

Space as a Tool in Ethnic Conflicts in the Context of Karachi

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Abstract

Ethnicity has played a contentious yet major role in shaping the urban fabric of Karachi, where ethnicity has become a ground for violence and conflict. This paper attempts to explore the relationship of how spaces were used for ethnic purposes in the city. The paper raises the questions as to how ethnicity and spaces became intertwined and eventually developed a deeply linked relationship which eventually resulted in a city divided on ethnic lines. This complex relationship can be understood better by tracing historically the formation of an 'ethnic identity' and what were the ideological and social underpinning which gave ethnicity a major role in the city. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in order to investigate the question at hand. The qualitative methods used were interviews of politicians and journalists, while reviewing socio-political theories on ethnicity in Karachi from both local and international authors. Survey-based quantitative method was then employed to assess the current trends in general public in regards to ethnicity and ethnically dominated areas.

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Introduction

“Architecture is the reaching out for the truth” – Louis Kahn

Architecture, a word derived from the Greek word *arkhitekton*, meaning ‘master builder’ from “arkhi” (Chief) and “tekton” (builder+carpenter), until recently, was used exclusively in the domain of building and construction. In present day, the word is synonymous with ‘structure’ as visible by use of terms such as ‘software architecture’, ‘molecular architecture’ and others. The practice of architecture, on the other hand, still remains exclusively tied to building and construction, despite the enormous changes that have occurred in the field over the course of human history and especially since the dawn of industrial age. Heavy criticism has been directed towards ‘architecture’ for being unwilling to change and adapt, indeed by many it is considered a dying practice, taken over by technology, engineers and technicians.¹

So much so that the modern day understanding of architecture amongst general public is limited to ‘aesthetic’ function of spaces, reinforced by the rise of 20th century starchitects like Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas and others, an aspect that contemporary architects abhor and vehemently argue against. What then, is the role of architecture, when constructing the building in modern times is more scientific and calculated than ever before. The reliance of architecture on engineers, technicians, craftsmen, technology and client is more than the ‘architect’ himself, visible by the fact that rarely does a project finish in a way that the architect envisioned it in the beginning. It is to say that creating architecture is no longer limited to single entity but instead everyone who is part of the process. Architecture and the architect are no longer inseparable, it is to say that architecture is free from the realm

¹ Brianna Rennix, Nathan J. Robinson. 2017. *Why You Hate Contemporary Architecture*. October 31. Accessed August 26, 2018. <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2017/10/why-you-hate-contemporary-architecture>.

of design and construction, without any curator or guide. In this case, what indeed is the limit of this architecture? What can it achieve if it's no longer confined by logic of building and construction? Can architecture even survive if it goes beyond its established territory?

Exploration of the limits of architecture, not just in sense of its physical products, but as a discipline and method is crucial if one is to practice or even understand architecture in the 21st century. By 'limits', I refer to the influence of architecture, its abilities and potential. It is imperative that the definition and fundamental principles of architecture be reworked to reintroduce architecture to the modern-day society.

The birth of architecture didn't have its roots in utilitarian or even aesthetical functions, as Vitruvius and later theorists were so convinced of², two terms which are considered defining aspects of architecture in present time. Instead, architecture was born out of a need to commemorate and celebrate, illustrated by earliest examples of architecture. As Jones explains it eloquently, "*Did the habitation of space by the profane precede the habitation of space by the sacred? Could we really imagine that the temple, the house of God, descended from the house of man?*"³ Once we acknowledge this fact, then we can sift through history of mankind to understand how the role of architecture was beyond mere 'brick and mortar' and its limits went far beyond just construction but served a much higher function. With the reorientation and, in my opinion, oversimplification of the discipline of architecture in the modern-day society, has led to a loss of opportunity for architecture to go beyond its assigned role. The unidimensional study, practice and understanding of architecture has limited its potential and here it is that the investigation begins, to question the existing use of architecture

² Jones, James Samuel. 1991. "Thirteen; Stones Around the Fire; the Threshold: Myth and Discourse on the Genesis of Architecture." *Oz* (Kansas State University College of Architecture, Planning, and Design) 13: Pg. 5

³ Ibid.

and understanding what it can contribute to the future as a practice, discipline and an industry.

Literature Review

Laurent Gayer, writing extensively on Karachi, examines the demographic shift that was brought about in the city on the eve of partition in 1947. Karachi, a city of around 450,000 people, comprising mainly of Sindhi majority (51%) saw a sudden influx of around 600,000 Urdu-speaking migrants, *muhajirs* and when the 1951 census came, the city's population had risen to 1.13 million, with 72% *muhajirs* as the majority.⁴ The infant cabinet of Pakistan designated Karachi as 'federally administrated', separate from the rest of the Sindh, this angered the local Sindhis who believed that the *muhajirs* were 'arrogant city dwellers' who disliked the locals.⁵ Gayer argues that this is where the 'seeds' of ethnic strife were first sown, creating a permeant split between the *muhajirs* and Sindhis. Gayer then grounds this ethnic difference, not in ethnic ideologies but explains that this was primarily a result of 'urban crisis' that took hold of the city after the partition due to 'social division of work' and space in the city.⁶ A direct result of partition and the urban crisis that followed, in Gayer's view, was that the city was now clearly divided in terms of 'planned' and 'unplanned' areas.⁷ The unplanned areas provided fertile ground for illegal activities, where the land as commodity become highly valuable and controlling of it was directly equated to political power. This struggle for control of the lands in the unplanned areas, or *bastis* was primarily fought between *muhajirs* and Punjabis, who were at the time part of the state machinery, therefore employed legal and illegal means of gaining an advantage over the other. The

⁴ Zaidi, S. Akbar. 1997. "Politics, Institutions, Poverty: The Case of Karachi." *Economic and Political Weekly* (Economic and Political Weekly) 32 (51): Pg. 3283

⁵ Gayer, Laurent. 2007. "Guns, Slums, and "Yellow Devils": A Genealogy of Urban Conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan." *Modern Asian Studies* (Cambridge University Press) 41 (3): Pg. 518

⁶ Ibid. Pg. 519

⁷ Ibid.

Afghan war in the 1980s introduced a new player in this 'war' with the influx of Pathan and Afghans from northern areas. With their extensive weapon networks tracing back to N.W.F.P., they were able to quickly establish control of these *bastis*.⁸ Gayer notes that with the arrivals of Pathan, the violence in this *bastis* reached its peak.⁹ Suddenly, the control for the physical piece of land became a major point of contention between the ethnic groups and these 'contentions' took violent turns. The first major ethnic riots that broke out in April 1985 between Bihar (a subgroup of *muhajirs*) *bastis* and Pathan strongholds, were a direct result of this 'land war'. These riots were geographically most concentrated at Banaras Chowk in Orangi town. Banaras Chowk, which acted as a point of contact between Pathan and Bihari territories became an 'interface', which Alan Feldman defines as a geographic boundary between ethnic groups where riots and disruptions are a mechanism to make territorial gains.¹⁰

Raman also describes the character of ethnic tensions in the city manifesting themselves in the physical space. The perception that the Pathans controlled most of the transport networks, and thus accessibility, in the city and occupying the peripheral *katchi abadis* while the *muhajirs* occupied the business and central urban areas, allowed the conflict became more spatialized.¹¹

Both for Gayer and Raman, the 'space' serves as a major means through which the ethnic groups in the city signified their presence. Controlling of a *basti* was seen as key for the survival for that ethnic group as evidenced by the Bihar's resistance to the Pathan occupations of their *muhallas*.¹² Furthermore, the location of the first major ethnic riot was an

⁸ Raman, Prassanna. 2012. "Exploring urban resilience: violence and infrastructure provision in Karachi." *Master's Thesis* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Pg. 12.

⁹ Gayer, Laurent. 2007. Op. Cit. Pg. 522

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Raman, Prassanna. 2012 Op. Cit. Pg. 39

¹² Gayer, Laurent. 2007. Op. Cit. Pg. 522

‘interface’ between the two different ethnic groups, even though *muhajirs* were spread in other areas as well with Pathans occupying multiple pockets in the city, Banaras Chowk continued to be a hotbed of ethnic violence. The Bushra Zaidi riots, which were a result of a Pathan minibus driver running over a student in Liaqtuabad were intrinsically based on the public grievances against the dangerous transport system of the city, but by placing the majority of violence that followed, in Banaras Chowk, the riots took an ethnic turn where it became about *muhajirs* against the Pathans instead of public grievances.¹³ This clearly illustrates how by using these ‘interfaces’ the groups were able to exercise and demonstrate ethnic control and use the land politics city to their advantage.

By applying Andrew Herscher’s idea of Counter-heritage to Karachi, one can also understand how space acted as a tool to manipulate the ethnic groups in the city. Herscher’s concept of ‘counter-heritage’ is heritage which is ‘condemned’, ‘despised’ and ‘demeaned’. In other words, it is ‘conceptually invisible as it is physically eradicated.’¹⁴ Counter heritage can also become a representation of the ‘other’ and therefore become a source of further friction. As the ethnic groups in Karachi consolidated themselves in specific geographic areas, the areas of the ‘Other’ were seen as a major threat and their boundaries were perpetual battlegrounds. Lyari, Orangi, Sohrab Goth, Federal B Area and later on Kati Phari were some of the major concentrations of these ethnic groups becoming ‘no-go areas’ with time, with ‘private armies’ guarding these ‘enclaves’.¹⁵ Areas under control of *muhajir* led Muttahida Quami Movement, which became a primary political force of the city in the 2000s, were heavily laden with pro-MQM signs, flags, portraits of its leaders etc. while the areas under control

¹³ Ibid. Pg. 524

¹⁴ Herscher, Andrew. 2006. "Counter-Heritage and Violence." *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism*. (University of Minnesota Press) 3 (2). Pg. 25

¹⁵ Raman, Prassanna. 2012 Op. Cit. Pg. 42-43

opposition faction, usually the *katchi abadis*, had their own ‘signage’.¹⁶ These signages were seen as representations of the control of the ethnic group in the space and its absence was equated with lack of control by the ethnic group, therefore acts of vandalism and ethnopolitical graffiti became commonplace in Karachi. The physical space, again, was extensively used to represent ethnic identities and exercise control over the respective ethnic groups.

Akbar Zaidi also explores the idea of the birth of this informal sector due to spatial issues, which dominates Karachi's socio-ethno-political realms. He places its creation at the hands of the ill-fated 1950s' Doxiadis plan.¹⁷ The plan called for the building of two new satellite townships away from the centre of the city where the refugees and squatters would be resettled. Due to reasons, beyond the scope of this paper, the plan was abandoned and tracts of land lay empty. These were quickly taken over and created the first *katchi abadis* in the city.¹⁸ While indeed the abandonment of the plan did lead to the creation of the *katchi abadis*, the informal sector, especially the land, were a source of friction between the ethnic groups long before the plan. The refugees from the partition had been squatting on government lands, in informal *bastis*, ever since the partition and buildings left behind by migrating families were quickly occupied by anyone with the resources.¹⁹ This is where the first informal networks came about to be, the Doxiadis plan merely provided for a more comprehensive space for these informal networks to develop but it was surely not the cause for these networks to develop. Indeed, the plan, which segregated the city into physical areas for rich and poor, the latter comprising mainly of *muhajirs*, did fuel the ethnic tensions. Zaidi

¹⁶ Gayer, Laurent. 2012. "Political Turmoil in Karachi: Production and Reproduction of Ordered Disorder." *Economic and Political Weekly* (Economic and Political Weekly) 47 (31): Pg. 78

¹⁷ Zaidi, S. Akbar. 1997 Op Cit. Pg. 3287

¹⁸ Gayer, Laurent. 2007. Op. Cit. Pg. 521

¹⁹ Ibid.

is partially correct in pointing out the cause of the informal sector in a spatial issue i.e. the plan but instead of Doxiadis' plan creating this network, the plan multiplied the networks by manifolds. Instead the creation of these informal sectors, and eventually the birth of the ethnic conflicts in the city can be traced to a different spatial issue, the influx of migrants in 1947 and the subsequent control of the city's space.

Research Methodology

To better investigate the research question both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied. The qualitative research allowed me to collect the ideas and views that seemed to explain the use of space as means of exerting ethnic control. Qualitative research through the method of ethnography ensured that the complex ideas related to ethnicity, politics and space could be cohesively recorded and analyzed. While the quantitative research served to collect data regarding how citizens of Karachi formulated the idea of ethnicity and its relation to the space. This will serve the purpose of establishing the relevance of the research question under investigation

Secondary research was undertaken in order to understand the historical context of the city and how ethnic movements were born and eventually dominated the socio-political scene of Karachi. An attempt was made to use theories and ideas developed in social sciences, political sciences and economics and apply them to the research question at hand. Andrew Herscher theory of Counter-Heritage provided a theoretical framework in understanding the relationship of spaces, identity and violence. Due to the politically charged nature of the research questions, local scholarly research tends to be riddled with political or personal biases, therefore lack of unbiased and scholarly research in local context resulted in seeking international sources regarding political narratives.

Laurent Gayer's work on Karachi fulfilled this purpose as it was relatively unbiased due to the author being an international researcher, not influenced by his own identity and provided a near neutral point of view on the ethno-political issues in Karachi, an area which is murky and convoluted at best. Although, questions can be raised about a "foreigners'" understanding of a highly contextual issue, Gayer's extensive scholarly output related exclusively to Karachi is some evidence that the researcher has a firm grasp on the understanding of this city.

This research was complemented by S. Akbar Zaidi's work to provide a local voice in the research and compare his views against Gayer's ideas. Zaidi's research was conducted through an economic lens thereby ensuring that the research question is not oblivious to economic forces which are highly relevant to Karachi.

By investigating the research question through inter-disciplinary method, an attempt was made to ensure a well-rounded voice in the paper could be developed which acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of the research question.

The qualitative research was carried out through one-on-one interviews. The interviews were designed on open-ended questions, letting the interviewee explain their opinions and ideas thereby leaving the opportunity open to look at the research question from new perspectives. The questions were designed around the idea of how space and ethnicity are linked and did their relationship was manipulated to gain ethnic advantages over the other groups.

For the purpose of qualitative research, two interviews were conducted. The first interview was Mr. Akhlaq Ahmad, a journalist, Ex-chief Editor of '*Akbar-e-Jahan*', affiliated with Jang Group, which has been a dominant media-enterprise in the country. The second interview was conducted of Mr. Anees Advocate, one of the founding members and now ex-member of M.Q.M., a major political and ethnic force in the city for the past four decades. Both of the

interviewees were subject to the same set of questions, thereby ensuring that a fair comparison can be drawn between the two sets of responses. The interviews were recorded on audio by the interviewer then transcribed.

By situating a deeply political voice against a journalistic view-point, an attempt was made to extract the comprehensive understanding of how political and journalistic groups viewed or created the ideas that resulted in space becoming the tool for ethnic control. The author is aware that the interviewees were quite opinionated, informed by their personal experiences and ideas of being active participant in the socio-political scene of the city, thereby their responses cannot be generalized to each and every member of their group.

The quantitative research was conducted through a survey questionnaire designed to inquire about an individual's connection to their ethnicity and their experiences in spaces which belonged to their own groups and the groups of others. The survey questions were designed to record responses on a scale format thereby attempting to ensure that concrete statistical data could be collected. The survey sample age group was restricted at minimum 20 years of age in order to record responses from those subjects who had seen or experienced ethnic tensions in the city, no other demographic restrictions were employed. The surveys were conducted in-person in Karachi University and Gulshan-e-Iqbal, an online version of the survey was also conducted hence increasing the protentional sample size.

Due to the political nature of the questionnaire some respondent were hesitant in filling out the survey. Also, the questionnaire primarily designed in English also limited many people from understanding the questions at all. A revised version with Urdu translation was created and administered, wherever possible the surveyor explained the questions to the respondents. It is quite possible that due to deeply personal and political nature of the questions, some

false responses are also recorded in the final data hence effecting the result but the author attempted to filter out as many false responses.

Findings and Analysis Chapter

This chapter discusses the findings, and its analysis, drawn through primary research conducted in investigation of the research question. Using interviews from experts in relevant fields, their viewpoints were compared to existing scholarly views as mentioned in literature review. This information was supplemented through data gathered from quantitative surveys in order to illustrate trends and ideas of the citizens of Karachi.

Ethnicity, is an important aspect in the city of the Karachi, with around 57% of survey participants identifying on some level with their ethnicity. Laurent Gayer notes, in Karachi, groups were more inclined to orient themselves with their ethnic identity instead of political ones,²⁰ thereby creating a highly contentious environment. He goes on to state that ‘urban crisis of 1980’s fuelled social antagonism which turned in to ethnic rivalries’.²¹ Gayer’s view was contradicted in primary research that was conducted. According to Akhlaq Ahmed, ex-Editor-in-Chief of *Akhbar-e-Jahan* and author, ethnicity became ‘politicized’ soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947.²² Anees Khan Advocate, seems to second this stance, alleging hostility between local sindhis and migrants as the birth of these ethnic tensions.²³ Both these interviewees placed the birth of ethnic tensions just after migration, citing instances such as Presidential Elections of 1965, where *muhajirs* supported Fatima Jinnah while Sindhis were aligned with Ayub Khan, as examples of early ethnic divide in the city. This asserts that

²⁰ Gayer, Laurent. 2007. "Guns, Slums, and "Yellow Devils": A Genealogy of Urban Conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan." *Modern Asian Studies* (Cambridge University Press) 41 (3): 515-544. Accessed September 14, 2018. Pg.587

²¹ Ibid. Pg. 519

²² Akhlaq Ahmed, interviewed 15th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

²³ Anees Khan Advocate, interviewed 14th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

ethnic divide in the city has existed since 1947 as opposed to a result of any single event after 1950s.

Ethnicity and ‘place’

Ethnicity and space in Karachi are intrinsically linked, and this relationship can again be traced back to migration in 1947, where conflict over land bound the idea of ethnicity to a ‘place’. Akhlaq Ahmed explains that this phenomenon came about soon after migration because land was a valuable commodity at that time, and due to lack of an effective system, the migrants and locals frequently came in conflict over land issues.²⁴ Squatter settlements, known as *bastis*, came about all over the city, these *bastis* were rife various issues but due to their ethnic nature, as illustrated by Dr Zaidi, were a hotbed for ethnic tensions.²⁵ The introduction of Afghan immigrants during the Afghan war, further heightened the tensions. Anees Khan, states that these Afghans ‘disrupted the lifestyle of the local communities’, Gayer also links the presence of these Afghans with increased drugs and weapons smuggling and violence. These factors contributed to localization of ethnicities in to specific areas, as Anees Khan in the interview pointed out, that “areas were aligned with certain ethnic identities, and this effect only produced a more fragmented city divided on ethnic lines”.²⁶ This geographic divide based on ethnic lines served to further the idea of ethnicity as major form of identity of an area in Karachi. This trend can be seen through the survey research which showed that at least 65% were aware of areas which are linked to a specific ethnicity,

²⁴ Akhlaq Ahmed, interviewed 15th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

²⁵ Zaidi, S. Akbar. 1997. "Politics, Institutions, Poverty: The Case of Karachi." *Economic and Political Weekly* (Economic and Political Weekly) 32 (51): 3282-3293. Accessed September 14, 2018. Pg. 3291

²⁶ Anees Khan Advocate, interviewed 14th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

illustrating that at least the idea of ‘spaces’ being linked with ethnicity was existing in the city.

Systematic violence to exert control

As the spaces became more ethnicized in Karachi, the race to control these spaces became more intense. This was achieved through various means, institutions, violence, politics all played certain roles. Akhlaq Ahmed said that as soon as ethnicity became an important element in the city, it was used for political gains.²⁷ As stated in literature review by Gayer and Ramen, concentrated ethnic groups in specific areas allowed for ‘spatialization’ of ethnicities, thereby control over these areas could be equated with control over the ethnicity.

²⁸ Akhlaq Ahmed believes that this wasn’t a case on ground at least, and was present only on a superficial level. He states that due to majority of one ethnic group in an area, minority groups were either suppressed or pushed out through violence and coercion, thereby creating an illusion of control.²⁹ But the idea that a different ethnic group was a threat in one’s space existed in Karachi. This phenomenon was intensified by frequent ethnic riots at the end of 1980s and 1990s, which led to people staying within areas of their own ethnic groups. Even the survey showed that 67% people were uncomfortable with the idea of being in an area of different ethnic majority. There exists in Karachi a certain anxious feeling regarding the groups of the ‘others. Herscher’s Counter-heritage, discussed in literature review, explains this behaviour, as the presence of ‘others’ was equated with a threat to one’s own group.³⁰ As Anees Khan states, that the spaces had to be controlled and the ‘other’ ethnic groups, in this

²⁷ Akhlaq Ahmed, interviewed 15th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

²⁸ Raman, Prassanna. 2012. "Exploring urban resilience: violence and infrastructure provision in Karachi." *Master's Thesis* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Pg. 39

²⁹ Akhlaq Ahmed, interviewed 15th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

³⁰ Herscher, Andrew. 2006. "Counter-Heritage and Violence." *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism*. (University of Minnesota Press) 3 (2): 24-33. Accessed September 16, 2018. Pg. 28

instance the *Pathans*, had to be kept in check in order to maintain peace in the areas.³¹ To control these areas through violent means became a norm³², violence against ‘other’ was expected in any ethnically dominated area. At least 57% people are aware of someone who is cautious in visiting an ethnically dominated area while 60% people know someone who was harmed in an ethnically dominated area. These figures demonstrate that the spaces of ‘other’ were seen as dangerous spaces.

Political Value to Space

It can be asked as to why was the control over these spaces important for different ethnic groups, specially the Muhajirs, Sindhis and later Afghans and pathans. Dr Zaidi’s analysis of post-1947 Karachi shows that the city had suddenly gone an extensive demographic shift, where a new majority i.e. Urdu-speaking muhajir had emerged.³³ Anees Khan, said that due to sudden shift, the locals felt threatened of the new ‘aliens’ and this historically became the issue of ‘son of soils’ and with Ayub’s direct democracy reforms in ’65, the issue of representation became a serious concern of citizens of Karachi.³⁴ It is there that reasons for ethnic control become clear. By controlling ethnically dominated areas, the controlling group gained political leverage which in turn gave political power. As Akhlaq Ahmed pointed out that controlling the ‘spaces’ in Karachi simply meant controlling the resources of that area, it also allowed the controlling party to portray itself representing the ethnicity of that area³⁵, thereby gaining political power through general elections, this is evident by the fact that

³¹ Anees Khan Advocate, interviewed 14th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

³² Gayer, Laurent. 2012. "Political Turmoil in Karachi: Production and Reproduction of Ordered Disorder." *Economic and Political Weekly* (Economic and Political Weekly) 47 (31): 76-84. Accessed September 14, 2018. Pg. 76

³³ Zaidi, S. Akbar. 1997. Op Cit. Pg. 3283

³⁴ Anees Khan Advocate, interviewed 14th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

³⁵ Akhlaq Ahmed, interviewed 15th October 2018. [Interview conducted at interviewees house, recorded and transcribed]

Karachi's two biggest political parties, MQM and PPP are both ethnic based parties. In contrast to Ahmed, Anees Khan, who was himself part of MQM, states that these areas became safe-haven for one's own ethnic group, and rejects the notions that this was merely a way to achieve political power. He believes that the early ethnic riots left the entire city at the mercy of violent groups and in order to establish certain peace in the city, spaces had to be controlled. These 'spaces' were safe-havens, relatively untouched by violent riots and given people a sense of security.³⁶ This clearly illustrates that for the people who were controlling these 'spaces', this was more about social concerns which then developed in to political concerns.

Ethnicity as major force in Karachi has existed since 1947, as shown through the primary research conducted. Due to both social and political issues, ethnicity soon became a deeply contentious issues with ethnic groups becoming concentrated to specific spaces in the city. These spaces were eventually used to control ethnic groups throughout the city, by creating 'interfaces' or through counter-heritage. Systematically controlling these spaces and their political value all contributed to the 'space' becoming a major stage for ethnic issues to play out and eventually becoming a tool for ethnic control in the city.

Conclusion

The importance of ethnicity in Karachi cannot be negated and its manifestations in the city have been in various forms, some in violence, others in politics and various times in the spaces of the city. This paper attempted to explore how then these spaces were employed to exert control on ethnic forces in the city.

³⁶ Gayer, Laurent. 2012. Op. Cit. 79

Laurent Gayer believes that it was sociological factors that led to ethnicization of the spaces in the city, citing the early *muhajir* and *pathan* riots as the first time that ethnicity was becoming contentious issue in the city. His analysis points out the ‘social division of work’ in the city on ethnic basis which promoted the ‘spatialization’ of ethnicity as the first step towards building a highly intrinsic relationship between space and ethnicity. Development of ‘interfaces’ around the city, most notably at Banaras Chowk, historically illustrates how ethnic tensions played out on a geographic field.³⁷ Dr Akbar Zaidi on the other hand finds that ethnic issues were born out of economical factors that plagued the city soon after partition in 1947, eventually coming to a head in Doxiadis’ plan of Karachi 1970 which divided the city in to formal and informal sectors and inadvertently on ethnic basis. The growth of informal sector, which was dominated by *pathans*, put them in direct conflict with the more ‘urbanized’ city dwellers. The two scholarly views, with their differing approaches, do ground the ethnicization of Karachi in spatial issues either resulting from social factors or economical factors. This phenomenon of spatialization allowed the opposing group to easily target the ‘spaces’ of others to a point where spaces became synonymous with a specific ethnic identity in the city by turning the abstract social idea of ethnicity in to one possessing a physical geographical characteristic in the form of ‘space’.

Even the existing general trend, as illustrated through the primary research conducted, tends to show that the idea of ethnicity and its relationship still prevails in Karachi to a degree. A significant majority of the people (67%) were uncomfortable being in an ethnically dominated area of a different group, a similar number were aware of ethnically dominated areas, proving that over the years ethnic groups have spatialized themselves quite visibly, some examples being, F.B. Area, *Sohrab Goth*, *Kati Pahari*. As Ahmed points out, this

³⁷ Gayer, Laurent. 2007. "Guns, Slums, and "Yellow Devils": A Genealogy of Urban Conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan." *Modern Asian Studies* (Cambridge University Press) 41 (3): Pg. 522

allowed easy ‘politicization’ of ethnicity for vote banks and political power in the city as concentrated ethnic groups developed in specific areas, hence ethnicity became a highly politicized issue. The issues of representations and safety seem to be the primary concern for people at the forefront of these ethno-political groups, such as M.Q.M. as expressed by Khan, an ex-member of the party, he rejects that there was any inherent political value to these spaces. Although the fact that currently two of three largest political parties in Karachi have strong ethnic roots seems to negate Khan’s idea but it can be said that for ethno-political leaders the ethnic spaces had social concerns of safety, representation which over the decades became politicized.

Ethnic tensions have plagued Karachi since creation of Pakistan and their effects are still felt today. The role that ‘space’ played in expressing and creating these tensions have often been neglected in the discourse over ethnic violence in the city,³⁸ this research attempts to bridge this gap through discussing the origin of ethnic tensions in the city and understanding their relationship with space. The research clearly indicates that even today ethnicity and space are strongly linked with each other and historically they have played a crucial role in creating these ethnic tensions through factors such as the ‘political value’ of spaces, ‘interfaces’, ‘counter-heritage’ among others. Understanding this role that spaces do play in enabling ethnic conflicts and tensions might help the city of Karachi and its citizens tackle a future spell of ethnic conflict and be aware of how ethnicity has turned in to maleficent force instead of a positive cultural force.

³⁸ Raman, Prassanna. 2012. "Exploring urban resilience: violence and infrastructure provision in Karachi." *Master's Thesis* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Pg. 10.

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Appendices

Interview Questions

- Q 1. What do you think was the major cause of ethnic tensions in Karachi?
- Q 2. Do you think that the conditions for ethnic violence were sown after migration due to contentions of space?
- Q 3. How did these ethnic tensions manifest themselves spatially/geographically?
- Q 4. Did control of 'spaces' eventually become equated to control over 'ethnicity'?
- Q 5. Why was control over space so important to opposing groups?
- Q 6. Keep aside financial interests, did control over space held any other significance?
- Q 7. Do you think this phenomenon is unique to Karachi?
- Q 8. Do you think this relationship of space and ethnicity will continue to effect Karachi in the future?

Survey Questions

45 – Administered, 37-Used

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree.

Q 1. I identify with my ethnic group.

1 – 10 , 2 – 6 , 3 – 15 , 4 – 6, 2

Q 2. I have interacted with people of different ethnicities.

0, 5, 17, 15, 4

Q 3. I live in an area of people with same ethnic identity as me.

6, 8, 20, 3, 2

Q 4. I'm aware of areas which are specific to certain ethnicities.

5, 8, 14, 10, 2

Q 5. I feel comfortable visiting or passing through areas which are dominated by other ethnic groups.

5, 20, 8, 4, 4

Q 6. I feel comfortable visiting or passing through areas which are dominated by my ethnic group.

6, 5, 19, 7, 4

Q 7. I know someone who is cautious in visiting areas which are uni-ethnic in nature.

8, 8, 12, 9, 2

Q 8. I know someone who was harmed in an ethnically dominated area.

12, 3, 18, 4, 2

Q 9. Limiting ethnicities to specific areas is detrimental to Karachi as a city.

6, 3, 18, 10, 4

Q 10 Limiting ethnicities to specific areas is beneficial to Karachi as a city.

12, 18, 3, 4, 2