

MARGINALISATION, CONTESTATION AND CHANGE IN SOUTH ASIA CITIES

Nida Kirmani (Ed.), A Publication of OXFORD

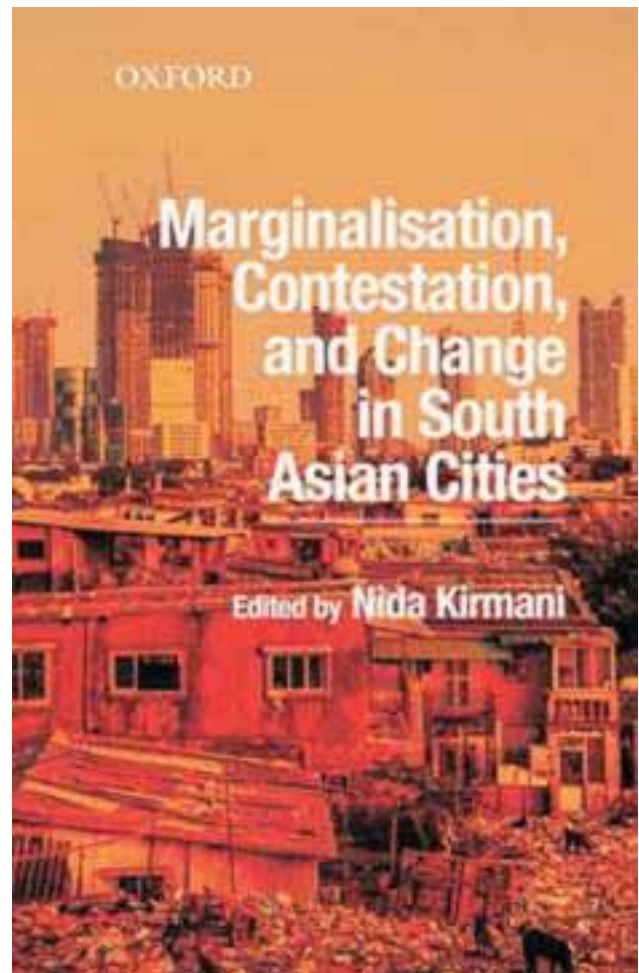
Reviewed by Saadia Bano*

BOOK REVIEW

“Marginalization, Contestation and Change in South Asian Cities” is an erudite compilation of research-based chapters by various intellectuals. This book is edited by Nida Kirmani. It is an essential contribution to the rapidly changing urban dynamics of Indo-Pak region. This scholarly compilation is very useful to understand current influx of utopian approach and its repercussion in future.

The prologue by the editor Nida Kirmani is a careful explanation of changes, challenges and opportunities in light of all nine chapter. On the other hand, the afterward by Nausheen H. Anwar successfully connects all the facts to view the changing profile of Indo-Pak region. She prudently summarized the state of neoliberal style so-called upliftment and urbanization in peripheral area, environmental and ecological depletion, emerging actors in changing urban fabric.

The first three chapters along with seventh one covers the case studies of extreme to moderate marginalization and exclusion of under privileged class of society. The first chapter ‘Entangling the Global City’: Everyday resistance in Gadap, Karachi by Shahana Rajani and Heba Islam examine the so-called Asia’s largest real estate company’s urban utopic project-Bahria Town Karachi; which claims to be a world class housing scheme cladded with strikingly questionable replicas of international monuments. The major point of this research-based compilation is to reveal the Asia’s biggest housing scam, which initially prompted that, its 23,300-acre site as barren and empty, which was not the actual case. The duo of Rajani and Islam along with 11 other participants revealed the forced erosion of indigenous landscape of at least 45 Sindhi and Balochi communities and their basic means of livelihood. The systemic eviction leads to marginalization of more than a century old communities and their memories were brutally



wiped out by force with pending cases in court against Bahria Town claimed by residents.

Second chapter by Hashim bin Rashid and Zainab Moulvi titled as “The Case of LDA City: How a Public-Private Partnership Fractured Farmers Resistance in Lahore” is an interesting case of initial resistance by the land owners of

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seven revenue village on demarcated site of LDA city housing scheme. This resistance eventually lost its inertia due to various nonviolent strategies and instruments to factualize dispossession. This chapter scrutinizes the adaptability of villagers in new professions other than their original agrarian works.

The case of Juggi Mokhampura housing development project is a thought-provoking chapter by Helena Cermeno cladded with creative mapping techniques to understand the state driven housing project with a high aim to improve life of under privilege which actually further accelerated the exclusivity and intangible divide between under privileged Juggi dwellers and other citizens in Amritsar. Chapter by Noman Ahmed is about connection between access restriction and barrier-based security with exclusivity in Karachi city. He analysed the rapid mushrooming of barriers on self-help basis by citizen and security personnel. A mega city with multiple ethnicities should be de-weaponised for the larger benefit of all but in case of Karachi it never happened due to several geographical and political reasons. This chapter includes several spatial and non-spatial solutions for this now declining trend of barrier cladded urban fabric.

The book also covers the declining transportation sector of Karachi. It is an extensive research by Kabeer Dawani and Asad Sayeed on “Mafia domination or Victim of Neoliberalism? Contextualizing the Woes of Karachi’s Transport Sector” on history of Karachi’s transportation sector after independence till date. It covers continual change in this sector; a transition from public sector service to private sector dominated enterprise.

Two chapters hit upon the main stream global issues of environmental pollution and sustainable waste disposal. Chapter “In the Time of Toxic Air: Environmental Knowlegdes, Collaborations, and Justice in Delhi and chapter “City Boundaries and Waste Frontiers: Exploring Nayandahalli as an Ecosystem Where Waste is Transformed into Resource” is a combine effort by of Rohit Negi & Prerna Srigyan and Pinky Chandran & Kabir Arora respectively. Negi and Srigyan tap upon the most pertinent issue tangled around Indian capital-Delhi. Authors able to identify several contributors of this toxic urbanism ranging from massive

rise in consumerism in neoliberal era to extensive industrialization and other capitalist activities to reach the world class city status. They efficiently reflect upon the contestation and mitigation measures taken by state and non-state actors.

On the other hand, Chandran and Arora explored the potential and input of marginalized working class of waste pickers in Nayandahalli. This chapter pave path for recognition of this essential environmental service providers and advocates their rights of existence in appropriate locations within city areas in the era of market led gentrification.

Shahana Sheikh, Sonal Sharma and Subhadra Banda exposed the electoral politics and largely unfulfilled promises of basic amenities and housing right of informal settlements residing in Delhi city and approximately measures half of the population of city. Writers focused on the most vulnerable strata of “unplanned settlement” i.e., jhuggi Jhopri clusters, resettlement colonies and unauthorized colonies residing in Delhi out of eight different local categories of settlements. It is a wholesome research of contestation, blame game, negotiation, favors and eventually exclusion because of unfulfilled promises.

Lastly, chapter by Mustasir Sattar titled as ‘Studying in Mahol’: Middle-Class Spaces and Aspiring Middle Class Male Subjects in Urban Pakistan is a thought-provoking exploration of newly emerging middle-class spaces in Lahore in the name of single-sex hostels for studying in feasible environment ‘Mohal’. This is an interesting investigation about aim oriented spatial and social cohesion in cosmopolitan of Lahore.

Overall, this book is sensibly crafted with supporting facts and pragmatic analysis. Which can be very helpful for researchers, academics and practitioners to envision changes (both negative and positive) in the paradigm shift of urban utopic approach of short-sighted urban transformation in Indo-Pak region. But, one thing which is somehow misleading is the title of book reflecting studies on South Asian cities. Which should have been changed according to its vital content on Indo-Pak cities. Nevertheless, this book has significant value in urban development discourse.