**Migrants, Cities and Urban Planning in Pakistan**

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Cities are made of locals and migrants but cities may ignore migrants. The question guiding this inquiry is simple: how urban planning excludes a variety of male and female migrants—temporary, seasonal, educational or permanent—from the everyday life of their host cities in Pakistan. I am studying the everyday lives of migrants in big cities of Pakistan such as Lahore, Karachi, Multan, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In Pakistani migration studies, the lived experiences of migrants are often neglected. In addition, urban problems are studied without reference to the migrants. How urban planning contributes to the exclusion of migrants from the social processes of host cities are also understudied. Decidedly less research has examined the vulnerability of the migrants in the Pakistani cities. Even journalistic reports are not available on the vulnerability of migrants in Pakistani cities.

World Migration Report 2015 notes with dismay that migrants are excluded from the agenda of urbanization. It says:

However, migration is largely omitted from the global debate on urbanization. There is a glaring absence of the mention of migrants in international planning for a new global urban agenda, such as Habitat III. Many city and local governments also still do not include migration or migrants in their urban development planning and implementation. Migrants are therefore still generally overlooked in global discourses on urbanization and cities.

The situation is not very different in Pakistani cities. As Zeenat Hisam notes that

Internal migration is a low-priority area for policymakers, researchers and civil society all over the world although it is four times greater than international migration. In Pakistan, internal migration does not come anywhere on the radar of policymakers. Internal migration is not mentioned in the Labour Policy 2010. There is no law protecting the rights of internal migrant workers in Pakistan.

The state has never come up with specific schemes to integrate multi-ethnic migrant workers in the cities. Internal migration — integral to urbanisation and development — has been a missing element in urban policies. There is no civil society initiative exclusively for the benefit of internal migrant workers.

Deprived of citizens’ entitlements, stigmatised and stereotyped, shunned by trade unions, migrant workers suffer from social exclusion and are a part of informal labour that exists outside the ambit of the legal framework. (Daily Dawn, 30 June 204 <http://www.dawn.com/news/1115923>)

Pakistani cities do not function well for migrants. It is because urban planning in Pakistan does not address to the needs of the migrants. The master plans of major cities, for example, do not pay attention to the migrants as a group with distinct needs. No city in the country provides information services to facilitate migrants. Similarly, no city in the country offers services to guide migrants. As a result, the migrants are left to their own devices. The landlords ask tenants to pay an amount of money as security deposit before renting homes which makes it difficult for many poor tenants to rent appropriate places to stay. As a result, the migrants are hardly integrated with the city life. The families which moved to the cities even more than two decades ago are identified with their places of origin. The migrants generally cannot vote in their arrival city until their votes are registered locally. As a result, the migrants remain politically voiceless which has a huge impact on the allocation of development funds. The development funds generally flow to the areas of locals who can vote in the elections. The areas where majority of people are migrants do not receive financial allocations for development which includes urban services. As a result, the migrants’ neighborhoods face the threat of ghettoization. Hundreds and thousands of students migrate to the major Pakistani cities for education. More than hundred private universities have opened in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi which attract students from across Pakistan. But these cities hardly provide for adequate and easy rental options to the students. The planning for housing is silent on meeting the housing needs of migrants. Many student migrants have to spend considerable amount of time in finding accommodation to stay. The landlords arbitrarily push conditions on their tenants. The rental laws are not followed. The landlords can refuse renting their properties without giving reasons and can rent out without providing the basic necessities and installations like electric, water or ventilation system.

The planning and social elite of the big cities view migration as an unnatural process which needs to be governed and controlled. In my interviews with urban planners and architects, many stressed that the government should develop villages and smaller cities so that people do not migrate to the major cities. The process of urbanization is portrayed in negative terms, as a catastrophe by the media. The media discourses portray urbanization, which is shaped by migration, as a source of crime and violence. Some of the academic work also views urbanization as crime producing phenomena. (Jalil and Iqbal 2010). In fact, it is not the urban planning and governance which is accused of urban problems but the migrants. The contribution of the migrants in the everyday life of their host cities is hardly acknowledged. The urban planning in Pakistan has a troubled relation with the migrant. On the one hand, migrants are needed to run the cities; on the other hand, the migrants are depicted as outsiders, as rustic, and as disorderly. When the problems of Pakistani cities such as housing, transport, and employment are discussed, they are hardly discussed with reference to migrants. The social and cultural issues of migrants are not highlighted in the urban planning documents.

**Social Constructionism**

**Why Narrative 500 words**

The narratives of the migrants I interviewed can be grouped in following ways.

*We are not trusted*

The migrants have little support and trust of the city dwellers. Almost invariably the interviewees complain about not being trusted by the city dwellers. In fact, the migrants have to satisfy the queries of the landlords before renting their properties. The tenants complain that they are not trusted by their landlords. A migrant shared his experience as follows:

I have been searching for home since the last three months. The landlords usually ask many questions. They ask if I will allow my friends to stay with me. They also ask if I will invite girls to my place. They suspect me as if I am a vagabond or some kind of a thief. This pisses me off.

In fact, landlords think that single or bachelor male tenant may invite girls for meeting or dating. Although dating is not common to majority of the people in Pakistani cities yet the landlords suspect single male tenants of inviting girls to their home. The society generally disapproves such interaction between boys and girls. Another report by a migrant illustrates this point well.

When I moved to Islamabad, I could not rent a home in 2006 because my wife did not accompany me then. Of the five landlords I visited along with the estate agent, none was willing to give their property on rent to me. Although I explained to them that I was a lecturer at a government university, all of them told me they could only rent their place to me if I bring my wife and children along to live with me. As a result, I had to live in boys’ hostel for six months. When I brought my wife and children with me, I could get a home on rent.

Islamabad is perceived to be a modern city where social taboos such as proscribing male and female meeting are not expected. However, even in Islamabad, the single tenants face problems. One of my interviewees regarded Islamabad as a conservative city where modern ethos such as single living was unacceptable. In fact, married people are viewed in positive light by the landlords while renting their properties. It is difficult for the singles to invite their blood-related females to their places. Following narration illustrate this point.

In 2003, I was living in a boys’ hostel. It was a private hostel with independent rooms. It was a big building. No girl was allowed in the hostel. If my sister or mother comes to meet me, I would have to meet them somewhere outside the hostel.

For majority of the single and bachelor migrants, the only place to stay in a big city is a private hostel. They are usually expensive places to live. The rooms are generally small and the bathrooms shared. As a result, the bathrooms are filthy and always overcrowded.

Since the landlords generally mistrust single tenants, many migrants face difficulty in renting home in a decent locality. Though some of the singles/bachelors can rent apartments in big cities, it is still difficult for many to rent homes. The real estate agents who broker deals between landlords and rent-seekers discriminate the bachelor and single rent-seekers. There are some who bring their families along to live with them for the first few weeks to show to the landlord that they are not living single. They send their wives and children to their homes once landlord starts trusting them. But it is a difficult deal.

One of my respondents lived alone in a home in Islamabad from 2007-2009. He says he could get this home on rent because the landlord was one of his friends. Even then a neighbor knocked the door and asked who was living there. A single male can get a home on rent only if landlord trusts him. Otherwise, landlords generally suspect bachelors capability of being decent and moral. Some landlords think that single males do not pay rent in time. Other landlords suspect the character of single male tenants. Still other landlords think that the single males are not careful with their property. Some landlords think they will annoy the neighbors by giving their property on rent to a single male. This report illustrates the point.

Since I was single, the landlord was reluctant to rent his house to me. Although I was doing reasonable job and I could provide evidence of my job to the landlord, he was not convinced to rent his place to me—to a single man. I repeatedly came across with this attitude.

Sometimes the singles have to lie to the landlord that they will live with their families in the rented house. And if a house is rented to a single, the landlord and neighbors usually keep vigilance on the tenant’s movement.

Women migrants disproportionately face more problems relative to men in renting accommodations. A girl who had rented a home in a posh locality in Lahore in 2010 shared that her landlord would not allow any visitors. She could invite only her women family members there. And even to invite women family members, she had to take her landlord’s permission. She had the feeling of being suspected by her landlord and his family. As a result of this suspicion, the majority of the migrant girls live in private girls’ hostels which have grown in almost all major cities of Pakistan. The living conditions in these hostels are generally unsatisfactory. In addition, the girls’ hostels have curfews in the evening or night. The number of girls sharing a room in a private girls’ hostels my range from three to six.

The narratives of distrust also highlighted the consequences of distrust on migrants. In fact, private hostels have grown in every big city of Pakistan. The conditions of most of these hostels are appalling. The interviewees who have stayed in more than one hostel generally complain about cleanliness in the hostels. Owners of private hostels charge high rents and provide negligible living facilities. The migrants cannot exercise control over the hostel space and they have to follow the hostel rules.

Labor class face this problem and they are in worst condition we have an informal economy so we do not have any documentation poof of the labors they do not have any working station/office so that they can provide any letter from the office as proof so mostly they are not entertained

If someone is a transgender he also has very less chances to get rental space

*Torn between Village and City*

Being a migrant can be difficult and painful. An interviewee said that the migrants spend their whole lives constructing their identities. They neither belong to their host cities nor to their places of origin: villages or smaller cities. As a result, the migrants may face exclusion both at their place of origin and at their host cities.

The pain of migrants experiences travel to generations. Migrants remain culturally deprived.

Whenever I visit my village, my village folks call me [pejoratively] Lahoria [It means a person of Lahore]. They expect at the same time that I should help my village fellows settle in Lahore, which is difficult. They think I am rich and I enjoy facilities in the city. In fact, I am neither rich, nor I enjoy facilities. Living in a big city is very difficult.

The migrants’ narratives revealed that their village fellows and city fellows considered them to be morally corrupt. Some villagers think that life in big cities was sinful. The villagers also think that the big city can particularly corrupt young boys and girls. For many participants the characterization of big cities as sinful places was disturbing.

*Stigmatization and Discrimination*

The migrants’ narratives reveal that they face stigma and discrimination at the hands of the city dwellers. One of my interviewees shared that he faced discrimination in Multan where he used to teach between 2002- 2004 at the Baha ud Din Zakaria University. The local Seriaki teachers would ridicule him for being a Punjabi. Some of them would not talk to him. Generally they would not develop friendship with him. He says:

Often times I felt lonely and excluded. As I would enter staff room the teachers would stop talking amongst themselves. Slowly, I stopped visiting staff room. Oftentimes I felt terrible. I became depressed. My mental and physical health deteriorated. I had no social life. It was a nightmare for me. I was so relaxed and happy when I quit university job. I had to live in a low profile vis a vis Seriakis and had to depend on Seriaki connections for everyday life. If I was not docile, my survival was difficult there. (Khurram Shehzad)

Police think that it is the migrants who are involved in crimes. Six of my respondents shared an apartment in 2002-03. Once police raided their apartment, asked about their whereabouts and abused them verbally. They are still terrified with that experience. They had to satisfy the police that they were not involved in crimes.

The war on terror has added a dimension to the discrimination against Pushtoon migrants’ in Pakistani cities. It is alleged that the Urdu speaking people portray all Pushtoons living in Karachi as Taliban. Police disproportionately raids Pushtoons in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad also. The Pushtoon leaders in Lahore complain of the unfair police arrests of hundreds of their ethnic fellows. The police extort money from the Pushtoons which it arrests. Newspaper reports suggest that Afghan migrants are not treated fairly in Lahore and Karachi. These reports highlight that Pushtoons are raided, harassed, and arrested by the police unfairly. The Pushtoons accuse that they are harassed due to their ethnicity and being migrants in Lahore and Karachi. The locals discriminate Puhstoons because they think that their jobs and businesses have been taken over by the migrants. These reports suggest that resentment exists between local Punjabis and migrant Pushtoons in Lahore and Karachi. The Pushtoon settlements are spatially segregated in both cities.

Though the migrants of the same ethnic group may also be stigmatized and discriminated against, the narratives of migrants suggest that ethnic differences contribute to stigmatization. The cities like Karachi and Lahore may accentuate ethnic differences instead of diffusing them.

The narratives of the city dwellers in Lahore portray their city to be an ideal and beautiful and a serene place before migrants started coming there. In inner city of Lahore, for example, older residents remember their city as a serene and perfect place before the migrants started to settle there in 1990s. The following narration illustrates this point.

Everyone knew everyone here [inner city of Lahore]. We knew each other since generations. Now there are many people who live in our neighborhood. Neither we know them. Nor they know us. They come from Shakargarh and Narowal and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They do not know how to adjust to city life. They do not know how to behave in a city. They are totally strangers.

The residents of the(Walled City/Old Lahore) inner city Lahore often complain against the migrants. Another report from an interviewee points to locals’ view of migrants in Lahore.

The migrants from Narowal are responsible for filth in our *mohalla* (neighborhood). They do not know the value of our *mohalla*. They do not know our customs. They do not keep the streets clean. Since they are living here, the shape of our *mohalla* has become worse.

The female migrant disproportionately face stigmatization relative to male migrants. In university of the Punjab, the day scholars used to gossip that hostel girls were immoral and loose. The day scholars would also gossip that the hostel girls freely date stranger men. A short story written by Sabahat Ikram accused girls living in hostels in Multan as indecent and morally corrupt. The hostel girls face many stigmas. A girl shared that when she told one of her relatives that she was living in a girls’ hostel, her relative gave her a strange look as if it was a sin to live in a private girls’ hostel.

The male migrants may also be stigmatized. The following story illustrates this point well.

Once I was walking outside the hostel of Punjab University. The superintendant noticed and started asking questions to me. He asked me to present him my national identity card which I presented. While reading information on my identity card, he looked at me and said: “all of you are criminals.” In fact, he was pointing to my city, Sheikhupura, which once had the reputation of being a high crime city. I felt embarrassed at being mentioned as an individual from a criminal city.

Not all city dwellers may know about the life and culture in villages. Out of their ignorance, some of them may make fun of the migrants. One of my interviewees recounted his experience of 2000 as follows:

One of my female classmates in university of the Punjab became my friend. She had little idea about the life in a village. She sarcastically asked me if we [the villagers] lived in mud houses and defecated openly in the fields. In fact, she was making fun of me by implying that city dwellers lived in real homes. She was referring to an imagined village of the past. She had a stereotype image of the village.

*We feel lonely*

Two of the major themes of migrants’ narratives are loneliness and alienation. Many migrants spend their lives in isolation. It usually takes long for educational migrants to develop friendships. The opportunities of interaction between migrants and city dwellers are limited. As the public spaces in the cities are becoming commercial, the migrants, especially the poor migrants are isolated further. The free or economical places of socialization are being replaced by fast food chains and commercial entertainments. (Task Force Report on Urban Development)

I am usually alone [in Lahore]… No friends… I feel lonely. Sometimes I want to run away to my home. I live in a tiny room with a roommate who returns to hostel very late… Life here is too fast…Everyone is running…I cannot adjust to this way of living

The narratives of the migrants indicate that some migrants from nearby cities used to return to their cities on weekends to prevent isolation. However, with rising transport fares and shrinking incomes, it is not possible for many migrants to return to their homes every weekend. The migrants from far off villages and cities can only visit their homes once in a while. On the occasions of eid holidays, when majority of the migrants return to their homes, transport is not available. The transport planning do not address to the needs of migrants.

Some of the migrants I interviewed deal with their loneliness through visiting cinemas or eating at restaurants. But visiting cinemas and dining out may be expansive for many poor migrants.

*Uncertainty of Future*

Many migrants especially the long-term or permanent migrants face uncertainty about their future. They are not sure if they continue living as migrants or they will every return to their places of origin. Not all permanent migrants have networks of support and trust which take a lot of time to get developed. The uncertainty about future was high among the female interviewees. The female interviewees were facing problems in getting married. Being migrants and professionals, they were not getting proposals. They were of the view that it becomes difficult for a hostel girl to find an appropriate match.

*Freedoms and their Burdens*

*Facilities are Available*

*Misuse of Advance rents (tenants, land lords, state agents/Property dealers)*

*Whenever someone wants to be a tenant mostly he use to consult with the state agents they always prefer family for renting spaces available with them if someone is bachelor he is going to get the worst place most of the time so worst renting spaces are like no ventilation, adjusting more people than capacity, no proper water availability, improper electric system and negligible parking space.*

*Family or bachelors need to pay 2to3 months’ rent in advance as security but still most of these rental spaces are not maintained by landlords in this case if someone wants to leave the space the treat tenant with delaying tactics which makes a tenant helpless if he wants to get any other rental space.*

*State agents are the source where most of the people get their rental spaces and they always create hype and haze in this process so that one must pay more than value and for this they always exaggerate situation you feel that if you do not grab this space on time you will lose the best space with the best rates. There is no rental Laws/regulation so that they can rent any space even with the worst or I must say inhuman conditions.*

**The Way Forward**

Cities should not function for their residents only. They should function for migrants also. I call for redesigning the urban planning which is sensitive to the lives/needs of migrants. Migrants not only need places to stay and jobs but also social life. They need to be integrated to the urban life. There are no forums or public places where migrants can interact with the locals and contribute to the culture of host cities. As a result, migrants remain excluded from the lives of their host cities. They are dislocated from their origins and not part of the host cities. This doubly excludes them.

The cities in developed world provide information and facilitation to migrant both internal and international. The Government of Tokyo, for example, not only publishes information for internal and international migrants but also facilitates them in terms of participating in the city life. None of Pakistani cities provide information for the migrants. As a result, migrants rely on other migrants or their acquaintances.

The World Migration Report 2015 asserts:

Having a clear understanding of where migrants reside and how they are organized is a critical first step in formulating an outreach strategy in order to foster their inclusion in the life of cities. Based on a good set of data on migrants, cities can then develop benchmarks for basic service provision as well as measure their levels of social and economic integration.

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**References**

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