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Mills to Real Estate: Examining the formal and informal trajectories of urban transformation across locked industrial lands in Serampore, West Bengal

The transformations of small towns along the shadow of metros in global south have witnessed transformation in terms of land use on one hand and social & cultural structures on the other. New forms of uncertainty mainly economy, livelihood, occupancy, residence and identity have emerged due to the unprecedented urban boom not only in the city core but also to the periphery of metropolis. The proposed study is an attempt to understand the negotiation and mediation that happens in the urban periphery due to the transformation of industrial land to real estate. This study is concentrated only on locked industrial lands which were kept stagnant for years and have not been used for any productive use. Land has always been a terrain where negotiation takes place. The multifaceted nature of land is juncture of both economy and politics. The instability in the nature of land has transformed land into a flexible assemblage of policies, practice and power. Through this research, I argue that state agencies in West Bengal have made converting industrial land into real estate more durable despite of having strict land governance. Using urban ethnography as a method, this research will try to concentrate on the production of formal and negotiated conversion of locked industrial lands, particularly in the small town Serampore lying in the periphery of the megacity Kolkata. This study will depict how estate activities change the urban space producing a new set of relations, negotiation and informalisation.

Key words: transformation, real estate, negotiated, industrial locked land