

Governance and Informality

The Case of Solid Waste Management in Kathmandu, Nepal



Fig:1 Indiscriminate dumping in the city (Author, 2019)

Municipal solid waste management is one of the most forbidding challenges faced by urban areas in South Asia. Most municipalities are unable to keep up with the pace of urbanization and increased volume of waste. Procuring technical equipment and constructing new landfills are the preferred solution to waste management problems for the local government.



Fig: 2 Location of Study Area (Kayastha and Chettri, 2015)

Case of Kathmandu Nepal

- Solid waste management characterized by collection and disposal to landfill site.
- Chronic problem in solid waste management dates to 1970, failed effort till date to reorganize the system.
- Integrated solid waste management largely endorsed in government policies and acts with little attention to successful implementation on ground.
- Range of actors, semi-formal to informal status running the everyday waste management process of the city are left unattended.



Fig:3 Vehicles in queue to dump waste at landfill site (Author, 2019)

Research Questions

- 1 How can governance contribute to a shift from disposal to waste as a resource in Kathmandu?
 - What are the practices of actors in waste and what role it plays in shaping the municipal waste management system?
 - How is the informal sector marginalized in the management of solid waste of the city?
 - Why has waste system stagnated in the city?

Theoretical Concepts

Governance and Informality

Governance: Interaction of interdependent actors [1]
Involves the roles of formal government institutions, informal networks, community-based organization, private sector, non-government organization in achieving collective actions [2]

Informality: An aggregate of practices, norms and exchanges that take place beyond formal/state regulation [3]

Informal practices are a way to complement or supplement the state [4]



Fig:4 Waste at transfer station before landfilling (Author, 2019)



Fig:5 Informal waste workers segregating at transfer station (Author, 2019)

Methodology

Case Study Approach: Interviews, household survey, field observation, photography and videography

Household survey in four wards of metropolis. Using purposive sampling achieved through snowballing
Total 182 households surveyed

Semi-structured interviews with formal, semi-formal and informal actors in solid waste management (A total of 70 interviews) supplemented by observation notes, photographs and videos

Mixed Approach

Descriptive statistics using Excel for analysis of quantitative data from survey

Thematic analysis for qualitative data from interviews, survey secondary data (academic and grey literature)

Preliminary Results

- Waste management in the city is guided by practices of actors rather than official acts and regulations.
- Foreign aid over the years has had a detrimental effect on the metropolis and public regarding the way they deal with waste.
- Local government's effort to enter public private partnership futile, without addressing existing actors and inherent socio-cultural, policy and institutional issues.
- Recognition of and collaboration between actors can play a vital role in moving forward from a haphazard system to an effective and efficient solid waste management system in Kathmandu.
- Waste work regarded as low-caste socially degrading job, out of sight out of mind attitude in public prevalent.
- Informal waste workers working in destitute situation, facing constant exploitation from municipal field staff, contractors and middlemen.
- Public distrust high on local government in terms of waste services and success of its waste projects.

References

- 1 Kooiman, J. (2003). *Governing as governance*. Sage.
 - 2 Stoker, G. (1998). Governance as theory: five propositions. *International social science journal*, 50(155), 17-28.
 - 3 Urinboev, R., Polese, A., Svensson, M., Adams, L., & Kerikmäe, T. (2018). Political vs everyday forms of governance in Uzbekistan: the illegal, immoral and illegitimate politics and legitimacy in post-Soviet Eurasia. *Stud Trans States and Soc*, 10(1), 50-64.
 - 4 Polese, A. (2016). *Limits of a Post-Soviet state: How informality replaces, renegotiates, and reshapes governance in contemporary Ukraine*. Columbia University Press.
- Fig 2: Chhetri, S. K., & Kayastha, P. (2015). Manifestation of an analytic hierarchy process (AHP) model on fire potential zonation mapping in Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Nepal. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 4(1), 400-417.