

ABSTRACT

There is a universal understanding that, urban beaches are the places for all citizens to enjoy for recreation, and that the state should be the owner and regulator of all waterfronts. This historic understanding is reflected in the Public Trust Doctrine based on which most national laws as well as regulations are created. Thus, whenever a commercial development of a beachfront is proposed it is regulated according to such relevant laws and codes, and its impact on various natural and social factors is heavily scrutinized and evaluated by governmental authorities and affected communities.

On the Karachi coastal belt, various commercial development projects have been proposed by the formal sector in recent years, but there have been no regulations appropriately and effectively imposed on them by the relevant government authorities. In fact there seems to be new state initiated master plans, schemes and regulations that seem to facilitate such privatization and commercialization trends and projects. Also little or no public consultation or consent has been sought.

This study conducted in July to December 2006 has attempted to study these plans and projects in their context in Karachi, and present a critical analysis according to accepted principles of urban planning and design which consider various legal, physical, environmental, socio-cultural and economic aspects. The objective has been to evaluate the overall impact of this major shift in beachfront ownership, control, access, use and character as it affects both the people and the place of Karachi.

The methodology of study included the following:

1. Literature review

- a. Review of earlier done work on urban beach development in Karachi by different author's articles from local newspapers (Daily Dawn and Daily News Pakistan)
- b. Internet web search to gain a global perspective on urban beach development.

2. Field work:

- a. Visit to Defence Housing Authority (DHA) for collection of DHA Master Plan for Waterfront Developments at Clifton beach
- b. Visit to Urban Resource Center for collection of information on beach development
- c. Personal observations and photographic survey of Clifton beach to learn about local culture, social impact and land utilization pattern of Clifton beach

d. Identification and categorization of stakeholders and interest groups for which informal interviews with a checklist were taken from local visitors to Clifton beach as well as DHA and Oceanography department's officials in anonymity.

3. Analysis:

a. Analysis of collected literature through newspapers and web search.

b. Analysis of a video documentary "Clifton Beach Shrinking for the Poor" prepared by Urban Resource Center (an NGO) in Karachi

c. Critical analysis and evaluation of the document of DHA Master Plan for Waterfront Developments as well as other development projects such as City District Government Karachi (CDGK) Beach Park and Karachi Port Trust (KPT) Port Tower Complex at Clifton Beach according to Urban Planning and Design criteria.