

ANALYSIS OF “*KOOCHA* HAVELI NAU NIHAL SINGH”, THE WALLED CITY, LAHORE

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ABSTRACT

According to a demographical study (JICA, 2012; Jamal and Mazhar, 2009) conducted in 2012, Lahore is the largest city of Punjab (Pakistan) with a population of about 10 million. The study also suggests that the population of this striving metropolis has been growing at a growth rate of about 3% per annum. The growth of population as compared to designed residential spaces is unbalanced. Lahore is facing a shortage of housing authenticated by the statistical data of 1980 and 1998 (JICA, 2012: 2-59). With the increasing number of people, there is a rapidly decreasing designed residential landscape required for the socialization of such a large population due to the profit-making strategy employed by the real estate developers merely observing human clusters as money machines. Our urban settlements are gradually becoming dead, lifeless spaces with no attraction, zeal and activity areas for all age groups. Question remains that how should we design our urban settlements, especially residential clusters, catering to the growing population simultaneously having the same spatial qualities, urban benefits and aspiring planning techniques that are present in historically grown informal settlements.

This manuscript analyzes an urban cluster located in the historic city center of the Walled City Lahore and documents those qualities and uncountable benefits that are being offered by the “*koochas*” (piazzas or squares) of this historic informal settlement to its residents. The role of a “*koocha*” in this informal settlement has been analyzed particularly in order to emphasize their importance in providing a luxurious space for routine gatherings and cultural events. Informal settlements like these are the most appropriate socio-culturally built environments that were developed (and are still developing) gradually with the passage of time over a period of several hundred years without the services of professionals. On the basis of characteristics of discussed “*koochas*” different

guidelines are developed in the form of conclusions so as to propose a basis for planning of futuristic urban settlements of Lahore.

Keywords: Lahore, Rapid Population Growth, The Walled City of Lahore, Urban Informal Settlements, *koocha*, *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh.

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing population of Lahore, the quality of designed residential landscape is declining day by day. Land use classification surveyed in 2001 suggests that residential usage (9.8%) is the second largest land consumption in Lahore after vacant agricultural land (JICA, 2012a: 4-7). Spatial growth of Lahore from past (Pre- Muslim Period up to 1002 AD) to present (Figure 1) is projected concentrically depicting population growth. After the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, Lahore city started circular development around the Walled City. In 1960s the high population growth rate lead to the city’s expansion towards south and south-west along Ferozpur and Multan Road corridors. Expansion towards east was limited due to the Indian border and was affected after 1965 war with India. West ward expansion of Lahore has been restrained due to the pressure of Ravi River (JICA, 2012: 1-2). Urban sprawl¹ of Lahore has resulted in the energy, infrastructure and profitable land waste. As the archival trends recommend, Lahore till 2020 (Figure 2) will be stretching far across the south-west direction exhibiting a luxurious residential landscape. If the spatial quality of this is to be developed, residential scenery will not be controlled and it will be a considerable addition to the existing unplanned, ribbon organic growth that has taken place in the past fifty years.

Among the several approaches an architect may opt for while considering the futuristic residential landscape, this

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1 Urban Sprawl is considered as a form of urbanization distinguished by a leapfrog pattern of development, commercial strips, low density, separated land uses, automobile dominance and a minimum of public open spaces.

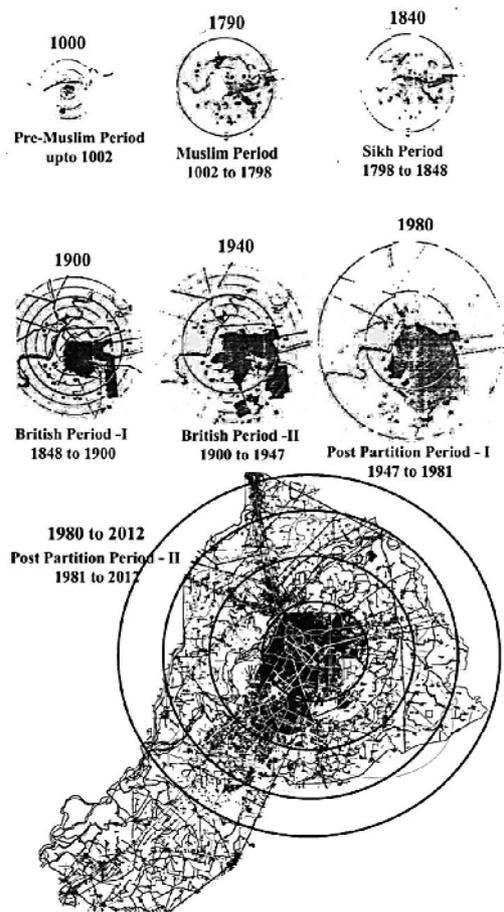


Figure-1: Spatial Growth of Lahore (2012)
Source: Farhat, 1976: 56

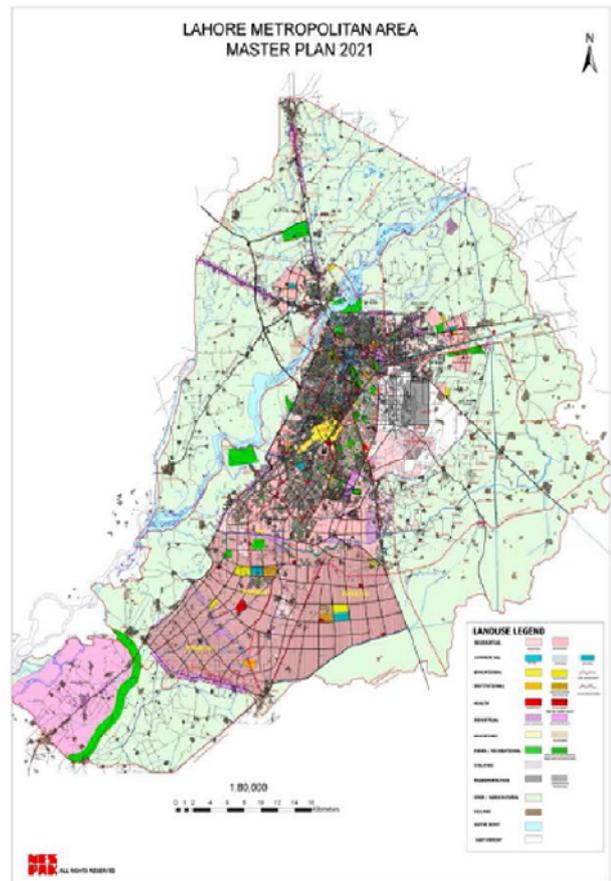


Figure-2: Master Plan of Lahore (2012)
Source: JICA, 2012: 2

paper analyses a historic cluster from the Walled City of Lahore as an alternative appraisal for residential problems that Lahore is facing today. Leaving many of the aspects of urban renewal or redevelopment essentials such as capitalist approach, gentrification, economics, public involvement, infrastructure, public health and many other aspects aside, this paper only focuses on the spatial planning that “*koochas*” are offering to their residents while touching just a number of cultural and humane aspects.

According to Lahore Urban Development and Traffic Study conducted by Lahore Development Authority in 1980, the population of Walled City of Lahore was about 500,000 (Mumtaz, 2002). It was also stated that Walled City was greatly overpopulated for its size and capacities back then. Another publication (Mumtaz et.al, 2002a: 87) states that the population of Walled City was 260,000 in 1983. Following this trend the situation has changed dramatically now. Due to rapid commercialization and development of luxurious

housing schemes at the outskirts of Lahore, population and particularly residential population of the Walled City has declined rapidly over the past few years. Major factors in this deteriorating condition are the lack of communal facilities and public transportation. Narrow streets are not able to bear the pressure of bank leased cars that are increasing rapidly in Lahore. Basic infrastructure necessities are also not present. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the spatial qualities that are still in their full bloom in the Walled City of Lahore, but also idealize the past quantitative population analysis that boosted highly densified but not over-crowded areas as the *koocha*.

“*Koocha*” is an Urdu word having the same meaning as of a square, plaza or a piazza. In all the cases, it is both an area framed by buildings and an area designed to exhibit its buildings to the greatest advantage (Moughtin, 2003). Walled City of Lahore possesses a very fine tradition of “*koochas*”, just to name a few near the Delhi Gate area are:

- *Koocha* Chaudhry Muhammad Siddique (Figure 3)
- *Koocha* Hussain Shah
- *Koocha* Namad-Garan

Although negligible work has been done in documenting the spatial qualities of *koochas* of historically significant informal settlements of Lahore, examples from other parts of geographically and culturally compatible regions including India (Bhatt and Rybczynski, 1984), Afghanistan (Aga Khan Development Network, 2007), Iran (Aga Khan Development Network, 1983), Uzbekistan (Aga Khan Development Network, 1996) and Egypt (Aga Khan Development Network, 2005) may be consulted. Furthermore different accounts (Aijazuddin, 1991; Latif, 2005: 3; Goulding and Thornton, 1924: 75-80) on the historical development of Lahore have been referred to but they also fail in presenting a thorough documentation of the spatial characteristics of historically significant informal *koochas*.

SELECTION CRITERIA OF A “*KOOCHA*”

Among a large variety of “*koochas*” existing in Lahore the ones from the Walled City and inner city areas offer an extensive insight regarding densification and mixed-use communities. *koocha Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh has been selected for a case study due to the proximity of this *koocha* with a historically significant heritage site of *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh (declared as special premises by the Government of Punjab under the Punjab Special Premises (Preservation) Ordinance 1985) having layers of Mughal (dating back to five hundred years and more), Sikh (1790 – 1849) and British (The Raj 1850 - 1947) architectural styles. The analysis of *koocha Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh reveals numerous benefits as compared to the current planned piazzas in outskirts of Lahore. These benefits are listed in Table-1.

Koocha Haveli Nau Nihal Singh

Historically significant informal settlement of *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh is located inside the Mori Gate area within the context of two most important monuments of Lahore – *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh (constructed in 1837) and the Walled City - has been analyzed as a prototype to be replicated in new urban developments. *Koochas* acting as ceremonial urban spaces in these informal organizations not only provide the residents with a luxurious space for socialization and hundreds of routine activities, but also act as gathering spaces during religious, cultural and political events. There are two *koochas* located adjacent to *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh (Figure 4). One *Koocha* is located at the west (Figure 5) and other *koocha* (Figure 6) is located on the east of the

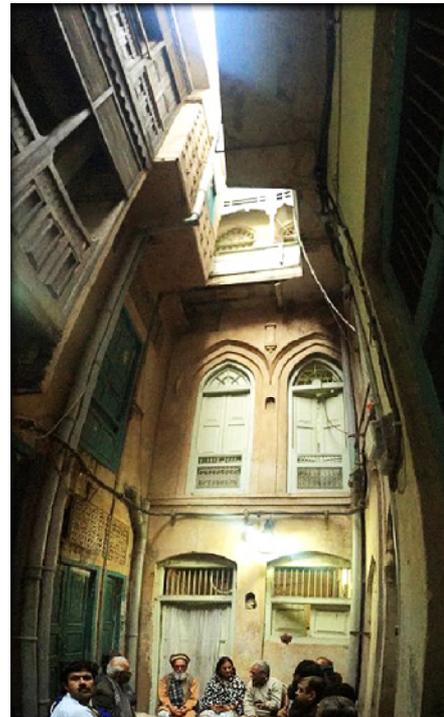


Figure-3: *Koocha* Chaudhry Muhammad Siddique
Source: The Lahore Project, 2014

Haveli. The *koocha* on the west is of a larger size as compared to the other one. Both of these have the same socializing spatial qualities, urban benefits and aspiring planning techniques that are characteristic of the Walled City of Lahore’s informal settlements. Some of these characteristics (Bhatt and Rybczynski, 1984) are listed in Table-2.

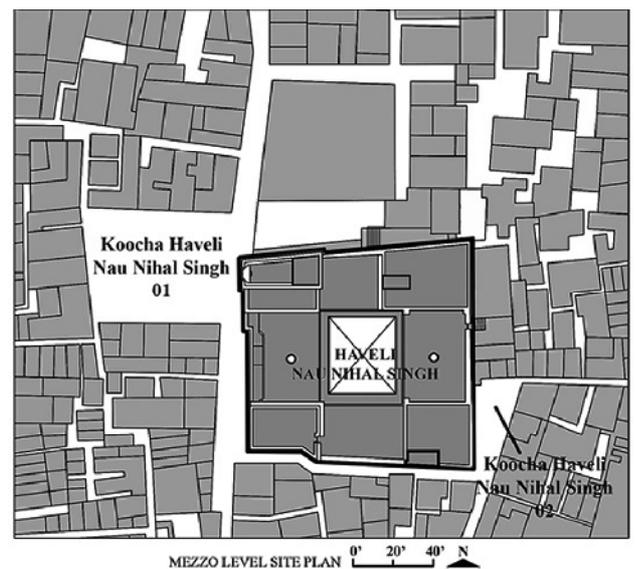


Figure-4: Site Plan of *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh

Table-1: An analysis of Koocha Haveli Nau Nihal Singh and koochas in Outskirts of Lahore, based on urban parameters

Parameters	<i>Koocha Haveli Nau Nihal Singh</i>	<i>Koochas in Out-skirts of Lahore</i>
Density	Higher Density	Lower Density, dispersed activities
Walkability	10 minute (1320 ft, 1/4 th of mile) distances between daily activities. Pedestrian friendly passages	Roads are designed for motorists and not for pedestrians. Different facilities are placed far away from each other
Land-Use	Mixed Land-Use. Better places to live, work, play and shop	Single-Use, segregated land uses
Scale	Human scale. Smaller buildings, blocks and roads/ pathways. More detail, since people experience the urban landscape	Large scale. Larger buildings, blocks, wide roads. Less detail, since people experience the landscape/ builtscapes at a distance
Transportation	Multi-modal transportation focusing more on pedestrianization	Auto-mobile oriented transportation
Connectivity of streets, roads and different linkages	Highly connected roads, sidewalks and paths, allowing relatively shorter distances for pedestrians	Hierarchical road network with numerous loops and dead-end streets, unconnected sidewalks and paths
Street Design	Mixed-Use streets accommodating a large variety of activity generation round the clock	Streets designed to maximize motorized vehicular traffic volume and speed
Parking supply	Limited supply and maximum management (although streets were not designed for this purpose)	Generous supply and minimal management
Public Space	Emphasis on the Public Realm	Emphasis on the Private Realm
Sense of Place	Unique Architecture with paths, edges, nodes, districts and landmarks creating an identity	Monotonous planning of communities due to which people hardly recognize places as they are similar in appearance
Sense of Belonging/ Ownership	Individual belonging to a place	Absence of individual responsibility
Sense of Security and Safety	Less crime rate due to eyes on street	Promotes crime rate due to lack of surveillance
Sense of Community/ Neighborhood	Social interactive spaces providing gatherings	Absence of interactive spaces
Social Coherence	People know each other	Motorists dominate
Appropriate Behavior Settings	Women, children and aged people can use all spaces	Most of the spaces cannot be used by women and children
Density at Town Center and towards the Edge	Higher density at the town center and lesser towards the (assumed) edge	Lesser density at the town centers and increasing towards edges or out-skirts
Quality Architecture and Urban Design	Human comfort for all age groups, disabled people and aesthetics in architecture	Discourages public amenities for different age groups, aesthetics and urban spaces (public realm)
Neighborhood Structure	Promotes traditional neighborhood structure completely in compliance with climatic and cultural conditions	Imitation of architectural styles of European countries that is highly unsuitable to be implemented in Lahore
Urban Sprawl	Promotes compact development and reduces urban sprawl	Promotes development of suburbs and results in urban sprawl

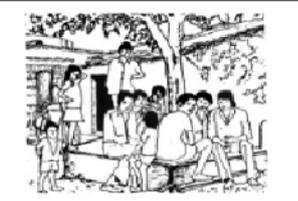
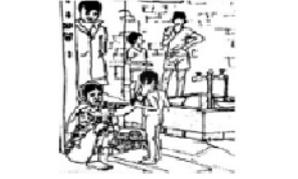


Figure-5: Koocha-01 Haveli Nau Nihal Singh



Figure-6: Koocha-02 Haveli Nau Nihal Singh

Table-2: Inherent Characteristics of Koocha Nau Nihal Singh

<u>Parameters</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Contribution to Koocha Haveli Nau Nihal Singh</u>	<u>Visual Presentation</u>
House Extensions	Spaces that are a part of the public realm but have acquired private character through physical modifications	Stoop is an enlarged step of concrete less than 39 inches width being used as a step, seat, a workbench	The public nature of this part of the house allows a greater contact with street life in Koocha	
Workplaces	Economic activities like small retail shops as khokhas, koisks etc	Simple hand tools and primitive techniques are used	Koochas are not just spaces for circulation and socialization but also being used as workplaces	
Small shops	Extremely small in size, their commerce and intimate proximity makes them important	Located right in the Koocha at corners and on ground level of houses	In the case of tea-shops they function as neighborhood meeting places and informal social centers	
Trees	Trees along with shade play the role of a public building in Koocha No.02	The public square grows around the tree and is common in informal Koochas	Shaded trees are used as outdoor classrooms, meeting places, workspaces and as markets	
Public Structures	Sitting platforms (present in front of Haveli Nau Nihal Singh) and entry gates act as public structures	Public structures provide identity to the public environment	Public structures act as landmarks and visual reference points in these Koochas	

Urban Benefits being offered by *Koocha Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh

Koochas in the informal settlement of *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh have been formed by its users in such a way that they benefit every age group socially; from toddlers to the elderly alike. The comparison of lively, joyful and safest public *koochas* present in this informal settlement is to none. Some of the urban benefits of these small but lively, joyful and multi-functional piazzas can be listed as:

Scale of *koocha* Nau Nihal Singh

There are two main methods of categorizing squares; by function and by form. While analyzing the function of a square, Vitruvius(1486) states ‘it should be proportionate to the number of inhabitants, so that it may not be too small a space to be useful, or look like a desert waste for lack of population’ (Moughtin, 2003: 87). The types of spaces needed in a city are, the setting for a civic building, the principal meeting places, places for great ceremonial occasions; spaces for entertainment around buildings such as theatres, cinemas, restaurants and cafes, spaces for shopping, shopping street, arcades and markets, spaces around which offices are grouped, spaces of a semi-public nature around which residential accommodation is arranged, (Figure 7) and finally, the spaces associated with urban traffic junctions (Moghtin, 2003: 88).

Observing on a micro-scale, all the above discussed characteristics are fully justified by *koocha Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh. The presence of *Haveli* Nau Nihal makes this *Koocha* a setting for a civic building providing a great ceremonial place (Figure 8) with a lively mixed-use community. Semi-public nature with surrounding residential accommodation provides a greater level of security throughout the day.

Symbolic Meaning attached with *koocha* Nau Nihal Singh

All great civic art is in tune with the profound depth of our emotions. There is an aesthetic experience, a deep core of valuation which owes little to critical judgement (Moughtin, 2003: 88). Belonging to the nobility that once existed during the Sikh Raj (1799-1849) that influenced the Punjab region of the Indian Subcontinent, this *koocha* holds a unique sentimental affect in peoples mind. It nurtures their sense of superiority, once acclaimed grandeur that has to be achieved again.



Figure-7: A mixed-use building located in *Koocha Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh

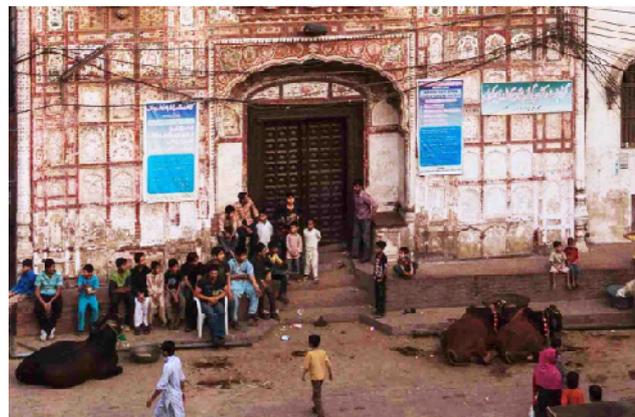


Figure-8: Eid celebrations in *Koocha Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh

Koocha Nau Nihal Singh – A Node; A Strategic Spot in a City?

In ‘*The Image of the City*’ Lynch(1960) found the node to be one of the elements by which a city is recognized and understood. In short, the node is ‘imageability’ or a strong image. As he says ‘nodes are points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is travelling’ (Moughtin, 2003: 89). *Koocha* Nau Nihal may be classified as a ‘definite center’, offering a remarkable influence on the micro-settlement as if a reason binding that micro-urban fabric.

The Form of *Koocha* Nau Nihal Singh

According to Paul Zucker and Sitte Moughtin (2003: 99) the five archetypal forms of a square are:

- Closed square where the space is self-contained
- Dominated square where the space is directed towards the main building
- Nuclear square where space is formed around a centre
- Grouped squares where spatial units are combined to form larger compositions
- Amorphous square where space is unlimited

While analyzing *Koocha* Nau Nihal Singh, a self-contained space having a direction towards dominated main building that is *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh fits in the best (Figure 9).

Social Value of *Koocha* Nau Nihal Singh

Koochas enhance the sense of place by connecting the residents all together through socialization. In this way the anti-social behaviour such as theft, vandalism and arson is deactivated and youngsters are encouraged towards physical activities such as sports and indigenous games. Not only these multi-purpose spaces accommodate numerous activities like religious celebrations including Eid and Pakistan Day celebrations, but also help in increasing the morale of residents by enhancing cultural and political enthusiasm through adequate space provision. It is only through these *koochas* that children have safest spaces for playing indigenous games while their mothers can keep an eye on them from the kitchens (*bawarchi-khanas*). Major accessing streets are nearly pedestrianized having limited vehicular accesses ranging from push/ pull carts, mopeds, scooters and four wheelers.

AN OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

Due to the rapid population growth of Lahore, swift urbanization and modern movement's split function model of urban planning, in the next decade Lahore will be stretching far across south-west. Majority of the stretched landscape will consist of residential land-use. If the current trend continues, residential schemes located on out-skirts of Lahore will be deserted areas lacking social integration of people. A model of mixed-use lively community has been analyzed and a centralized foci has been discussed so as to inspire



Figure-9: Small scale kiosks in *Koocha*

the upcoming generation of architects, planners and road engineers in order to convenience them towards the benefits of our traditional rather indigenous planning techniques. A *koocha* has been studied so as to present each cluster with its own community socializing point. Foci helps in attracting the residents as if it is a magnet.

Koochas of a variety of sizes, form and function from the Walled City of Lahore are compared with present day trends and thus presented in this case study so as to portray that it does not matter what the *koocha* physically possesses but the space that it offers, the socializing benefits it presents to all the age-groups are a point of consideration. *Koocha* Nau Nihal Singh acting as a self-contained space having a dominated *Haveli* Nau Nihal Singh abutting its side can be referred as a prototype for designing focal nodes of futuristic urban housing societies. We could also analyze different clusters of historic informal settlements in Lahore through archival research in the chronological order of their development and documentation especially to study those beautiful and unintentionally carved *koochas*, recessed areas and pockets present in these clusters used by children for playing primitive games. As such no considerable work has been carried out previously in documenting these informal historically significant *koochas*. A variety of public squares and other informal meeting places acting as socializing magnets with multifaceted activities that take place in these areas can also be analyzed and documented. These findings can be easily incorporated in futuristic urban landscapes.

All the parameters discussed in this paper are proposed as a little effort in convincing those real estate developers who consider residential schemes as money machines merely. With the incorporation of *koochas* and other traditional urban crafts and benefits, these schemes may rise from mere money making machines to living spaces appropriate for *Lahoris* in particular and Pakistanis at large.

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