



DEYALKOTHA

SAHJABIN KABIR, TANZIA ISLAM

DEYALKOTHA is the first initiative towards place-making under the Tejgaon flyover in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The flyover was built from the needs of mobility in the city; however, the neglected underneath spaces ran to land misuses such as dumping debris and parking of trucks and cars. The surrounding low income population gave some purposeful meaning to the flyover through their self-generated activities such as cooking, sewing, sleeping, playing, animal husbandry and night schooling as well. However, the space requires some design intervention that may further develop the area as well as help the community with better amenities. After a detail ethnographic survey, the project came up with a learning platform using the flyunder wall with playful and learning elements like chalk wall, alphabets, children name, photos, map, national anthem, flag and height scale. . The design was quite challenging in terms of security and safety measures. Therefore, low cost local materials were chosen for construction and modular structures were developed for easy assembling, disassembling, moving and maintenance. The raised section was developed for formal classes and the stage was proposed for cultural events, which would be folded at other times.

The project has been proposed in an area predominantly occupied by economically and socially disadvantaged population from rickshaw pullers to domestic workers, who live either on the sidewalks or over the medians underneath the flyover. The initial project plan was to design a folk theatre for the poor migrant community and at times local slum schools who do not have an auditorium can use the theatre for the student's events. It was the community who initiated our plan for the school. As the pavement dwellers are considered illegal, no government school was established. Low income parents can hardly afford to bear the expenses of the nearby schools. In such case, the children roam around the area in a filthy environment though they want to go to school like other children. Therefore, the improved plan integrated interactive education through an amalgamation of artworks and cultural activities using the underutilized flyunder wall. Before implementation classes were undertaken to understand the community needs.

All the team members, who had developed the design for Deyalkottha are either students or recent graduates. They have voluntarily worked for the project. The aim was to introduce interested students to the fundamentals of working within disadvantaged communities. Allowing them to work in close relation to the community can encourage their professional life towards community improvement before speculative economic profitability.

The project calls for a change in the existing government system to think about space in multidimensional way for community service, for the marginal population who do not get the privilege as we do in a densely populated city like Dhaka. This type of project has been experimented in Bangladesh for the first time and therefore, the painstaking challenge of the project was to get an authorized paper from the government authorities. The design was first initiated under the supervision of a master's thesis project at Harvard University Graduate School of Design and then the design was further developed by architecture students. The proposal was presented at different conferences and afterwards, the project won the Community Service Grant Proposal. We have partnered with a youth based local NGO, "Light of Hope" for the education program and for the health, hygiene and social awareness

