BEYOND INHABITATION LAB SEMINAR SERIES

THE MYTH OF THE BOTTOM-UP IN PRECARIOUS HOUSING: LESSONS FROM THE LARGEST "INFORMAL" SETTLEMENT IN DHAKA

"Informal" settlements are often described as a bottom-up process catering to housing precarities in global South conditions. It is seen as a site of radical politics and even a manifestation of the right to the city (Purcell 2013). However, this presentation, which is based on empirical findings from a multi-year socio-spatial ethnography conducted in Karail–the largest informal settlement in Dhaka, problematizes this reductive characterisation, not to contradict such claims but to explore the complexities within. The findings from Karail allow for identifying the interconnections between different actors across different binaries that make it work and the different modes of settlement's production itself. Both the entanglements and processualities point to the inadequacy of using the notion of the bottom-up to explain the ongoing struggles and power dynamics. Beyond power itself, the presentation recasts the settlement as a manifestation of a landscape of intersecting desires in an effort to speak of precarious housing in a new vernacular transcending the stifling dichotomy of top-down/bottom-up.

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Politecnico di Torino

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO

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