

The Politics of Urban Spaces in Selected Pakistani Fiction: A Psychogeographic Analysis

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Abstract

Psychogeography is a method of spatial analysis deals with the psychological and emotional aspects of geographical space. This study aims to explore the psychological impact of urban spaces of Karachi as depicted in the selected Pakistani fiction. By employing Merlin Coverley's notion of Psychogeography, this research delves into the spatial and socio-political structure of the metropolis and its direct influence on characters' perception of life along with their choices and experiences. The psychogeographic concepts of flâneur, dérive and détournement are used to examine the spatial representation of Karachi. The findings reveal that the external environment plays a huge role in shaping the internal psyches of people. The city does not remain a passive setting but rather acts as an active agent that controls the narrative according to its will. This study contributes to the nuanced understanding of dynamic nature of urban spaces and is significant for urban planners and developers. It highlights not only the consequences of inadequate urban planning but advocates for effective infrastructure development to promote equality and peace in the society.

Keywords: urban space, Karachi, psychological impact, psychogeography, flâneur dérive, détournement

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Introduction

Space is defined as an entity that surrounds everything and exists everywhere in both concrete and abstract forms (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Mindra (2018) maintains that the function of space is to emphasize a deeper geographic and bodily experience. The Spatial Turn of the 1960s has played a fundamental role in integrating space into every sphere of life including critical and literary theory. Soja (1996) foregrounds the socio-political aspects of space through the notion of "spatiality" which analyzes space as a social product. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991) asserts that space is not an empty container but rather a social product which controls the power dynamics of a society and becomes a tool for capitalism. Finch (2016) also highlights the political nature of space and asserts that urban space is a "site of contestation" for different ideological forces (p.28). This has led to the rise in spatial studies which emphasize the need to look at urban spaces from a critical point of view.

Spatial studies have also been incorporated in literature to examine the spatial features of setting in literary works. Tally (2017) proclaims that it focuses on the “space, place and mapping” of a text (p.3) and provides insights about the representation of real and fictional places. Urban literary studies are a sub-field that has arisen due to rapid urbanization in the postmodern era. These studies concentrate on the lifestyle, landscape, history and culture of a particular urban region (Rotella, 2017). One important feature that is extensively analyzed in this field is the notion of “citiness” or the “particular presence of a city” in a text that actively functions to shape the narrative (Ameel, 2023, p.2). By doing so, the city and its urban environment becomes an active agent that manipulates the experiences and attitudes of the characters (Pike, 1981). Therefore, the city becomes the essence of urban literature and is further divided into urban center and urban periphery. The center is controlled by capitalist powers while the periphery is occupied by marginalized people who are constantly in a struggle against the center. Since, the urban centers are created with peculiar spatial structures to control the movement of masses, the marginalized people use art production and walking through the structured city as acts of political revolt.

A number of theorists and philosophers have analyzed space from multiple perspectives. Henri Lefebvre in his seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1974) proposed a method of spatial analysis that treats space as a social product and as a means of social production. Correspondingly, Bertrand Westphal notion of “geocriticism”, David Harvey’s “spatial justice”, Deleuze and Guattari’s “geophilosophy” and Jameson’s “cognitive mapping” have also probed into diverse aspects of space. Debord’s concept of psychogeography is also a critical method of spatial analysis which is used as theoretical foundation for this research.

Psychogeography is an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on analyzing the emotional effects of geographic spaces on people. It is a type of spatial analysis based on the intersection of space and human mind and concentrates on the psychological aspects of urban spaces. It originated in 1950s from the Situationist International movement in France. Guy Debord coined the term in 1955 and introduced it as an act of political radicalism amidst the urban chaos of Paris. The purpose of psychogeography is to provide a critique of capitalism and socio-spatial structures of the urban city that exist to oppress the masses. *dérive* (walking in the city), *flâneur* (urban wanderer) and *detournement* (turnaround) are the prominent features of psychogeography. Michel de Certeau with his seminal work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) and Iain Sinclair through his literary works have contributed significantly to this method of spatial analysis. In postmodern times, Will Self (2007) and Merlin Coverley (2010) have also expanded upon the idea of psychogeographic explorations to challenge the hegemony of capitalist space.

In order to probe into the psychogeographic effect of urban spaces, two novels from Pakistani crime fiction have been selected which use Karachi as a background setting. *The Prisoner* (2013) by Omar Shahid Hamid chronicles the story of Akbar Khan, a police man who solves the case of a kidnapped American journalist during his incarceration in Central Prison. The second novel, *Karachi You’re Killing Me!* (2014) by Saba Imtiaz narrates the daily life of a female journalist, Ayesha, who is trying her best to navigate the precarious conditions of the city in an effort to improve her career and life. Both these works represent various urban spaces of

Karachi from slums to posh areas. They also delve into the unequal urban development in the city and highlight its negative impacts on the characters.

Statement of the problem

Urban spaces come into being through urban planning which has a critical role in shaping the geographic and topographic landscape of a region. Onyeneke and Karam (2022) claim that poor urban development and resource management has adverse effects on people and has a significant part in marginalizing them. In Pakistani fiction, urban spaces are used quite frequently as settings of the novels but they are portrayed as empty vessels that provide a geographic container for the plot. To investigate their role in social and spatial oppression, the present study probes into the urban spaces of Karachi as depicted in Hamid's *The Prisoner* (2013) and Imtiaz's *Karachi You're Killing Me!* (2014), to explore their influence on the psychological state of the characters. Furthermore, it also delves into the role city plays as a pivotal force in influencing and manipulating the free will of the citizens.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to highlight and analyze the psychological impact of the urban spaces and its influence on the actions of the characters in the selected works.

Research Questions

The following question has been designed to achieve the objective of this research:

In what ways do the urban spaces influence the psychological states and actions of the characters in the selected novels?

Significance of the study

This research is significant in that it analyzes the psychological impact of the spatial structure and spatial norms of urban spaces in Karachi. They reveal the fragmented and volatile nature of the city which influences and shapes the daily life and experiences of the people. A number of studies have been done on exploring the capitalist side of urban planning but this study specifically probes into the psychological impact of the urban spaces produced by the capitalist system with specific emphasis on the actions of individuals who inhabit these spaces.

Literature Review

Psychogeography in literature focuses on the dynamic nature of setting in a text. Löffler (2017) has delved into the act of urban walking as presented in English literature. She has analyzed the psychological aspects of urban spaces of London and asserts that a psychogeographic exploration is significant for understanding the social and spatial dynamics of a city space. Similarly, Tso (2018) has examined the use of psychogeography in Alan Moore's novel, *From Hell* (2008). The author employed this technique to establish a connection between London's spatial dynamics and the protagonist (killer)'s search for murder victims. He traverses across the city streets in an attempt to connect with the past where he envisions himself as Jack the Ripper and commits murders in a similar fashion. Thus, wandering across the streets of London helped him in reminiscing and reliving the past grandeur of a notorious murderer.

In accordance with the previous studies, Knowles et al. (2016) have used psychogeographical method of urban walking or *dérive* to investigate the problems of urban life in the times of a calamity as described in Defoe's work, *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722). This research probes into issues of urban mobility, employment and daily life management in London during the plague of 1665. Defoe has written the novel from the perspective of a wanderer who navigates the city streets repeatedly and narrates the events in his journal. The text effectively uses a *flâneur* and *dérive* to explore the city space in an attempt to deal with its complexities and troubles.

Wilkinson (2012) has examined the complicity of the cities in crime as depicted in the works of Dostoevsky and Zola. She discovered that both St. Petersburg and Paris are presented as agents of chaos in the works of these writers. They act as living creatures who are capable of influencing characters' wills. By using psychogeography as a framework, the researcher has illustrated that surrounding geography as a critical impact on the psyches of the characters. This influence is so strong that it even compels people to commit crimes as is evident in Raskolnikov's case. The urban spaces completely overwhelm a person's mind and will power and forces him to perform such actions that even go against his ideals.

Khaidzir et al. (2022) have studied the role of urbanization in the transformation of Kuala Lumpur from a traditional rural place to a metropolis of international significance. Psychogeography is used to navigate the city in search of cultural history and connection with the past. In another research, Seach (2024) has also employed the same framework to probe into the psychological impact of urban spaces of Malaysian capital city on the female characters of an anthology titled, *KL Noir: Magic* (2021). This study highlights the way women interact with their surrounding environment and how this interaction plays a role in shaping their perception of life. Likewise, Amran and Termizi (2020) have pinpointed the representation of female *flâneur* in Chan Ling Yap's novel, *Where the Sunrise in Red* (2018). This research compares the situation of women in colonial and postcolonial Malaysia and their ease of access to public spaces. The findings reveal that modern urban spaces offer more freedom and ease to women as they can easily navigate these spaces. Another study conducted on Yap's novel *Sweet Offerings* (2009) by Amran et al. (2022) highlight the capacity of feminist psychogeography in providing the female protagonist with the opportunity to reclaim both the public and private spaces as an independent individual. It also assists her in challenging the traditional position of *flâneur* which is associated with men only.

Pramanik (2020) has investigated the role of urbanization in marginalizing the non-bengalis as depicted in Kunal Basu's novel *Kalkatta* (2015). This study focuses on the spatial and socio-political dynamics of Zakaria Street where the narrative takes place. The poor people of this urban place are victims of capitalism as they constantly battle with lack of resources. Thus, space becomes a hegemonic force that has adversely impacted the people of that locality. Garayeva (2021) has provided a critique of Peter Ackroyd's psychogeographical writings which delineates between classical and contemporary psychogeography. The findings of this study highlight the oppressive nature of the city streets which acts as agents of chaos. They leave a profound impact on the minds of the characters to such an extent that even their identities undergo serious transformations. Here, the act of *dérive* becomes a means of negative change.

Berbar (2023) has used psychogeography to compare the impact of urban and rural landscape on the mind and personality of the characters in the novel, *The Ambassadors* (1903) by Henry James. Travelling acts as a means of change for the protagonist as the surrounding environment directly influences his mind. Raslan (2023) has also analyzed the spiritual and psychological transformation in Aboulela's *Bird Summons* (2019). The act of walking plays a fundamental role in the metamorphosis of the characters and acts as a source of liberation for them. In addition to this, Sabu (2023) has conducted a research on Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) to highlight the devastating impact of geographical division as a result of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The physical separation had a lasting impact on the psyches of people which is reflected in their behaviors. Trains are presented as symbols of spatial divide and become a suitable motif for psychogeographic study.

Chakraborty (2024) has examined Ruskin Bond's works through the notion of *dérive* in order to demonstrate the role urbanization is playing in marginalizing the Indians. This analysis provides a critique of capitalism and consumerism who has controlled the entire society and maintains the power dynamics that serve to oppress the poor and downtrodden class. Similar to the findings of this research, Cakar (2025) has also performed a psychogeographic analysis of George Szirtes' poems to unveil the emotional impact of urban landscape on people's identities. Consumerism, migration, alienation and nostalgia are the significant factors that shape the life experiences of the poet and are also reflected in his writings. This analysis pinpoints the complex relationship between individuals and their surrounding environment. The psychological aspects of the urban spaces play a crucial role in defining the sense of assimilation and rejection that people feel when they interact with such places.

Research Gap

Previous studies on the selected works have primarily focused on the gender dynamics, socio-political contexts, economic factors and themes of violence. However, there is a lack of research on psychological dimension of the urban environment and its part in shaping the everyday lives of individuals. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the analysis of urban spaces and their impact on the behaviors and actions of the characters that interact with these spaces.

Theoretical Framework

Coverley's (2010) notion of psychogeography forms the theoretical foundation of data analysis for this research. In his book *Psychogeography* (2010), Coverley explains it as the juxtaposition of psychology and geography which serves as a means for analyzing the urban spaces. Guy Debord, a French Marxist theorist, initially proposed the idea of psychogeography and claimed that its function is to highlight the "specific effects of geographical environment" on individuals (1981, p.4). Therefore, the focus of psychogeography is on the psychological aspects of peoples' surroundings and their impact on emotions, attitudes and actions. Additionally, it also provides a critique of the urban spaces produced by the capitalist system and their role in upholding the power structures of the society.

The primary component in a psychogeographic exploration is the presence of a flâneur. The idea of flâneur is taken from Baudelaire's poetry where he is defined as a "mental traveler" who traverses across the city to record the urban experience through observation (Coverley, 2010, p.20). His task is to combat the capitalist powers of the city that has turned everyday life into a monotonous routine. The second essential part of this method is the act of urban wandering or drift also known as "dérive". This notion was put forward by Debord in his work, *Theory of the Dérive* (1958) where he presented it as an act of political awakening. Coverley (2010) maintains that the purpose of dérive is to explore the social experiences of people that are produced as a result of their interaction with the urban environment.

Other important concepts are détournement which is the act of changing the traditional meanings and symbols associated with spaces and cultural artifacts. It is an effective method of challenging the hegemony of the capitalist power structures in the city to reclaim the public spaces. Similarly, ley lines help the flâneur in linking various landscapes and spaces. Emotional geography and subjective mapping also delve into the emotional effects of space on people's perception of reality. Thus, psychogeography attempts to dismantle the hierarchical spatial structures in the city to create awareness about the social oppression faced by the masses. It endeavors to liberate people by giving them the opportunity to navigate the city according to their own free will.

Materials and Methods

Given the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative research design is selected due to its strength in dealing with non-numerical data. The data has been collected from two Pakistani novels, *The Prisoner* by Omar Shahid Hamid (2013) and *Karachi You're Killing Me* by Saba Imtiaz (2014). Excerpts have been selected carefully from these works and are analyzed according to the theoretical underpinnings of Coverley (2010) to provide an understanding of the role urban spaces play in shaping people's lives and experiences. Since the data is qualitative in nature, the technique of textual analysis is used to analyze the content of the novels. Moreover, the researcher has also used a combination of hermeneutic and phenomenological methods of interpretivism as described by Bryman (2016) to analyze and interpret the selected excerpts. The hermeneutic method is essential for the interpretation of texts and phenomenology focuses on the subjective experiences of people which is crucial to this research.

Analysis and Discussion

Using Coverley's (2010) notion of psychogeography provides deep insights into the chaotic and fragmented nature of urban spaces as represented in both the novels. The city takes on the role of a living entity that has subjugated the will of the characters and actively shapes their life experiences and destinies.

The Prisoner

Karachi, the metropolis of Pakistan, is depicted as a site of oppression and control in *The Prisoner* (2013). The main narrative revolves around the kidnapping of an American journalist and the attempts made by the police and intelligence agencies to rescue him. The protagonist, Constantine D'Souza, is a former police officer who has been promoted as the superintendent of city's Central Prison. He is the type of a person who is deeply impacted by the change in

Karachi's weather, environment, and physical as well as socio-political spaces. As the novel begins, Constantine is found to be coughing and stamping his feet because he is "*totally unprepared for the wintry weather*" despite living in the city all his life (Hamid, 2013, p.1). His irritation is evident through his actions which also mirrors his mental state which is heavily influenced by the sudden change in Karachi's climate.

Constantine is portrayed as a flâneur who is constantly navigating through different parts of the city. The existence of flâneur is of primary importance to a psychogeographic exploration as his fate is "bound up with the fate of the city he inhabits and his very existence acts as an indication of the struggles" (Coverley, 2010, p.8). In this regard, he is an active observer of urban decay and corruption that has entangled Karachi in its web. Constantine also engages with all those spaces that are emotionally charged and leave an imprint on his mind. His office cabin in Central Prison is the first place that has a profound psychological impact on him as the room is depicted to be "small, narrow, and badly lit, with no windows" (Hamid, 2013, p.5). The basic structure that defines a room includes a proper system of ventilation and light which is lacking here. This condition of the office adversely affects him as despite being a member of states apparatus, he does not have access to proper resources and infrastructure. He even believes that the portrait of the founder of the nation who is hanging in his room is also "staring down with faint disapproval" (p.6).

Likewise, places like Zamzama, the modern shopping district of Karachi has transformative impact on him leading to transformative worldview. Regardless of his religious identity as a Christian, he considers advertising lingerie on billboards as "licentiousness" that has plagued the elite class (Hamid, 2013, p.84). This space is equivalent to an "oasis" created by the rich in order to escape the "problems of this chaotic metropolis" (p.84). The stark difference of this affluent place with the rest of the city is made clear when Boulton Market is depicted in the novel. As Constantine travels from Zamzama to the other marketplace, he is essentially performing the act of *dérive* which refers to drifting across the city. Coverley (2010) maintains that this method of urban walking "resonate(s) with particular moods and ambiances" (p.57). Hamid (2013) describes Boulton Market as a place filled with working class individuals who are trying to make their living by "selling all sorts of wares, from car tires to open spices" (Hamid, 2013, p.87). Even the traffic is different here which mostly consists of rickshaws and wagons which completely opposite to Zamzama as it is filled with "Mercedes" and "Toyota SUVs" (p.87). This place presents the essence of Karachi and makes Constantine feel at ease.

During his investigation for the missing foreigner, Constantine also interacts with the spaces occupied by the ruling elite of the city. He meets up with Colonel Tarkeen at the "Bleak House" which is operation base for an intelligence agency (Hamid, 2013, p.49). Similarly, he is also summoned to the office of Home Minister in order to negotiate a deal with regards to the political and law and order situation in Karachi. Constantine describes him as a man who "seemed more suited to the mean streets of the city than these hallowed ministerial chambers" (p.151). The reason behind it is that the Minister uses his immediate surroundings to intimidate others into following his orders which ultimately turn these spaces into centers of corruption that shape the political fabric of the city. For Constantine, these are the places where his mind is enslaved, his own will is subdued and he is forced to follow others orders that even go against his ideals.

This novel also illustrates the détournement of various spaces in Karachi. Coverley (2010) proclaims that “détournement creates new and unexpected meanings by hijacking and disrupting the original” (p.55). The most prominent instance of it, is the conversion of an abandoned school building to base of United Front’s ward boys by naming it “Hajji Camp” (Hamid, 2013, p.34). The mafia has taken control of the neighborhood buildings and in doing so have changed the spatial dynamics of Karachi. Additionally, mosques and madarsas which are primary means of acquiring religious knowledge have also been converted into centers of corruption and political revolt. This is evident through the actions of Sheikh Noman also known as “Nomi” who has rebranded himself from a lowly gambler to a religious scholar and uses his seminaries and mosques as a cover for his gambling business. Akbar explains this situation to Constantine as:

They have almost completed the successful illegal occupation of the land where this madrasa will be built. And it’s conveniently located right next door to Nomi’s, sorry, the sheikh’s gambling den. (Hamid, 2013, p.120)

Faith is used as a cog in the apparatus of power. This demonstrates that in Karachi criminality and respectability are correlated. The people who are in positions of power use their influence to subvert the meanings of traditional spatial structures according to their own benefits.

Karachi You’re Killing Me!

Saba Imtiaz has presented Karachi as an dynamic agent of chaos in this novel. The protagonist, Ayesha, who is a journalist belongs to a middle class family but has friendships and relationships with people from the upper class. This class difference manifests in the urban spaces that are inhabited and frequented by her and they way they impact her mind and her life experience. The apartment where Ayesha lives also embodies a typical middle-class place where shop keepers are always arguing with each other and the noise contributes to the disruption of mental peace. Even on the day when she has to give a telephonic interview to an international organization, a typical loud argument happens outside. Despite the poor circumstances, she is able to give a good interview and even has a “good feeling” about it (Imtiaz, 2014, p.1). This demonstrates the ability of urban spaces to cause disturbance in people’s lives and careers. The condition of her room also reflects the chaos that plagues her public life. She describes it as a piece of installation art called “Where Journalism Goes to Die” as it is littered with “notebooks and “piles of old newspapers” (p.4). The house which is a traditional symbol of comfort fails to provide the mental relief that she deserves instead it acts as a metaphor for death of creativity and peace that mirrors the disarray that consumes her private and professional life.

Ayesha’s daily routine involves engagement with city’s poor infrastructure which has a fundamental role in shaping her attitude towards her surroundings. Coverley (2010) contends that it is crucial to monitor the “emotional and behavioural impact of urban space upon individual” as the results help in constructing an environment that provides ease and comfort to the inhabitants (p.52). She describes her office as a “dungeon” and “basement” and compares it to “Anne Frank’s attic” which underlines the claustrophobic and oppressive nature of the workplace (Imtiaz, 2014, p.1). Her boss’ big airy room stands in stark contrast to the rest of the place. It even has glass walls from where he monitors his staff and makes them feel like they belong to the “wretched of the earth” (p.1). Despite Karachi being a metropolis, the

infrastructure of both public and private workplaces is quite substandard. The rooms are small with poor ventilation systems which has a drastic impact on the physical and mental well being of the workers. The capitalist system design this type of places to serve the interests of people in power and to oppress the powerless.

To combat the hegemony of these repressive urban spaces, psychogeography introduces the notions of *flâneur*, *dérive* and *détournement* as “process of political awakening” (Coverley, 2010, p.9). Ayesha takes on the role of a *flâneur* to navigate the chaotic urban sites of the city which actively shape her identity and experiences. She travels across Karachi volatile, violent and male-dominated spaces in an attempt to show resistance against the perceived patriarchal spatial structures. She challenges that power structures that resist free mobility across city’s urban landscape which is the fundamental aspect of *dérive* that makes this type urban wandering an act of “political radicalism” (Coverley, 2010, p.4). As a journalist, she covers all sorts of crime scenes, social events and interviews various personalities like politicians criminals and prisoners including a Guantanamo Bay detainee. As a *flâneur*, she drifts across the city and in doing so reveals the urban decay that has encapsulated it. The city is presented as a fragmented space where some places are marked with poor resource management, violence and crime while the other places like Zamzama manifest themselves as embodiment of modernity and affluence (Hassan, 2017). Even on New Year night, electricity is cut off which leads to the “roars of generators” that effectively dampen Ayesha’s mood but the idea of enjoying at a new year party makes her feel better (Imtiaz, 2014, p.7). When she finally reaches the party, she raises a toast “to getting the hell out of Karachi” which appropriately symbolizes her antagonistic relationship with the city (p.10). This incident also accentuate city’s unreliability and environmental instability which has a significant role in influencing the mood and overall attitude of people. Therefore, the protagonist’s depressed state of mind is a direct consequence of city’s failed infrastructure.

Furthermore, Ayesha’s interactions with different places also become an embodiment of *détournement* which is a “ tool that subverts one’s opponent’s message while promoting one’s own” (Coverley, 2010, p.56). She subverts the traditional socio-cultural meanings that are associated with these spatial structures by inhabiting them and resisting their hegemony. She is the first to report from the crime scene at the Central Railway Station and takes it as an opportunity to reclaim this space by defying the norm that public spaces can only be occupied by men as Coverley (2010) asserts that “the act of walking becomes... characteristic political opposition to authority” (p.3). She also reveals the true nature of public hospitals that appear “to be far more humane than the sterile private hospitals with their brusque staff, who thought they were doing you a favour by pointing you in the direction of a doctor” (Imtiaz, 2014, p.25). She reinterprets these spaces are centers of community support and empathy who are open to everybody and compares them to private hospitals who are elitist in nature and are openly disrespectful to patients.

Ayesha also explores Karachi’s crime ridden underbelly, on her job as a reporter, which is a home to various types of deviant activities and individuals. This activity is in accordance with Coverley’s (2010) argument that “crime and lowlife in general remain a hallmark of psychogeographical investigation” (p.4). The city has been infested with crime to the extent that she claims that “where it’s easier to hire an assassin than meet an attractive, intelligent, normal

single man” (Imtiaz, 2014, p.11). This law and order situation has an adverse impact on the psyches of the citizens which adds to their despair. The emotional impact of Karachi’s urban landscape is evident from the fact that it is almost impossible to come across a potential lover in a city of “twenty million people” as it has become a “wasteland” of urban decay and violence (p.11). This indicates the level of isolation faced by people as they attempt to navigate the metropolis through *dérive* which has also become difficult given the dangerous circumstances.

In this regard, it is also made clear that Ayesha has more negative feelings for Karachi and even argues with Saad when he mentions moving back here from Dubai. For her, the city is as good as a cemetery and claims that “life and love come to die” here and there is “nothing” that can bind a person to Karachi (Imtiaz, 2014, p.148). She has experience with the ground reality of this city and believes that if Saad actually decides to come back he will also be complaining about “about extortionists and muggings and sectarian groups calling for carnage” like the rest of the citizens (p.148). The rise of different types of social chaos and crimes have made exasperated people to the extent that they want to leave the city for good and move to a more peaceful place. Thus, Karachi becomes a center of fear, desolation and urban chaos which is affecting people on a personal level.

Findings

The psychogeographic analysis of the selected novels, underscore Karachi as an entity that has the ability to impact peoples psyches and shape their experiences. By using the concepts of *flâneur*, *dérive* and *détournement*, this analysis highlights the role of city as an active agent of chaos that overwhelms the free will of the citizens and compels them into performing actions that go against their ideals. These actions are the reflection of the psychological influence of the spaces that surround the characters. Moreover, the spatial dynamics of an urban space are also linked to law and order situation in the city.

In *The Prisoner* (2013), Constantine feels pressurized by the hegemonic nature of the city space and is most of the times coerced into bending the laws to please the ruling elite. He is also involved in certain criminal activities like bribery despite being a member of a law enforcing institute. His navigation of spaces of power and crime in Karachi reveal the oppressive forces that are linked to certain spaces which directly affects people’s emotions. The urban drifting that he undertakes is mostly done for the sake of investigation of the kidnapping. Most of the spaces in the city have been subverted for instance: government buildings, madrasas and various UF occupied neighborhoods have become hubs of corruption and violence.

In *Karachi You’re Killing Me!* (2014), Imtiaz has drawn a picture of failure of city’s infrastructure which eventually leads to urban decay. The psychogeographic analysis has probed into Ayesha’s mind and actions that are shaped by the urban spaces she frequents. She has a fragmented relationship with Karachi where most of the time she hopes and plans on escaping the violence-ridden city. She uses sarcasm and cynicism as means to combat the spatial injustices that are faced by the masses. The public and the personal spaces that she regularly navigates have a claustrophobic and controlling nature. Her room is a manifestation of the urban chaos that has enveloped the city. Her primary goal is to escape Karachi as she has a hard time trying to find love and peace in a metropolis of twenty million people.

In this way, Karachi emerges as a character and a narrative force in these novels and also highlights the symbiotic relationship between urban spaces and people's psyches. This analysis highlights the manipulative nature of city as it alters the conventional meanings of public space, law and justice. The city becomes a dynamic entity which has the capacity to uphold power structures that benefit the upper class and marginalize the lower class. This investigation also provides a critique of poor urban planning and infrastructure development which became the major perpetrators of increased crime-rate and political turmoil. Thus, Karachi does not remain as an inert backdrop but actively participates in shaping the narrative.

Conclusion

This study has probed into the psychological aspect of urban spaces by using psychogeography as a theoretical framework because it helps in bridging the gap between the emotional and physical dimension of geography. Since this research uses two Pakistani novels that use Karachi as the setting of the narrative, it also explores the dynamic nature of the city which acts as a character itself and influences the emotions and actions of the other characters. The characters are deeply impacted by Karachi's landscape and socio-political atmosphere as their actions are guided by city's spatial dynamics. Moreover, this analysis also highlights characters' everyday experiences which are shaped by their surrounding urban spaces. This intersection of psychology and spatial analysis is, therefore, essential for understanding how city's topography is shaped and the way it shapes the mindsets of the people who are navigating it.

Future Implications

This research provides an a deep understanding of the emotional and psychological influence of the urban environment on people. In this regard, this is useful for social scientists, urban planners and development authorities as it highlights all the negative aspects of ineffective urban development. It encourages an exploration of spatial injustices that are faced by people. Moreover, it also promotes the need to develop safe and comfortable work places, social institutes, public spaces as well as housing societies to create a peaceful society. Future studies can probe into the consequences of poor urban planning with specific reference to mental and physical wellbeing of the citizens and how these detrimental conditions lead to their marginalization.

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