

ADDRESSING INFORMAL PROCESSES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE CITY CENTRE

Case of Saddar Bazaar, Karachi

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ABSTRACT

Karachi's townscape has evolved through a process of responses to the changing needs and priorities of a population influx of the past 300 years. Over centuries, its port's trading and defence potential has attracted merchants, colonials, feudal lords, intellectuals and political and economic migrants. These migrant groups in turn, have contributed towards the development and degradation of the city and its centre, 'Saddar Bazaar'¹.

In the past 50 years, due to an immense increase in the size of the population of Karachi and the expansion of its geographical boundaries, several centres have developed, serving their locale. However, the importance of 'Saddar' as a cultural and economic centre still remains, as none of the other have been able to develop the required commerce or culture related facilities which could serve the whole city.

Saddar lies in the economic hub of the city and serves thousands of vehicles and transit commuters who pass through it. This has led to the degradation of its facilities and fast disappearance of its cultural spaces. The absence of these in turn, is resulting in alienation amongst communities,

ghettoisation of rich and poor areas and a cultural division of the city.

This paper attempts to analyse the process of Saddar's transformation, identifying the inherent processes and agents of change, and gives some suggestions for its future rehabilitation.

1 - CASE OF KARACHI – LARGER SCENARIO

Historically, Karachi developed from a fishermen village 'Kolachi jo Goth'², to a 18th Century trading town, 'Kurrachee'³, to a mid 19th Century British port and military city, to a 20th century third world Asian megapolis. These developments have been a result of economic and political migrations due to, its port's strategic geo-political location on the Indian Ocean.

The migrant communities have given Karachi its cosmopolitan nature, urban culture, physical and social infrastructure and some of the better-planned settlements and exquisite architecture, of which it can still boast (Figure 1).

However, conditions in the city and its centre have deteriorated due to the population increase

¹ 'Bazaar' is a local term used for a commercial centre.

² 'Kolachi Jo Goth' means the village of Kolachi.

³ 'Kurrachee' is one of the old names of Karachi.

⁴ In 1947, Pakistan gained independence from the British and separated from India.

⁵ During 1960's, two industrial estates were established in Karachi, which attracted thousands of port, industrial and building site labourers. These migrants in the absence of formal housing formed inner and outer city slums and shanty towns.



Figure 1: Old British Architecture on Bunder Road.
 Source: The Dual City Karachi During the Raj, by Yasmeen Lari and Mihail S. Lari.

instigated by the refugee influx of 1950's into the newly independent state of Pakistan⁴ and later the rural- urban migrations of 1960⁵ onwards, instigated as a result of the industrial revolution introduced in the country.

The demographic change resulted in an unplanned expansion of the city limits, break-up of old community systems, feelings of apathy and alienation amongst the new communities, exhaustion of the governing institutions and existing infrastructure and moving out of the political power and interest groups.

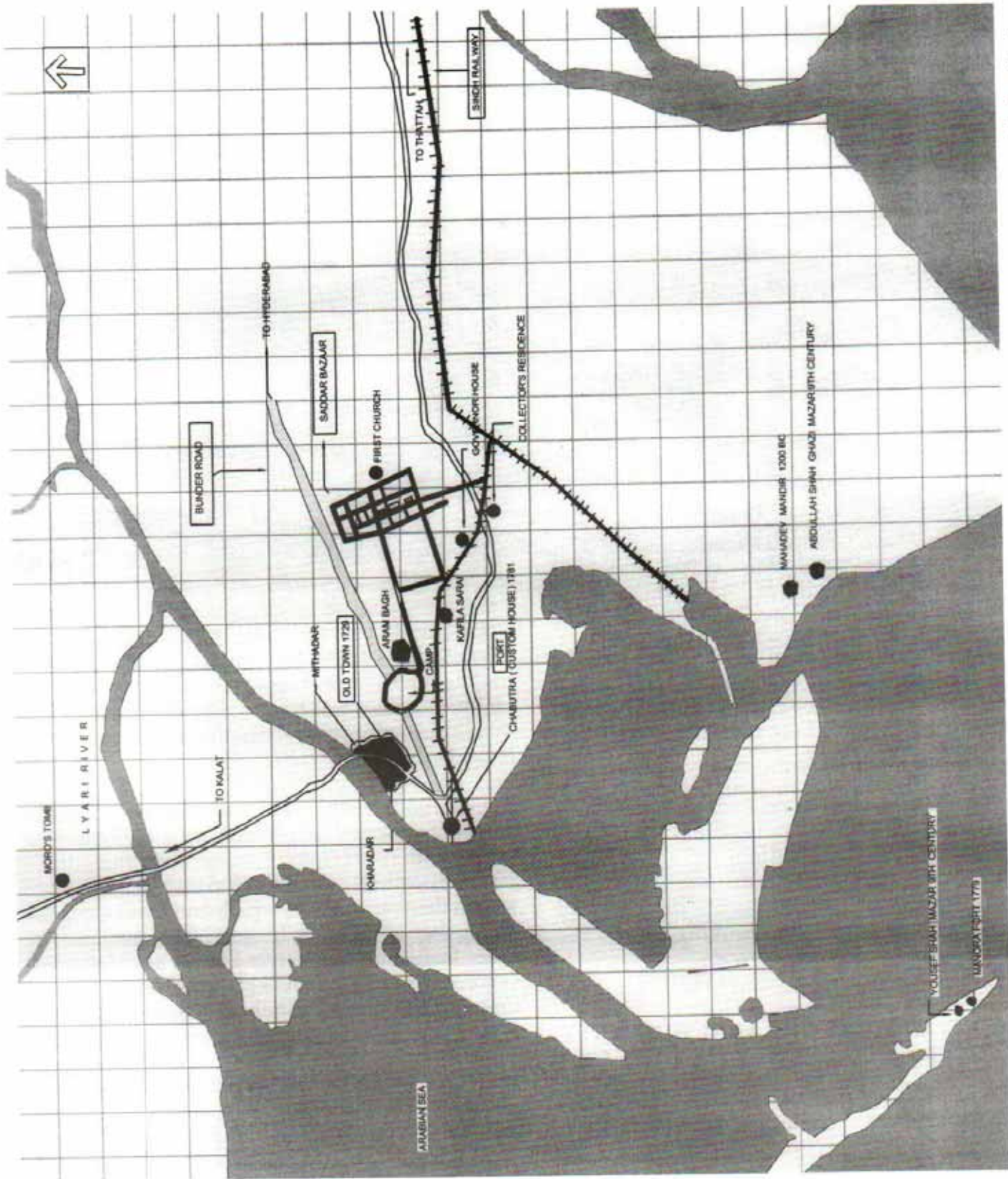
2 - DEVELOPMENT OF KARACHI'S CITY CENTRE: CAUSES AND EFFECTS

EMERGENCE AS A PORT AND A TRADING CENTRE: The 18th century fishermen village,

'Kolachi jo Goth' was developed into a prosperous trading port and town by the Sindhi and Baluchi Hindu merchants of Kharak Bunder (a port some 40 kilometres west of Kolachi), as their own port had silted up [1].

They built the fortified city of 'Kurrachee' on 35 acres of high land north of Kolachi bay. The trading centre with its markets, caravan serai (traveller's inn), shops and related infrastructure operated within the fortification, which had two gates, one facing the sea called 'Kharadar' (salt gate) and the other facing the Lyari river known as 'Methadar' (sweet gate) [2]. A settlement we today know as the 'Purana Shehar' or the old town of Karachi (Map - 1) (Figure 2).

DEFENCE AND MILITARY POTENTIAL EXPLOITED: "By late 18th Century, Kurrachee had changed hands several times between the local



Not on Scale

Map - 1: Karachi-Post British
 Source: Arif Hasan and Associates, Feb. 1999

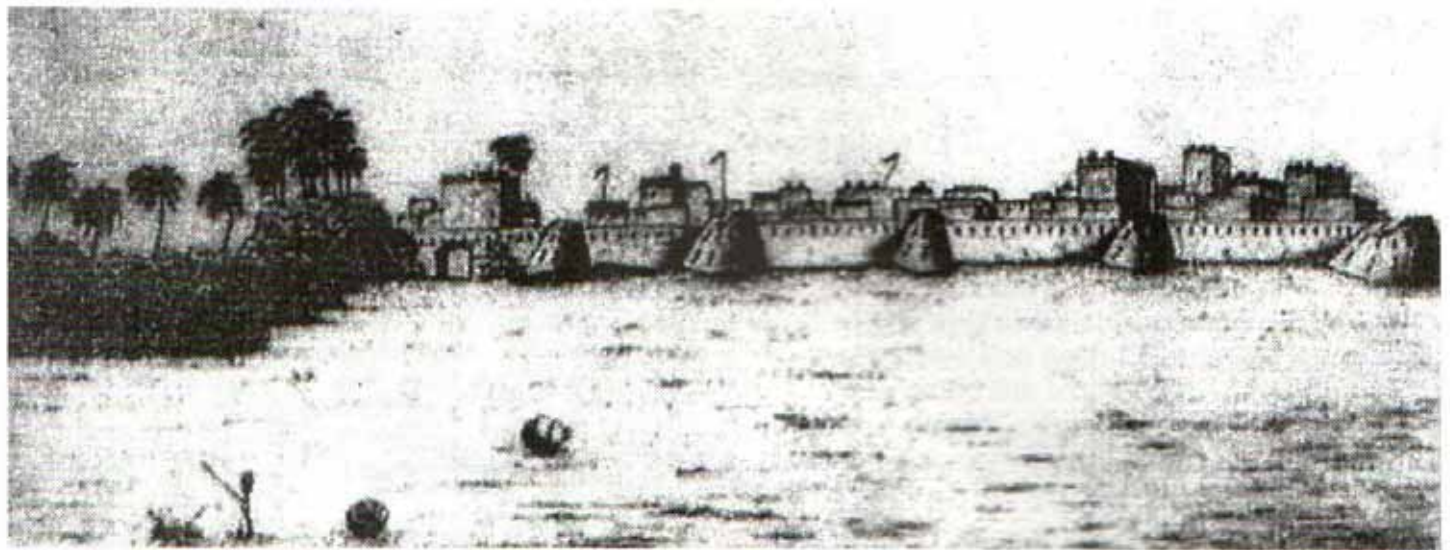


Figure 2: A sketch of the Fortification Wall around the Old Town of Karachi.
Source: The Dual City Karachi During the Raj, by Yasmeen Lari and Mihail S. Lari.

Chronological Development of Karachi		
Period	Migrant Communities	Developments
Till late 17 th Century	Local fishermen clans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing village of a few hutments called 'Kolachi jo Goth'
Early to mid 18 th Century	Hindu, Sindhi and Baluchi merchants of Kharak Bunder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a trading port and fortified town 'Kurrachee'
Mid 18 th Century to mid 19 th Century	Local feudal lords including; the Baluchi tribes of Khan of Kalat and the Sindhi Talpurs and Mirs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of 'Manora Fort'
Mid 19 th Century to mid 20 th Century	British colonials, military personnel, traders, businessmen and port labourers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International trading and defence port Development of railway, road network and grid iron planned residential and commercial areas
1947 - 52	Refugees from India including; civil servants, bureaucrats, intellectuals and businessmen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encroachments in the city centre Emergence of suburbs
1960's- 80's	Rural - Urban migrants; mostly port, construction site and industrial labourers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of satellite industrial towns Peripheral and inner city slums, further degradation of the city centre.
1990 to date	Consolidated third generation migrant communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-centred city Metropolis containing 16 towns

feudal lords including; the Baluchi tribes of Khan of Kalat and the Sindhi Talpurs and Mirs”⁶.

These indigenous tribes developed its trading and defence potential by constructing the ‘Manora Fort’ and investing in the old centre [3].

By the early 19th Century, the city centre had expanded as new markets dealing in slaves from Africa, goods from Europe and local produce, were added to it. The news of this booming trading centre reached the ears of the British ruling the Sub-Continent and Karachi was occupied in 1838[4].

EMERGENCE AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE AND SERVICE CENTRE FOR THE BRITISH EMPIRE: British developed Karachi as an imperial trading, defence port and administrative centre [5]. They invested in the communication and transportation infrastructure, developing Karachi as: one, district headquarters, looking after Sindh, Baluchistan and Punjab⁷ as a separate entity from the Bombay Presidency; two, military base and port exporting cotton, wheat and importing arms via the Suez Canal [6].

They divided the city into native and British towns lying on either sides of the main transportation artery of the city called ‘Bunder Road’ that, connected to the port towards the south and had an intra city tramway running on it.

The old town centre compact and congested with its winding and cul-de-sac streets, wholesale markets and labourers and workers quarters, brought in to look after the administration, services and infrastructure of the port could not aspire to accommodate the retailing, cultural and social needs of the British.

For this, a new city centre ‘Saddar’ was planned

on gridiron and developed with modern infrastructure and buildings to serve the high ruling military and administrative staff of the British Empire, traders, businessmen and some rich and influential locals (Figure 3).

An Inter city, ‘Sindh Railway’ network was laid to link up the port to the wholesale markets of the native town and the railway station, administrative offices and retailing shops of Saddar.

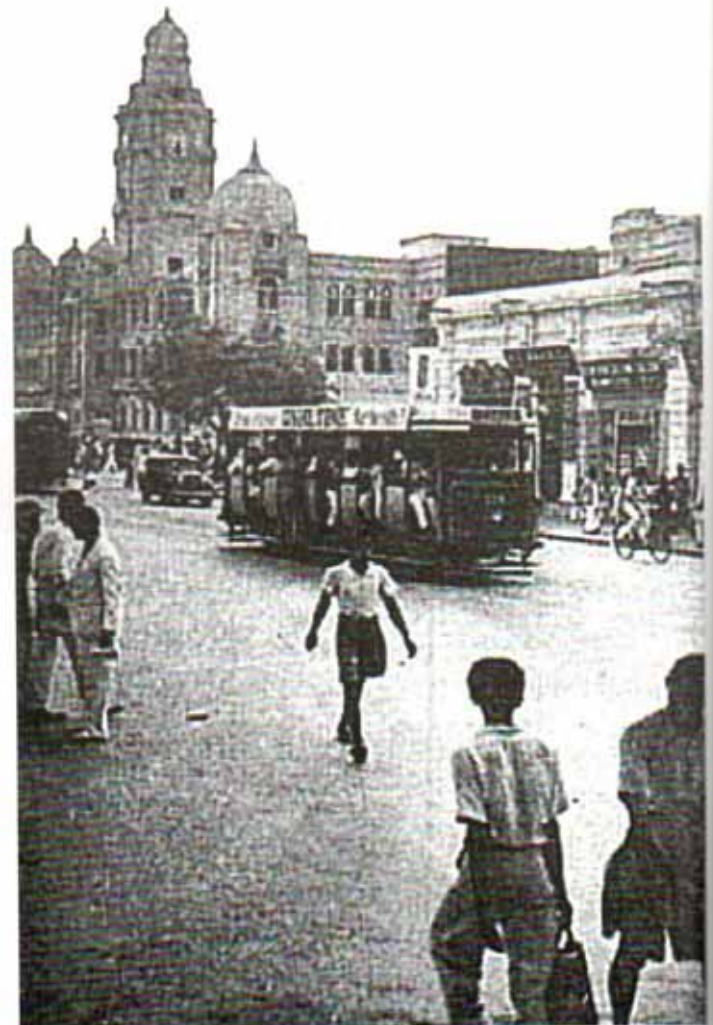


Figure 3: The Old Tramway of Karachi.
Source: Arif Hasan's Archives

⁶ ‘Sindhis and Baluchis’ are two of the indigenous ethnic/linguistic groups living in the South and West of Pakistan. Talpurs, Mirs and Khans of Kalat are the names of some of the tribal clans belonging to them.

⁷ ‘Sindh, Baluchistan and Punjab’ were the three Muslim dominated provinces of the British Empire; nowadays these form three of the four provinces of Pakistan.

The respective centres were maintained to keep a social and physical distinction for the sake of cultural sanctity and political stability. The Karachi Municipal Committee (KMC), setup by the British during this period, controlled and maintained all the facilities.

EMERGENCE AS THE CAPITAL OF THE NEWLY FORMED STATE OF PAKISTAN: Pakistan gained independence in 1947 and Karachi was made its first administrative and economic capital. This led the population of Karachi to rise from 450,000 to 1.137 million between 1947 and 1951 [7].

As the newly created state of Pakistan was unable to cater to the refugee influx, people belonging to destitute backgrounds squatted on all available open spaces, grounds and parks in and around the old town and some areas of Saddar. This resulted in the degradation of the infrastructure and emergence of inner city slums.

Upper class areas around Saddar were mostly occupied by civil servants, intellectuals and businessmen who added to its cultural and social life and Karachi's political and economic power. New schools, colleges, a university, many religious and cultural institutions sprung up to cater to this new multi cultural rich and middle class migrants.

By 1952, the city centre had expanded to its limits and new suburbs developed to the north of it. A Swedish planning company MRV was commissioned to design the first Master Plan for Karachi⁸ to determine the growth patterns and future developments of the city.

DEGRADATION OF THE CITY CENTRE: In 1958, the first martial law administrator Ayub Khan shifted the administrative capital to

Islamabad. This followed a decision to resettle the refugees living in Saddar, as labour force in the newly planned industrial satellite towns.

To prepare this plan known as the 'Greater Karachi Resettlement Plan' (GGRP) Greek planner Doxiades was hired. The plan was not successful as industrialisation was slow to develop and people could not afford to live away from the city. This forced them back to form slums in the city centre.

The other problem created by GGRP was that a large majority of resettled population had to travel to their jobs across the city to areas like; the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate (SITE), the port, the Central Business District (CBD) and the old town wholesale markets. As there were no alternative roads available, the entire movement was through Saddar [8] (Map - 2).

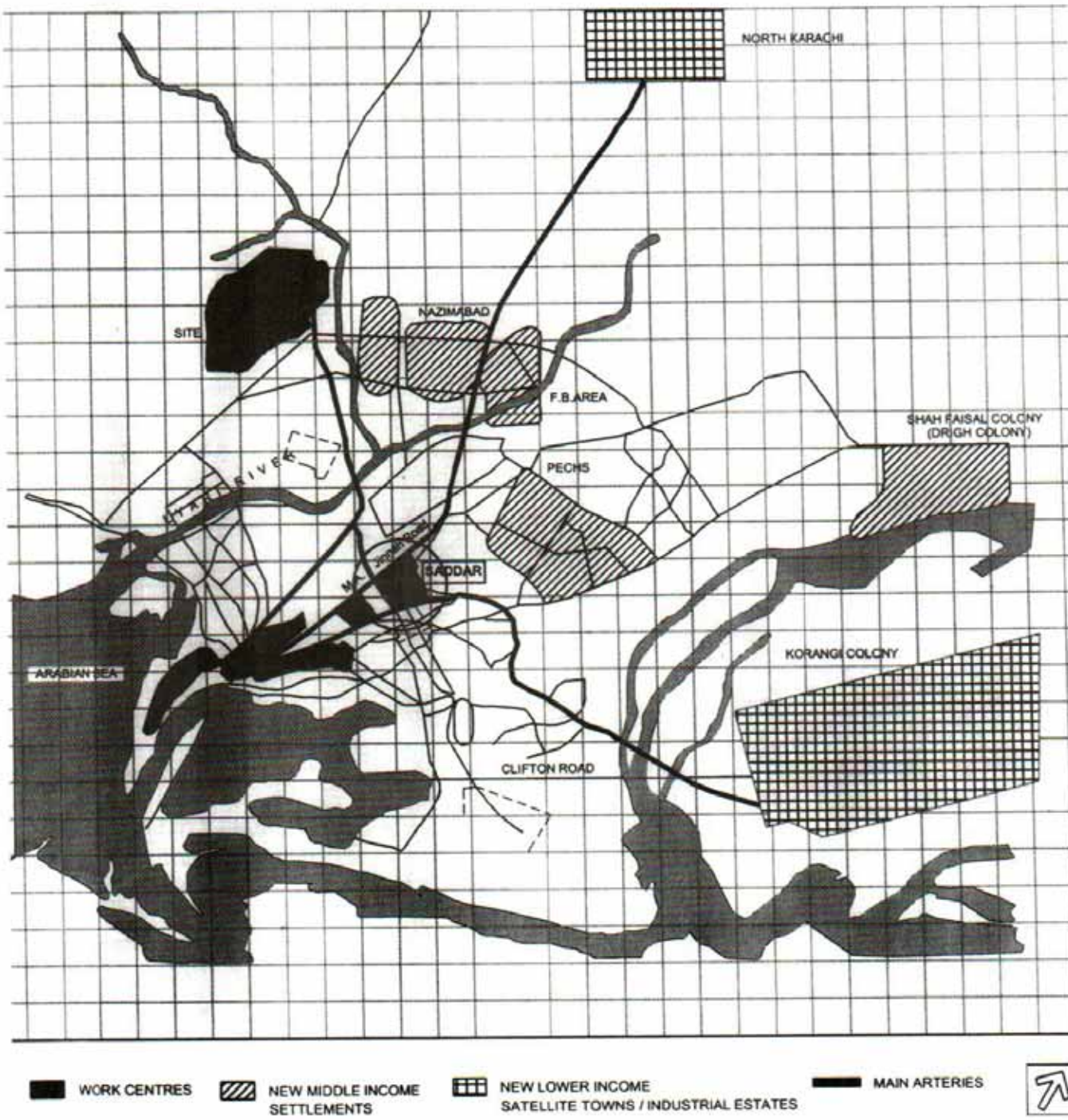
This transformed Saddar into an unplanned transit zone and transport terminal, encouraging transport related infrastructure, wholesaling, storage and traffic to develop in the area. This resulted in noise and air pollution, difficult accessibility, lack of parking, exodus of elite and a social and physical degradation of the area (Figure 4). The middle class filled in the physical and cultural void left by the elite, keeping Saddar alive.

This situation changed in the 1970's as the construction boom generated by gulf money led to an emergence of high-density high-rise apartment buildings and commercial centres forcing the middle class out⁹. Consequently, the area was taken over by real estate speculators, labourers and encroachments catering to the growing transport and construction sectors in Saddar. 1980's and Zia's Islamisation saw the last of the bars, billiard rooms and cinemas of Saddar¹⁰.

⁸ According to Arif Hasan, in his book, *Understanding Karachi, Planning and Reforms for the Future*, "The MRV plan proposed a federal secretariat, legislative buildings and a university around a large independence square to the north of the city. A mass transit system and resettlement scheme for the inner city slums was also proposed".

⁹ In the 1970's, the government encouraged the construction of high rise buildings by making new building bye-laws.

¹⁰ During the 11-year long Martial Law regime of ZiaulHaq, a major drive for Islamisation was undertaken in the country to generate a popular vote bank. These led to a cultural degradation both spatially and socially, as all places of entertainment and gathering were banned.



Map - 2: Krachi-1960
 Source: Arif hasan and Associates, Feb. 1999.



Figure 4: Traffic Congestion at the Adhoc Bus Terminal in Saddar.

NEED TO REHABILITATE THE CITY CENTRE: After discussing Karachi's development patterns and resultant structure, it becomes obvious that the city has grown multiple centres serving their respective catchment areas. However, these centres are isolated and incomplete in their social, cultural and commercial facilities, with no common places or spaces of interaction between the elite and the masses.

Saddar due to its nearness to the port, the Central Business District (CBD), wholesale markets and direct transportation link to the two industrial estates; Landhi-Korangi Industrial Estate (LITE) and Sindh Industrial and Technical Estate (SITE), forms the economic centre of the city. In addition, being accessible by public transport and having some of the remaining rich architectural and cultural heritage, makes it a frequently visited and de facto cultural centre of the city.

Saddar may be an active commercial zone of the city during daytime catering to thousands of vehicles and commuting transit population, but in the evenings when the traffic dissipates and the related activities die out it becomes void of any cultural or social activity.

Traffic generated degradation has lead to grave

environmental problems which are not only damaging to human health but are also harmful to the architectural and cultural heritage of Saddar.

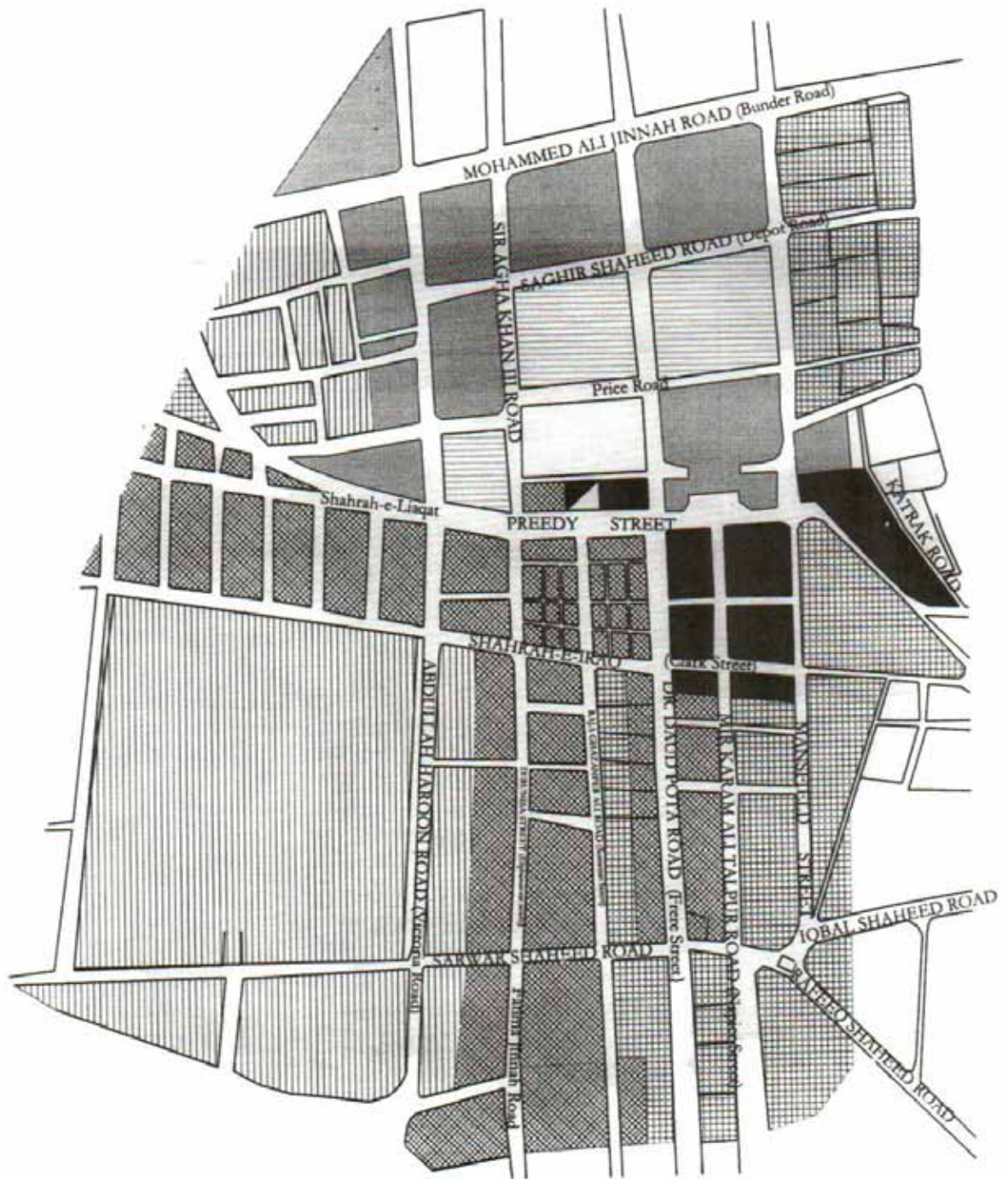
To safeguard the city centre from further degradation, it is important to analyse the inherent informal and formal processes of change and propose a rehabilitation scheme, which addresses them.

3 - TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY CENTRE: CAUSES AND EFFECTS

A - Land use in Saddar: (Map – 3)

- **RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY:** Saddar has lost its charm as a pedestrian 'neighbourhood'. Most of the residential buildings are converted into commercial ones, with retailing on the ground floors and wholesale markets, godowns, warehouses, storage and low income, single men dormitories on the upper floors.

Some of the buildings still have families residing in them, who do so either out of family tradition, habit or convenience. They complain of noise and air pollution, solid waste debris, encroachments, hawkers and vehicular congestion, factors which



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITY | | SHOPPING (RETAIL) / HOTELS | |
| INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITY | | SPECIALIZED MARKETS | |
| RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY | | TRANSIT ACTIVITY | |



Map - 3: Landuse-Saddar
 Source: Arif Hassan and Partners, 2002



Figure 5: Hawkers and Public Transport Blocking a Residential Street.

force them, especially, their women, to remain indoors.

These social changes have altered the character of the streets in Saddar, from lively down town shopping and residential areas to deserted and unfriendly spaces in the evenings (Figure 5).

- **OPEN SPACES, INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES:** The only large public open space available in Saddar is Jehangir Park. It is fairly developed with trees and paved areas, but part of it is being encroached upon by a mosque and related facilities. Physically pleasing, the current social environment of the park is not conducive for attracting families, children or older people, as it is mostly in the use of single men, encroachers, loiterers and drug addicts.

Cultural facilities including cinemas, bars, billiard rooms, restaurants, libraries, bookshops and community halls are almost finished, as most of them are being converted into multi-storeyed shopping malls, warehouses or apartment blocks by the developers lobby.

Almost half of the old institutional buildings including schools, colleges, hospitals, municipal offices, auditoriums, religious buildings and socio-cultural facilities, have also moved out due to a lack of parking, difficult accessibility and noise and air pollution [9].

- **COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY:** Saddar lost its charm as a retail centre for shoppers belonging to

the upper and middle-income groups due to; One, the emergence of new commercial centres in their local suburbs Two, the increase in traffic congestion and its resultant degradation in Saddar.

Majority of retail shops in Saddar are catering to transport related activities like mechanic workshops, spare parts shops, small hotels, tea stalls and outlets selling cheap consumer goods to the lower income commuters, drivers and conductors. Yet, despite these changes, shopping for specialised items like marriage clothing, jewellery and electronics is still associated with Saddar by the rich and the poor alike.

Shoppers constitute only 14 percent of the population coming to Saddar, the remaining 86 percent are in transit and are catered by the hawkers and vendors, while sitting in or changing buses (Figure 6).

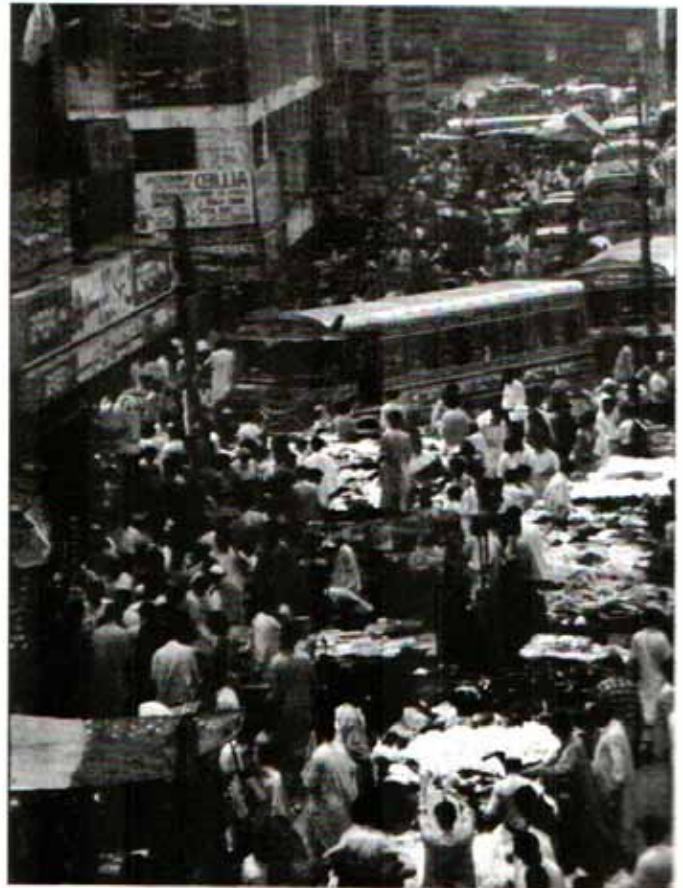


Figure 6: Traffic, Hawker and Vendors Creating Congestion in Saddar.

In fact, a trip to Saddar has become synonymous with shopping on streets from hawkers and vendors who sell all sorts of consumer goods at cheap prices. They also act as outdoor salespersons for shops, selling the merchandise at a cheaper rate due to lower overheads and are given a cut in the profit.

Shoppers of all income groups term hawkers and vendors as a part of the experience of shopping in Sadda; something which may not be the main purpose to visit Saddar but definitely adds value to the trip.

B - New Land Use Trends in Saddar: In the past 30 years, land uses such as hawkers, vendors and leased markets have gained de-facto status in the area. Hawkers and vendors are mostly illegal, whereas leased markets are legal and built by the city government (former KMC) or Cantonment Board. However, these also form a type of encroachment as they mostly occupy open land such as, the gardens adjoining Empress Market (Figure 7).

Hawkers and vendors of Saddar are of various types, including permanent and collapsible stalls and *thellas*¹¹, selling merchandise ranging from food, clothes and household items to cheap imported items like watches, radios and toys. They also include masons, painters, beggars and fortune-tellers, all together adding to the commercial and cultural life of Saddar. They appropriate space on footpaths, roadsides, overhead bridges, cross sections and any available open plot.

Due to Saddar's new type of transit clientele, there is a genuine demand for hawkers¹² and encroachers, which promotes their growth and interest in the area. They can make a sizeable income of up to Rs.400 per day in Saddar and form an important part of the employment pattern of the city [10].

Hawkers, vendors and leased markets are also a cultural need for the middle and lower income

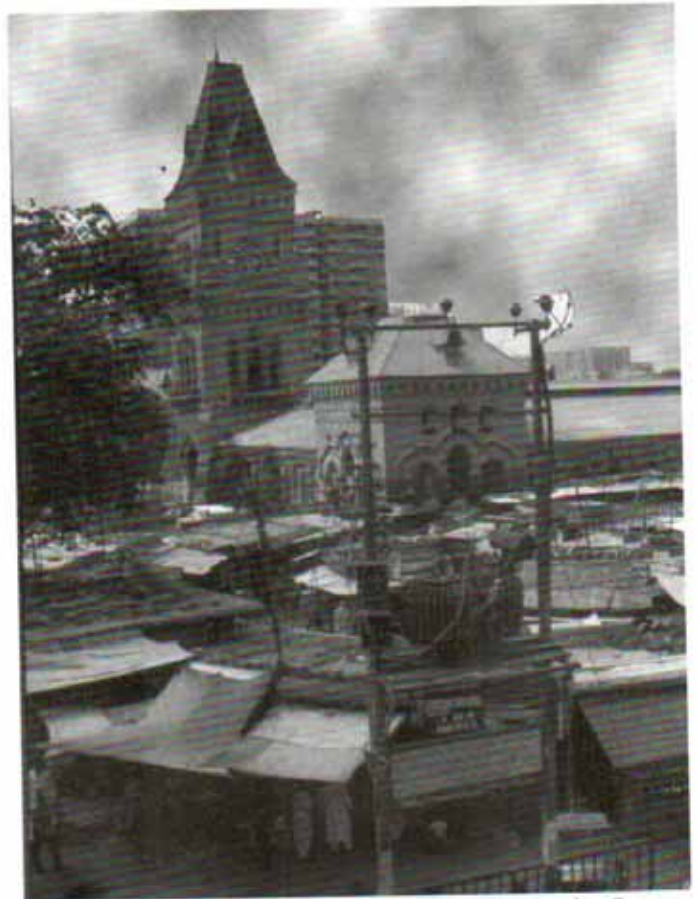


Figure 7: A Leased Market Encroaching upon the Open Garden Adjoining Empress Market in Saddar.

groups visiting Saddar as they provide services as well as amusement to the transit and shopping population. The cultural aspect of wandering and browsing through merchandise, leafing through a newspaper, sitting with a palmist, having the shoes polished, etc., add flavour to the trip made by a regular visitor. The labourers, shopkeepers and office employees working in Saddar also use the eateries available with the hawkers for their daily meals.

They also cater to transport and transporters' needs by selling and repairing tires, providing mechanic services and cleaning the vehicles. The mobile vendors (pushcarts) usually sell drinking water and provide money exchange (from bank notes to coins) required by commuters and conductors.

¹¹ 'Thellas' is a local term used for four wheeled push carts used by vendors.

¹² An average hawker, encroacher and leased shop keeper in Saddar makes up to Rs 9,000 per month which in the given economic recession is a considerable sum and a much sought after opportunity for regular income generation.

Due to this demand there are approximately 3,000 semi-permanent cabins, hawkers and vendors and 2018 leased shops present in Saddar¹³ [11]. The number of hawkers and vendors can double during special occasions and festivities in the city.

These encroachers have become fairly organised over the years and have registered associations. These associations take care of their social welfare, solid waste management, storage and security requirements for merchandise and pushcarts and provide funds for rehabilitation in case of evictions.

Successive city administrations have attempted to remove these encroachments by force. This has proven to be of no avail as they all operate under the protection and sometimes collaboration of the corrupt government officials, who extort bribes or 'bhatta'¹⁴ from them [12].

The hawkers, encroachers and shopkeepers of leased market, although, tired of these periodic evictions are unable to have a dialogue with the government as their unions are not technically equipped to make alternative plans for rehabilitation and or negotiate.

Keeping in view, the close relationship hawkers and vendors enjoy with the commercial and cultural life of Saddar. Any proposal for the revitalization of Saddar should include a rehabilitation scheme for them to make it realistic and successful.

C - Transport and Traffic in Saddar: As a result of the traffic network of the city, approximately

3, 50,000 buses, mini-buses and cars are entering Saddar daily [13]. The increase in traffic intensity has been unavoidable and irreversible as the number of buses and cars going through Saddar have increased by an alarming 40.7 percent in the last 6 years¹⁵ [14].

The reasons for this high numbers of mini buses and buses plying through Saddar and their resultant congestion are that:

- There is no government provided public transport system available in Karachi. Almost all the buses in Karachi are owned and operated by the private sector or what is commonly known as the 'Transporters Mafia'. The government has very little control over the illegal routes and large number of buses plying in Saddar as the transporters can and do call for a strike, immobilizing the city. Being in a strong position to monopolise and buy off officials they do not only control but also interfere in the planning of the routes¹⁶ [15].

- Almost all the bus stops and terminal facilities in Saddar are ad-hoc and illegal. Bus stops are usually at intersections where buses stay for unlimited time causing delays and congestion. These are operated through a system of bribing the traffic police, police and the related department's officials.

- There is a conflict between vehicular and pedestrian traffic, as there are 5, 49,843¹⁷ vehicular

¹³ There are no official counts available on the number of hawkers in Saddar as they are considered an illegal entity.

¹⁴ The hawkers, encroachers and shopkeepers pay bribes (bhatta) or beat, as it is known in Saddar to middlemen, known as 'beaters'. These beaters are in touch with the hawkers' associations and daily collect the beat (bhatta) @ Rs 30 to Rs 150-200/ encroacher per day depending on the nature and size of their business.

¹⁵ Calculations made on the basis of the counts for 1994 provided in, "Saddar, Traffic Management Scheme, A Plan for the Future" by TEB, 1996.

¹⁶ The numerous transporters' associations in Karachi provide illegal protection to their members for any "inconvenience" that might occur during their daily work. For this purpose they pay bribes to the traffic police, police and city government to turn a blind eye to illegal acts committed by the bus drivers. Operators plying through Saddar pay an average of Rs.3,000 per month so that they can continue to violate traffic rules and regulations.

¹⁷ Calculations made on the basis of the counts for 1994 provided in, "Saddar, Traffic Management Scheme; A Plan for the Future" by TEB, 1996.

trips going through Saddar daily, coupled with 1,00,000¹⁸ pedestrians. The absence of a pedestrian network incorporating footpaths, signals, and vehicle free zones adds to the problem.

- There is a conflict between local and through traffic. 84 percent of the buses and mini-buses of Karachi are using Saddar as a thoroughfare and hinder the local traffic by blocking the roads and parking spaces.
- There are thousands of ill-managed encroachments on pavements and roads catering to and blocking the traffic.
- There is no traffic management due to the corruption and inefficiency of the concerned authorities and lack of negotiations with the transporters lobby

NEW TRAFFIC TRENDS: There is a spatial interdependence amongst the vehicular, pedestrian traffic and the hawkers, vendors and leased markets of Saddar. Hawker's and leased shop's businesses depend on pedestrian movement, as commuters who get down in Saddar to change buses or walk towards their businesses and homes, shop along the way to conserve time and money. Vendors on the other hand approach the transit population for service provision and merchandise, as they do not have the time to get down and shop.

The ad-hoc bus terminal near Empress Market plus all the ad-hoc bus stops in Saddar and their surrounding hawkers, vendors and leased shops, are such examples. Cross sections, footpaths along roads and open plots are attractive locations for hawkers, vendors and leased markets; as these are in the hub of bus routes and pedestrian flow and are visible, accessible and appropriate for a quick wind up in case of police action and evictions.

This strong spatial and economic relationship existing between vehicular and pedestrian traffic and land use changes has not been understood and addressed by the state planners and relevant agencies, resulting in non responsive plans and continuous degradation.

CONCLUSION

For a rehabilitation scheme in Saddar to be successful, the concerns of all actors have to be addressed and made a part of the plan through a process of negotiations. This plan than has to be implemented with the joint efforts of planners of relevant agencies, stakeholders in Saddar and a neutral body like a committee of concerned professionals and or a development NGO, which would be neutral and instrumental in resolving any issues which may arise.

A revitalization plan for Saddar primarily requires re-organization of traffic, in keeping with the rehabilitation of hawkers, vendors and leased markets. For this, at city scale a rationalization of routes through a revised transportation plan is needed, in order to reduce the number of vehicles going through Saddar. In addition, the major mass transit schemes in Karachi should be tied up with an area level transportation plan to relieve the load of the through traffic. Within Saddar segregation of local and through traffic, vehicles and pedestrians, relocation and planned resettlement of hawkers, vendors and leased markets and the construction of a bus terminal are needed to relieve the situation.

Being the nerve centre of the city, housing many interest groups and strong lobbies, it is not easy to initiate a project in Saddar. Therefore, above all a political commitment and good will is required from all concerned■

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¹⁸ Calculations made on the basis of the counts for 1994 provided in, "Saddar, Traffic Management Scheme; a Plan for the future" by TEB, 1996.

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The case study discussed is taken from the research, "Revitalization and Rehabilitation Project for Saddar, Karachi; A Research to Formulate Alternatives for Revitalisation of Saddar and Rehabilitation of its Hawkers, Encroachments and Leased Markets". This research was undertaken between November 2001 to August 2002 by a research team including Architect/ Planner Arif Hasan, Architect/ Planner Asiya Sadiq-Polack, Architect/ Planner M. Christophe Polack, and research assistants Mohammad Nazeer and Mohammad Jameel. Field assistance was provided by the Urban Resource Centre (URC), Karachi and financial support from the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), based in Bangkok.