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Mapping out Responsibilities and Implications in the Use of Geo-information Technologies in the Classification, Representation and Monitoring of Deprived Urban Areas

As the world undergoes further urbanisation in cities in the coming years, with a greater rate in developing countries, an increasing proportion of those moving into cities in the Global South are finding themselves living in deprived urban areas referred to commonly as 'slums' or informal settlements. These areas are sites of inadequate infrastructure (e.g. unorthodox building materials), service provision (e.g. medical centres, education and utilities) and safety conditions (e.g. overcrowding and proximity to hazards) for those living in them. What is more, these areas host communities that are often not acknowledged by the governments in charge, making it further difficult for their wellbeing to be improved. And due to their rapidly increasing growth, information regarding the exact number and condition of the communities living in these areas is difficult to acquire through traditional censuses. For this reason, over the past two decades geo-information scientists have been making use of geo-information technologies to acquire, process and represent deprived urban areas in digital maps for the sake of scientific as well as humanitarian goals. The project of my PhD research, is analysing the use of these technologies through a post-phenomenological and spatial humanities lens. The project's aim will be outlining that while much focus in the literature and work of geo-information scientists is in the technicalities involved, there is not sufficient attention given to the socio-political as well as ethical implications in the use of geo-data technologies. Implications which affect the utility of these geo-data technologies with regards the actuality of their improving the wellbeing of those living in these deprived urban areas that are being mapped.