Conflicting Binaries and Urban Spaces: the Case of Merewether Tower Precinct in Karachi (Pakistan)

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Abstract: In the South Asian context, public spaces accommodate various forms of informality. Economic, social and political procedures may at times have a vital role in the management and organization of these spaces. The interface between the informal and formal use of land and associated activities comes into competition when the notion gets tied to the creation of an identity for the urban space. In such a situation, these urban spaces accommodate conflicts between global and local identities within the neo-liberal agenda, informal and formal socio-economic practices, and various opposing forces related to traffic and pedestrian movements. Using a case-based methodology, this paper maps the various parallel working jigsaws of conflicting binaries and the many types of negotiations happening on a daily basis within the historic precinct of Merewether Tower in Karachi. In doing so the paper tweezes out the significant and inevitable role of informal enterprises and negotiations in the urban realm as un-detachable from the creation of public urban space in the global south

Keywords: Urban Design, Public Space, identity, accessibility, informality, inner city, neo-liberalism.

1. Introduction

In the south Asian context, public spaces accommodate various types of informalities. These informalities often go unnoticed, but when they come in conflict with development of neo liberal practices and notions of identities for the urban area, then they are questioned by the authorities. In such situations, informality is neither comprehended nor accepted by the decision-makers, partly because there is the absence of comprehension about how to address the two opposing forces within an urban realm. 'Informality' is a term used to outline the commercial ventures, workers, and activities that operate outside the regulatory and legal systems (Perry, Fajnzylber, Maloney, Mason, & Saavedra-Chanduvi, 2007).

The query that emerges is how to plan/ develop / regulate public spaces which are people-centric and sensitive to various informal and formal socio-economic processes addressing the larger global agendas related to 'identity' simultaneously. The significant and inevitable role of informal enterprises and negotiations in the urban setting as un-detachable from the production of public urban space in the context of the global south has been researched by theorists (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2015; Graaff & Ha, 2015; Hillier & Hanson, 1984; Roy & Sayyad, 2006; Sassen S., 2012; Zukin, 2008). What is less researched is how to mitigate conflict between local and global agendas and formality and informality, which this research focuses upon. Focusing on the case of the Merewether Tower Precinct in Karachi, this paper highlights these

informal practices and the ways they are at odds with the formal forces. The idea is to develop a better comprehension of the ways to mitigate/ work around the two opposing forces and conflicting binaries, which are formality and informality.

The central area of Karachi houses historical buildings and many of them have acquired monumental value with the passage of time. The open areas around these buildings are utilised for various purposes, ranging from bus stops, accommodation of hawkers, informal food stalls and as spaces for hideouts of beggars and other socially rejected groups of society. The precinct houses wholesale markets, along with the central business district of the city (CBD) which houses head offices of multinational corporations and banks, the city's stock exchange, other financial institutes, and government offices. These generate the critical retail, corporate, and service activities serving as the impetus for the informal sector.

The area under study here, Merewether Tower and its precinct has recently witnessed many other urban projects being developed for the locality, in backing of the Bus Rapid Transport Project aimed to address the transport problems of the city at large. In line with this Project and with the bigger global agenda, the local government has oriented itself to the formation of an enhanced urban environment that accommodates pedestrian-friendly spaces and thus develops distinctiveness for the city. However, it is unclear how these public spaces are envisaged and if they would take into account the complicated attributes of public spaces, including the various informal practices taking place within these spaces at present. The aspects that are unclear are if retail, service, and warehousing activities shall continue to exist with informal service providers performing their jobs. Will these planned developments relate to the needs of this cross-section of people? Thus, this paper analyses the existing utilization of a major public space within Karachi and brings forth the formality and informality of these spaces. In the process the paper contributes in the direction of weaving an identity for the neighbourhood and for the city at large.

The research is based on local contextual realities, documenting the activities of public spaces. These include streets and allied functions, along with the public transportation proposal. The case-based methodology is based on quantitative and qualitative data collection. The methods include interviews of people belonging to various stakeholders and interest groups, along with physical mapping and documentation of the area. The findings add to the theoretical frameworks that define public spaces, incorporating various informal processes and agendas within this framework, in order to make it more realistic and workable in the given context.

2.Theoretical background

The field of urban design and classifications of public spaces took off in the last century with a major focus on aesthetics of physical form, morphological and typo-morphological classifications (Krier, 2008; Sitte 1889; Zucker 1959). The later decades have seen theoretical inclinations from sociological perspective aiming to make users and their perceptions a premise. Hall (1966) and Wallin (1998) have highlighted the juxtaposition between impersonal and abstract spaces to proxemic spaces dictated by cultural norms. The political economy perspective has also offered a direction for the classification of public spaces (Gulick 1998). These theoretical variations acknowledge the incoherence and disunity inherent in ideas of morphological and form-oriented public space classifications. Contemporary theorists like Davoudi & Madanipour (2015), Mitchell (2000), Roy & Sayyad (2006), and Zukin (2008) have put forward questions for urban design and public space production as the prescribed global agenda. This is acknowledged to be a paradoxical reality for a context that houses informality and is facilitated by it (Devlin, 2015; Graaff & Ha, 2015). The argument put forward is that public spaces not only help in building an identity for a city, but also have many livelihoods associated to them, and the acknowledgement of the formal and informal processes within this relationship is imperative. The question raised is how a balance can be achieved in the face of conflicting binaries such as neo-liberalism and informality.

Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas (1996) suggest that globalism and neo-liberalism suppress local comprehension of public spaces, and do not aim to arrive at the accurate meaning of the space. The understanding of urban space used is dictated by both formal and informal practices and meanings. Legitimacy, law regulation, and its tussle with 'justified' informality, 'informal custom', is often attributed to a lack of law enforcement. Legitimacy thus validates this co-existence until the neoliberal

paradigm dictation brings about ruthless policy enforcement. The global agenda is targeting the informal use of public space in abrupt, ad-hoc ways, with little acknowledgment of the alternative considerations. The two kinds of practices need to be decoded, in order to achieve public spaces which are rich, thriving, and reflect the true spirit of the context (Collins, 2004; Hillier & Hanson, 1984; Madanipour, 2010; Massey, 2004). The conduct of people related to adoption, management, ownership, and role in creating public spaces adds meaning and value to them. Thus, it is vital to be acknowledged and included in formal policymaking.

In more recent literature, public space management is advocated as a bottom-up phenomenon, rather than a top-down approach (Carmona & Magalhaes, 2006). But in reality, current planning trends based on the privatization of public space is limiting the amount and types of public spaces available to the general public (Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous, 2018). Public spaces perform an important role in every city, as they house and facilitate everyday life. They become the physical markers where nonphysical elements of culture, politics, economy and society are housed. Public spaces also acquire the role of being platforms for the different social groups in society where various forms of expressions take place (Madanipour, 2010). They also become spaces of contestation and competition at times (Collins, 2004). Furthermore, public spaces lead to the generation of an identity for a city. According to Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous (2018, p. 797), "two fundamentally opposing driving forces that act in public space can be identified: one ephemeral and performative, the other, stabilizing and solidifying". Between the informal and formal space use, the formal can largely be grouped into the latter driving force, while the informal within the former. While there is a reciprocal relationship between the informal and formal space use in the public realm, where both benefit from one another, the informal largely suffers given its floating status. The formal harbors the informal and sometimes the formal acts informally, knowing its advantages and dealing with its consequences.

For this paper the public space falls within the realm of an ambiguous space, as within the historical core it is accessed through various negotiations, within the formal and informal realm, and has many privately run practices which impinge upon the public space. The negotiations often fall within ambiguity and are difficult to theorize. For example, public space can be the result of "negotiations" between opposing forces. These forces become important to be identified and decoded in order to understand the working of such space. The reading and understanding of the way streets are utilized can lead to an understanding of the "chance encounters and co-existence across diverse social and ethnic divides whilst patterns of daily encounters may foster familiarity between individuals" (Hillier & Hanson, 1984, p. 245). These encounters and social boundaries, which get translated into visible or invisible physical boundaries, can also lead to gentrification, which is yet another social phenomenon that needs decoding. Amin and Thrift (2002) put forward the argument that the 'micropublics of everyday social contact and encounter' are far more important in 'reconciling and overcoming ethnic cultural differences' (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 959). These so-called everyday encounters are what needs to be recorded and translated in order to tweeze out the essence of public space and its workings.

Within this larger urban paradigm, and the conflict between formal and informal processes, informality takes on a fluid and flexible presence and formality makes itself evident through rigid presence (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous, 2018). The public places and in turn the identity of the city is developed within this binary co-existence, with both the formal and informal processes playing an equally important role. The public spaces are mostly developed via formal processes, but in the context of the global south, they become containers of various informal processes and negotiations, as is evident in the case study analyzed in this paper.

Furthermore, the commodification of public space under the neo-liberal agenda devoid of public space from its intrinsic quality and shapes it into a certain typology where there is no room for informality (Graaff & Ha, 2015; Roy & Sayyad, 2006). Within this paradigm, informality gets theorized and is simply bracketed into something which is equated to disorder and simply not desirable (Devlin, 2015; Mitchell, 2000). On the contrary, as witnessed on the ground, informal commerce and processes that have been prevalent for decades become a norm. They can be attributed to a lack of planning, enforcement, and management. In addition, often it is informal negotiations and activities that create fuzziness

in the boundaries of civic and service spaces. While public space characteristics, like the ease of movement and legibility, are mostly compromised, the characteristics of adaptability and diversity find creative endeavors. Imageability stands compromised but a developed sense of community ownership is found given the need to create stability in its 'temporary' characteristic.

Imagery, safety, comfort and sociability are some of the factors defining psychological access (Erkip, 1997; Madanipour, 2010; Whyte, 2000). The activities housed within a public space become a major building block and with more variety in activities, there is greater ownership of space (Whyte, 2000). As for accessing public space, various stakeholders may experience hindrances in terms of physical accessibility, lack of management, poor infrastructure conditions, and various interruptions in conducting daily business (Carmona, 2019; Fraser, 1990). Quite simply, accessibility includes psychological and physical access and can be measured in terms of the 'degree of public space dispersion' (Doratli, 2004, p. 227). People generally prefer dispersed spaces compared to concentrated spaces, which points towards a preference for mixed-use planning, close proximity of public spaces with respect to residential areas, and a network of multi-scaled public spaces (Talen, 2000). This encourages pedestrian accessibility and minimizes the walking distance to get to a public space. In short, a frequented public space is easy to

access and use (Doratli, 2004; Harnik, 2003; Lau & Chiu, 2003; Talen, 2000). But the neo-liberal agenda has other priorities, with pedestrian access, accommodation of informality and mixed-use planning not being some of them.

Within these theoretical explorations, this paper decodes the interaction between formal policies and informal practices (Figure 1), between the binaries of global agenda and local practices, and between larger master plans for the city (like a transit movement plan) and localized pedestrian movements based on everyday negotiations within an urban space.

3. Research Methodology

The first step of the research aimed at developing a general understanding of the case study area. This initial part of the research survey was designed to collect baseline data from the case study area. The objective was to develop an overall comprehension of the existing urban fabric of Merewether Tower and its precinct. This included understanding the various operating systems and organizations that cater to the precinct and bring about changes in its urban scape through the day, the week, the weekend, and on special days of the year. The initial survey also included recording the area through photographs and maps. Some in-depth interviews and questionaries surveys were also carried out in the case study area. This was coupled
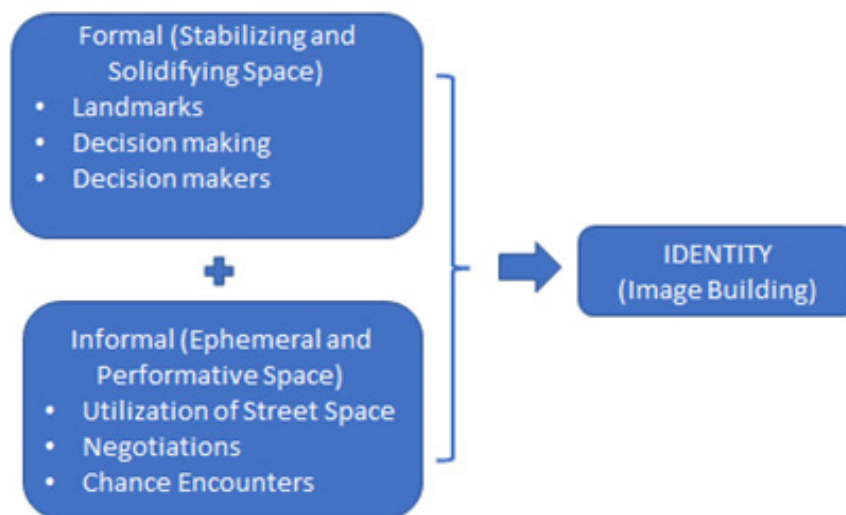

Figure (1). Ingredients of Public Space Identity- A theoretical framework based on formal and informal processes (Source: developed by Suneela Ahmed)

with qualitative and quantitative interviews of relevant stakeholders and interest groups. Thirty qualitative interviews were conducted with shop owners, government officials, visitors, residents, urban planners, and architects.

As a second step, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the various formal and informal characteristics of activities, different stakeholders, residents and visitors were targeted for structured questionnaires to highlight various spatial issues related to utilities, accessibility of public space, and organizational mechanisms in practice. Semi-structured interviews of officials working in different government agencies were also conducted. The idea was to understand and compare ground realities and the larger vision of governing bodies. Officials and professionals involved in various infrastructure development projects were interviewed, including officials from Karachi Water Board, Sewerage Board, Sindh Solid Waste Management, Sindh Building Control Authority, Bus Rapid Transit project, and the Karachi Neighbourhood Improvement Project (a project sponsored by the World Bank in the nearby vicinity area). As the last step, these interviews were then analyzed, using content and narrative analyses, to comprehend the conflicting interests in the development of the case study area and to draw connections with the larger vision for the locality and the physical documentation is done initially, as a first step of the research.

4.Findings

4.1 Global-local binary

The urban area around Merewether Tower is largely mixed-use commercial space housing a variety of related land uses and activities. The Merewether Tower is a city level landmark marking colonial development, located at the intersection of two primary roads, connecting the historic market areas on M.A. Jinnah Road with the contemporary Central Business District on I.I. Chundrigar Road. The two main roads create a prominent commercial and institutional façade of the city, with the M.A. Jinnah Road housing important institutional and government offices along with the main wholesale markets of the city. The I.I. Chundrigar Road houses the head offices of banks, stock exchange, and other important office buildings. These together define the formal city and are representative of

the 'image' of the city of Karachi, being examples of stabilizing and solidifying spaces as argued by Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous, (2018). This area consists of the heritage building stock, as well as contemporary buildings. The formality of the streetscape is supported by the architecture of the monumental, institutional, and commercial buildings along with other land uses.

In parallel, the adjoining blocks and plots along secondary and tertiary roads consist of mixed land uses, varying from warehousing, residential apartments, shops and offices, as well as informal commerce, restaurants and eating outlets and parking spaces (Figures 2 & 3). The urban space within this locality faces competition for the provision of better utilization and accommodation of various commercialized services and infrastructure. The supporting rear sides of these primary roads present an interesting contrast. These can be identified as positive and negative spaces (Carmona 2010); however, the traffic issues put both into the category of ambiguous spaces where boundaries become unclear.

The mixed land use and building stock add to the diversity of area and to its overall aesthetics. The active usage of the neighborhood throughout the day also adds to its intrinsic character. The residential use of the area becomes the watchdog, ensuring security at non-commercial hours, not to mention the ease of access to inner city areas and public transport as major benefits for residents (as established through fieldwork conducted in 2018). The formal image of the city as a provincial capital and economic center is represented by the monumental buildings lining the primary roads of the case study area. However, because of poor building controls, these buildings have fallen prey to neglect, and are in need of repair and maintenance. Wholesale activities, the use of upper stories of old buildings as warehousing, and a concentration of informal commerce and traffic congestion together add to further dilapidate the built environment. The inner-city market areas of Karachi offer a unique centralization of commercial activities through regional networking, with its localized facilitation (transport, port) and face-to-face interaction opportunities for city dwellers and retail markets. This resonates with the argument put forth by Carmona & Magalhaes (2006). The area is important for its global and local capital flows pointing towards the fact that changes within global and local reallocation of capital and space needs

Figure (2). Formal land use around Merewether Tower, Karachi (source: Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology)

Figure (3). Merewether Tower and its surroundings (source: Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology)

inclusive forms of urban planning, which should counter processes of exclusion and marginalization. As is evident through the fieldwork, economic development will continue at the same pace with I.I. Chundrigar Road being predominantly services based and M.A. Jinnah Road being predominantly market oriented, thus lacking social and recreational spaces will continue to negatively impact the development.

4.2 Formal- informal binary

The Tower Precinct's success as an employment and business center makes its arteries busy with consistent activity, spatial movement, and usage, which is negotiated through formal and informal means. While the primary roads are kept strictly free for the movement of public and private transport, the secondary and tertiary roads are

Box (1). Interview of shop owner close to Memon Masjid

Interview 7	Name: Zeeshan	Nature of work: shop owner (carpets, blankets and rugs)
Sector 5	Age: 35	

> "The shop is 22 years old and I have been here for past 6-7 years. The location of our shop is prime because of Memon Masjid but that also is the reason for the traffic and congestion. Hawkers and temporary shops have surrounded the masjid making the street hard to access by the people coming by cars. There is no parking facility for the customers to park their car. And I am very well aware that I am also contributing to the congestion by shop extension but removing it would not do any good either, as the space will be taken up by bikers for parking."

used for active pedestrian movement, parking, and informal commerce. Traffic volumes received by the area are significantly large (ECIL 2007, Hasan, 1999) with parking being a major issue in the locality. There are several vacant public and private land properties and streets which are made available for informal and formal parking of private vehicles. Thus, there is a formal/ informal dichotomy that is in peace because the land on which parking is taking place is not formally allocated for parking, but the parking contracts between local contractors and local body representative is a formal setup.

Lack of adequately designed parking, loading, and unloading spaces adds to the congestion of the locality. Effective space use management is a critical component of the case study area which is required for the success of any intervention in the precinct. The quantity of parking provided and the way in which it is managed are fundamental determinants of the character of major commercial areas of city. Parking supply affects urban form, such as the intensity of development and pedestrian friendliness, transportation characteristics, and municipal finances (Lefebvre, Kofman & Lebas, 1996). For these reasons, there is a close relationship between parking policies and the success of public space development (Madanipour, 2010).

Several open grounds are allocated for charged, official, public, and private car and motorbike parking in the case study area. People working in the area and utilizing these services on a daily basis are aware of their presence and often pay a monthly fee for this service.

A number of charged and shared surface parking lots have been identified, lying within opaque boundaries invisible to people not familiar. These lie on public and private properties as charged parking becomes a source of earning. If

there is a system of information sharing this may improve the parking issue. More shared parking lots in basements can relieve the roads for pedestrians too. Shop owners often highlight the issue of lack of adequate parking facilities as a main issue in the decline of their business (Box 1)

Furthermore, the width of the pedestrian pathways as well as secondary / tertiary roads is compromised because of encroachment along various lengths, being examples of every day contestations and negotiations within the formal paradigm (Graaff & Ha, 2015). In addition, the Merewether Precinct carries a substantial percentage of the informal economy. These include a variety of mobile and temporary structures being used as food stalls, shops for everyday grocery items, or sometimes for small clothing items (Figures 4 & 5). Another informal usage is the use of the pavement or a wall along the street for putting up goods for display by these vendors. These informal vendors do not own space on the street; they locate themselves as per the influx of clients. A temporary structure also helps them avoid the tax net. The space they occupy on the street or footpath is negotiated through developing relationships with a) shopkeepers, across whom they acquire space; b) the area police; c) political workers; or d) municipal authority representatives. These informal negotiations allow them to maintain their spatial disposition over time as argued by Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous (2018).

These informal practices are not seen as alien within the context, become embedded and accepted as the norm, and are often defended and legitimized. Thus, it is felt that in the description and definition of local public space, these informal processes need to be acknowledged, comprehended, and assimilated.

Figure (4,5). Temporary Structures and Motor bikes parking together leave tight space for pedestrian and slow-moving traffic (source: Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology)

Figure (6,7). Hawkers and temporary encroachments on secondary roads with mix land use. (source: Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology)

The urban street, particularly in the city center, is an economically competitive space. Its economic and functional value is higher in places where there is a greater flow of people (Graaff & Ha, 2015). Hawkers or informal salespeople are most often found located at or close to bus stops, gateways, circulation nodes, and street corners (Hasan, Sadiq, & Polack, 2008). This is evident in the case study area too (Figures 6 & 7).

Hawkers occupying the footpaths are not allowed on the major thoroughfares of the case study area (Box 2). Since the load of vehicular traffic is more on these roads, hawkers are mostly found on parallel or secondary streets where pedestrian movement is freer and more abundant.

Often buildings are shared in tenancy and / or ownership and the upper stories are used for other purposes then what they have been allocated for, including residential or official use or warehousing

facilities. Thus, there is yet another formal-informal dichotomy witnessed here, where the usage of the spaces is not necessarily in accordance with the formal allocations.

4.3 Movement and pause binary

Vehicular traffic movement is the biggest issue in the inner-city areas given the enormous diversity of uses and activities bringing people together in high concentration and density. Due to space constraints, a greater percentage of motorbikes (48/49 %) ply on the main roads at peak hours (9 am and 5 pm are approximate peak hours of the weekdays). Even though vehicle ownership in the city is substantial, people traveling to inner-city area prefer the former or the public bus as the main form of transport. This allows ease of movement, maneuvering in dense, congested areas as well as a

Box (2). Interview of shop owner

Sector 5   Name: Muhammad Ikhlas

Age: 62   Nature of work: shop owner (wall clocks)

"I have been coming to this area for over 18 years now. Over the years I have only seen degradation in the physical

environment except for the little vegetation you are seeing around is new. Earlier there were less or no trees but again

considering the environmental pollution in this area, these trees are not enough to filter the atmosphere.

The footpaths here are not proper. You will see the shopkeepers have built or shaped footpaths according to their need.

You will see variation in heights and sizes of sidewalks in the same stretch making pedestrian movement a difficult task.

To help these scenario hawkers should be removed, shop extension should be stopped and sewerage issues must be

resolved.

Traffic jams are part of our everyday routines; most of the workers over here take public transport as mode of transport

from home to work and vice versa. Workers come from nearby settlements but the time it takes to commute is more than

it should be…."

smaller parking footprint.

Furthermore, as the traffic volumes change at different times of the day in the case study area, the traffic police work with flexible dividers along primary roads, so when the traffic in one direction decreases, they move the dividers and provide more lanes for movement in the direction of greater incoming traffic (Table 1). Informal activities on the primary roads are restricted due to stricter law enforcement and the pressing requirement for the quick flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Yet the informal vendors occupy spaces in front of some buildings for some time during the day (at lunchtime food vendors are seen here). These spaces are also used as informal taxi stands and bus stops because they are visible and easy to identify.

Shortage of space for the movement of goods in the markets is dealt with by shifting modes of movement, with a preference for modes with a smaller footprint. The cargo is moved from trucks to pickups (Suzuki vans), and then from pickups to hand carts, and in some cases, it is carried by hand to the storage areas which are on the upper floors of the buildings. Narrow lanes and tight conditions do not allow heavy truck movement. The area accommodating the warehouses has a distinct morphology based on small plots of mixed-use, with winding lanes of varying sizes. This is particularly challenging with its wholesale function for goods like building materials, grains, and textiles. Due to these reasons, traffic movement in the inner city is difficult, with much air and noise pollution.

These findings are mapped in Figure 8, linking up to the theoretical framework.

Table (1). Modal count of traffic at different times of day, around Merewether Tower

| Time	Direction	Modal Count of M.A Jinnah Road
8.30 am	Towards Merewether Tower	**27% cars, 49 % bikes**, 10% buses/ minibuses, 3 % taxis, 7 % rickshaws, 4 % Suzuki pickups
13.25 pm		**30% cars, 38% bikes**, 11%, buses/ minibuses, 2% taxis, 8%, rickshaws, 11% Suzuki pickups
17.10 pm		**24% cars, 48 % bikes**, 8% buses /minibuses, 3% taxi, 8% rickshaws 4% Suzuki pickups
8.45 am	Away from Merewether Tower	32 % of cars, **58% bikes**, 4 % buses /minibuses, 4% taxi, 6% Rickshaws
13.30 pm		25%, cars, 41% bikes, 16% buses/ coaches/ minibuses, 6% taxi, 6% rickshaw, 6% Suzuki pickups
17.30 pm		29% cars, 49% bikes, 8 % buses/ coaches, 3% taxi, 7% rickshaw.
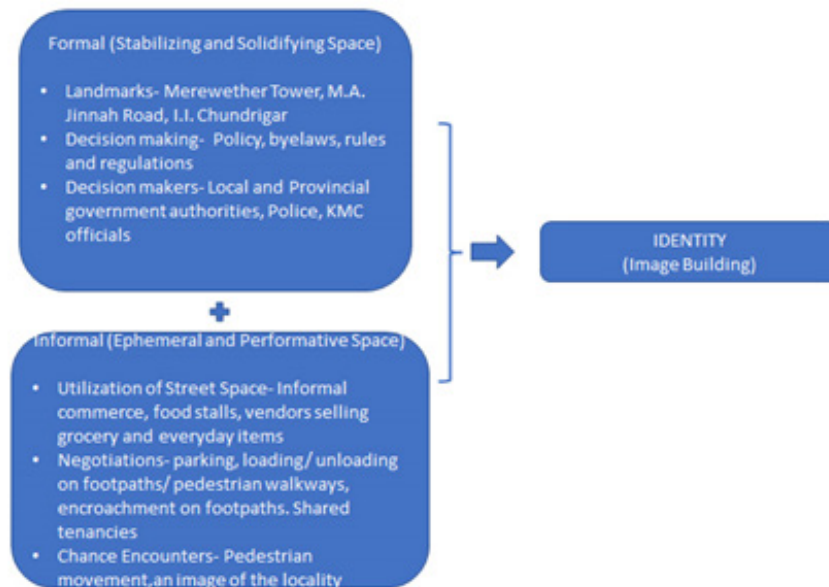
Figure (8). Mapping the theoretical framework with the case study findings (source: developed by Suneela Ahmed)

5. Analysis

Formal land use definitions, major architectural landmarks and institutional buildings have a clear relationship with street usage (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Carmona, 2010). This is clearly apparent for the primary roads of Karachi, particularly given the historic value of the case study area. This section identifies the relation of informal activities to the type of street as a response to the requirements for public movement, which happens to be by chance and not something which has been formally planned:

- Primary roads house prominent landmarks, commercial and institutional buildings
- Secondary roads of commercial importance house important markets and retail businesses: These streets experience competitive use and negotiation of street space by formal and informal activities, including temporary and permanent encroachments. Some parts of the case study area, in alignment with the traditional model of cities of the global south, are organic in planning, comprising of a mix of wide and narrow streets, where plot lines were decided by community members as the locality was developed a couple of centuries ago. The local streets, given their mixed informal and formal uses, are well known to old residents and citizens and play

an important role in maintaining the diversity of the area. Informality is acknowledged as a norm, with the streets being known by the businesses they accommodate, rather than by their formal names.

- Tertiary roads with little or no commercial activity: These are mostly used for entrances to residences, offices, or warehousing facilities through small gateways connected via staircases. Such roads are quieter in character in contrast to adjoining busier surroundings. Street space here is utilized mostly for parking, leaving just enough space to walk or drive through in a single file to the other connecting roads. There are many examples of tertiary roads being used for informal commerce by shops, along with residential access. They allow a compromised right of way for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

5.1 The challenge of the dwindling image of the precinct

The older parts of Karachi still retain the historic character and form of streets and neighbourhoods, along with a number of temples, mosques, shrines, and traditional bazaars. The locality retains its winding streets and open squares. The 19th and 20th-century British quarters, which flourished with commercial/port activities,

are largely intact. The older neighborhoods of the city are confronted and challenged with the insertion of conflicting developments taking place in the historic core, such as construction of multi-storey high-rises, BRTS service, KNIP (Karachi Neighbourhood Improvement Program), upscale commercial/cultural activities and tourist bus services. In these projects, local government representatives, architects, builders, contractors, and other private stakeholders are involved.

The recognition of the historic city's cultural significance and its future within the overall urban system is ignored by the city development agencies, resulting in the lack of a policy framework that could guide decision-making relating to future land use, traffic improvement, and the control of certain incongruous economic pressures on the historic quarters. There is no consideration for facilitating land uses that can reinforce cultural continuities, and help revive the self-identity and pride of the residents. The already overcrowded precinct has been subjected to so many other activities which are not properly supported by the old and dwindling infrastructure of the area, leading to many social and environmental hazards. There are safety and security issues, traffic congestion, noise and air pollution, and overall social degradation.

Places of collective memory, -historic and cultural importance form centers or focal points in settlements (Massey, 2004). Merewether Tower has been such an intersection of historic importance, where the white and native parts of the city converged, as it stood divided during the colonial period (Lari & Lari, 2000). Thus, the image of the city center requires maintenance and support through the readjustment of activities, supporting policies and regulations, which include addressing, acknowledging, and regularising the informal sector and its presence. The open public spaces within the locality can act as a generator for this image. At present, the formal public space is under competition to utilize every inch for economic or service support. They are other associated issues of traffic, pollution, and overall chaos.

5.2 Negotiations between opposing forces

Within the case study area there are many levels of negotiations taking place within public spaces on everyday basis. These range from negotiations between the shopkeepers and the customers, between police and shop keepers, between infrastructure providers and residents, and between local municipality workers and transporters. Some of these negotiations result in the creation of opportunities for local entrepreneurs whereas others can become a hindrance in the everyday running of businesses.

The use of street spaces, including different types of parking and access, is organized for efficient utilization of space. Both formal and informal groups engage in this urban space organization. Parking for instance of different modes of traffic, including cars, motorbikes, rickshaw, pick up carriages, and handcarts, is organized by the government through private and sometimes informal contracts. Spaces for hawker spaces and access for the movement of pedestrians, along with the entrée points for private properties by vehicles and pedestrians are clearly demarcated and understood by all parties negotiating the space use. While the experience of spaces may seem chaotic at times, multiple levels of organization and negotiation, including formal and informal ways are underway among these. Bribes and commissions are paid to multiple regulatory authorities to sustain the overall system. Similarly, the various open spaces have clearly defined ownership patterns, and are at times under negotiation depending on the stakes and pressing needs of the users. For example, a strip of the informal market sits in the area over a drain. This has existed long enough for many users to have forgotten the drain presence. Nevertheless, the regulatory authorities are paid under the table for continuing space use. The open spaces include areas left over in and around each building and within the plots. Many government properties belonging to different departments make up large plots of land in this prime commercial area and comprise a substantial amount of open space within plots. These are mostly underutilized spaces and there is a need to consider their adequate usage.

Informal vending and related activities are often supported by organizations within the locality. Some of these are private non-government organizations, yet others can be categorized as informal and unregistered associations. These organizations safeguard the rights of vendors or offer some mutual understanding or security. They may be supported or even dominated by representatives from political parties in an attempt to have political influence in the area. Some of the organizations are run by community heads and members of market unions. Commercial areas have

their own unions based on the type of market they are running, whereas residential unions are based mainly on ethnicity. These processes are however not recognized or made part of the formal planning procedures and are mostly overlooked, quite similarly as mentioned by Collins, 2004; Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous, 2018; Talen, 2008.

6.Conclusion

Informal commerce and related activities form an intrinsic character of Karachi. It is an important part of the city's identity as well (Cruz, Roskamm, & Charalambous, 2018). The daunting scale of informal commerce and services points toward a pressing need of the people of the city and the link with the larger identity. Together it is the formal and the informal space that makes up the character of the areas of Karachi. Thus, it is important to acknowledge their presence and incorporate them within the formal planning strategies by understanding and planning for them. It must, however, be ensured, that too much planning can negatively impact the informal activities and processes, thus a flexible approach is encouraged, where room for maneuvering between formal and informal realms is catered for. There is also a need to celebrate the everyday encounters taking place between formal and informal processes and the associated ephemeral qualities of informal practices.

Despite the importance of the topic of the research paper in the context of the problematic identification of cities and the impact of informality and its role in shaping the urban fabric. However, the conclusion is very weak and did not provide us with any guidance on how to accommodate the informal practice within the scope of the central area and how these informal activities can be organized so that they turn into formal activities that support the economy of the city. There is a need to develop clear recommendations and guidelines for this transformation.

In general, urban design and planning need to take a more flexible and inclusive approach toward informality in the city. Given the scale of informal commerce and various activities, pretending that the associated issues can be resolved by turning a blind eye is not a smart way to go about it. The example of the recent large-scale eviction of temporary commercial structures in Karachi is a case in point, where interviews revealed that most informal vendors had been present in the locality for more than forty years and yet categorised as 'informal'. Considering a more inclusive and compassionate approach to all social groups of the city, is an attitude that can prove to be more fruitful and improve general civic facilities.

Better management and organization of traffic, formalizing and accepting informal commerce as a way of earning a livelihood, and planning and accommodating charitable works within better spatial parameters are some of the conducts where informal activities can be accepted to add positively to the urban setting. Their acceptance in law and spatial design would point towards an equitable city, one that is sensitive to various social groups and not just a select few. Thus, the city can become inclusive in character.

Lastly, based on the contextual realities of Merewether Tower, informal and formal activities taking place within an urban realm need to be better integrated into spatial planning and acknowledged for a contribution towards the creation of an identity for public space and for the city at large by taking a flexible, inclusive and equitable approach towards planning and policy-making (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2015; Hamdi, 2004; Roy & Sayyad, 2006; Sassen, 1991; Zukin, 2008).

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الثنائيـات المتضاربـة والمسـاحات الحضريـة: حالـة منطقـة بـرج (Merewether) في كراتـشي (باكسـتان)

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ملخص البحث. في السياق لمنطقة جنوب آسيا، تستوعب الأماكن العامة أشكالاً مختلفة من الطابع غير الرسمي. وقد يكون للإجراءات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والسياسية في بعض الأحيان دور حيوي في إدارة وتنظيم هذه المساحات. وتتنافس العلاقة بين الاستخدام غير الرسمي والرسمي للأراضي والأنشطة المرتبطة بها عندما ترتبط الفكرة بإنشاء هوية للمساحة الحضرية. وفي مثل هذه الحالة، تستوعب هذه المساحات الحضرية الصراعات بين الهويات العالمية والمحلية ضمن جدول الأعمال الليبرالي الجديد، والممارسات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية غير الرسمية والرسمية، ومختلف القوى المتعارضة المتعلقة بحركة المرور وتحركات المشاة. ومن خلال استخدام منهجية قائمة على الحالة، ترسم هذه الورقة مختلف أشكال العمل المتوازية للثنائيات المتضاربة والأنواع العديدة من المفاوضات التي تحدث على أساس يومي داخل المنطقة التاريخية لبرج ميريويذر Merewether في كراتشي. وبالتالي، تبرز الورقة الدور الهام والحتمي للمؤسسات والمفاوضات غير الرسمية في المجال الحضري باعتبارها غير قابلة للانفصال عن إنشاء مساحة حضرية عامة في الجنوب العالمي. .

الكلمات المفتاحية: التصميم الحضري، الفضاء العام، الهوية، إمكانية الوصول، الطابع غير الرسمي، المدينة الداخلية، الليبرالية الجديدة.