

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Opportunities and constraints for a 'liveable' future in megacity informal settlements: Challenging the generic concepts of 'liveability'

- **Format:**

Written paper

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Recent years have observed a growing interest placed on planning systems that aim to produce a more liveable urban future. While 'liveability' typically refers to the condition of living environment, related to a set of criteria that asserts a locale as adequate for quality living, the criteria used so far have emphasised much on the issues of the developed world frequently disregarding the fundamental elements of global South and resulting in rather parochial perspectives. Moreover, 'standards' and 'theories' of liveability, developed to address issues in one part of the world are incorrectly transported and applied in significantly different contexts in other parts, constraining the ability of urban planning to respond to specific problems. The potential of a 'liveable' future in the cities of global South has rarely been studied, let alone low-income informal settlements that mostly are accompanied by increased non-liveability levels despite being homes to majority of the urban population. The paper will focus on two Asian megacities, Dhaka and New Delhi, analysing how the generic concepts of 'liveability' fail to encompass wide range of social, environmental and ethical issues, resulting critical needs for re-examination and re-definition. It will also attempt to bring together the

deeply connected issues of urban poverty, informal settlements and differential outcome of the 'lived environment' and 'liveability' in low-income settlements, with explorations of opportunities and constraints posed by the differential policy context. It will subsequently turn to the question of 'liveability' by stretching focus beyond its generic attributes and its causality with various national and international policies aimed at enabling and facilitating the urban poor.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Yasmin Ara studied in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and obtained Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) in 2000. After working for three years in traditional architectural field and also having wide-ranging experience in action research, she pursued her postgraduate study in Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Belgium and obtained Master of Architecture in Human Settlements (MAHS) in 2004. She also received advanced training on 'Organized Self-help Housing: Planning and Management' offered by Lund University, Sweden and FUPROVI, Costa Rica in 2007. Her research background is on low income rural and urban housing; gender perspective of the built environment; informal urbanism; polarization in cities like Dhaka; and lately neoliberal urbanism and 'liveability' in urban informal settlements. She has written book chapters and published journal articles on these issues. Yasmin works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture, BRAC University, Bangladesh. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Lancaster University, UK.