**Value Extraction from Land and Real Estate in Karachi**

By

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**Introduction:**

This paper does not theorise nor does it challenge any theory of gentrification. It seeks to show how land-use changes and extracting value from real estate takes place in Karachi, a global south mega city. This process of extracting value pushes out poor communities from the land and homes of their ancestors and replaces them with richer and/or more politically powerful groups. These processes are very different from those in the global north. It also seeks to show how the concepts of “gentrification” and its vocabulary and neo-liberal planning concepts are shaping academic training and public consciousness regarding heritage and conservation in Pakistan and how attempts to take over Karachi’s beaches (which are extensively use by its working and lower middle classes) for high income clubs, condominiums and five-star hotels and marinas have been made in the recent part. It is important to note that this development is taking place in areas located in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) (a military control housing colony) and those areas that come under the jurisdiction of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), a federal government agency controlled, for all practical purposes by the Pakistan Navy.

To understand what this means requires an understanding of land ownership and control pattern in the city. The City District Government Karachi (CDGK) directly controls 30.9 percent of land in the city. Indirectly it also controls land allocated to civilian cooperative housing societies. This land amounts to only 1.9 percent of the total land mass of the Karachi district. Federal agencies, such as, Railways, KPT, Port Qasim, and the Federal Board of Revenue (BoR) control 4.7 percent, the DHA 5 percent and the military cantonments 2.1 percent. The rest of the 56 percent is controlled by various agencies of the provincial government and by the national parks (20.7 percent). All the federal agencies (which include the military cantonments and the DHA) have their own development programmes and building byelaws and zoning regulations while the city government has its own plans and regulatory institutions. There is no coordination between these different agencies for planning purposes except for overcoming issues related to utilities. The city government, by virtue of being governed by an elected council, is more influenced by community and citizen concerns than the federal agencies. In addition, federal agencies have the support of the powerful central government and its planning and financial institutions. To understand what projects have been proposed for Karachi and where, in the recent past, it is important to understand this difference.

**The Case of Karachi:**

Karachi is the fastest growing mega city in the world (*Wendell 2012*). It is Pakistan’s only international port and contains 10 percent of the total population of the country and 25 percent of its urban population. It generates 15 percent of the national GDP and 42 percent of value added in large scale manufacturing. It provides 25 percent of federal government revenues and 62 percent of income tax (*Master Plan Group of Offices, 2007*). In spite of being a major industrial city of Pakistan, 75 percent of the working population in a 1990 survey worked in the informal sector which mostly operates out of low income settlements mainly in the garment, leather, textile, carpet and light engineering sectors. It is unlikely that the number of persons working in the informal sector has decreased in percentage terms but a link between formal and informal sectors has been established with the formal sector sub-contracting work to informal establishments. The growing importance of the city in the national economy is reflected by the increase of cargo handled by the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) which was 2.8 million tons in 1951 and 32.3 million tons in 2005-06 (*Government of Pakistan, 2007*). All these factors play an important role in land and real estate conversions and contribute to the continuing migration to Karachi from other regions in Pakistan and from other countries, such as, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Burma.

Karachi’s population in 1941, the last census before Independence in 1947, was 435,887 and its built-up area was less than 100 square kilometres. Today, its population is estimated at 18 million and its metropolitan area is 3,527 square kilometres (*Master Plan Group of Offices, 2007*). A major increase in percentage terms took place at the time of Independence when the population increased from about 450,000 to more than 1,435,667 in 1951 (*Government of Pakistan, 2007 / Master Plan Group of Offices, 2007*). This increase was due to the migration of Muslims from India. It was also accompanied by outmigration of Hindus to India from Karachi. 600,000 migrants had to be housed and most of them occupied the houses vacated by the departing Hindus.

Most of the departing Hindus came from the merchant and trading communities and lived in lavish homes and beautiful neighbourhood in what is today Karachi’s inner city. This beautiful inner city has been devastated because of severe social and physical degradation. The houses in which one rich Hindu family used to live are now inhabited by many poor Muslim families. To house the increase in population additional floors in concrete have been built over beautiful stone buildings. Many community buildings have also been occupied and converted into homes (*Cheema, 2007/ Hasan et.al, 2013*). Cargo terminals, the port and the intercity railway network were also located in the neighbourhood of the old city. Wholesale markets and small manufacturing units were within the old city but formed no more than three percent of its area. As Karachi grew, the wholesale markets and small scale manufacturing and their related warehousing also expanded. In the process the male only migrant working class population increased to serve these facilities. Most of the two to three storey homes were pulled down and replaced by warehousing and commercial and industrial activities on the ground floor with worker’s accommodation on the five to six floors above. These developments have also meant a large increase in the movement of the number of heavy vehicles in the narrow lanes of the inner city. This has meant further degradation and traffic congestion. As a result of this degradation, much of the better-off population of the old city has relocated to the new housing schemes developed by the Cantonment Boards and the Karachi Development Authority (KDA). Very few old neighbourhoods survive in the old city and that too in a very hostile environment (*Cheema, 2007*).

The result of these changes has seen a massive increase in the value of land and property in the inner city because the markets and its working class is now located there. Attempts at shifting the markets to the bypasses of the city, which have been proposed many times by the local government, have been resisted by the market operators and the working class population.

The enormous expansion of Karachi since 1947 has also meant the acquiring of land for development. It is important to understand whose land this was, the manner in which it was acquired and its repercussions on the original inhabitants.

Karachi’s hinterland consisted of over 3,000 small villages. These village communities in almost all cases are pastoral and either Sindhi or Balochi speaking. The 1947 migrants from India, on the other hand, which today form over 45 percent of the population, are Urdu speaking. In addition, the post-Independence migrants also consist of Pushto speakers from the North-West of Pakistan. Under the Land Settlement Policy of the British colonial administration, the land on which the village is located is owned collectively by the village. However, the village pasture lands (mostly desert shrub) are the property of the governments’ provincial Board of Revenue. This pasture land was leased out on an annual basis to the pastoral clans at a very low rate. The purpose was not to collect revenue from this land but to ensure the loyalty of the clans to the British government by doing them a favour. This land has been (and is still being) acquired for the development of Karachi and developed in three very different ways.

One, the Karachi Improvement Trust and later the KDA acquired the pasture land from the Board of Revenue for the implementation of their various housing and commercial schemes which were part of their master plans. In many cases, the villages were left intact but those that came in the way of large infrastructure projects were relocated. In the acquiring of village land promises of providing jobs at some of the infrastructure locations (especially related to industries and port expansion) were also made to the local population. However, since the local population lacked the necessary skills and political power, these promises were never kept. No compensation or alternative was provided to the village communities at the loss of their pasture lands.

As a result of the acquisition of pasture lands, the rural economy has been devastated and the village communities have lost their means of livelihood. Studies and surveys show that they have much lower social indicators and social and physical infrastructure and upward mobility as compared to the rest of Karachi (*Anwar, 2013*).

In addition to the pasture lands, there were also a number of oasis and agricultural belts along the seasonal rivers in the Karachi region. Most of these areas have also been urbanised in spite of the fact that they were marked as protected green areas under the various master plans (*Hasan, Abid, 2013*). These areas provided a sizeable amount of fruit, milk and vegetable to the city which now depends entirely on importing these from agricultural zones at considerable distance from the city (*Anwar, 2013*). These lands, have been acquired both by the formal and informal sectors for development purposes. The owners of these lands have made considerable financial gain by selling them to formal and informal developers. What has become of these owners and of the people who worked on these lands has not been adequately studied.

Since the 1960’s, there has been an increasing gap in the demand and supply of housing in Karachi. At present, the demand is of 80,000 housing units as opposed to a supply of 30,000 by the formal sector per year. This supply gap is made up by the supply of 32,000 housing units in the informal settlements known as “*katchi abadis”*. These *katchi abadis* have been developed on the Board of Revenue lands through an informal agreement between government officials, politicians, informal developers and village elders who also lay a claim on the pasture lands around them. 62 percent of Karachi’s population lives in such settlements today. These settlements began as shacks but over time have built proper houses and acquired physical and social infrastructure through government programmes, through lobbying political parties or self-help supported by NGOs and informal developers. The value of land as a result of this development has increased enormously and so have rentals. In 1991, land in the *katchi abadis* on the periphery of the city was Rs 176 (US$ 1.76) per square metre or 1.7 times the daily wage for unskilled labour at that time. By 2008, this had increased to Rs 2,500 (US$ 25) per square metre or 10 times the daily wage for unskilled labour (*Hasan, 2008*).

More recently, the government has initiated what is known as the “Goth Abad Scheme” (village rehabilitation scheme). According to the scheme, the villages on the periphery of Karachi are given ownership documents if they can prove that they are the original inhabitants of the village. Once regularised, the land of these villages comes into the Karachi land market. This land is either formally or informally developed through a “joint venture” between the community, an informal developer and relevant government officials. Again, communities have benefitted from the sale of this land while also holding onto land for their homes. But again, there is a major difference between the skills that the original inhabitants have as compared to the livelihoods opportunities the city offers.

A large number of communities have been displaced to the periphery of the city due to infrastructure projects, especially roads. As a result of this displacement, they have become poorer. However, the value of the properties along the roads has increased considerably. In much of the land which has been vacated and its neighbourhoods, informal and low income formal housing is being replaced by what is known as commercial “plazas” and higher income housing (*Urban Resource Centre Website*). In addition, parks and amenities are also being occupied illegally for commercial and residential purposes. In this process government agencies and even the international corporate sector are involved. Communities and concerned citizens have sought relief from the courts against these encroachments (*Shehri Website*).

Two other phenomena are taking place in Karachi. One is the bulldozing of settlements on government land by a powerful nexus of developers, bureaucrats and politicians. This development is for formal sector commercial and residential purposes for lower and lower middle income groups. These bulldozings take place on small lots of land which are marked for development under local government schemes. Their residents relocate to the city periphery (*Urban Resource Centre Website*). The second phenomena is the legal and illegal conversion of residential areas into commercial zones. Legally, the local government declares a certain residential corridor as a commercial one. This means extra floor area ratio, a larger number of stories and mixed land-use as compared to residential only land-use. Illegally, people also start opening shops, schools, clinics and offices in their homes. This congests the neighbourhood, taxes the infrastructure but brings considerable economic benefits to the house owners. However, there are always those individuals and families who go to court against such legal and illegal land-use changes (*Shehi Website / Hasan et.al; 2013*). Over time, the illegal changes are regularised and as in the legally commercialised areas, high-rise construction catering to the corporate sector and high-end local businesses, often designed by the top architects of the city, begins to replace the old architecture of the area.

Studies have also revealed that the old informal settlements have changed over time. One, they are no longer purely working class settlements. They have a younger and literate leadership as compared to the older generation leadership; they contain a sizeable number of white-collar workers, teachers and entrepreneurs; they have marriage halls and beauty parlours; and a fiercely upwardly mobile population (*Hasan, 2003*). The other phenomena is that regularised or to be regularised *katchi abadis* are building upwards. Through a understanding between house owners and developers (formal and informal) individual houses are being replaced by high-rise apartment blocks which contain very small apartments so as to make them affordable to low income households both for purchase and rentals. Families who own these houses have become wealthier since the agreement with the developer means substantial money for the sale of the plot and retaining two or more flats in the building which is being constructed. However, the environment of the *katchi abadi* becomes environmentally degraded as a result of such unplanned densification. The infrastructure is also over-taxed as a result (*Hasan et.al., 2010*). What the future of these settlements will be has not yet been adequately studied.

The processes described above can be divided into two. One, those that degrade; and those that “gentrify” meaning improved social and physical conditions and/or a more affluent and politically more powerful class moving in. For instance, in case of the old city it is certainly not gentrification. Here, as a result of the expansion of warehousing, wholesaling and manufacturing, its better-off population abandons it leaving behind the lovely institutional buildings that served them. Yet, in economic terms, the old city booms and its land values become much higher than those of the elite areas of the city. Again, persons living in better located formal sector settlements illegally change them into mixed land-use settlements and reap enormous economic benefits. In most such cases, the result is environmental degradation with little hope for future gentrification. But where the nexus of developers, bureaucrats and politicians (including international corporate sector organisations) illegally acquire land marked for utilities and convert it for commercial and residential purposes and they also put pressure on local government to pass laws to change selected residential corridors into commercial ones with higher floor to area ratios, the case is different. In such areas where there is a potential for high and commercial usages, gentrification in the form of well-designed office buildings and apartments does take place. Again, where pastoralists are replaced by city dwellers and their economy is ruined, the case is different for they are replaced by better skilled communities who over time improve their status and extract value from the land and properties on which they live.

Much of the above cases can fall under the term of “development induced displacement”. However, some of this development does result in developing high end residential, retailing and commercial neighbourhoods. Can this be classified as “gentrification” under any of the existing gentrification theories? I feel that this is a subject that needs to be debated by academia.

**Towards Gentrification?**

Interest in Karachi’s built-heritage in the inner city first appears in the mid-80’s in a series of articles that appeared in the Herald monthly magazine and proposals for pedestrianisation in certain parts of the colonial city (*Hasan, 1986*). These proposals were more about creating order out of chaos rather than “gentrification”. In the early 1990s, the Design Bureau of the KDA prepared measured drawings of important Karachi buildings and undertook limited “repair” work on some of them. In addition, old churches, schools and some “iconic” public use buildings were also repaired by their owners more out of necessity than out of love for their heritage value. This work was not done by trained conservationists or even by persons who had any experience of such work. However, in the decade of 90’s two other important things happened. First, the Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act 1994 was enacted and a listing of heritage buildings was commenced. An Advisory and a Technical Committee were set-up under the Act to assist the Sindh Culture Department. An UK trained architect, Yasmin Lari, played an important role in pushing for this act. The second important thing was that another Yasmin, Prof. Yasmin Cheema, returned from Turkey after studying and teaching conservation. She became a teacher at the Department of Architecture and Planning at the Dawood College, Karachi, and commenced the first ever systematic documentation and analysis of Karachi’s built-heritage. This led to her defining a “historic district of Karachi” and the publication of her book “The Historical Quarters of Karachi”. During the 1990s, a number of students at the Dawood College undertook “adaptive reuse” projects related to old buildings in the inner city and a study of the quarters in which they were located. However, Dawood College had a strong populist tradition built around the concept of “socially responsive architecture” and as such these projects did not aim at displacing people who already lived in these quarters.

Other important developments have taken place in the first decade of the 21st century. Anila Naeem, a graduate of the Dawood College did a PhD in Conservation at the Brooks University, Oxford. She returned to teach at the Department of Architecture and Planning at the NED University in Karachi. The NED University’s Conservation Cell also became the consultant to the Sindh Culture Department and a member of the Technical Committee. As a result, a larger documentation and categorisation of Karachi’s built-heritage has been undertaken. The owners of listed buildings have often gone to court against such listings. The Technical Committee has offered them alternatives to demolishing the building. These alternatives aim at providing the owners the same economic benefits that pulling down and reconstructing the building can offer. A number of such projects have been implemented (along with conservation related advice to owners of public and corporate sector listed buildings) but they do not aim at changing the land-use of the area. However, the buildings that undergo the adaptive reuse design process attract the attention of corporate sector institutions and higher end users. For example, the Sindh Zamindar Hotel, a 1920’s building in what is now a down market area was redesigned as a down market retail shopping centre (*Arif Hasan Website*). Once the facade was rehabilitated, a number of banks contacted the owner who was unhappy that he had not foreseen this for if he had he would have had the building redesigned differently. There are indications that if these heritage buildings are beautifully conserved, even for down market activities, they will eventually help in changing the land-use to a higher end market.

Students’ projects and proposals of the Conservation Cell at the NED University have not really proposed “gentrification” in the conventional sense of the term. They have only made proposals for protecting and conserving existing neighbourhoods where heritage is still intact and communities still exist. However, a debate on shifting wholesaling and warehousing from the inner city to the city bypasses is ongoing. Given Karachi’s political violence and the role of real estate development and battles for turf between conflicting interest groups in the inner city, this is not likely to happen in the near future.

Karachi has an active and rapidly expanding theatre, film, fashion, media and art scene. Most of this is located in the elite and middle income areas or near the administrative centre of the city. Abandoned warehouses in the industrial areas on the periphery of the city are increasingly used for this purpose. Talk of shifting this to the inner city now often takes place in academic and art circles. However, for reasons given above, this is unlikely to materialise. But the desire to preserve and use old buildings for cultural purposes is strong and has been promoted by the small but increasingly vocal conservation lobby and a number of organisations have emerged to promote concepts related to heritage (*Seeds Website*). As a result, a number of old listed colonial buildings in the Cantonment and elite areas have been conserved and are being reused as museums, schools and expensive restaurants.

A major boost to promoting development at the cost of relocating and evicting communities took place in 1999 when Gen. Musharraf dismissed the democratically elected government in Pakistan and became the country’s chief executive. He appointed a Chief Vice Executive of the Citibank as Finance Minister who in 2004 was appointed Prime Minister. He also appointed a very senior economist of the World Bank as the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan whose additional job was that of chairperson of the National Commission for Government Reforms. Another important World Bank person was appointed as the Minister for Finance, Planning and Development in Sindh province. In 2002, he was made federal minister for Privatisation and Investment.

As a result of the neo-liberal agenda followed by the new government, decentralisation was carried out in 2001 and indirectly elected mayors replaced the old colonial bureaucracy and Karachi became an autonomous city district. International companies and international financial institutions flooded the city seeking to invest in it. A new vocabulary entered the development and planning process. Terms, such as, World Class city, investment friendly infrastructure, direct foreign investment, cities as engines of growth, golden hand-shake, public-private partnership, build, operate and transfer, began to be used more extensively in planning circles and in the media. This vocabulary and the culture that it promoted has also found its way into academia and is being promoted by many teachers, especially those who have studied in the West.

The Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 specifically states in its vision that Karachi is to be a World Class city. Under this vision, a beautification programme was commenced which consisted of building signal-free roads, flyovers and underpasses. These were built in spite of the fact that they were opposed by the city government planners and that they evicted 300,000 people from their homes. As part of Karachi’s beautification and investment plan, the gentrification of Karachi’s coastline was also undertaken by federal land owning agencies. This coastline is 27 kilometres long and has numerous creeks and mangrove forests. It is dotted with ancient fishing villages and more than half of it is visited by hundreds of thousands of Karachiites every week for recreation and entertainment. A large services sector serves the visitors.

In 2006, the Prime Minister signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dubai based developers and ordered federal land-owning agencies to provide land to the developers by transferring state land to them and by cancelling existing leases of non-state entities. A MoU for handing over two islands off the coast was also enacted. The development projects proposed consisted of condominiums, five-star hotels, marinas, elite clubs and housing and commercial facilities. All these projects were located in the jurisdiction of the DHA and KPT.

The projects that were nearest to the city centre and on beaches most used by Karachiites, were located in the DHA, which began in the 1960’s as the Defence Housing Society. It consists of 3,530 hectares and is the most elite area of the city. It contains luxury apartments and homes, schools, colleges, clubs, posh shopping centres with designer boutiques, and five and six star hotels. Functioning of the Authority is vested in two bodies: the Governing Body, headed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence and the Executive Board headed by the Karachi Corp Commander of the Pakistan Army. The housing society also contains about 18 kilometres of coastline and creeks.

In 2002-3, the DHA built a promenade along a stretch of beach. It came to be known as Sea View. It was a major addition to recreation for the city of Karachi. As a result, people shifted from other beach fronts to it. Hawkers, jugglers, animal performers, camels and horses for riding, invaded it. The DHA was horrified for it wanted its beach to be used by “decent people”. So, it banned all hawkers, performers and other persons serving the poorer sections of the population from the beach front. It set up expensive food outlets along this stretch of beach. As a result, poor people stopped coming here. This stretch came to be known as the rich man’s beach and a beach adjacent to it in the jurisdiction of the city government, where all activity was permitted, as the poor man’s beach.

The Urban Resource Centre (URC) took up this issue by articles and letters in the press and the media also made it an important issue. Finally, the DHA residents’ society intervened and made the DHA management relax the conditions they had imposed. Meanwhile, the city government developed the poor man’s beach as a park and turned away all the hawkers and performers from there as well. However, they have come back on the entrances to the park and in the lanes next to it by informally paying the city government staff and officials.

In 2004, the DHA initiated another project. Its promotional literature described the project: "In Karachi, DHA has a virgin, unspoiled waterfront of nearly 14 kilometres ready with full potential for development... The residents of Karachi will soon see a qualitative change in their lives and their concept of relaxation, style and fun. Fire of creativity and imagination is promising to make Karachi beachfront a much sought-after tourist destination in the foreseeable future. Entirely practical and wholly realizable projects will have a deep impact on the lifestyle of the people of Karachi whose perception of enjoying the sea at present consists of riding a camel or a horse or just taking a walk on the wet sand and watching the waves crash on the shore. They will soon have access to multiple recreational activities within their reach."

The project also involved the “reclamation of 74.5 acres of land for a high-end hotel complex”, “5-star hotels owning private segments of the beach” and a “private beach with lagoon for hotel and residential blocks”. It also included Emaar’s “Crescent Bay Project” with a 7-star hotel and 4,000 super luxury apartments with private beaches and lagoons. Civil society organisations argued that as a result of these developments, 20% of the beach will not be available to the public but even the remaining 80% that is meant to be available is beyond the disadvantaged and the poor’s economic power to access.

These projects, along with the other projects located in the KPT areas and the sale of the islands, were opposed by civil society organisations backed by prominent Karachi citizens; the Wildlife Fund Pakistan; national, provincial and Karachi based fishermen’s organisations; trade unions; low income schools and CBOs from all over Sindh through a signature campaign by the URC; academia; and concerns voiced by some corporate sector heads, planners from within the city government and senior provincial bureaucrats. These organisations and individuals argued that as a result of these developments Karachiites would lose an important part of their entertainment and recreation assets; the services sector that served these facilities would lose its livelihood; fishing villages would lose access to their fishing grounds and livelihoods and a large number of them would be evicted; immense environmental damage would be caused to wildlife and the natural environment, especially to the mangrove marshes and also that these projects were strictly speaking illegal as they violated the Public Trust Doctrine and the governments own environment related laws.

The most important role in opposing the projects was played by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum which is a network of fishing communities from all over Sindh province. They were able to mobilise their network and carry out large scale demonstrations in various Sindh cities. They also produced a position “letter” refereeing to the project as development to destroy nature and displace people. The letter was an outcome of consultations between various stakeholders, especially fishing and low income communities. Among other things the letter pointed out that the projects posed a threat to the coastal ecosystems as they were destroying major breeding areas of the green turtle, the resting place of migratory birds and the nurseries for shrimps and several fish species. The letter also pointed out that fishing communities have been living on the coast for centuries and that the proposed developments would destroy not only their economy but also their cultural heritage and make access to the tombs of their saints, where their yearly festivities are held, difficult if not impossible.

The projects were shelved except for the DHA Crescent Bay Project which was well on its way before the other projects and opposition to them was launched. In the areas where the projects were supposed to take place, the DHA has now planned residential and commercial schemes consisting of small plots. In these schemes the beaches are accessible and no further reclamation from the sea is being carried out. The reasons for the shelving of the projects are not clear. Maybe it was because of the recession of 2010, or because of the deteriorating law and order situation in Karachi, or because of civil society opposition, or a combination of all three. However, as a result of this opposition, certain criteria for the preservation of the coastline were incorporated in the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 (KSDP-2020) which was being formulated while opposition to the projects were taking place. These criteria include that no reclamation from the sea, mangrove marshes, mud flats (which are fish and turtle nurseries) is permitted. Also, all the beaches would be accessible to the fishing communities and to the public. No development between the high water mark and 150 metres beyond it, or on the seaward side of the coastal roads, is permissible. The KSDP-2020 was approved by the city council in December 2007. Under the provisions of the KSDP, none of the proposed projects can possibly be built. However, two of these projects do not fall in the jurisdiction of the city government but of military cantonments and the DHA who are under no obligations to follow the KSDP provisions. Meanwhile, another form of gentrification has taken place in the shape of the Port Grand Project in Karachi (see **Box: The Port Grand Project in Karachi**). Such gentrification through small scale improvement projects are being discussed for various locations in the city centre.

**Conclusion:**

This paper shows that extracting value through land-use changes can cause degradation (both in social an physical terms) as opposed to gentrification even of heritage areas. Also, that gentrification can take place as a result of development which displaces people from their traditional lands and homes in peri-urban areas and replaces them with better-off and better-educated populations. Gentrification can also take place as a result of inner city areas (not necessarily heritage zones) where there is a potential for high-end commercialisation. How all this fits into the existing theories of gentrification is upto the academics to debate and decide. However, they will have to accommodate the views of the pro-poor development activists and members of academia and professional institutions, if the theory has to have a relationship with reality.

But then, things can change. The neo-liberal related trends described in the paper along with the increasing number of western trained professionals who in turn are educating the future generations, are having an impact both on practice and policy. The question that one is forced to ask is whether the Dawood College concept of “socially responsive architecture” and the powerful hangover of populism that still lives in the media, will survive this onslaught? And if it does not, will it be possible to mount a civil society movement against the gentrification of the inner city if at some stage it is proposed and seems possible. It is difficult to answer this question. However, it is important to note that almost all those professionals and academics who actively opposed the gentrification of Karachi’s coastline were either trained at the Dawood College as architects, belonged to the environmentalist lobby in the city, or to a strong left-wing tradition.

**Box: The Port Grand Project in Karachi**

*The Native Jetty Bridge was built by the British in the 1850’s. It linked the island of Keamari where the port is, to the Karachi main land. In the decade of the 1990’s, a new bridge (Jinnah Bridge), linked to a number of flyovers was built parallel to the Native Jetty bridge, which as a result, was abandoned.*

*From the time the Native Jetty Bridge was built, it served also as a place for gatherings and various cultural activities. “Common” people sat at the edge and watched the water. Boys jumped off it to swim. Older men fished while sitting at its edge. The water catered to a number of religious superstitions; fish were fed, birds were released from cages, trysts were consolidated and many religious processions terminated at the water edge. Old religious manuscripts were also ceremoniously given to the water. After the construction of the Jinnah Bridge these activities continued at the Native Jetty Bridge.*

*However, in 2003, the bridge was taken over by the Grand Leisure Corporation. As a result, all the popular activities shifted to the Jinnah Bridge. Meanwhile, the Grand Leisure Corporation have constructed Port Grand Project on the Native Jetty Bridge. It promotional literature says “The project is a food, shopping and entertainment complex which has been built with over Rs 1 billion investment by Grand Leisure Corporation. Port Grand project is a 13-acre world-class facility that has been designed and built in collaboration with top international architects/designers who employed the latest technology and building techniques to deliver a state of the art facility. About 40 outlets are being made operational at this stage while more outlets would be opened soon. The native jetty bridge has been entirely rebuilt to ensure a world-class tourist destination and a source of pride for Karachites that would ultimately attract millions of people from all over the country and beyond. Visitors would come to Port Grand not only for food and entertainment but for over a hundred different concepts at port grand that includes free wifi, port bazaar, bookstore, florist, Art lane, gift and antiques etc. Parking for over eight hundred cars with complimentary valet service, and pristine public restrooms and plenty of pedestrian friendly walkways are additional attractions at the project. Port Grand is also one of the first projects in the City that has been dedicated to building an open eco-friendly/ green environment, with special focus on urban regeneration. Port Grand is going to be a model for lot of good to be followed in the city.” (Source: forum.xcitefun.net/****port****-****grand****-****karachi****-food-street-t63136.html*[*Cached*](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:XHnw-pSPRx4J:forum.xcitefun.net/port-grand-karachi-food-street-t63136.html+port+grand+karachi&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=pk)*)*

*Politicians, middle classes, elite and the media are all full of praise for Port Grand. Various Karachi websites are very appreciative of it. However, Jinnah Bridge looks down onto Port Grand. As a result, poor people on the bridge while carrying on their various “cultural activities” could look into Port Grand which also hosts fashion shows. It was felt that Port Grand should be protected from such voyeurs and so barriers were built on either side of Jinnah Bridge making the populist activities that took place there, impossible. So far, no protests against this discontinuation of popular activities have been registered.*

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