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23 February 2023

Spatiality is critical for human development - study

Spatiality is a potential dimension of human development that needs to be incorporated into the traditional Human Development Index (HDI) because where one resides will most likely determine his or her human development outcomes, a University of Cape Town (UCT) study has found.

In her PhD thesis, titled *Spatiality and Human Development in the Western Cape of South Africa*, Primrose Dube, found that those who are confined to urban poor vicinities face various challenges that affect their human development outcome, whereas the affluent enjoy the benefits of residing in healthy and safe environments, thus, enhancing their human development opportunities.

"There has been minuscule spatial transformation in the Western Cape since the end of apartheid. More resources and spatial justice are needed, particularly in poor communities, for the province to have better human development outcomes," says Dube who recently graduated with a PhD in social development at UCT.

What drew her to this topic?

"The passion to make a difference in our society and see necessary transformation at the grassroots level, particularly those living in the underprivileged communities such as townships, informal areas and other needy areas.

"After 28 years of democracy, many cities and towns in South Africa remain unequal and separated despite several years of government attempts," she says.

Dube has resided in Masiphumelele, a township near Fishhoek, for several years where people are confined in a tiny piece of land and the population size keeps mounting.

"Resources and services are limited or lacking including land, health facilities, water supply, sanitation, quality education, employment prospects, etc".

Her research identified a gap in development, specifically spatial development and human development, and derived a model that incorporates the spatiality dimension into the standard HDI in order to measure human development by focussing on the concept of spatial justice.

The study seeks to inform policy development by bringing out perspectives from the disciplines of social geography, urban planning, social development and human development.

She hopes the authorities, relevant departments especially the Human Settlements, Social Development and Environmental Affairs, and policy makers will be given the opportunity to read her thesis and get more precise guidelines, advice and tips regarding spatial interventions and human development approaches.

"Quite a number of historical and latest sources including books, journals, South African legislation and policies and from other countries were consulted, and data from the research study, thus, in- depth data was gathered, critically analysed and presented.

Spatial development and human development strategies beneficial to the society at large, including key role players: national, provincial and particularly the local government spheres; community members, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, faith-based organisations and the private sector, were explained.

The research is likely to have a positive impact in society. Dube says: "Any country with spatial inequalities can get some insight and development strategies from the thesis. The thesis needs to be propagated locally, nationally and internationally, and I am willing to present my research work at seminars, conferences, parliament, abroad and to anyone who is interested and advocating for spatial transformation in our societies and better human development."

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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