

Foreword

I welcomed my first Bangladeshi postgraduate student to Durham over 25 years ago and from then until my retirement I supervised to completion 17 research theses on that country. Most of the researchers had established university posts at universities in Bangladesh and were taking a career break in order to pursue their interests full time. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission provided financial support, along with the Christopher Moyes Memorial Foundation, the British Council and other funders. From my own point of view, this small industry of research on Bangladesh not only produced important academic results, it also generated many continuing friendships and I greatly enjoyed this aspect of my career.

A generation of young geography researchers has returned from training in the Global North with their own ideas on how the discipline should be applied in Bangladesh. Many have immersed themselves in new technologies such as GIS and remote sensing, which have the potential to generate and analyse vast databases of information, especially on environmental topics. Others have become convinced of the importance of new methodologies in human geography, for instance the qualitative techniques that are now yielding important insights into people's behaviour and decision-making, or in physical geography the application of wet-lab analysis. All of this amounts to a revolution in thinking about geography in Bangladesh.

It is important to note that the geography I am talking about here is not a one-way traffic from Europe or North America. There are encouraging signs that journals of global significance and international book publishers are beginning to discover the wealth of talent in South Asia. The present book is just one example among many of the desire of Bangladeshi scholars to be heard and to contribute to their discipline in their own way. Readers will notice that an important element of this volume is applied geography. I take the message to be that human, physical and environmental geography have a vital role to play in understanding the many problems facing the country and in finding practical ways to solve them.

This book is a celebration of the many voices and approaches of geographers in Bangladesh. This diversity is a great strength and overall the book is proof that geography is both vibrant and relevant in that country.

Peter J Atkins, Em. Professor of Geography, University of Durham, UK