The tale of ethno-political and spatial claims in a contested city: the *Muhajir* community in Karachi.

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Introduction

Karachi today is essentially a city of migrants; the result of successive waves of in-migration triggered by past events and decisions that took place predominantly on the national and the international political stage. Possibly the most significant of these was the departure of the British Raj and the Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 to the separate states of India and Pakistan. This resulted in a large influx of *Hindustani* migrants into the city where over a million people arrived as it became the federal capital of the new nation of Pakistan. The *Muhajir* or refugees – primarily Urdu-speaking, North Indian Muslims migrating from Hindu majority urban centres in previously undivided India – inundated the city, transforming it from a small, cosmopolitan colonial port to a city that appeared to have morphed into the various neighbourhoods of Lucknow, Agra and Hyderabad from where these refugees had migrated (Siddiqi, 2008). Today their descendants continue to be referred to as *Muhajir*.

Whilst the *Muhajir* community is the largest migrant group in Karachi – they have consistently made up over 50% of the city's population since Pakistan's first census in 1951 – today they represent only 6% of Pakistan's total population. Since arrival post-*Partition*, the *Muhajir* have continued to be viewed as a landless, rootless people whose loyalties to Pakistan are suspect. This is due to a combination of their ongoing geographical concentration and their signature urban Indian heritage which is in marked contrast to the clan and tribal solidarities of many of Karachi's domestic migrant communities who still exhibit strong tied to ancestral lands. This imposed and perceived *otherness* has resulted in the *Muhajir* community behaving as a people under constant threat, manifesting in the form of persistent geographical concentration over time, and political mobilisation to demand and preserve their rights.

It could be said that Karachi's population is the outcome of the geopolitics of the region; Partition-related refugee communities, rural domestic migrants displaced by

green revolution policies in the 1960s, Biharis, Bengalis and Afghans displaced by war, secession and occupation in Bangladesh and Afghanistan in the 1970s and 80s and most recently, Internally Displaced People (IDPs), the result of military operations in Pakistan's northern areas. This has brought a diverse array of communities and cultures into close contact in an urban environment where resources such as housing, transport and employment are in short supply. Non-state actors, through a process of politicisation of ethno-linguistic solidarities, have stepped in to bridge the disparity between demand and supply. This complex situation suggests that migrant politics may be critical to the shaping of the city where language, ethnicity, spatial clustering and politics are intrinsically linked; language often influences ethnic loyalties, which in turn sway political affiliation. In essence, through an analysis of the spatial and ethno-political histories of the *Muhajir* community in Karachi, this chapter seeks to dissect the impact the city's often volatile geopolitics has had on the form it takes today. .

The *Muhajir* community's process of migration and settlement seemingly follows the trajectory outlined by Vertovec (1995): i) migration, ii) the establishment of cultural institutions, iii) political mobilisation and finally, iv) identity decline and rejuvenation. In the absence of detailed ethnographic data, where the last useable census was conducted in 1998 and published data are available at the very large scale of the city district[i], analysis of the processes of migration and settlement as outlined by Vertovec is central to studying the settlement patterns of the *Muhajir* community in the city today. This was done through the mapping and analysis of the clustering of certain cultural/communal institutions particular to the *Muhajir* community.

Minority or ethnic clustering is a complex spatial phenomenon, often a combination of both forced separation by the majority group of peoples perceived as the other to maintain a sense of purity of the host community (Sibley, 1995; Sennett, 1996) as well as a self-imposed separation by the minority for the purposes of socio-cultural preservation (Werbner, 2005). The location, persistence and densification of the ethnic settlement may be shaped by market forces pertaining to affordable housing (Phillips, 2006), proximity to employment (Charalambous and Hadjichristos, 2011), security and safety in numbers resulting in an inversion of power within the enclave in favour of the minority (Peach, 1996) or, all of the above. Affordable commutes and access to reliable employment, services and social networks are features that are built over long term residence and are advantages that diminish dramatically, should the residents sell out and move away (Simone, 2013).

Such clustering may be beneficial for the purposes of acclimatisation of fresh arrivals and for the preservation and persistence of cultural traditions, depending on the location of the clusters, it may also lead to a reduction in interaction between the residents and the host community and more limited economic and social opportunities. This may be particularly problematic if immigrant enclaves are also spatially isolated (Legeby, 2009). Such a situation may heighten the sense of marginalisation amongst members of the community, leading to the crystallisation of political identities, consolidation of ethno-religious solidarities and the perpetuation of feuds and prejudices (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006).

This chapter presents an overview of urban geopolitical and developmental histories of post-Partition Karachi in order to show how in-migration of multiple communities and the ethno-political affiliations of various state-backed actors have impacted the planning and development of the city. This process has over time laid the groundwork for the city's current socio-spatial divisions. Additionally, the connection between language, ethnicity and politics and how this contributes to ethno-spatial appropriation and contestation, ethnicity-based service monopolies and uneven planning and development of the city will also be discussed. By viewing the urban geopolitics of the city through the spatial-political trajectory of the *Muhajir* community in Karachi since Partition, this chapter examines the synergistic and often divisive relationship between ethnicity, politics and urban development, an issue shared by numerous contested, post-colonial urban environments today.

Historical Background

As suggested by the title, this chapter describes a study into the nature of the relationship between ethno-political identities and the occupation and adaptation of space in Karachi. In order to deconstruct this relationship, there is a need to establish that there is in fact such connection, and specifically between the emergence of urban geopolitical ethnic identities and activities and the spatial planning and development of the city. Table 1 outlines broad political periods in Pakistan's history as well as presenting in-migration, urban development and the ethno-political outcomes in the city during these periods in order to illustrate how these issues are inter-connected and how the politics of ethnicity have coloured official patronage and development of the city and its communities.

Year	Political	Migration Outcomes	Urban Development plans	Ethno-political Outcomes
1947-57	7 Prime Ministers in 11 years. **Ethnicity:** Primarily migrant backgrounds. Iskander Mirza declares Martial Law in Oct 1958.	**Arrivals:** *Muhajir* **Status:** Refugee **Cause:** Partition of the Indian Sub-continent- 1947	**Masterplan:** MRV Plan 1951(not implemented) Refugee rehabilitation is the primary objective of the government. Settlements can be broadly classified as 1. Relief & Transit camps, 2. Gov. sponsored Housing Schemes, 3. Community initiated Housing Societies, & 4. Informal squatter settlements.	*Muhajireen* were clustering in Northern and North-Eastern areas of the city; e.g. Liaquatabad, Nazimabad, North Nazimabad, Federal B Area, as well as placed-based housing societies of PECHS, Sindhi Muslim, Bahadurabad etc. at the edge of the city centre and the squatter settlements on the northern banks of the Lyari River- Golimar, Lalukhet etc.
1958-69	**President:** Field Marshal Ayub Khan **Affiliation:** Army **Ethnicity:** Pakhtun **Elections:** 1965	**Arrivals:** Pakhtun/Punjabi **Status:** Economic migrant **Cause:** Green revolution policies implemented in rural areas. Construction of Mangla and Tarbela Dams. Industrialisation of urban centres.	**Masterplan:** GKRP (1958), Karachi Masterplan 1974-85 (1964) Gov. decides to "decentralize population" and hence Doxiades GKRP proposes industrial estates at the periphery (Landhi-Korangi & New Karachi) with associated residential units to house displaced inner-city squatters. Karachi Masterplan 1974-85 proposes insightful transport and infrastructure interventions but is shelved shortly after initiation.	Government employs a policy of spatial and commercial marginalisation of the *Muhajir* community by 1. Decanting inner-city settlements to industrial estates at the periphery, 2. Moving the federal capital from Karachi up-country to Islamabad, 3. Preferential treatment of Pakhtuns in the awarding of transport licences. Emergence of ethnic tensions as *Muhajirs*, Pakhtuns and Punjabis now vie for the same resources and economic opportunities in the city.
1970-77	**PM:** Z.A.Bhutto **Affliation:** PPP **Ethnicity:** Sindhi **Elections:** 1970, 1977.	**Arrivals:** Bihari/Bengalis **Status:** Refugee **Cause:** Secession of East Pakistan & the creation of Bangladesh	**Masterplan:** - Coastal development projects initiated along with changes in FAR for certain areas to boost commercial activity which result in the emergence of the high-rise apartment buildings. Construction of Metroville projects as low-cost housing and the subsequent mushrooming of informal settlements in proximity to these government sponsored projects to the west of the city.	Further marginalisation of the *Muhajir* community through the implementation of policies advocating 1. Sindhi as an official language in schools and government departments thus contesting the status of Urdu as the national language, 2. The re-evaluation of the Quota System to give rural communities more access to government jobs and university places thereby reducing quotas for urban communities such as the *Muhajireen*, 3. The nationalisation of industries and businesses resulting in increased competition for positions, in keeping with the Quota System. This resulted in the Language Riots of 1972 and

Year	Political	Migration Outcomes	Urban Development plans	Ethno-political Outcomes
				the emergence of student politics in government educational institutions.
1977-88	**President:** General Zia-ul-Haq/Martial Law **Affiliation:** Army **Ethnicity:** Punjabi Elections: 1985 (Non-Partisan)	**Arrivals:** Afghans **Status:** Refugee **Cause:** Soviet occupation of Afghanistan	**Masterplan:** - Regularisation of informal settlements (1978). The development of high-rise apartment complexes by private developers in Gulshan and Gulistan-e-Jauhar areas in the north-east of the city, financed by ex-pats remittances from the Gulf States.	*Muhajir* students leave the Punjabi-centric IJT and form the APMSO in 1978 at Karachi University. Establishment of the MQM (1984) which goes on to sweep the first elections they contest in 1988 in Karachi and Hyderabad.. Ethnic tensions rise resulting in clashes between *Muhajirs* and Pakhtuns especially in the squatter settlements of Qasba and Orangi to the west of the city between 1985-86.
1988-99	**PM:** Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif **Affiliation:** PPP/PML **Ethnicity:** Sindhi/Punjabi **Elections:** 1988, 1990, 1993, 1997.	**Arrivals:** -	**Masterplan:** Karachi Development Plan 2000 (1989) Development of Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Scheme 45, Taiser Town and Gulzar-e-Hijri again in the north-eastern quadrant of the city.	MQM's Dr Farooq Sattar is mayor of Karachi from 1987-92. A paramilitary operation is conducted to 'cleanse Karachi of anti-social elements' targeting primarily *Muhajir* majority areas known as Operation "Clean-up" (1992-94). Resulting in thousands of arrests and extra-judicial killings of MQM activists. The party's top brass went "underground" and party chairman Altaf Hussain went into self-imposed exile. During this period areas like Lines Area, Liaquatabad and Golimar become notoriously known as "no-go" areas due to clashes between *Muhajir* youths and the city's security forces.
1997-2007	**President:** General Pervez Musharraf **Affiliation:** Army **Ethnicity:** Muhajir **Elections:** 2002	**Arrivals:** Pakhtun **Status:** IDPs **Cause:** Anti-terrorism military operations in Swat and Waziristan	**Masterplan:** Masterplan 2020 (2007) Flyovers and underpasses, The LEW & Northern Bypass are built, Dolmen City is revived and Creek City initiated. Establishment of new displaced persons townships in Malir and Hawkesbay. Official commercialisation of 17 major commercial streets across the city.	With MQM's Syed Mustafa Kamal as the city's mayor from 2005-2010, MQM dominates the City District Government and are seen as the king-makers of the nation. Large scale infrastructure projects that had seen little movement are brought to life and completed.

Table 1. Synthesis of Karachi's political and urban development histories. Source: Karachi Masterplan 2000, Ansari (2005), Dowall (1991), Gayer (2014), Hasan (1999), Zamindar (2010).

Table 1 shows that with each wave of in-migration, the state proposed a master-plan to address growing concerns of housing, transport and infrastructure development. At each point these interventions fall short of the needs of a growing population or are abandoned and the informal sector steps in to bridge the gap. It also illustrates how the movement of migrants into the city was intrinsically linked to the politics of post-colonial development. Additionally, it appears that State patronage shifted from community to community depending upon the affiliations of those in power. Events like Pakhtun army man Ayub Khan awarding transport licences to members of his community in the 1960s resulting in a long term transport monopoly by the Pakhtun community illustrate this. Similarly, in the 1970s Sindhi feudal Bhutto promotes Sindhi language and Sindhi presence in public sector positions and finally *Muhajir* military man Pervez Musharraf backs the MQM and pours funds into infrastructure development in *Muhajir* dominated Karachi in the early 2000s. This state-led patronage has assisted in the emergence of ethnic trade and service monopolies and the subsequent politicisation of ethnic identities.

Karachi's unholy trinity: Language, ethnicity and politics.

Karachi's post-Partition history is characterised by almost constant in-migration, developing ethnic trade and service monopolies and political marginalisation. This section discusses the critical relationship between language, ethnicity and politics and its role in contestation, spatial demarcation and socio-political dominance in Karachi today, using the *Muhajir* community as a point of reference in the emergence and evolution of ethno-political identities in the city.

The *Muhajir* community today can broadly be defined as first-wave Muslim migrants and their descendants, who originated primarily from urban centres in India's Uttar Pradesh, Central Provinces, Hyderabad Deccan, Rajasthan and Gujarat, essentially Hindu majority provinces at the time of Partition. Hence, this is a community that is comprised of a diverse array of ethnic sub-groups. Their commonality at the time of their migration and settlement in Karachi was a shared Islamic faith; Urdu as the *lingua franca* of the Indian Muslim community, and a political conviction in the Pakistan Movement, the political movement spearheaded by the All-India Muslim League to demand a homeland for Indian Muslims once the British withdrew from India. Hence,

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the community's inception and cohesion was based on broad religio-political and linguistic similarities.

In the early stages of settlement in Pakistan, the label *Muhajir* was used as an official description of a 'situation' rather than as a reference to the identity or place of origin of these refugee communities. The *Muhajir* community's post-Partition access to political power, public sector institutions and economic opportunities was increasingly curtailed by various local power players coupled with the arrival of newer migrant groups. This engendered a growing sense of both physical and political marginalisation resulting in the community resorting to the form of ethno-political identification common in Karachi, namely the emergence of the *Muhajir Quami Movement* (MQM) in 1984. Gone was the image of the landless, bedraggled refugee community to be replaced by a politically active, cultured, Urdu-speaking urban middle-class, Pakistan's so-called fifth ethnicity (Ahmed, 1998). This was now a community demanding political recognition alongside Pakistan's four acknowledged ethnic groups – Balochis, Pakhtuns, Punjabis and Sindhis – each identified by a distinct language(s), culture and political representation. Hence their re-imagining as a cultured, Urdu-speaking, urban middle-class political entity has been critical to describing and mapping Karachi's ethno-political fault lines.

Associated with these social characteristics of the *Muhajir* community are certain tangible, spatial features such as the political party office and the religious building. These communal institutions not only provide a means of community building and identification, but can also act as socio-spatial proxies indicative of a community's presence and activities within an urban environment (Waterman and Kosmin, 1988).

Language

Urdu is a language with a significant political history, often considered to be a pidgin or Creole (i.e. mixed in its origin) language developed in the military encampments of the Mughal army, enabling soldiers of diverse ethnic backgrounds – Turks, Persians, Arabs, Indians etc. – to communicate. Its vocabulary borrowed from local languages such as *Hindvi/Dehlavi* as well as from Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Contrary to this, Rahman (2011) argues that whilst Urdu and Hindi share the same *Hindvi/Dehlvi* roots, it was Mughal patronage of the language after the British replaced Persian with vernacular languages for official purposes that purged it of its Sanskrit vocabulary and pushed it

towards the 'Arabicise/Persianised' form it takes today both its script and the hybridity of its vocabulary so that it has become a symbol of the Muslim elite. With the politicisation of Muslim identity in the early twentieth century culminating in the Pakistan Movement, Urdu became more closely linked to Indian Muslim nationalism through its use in printed religious and political literature (Rahman, 2011).

Post-Partition, language has become a politically contentious issue in Pakistan; Urdu was installed as the national language across both West and East Pakistan (subsequently Bangladesh) despite the numeric dominance of Bengali-speakers, resulting in recurring protests in Dhaka from 1952 until Bengali was given official language status in East Pakistan in 1956. Subsequent language related policies include the compulsory teaching of Sindhi in schools and colleges and its recognition as an official language on a par with Urdu in Sindh in 1972, Sindh being the only province where Urdu-speakers were in the majority. These state-sponsored initiatives resulted in the language riots where Urdu-speaking communities, encouraged by the Urdu press, protested. The *Muhajir* community consider their Urdu-speaking heritage as a badge of honour, indicative of their commitment to and sacrifice for Pakistan whilst the native communities see it as a mark of *Muhajir* foreignness. Thus this linguistic difference has become a means of differentiating between the sons of the soil (Ansari, 1995) and new migrants. This clash of cultures has only increased with time and the role of language in this discourse has only become more contentious in the way in which it provides a form of self-identity as well as a way to establish status, as has been the case with other migrant populations elsewhere in the world (Kershen, 2000).

The fact that Urdu remains the language of the *Muhajireen* to the present day is illustrated by census statistics (1998) where only 7.57% of the total population claimed Urdu as their mother tongue in contrast to 48.52% of Karachi's population claiming the same. Further analysis of census data shows that Urdu-speaking communities appear to be concentrated in two of Karachi's five districts, i.e. districts Central and East (Figure 01a). This is one of the first indications for the continuing spatial clustering of the community within Karachi.

Institutional Politics

As the discussion thus far has shown, in Pakistan, language and ethnicity are intimately connected, and this link has been exploited for political purpose as Table 1 shows through the implementation of state-sponsored policies. With regard to party politics in Karachi ethno-linguistic solidarities are further exploited. Two broad categories of political parties exist; mass-based parties - both religious and secular - and ethnicity-based parties. In Karachi even mass-based secular parties like the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) exhibit an ethnic bias hence until recently, Sindhis and Balochis voted primarily for the PPP; amongst many other such ethnic affiliations, *Muhajir* communities have historically voted for the Muttahaida Quami Movement (MQM) since the party's foundation (Hasan, 2005). In recent times, Karachi has seen the aggressive re-emergence of various right-wing Sunni groups like the Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), where the PST is looking to break into the *Muhajir* vote base whilst the JI are in the midst of a violent attempt to reclaim the *Muhajir* vote bank they lost in the 1980s.

By reviewing electoral results from 1988 to 2008, a consistent pattern emerges that shows a concurrence between linguistic concentrations and voting patterns; the city's Central and Eastern districts[ii] not only show a majority Urdu-speaking households but consistently vote overwhelming for the MQM (See Figure 1b). This seems to reinforce the notion that in Karachi there has been a transformation of ethno-linguistic solidarities into urban geopolitical ethnic identities.

The MQM's physical political presence in many of the city's areas can be mapped too due to the party's unique three-tier structure. This consists first of Nine Zero, their nation-wide headquarters located in Azizabad, a middle-income neighbourhood in Karachi's District Central. Under the headquarters are twenty-six citywide sector offices, each overseeing eight to ten unit offices embedded within the neighbourhood they serve. The bottom tier comprising Unit offices is of particular interest to this study; their location within neighbourhood streets is indicative of political activity at that scale, where political activists are youths from the area who therefore possess a familiarity and access to both space and information The locations of these Units within the city showed that the highest concentrations existed in Karachi's districts Central and East exhibiting similar patterns to those shown earlier through linguistic mapping and electoral results (Figure 01c).

Religion

Language and political affiliation provide the broad strokes of community definition in Karachi, as can be seen from the number of religious groups with a political presence in the previous section. Religion too plays a significant role in the definition of a community. In the context of the *Muhajir*, amongst the various sects within the Islamic faith, two are of particular interest; the Shi'a and Barelvi communities. The former is the second largest denomination in Islam and is mainly comprised of the followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law and the fourth Caliph, and the latter community practices a form of Sunni Islam that was founded in the north Indian city of Bareilly by Ahmed Raza Khan. It is important to note that whilst the *Muhajireen* are not the only practitioners of these schools of belief in Karachi, prior to Partition, both sects had large followings in the regions from which the *Muhajireen* originated. Hence, in Karachi today, many of those who subscribe to either the Shi'a or Barelvi schools of religious thought are of *Muhajir* descent (Jones, 2007; Robinson, 2014; Verkaaik, 2004). In the Islamic faith, due to the frequency of congregational prayers, religious buildings are a common neighbourhood feature and practicing Muslims generally reside close to a mosque catering to their particular denomination. Thus the analysis of the distribution of these particular religious institutions provides another source of information on the spatial patterning of the *Muhajir* community.

Mapping religious institutions for both the Barelvi mosque and the Shi'a place of worship, the *imambargah*, showed that - as was the case with linguistic and political clustering - the highest concentrations of Barelvi mosques and *imambargahs* were to be found in both districts Central and East (See Figures 01d and 01e). This firmly corroborates the findings of the linguistic analysis which suggests that the *Muhajireen* appear to be clustering in specific districts of the city despite the fact that the census data used is over fifteen years out of date.
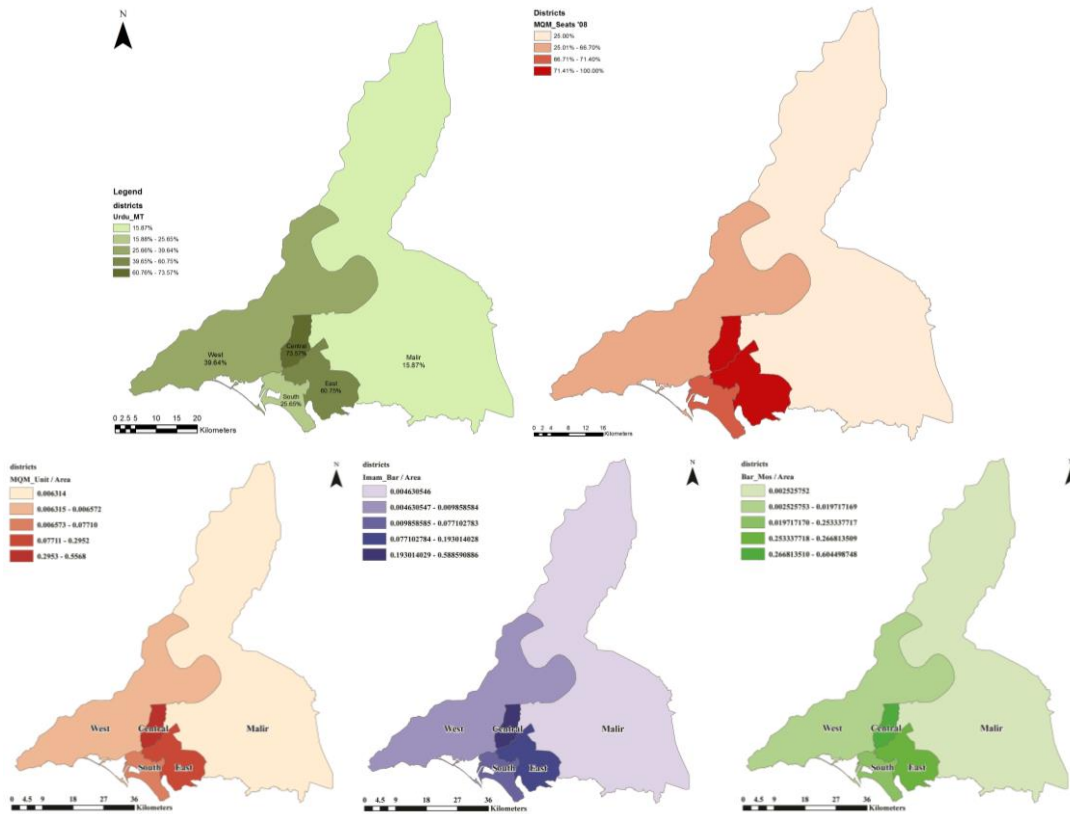
Figure 1
District-wise distribution of a) Urdu as a mother-tongue, b) Election results 2008, c) MQM Unit offices, d) *Imambargahs*, and e) Barelvi mosques. Sources: *Census Reports*, Government of Pakistan. Election commission reports accessed from www.ecp.gov.pk. Communal institutions mapped by the researcher for the years 2011-2013.

Establishment of a community: Distribution and clustering of communal institutions

Whilst the use of communal institutions and features such as language, MQM unit offices and Barelvi mosques and Shi'a *imambargahs* help to describe community concentrations at the district scale, these land parcels are large and municipal boundaries lack the nuances required to illustrate actual community clusters. Hence in order to identify specific community clusters, geographical information system (GIS) analysis is used to statistically capture measurable clusters of features or activities that

can be attributed to *Muhajir* population communal activities. It is important to point out that by using these communal institutions as socio-spatial proxies to locate the community in the city today in the absence of reliable ethnographic data, it is also possible to illustrate the intimate connection between ethnicity and politics through their spatial overlaps.

A few things should be noted at this point; first that the community continues to occupy the localities in which they originally settled shortly after arrival in the city as outlined in the years 1947-58 in Table 1 whilst simultaneously colonising newer adjoining localities. Secondly, many of the neighbourhoods exhibiting the highest concentrations of *Muhajir* communal institutions shown in Figure 2 were high density, lower-middle income localities that repeatedly came up in news reports as centres of *Muhajir* agitation and major MQM activity; i.e. Liaquatabad, Golimar and Lines Area. Finally, there is a noticeable absence of *Muhajir* identity-markers in the city's elite district to the south and the ethnically mixed informal settlements to the west. These features seem to suggest that in addition to State-sponsored marginalisation and inter-community contestation for public services, ethnic clustering, spatial proximity and economic characterisation have been partially responsible for the emergence of a group identity, defined by politics, language and close proximity within itself. The latter point is explored further in the following section.
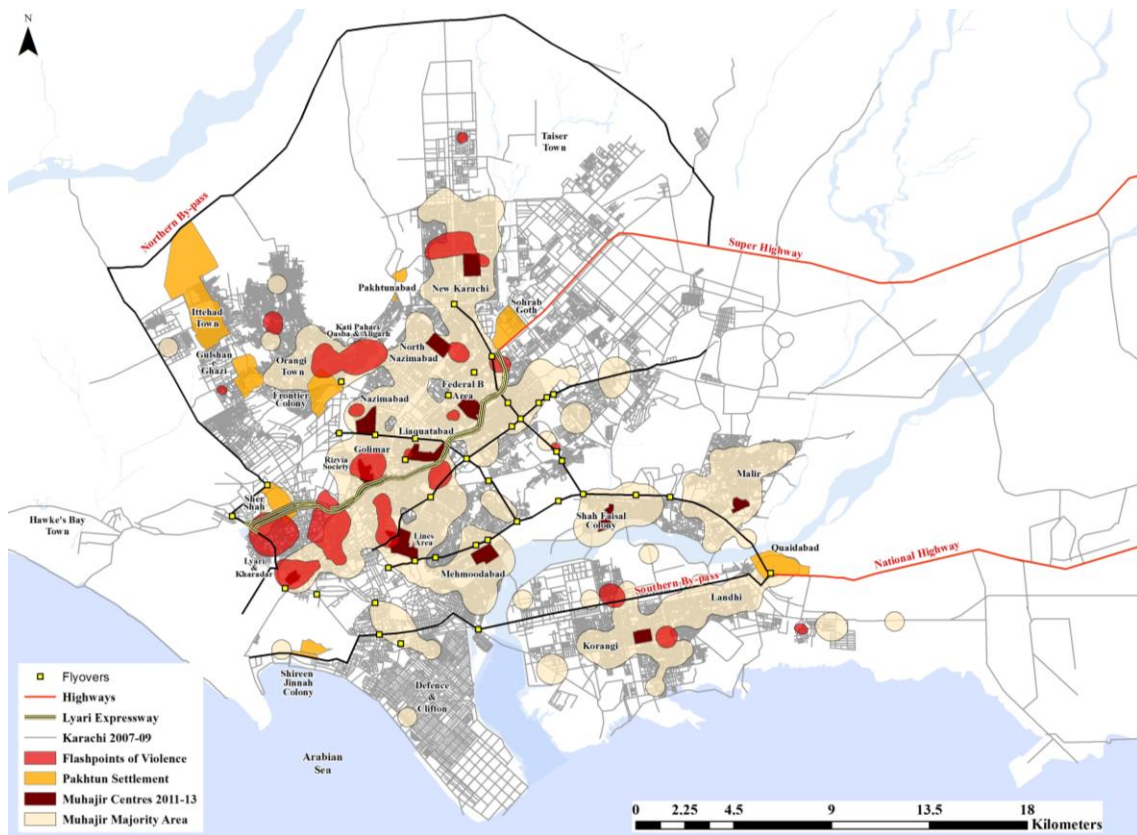
Fig. 2
Location of the *Muhajir* majority areas, *Muhajir* centres, signal-free corridors and flyover and underpass projects (Maher, 2013) as well as flashpoints of violent encounters between communities for the election period 1st may-31st July 2013.

Re-imagining a community: Political power, location and urban control

This section focuses on the relationship between spatial configuration, ethnic clustering and the strategic positioning of a community within the fabric of the city. In 2002, a new devolution plan was instituted at the City District level, replacing Karachi's five district structure with eighteen towns under which there were 178 union councils, each union council comprised of thirteen elected councillors. During this period MQM had the largest number of elected councillors of any political party in the City District Government, with this form of governance giving them more access to political power

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and funds than they had experienced since 1992. This resulted in a mushrooming of infrastructure development projects across the city.

Location of major thoroughfares

The nature of transport infrastructure in changing the spatial landscape of Karachi is an important element in tracing the spatial history of the *Muhajireen*. As part of the Karachi Masterplan 1974-85, two transport links were first proposed in 1968. The intention was to enable the rapid movement of people and goods between the port and Karachi's hinterland; the Southern and Northern By-passes (see Figure 2). This proposal, along with the masterplan itself was abandoned shortly after its inception, only to be revisited in 2001 when both were built along with the Lyari Expressway. The latter was initially proposed as an alternative to the bypasses. The eventual development of these transport links was part of a scheme to develop six signal-free corridors through Karachi. These proved to be highly controversial on several levels: firstly, by displacing a number of non-*Muhajir* communities living alongside the planned routes to more remote peripheral localities of the city (Taiser and Hawke's Bay Towns); and secondly, due to their consequential severance of previously connected central districts resulting in a noticeably uneven development in the city. Figure 2 highlights in particular the flashpoints of violence that occur in close proximity to the expressway.

Whilst these projects appear to be following the alignments of some of the city's busiest and longest thoroughfares connecting the centre and the port to the peripheries, they happen to be located primarily in the *Muhajir* majority areas found above, effectively connecting Karachi's peripheral *Muhajir* localities to its central stronghold. It should be noted that there has been limited intervention in the low-income, ethnically mixed settlements to the west of the city and the elite district to the south, with the bulk of the flyovers and underpasses required to facilitate these signal-free corridors being sanctioned and executed after 2005 when Karachi had a *Muhajir* mayor and MQM had a majority stake in the city government.

Location of major commercial centres

Whilst initial *Muhajir* residential areas and commercial activities were confined at first to the Old City Centre, as the city has grown and population densities have shifted,

newer commercial areas have emerged outside the city centre to cater to these changes. Unlike the commercial areas of the old city centre, many of the newer areas started as informal commercial areas. Through a long process that culminated in 2003, seventeen streets citywide were officially categorised as commercial; six major roads in phase 1 followed by eleven more in phase 2 (Anwar, 2010). Similar to the flyovers, this policy was implemented whilst Karachi had a *Muhajir* mayor and an MQM majority in the city government. Again as was the case with the major thoroughfares of the city, many of these streets are amongst the city's busiest thoroughfares, hence the logic of their selection for commercial activity seems obvious yet, the political advantage of the situation seems undeniable; of the seventeen streets that were commercialised, only two are to be found outside the *Muhajir* majority areas (see Figure 3). These outliers are both situated in the city's elite localities of Defence and Clifton, whilst there is a noticeable absence of planned commercialisation in the city's lower-income localities of Landhi and Korangi to the east and Orangi Town and Baldia to the west, the latter increasingly becoming areas of contention between the MQM and other ethnic and political groups active in these areas.
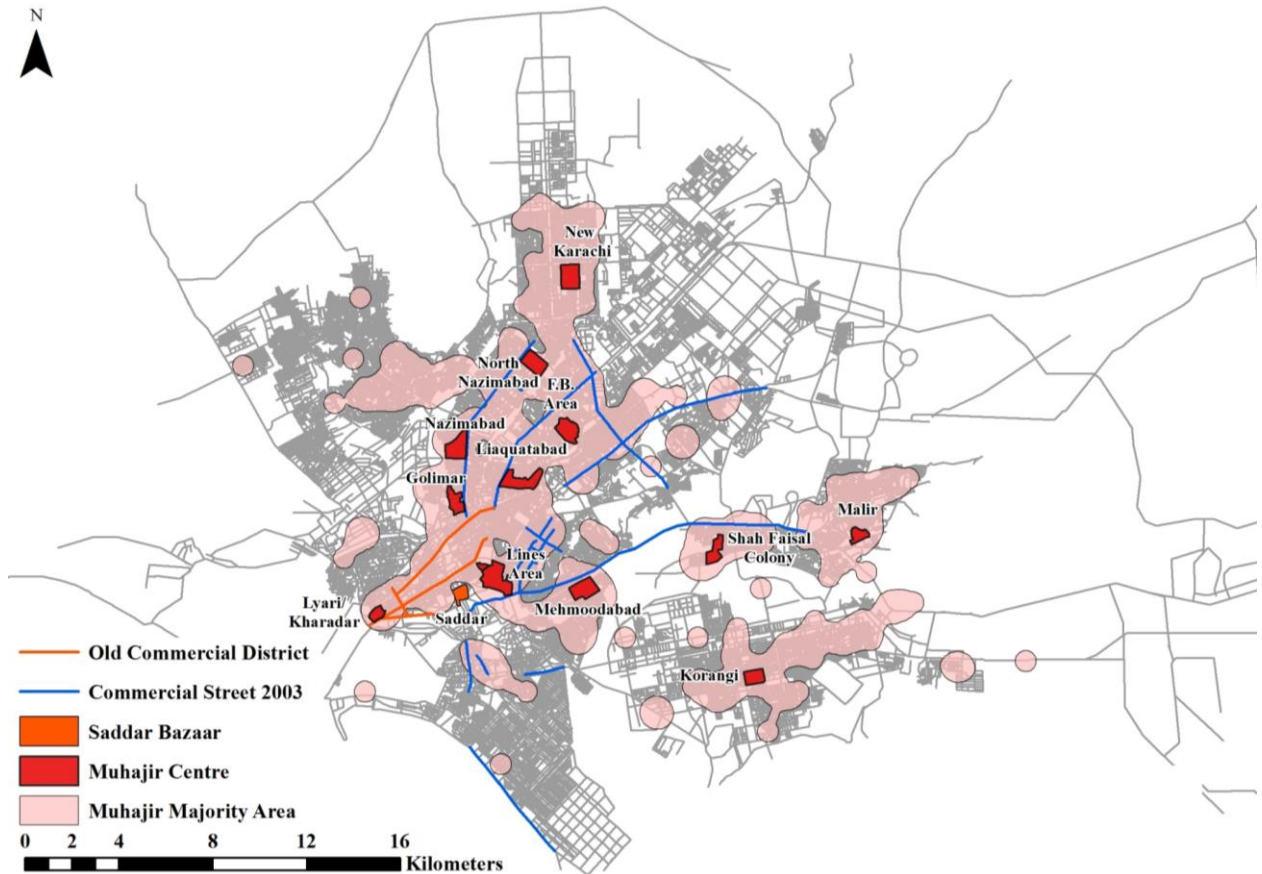
Fig. 3
Streets commercialised in 2003 overlaid on *Muhajir* clusters R1000m showing that these areas fall primarily into *Muhajir*/MQM jurisdiction (Anwar, 2010).

So who controls Karachi?

The analysis so far has highlighted two parallel processes: self-segregation by the *Muhajir* community and political and spatial marginalisation by the State, e.g. limiting access to public sector institutions by imposing a quota system that favoured a rural intake. Taken together, it seems evident that these processes have contributed to the ongoing, spatial concentration of the community in areas of the city, which has in turn helped sustain their spatial-political power in the city over the last thirty years. But this does not mean that they are the only influential ethno-political players present. The

contestation of political power along the city's myriad ethnic fault lines have led to conflict in focus points around the city, making Karachi a dangerous megacity.

As the city has grown and newer migrant groups have moved in, large sections of the peripheries have developed as informal settlements, housing new arrivals where the state has failed to provide accommodation. Thus many peripheral settlements are multi-ethnic and low-income areas. Karachi is a dangerous city where contestation of space and access to services has often resulted in violent encounters between communities in the form of bombings, targeted shootings and street clashes. Election time in the city is particularly volatile with competing ethnic groups and political factions targeting their rivals to ensure votes.

For the purposes of this chapter, bombings for the election year (1st Jan-31st Dec 2013) as well as shootings for three months around the general election itself (1st May-31st July) were recorded and their locations plotted. A GIS cluster analysis of these violent events, as seen in Figure 2, highlights particular flashpoints in the city. These include certain peripheral *Muhajir* localities whilst others are embedded deep within the *Muhajir* centre. On closer investigation of those targeted in these encounters and the perpetrators, Karachi's ethno-political rivalries can be seen being played out through violent urban street battles. Encounters between *Muhajir* and non-*Muhajir* communities (Pakhtun, Baloch and Sindhi) in places like Kati Pahari and Qasba Colony in the North West, and Shershah and Lyari in the east appear to be highlighted. Similarly, tit-for-tat shooting between rival *Muhajir* groups can be seen in New Karachi to the north, Lines Area in the centre and Korangi in the east. This seems to suggest that the MQM's political and physical strength wanes as distance from its political centre increases and that whilst MQM may claim to be the dominant *Muhajir* representative, there is significant challenge to their dominance posed from within the community.

Conclusions

What appears to have happened in Karachi over the course of the last sixty-five years is a process of inversion of power where a national minority has been able to control and transform the districts, in which it constitutes a majority group. This local dominance has been achieved through the combined impact of legitimate political processes and violent street presence. This urban geopolitical response, is in line with Vertovec's

description of migrant resettlement patterns, has often been attributed to their systematic marginalisation by the state. Nevertheless, it could be argued that this marginalisation was not a passive process of minority exclusion by the state. Notably, the creation of MQM by a second-generation *Muhajir* community represents a capturing of power by a previously fervently nationalistic community, reimagining itself in its current ethno-political incarnation after being disenfranchised by the state.

The *Muhajir* community dominates the dense urban centre of the city, controlling transport links, key urban nodes, and commercial and industrial sites. It is a political entity that is under threat at the peripheries of its domain by either rival *Muhajir* political representatives such as the Jamaat-e-Islami or MQM-H, or other ethnic groups eager for their piece of Karachi. This continuing contestation of power in the city can be said to show that political strength wanes as the distance from the political centre increases. Karachi's affluent residents in the southern-most areas of Defence and Clifton rarely vote consistently from one election to the next and, these areas are for the most part devoid of any ethno-political violence.

Allegra et al (2012) make a distinction between various types of so-called divided cities. They maintain that governance, decision-making and public policy are the points of distinction between city types, namely partitioned, contested and discrete cities. Whether it can be simply labelled as 'divided' is a moot point. Clearly Karachi is a city in a state of constant turmoil, where the distribution and access to services and opportunities is determined by community numbers and ethno-political clout and where urban space is contested daily by decisions relating to individuals making decisions on residential location as well as political powers determining urban policy. Despite repeated efforts by the State to limit their access to power and continuing challenges posed by other ethno-political factions, the *Muhajir* community continues to dominate Karachi both numerically and politically for the time being, despite their perception as a marginalised group. What this chapter has shown is how the reality on the ground of what might simply be described as a city in conflict, is in fact constructed by complex political-spatial processes.

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[i] At the time this study was carried out, from September 2011 to December 2015, Karachi was divided into 5 large administrative districts; districts Central, East, Malir, South and West. Published census and electoral data has been aggregated at this scale.

[ii] In the 2002 LG elections, MQM took 100% of the seats in District Central and 75% in district East, whilst in the 2008 LG elections they took 100% of the seats in both Districts.