

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.