

## LOSS OF INTRINSIC QUALITIES OF URBAN FORM AND LOCAL SOCIAL PROCESSES IN THE FACE OF GLOBALISATION: CASE OF KARACHI'S OLD TOWN (1)

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### INTRODUCTION

The perception amongst some theorists (King, 2004; Frampton, 1983; Ricoeur, 1983) is that cities in their desire to modernize and change lose their own local identity, as they aspire to achieve a global image. So the question arises, if it is acceptable to let go of the cultural past and take part in the scientific, technical and political objectivity (Ricoeur, 1983), as not every city can absorb the traits of being a modernist city yet retain its old fabric. Another question that arises is about what is lost in this process, and how is the new development valued by the locals? These questions are reviewed in this paper with respect to the city of Karachi, which is experiencing the construction of a number of built forms which repond to the global image and are not locally connected or valued.

There is debate about role of designers in analysing and addressing the connection of locals with the built form and their role in the conception and development of new neighbourhoods within developing world cities (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015; Hirt and Zahm, 2012; Knox, 2011; Peterson, 2010; Watson and Bentley, 2007; Marston, et al., 2005; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003). The understanding of the meaning of space by the indigenous communities is not always bound by the physical notions of space, and at times this is not realized by the professionals, which is a problem as there is lack of link between research and practice. There is a requirement to understand the local communities and their association with local places and to feed the lessons learnt therein into new developments within the cities of the developing world. Some urban anthropologist (Sepea and Pittb, 2014; Low, 2009; Marston et al., 2005; Sheppard and McMaster, 2003; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003) stress on the fact that there is a requirement to analyze places at various scales, ranging between global and local scales, and to comprehend and absorb that the global models do get incorporated in the local contexts. These spatial models are contextual rather than universal. The question

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then arises about how the decisions are taken, and what value systems are addressed in the context of competing views about what should be built. The theoretical aspects of global influences and local aspirations become important. These aspects are sifted through local influences. These observations are true for Karachi's built form too.

Recently, a number of architecturally distinctive buildings and urban spaces have been constructed in Karachi which are a response to projecting a global image for the city (Mumtaz, 1999). These buildings and spaces do not reflect an understanding of the manner in which communities associate with local spaces and thus the indigenous spaces are not included in the design of new developments. In the case of the older areas of the city, there is a huge difference in the manner that the government, the professionals, the residents and market owners perceive the same locality. The government professionals envisage the dense organic urban fabric as a sore eye and are interested in moving the wholesale markets from the locality to the outskirts of the city. If this were to happen it would impact the social and economic setups of the locality. On the other hand, the architects and planners value the locality because of its historical significance, but lack an understanding of the intrinsic relationship of the locals with the built form and the social processes involved therein. For the people residing in the Old Town, the urban spaces that have developed over time and have unique names and character, along with the narrow, organic and meandering streets are part of their daily socializing routines. Furthermore, the perception of the boundary of the locality by local residents and shop owners is based on the jurisdiction of different markets, rather than by administrative divisions defined by the government. The locals associate with the old buildings and other landmarks which overtime have become a part of their identity, and are embedded in their memory of the area. Thus, the locals have a nostalgic association with the built form of the area. They use certain words to describe these spaces, and these words cannot always be translated into other languages, and even if they are they tend to lose some of their meaning. Such spaces have been identified in this research and the meaning and social processes associated with them have been documented. The objective is to ascertain what can be learnt from developing an understanding of these local spaces, which can infuse life into modern urban form. Currently, the modern neighborhoods do not reflect an understanding of the intrinsic qualities of the local urban landscape.

This paper has four sub divisions, with the first section providing a synthesis of the literature reviewed. The second section outlines the research methods. The third section presents the documentation and analysis of the Old Town, in terms of the evolution of the urban form. The fourth and last part analysis the area in terms of local physical and social aspects of the built form, which are valued by the locals, linking up the findings with the literature reviewed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The new built form in developing countries, responding to the 'universal rhetoric of growth' results in the destruction of authenticity (Zukin, 2008). With this destruction the cultures that create urban diversity are destroyed. One of the reasons behind this is the lack of understanding of the professionals involved in the design of the new neighborhoods about the intrinsic quality of urban form and how it is valued by the locals. Another

question that arises is, what is local? especially in terms of built form. According to some theorists, if a city wants to modernize while it retains its localness, architects, urban planners and designers need to develop a means to incorporate features of local form, at the urban and architectural scale, into modern day buildings and urban spaces (Watson and Bentley, 2007). Thus, it becomes important for the professionals to understand the meaning of the built form and the ways in which locals relate with it. But, according to the literature reviewed, the built form discipline, has inadequacies for exploring in all its dimensions the experience of what is local in a specific context. The reasons behind this are many. Firstly, the meaning of space for communities is not always bounded by the physical notions of place, and secondly, these theories being west centric over simplify the analysis of local by labelling it as the opposite of global (Knox, 2011; Unwin, 2009; Watson and Bentley, 2007; Relph, 1987; Alexander, Ishikawa, Silverstein, Max Jacobson and Angel., 1977; Lynch, 1972; Jacobs, 1961). This is particularly true for Karachi, which is a three hundred year old city, which has evolved from a fishing village to a mega metropolis sheltering a population of twenty million, experiencing various informal processes on different scales daily. These processes are not always bound by physical form and geographical locations, and cannot at times be bracketed within larger theoretical streams.

The anthropological approach to understanding the built form gives a sensitivity and deeper understanding about the way locals interact with the built form, and with one another in different urban settings (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015; Hirt and Zahm, 2012; Peterson, 2010; Sheppard and McMaster, 2003; Marston et al., 2005; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Oliver, 1997). This literature also offers ways to understand social affiliation with built form. One way of decoding this connection, according to Oliver (1997), is to understand the structure of local language. According to Oliver 'no detailed study of vernacular architecture and settlement can be complete without paying adequate attention to the conceptual terminology used by the local population'. The author agrees with Oliver (1997) and reinforces that research on particular words used for describing local spaces can explain 'concepts, values and meanings of building within diverse cultures' (Oliver, 1997, 91). Rapoport (1997) outlines four methods for understanding the way locals associate with the built form, and one of the approach is based on semiotic models. This method is based on the identification of specific words used by locals to describe built form and meanings associated with it. Thus, this research attempts to document and analyze such terminologies, along with local social processes and certain words which are used to describe typology of built form.

Furthermore, three basic strategies exist for the semiotic analysis of an urban space; namely urban history, urban myth and urban text (Pilshchikov, 2015). Although in reality these lines are not very clear, but these categories provide some basis for analyzing a city and the urban space, as according to Pilshchikov (2015, 12), "the city is a semiotically charged space, in which various sign systems function and interact, but it is not regarded as a text among other texts". As these strategies provide a rigorous basis for documentation they have been used for recording and analyzing the case study area in this research.

The author also believes that the value given to indigenous language, when describing built form and urban spaces, does not always have to be in terms of physical form (street names written in indigenous language); it can

also take ideological roles. The acknowledgement of a certain local word used to describe an urban space and the inability to translate it into any other language, is a recognition of a certain typology in an urban context. Professionals, however, may not always value these local urban spaces and practices, which cannot be linguistically translated. Thus, there is a requirement to bridge the gap between professional practice and research, so that professionals are better informed. This research is an attempt towards this end. Baloy (2011, 518) puts up a similar argument, where she reinforces that the presence of local languages in an urban context, in the form of local signs, “represents opportunities for reclamation of native identity and pride, decolonization, and assertion of sovereignty”. She acknowledges that indigenous language is a way of “addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in the city” and shows a connection with the local place and people (Baloy, 2011, 538).

Many a times, professionals overlook the local terms used to describe certain type of urban spaces, and instead use foreign terminologies, which represent modern spaces, and are the result of global impacts. Metaphors and similes like cells, nodes and networks, are commonly used to analyze changes in urban spaces (Steger and McNevin, 2010). The usage of these terms drive the development of cities in a particular direction, which may not always connect and reflect local aspirations and associations with built form. For instance, the metaphor of “a city like Dubai” has been used for Karachi by politicians on many occasions, which has resulted in the construction of tall buildings in the city, which are clad with glass and steel, representing certain value preferences of politicians. Thus, there is a symbiotic relationship between terminologies used to describe space, and what actually gets build as “language transforms space just as space transforms language” (Steger and McNevin, 2010, 325).

There is no denying that in an age of globalization cities will be influenced by foreign built form, and the local buildings will be a representation of this influence. It should be accepted that it is not possible to retain all aspects of the indigenous area of a city, but the question arises, what should be retained? This is where the contribution of this research lies, because it attempts to dig out the meanings associated with local form that contribute to social setups and is reflected through the usage of certain terminologies to describe these forms, which can help professionals understand which built form is valued by locals.

This leads to the question of adequate means of representation for new evolving cities of the twenty first century, and one of the means through which this connection is being attempted internationally, is through returning to pedestrian oriented cities. For example, Linda and Kolomeytsev (2017) discuss Dubai and the tropical megapolises of the East, and highlight the tendency of different countries in returning towards pedestrian oriented cities, which promote walking, jogging and biking. This orientation, is partly contributed by the development of information systems, which no longer require movement of people from place to place, and partly contributed by the search for identities for new globalized cities, which is not possible in overautomobilized cities. “That is, pedestrian space has to provide not only the comfortable perception of processes that take place around the subject, but also the understanding of political, social and cultural essence of these processes” (Linda and Kolomyeytsev, 2017, 127). Linda and Kolomyeytsev (2017) stress on the requirement to return from the automobile to pedestrian oriented cities, through which the semiotic

qualities of the urban spaces can be returned. This aspect supports the intrinsic character of Old Town in Karachi, and other similar cities, where the lanes are so narrow that automobile accessibility is limited, which adds to the local flavor and gives the area distinctiveness.

It can be concluded that built heritage is an important aspect of urban environment. As cities develop and transform, the evolution is reflected through the built form. Built form not only has a physical importance, but symbolic vitality too. Many events and memories are associated with it. In the age of globalization and rapidly changing cities, it is just not possible to preserve all the built form. Recent research supports the fact that old as well as contemporary built form helps in creating an identity for a city (Kaymaz, 2013; Steger and McNevin, 2010; Zukin, 2008). The public realm also adds to the identity of the city, as these are spaces where social, cultural and economic activities take place in a city, creating a sense of community. It becomes important to decide what gives identity to an urban space and what is valued by the locals. Thus the author believes that the decoding of local language becomes an important tool to absorb the relationship of communities with the built form, and to decide what built form is essential for the city's character and should be retained.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the case study methodology helps decode the meaning people associate with the built form, rather than providing any sweeping explanations about what is valued.

Yin (2003) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This method enables the researcher to explore the relationships between individuals and organizations through "interventions, relationships, communities, or programs" and supports the "deconstruction and the subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena" (Yin, 2003, 23). Vissak (2010) also points out that the case study method helps in grasping a holistic view of different perspectives. It also offers flexibility in sequencing, reformulating and adding questions, and the researcher can work back and forth between theoretical reading and empirical data.

This research uses mixed methods for collecting the data arching over thirty qualitative interviews, personal observation, one focus group in the case study area, built form documentation through moving and still images documentation, archives review, analysis of sketches (done over time by the author) and mental maps prepared by locals.

A multi method approach for collecting data allowed for triangulation of data through cross checking the findings with the results of the qualitative interviews of locals and professionals, focus group and a workshop of professionals (see Appendix 1). The consistency of findings was checked from the various methods used for data collection and through the semi-structured interviews of design professionals, residents and elected government representatives, focus group interviews with residents and still and moving images and urban form documentation. By overlaying historical urban maps, the built form that had been retained over the years was identified. This also lead to the identification of retention of traditional patterns of space and construction design. The memory and

associated symbols, if any, of these places and buildings were identified through interviewing residents who had resided in the locality over a significant period of time and had economic or social associations with the neighborhood.

To explain the adaptation of urban spaces for different functions, economic evolution, social and environmental changes, the form, function and the context needed to be explained. This was done through mapping the intangible connection and association with the urban context. The typological components that make up the urban area, and create a relationship between built form and social, economic and environmental functions were documented. This approach was not simply a study of the physical form and materials of the built environment, but the social needs that the built form addresses were examined. The socially produced knowledge arising from the interaction between the spatial configurations and social demands was also analyzed. Conclusively, the following methods of data collection were used:

1. Urban form data to understand the evolution of the built form. This was collected through direct observation on site, archival review of maps, photographs, and drawings depicting the built environment. This method was used to put together the history of the locality.
2. The perception of built form was understood through qualitative semi structured interviews of different stakeholders- ranging from government decision makers, architects, planners, developers and local residents. This helped put together the various urban myths and urban text associated with the locality.
3. Focus group in the case study area helped understand how locals value the built form and how they associate with it, which helped outline the local social and urban processes.
4. Following the case study documentation and analysis a workshop was held with professionals (architects, planners and academia) to understand how the concept of social affiliation with the built form is valued by professionals. This which helped understand the type of knowledge professionals have about local built form and how they value it.

### URBAN HISTORY: CASE STUDY OF OLD TOWN, KARACHI

The boundary of Old Town in Karachi is defined by a primary road of the city known as the M.A Jinnah Road (previously known as *Bunder* (Port) Road) to the south and by the Lyari River to the north. M.A Jinnah Road is a colonial development of the 1850s, and has always acted as a divider between the old and the new town, and acts as a major artery that connects the city to the Port (**Figure 1**). The Old Town is a vernacular settlement where the city originated in the eighteenth century. This area consists of narrow meandering streets having mixed land use and high built up density. The area also has a number of stone buildings, belonging to pre-colonial times, although these stone structures are in poor shape and are being fast replaced by modern structures.

The Old Town is located next to two wholesale markets of Karachi, the cloth and the paper markets. Retailers and merchandisers from the entire country frequent the area. The wholesale market was initiated by the Hindu merchants in the early eighteenth century, as they merchandized



Figure 1. Old Town, Karachi.

goods from across the Arabian Sea, which eventually led to the development of the Port in Karachi, and thus the city acquired the status of a trading center. The importance of the city as a trading city with the presence of a port was recognized by the British, and the city was annexed to the Colonial Empire in 1843. Eventually, the British also developed the infrastructure in the city and built buildings to house civic facilities and administrative offices. The Port was also expanded and developed by the Colonial rulers, and its full potential for that time was realized. This resulted in the expansion of commerce in the city, which in turn attracted people from different walks of life, belonging to diversified communities. These communities built living quarters in specified neighborhoods, depending on their economic and social status.

To address the demand for residential and commercial buildings from the migrating merchants many structures were constructed, which led to the increase in the density of the city, and a change in the overall urban fabric. The newer neighborhoods (quarters) were mostly mixed use, housing commercial and residential uses, with the M.A Jinnah Road serving as a divider for the city. Eventually the commercial buildings in the case study area exceeded the residential buildings, and a new typology of apartment buildings was introduced in the area, in the early nineteenth century. Many of these structures are still present and form a part of the case study area.

The Market quarter was developed as an extension of the Old quarter. It had an organic plan and developed without any formal pattern. Many years later it was regulated through a super imposed grid and annexed by Sir Bartle Frere in 1840s. The major wholesale market within the quarter, named Bolton market, is still a vibrant wholesale fresh vegetable and fruit market. To date, this quarter houses one temple, three shrines and four mosques. There were many water wells in this locality too, but these have dried up over time.

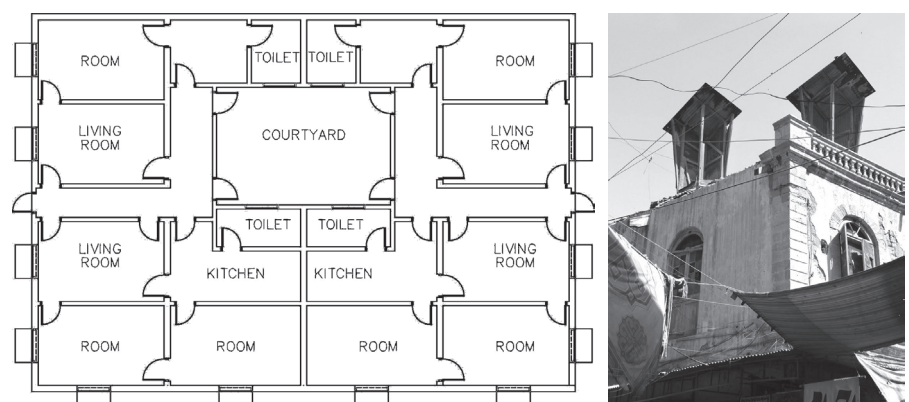
The Bunder quarter, which is the third quarter within the study area, is named after Bunder Road (now MA Jinnah Road) and the city's first and still surviving police station is located within it, along with one shrine and two mosques. The introverted house has been an intrinsic element of the old town, with its mixed land use which has evolved as an economic, climatic and social response to the requirements of the merchants who

came and settled in the area. Through reflecting upon the development of this typology of built form, an understanding can be developed regarding the response to the urban form, climate, technology, aesthetics and aspects of traditional and modern architecture.

The population density of the case study area was two hundred and eighty people per acre (Lari and Lari 2000, 98) as compared to the neighboring white town, where the density was one person per acre, in the early twentieth century. The old indigenous city had organic street layouts with narrow streets, irregular plot sizes and intimate public and semi-public spaces. The locality had mixed land use, with places of worship, residential and commercial spaces all intertwined, promoting pedestrianization, as all types of places were within easy reach. The locality was divided into *mohallahs* (neighborhoods), where religious spaces (shrines, temples and mosques) were the focal points, and the Friday market held a crucial location in the city.

The private dwellings were oriented towards the internal courtyard. These structures expanded vertically in an incremental fashion and they were lined up by other residences on either side. The construction of these houses was simple frame structure, with a flat roof and windows opening onto the internal courtyard. The finishing of the houses was done in thick layer of mud plaster (Lari and Lari 2000). Wind catchers were designed on the roof tops, to scoop the wind and light into the structure, thus they dominated the skyline of the locality (**Figure 2**). The roof top was utilized for socializing during evenings and for sleeping at night time. The roof had low parapet walls, thus socializing could also take place between neighbors while residents enjoyed their evening tea. The ground floor of the structure had shops, while the upper floors had residential apartments, and usually the owner of the shop and the apartment was the same merchant family. This typology of the house was a response of the aesthetic and social requirements of the communities, as was evident by the usage of roof tops for socializing, additionally wooden screens, bamboo blinds and ventilators were used to maintain privacy, and the façade often had stone carvings and mouldings of human, animals, figures, flora and fauna, depending on the religious beliefs of the residents.

A similar typology of apartments, with a central courtyard was developed at a later date, within the Old Town, to accommodate merchants migrating to the city with their families. Each apartment was under single ownership, and was clustered around a communal courtyard (**Figure 2**), which helped the apartments receive light and ventilation. The ground floor of these



**Figure 2.** Typical apartment plan in Old Town and wind catcher on a structure in Old Town



buildings housed shops, the mezzanine floor had storage spaces and the upper floors had apartments measuring approximately eighty square feet.

Another important urban element of the locality is the public squares (*chowk*) which are, to date, the only open spaces in the locality, and these were located at the culmination points of the roads and were not formally planned. They mostly developed in the left over, oddly shaped spaces as a result of the organic development of the Old Town. They were also located on open space around shrines and mosques.

### URBAN MYTHS AND URBAN TEXT: AFFILIATION WITH URBAN SPACE

The residents of the Old Town to date have strong affiliations with local urban spaces. The historical evolution of the locality and the private house as a typology are still intrinsic parts of the fabric of the Old Town. It was observed that the participants of the interviews were conscious of the heritage significance of the neighborhood, and they attached a sense of identity, based on the historical significance of the locality. The residents were also aware of the many monuments in the neighborhood. The shops and streets were special social nodes for the residents, as mentioned in the interviews, as they were valued as open spaces in the dense locality, and the streets took on the role of open spaces. Furthermore, for the residents the edge of the markets had value, and they identified with these edges as formal limits of different neighborhoods, rather than the formal jurisdictions.

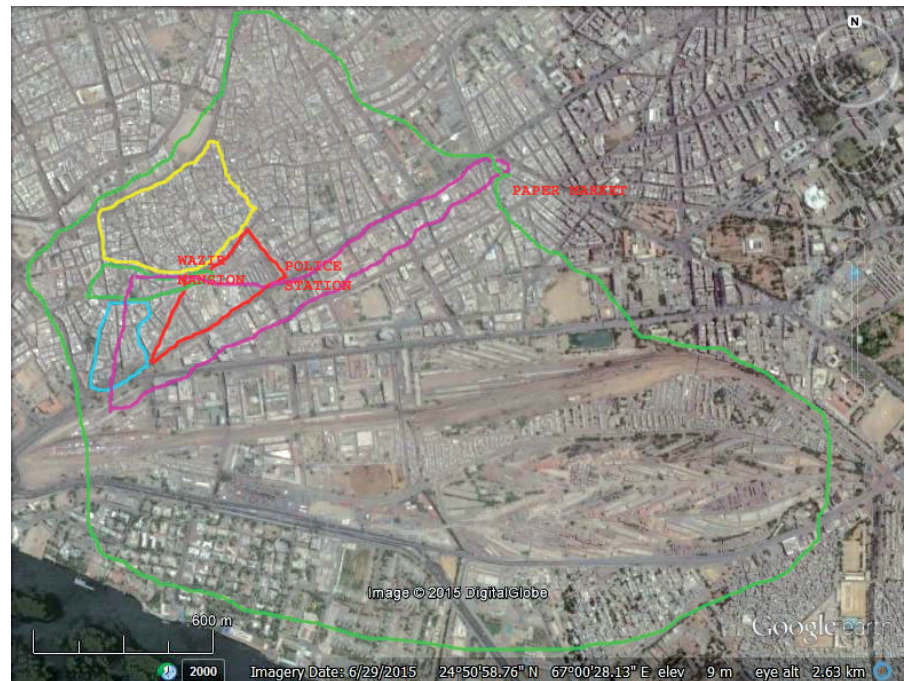
The *chabootras* (platforms in front of buildings) acted as socializing spaces for the residents during different times of the day. They were occupied by women in the morning, and by men in late evening. In case the *chabootras* were absent, residents would put movable furniture, like chairs, and sit on the streets in the evening to socialize on the streets (**Figure 3**).

At the intersection of the streets spaces were created which were utilized by the residents for social interaction, and was formalized by the presence of tea stalls. Such nodes were known as *chowks* in Urdu, the local language, and they formed an essential part of the urban form of the area. These spaces were also used for out spill of larger crowds when they located next to a shrine or a mosque.

An additional distinctive feature of the locality was the manner in which the streets were named. The streets were named on the basis of the type

**Figure 3.** Platforms used for socializing and for market related activity





**Figure 4.** Maps of area boundaries as perceived by residents of Old Town

of merchandise being sold there in, and not by their formal names. For instance, if a street housed a market selling spices, then it would be called *masala gali* (spice street), and if a street housed vendors selling books, it would be called *kitab gali* (books street).

The residents conceived the boundaries of the locality in various ways. When asked to map the limits of the locality different maps were prepared. Some of these maps envisaged the main road as the edge of the locality, others saw the markets as the edges and still others viewed the Town as the boundary of the locality (**Figure 4**).

The residents were also conscious of the historical attribute of the area, and were interested in the conservation and maintenance of old buildings, which reflected a sense of their identity, as evident in the interviews. There were many buildings within the area, which were pointed out as important buildings during the stakeholder interviews and focus group discussion, although some of these buildings were not on the official heritage list for the locality. The residents however attached meaning to them, because either they had been part of the neighborhood since its inception, or because they associated a certain event or incident to it (**Figure 5**).

As can be seen in **Figure 5** residents attached meaning to built form beyond the Old Town and a few landmark buildings across M.A. Jinnah Road were also pointed out as important built forms. Residents also associated meaning with public built forms like markets, mosques and monuments.

Interestingly, the important built form which was mentioned by government officials in the Old Town did not include small mosques, shrines and markets that the residents of Old Town associated meaning with. Government officials pointed out the Khaliq Dina Hall was an important building, whereas it did not have any meaning or association for the residents and shop owners of Old Town. This was perhaps because in reality it was a building with a historical significance, which did not affect



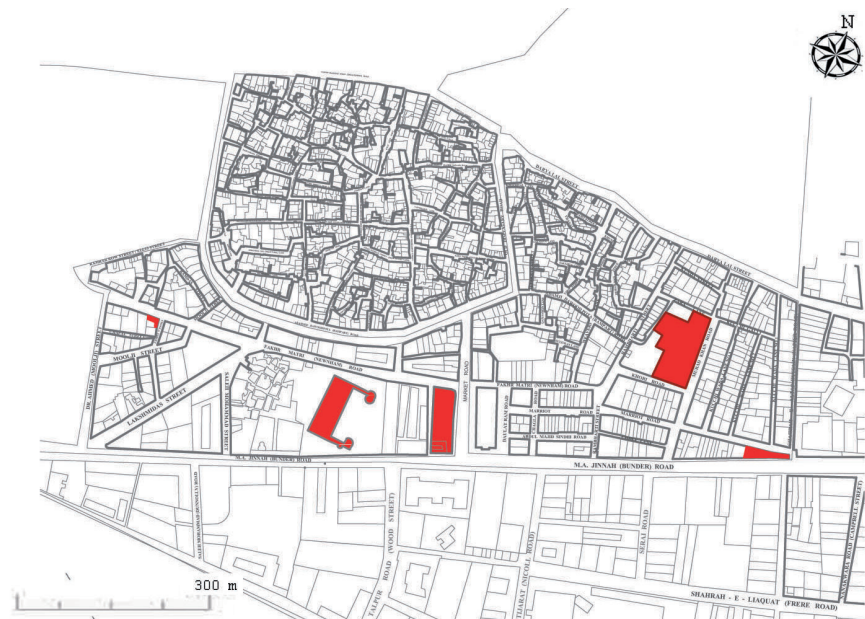
**Figure 5.** Places important for people within the Old Town and its immediate vicinity

the everyday lives of the people. It has a hall, which is used occasionally for events. One room within it houses a library and another room is occupied by an office of a NGO.

### LOCAL SOCIAL PROCESSES

The social structure of Old Town consists of extended families. The residents of the area are the people who have inherited the apartments that they live in from their families. According to the interviews of the residents, the elderly had strong bonding with the locality and the neighborhood and were not willing to shift out of the area, despite various infrastructure, operation and maintenance issues in the locality. The younger lot on the other hand, was willing to shift to a less dense locality, even if it was located further away from the city center. It was generally observed that people formed strong social affiliations with the neighborhood as they were seen socializing more on the streets and in front of different shops. The congested locality and narrow streets resulted in less vehicular access, which eventually lead to the streets being used by children as play areas, especially on public holidays when the markets were closed and the area was less congested. People were seen co-existing happily in clusters. These clusters were based on ethnicity, and gave a sense of homogeneity while tending a local flavor to the locality. This was evident in the usage of streets as an extension of the living space of the apartments.

The shop owners of different markets had a sense of strong bonding too. Majority of the shop owners had been working in the area for almost forty to forty-five years, and many of them resided within the same locality



**Figure 6.** Important built form in Old Town as mentioned by government officials

too. As the same locality was the place of work and residence for many, thus the sense of ownership was very strong in terms of looking after the interest of the community and general well-being of the locality.

A number of informally run organizations operated in the locality for provision of education and health facilities. These organizations (*Kutiyana Memon Society, Pakistan Memon Ittehad* and various Market unions) were dominated by representation from political parties, which may not always be the elected political party. Community heads ran some of these organizations, while others were operated by NGOs, CBOs and members of market unions. These organizations worked as a bridge between the interest of the government and the local community, for the maintenance and provision of municipal services. Markets had their own unions based on their typology, whereas organizations operating in residential areas were based on ethnicity. Many such organizations were dominated by the *Memon* community. Example of such ethnicity based organization was the *Kutiyana Memon Community Organization*, which operated hospitals, clinics and schools in the neighborhood. This community had contacts with other similar organizations in the city and received funding from various donors. Through these donations the organization was able to provide financial support to the under-privileged members of the community, in the form of loans that were payable on easy installments and were given on the basis of mutual trust.

A social bonding was evident in the way residents were seen socializing with one another, or the way they spoke about codependency on their neighbors for various daily tasks, like looking after children while parents were away running chores, or celebrating festivals together. This codependency was also seen in the way the residents socialized. Residents socialized on the streets, from their apartment windows, on the staircase landings, on balconies and in front of shops. As the streets were congested because of market activity, therefore residents preferred interacting with neighbors at various other levels. The residents did speak of congestion in the locality, and lack of recreational and open public spaces where they could enjoy with their families, and they were not satisfied with the law

and order situation and complained of frequent mobile snatching, but in reality these issues did not seem to impact the social character of the area, and the neighborhood seemed to be inundated by the hustle and bustle.

The presence of the mosques, temples and especially the shrines give the neighborhood another interesting local essence. These religious spaces have always been an important social fabric of the locality and they are frequented by devotees not only from the neighborhood, but from the city at large, and from the entire country too. These religious spaces serve as important landmarks and social gathering spaces for the neighborhood, and are seen as part of the identity of the area. The entire locality transforms at the time of annual celebrations marking the birthday or death day of the various saints, who are buried in these shrines. There is also a huge informal economy attached to the running and upkeep of these shrines. There are trusts set up by the direct descendants of the various saints, or the care takers of the mosques and temples, who collect alms for the upkeep and maintenance of the edifices, for providing free food to the poorer sections of the society and for offering sleeping spaces for travelers and for homeless people. These religious buildings are vital tangible heritage, and the locals see them as important landmarks which are intrinsic part of their memory of the area. During the annual celebration the streets leading to the shrines are adorned with colorful lights, and various types of stalls selling food, local handicraft and products for offerings at the shrine like fresh flowers and decorated fabric to be laid over the grave of the saints. Furthermore, a number of mobile swings move into the streets as well, along with other game stalls, to keep the children entertained while their parents make offerings at the shrines and are engaged in some rituals. A number of such shrines and the allied functions can be spotted in the locality, and within the city at large. These shrines and allied activities are an integral part of the local culture as they become a means of entertainment, recreation and are seen as an activity bonds the locality socially and boosts the economy too.

A number of physical features of the built forms, like sectional and decorative stone details, usage of wooden *jalis* (screens) for privacy, bamboo blinds, courtyard typology of the house, and floral stone carving patterns, add to the overall character of the neighborhood, since residents associate a sense of continuity in the chronological development of the area as these design elements still survive to this day.

One of the reasons behind the continued existence of the area's physical form and historical buildings is the presence of the homogenous community in the area. This community is not only socially bonded, but also values the physical assets of the locality. Many informal and social organizations operate within the community for the maintenance, running and upkeep of the locality, and work towards promoting its historical significance. If it were not for the role and presence of the community, the area would have fallen prey to neglect and other global forces, that demand for the construction of a particular typology of built form. But unfortunately, this co-existence between the tangible and intangible aspects of a locality are neither understood nor acknowledged by many of the professionals who are involved in the art of building, and thus this quality is not reflected in newer neighborhoods. The introverted house, *chowk* and *chabootra* are not part of the urban and housing design in new neighborhoods. As the localized social processes help bring out the uniqueness of the area, thus, it is essential for professionals to acknowledge

the co-dependency of local physical form and social processes, if a city is to retain its uniqueness and individuality, as Sassen (2012) points out that the acknowledgement of the localized forms and processes can help cities achieve global advantage.

### LOCAL URBAN PROCESSES

Ownership of property in the Old Town is based on the *pagri* system, which is an informal lease arrangement between the owner of the property and the person who rents it. Nothing is recorded on paper and the agreement is carried out on the basis of mutual trust and simply by word of mouth. The owner of the property lets the tenant use the property after receiving a certain amount of cash (*pagri*) as rent. This amount is usually less than the amount being offered in the open market, elsewhere in the city. The tenant continues to pay a nominal rent amount while using the premises, and cannot be evicted, while the property remains in the name of the original owner who continues to pay taxes related to the property. Every time there is a change in tenancy, the original owner receives a certain percentage of first month's rent amount. This method of renting premises in the Old Town has been practiced since the early nineteenth century, and is still practiced and preferred as it is based on mutual trust, and since the community is socially bonded the need to introduce a formal system of renting is not felt, as all related paperwork can be avoided. But the downside of this system is that house loans cannot be obtained for the purchase of such property, as the properties do not conform to the requirements property registration system. The property owner does not own any documentation of the property or any title deeds, thus the property cannot be sold in the open market. Furthermore, as the tenancy terms and conditions are left undocumented, there is no cover to fall back on in the case of a dispute between the tenant and the property owner.

It has also been witnessed that this informal system of rent, where the tenant cannot be evicted, can become a threat to the old buildings, because property owners do resort to other means of evacuating the property, like putting the buildings on fire, or causing some other damage due to which the tenant is forced to leave the premises. The weak heritage conservation laws and their implementation worsens the situation.

Although *pagri* system has many problems associated to it but these traditional systems have some merit too, and if these systems can be formalized, they can work towards strengthening the social relationships between communities and minimizing the commodification of property. One of the greatest merits of the '*pagri*' system is that it does not see property as a commodity, as land title remains in the name of the original owner and the tenant is allowed to use the premises on the payment of a rent (*pagri*). This ties in with Payne's (2006) argument related to the breaking down of the traditional land management systems, because of the introduction of capitalist concepts of property ownership which has drastically changed the way property is viewed and valued.

Although Payne (2006) asserts that "globalization is tending towards conformity to a predominantly western world view", resulting in universal applicability of spatial languages, Sassen (2012) points out that localization of globalization takes place in different ways, and although cities of the developing world try to imitate the western cities, but what actually gets built is sifted through locally available resources, technology and

is a response to local economic realities and social norms. At some other instances, the built form may be direct replicas of the models from the west, but how these forms get adapted and adopted is based on the local response. Therefore, there is a need to understand social norms, local aspirations, diversity and the association with physical built form, and the connect, or the lack of it, with the official planning policy which tries to embrace a global outlook.

## CONCLUSION

Urban spaces which house social activities and processes are valued by locals. People have meanings associated with these spaces, and these meanings are reflected in the local terminologies used. More than the physicality of form, the social processes are celebrated by the locals. These processes give an urban area its authenticity which is referred to by Zukin (2008). Thus, cities thriving to attain a global image, are merely creating hollow shells which have global outlook, whereas the processes housed within may remain local, as that is what locals value.

Furthermore, certain urban forms and types are untranslatable into a language that has no words for them (predominantly English), and, because of the influence of imported design language, these spaces are often lost in newer developments. Thus, one way for cities to retain their intrinsic urban form and derive lessons about the value given to processes associated with them, is to retain local words used for these spaces. Professionals involved in the design of newer localities, which are influenced by globalization, need to understand these processes too. These local spaces are not valued by professional designers, planners and architects, especially those who are trained in the west, and involved with new urban developments. There is a significant disjunction between western architectural ideologies (even though they may talk about the importance of the vernacular in informing locally relevant design) and local forms, as they are produced and experienced. There is a requirement to dig out the meanings associated with local form that contribute to social setups and is reflected through the usage of certain terminologies to describe these forms.

The research also reinforces that the methods used by urban anthropologists, being cross disciplinary, (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015; Sepea and Pittb, 2014; Hirt and Zahm, 2012; Peterson, 2010; Low, 2009; Marston et al., 2005; Sheppard and McMaster, 2003; Low and Lawrence, 2003) are sound (semiotic model), and help in understanding how people relate with built form. These theories can inform theories associated with physicality of built form (Alexander et al., 1977; Frampton, 1983; Knox, 2011; Unwin, 2009).

The research also highlights that it is naïve to simply term cities of the developing world as trying to become global in their outlook, because even if a city copies built form of the west, it is adopted, adapted and localized according to local social, economic and other requirements and realities. This is an area which can be further explored. What is lost and retained in this process of adaption and adoption can be researched further, as many other cities of the developing world face similar issues. There is a need to look into spaces at diverse scales, both global and local, and to analyze what global models are retained in the process and if these models are contextualized or globalized.

### APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP AND PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOP DETAILS

	Date	Duration and Venue	Participants
Focus Group in Kharadar with Shop Owners and Residents	10-6-2015	1 hour Venue: Meeting room, Kharadar Primary School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Abdul Kareem Budhani, Secretary Kutiana Memon Association</li> <li>2. (Sikander Duppattaywala – Chairman Saddar Meethadar Association, Saddar, Ex councilor</li> <li>3. Abdul Rauf – Resident + Shop keeper/ owner Kharadar</li> <li>4. Ayesha Khatoon- Resident Kharadar</li> <li>5. Maroof Hussain- Resident Kharadar</li> </ol>
Workshop Discussion with Professionals	24-4-2015	1.5 hours Venue: Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Architect Yawar Jilani</li> <li>2. Architect Moyeena Ahmed</li> <li>3. Prof. Dr. Noman Ahmed</li> <li>4. Associate Prof. Architect Fariha Amjad</li> <li>5. Assistant Prof. Architect Masooma Mohib Shakir</li> <li>6. Assistant Prof. Architect Fahmida Sheikh</li> <li>7. Assistant Prof. Architect Shabnum Nigar</li> <li>8. Lecturer Architect Rahat Arsalan (</li> <li>9. Karachi Development Authority Planner Islamuddin Siddiqui</li> <li>10. Planner Farhan Anwar</li> </ol>

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### KÜRESELLEŞME ÇAĞINDA KENTSEL FORMUN İÇKİN NİTELİKLERİNİN VE YEREL TOPLUMSAL SÜREÇLERİN KAYBI: KARAÇİ ESKİ KENT ÖRNEĞİ

Batı şehirlerini taklit etme isteği bağlamında, gelişmekte olan ülkelerde yer alan pek çok şehirde, farklı bağlamlarda üretilmiş yapı formu körü körüne kopyalanmakta ve bu durum iklimsel, sosyal ve ekonomik olarak bağlamına uymayan yapıları çevrenin ortaya çıkmasına sebep olmaktadır. Belli bir yapı tipinin modernizmi ve geleceği temsil ettiği varsayıldığı için bu kopyala-yapıştır uygulamaları halen devam etmektedir. Bu uygulama Pakistan'ın tüm büyük şehirlerinde görülebilir.

Gerçekte, yerel toplulukların mekân algısı her zaman fiziksel formla ilişkili değildir. Toplumun yapıları çevreyle kurduğu sosyal bağ, dilsel veya fiziksel olarak başka dillere çevrilemez. Yabancı ithal tasarım dilinin neden olduğu etkiler nedeniyle küresel bir imaj yansıtmayı amaçlayan yeni gelişme alanlarında, yerel yapıları için belirgin nitelikler kaybolmaktadır. Yerel toplumun ve bölge sakinlerinin kullandıkları dilde, kentsel mekânı ve yapıların içerisindeki mekanları belirgin bir biçimde tanımlayan özel kelimeler bulunmaktadır. Bu kelimeler yabancı dillere çevrildiklerinde fiziksel ve kavramsal özlerini kaybederler.

Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar, odak grup çalışmaları, kentsel form belgelemesi, arşiv incelemesi ve kişisel gözlemlere dayanan karma bir araştırma yöntemi kullanılan bu araştırma; yerel yapıları çevre ve yapı biçimi üretimine dair çalışmasından toplumun yerel mekâna verdiği değere ve küresel güçlerin etkisine dair dersler çıkarmaktadır. Bu makale, Pakistan'ın Karaçi kentinde yöreye özgü bir bölgeyi analiz ederek kentsel mekân ve yerel yapıları formla ilişkili, resmi planlama dili olan İngilizceye çevrilemeyen belirli kelimeleri tanımlamaktadır.

Bu araştırma, yapıları çevre ve form kuramcılarına kıyasla kentsel antropologların, toplumu analiz etmeye yönelik disiplinler arası yaklaşımları nedeniyle, yerel halkın yapıları formla ilişkisini anlamak için daha avantajlı olduklarını saptamaktadır. Ayrıca, hangi kentsel formun korunması gerektiğini ve bu mekânsal modellerin evrenselden ziyade bağlamsal olduğunu anlamak için çeşitli küresel ve yerel ölçeklerdeki

mekanları analiz etme gereksinimi olduğunun da altını çizmektedir. Çalışma, sosyal yapılara katkıda bulunan ve belirli terminolojilerin kullanılmasıyla yansıtılan yerel formla ilişkili anlamları vurgulamaya çalışır. Bu teşhis, böylece, profesyonellerin hangi yapılı formun yerel toplum tarafından değer gördüğünü ve nasıl/neden bu yapılı forma değer verildiğini anlamalarına yardımcı olabilir.

### **LOSS OF INTRINSIC QUALITIES OF URBAN FORM AND LOCAL SOCIAL PROCESSES IN THE FACE OF GLOBALISATION: THE CASE OF KARACHI'S OLD TOWN**

In their aspiration to imitate cities of the west, many cities in the context of the developing world blindly copy the built form being constructed in other contexts, irrespective of the fact that this imitation may lead to creation of built form which may not be climatically, socially and economically relevant. As a certain type of building is supposed to represent modernism and the future, thus this exercise of copy pasting continues. This practice is evident in all major cities of Pakistan.

At ground reality, the perception of space, by the local communities, is not always related to the physical form. The social attachment of the communities with the built form cannot be translated, either linguistically or physically, into other languages. Through the influence of foreign imported design language, significant aspect of local built form is lost in newer developments that aspire to project a global image. There are certain words of the local language used by communities and residents that describe urban space and spaces within buildings, in a particular manner. These words lose their physical and conceptual essence if they are translated in foreign languages.

Using mixed methods, based on semi structured interviews, focus groups, urban form documentation, archive review and personal observation, this research postulates lessons from its study of local built form production on the value given to local places by communities and the impact of global forces. This paper analyses an indigenous locality in Karachi, Pakistan, identifying certain words associated with urban spaces and local built form, which cannot be translated into the official planning language, which is English.

The research identifies that urban anthropologists are better positioned to understand the way locals associate with built form because of their cross-disciplinary approach to analyzing the society, as compared to built form theorists. It also identifies that there is a requirement to analyze places at diverse global and local scales to understand what urban forms need to be retained and to understand that these spatial models are contextual, rather than universal. The research attempts to highlight the meanings associated with local form that contribute to social setups and is reflected through the usage of certain terminologies. This recognition can in turn help professionals understand which built form is valued by locals, and how and why is it valued.

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