



Public and private control and contestation of public space amid violent conflict in Karachi

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Few cities in South Asia have been affected by violence more than Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and economic centre. This working paper examines the impacts of the city's declining security situation on the control and contestation of public space. It focuses specifically on the efforts of public and private actors to protect themselves through the widespread use of physical barriers as a form of conflict infrastructure. To help provide a way forward, recommendations are presented for planning and managing barriers more effectively and equitably, and for supporting alternative means of security for the poorest and most insecure groups. Particular attention is paid to the city's ethnic and religious/sectarian politics and the limited capacity of the authorities, and their difficulties in maintaining neutrality in attempting to intervene.

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Executive summary

In its recent past, Karachi has experienced recurrent waves of violence and terrorism. The structural causes behind the city's predicament are multifarious, but have been strongly influenced by national political instability, regional conflict associated with the Afghan war, and migration and ethnic violence accompanying the partitioning of India. As a major port city, Karachi has also become a strategic hub for the Afghan heroin trade, an asylum for migrants and refugees, and an entry point for arms and munition destined for Afghanistan. Rising urban poverty and unemployment (particularly among youth), ethno-political tensions, socio-spatial divisions, and governance failures have combined with these external factors to create the conditions conducive to various forms of violent conflict – ethno-political, sectarian, militant and criminal – throughout the city.

This working paper examines the impacts of violent conflict on the control and contestation of public space in Karachi. It focuses specifically on the efforts of public and private actors to enhance safety and security through the use of physical barriers as a form of conflict infrastructure. Case studies were undertaken to document these efforts in different parts of the city using field surveys and photographic documentation, silent probe and observation, and key informant interviews augmented by a literature review. Workshops with key stakeholders engaged in security and urban planning were also held during the research to galvanise interest in the findings and their implications for urban policy and practice.

The paper begins by analysing the major historical factors that have contributed to Karachi's declining safety and security situation and its spatial impacts. This includes a focus on the city's geographic location, urban migration and ethnic partitioning, and planning failure and informality. The different spaces affected by violent conflict are then outlined. They include secluded peri-urban spaces; low-income neighbourhoods (including *katchi abadis*, or informal settlements); polling stations (when general or municipal elections are held); apartment buildings; land; business and marketplaces; streets and public spaces; places of worship; educational institutions; and spaces where women face various forms of everyday violence.

These spaces reflect significant state failures in the realms of security and urban planning, which have also allowed public and private actors to intervene informally.

Physical barriers are the most visible and widespread interventions that have been deployed. Other interventions include surveillance systems used to monitor suspicious behaviour and symbolic mechanisms (eg posters, banners and wall chalking) used to delineate territorial control and demarcate authority and political affiliation in contested localities. These mechanisms have resulted in a number of distinct spatial manifestations:

- **Forced cul-de-sacs** occur where arm levers, iron gates and, in more unusual cases, walls, have blocked public streets, creating dead ends. They tend to be concentrated around gated neighbourhoods/apartment blocks, high profile residences, markets, religious gathering spaces, and culturally/politically significant institutions. Forced cul-de-sacs protect residents and other beneficiaries from unknown pedestrians and vehicles, but have burdened the general public by reducing accessibility and freedom of movement. They have also prevented informal vendors from entering neighbourhoods, adversely affecting their livelihoods.
- **Disrupted footpaths** occur where concrete barriers, cargo containers, metal spikes, reinforced concrete walls, bollards, and sand bags have encroached onto sidewalks. They tend to be concentrated around the boundary walls of significant institutions, police and ranger posts and stations, hotels, embassies and consulates, and prisons. Footpaths are disrupted in order to protect residences and institutions against potential intrusions, but this also creates additional hazards for pedestrians by forcing them into traffic.
- **Restricted thoroughfares** occur where cargo containers, concrete blocks, and temporarily parked buses have blocked access to major streets. Restricted thoroughfares permit the control of pedestrian and vehicular access by residents and the authorities, but impede accessibility and mobility, and create additional hazards for pedestrians.

- **Privately controlled public spaces** occur where boundary walls, metal grills, cargo containers, and concrete blocks have encroached public spaces. They tend to be concentrated around residences of political leaders, public offices and gated communities. Privately controlled public spaces protect those they were designed for, but they remove space from the public realm, effectively privatising its control and management.
- **Diminishing green strips and medians** occur where walls, iron grills and metal fences have encroached spaces often used for the provision of municipal services (eg refuse collection) and utilities (eg electricity) or for landscaping. These spaces are increasingly being taken over by property owners for the purposes of enhancing security. In effect, barriers are being used to privately occupy and illegally acquire public space.
- **Gated neighbourhoods** occur where walls, iron gates, and arm levers form protective compounds around communities. They have become the norm for most higher-income developments, including many apartment blocks. While gated neighbourhoods protect and insulate residents from outside security threats (real and perceived), they contribute to the social divisions that fuel ethno-political violence. They also contribute to the inequitable provision of infrastructure where municipalities approve and in some instances co-finance barriers and other improvements for higher-income, but not lower-income, neighbourhoods.
- **Secluded peri-urban spaces** include low-income neighbourhoods where flags, banners and wall chalking are used by gangs, mafias and other armed groups for the purposes noted above. Ad hoc barriers (eg felled electricity poles) are also often deliberately placed across roads and access points to deter police and outsiders from entering. The relatively high densities and narrow paths and streets also form indirect barriers, making these neighbourhoods less accessible and more secluded.

The paper concludes with recommendations aimed at planning and managing physical barriers in more effective and equitable ways, and at promoting alternative security mechanisms for the poorest and most insecure groups. Both recommendations adopt a spatial lens in addressing insecurity and its effects on different communities and groups of people. But they also address the limited capacity of the authorities, and their difficulties in maintaining neutrality in attempting to intervene. These recommendations are twofold:

Support local platforms for planning and managing physical barriers more equitably – Physical barriers have become an irreversible reality, even though most are illegal. Subsequent efforts by the Sindh government to remove illegal barriers have been vigorously contested by ordinary citizens and other stakeholders demanding alternative means of security before their removal. Many residents in planned neighbourhoods believe that in the absence of a non-partisan and efficient local government and policing system, the status of their safety and security will be compromised. In their view, removal of barriers may not be a wise option in the present circumstances.

In the absence of alternatives, physical barriers should be planned and managed in ways that maximise their benefits and minimise their burdens for all affected groups. As the agency responsible for the provision of municipal services, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has a clear role in coordinating the planning efforts required to achieve this objective. This requires closer engagement with the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), which is responsible for enforcing building regulations, but which lacks the capacity and political will to do so. The intention to re-instate local elections despite continued postponements presents an ongoing important opportunity to empower municipal institutions to engage in more accountable, representative and less politicised urban planning and governance processes. However, the extent to which municipal institutions would be able to address these issues without getting caught up in the city's ethnic politics remains to be seen.

Co-produce citizen-police security solutions at the community level – The Sindh government established Citizen-Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs) in 1989 to bridge the gap between the police and citizens. CPLCs provide critical inputs into law enforcement and have proven effective in enhancing security, including in lower-income neighbourhoods. Holding municipal elections would present another opportunity for locally elected councilors and the mayor of Karachi to liaise with the authorities to enhance local representation, accountability and community engagement in policing.

However, reaching security solutions that are both politically unbiased and socially equitable will ultimately depend in large part on whether the city's enduring ethno-religious/sectarian politics can be transcended by stronger and more accountable local institutions (particularly those governing planning and policing). If these institutions can be fostered through local elections, then Karachi could have a real chance of planning and managing physical barriers and other security mechanisms in more effective and equitable ways.

I

Introduction

Karachi is the most populous city in Pakistan, with about 20 million inhabitants, making it one of the largest megacities in the world (Hasan *et al.* 2015). Karachi is also Pakistan's economic centre, contributing 25 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), managing 95 per cent of the country's international trade, and accounting for 70 per cent of national income tax revenue (Yusuf 2012).

However, Karachi's livability and prosperity have been seriously threatened by recurrent waves of violence and terrorism (Yusuf 2012). The structural causes behind the city's predicament are multifarious, but have been strongly influenced by national political instability, regional conflict associated with the Afghan war, and migration and ethnic violence accompanying the partitioning of India (Gayer 2014). As a major port city, Karachi has also become a strategic hub for the Afghan heroin trade, asylum for migrants and refugees, and entry point for arms and munition destined for Afghanistan (*ibid*). Rising urban poverty and unemployment (particularly among youth), ethno-political tensions, socio-spatial divisions, and governance failures have combined with these external factors to create the conditions conducive to various forms of violent conflict – ethno-political, sectarian, militant and criminal – throughout the city (Hasan and Mohib 1998; Hasan *et al.* 2015; Gazdar and Mallah 2013; Kaker 2014; Yusuf 2012).

This working paper examines the impacts of violent conflict on the control and contestation of public space in Karachi. It focuses specifically on the efforts of public and private actors to enhance safety and security through the use of physical barriers as a form

of conflict infrastructure serving to divide contested spaces and populations (as documented by Pullan 2013 in other contested cities). To help provide a way forward, recommendations are presented to plan and manage physical barriers in ways that are more effective and equitable and to support alternative means of security, especially for the poor.

1.1 Methods

Case studies were undertaken to profile public and private attempts to control and contest public space in different parts of the city. Cases include neighbourhoods of different socio-economic compositions and locations; residences of prominent political figures; public and private institutions (governmental, educational and religious); military installations; public spaces (including major thoroughfares, secondary streets, pedestrian footpaths and open spaces); and secluded peri-urban areas.

The case studies deployed field surveys and photographic documentation, silent probe and observation (particularly in more insecure peri-urban spaces) and interviews with key informants (including security professionals, transport planners and other municipal officials), augmented by a literature review. A series of stakeholder workshops (Annex I) was also held during the research to illicit local insights and to galvanise interest in the findings and their relevance to urban policy and practice.

1.2 Structure of the report

This working paper contains four sections. Following the Introduction, Section 2 outlines the major historical factors that have contributed to persisting socio-spatial patterns of violence in Karachi and identifies the various spatial manifestations of violent conflict that have emerged. Section 3 presents case studies of different attempts by public and private actors to control and contest public space, with a focus on physical barriers and their spatial manifestations and effects. Section 4 concludes by presenting a set of recommendations aimed at planning and managing physical barriers more effectively and equitably, and by exploring alternative means of security at the community level. Particular attention is paid to the subversive nature of the city's ethnic and religious/sectarian politics and the limited capacity of the authorities, and their difficulties in maintaining neutrality when attempting to intervene.

2

Socio-spatial patterns of violence in Karachi

Karachi was once renowned as the ‘city of lights’ due to its vibrant urban life and cosmopolitan character (Waqas 2013). However, as it fell into a spiral of violence amid mounting ethno-political tensions and demographic pressures in the 1980s, Karachi became known as the ‘South Asian Beirut’. Today, Karachi’s global image has grown more sinister, having earned the title of the ‘world’s most dangerous city’ (Khan 2013), with a murder rate of 12.3 per 100,000 people in 2011 (Anwar *et al.* 2013). As Gayer (2014) points out, this title is not entirely fair, given that many smaller cities, such as Caracas and Guatemala City, have murder rates exceeding 100 per 100,000 people. Nonetheless, the city’s reputation for violence is deserved. Between 2008 and 2012, more than 7,000 people in Karachi were killed by various types of violence – ethno-political, sectarian, militant and criminal (for a comprehensive review, see Yusuf 2012).

Unlike many other conflict-affected cities, where rapid social change has prevented sustained political dominance, Karachi’s major actors and sites of confrontation have remained relatively constant (Gayer 2014, p. 5). This has been accompanied by the concentration of homicidal violence in particular parts of the city. Figure 1 illustrates eight violent flashpoints in Karachi between 1 January and 31 August 2013. These flashpoints include Orangi in the west and Korangi in the south-east, which, along with New Karachi in the North and Garden/Lines Areas in the city centre, have been among the major sites of violence in the city since the mid-1990s. As discussed below (Section 2.1.3), these patterns generally correspond with the clustering of political parties in certain locations, which tend to be

geographically dispersed and semi-peripheral, forming what has been described as a ‘ring of fire’ around the city (ibid, p. 7).

This section examines some of the major historical factors that have contributed to persisting socio-spatial patterns of violence across Karachi. These factors include the city’s geographic location; urban migration and ethnic partitioning; and planning failure and informality. The section goes on to identify the different spatial manifestations of violence that have emerged.

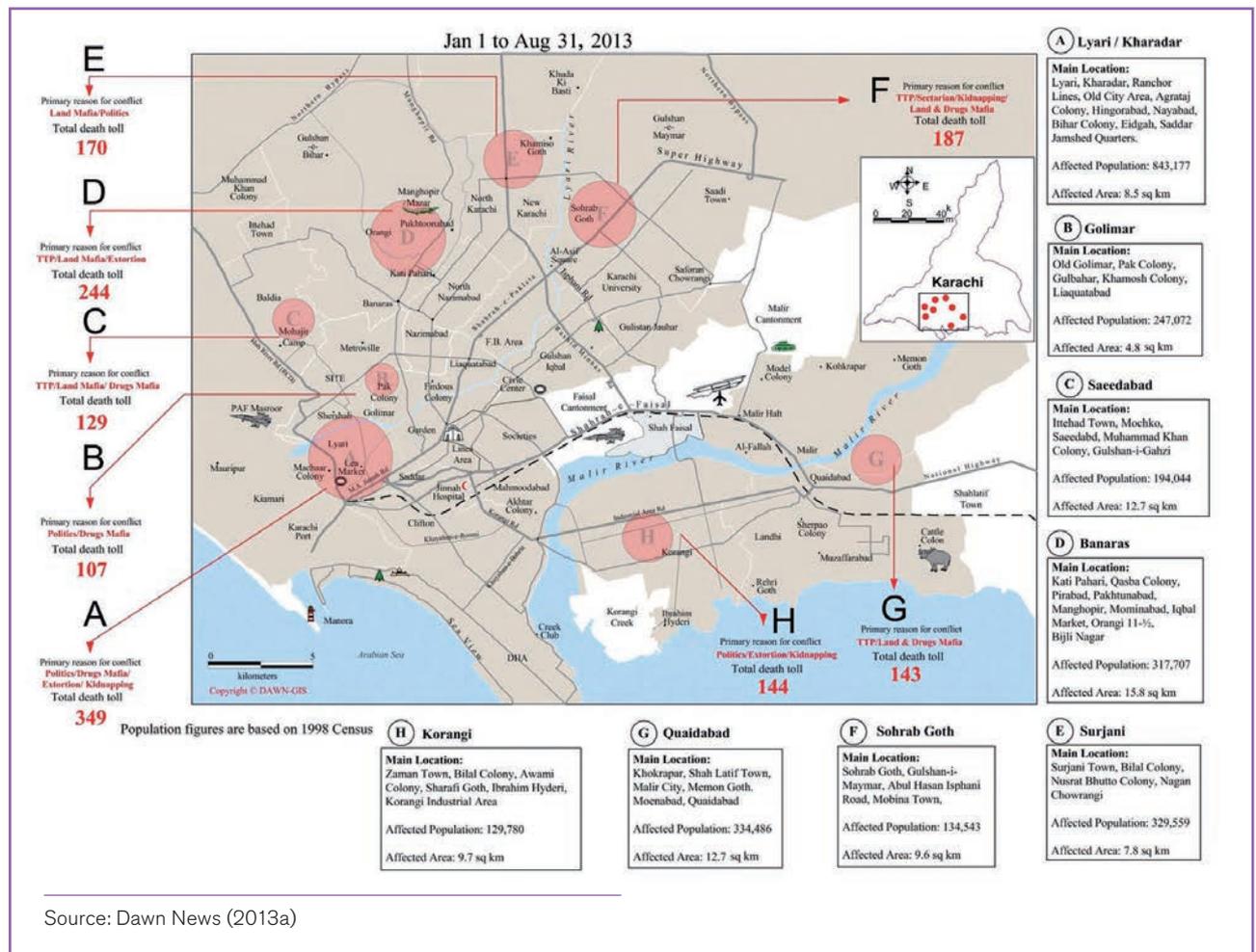
2.1 Historical factors

2.1.1 Geographic location

Karachi’s natural port, located at the nexus of Central Asia, India, the Persian Gulf and East Africa, has been a double-edged sword (Esser 2004; Gayer 2014). While the city’s location has connected it to global trade and financial networks, it has also turned the city into a vestibule for Afghan conflicts; a hub for the Afghan heroin trade; an asylum for migrants and refugees (many with prior experience as victims and/or perpetrators of violent conflict); and an entry point for arms and ammunition destined for Afghanistan (Gayer 2014). With the sudden inflow of arms into Karachi in the 1980s, political conflicts turned increasingly violent, as political groups began to militarise (ibid).

Karachi’s dense and porous environment and secluded peri-urban spaces have also made the city an ideal place for militant groups and terrorists organisations (including the Taliban) to permeate and hide. Meanwhile,

Figure 1. Eight flashpoints in Karachi, January 1 – August 31, 2013



the collapse of state institutions as a result of rising demographic and budgetary pressures, political conflicts, ethno-religious tensions and the changing nature of urban warfare, has presented additional opportunities for organised crime to thrive on illegal trade (Esser 2004). In this context, Karachi provides an example of how urban spaces in conflict zones can create, host, and reinforce social systems and structures that perpetuate violent behaviour, particularly in the absence of effective state intervention (ibid).

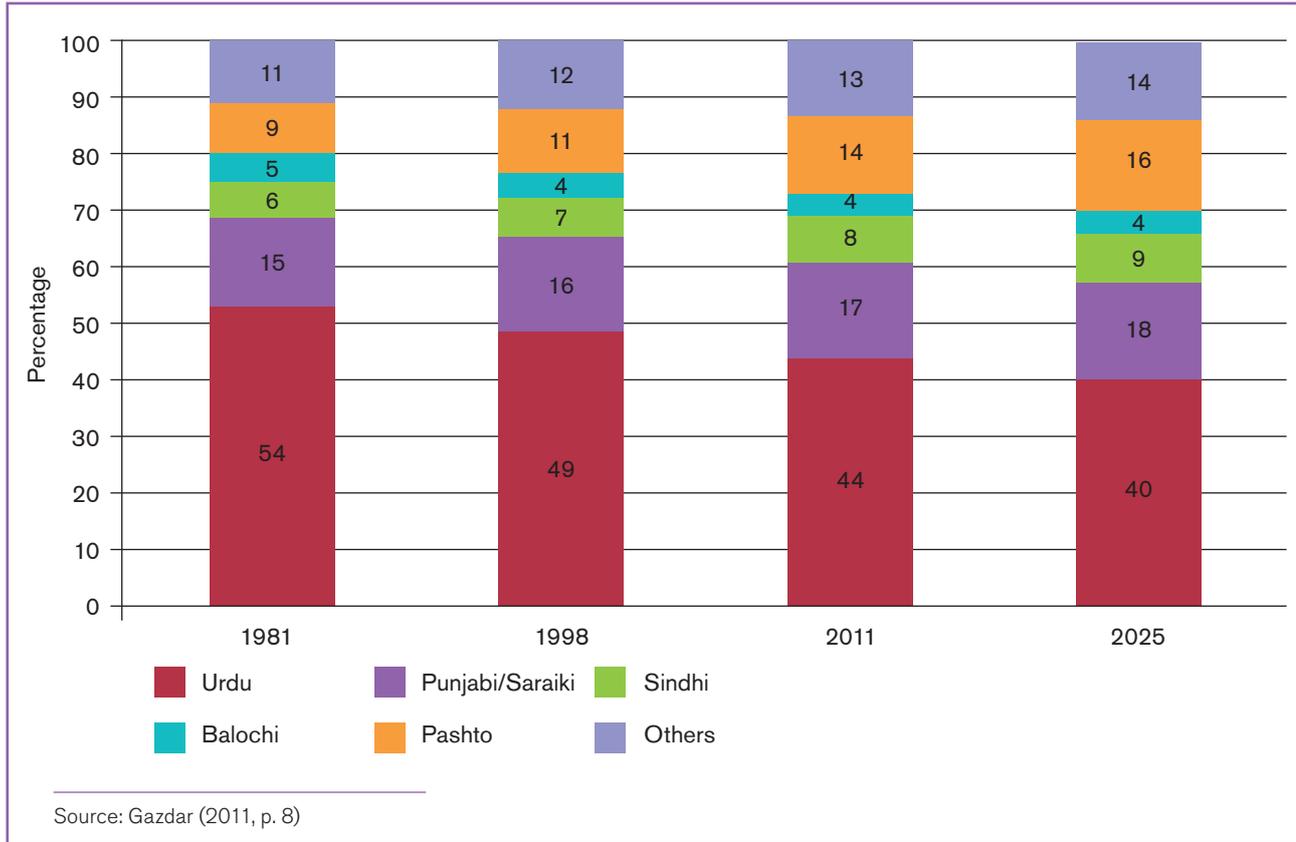
2.1.2 Urban migration and ethnic partitioning

Successive waves of migration dating back to the eighteenth century have profoundly shaped the demographic and cultural landscape of Karachi. Whilst a detailed examination of migration trends is beyond the scope of this working paper, and is well documented elsewhere (see Gayer 2014, p. 23-30; Gazdar 2011), the sudden influx of Urdu-speaking migrants (*mohajirs*) into Karachi following the Partition of India in 1947 is particularly relevant to consider. As the number of *mohajirs* grew, they came to dominate

the city's post-colonial politics with the rising tide of Muhajir nationalism (Ring 2006, p. 8). In the 1960s, the dominance of the *mohajirs* was challenged by an influx of Pashtun migrants from north-west Pakistan. At the same time, increasing numbers of migrants and refugees from Pakistan and surrounding countries began to arrive in Karachi, further contributing to the city's ethnic diversity. While the city's precise demographic profile remains unclear in the absence of reliable census data, estimates indicate that the growth in the Pashtun (Pashto-speaking) population has gradually cut into the *mohajir* (Urdu-speaking) majority (Figure 2).

These demographic shifts have been accompanied by mounting tensions between ethnic groups competing to fill the political, cultural and economic vacuum created by the departure of the non-Muslim elites who played a lead role in the city up until partition (Gayer 2014, p. 25; Gazdar 2011; Ring 2006). In effect, partition set the stage for persisting conflict between competing nationalisms (Ahmed 1988; Ring 2006, p. 9), leading to the first city-wide ethnic riot in 1985, which claimed more than one hundred lives (Yusuf 2012). This event paved the way for the Muttahida Qaumi Movement

Figure 2. Mother tongue of Karachi residents



(MQM), a political party established in 1984 to represent the *mohajirs*, which added a political aspect to the city's escalating violence (ibid).

In this context, ethnic diversity resulting from migration did not contribute to a sense of cosmopolitanism in Karachi. Rather, it resulted in the partitioning of urban space as the city's diverse populations re-organised into ethnic clusters, with *mohajirs* organising around language, sect, region and city of origin, and with Pashtuns organising around village- and clan-based networks (Gayer 2014, p. 28). In the decades to come, ethnic clustering would intensify following repeated episodes of 'ethnic' violence, resulting in new forms of 'enclavisation' along ethnic as well as class lines (Kaker 2014).

2.1.3 Planning failure and informality

Whilst most research on violence in Karachi has focused on ethnic identity, Fazila-Yacoobali (1996) warns that such a focus risks locating the problem away from the state. In this vein, Gazdar and Mallah (2013) emphasise informality as a useful lens for analysing the relationship between political violence and two

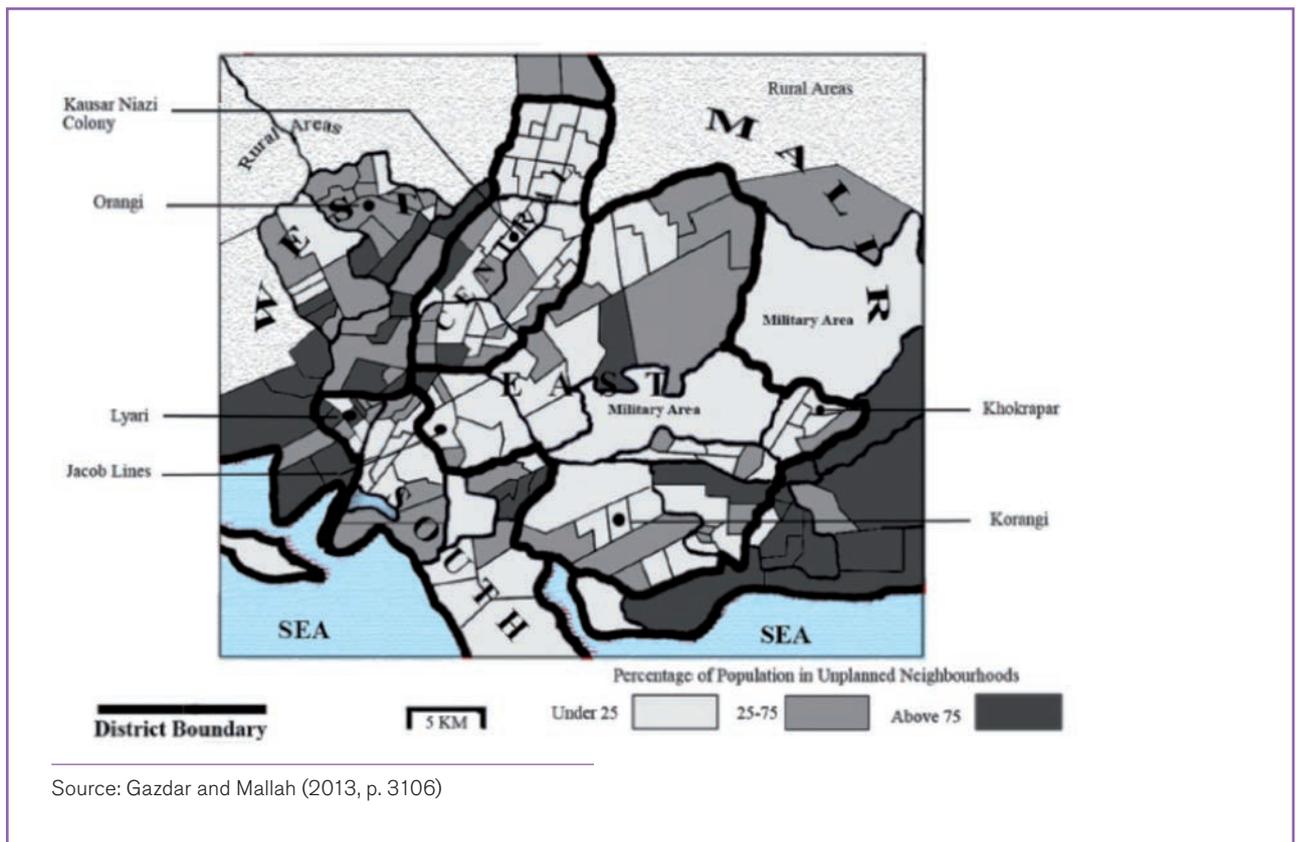
conspicuous state failures regarding security and urban planning.

Karachi's planning failures can be traced back to its colonial legacy and the subsequent lack of an integrated planning system to guide rapid population growth – driven largely by the refugee crisis – in the post-partition era (Gayer 2014, p. 33; Yusuf 2012). As an emerging housing crisis intensified, land and housing delivery systems began to informalise (Hasan *et al.* 2015) providing officials and unofficial entrepreneurs with lucrative opportunities for brokerage and protection, which became increasingly violent as access to arms increased (Gayer 2014, p. 33). Estimates suggest that more than half of Karachi's population in 1998 lived in census units comprised mainly of informal/unplanned settlements (Figure 3) (Gazdar and Mallah 2013). Over time, these settlements have become increasingly, though not exclusively, concentrated in peripheral areas.

Gazdar and Mallah (2013) examine how planning has been implicated in the city's shifting ethnic demography. Their analysis of census data showed that most *muhajir* communities live in formal/planned settlements¹, while most post-partition and pre-partition communities live

¹ This can partially be explained by post-1947 urban planning policy, which sought to provide post-partition migrants with housing (Gazdar and Mallah 2013, p.3111).

Figure 3. Percentage of Karachi's population in informal settlements



in informal/unplanned settlements (*katchi abadis*)². Analysis of polling station data also revealed a similar connection between election results and ethnic divisions in neighbourhoods dominated by particular political parties, with most formal settlements being strongholds for MQM support and most informal settlements being strongholds for rival parties, notably the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The MQM has exploited these connections by targeting unplanned settlements with eviction (as opposed to regularisation) due to the political threat posed by a growing non-*muhajir* population. In response, organisations initially formed by non-*muhajir* communities to support labourers were adapted to resist eviction. Over time, some of these organisations became involved in smuggling and heroin trafficking, while others have been used by the PPP to secure polling stations and engage in armed combat with the MQM (ibid).

Gazdar and Mallah (2013) conclude that violent political conflict in many neighbourhoods "can be traced to ethno-political divisions between planned and

unplanned areas and to mutual threat perceptions of ethnic groups" (p. 3111). This helps to further explain why repeated episodes of violence have reinforced Karachiites' pre-existing preferences for ethnic partitioning (Gayer 2014, p. 257). In line with earlier predictions by Ahmad (1993), it is likely that this trend will continue as Karachi's diverse populations continue to partition themselves into 'high-risk' areas and 'safe rings'.

2.2 Spatial manifestations

A number of distinct spatial manifestations of violence have materialised out of this historical context in Karachi. While this study is cross-sectional, it is important to note that these spaces, the types of violence occurring in them, and the people affected, may change with time (of day, month, year), seasons, religious calendars, electoral cycles, by social identities and statuses, and according to many other variables. Indeed, the relationship between urban space and violence is

² This can be partially explained by the fact that Pashtun as well as other migrant groups did not receive any housing support from the state, thus forcing them to rely on kinship and village networks (Gayer 2014, p. 256).

neither linear nor uni-directional. It is nevertheless possible to identify a number of spatial manifestations of violent conflict that have emerged in Karachi's contemporary landscape. These include the following:

- **Peri-urban areas** – As noted above, violence has formed a 'ring of fire' around the city, with six out of the seven major centres of violence being located within a 7-20 kilometre (km) radius of the city core (Gayer 2014, p. 7). In 2011, these centres accounted for 47 per cent of reported homicides across the city, while accounting for only 3.5 per cent of Karachi's total land area and 8.4 per cent of its total population (The Herald 2011). However, the city centre has not been immune to violent outbreaks, with the Lines Area being a major site of intra-mohajir violence during the 1990s, and with Kharadar and Lyari and their adjoining areas experiencing most of the conflict between MQM and the People's Aman Committee (PAC), a politico-militant organisation established in 2008 by a notorious Lyari bandit (Gayer 2014).
- **Low-income neighbourhoods** – As a major trading centre for Afghan heroin, Karachi has attracted growing numbers of crime syndicates (Gayer 2014, p. 44). As the heroin trade has grown, low-income neighbourhoods have become centres of mafia operation, exposing residents to various forms of criminal violence (Hasan 1986). Entrenched militias (including the Taliban) have also transformed many low-income neighbourhoods into battlefields, exposing residents to raids by state enforcement agencies and rival paramilitary organisations, reinforcing a perpetual state of chronic violence (Gayer 2014, p. 252). Meanwhile, rising tensions between ethnic groups in many mixed low-income neighbourhoods and katchi abadis have resulted in increasing levels of violence, from Orangi to Lyari (ibid, p. 257). However, it is important to note that there is no inherent link between low-income neighbourhoods and insecurity. In large part, insecurity is underpinned by the absence of credible state security and subsequent reliance on nefarious non-state security sub-structures. But this is not always the case. In Mumbai, for example, Gupte (2012) finds that non-state sub-structures play important roles in supplanting credible and accessible state security in some low-income neighbourhoods.
- **Polling stations** – During municipal and general elections, designated polling stations in Karachi have become sites of violence and intimidation as political parties have sought to monopolise their territorial control of neighbourhoods (Gazdar and Mallah 2013) and other strategic voting locations (eg public schools, university campuses, among other public institutions). In some cases, violent clashes between armed groups have erupted for control over these stations during elections (Yusuf 2012). Some stations have also become targets for bomb attacks, as demonstrated on Election Day in May 2013 when 13 people were killed and over 100 people injured in two blasts in Quaibabad and Qasba (Dawn News 2013b). Attacks against polling stations reflect the periodic nature of much of the city's violent conflict around specific events.
- **Apartment buildings** – High-rise apartment blocks are increasingly being constructed as developers continue to capitalise on growing land values, and as municipal authorities seek to achieve density targets while adhering to building bylaws (Hasan et al. 2010). While much – though not all – of the city's population live in ethnically and religiously homogenous neighbourhoods, many apartment buildings display significant ethnic mixing (Ring 2006). However, some apartments have been taken over by political parties in an attempt to evict residents affiliated with rival ethnic groups, as demonstrated by the armed battle erupting between the MQM, the Awami National Party (ANP) (the National Popular Party) and the Jiye Sindh Quami Mahaz (JSQM) (the National Front for the Protection of Sindh) in the Rabia City apartment complex of Gulistan-e-Jauhar in 2011 (Gayer 2014, p. 257-58). Some apartments are also run by gangs known to extort and harass local residents.
- **Land** – Violent evictions of katchi abadis orchestrated by private developers and land mafias often with the backing of government bureaucrats have become commonplace in Karachi, as population pressures and land values have continued to soar. In many instances, ruling political parties, such as the MQM (as discussed in Section 2.1.3), have used evictions as well as large-scale infrastructure projects (eg the Lyari expressway) to displace rival ethnic groups (Gayer 2014; Sadiq-Polack and Ahmed 2010). Gang wars are also frequently fought over land acquisition and development, as in Lyari (Hasan et al. 2015, p. 142).
- **Businesses and marketplaces** – Places of business and markets have become targets for bomb blasts and arson. For example, following a bomb blast during a Shia religious procession along Mohammed Ali (M.A.) Jinnah Road on 28 December 2009, local shops owned by Sunni Muslims in Bolton Market – Karachi's largest market located in the Central Business District (CBD) – were reported by some to have been set ablaze by arsons affiliated with a land mafia interested in redeveloping the area into more profitable uses (Inskeep 2011). While the specific motive and actors responsible for the fire remain a matter of speculation, the event further underscores the significance of real estate as an emerging source of violent conflict in Karachi.

- **Streets and public spaces** – Target killings (particularly involving the use of motorbikes) and bomb blasts occur nearly on a daily basis in streets and public spaces where intended victims and innocent bystanders are exposed and vulnerable to attack. This applies especially to crowds in contained environments, including security checkpoints, transport systems and airports (Elias 2009), as demonstrated by the terrorist attack on Karachi's international airport on 8 June 2014, which claimed 28 lives (Dawn News 2014). More recently, at least 45 people were killed and 13 injured when six gunmen on motorbikes stormed a bus carrying Ismaili Shia Muslims on 13 May 2015 (BBC 2015). Disruptive protests led by marginalised communities and the general public (particularly in response to power outages) have also turned streets and public spaces into violent arenas.
 - **Places of worship** – Churches, mosques, temples, among various other religious institutions, have been attacked, looted, fired upon and set ablaze, reflecting rising religious intolerance across the city (Ali, R 2012). Such institutions have also been targeted by violent protesters demonstrating against power outages (ibid).
 - **Educational institutions** – University campuses have been regular sites of clashes between armed political student groups, reflecting rising ethno-political and sectarian violence in Karachi (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 2014). Primary and secondary schools for ethnic minorities have also been targeted by gunmen and bomb blasts (Agence France-Presse 2013).
 - **Gendered spaces** – Urban spaces are increasingly becoming sites of gender-based violence in Karachi (Anwar et al. 2013), reflecting broader trends in cities of the global South (UN-Habitat 2013, p. 32; Whitzman et al. 2014). Such spaces include those listed above, but also those listed below. Further research is required to better understand how men and women experience violence in different ways within and across these and other spaces.
 - Public spaces and the workplace – Women in Karachi (particularly among the working class) are frequently subjected to violence in public spaces (including public transport systems) and to harassment and intimidation in the workplace (particularly in factories) (Ali, KA 2012; Anwar et al. 2013). This can be attributed in part to the rising involvement of women in paid work outside the home (ibid) – another common trend in cities of the global South (Chant 2013). Other people with subordinate identities are also not immune to violent attacks. For example, in 'gay cruising' areas of Karachi (as well as Islamabad and Lahore), gay men and transgendered persons are frequently picked up by groups of people and then gang beaten and/or raped (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2015).
 - The home – Entrenched patriarchal norms and emerging notions of 'hypermasculinity' in Karachi have rewarded the violence of young men, while reinforcing hegemonic gender structures (Khan 2007). As violence perpetrated by young men has become increasingly normalised in everyday life, women (particularly in low-income neighbourhoods) have been continually exposed to various types of violence – structural, systemic, physical and direct – extending increasingly into the home (Ali, KA 2012; Chaudhry 2004).
- The spatial manifestations of violence identified above impinge on nearly all spheres of public and private life in Karachi, including the community (low- and high-rise), workplace, street, place of worship, daily commute, marketplace, and the home. Despite their reach, these spaces tend to be unevenly distributed both socially and geographically, indicating that some groups in particular parts of the city are affected by violence more than others, depending on their income, planning status (ie formal versus informal), ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, among other intersecting social identities and statuses. Moreover, while poor people and 'slum' dwellers are often blamed by Karachiites (fairly or unfairly) as the primary perpetrators of violence, they also appear to be disproportionately affected as victims (Ebrahim 2011). This is similar to other large cities, where violent conflict has become normalised into the everyday life of informal settlements, particularly in peripheral areas (Briceño-León and Zubillaga 2002; Pecaut 1999; Scheper-Hughes 1995; UN-Habitat 2007).
- In the absence of effective state intervention, public and private actors have taken it upon themselves to guard many of the spaces identified above against violent conflict. The following section outlines the various physical barriers and measures that have been deployed in public spaces and examines their spatial manifestations and effects.

3

Spatial security measures

This section outlines the different spatial security measures that have emerged in Karachi, presents case studies to illustrate their spatial manifestations, and concludes by assessing the effects of these measures on different spaces and groups of people. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which physical barriers as a form of conflict infrastructure may be reinforcing existing socio-spatial divisions, ethnic tensions and insecurities, as observed in other contested cities, such as Jerusalem, Berlin, Nicosia, Vukovar, among others (Pullan 2013; see also *Conflict Cities and the Contested State* 2012).

3.1 Physical barriers

Cities around the world are increasingly constructing conflict infrastructures (eg fences, gates, bollards, walls, sand bags, concrete blocks, cargo containers etc) as responses to conflict (intra-city, regional and international), violence, inter-ethnic fear, contest over territory, and as attempts to control immigration (Pullan 2013). Karachi is no exception. Some of the most common barriers (permanent and temporary) identified from the case studies (presented in Section 3.4) are summarised below.

3.1.1 Permanent barriers

- Street barriers, such as iron gates and lever arms (often, but not always manned by armed and unarmed private security guards).
- Reinforced concrete barriers of various shapes and sizes.
- Spikes made up of metal bars joined together to form barricades.
- Bollards made up of short metal poles fixed a short distance apart to form barricades.
- Boundary walls and metal mesh fences topped with barbed wire.
- Sand bags (or gunny bags) made of wire mesh, lined with thick fabric material.

3.1.2 Temporary barriers

- Cargo containers installed by police to cordon off streets and other public spaces. Such containers are often painted dark blue with 'POLICE' emblazoned on their sides. Others bear the names of the shipping companies that own them.
- Trucks, buses and trailers parked in rows to block streets during protests and processions.
- Sand bags temporarily placed to lower the impact of explosions. Overtime, they have become permanent features in the city.

- Felled electricity poles and other ad hoc debris used to barricade streets and other entrances in lower-income neighbourhoods and katchi abadis.

3.2 Symbolic mechanisms

Symbolic mechanisms used to demarcate authority, claim territorial control and warn rival groups are frequently deployed by contesting stakeholders (particularly gangs) throughout Karachi. These include party flags, banners, loud speakers, wall posters and especially wall chalking. Rival political parties and gangs either observe these mechanisms in silence or retaliate with violence.

However, not all symbolic mechanisms are nefarious. A new art project called 'Reimagining the walls of Karachi' led by 'I am Karachi' is seeking to reclaim walls covered with chalking by painting them with new images aimed at restoring a sense of pride and optimism in the city (see Murad 2015). This project demonstrates the positive ways in which public spaces can be transformed for the benefit of Karachi, while presenting new opportunities for citizens and communities to reclaim ownership of their city.

3.3 Surveillance systems

Surveillance systems are often used to detect weapons (eg metal detectors) and intrusions (eg alarm systems), monitor and record intruders (eg video recording systems), and trigger incident responses (eg by security guards and the police) (Talbot and Jakeman 2009). Among the most popular deterrence measures used by the authorities in Karachi are closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, which cover all major streets and public spaces and are connected to the central control room at police headquarters. According to police officials, rapid response is initiated after observing any unusual occurrences. However, as indicated by a senior journalist, CCTV systems are often damaged or destroyed by criminal elements in particular neighbourhoods, as in Lyari. In such neighbourhoods, informal surveillance mechanisms are often deployed by gangs and other armed groups for the purposes of identifying and monitoring outsiders, the police, and other potential threats.

The spatial measures outlined above are commonly used to enhance the security of both public and private spaces – residential, commercial, institutional, etc –

across the city. Due to rising security threats, the use of these measures has extended to educational and religious spaces, particularly during culturally significant rituals and events, as documented below (see Section 3.4.2.3).

3.4 Spatial manifestations

The physical security systems outlined above have resulted in a number of distinct spatial manifestations with differential effects for certain groups. These include the following.

3.4.1 Forced cul-de-sacs

Forced cul-de-sacs are streets blocked by physical barriers, creating dead ends. These streets were initially planned to be public thoroughfares, but have been either closed from one end or both. In some cases, security gates (*chowkis*) are manned and monitored by private unarmed and armed guards (*chowkidars*) employed either by individual households or neighbourhood organisations. *Chowkidars* permit entry only after they have conducted vehicle and pedestrian checks, although not all *chowkis* are manned. In other cases, iron gates have been installed, including some that are permanently closed and others that are operated by *chowkidars*.

3.4.1.1 Common locations

- Gated neighbourhoods and apartment blocks.
- Streets around religious gathering spaces and other culturally and politically significant institutions.
- Streets around residences occupied by high profile people.
- Market places and other busy locations where entrances are blocked and controlled.

3.4.1.2 Barriers deployed

- Arm lever barriers are common, but their state of repair and upkeep vary widely.
- Iron grill gates standing up to eight feet tall are common. They may be reinforced with additional arm lever barriers a few feet behind them.
- In more unusual cases, walls have been built around residential areas and streets to provide protection against criminal and terrorist elements.

3.4.1.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

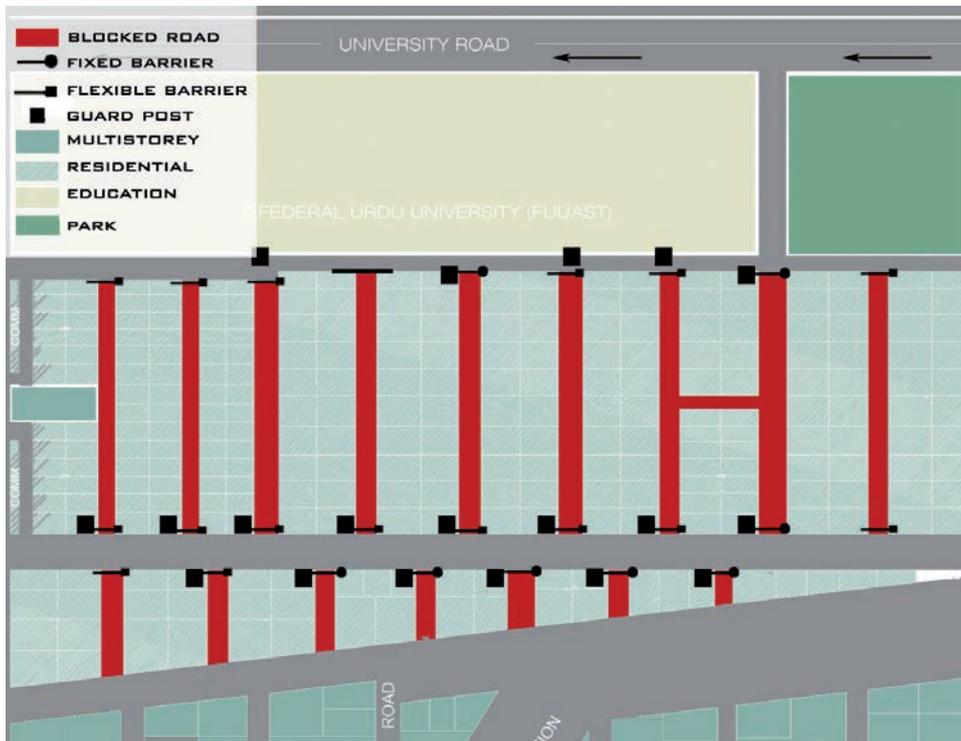
- Protecting residents against threats (real or perceived) from unknown pedestrians and vehicles.
- Impeding traffic flow within and through neighbourhoods, creating travel inconveniences for the broader community.
- Blocking streets prevents informal vendors and domestic workers from entering neighbourhoods, adversely affecting their livelihoods and the mobility of women.
- Reinforcing trends towards enclavisation along ethnic and class lines.

3.4.1.3 Case studies

Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Block 9

Gulshan-e-Iqbal is a middle-to-upper income planned neighbourhood in eastern Karachi (Figure 4). Residents generally belong to mixed religious, sectarian and ethnic backgrounds. Due to security concerns, most streets and lanes in the neighbourhood have been installed with metal and/or concrete barriers. Some residents have pooled their finances to construct solid metal gates and to employ *chowkidars* to stand their guard at the end of each street. As a result, only vehicles belonging to residents or their guests are permitted to enter. This applies similarly to pedestrians.

Figure 4. Gulshan-e-Iqbal Block-9



Source: Authors

Although streets and lanes are public spaces, many have become semi-private, having been closed off to non-residents by gates. The municipal administration, law enforcement agencies and other government bodies seem to have informally accepted the emergence of these spaces, even though they often contravene formal regulations. These spaces now occupy most middle-to-upper income neighbourhoods in the city.

Due to its location adjacent to Aziz Bhatti Park and a nearby *katchi abadis*, the neighbourhood is said to be strongly affected by petty theft and street crime. As a

response to countless mobile phone and motorcycle snatching incidents, the residents, with the permission of the police, have taken it upon themselves to install various kinds of barriers, including arm lever barriers, grilled gates, and walls (see Figures 5-7).

During the interviews, residents reported an improved level of security after installation of metal gates. However, these barriers have also impeded the ability of local informal vendors from entering the community to conduct their business, adversely affecting their livelihoods.

Figure 5. Unmanned iron gate



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 7. Barrier wall surrounding residence



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 6. Manned pole lever and iron gate



Photo credit: Authors

North Nazimabad, Block C

North Nazimabad is a planned neighbourhood in north eastern Karachi. While its residents have different social, religious and cultural backgrounds, some areas have become focal points for specific religious communities. In particular, 'C' block is dominated by the Dawoodi Bohra community, which is an offshoot of *Shia* Muslims. The Bohras have their *Jamaat Khana* (place of worship) and other communal facilities in this area. Until recently, there were no barriers in this part of the neighbourhood, as Bohras have lived in peace alongside other groups. However, this quickly changed when the Bohras were impacted by several terrorist attacks, which left many people dead and wounded. As feelings of insecurity have spread, all streets leading

into the Bohra community have been blocked with metal and concrete barriers, effectively creating a compound (Figure 8). No vehicle or pedestrian can enter without being checked by *chowkidars* at the *chowkis* (Figure 9). National identity cards must also be produced.

Prominent buildings in the Bohra Compound, including the Bohra Mosque, Jamea University, a hostel and auditorium, have been further protected by closing all surrounding streets, including many secondary streets. These road closings have created a long detour leading into the area from a back route. The barriers have also had an impact on the community's social composition, as houses owned by non-Bohra residents are increasingly being sold to Bohras.

Figure 8. North Nazimabad, Block C



Source: Authors

Figure 9. Barriers blocking entrance into North Nazimabad, Block C



Photo credit: Authors

Mehfil-e-Shah-e-Khurasan Numaisht

The central religious processions by *Shia* Muslims in Karachi begin from Mehfil-e-Shah-e-Khurasan, an historic mosque located a short walk east of M.A. Jinnah Road (Figure 10). As a religious landmark, the mosque attracts thousands of worshippers, especially during the Muharram/Ashura days. After congregating and performing the necessary rituals, the procession moves from the mosque to M.A. Jinnah Road before proceeding about three kilometres south to Hussainian Iranian Imam Bargah in Kharadar.

Khurasan Imam Bargah lies in a residential neighbourhood developed in the 1930s. Like other

places of *Shia* worship, this site faces serious threats. The administration has blocked all lanes and streets leading to the site. Metal and concrete barriers have been installed, obstructing vehicular movement through and around the site. No one can enter into the precinct without a body search and identity clearance. During Muharram and other important religious holidays, the police temporarily place empty cargo containers to visually and physically seal the Khurasan Imam Bargah. The procession route during rituals is declared a no-vehicle area to facilitate movement. However, access for residents of surrounding neighbourhoods remains an acute problem for most of the year as religious activities have continued to expand and intensify.

Figure 10. Mehfil-e-Shah-e-Khurasan



Source: Authors

Ancholi, Federal 'B' Area

Ancholi, Federal 'B' Area has gradually become a predominantly *Shia* Muslim neighbourhood (Figure 11). During the last ten years, attacks on *Shia* and threats to their life and property have increased considerably. This has motivated many *Shia* to re-locate to this and other neighbourhoods where their numbers are high and they are more readily able to control the security of their community.

Ancholi in Federal 'B' Area has become a desirable location for many middle-income community members seeking secure housing. The neighbourhood's streets, entry points, exits and boundaries are strictly guarded by private security guards with the help of the police. All streets and lanes and the boundaries of *Imam bargah* are fortified with barriers, check point gates and *chowkis*. Measures such as barriers, check points and surveillance cameras are also used to deter outsiders.

Despite these precautions, target attacks by rival sectarian groups continue unabated. In addition, while

the barriers and surveillance provide some sense of security in the community, residents remain vulnerable to attack when they commute to work or attend other social obligations in other parts of the city.

Empty cargo containers placed at the intersection of the main road and secondary streets reflect Ancholi's sensitivity. Cargo containers are often stacked on sidewalks and manned by police officers. All streets have also been blocked by gates that open only for residents after their identity has been verified. Recently, residents have collected money from the community to increase the presence of private security guards at the gates.

Streets around *Imam bargah* in Acholi have also been permanently closed and are thus no longer used. There are arm lever barriers in the inner streets apart from the gates that block the main streets. However, some residents interviewed indicated that many of these barriers have been installed only to deter unwanted parking in front of houses.

Figure 11. Ancholi, Federal 'B' Area



Source: Authors

Azizabad '90' – Headquarters of the MQM

Azizabad 90 is the home of the leader of the MQM, the second largest political party in Sindh. Although he resides abroad, all party activities take place in the vicinity. It now acts as the MQM head office. Until March 2015, all streets leading to the house were blocked by arm lever barriers and monitored by party volunteers. Once a main thoroughfare, Mukka Chowk, the road leading to Azizabad 90, has been gradually blocked by concrete barriers. Initially, only one side of the road was surrounded, but until recently no traffic was allowed on either side. The entrance is marked by a police vehicle, party volunteers (often believed to be armed), city wardens, and concrete barriers installed by traffic police. Only residents and visitors with security clearance are permitted inside. A small cabin serving as a help desk is where visitors must register, show identification and state the purpose of their visit. After passing this checkpoint, visitors are relatively free to move about. But if visitors wish to visit the Khurshid-Memorial hall (The *Rabata* (Liaison) Committee office), they must register a second time and surrender any sharp objects. There are other *chowkis* as one walks towards the office. As visitors reach the office, their belongings are checked again for any suspicious objects. According to an MQM representative, the physical barriers have now become mandatory to ensure security, especially after the numerous terrorist attacks at their office and the target killings of their party workers.

The rangers raided Azizabad 90 on 11 March 2015 and arrested a few alleged target killers and criminals from the area. Many barriers have since been removed from the around the MQM head office.

3.4.2 Disrupted footpaths

This category includes sidewalks that have been disrupted by physical barriers installed to protect offices, military installations and public buildings from attacks by militant groups, extremist sectarian organisations, among other potential threats. The disruptions the barriers have caused have made it impossible for pedestrians to use these footpaths.

3.4.2.1 Common locations

- Boundary walls of military bases
- Police and rangers' posts and stations
- Public buildings
- Hotels
- Schools, offices and banks
- Embassies and consulates, and
- Prisons.

3.4.2.2 Barriers deployed

- Concrete barriers and blocks are installed to prevent entry of vehicles and pedestrians. These barriers are often painted in black and white or in red and yellow stripes to increase their visibility. In other cases, they are disguised as planters to blend into the building facade and streetscape. Many concrete blocks bear the embossed initials of the Municipal Department, 'KMC'.
- In special cases, sand barriers are installed as high as boundary walls to provide additional reinforcement against explosions.
- Metal spikes are installed to deter attackers. Like the concrete barriers, these spikes are often painted red and yellow or black and white.
- Cargo containers painted dark blue and featuring the police logo in white are temporarily installed to block roads. In other cases, they bear the names of the companies that own them.
- High reinforced concrete walls topped with barbed wire are constructed around sensitive locations.
- Bollards are placed a few feet apart to allow pedestrian movement, while serving as a barrier for vehicles.
- Sand bags are made of wire mesh lined with thick fabric material and are filled with sand. These bags are temporarily placed to lower the impact of explosions, but have become permanent fixtures on many streets.

3.4.2.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Protecting residences and institutions against potential intrusions.
- Encroaching and blocking public footpaths, reducing walkability and creating additional hazards for pedestrians by forcing them into traffic.
- Blocking entrances to residences and institutions, inhibiting pedestrian access.

3.4.2.4 Case studies

Consulates and embassies

Consulates and embassies, mainly located in the Clifton and Defense localities, are protected by concrete blocks in various shapes and sizes, ranging from about 2 to 9 feet high, with planters or chains linking them together. *Chowkis* are often built on the corners with fixed surveillance systems to monitor pedestrian as well as vehicular movement in the nearby vicinity. Consulates hire private security guards to protect their premises. They often block smaller roads and service lanes adjacent to boundary walls for further protection, but often at the expense of pedestrian access.

Educational institutions

Educational institutions have increasingly undertaken security measures, particularly following anonymous threats. Schools attended by children of high profile individuals tend to be more heavily fortified with physical

barriers than others. The same concrete barriers used elsewhere also line the boundary walls of schools and block gates. After the deadly attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, that claimed the lives of up to 141 children on 16 December 2014 (Sherazi *et al.* 2014), schools throughout the country have installed barriers to enhance their security.

For example, Karachi Grammar School (KGS) is a primary, secondary and higher-secondary institution located in Clifton, an affluent suburb in the Saddar Town of Karachi (Figure 12). Affiliated with the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom (UK), KGS is attended by children from upper-income and influential households (including those headed by high ranking civil servants and police officers), making it a target for terrorist and political groups. Around a decade ago, KGS management installed barriers and fortifications around the premise in response to terror threats (Figures 12-14). The access road and portion of the

Figure 12. Karachi Grammar School – View of fortifications



Source: Authors

Figure 13. Concrete blocks lining perimeter of KGS



Figure 14. Poll lever blocking entry to KGS



Photo credit: Authors

main front street were impacted as a result. Barbed wire, partial closure of the back streets and alteration in the adjoining part are some other visible obstructions. During the early morning and afternoons, the streets are heavily congested with private cars coming to pick and drop off children. With barriers and limited access points, the streets become virtually non-navigable for ordinary citizens, especially those who reside in the adjoining areas. As terror threats to high profile schools are still valid, the security agencies have not dismantled any barriers or barbed wires from around the premises of KGS.

UK Deputy High Commission

The UK Deputy High Commission is located in the Old Clifton area where many other diplomatic commissions are concentrated (Figure 15). Security measures were normal until 9/11 motivated most commissions to make improvements. All vital arteries and footpaths leading to the UK High Commission are now blocked by barriers and its entire perimeter is surrounded by sand bags. Since much of the surrounding area is a low density elite neighbourhood, people are able to adjust and manage the impacts of security barriers. But when the traffic moving through Shahrā-e-Iran to the beach increases, it causes problems for pedestrian movement and accessibility.

Figure 15. UK Deputy High Commission – View of fortifications



Source: Authors

Hotels

Following an attack on the Karachi Sheraton Hotel in 2002 (McCarthy and Webster 2002), hotels have enhanced their security significantly. The presence of foreigners and tourists (especially people from Western countries) combined with high levels of mobility heighten the vulnerability of hotels to terror attacks. Concrete blocks reinforced by sand bags are the most common security barriers for hotels (Figure 16). In other instances, cargo containers have been cut in half and stacked on top of each other to form walls at hotel entrances. There has been encroachment over side roads to further protect these establishments. One hotel has also constructed their parking space in the premises of a high profile public park adjacent to it. In other instances, small businesses have taken over public sidewalks to increase both parking and security.

3.4.3 Restricted thoroughfares

Events such as rallies and processions require space for people to gather. In Karachi, these spaces are almost always the main thoroughfares, which are the responsibility of the police to protect from attacks. Different methods are used to cordon off routes, control and monitor entry points and to divert pedestrians and vehicles.

3.4.3.1 Common locations

- Entry points to major streets and thoroughfares.

3.4.3.2 Barriers deployed

- Cargo containers (often featuring 'POLICE' or the names of the companies that own them on the side)
- Buses temporarily parked perpendicular to roads
- Concrete blocks.

3.4.3.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Permitting control of pedestrian and vehicular access
- Impeding pedestrian and vehicular accessibility to limit participation in processions and protests
- Forcing people to climb over them, creating additional hazards.

3.4.3.4 Case studies

Notable thoroughfares and locations where rallies and processions commonly occur include Numaish-Khurasan, Nishter Park, M.A, Jinnah Road and Karachi Press Club. Barriers commonly deployed are illustrated in Figures 17-19.

Figure 16. Barriers surrounding the Marriot Hotel (Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road & Abdullah Haroon Road)



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 17. Police positioning temporary cargo container



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 18. Cargo containers blocking pedestrian and vehicular access



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 19. People jumping over cargo containers



Photo credit: Authors

3.4.4 Privately controlled public spaces

The private control of public space around prominent residences and offices of political party leaders, and provincial, federal, and military administrators has become increasingly common. More than ever, politically influential connections are pressuring the government to permit the construction of fortifications. Permission is usually granted informally.

3.4.4.1 Common locations

- Residences of political leaders
- Public offices
- Gated communities.

3.4.4.2 Barriers deployed

- High walls constructed around sensitive residences. Their tops are often reinforced with metal spikes or barbed wire.
- Metal grills installed around the perimeters of residents and on traffic islands to prevent pedestrians from crossing the road.
- Cargo containers installed to block roads and footpaths, many of which have become permanent fixtures.
- Concrete blocks barricade roads and footpaths.

3.4.4.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Protecting individuals and communities they were designed for by controlling and monitoring pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- Removing space from the public realm, effectively privatising it often for commercial gain.
- Impinging on pedestrian and vehicular accessibility and movement.

3.4.4.4 Case studies

Bilawal House

Bilawal House is a residential bungalow in Clifton occupied by Mr Bilawal Bhutto and Mr Asif Ali Zardari, the Chairman and Co-Chairman of the PPP, respectively (Figure 20). Although the residence has been routinely monitored and guarded for the last five years, physical security interventions have increased considerably following an attack on the convoy of Ms Bhutto on 18 October 2007, and her subsequent assassination on 27 December the same year. Attacks on the party stronghold combined with a growing lack of confidence in the ability of the police to protect the property have motivated additional security interventions. These have included the construction of a concrete wall running parallel to the property along Shalrah-e-Iran (a major arterial road), the complete closure of Shalrah-e-Iran, and the introduction of security check points at either end (Figure 21).

These interventions have significantly impacted the surrounding area by removing public space through the construction of walls and barriers that have also impeded accessibility and freedom of movement. Many residents complain that such interventions reflect growing efforts by political and economic elites to use public spaces for their own purposes.

Figure 20. Bilawal House – View of fortifications



Source: Authors

Figure 21. Barrier blocking entry to public road leading to Bilawal House



Photo credit: Authors

3.4.5 Diminishing green strips and medians

In conventional neighbourhood design, private properties fronting onto public streets are lined with green strips and medians to facilitate infrastructures below the surface (eg municipal electricity cables) or services on the surface (eg refuse collection). These spaces are increasingly being taken over by property owners for the purposes of enhancing security through the construction of boundary walls, iron grills, metal mesh fences, among other physical barriers. In effect, these barriers are used to privately occupy and illegally acquire public space.

3.4.5.1 Common locations

- Residential areas
- Between sidewalks and street kerbs
- Between private properties and the public right-of-way.

3.4.5.2 Barriers deployed

- Walls
- Iron grills
- Mesh metal fences
- Metallic spikes
- Boundary walls topped with barbed wire.

3.4.5.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Increasing safety by taking over the control and management of public space
- Interrupting the operation and maintenance of municipal infrastructure and services.

Examples of diminishing green strips and medians can be seen throughout the city's residential areas, from Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Gulistan-e-Jauhar to North Nazimabad.

3.4.6 Security structures in public spaces

There is an expanding typology of structures erected in public spaces for security purposes. These include police check posts on footpaths, rooms and accommodation for security guards, and various guard and watch towers. While many check posts and watchtowers remain vacant, they stand as symbols of vigilance over elements of civil unrest.

3.4.6.1 Common locations

- Areas prone to attacks, including footpaths, end of residential streets, central locations, and residences of prominent political and religious figures.

3.4.6.2 Barriers deployed

- Check posts (e.g. individual structures for police and rangers)
- Concrete watch towers (including ground level and up to two storeys)
- Cargo containers (used as ad hoc posts).

3.4.6.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Check posts and guard towers enhance vigilance over vulnerable public spaces
- General public subjected to spot checks and searches.

3.4.6.4 Case studies

Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Gulshan Chowrangi, University Road and many other streets in the city

Rangers' posts have recently been built in central areas to provide vantage views. Examples of locations where these posts are typically found include the central median of the main Rashid Minhas Road, on the main roundabout of Safoora Chowk, at the corner of the military establishments on Dalmia Road, and on the U turn centre island on University Road. A container, acting as a police post, can be seen in front of the Empress Market, with barbed wire encircling it.

3.4.7 Gated communities

Gated communities are generally distinguished from others by their inward-looking spaces, bounded form and privatised security. In Karachi, gated communities, including gated apartment blocks, have become the norm for most middle and high-income developments (The DAWN National Weekend Advertiser 2012), reflecting broader trends in the global South (Landman and Schönteich 2002).

3.4.7.1 Common locations

- New middle and high-income neighbourhood developments (particularly in, but not limited to, peripheral areas)
- Retrofitted middle- and high-income neighbourhoods
- Apartment blocks.

3.4.7.2 Barriers deployed

- Walls
- Arm levers
- Iron gates.

3.4.7.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Protecting and insulating residents from outside threats (real or perceived).
- Contributing to the inequitable provision of infrastructure in instances where municipalities approve and in some instances co-finance barriers and other infrastructure improvements for higher-income, but not lower-income, neighbourhoods.
- Contributing to the social divisions that fuel ethno-political violence.

3.4.7.4 Case studies

Overseas Housing Society

The Overseas Housing Society is a planned housing cooperative built in the 1980s to accommodate people who live abroad and spend their holidays in Karachi. There are numerous parks, a school and various shops among other amenities in the neighbourhood. It is similar to other planned residential areas in Karachi, with the exception of the relatively inconspicuous walls that surround it. Some walls are short and thus less noticeable as compared to many other residential areas with much higher walls.

According to a member of the administration, spending on security retrofits has increased markedly, reaching two hundred thousand rupees per month (US\$ 2000/= approximately). Security measures now include a main gate guarded by two security personnel, a reinforced barrier and a guard post recently built on top of a wall painted in bright colours to increase its visibility. Visitors are required to submit their identity card and to indicate the address of the residence they wish to visit.

Askari IV

Askari IV is one of Karachi's many military owned and run housing estates built as apartment complexes for military officials and their families. As one of the best maintained housing schemes in the city, Askari IV features a large mosque, a shopping complex, basketball courts, and numerous parks. These features have attracted growing numbers of civilians over time.

The estate has high boundary walls and gates manned by security guards. Some residents desire a primary school to be built in the estate to protect their children from the city's declining security situation. The concentration of basic amenities, infrastructure and services in gated communities reflects the internalisation of the city's population.

3.4.8 Secluded peri-urban spaces

As noted above (Section 2.1), secluded peri-urban areas serve as ideal places for criminal elements and terrorist groups to permeate and hide. This is especially the case in dense, highly porous and poorly policed *katchi abadis* in peripheral settings. Compared to other settlements, *katchi abadis* typically lack permanent physical barriers, which are often not supported by municipal authorities. Instead, symbolic mechanisms have been used by gangs, criminal elements and other armed groups to delineate territorial control and demarcate authority and political affiliation.

3.4.8.1 Common locations

- Katchi abadis (peripheral as well as inner-city locations).

3.4.8.2 Barriers deployed

Direct barriers include:

- Flags and banners
- Wall chalking
- Deliberately placed obstacles (eg felled electricity poles).

Indirect barriers include:

- Density
- Narrow footpaths and streets.

3.4.8.3 Effects on beneficiaries and the burdened

- Warning outsiders to avoid entering territories controlled by rival groups
- Generating conflict over territorial control, resulting in violent outbursts
- Allowing criminals and gang members to evade police
- Contributing to the ghettoisation and marginality of *katchi abadis*.

3.4.8.4 Case studies

Lyari

Lyari is home to various opposing gangs embroiled in turf wars that affect all residents. Physically, Lyari is dense with narrow streets (often allowing only two people to walk abreast) and numerous dilapidated buildings, which in effect serve as an indirect barrier against outsiders. Gang members also use their familiarity with settlement layouts to escape the police and rangers by skipping from rooftop-to-rooftop or

slipping from one house to another. In other instances, speed-bumps and felled electric poles across streets are used to hinder the infiltration of security forces.

Armed gang members in Lyari also serve as guards outside houses and in the streets. Gangs commonly employ teenagers for around 600-1,000 rupees to track and monitor activities and outsiders in the area and to conduct informal security checks. Men are interrogated more than women, since women in the community are mostly known. Recently, five people of the same family were killed in Moach Goth because they were suspected of providing information on the gangs to outsiders or the authorities.

Field observations and conversations with area residents suggest that demarcation of territorial control is done through flags, banners and wall chalking by various party activists and their supporters (Figures 22 and 23).

Figure 22. View of flagged street in Lyari



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 23. Wall chalking on a dead end street corner in Lyari



Photo credit: Authors

Baldia

Baldia is a loosely governed and policed neighbourhood with a variety of rival gangs, who demarcate their territorial control using flags and wall chalking (Figures 24 and 25). Such mechanisms work to deter outsiders and other trespassers from entering rival gang territory. Any dispute or crime occurring in a given territory is the responsibility of the controlling gang to manage and resolve. An informal mechanism of conflict resolution and dispute negotiation has thus evolved without any link with formal law enforcement agencies.

Figure 24. Flags flying in Baldia



Photo credit: Authors

Figure 25. Wall chalking in Baldia



Photo credit: Authors

Korangi

Korangi was originally planned by the Ministry of Rehabilitation under the military government of Ayub Khan in 1960s as a populist low-income housing scheme for partition migrants from India. The formation of the housing scheme provided housing for the workforce of the Korangi Industrial Estate. Although the physical elements of the scheme were planned by the government, the social and economic structures required to support the community were not.

Korangi is divided into several territories controlled by rival gangs, which often clash when crimes or acts of terror are committed against one another. Innocent residents suffer immensely when incidences of violence erupt as a result of on-going differences. Like Lyari and Baldia, flags and wall chalking are used by gangs to demarcate territorial control (Figure 26).

Figure 26. Wall chalking in Korangi



Photo credit: Authors

Orangi

Orangi Housing Scheme was part of Plot Townships planned by the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) in 1964 intended to resettle refugee squatter settlements from the inner city to the periphery. Although intended for low-income groups, the scheme was sold to middle-income groups as a speculative property investment. The influx of migrants from East Pakistan in the late 60s and early 70s led to rising conflicts over the area's development. The scheme was informally extended and developed into adjacent vacant areas through a process of illegal subdivision, absorbing more than 3,600 acres. Political riots and unstable conditions motivated many middle-income residents in planned areas to resettle to other areas or to sell their properties, leaving Orangi to become a largely low-income locality.

Orangi remains a troubled neighbourhood. Different ethnic and sectarian groups continue to battle over territorial control, while law enforcement agencies have been unable to effectively respond. Like the other settlements above, flags and wall chalking are used by armed and political groups to demarcate territorial control.

3.5 Effects

As noted by Section 2.2, the relationship between urban space and insecurity is changing and shifting just as quickly as the city itself. In an attempt to pacify this relationship in the absence of effective state intervention, physical barriers have emerged as the dominant mechanism of control and contestation. Following Pullan's (2013) research on conflict infrastructures in contested cities, this section profiles the different effects that barriers have had on different spaces and groups of people, including the socio-spatial divisions between them.

Effects on individuals versus the collective – Most physical barriers make the communities and institutions they were designed for safer and more secure. Among the most obvious examples are gated communities, which protect their residents from outside security threats through fortification and private security. Other security initiatives deployed by both public and private actors to control public space have enhanced their own security by controlling pedestrian and vehicular access, but often without sufficient, or any, consideration of the indirect effects on the surrounding community and broader city (particularly in terms of reduced accessibility, mobility and safety). Since most barriers are informally constructed by self-interested individuals, such considerations are largely overlooked at the expense of the general public, who are often exposed to additional hazards as a consequence (eg disrupted footpaths create additional hazards by forcing pedestrians into traffic).

Effects on high- versus low-income groups

– Many residents associations in higher-income neighbourhoods have been able to negotiate with local authorities for infrastructure improvements (eg barriers and CCTV systems) that have enhanced their security. According to Kaker (2014), this has resulted in a “private sub-structure of local municipal service provision” (p. 97) that has increased the security and property values of affluent neighbourhoods while allowing the city government to gain political support and credibility.

In shifting state-society relations towards the interests of higher-income groups, lower-income groups remain neglected in terms of municipal service provision and policing. Barriers have also adversely affected the livelihoods of informal vendors from nearby lower-income neighbourhoods and *katchi abadis* by preventing them from selling their goods and services in higher-income neighbourhoods.

Effects on women versus men – Violent conflict does not always differentiate between men and women, as in the case of terror attacks perpetrated against the general public. However, the findings suggest that women and men are often affected by both violent conflict (as discussed in Section 2.2) and by barriers in different ways.

For example, lower-income women, including domestic servants, are often forced to detour or commute longer distances where physical barriers restrict mobility, exposing them to additional insecurities along the way (eg harassment, sexual and gender-based violence, extortion, etc). Women in both high- and low-income neighbourhoods are also commonly excluded from decision-making regarding security for traditional and cultural reasons. However, much more needs to be understood about how men and women are affected by various types of violent conflict in particular spaces and by barriers in different ways.

Effects on ‘us’ versus ‘them’ – The case studies in addition to the broader literature (for example, Kaker 2014) suggest that barriers are contributing to the underlying social tensions and ethnic divisions that are fuelling violent conflict across the city. Of particular concern is the increasing prevalence of gated neighbourhoods as a reflection of growing intra-urban disparities, particularly between secluded peripheral areas and the more visible inner city. Similar concerns exist in many other conflict-affected cities, where conflict infrastructures, “dislocate city spatial structures to cause severe spatial discontinuities. In doing so, they can damage the plurality of cities and, in extreme cases, the very nature of urban experience; ultimately, they may disrupt the exigencies of long-term urban order” (Pullan 2013: 19).

Effects on conflict versus peace – The case studies on peri-urban neighbourhoods (Section 3.4.8.4) suggest that barriers (direct and indirect) may be creating spaces for crime, violence and terrorism to thrive. On the other hand, barriers could, in principle, create spaces where relative peace can be maintained or even built.

However, the case studies on gated neighbourhoods (Section 3.4.7.4) suggest that such spaces tend to be concentrated in higher-income neighbourhoods and other privately securitised compounds. Much more needs to be understood about other factors that may be contributing to relative peace in these and other spaces, such as the social composition and cohesion of communities, the existence of social capital, and the potential role of women. The art project seeking to reclaim Karachi's walls from chalking, as outlined in Section 3.2 (see also Murad 2015), represents an example of public spaces in which peace may be, to borrow from Ring (2006), 'breaking out'. It is, however, unlikely that such initiatives would have any effect on reducing the level of violent conflict in the short term under the current circumstances.

Effects on public versus private space – The informal installation of barriers by both public and private actors is removing space from the public realm, effectively privatising its management and control often for commercial gain (eg the conversion of sidewalks into parking by small businesses). This raises important questions about local democracy and accountability regarding the increasing role of private interests in policing and controlling public space, and about people's right to use these spaces for a variety of activities (political and non-political).

Effects on public versus private control of space – The prevalence of barriers throughout the city reflects the extent to which security has become a private rather than a public concern. In effect, the increasing involvement of citizens in guaranteeing their own security has helped the state to abdicate itself from its responsibility to uphold safety and security in the public realm. But while the privatisation of security may make sense in a highly divided city, it covers up the corruption and connivance of the state's own security apparatus in creating and reinforcing insecurity. It also reinforces a culture that demotivates and discourages citizens from

engaging with the state to improve security or address the root causes of poor law and order as well as violent conflict itself. In this regard, the rise of private security, including the widespread use of barriers, reflects an inward-looking mentality that reinforces marginalised and disempowered citizenship.

Overall, the effects outlined above suggest that physical barriers have tended to contribute towards:

- Reinforcing existing socio-spatial divisions between the rich and poor, and the inner-city and the periphery.
- Intensifying existing infrastructure and service deficits between well-served and securitised high-income neighbourhoods and ill-served and insecure low-income neighbourhoods and katchi abadis.
- Exacerbating the underlying social tensions and ethnic divisions that are fuelling violent conflict across the city.
- Impeding public mobility and accessibility, with disproportionate consequences for women, domestic workers, and informal vendors.
- Encroaching and consuming public space while privatising its management and control, often for commercial gain.
- Discouraging citizens from engaging the state in finding alternative solutions; and
- Allowing the state to further remove itself from its responsibility to provide security and to engage in urban planning.

Two important questions emerge from the above: if physical barriers have become an inescapable reality, despite the effects above, than what ought to be done about them, if anything? Are alternative means of guaranteeing security required, and if so, which are most suitable and who must be involved? The following concluding section addresses these questions.

4

Conclusions and recommendations

In the absence of alternatives, physical barriers have become the dominant means of security deployed by both public and private actors throughout Karachi. This is likely to remain the case so long as the state remains unable to effectively intervene in both policing and urban planning.

Despite the ineffectiveness of the state, two important opportunities may be emerging for municipal governments to promote safer and more secure spaces. The first involves planning and managing physical barriers in more effective and equitable ways, while the second involves supporting alternative means of security for the poorest and most insecure groups. This section presents two recommendations aimed at supporting these respective opportunities. Importantly, both recommendations adopt a spatial lens in addressing insecurity and its effects on different communities and groups of people. But they also address the limited capacity of the authorities, and their difficulties in maintaining neutrality in attempting to intervene. These recommendations are as follows.

Support municipal platforms for planning and managing physical barriers more effectively and equitably – Most physical barriers in Karachi have been illegally constructed without planning approval by the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA). In other cases, barriers among other infrastructure improvements have been approved and even co-financed by municipal authorities and utility companies, but this has been limited to higher-income neighbourhoods (Kaker 2014).

On the other hand, the use of barriers and other contestation mechanisms in lower-income neighbourhoods and *katchi abadis* has been

discouraged by municipal authorities who view these neighbourhoods as hotbeds of crime, violence and terrorism. However, their residents face heightened security threats as well as police harassment and neglect (Gayer 2014; Masud 2002; Ring 2006).

Efforts to redress the burdens created by physical barriers have been similarly inequitable. In 2009, the Sindh government tasked the rangers with removing illegally constructed barriers. These efforts have been vigorously contested by ordinary citizens and other stakeholders demanding alternative means of security before the barriers are removed (Khan 2013). Residents in barricaded localities argue that they have no alternatives to such self-help measures since the government and law enforcement agencies appear incapable of upholding security (Dawn News 2008). The fact that barriers around embassies and government institutions (including police stations, see Figure 27) have not been removed also alludes to their continuing importance in the absence of alternatives.

Rather than simply promoting the removal of barriers, a more useful approach would be to plan and manage them in ways that maximise their benefits and minimise their burdens for all affected groups. As the agency responsible for the provision of municipal services, the KMC has a clear role to play in coordinating the municipal planning efforts required to achieve this objective. This requires close engagement with the SBCA, which is responsible for the enforcement of planning and building regulations, but which has neither the capacity nor political will to do so (Hasan *et al.* 2015, p. 51).

Figure 27. Arm lever blocking road leading to the Aziz Bhatti Police Station in Gulshan Iqbal



Photo Credit: Authors

There is great hope that the reinstatement of local elections in Karachi's six cantonments³ initially scheduled for September 2015 will present new opportunities to empower municipal institutions and to build their capacity to engage in more accountable, representative, and less politicised urban planning and governance processes. Ideally, this would allow municipal governments to reclaim space as a public security concern. At the time of this writing, however, these elections were further postponed for political reasons.

But even if local elections were held, the widespread corruption and politicisation of key government institutions, including the police and urban planning, raise serious questions concerning whether stronger local institutions will be capable of transcending the ethnic politics that have historically governed the city and fueled its violent conflict. There is a risk that local elections would simply reproduce political biases at the cantonment level, further contributing to existing social tensions and ethnic divisions both within and between communities. If these politics can be overcome by local councilors and administrators, then important opportunities to plan and manage barriers more effectively and equitably may arise. If so, key planning considerations would include:

- **Ensure inclusivity** in planning processes so that the needs and priorities of all affected groups – including ethnic minorities, informal vendors, domestic workers, residents of low-income neighbourhoods, and other marginal groups (women and men) – are considered. Involving a local non-governmental organisation – such as the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP)⁴ – with prior experience in conflict resolution and community mobilisation could help to support this. For example, the OPP has proven effective in helping community leaders to find amicable solutions to conflict between Muhajirs and Pashtuns (The Express Tribune 2013).
- **Leverage private investment for public benefit** by requiring applicants seeking municipal approval to demonstrate that their proposed security arrangements, including barriers, will have public benefits or at the very least avoid adverse impacts on the public realm. In areas of the city where social tensions and ethnic divisions are high, alternative means of guaranteeing security may be required, as addressed by the following recommendation.

Co-produce citizen-police security solutions at the community level – Orangi, Korangi (and Landhi), Baldia and Lyari are among the city's largest peri-urban settlements. However, they have become virtually ungovernable due to their invisibility to urban

³ Cantonments were formerly military installations that have gradually evolved into settled areas. Previously, they were controlled by cantonment boards as principal decision-making bodies. Today, cantonments are local government systems mandated with the management of land, municipal service provision and revenue generation through taxation. Local government elections have not been held in the cantonments since 2000. In 2014, changes were made to the Cantonment Board Act of 1924 to make it easier to hold free and fair elections in them (see Anwar 2015).

⁴ The OPP-RT is a local NGO established in 1989 to work with residents of *katchi abadis* in Karachi and other cities in Pakistan to develop and finance low cost infrastructure (particularly related to sanitation) and housing solutions. The OPP-RT has proven effective in developing partnerships between marginalised communities and municipal authorities in local planning and infrastructure provision (see Hasan 2006).

administrators. The Taliban have also become *de facto* public authorities in many of these settlements, establishing their own parallel justice systems (Gayer 2014, p. 184). This has put the Taliban into direct conflict with political parties (notably the MQM) and other armed groups seeking to carve out their own sovereign spaces in the city (ibid).

As the military capacity of armed groups has increased, the ability of the police to uphold law and order has further decreased (Masud 2002). The police remain hindered by inadequate funding⁵, organised crime, politicisation (particularly regarding patronage), and the ethnic composition of its force (traditionally dominated by *Punjabis* and *Pathans*). Higher-income groups generally believe that the police have failed in law enforcement, while the poor view the police as an instrument of harassment (ibid).

In an effort to bridge the gap between the police and citizens, the Sindh government established Citizen-Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs) in 1989 as non-political statutory institution operated and managed independently by concerned citizens (Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives 2014; Masud 2002). CPLCs possess the legal basis (as prescribed by Amended Rule 1.21A of the Police Rules 1934⁶) to interact with the police to carry out a number of core functions:

1. To satisfy that the First Information Reports (FIRs) on crime are duly registered and no FIR is refused illegally. (The FIR is a criminal procedure that initiates the criminal justice system. Any victim or witness to a crime has the right to lodge a FIR with the police for them to investigate. Investigations of serious crimes require a FIR)
2. To determine if dilatory tactics are being adopted by the police officers in investigating cases.
3. To collect statistics on various criminal cases.
4. To check if all registers in police stations are being properly and regularly maintained.
5. To insure that no person is unlawfully detained at any police station.
6. To assist the police in preserving peace and assist in detection and prevention of crime.
7. To report any misconduct or neglect of duty on the part of any police officer.
8. To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the government.

While most of these functions entail oversight, the CPLC provides critical inputs into law enforcement in practice. Masud (2002, p. 12) identifies at least seven areas where the CPLC has enhanced police performance:

1. Problem identification and solution.
2. Improving police procedures.
3. Improving the 'economics of investigation'.
4. Improving the monitoring of law enforcement on the ground.
5. Setting standards.
6. Putting accountability mechanisms in place.
7. Providing access to justice for the poor.

In particular, the CPLC have improved policing for the poor by enhancing citizen oversight, raising accountability in the face of corruption and politicisation and providing a forum for resolving disputes (eg financial transactions, landlord-tenant issues, land grabbing, domestic issues, etc) outside costly judicial processes (ibid). Ideally, local elections would present additional opportunities for councilors and the mayor of Karachi to liaise with the authorities to enhance local representation, accountability and citizen engagement in community policing. It would also present opportunities to engage the private sector as one of the largest financial contributors to CPLCs (Pryjomko 2011).

However, as cautioned above, there is no guarantee that stronger and more accountable local institutions will make urban administrators or the police force any less susceptible to corruption or political patronage. Ultimately, if the ethnic and religious/sectarian politics that continue to govern the city are overlooked, then planning and policing interventions (whether involving barriers or alternative mechanisms) may reproduce existing social tensions and ethnic divisions. Thus, any future effort seeking to enhance the city's safety and security situation cannot be viewed in isolation from these enduring politics.

⁵ The average police station in Pakistan has an annual operating budget, exclusive of additional staff costs, of only 8,000 rupees (USD\$120) (Masud 2002, citing the Asian Development Bank).

⁶ Government of Sindh Notification V111(3)SOJ/90 dated 15/04/1990.

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Annex I – Workshop information

Three workshops were held in Karachi to disseminate the findings and outcome of the study and to screen the video documentary.

The first workshop was held on 6 March 2015 at the Urban Resource Centre. The participants included community activists, workers of community-based organisations, university students, and some members of the media. There were many comments received during the event. The audience was concerned with the status of the poor safety and security situation in the peri-urban areas of the city. They argued that while the middle income and affluent neighbourhoods in the city had exercised the option of installing physical barriers, the same option was not available to residents of squatters and peri-urban areas. The presence of various interest groups and armed outfits prevented people from implementing any self-help solution for common safety and security.

The second workshop was held on 20 March 2015 at NED University of Engineering and Technology, where the audience was made up of architects, engineers, students, and members of civil society. Apprehension was raised at the dismal situation of safety and security; however the participants expressed their concerns on the increase in barriers and gated communities. It was generally agreed that these informal physical interventions in public spaces are not the answer to security problems. Improved local governance and community monitoring were argued as the better options.

The third workshop was also held at NED University on 22 May 2015. The target audience was media personnel, and there was overall agreement amongst participants that physical barriers should not be treated as a universal solution to security issues. The media agreed to report on and analyse related issues, such as the use of barriers as an instrument of land grabbing and the illegal restriction of public spaces from ordinary use.

An Urdu language pamphlet was prepared based upon the key findings and recommendations of the study and disseminated to community groups in Orangi, Baldia and Liaquatabad neighbourhoods. The participants of these discussions, which took place between the authors and area residents during August and September 2015, generally agreed with the contents and recommendations of the report. All the groups were of the view that physical barriers are not permanent solutions to issues of security. It is clear that administrative and political solutions have to be found through consultation and further research.

Few cities in South Asia have been affected by violence more than Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and economic centre. This working paper examines the impacts of the city's declining security situation on the control and contestation of public space. It focuses specifically on the efforts of public and private actors to protect themselves through the widespread use of physical barriers as a form of conflict infrastructure. To help provide a way forward, recommendations are presented for planning and managing barriers more effectively and equitably, and for supporting alternative means of security for the poorest and most insecure groups. Particular attention is paid to the city's ethnic and religious/sectarian politics and the limited capacity of the authorities, and their difficulties in maintaining neutrality in attempting to intervene.

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