Political Transformations, Changing Heritage, and Negotiating Identities

Planning, Designs and the Evolving Cultures of DHAKA

Compiled by
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Political Transformations, Changing Heritage, and Negotiating Identities

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DHAKA

Dhaka, frequently ranked as the world's least livable city, presents a multifaceted urban phenomenon where rapid, unplanned growth intersects with pressures of accommodating an expanding population, all while navigating the concurrent shifts in cultural identities and transformations. These dynamics not only exacerbate the city's infrastructural challenges but also contribute to a broader and more composite discourse on the interplay between urbanisation, identity, and cultural evolution. These contemporary challenges are somewhat deeply rooted in Dhaka's historical trajectory, which illustrates a complex case of urban evolution marked by periods of prosperity, decline, and resurgence (Shakur, T., 2008). The pre-Muslim and pre-Mughal history of Dhaka remains somewhat indistinct, as noted by some South Asian urban historians. This lack of clarity is primarily due to the absence of specific historical studies focusing on the ancient periods of individual cities. However, the city's significant transformation began in the early 17th century, when Subedar Islam Khan made it the capital of Bengal, leading to a golden age of economic, cultural, and political prosperity under Mughal patronage. During the British period by the 18th century, Dhaka was reportedly one-third larger than London, with a thriving economy and markets, as noted by early European travelers. However, the 19th century saw a dramatic decline as the weaving industry collapsed and local trade diminished due to British steam technology, reducing the population significantly. Despite this, Dhaka modernized with new infrastructure like railways and civil lines. Post-British rule, during the Pakistan era, Dhaka became the provincial capital, experiencing rapid population growth due to migration and maintaining its political significance (ঘোষ, সুশীল, 2004). This dynamic history highlights Dhaka's adaptability and enduring importance in South Asia (Shakur, T., ibid).

Today, Dhaka Megacity, with its increasing population growth and poor access to buildable land, is forced to expand mainly in the North axis, making it not a very functional city in terms of transportation. This leads to congestion that swallows up about 3.2 million working hours daily (Zaman, 2024). In a recently published research, Sayeda Zafrina Nancy (2024) attempts to explain that growth transformation in the absence of any density guidelines aligned with the sustainability agenda has led to "densification of the residential areas that started in the mid-1990s and is still ongoing without any consideration of the urban and environmental context, which adversely affects the livability and spatial quality of the built environment." Interestingly, researching on a few very low-income informal settlements and stressing the role of private sectors, Yasmin Ara (2024) pleads that by "maximizing positive outcomes of livability and minimizing negative impacts, it was found essential for all stakeholders, including the state, civil society organizations, and private sector actors, to collaborate, adopt responsible practices, and prioritize the well-being of informal settlement residents." In a commentary on premature globalization and the birth of megacities, Mahtab Zaman (2024) laments that "Dhaka's four decades of unplanned provision and infill of garment and small-scale industries within residential areas are visible as a juxtaposition of myriad typologies of the pseudo-urban form."

Since 1952, Dhaka and its various enclaves, such as Dhaka University Campus, Shahid Minar, Shahbag, Shapla Chattar, Paltan, Ramna-batamul, and Racecourse, have been known as distinct sites of cultural and political demonstrations. Nationalist movements from 1948–1971, the mass movement of the 1990s, the anti-razakar demonstration in 2013, various student movements, and the recent anti-government protests in 2024 are a few examples of events that contributed not only to political changes but also to cultural fields.

The conflicting political identities and myriad ideologies shaped by different government regimes never seemed to unite or end; rather, they continued to contradict and influence the living cultures of the Dhakaites (Nusrat, 2018).

The spaces of cultural identities in Dhaka range from Bangla New Year's celebration, Shakrain, religious festivals, 21st February Language Martyr's Day, and Victory Day celebrations. The political transformations of the Megacity produced deep implications for the built environment and even for the virtual hyper-real cultural sphere of the city. Dhaka, despite its unlivability, is also known as a cultural hub, hosting events like the Biennial Asian Art Exhibition, international cinema, theater and music festivals, and the largest international Muslim congregation (Ijtema) that takes place annually in Tongi. In contrast to the traditional festivities, the changing cityscape has inspired various urban pop genres, cartoons, animations, photography, rap, poetry, street plays, monuments, and graffiti during political conflicts.

Lived experiences, cultural practices, and entertainment for the teeming urban poor, Gen Z, senior citizens, garment workers, working-class, middle-class, and upper-class residents in the city have transformed at various levels due to socio-economic and political alterations. A city that has experienced so much diversity and transformation recently requires in-depth research on how the recent landscape of Dhaka created new spaces by demolishing historical figures and structures, challenging its long-standing ideology, identity shifts, and heritage of cultural significance.
While Dhaka's architecture and urban designs remain somewhat complicated, ranging from mainly modernist to a few chaotic postmodern styles, it perhaps requires serious attention and academic examination. However, a renewed interest seems to have taken place in heritage culture in Dhaka, including the Mughal fort at Lalbagh and other significant cultural and traditional places.

It is envisaged that this forthcoming International Workshop on Megacity Dhaka will take into account a comprehensive range of elements, including Growth Transformations, Changing Heritage, and Negotiating/Contesting Identities, while keeping in context the planning, designs, and evolving cultures of Dhaka.

Convenors:
Tasleem Shakur,
Bayes Ahmed,
Masrufa Ayesha Nusrat,
Imamur Hossain.

Saturday, 25 January 2025
All times given are in local Dhaka/Bangladesh Time.

09:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Welcome Address by Professor Shamim Ara Hassan Keynote Adress by Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman Introduction to Workshop Theme by Dr. Tasleem Shakur Launching of new track 'Rebel in Blue'.
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Session 1: History, Memories and Spatial Evolution: Linkages
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Session 2: Social Transformations versus Political Ruptures
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	Session 3: Eruptions of Fringe Movements in Marginal Subcultures
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM	Session 4: Simulated or Mediated Popular Cultures?
4:00 PM – 5:20 PM	Plenary Session

Date: Saturday, 25 January 2025.

Venue: Hybrid Format (Sonargaon University, Dhaka, Bangladesh + Zoom)
Zoom Link: Session I and 2: https://bdren.zoom.us/j/99030422503
Session 3 and 4: https://bdren.zoom.us/j/96197151001
Plenary Session: https://bdren.zoom.us/j/97594534783

Time: 09:30 AM–5:20 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time, BST/ GMT+6).

Political Transformations, Changing Heritage, and Negotiating Identities
Planning, Designs and the Evolving Cultures of
DHAKA

09:00 AM – 09:30 AM | Registration

09:30 AM – 10:00 AM | Opening Session

Time	Details
09:30 AM – 09:35 AM	Welcome Address
	Professor Shamim Ara Hassan, Vice Chancellor, Sonargaon University (SU)
09:35 AM – 09:45 AM	Keynote Address
	Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman Economist and Social Thinker, Executive Chairman, PPRC and Chairperson, BRAC.
09:45 AM – 09:50 AM	Introducing ICDES
	Dr. Mahfuzul Haque Honorary Director, International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies, ICDES
09:50 AM – 09:55 AM	Introduction to Workshop Themes
	Dr. Tasleem Shakur Editor of South Asian Cultural Studies (SACS) and Coordinator of Knowledgists Without Borders.
09:55 AM – 10:00 AM	'Vule Jai Ami'- a song on the July Revolution performed by **Parsa Mehjabin**

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM | Session I:
History, Memories and Spatial Evolution: Linkages

Chair: Imamur Hossain.
Centre Coordinator, International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies, ICDES, Assistant Professor at Department of Architecture, Sonargaon University; and Executive Member, Knowledgists Without Borders.

Time	Details
10:00 AM – 10:10 AM	**Dr. Anindita Ghoshal** Associate Professor, Diamond Harbour Women's University. Kolkata, West Bengal, India
	The Evolution of 'Dacca' to 'Dhaka': Urbanity, Urban Life, and Cultural Identity of a Space
10:10 AM – 10:20 AM	**Dr. Tasleem Shakur** Chief Editor, South Asian Cultural Studies (SACS).
	Transient observations and lessons of about half a century of Dhaka's negotiated urban cultures, contested very poor communities along with ruptured planning and design.

Time	Details
10:20 AM – 10:30 AM	**Labib Hossain** Assistant Professor, Miami University. The Organized Landscapes of the New Civil Station, Dacca: 1905-1911
10:30 AM – 10:50 AM	Q&A Discussion Session Wrap-up.

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM | Coffee Break

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM | Session 2:
Social Transformations versus Political Ruptures

Chair: Professor Dr. Sadequl Islam, Chair of Economics at Laurentian University, Ontario, Canada.

Time	Details
11:30 AM – 11:40 AM	**Dr. Mehnaaz Momen** Professor, Texas A&M International University Political Upheaval 2024: Discord in Bangla Town Toronto.
10:30 AM – 10:50 AM	**Dr. Tazeen M Murshid** Professor, Université Libre de Bruxelles Dreams, Promises and Religion Unchained: A Secular Fallout?
11:50 AM – 12:00 PM	**Dr. Dina M Siddiqi** Professor, New York University. Refusing Nationalist Time: The People's Uprising and Garment Worker's Right to the City
12:00 AM – 12:10 PM	**Dr. Aminul Karim** Former Dean, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Lieutenant General (rtrd.) The Tragedy at the Heart of Dhaka City in a Broad Day Light
12:10 PM – 12:30 PM	Q&A Discussion Session Wrap-up.

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Lunch Break
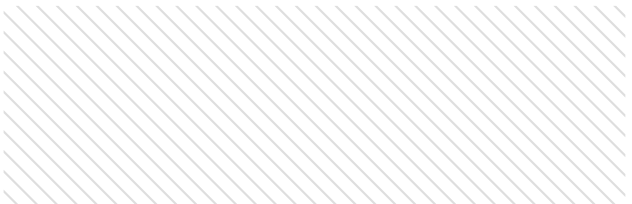
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM | Session 3:
Eruptions of Fringe Movements in Marginal Subcultures

Chair: Dr. Mahfuzul Haque.
Honorary Director, International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies, ICDES and Executive Member, Knowledgists Without Borders.

Time	Details
1:30 PM – 1:40 PM	**Parisa Shakur** Senior Lecturer, North South University. From Fringe to Force: The Role of Private Universities in Bangladesh's July 2024 Student Movement
1:40 PM – 1:50 PM	**Imamur Hossain** Assistant Professor and Coordinator, IICDES, Sonargaon University. Margins in Motion: Dissonant Heritage and Cultural Contestation of Dhaka's Stranded 'Biharis' at Geneva Camp
1:50 PM – 2:00 PM	**Shirin Haque** Founder, Naripokkho Stopping tree cutting in Dhaka : Experience from Satmasjid Road to Pantho Kunja
2:00 PM – 2:10 PM	**Dr. Matluba Khan, Dr. Tom Smith, Dr. Rashed Bhuyan** Associate Professor in Urban Design at Cardiff University Children's sense of identity and placemaking in Dhaka.
2:10 PM – 2:30 PM	Q&A Discussion Session Wrap-up.

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Session 4:
Simulated or Mediated Popular Cultures?

Chair: Dr. Tasleem Shakur,
Chief Editor of South Asian Cultural Studies (SACS) and Coordinator, Knowledgists Without Borders.

Time	Details
2:30 PM – 2:40 PM	**Dr. Zakir Hossain Raju** Professor, Independent University, Bangladesh. Aspirations versus Imaginations around Dhaka Airport: Cinematic Representations of Aviation and Airport in between Nation-State and Global Modernity.
2:40 PM – 2:50 PM	**Dr. Syeda Jafrina Nancy** Assistant Professor, Military Institute of Science and Technology The Emerging Socio-cultural Hub of Dhaka: A Study on the Changing Trend and Role of Street side Public Eateries.
2:50 PM – 3:00 PM	**Sanjida Ahmed Sinthia, Professor Dr. Mohammed Mahbubur Rahman.** Sanjida Ahmed Sinthia, Assistant Professor, AUST. and Pro Vice Chancellor, AUST. Urban Spaces of Resistance: Their Role in Contemporary in Dhaka.
3:00 PM – 3:10 PM	**Jahidul Alam** Lecturer, Southeastern Louisiana University Broad Basil Banners with Vibrant Bengali Letters. July 2024 in Bangladesh.
3:10 PM – 3:30 PM	Q&A Discussion Session Wrap-up.

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM | Tea Break

4:00 PM – 5:20 PM | Plenary Session

Chair: Dr. Tasleem Shakur,
Chief Editor of South Asian Cultural Studies (SACS) and Coordinator, Knowledgists Without Borders.

Time	Details
4:00 PM – 4:20 PM	Rapporteurs' Reporting
4:20 PM – 5:00 PM	Reflections with Panel Members and Conveners.
5:00 PM – 5:20 PM	Closing of the Workshop **Imamur Hossain** on behalf of ICDES, Sonargaon University (SU) and Knowledgists Without Borders;. With launching of the new track 'Blue Rebel', with Natalia Alexdandria.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Hossain Zillur Rahman is an academic, economist, and policy maker from Bangladesh. He founded the Dhaka-based think-tank Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and prior to that was for over twenty years, a leading researcher at the Bangladesh Institute of development Studies.

On January 2008, he was appointed as an adviser (cabinet minister) to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh and was entrusted with the ministries of commerce and education. He was an Inspire Fellow at the Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University, US and was awarded the Dr. John Meyer Global Citizenship Award by the Institute in November, 2009.

In 2013, he was awarded gold medal by Rotary International Bangladesh. Currently the Executive Chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC). He is currently elected as chairperson of BRAC.

Theme 01

History, Memories and Spatial Evolution: Linkages

The Evolution of 'Dacca' to 'Dhaka':
Urbanity, Urban Life, and Cultural Identity of a Space

Anindita Ghoshal

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Anindita Ghoshal is an Associate Professor of History at Diamond Harbour Women's University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Her area of research includes partition and refugee studies, with a special emphasis on eastern/northeastern India and Bangladesh. Dr. Ghoshal is the author of Refugees, Borders and Identities: Rights and Habitat in East and Northeast India, published by Routledge in 2021.

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is more than just an urban center in South Asia; it embodies a rich tapestry of traditional movements, community identities, and cultural evolution. Its political, economic, and historical landscape is shaped by significant events and untold stories, creating a complex interplay of memory and forgetfulness. While its ancient history is notable, it was during the Mughal era that Dacca earned the title "city of dreams." The Nawabs of Dacca played a crucial role in the city's development, maintaining influence even under British rule and leading up to the Partition. Although residents of East Bengal initially sought inspiration from Calcutta, the colonial period saw Dacca emerge as a vital hub for education, employment, and resources, particularly for the educated middle class and elite Muslim families. Over time, Dhaka has come to symbolize hope and positive aspirations for its people.

The city serves as a witness to the multidimensional changes in community life. Following the Partition, Dhaka experienced rapid urbanization, initiating a new phase of development characterized by the planning of government buildings and housing for officials, which transformed the city's landscape. Dhaka became a center for protests, gatherings, and social movements, also serving as a refuge for migrants. In 1956, the area was officially renamed East Pakistan, marking a significant shift in urban culture and showcasing the evolution of Dhaka's cultural and economic landscape, alongside the decline of a new professional group along the Buriganga River. As the city evolved, it also experienced religious developments and social changes. Despite its geographical isolation, Dhaka has thrived due to its vibrant urban life and the resilience of its residents, with urbanization influencing cultural practices, food habits, and political awareness.

In 1971, the formation of Bangladesh significantly transformed Dhaka, yet the city continued to grow and develop. Affection for Dhaka increased, accompanied by notable advancements in education, healthcare, and civic culture. The city physically expanded to accommodate new residents and remains vibrant, with its citizens advocating for civil rights and social justice. Historians, political thinkers, and economists have studied Dhaka's evolution, but defining its survival remains elusive. This presentation will explore Dhaka's transformation from 1905 to 1971, emphasizing the impact of policies on its culture and economy. This presentation would aim to understand the historical context that shaped the city's development and to identify potential future directions.

Transient observations and lessons of about half a century of Dhaka's negotiated urban cultures, contested very poor communities along with ruptured planning and design

Tasleem Shakur

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It had been more than forty five years that I had been actively involved in the research, teaching and publishing on the urbanisation of the global south, particularly on the urban poor of south Asia and that of Dhaka.

In my first focused study on one of the worst slums of central Dhaka (Nawabbagicha, near Hossaini Dalan) in the late 1970s, I was appalled to find that more than forty families were sharing one latrine, living in squalors near a public drain which carried waste overflows from nearby Dhaka Medical College hospital. With a newly trained architectural skills and acquired skills from elementary economics and financing knowledge, I demonstrated an upbeat sense of optimism through a decent 'site & service' plan as recommendation for the future change in housing condition. However, I also realised that the more affluent communities living in the neighbouring areas were not necessarily sympathetic to such poor slum populations, neither was the response from the ruling government (Shakur T, 1980).

Fast forward another ten years in the late 1980s, when I completed my doctoral studies on the squatters of Dhaka (with a more emphasis on social-anthropological studies), my findings were dramatically different from my previous studies, which suggested that 'unless there were radical political changes in the country, the housing conditions of the squatters and slums of Dhaka will remain the same for a foreseeable future (Shakur, M T, 1987). Meanwhile, the city was fast growing in the north with the massive development of Uttara, almost like satellite town with no major urban planning or designs projects undertaken except for plot development by DIT and a few private real estate developers. By this time with the government change , favouring more Islamic/market economies, Dhaka's city cultures started demonstrating increased visible nationalistic/religious street rallies. With the proliferation of NGO activities in the country, the capital city started experiencing a few global neo-liberal developmental agendas (including more gender and minority culture rights movements).

Although there had been some experiments with low cost shelter designs, Dhaka's mainstream architecture scene was strongly following the modernist movement influenced by mainly Louis I Kahn's National Assembly complex.

With the start of the twenty-first century Dhaka's squatters got scattered in more discrete locations of the growing megacity. However, homeless population were still visible in their ramshackle shelters along the old railway lines from Fulbaria railway station till around Katabon area. Also there were some makeshift shelter locations near the rapid development industrial districts of Tejgaon and Mirpur in the north of the city. In the meantime the land property development soared with the business ventures from Rehab (private developers group). While such movement helped the housing crisis for the middle class it caused further deterioration of the existing slums with the proliferation of a massive slum development of Korail adjacent to Banani/Gulshan area.

This presentation attempts to put forward a quasi personal transient observation/both primary and secondary research findings between 1979 and 2024. The aim is to provide a composite picture of Dhaka's relatively fast changing urban street cultures with corresponding marginalised very poor communities amongst ruptured planning and design development/practice.

Tasleem Shakur FRSA FBIP is a retired English university academic. He has taught and conducted research on architecture, urban planning, development, environment, and human geographies at Liverpool University, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Sheffield, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, and Edge Hill University, Lancashire.

At Edge Hill University, he served as the Director of the International Centre for Development & Environmental Studies (ICDES) from 1992 to 2012. During the late 1990s and early 21st century, he was a Visiting Professor of Architecture at Istanbul Technical University and Kuwait University Architecture School.

He is the editor of Global Built Environment Review (GBER) and South Asian Cultural Studies (SACS). Currently, he is in the process of establishing a small volunteering research and teaching unit called Knowledgeists Without Borders.

The Organized Landscapes of the New Civil Station, Dacca: 1905-1911

Labib Hossain
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Labib Hossain is a PhD Candidate, Cornell University and Assistant Professor, Miami University.

Urban development received a massive boost after the Bengal Partition of 1905, when Dacca became the provincial capital of the Eastern Province under the British colonial administration. As a precursor of the India-Pakistan partition (1947), this 1905 partition was an experimental religious divide that accelerated communal violence and nationalist movements on both sides. However, for Dacca, the new capital status resulted in an elaborate campaign of construction to accommodate new administrative buildings and ceremonial landscapes in the Ramna Area. The Indo-Saracenic style used for these public projects was a combination of Gothic and Mughal styles, which, as historian Mark Crinson has argued, sought to pacify the growing agitation of the anti-colonial and nationalist movements by promising them a sense of ownership, albeit a false one. But historical and religious style were not the only means of architectural consensus and pacification. It was also about cultivating the desire of being modern where the dry and high grounds free of germs, corpses, dampness, and any uncertainties had been acquiring such consensus through the discursive transformations. Focusing on building as a technique of land-making, as opposed to an object in the landscape, as I will focus on the Government House and Secretariat Building Project, designed by Architect Mr. Thornton of Martin & Co and Mr. Ransome, the Government architect of India, my paper will foreground the way the language of dryness became concretized and was expressed in the new civic structures and symbolic public spaces.

The dry conditions that colonial interests had engineered, troubleshooted, and designed proved particularly fitting for the late colonial and postcolonial context. The exoticizing of the uses of landscape, including the role in it of water that is so central in this region, as "ornamental" would continue with the late-modern nation-building projects in the postcolonial, post-independence context. The modern idea of "contained water" that was materially and discursively produced through the British colonial drying discourse gave rise to a lineage that is visibly present in subsequent architectural discourses and practices, from the uses of landscape in the modernist projects of the 1960s of Muzharul Islam, a pioneer of modern architecture in Bangladesh, to Louis Kahn's use of water in the Assembly Building Complex, completed after Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

Theme 02

Social Transformations versus Political Ruptures

Political Upheaval in Dhaka 2024:
Discord in Bangla Town Toronto

Dr. Mehnaaz Momen
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Dr. Mehnaaz Momen is a Professor at the Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, Texas A&M International University.

The student-led movement regarding job quota evolved into a mass political uprising that ended the 15-year regime of Sheikh Hasina. The accusation of dictatorship, power concentration and corruption of Awami League are being exposed in detail with evidence. A new interim government is in the helm and the future of country is unstable. The narrative of this political upheaval has reinvigorated the historic debate about Bangladeshi identity—whether the locus of the identity should center around ethnicity or religion. This analytical framework to understand and explain the political trajectory has been ruptured by the new generation of students who brought issues like discrimination, economic disparity, and social justice in the public domain with renewed energy and mass support. I will discuss the impact of the clash of old and emerging narratives in the diaspora community in Toronto. I will situate my analysis in the formation of Bangla Town in Toronto that reflects urban facades of Dhaka and how it functions as an extension of Bangladeshi culture in the global stage. Based on ethnographic primary data on immigration, I would identify the strands of division in the Bangladeshi community in Toronto and predict the implications of such divisions, which are relevant for the home culture as well. The most visible rupture may be around political ideology, but the most consequential breach is generational.

Dreams, Promises and Religion Unchained:
A Secular Fallout?

Tazeen M. Murshid,
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The graffiti that adorned the streets of Dhaka during the Quota Movement in July 2024 heralded a new dawn based on egalitarianism and inclusion. One interesting caption encapsulated that dream: 'dharma jar jar, rashtro shobar,' meaning, 'to each his religion, but the state belongs to all.' It comes from a phrase in the Qur'an, 'lakum di nukum waliya din.' That optimism has since been tempered by various disturbing developments since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country on August 5. Widespread destruction followed, including public property, Sufi shrines, and Hindu temples; desecration of the statues of Bangabandhu, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—an iconic figure in the history of Bangladesh; arson; killing policemen and stealing their weapons; and attacking women and minorities. The subsequent revelation that the movement was 'meticulously' planned by Jamaat Shibir youths, who admitted to killing the police and setting fire to the Metro rail, must give us pause. In light of ongoing deliberations to reform or rewrite the Constitution of 1972, sporadic calls to change the national anthem, or suggestions that Prophet Abraham has greater claims to be the father of the Bengali nation than the man who actually led our national-political struggles for selfhood, the burning question that arises is this: Is a fundamental shift in the character of our state, identity, and its expression being envisaged? How strong is the support base for such ideas, and does it encapsulate a cultural paradigm shift, or an erasure of our ideological and intellectual understandings that were taken for granted by many? In which areas can we expect these changes most, given the early signs, and what would be the impact of such changes on the body politic that is deeply religious at the personal level but profoundly attuned to a liberal, secular ethos?

This paper will raise these questions. In the process, it will explore some of their implications for the evolving nature of the state and our identity. One aspect of this may be to replace the enshrined secular ideology—which states that sovereignty belongs to the people—with invocations that sovereignty belongs to God. This would set the scene for men of religion who demand Shariah laws to claim the mantle to interpret God's laws, even though there is no consensus as to what these are. We already know that such sentiments are being aired widely. Another sign is the rewriting of our history through the 'reset button' metaphor, which allows the history of the 1971 War of Liberation and the struggle that led to it to be overlooked or erased. This would be a way to permit the reinstatement of the Jamaat-e-Islami—which had forcibly attempted to prevent the emergence of Bangladesh—without having to apologize or submit to a reconciliation process. A third set of ideas to explore is the re-emergence of culture wars exemplified, for instance, in the vilification of iconic figures like Tagore and Lalon Fakir. Potentially, this would enable the production of a 'purified' version of Islam while negating the syncretic roots of Bengali Islam. Each of these scenarios will impact the religious-secular tension that has characterized the history of the Muslims of Bengal and Bangladesh. Simultaneously, it will complicate our understanding of a past that has never been unilinear nor consensus-based. Instead, a group left out of the national mainstream for fifty-plus years seems poised to come center stage and rewrite our history, culture, and identity.

Tazeen M. Murshid is a Professor of History and Politics at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, specializing in development research cooperation. She has held academic positions at esteemed institutions including SOAS, BRAC University, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), the University of Oxford, and the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris.

Refusing Nationalist Time:
The People's Uprising and Garment Workers' Right to the City

Professor Dr. Dina M. Siddiqi

Professor Dina M. Siddiqi is a cultural anthropologist by training. Her research -- grounded in the study of Bangladesh -- joins critical development studies, transnational feminist theory, and the anthropology of labor and Islam. She has published extensively on the global garment industry and supply chains, non-state gender justice systems, and the cultural politics of Islam, feminism, and nationalism.

The former government of Sheikh Hasina sought legitimacy through tapping into nationalist anxieties and the promotion of development populism. Hasina pointed to mega infrastructural projects and high economic growth rates bolstered by the garment industry as her 'gift' of development to the nation. Protesters saw through the ruse of nationalism and development populism for what they were – covers for rapacious, extractive neo-colonial policies that enriched a select few party loyalists, and capitalists at home and abroad. A piece of graffiti I saw on August 5 says it all: "We don't need development; we want a full belly of food."

Among the many meanings of the slogan, tumi ke, ami ke, razakar, razakar, was a rejection of the once sacred association between Hasina, her family and the national story of independence. The soundtrack of the 'revolution' (it seemed like one at the time), primarily rap produced in those few weeks, reflected this refusal of nationalist time. Many wrote out 1971, often in favor of an earlier moment of student revolt in 1952, implying also that a second independence was yet to come. The first two lines of the most popular song, "Kotha Kou" ("Speak U   p") by Shezan begin this way:

"From 52 to 24 – where's the difference? Speak up!
If the country is free, then where's the hitch? Speak up!"

With this backdrop in mind, I ask in this paper what recent events have meant for the future of garment workers, many of whom were active in the uprising.What kind of spaces have opened up for their claims to the city and to the nation itself? From all indications, it seems the structural position of workers has not shifted substantially as they continue to be disciplined spatially and discursively through appeals to nationalism and a discourse of sacrifice. Working bodies, "out of place" (demanding rights) continue to be cast as disruptive to the time of national progress. The paper calls for alternative political imagining around labor and nationalism.

The Tragedy at the Heart of Dhaka City in a Broad Day Light

Mohd Aminul Karim

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It was 25 February 2009. It was all shinning in a broad day light. The city was all bubbly with normal life. The traffic in the city was normal. It was around 10 in the morning in the heart of Dhaka City—in a small garrison that houses the national headquarters of the prime paramilitary border force of Bangladesh—sudden bursts of fire from automatics and rocket launchers drew the attention of city dwellers as to what was happening at the intersection between Old and New Dhaka? Gradually the sounds of the automatics were getting louder that had even reached my ears, while I was busy with piles of files in my posh office in the suburb of Dhaka city. It was another garrison in northwestern part of Dhaka city called Mirpur.

I had initially thought it was business as usual like soldiers were conducting practice fire at Mirpur firing range. I was so wrong to think such, as after a while, my officers reached me to say ' Hey general it is a gruesome massacre being perpetrated by both known and unknown professional killers on the unarmed best-of-the-best officer-commanders and their families at Peel Khana garrison, covered by lush green surrounding. By the time I was fully awake, the greenery got outshined by iron-rich red blood flowing from the gentle but courageous commanders' veins. The veins were flowing without any interruption for the next two days till their bodies were buried underneath the soft ground in that lush green setting, crafted by best possible conceivable military-like planning.

The nation was awestruck and also so helpless to launch a counterattack and rescue operation. It was the lack of decision and command, despite having much superior overwhelming military forces, fighting ready lock, stock and barrel, just a few kilometres away at Dhaka's main garrison.

The military troops lined up in battle gears to launch a counterattack and rescue operation but sadly, their boots were not rolling any further due to unknown reasons. Was a conspiracy at work? Did international and national politics derail most justified military assault? Was the military command so rusty to pass down the simple order to 'assault' ? Were the consciences of both the political and military commanders so dampened to think of a most-justified reprisal? This short note attempts to describe those horrendous activities in as much details as possible and its ramifications on sovereignty and security of a newly born nation-state in South Asia. The author provides his narratives as an eye witness of most of its scenes, episodes and their ramifications. The author also collects evidences from his comrade-in-arms.

Mohd Aminul Karim is Retired Lieutenant General of the Bangladesh Army. He served as the military secretary to the president of Bangladesh, Iajuddin Ahmed. He was a senior research fellow at the Asia Europe Institute, University of Malaya. He is also the former Dean, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

Eruptions of Fringe Movements in Marginal Subcultures

Parisa Shakur

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Parisa Shakur, a Senior Lecturer in Economics at North South University, Bangladesh, brings over a decade of experience in teaching and administration. An alumna of SOAS (UK) and the London School of Economics (LSE), she is a published researcher, with work focusing on social business and the challenges faced by Bangladeshi garment workers. Parisa is trained in qualitative research, student psychology, and stress management, and she actively participates in seminars and fellowships around the world. Deeply passionate about youth leadership, community service, and meaningful education, she is dedicated to fostering growth and development among the next generation.

From Fringe to Force:
The Role of Private Universities in Bangladesh's July 2024 Student Movement

The student movement of July 2024 in Bangladesh, a crescendo in the history of youth activism, underscores the pivotal role of private universities. This talk explores how these institutions and their students, traditionally detached from political currents, became a decisive force. Drawing from my ongoing research on determinants of student's participation in protests, 14 years of teaching at a private university and my active participation in movements like the 2018 Road Safety protests and the VAT on Tuition Fee campaign, I discuss how the momentum shifted when private university students mobilized. Their involvement came at a high cost, with 25% of those injured and 18% of those killed being from private institutions, despite such students constituting only 12% of total university enrollments. This disparity highlights their disproportionate sacrifice. These students—often from apolitical backgrounds and unconnected to quota debates—embodied a new form of civic engagement, one driven by ideals of justice and accountability rather than political affiliation. This movement redefined the role of private universities, previously perceived as disengaged, as crucibles of activism. My talk delves into this transformation and its implications for Bangladesh's socio-political fabric, demonstrating how these "fringe" institutions disrupted the mainstream narrative to demand systemic change.

Margins in Motion:

Dissonant Heritage and Cultural Contestation of Dhaka's Stranded 'Biharis' at Geneva Camp

Imamur Hossain

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Bihari community in Dhaka represents a diasporic and 'marginalised' group that negotiates identity and heritage within the spatial confines of their designated camps where they remained politically stranded since the 1971 Liberation War. While these camps are often being regarded as squatter-like informal settlements by mainstream perspectives, they serve as both physical and symbolic repositories of collective memory- embodying the tension between systemic social exclusion and cultural vitality. This talk aims to situate the Bihari community's cultural practices as a lens to examine he intersection of subaltern agency, dissonant heritage, and contested urban transformations in Dhaka.

The architectural adaptations within Geneva Camp as the Imambaras and Tajias, somewhat act as more than functional spaces as they embody memory, and cultural continuity. Public performances like Ashura processions disrupt Dhaka's streets, transcending the confines of the camp and momentarily reconfiguring the city's socio-political landscape. These performances highlight the duality of cultural resilience: while asserting visibility, they also expose the community to further stigmatization.

The study employs a qualitative approach, integrating ethnographic fieldwork, critical discourse analysis, and spatial analysis while taking the theoretical framework from critical heritage studies. Observations document the resource allocation and preparation for Ashura, while interviews reveal how cultural priorities shape decision-making. Spatial mapping highlights the role of semi-permanent Imambaras and Tajias as markers of cultural identity within a deteriorating built environment. Three major findings this study attempt to investigates are: firstly, the study argues that Geneva Camp as a dynamic cultural site, exemplifies how marginality produces heritage while cultural continuity prioritised over basic infrastructural improvements. Second, it critically examines the politics of visibility, interrogating whether performances like in Ashura subvert exclusionary frameworks or reinforce entrenched stereotypes. Finally, it repositions Dhaka's urban evolution as a process of cultural erasure and reconstruction, exposing the power-knowledge structures that shape heritage practices in marginalized spaces.

By foregrounding Ashura as a cultural eruption rooted in subaltern practices, this study challenges nationalist heritage discourses that homogenize identities and dismiss marginal narratives. Focusing on the the trade-offs inherent in subaltern heritage-making,it calls for a decolonised approach in recognising grassroot heritage, dissonant voices and alternative cultural imaginaries as they are integral to Dhaka's urban and cultural transformations.

Imamur Hossain is an Assistant Professor of Archiitecture and the Centre Coordinator of the International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies (ICDES) at Sonargaon University. His research critically engages with heritage and culture in the Global South, focusing on contested and dissonant heritage, postcolonial urbanism, and decolonising architectural practices. His work attempts to integrate alternative methodologies in heritage interpretation to challenge conventional paradigms that prioritise material preservation over the dynamic cultural processes shaping identity and memory. Deeply committed to decolonising heritage narratives, he advocates for inclusive, community-driven frameworks that honour subaltern perspectives and intangible heritage, ensuring its relevance in contemporary socio-cultural and environmental contexts.

Shirin Haque

Shireen Huq, also known as Shirin Parvin Haque, is a women's rights activist, and founder of Naripokkho, a woman's rights organization. She is a trustee board member of Gono Bishwabidyalay. She is the co-convener of Bangladesh Civil Society Platform on Justice and Accountability for the Rohingyas.

Stopping tree cutting in Dhaka :

Experience from Satmasjid Road to Pantho Kunja

The overnight cutting of over 600 50+ years old trees on the road divider on Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi led to over a month long sit in protest and 24 hours vigilance. Ultimately 37 trees were saved. Plans for cutting trees in other parts of Dhaka were halted.

Children's sense of identity and placemaking in Dhaka

Dr. Matluba Khan, Dr. Tom Smith and Dr. Rashed Bhuyan

Dhaka, one of the most densely populated cities in the world, presents unique challenges to its young citizens, whose rights to live, play, learn, and express their opinions are at stake. Dhaka has the lowest per capita number of playgrounds, parks, woods, and other public spaces globally (Hossain, 2010), with less than 2% of the city's children having access to any form of play spaces. This has led to a sedentary lifestyle, with 20% of children aged 5-12 being obese or overweight (Rahman et al., 2014). Obese and overweight children are more likely to develop conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, which can increase their risk of cardiovascular disease in adulthood.

The relationship between the built environment and people's health and well-being is not consciously considered in the design and planning of buildings and cities in Dhaka. Yet, many lifestyle diseases could be prevented by creating opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. It is critical to seek children's voices in creating such opportunities. However, in a city where policymaking is top-down and rarely evidence-based, the voices of the people—especially children—often go unheard. Children are not only excluded from decisions about their urban environment but are also systematically left out of the urban fabric.

The lack of action by adults to listen to youth voices and address their needs has been evident in various ways over the past decade. The student protests for safe streets in July-August 2018 and the student movement in July-August 2024 should not be seen as isolated events but rather as responses to the indifference of policymakers. Against this backdrop, academics from Cardiff University and BRAC University, in collaboration with Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust, are undertaking a project to understand children's lived experiences in one community of Dhaka and co-produce a child- and youth-friendly, sustainable, and inclusive plan for their neighbourhood.
The project employs multiple methods, including a household survey of parents, interviews with policymakers and professionals, observation and behaviour mapping of public spaces, and co-design workshops that utilise creative methods (Khan et al., 2023) such as drawing, mapping, and model-making. These methods aim to provide a deeper understanding of children's experiences of living, playing, and learning in their neighbourhood, as well as their preferences for changes that could improve their health and well-being.

The ultimate goal is to replicate this project in other communities across Dhaka, leading to the co-creation of a child- and youth-friendly city. This initiative seeks to empower children as they negotiate their identity and establish their place in their neighbourhoods. We will present preliminary findings from the co-design workshops with children and youth in one community, Rayerbazaar. These findings will reflect on children's experiences of participating in the workshops and explore how these insights can guide the transformation of their neighbourhood into a child- and youth-friendly, inclusive, and healthy environment.

Dr Matluba Khan is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Geography and Planning at Cardiff University. Her approaches to teaching and learning are informed by my extensive research experience on the relationship between built environment design and people's behaviour, health and well-being. She developed expertise in participatory design and planning, intervention research and evaluation of design for children's learning, health and well-being and expanded my research horizons from the Global South to the Global North.

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Theme 04

Simulated or Mediated Popular Cultures?

Aspirations versus Imaginations around Dhaka Airport:
Cinematic Representations of Aviation and Airport in between Nation-State and Global Modernity

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Zakir Hossain Raju is Professor and Head of the Dept. of Media and Communication and the Director of the Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR) at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). Here he is also the founding Director of King Sejong Institute, the first ever Korean language institute in Bangladesh. Raju obtained PhD in Cinema Studies from La Trobe University in Australia, as well as taught at Monash University there. During 2008-10, Raju served as Postgraduate Coordinator and Senior Lecturer at Monash University, Malaysia. In 2014, he served as a Visiting Professor and Korea Foundation Fellow at Korean National University of Arts, Seoul. During 2022, Raju was a Japan Foundation Fellow and Visiting Research Scholar at Waseda University, Tokyo. A reputed scholar of Bangladeshi and South Asian screen industries as well as East Asian media and culture focusing on South Korea and Japan, Raju authored a number of monographs including Bangladesh Cinema and National Identity: In Search of the Modern? (Routledge, London: 2015/18). He has published around fifty research papers in well-ranked journals and edited volumes published by leading academic publishers worldwide.

This paper aims to locate and historicise the aspirations behind the major international airport of Bangladesh located in Dhaka through its popular and artistic imaginaries both at national and individual levels. By analysing filmic representations of aviation and Dhaka airport during 1970s-2010s, I aim to investigate its role for Bangladesh nation-state and its population. This paper will then investigates how both the popular and artistic cinematic forms of Bangladesh imagined, contested and appropriated the images of commercial aviation taking Dhaka airport as the centre—as a means towards the rapid cultural and economic globalisation of Bangladesh as/in Global South during the 1980s-2020s.

Dhaka houses the nation's main air-hub—DAC as per IATA—in Kurmitola, 17 kilometres from the city centre. After Bangladesh got independent in 1971, this airport was constructed with a French design as a globalising effort of the new nation throughout the 1970s and inaugurated in 1980 as Dhaka International Airport. In 1983, it was renamed as Zia International Airport (ZIA) paying homage to General Zia who ruled the country during 1976-81 and also founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). In 2010, after Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) came to the power, the DAC was renamed as Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), in the name of a religious saint whose shrine is in Sylhet, northwestern part of Bangladesh. While the DAC has been a site of political contestation, over the years, it has also symbolised the dreams and agonies of numerous migrant workers leaving Bangladesh for better lives abroad. More recently, the HSIA is going through huge expansion. A third terminal is being built which is going to be few times larger than the existing two terminals at HSIA. With the design by Singaporean architect Rohani Baharin and funded by Japan, the state of the art terminal is being built by global companies like Mitsubishi and Samsung. It was to be opened in end of 2024 as a flagship project for and by now-deposed Sheikh Hasina government that was in power since 2009.

I aim here to outline the complex transformation of the notion of aviation in a non-Western nation-space like Bangladesh through the popular and artistic screen narratives circulated among Bangladeshi citizens. I wish to ask here (and attempt to answer) some key questions, such as: how was the connotation of the 'Western' culture of aviation got presented and negotiated through home-grown cultural genres of popular cinema here? How did the art cinema filmmakers translate the state-national aspirations around Dhaka Airport on screen? How were these imagined scenes of air travels been conceived, produced and circulated as and alongside a process of vernacularising aviation here? The central question is: how was Dhaka Airport as a transport hub imagined, positioned and questioned with/in the 'worlding' of Dhaka and Bangladesh? This paper is thus going to be a very first initiative towards mapping out the possible relationships between Dhaka airport and the modernist aspirations of Bangladesh nation-state amid rapid commercialisation and globalisation during last four decades.

The Emerging Socio-cultural Hub of Dhaka:
A Study on the Changing Trend and Role of Street side Public Eateries

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The experience of outdoor eateries in Dhaka has evolved to prioritize not just the food but also the ambiance and social aspects of eating out. Restaurants are designed to be attractive and comfortable, providing a space for socializing and entertainment, which is particularly appealing in a crowded urban environment. In Dhaka, street eateries have been an quintessential element of urban lifestyle as they not only cater culinary service but also acts as places for respite. In a dense city like Dhaka where socializing space is a scarcity, the street side eateries, café, restaurants had become the alternative social hub for the urbanites. Street food in Dhaka reflects a rich culinary history, evolving from traditional Mughal and British influences to contemporary offerings. Tracing back from the crisp jilapis in the Mughal Empire to the elaborately cooked egg rolls in the British era, dishes like fuchka and halim have become staples, showcasing local flavors while also adapting to modern tastes. This blend of tradition and innovation keeps the food culture dynamic and relevant, appealing to both older generations and the youth. The love for street food has been an age old one the evolution of street food in Dhaka has always been a culinary wonder etched in every lane and locality of the city. Traditional street food vendors are responding to the fast-paced urban lifestyle by providing quick and convenient meal options. The proliferation of food carts and trucks allows busy city dwellers to grab meals on the go, making street food a practical choice for those with limited time. Moreover, the globalization of food has transformed local dining habits in Dhaka by introducing diverse cuisines, fostering the growth of trendy cafes, influencing consumer behavior through social media, and promoting a focus on health and quality. This evolution reflects a broader trend of modernization and cultural exchange, reshaping how residents experience and enjoy their leisure times. The street food culture in Bangladesh has significantly influenced urban life by shaping social interaction, preserving culinary traditions, fostering community connections, creating economic opportunities, providing affordable dining options, adapting to modern lifestyles, leveraging social media for promotion, and gradually improving health and hygiene standards. Along with the evolving street food culture the eateries have also undergone subsequent changes in their functional and spatial characteristics. Keeping in pace with the generational preferences and demand the public eateries have evolved into a myriad of typologies from vendors at the traffic signals, food carts, roadside eateries, cafes, bistros, tea/ice-cream parlors, international and local fast-food chain to Pan Asian cuisine restaurants. The street food scene in Dhaka exemplifies a rich tapestry of culinary heritage and contemporary dining trends, serving as a vital component of the city's social fabric. This study underscores the need for exploration of the evolving characteristics of street-side eateries and their impact on urban life, highlighting their significance in shaping the cultural landscape of Dhaka.

Syeda Jafrina Nancy earned a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in 2016. Her dissertation was titled "Densification of Residential Areas of Dhaka: An Enquiry of Causes and Consequences to Approach Towards Sustainability."

Prior to this, she completed her Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) and Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) degrees from the same university. Her MURP thesis was titled "Effects of Commercialization on the Adjoining Residential Areas: A Study of Dhanmondi and Banani."

She is currently serving as an Assistant Professor in the Architecture Department at the Military Institute of Science.

Urban Spaces of Resistance: their role in contemporary in Dhaka

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Visual and physical accessibility are important ingredients for creating a welcoming space for people to gather for a common purpose. These spaces become important for collective gathering and often protest that may accentuate social and political movements. This work considers the historical, social and cultural circumstances that make people assemble to protest in such particular sites in Dhaka city. Cultural Spaces of Protest in Urban Contexts are living things that have grown in unique ways (either accidentally or by design), and embody the historical narratives, social relationships, and contemporary [cultural] aspirations of the communities who come to claim what they consider as their rights.

These spaces help bring larger issues to public domain and amplify marginalized voices. Besides, proximity of public spaces and cultural institutions, educational facilities or historical sites usually enhances their specific value. In Dhaka, such spaces that protesters usually occupy, e.g., Shahbagh, Shahid Minar, Sangshad Plaza and Shapla Chattor, have significant historical and cultural roles. These transform into centers of activism and fill with vibrancy with students and young people bringing forth contemporary issues of contention. The sight of cultural landmarks or memorials dedicated to struggles of the past can elevate historicity of these spaces significantly, adding another dimension to the conscientious battle for rights, recognition and freedom of speech.

The relationship between spatial dynamics and cultural narratives underlines the manner in which the urban environment conditions protest's form and efficacy. The spatiality of protests, like other social practices, matters: how a protest space is structured— its size, internal organization, accessibility and visibility— can play a crucial role in shaping how the mass organize and articulate themselves. Such activities in these spaces could intervene the urban life— especially for the daily commuters and residents in and around these spaces. Thus impact of protests gains magnitude by disrupting life and compelling attention and civic engagements.

Cultural protest spaces also affect urban planning and policy-making. Such spaces must be inclusive and support democratic processes. Urban planners and policymakers need to recognise the historical, social, and cultural realities of these spaces when crafting urban environments for the future Dhaka city. Urban cultural protest spaces are significant sites of place making in which protesters cultivate a sense of belonging and urgency. Through examination of the historical importance of these spaces and their role in social movements this paper seeks to further an understanding of how urban environments can support collective action, amplify marginalized voices, and promote social justice. As shared spaces, their strategic deployment could even make the city one where regular protests contribute to creating and perpetuating an active urban society.

Broad basil banners with vibrant Bengali letters

 black cops pull the trigger with relish
while green kids hold mini placards
with their dismayed dads & moms
in the other sky. broad basil banners
with vibrant Bengali letters waving
in this light Lafayette breeze. floating
in front of their wide-open chests &
resting in their cold clenched fists.
proud people with tiny green-red flags
on their foreheads. chanting stormy
slogans at the top of their lungs: we
demand justice. no more killing. people dying
for their robbed rights, for their silenced
voices: students brothers sisters kids
selling their shining souls shimmeringly
perishing powerfully under an autocrat's
pedestal on this dead night. hungry cops
carrying corpses on their cruisers' coffins
overhead. hurling them cowardly to flee
from the crazy mob. curfew on the streets
streets floating on the rivers of blood

Rumors

rumors walk around the US
in every BSA like some ethereal
ghosts as they start fuming
against the bearded cop
people running on the street
the whole day. aerial vehicles
run like a creepy cat to drop
tear gas to the crazy mob

Death Registers

nowhere the death registers
in the hospitals. airy hands
on them. anonymous corpses
no eyes, no heads, and no hands.
decapitated dilapidated
bullets from the cops pierced
through the fleshy body
like a plow that curves furrows
with no remorse

July 2024 in Bangladesh

spaded up to receive them in its tight
bosom, the saddened earth mourns
like a widow. all in a body. four-in-one
crowding and elbowing. the whole country
is a graveyard: cops, cadets, commons,
and corpses. easy preys of a flaunting female
dull daring lambs to the slaughter
some just left home from their
lovely wives & children to the office
some to their moms. all in the sizzling street
shouting and chanting the heated slogans:
Sheikh Hasina shoirachar, ei muhurte godi
char.
chirping rickshaw pullers, yelling vegetable
vendors, hurrying street hawkers, or rattling
ride-sharers. all are muted statues now
no escape from the detonating despotism
grappling in the dire darkness

Dr. Jahidul Alam

Dr. Jahidul Alam is working as a lecturer
(Part-Time) in English at Southeastern
Louisiana University. He is an Associate
Professor (on Leave) of English at
Comilla University, Bangladesh.

About Knowledgists Without Borders

Knowledgists Without Borders is a Dhaka-based think tank founded by Dr. Tasleem Shakur, Professor Sadequl Islam, Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, and Imamur Hossain, with connections to the UK, Turkey, and Canada. The organization aims to inspire young minds through critical engagement with the Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Education. Its activities include undertaking research projects, organizing scholarly workshops, seminars, and talks.

Through meaningful initiatives and global collaboration, Knowledgists Without Borders bridges intellectual and cultural divides, empowering the next generation of leaders and scholars.

Dr Tasleem Shakur

Coordinator,
Knowledgists Without Borders

Dr Mahfuzul Haque

Executive Member,
Knowledgists Without Borders.

Former Additional Secretary, GOB Adjunct Faculty, Dept of Sociology, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Dhaka

Sadequl Islam

Executive Member,
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Methila Farzana

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Research Associate.
Translation, Media and Communication Coordinator.

Md Kamrul

Logistics and Support Coordinator.

Md Tauhidul Islam

Publishing Coordinator.

About International Centre for Development and. Environmental Studies (ICDES)

The International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies (ICDES) was established in the UK in 1992 as the brainchild of Dr. Tasleem Shakur, a faculty member of Edge Hill University and now the honorary advisor of ICDES, SU. The ICDES, having offered a rich academic canvas that includes interface programs, research platforms, and international courses, finds its new home within Sonargaon University.

Coordinated by Assistant Professor Imamur Hossain and Directed by Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, ICDES has successfully played a pivotal role in facilitating academic interfaces, disseminating research, and fascilitating discussions on environmental and developmental topics at a global level.
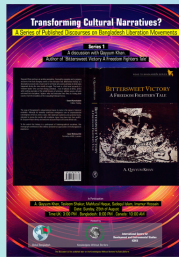
"Transforming Cultural Narratives: A Series of Published Discourses on Bangladesh Liberation Movements."
To critically explore and reshape cultural narratives around the Bangladesh Liberation Movement through scholarly discussions of published works.

Launched on the 31 August 2024.

ICDES Workshops: Uniting Academia and Industry

Event: Inaugural workshop titled "Building Success: Navigating the Crucial Partnership Between Architects and Structural Engineers", held on September 7, 2024.

HeritageX: Launch of a Cross-Border Collaborative Initiative
HeritageX—a collaborative research and exploration platform uniting scholars from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the broader South Asian region.

Collaborating with ICDES & UNESCO World Heritage Volunteers 2024

ICDES and "নগর উপাখ্যানঃ Cityscape" propose a joint initiative for 2024, aligned with the UNESCO World Heritage Volunteers program.

**Political Transformations,
Changing Heritage,
and Negotiating Identities**

Planning, Designs and the
Evolving Cultures of

DHAKA

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Tasleem Shakur is a retired English university academic with extensive teaching and research experience in Architecture, Urban Planning, Development, Environment, and Human Geographies. He has held academic positions at Liverpool University, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Sheffield, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and Edge Hill University, Lancashire.

At Edge Hill University, he served as the Director of the International Centre for Development & Environmental Studies (ICDES) from 1992 to 2012. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, he was a Visiting Professor of Architecture at Istanbul Technical University and the Kuwait University Architecture School. He currently edits GBER (Global Built Environment Review) and SACS (South Asian Cultural Studies). Tasleem Shakur is in the process of establishing a small volunteering 'Research and Teaching' unit called Knowledgeists Without Borders.

Bayes Ahmed (PhD) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Risk and Disaster Reduction at University College London (UCL). His research experience spans across disaster risk reduction, conflict and migration, genocide diplomacy, hydrocide, climate mobility, and disaster displacement. He specialises in the intersection of conflict and disaster, with a vision to improve the quality of life of displaced persons, genocide survivors and stateless populations. He is driven by a passion for collaborating with frontline communities, aiming to understand their challenges comprehensively and develop culturally appropriate technologies and actionable policy recommendations to meet their specific needs.

Masrufa Nusrat is a doctoral student at UT Dallas in the Literature program. She is also a literary translator, and her translations have appeared in anthologies published by the Dallas Review, Orient Black Swan India, Aleph, Nymphea Publication, writers.ink, Bengal Publications, Comma Press, and UPL, to name a few. Celebration and Other Stories (2015) is her debut collection of short stories in translation by contemporary women writers from Bangladesh. Her research interests include postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, anglophone literature, women's writing, transnational feminism, war narratives, cultural studies, cinema, and art theory.

Imamur Hossain, is an Assistant Professor of Architecture, also serves as the Centre Coordinator of the International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies (ICDES) at Sonargaon University (SU) and is a Coordination Member of the ECRN of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies. His research focuses on critical heritage, postcolonial urbanism, heritage interpretation, and decolonizing practices in the Global South. As an educator, he attempts critical design inquiry and innovative approaches to heritage interpretation, emphasizing inclusive and adaptive frameworks.
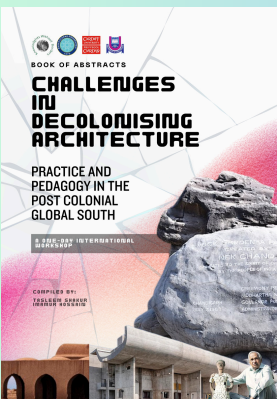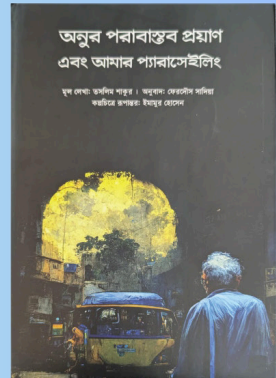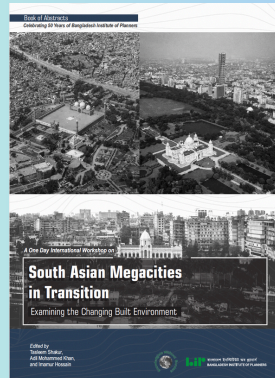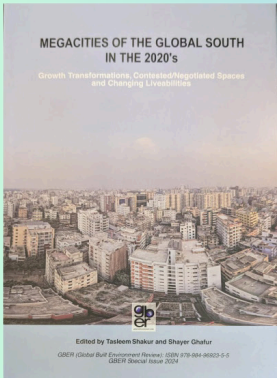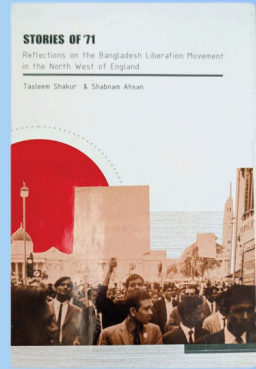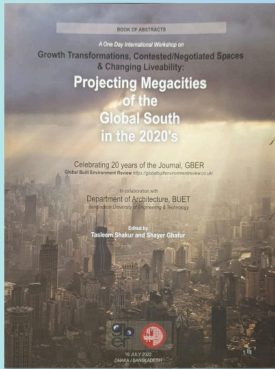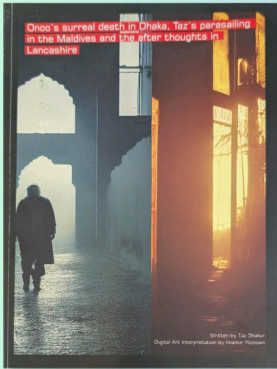
Forthcomings

Bangla Translation
of Stories of 71

Sonargaon University (সোনারগাঁও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়; SU) is a private university in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It has four faculties: Science and Engineering; Business and Economics; Humanities and Social Science; and Law and Justice.

It has been accredited by the government of Bangladesh, curricula, and academics, while its programs have been approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC). It was established under the Private University Act 2010 with the approval of the government of Bangladesh in December 2012 for awarding degrees in various fields.

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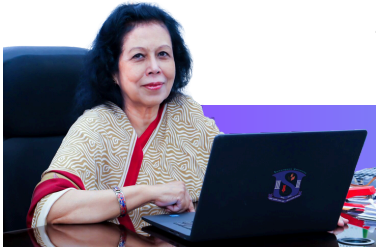
Professor Shamim Ara Hassan
Vice Chancellor,
Sonargaon University (SU)

Prof. Shamim Ara Hassan is the Vice-Chancellor of Sonargaon University (SU) in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She earned her Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and a Master of Architecture (M.Arch.) from Dalhousie University in Canada.

Before joining SU, Prof. Hassan served as a faculty member in the Department of Architecture at BUET. She later became the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Sonargaon University and was subsequently appointed as the university's second Vice-Chancellor. Under her leadership, SU has expanded its academic offerings and research initiatives, aiming to provide quality education across various disciplines. Prof. Hassan is dedicated to fostering an environment that integrates teaching and research, preparing students to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

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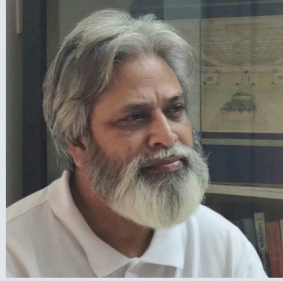
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Rebel in Blue

 Dont try to fool us- your news's so fake,
সব চাল চলেনা- 'cause we are wide awake.
স্বৈরাচারীর সময় শেষ- the message is clear,
We're all students, we got no fear!

Hear the sound? Its loud and clear,
আর ভয় নাই- we rise from here.
We wouldnt be silenced- we are the voice,
বিপ্লব এসেছে- it is our choice.

When corruption rots the land Feels like nothing we can do,
Voices silenced, truth is banned- No defiance left in you
But all it takes is joining hands, We are many they are few,
Now they're sinking into quicksand, People-power's getting through.

'I'm ever indomitable, arrogant and cruel,
(Chorus)
I'm the Dance-king of the Day of the Doom,
I'm the cyclone, the destruction!
I'm the great terror, I'm the curse of the world.
I'm unstoppable,
I smash everything into pieces!
I'm unruly and lawless.I crush under my feet
all the bonds, rules and disciplines!
I don't obey any laws.
I'm the destructive Dhurjati,
the sudden tempest of the summer.
I'm the Rebel, the Rebel son
of the Creator of the universe!

 'Destroy those iron gates of prison,
demolish the blood-stained stony altars
of chain worshipping!'

You tortured Abrar, but more stood up,
And Bhasani's spirit, that you couldnt stop!
Shiraj Shikder's fire still burns in our soul,
Rising like thunder, unstoppable, whole!
Colonel Tahel- still guiding the way,
Amra united- and no more delay!

'I'm the Rebel Bhrigu,
I'll stamp my footprints on the chest of god
sleeping away indifferently, whimsically,
while the creation is suffering.

I'm the Rebel Bhrigu,
I'll stamp my footprints
I'll tear apart the chest of the whimsical god!
I'm the eternal Rebel,
I have risen beyond this world, alone,
with my head ever held high!'

Do you hear the sound of hope,
No more ignorance and fear,
We won't be silenced anymore
The revolution - is here!
(hahah - - a victory laugh!)

Lyrics Composed and Compiled by: Shabnam Ahsan, Tasleem Shakur, Natalia Alexandra, Imamur Hossain. September 2024. The excerpts in quotation marks are taken from the translations of two poems, Bidrohi and Karar Oi Louho Kopat, by the national poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam, translated by poet Sajed Kamal.

Political Transformations, Changing Heritage, and Negotiating Identities
Planning, Designs and the Evolving Cultures of
DHAKA

A One-Day International Workshop on

Political Transformations, Changing Heritage, and Negotiating Identities:
Planning, Designs and the Evolving Cultures of Dhaka

Themes of the Workshop:

- History, Memories and Spatial Evolution: Linkages
- Social Transformations versus Political Ruptures
- Eruptions of fringe movements in Marginal Subcultures
- Simulated or Mediated popular cultures

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
iCDES
SONARGAON UNIVERSITY (SU)

UCL University College London

Knowledgists Without Borders

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Venue: Auditorium,
Sonargaon University (SU) and Online (Zoom).