

DOMINANCE OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE PROVISION OF HOUSING, RISE OF INFORMALITY AND RIGHT TO HOUSING FOR THE POOR: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL MODEL*

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ABSTRACT

With the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in many of the developing countries, the role of state has changed from provider to enabler in the provision of goods and services (UNESCAP, 1997); it is either the market forces that have filled the vacuum as “provider” in this regard, while those who are unable to afford services provided by the market are catered by channels termed as “Informal” in literature. Although “informal” is pitched as opposite to “formal” or “Legal”, however, the boundaries are not quite clear; it is not a simple case of duality in terms of legal vs Illegal; it is a complex situation (Roy, 2005; Varley, 2012).

To better understand the phenomena of “informality” in spatial terms, theorization of the process is important. Focusing on the housing sector, the practical aspects regarding the rise of market forces and its impact on the poor, the rise of informality has been explored by many, while the absence, failure and in-capacity of the state institutions have been discussed, however, there is a need to theorize the whole process, especially in connection with the basic concepts of Power, Space and Society.

The market forces in the form of private land owning agencies, authorities and similar sort of institutions with various levels of powers, working on profit basis are active in the housing provision scene at the moment in Karachi. This article, in the background of provision of housing to the public, aims to understand the rise of market forces and of informality under the dormant umbrella of the state power, by theorizing the whole process in connection with the theoretical perspective of right to the city.

Keywords: Housing, informality, institutions, Karachi.