The foreground of this photo is of Korail bastee (Bengali slums) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where more than a hundred thousand undocumented slum-dwellers live in one square-miles. They make their temporary homes with bamboo, thatch and corrugated sheds on unclaimed urban, interstitial spaces. Without water, sewerage, and proper infrastructure, they lead susceptible lives. The background is the permanent city, authoritative and ordered. In the age of globalization, each city thrives to carry postcard perfect, glossy imagery of permanent worlds. We typically live in urban-environments constructed under strict planning and design. The impermanent city coexists with this permanent city, creating an urban duality. Slum & squatter settlements, favelas and bastees, are ubiquitous, fleeting, and temporal. The informal labor of slum-dwellers is indispensable for an urban economy and a city’s sustenance. Yet, they are often ignored. These two urban oppositions co-exist through constant negotiation. This urban duality is an essential phenomenon of megacities of the global south. Through this photo, we question- which is the foreground, and which is the background? As a global issue, which is relevant, and which is irrelevant? Korail bastee voices the omnipresent urban duality that is an imminent issue and human challenge in this postmodern world.

Urban Duality: Korail Bastee
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