

Yasmin Ara (Palestine)
Lancaster University, Urban Geography/Urban Planning

The role of multi-scalar private entrepreneurs in shaping the built- lived environment for the urban poor in low-income informal settlements: A Dhaka-Delhi analysis

The primary aim of the research is to explore the under-theorised but significant and rapidly growing phenomenon of private entrepreneurship in low-income informal settlements. Analysing the opportunities and constraints posed by multiscalar private initiatives, the research attempts to bring together the deeply connected issues of urban poverty, informal settlements and differential outcome of the 'built-lived environment' and 'liveability' in these settlements. It uses the framework of 'comparative urbanism' to investigate the closely comparable contextual setting of two megacities in global South, Dhaka and New Delhi, and then analyses how two different policy contexts produce a highly differentiated pattern of built-lived environment in their informal settlements. Through case study research in selected informal settlements in these cities, the research identifies the ways in which several alternatives of private schemes unfold on the ground. Using KIIs, FGDs, FAPOs and community mapping as research tools, the actors are recognised who work within the unique version of the cities' neoliberal governance giving rise to much needed private entrepreneurship in these settlements. The study subsequently turns to the question of 'liveability' by stretching focus beyond its generic attributes and exploring its correlation with policies aimed at enabling the urban poor. In conclusion, the research attempts to theorise the sensitivity of 'slum liveability' to specific forms of political imagination.