

Experiences of Socio-Spatial Injustice and Inequality: a Case of Galeshewe Township, Kimberley

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1 ABSTRACT

The enduring legacy of spatial apartheid continues to shape the lived experiences of many South Africans, particularly in urban areas. Historical injustices have resulted in fragmented spatial configurations that exacerbate socio-economic inequalities. Galeshewe Township in Kimberley, Northern Cape province, South Africa, serves as a case study of a community grappling with these challenges. This study aims to investigate the socio-spatial injustices and inequalities experienced by Galeshewe residents. The research is motivated by the significant and ongoing impact of these issues on the community, as well as the dearth of scholarly research addressing this topic within the South African context. Ten key socio-economic factors were identified for analysis: income disparity, rural-urban divide, educational attainment, health outcomes, public service access, land tenure security, poverty, employment patterns, and spatial freedom. A qualitative research methodology, employing semi-structured interviews and a qualitative survey, was utilized to collect data. The sample comprised fifteen residents of Galeshewe and five professional planners. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were employed to select participants from the township. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that the unequal distribution of societal benefits significantly contributes to economic deprivation and limited access to essential services. Based on these results, the study concludes by advocating for social cohesion, inclusivity, and equitable planning practices. This research contributes to the field of urban planning by highlighting the enduring impacts of historical injustices and the need for more equitable and socially just urban development.

Keywords: Socio-spatial justice, Socio-spatial inequality, Galeshewe Township, Kimberley, Challenges

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Globally, stark disparities between different places and social groups characterize socio-spatial injustice and inequality (Brenner & Theodore, 2020). Wealthy areas boast well-maintained infrastructure, access to quality services, and green spaces, while marginalized communities often face overcrowded housing, limited sanitation, environmental hazards, and a lack of basic amenities (UN-Habitat, 2020). The African continent presents a particularly acute example of how these global trends intersect with specific regional challenges. Furthermore, the legacy of colonial land dispossession and racial segregation continues to shape spatial inequalities, with certain groups having limited access to prime land and opportunities (Watson, 2022). In South Africa, these inequalities are deeply intertwined with the nation's colonial and apartheid history. Discriminatory policies and practices systematically disadvantaged Black South Africans, resulting in a significant racial wealth gap that persists to this day (Wolff et al., 2018).

Townships, established under apartheid to segregate the Black population, often lack basic infrastructure, quality education facilities, and access to reliable transportation (Ballard & Desai, 2009). Conversely, wealthier suburbs, historically reserved for white residents, benefit from proximity to jobs, green spaces, and well-maintained public services (McDonald, 2021). This uneven distribution of resources perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage in marginalized communities, reinforcing social segregation and limiting opportunities for social mobility. Discontent and social unrest often arise in response to these inequalities, as residents struggle with inadequate healthcare, limited access to resources, and a lack of political representation (Satterthwaite, 2017). The ongoing challenge of spatial inequality is further amplified by the rise of gated communities within South African cities (Wu et al., 2020). These enclaves of privilege, often located in previously white suburbs, offer residents access to high-quality amenities and security. However, their exclusivity reinforces social segregation and limits opportunities for interaction and integration between different socio-economic groups. The latest data from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) in 2024 indicated that the gini coefficient in South Africa remained high at 0.63 points in 2024, highlighting the persistent challenge of income inequality that spatial planning efforts must address.

The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) of 2013 marked a significant step towards redressing spatial inequalities in South Africa. Recognizing the enduring legacy of apartheid's discriminatory spatial planning, SPLUMA aimed to create a more inclusive and equitable urban landscape. As a means of restoring the unjust spatial configuration of the apartheid era, SPLUMA's distinguished principle of spatial justice, seeks to address the past spatial imbalances such as, improving access to land and the use thereof. However, SPLUMA's implementation faces significant challenges rooted in the enduring spatial form of apartheid South Africa. The fragmented ownership patterns within townships, with a mix of formal and informal settlements (Govender, 2016), pose a complex obstacle to integrated planning and development. While there are policies, plans and frameworks developed to address such imbalances, the greatest challenge remains to be the implementation of the respective tools. The main objective of the study is to identify the causes and forms of socio-spatial injustice and inequality within the Galeshewe township, while exploring the perceptions of the residents on the socio-spatial injustice and inequality embedded in their daily lives, as well as identifying any gaps and limitations within the existing policies and frameworks in addressing the specific needs of the Galeshewe residents.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Conceptualizing socio-spatial injustice and inequality

This section lays the groundwork for understanding socio-spatial justice and inequality by establishing clear definitions of the key concepts that underpin the research. A precise grasp of these terminologies is crucial for effectively analyzing the lived experiences of residents in Galeshewe and the challenges they face. In order to get a meaningful insight on what the study focuses on, the key concepts pertaining this study are explained here below.

3.1.1 Socio-Economic Inequality

The concept of socio-economic inequality touches upon many factors which essentially covers the social disparities and inequalities to a greater extent. Socio-economic inequality denotes a state where there is unequal distribution of resources, services, opportunities, and social classes within a specific geographical space. This means that certain areas are provided with better access to social and economic opportunities than others. Furthermore, the concept of socio-economic inequality considers a number of factors ranging from education, health, income, and services disparities; therefore, presenting an economic and political challenge of many developed and developing countries.

3.1.2 Spatial Disparities

The concept of spatial justice has been discussed extensively by scholars since the coining of the two theories being, Lefebvre's Right to the City as well as Harvey's Social Justice and the City (Garnica-Monroy & Alvanides, 2019). It does not only refer to the unfair and unjust access of physical space, but also considers the change in which the quality of life of individuals in different geographical locations of the city should be pursued. Furthermore, spatial disparities concept does not anchor its focus on spatial patterns only, which shape the horizons of urban lives, but mobility, housing, and infrastructure quality (Bhan & Jana, 2015). The concept is further associated with the spatial distribution of resources and economic opportunities in urban centres or cities. Greenberg (2016) emphasized that spatial disparities are rooted on the notion of "who gets what and where". This refers to the limited resources availed to the community in accessing their essential services.

3.1.3 Socio-spatial Justice

Socio-spatial justice is understood as the equitable distribution of social resources in a given geographical space. This concept considers the involvement of equity, participation, and accessibility of societal resources over space. However, Cassiers & Kesteloot (2012), argue that there is a possibility of creating a socially unequal city without spatial inequality. Spatial justice lays ground for social justice. When thinking about space, we should remember that the society shapes the space in which they live. It is imperative to emphasize that when deliberating on the concept of socio-spatial justice, we need to understand how space is structured socio-economically, and that socio-spatial justice is derived from the spatial arrangement of economic activities (Han, 2022).

3.2 South Africa: The legacy of apartheid and spatial justice

The apartheid government of the Republic of South Africa passed pieces of legislation which were used as legislative tools to enforce the segregation of various races to specific areas within the urban spaces. It was during this era that South Africa was racially segregated; leading to the enactment and enforcement of a series of laws, which institutionalized white supremacy. The apartheid era in South Africa, which was controlled by the white ruled government, continued as an institutionalized policy in effect from 1948 to 1994. It was in 1948 after the National Party won elections and occupied the office. The racial segregation of people was legally governed by the Popular Registration Act 30 of 1950, and the Group Areas Act 40 of 1950 (Davies, 1981). The Population Registration Act of 1950 classified South African racial groups into 4, being the Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Asians. The allocation of space and land was racially dependent which resulted in what was known as the apartheid city (See Fig.1).

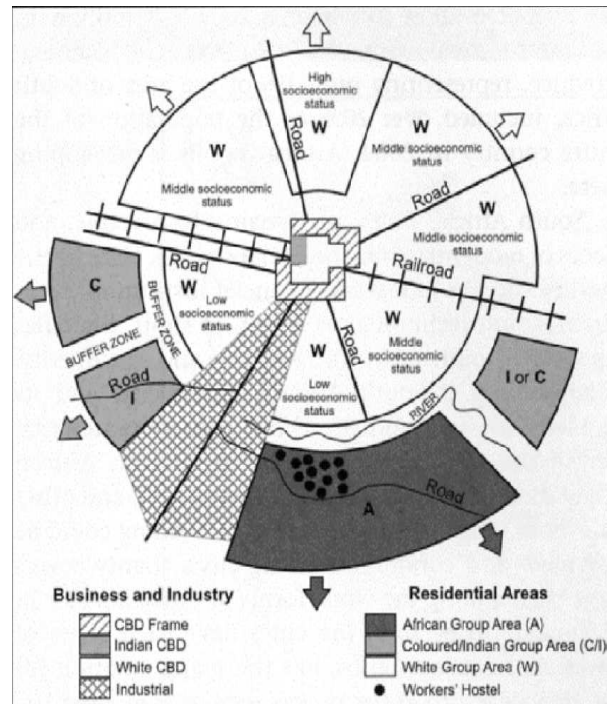


Fig. 1: Apartheid City Model. Source Davies (1981:69)

Through the regulations of this Act, (Population Registration Act, 1950), separation of residence, public facilities and transportation systems, labour market, education and health systems, were strictly enforced. The model (Fig 1) illustrates how the White dominated areas were located in a very close proximity to the central business district frame, whilst the African Blacks, Indians and Coloureds were placed on the outskirts of urban areas. The apartheid city model was contrary to the social justice theory coined by Henri Lefebvre in 1968. Lefebvre emphasized the effects that capitalism had on social collaborations contributing to the rise of spatial inequalities throughout cities across the world. Such effects led to a point where urban life became a commodity. Lefebvre called for man (citizens) to save the city which he had built and make a city an accessible meeting point for all; not an exclusive good.

Lefebvre's slogan was realized by social movements as the cities around the world saw a rise in the struggle for social justice and distinguished access to urban life. In support of Lefebvre's slogan about inhabitants having the right to the city, a British Geographer, David Harvey; emphasized that the right to the city is a collective right to have an all-inclusive participative democratic society, whereby the inhabitants have the power to be decisive in terms of the conditions that benefit and affect their livelihoods.

The right to a clean, healthy, safe and sustainable environment without excluding quality health is also a right to the city. The city inhabitants are also entitled to a safe and sound neighbourhood without any fear. Additionally, the right to the city should allow equitable access to housing, health facilities, education, and economic opportunities to citizens.

3.3 The context of Galeshewe Township

In 1871 a township called Galeshewe was established, which was named after the baTlhaping Chief, Kgosi Galeshewe. The township was inhabited by the black people who were mine workers. The areas surrounding the city were segregated based on skin colour where, the black people were meant to reside in Galeshewe; whilst the coloured people resided in Greenpoint, an area located outside of the city centre. Areas beyond the city centre were not serviced, only the white dominated areas received adequate municipal services. Following the opening of the mine, a large compound known as “The Greater No. 2” was established, located closer to the mine open pits which accommodated the black people employed as mine workers as they needed to reside closer to their workplace. After a while, the Greater No. 2 area expanded due to the high influx of people from various places seeking job opportunities (Sol Plaatje Integrated Development Plan, 2022). Furthermore, there was a law practice firm along the main street of Greater No. 2 known as Royal Street that was owned and managed by the first president of the Pan African Congress (PAC), Mr. Robert Sobukwe. It was during the apartheid period that the Greater No. 2 area became popularly known for many protests against the then system. The area therefore became known as the most violent part of Galeshewe.

On 8th November 1952, there were campaigns led by political and social activists raising their voices for poor housing, lighting, and public transport as well as “unfulfilled promises”. These campaigns and uprisings led to the riots that transpired then. The city has considerable history due to its diamond mining activities in the past and the siege during the Second Boer War.

Post-apartheid, the Kimberley City Council was then renamed to Sol Plaatje Local Municipality, named after a prominent writer and activist who spent much of his life in Kimberley. Additionally, the District City Council which was then known as Diamantveld District Council was also renamed to Frances Baard District Municipality. The district municipality was accordingly renamed after a trade unionist, Frances Baard who was a resident of a ‘coloured area’ Greenpoint. The segregation of land based on race took effect pre-apartheid and led to the current spatial configuration present. Evidently, the community of Galeshewe are to date still experiencing the aftermath of apartheid regime socio-spatial imbalances. These imbalances are characterized by poor service delivery challenges, social and economic exclusion as well as spatial marginalization.

4 METHODOLOGY

This research forms part of the Masters study concerning the experiences of socio-spatial injustice and inequality within the residents of Galeshewe Township in Kimberley. This study adopts a qualitative research approach to understand the experiences of socio-spatial injustice and inequality within the community of Galeshewe township. A qualitative research approach is described as a holistic approach and an unfolding model applied to understand an experience of a phenomenon in a more natural way (Williams, 2007). Moreover, qualitative research approach can be understood as a model occurring in a more natural set-up, enabling the researcher to establish a detailed level of involvement in the actual experience (Khan, 2014). This study is designed as a case study. A case study research design considers an in-depth examination of a case, people or a group of people. When using this design, the researcher searches for themes and patterns. A case study research design assists the researcher to concentrate on keeping the focus of their research within the confines of space and time. Creswell et.al (2007) asserted that case studies focus predominantly on a specific case selected to understand the issues thereof.

Case study design is best suited for this study because it explores an understanding to a greater length of complexities of issues in the real-life context. The study employed semi-structured interviews and qualitative survey methods which allowed the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the experiences of the Galeshewe community. Fifteen community members, four professional town planners and one ward councillor formed part of this study during the data collection process. The study was sampled through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Lastly, the results of this study were analyzed through the thematic analysis process.

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study outlines findings and discusses to shape the data collection and analysis through the development of themes and subthemes. The presented findings emerged from the data collection process and was analyzed in order to guide the researcher in finding answers to the research questions of the study.

5.1 Identifying the causes and forms of socio-spatial injustice and inequality in Galeshewe

The apartheid era reflected the racial imbalances through spatial configuration. According to Tutu (2005), apartheid was a policy of exclusion. Racializing land significantly drew a line between the blacks and the whites in South Africa, and legalizing it through the Natives Land Act of 1913, took land tenure even a step further (Ramutsindela, 2012). The historical legacy of discriminatory land policies, such as the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, continues to shape the spatial and social realities of Galeshewe. These policies resulted in forced removals, spatial segregation, and restricted access to land and resources for Black South Africans. The spatial legacy of these policies is evident in the fragmented and marginalized location of Galeshewe. Participants in this study highlighted the ongoing impact of these historical injustices, emphasizing the unfair distribution of land and resources. One participant noted that "there is no fairness for as long as the township is known as an area for the previously disadvantaged." Another participant expressed their frustration with the discriminatory policies of the past, stating "the apartheid era was so discriminatory, and laws were suppressing us. We were forced to stay in townships yet work for the whites who were staying in urban suburbs. I really felt oppressed for the longest time, and here I am, still in the township." These firsthand accounts underscore the enduring impact of historical land policies on the spatial and social fabric of Galeshewe. This aligns with what Kloppers & Pienaar (2014) said when they outlined their perspective on the historical context of land reform in South Africa that: "the effect of this racially based segregation legislation was to force black people to be 'perpetual tenants' with very limited rights." What Kloppers & Pienaar (2014) alluded links with the study through the identification of forms and causes of injustice and inequality where the legalized apartheid laws discussed in this study enforced strict racial segregation. Such pieces of legislation institutionalized racial discrimination, causing severe economic, social, and psychological harm to Black Africans. Considering land as a critical matter in the broader South African context, upon attainment of democracy in 1994, the government of South established policies and programmes which aimed at addressing the land issue. For the community of Galeshewe, attempting to purchase land is almost impossible because either "there is no land available" or it's exorbitantly priced.

Evidently, the demand for land is currently high as citizens, particularly the under privileged and previously disadvantaged blacks want ownership of land in urban and sub-urban areas, closer to economic opportunities, hence the rapid urbanization leading to the mushrooming of informal settlements and illegal land invasion in and around urban areas. Mather (2002) argued that despite the passing of numerous legislations and policies aimed to redress the inequalities brought by the apartheid legacy, the success of overcoming such legacy is very limited. Although the government employed the 'land reform programme' after attainment of democracy in 1994, with the aim of addressing the past racial inequalities and social injustices, land will remain a greater challenge in South Africa. Zantsi & Greyling (2021) asserts that land reform is quite complex as it has social justice and equity features with which it encompasses. Land reform is made up of 3 pillars known as the land restitution, land redistribution and land tenure, and is considered a step in the right direction towards responding to land issues and claims. This aligns with a statement made by Hall (2004) that:

"Land reform was conceived as a means by which the South African state would provide redress for past injustice and promote development. It would pursue these twin goals by restoring land rights to those dispossessed by segregation and apartheid through a land restitution programme, securing and upgrading the rights of those with insecure rights to land through a land tenure reform programme, and changing the racially skewed land ownership patterns through a land redistribution programme."

In support of the statement made by Hall (2004), the land reform programme has made strides toward addressing the legacy of apartheid but has also faced significant challenges that have perpetuated or even exacerbated socio-spatial inequality. Despite the land reform programme being designed to address these historic spatial inequalities, its slow pace, insufficient support for new landowners, and continued concentration of wealth and land in urban and commercial sectors have meant that spatial inequalities remain entrenched. For land reform to effectively reduce socio-spatial inequality, it will need to address not only

land redistribution but also broader issues of infrastructure, economic opportunities, and support for small-scale farmers, while ensuring that the benefits of land reform reach all South Africans, particularly those in rural and historically marginalized areas.

During the data collection process, one participant expressed their view on access to and security of land post 1994 when they said “we are in the democratic country right now, but the issue of land is still a topic for continuous discussion in government. It seems like the process of land will not happen in the near future because, the people leading the process also want a piece of land to themselves, and there’s also political instability and corruption which generally affect the whole process.” On the other hand, another participant indicated that “I believe that our government had good initiatives, policies and programmes in place which were meant to redress our challenges from the apartheid times. However, the problem became the implementation part, where the goals and objectives of such programmes were not achieved over the prescribed period, therefore delaying the whole process.”

In addition to the land issue, municipal service delivery was identified as a key challenge for the community. They further emphasized that local government sector is the closest sphere of government to them; and should make services accessible to them easily; however, the respective sector still fails to render its services to the local community as mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. In terms of Section 152 of the Constitution, the object of local government sphere is to render a provision of services to the communities in a sustainable manner and promote a social and economic development. The frustrations of the community was recorded where they highlighted that “we are just paying for services, but we struggle to get our value for money. If it’s not water cut due to a burst pipe somewhere around the township almost every day, then it’s electrical cable that are stolen or damaged.” Another participant indicated that “poor service delivery has become a norm to us. If it’s not water, then it’s electricity or sewerage flowing down the streets.” The dissatisfactions raised by the participants align with what was highlighted by Zondi & Nzimakwe (2017) when they indicated that:

“Municipalities are legally obliged to deliver services such as water and sanitation, and to involve communities in the formulation of developmental priorities. However, low levels of public satisfaction with government performance indicate that citizens are increasingly discontented with the state of local government.”

In support of the statement made by Zondi & Nzimakwe (2017), the dissatisfaction with municipal service delivery in Galeshewe reflects deep-rooted issues such as inequality, corruption, poor governance, and resource mismanagement. Addressing these concerns requires a multifaceted approach that includes better planning, transparent governance, improved accountability, effective use of public funds, and stronger community engagement.

5.2 The perceptions of Galeshewe residents on socio-spatial injustice and inequality embedded in their daily lives

The economic growth of Kimberley as a financial hub has been gradually declining over the years. The town that is situated along the N12 treasure route has its economy largely concentrated on the tertiary sectors. The rise of economic difficulties put many businesses under pressure, therefore forcing the closure of some businesses, resulting in poorer economic growth and higher unemployment rate. The continued decline of business in private sector, exerts more pressure on the public sector to establish some employment opportunities. In terms of employment and income, it is mostly the dwellers of urban areas that are employed and can afford to properly sustain their livelihoods. Nonetheless, there are township residents who are employed, but the percentage is quite minimal; therefore, pressuring the dependency ratio. The inhabitants of the township are mostly unemployed, or discouraged job seekers, or even economically inactive. In essence, a society cannot not develop if they are not economically active.

While Kimberley remains the capital and economic hub of the Northern Cape, economic activities are drawn central to the city centre respectively and further disseminated to the eastern part (white dominated areas) of the town. The participants outlined their economic challenges when they said: “I have been unemployed for than 6 years now. I am a single mother of 2, residing in this shanty with my kids. I used to work on a contract job, and it ended in 2019, I have since been struggling to make ends meets. I had to resort to a being street vendor so that I can put food on the table.” Another participant indicated that “unemployment is a serious problem that we especially the youth are faced with. We are advised to go to school, study and obtain

qualification to fit with the corporate market. However, once you're qualified, then the reality of unemployment kicks in. It is an overwhelming reality, but I remain positive and hopeful for a better outcome." According to the Sol Plaatje Integrated Development Plan (2022), the implications for the municipality as brought forth by the income gaps adversely affects the disposable income of households, exacerbating social unrest and crime. Furthermore, the purchasing power gets eroded, and the dependency of government grants increases. The participants of this study within the Galeshewe community are of the view that they are economically and socially excluded. Factors such as limited access to improved education quality other social services and facilities contribute to the socio-economic exclusion of such community.

5.3 Gaps and limitations within the existing policies and frameworks in addressing the needs of Galeshewe

Several policies and programmes established years ago post 1994, aimed at remedying the past spatial planning system that burdens the current planning system. It started in 1994 post attainment of democracy and the greatest predicament still presented to this day is lack of implementation of established policies. The most recent piece of legislation being Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 2013 (SPLUMA) is tasked with guiding land use and land development across SA. The underlying problems from the past spatial planning leave a big challenge for SPLUMA and it will take a longer period to attain spatial justice as advocated for by the said Act respectively. The professional planners across sectors departments attest to the fact that yes, policies are in developed, but the non-implementation leads to the said policies not being effective. Despite all the policies, plans, acts and programmes; Galeshewe is still faced with socio-spatial inequality and injustice.

The one participant shared their opinion when they said: "yes, SPLUMA can redress past spatial imbalances if Urban Planners are given the space to lead the spatial transformation agenda in organizations without any hinderance (e.g. political interference). However, common in local government level, the challenge remains whereby there is no political-will and lack of departmental budget to support initiatives from the Urban Planning Section which seeks to fast-track spatial transformation in line with the SPLUMA Principles." Another participant highlighted that "socio-spatial injustice and inequality are practical in Kimberley. There are only two malls (North Cape Mall & Diamond Pavilion Mall) which are situated in areas previously classified for the minority population. Therefore, one proposal is for the local authority to stimulate investment by creating an enabling environment where private sector can develop malls with similar magnitude to the existing two malls in areas such as Galeshewe, Roodepan, Colville. This could stimulate social and economic spin-offs such as job creation, decrease unemployment, reduce travel time and spending on transportation for the poor and redress the current spatial inequalities experienced in areas classified as previously disadvantaged (i.e. coloured and black communities)".

The government must, especially at the municipal sphere ensure that there is suitable and sufficient capacity to implement the programmes and plans. Considering that land as source is central to development; the redistribution process by government should not only focus on peripheral areas; but should also in the urban areas so as to promote inclusivity and spatial reconciliation. One of the participants touched on the issue of prime land still being under the control of the elite when they said "land redistribution needs to be prioritized firstly to the previously marginalized. The reality on the ground is that the minority or elite still control the prime development land. Additionally, the rapid release of land is often in unserviced and inaccessible location. What then is the role of the private sector in ensuring spatial justice?"

6 CONCLUSION

The study has outlined how the spatial configuration of Galeshewe was formed as a result of racial segregation which transpired during the apartheid era. The concepts of spatial injustice and socio-economic inequalities have been in existence for decades, and in the context of South Africa, such injustices were legislated during the apartheid era. The study revealed that Galeshewe is still confronted with socio-spatial injustice and inequality despite the formulation of programmes and plans aimed at addressing socio-spatial imbalances. It is important to emphasize that although spatial justice may be understood as the form of equity in spatial distribution and allocation, it also encapsulates factors such as transportation, health, education and employment issues, which form a larger part of the socio-economic and spatial imbalances.

The study outlined the lived experiences and perceptions of the Galeshewe community in respect of socio-spatial inequalities and injustices and has discovered some common ground factors which are evidently affecting their lives. Legislative and policy framework non-implementation have been noted to be the catalyst in delayed development and poor service delivery. Therefore, it can be concluded that socio-spatial inequality and injustice in disadvantaged, impoverished communities will continue to occur because the strategic tools established to address such challenges are not effectively implemented.

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