

The Walled City of Lahore Authority, an autonomous local body, is implementing a World Bank-funded project to repair, preserve and protect the architecture marked historically significant in the Old City of Lahore, Pakistan. The heritage project has led to many sociospatial transformations, such as the removal of “illegally” occupied shops and houses and the cleansing and remaking of the “narrow” and “winding” streets in the area. My ethnographic research seeks to understand how the ongoing “museumification” (Ali and Reiker 2010) in and of the Old City has affected the sense of place and the rhythm and flow of everyday life for its long-term residents. Those affected by the heritage initiative include but are not limited to socially marginalized groups of people, such as Mirasis (hereditary musicians), *tawaiifs* (dancing women and sex workers) and *khusra* (a derogatory term for “third gender”). These people are inhabitants of the Royal Neighborhood (Shahi Mohallah), a “tabooed” section (Saeed 2002) lying at one edge of the Old City. Historically infamous for behind-the-scene prostitution, the neighborhood used to be considered a lifeline of the radio, television and film industry of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as many of the country’s famous musicians and film/television actors came from this area. Now as middle and upper class patrons enjoy the ambience of the newly established Food Street, a few steps down from this *gentrified space* are the dilapidated streets with long rows of abandoned balconies where there used to be *tawaiifs* who allured the passersby; where Mirasis used to play music in the background during the dance performances. In this context, the proposed research asks four specific and inter-related questions. (i) How do the long-term residents respond to – experience and relate to or not – the heritage management policies? (ii) What everyday tactics do the residents use to protect, preserve, and alter their everyday means and ways of life? (iii) How do the local communities come together as social groupings to exercise their right to the place they call home? And (iv), finally, how do the residents come to terms with new actors in the area and the bureaucratic and other state apparatus authorized to implement the heritage program?

Going beyond the prevalent methodological and conceptual framework of the deterministic logic of capitalism and the monolithic ordering of post-colonialism, my ethnographic study aims to make an anthropological contribution to, and intervention in, the “always already” known maps of the city in the Global South (Roy and Ong 2011; Roy 2009; also see Chakrabarty 2000; Tsing 2011). My study seeks to foreground and make “visible” the heterogeneity and local specificity of the place; the everyday practices of the long-term residents who shaped and were shaped by the place (Feld and Basso 1996; Tuan 1977). Influenced by Asef Bayat’s work (2010), I will read these acts by the inhabitants as a form of “quiet encroachments of the ordinary,” the tactics through which the urban poor make their (informal) claims heard (Gandolfo 2013, 2009; also see Chatterjee 2004). My research follows the work of AbdouMaliq Simone (2004; 2010) and seeks to understand people as infrastructure, the essential material a city is made of. It ethnographically attends to the innumerable ways citizens make connections and build networks to retain control of their lives and make cities work. It is attuned to “the citiness,” “the very dimension that characterizes the city – its capacities to continuously reshape the ways in which people, places, materials, ideas and affects are intersected” (Simone 2010, 5).

The fact that no ethnographic study has been undertaken so far to look into the ongoing cultural gentrification in and of the Old City of Lahore, Pakistan, the timing and importance of my proposed research cannot be stressed enough. Serving as a case study, my research has the potential to bring new insight into how cities work (or don’t), and how lives are made and re-made to cater to the city-remaking processes in the Global South. Also, “That the human condition and the urban condition may have become one and the same” (Amin 2013, 201), underlines the urgent need for undertake the ethnographic study of the ongoing cultural gentrification in and of the historic district of Lahore, “the cultural capital of Pakistan.” Looking beyond the broad and essentializing categories of the state and religious extremism/fundamentalism, “the unexamined normative models” (Gilmartin 2010: 521), my ethnographic focus on the everyday also seeks to bring out more nuanced understanding of the society in Pakistan. The attention to the everyday, thus, enables my research to contribute to Anthropology of South Asia in general, and Lahore, Pakistan, in particular.

Using a range of ethnographic methods – such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, walking and mapping – I have already done eight months of fieldwork to collect data for writing my PhD dissertation. That most of the time went into rapport building and working with the long-term residents in general, I need to stay in the field for about three more months to keep working with and further deepen ties with the socially marginalized/tabooed groups, to get intimate knowledge of their close-knit lives. Also I need to do some follow-up interviews of few government officials involved in the cultural gentrification. I seek the AIPS grant to help me complete my fieldwork and achieve the stated research goals.

...

References Cited

- Ali, Kamran and Martina Reiker. 2010. "Remaking Cairo, Revising al-Darb al-Ahmar." In *Living in Historic Cairo: Past and Present in an Islamic City*, edited by Farhad Daftary et al, 180-191. London: University of Washington Press.
- Amin, Ash. 2013. "The Urban Condition: A Challenge to Social Science." In *Public Culture* 25 (2_70): 201.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 2004. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Feld, Steven, and Keith H. Basso, ed. 1996. *Senses of Place*. 1st ed. Seattle; Santa Fe, N.M: School of American Research Press.
- Gandolfo, Daniella. 2013. "FORMLESS: A Day at Lima's Office of Formalization". In *Cultural Anthropology* 28 (2): 278-98.
- . 2009. *The City at its Limits: Taboo, Transgression, and Urban Renewal in Lima*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilmartin, David. 2010. "Living the Tensions of the State, the Nation and Everyday Life." In *Beyond Crisis: Re-evaluating Pakistan*, edited by Naveeda Khan, 521-530. London: Routledge.
- Roy, Ananya. 2009. "The 21st Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory." In *Regional Studies* 43(6): 819–830.
- Roy, Ananya, and Aihwa Ong. 2011. *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Saeed, Fouzia. 2002. *Taboo: the Hidden Culture of a Red Light Area*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2010. *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar: Movements at the Crossroads*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2004. *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Tsing, Anna. 2011. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Tuan, Yi-fu. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.