● RESOURCE

Re-Conceptualising Gender and Urban Water Inequality. Applying a Critical Feminist Approach to Water Inequality in Dhaka

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Description / Abstract

Commonly, urban water inequality has been conceptualised in scholarship and policy as a fixed issue; little attention has been given to dynamic changes over time, space, identity, and relations. Influenced by traditional feminist critiques of development and of who suffers the responsibilities of water management, the consequence has been a focus on women. However, gender mainstreaming approaches aiming to empower women are often critiqued for (re)producing static narratives, and overlooking the multiple experiences and processes of (re)production of inequality. This paper places itself within this debate, aiming to enhance analytical approaches to studying urban water inequality and challenge pervasive simplified, homogenised accounts of urban water inequality. Through critical application of recent conceptual shifts in feminist theorising, it brings together Feminist Political Ecology and Intersectionality literatures to formulate a framework for analysis of urban water inequality. This explores the role and importance of relational subjectivities, power dynamics, hydrosocial relations, and dynamic relations across and within micro and macro scales. The paper focuses on how these dynamics manifest in Dhaka's informal settlements. Bangladesh shows the complex and multi-layered nature of both how water inequality is (re)produced, and how people negotiate it in their everyday lives. The insights, particularly findings of informal and formal fluidity, are then reflected upon in relation to the framework and future research agendas.

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