

City Development planning An alternative perspective

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Karachi demolitions

Arif Hasan January 31, 2019

THE Supreme Court of Pakistan has ordered that Karachi be restored to its former 'glory' of 40 years ago by demolishing all that which was not legally constructed since then. This is simply not possible. Karachi's population in 1981 was 5.4 million. Today it is 17m. The katchi abadi population in 1978 was 2m and today it is estimated at more than 9m. The number of vehicles in 2005 was 2,359,256 and in 2018 it was 4,642,196. Motorcycles increased from 361,616 in 1995 to 2,856,704 in 2018. Meanwhile, Karachi's urban footprint has more than doubled in the last 40 years.

Since 1947 (and not since 40 years ago), Karachi and its master plans have not been able to predict or meet the requirements of an increasing population. As a result, homes, industrial areas, markets, godowns, and cargo and bus terminals have sprung up informally. The demolition of what has been built in violation of Karachi's master plan of 40 years ago will destroy the socio-economic fabric of the city and fill its roads with homeless people.

The recent unplanned, selective and anti-poor demolition of encroachments in the city has destroyed its informal economy. Over 11,000 small businesses and more than 300,000 jobs have been lost, and customers are at a loss as to where they can make purchases. Meanwhile, the local government has no money to pick up the debris of the demolished markets.

Over 11,000 small businesses and more than 300,000 jobs have been lost.

What is required is to bring back the hawkers and market operators to their places of business in an organised manner which does not disrupt the functioning of the city and at the same time restores the badly damaged informal economy of Karachi. To improve conditions, it is essential to assess what has been built without permission and identify that which is of socio-economic benefit for the city — and regularise it.

A heavy regularisation fee or penalty (maybe even imprisonment) should be imposed on the persons responsible for the illegal developments, which should then be spent on the improvement of the area where the property is located. That which is environmentally harmful for the city, or land which is required for important infrastructure projects, should be removed, providing only exploited affectees with alternatives.

As their lordships have started taking executive decisions, they might consider promoting a number of initiatives which would benefit Karachi. The area between Shahrah-e-Faisal to the south, Lyari river to the north, the port to the west, and the old Sabzi Mandi to the east (where most of Karachi's formal and informal businesses are

located) is accessible through 13 roads which are used by hundreds of thousands of people and vehicles to get to and back from work.

This area desperately needs a traffic management and circulation plan which segregates through and local traffic, slow and fast-moving traffic, and vehicular and pedestrian movement. This will go a long way to tackle the traffic issue and create more car parking space.

Their lordships might also consider ordering the Sindh government and the KMC to introduce 10,000 large buses and create a proper school for drivers, conductors, and traffic managers who alone should operate the Karachi transport system. This is essential because the BRT mass transit plan will not be able to serve more than five per cent of the trips generated in Karachi.

Another issue which is tormenting more than 400,000 (mostly poor) people living on the Karachi Circular Railway 'right of way' is that they do not know what their future is, or the amount of land that the railway requires. It is essential that the railway takes a firm decision on the land that it needs so that this nightmare being faced by the people is removed.

The destruction of commercial activity in the railway land informal settlements, from which about 25pc of the population make a living, should also be stopped and be made part of a larger rehabilitation plan. The rehabilitation of these affectees should take place nearer to their present places of residence and it can be a part of larger commercial projects which can bring considerable revenue to the government and at the same time provide housing for the affectees.

The above Karachi rehabilitation plan is the only way to reconcile the city's ad hoc growth with its present plan for the future. This cannot be done by giving unmanageable time frames or by setting up committees consisting of compromised persons and hiring of inexperienced consultants. For this, a five- to 10-year time frame is required, along with appropriate institutions with teeth for planning and implementation. These institutions do not exist and need to be created and nurtured.

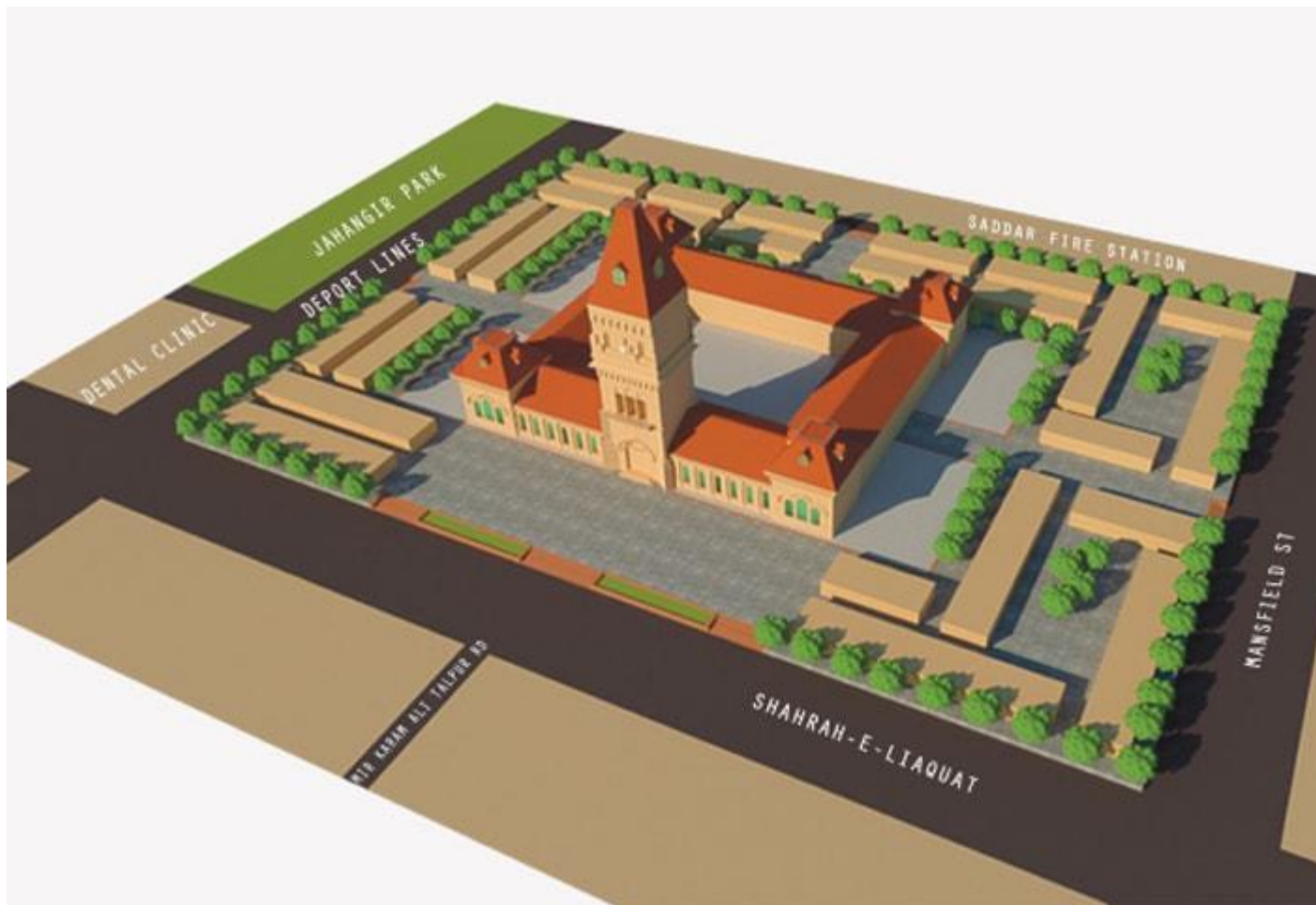
Meanwhile, through small projects, the city can be given some temporary relief. Anger has to be replaced with respect and understanding if Karachi is to be salvaged.

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THE FUTURE OF KARACHI'S SADDAR

Arif Hasan January 06, 2019



Aerial view of Empress Market proposed plan | Courtesy Arif Hasan

For the past 30 years, the future of Empress Market and hence of Karachi's Saddar has been a subject of debate among architects, planners, administrators and politicians. Some have proposed that the building should be turned into a museum, others have wanted it to become an art gallery and, more recently, the planners appointed by the government have proposed that it should be turned into a high-end dining space. There are also those who have said it is, after all, Empress Market (the emphasis being on market). So why should it not remain a market?

All proposals have been accompanied by area plans. The proposal of the present city mayor is simple: Empress Market should be restored to its former glory. To which period "former" belongs to has not been defined.

The future function of Empress Market will, to a great extent determine whether Saddar is to acquire an elitist and sanitised physical and social environment, taking away yet more more space from the middle-middle, lower-middle and working classes of the city, or will it, in some way, reflect its existing populous nature. After the recent

demolition of the bazaars around Empress Market, the eviction of shopkeepers from within it, and the removal of the hawkers from Saddar's streets and pavements, the question of its future has become all the more important, not only for Saddar, but for Karachi as a whole. So, a bit of history is necessary.

The recent 'anti-encroachment' drive in Karachi has resulted in the loss of over 200,000 jobs as well as threats to the multi-class social and cultural fabric of Saddar. Eos presents a proposal to ensure that the city's tangible and intangible heritage are both preserved...

A HISTORY OF SADDAR

Saddar was established in 1839, after the British occupied Karachi as a trading post, in competition with the markets of the native city which were located within and on the periphery of the walled city of Karachi, mainly in the areas of Kharadar and Mithadar. After the annexation of Sindh in 1843, the British administrative and military functions were located in Saddar and its environs. The first Church in Karachi was also built in 1843 in Saddar and, between then and the turn of the century, a large number of the important administrative and military complexes were constructed in Saddar along with civic and religious buildings of the Christian and Parsi communities.

The freedom fighters of the rebellion of 1857 against the British were also blown from the mouths of cannons in Saddar on the parade ground where Empress Market is located today and the parts of their blown-up bodies were buried in pits on the parade ground. As such, Empress Market is also their mausoleum. There are many legends associated with the rebellion and they survive with the residents of Chanesar Goth, many of whose ancestors were sent to Kala Paani to die of disease and starvation because they had supported the rebellion led by Ramay Panday, who was from Bareilly (in Uttar Pradesh) and a Subedar in the army of the East India Company.

Empress Market was inaugurated in 1889. It was designed as a meat, vegetable, fruit and household goods market and it was meant for the families of the British administrators and soldiers and Goans and Parsis who inhabited Saddar. The area around the market had posh cafes, bars, and restaurants such as the Saddar Tea Rooms, Elphinstone Restaurant, India Coffee House, the old Todi shop and Café Parisian. Badly dressed persons were not permitted to enter Saddar and it came to be known as the European Quarter of Karachi where the white population could shop in a not unfamiliar environment, often with merchandise brought from home.

Here it is important to note that Empress Market was part of a larger urban design project. It was placed on the axis of Napier Street (Karam Ali Talpur Road). During the same period, the Edulji Dinshaw Dispensary was also built (1882) and it was placed on the axis of Somerset Street (Raja Ghazanfar Ali Road). The Parsi maternity

home was built in 1917. These three buildings are built around Jahangir Park, which was inaugurated in 1883 and was the first and last gravel park of Karachi.

A number of other axes were also created by the British. An important one in Saddar is Clark Street (Shahrah-e-Iraq). Christ the King monument and St. Patrick's Cathedral lie on its axis and so does the High Court. Before Partition, there was an important monument on the crossing of Clark Street and Somerset Street emphasising the importance of the axis. The monument has long since disappeared. In any plan for Saddar, the importance of these axes has to be taken into account and respected.

Because of its importance, Saddar also became an important public transport terminal of a city that, by 1941, had a population of 450,000. Bus routes terminated here and it was an important tramway junction.



Top view of the proposed plan showing the dismantle-able shops on the Empress Market premises, and the paved courtyard surrounding it to facilitate pedestrian flow

And so Empress Market and Saddar continued until 1947 when the demography of Karachi underwent a major change due to Partition and the market, along with Saddar as a whole, had to accommodate the needs of a much larger population and also cater to different classes and ethnicities. By 1977, Saddar had 44 pre-Partition businesses

still operative, 17 non-text bookshops, 17 bars and nightclubs, 11 billiard rooms, 12 cinemas and four music schools. In addition, it had 37 restaurants and cafes. These facilities catered to different classes and existed side by side. Jahangir Park became the centre of political and religious activity and a cricket ground, where Pakistan's leading cricketers have played and received training. Thus, a multi-class public space was created which was within walking distance from the federal secretariat on the Artillery Maidaan, Civil Lines (where embassies were located), the university on Baba-e-Urdu Road, and the D.J College, S.M Law College, and N.E.D Engineering College. As a result, a mix of bureaucrats, politicians, intellectuals, students and proletariat became part of Saddar's commercial and intellectual life.

Since Saddar was the destination or transit point for the majority of commuters, the new commercial demands found space around Empress Market and its neighborhood to establish themselves. The state supported this process by regularising and, in some cases, creating the emerging business markets.

With 'Islamisation' in 1977, entertainment and recreation disappeared from Saddar. The night clubs, bars and billiard rooms vanished. With this change, the elite stopped visiting it. The retail markets started to cater almost entirely to the lower and lower-middle class. However, Saddar remained a major bus terminal in Karachi and, as a result, the number of commuters continued to increase with an increase in population. Hawkers emerged to cater to the needs of the commuters and occupied pavements and, later on, even entire streets. In the sixties, trade and commerce expanded rapidly but no place was developed in the city for catering to it. Since Saddar was the destination or transit point for the majority of commuters, the new commercial demands found space around Empress Market and its neighbourhood to establish themselves. The state supported this process by regularising and, in some cases, creating the emerging business markets. So in the process, the tea market (with strong links with Kenya, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh), the bird market (with strong links with legal bird suppliers in Africa and Southeast Asia but also with smugglers in the wildlife trade) and the dry fruit market (with strong links with Balochistan and Afghanistan) were created in 1962. The cloth markets with strong links with Chinese and Indian product importers were created in 1972-1973. The tea, dry fruit and bird markets were specialised markets, and their customers were those who had an acquired taste for these products. All informally created markets, hawkers, beggars and performers paid *bhatta* (extortion money) amounting to crores of rupees per month to 'collectors' protected by the police.

DEMOLISHED MARKETS

- Paan Market and Book Market
(both markets were on the same side)
- Dry Fruit Market
- Tea Market
- Umer Farooq Cloth Market
- Birds Market
- Kite Market
- Four hotels
- Two tea shops outside
- Ice depot
- Ali Husain Bazar (vegetable market)
- Egg Wholesale Market
- Pansar Market

This entire development was organic and ad hoc, its nature determined by the culture and the financial and technical constraints of those who created it. Its “disorganisation” was heavily criticised by planners and city managers. At the same time, the ambience it created was appreciated by many architects and romantics, and especially by tourists. This was because of its strong informal culture and atmosphere of an “oriental bazaar.” People from all walks of life kept visiting Empress Market but it was the commuters and Karachi’s middle-middle and lower-middle class that were the majority. As the number of predominantly male visitors increased, the number of women visitors decreased and, with the end of elite-related recreation and entertainment, and the creation of alternative bazaars in the elite ghettos, the “begums” ceased to visit it.

WHAT WAS LOST?

It is not possible to determine the extent of loss that the demolition has caused to the informal economy of Karachi, which according to estimates is 30-40 percent of its total economy. Nor is it possible to determine the loss incurred to various chains of production, delivery, wholesale and retail. However, it is possible to determine the number of markets that have been demolished, and the number of jobs that have been lost in the process (a list of demolished markets is given on page 1). Here, it is important to note that 72 percent of all Karachi jobs are informal and the majority of jobs lost due to the demolition are almost all informal.

Estimates vary. However, the figure most quoted is that 1,700 shops were demolished, of which 1,200 were either leased or were paying rent to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation. Inside the market, 93 butchers' shops were also destroyed although they were not encroachers. In addition, fruit and vegetable markets were removed from the pavements and so were approximately 3,000 push-cart hawkers. These figures do not include mobile hawkers and those who spread out cloth on the ground and placed their wares on it. It also does not include the musicians and performers who entertained the commuting public, nor the beggars who extracted charity from the visitors. Surveys by NED University students of development studies and the Karachi Urban Resource Centre have established that over 200,000 persons lost their jobs due to the demolitions. These include suppliers of manufactured goods, meat and vegetables; employees of the various businesses; porters, solid-waste collectors, chowkidaars, and 20-30 Hindu women who sold spices on the roadside like their parents and grandparents had done before them.



Front view of Empress Market

Visits and meetings with the affected population established that they were poor and, as a result of the demolition, they are rapidly falling into debt, without which they can no longer feed their children or pay their rents.

In addition to the markets, Saddar also has a cultural life revolving around the educational and religious institutions of the Christians and Muslims. The most important Catholic cathedral (St. Patrick's) is located here along with a number of Catholic educational institutions, including St Patrick's High School and St Joseph's Convent High School, set up in 1861 and 1862 respectively. Katchi Memon Masjid, an important mosque and educational institution of Karachi is also located here. Then, there is night cricket played on the streets under floodlights in Ramazan and also on weekends. There are also special bazaars during Eid and people from all over Karachi, including its distant katchi abadis visit them. And then there is also a Sunday book bazaar at Regal Chowk which has been there since the last 50 years and attracts students and book lovers from every corner of the city.

With the building of the Atrium Cinemas and the commercial area connected to them, a process of gentrification is emerging in Saddar. Owners of properties are being approached by developers, and fast-food outlets are exploring the possibility of establishing themselves here. Some have already done so. This gentrification is welcome and should be guided through appropriate building by-laws and zoning regulations that also promote the reuse of heritage buildings. However, Saddar's present reality and its pre- and post-Partition history and tangible and intangible heritage should also be protected and promoted so that a multi-class public space can be recreated. For example, a non-obtrusive plaque in a corner of the Empress Market courtyard should be placed in memory of the martyrs of the freedom movement of 1857 and should tell their forgotten story.

Surveys by NED University students of development studies and the Karachi Urban Resource Centre have established that over 200,000 persons lost their jobs due to the demolitions.

THE PROPOSAL

The manner in which this can be done is by accommodating the old markets and bringing back the hawkers in an organised manner so that their presence does not create congestion or obstruct pedestrian and vehicular movement. Popular culture can also be promoted by creating public spaces for performances by young people who constantly demand open spaces in the city centre for their cultural activities and fail to get it. Some occupy space without permission, such as the ghazal singers of Kotari Parade did when Muhammad Bin Qasim Park was open, and the singers and dancers in the Frere Hall gardens. More recently, such space has formally been provided in a park in Sector 11-B of North Karachi, which has been taken over by Habib Bank Limited under the 'Adopt a Park' Scheme.



Before and after demolition of 'encroachments'

Keeping the above vision in view, it is proposed that:

1. Bring back the meat, vegetable, spices and household goods shops in the interior of a beautifully restored Empress Market. This was its original function.
2. Create about 800 shops in an organised manner around the building of the Empress Market. These shops can be of metal, dismantle-able and of low height. They can be arranged in a manner that the view of the Empress Market is not obstructed. Even after they have been put in place there will be sufficient space around the market to accommodate events such as weekend bazaars, food courts and cultural happenings (for details see above plans and 3-D models).
3. Where wide pavements are available, such as on Preedy Street, small beautifully designed and dismantle-able kiosks can be placed for commercial activity.
4. Bazaars that cannot be accommodated around the market can be shifted to the City Government District Karachi (CDGK) parking plaza and the open space next to it can be developed in an organised manner as a hawkers' market. To make the plaza and the hawkers' market commercially viable, a number of bus stops should be created next to them on Preedy Street. A pleasant walkway should link the hawkers' market to the Empress Market podium. The walkway should continue to an appropriately upgraded Regal Chowk so that the weekend book bazaar can be held in a more pleasant environment. The walkway should

continue to the Burnes Road food street, where pavements can be widened to accommodate roadside eating spaces. The walkway can then turn right to a renovated Urdu Bazaar which is visited by hundreds if not thousands of students and book lovers every day, and then turn left to the open space near the S.M. Law College and the D.J. Science College, and also to Pakistan Chowk. Many such walkways can be created to link students, small businesses, hawkers and different types of eating places with each other.

5. Hawkers' bazaars that are held on M.A. Jinnah Road on Sundays and are visited by low-income groups should also be organised so as to have a better appearance. Spaces for community, cultural and social use should be created wherever open space is available. Perhaps some aspects of the Pakistan Chowk Community Centre can serve as a model.
6. The axes that were created by the British should be enhanced. Pavements on both sides of Karam Ali Talpur Road, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Road and Shahrah-e-Iraq should be widened and trees on either side should be planted so as to enhance the axis and integrate important public buildings into a larger plan.
7. The car parking problem in Saddar is less related to the non-availability of space and more to traffic and space management. Space for parking can be considerably enhanced by segregating through and local traffic in Saddar. Proposals for this have been made previously by the Traffic Engineering Bureau.
8. A major constraint in improving Saddar's physical and social environment is related to the poor state of Karachi's public transport vehicles and the pollution they cause, both visually and environmentally. In addition, there is an absence of proper bus stops, pavements and traffic management. If these aspects are not addressed, it is more than possible that Saddar will go back to being what it was before the demolition. But then, this is not a Saddar-specific problem but holds good for all of Karachi.

THE PROCESS

The above proposals are schematic in nature. They, or any future plans, need to be critically examined and discussed with the Saddar market operators, hawkers' unions and the residents of Saddar. To make this possible, it will be necessary to follow a process described below.

- A. Categorise the activities and markets that have been demolished and those that still exist.
- B. Determine which markets and activities need to be rehabilitated around the Empress Market and those that can function commercially even if they are relocated to the Parking Plaza.
- C. Determine the number of hawkers that can be placed at bus stops and the locations for such placement.

D. Hire appropriate consultants that have an understanding of the socio-economic aspects of urban development and are acquainted with the evolution and history of Karachi and of the people that inhabit it.



The map shows the proposed walkway linking the hawkers' market to Empress Market and continuing to the Burnes Road food street and Pakistan Chowk

To make any proposal possible, institutional arrangements have to be made. Maybe it is time to have an institution that deals with planning and implementation of developments in Saddar with a vision that it is to be a multi-class city centre, catering to the needs of not only its residents, but of Karachiites of all classes and ethnicities, by providing them the institutional and physical space for setting up their businesses and for expressing their culture. But such an institution has to be subservient to a larger Karachi planning and development agency, which unfortunately does not exist in any effective form.

It also requires a political establishment that is less paranoid of liberal values. A struggle for the creation of such an agency, and for societal values that reflect the aspirations of Karachi's youth, has to be a part of this struggle as well.

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City and plans

THE recent demolitions of formal and informal businesses in Karachi have raised some important questions. What is a city? What are encroachments? What is culture and heritage and law?

The city is where people live, work, come to study, trade and fulfil their dreams. These activities require wholesale markets which we did not provide, and so they expanded in the old city and destroyed almost all our built heritage. They required cargo terminals which we also did not provide so they developed wherever there was space without workers' homes, toilets, and other social requirements, causing not only social problems but also immense problems for heavy vehicles exiting the city.

We have not provided bus terminals, depots, and workshops, and so by paying bhatta they have established themselves on the roads of the city creating unbearable congestion. We were unable to provide affordable and accessible housing to our working class so they live in katchi abadis in perpetual insecurity without access to proper education, health, family planning, and jobs.

People work and at lunchtime they need places to eat cheaply. Formally, these do not exist so pavement restaurants and hawkers develop to cater to their needs. The working classes have a desperate need for cheap bazaars but there are no spaces for them, so they occupy the pavements of the city. All that we were unable to give to the city, and which the city has acquired itself out of necessity, is known as encroachments.

Heritage is not just buildings. It is much more than that.

However, we have developed huge housing societies with lots of big plots for the elite and the middle classes of this country but here too we were not able to provide sufficient space for entertainment, recreation, health and education facilities. So today, they function out of houses and commercial areas not meant for them. These are also encroachments.

Heritage is not just buildings. It is much more than that — it is living tradition which is added to as the city evolves and which is related to the history of the neighbourhood in which the buildings are located. It is nihari, sajji, Baloch ice cream, Ghaseetay Khan Ka Haleem and public spaces to have them at an affordable cost. Such spaces too, we have not provided.

In the narrow lanes of Karachi's settlements, young people create libraries, arrange mushairas, qawwalis, variety programmes, practice the musical instruments that they have secretly learned to use, and young singers desperately try to find a place in the world of music. There are no spaces for them to learn, practise, develop and perform. As such, many aspiring artists fail to fulfil their dreams. We have never thought of these issues or of multi-class spaces where popular culture can evolve and take root.

And then there are no places where we can protest against the real or conceived tyranny of the state, international events and social customs and biases.

Cities are living entities. They do not wait for formal plans to acquire what they need. True, they acquire it in an ad hoc manner, shaped by the limitations of the financial and planning capabilities and capacities of their informal planners. And if the planning does not accommodate and support this informal process, the city bursts and eats up that which was formally planned.

But why did Karachi's planners and politicians not plan for all that was required? One of the possible reasons was an absence of anthropological research on socioeconomic relations which did not feed into the planning process. As such, the planners were unable to understand the social dynamics of the city. The other aspect is related to the fact that the planners and the politicians were more interested in the form of the city than aspects of livability, the product of class biases in their education and society. The development of large-scale industrial estates was undertaken, but again, in most cases, without space for workers' homes, and the informal support facilities that they required.

Architects are supposed to be the conscience of society for the development of a humane city. However, Karachi's architects have sought patronage from the rich and the powerful and catered to their needs. With the exception of a few, they have not worked or lobbied towards accommodating in a humane manner the needs of an evolving city. Hopefully, as a result of the demolitions that have taken place, they will come closer to the ethics of their profession and try and integrate the needs of Karachi's citizens into the larger planning process.

As far as law is concerned, there should always be a possibility to appeal against its procedural aspects so as to protect the functions the city has acquired out of necessity in the absence of planning or official indifference and corruption.

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Anti-poor bias?

Arif Hasan November 28, 2018

IT is estimated that Karachi's informal economy is between 30 to 40 per cent of the city's total economy. Most of it consists of informal markets scattered at various locations where businesses can be carried out due to the presence of commuters who are their main customers.

According to official estimates, 72pc — about 1.2 million — of jobs in Karachi are generated by the informal economy. Hawkers are the backbone of this economy but no attempt has ever been made to regularise them or to improve their functioning.

On the other hand, in other cities, both in the north and south, this economy has been supported by developing hawkers' markets of various kinds. These markets exist in London, Paris, Rome, and in other cities of the north. They cater to tourists, commuters, and the local populations. The location of many of these markets is in the city centre and often in the historic districts.

In the south, in many cities, markets have sprung up spontaneously because households had to earn a livelihood. They occupied public space, pavements, and even roads, just as in Karachi. In cities like Hanoi and Phnom Penh, they have been allocated space from where to function and in some cases they have been formalised.

Declining incomes have resulted in a major deterioration in livability.

In the Kathmandu valley, they function in the historic Darbar squares of all the towns. However, it is in Bangkok where a conscious effort has been made to promote the informal economy and markets have been established wherever there was a potential for economic activity and the creation of jobs. Cabins have also been placed on wide pavements all over the city. This has also been done very beautifully in Almaty thus integrating the formal and the informal. Pakistani politicians and planners have surely visited the informal markets in these cities and enjoyed the experience.

Karachi's informal sector needs far more support than any of the above-mentioned cities because poverty in Karachi is increasing at a very fast rate whereas in the other cities it is shrinking.

In this context, the statistics given below would be eye-openers. The male unemployment rate between the ages of 25 to 59 years has increased from 16.69pc in 1981 to 29pc in 1998. All indications are that joblessness has increased substantially since then. Official figures suggest that 50.5pc of all Karachiites live below the poverty line as compared to 89pc of all katchi abadi households. In addition, the chronic poor constitute 54pc of the katchi abadi population. These figures alone should make us look at the informal sector, which is the main source of livelihood for the poor, as an alternative to bulldozing of markets and homes.

Declining incomes have resulted in a major deterioration in livability and this is obvious by comparing the housing census of 1981 with that of 1998. Houses without separate latrines were 26pc in 1981 while in 1998 they had gone up to 53pc.

Similarly, houses without separate kitchens increased from 35pc to 52pc and those without separate bathrooms increased from 31pc to 66pc in the same period. These are very damning statistics and point to increasing densification and a lack of means with households to maintain and extend their homes.

Given that densities are increasing phenomenally, the figures that the 2017 housing census will provide will be much worse. With the perpetuation of such conditions in

its largest city, Pakistan can never become an Asian tiger and nor can the riasat-i-Madina be established.

It is very important for us to understand why our politicians and planners have never wanted to provide space for the informal sector or upgrade it and why they have always chosen instead to demolish it and that too brutally. Is it megalomania or paranoia? Or is it that they cannot understand the larger socioeconomic context of the city? Or maybe it is a strong anti-poor bias deeply embedded in our social consciousness.

Whatever the reason, it is suggested that in the future before removing or demolishing any significantly large economic enterprises, an alternative plan of accommodating them in nearby available spaces be made in a manner that does not inconvenience pedestrian and vehicular traffic and does not create conditions for physical and social degradation.

If this can be done in other cities of the world, there is no reason why it cannot be done in Pakistan especially since there are academic institutions in this city who have the knowledge and expertise for negotiating such a settlement and linking it to larger heritage concerns.

Given the fact that the courts in Pakistan determine policy to a great extent today, it is humbly requested of their lordships to please turn their attention towards these very important right to livelihood and urban planning issues so that a more equitable and humane city can be built.

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Saddar massacre

Arif Hasan November 19, 2018

ON the orders of the Supreme Court, over 1,400 shops, including leased ones, have been demolished in Karachi's Saddar area. Over 4,000 hawkers have also been removed. Many of these shopkeepers and hawkers had been here for 50 years or more, and running businesses that their fathers had established.

The support system to these services (chowkidars, jamadars, manufacturing of items that are sold, transport, etc) is more than twice as large as the businesses themselves. So one can easily say that over 10,000 families lost their livelihoods in a two- to three-day period.

Agreed, footpaths and roads should not be encroached upon, obstructing pedestrian or vehicular movement. But if the markets and hawkers had to be removed, alternative plans for their relocation in or outside Saddar should have been prepared and

implemented before removing them. The offer of compensation after evictions, given past experience, is at best a bad joke.

The Saddar demolition is not only inhumane it is also shameless because of its scale, the cruel manner of its implementation and because it has taken place in a period of unbearable recession and inflation for the marginalised of this country. It has proved once again that Pakistan's establishment, professionals and its political parties are simply anti-poor.

The demolition in Karachi's Saddar area is inhumane and shameless.

One of the reasons given for the demolitions is the protection of heritage. But heritage is not simply a dead colonial stone building. It is a living thing, enjoyment and a form of participation for people from all walks of life, an expression of our diversity, which planners and politicians, if they have consciousness and sensitivity, can integrate into their plans as part of a larger city culture.

As such, the bird, fruit and tea markets in Saddar are heritage by any definition, and so are the area's newspaper hawkers' kiosks which, along with the markets, were established more than 50 years ago. They were the product of their times and an important part of Karachi's post-Partition history. Karachiites of all classes and many generations have shopped here, except for perhaps the younger generation of the city's district south.

With this demolition, many questions arise. What will happen to the second-hand weekend book market at Regal Chowk, which has been around for more than 40 years and which is visited by customers, mainly the young, from all over a culture-starved city? Will it be possible to hold weekend and Ramazan cricket matches? And what will become of the scores of Sunday markets on the streets of Saddar and on Bunder Road?

There is strong interdependence between hawkers and poor commuters. Will that be maintained under the new arrangements? If not, they will both be impoverished. With all the palmists evicted from Saddar, where will people go to have their fortunes read, or listen to the music of their choice while waiting for a bus? To insensitive politicians and planners, these may be frivolous issues, but catering to them is what 'equitable' planning is all about.

What Saddar needed was a rehabilitation plan whereby the markets could have been relocated within the area, where they belong. And the hawkers, in a disciplined manner, could have been placed at bus stops and on semi-pedestrianised streets in Saddar. The holding of hawkers' markets should have been discussed with the hawkers, for no one understands better than them the issues involved. In the process, a multi-class public space, which Karachi desperately requires, would have been created. Saddar's populist culture and history could have been preserved and, if sensitively designed, it would also have been aesthetically pleasing.

But that is not the objective of the demolition. The objective is to rob high-value space from where the poor are located and use it for the benefit of the rich and the speculators who serve them. It is to replace hawkers and indigenous markets with malls and high-end retail outlets. That they can coexist with hawkers and Saddam's history is beyond the comprehension of a paranoid elite and enemies of a multi-class city. There is also a possibility that Empress Market itself may lose its historical function and be turned into a museum or a high-end dining facility.

This process of gentrification of which the Saddam evictions are a part is dividing the city as never before and pushing the working classes towards religious extremism. The signs are already there.

As a Karachiite, I feel ashamed at what has happened. I do not think that we can talk anymore, without embarrassment, about equity, culture, the city's history, poverty alleviation or professional and academic values. And as for those who justify this shameful destruction on legal grounds, they must understand that apartheid was legal and that the demolition of Palestinian homes is also legal under Israeli law because they, like the Empress Market evictees, do not possess ownership papers.

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Pakistan Quarters

Arif Hasan October 28, 2018

JAMSHED Quarters, Martin East, Martin West, and Jahangir Quarters are all part of Karachi's Pakistan Quarters that were built on state land for government servants at the time of Partition. They are located on the main corridors of movement, and are easily accessible from the central business district. With the building of the Green Line BRT in the neighbourhood, the value of the land on which they are built has increased substantially.

After the 1960s, the quarters were abandoned by government agencies and left to evolve incrementally on the basis of the needs of residents. The vast majority of the original allottees have passed away, but there are still a few pensioners. The quarters are now occupied by the children, grandchildren — and in some cases, the great grandchildren of the original allottees — and the houses have been subdivided and extended to accommodate the increase in population.

Many households have rented out accommodation as well. The area contains sports clubs, religious societies, community welfare organisations, schools, mosques and imambargahs, and considerable economic activity — everything that creates cohesive communities. These have developed over the last 70 years.

Here's an opportunity for the PM's housing programme.

The residents of the quarters are now being asked to vacate, without any compensation or alternative accommodation, the houses that have become home to them and neighbourhoods where the majority of them had been born and grown up. They are being punished for the state's negligence and corruption, and according to some, for the greed of developers who are eyeing this land. In the process, the existing housing stock in Karachi is being reduced, according to official figures, by about 8,000 units and their residents are being made homeless.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER AD

Taken from satellite imagery, the area of the quarters mentioned is 335 acres and the density by observation and satellite images is about 200 persons per acre. This means a population of 90,000 or 13,000 households.

In an ideal world, the residents would have stayed and paid for and managed the incremental upgrading of their settlement. But we live in a market economy where land use is determined by land value and not by environmental and sociological considerations.

However, the situation offers an opportunity for the prime ministers housing programme. The area can be redeveloped as low-rise apartments and/or houses of ground plus two floors to a density of 800 persons per acre. This will give us 40,000 housing units, an addition of 27,000 units to the existing stock. The existing population can be accommodated in low-cost units and the additional 27,000 units can be developed as middle-income housing and commercial facilities.

The residents should be required to pay the actual cost for their new homes in easy instalments over a 15-year period. To discourage speculation, no sale or transfer of the homes should be permitted for 15 years and in addition, to curtail speculation, community ownership of clusters of housing units should also be considered. Renters should be accommodated for they also need to be house owners. There can be many options for them but these can only be determined after proper surveys have been carried out. The entire project can easily be funded by commercial development along the main corridors.

If the design is sensitively done, there is enough space so that development can take place in a manner that no more than five per cent of the population will have to move out while their homes are under construction. The rest will move directly from their present to their new homes. This will overcome one of the major problems that redevelopment projects face and which causes immense hardships while people wait in rented accommodation or in relatives' homes, sometimes for years, till the construction on their new homes is completed. In the process, most end up heavily in debt.

The best way to manage this redevelopment is to establish a research, design and construction company as a public-private enterprise. Research would be in

understanding the community structures and their preferences and the existing social infrastructure so that planning and redevelopment can take place with the community's involvement in design and supervision of construction.

The company should have a board consisting of a representative from the community, respected civil society citizens and relevant persons from academia. In addition, there should be a paid executive committee consisting of an area representative and independent professionals who see to it that the concerns of the board are addressed by the executive.

This concept may or may not be adopted, but hopefully we will not see violent evictions in the city again for 'illegal' settlements that are the result of the state's failure to provide housing options to low-income groups. And surely, creating homelessness is not a part of the prime minister's five million housing programme.

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Icon remembered

DR Akhtar Hameed Khan, the iconic South Asian social scientist, died in the US on Oct 8, 1999. His body was brought to Karachi and buried in the compound of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), one of the many institutions that he created in his long and tumultuous career. Akhtar Hameed Khan is also the author of the Comilla Cooperatives, set up in East Pakistan in the 1960s, whose rural development model has and is being replicated in both First and Third World countries.

Even today, it is taught at the best of universities in rural development and sociology related disciplines. Much of the academic material related to these subjects was either developed by Doctor Sahib himself or is based on his theoretical and practice related framework. The AKRSP and the RSPN models in Pakistan, developed and nurtured by his distinguished colleague and student Shoaib Sultan Khan, are also based on concepts developed by him.

His last project was the OPP in Karachi, a city that perplexed him in the beginning but which he subsequently learnt to understand better than anyone I know.

Through the OPP, which was established in 1980 and is his only urban undertaking, he tried to overcome fiscal, social and technical problems that the state faces in upgrading and regularising katchi abadis and, in the process, reducing poverty. When he asked me to join him in 1981, he said that his objective would only be achieved if the OPP became a research and extension organisation not only for local government in Karachi but also as a teacher to other local governments. Such a relationship was

never formalised, but the OPP has acted and continues to act as a research and extension organisation for many urban sanitation, water supply and land related issues in Karachi and in other cities of Pakistan.

Akhtar Hameed Khan's real legacy lies in a structure of thinking.

The OPP's documentation of katchi abadis and the natural drainage system of the city which began in 1981 was developed to scientific perfection by its former director Parveen Rehman. This documentation is the basis on which the S-3 sanitation project for Karachi has been developed and on which a realistic understanding of the land issue and the relationships between its different actors can be established. This understanding and the OPP's secure housing programme is responsible for providing affordable land to poor communities, which would otherwise have been grabbed by developers for middle and elite housing. It is believed, with considerable logic, that this programme was the reason for which Parveen was murdered.

Akhtar Hameed Khan's real legacy does not lie in his projects, but in a structure of thinking which is often unknowingly followed by hundreds of his disciples who are replicating the OPP on their own. He believed that we live in times of major physical and social dislocation due to which old forms of collective action no longer exist and that community organisations are the only means to fill this gap. He worked all his life for the creation of such organisations with a single mindedness of purpose. He believed that if communities could organise around a single issue, raise or access money, decide on how to spend it, and are supported by technical and managerial skills, they become empowered and this changes their relationship with government agencies and subsequently leads them to do other things for the benefit of their community.

To urban development theory, he has gifted the component sharing model where communities finance and build their neighbourhood's physical and social infrastructure while the state develops the off-site infrastructure. More than three million people in Pakistan have benefited from this model.

After Parveen Rehman's death in 2013, the OPP passed through difficult times. The leadership of the project was continually receiving death threats, asking it to withdraw the cases it had filed seeking justice for Parveen, and visitors were afraid to visit the OPP offices.

However, the OPP has recovered from the difficult times that it passed through. This is thanks not only to the courage of its leadership but also that of its lawyer and the strong support it received from CSOs, media, judiciary, and from certain individuals in the establishment.

Today, its links with both government and NGO-promoted projects and with Pakistan's academia are as strong as ever. The urban development model of Akhtar Hameed Khan has proved that it can deliver affordable and sustainable infrastructure

which does not require large foreign loans, something he had become extremely critical of.

Apart from the model, without the intense interaction, and its documentation, that the OPP process has generated between government, development practitioners, professionals, academia and communities, the country (and especially its poor) would have been much poorer. And behind all this lies Akhtar Hameed Khan's lifelong search for truth.

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City running dry

Arif Hasan September 25, 2018

THERE are neighbourhoods in Karachi that receive water for one or two hours every 36 days; there are those who have not received water for the past six months or more; and there are those where pipelines have been laid but water has never come.

In these conditions, people have to fend for themselves. The well-off make independent bores to a depth of 30 metres or more at a cost of Rs200,000 to get brackish water. Those who cannot afford to do this pool money to develop a collective bore. Those who cannot afford to participate in this process purchase tankers collectively. In all cases, portable water is mixed with brackish water to increase the volume.

Meanwhile, the private sector has stepped in to provide relief. Entrepreneurs have taken over the abandoned filtration plants that were set up (one in every union council by the city government). They operate these plants 'illegally', in connivance with the police and 'officials'. There are long lines at these plants where water is sold at Rs1 per litre. Water vendors also pick up water from here on Suzukis and sell it at a cost of Rs2 per litre at the household door. Entrepreneurs have also put up osmosis plants where water is sold at Rs3 to Rs4 per litre.

Around 40pc to 50pc of Karachi's water is lost through leakages.

The poorest can't make use of any of these options and wait for KMC tankers to provide them with water. These tankers function erratically, and so people, mainly women and children, wait in long lines, sometimes for an entire night to fill their cans and utensils.

Surveys show that the water situation stops children from going to school, women from working, and men from being punctual at their jobs. The situation is also

responsible for domestic violence, neighbourhood quarrels, and abusive language against the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and KMC staff, who along with the informal private sector are the main financial beneficiaries, through bribes and coercion, of a system that informally provides relief to a thirsty public.

Politicians constantly remind the people of Karachi that their water problems will be solved when the K4 water scheme which is supposed to bring additional water to the city will become operative. However, it will take three to four years before the project can be commissioned. And even when commissioned it will not solve Karachi's water problems in the absence of an efficient and empowered KWSB. This is because Karachi's water-related infrastructure needs repair, replacement, and maintenance, especially since more than 40 per cent of the city's pipes are 50-70 years old.

As a result, 40pc to 50pc of Karachi's water is lost through leakages. Most of the pumps are old and energy inefficient, and require heavy maintenance. The diesel pumps which are to function during load-shedding often do so erratically, and in many cases do not have any diesel available, for whatever reason.

Water is also tapped illegally in a big way and lines are often laid in the sewage-carrying nullahs. Parallel lines, depriving the system of water, are also laid for political reasons, and are not documented. On the outer fringe of the city, councillors and KWSB staff are continuously extorting money from people promising water supply which never materialises. A bulk metering system was installed at an enormous cost but it no longer functions, making a rational water-rationing system impossible.

In all this, line men are kings. They determine who gets water and who does not, and they arrange for illegal connections and extensions. Only they know the location of pipes, thousands of the smaller leakage points and the amount and process through which people are willing to pay for the service.

Given this situation, it is necessary that the system be documented, a human resource audit carried out, and its recommendations implemented. This can only be done effectively with the involvement of the line man and mid-level KWSB staff. In addition, the KWSB requires a culture of continuous learning, training, and documentation. It also requires being accountable to the people through presenting them with its plans and their costs, and incorporating their concerns.

It is assumed that accountability can be achieved through a board of respectable citizens. However, the board has proved to be an incompetent entity composed of competent people. What the KWSB requires is a paid executive committee drawn from civil society that advises the KWSB executive in carrying out the agenda outlined above. It is a difficult task that has to be done.

As for sustainability, the KWSB will require a large subsidy for the foreseeable future. But over a 10-year period, with consultative reforms, sustainability can be achieved. Mega projects funded by international funds have not worked in the past and will not

work in the future without mega management. We have learnt this at an enormous expense. We must not make the same mistakes again.

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Climate concerns

Arif Hasan August 31, 2018

THE government of Pakistan is taking climate change seriously, and so are other research and development organisations. A climate change ministry has been set up at the federal level along with a climate change national authority. In addition, a multi-sectoral national network on climate change has been established. It consists of a dozen scientific and research organisations, civil society groups and government departments.

The function of the network is to develop information exchange, hold forums for raising awareness (especially in the media) and dissemination of research material. In addition, there is the Pakistan Disaster Management Authority to deal with the many inevitable climate change-related disasters.

However, to deal with and prevent such disasters you also need effective line departments of which those of irrigation, local government, forest and roads are perhaps the most important. The 2010 floods in Sindh showed us that flooding was also manmade. Canals, barrages and headworks had not been de-silted, preventing the flow of water. Flood protection and canal embankments had not been maintained, and in many cases, the trees on them had been cut illegally and sold.

The drainage and water systems in Sindh flow north to south. Many new roads cut across them. While bridges have been built on the larger channels, roads usually block many of the smaller drainage channels making the disposal of water almost impossible. Between the mid '80s and 2010, the floodplains of the rivers were occupied. These floodplains have been clearly demarcated and no construction of any permanent nature is permitted on them under the law. However entire settlements, complete with social and physical infrastructure, have been built on them over the years, often with the help of government agencies.

There's an urgent need to improve line departments.

Another aspect that surfaced during the floods was the role of local government and community organisations. Where local government and line departments were better organised and community organisations existed, the management of prevention, relief and rehabilitation was organised more successfully than in areas where such linkages and groups did not exist.

All this points to the urgent need for improving the functioning of line departments; developing a third tier of local government and supporting it with technical advice and managerial guidance, very much along the lines proposed by the PTI. If this is done effectively, it will lead to the creation of empowered local communities and prevent powerful landlords from breaching canal and flood protection embankments to protect their lands, as, it is claimed, happened in 2010.

One of the major climate change-related concerns is the growing water shortage in Pakistan which experts feel is already at crisis level. This has led to the reopening of the Kalabagh dam issue and renewed pressure for the building of the Bhasha dam which might take more than 20 years to become operative. Some 92 to 95 per cent of all water in Pakistan is spent on agriculture. We practise flood irrigation where water is flooded into the fields. These fields are for the most part uneven as a result of which a very large volume of water is required to flood them.

An important government land-levelling programme already exists, to use laser levellers attached to tractors to level agricultural land. The programme has been initiated both in Punjab and Sindh, and farmers who have levelled their field claim that, as a result, water usage has dropped by 20pc to 25pc. However, small landlords claim that the machines have disappeared and are now in the possession of powerful landowners. An added advantage of the levelling process is that fields can be made to slope towards the drainage systems thus not only saving water but improving drainage too.

Another government programme operative in both Sindh and Punjab is the lining of canals with brick and concrete to prevent seepage and hence loss of water. This again would save another 15pc to 20pc of water usage. Meanwhile, if farmers lined their water courses, additional saving of water could be achieved. Serious research and its extension are required on developing materials that can be used for quick and easy lining of water courses.

The laser levelling and canal lining programmes have not really taken off. It is important that they be expanded with immediate effect because for the time being they are a quicker and cheaper, and in the long run, a more effective means of tackling the water crisis than waiting for the completion of large dams.

Scientific research and the creation of new institutions around it is important. However, it cannot do much without local level O&M institutions which have long institutional memories. Making these institutions efficient and powerful should be a priority for the climate change agenda.

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THE CRISIS OF URBAN HOUSING

Arif Hasan | Hamza Arif August 19, 2018



Illustration by Soonhal Khan

Pakistan is the seventh-most populous country in the world. According to the 2017 census, its population is 207.7 million and has grown at the rate of 2.4 percent per year in the intercensal period. Its urban population, on the other hand, has grown at the rate of 2.7 percent per year during the same period and is estimated at 75.5 million.

The urban housing demand in Pakistan is 350,000 units per year. Of this, 62 percent is for lower income groups, 25 percent for lower-middle income groups, and 10 percent for higher and upper middle income groups. The formal supply per year is 150,000 units. The unmet demand is taken care of by the creation of informal settlements of two kinds: occupation and subdivision of government land (katchi abadis or squatter settlements) and, second, by the informal subdivision of agricultural land (ISALs) on the periphery of the urban settlements. In the last two decades, however, the demand is increasingly being met by densification of existing low and lower-middle income settlements.

Rural-to-urban migration is taking place at an unprecedented scale because of the demise of the village self-sufficiency model — a product of caste structures and a barter economy, both of which are in their last throes.

There is an 8.5 million unit backlog of housing in Pakistan that is growing by 200,000 units every year. Successive governments have made grand promises about providing housing but they all fail to understand the scale of the crisis or its dynamics...

At present, the state has no plans for dealing with the migrant influx nor is it in a position to provide them with homes. What compounds matters is that these internal migrants' options of living in katchi abadis or ISALs in the absence of the availability of land near the ever-expanding urban centres are becoming difficult due to an increase in cost, distances and the inconvenience related to commuting.

To respond to these problems, low-rise and low-income settlements near places of work or town centres are informally becoming high-rise, with all the physical and social problems of unplanned densification. The units are also becoming increasingly smaller so as to become more affordable. Meanwhile, for the first time in Pakistan's urban areas (especially in Karachi and the larger cities), we are seeing people sleeping under bridges, roundabouts, pavements and open-air 'hotels.'

The politician-developer nexus is producing gated communities for the elite and middle classes, segregating cities further into rich and poor areas, and thus, increasing the possibility of urban conflict. The process of gentrification is taking away space from the public and transferring it to the rich and the middle-class. This is being facilitated by large loans from the international financial institutions leading to massive speculation which needs to be contained. This speculation has put housing beyond the reach of even middle-class young couples.

The provincial governments are promoting regularisation and improvement of informal settlements. However, in Karachi, through new legislation, they are also promoting their demolition and conversion into medium- and high-rise apartments through developers. They feel that this will integrate them into the city.

The process of gentrification is taking away space from the public and transferring it to the rich and the middle-class. This is being facilitated by large loans from the international financial institutions leading to massive speculation which needs to be contained.

Finances for such large interventions are not available, and even if they were, they are not feasible for social and political reasons. What is required is house improvement

loans for the katchi abadis and technical advice on how to use those loans effectively. In addition, design and technical advice is also desperately required for the actors in the informal densification process. This advice can be given to individual families, neighbourhoods, or to the informal developers and contractors working in the low-income settlements.

The credit facilities available through banks and the House Building Finance Company (HBFC) are not sufficient to cater to even a fraction of the demand. Without a reform in these institutions and their means of raising and disbursing funds, the situation will not improve. A very important element that needs to be introduced if the housing demand is to be better met is the creation of credit for the purchase of land for individuals as well as small cooperatives. To freeze the shelter shortage to present levels (an 8.5 million unit backlog growing at the rate of 200,000 units a year), an outlay of 100 billion rupees would be required annually for the next 10 years, whereas the 2017-18 national budget has allocated a mere 2.329 billion rupees for housing.

The state is transferring its responsibilities to companies. A number of municipal functions have already been transferred, including the collection of revenue in some cases, which is no longer the responsibility of the state. If this policy is to be pursued, there has to be a very strong regulatory framework which protects the poorer sections of the population.

It has been seen in the case of electricity that the poorer sections cannot afford to pay their energy bills since the costs are exorbitant. They also have to bear the brunt of power load-shedding as opposed to higher-income settlements. In the case of solid waste management, the katchi abadis have been ignored. Unlike 15 years ago, a family now has to pay to enter a park for recreation purposes and has to pay a parking fee to park their motorbike or car. According to the Urban Resource Centre's (URC) research, low-income visitors to the more expensive parks have decreased.

A heavy toll tax has been placed on motorways and national highways, making travel very expensive in one's own vehicle.



With great migration to Lahore from other parts of the country, the city's low-income settlements have swelled in size. This has also created a crisis of resources | Junaid Ahmed

Unlike before, the state ignores protests from communities who increasingly use NGOs or political parties as go-betweens for negotiation purposes. The resulting culture has, apart from creating dependence, created a distance between government agencies and communities. The state does, however, listen to community projects which it showcases and which are increasingly becoming a drop in the ocean of capitalist domination.

The expansion of urban centres, in the absence of land use planning or its implementation, is swallowing up valuable agricultural land and damaging the ecology of the regions in which the cities are located, depleting water resources and polluting water bodies. It is also destroying geological formations, forests and natural drainage systems. This is causing flooding and bringing about a rise in temperature, creating heat island effects in the urban areas especially in the high-density high-rise informal settlements. If unchecked, these environmental hazards will increase. There is a need for new building design and technology which is affordable for low income groups (especially with relation to insulation of external walls and roofs of buildings and planting trees) to deal with the effects of climate change. Urbanisation on the

periphery is also destroying traditional cultural precincts, intangible cultures and archaeological sites. With the neoliberal regime and its emphasis on direct foreign investment, master and strategic planning has been replaced by unrelated projects for which funds are available in the international market and with international financial institutions.

The URC in Karachi proposes no settlement should have a density of less than 400 persons per hectare and no person who has taken a loan for house building once should be given another loan.

If we accept that this will remain so for the future, then we need to develop a criterion for judging projects. The URC in Karachi has developed the following criteria: that projects shall not destroy the ecology of the region in which the city is located; that the project should serve the interests of the lower and lower-middle income groups who form the vast majority of the populations of urban centres as priority; that land use should be decided on the basis of social and environmental considerations and not on the basis of land value alone; and that projects should not damage the tangible and intangible culture of the communities that live in urban areas.

The most important issue, however, is related to land, its use and conservation.

The URC in Karachi is of the opinion that Pakistan requires a serious urban land reform. Such a policy would involve a heavy non-utilisation fee on land and property and an urban land ceiling act whereby no one person can own more than 500 square meters of urban land. Similarly, no settlement should have a density of less than 400 persons per hectare and no person who has taken a loan for house building once should be given another loan. In the presence of a powerful developers' lobby and elite interests, it is difficult to implement such an urban land reform. But given the changing political scenario in Pakistan and the activism of the higher courts, such a conversation can take place.

The above recommendations will need time and effort. A more important reality is that for the foreseeable future, housing will increasingly be provided by the formal and informal private sector. Formal because increasingly funds are being made available for it, and informal because there is a demand for it and there are huge profits that can be made from it with very little investment. To deal with this situation there is need for some sort of intervention to make the formal and informal housing product better designed and more affordable. It is also necessary to develop ways to open land for informal development through the provision of appropriately located road infrastructure and by enacting legislation through which the state can acquire vacant land for low-income housing.

Academic institutions put a great deal of emphasis on community housing projects. This is important. However, it is equally important that they understand the present formal and informal capitalist mode of housing production, its potential and its

constraints, so that they can make relevant interventions in the process and come to conclusions, especially on density, space per person, energy and their relationship with architecture and planning, for different Pakistani contexts.

More recently, the courts have taken cognisance of the lack of housing opportunities for low-income groups, demolition of informal settlements and corruption in the real estate sector. They have also taken notice of problems in water supply and sanitation services and established a special tribunal to review them. This has generated hope but there is also considerable cynicism regarding the ability of the courts to bring about meaningful change.

There are many peasant and indigenous peoples' movements against urbanisation of agricultural land, water resources, cultural sites and orchards. These are environmental issues and need the support of academic institutions and civil society. If these movements are strengthened, then the political establishment and the courts of law, especially the environmental tribunals, will take note of it. Many related issues are already before the Supreme Court.

Arif Hasan is a town planner and architect Hamza Arif is a researcher in sociology

HOW A KATCHI ABADI GETS BUILT

Yakoobabad is an informal settlement in Orangi Town, Karachi. Before 1977, it was vacant land belonging to the Board of Revenue (BoR), who had given it on a one-year renewable lease as pasture land to an elder of the Rind tribe (hereby referred to as X).

In February 1977, Y, who is a well-known informal developer, moved on to X's land with 100 destitute families whom he provided with bamboo posts and mats for constructing shacks. X resisted the occupation and there was violence. The local police station intervened and arbitrated. It was decided that the Rind tribe would receive 500 rupees for every plot that was developed by Y. The plots given to the 100 destitute people were exempt from payment and Y also did not receive any payments for them.

It was also agreed that Y would pay 200 rupees per plot to Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) officials from the sale proceeds and then the police would recover 200 rupees or more from the owners when they converted their shacks into concrete construction.

After this, Y laid out Yakoobabad on a grid-iron plan, levelled the roads by informally hiring tractors and a bulldozer from the KMC staff, and left an open space for a mosque and school. Commercial plots were set aside for speculation along the main roads, some of which he retained for himself — his return on his efforts so to speak. Negotiations were entered into with representatives and touts of government officials who could be of help in the future development of the settlement and 30 percent of all plots were set aside for these officials for speculation purposes. Whoever purchased a

plot — except the KMC and government officials — had to construct a house in a month's time and move in failing which he/she would lose their plot and the money they had paid for it. Thus, speculation was prevented and the settlement expanded fast.

Y engaged donkey-cart owners to supply water (illegally acquired from the KMC water mains in Orangi) which was paid for by the residents. A few weeks after the first shack was built, a contractor, Nawab Ali, established a building component manufacturing yard in the settlement and started supplying concrete blocks and tin roof sheets along with technical advice and small credit for housebuilding.

By the year 2000, 92 percent of the families had built their homes with support from Nawab Ali and 62 percent had taken credit from him. Another entrepreneur, Faiz Muhammad Baloch, moved into the area and set up a generator and started supplying electricity to the residents at the rate of 30 rupees (payable in advance) per month for a 40-watt bulb.

Y formed a welfare association of all the households who purchased a plot from him and got it registered. Through the association, he has lobbied for infrastructure and improvements with the help of officials and politicians who held plots in Yakoobabad. As a result, by 2000, Yakoobabad had become a proper settlement with electricity, telephone, water and gas connections. Also, by 2000, the area had 10 primary schools, two secondary schools, six clinics and paved roads including 401 micro-enterprise units providing employment to over 2,600 persons in the settlement.

THE INFORMAL DEVELOPERS OF FAISALABAD

Chaudhary Ghulam Rasool Cheema is an informal developer in Faisalabad. His family came from Gurdaspur in India and lived near a village on Jaranwala Road. He has been a member of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and later of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Cheema's first job was as a Water and Power Development Agency (Wapda) storekeeper. But he entered the real estate business because his meagre salary was not enough to support his big family. To launch his business, he sold a tract of land that he had in his village which is situated about 20 kilometres away from Faisalabad. He chose to work along the Jaranwala Road because the people of the area knew him because of his political activities.

He planned his first housing scheme in 1990 but work on it started in 1994. Up till now, he has completed five small schemes, each with 70 to 150 plots. The size of the plots is usually five marla [1,361.25 square feet] and the measurements are 30 feet front by 45 feet depth. The streets are 20 to 28 feet wide. He raises the streets two feet above the road level. If the streets are not raised then people do not buy the plots because they are afraid that the settlement will get flooded.

The earth-work for the streets is done by the Afghanis who have trolleys and jack machines for this job. Local people do not do this work since they have no experience in it and no machinery either. For setting up his business, he employs two persons as office staff. However, he hires a number of “field workers”. These field workers contact prospective clients, prepare layout on site and supervise earth filling.

The most important criterion for the purchase of land for the scheme is the availability of transport, which means access to the main inter-city road, and electricity.

When a project begins, he usually has about 20 field workers who provide forms to the clients at 10 rupees each. If they sell 10 forms in a day, they earn 100 rupees. For the advertisement of a scheme, a pamphlet is prepared and is given in newspapers inviting young middle-school or matric-educated boys to come and work as field staff. These boys go to the areas which are congested or where people do not have their own houses. They brief them about the scheme and try to convince them that they should buy a plot.

Most of the boys who respond to Cheema’s ad already have experience in this field. They are given a further incentive of a commission for each plot that they sell. The planning of the scheme is done by Cheema himself, after which the sketches are provided to a draftsman for further development. The draftsmen who work for him are Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) employees and are hired by him on a per-job basis. The most important criterion for the purchase of land for the scheme is the availability of transport, which means access to the main inter-city road, and electricity. If the land is more than two kilometres from the inter-city road, the scheme does not sell.

There is no attempt to develop corner plots or commercial plots. It is simply a five-marla subdivision. In the smaller schemes, Cheema provides no services such as water, sewerage or electricity. People acquire water by hand pumps, which they later convert to piston pumps, sewerage through self-help (it invariably disposes into a canal) and electricity through lobbying with Wapda.

The developer does not keep any plot for speculation but 30 percent of the plots normally remain unsold for a period of three to four years. There is a written agreement with the person who purchases the plot and proper records of receipts of instalments paid are maintained. People invariably pay regularly by coming themselves to Cheema’s office. For the transfer of land from the landowner to Cheema, both parties visit the divisional headquarters where land records are kept. Here they pay the legal as well as “other” charges. In the revenue department ledger, land remains as agricultural and streets and roads are recorded as amenities. The cost of transfer of land to the developer is borne by the purchaser.

When Cheema started his business in 1990, he had to look out for people who wanted to sell their agricultural land. Now that people know that he is in business and has an

office where plans are displayed, landowners come to him themselves. Wherever he develops a scheme, he puts up a board on which the name, plan and details of the scheme are given.

Cheema says that the success of these schemes lies in the fact that the developers have understood what a poor man can afford to pay and they act accordingly. He also says that if the government could support this activity and provide the developers some loan, then in two to three years' time there would be no one left in Faisalabad who was homeless.

UNFULFILLED PROMISES: INCOMPLETE HOUSING SCHEMES



Squatter settlements seem to be the only accessible and affordable housing option for the working classes | WhiteStar

The PPP had announced a project under which the poor would be provided with affordable homes and plots in all cities of Sindh, including Karachi. This project, to be commenced under the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Housing Cell, was to cater to around 15,000 underprivileged families. The former chief minister, Qaim Ali Shah, had approved the allocation of 350 acres of land in different parts of Karachi for this project.

Land, however, was never transferred to the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Housing Cell. The land utilisation department under the new administration of the housing cell issued challans worth 170 million rupees to transfer ownership of the land to the housing cell in June 2016. The release of the payment was delayed and so was the transfer of the land.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif announced Apna Ghar Housing Scheme in 2013. The project has yielded nothing so far except for files ... Of the 350 million rupees asked for by

the housing ministry, the government allocated only 10 million rupees.

Because of the delays, the land near Surjani Town has already been illegally occupied and there are apprehensions that the rest of the land will also be encroached upon.

In Hyderabad, a project was planned to provide 300 families with plots at low rates on a total of 19 acres of land. Over 4.6 million rupees were to be provided to the land utilisation department so that it could obtain ownership of the land; this is yet to happen. Twelve acres of land have been allocated for 200 families in Mirpurkhas while five acres of land has been allocated for 120 families in Nawabshah.

No work has commenced on either of these projects. Instead, the projects suffered from reports of financial irregularities, a lack of administration, and a serious questioning of the quality of construction by the housing cell. All of this resulted in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) arresting the former chairperson and technical director of the cell, Manzar Abbas, along with several other employees in 2015.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif announced Apna Ghar Housing Scheme in 2013. The project has yielded nothing so far except for files. The manifesto of the PML-N promised to provide at least 1,000 clusters of 500 houses each. The provinces were to provide the land free of charge and the construction costs would be taken up by the federal government. This project was to be completed within the span of five years. Of the 350 million rupees asked for by the housing ministry, the government allocated only 10 million rupees. The project also does not have a permanent chief executive or related staff to run the programme and the project continued to be on the least priority agenda for the government throughout its term.

Imran Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has announced that in the next five years his government will provide five million new housing units. However, his government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the fourth provincial government to have failed to complete the Regi Model Town launched 26 years ago.

Regi Model Town has 26,000 plots and is the oldest and largest housing project in the province. Out of five zones, Zone 3 and 4 of Regi Model Town have 10,000 housing units in them, which the PTI government failed to develop. The Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) has also been accused of spending the funds for Regi Model Town on other projects. Only 600 houses have been built and a few dozen are under construction, but there are no facilities available to residents except for electricity and water. The residents were promised gas connections three years ago which are also yet to be provided.

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Houses or housing?

Arif Hasan July 15, 2018

THE seriousness of the housing issue in Pakistan can be judged from the fact that conservative estimates put the housing backlog at nine million units which is increasing at 300,000 units annually because of unmet demand. Sixty-two per cent of this demand is for lower-income groups. Yet political party manifestos hardly talk about this.

Before its last tenure, the PPP promised to build 15,650 housing units. The number is so small that it would have made no difference to the housing crisis. However, none of these units were constructed.

The PML-N did better. In their 2013 manifesto, they promised to build 1,000 clusters of 500 houses each. This would have made some difference even if it would not have come any nearer to resolving the crisis. But again, not a single house was constructed.

Imran Khan has outdone both the PPP and the PML-N. He is promising to build 5m houses. This will cost a minimum of five thousand billion rupees which is one-seventh of our GDP and will require more than 120,000 acres of land. We do not know how he will manage this but even if he succeeds in building 20pc of what he is promising, it will be a great achievement.

Housing is not about building units. It is a far more complex affair.

All political parties talk about building a certain number of housing units. However, housing is not about building units. It is a far more complex affair. First you need a sustainable financial arrangement with funds that revolve and multiply through the process of giving affordable house-building loans. Affordability for low-income groups can be achieved through direct subsidies or through cross subsidies from higher income housing.

The national budget 2017-2018 has allotted Rs2.3bn for the housing sector. This is a drop in the ocean as, according to some sources, Rs100bn per annum for the next 10 years is required to freeze shelter shortage at the present level. In addition, location is important as jobs and social infrastructure have to be easily accessible to homes. Many housing schemes built by both previous governments lie empty to this day, simply because the location was wrong.

A sustainable housing policy would also require a control on speculation, and so it would need considerable political support to operate in a ruthless 'mafia'-dominated land and real-estate market. It would also mean determining what constitutes a home in terms of minimum space per individual and the typology of housing for different

locations and groups. In short, housing would have to be a part of a larger process of planned urbanisation and rural development.

Traditionally, low-income groups have acquired their homes in katchi abadis or through the informal subdivision of agricultural land on the city fringe where costs are low. Both the processes have become difficult to access because of the rising cost of land, the increasing distance of the fringe from work areas due to the expansion of cities, and because land on the fringe is now being held for speculation and/or construction of middle-income housing. In the absence of more affordable options, low-income settlements and the centres of historic cities, which have been abandoned by the rich, are densifying heavily with all the physical, social and climate change-related problems of unplanned densification.

In Karachi, many of these settlements are now high-rise with densities of over 1,000 persons per acre. Meanwhile gated colonies are being constructed all over Pakistan for the elite on the city fringe with densities as low as 50 persons per acre. These colonies are ecological disasters as they are eating up orchards, forests, natural drainage systems, geological formations and historic sites.

The housing crisis is so huge that it cannot be resolved through conventional means. What is required is to support the densification process by developing urban design plans for those areas where it is taking place and providing technical and design advice to the builders along with short-term loan packages. It would also require containing speculation on land and built assets. For this, a heavy non-utilisation fee on land and properties would have to be imposed. To conserve land, an urban land ceiling act would also have to be enacted to limit land holdings per individual, and a minimum density determined for all housing, including elite projects. In addition, laws giving the state the power to acquire land for low-income housing at appropriate locations would be required.

In the absence of these steps, and the required institutions to implement them, it is more than possible that large-scale housing projects will either not be implemented, or will end up being victims of massive speculation, and cause further environmental damage as has happened many times before and in many countries.

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Avoidable deaths

FOR the last two years, the entire nation, led by the media, has been preoccupied with issues of corruption, offshore companies and Supreme Court verdicts. As a result, issues such as water, sanitation, education and environment no longer figure seriously

in the political discourse. But there is also another issue that does not figure, and has never figured, in any manifesto or political discussion ie avoidable deaths which are increasing in geometric proportions as Pakistan struggles with the repercussions of unplanned urbanisation.

People die when it rains. They drown or they are electrocuted. This is accepted as normal although flooding takes place at the same place and for the same causes every year. In Karachi, the cause given is encroachment by katchi abadis on the natural drainage system. Attempts are often made to remove these encroachments. However, even if they are removed, Karachi will still flood as the outfalls of the drainage system to the sea have, for the most part, been encroached upon, by elite formal-sector housing. Also, though Karachi's 50-plus large natural drains are still intact, thousands of minor drains that fed into them have disappeared, and in the absence of a planned drainage system, the roads and neighbourhoods have been turned into drains. The process of eliminating the sub-drains continues unabated as the Sindh Building Control Authority grants approval to plans that do not safeguard them.

Another major cause of avoidable deaths is road accidents. In Pakistan, it is estimated that some 5,500 persons die in road accidents every year. The figure for Karachi is just over 1,000 annually. Fatal accidents involving pedestrians in the city have more than doubled after the development of signal-free roads. In addition, buses carrying passengers constantly fall off mountain tracks or trucks overturn because of unchecked overloading.

In media interviews, police officials have put the blame for these accidents on unskilled drivers (60 per cent without licences), overspeeding and overtaking without indication and a general sense of fatalism in society. But there are other reasons also. The general public and drivers are more often than not unaware of traffic rules and also of safety-related precautions that need to be taken while navigating traffic. Then, planners plan for the automobile and their projects do not take into consideration the needs of pedestrians and low-income settlements.

Known urban hazards remain unaddressed.

Over the last five years, regular fires in factories and offices have been reported from all over Pakistan. Usually, a short circuit is identified as the cause of fire. This means that substandard wiring has been used or the electrical system has not been properly designed. The question that arises is why the manufacturing of substandard cables is allowed and who is responsible for the substandard designs.

Building by-laws, zoning regulations and engineering standards have appropriate fire-related laws and regulations, both for prevention and emergencies. Where fires have occurred, regulations have either not been followed or systems have not been maintained by the owners.

Except for the large cities, fire-fighting facilities do not exist. Even in the large cities they are inadequate and incapable of putting out fires quickly. Under the law, water

hydrants for filling up fire engines have to be provided at various locations in the city and/or on the factory premises. These either do not exist or do not function, with the result that the fire engines have to go back to their stations to get water while people burn to death. The facilities that do exist are inadequate and have difficulty in accessing fires beyond six storeys. This is serious because Karachi is becoming a high-rise city with more than 100 buildings of between 20 to 50 floors currently under construction.

In addition, formally and informally built buildings often collapse killing the inhabitants; a large number of people die because of firing in the air to celebrate weddings and national days; and the number of persons drowning in the sea, manholes and cesspools is large and on the increase.

With urbanisation, these trends are rapidly increasing and the public response is one of violence, leading in many cases to social anarchy. The most important aspect in dealing with these issues is the need for the promotion of a civic culture of which the introduction of appropriate curriculum at schools and colleges and sustained public awareness-raising programmes would be the major ingredients. Also, institutions of urban management must be created where they do not exist, and strengthened where they do. But the process for creation of such a culture cannot even be initiated in the absence of a recognition by political parties and policymakers that this is an important development matter and that building expensive infrastructure alone, will not overcome but aggravate it.

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Up in the air

Arif Hasan June 14, 2018

I AM 75 years old, and as far as I can remember, the civil-military establishment in Pakistan has always told us that the country is in danger. However, they never told us why we were in danger and how we could get out of it. Sometime later we were informed that the 1,400-year-old Islam was also in danger from the Western culture of obscenity and free thinking.

These were not just statements. Around them a whole world of suppression, violation of human rights, accusations of treason, retrogressive thinking and forced or self-imposed censorship were constructed. In spite of this, Pakistanis understood the nature of the state and the functions of its different institutions. There was also an accepted manner of dissent and one knew what its repercussions would be, including death by

torture in some form or the other, if one was a communist. But today the whole system is up in the air. No one knows anything.

Recent Supreme Court judgements that have an impact on politics have become controversial in the minds of the people of Pakistan, and questions are being asked such as to what extent the courts can or should intervene in matters related to the public realm. Questions are also being asked about when and how suo motu should be applied and of what use is habeas corpus when an increasing number of 'bodies' are simply not being produced and the courts can do nothing about it.

There are also numerous cases where important court judgements are not being implemented. Yet judicial activism has opened a Pandora's box of corruption, nepotism and gross misuse of privileges in public office and given the recently acquired assertiveness in society, it is not going to close.

New words and concepts have entered the political discourse.

NAB is not a new institution. However, it is only now being accused publicly of selective accountability for political purposes, and according to the press the joint investigation teams are violating their own rules and regulations to the detriment of justice. From media reports, it seems that the 'establishment' has supported violent dharnas which have resulted in huge losses to the state exchequer and in large-scale destruction of public property. Meanwhile, the dharna leaders are still not under arrest.

In the last three years, new words and concepts have entered the political discourse right down to the neighbourhood level in low-income urban settlements and rural villages. These words include 'iqama', 'NRO', 'JIT', 'money trail', 'offshore companies', 'khalai makhlooq', etc. These are subjects of intense public discussion, information, disinformation and confusion which are going to play into the coming elections.

This whole process has been educative for the people of Pakistan because the semi-opaque curtains behind which the establishment functions have been removed publicly for the first time and the nature of relations between different state institutions, previously denied, have been to a great extent been exposed to public view, raising questions which have yet to be answered.

However, there is a downside to this questioning, for it has been born out of a very disturbing political culture whose basis is arrogance, hate, abuse, lies, intolerance, intimidation and shameless opportunism which has filtered down to the level of the political worker as well.

All the major parties today stand accused of corruption, lies and manipulation of the electoral system and if the media is to be believed, there is a lot of truth in these accusations. Their only public discourse is attacking each other in derogatory terms. Democracy cannot survive in such a situation which can only be salvaged by the emergence of a young and new leadership that rejects this culture of opportunism and

sees the wisdom of negotiation and consensus without which reform and change cannot even be initiated. But where will this young leadership come from and where and how will it be groomed?

The coming five years can perhaps nurture this growth by permitting elected student unions at universities and colleges, and perhaps civil society and academia (sparing some time from their foreign-funded research and NGOs) can play a role by creating the necessary ambience for it. But this would also mean the coming together of like-minded and not-so like-minded groups (which is not easy) who are interested in discussing a future Pakistan that is not held together by dirt. Will this be possible, and how will the security establishment react to this?

For my part, for the first time in my life, I do not know if I will vote because it means voting for a culture of megalomania, paranoia, narcissism and hatred which is increasingly dividing our society and destroying the few democratic values that have survived the onslaught of military rule and political opportunism.

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Where's Empress Market?

Arif Hasan May 01, 2018

KARACHI'S pre-Partition mayors and colonial administration placed most of our beautiful institutional and iconic buildings on the axis of important roads. As a result, these buildings, before pollution obscured them from view, could be seen from a distance, making them an integral part of the cityscape.

Thus Saint Patricks Cathedral and Christ the King Monument are placed at one end of Shahrah-i-Iraq (previously Clark Street) and the high court's east facade on the other. The west facade of the High Court is on the axis of what is now Shahrah-i-Kamal Ata Turk. Similarly, the Eduljee Dinshaw dispensary lies on the axis of Raja Ghazanfar Ali Road (previously Somerset Street) and is visible all the way from its intersection with Sarwar Shaheed Road (previously Depot Road). Merewether Tower is on the axis of Napier Mole Road and there are many other examples as well

The founding fathers of Pakistan also followed the same tradition when they chose the location for the mausoleum of the Quaid. They placed it on the axis of what were then Bunder Road and Bunder Road Extension. These roads, following his burial, were renamed after him.

Iconic monuments in Karachi have been hidden from public view.

An elevated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) had been proposed on M.A Jinnah Road earlier this year. When it was pointed out by a few citizens that the elevated BRT would obscure the view of the mazar from M.A Jinnah Road, the chief minister of Sindh directed that the BRT be brought down to grade thus preserving the sanctity of the mazar, public space and saving, what is perhaps the most important monument in the city, from being hidden from public view.

Among the colonial buildings, Empress Market is undoubtedly the most important, not only for its architecture but also for the fact that various specialised markets within and around it are visited by all classes of citizens, something rare in Karachi.

In addition, it is built on the grounds where freedom fighters against colonial rule were blown up from the mouths of cannons by the British in 1857, while their supporters were hanged or deported to the Andaman Islands (known locally as kala pani) to die of starvation and disease. Many of those who were deported belonged to Chanesar Goth. A low key monument in their memory in the precincts of the market would be in order.

Empress Market lies on the axis of Mir Karam Ali Talpur Road and was visible all the way from Lucky Star, more than two kilometres away from it. However, next to it and bang in the centre of Karam Ali Talpur Road, a huge shed has been built recently to house a food street. The shed has completely hidden the view of the market building from the entire road on whose axis it had so lovingly been placed. The idea of the food street is most welcome but it could have been done easily without hiding an iconic piece of architecture (whose image is often used to represent the city) from public view.

For those who have some aesthetic sensibility, and this includes Saddar shopkeepers and transporters, what has happened to Empress Market is tragic. This and the elevated BRT fiasco on M.A. Jinnah Road, along with so many environmentally unfortunate decisions that Karachi has had to put up with, could have been avoided if the government's proposals had been shared with the citizens of Karachi.

Given the discussion here, it is important that:

- a) the structure erected in front of Empress Market be demolished and the food street be redesigned so as not to hide the market building.
- b) a firm decision be taken that in the future no construction will be carried out that hides a heritage building from public view.
- c) roads on whose axis heritage or exceptional buildings are located be developed in a manner that enhances the visibility and importance of those buildings.

d) in future, all development plans that are in their conceptual stage be exhibited at a public space with drawings and 3-D images for a period of 30 days for comments by the citizens. A committee of members from civil society, academia, professional institutions and public representatives could then jointly take decisions in the larger interests of the city and its citizens.

To begin with the government could put up for display the physical proposals, along with their images, that have been prepared for the World Bank project for which the government has negotiated an \$80 million loan. At a meeting held sometime in mid-2016 with civil society organisations, Bank representatives had promised that they would share all their plans with civil society organisations and with the residents and businesses of the project areas. Not only has there been no sharing, no contact has been established either for that purpose.

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Chaotic city area

Arif Hasan December 10, 2017

KARACHI'S central business district (CBD) is normally considered to lie between Lea Market to the north, Maulvi Tamizuddin Road to the south and between the Quaid's mazaar to the east and Merewether Tower to the west. However, over time this has expanded to the Lyari River on the north and Sharea Faisal on the south.

This area houses Karachi's financial institutions; major wholesale markets and their warehouses and workshops; solid waste recycling units; multi-storey retail bazaars (over 65 in Saddar alone); the birthplace of the Quaid; and 19th-century buildings that house the offices of community trusts; and thousands of hawkers that occupy roads and pavements.

In addition, the majority of Karachi's built heritage is located in this area. It consists of the city's oldest schools and colleges (including the two that the Quaid attended); and its most important cultural and administrative institutions and earliest civic amenities. It also contains the majority of the city's 73 Hindu temples, the oldest one being Punjmukh Hanuman Mandir, said to have been established in the 7th century. Forty-eight of the 200-plus Muslim shrines are also located here including the 10th-century shrine of Hazrat Meer Hasan Shah Ghazi in Joria Bazaar in whose neighbourhood Karachi's oldest bookshop, which was established in 1910, still

functions. And then, there is the walled city itself which houses Karachi's oldest early-19th-century imambargah and where Karachi began as a town in 1729.

Karachi's business district desperately needs a master plan.

All roads of Karachi's post-independence development lead to this expanded CBD and through them thousands of vehicles including hundreds of thousands of motorcycles make their way every day. Meanwhile, in the narrow lanes 'coolies' carry cargo on pushcarts and on their backs to the beautiful old buildings which have now been turned into warehouses. On Sundays, children play cricket on the empty streets and roadside markets emerge which cater to the needs of Karachi's low-income communities. On religious and national holidays, the neighbourhoods turn into spaces of recreation, especially in Ramazan and Diwali, or of mourning in Muharram.

This entire area is chaotic. It has massive traffic jams that last for hours. It has serious problems of parking, especially for motorbikes, which occupy almost all pavement space. Heavy transport vehicles, carrying cargo move through broken roads causing unbearable air and noise pollution. The low-income settlements in this area, which were one or two storeys high a decade ago, have transformed themselves informally into high-rises of five to 10 floors, with unplanned densities of up to 3,000 persons per hectare (1,215 per acre), creating immense social stress for the residents.

Meanwhile, thanks to the enactment of the Sindh High Density Board Act 2014, buildings of between 20 and 40 floors are under construction or their plans are with the Sindh Building Control Authority for approval. Many of these are of questionable architectural quality and are further degrading the physical environment. No one has so far calculated the economic loss of this chaos but it probably runs into billions of rupees per month.

As if these conditions were not serious enough, three bus rapid transit corridors are going to arrive at Guru Mandir and one at Preedy Street. At least two of them are going to make their journey through M.A. Jinnah Road to Merewether Tower. This will have a major impact on subsequent land use and will require complete changes in traffic movement if an increase in chaos is to be contained. In addition, there is the World Bank Neighbourhood Improvement Project and the Pakistan Chowk Initiative which are also located in this area. Many more projects are likely to be introduced as a result of the repercussions of the proposed and uncoordinated projects being built.

Karachi's CBD desperately requires a master plan, along with an institution which has teeth and political support, to develop and monitor it. All projects should be subservient to such a master plan. The major ingredients of this should be: traffic re-routing and management; development of pedestrian and commuter-friendly by-laws and zoning regulations; conservation of built heritage, an aesthetic committee to scrutinise building plans so that they are in keeping with a vision for this area; effective communication with all other departments involved in infrastructure development and management; and preservation of the hundreds of thousands of jobs that the formal and informal economy of the area generates.

Such a plan cannot be successful without the involvement of the numerous bazaar and community organisations who are constantly pushing their claims and guarding their gains. It is my view, based on years of observation and documentation, that much of this chaos can be overcome simply through the reorganisation of space and traffic management. However it has to be understood that the problems of CBD cannot be overcome by micro-level projects unless they are a part of a larger plan.

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The coal project

Arif Hasan November 21, 2017

THARPARKAR is not like the Sahara Desert. In the valleys between its sand dunes there are millions of trees (that nature has created and sustained over centuries) and rain-fed agriculture. After the rains its rangeland, which is known locally as gowcher, supports a variety of grasses on which its 6.3 million animals graze.

The area of the Tharparkar District is 19,000 square kilometres of which 9,000 has been marked for the coal project. Under the project, different companies will extract coal and turn it into energy. At present the work of Engro is the most advanced.

Land for the project and its various components has to be acquired under the Land Acquisition Act for which only formal land owners can receive compensation and not haris and landless labour. The application of the Land Acquisition Act means that the land owners and local communities lose all future claims to the land.

The extraction of coal is through 'pit mining'. Pits of over one square kilometre are being excavated to a depth of 120 metres, for that is where the coal lies. The excavated earth is being converted into mounds that can be higher than 40m.

To access the coal, water from the aquifers has to be drained out.

During excavation three water aquifers are encountered. One is the rainwater aquifer at a depth of around 50m, which is in most cases potable. Much of the population of Thar has access to it through family or communal dug wells. The second aquifer is saline and is encountered at a depth of around 120m. The third aquifer is the deep aquifer which has been created over millions of years and is normally conserved as an asset.

To access the coal, water from these aquifers has to be drained out. At present, 27 wells are operative, 24 hours of the day, to pump out 30 to 35 million cubic metres of water of the Engro site. Since the water of the potable and saline aquifers is mixed, it is no longer suitable for drinking or agriculture. As a cure, the project proposes the introduction of crops that can be cultivated using saline water. However, this can only benefit the displaced population and its animals if a major land reform granting them land ownership is implemented. Managing this would take decades, and also there is no political will nor wish for it.

Space for the disposal of the pumped water has also to be found. At present, the water from the Engro site alone is being drained to a 1,500-acre depression near the village of Gorono, whose residents have been protesting for the last many months against their land being used as storage for what they consider to be poisoned and, as such, unsafe and unusable water.

It is generally agreed that the pit mining process will create air pollution, destroy all trees in the area of the coal project and will also reduce an already overgrazed govt. substantially. To counter this, the project has an ambitious tree plantation programme. However, to rejuvenate so thoroughly a devastated region and make it available for productive purposes is next to impossible. In the case of the US and China, only 10 to 12 per cent of trees planted under their coal projects have survived and nine million hectares of land have been turned into unproductive deserts.

The loss of potable water means that the population will have to be dependent on other sources. The project proposes that osmosis plants be set up to provide water

to a thirsty human and animal population. In February this year, there were over 800 reverse osmosis (RO) plants in Thar of which only around 140 were in working condition. A 10 cubic metre plant maintenance and operation costs about Rs4m per year. Given the subsidies involved, this proposal will not be sustainable.

Engro has helped in creating the Thar Development Foundation which is going to provide schools, healthcare and skills for the population of Thar. This is welcome. However, this cannot overcome the environmental and socioeconomic repercussions that are in the process of taking place in Thar, where a rapidly increasing and externally controlled real estate and services sector is leading to massive unplanned urbanisation whose main victims are the landless communities, flora and fauna.

What Thar needs today is an integrated vision for the future of both its 9,000 sq km of the coal mines and of the remaining 10,000 sq km. A beginning can be made by working on a mitigation plan that deals with the larger socioeconomic- and environment-related issues. However, such a plan can only be useful if respect and affection for the Thari population and its culture and history are an integral part of it, and if it does not seek to gloss over the negative aspects of the coal project or seek to justify them.

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The mazar & BRT

Arif Hasan May 14, 2017

IN 1994 Karachi citizens of all walks of life got together to create the Citizens' Forum on Mass Transit. Through this organisation they opposed the construction of an elevated light rail through the whole length of M.A. Jinnah Road.

Their objection was that the elevated light rail and its stations, which would cover the entire width of M.A. Jinnah Road, would make the bulk of Karachi's built-heritage invisible, apart from causing major environmental degradation to where Karachi began as a city. They also argued that, as a result of the elevated light rail and its stations, the rehabilitation of Karachi's historic district would not be possible.

The elevated transit-way reappeared, either as a bus rapid transit (BRT) or light rail, in every subsequent mass transit proposal for the city and was opposed each time through contacts with officials in Karachi and Islamabad, newspaper articles and public forums. The debate ended when it was decided by the executives, consultants and the board of the Karachi Infrastructure Development Company (in charge of designing and overseeing the implementation of the now under-construction Green Line BRT project) that the Green Line would be at-grade or underground throughout the length of M.A. Jinnah Road from Guru Mandir to Merewether Tower. This was a welcome decision.

The view of the Quaid's mausoleum must not be obstructed.

However, due to technical design issues it now appears that the BRT might have to be elevated from Seventh Day Adventist Hospital to the Municipal Park on M.A. Jinnah Road. This will obstruct the view to about 50 listed heritage buildings and also obstruct the view of the Quaid's mazar from M.A. Jinnah Road. Here it is worthwhile recalling why the mazar is located where it is and the importance of that location.

On the night of Sept 11, 1948, the Quaid died and the Karachi administration, with the approval of the founding fathers of Pakistan, chose the location for the Quaid's mazar. Hashim Raza, the then commissioner of Karachi, describes in his book how they searched all night for an appropriate location and that the site of the mazar was finally chosen for its height (visibility), accessibility, and because it was in the heart of Karachi.

The choice was made after considering many alternatives including that of graveyards on the northern banks of the Lyari. The grave was located so that it lay on the axis of what was then Bunder Road, Karachi's main thoroughfare and historically its most important road. It also lies on the axis of the Bunder Road extension. As a result, the mazar is visible from the whole length of the two roads when pollution does not obscure it.

Meanwhile both these roads now carry the name of the Quaid and the decision to rename them M.A. Jinnah Road and New M.A. Jinnah Road was consciously taken and has a close link with the mazar that lies on their axis.

When Yahya Merchant designed the mausoleum in 1960, he enhanced the height of the podium by 11 feet to make the mazar more visible and in his design he respected the decisions that were taken regarding making the mazar a landmark monument visible from all the roads surrounding it.

If we go ahead with building the proposed elevated section of the BRT and stations that cover the entire width of M.A. Jinnah Road, then the mazar will not be visible from the Seventh Day Hospital to the Municipal Park on Bunder Road and well beyond. The vision of the founding fathers and that of the architect will be compromised and it will be a loss to Karachi and to its present and future citizens.

In addition, conditions below the proposed elevated BRT and its stations on M.A. Jinnah Road will be devoid of sunlight and environmentally as degraded as under the various existing flyovers and expressways in the city.

Infrastructure is important but its design must not only respect history, identity, national monuments and urban planning axioms. It must also enhance their importance. If we do not follow this principle we will lose whatever little history is left of this abused and unfortunate city. It is not only the job of Karachi's citizens to ensure this but more so of the Sindh Culture Department and, in the case of the mazar, of the Quaid-i-Azam Mazar Management Board.

A firm decision must be taken that no elevated structure is built on M.A. Jinnah Road so that the sanctity of the mazar is preserved and that an alternative solution to the elevation is found. Planners feel that with some compromises, re-routing traffic in Saddar with the help of a few traffic-related engineering projects and better traffic management, this is possible.

Hopefully, one day when Karachi is pollution free and wider parts of M.A. Jinnah road are lined with trees as they once were, the Quaid's mazar will be visible from Merewether Tower.

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Thar revisited

Arif Hasan April 26, 2017

“Before we ate what we grew. Now we sell what we grow and buy what we eat” — a Thari elder

MY first visit to Thar (Sindh) was in 1978 and since then I have visited it 17 times for recreation, work and research. I have seen it change from an isolated region with a caste-based subsistence barter economy to the transition it is in today. During a recent visit, my colleagues and I spoke to various sections of Thari society including transporters, market operators, middlemen, recent migrants to Mithi, and school teachers. What is given below are my observations and a synopsis of what people said.

The most visible change in Thar is the construction of high-quality major roads and a profusion of secondary roads linking settlements to them. A large number of tankers now carry water from the outlets on the pipeline from the barrage areas and the RO (reverse osmosis) plants that have been established in the past four years. People however, feel that the RO plants are unreliable as they are of substandard quality and are expensive and intensive to maintain and operate. They feel, with good reason, that the canal source is more sustainable.

Every hour an air-conditioned bus, complete with TV and Wi-Fi (owned by Karachi Pakhtuns and Mianwals), leaves for or arrives in Mithi from Karachi. In the last four years, the number of taxis operating in Thar has increased from 150 to over 400 while the Qingqis in Mithi alone have increased from 150 to over 350. The taxis carry passengers not only within Thar, but increasingly to distant locations all over Pakistan while the Qingqis have completely replaced transport animals.

Capitalism is making inroads in Thar.

Because of the roads, Thar’s agricultural produce now goes to distant markets. Six to seven trawlers per day carry onions from Nagarparkar to Lahore. Vegetables and fruit from other areas of Sindh and Punjab are now easily available. Unlike 15 years

ago, there are cattle markets in the taluka headquarters so the Tharis do not have to make the long trek on foot to Juddo to sell their animals. Shops carrying industrially produced household food and other items have multiplied and sell items unimaginable before, such as baby pampers.

The other visible change is the expansion of settlements on the periphery and within Mithi and Islamkot. Google maps show that Mithi's spread has increased by over 200 per cent since 2012. New construction is of concrete and not in the traditional Thari style. The construction boom is so large that steel for reinforced concrete construction is short in supply. It was also said that local timber for traditional construction is no longer available due to deforestation.

The new settlements are established by enterprising individuals who occupy state land, subdivide it and sell it to the migrants. Increasingly, however, groups of up to 50 households move together to occupy and settle on land on the immediate periphery of the urban areas. Once established, they lobby with their elected representatives for a road link and electricity. These unplanned, randomly located settlements are an ecological disaster and will be a nightmare for future planners and officials.

Migrants give different reasons for migrating. One, that in the village the landlord made life difficult for them since, unlike their ancestors, they were not willing to do baygar for him. Also, in the towns, unlike in the village, they can get cash paid work on a daily basis, get their children educated and also become azad. All those spoken to had no intention of going back.

Village carpenters and other artisans have also migrated to the towns where, unlike the village, there is a lot of work and payments are made in cash as opposed to grain. Their leaving has left the village impoverished. We were also informed in 2012 that there were a few hundred Tharis working in the garment industries in Karachi whereas today, there are "thousands" and increasing.

The changes given here are the result of inroads that capitalism is making in Thar. The role of the coal project in the future of the district is another story. Here it is sufficient to say that the better-off entrepreneurs, shopkeepers and landlords see it as a welcome opportunity. The intellectuals, smaller businessmen and cultivators see it as an ecological disaster, an uncompensated land grab by outsiders, a destroyer of tangible and intangible culture which will marginalise them further and increase the rich-poor divide.

For the future of Thar, it is necessary to understand the changes taking place; their actors and factors, and support, curtail or direct them for overcoming environmental degradation and the social inequities inherent in them. This understanding and responding to processes is something that capitalism cannot do and is the domain of the state and civil society.

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KCR concerns

February 5th, 2017

THE Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) is arguably the most important project in the pipeline since it connects the four areas where over 45 per cent of Karachi's jobs are located with important low- and middle-income settlements. However, its right of way along 72pc of its length is encroached upon by many 'legally' built formal-sector constructions such as housing colonies, factories and warehousing and about 28pc is 'encroached' upon by katchi abadis. Without removal of much of these encroachments, the KCR cannot be built.

The government has not announced the measures it will take regarding the formal-sector encroachments but it has produced a plan for the removal and rehabilitation of the katchi abadis. They are to be shifted to Juma Goth, about 25 kilometres away from the city centre, where each household will be given an 80-square-yard plot and Rs50,000, a sum not even enough to transport one's belongings to the Juma Goth site.

Surveys of the settlements carried out by the Urban Design Research Cell of the NED University show the majority of children in these settlements walk to school; most of the men work within the settlement or in neighbouring industrial areas; and many women work in the neighbouring middle-income settlements as domestic help.

Sindh must pay heed to the projected plight of KCR affectees.

In addition, there are small- to medium-size businesses and workshops in the settlements which provide jobs, not only to residents but also to outsiders who

service their transport, financial and skill-related requirements. Shifting them to a faraway location where they will have to build their homes (all over again) for which they have no finances; bear additional costs and time to travel to work and back, and to school; face the difficulty involved in participating in family festivities or visiting places of entertainment and recreation with their children, and accessing healthcare; will make them far poorer than before. The majority will come back to their old neighbourhoods as insecure renters. This is what has happened to many affectees of the Lyari Expressway rehabilitation project on which the government's KCR affectees' relocation is modelled.

The Urban Resource Centre has been in dialogue with the KCR-Affectees Action Committee. One of the possibilities that has been explored with them and which they cautiously seem to support is that the affectees, irrespective of whether they have a lease or not, should be divided into four broad categories — one, those with pucca houses and full utility connections; two, those living in makeshift shacks; three, those in between the above two categories; and four, those who are owners of businesses.

It is suggested that households should be paid between Rs2.5 million and Rs300,000, depending on the category they belong to, after which they should move out and find their own accommodation. Other considerations such as the period of time that the affected household has been residing in the settlement can also be taken into consideration. A committee consisting of representatives of civil society, the affectees and government departments could develop the criteria for compensation and supervise its implementation.

The cost of the KCR project in 2012 was worked out at just below Rs150 billion of which the affectees' rehabilitation cost was worked out to about Rs2.5bn or 1.6pc of the total cost. If what is being proposed is accepted, the cost would increase to Rs7.5bn or 2pc of the total cost of the project. It has to be understood that the government plan will also require years to implement (while the communities remain in limbo) and its cost will go up by at least 100pc during the course of implementation. In the case of the Lyari Expressway, the rehabilitation costs increased by 3.5 times — from Rs2bn in 2003 to Rs7bn in 2012. The process is still incomplete and the resettlement colonies have been abandoned by the government with incomplete or non-functioning physical and social infrastructure.

If the proposal given here is accepted by the government and the communities, then most of the affectees will be able to make arrangements of their own choice in which

many of the households will opt for finding accommodation in formal settlements. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is what happened in the case of the Kati Pahari road project where the market price was paid to the affectees and there was no protest or disagreement from their side regarding the decision.

Adding to the misery, class segregation and poverty, and actually spending well over Rs2.5bn to make that happen makes no sense. It will only add to the existing conflict and sense of alienation in an already divided city. Putting political and bureaucratic considerations aside, the Sindh government should consider, in conceptual terms, the proposal discussed in this article.

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Karachi diagnostic

Arif Hasan January 08, 2017

PROJECTS supported by international loans have a poor history in Karachi. The process of setting up the project after negotiating the loan follows a familiar pattern. A posh project office is established, expensive cars and equipment are purchased for it, and even more expensive foreign and local consultants and government officials are hired to research, plan and implement the project, which usually has socio-economic, physical and institutional components.

The consultants appointed are always technically competent but often know very little about the complex ways in which Karachi functions. Their conventional research methodology and dependence on questionable statistics and foreign examples, fail to establish it. In the end only the infrastructure-related hardware component is implemented. When the loan period is over, the project office winds up, the cars are distributed among departments and individuals, government officials return to their parent departments and the consultants start searching for other lucrative contracts. Things return to normal and the project is forgotten. However, where communities have been involved, activists do emerge who often form organisations working for change.

Foreign-funded water and sanitation projects have not solved our water and sanitation problems; the katchi abadi regularisation programme has not led to regularisation; and extensive studies on shelter have given us no shelter. Meanwhile, the Left Bank and Right Bank Outfall Drains have resulted in massive environmental damage and dislocation of communities and have huge cost overruns.

However, international agencies alone cannot be blamed. Equally (if not more) to blame is Sindh's political culture and its conflict with what the city requires; the absence of continuity in government policies and institutions and meaningful involvement of civil society and academia in the design and implementation process.

Consultants often know little about the complex ways in which Karachi functions.

Where there has been such involvement, costs have been reduced to a fraction leading to project sustainability, such as in the case of the ADB-funded Orangi sanitation project. In the case of the design proposal for the Korangi Waste Water Management Project, costs, with OPP involvement, were reduced to one-third of what was estimated. The high cost was mainly due to not recognising the existing undocumented infrastructure and integrating it into the project design. Such non-recognition of the existing situation is common to most projects.

It is with this background that there are serious concerns about the proposed Karachi project for which the Sindh government has negotiated a World Bank loan of \$80 million.

A presentation 'Karachi City Diagnostic: The Way Forward' has been prepared by the Bank and presented to civil society organisations. The presentation states that project's objective is to transform Karachi into a 'world class city'. However, except for some new ideas and the development of useful statistics, it says very little that has not been said before. Also, it does not tell us what constitutes a world class city.

Now that we have taken the loan, it is in our best interest to use it for the well-being of our rapidly changing city. The development of Bus Rapid Transits and the Karachi Circular Railway will have important repercussions for land use, especially along M.A. Jinnah road and Saddar. As a result of the enactment of the High Density Board Act, there are already over hundred 20-to 50-storey buildings under construction.

Due to an absence of badly needed warehousing, new areas are informally opening up for this function and the inner city, which contains our endangered built heritage, is being further utilised for this purpose. Because of a decline in transport services, motorcycles are increasing phenomenally and require space for movement and parking. Meanwhile, in the absence of social housing, homelessness is rapidly multiplying.

The solution to all these issues is linked to land use, transport and traffic management and the changing sociology of the city. In addition, inner city katchi abadis have densified informally to over 2,500 persons per hectare and with unprecedented migration under way this is bound to increase. Land reclamation from a sewage-polluted sea and insensitive real-estate development on the periphery have already seriously damaged the ecology of the Karachi region.

No project, especially a time-bound one, can deal comprehensively with these closely interrelated issues. The fear is that some of them will be addressed as location-specific window dressing sub-projects and, in the absence of effective governance institutions, they will be swallowed up by a sea

of expanding chaos. The question is, can this loan and its processes be utilised for establishing a desperately needed sustainable planning and management agency for the city? If yes, then the loan will be well spent.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1307034/karachi-diagnostic>

Ugly Karachi

Arif Hasan November 06, 2016

KARACHI is becoming an increasingly anarchic, ugly and divided city — but is loved and glorified by its comparatively well-to-do citizens, public intellectuals and those in search of an identity. Loving Karachi is understandable but glorifying it is questionable.

The city has no research and planning agency — a must for any expanding city. Previously, it had one in the form of the KDA Master Plan Group of Offices. Its garbage cannot be lifted because it has no effective local governance system and the agency responsible cannot even pay its workers on time.

Karachi's infrastructure projects are generally of poor quality; they start crumbling after a couple of years. Most consist of flyovers and underpasses that have failed to solve the city's traffic problems. Its pedestrian bridges are not used as many of them are at the wrong locations. In any case, the old, the sick and women with children cannot use them.

The list of woes of lower-income Karachiites is endless.

For them, there are zebra crossings, but these cannot be accessed as cars do not stop for pedestrians. Traffic rules are not respected and the ensuing chaos results in violence. The option for women to take up a job of their choice, or one they are qualified for, is limited by their dependence on transport availability.

As a result of recently enacted anti-planning laws, Karachi is now 'legally' densifying; the absence of an urban design plan is creating conditions of severe overcrowding.

Also, there is no social housing, nor any plans for it. So, unlike previously, an increasing number of families live on the roads and under flyovers.

For the poor, and now also for the lower middle class, needs related to transport, water, land and housing are catered to by an exploitative, unreliable informal sector, while land use is controlled by a powerful developers' lobby through bribes and coercion, devastating the city.

In 1998, 30 per cent of Karachi's primary school students studied at government schools. This dropped to 6pc in 2015. Most of these schools, including the 600-plus KMC ones, are on the verge of collapse. Many of them have more teachers than students. For curative health, the vast majority of Karachiites rely on quacks as there is no comprehensive preventive health plan in place.

Karachi is building upwards and registering more than 900 additional vehicles per day. No serious traffic management and engineering plans are in place to accommodate the increasing numbers. Karachi's firefighting arrangements are also grossly inadequate. Easily manageable fires consume not only buildings but people as well.

The state now has many documentation requirements, including ID cards, B Forms, marriage and divorce certificates and property-related papers. Acquiring these is difficult and time-consuming and so often citizens pay middlemen to facilitate the process. Similarly, acquiring a lease in a notified katchi abadi is only possible by paying the middleman Rs35,000. By paying a bribe you can also purchase a driving licence without passing the test — essentially giving one the licence to kill.

The city has a lot of public space but much of it is not maintained and is often used by drug addicts, for sorting out garbage and for sleeping purposes by the homeless. Karachi has no city museum — a must for schoolchildren if they are to relate to the city as a whole and not just to their environmentally degraded neighbourhoods. Cinemas have also disappeared and the cineplexes are unaffordable for lower-income groups. Most parks require an entrance fee.

Less than one inch of rainfall can flood the city — because elite housing societies continue to encroach on the outfalls to the sea, while informal settlements, for lack of options, continue to build homes on drainage channels. Meanwhile, when it rains, a number of people in low-income settlements die of electrocution. This is accepted as normal.

As if this were not enough, citizens have to put up with political processions and rallies that block traffic for hours on end, because of which children miss school, patients die on the way to hospital, and businesses and citizens not only suffer but feel insulted. The list of woes of lower-income Karachiites is endless.

To deal with what has been mentioned here, Karachi needs much more than political promises and self-serving rallies. One-time events and short-term foreign-funded projects are important but they alone cannot overcome the problems of the city which needs new and effective institutions of governance with strong horizontal linkages.

The constraints to achieving this are many but there is no other option if the city is to be made workable for its majority. And without this, peace, given the aspirations of the younger generation of Karachiites of all classes, will remain a distant dream.

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‘Honour’ killings

Arif Hasan August 07, 2016

BY all accounts, over the last two decades ‘honour’ killings have increased manifold; they are going to increase even more in the foreseeable future. This is because a gender-segregated patriarchal society, which has traditionally used violence for settling even petty disputes, is finding it difficult to come to terms with new realities.

These include working women, adult female students, ‘free-will’ marriages, women in sports, a media landscape that is both loved and hated, emancipated role models, and aspirations for greater freedoms. Observations, surveys and available statistics all show that Pakistani society is changing rapidly and that these changes cannot be digested by a conservative establishment and its support groups.

I started working in Karachi’s informal settlements in the mid-1970s and since 1981 with the Orangi Pilot Project in katchi abadis (slum areas). In Karachi at that time, katchi abadis were purely working-class settlements in which women did not work outside their homes.

Today, Suzuki-loads of women are taken to garment, packaging and pharmaceutical factories, to return late in the evening. Thousands more take the long bus ride to affluent areas of the city to work as domestic staff; they are forced to deal with men during the journey and at their workplaces. Over the last decade, they have become well groomed and many today are indistinguishable from their female employers. Without their income, the kitchen at home could not function.

Existing trends will change Pakistan in the coming decade.

Meanwhile, most of the older settlements are now multiclass as an increasing number of their residents, both male and female, have white-collar jobs in which women work alongside men. Also, private schools used to be rare in these settlements and there were no beauty parlours. Now almost every neighbourhood in the older settlements has at least one of each and the vast majority of teachers, and sometimes education and other entrepreneurs, are local women.

Marriage halls also exist in these settlements today and over the years, the strict gender segregation at marriage ceremonies has relaxed considerably. All this is in spite of the fact that these changes have been opposed, often with violence, by the more conservative residents and activists of militant groups created as a result of the Zia era and our involvement in the Afghan war.

Census statistics tell us that other changes at the overall city level are also taking place. The most important age group in any census is between 15 and 24 years. This is because it is both the present and the future.

In Karachi in 1961, 66.71 per cent women and 23.38pc men were married in this age group. If we extrapolate the statistics of the 1998 census to 2016 (keeping all things constant) then the percentage of married women in this age group today is 17 and married men 7pc. So, for the first time in Karachi, we have an overwhelming majority of unmarried adolescents which any sociologist knows is enough to change gender relations and family structures.

Surveys conducted for the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 tell us that 82pc of Karachi families are nuclear. This is an over 80pc increase from some area-specific surveys of the 1990s. Though no reliable data for free-will marriages is available,

lawyers dealing with court marriages say that they have increased in geometric progression over the last decade and half.

These changes are taking place all over Pakistan. The figures for even small Punjab towns such as Chiniot and Kasur, for the age group of 14 to 24 years, are similar to those of Karachi. (In the rest of Sindh apart from Karachi, the trends are similar but somewhat slower than those in Punjab.)

Women dominate universities in Karachi and many other cities in Pakistan, and their presence is increasing. Critics point out that once educated, women do not work. However, alumna and university reports suggest that this is changing rapidly. What policymakers should be made to look at are societal trends, and not simply existing conditions.

The trends discussed are nothing short of a revolution for a country like Pakistan. They will change Pakistan in the coming decade, whether the country becomes a 'secular' democracy or not. However, addressing or even recognising these trends in clear terms does not figure in the state's development policies. Meanwhile, civil society is waging a battle against oppressive tradition and the ugly incidents it creates, and for appropriate legislation.

Still, there is a dire need to understand the changes taking place, their causes and repercussions, and to see how new societal values can be built and promoted around them. For this the most important role is that of the media and the more liberal right-wing groups in society. In the absence of these values, change will only consolidate itself through a long process of which pain and frustration, mainly for women, will be an integral part.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1275859/honour-killings>