

A brief reflection/view on Kathmandu City

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This is not scientific paper but a reflection as researcher about Kathmandu Valley focusing to the special questions asked by Professor Crow.

Kathmandu is one of the fastest growing cities in South Asia and according to the assessment of the UNDP (2014) and Asian Development Bank (2013) the poverty rate is increasing in urban areas like Kathmandu whilst it is declining in rural areas.

Our studies on land related contestation show enormous land conflicts arises from the livelihood insecurity and lack of access to and resources (Upreti et al., 2017; Pyakuryal and Upreti 2016; Upreti et al., 2008; Upreti 2004; 2002, Sharma et.al., 2013; Locher et.al., 2012) and often the victims are poor and weak sections of society.

Every year 450 thousand people enter into job the job market in Nepal whereas 538 thousand youth every years go abroad for seeking job (mainly in Gulf countries and Malaysia, India excluded) as 1 in 5 are fully unemployed. As unemployment is one of the major concerns in Nepal, many youth arrive Kathmandu for seeking better future that lead to population growth and stress on available services and resources. According to the Population Pressure Index developed by Ministry of Environment and Population (2016) the population density of Kathmandu is 2799.8 compared to the 180 national average and its contains 9.5 percent of the population of the country. Population of Kathmandu is constituted from a) inhabitants, b) migrants and c) transients.

The major reasons of arrival of large number of people in Kathmandu in the past 2 decades are related to the 'armed conflict induced displacement', displacement from natural calamities, seeking for employment opportunities and obtaining better services (treatment in good hospitals, education in better schools, etc.) and obtaining other centralised services (e.g., passport from fast track arrangement, various examinations). Hence, Kathmandu is facing stresses to provide basic services to growing population in terms of health facilities (e.g., 16455 people per health service facilities in Kathmandu compared to 6198 national average), education, road access, access to open spaces, drinking water, social services, and employment, as well as productive agricultural areas etc. Anthropogenic activities in Kathmandu are exerting pressure on housing, agriculture, industries, transport, water, open space, public areas and recreation, which is a major challenge.

Unemployment is becoming one of the structural causes of conflict in Nepal (Upreti and Muller-Boeker, 2010) and affecting to the labour forces and employment (Upreti et al., 2013). Together with the expansion of urban areas, slums and squatter areas are also expanding in different parts of the city. Some noted sites for example are: Manohara corridor, Bagmati corridor, Bishnu Mati Corridor, Hanumante Corridor, Nakhu, Sankhamul, Mandikatar, etc. where several issues and concerns are raised, such as encroachment of public land and open spaces, direct pressure on intake of natural resources (especially water), pollution (waste disposal and air quality), congestion in public services such as schools, hospitals, transport, etc. As the slums and squatters areas are expanding several livelihood options are practices as employment such as garbage/waste collection (both resident collectors itinerant collectors), street vending, work in brick factories/stone crushing, daily wage labour in agriculture and animal farms, etc. However, poor people in slums, shanty and squatter settlement areas are mostly deprived of good housing, proper sanitation, clean water and air, pollution,

and consequently endangering their health (e.g., respiratory diseases, gastrointestinal diseases) (Elsy et al., 2016), safety and moral and more susceptible to natural calamities like the earthquake of 2015 April and man-made disaster.

Another issue main issue faced in the context of urban poor, especially the slum dwellers and squatter communities is the lack of their legal recognition which in specific cases obstruct to access special services provided by the state to poor. Though some legal provisions and policy frameworks are developed their effective implementation is in big question. Even though the Constitution of Nepal 2015 is quite friendly to poor and marginalised people its translation into action is yet to realise, as country is in transition and all national efforts are made to complete the 3 levels of election (local, provincial and federal) within few months.

With this background some of responses in the form of bullet points are inserted within the specific questions mentioned:

1. How are households of the urban poor taking action to gain what they need?

- Collectively organise (e.g., landless association) and making collective bargaining/demand with the state (especially for the getting the occupied land transfer to their name of provide shelter in appropriate places within KTM Valley
- Occupying open spaces, river beds and taking membership of certain political parties to get party protection and becoming quite successful. For example, when the government in 2012 started evicting the squatter people they vehemently resisted and later MC leader and PM Prachanda stop evicting them.
- Municipalities were also dealing with the landlessness issue and negotiating with the claimers
- Different commissions (landless Problem Settlement Commissions) to settle the issues of landless but they were politically motivated to distribute land to their supporters, contested and objected and demanded to solve the problems.
- In KTM Valley, many of the land belonged to Guthi but now this is weak.

2. What sorts of formal and informal work offer opportunities for men and women to make a living? How are those opportunities changing?

- Post-earthquake reconstruction
- Brick factory, stone factories
- Agriculture, commercial agricultural farms (massively growing in Kathmandu valley)
- Un/semi skill labour in construction work
- Vending, garbage collection,
- Retail shops/vegetable-fruits vendors
- Vocational skill workers like electrician, mansion, plumbers, etc

3. Are there ways in which community based organizations and NGOs are representing and supporting the claims and negotiations of the urban poor with employers, city agencies and others?

- LUMANTI (Support Group for Shelter) works for informal settlements and marginalized communities in the cities. Efforts from LUMANTI and others are concentrated on: a) slum upgrading, b) housing security for poor people (housing projects), c) saving and credits, d) water and sanitation interventions, education program, e) strengthening community organizations, f) trek guiding, teaching, labour work, and domestic alcohol production/sale
- Different local committees formed to address local problems

- CSRC (Community Self Reliance Centre), mainly focusing to livelihood and access of poor on land resources
- National Land Rights Consortium
- Users communities operating to implement different activities within municipalities and VDCs in KTM Valley
- Organisations and groups supported by UN-Habitat and other international organisations

4. How are women and men in informal settlements able to gain education or health care and how is that changing?

- Access to public health facilities and public schooling is open to all irrespective of their settlement status (people from informal settlement can also access equally)
- Special supports from organisations working on urban poor and slum dwellers
- Negotiated facilities provided by the local governments

5. Are national and municipal agencies attempting to upgrade the living conditions of the urban poor? Are those agencies responsive to concerns of residents? What is happening as a result of such action?

- Department of Urban Development & Building Construction: Built 6 story building to settle the landless but people did not reside (politics, eye on occupied land and other reasons)
- Constitutional guarantee for the shelter, basic needs/services, so
- Legal arrangements, policies and procedures are being made
- Municipalities are directly engaged and Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC) supporting
- 'High Powered Committee for Integrated Development of Bagmati Civilisation' is also dealing
- Kathmandu valley development Authority
- Rebuilding settlements with Communities initiatives
- Not much progress

6. Are the urban poor able to achieve secure housing? What obstacles hinder this achievement?

- Government constructed 6 multi-story buildings constructed at Ichangunarayan to relocate squatters. This model is planned to extend in other areas of KTM Valley.
- Politicization of landlessness and vested interests hinder to achieve secure housing

7. Is there action focused on women's domestic work, and the risks and indignities that women face?

- Women rights activists working
 - to protect the exploitation
 - Equal pay for equal work issue
 - Child day care centres and separate toilets/breast feeding places
- Maid is most common in KTM valley with no formal contract, humiliation and sexual harassment are said to be high
- Delay in payment of work

Few selected relevant publications from Bishnu Upreti

1. **Upreti BR**, Breu T. & Ghale Y. (2017): New Challenges in Land Use in Nepal: Reflections on the Booming Real-estate Sector in Kathmandu Valley and Chitwan. *Scottish Geographical Journal*. Vol. 133, Issue 1. Pp. 1-15.
2. **Upreti BR**, Sharma SR, Paudel SB (2016), Food Security in Post Conflict Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities. New Delhi: Adroit Publishers.
3. Pyakuryal KN and **Upreti BR** (2016), Research series Volume 3: Land, Agriculture and Agrarian transformation. New Delhi: Adroit Publishers.
4. **Upreti BR**, Ghimire S. and Ghale Y (2013), Globalisation and Labour in Conflict-Engulfed Nepal (Chapter 5), In: Reddy DN (ed.) Globalization and Labour in South Asia. Kathmandu: Panos South Asia. Pp.181-231.
5. Sharma S.R., **Upreti BR** & Müller-Böker U. (2013), Negotiating Access to Land in Nepal. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. No 44, Issue No 3. Vol. No 44, Issue No 3. Pp.521-539. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2013.868022.
6. **Upreti BR**, and Muller-Boeker, U. (eds.) (2010), Livelihood insecurity and social conflict in Nepal. Kathmandu: RCO NCCR North-South.
7. Locher M., Steimann B. and **Upreti BR** (2012), Land grabbing, investment principles and plural legal order of land use. *Journal of Legal Pluralism*. Issue No 65 Pp. 31-63
8. **Upreti BR**, Sharma, S. R. and Basnet, J. (eds.) (2008) Land Politics and Conflict in Nepal: Realities and Potentials for Agrarian Transformation. Kathmandu: Community Self Reliance Centre, Human and Natural Resources Studies Centre, Kathmandu University and South Asia Regional Coordination Office of NCCR North-South.
9. Upreti, BR (2004), Land Conflict in Nepal: Peasants' Struggle to Change Unequal Agrarian Social Relations. *Journal of Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 7, No 3, Pp. 371-394. 22. Upreti, B. R. (2004). Dynamics of Resource Governance, Resource Scarcity and Conflict in Nepal, *Journal of Forest and Livelihoods*, Vol. 4(1).
10. Upreti, BR (2002). The Management of Natural Resource Conflict: Case Studies from Nepal. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*. Spring 2002 (22), Pp 37-60.
11. Upreti, B. R. (2000). Resource Use Negotiation as an Alternate Strategy for Sustainable Water Resource Management: Experience from Nepal. *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, International Journal on Changes in Knowledge and Action Systems* 7(1), Pp. 11-20.