



Community Land Trusts in contexts of informality: Process, politics, and challenges of implementation

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Abstract

Informal settlements—characterized by a lack of proper housing, urban infrastructure, and insecure tenure—house a significant portion of the world's population. This is an overwhelming reality in Global South countries and requires alternatives to guarantee permanent and secure affordable housing to residents while promoting community empowerment and improving quality of life. Community land trusts (CLTs) offer promise for housing struggles due to their mechanism of permanently securing housing affordability and their premise of ensuring community control over development. However, despite such promises, there are scarce experiences of community land trusts in contexts of informality. Based on recent and ongoing CLT implementation experiences in Puerto Rico and Brazil, we explore the process, politics, and challenges of community land trust implementation in informal settlements. We examine four critical moments in the overall process of CLT implementation in contexts of informality and problematize its difficulties and relationship with broader ongoing urban challenges. We consider the potentiality of CLTs to support housing struggles and mitigate long-lasting dispossession in different urban and housing realities throughout the urban Global South.

Keywords

Community Land Trusts, informal settlements, affordable housing, community control, Global South



Introduction

Land and housing struggles throughout the Global South often happen within an organizing logic of urban informality (Roy, 2005), where low-income households have historically relied on self-built settlements on public or privately owned land, which often lacks the proper urban infrastructure to meet basic human needs. While housing and urban realities within these contexts vary greatly, close to one billion people live in informal settlements today, frequently facing socioeconomic and environmental difficulties and social stigma and discrimination (United Nations, 2019). Ongoing patterns of unequal peripheral urbanization have contributed to land speculation and gentrification, resulting in external pressures, tenure insecurity, and vulnerability of informal settlements' residents to housing displacement (Yunda & Sletto, 2017). At the same time, policymakers worldwide have implemented various strategies to eliminate or improve such settlements. However, existing strategies present substantial gaps in the long-term improvement of residents' quality of life, sustaining housing affordability and tenure security, and promoting community control (Basile & Ehlenz, 2020).

A community land trust (CLT) is a type of shared equity ownership. The land is collectively owned and administered by a community-represented non-profit organization, protecting residents from land speculation, gentrification, and displacement. The development of the land is then controlled by a non-profit organization that owns the land and leases it or grants surface rights or other types of leases to residents who own the buildings. The flexibility of CLTs has allowed its use and adaptation in different contexts, adjusting it according to local communities' conditions and needs (Davis, 2020). In countries like Kenya and Puerto Rico, CLTs have demonstrated their ability to effectively safeguard housing affordability and tenure security for informal settlement residents while ensuring community control and empowerment through the community-represented managing organization (Hernández-Torrales et al., 2020). Despite such potential, CLTs in informal settlements are rare. There are only three known cases of implemented CLTs in informal settlements (two in Latin America and one in Africa).

Due to the novel nature of CLTs in contexts of informality, there is still a lot to learn about their adaptability, potential, challenges, and dynamics in such varied circumstances. Based on an analysis of experiences in Puerto Rico and Brazil, we explore four critical moments of the overall process of CLT implementation and challenges in different urban and housing realities, considering such communities' particularities and contexts. The framework put forward in this article is based on the direct lived experience of one of the authors in the process of implementing the first CLT in a Brazilian favela—a process initiated in August 2018, and still ongoing as of June 2022—in addition to several exchanges with five leaders and residents from Puerto Rico's Caño Martín Peña CLT and the analysis of secondary data from CLT implementation in Kenya and Puerto Rico. This exploration contributes to understanding the nuances and specificities of CLTs in varied Global South countries and the challenges inherent to such processes. Ultimately, the CLT offers a path to potentially address the long-lasting legacies of inequality and dispossession by securing

permanent affordable housing, building community wealth, and strengthening collective power in various contexts (Davis & Fernández, 2020).

We use the term Global South to refer to geographies that have experienced histories of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and socioeconomic and political struggles and resistance (Dados & Connell, 2012), while acknowledging the heterogeneity of the urban and housing realities the term encompasses. Similarly, we reject homogenous depictions of informality and seek to learn from the particular experiences of housing struggles. In what follows, we provide an overview of community land trusts and review existing CLTs in informal settlements. Next, we present the existing experiences and discuss the overall process of CLT implementation in detail, reflecting on differences, challenges, and lessons. Finally, we conclude with a reflection on the relevance and implications of CLT implementation in informal settlements for the current worldwide socioeconomic and public health crises.

Community land trusts (CLTs): an overview

CLTs are an alternative mechanism of ownership in which the land is legally disassociated from the buildings on it (Davis, 2010). The model allows for the development or provision of affordable housing, protecting residents from land speculation. In a CLT, a community-controlled organization (usually a non-profit) holds the ownership of the land and leases or grants surface rights of the land to households living in dwelling units built on it. In its traditional format, CLT residents own the houses they live in and any appreciation from improvements made to the structure (Thaden et al., 2013). Houses can also be owned collectively through a cooperative (Ehlenz, 2018). The community typically elects and constitutes part of the non-profit governing board, maintaining control of the CLT. The land's guardianship by a community-controlled organization and the commitment to permanent affordability through limits on resale equity remove the land from the speculative market, securing residents' tenure independently of rising land values in surrounding areas. This property ownership structure ensures long-term affordable housing, tenure security, and community control.

CLTs first emerged in rural areas of the United States during the 1960s, prioritizing affordable housing and other activities such as farming, food cooperatives, and entrepreneurial employment opportunities (Ehlenz & Taylor, 2019). The first CLT was created in Georgia in 1969 by organizers connected to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and other groups. Directly associated with civil rights movements, these groups established CLTs with the specific goals of promoting socioeconomic and political transformation for Black families through land ownership and control (DeFilippis et al., 2019). The CLT model's original intentions stress its transformational potential to support vulnerable populations (Taylor Jr., 2020). Since the 1980s, CLTs have expanded to urban and suburban areas and different countries throughout the Global North. Hundreds of communities worldwide have adopted the model, growing what is now recognized as a worldwide CLT movement (Davis et al., 2020).

Research has emphasized several positive effects of CLTs, including permanently affordable housing and wealth-building opportunities for low-income families through lower purchase prices and access to affordable loans (Davis, 2017; Theodos et al., 2017). The CLT model promotes a range of non-economic benefits, such as a sense of stability, security, improved quality of life, and autonomy for residents (Hackett et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2019; Thaden et al., 2013). These benefits occur at the individual and the community level, allowing for residential mobility (Davis & Stokes, 2009). CLT implementation, realization, and maintenance foster community empowerment opportunities, capacity-building, collaboration, and solidarity among residents (Aernouts & Ryckewaert, 2018; Midheme & Moulaert, 2013). CLTs are embedded in a care framework, providing spaces for caring for residents and communities according to specific contexts and difficulties (Cahen et al., 2020).

Despite its potential for community control and empowerment, CLT implementation does not inevitably result in democratic decision-making and power for the communities it serves (Moore & McKee, 2012). As a socially embedded model, contextual and historical factors influence CLTs' intensity and type of community control (Crabtree, 2020). The advancement of the model in the US, combined with a focus on its economic benefits, has contributed to the promotion of CLTs as a mechanism of affordable housing provision to the detriment of community control (Gray & Galande, 2011; DeFilippis et al., 2018). Growing fiscal austerity also impairs the power of a community within CLTs (Williams, 2018). DeFilippis and colleagues (2018) also point to the growth of CLTs beyond the neighborhood level as a restraint to implementing and maintaining community control and public and philanthropic funders' tendency to use CLTs as a policy intervention with little or no intention of community control and transformation. The loss of community from CLTs due to these and other factors distances the model from its original purposes of radical social change through community control and empowerment (DeFilippis et al., 2018). Ultimately, resident engagement is essential for community control (Lowe & Thaden, 2015). These findings point to the limitations of CLTs as a tool for structural change in the context of neoliberal governments and private development interests (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis et al., 2019).

Experiences and struggles in contexts of informality

Struggles over urban land management and control are at the core of housing justice. We highlight the contested nature of such struggles within contexts of urban informality in discussing CLTs' implementation in informal settlements in Kenya, Bolivia, and Puerto Rico. In Kenya, the Tanzania-Bondeni informal settlement residents in Voi chose the CLT model to secure land rights and preserve residents' benefits after an upgrading project in the 1990s (Bassett, 2005). During the implementation process, there were significant difficulties due to Kenyan law and administrative frameworks that restrict ownership, requiring the establishment of a legal entity to manage the CLT and a separate trust to retain the land title (Midheme & Moulaert, 2013). Since its implementation, the Tanzania-Bondeni CLT has successfully preserved housing affordability and advanced collaboration among residents (Midheme & Moulaert, 2013). The CLT has enabled residents to access resources that would

be unavailable otherwise, such as housing financing mechanisms (Bassett, 2005), and contributed to the community's territorial improvements, such as urban services and housing upgrades (Simonneau & Denis, 2020). However, there are also conflicts and challenges in management, maintenance, and community involvement in the CLT. Specifically, the Tanzania-Bondeni CLT has faced difficulties maintaining its organizational structure and mandates. Due to residents' unfamiliarity with how the model works, constitutional rules related to the re-election of managing committee members and the oversight of absentee owners have not been enforced (Bassett, 2005; Simonneau et al., 2021).

In Cochabamba, Bolivia, *Hábitat para la Mujer* in the Maria Auxiliadora Community applies the CLT model to provide low-income housing to vulnerable families. The land is collectively owned while families live in houses, and renting is prohibited, ensuring the land's long-term affordability (World Habitat Awards, n.d.). Additionally, the Maria Auxiliadora Community has a strong focus on supporting, protecting, and empowering women. All titles are put in the woman's name, protecting women and children in cases of separation or divorce. Women receive training and occupy leadership positions, and there are open domestic violence workshops for women. The community also has specific rules prohibiting the sale of alcohol and gender-based violence, removing those who do not comply with the rules. The Maria Auxiliadora Community has successfully maintained housing affordability, promoting cooperation and solidarity, reducing domestic violence, and empowering women (Booth, 2017). However, there were also barriers throughout this process. Municipal authorities opposed the project in its beginning stages due to its reliance on clientelist practices. Other issues included conflicts over collective ownership and financial uncertainty during the first stages of implementation (World Habitat Awards, n.d.).

In Puerto Rico, residents of the Caño Martín Peña communities decided to create a CLT after a planning-action-reflection process that involved thousands of residents in the early 2000s (Algoed & Hernández Torrales, 2019). Designed to regularize land tenure and inhibit involuntary displacement, the Caño Martín Peña CLT gives collective ownership of more than 110 hectares of land to roughly 1,500 low to moderate-income households in San Juan, Puerto Rico (Hernández Torrales et al., 2020). Since its implementation, the Caño CLT has promoted a strong community development program, leading to territorial improvements based on residents' decisions. Moreover, such territorial and community development, allied with the various national and international partnerships, has ensured a process of community empowerment in the face of social, political, and environmental adversities (Algoed & Hernández Torrales, 2019).

The Caño CLT also faced considerable challenges in its process of implementation. The CLT was legally formalized in 2004, and the ownership of the land was transferred to the CLT in 2009 (Hernández Torrales, 2007). Subsequently, newly elected officials reversed the CLT collective ownership of the land, returning it to the public domain and advocating for conventional individual titles (Nagy, 2017). Legal challenges to this reversal were unsuccessful. Ultimately, the Caño communities mobilized politically and successfully regained land ownership in 2013. The Caño CLT's struggle and achievements have drawn global attention and recognition, including receiving the World Habitat Award in 2015. Since

receiving the award, residents of the Caño CLT have been sharing their knowledge and experiences with informal settlements' residents and leaders worldwide, inspiring other communities to learn about the model and organize to adapt it to their realities (Hernández Torrales et al., 2020). These experiences further highlight the contested nature of struggles for land ownership in contexts of urban informality and the range of challenges faced by communities seeking to implement the CLT mechanism.

Efforts to adapt the model and establish CLTs in informal settlements are underway in favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Ribeiro et al., 2020) and Bangladesh's Bihari Camps (Sholder & Hasan, 2021), both informed by exchanges with residents from the Caño CLT. The first pilot project for CLT implementation in a favela in Brazil emerged in Rio de Janeiro, coordinated by the non-governmental organization Catalytic Communities – CatComm. The Brazilian Community Land Trust model received the name of Termo Territorial Coletivo - TTC (translated to English as 'Collective Territorial Term'), seeking to maintain the CLT model's essential elements but informed and adapted by the Brazilian legal and social specificities. Since its inception, the project has accumulated many supporters, including public agencies, private entities, universities, residents, and favela leaders. The richness of knowledge and experiences of this plural composition of supporters has been fundamental to the project's overall development. The TTC is currently in a mobilization phase in two informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro.

Transferring CLT models and contextualized practices

As previous experiences have shown, the CLT is a promising model. It can secure permanent housing affordability and community control through a stewarding organization and representative board in contexts of contested processes for land access and control. While we acknowledge the potential of CLTs, it is important to problematize the transferring of policy models and how 'best practices' are often portrayed 'universal' without consideration of the different urban contexts where they are applied. The travel and reproduction of decontextualized models ignore the nuances of specific urban realities and can lead to problematic consequences for the populations and communities subjected to such practices. Relying on 'universal best practices' overlooks the histories, practices, and existing knowledge within communities in urban informality contexts. It also disregards past policies and programs and their impact on multiple scales of the urban environment and communities.

For decades, the transfer of policy models designed to address land and housing issues in informal settlements has been promoted, supported, and carried out by international development organizations and banks, NGOs, and governments (e.g., Holstein, 1996; Payne et al., 2009), but not without consequences. For instance, land titling has been extensively used as a 'successful' strategy to 'regularize' informal settlements by giving individual titles to reduce poverty and expand the local tax bases (De Soto, 2000; Gilbert, 2002). However, the overall results of this strategy have been contested in various contexts. For example, in Brazil, land titling has led to pressures from the real estate market on owners to sell their homes for

less than they are worth, forcing them to move to less valued peripheral areas to afford to buy a new home with the amount received (Alfonsin et al., 2019). Market-driven displacement after land titling programs has also been experienced in Cambodia and Rwanda (Durand-Lasserve et al., 2007). On the other hand, Varley (2016) found that processes of gentrification and displacement after titling in Mexico have only happened in particular locations that may attract commercial interest and capital investments. This finding further reinforces the importance of context in considering policy models. Similarly, the financialization of mass social housing as a model for the delivery of affordable housing has been reproduced in countries such as Argentina (Socoloff, 2020), Mexico (Reyes, 2020), and Brazil (Klink, & Denaldi, 2014). Many of these experiences have resulted in negative impacts for low-income populations who acquire significant debt and are generally displaced to poor quality, peripheral, and isolated developments (Acolin & Green, 2017; Moura, 2014), frequently failing to address the local realities of poverty and segregation (Rolnik, 2013a; Valença & Bonates, 2010).

A new model?

CLTs are currently being promoted as a successful model created in the US and exported to significantly different contexts. A key difference in this so-called model and its transfer lies in its flexibility to be adapted and substantially re-designed according to local contexts and specificities. The existing experiences of CLTs in contexts of informality demonstrate such flexibility and the necessary changes made to fit the needs of the communities in question. For example, the Caño CLT in Puerto Rico uses surface right deeds rather than a ground lease (common in US CLTs) to increase the security of tenure for residents (Davis, 2020). Ultimately, CLTs should not be considered a ready-made recipe. Instead, CLTs are a potential mechanism to disrupt the long-standing paradigm of individual property and top-down control of land and housing development and, possibly, to guarantee community control and permanent affordability to informal settlements in cases where it can be adapted and transformed to fit existing local realities.

A second difference is that CLTs are not designed to be imposed as a top-down policy. Instead, the decision to create a CLT and its control after implementation must lie with a committed and engaged place-based population (Davis et al., 2020). CLTs should be implemented through a participatory process, promoting residents' engagement, participation, and organization to ensure success (Hernández-Torrales et al., 2020). Residents must evaluate their needs and desires, choose to adopt the CLT model and commit to ownership for the common good to achieve their goals (Ribeiro et al., 2020). In contrast to previously mentioned policy models (mass social housing and land titling) in which governments or international development organizations hold power and means to pursue them, CLTs are a bottom-up approach (Basile & Ehlenz, 2020). Thus, CLT implementation requires a collaborative process in which communities possess and maintain agency and are empowered to make decisions, leveraging existing governance structures and organized leadership. Thus, CLTs are not simply a model of supplying houses or formalizing land/real

estate. Rather, CLTs have the potential to facilitate an emancipatory process with profound and lasting effects for its members. Despite such differences, there is still a need for caution and scrutiny of the appropriateness of CLTs to the specific context and local realities. CLTs will certainly not be the best strategy for all communities fighting for land and housing justice, but they represent another possible path for such struggles.

Rather than incentivizing the uncritical transfer of the CLT model to informal settlements, we suggest that communities struggling for housing and land justice in such varied contexts can learn from and be inspired by existing experiences. Such processes can involve contemplating possibilities of disrupting existing forms of individual property towards one that relies on the collective to promote long-lasting common good. In this sense, we draw on existing CLTs in informal settlements in the Global South to discuss what such a process could look like for different communities and the challenges that might arise from them.

Processes of community implementation of CLTs: four critical moments

The potential of CLTs for informal settlements in the Global South and the successes of existing experiences demonstrate the importance of efforts supporting the dissemination of the model and recognizing the potential challenges faced in such processes. This article seeks to contribute to these efforts by discussing four critical moments in the overall process of CLT implementation in contexts of informality and problematizing its difficulties and relationship with ongoing urban challenges in general. The critical moments we focus on are 1) feasibility and building community awareness, 2) mobilization, 3) community planning, and 4) implementation. This division seeks to highlight the specificities of each moment while discussing the range of challenges emerging from them. Despite the linearity of the discussion, justified by didactic purposes, it is critical to clarify that these phases rarely follow this exact order (see Figure 1). Instead, processes of CLT implementation in contexts of informality are long, complex, context-specific, and often contested. Our visual representation of these divisions emphasizes this complexity, showing how one moment informs the other yet are often overlapping. For instance, while the feasibility analysis of the model is critical in its beginning, it is not necessarily integrated into the community planning process. This visual shows the critical role that community mobilization plays throughout any phase of the process, being an ongoing process and integral for community planning and, later, CLT implementation and long-term sustainability.

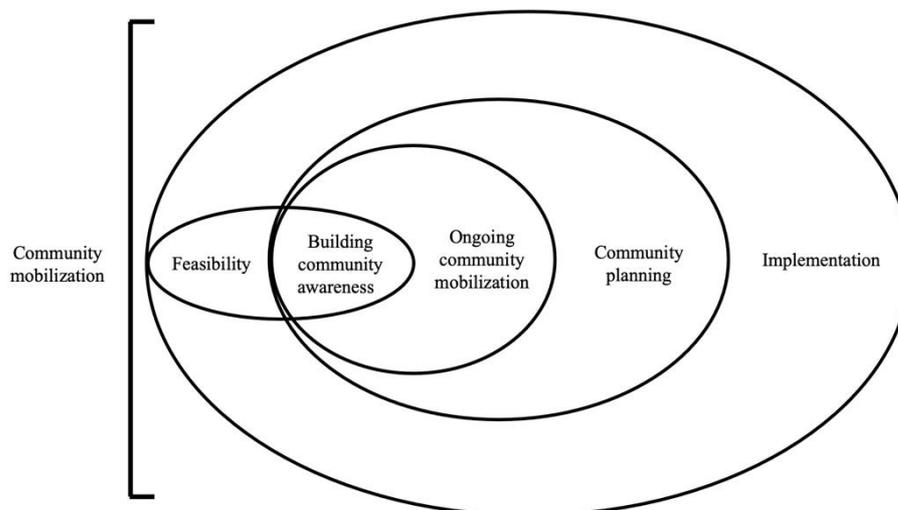


Figure 1:
Critical moments of CLT implementation in informal settlements. **Source: Authors**

Feasibility and building community awareness

CLTs have existed for decades in countries such as the United States, resulting in a body of existing knowledge and experiences about the model, possible paths for implementation, and challenges. On the other hand, there are very few experiences of CLTs in Global South countries. This reality translates as a gap in knowledge and awareness of the CLT model and a need to understand its overall feasibility within specific countries and their political and legal frameworks. The experiences in Puerto Rico, Kenya, and Brazil demonstrate the need for technical supporters to be involved in the process early on to analyze the feasibility of CLT implementation in the context and realities of each country. For instance, in the Kenyan case, it was impossible to implement the CLT in its classical form due to Kenyan land law and administration systems. Technical supporters of the project had to create specific mechanisms to implement a modified version of the CLT within that reality (Midheme & Moulaert, 2013). With the spread of the model worldwide, such support will likely lose its character as a necessity as communities will be able to replicate, share, and learn from past and ongoing experiences in a more organic manner, as seen in countries such as the US.

On the community scale, an alliance between community residents and leaders and a multidisciplinary team of technical supporters has also shown to be essential in considering the legal, economic, social, and territorial aspects and the possibilities for adapting the CLT model to the local context. CLT implementation and long-term maintenance require spontaneous membership of residents, collective stewardship, and management of the land through a community-controlled organization and the socioeconomic, long-term sustainability of the organization. The support of technical allies allows for considering all technical aspects of these processes and potential challenges. Analysing and exploring these

possibilities take significant time and effort but are necessary to confirm the feasibility of CLT implementation and draw possible paths for such a process in a specific community.

An ongoing necessity in this initial moment involves engaging residents in reflecting on whether implementing a CLT aligns with their goals as a community. In Puerto Rico and Brazil, this moment consisted of developing a critical reflection on the legal and socioeconomic realities of their territory and considering possible options to ensure long-term tenure security and improvement. In both countries, the possibility of a CLT was introduced after residents had clarity about their priorities and needs as a community, allowing them to question the extent to which the model fitted within their priorities. Such processes are inevitably long and often require the support of technical allies to seek didactic ways to explain the CLT model, which is complex and often unknown.

It is important to highlight the model's flexibility and how it has been adapted to different contexts and needs. This process may require various activities and opportunities to introduce and explain the CLT model and its ownership and management structure to residents. Due to the model's complexity and novel character for many, leaders and technicians need to work together in explaining the model in an accessible way to residents, considering language use and forms of presentation. Presenting experiences of successful CLT implementation and their challenges to residents is a way of demonstrating its possible benefits and opportunities and the weaknesses and challenges of the model on the local scale. The TTC project in Brazil began with an exchange of experiences between leaders and technicians from the Caño CLT and favela residents in Rio de Janeiro. The testimony of those who live in a CLT and worked for its implementation was critical for residents to see the model's viability for informal settlements and consider it a real possibility. Promoting this exchange also allowed favela residents in Rio to witness the positive results of CLT implementation regarding land security, community empowerment and control, and possibilities for territorial improvements. In this first moment of a long and often contested process, residents must reflect on their needs and priorities and analyse whether a CLT could offer a path for achieving such goals.

Mobilization

If there is resident interest and support to pursue the CLT as a possibility for their community, further community mobilization is necessary to engage as many residents as possible in the debate about a possible process of CLT implementation. Mobilization is an effort to organize residents in strengthening their community and promoting discussion about their territory and ways to improve it, possibly through the framework of a CLT. Mobilization as a continuous process of organizing and partnership with technical supporters is thus critical to implementing a CLT. While we begin the discussion with feasibility and building community awareness, community mobilization usually predates such efforts, a necessary ongoing effort that should always be happening independently of the phase of the process. The Caño CLT case demonstrates that the long-term success and maintenance of a CLT are connected to the degree of organizing and mobilization of residents around the

model, its process of implementation, and community improvement. Continuous mobilization can support the creation of a foundational structure, culture, and mechanisms for resident involvement and control that are critical for a CLT before and after its implementation.

There are several challenges to community mobilization in informal settlements. First, developing a collective process of reflection and mobilization around a CLT can be challenging in contexts dominated by the ideology of individual private property (Ribeiro, 2020). The long histories of struggle and failed interventions in informal settlements frequently lead to skepticism of ready-made solutions that seem "too good," especially if presented by people "from outside." Clientelist practices and forgotten campaign promises by politicians reinforce informal settlement residents' skepticism of quick fixes and ready-made solutions (Deuskar, 2019). Such histories and realities demonstrate the importance of mobilizing residents to develop agency and ownership over the project and process. Organizing efforts can also contribute to nurturing relationships of trust between communities and outside technical supporters. In Rio de Janeiro, strategies such as continuous personal contact, involvement of technical supporters with community members, and maintaining the frequency of activities have effectively built relationships and trust in mobilization processes.

Another common challenge is the availability of community members for activities that seek to engage and mobilize residents. Informal settlements are heterogeneous communities, and residents often have a range of demands from work and family needs in their everyday schedules. Using various formats of activities, including recreational activities for families at times that are most convenient for residents (after work or during the weekend), is critical to respond to these realities. Community leaders and technical allies need to be available and willing to adapt to residents' needs and engage with as many residents as possible in meetings and activities.

Often, a group of leaders and residents demonstrate interest and involvement with the possibility of a CLT from the beginning of the process. This group of residents plays a critical role in the process, acting as multipliers of the model, talking to residents who do not have the opportunity or interest to attend information and brainstorming sessions. These efforts help build a communication bridge between more reticent residents and technical supporters. They can answer questions and ensure that, at the right time, everyone can make an informed decision to adhere to the model or not. The consistent involvement of this group of residents also contributes to community ownership of the project, critical for its long-term success. In the case of Puerto Rico, mobilization included the participation of technicians and leaders engaged in implementing the CLT in daily community activities to reach as many people as possible (Algoed & Hernández Torrales, 2019). A similar strategy was adopted in Rio de Janeiro, seeking to mobilize residents at different times and spaces.

The mobilization stage is inevitably long and continuous. There is a need to reach as many residents as possible to encourage reflection and provide thorough information about the model, what it entails, its characteristics, potential benefits, and difficulties. It is essential to be intentional about language, format, and communications, always respecting residents'

agency in the process. Despite such efforts, there may be residents or groups of residents who are not interested in pursuing a CLT as a strategy for community stability and improvement. In this case, additional mobilization difficulties may come from the organized opposition of residents or even outsiders such as politicians who benefit from clientelist practices for political capital and election votes. When there is resident support and opposition at the same time, it is important to explain and emphasize that being part of a CLT is a choice, and there is no need for an entire community of people to be willing to join for the CLT to move forward. Nevertheless, there is a need for enough resident support and buy-in for a CLT to be implemented. Ultimately, the decision to implement a CLT rests with the community. Outside supporters must be respectful and understand a possible rejection of the CLT model by residents. Continuous mobilization efforts will likely contribute to greater community involvement and control once the CLT is implemented. If mobilization efforts successfully engage as many residents as possible and there is a continuous positive response toward the CLT model, it is then possible to consider a path for implementation. Debating a potential pathway for implementation can strengthen the engagement process since residents feel like they are creating something concrete, as experienced in Rio de Janeiro.

Community planning

Community planning is necessary to implement a CLT in an informal settlement. Community leaders, members, technical supporters, local government representatives, and other interested institutions reflect on residents' desires and needs for their community. In this sense, community planning is a formative and reflective activity, allowing people to consider the possibilities and limitations of strategies and plans for improvement. Community planning is ongoing, happening concomitantly and continuously throughout mobilization and implementation.

Planning should be as broad as possible, covering the territorial, social, and economic dimensions, based on the material realities of the informal settlement in question and the proposition of concrete measures for improvement (such as infrastructural and housing improvements, mitigation of geological risks, income generation, implementation of public facilities, among others). The elaboration of a comprehensive plan with residents' desires and perceptions seeks to subvert the "top-down" logic of urban planning efforts (Annamalai et al., 2016) and prioritize residents' agency in the process. Considerations about funding, resources, and timing are also crucial in the planning process to ensure the viability and materialization of proposals. Residents and supporters should be intentional about considering realistic paths for implementing the plans idealized by community members. This is especially important for informal settlements where, in many cases, there is an urgent need for infrastructural implementation or improvement and housing improvements. Similarly, it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved in the short, medium, and long term and to brainstorm and design possible paths to get there (timeframe, outside support, funding, others). Not promising more than can be achieved is also key to maintaining community engagement and support in the long term.

Planning efforts should include discussions, training, and reflection about the CLT managing entity. Residents need to discuss and have clarity about the CLT managing entity's objectives and its limitations of scope and reach. Residents and partners should outline clear strategies and goals for developing the entity and its specific performance in the community. Carrying out comprehensive planning based on residents' perceptions and needs for the community and the CLT management entity is a fundamental step for the engagement of residents and the proper development of the CLT. In addition to documenting the community's wishes and needs, planning as a process can engage residents, and its final document establishes a commitment to the goals and objectives defined collectively.

The entire planning process shares the challenges already highlighted in the mobilization stage, mainly as they occur in an overlapping way. Thus, the mobilization of residents itself can be a challenge, as well as the need to make the contents inherent to planning accessible to residents without technical knowledge. The Puerto Rico experience involved continuous community mobilization, development of teaching materials, and practical explanations about the possibilities for improvement of the communities affected. The Puerto Rican process took a few years, but it was essential for constructing an effective participatory planning effort with the leading role of the residents (Algoed & Hernández Torrales, 2019). The planning process established within the scope of a CLT, and the mobilization process can empower and strengthen the communities involved in their local demands and contribute to an exercise of active citizenship. Such processes of critical reflection about territory and planning allow residents to be better prepared to participate and engage in the discussion and making of public policies at all levels of government.

Implementation

The model's implementation can begin once a substantial group of residents has made an informed decision to pursue the CLT model after a robust mobilization and planning process. While implementation is presented as a separate moment in this discussion, it often starts earlier, involving land tenure regularization procedures and discussions about the managing entity's mission and goals. Overall, the implementation aims to put in place the necessary measures for developing and formalizing the CLT structure and work, recognizing that each community's particularities may lead to additional actions and challenges. The bureaucracy of CLT implementation requires the involvement of technical supporters in considering its legal, administrative, and economic aspects.

One of the main elements needed for CLT implementation is land ownership. The process of acquiring land ownership for a CLT in an informal settlement includes: (i) securing the individual property titles of each parcel of land that will be included in the CLT; (ii) consolidating ownership of the land under the legal entity responsible for the management of the CLT; and (iii) separating the individual ownership of the buildings from the collective ownership of the land through leases or the conveyance of surface rights. This effort would likely begin earlier in the process. In informal settlements, securing property titles takes time as it depends heavily on state support through laws, public policies, and direct investments.

It can also be a contentious process due to resistance from public or private actors who may have alternative economic and political interests (Davis & White, 2012). In such cases, a community's capacity to mobilize and advocate for its cause will be essential in facing such difficulties. The lack of land ownership prevents CLT implementation.

The process of securing the land in Puerto Rico was a contested one, involving the reversal of the decision to create a public company for collective ownership of the land due to changes in local government and political interests. In May 2009, the Caño Martín Peña land ownership was transferred from the government to the CLT. A month later, the government took the land back through legislation that reverted land ownership to the public domain. The newly elected sitting administration sought to use individual land titles, arguing that it would be a preferable option long term. Legal efforts by the Caño Martín Peña communities to overturn the local government's decision failed. It was not until 2012, when a new election was taking place that leaders and residents heavily organized and mobilized efforts to ensure the support of all running candidates. The ownership of the land was returned to the Caño CLT in 2013 because of these efforts (Nagy, 2017). In Rio de Janeiro, despite Brazil's advanced urban legislation (Friendly, 2020), land ownership is similarly complex due to the history of land tenure irregularities. Thus, strategies to overcome these obstacles will have to be thought out on a case-by-case basis, according to the peculiarities of each of the communities involved as well as the needed support of outside parties.

The creation and structuring of the CLT management entity ideally happen simultaneously to secure and consolidate land ownership. There is a plurality of possible formats that could be adopted, differing in legal and administrative elements. For instance, there are CLTs managed by housing cooperatives (Angotti & Jagu, 2007), while others adopt a complex structure of more than one entity responsible for managing different CLT aspects (Davis, 2020). Ultimately, the managing entity's structure would comply with the decisions made by residents during the planning phase, respecting the agency of the residents per what is possible within each legal system.

It is also important to create mechanisms for residents' direct participation in decision-making processes within the managing entity's structure. Residents need to elect the members of the representative board of the CLT managing organization. An active and engaged democratic process and continuous efforts to engage residents will ensure more significant mobilization and community empowerment. The structuring of the management entity must also include training and education efforts of residents and leaders concerning the legal entity's administration and management. In addition to administrative structures, a series of bureaucracies and managerial procedures specific to each legal entity must be placed in the community members' hands to ensure long-term effective self-management efforts. In Puerto Rico and Brazil, communities have had the ongoing support of a multidisciplinary technical group since the beginning of the process, allowing them to overcome ongoing technical and bureaucratic challenges.

Decisions about the structure and duties of the representative managing board are also part of this process. The board is responsible for the administration of the legal entity and, ultimately, for the future directions of the CLT. The representative board may vary in size,

composition, term of office, and duties, among other aspects. Residents must lead the decision-making process, and the CLT format and structure must be adapted to the community's realities and priorities. For example, it is common for the representative board to have a "classic" tripartite format, consisting of one-third residents, one-third neighbourhood residents, and one-third technical allies (Davis, 2020). This format aims to prevent the formation of occasional majorities on the board that could distort the actions and goals of the CLT. While this structure has been successful for CLTs in the Global North, it is not necessarily the best option for emerging CLTs in informal settlements. Residents of neighbourhoods adjacent to informal settlements tend to be against their permanence. Informal settlements are frequently viewed with prejudice and stigma by society, resulting in pressures for removal and elimination (Fernandes, 2011). Such a goal is the opposite of a CLT's objectives in informal settlements, prioritizing community permanence and development. Having residents from adjacent neighbourhoods as members of the representative board could thus be contrary to the goal of permanence for informal settlements' residents.

Similarly, the composition of the representative board in CLTs in informal settlements must respond to territorial control challenges by armed groups (e.g., Zaluar & Conceição, 2007). The risk of co-optation by these groups should be considered in the decision-making process regarding the CLT structure, which should seek to remove or reduce the influence of such groups under the threat of a complete distortion of the CLT model and its objectives. In Puerto Rico and Brazil, there has been a reliance on the presence of external actors and institutions as part of the representative board and the continuous mobilization and strengthening of residents to prevent the co-optation of the board by armed groups. Such actions help create a system of accountability of the board to residents and the external actors involved in the process, reducing the likelihood of these groups' take-over of community infrastructures.

Structuring the CLT managing entity also involves the formulation of its internal rules. This is a document in which the community sets the rules for coexistence, management, and any limitations on transactions involving the properties of the CLT. Regulations for the CLT's legal entity need to comply with local legal systems. Residents should have autonomy in deciding the range and detail of the rules, ideally assisted by supporters with legal and administrative expertise. The making of this document should be a collective process from the beginning and count on the support from all residents involved with the CLT. Involving residents in this process is fundamental for the maintenance and sustainability of the CLT over time, as it will ensure residents' adherence to the established regulations. It is also essential to achieve a considerable consensus and agreement among residents about the entity's rules. Once all these steps are completed, the CLT will be implemented, functioning, and able to develop its potential for the benefit of the informal settlement's residents. Overall, implementing a CLT can guarantee the permanence of vulnerable urban populations in valued areas of large cities while guaranteeing community strengthening and the empowerment of residents.

Conclusion

Successive crises and persistent vulnerability and deprivation of the most impoverished populations in the Global South expose the continuous need for efforts and policy alternatives that promote the security of tenure and community empowerment and control. The Covid-19 pandemic worldwide and particularly in Global South countries, further aggravated existing injustices, inequalities, and dispossession, disproportionately impacting residents of informal settlements (Wilkinson, 2020). The right to adequate and secure housing is indispensable for guaranteeing several other fundamental human rights. The CLT model gains relevance within this context due to its ability to mitigate the risk of displacement and community control proposition. CLTs are internationally recognized for guaranteeing permanent affordable housing and community control to vulnerable populations. Therefore, the model represents a viable alternative for informal settlement communities to pursue improved housing security and quality of life.

This article breaks new ground by highlighting the critical moments and challenges of implementing CLTs in informal settlements, furthering the dissemination of the model in the Global South context. CLTs provide a framework for emancipatory processes of community reflection, mobilization, and control over development while ensuring permanent housing affordability and security. The materialization of these possibilities can begin to mitigate the ongoing and long-lasting dispossessions experienced by informal settlement residents in the urban Global South. This reflection has practical and theoretical implications for our understanding of the flexibility/adaptability of the CLT model and necessary adjustments for informal settlement communities. Yet, there is a growing need for more empirical and theoretical inquiries about the CLT model's benefits, challenges, drawbacks, and long-term performance in informal settlements. Our discussion contributes to advancing and disseminating the model to mitigate long-lasting vulnerabilities that persist in informal settlements. Ultimately, we hope these reflections can support communities and other stakeholders' efforts in CLT implementation processes in the Global South.

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