

# THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A RESEARCH AGENDA

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## Abstract:

*Currently, local development plays an important role in the sustainable development of the country and is the driving force to ensure social stability. Many studies show that local development is influenced by different factors. Therefore, identifying the factors that affect local development is essential. Among the factors that affect local development, the community is identified as having a strong influence and bringing many benefits to local development in many different aspects. The goal of the paper is to determine the relationship between the community and local development using a systematic theoretical research method. The author analyzed the data collected through the Scopus database and a theoretical study based on the available research literature. The research results from the review of the literature indicate that the community and local development have a close relationship. Furthermore, the community plays an important role in sustainable local development according to many different criteria. Communities influence local development in the terms of the development of the economic, poverty alleviation, and in the terms of sustainability in the use of local resources, improving the well-being of individuals, protecting the environment and landscape, etc. The presented results contribute to promoting research on the relationship between community and local development.*

**Key words:** community, development, local development, local community, regional development.

**JEL classification:** M13

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, more and more businesses are established and have developed strongly. It takes place with the development of countries' economies. However, there are also many risks and challenges to the economy, society, and business environment that affect development at the national level, as well as at the local level. The scholars show that contextual factors that are linked to the business environment have a direct impact on that development (for example, infrastructure, information technology, social environment, etc.). Among factors affecting local development, the community factor is assessed to have a significant role in entrepreneurship and local development (Huggins & Thompson, 2016). In addition, the development of the local economy has an important contribution from the community (Grodach, 2011).

Additionally, the community has the role of the foundation, the driving force, and the goal for development (Parwez, 2017). In addition, the community plays the role of supplying human resources and natural resources for development. It is a location to consume manufactured goods. (Doan, 2022). Fyfe (2009) stated that community participation is the most significant process to address programs that are demographically and geographically emphasized. Furthermore, many studies indicate that the community has a role to play in promoting, and supporting entrepreneurial spirit as well as social welfare (Darwish & Van Dyk, 2018; Naushad et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be said that the community plays a role in encouraging economic development and changing the society (Doan, 2022).

Today, many communities are being founded. They have different purposes and goals. Furthermore, the appearance and expansion of the community have an essential function for the community itself and community-related objects. The function of the community is shown by donating to improving the quality of human life, ensuring the environment, and developing the economy - society. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the role of the community in local

development. From there, it is possible to evaluate and select the local development model that best fits the characteristics of the community.

This paper's purpose is to systematically review the current literature. From there, it can clarify the role of communities in local development. From there, there is a clearer view of the community's approach to local development. The paper also determined a theoretical framework and created a premise for future research. About the structure of the paper, the article has five parts: introduction, literature review, methodologies, results and discussions, and conclusion.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community

Community is a term that has been used in many different research fields. Therefore, an objective requirement is to build a definition of the concept of 'community' that is coherent, scientific and highly instrumental or functionalist. This definition is the basis and tool for research on the community and issues related to the community. The term 'community' comes from Latin origin, 'communitas', which means all followers of a religion or all those who follow a determined leader. Today, this term is generally used in European languages, the US, as in French is 'communauté', in German it is 'gemeinschaft'. However, the term 'community' has different meanings in different contexts. The fact is that, due to being the research object of many specialized sciences, the "community" is approached from many different angles, and the way of defining this concept is not the same.

From a modern economics perspective, many scholars considered community as a kind of 'social capital' (Mattessich, 2009; Phillips & Pittman, 2014). On the other hand, modern political scientists are interested in the community as a form of organization in the political process, ranging from interest groups to political parties; from the commune types to the nation-state. At the end 20th century, the term 'imagined community' appeared in the field of political studies (especially in political culture). From this, Anderson (1983) developed a new theory of the community and the nation-state. In this case, the emphasis is on the process of sharing among community members about what they imagine the community and the function of their personality as an integral part of that community. It is one of the most significant achievements in social science community research.

Communities can also be applied to consider a kind of society that has similar characteristics of ethnicity, race, or religion. Smaller, the community is used when naming units of villages, communes, districts, etc. In participatory community development programs, this concept is understood in a narrower scope. Communities are groups of people gathered in different forms such as age, occupation, bloodline, geographic area, mass organization, interests, etc.

Many scholars determine that the concept of community is fundamental. However, the reality is that the concept of community is difficult to hold (Doan, 2022). This is due to the lack of consensus on a clear concept of community. Furthermore, it is not possible to define a single set of criteria that define a community in different situations (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012). There are many different definitions of the term community (Paveglio et al., 2016).

Some of the definitions that can be mentioned are:

- *'A community is a group of people, often living in the same geographic area, who identify themselves as belonging to the same group.'* (Sproule, 1996: 235).

- *'A community as a locality comprised by people residing in a geographical area; the resources such people require to subsist and progress; and the processes in which such individuals engage to distribute and exchange such resources to fulfill local needs and wants.'* (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012: 295).

- *'Community is defined as a place-oriented process of interrelated actions through which members of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in the common concerns of life'* (Theodori, 2005: 662-663).

### **Local Development**

Local development is evolving into an increasingly essential issue in many countries. (Prijon, 2012). A lot of agencies and committees are addressing this issue by developing relevant metrics and strategies that could allow development in poor localities and regions that are lagging behind the other localities. Thierstein & Walser (1999) defined local development as a socially complex process. It allows actors in the locality to form and execute innovative programs that are based on the integrated use of internal resources (Thierstein & Walser, 1999). In addition, local development plays a complementary role in the macroeconomic and policy structures of the state. OECD (2003) also emphasized the importance of role of the dynamic and competitive regions in all countries. From there, the nation can achieve economic and social goals. OECD (2003) defined local development as *'...a broad term, but can be seen as a general effort to reduce regional disparities by supporting (employment and wealth-generating) economic activities in regions.'*

Regarding goals of local development, Armstrong & Taylor (2000) determined that economic concerns are an important issue of local development. It includes growth, the income of the locality, and employment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2000). Additionally, local development may be viewed as regional and local economic development (Beer et al., 2003). According to Storper's (1997) research, the prosperity and well-being of the locality and region depend on an indispensable sustained increase in economic development in terms of employment, income, and productivity. However, currently, Pike et al. (2007) stated that the purely economic focus of local development has been extended to address social problems and political, ecological, and cultural concerns. Thus, Pike et al. (2007) promote some suggestions to define local development. Furthermore, there are efforts to reduce social inequality, promote environmental sustainability, encourage inclusive government and governance, and recognize cultural diversity (Pike et al., 2007).

## **3. METHODOLOGIES**

### **Research Purpose**

This study was conducted to assess the role of the community in local development. Therefore, the research question proposed in the study is: What is the role of the community in local development?

### **Research Methodology**

This paper uses the bibliometric method in this paper. By this method, the scientific knowledge researched in a particular field is presented. It relies on statistical tools to determine documents relevant to the field of study (for example, articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings). The bibliometric method is selected to explore the newest research situations and trends on a specific topic. It includes the number of articles, journal, geography, topic distribution, authors and scholarly comparisons, citation articles, effective organization, etc. (Yu et al., 2016). Therefore, the bibliometric method has been used to provide a quantitative analysis of written publications or academic literature in recent years. The present study will continue to use the bibliometric method to examine the content of articles, including scientific databases. The VOSviewer software provided was used in this study. VOSviewer is software developed and built by Van-Eck & Waltman (2010). Furthermore, VOSviewer is software with the purpose of text mining. Therefore, this software has been used to visualize similarities between distinct objects. Thus, many scholars used it to visualize the descriptive results. From there, assessments and analyses can be carried out. The author uses the literature review method to show some of the roles of the community in local development.

### **Data collection**

Today, many different scientific databases are created. Scopus and Web of Science are rated as the two leading databases, reputable compared to other databases (in terms of the number of articles, coverage, and acceptance). In this study, the author used the database extracted from the Scopus database to avoid duplication when using both databases. Scopus is considered the largest database of abstracts and citations in many fields of science, engineering, business, etc. The Scopus

database is recommended as a reliable source (Soosay & Hyland, 2015), a more centralized database, and faster to analyze (Trinh & Cicea, 2021).

To collect data, in the first step, a systematic document search for documents was used. By using search engine of the Scopus database, the keywords "community", "local development", and "region development" were used in the titles of the publications. A total of 695 documents were collected. In the next step, the most popular, most commonly used, and most academic documents (Conference papers, Articles, Books) were selected. These are documents that provide more objective and scholarly data. As a result of the second step, the number of documents is reduced to 651 publications. In the third step, publications in English were selected because international indicators were considered. The number of publications decreased to 591. The research used all 591 publications to analyze the current research situation on the relationship between the community and local development.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Classification and the field of research

Statistical results are in Table no. 1 show the top 10 subject areas of research for communities and local development. The results show that a total of 591 documents cover 25 research areas. In which, Social Sciences accounted for the highest proportion at 60.74% (359 publications), followed by environmental sciences with 26.9% (159 publications), Business, administration, and accounting with 16.75% (99 publications). From this result, it can be seen that the social and economic sciences have a relatively high proportion of research on communities and local development.

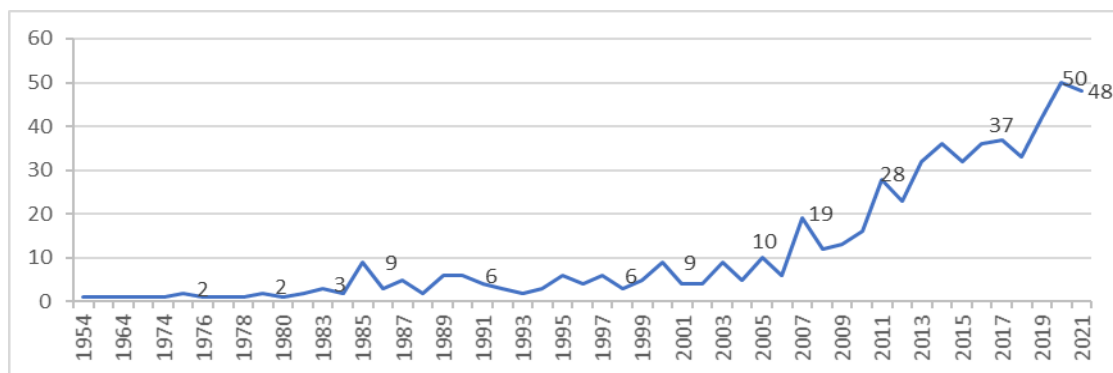
**Table no. 1. Top 10 publications by subject area**

Ranking	Subject Area	Number	Percent (%)
1	Social Sciences	359	60.74
2	Environmental Science	159	26.90
3	Business, Management and Accounting	99	16.75
4	Economics, Econometrics and Finance	65	10.99
5	Earth and Planetary Sciences	57	9.64
6	Energy	48	8.12
7	Agricultural and Biological Sciences	42	7.11
8	Engineering	42	7.11
9	Medicine	35	5.92
10	Arts and Humanities	32	5.41

Source: Author's own research results.

##### Number of publications over time

Figure no. 1. shows the time distribution of the studies from 1954 to the present. The results show that there is a trend that more and more studies are interested in the relationship between community and local development over the years. It shows that in the period 1954 to 1985 there were very few studies per year (only about 1-2 studies), until a significant increase in the period 2005 to present. In 2020, we saw a peak of 50 studies. Furthermore, by the end of November 2021, 48 studies have also been conducted.



**Figure no. 1. Publications by time**

Source: Author's own research results.

### The association in keywords of publications

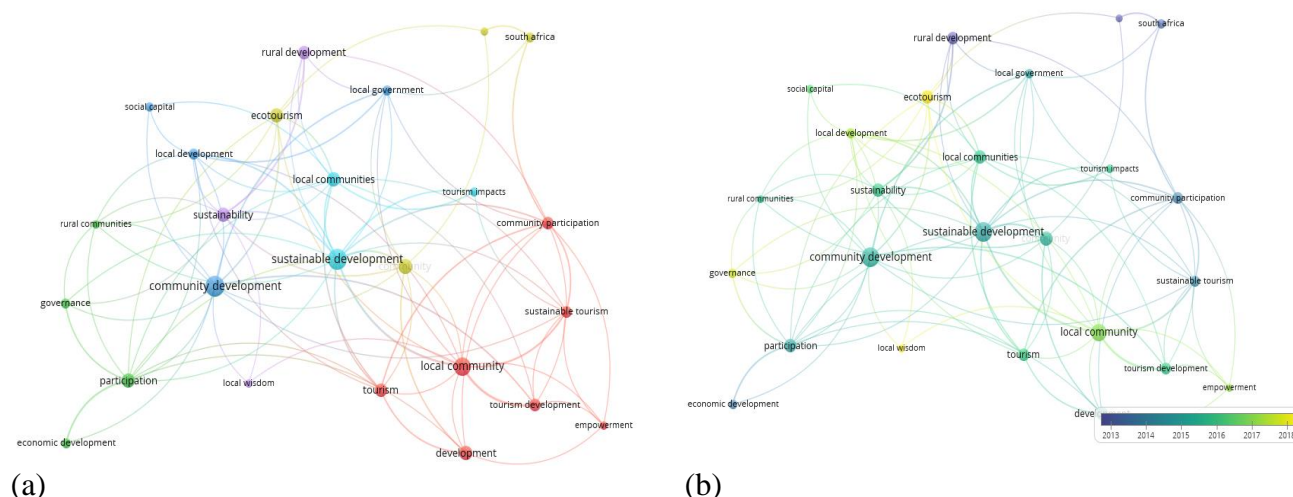
Table no. 2 shows the keywords, their frequency, and the number of associations, in which each keyword has been linked to the other words. Because there are many different keywords, to ensure linkability, the author has selected keywords with a minimum number of occurrences of 5 to conduct the analysis. These keywords are divided into six different clusters based on criteria.

**Table no. 2. Keywords with occurrences at least 10**

Ranking	Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength	Cluster
1	Community participation	11	14	1
2	Development	15	8	1
3	Local community	24	21	1
4	Sustainable tourism	10	11	1
5	Tourism	13	12	1
6	Tourism development	12	11	1
7	Participation	14	14	2
8	Community development	30	15	3
9	Community	17	13	4
10	Ecotourism	15	10	4
11	Rural development	13	8	5
12	Sustainability	14	13	5
13	Local communities	14	15	6
14	Sustainable development	32	25	6

Source: Author's own research results.

Figure 2 shows the link between keywords. Through Figure 2a, we can see the significant role of the community in local development by promoting factors to ensure local development, such as sustainable development, local development, economic development, or participation. These are currently the top concerns of researchers. The keywords that are most interested in turn are local communities, sustainable development, community development, local development, community development, local community, community. This result demonstrates the linkage and interdependence between community and local development.



Source: Author's own research results.

Figure 2b shows the appearance of keywords in chronological order of the studies. Through Figure 2b, we can see that there is a change in the subjects of the studies. Previous studies have focused on local sustainable development, as well as rural development and tourism development. Currently, research tends to focus on local communities, community development, empowerment, and local wisdom.

## The role of community for local development

Many studies have confirmed that communities and localities have close relationships and mutual influence. Accordingly, researchers determine that communities contribute to local development (Barth, 1967; Delicado et al., 2016; Wahid et al., 2017; Hassan et al., 2018; Yeh et al., 2021). More specifically, participation of the local community has a positive influence on local development projects (Hassan et al., 2018) and local development (Kostyuchenko et al., 2015). Community-led and community-based local development structures are a recent development phenomenon applied by many developing and developed countries (Wahid et al., 2017). It is necessary to increase active participation of the community and improve the quality of life and social welfare of the local community. From there, local sustainable development can be achieved (Wahid et al., 2017). However, the relationship between the community and local development also exists in many complex issues. Therefore, for this study, we need to consider the relationship between the community and local development from the community's perspective to better understand the role and contribution of the community in local development.

According to Barth (1967), communities may be regarded as the cause of social and local changes. Furthermore, local development under community responsibility is part of local development, in which local people take control and form local partnerships to develop and implement all development strategies. (Barth, 1967). Therefore, we must recognize the implication of local actors as well as the direct beneficiaries from public policy when discussing about local development. Cebotari & Mihály (2019) found that it is necessary to improve or change the current policy approach toward developing community participation in local development. From there, it can increase the effectiveness of development policies. Therefore, improving community participation by giving local people a bigger voice in local decisions contributes to local development (Lukkarinen, 2005). Furthermore, Cebotari & Mihály (2019) have argued that the development of the locality should be primarily linked to local communities. By engaging local communities in policy review and assessment, policy makers will ensure feedback directly from the source (Cebotari & Mihály, 2019). Furthermore, it will be able to compare data sourced from the locality with large N statistics data (Cebotari & Mihály, 2019). Therefore, the link between action

and the welfare of the community is sustainable. This suggests that efforts to promote community development at the local level should be a major component of development policy (Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

In evaluation of community contributions to the locality, Perez et al. (2017) argued that community strength is a viable option for application to local development. It allows one to maintain a development base in the use of local endogenous resources, ensure resource protection, care for the environment and locally sustainable development (Perez et al., 2017). Furthermore, broad community participation is critical to local-led development against peripheralization (Cebotari & Mihály, 2019). The support of integrated local development strategies and local action groups can facilitate sustainable and consistent implementation interventions. Therefore, the community can be a group of measures that can be managed across all areas to promote new opportunities, socioeconomic benefits, equity, as well as diversity in local innovation and activities (Birolo et al., 2012).

From another point of view, Dongier et al. (2001) considered community-based development as a mechanism to enhance sustainability and efficiency. It allows poverty reduction efforts to be implemented on a large scale, empowering the human poor, creating social capital, enhancing management, and completing activities of markets and the public sector (Dongier et al., 2001). Some evidence suggests that community participation projects create more efficient community infrastructure and improve welfare outcomes (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Community-based and participatory initiatives help the poor access new livelihood opportunities, improve their living standards, and increase social integration (Dodman & Mitlin, 2013). In addition, community-led initiatives can be more effective, and this is a resource of innovation since they are tailored to the interests, needs, and contexts of the community (Wahid et al., 2017). Furthermore, community empowerment improves social, economic and human capital (Wahid et al., 2017). These are resources for the reduction of poverty, the quality of life, and rural development (Wahid et al., 2017). By directly relying on the low-grade to promote development, Dongier et al. (2001) identified that the community has the possibility to undertake more responsive, more inclusive, sustainable poverty reduction efforts, and more cost-effective than the traditional leadership-led programs. The community will fill a gap in poverty reduction. Furthermore, it achieves immediate and lasting results at the grassroots level. It complements the market economy as well as the programs of government (Dongier et al., 2001).

In addition, evidence of the relationship between community participation in happiness and local action has been recorded in many recent studies. For example, the research of Claude et al. (2000) takes place in four rural communities in Pennsylvania. In communities with a high level of activity, people ranked the welfare of the community higher than in communities with a low level of activity. Furthermore, in places characterized by low success and high levels of positivity, people are more likely to rate social welfare higher than their communities within communities with a high degree of success and a low degree of positivity (Luloff, 1998). There is proof that community positivity is associated with happiness on a personal level. For example, research by Jacob et al. (2001) found that communities are characterized by macrolevel factors. It includes community solidarity that has contributed to mental health. People living in communities with a higher degree of community solidarity were less likely to be depressed than those living in areas with a low degree of solidarity (Jacob et al., 2001).

Research by Delicado et al. (2016) also identified the perceptions of communities about the impacts, both positive and negative, on the local development and landscape environment. Therefore, there is continuing attraction and advancement in local communities and the indigenous economy. Especially, it is established based on traditional, cultural, and ecological knowledge. From there, it contributes to native recovery (Yeh et al., 2021). In addition, community and local development practices involve bargaining between communities and external actors (Yeh et al., 2021). Therefore, these strategies for local and community development are designed to harness the social, environmental, and economic strengths of the community rather than to offset the problems

faced. So this partnership benefits from long-term funding and has the power to decide how to spend the funds (Saracu & Trif, 2019) on local development.

Furthermore, research by Tsai & Tseng (2003) has emphasized the critical role of local institutions in enhancing and enforcing initiatives toward the environment. It includes conservation of resources, beautification of landscapes, recreational sector development, organic food production, etc. These local collectives and communities are identified as agents of local change. It is done by identifying demands, marshaling resources, driving solutions, and enforcing strategies that change relationship between people and environment. From there, it forms a sustainable basis for the conservation and natural resources exploitation in sustainable ways (Valchovska & Watts, 2013). Hence, it contributes to local development. To create a strong indigenous economy, it is good practice that each community should take a collaborative process, make a strategic plan, and then act based on their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Pennink, 2012). Therefore, Saracu & Trif (2019) argued that the participation of local communities should be encouraged in identifying solutions to specific problems and challenges in local development rather than assigning duties to local governments.

In many countries, the situation of local communities from 2014 to 2020 is different from the situation in previous periods. A study by LCM (Local Government Commission) stated that: *'One of the biggest myths is that to foster economic development, a community must accept growth'* (Pike et al., 2007: 1254). Therefore, some different approaches appear that focus on local and social orientations (Pike et al., 2007). Furthermore, in the face of the severity of the economic crisis, many existing local partnerships are forced to identify additional funding sources only to continue operating or survive. However, given the increasing social, environmental and economic constraints, continuing activities to date is no longer a viable option for many local communities (Saracu & Trif, 2019). Local development partnerships placed under the responsibility of the community face a completely different governance landscape from the original (Saracu & Trif, 2019). It requires local communities to make changes to contribute to the continued development of the locality. Many partnerships, initially small and relatively free pilot community initiatives, have been extended to rural areas and vast coastal regions (Saracu & Trif, 2019). It has shown that communities are increasingly playing an essential role in local development not only in terms of growth but also in solving other local development problems.

In the opposite effect, local development also contributes to influencing the community. Many studies show that local economic development strategies have a significant impact on the improvement of the infrastructure and service delivery of local communities (Musakwa, 2009). In addition, the status of community cohesion and social capital, is expected to grow the quality and sustainability of regional development projects (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Local economic development strategies have a slight impact on income improvement, asset indexes, human capacity, market share, and job creation for SMEs, as well as residents in communities (Musakwa, 2009).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The above research results show the significant role of the community in local development. Communities act as a driving force and an essential factor in promoting local development. Communities have an important role in local economic development and in solving other local problems. This role of the community is not only in the early stages of local development but also in the early stages of local development. The community also affects the characteristics and factors of the locality. It will be a source of funding and a basis for local development. However, the community is still facing many challenges, such as changes in the environment, people, external agents, etc. Therefore, the reality is that the current community must make some changes. These changes contribute to the sustainability of local development and avoid the possibility that the community is an obstacle to local development. To ensure this requirement, the author proposes some recommendations to increase the role in local development. First, it is to improve the capacity



of the community for local development. Also, many factors, such as people, culture, and education level, must be paid notice. Second, many policies and development models to promote the growth of businesses in the locality in the link with community development.

This study ends with a presentation of the theoretical basis of the role in local development. Therefore, this study has limitations. First, research papers are based on Scopus databases. Despite the fact that the Scopus database is reputable and highly influential, it has not yet generalize all existing research on communities and local development. In addition, the study has not analyzed in depth the characteristics, subjects, and results of the publications studies. The study only analyzed the theory, not the quantitative analysis. In addition, due to limitations on the use of VOSviewer's analysis platform, the article cannot go into the specific analysis of the influence of the community on local development.

Regarding the direction of further research, the article suggests some future research directions based on the above limitations. First, based on concepts, future research can build a scale to assess the influence of the community on local development. From there, conduct an actual assessment of the scale built based on real studies to form the official scale. Second, research the role of different communities in local development or the change of communities in improvement in many localities. From there, it is possible to make a detailed comparison of that difference.

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