

Critical Realism: A Critical Evaluation in the Context of Community Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

This chapter seeks to contribute to the philosophical and theoretical perspectives informing community development in sub-Saharan Africa. It does this by theorising community development through the critical realism lens. Thus, drawing on the key issues raised in critical realism, efforts are made to discuss the main features of critical realism, specifically its emancipatory values, iterative pluralism, ontological realism, and epistemological relativism in the context of community development in sub-Saharan Africa. These features are important in explaining reality and the materiality of the development discourse and informing debates in community development in sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter asks four interrelated research questions. The first is conceptual: what is critical realism? The second is an abstract normative question: what is the nexus between critical realism and community development in sub-Saharan Africa? The third is a contextualised normative question: how applicable is critical realism in understanding community development in sub-Saharan Africa? The chapter concludes by asking what community development informed by critical realism looks like.