



The Spatial Dimension of Social Inequalities Affecting Children: A Child-Centered Social Impact Assessment Framework

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Abstract

Social inequalities affecting children are commonly examined through disparities in health, nutrition, and socioeconomic conditions. However, spatial inequalities manifested in unequal access to safe, inclusive, and age-appropriate public and shared spaces also play a critical role in shaping children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. This study investigates the effects of urban regeneration on children's access to and use of playgrounds, sports facilities, and green spaces, and proposes a Child-Centered Social Impact Assessment (CCSIA) framework that systematically incorporates children's perspectives into planning and decision-making processes. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach based on a large-scale urban regeneration project implemented in Ankara, Türkiye, combining surveys with more than 500 children and their caregivers, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations. The findings demonstrate that children's opportunities for play, physical activity and social interaction depend not merely on the existence of public spaces but also on their accessibility, quality, and age-appropriate design. The research further reveals that children from socioeconomically disadvantaged households rely more heavily on neighborhood facilities, making deficiencies in local public spaces a significant source of spatial inequality. Drawing on these findings, the study proposes a four-stage Child-Centered Social Impact Assessment framework consisting of baseline assessment, participatory data collection, social impact analysis and post-implementation monitoring and feedback. While developed in the context of urban regeneration, the framework is also applicable to broader local planning processes. By recognizing spatial inequality as a fundamental dimension of the social inequalities affecting children's well-being, the proposed framework promotes the systematic inclusion of children's voices throughout planning processes and contributes to the development of more inclusive, child-friendly and socially sustainable cities.

Keywords: Spatial Inequality, Social Inequality, Child-Centered Social Impact Assessment, Urban Regeneration