

# IMPACT OF CULTURAL SHIFT ON THE GREEN-SCAPE OF LAHORE, FROM MUGHALS TO PRESENT (2014)

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## ABSTRACT

Lahore has a glorious history and it remained a chief cultural centre throughout the past from Ghaznavids Rule to the independence of the sub-continent in 1947. The city which was known as the City of Gardens has experienced a changing trend in garden design over a period of time, from the past to present. Initially, the changes were brought about by the immigrants or invaders, but now the trend in designing of parks is changing, faster than ever before. Lahore has had the privilege to preserve the changes brought about by design of Green-Scape. This paper discusses the changing trends in park design by mapping out the expansion of Lahore, thus recognizing the present status of its Green-scape under the growing urban development of Lahore, and the changes brought in its design and concepts, due to the cultural-shift from Mughals to contemporary times.

From past to present, the cultural change and the trends in living has influenced the design and layout of parks and gardens of the city. The Mughals brought the tradition of creating formal gardens to South Asia based on Chaharbagh; a Persian tradition. The tradition of laying out new gardens in the city remained an important part even after the decline of Mughals during Sikh period. The British also marked their name in the list of gardens in Lahore, by introducing a new concept in terms of botanical gardens. After independence until now, the gardens and parks continued to emerge on the map of Lahore, but with varied modes and shades, influenced by globalization. Currently the urban sprawl of Lahore is increasing with a faster pace than ever before, and along with it the concept behind the design and development of Green-Scape is also flourishing, bringing back the lost glory of Lahore, once called the “**CITY OF GARDENS**”.

**Keywords:** City of Gardens, Evolution of Gardens in Lahore, Globalization and Green Scape of Lahore, Changing culture and landscape of Lahore

## INTRODUCTION

Our ways of thinking regulates our ways of living, and our ways of living forms our culture and it's the culture that shapes our environment. Environment is made up of three shades of nature, Blue; the water, Grey; the built structure, and Green; the landscape. The form, shape and intensity of these three shades in our environment, brings variety in cultures, and on the other hand the differences in the culture brings variations in the landscape.

The Green-space is a part of nature that soothes our souls against the harsh climate and the grey-scape.<sup>1</sup> This Green-scape is an important part of human psychology that has always been present in our lives throughout history. Even in 21<sup>st</sup> century, when our lives are obsessed by technology, its importance cannot be denied, in spite of being poorly perceived as part of the city.

Alexander Garvin has demonstrated in his book “Public Parks- The key to liveable communities” that;

“It is impossible to understand fully the functioning of cities and suburbs or plan adequately for their future without a deep appreciation of parks and the way they affect every aspect of our lives”.

“Public parks have become as central to contemporary life as airports, highways and all other components of world's infrastructure, they constitute assets that must be sustained” (Garvin, 2011).

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1 This is a self-generated term by author which means the built environment, the buildings, roads etc.

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The Green-space can be either natural or man-made. It exists in the form of gardens or parks, and formulate the breathing space for a city. But, with urbanization the green-scape has vanished in the grey-scape. When people realized this deficiency of the soul healer, they started building up their environment, to fulfil this deficiency of the green-scape in the urban sprawl. In the case of Lahore, the target of the builders is to attract people to have residences in open, serene and green areas, while fulfilling the official requirements (the LDA bylaws) of providing 7% green spaces in a society, but the users still demand to reside in a soothing green environment.

Lahore was called “CITY OF GARDENS” on the basis of having more area as gardens as compared to the developed land. Gardens were built by different rulers in different

times. The nature, typology and use of the gardens in each era was different, depending upon the culture of the era. The history of the Green-scape of Lahore started from the time of Muslim Emperors, passing through the British Rule and is now progressing in the present era. Lahore, lost its character few decades ago but is now reviving, as “The City of Green-Shacks”;<sup>2</sup> rather than “The City of Gardens”.

## EVOLUTION OF GARDENS

With the urge to urbanize their living, people also started urbanizing the Green-scape, by incorporating gardens in the urban settlement. Lahore had the privilege to be the carrier of the visual timeline of evolution of gardens, representing the changing trends in the landscape design (see Figure 1).



**Figure-1:** Map of Lahore in 1867  
Source: (Rehman, 2013)

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2 By the “City of Green Shacks” it means; a development which has tried saving the green scape in the form of green patches/small green pockets instead of large garden spaces.

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The development of landscape in Lahore has been categorized according to its purpose, area and use. There are various classifications of numerous parks and open spaces which are involved in a typical park and open space system (American Planning Association, et al., 2012). The cultural evolution of gardens and parks from the time of Mughal till present is as follow:

- In the Mughal time there were pleasure, residential and funerary gardens.
- In the Sikh period, the trends continued with development of pleasure gardens.
- Later in the British period a new category of gardens was developed named as recreational gardens.
- This further flourished under new concepts of parks in the post-independence phase of garden development of Lahore.

These categories of gardens are explained below:

- Pleasure gardens: exclusively for the royal use
- Residential gardens: these are the gardens built in residential area. (Could be royal residence and public residence)
- Funerary gardens: gardens built around a tomb,
- Recreational gardens- meant for people from all ages and class. They incorporate attractions and activities that can be further divided as<sup>3</sup>:
  - Ride parks (Similar to the early amusement parks and directed towards attracting teenagers. These parks have thrill rides, like Joy Land in Fortress, Lahore),
  - Water parks (Parks where water rides and parks are the primary focus, like Sozo Water Park, Lahore),
  - Theme parks (Theme Parks where rides and other activities are based on a specific theme like Disney Land),
  - Family entertainment parks (Parks which have games, amusements and attraction for all ages like Race Course Park, Lahore),
  - Themed attraction parks (Parks, centered on a principal attraction such as a safari or a historical site and are targeted towards all ages, like Iqbal Park, Lahore),

- Community parks (Parks established with in a residential settlement, like Model Town Park , Lahore) and
- Road side parks (Parks along the roadside for the beautification and recreational purpose like Nawaz Sharif & Alfalah Bank Park).

### **A GLANCE INTO THE PAST: THE BEGINNING OF FORMAL GARDENS IN LAHORE**

Mughal gardens are of Timurid Central Asian origin. Baber, the first Mughal ruler carried these influences to northern India from the valley of Ferghana, the suburbs of Samarkand and the irrigated channels of Heart, along with his own experiences of gardens at Kabul (Jr., 2015). The physical spaces in the early gardens of Mughal India were small and modest, but culturally significant in a way that the social space they envisioned was marked with royal scale and meaning. Tradition of Mughal garden was intensely rooted in this dynastic psyche. This spatial design approach took physical form in garden design and was carried further in the empire (Jr., 2015). Inspired from the earlier gardens, Mughals built their gardens on the concept of Charbaghs. The plot was divided into four parts by khyabans; “walkways” and nahr; “canals”. Each part was further divided into four parts. The running water was one of the key features of Mughal gardens. This was the solution for the harsh and hot climate of Lahore. In accordance with the culture, there was a gender separation in these gardens; separate rooms for men and women were provided (Nadiem, 2005).

Mughal gardens developed parallel to the Baroque European gardens, in which there appears to have been a cross-cultural exchange of plants, imagery and iconography. But all these shaped under the influence of local culture. The design of these gardens revolves around the royal expressions and philosophy of the constructor.

The Mughal gardens firstly appeared on the map of Lahore in the era of Mirza Kamran; a son of Emperor Babur, who had constructed two gardens on the bank of River Ravi (Anon., 1990) with features such as pavilion or baradari, water reservoir, canal and fountains. When Lahore became the seat of power under the rule of Emperor Akbar, landscape design and execution flourished.

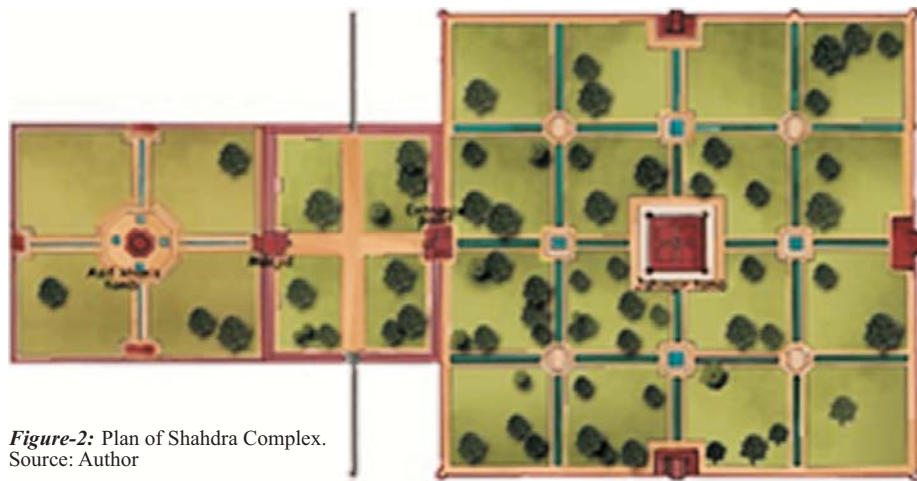
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3 The classification done on the basis of the categorization discussed in (Gothelf, et al., 2010) (Raluca & Gina, 2008)

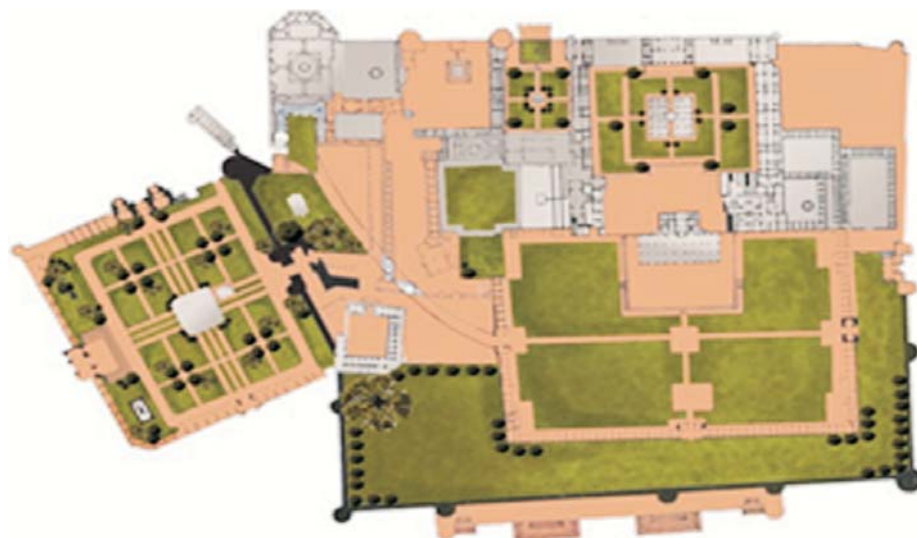
A number of gardens were built along the River Ravi and the miniature paintings of the manuscript illustrated the garden's concept which showed continuation of Charbagh. The gardens of this era have now vanished (Rehman, 2009). During the reign of Emperor Jahangir, the concept to bring nature into the built environment was introduced. The use of water in the landscape continued, but it took a poetic expression in the gardens of Shah Jahan's era. The Persian culture was introduced in the Mughal gardens, as Jahangir married Nur Jahan, a lady of Persian origin. She laid a garden complex at Shahdra (see Figure 2). These were leisure gardens in the Emperor's lives and were resting places after their death (Rehman, 2001). Mughals have a big contribution in making Lahore a city of gardens. The gardens were mostly funerary, residential and pleasure gardens (Rehman, 1997).

The Shalimar Garden (June, 1641- Dec, 1642) which took its inspiration from the Shalimar Garden of Kashmir, was planned on the concept of pleasure garden (Nadiem, 2005). There is an amalgamation of the natural features like running water, trees and flowers, with singing birds. The manmade substances are in perfect harmony, where sun, moon and stars reflect the beauty of the garden, reaching new heights.

The site selection took the following points in consideration; availability of a sustainable water source, site contours to allow terrace levels, waterfalls, canals and fountains. It is an enclosed garden with three terraces. The upper most rectangular terrace was named Bagh-e-Farah Bakhsh "pleasure bestower", and the middle and lower square terraces were named Bagh-e-Faiz Bakhsh "bounty bestower" (see Figures 3 and 4).



**Figure-2:** Plan of Shahdra Complex.  
Source: Author



**Figure-3:** Master plan of Lahore Fort  
Source: Author

The garden had a variety of fruit trees and flowers. The main entrance was on lower terrace; open to noblemen and on some occasion to the general public. The middle terrace was the emperor's garden and had the most elaborate water system. The water from the canals and fountains fell on the cascade and was collected in the hauz (water tank); with a central seating platform for the emperor present in front of the marble cascade (see Figure 4) (Rehman, 2009). The Shalimar Garden based on the concept of an earthly paradise was a source of motivation for the city development and a large number of gardens were built on its east and southeast sides. Some other pleasure gardens were also constructed during this period namely; Gulabibagh, Wazir Khan, Chauburji on the concept of Charbaghs (Rehman, 2009). The Mughal's design concepts continued its practice in the Sikh period. And today these gardens are largely perceived by public as places to relax, walk, and picnic with family and friends.

## BRITISH CONTRIBUTION 1847-1947- A GATEWAY FOR PUBLIC PARKS

The British, after taking control of India setup new trends in the urban landscape. The imperial allusion in terms of spatial scale was lost and regained through enhanced intimacy and taste (Jr., 2015). William Carey founded the Agri-horticultural Society in 1820, in Calcutta (Smith, 1909) which made a flower garden, a greenhouse, a research lab and a library. British interest was more in horticulture, so they laid out many botanical gardens. Plants were imported from different parts of India and other European lands. The British also constructed race courses, parade grounds, polo and cricket pitches and tennis courts in Lahore (Rehman, 2009).



*Figure-4:* Plan of Shalimar Garden  
Source: Author

The major contribution of the British in Lahore's Green scape is the Lawrence Garden, laid out as a botanical garden, based on the concept of Kew Gardens in Europe. In 1860, a part from its western side was used as public pleasure garden for archery, badminton and cricket (see Figure 5) (Rehman, 2009).

The British brought a new shift in the usage of parks which inclined towards the public. This is because in 1840 Britain's society experienced a change in its culture. There was a

growing interest in horticulture and gardening among the middle class, having sufficient money and leisure time to utilize (Basde, 2013). This blended with the prevailing nineteenth-century ideas of engaging in what was known as 'rational recreation'. Along with the public city parks, the Royal Botanical Gardens in Europe was established to benefit people through the findings of natural sciences. Thus, from the outset the gardens role as a place of rational recreation<sup>4</sup> was popular with the public.



Figure-5: Plan of Jinnah Garden  
Source: Author

4 Rational recreation is a form of physical recreation which began to emerge in Britain around the 1850's. It involves the leisure time to be spent in a constructive way.

The British continued this concept in India as well, but with a different perspective. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Lawrence Garden became a centre of botanical and horticulture interest, where it not only grew plants but also sold them to the general public. The development of horticulture concept was to promote improved horticulture plants and vegetables for the people. Lawrence Botanic Garden was indeed a help in making Botany a serious subject in Lahore, which further strengthened with the establishment of GC and PU in 1864 and 1870 respectively (Rehman, 2009). The garden was designed for the British elite; it became the first public park in Lahore (see Figure 6) with

access allowed for the people from the two old settlements of Mozang and Ichra (Rehman, 2009). The two mounds were used for recreational purposes. According to Kholsa, they had been turned into terraced garden with huge plain on the top, where scores of people sat in the evening to rest for a while (Din, 2003).

The British brought different lifestyles to Punjab which also reflected in their landscape and architectural projects. Based on the socio-economic and their cultural setups they introduced garden trends which were different from the Mughals, to show their dominant ruling power as observed by C.M. Villiers Stuart:

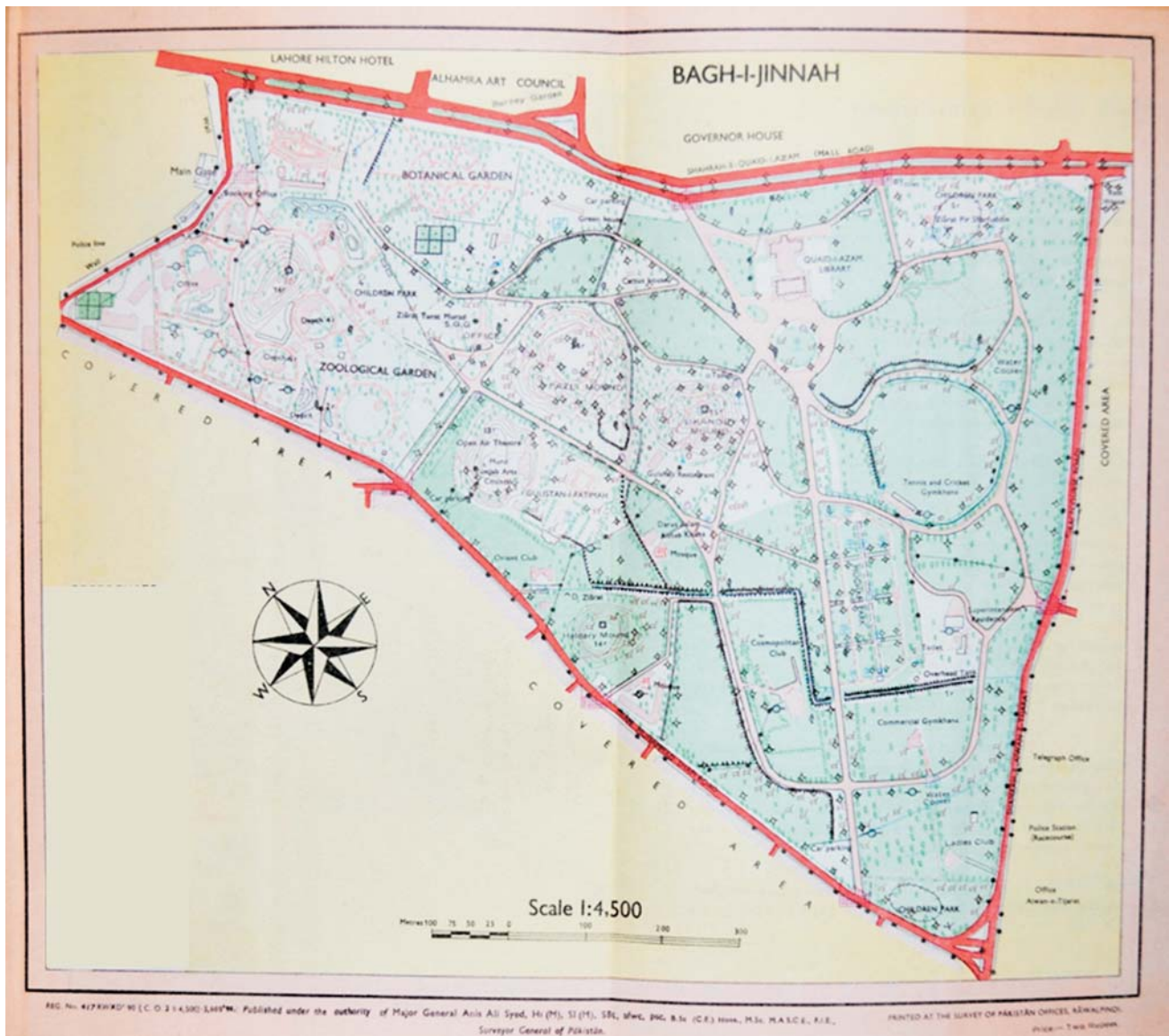


Figure-6: Survey Plan of Lawrence Garden; Bagh-e- Jinnah  
Source: (Anon., 1990)

“It is easy to picture the change; the exposed private garden, a contradiction in its very terms; the public parks with their bare acres of unhappy-looking grass, their ugly band stands, hideous iron railings, and furlon European statues; their wide objectless roads, scattered flower beds and solitary tress and worst of all in a hot country, their lack of fountains and running water” (Staurtpp, 1913).

Gardens were featured with radiating avenues from gate ways, connected by curvilinear paths and encircling the

ground. The planning concept was inspired by long avenues, grand vistas of lawns; dominating the British gardens of that period, although the use of water was excluded.

Geometrical patterns were now replaced by grass, trees were planted in clusters rather than in straight lines which was a completely different approach from the Mughals. On 15th April 1885 it appeared to Lady Dufferin that there was no town in Lahore, but avenues of trees, luxuriant foliage and nurseries of foliage growing in incredible profusion (Rehman, 2009). With this Lahore sustained its repete as a City of Garden.

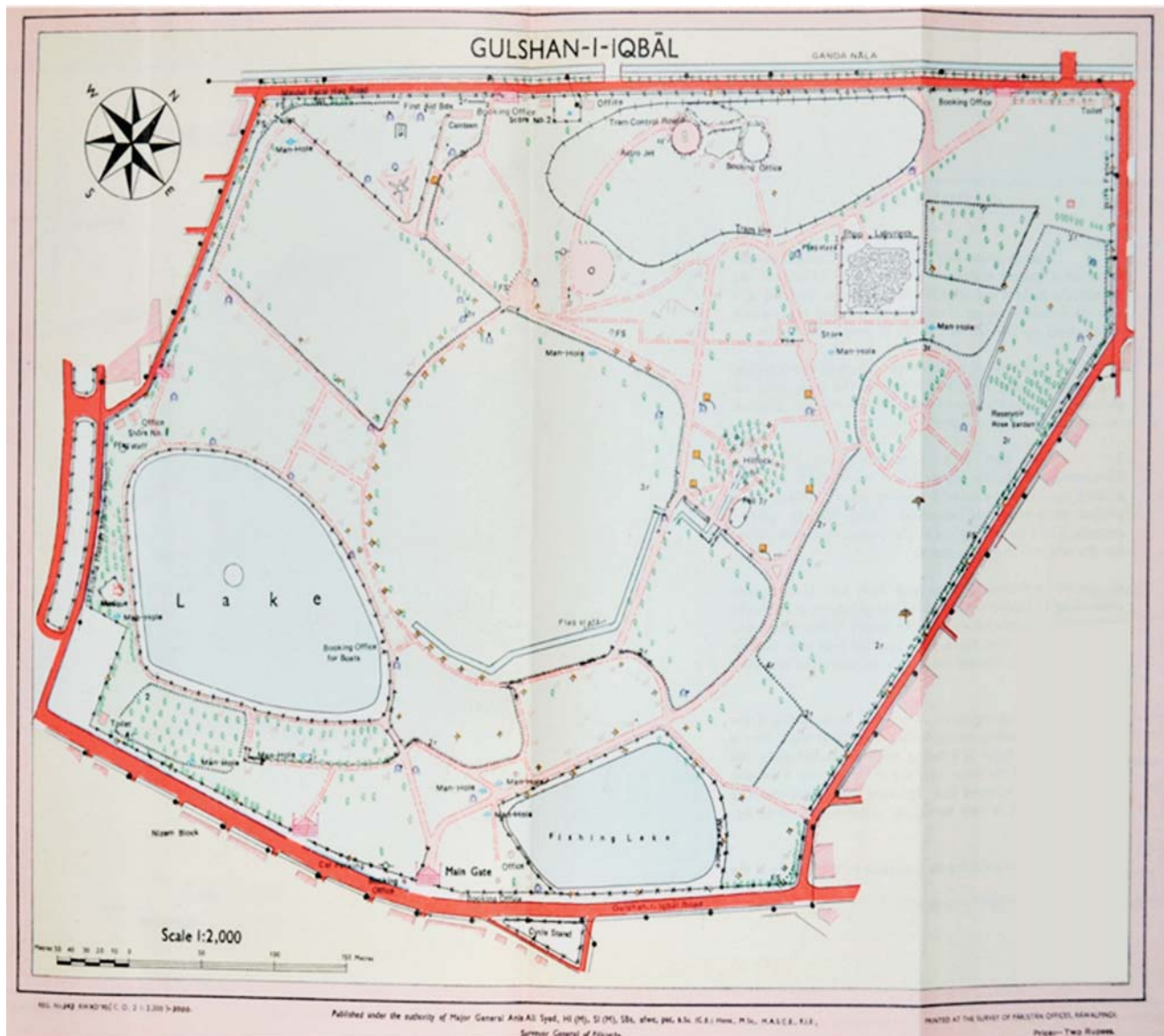


Figure-7: Survey Plan of Gulshan-e-Iqbal  
Source: (Anon., 1990)



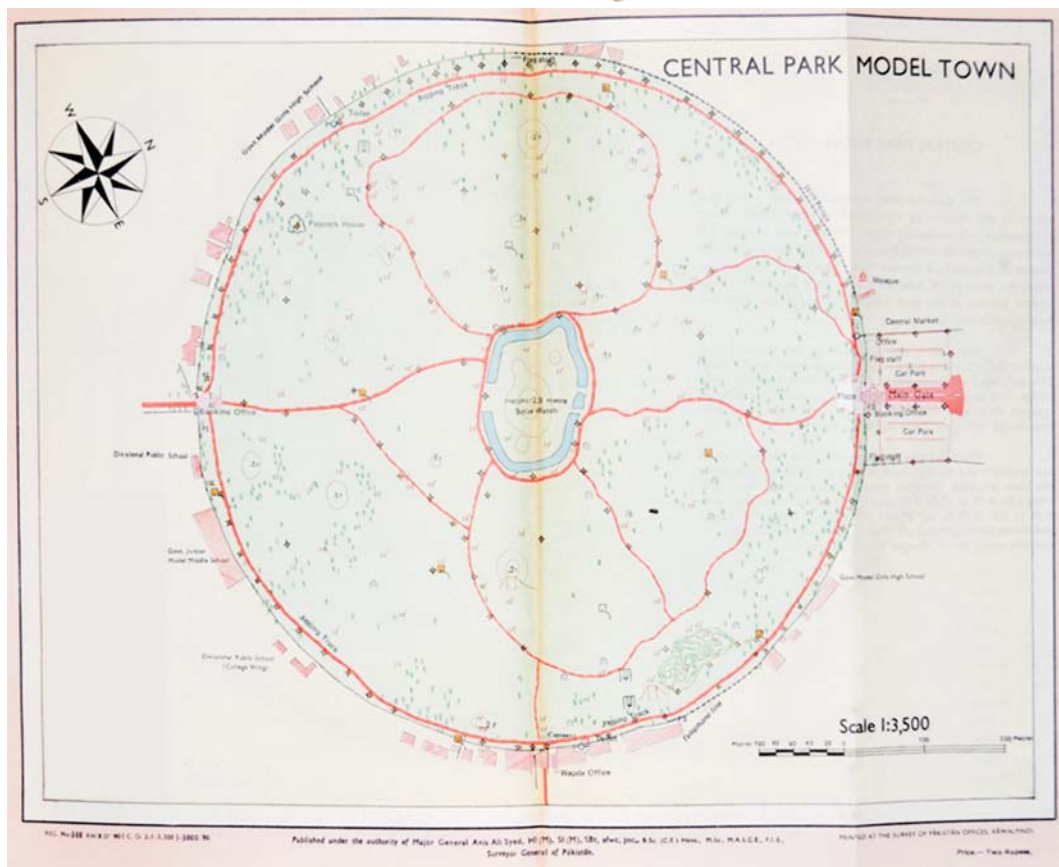
## GREEN SCAPE OF 1947-2014- A PUBLIC REALM

After independence, the green scape of Lahore was not confined to the decisions of a particular monarch or some elites, but a wave of democracy played a role in moulding and designing of the green scape. The usage now shifted towards common man and the general public. As the population grew, the old green areas were taken up for construction like Chuburgi and Model Town extension. Thus, the number of existing parks became less and the

green areas were compromised. After realizing this deficiency in urban development, later on new parks were generated with a different approach. Here the driving force was the interest of the general public and so the designing of the parks restarted. The most prominent is the Minar-i-Pakistan Park (1970s) and Gulshan Iqbal Park (1980s) (see Figure 7), Race Course Park (modern Gillani Park); (see Figure 8) and model Town Park (remodelled) (see Figure 9) (Rehman, 2009).



**Figure-8:** Plan of Race Course Park  
Source: Author



**Figure-9:** Survey Plan of Model Town  
Source: (Anon., 1990)

As these parks were designed for the citizens therefore, activities for recreation were made part of the green-landscape. These included boating, waterfalls, zoo, curvilinear walkways which divide the park into several lawns and jogging tracks. The use of water was sustained and provided link with the Mughal gardens. The different activities were well represented in the form of montages. There was however a shift in the placement of trees in three eras of the parks in Lahore. In Minar-e-Pakistan Park, to avoid obscuring the view of the Minar, trees were not planted and in the later parks they either existed on the periphery or along the walkways. These gardens had features similar to previous parks, like the botanical garden and mounts. New features were also included in these parks which was the result of global influences.

The uniqueness associated with these parks, which were developed after independence, was the impact of globalization. The prevailing concepts of urbanization along with the state of confusion (about revitalizing the historic parks or bringing a different idea on ground) in the west, was the base of this changing green culture in Pakistan (Waldheim, 2002). This change remoulded the definition of pleasure and recreation. People of today, expect something

new to be experienced in the form of recreation, that is different from previous designs. Moreover the nuclear family system adopted from the west also plays a role in the changing demand of recreation (Botteriell, 1997). In response to this, the demand of recreation is fulfilled by the addition of rides in the parks. These rides were initially meant for family entertainment and were installed within the green-landscape. But later they flourished as separate rides parks, which were developed, like Joy Land. Rides were categorized according to age group. This was the era when the culture was moving from joint family living to independent living. Hence, to keep the parks alive multiple attractions were added. Gulshan Iqbal Park had family entertainment facility; train trip and dodgem cars, but later on new rides were added to the north of the park (see Figure 7). Similarly Racecourse Park, (see Figure 10) had botanical garden; children play facility, avenues of trees, leisure walk, and waterfall, which is an example of a late 20<sup>th</sup> century pleasure garden.

The design trends of parks keep changing as new concepts are triggered worldwide with the advancement of technology, and result in the development of parks like Woodland Wild Life Park - Safari (see Figure 11), Sozo Water Park (see Figure 12), Polo Ground (see Figure 13), Sky Land Water Park, and Pakistan Park. These developments are based on a highlighted activity. Like in Sozo Water Park the highlighted activity is the use of water in rides, similarly in Safari Park, safari is the highlighted activity, and so on.

At present, theme parks are the latest demand in recreation. People want to experience a world of fantasy. The cause of this demand is well explained in Botteriell, 1997 by noting the influence of industrialization over general perceptions. The pre-fabricated culture has changed the amusement



**Figure-10:** Montage of Race Course Park  
Source: Author



**Figure-11:** Montage of Safari Park  
Source: Author



**Figure-12:** Montage of Sozo Water Park  
Source: Author

market and theme parks have emerged (Botteriell, 1997). This change in the cultural demand and urbanization has made the park industry flourish towards commercialization. People pay to be entertained via the thrill rides. This psychological demand of the humans is also a post war response (Botteriell, 1997). After a study of two decades, Glenn Sparks, describes it as:

“Some people have a need to expose themselves to sensations that are different from the routine,”

And this latest demand is no more a fantasy for the people of Lahore. The development of Mini Disney Land in Nishtar Block, Bahria Town fulfills this demand for Lahore. The main feature that differentiates the theme parks from other kind of parks are their character of offering everything in one place, themed around a fantasy world and based on a high capital investment (Raluca & Gina, 2008). The concept of commercialization is engulfed in these parks as well. The theme parks are defined in Economics Research Associates (ERA) as:

“A gated attraction that contains rides and/or shows in a themed environment, offers a pay-one-price ticket for its guests and attracts at least 500,000 annual visits” (Groote, 2009).

Globalization has made these ideas floating in the west so much influential that it dominates the concept of green environment. Lahore kept on expanding under the idea of urbanization but the development of green-scape was lost in the evolution of parks with the advancement in technology and globalization. The latest concepts of recreation like Joy Land (see Figure 14), Disney Land (see Figure 15) have hard landscape, and are not developed as green parks. The urban sprawl in Lahore keeps increasing and the gardens of the past are being encroached upon, converting the Garden City into Grey City. The feature of the green space has lost its importance as a soul healer.

The calmness, relaxation and the cool breath one can have in a garden full of nature and greenery has no comparison with any alternatives. This was the reason that all the attraction of technology failed to keep humans away from the very need of greenery and there came another shift in the green-scape of Lahore. It neither stopped Lahore from expanding nor did it change the existing trend of entertainment parks, infact it started to develop as green pockets in the grey-scape, which became a cause of the development of the community parks in societies. The new societies are now developing with good amount of area designated for the



Figure-13: Montage of Polo Ground  
Source: Author



Figure-14: Montage of Joy Land  
Source: Author



Figure-15: Montage of Disney Land  
Source: Author

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green-scape as community parks and parks within blocks. New small and large parks continue to develop as a response to the idea of landscape urbanism, which not only provides entertainment but also beautifies the city, thus providing green ambiance in the urban sprawl (see Figure 16).

## CONCLUSION

Developments are made on the basis of human needs, and so is the development of landscape. From the time of Mughals to date (2014), the green-scape keeps on changing and flourishing, leaving a mark on the map of Lahore. And by studying this evolution of green-scape with reference to culture, there is seen a shift from royal to public gardens, rigid to flexible design, straight to curvilinear tracks, from pleasure to recreation and finally the jump into fantasy. The vibrant vibes Lahore has witnessed, has left an impact in many ways, out of which landscape is an important one. The landscape of Lahore kept on changing with time and once called the City of Gardens is now reviving itself as city of Green shacks, by the incorporation of community / society parks in the new developments.

By analysing the current map of Lahore, it is evident that southern Lahore has more green pockets as compared to northern Lahore, with a ratio of 30:70 (see Figure 16). This shows the eating up of old gardens for development in the north Lahore and awareness of green-scape as a breathing lung in newer developments in southern Lahore. This imbalance though, doesn't fulfill the demand of the green-scape, but has somehow prevented the urban growth of Lahore from completely losing the green-scape. Lahore may not be called the "City of Gardens" anymore, but can still be labelled as the "City of Green Shacks".

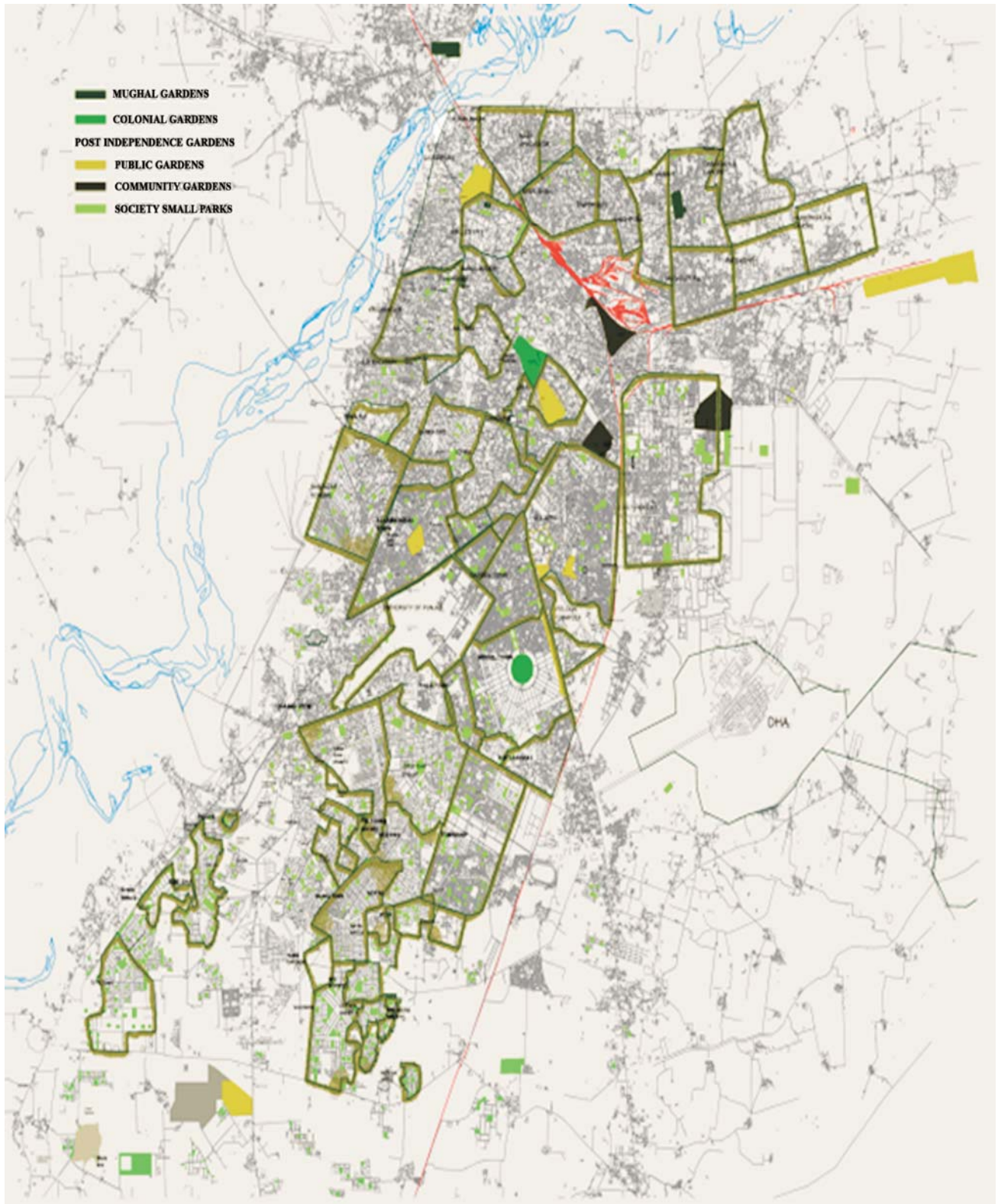


Figure-16: Lahore Map 2014  
 Source: Author

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