

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18443712>

From Observation to Intervention: The Impact of Psychogeographic and Ethnographic Insights on Urban Retrofitting



Fatima Farid (Corresponding Author)	Lecturer, SDAAT- School of Design Art and Architecture, Pak-Austria FACHHOCHSCHULE, Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology. Haripur, Mang fatima-farid@paf-iast.edu.pk
Dr. Ghousia Saeed	Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, Abbottabad Campus. ghousia@uetpeshawar.edu.pk
Salman Jamil	Associate Professor, SDAAT- School of Design Art and Architecture, Pak-Austria FACHHOCHSCHULE, Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology. Haripur, Mang salman.jamil@paf-iast.edu.pk

Abstract: *The paper discusses different types of spatial analysis and how they play a major role in highlighting cultural attributes by observing the behavior and moving patterns of people. Paper highlights the importance of psychogeography along with its fusion to ethnography. It also discusses how behaviors of people are directly impacted by the environment they move in. The case discusses in detail two colonies and carry Psychogeographic analysis in both in order to observe and propose retrofitting's. The research highlights the importance of Psychogeographic and Ethnographic analysis in upgradation of urban spaces. The mediums of ethnographic study are also discussed along with the role of Psychogeographer. Paper expresses different ideas through visuals and photographs clicked while performing psychogeography. The case undergoes the significance of images as powerful storyteller and also concludes the research by recommending changes needed according to cultural interpretation and impact of people engagement in community design.*

Keywords: Psychogeography, Ethnography, Retrofitting, Cultural Narratives, Moving Patterns

Introduction

Built Environment is not just a physical entity but is a product of human interactions. The most important frame work to understand spaces are “perceive, conceived and lived spaces.” While observing an environment if social dynamics of production are left unaddressed leads to incomplete analysis ideology, power and cultural impacts. Spatial Analysis plays a major role in revealing hidden meanings from the layers of societies that keeps redefining themselves through cultural practices (LEFEBVRE, 1991). Psychogeography a tool of

spatial analysis is a method used to explore the behavioral and emotional impacts of environments on individuals.

Traditional observatory analysis often misses subjective experiences of people. Derive which refers to drifting is a very useful tool in Psychogeographic analysis and mostly works on how cities influence, control and impact emotions of people. Drifting through the cities can reveal hidden social and power issues (Debord, 1955). Tuan and et.al (1977) draws a clear boundary between “space” and “place”. It says that space is a geometric concept whereas

place is filled with meaning. Places are formed by personal memories, attachments and cultural narratives. It mentions that places get shaped by the cultural beliefs and practices of the people living in them (Tuan, 1977).

Literature Review:

1. Spatial Behavior and Human Geography:

Human geography studies how people interact with the spaces they are surrounded by with special focus on how they move, see and use those spaces. This idea called as spatial behavior helps us understand why people behave certainly in differently places (Reginald G. Golledge, 1997). People often have certain image w-r-t different places, every individual visualize maps of certain areas. People feel comfortable according to the map they have made in their mind of a respective area. We can learn a lot about cities by exploring and walking quietly from certain areas. But the walk of an observer should be intentional. Random walks cannot help in identifying the beliefs beneath the structures (Lynch, 1960). Vibrant environments emerge from organic human interactions and unplanned diversity which supports the idea that spatial behavior and culture of neighborhood keeps evolving (JACOBS, 1961).

2. The Social Production of Space: Cultural and Power Dynamics:

The built spaces can be well understood by understanding and applying the framework of “perceived, conceived and lived spaces.” Different societies have different impacts on humans (LEFEBVRE, 1991). Urban residential areas have rich cultures because they are not specifically designed but are a result of culture whereas some residential societies like gated communities are well planned, well maintained with some rules and regulations which restrict certain activities.

These restrictions lead to a space that illustrate how power is maintained through spatial means creating a less interactive place (Harvey, 1989).

The invisible layers that are explored by Psychogeographic and ethnographic analysis are the layers that influence how people interact with and within their environments. The

interaction gives birth to a continuous redefining cultural process that impacts societies and act as key to understand residential settlements (Soja, 1996).

3. Psychogeography: Exploring the Emotional and Behavioral Impact of Environments:

Psychogeography offers a unique lens to understand the emotional impacts of spaces on

individuals. The unstructured drifting called as “Derive” reveals how environments shape moods, social interactions and behaviors in a way that often get missed by traditional analysis (Debord, 2008). “Flaneur” is different from psychogeography because it is not intentional, the intention of a Psychogeographer makes his walk meaningful, thoughtful and productive (Coverley, 2018) (Pinder, 2005).

Some people prefer housing setups that do not come under strict institutions. They want to enjoy their everyday life with less rules where they can grow and behave on their own these kind of setups are more cultured. The people of such societies have somewhat of resistance to power and control which is why these people like to live in same areas for years. The environment continuously gets developed under a strong hold of culture. People use their everyday experiences in shaping their environments whereas the housing societies under strong institutional influences continuously gets developed on the “urban plan” passed through authorities. These people interact with built environment but are restricted due to terms and conditions which create less cultural impact on the development and environment. This makes the people to socialize less hence giving a comparatively silent neighborhood (Certeau, 1984).

4. Ethnography and its Visual Methods:

Ethnography compliments psychogeography by providing qualitative insights into cultural practices and social interactions within built societies (Geertz, 1973). Photographs, videos, maps act as powerful Ethnographic visual tools to explore lived experiences and spatial meanings.

When Ethnographic tools and Psychogeographic drifting are integrated researcher not just document about people movement but their emotional and cultural engagement with environment is observed closely. This fusion helps in understanding multiple layers of residential zones where physical structure overlaps cultural practices (Pink, 2007). People do not just see their environments, they experience it by living and interacting with it. Understanding these concepts through ethnographic analysis can provide in-depth spatial and cultural analysis which can further help in design interventions (Ingold, 2000).

5. Space, Place, and Human Attachment:

There is a sharp distinction between space and place. Space is an abstract physical dimension which is often talked when superficial concepts are discussed. While place refers to a space invested with collective meaning (Thrift, 2007). Residential societies hold strong memories, attachments and cultural narratives of the inhabitants. These aspects of societies when understood can give an understanding of societal layers. For this kind of analysis psychogeography and its tools play a vital role in providing the in-depth analysis of human settlements (David Seamon, 2008) (Relph, 1976). Human settlements behave as non-verbal communication systems which convey behaviors, values, morals and cultural codes through alignment, condition of streets and selection of public spaces and type of houses within their environment (Rapoport, 1990).

6. Deriving Design Recommendations through Psychogeographic Observation

Psychogeographic analysis allow designers and planners to suggest and propose meaningful, context sensitive design interventions by analyzing the behavioral and emotional response of people towards their environments. While recommending or suggesting retrofitting's within a built environment it is important to first observe every layer of the respective area. Through social interactions and memories spaces evolve continuously, drifting makes it possible for a researcher to understand

settlements in detail, sometimes even unnoticed areas can work as a good space for public engagement. For instance, a neglected alleyway can serve as a spot of

social interaction where people can get together and enjoy their time. Sometimes some negative spaces can work wonders if thoughtfully designed (Manzini, 2015).

Cultural interpretation and values embedded within spaces if observed keenly can provide insights for design interventions. When planners observe, document and record the movement and interaction of local community with their surrounding they can suggest changes that can be integrated in the surrounding spaces which can add life to the environments. Ethnographic tools help in observing and analyzing the living styles, moving patterns, interaction styles of people while photographing and taking videos alternatively. This helps the planners to integrate stories and feelings in the retro- fittings they are proposing (Hubbard, 1998).

When Communities are engaged in reimagining their environments outcomes reflect a strong essence of cultural beliefs. This plays an important role while carrying such activities inside residential societies where space has its roots to identity and memory. When change is needed in some societies, communities are made a part in order to understand their view point to integrate such spaces which get accepted over time (Till, 2005).

7. Leading to Methodology: Psychogeographic Analysis of Residential Colonies:

Small public spaces inside settlements often reveal societal preferences and play an important role in Psychogeographic explorations (H. Whyte, 2001). Literature shows how traditional spatial analysis focuses just on physical form or economic factors. These factors alone are insufficient to fully understand the human settlements which are practical forms of lived experiences.

Psychogeographic explorations of emotional and behavioral responses combined with ethnography and its visual methods of analyzing

can offer a comprehensive methodological approach which can help in observing and analyzing the layers of residential societies.

By conducting Psychogeographic analysis of two residential colonies, this study aims to identify and explain how built environment shapes or gets shaped by residents' behaviors, perceptions and social interactions. This method becomes interesting when residents engagement with built environment is observed along with resistance and transformations offered by culture to certain type of dwellings within their context.

Methodology:

This research adopts qualitative as well as quantitative approach. For qualitative analysis, observatory and exploratory approaches are combined using Psychogeographic and

Ethnographic tools as source of collecting data in order to understand built environment and its influence on emotional, social and cultural behavior of people. The methodology emphasis on movement, observation and documentation by photographing and video making. This will help to record and understand the lived realities of people.

Selection of Case Studies:

This research will be taken further by carrying the above mentioned analysis in the two residential communities. These communities were chosen on the differences found in literature review with one being a gated community while other being a regular residential area which is somehow a result of urban sprawl and not properly planned or developed.

Colony A (Nawan Shehr, Abbottabad)	Colony B (Habibullah Colony, Abbottabad)
1. Oldest but unplanned	1. Properly planned residential colony
2. Non gated community	2. Gated Community
3. Narrow, dead end streets	3. Proper street access (connected to each other)
4. No Flaneur culture	4. People walking with pets
5. Mix commercial and Residential space	5. No commercial space with residences, shops away from residential zone.
6. Compact Housing Structures	6. Open Housing structures following bylaws.

COLONY A: Nawan Shehr:

As discussed in Literature review we can analyze different societies by using Psychogeographic analysis. Move, observe, notice, collect, analyze, and reflect the “Flaneur” was finally done.

Based on research from literature review about how to carry Psychogeographic and Ethnographic analysis it became more interesting to explore the Nawanshahr. Everything started to make sense when onsite analysis of the site were done.

KEY PLAN NAWASHEHR

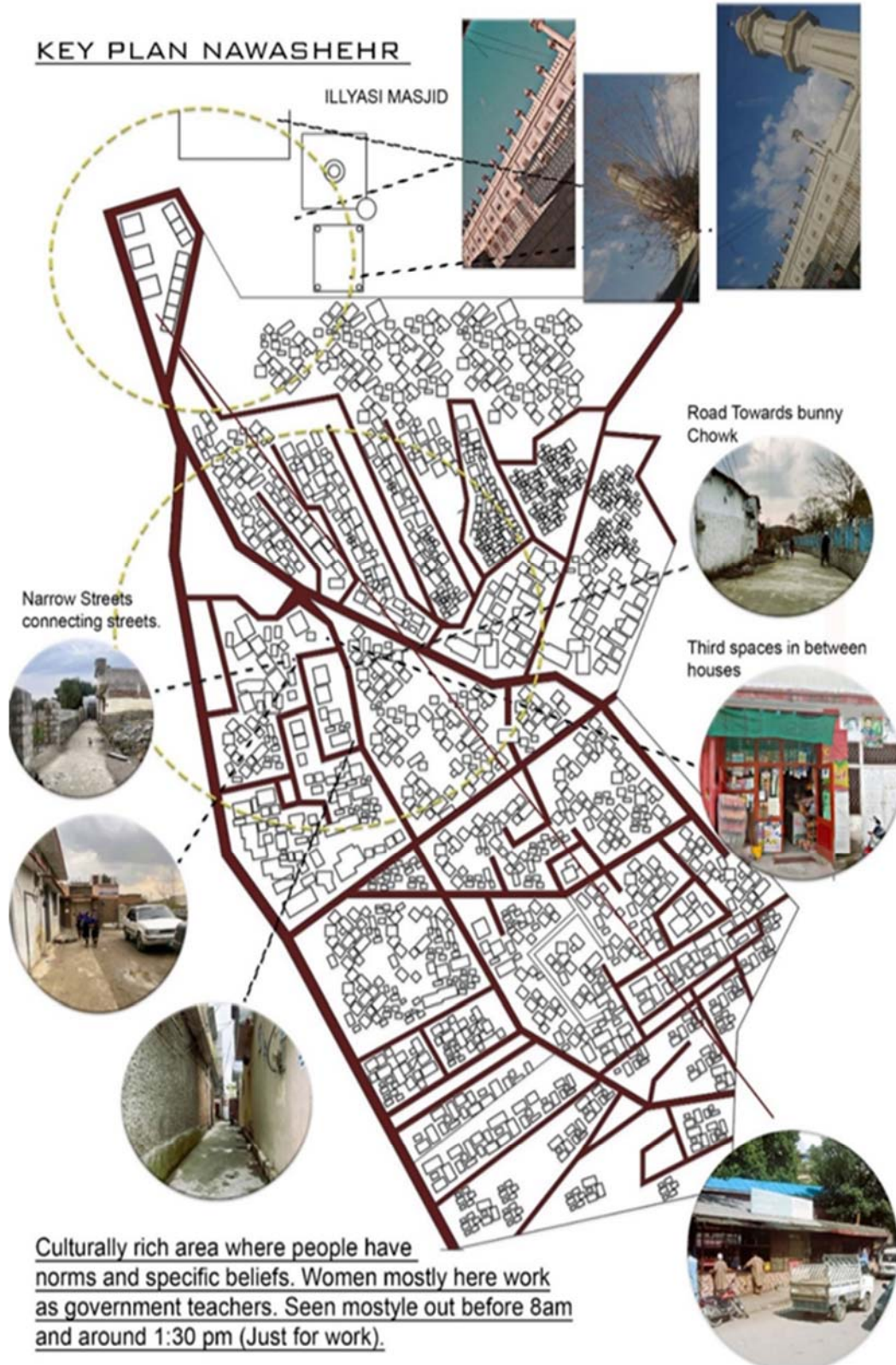


Figure KEYPLAN NAWASHAHR TOWN.

Source: Author

Ethnographic Analysis:

1. People of Nawanshahr:

People living here try to give and get the best education. Women living here mostly work as government teachers. People living over there believe in the caste system. Where the upper cast is somehow repressing the lower. The marriage beliefs are engraved with the caste superiority system. The culture followed here is so much fused with the family norms that education even didn't bring change in them. They have property in the form of land but they never sell that for any need or necessity, which is why the living standard never improves.

2. Everyday Amenities Embedded in Residential Fabric:

The Commercial area of Nawanshahr include the famous Pakora shops attached to Illyasi Masjid, Utility Stores, small tuck shops opened between residences, mobile, butcher, chicken, and vegetable shops including bakeries and other shops having the necessities. The town is

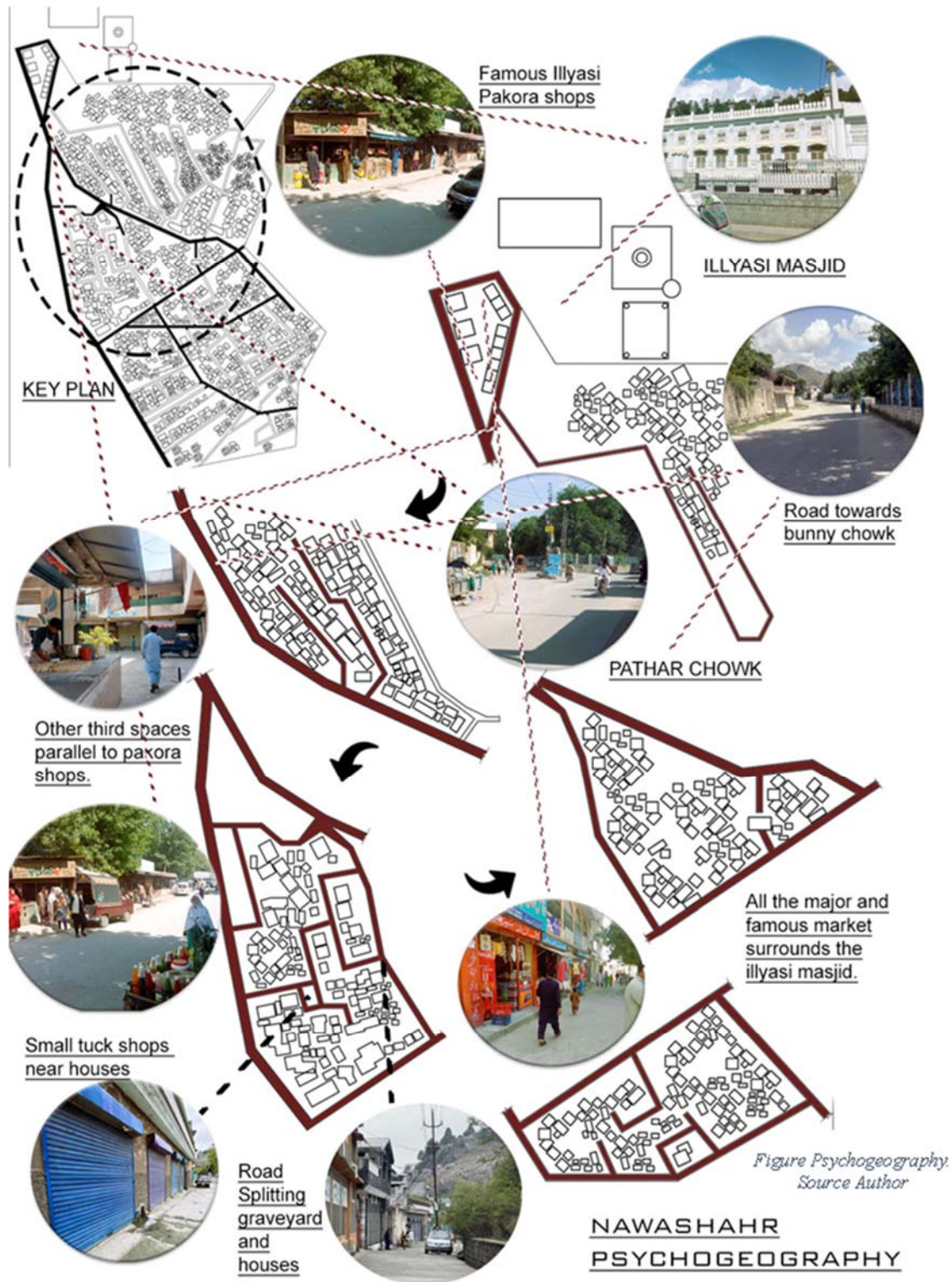
enriched with the amenities. A huge flux can be seen on the roads. The area has some small schools and colleges.

3. People moving patterns:

Due to a large number of third spaces a huge flux of people is observed just buying things and heading towards their destinations. There is no concept of eating while sitting in open spaces. Ease of movement is repressed due to no outdoor Flaneur culture.

4. People's Point of view:

People are easy to talk to. When people were asked different questions regarding the absence of sitting spaces and other problems they face. People had a positive feedback on the integration of open sitting spaces and other park areas integration where they can sit, eat and interact with others. Local people were positive regarding the concept of such retrofitting's that can bring a change but the bad urban planning restricted their activities.



COLONY B: Habibullah Colony:

Ethnographic Analysis:

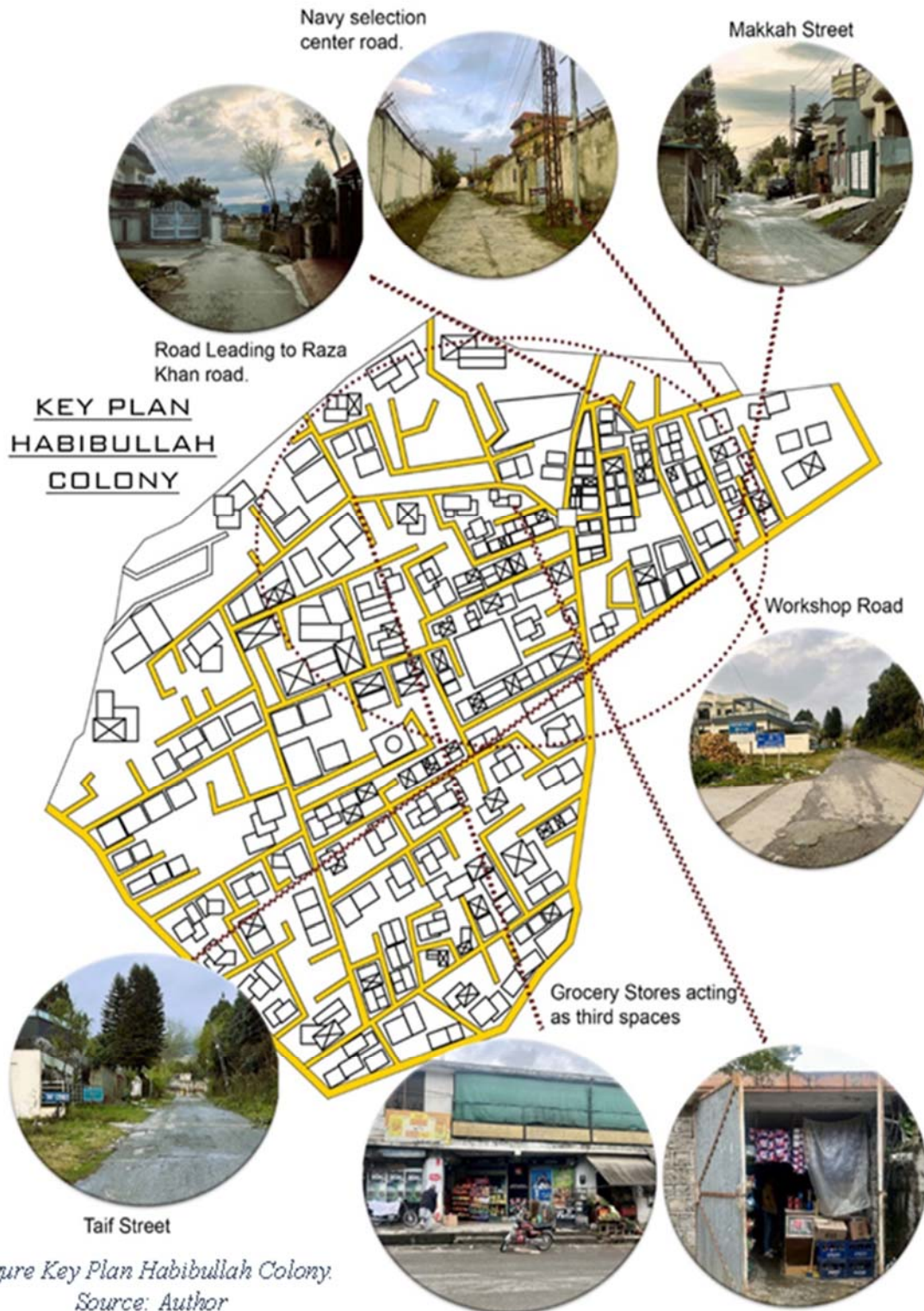
1. Psychological Context:

The contextual environment, the skyline, and the building blocks between the soothing weather are great. Two roads named Rah-e-Aman and

Rah-e-Sakoon go with their names. They truly can help a person to release his/her stress. The clouds covering the mountains and the soothing air can make a person forget his/her worries. Men/boys living in this colony were of the view that they liked commuting with their pets (Dogs). They feel the soothing fragrance in the

calm streets of Habibullah Colony. The area is still developing and due to the continuous boundary being attached to PMA, it makes it

safer and comparatively better to move around.



1. Amenities Nearby:

The shops are comparatively lesser in number because people either come out for walking purposes or when they need any grocery item they move towards the city for shopping. People here like to walk between 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

2. People moving patterns:

The area seemed quiet. Mostly people living here were educated and seemed interested in the interview-based activity. When people were asked about them coming into the outdoor spaces they were totally easy and were of the view that there are no spaces specifically designed which is why they are likely to stay inside. If spaces are integrated, then we think we can come out and have quality time with neighboring people. They say that it's better than the other areas of Abbottabad but still properly allocated spaces for certain spaces make huge

difference. These spaces can bring a change in the neighboring culture as well.

3. People Suggestions:

People had different ideas regarding the retrofitting's. Some said that nearby Digital café and proper parks can help. While some insisted on having food corners or open sitting spaces for people of the colony. Some said if people will started to come out then environment of the neighborhood would become more lively, comfortable and safe.

Overall, the colony seemed much less crowded than Nawanshahr.

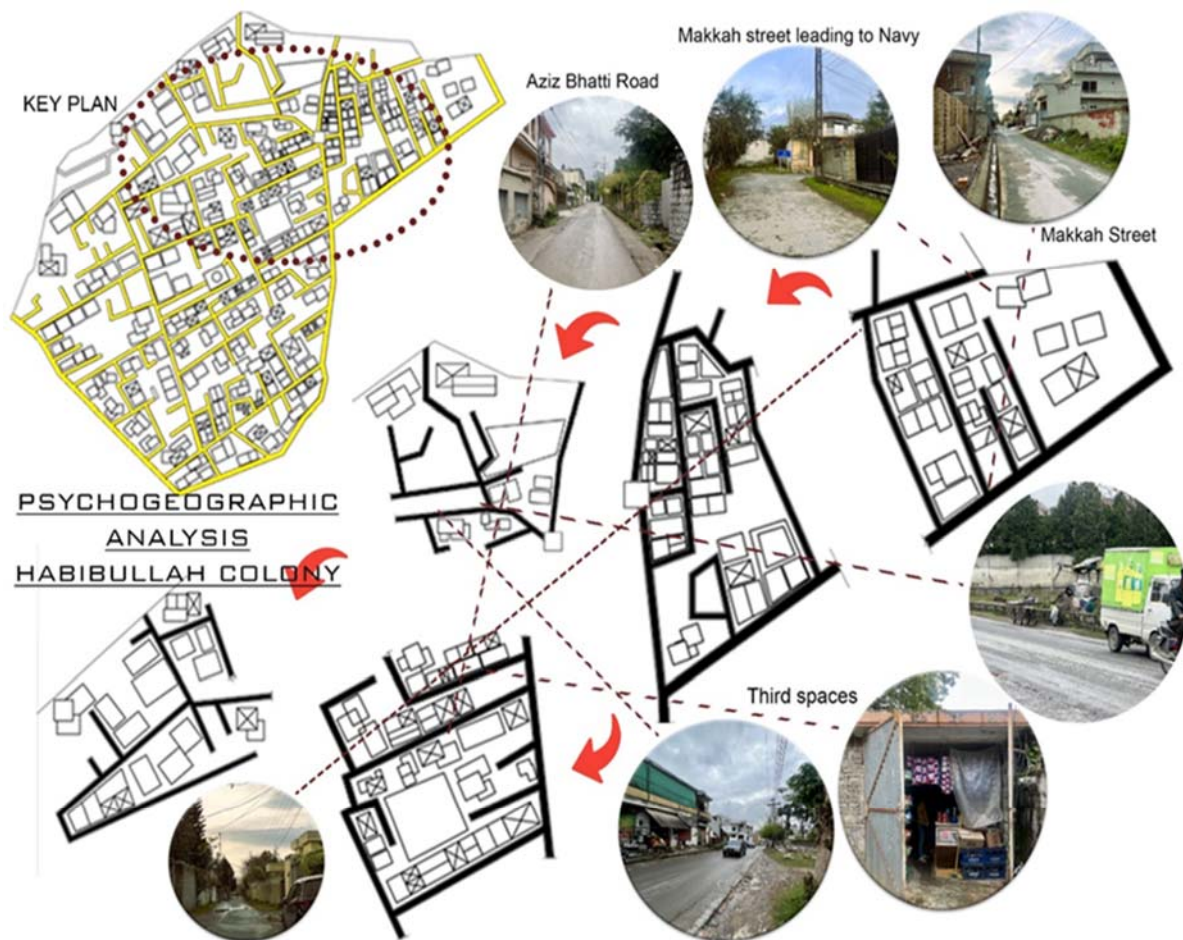


Figure Psychogeography of Habibullah Colony.
Source: Author

Stories That Shaped communities (Open Discussions with people to understand cultural Narratives)

After doing the Psychogeographic and ethnographic analysis, having an observation about how the towns and colonies worked plus going through anything that grabbed attention like culture, dressing, people's moving patterns, people's interactions with one another, roads, houses, streets, shops, including the people engagement with amenities gathering cultural narratives from open discussions with people

seemed mandatory. The discussions were carried after documenting the colonies so that they don't impact the observations made at the time of carrying analysis through tools (Psychogeographic and Ethnographic).

People there had different views regarding the amendments that can be done in their societies for providing them a better lively and sensitive environment. A cultural biasness was felt in the answers of different people who were recommending different open spaces.

In Nawan Shehr people wanted more kind of family spaces which can be used by families rather than bachelors. Suggestions include open sitting spaces outside cafes, benches within parks, street lights for security purposes.

In Habibullah colony people had different opinions they wanted moveable market which can come thrice a week and they can buy fruits and vegetables while walking around their community. They wanted the cart owners to go back because of the community guidelines. They wanted to have pavilion designed sitting spaces on the side of major street lines where they can sit and have cup of tea with the people of neighborhood.

Conclusions:

The study shows that by making best use of analysis tools like Psychogeography and Ethnography we can understand the culture and values of a certain places. By having collaborative discussions we can understand the demands and needs of a society that can bring positive change in the vicinity. This helps the designer to propose changes needed in a community. The designer should amalgamate his observations and demands of people and then propose retrofitting's for respective areas. The ideas suggested by people play an important role in adding cultural meaning and narratives to proposed design fittings. These ideas suggested by people are actually the reflection of the mindsets of community which holds importance in upgradation of urban spaces. Designs proposed on the basis of observatory analysis and discussions can bring a positive change in contexts. This method of upgradation of societies maintains cultural legacies while adapting to modern world and contemporary lifestyles.

As discussed in heading 7 Literature review the

discussions with people prove that resistance to certain dwelling were there, people were more interested in the adaptation or transformations of ideas that they wanted to be a part of their environment this approach of people usually results in a continuous redevelopment of cultural and architectural identity.

References

- Certeau, M. d. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press.
- Coverley, M. (2018). *Psychogeography*: Oldcastle Books.
- David Seamon, J. S. (2008). Place and Placelessness. *ResearchGate*. doi:10.4135/9781446213742.n5
- Debord, G. (1955). Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography. *Word Press*.
- Debord, G. (2008). *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- H.Whyte, W. (2001). *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces: Project for Public Spaces*.

- Harvey, D. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity*.
- Hubbard, T. H. a. P. (1998). *The Entrepreneurial City: Geographies of Politics, Regime and Representation*.
- Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment*
Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill.
- JACOBS, J. (1961). *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES*.
- LEFEBVRE, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*
- Lynch, K. (1960). *THE IMAGE OF THE CITY*
- Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs*
An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation.
- Pinder, D. (2005). *Visions of the City*
- Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth Century Urbanism. *Taylor and Francis Group*.
- Pink, S. (2007). *Doing Visual Ethnography*.
- Rapoport, A. (1990). *The Meaning of the Built Environment*. University of Arizona Press.
- Reginald G. Golledge, R. J. S. (1997). *Spatial Behavior*.
- Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness*.
- Soja, E. W. (1996). *Third space: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell.
- Thrift, N. (2007). *Non-Representational Theory*
Space, Politics, Affect. *Taylor and Francis Group*.
- Till, J. (2005). *The negotiation of hope*. *Taylor & Francis Group*.
- Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*