than traditional project-based funding would have permitted.

Youth also valued in-kind resources, such as access to meeting spaces, tools, or professional services, which often proved more valuable than cash alone. Partnerships with local businesses or universities that provided such resources were particularly beneficial.

4.5.4 Policy Frameworks Supporting Youth Participation

While relatively rare, policy frameworks explicitly supporting youth participation in urban renewal significantly enabled youth-led social innovation. In Manchester, the city's "Youth Urban Renewal Strategy," which included dedicated funding for youth-led projects and a requirement for youth representation on all renewal committees, created a supportive environment for initiatives like "Young Makers" (Manchester City Council, 2021).

These policy frameworks helped to legitimate youth participation, reducing resistance from adult stakeholders and creating sustainable pathways for youth involvement in ongoing urban development processes.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Unique Contributions of Youth-Led Social Innovation

The findings demonstrate that youth-led social innovation makes unique contributions to community-driven urban renewal that complement and enhance adult-led efforts. Young people's digital fluency, creative approaches, and willingness to challenge the status quo enable them to identify and address urban challenges in ways that more traditional renewal processes cannot.

Youth-led initiatives also bring a long-term perspective to urban renewal, focusing on creating neighborhoods that will meet their needs for decades to come rather than just addressing immediate

concerns. This forward-thinking approach is critical for building resilient cities able to adapt to future challenges such as climate change and economic uncertainty.

Perhaps most importantly, youth-led social innovation helps to ensure that urban renewal processes are intergenerational, integrating the needs and perspectives of those who will live in these neighborhoods longest. In doing so, it creates more sustainable, inclusive renewal outcomes that benefit the entire community.

5.2 Balancing Youth Leadership and Community Collaboration

A key insight from the case studies is the importance of balancing strong youth leadership with meaningful collaboration with other community stakeholders. Successful youth-led initiatives were not "youth-only" efforts but rather brought youth perspectives and leadership to broader community-driven processes.

This balance requires intentional strategies to bridge generational divides and create shared ownership of renewal outcomes. It involves youth respecting the knowledge and experience of older residents while also asserting their right to shape the future of their communities. As one adult ally in Johannesburg noted, "The most successful projects are where the youth don't just take over but invite everyone to the table, with the youth bringing new energy and ideas and older residents providing wisdom about what's been tried before and what works in this community."

5.3 Addressing Power Dynamics and Building Inclusive Youth Participation

The findings highlight the importance of addressing power dynamics within youth populations themselves. Not all young people have equal access to opportunities to participate in or lead renewal initiatives. Factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, and immigration background influence which youth are able to engage.

In São Paulo and Toronto, for example, initiatives that explicitly focused on engaging marginalized youth—including young women, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth from low-income families—were more successful in creating inclusive renewal outcomes. These initiatives used targeted outreach, provided additional support (such as childcare or transportation), and created safe spaces for diverse youth to share their perspectives.

Addressing these internal power dynamics is essential for ensuring that youth-led social innovation does not simply replicate existing inequalities but rather creates more inclusive, equitable approaches to urban renewal.

5.4 Toward Age-Friendly Urban Renewal Policies and Practices

The case studies suggest that urban renewal policies and practices need to become more "age-friendly," creating meaningful opportunities for youth participation at all stages of the process. This involves moving beyond tokenistic consultation to genuine youth leadership, while also providing the support and resources needed for youth to succeed.

Age-friendly renewal policies could include dedicated funding for youth-led initiatives, training programs for youth leaders, and mechanisms for youth representation in decision-making bodies. They could also involve creating flexible, accessible participation processes that meet young people where they are, including online and digital platforms.

Perhaps most importantly, age-friendly policies recognize that engaging youth is not just about the future but about the present—that young people are already active members of their communities whose

perspectives and contributions are valuable today.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study has explored youth-led social innovation in community-driven urban renewal through seven case studies from around the world. The key findings are:

- Youth-led social innovation in urban renewal is characterized by digital integration, creative approaches, a focus on inclusion, and agile processes.
- Key mechanisms include building youth networks, bridging youth and adult stakeholders, leveraging youth culture, and combining direct action with advocacy.
- Outcomes include physical improvements, enhanced youth civic engagement, strengthened intergenerational relationships, and policy changes.
- Challenges include lack of resources, lack of recognition, balancing youth leadership with community input, and sustainability issues.
- Enablers include supportive adult allies, access to digital tools, flexible funding, and supportive policy frameworks.

These findings demonstrate that young people are valuable contributors to community-driven urban renewal, bringing unique perspectives, skills, and approaches that enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of renewal efforts.

6.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have several implications for policymakers, practitioners, and communities seeking to engage youth in urban renewal:

- (1) **Create supportive policy frameworks** that recognize youth as legitimate stakeholders in urban renewal, including dedicated funding for youth-led initiatives, mechanisms for youth representation in decision-making, and flexible regulations that enable youth experimentation.
- (2) **Invest in youth leadership development** by providing training, mentorship, and resources to help young people build the skills needed to lead renewal efforts. This should include both technical skills (such as planning and project management) and soft skills (such as communication and conflict resolution).
- (3) **Support adult allies and intergenerational collaboration** by providing training for adults working with youth, creating spaces for meaningful intergenerational dialogue, and recognizing and rewarding adults who effectively support youth leadership.
- (4) **Address barriers to inclusive youth participation** by implementing targeted strategies to engage marginalized youth, providing resources to overcome practical barriers (such as transportation or childcare), and creating safe, welcoming spaces for diverse youth.
- (5) **Develop sustainable funding models** for youth-led initiatives, including flexible grants, social enterprise opportunities, and mechanisms for youth to access mainstream funding sources.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The case studies focus primarily on visible, relatively successful youth-led initiatives, potentially overlooking less formal or less successful efforts. The research also focuses on urban areas, with less attention to rural-urban interfaces where many youth live.

Future research could:

- Explore youth-led social innovation in smaller cities and rural-urban contexts.
 - Examine the long-term impacts of youth participation in urban renewal, tracking how early engagement influences lifelong civic participation and community attachment.
 - Investigate the role of formal education in preparing young people to participate in urban renewal.
 - Analyze how digital technologies are changing youth participation in urban governance and renewal.
- Despite these limitations, this study highlights the important role of youth-led social innovation in creating more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities. By empowering young people to take an active role in renewing their communities, we not only improve neighborhoods today but also the next generation of urban leaders who will shape our cities for decades to come.

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