

Abstract of Dissertation

Study on the Spatial Structure and Process of Transformation in the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka through Socio-physical interactions

社会と空間の相互作用を通じた旧ダッカ市街地のプレムガール地区の都市構造の変遷に関する研究

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The historic kernel of Dhaka, commonly called ‘Old Dhaka’, retains the traditional features it has inherited from a long history of urbanization influenced by various cultural phases, sometimes hostile to its natural process of evolution. Local culture and the way of life had always been a unique modifier to absorb or adapt that is new, in its folds. A series of superimposed or juxtaposed layers of interventions due to these phases, sometimes beyond recognition, when unfolded, reveal an epitome deep beneath. This epitome shows clues to a hidden order that gives a distinctive texture to indigenous settlement morphology. In order to understand the spatial structure of Old Dhaka or to predict its future, it is essential to understand the process and context of its transformation. This present research sets out to investigate the process of the spatial transformation of Old Dhaka through analysis and synthesis of the socio-physical interaction.

It has been observed that, in contrast to total Dhaka city the older areas still retain their traditional life styles. One of the probable reasons may be the social interaction of community with the neighbors, relatives and friends within neighborhood areas. Another significant reason may be the physical structure of the built form as well as urban spaces of local areas that persists the traditional qualities of articulation. Therefore, it seems imperative to understand the socio-spatial organization of such urban areas. Hence, the morphological features of man made space at local level could be lawfully determined by social process with physical intervention.

Since study of the whole of the Old Dhaka is beyond the sphere of the available time frame of research. An attempt had been made to pick up an area providing scope for studying urban

structure of Old Dhaka and processes of transformation. Assuming that socio-cultural and spatial aspects of land use do not significantly differ from place to place within Old Dhaka, the Pre-Mughal boundary, the area inside the Dholai Khal (canal), the oldest part of Old Dhaka is chosen for this study.

The present research intended to explore the origin and development of indigenous city form with particular emphasis on Old Dhaka through an orderly comparison of its historical, social and morphological growth pattern. Moreover, spatial structure of historically and culturally eminent local areas is thoroughly observed within the overall nexus of organically generated old society. Hence, the main objective of this present research sets out to understand the urban morphology of Old Dhaka and the forces that had acted here to produce it. Then finally analyze the socio-physical qualities and internal spatial structure of these areas and their transformation that makes the Old Dhaka vibrant and impulsive even at present.

There is a dynamic relationship between the human settlement and process of transformation and their response to each other. Like other cities with colonial influence, Old Dhaka consists of a patchwork of different areas are layers from different periods. How to describe this kind of mosaic situation in this context is a major challenge of this study. The image of Old Dhaka and public perception within or outside this area still continues and we have to understand the key elements behind this. What factors produces the image and spatial essence of Old Dhaka, remains the key question.

This research simultaneously draws out the emerging of discourses discussing complex system throughout several discipline and grounds the theoretical framework in the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka with the dynamics of the evolution and transformation of the spatial structure as main focus, with an emphasis on socio-physical interaction. The theoretical framework and reading of the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka as complex system and grounded theory as the research approach. More specific research detects the dynamics between socio-physical interaction and the consequent transformation of the spatial structure.

The analysis is conducted in three steps; the first step is to review and synthesize the theories in the study of spatial and social structure of cities; the second step is to identify the evolution and change in historical, social, cultural, political aspects in relation to the spatial structure of Dhaka; the third step is to identify the characters of the spatial structure and transformation of the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka during last one hundred years.

The formation of the study has been divided into seven chapters. The initial chapter defines the problem and background of the study followed by the research question, objective with specific aim and description of methodology to examine the socio-spatial structure of the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka. The next three chapters mainly deal with the three broader issues that are listed below respectively.

- a. Review and synthesis of literature in the study of spatial and social structure of cities
- b. The study of historical and morphological evolution of Old Dhaka as indigenous organic development over the period of four hundred years.
- c. Comparative study of the social structure and spatial formation of urban Dhaka

The second chapter reviews the thoughts and ideas present in the field of socio-spatial study of cities. This chapter tries to focus on the existing theories and concepts of different researchers to understand the background and possibilities of this research.

After the theoretical review and synthesis of the literature, the third chapter is considered as a preamble to the city of Dhaka. It discusses the brief history of this city and dynamics of the physical growth and the spatial structure of Dhaka city over last four hundred years. This part of the research tries to pinpoint how the cumulative process of growth and consolidation has influenced the spatial structure of Dhaka. This section extracts mainly on the historical, political and morphological pattern of development that has been categorized into six major phases and how the theoretical interpretations of organic development intermingle with the historical development of old city. In the fourth chapter, the social structure and spatial formation of Dhaka over four hundred years has been discussed from a socio-cultural perspective.

The analytical finding of the empirical research is compiled here in two chapters. Among them chapter five discusses the dynamics of the physical growth and the spatial structure of the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka over last century with the help of available cartographic maps at four different stages from 1859 to 2010. This part of the research has presented the field survey findings on the spatial structure and analyzed the extent of transformation. It finally introduces the areas which are selected from different phases of growth for the detail investigation to understand the socio-physical interactions.

The sixth chapter deals with the spatial structure of the selected areas in Old Dhaka. This chapter tries to identify different physical units of this area having a distinct social as well as

spatial attribute; and also intends to investigate their particular relationship to one another. It is actually a search for a morphological order of neighborhood areas within the urban structure. In doing so, it also tries to examine the existence of historic neighborhood within the existing fabric. It also focuses on the social aspects associated with the perceived spatial organization. It tries to ascertain the social structure and spatial behavior pattern of the urban mosaic and its significance.

The last of the seven chapters tries to provide a holistic view of the study. It sets out to delineate the generalizations achieved through this research endeavor about the socio-spatial structure of the Pre-Mughal area of Old Dhaka, and to relate them to more general observations about the organic city form and the continuations and changes in the spatial logic of these underlying social processes.

Thus through a systematic unfolding of the social as well as spatial structure of local areas, this thesis tries to find the generic characteristics of the organic morphology of Old Dhaka. It is believed that this study would create an understanding, so that urban design approaches might take a greater influence from the phenomena created in the organic areas.