

## **Research Proposal**

France Colony is an unIslamic, unmodern, and unplanned neighborhood in the Islamic, modern, and planned city of Islamabad. It has invented its own spatial expressions of citizenship in Pakistan's capital by practicing insurgent planning - an everyday, democratic process of civility and placemaking that challenges the nation's entrenched and hegemonic citizenship (Holston, 2008; Miraftab, 2009). So, why are their spatial expressions of citizenship even considered insurgent? And why do these spaces better represent the city, and nation's collective identities than the state's planning pursuits? I aim to answer these questions by conducting a visual ethnography of France Colony, an informal settlement with predominantly low-income Christian residents located within a wealthy district in the nation's capital. The neighborhood has been a source of interest for many activists, scholars and the media because of the rising conditions of religious and class disparities in the city and nation at large.

Capital cities mistakenly pay homage to a single imagined national identity that is usually conjured up by the designer/planner himself, or the leadership in power (Vale, 2014). Similarly in Islamabad, the State has failed to incorporate low-income Christian residents' existence in the city's urban design, as seen in its national monuments, parks, government housing, and places of worship. Public areas largely serve Sunni Muslim identifying men while alienating all others. These processes are then not able to encapsulate the intricate ways actual inhabitants create and celebrate their identities in their vernacular spaces (Holston, 1998), and so a project that highlights these everyday interactions is essential for Pakistan's future as a more tolerant nation. Therefore, it's time to take the research gaze inwards and have the community tell their story themselves. I aim to use participatory research methods including photovoice and participatory mapping to understand the socio-spatial narratives France Colony's residents have created in their own neighborhood - where they gather, play, celebrate, and create. I also aim to contrast the community's experiences in these communal spaces to their visceral and emotional interactions with the existing State-sponsored, hegemonic, national spaces such as Jinnah Avenue, Ayub National Park, areas near the Red Zone, Faisal Mosque etc. This will contribute to the larger discourse of how marginalized populations challenge national imagined communities, forcing states to rethink their definitions of ideal citizens of the nation (Sletto and Nygren, 2015).

### **Award Tenure:**

I aim to use the funds received through AIPS short term research grant to travel to Islamabad over the summer/early fall for preliminary research which will include, meeting and familiarizing myself with France Colony and its residents, and conducting preliminary visual ethnographic work through photography of monuments and public spaces created by the state, and spaces created by informal settlement residents. This will help preface the participatory methods I aim to use in the later stages of my fieldwork.

**Works Cited:**

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