



RESEARCH PAPER

Spatial Injustice in Shamsie's *Kartography*

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: July 30, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: October 25, 2021</p> <p>Online: October 27, 2021</p> <p>Keywords: Capitalistic Hegemony, City Space, Globalization, Spatial Cleansing, Spatial Injustice</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: hibbazainabzaidi@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Social space under postmodernism and wave of globalization have suffered in and its idealistic representations are lost and deteriorated which ultimately led to discursiveness in the lives of postmodern man, especially Karachiites. The boundaries of geographies play a significant role in shaping fates, biographies, social superstructures and shared collective histories of its residents. Considering this, Henri Lefebvre and Edward William Soja, argue that space is something which determines the living circumstances within the particular social framework and instigates and controls various societal happenings. City space of Karachi suffers from appalling distortions as a part of postmodern, globalized and capitalist world. By employing Lefebvre's idea of spatial triad and Soja's views of the trialectics of spaciality, this paper foregrounds how social space enforces spatial injustice and serves for the inculcation of spatial cleansing in the lives of inhabitants of urban space. Using Shamsie's <i>Kartography</i> as an interpretive tool for contemporary urban environment, this paper inquires the engrafting of spatial cleansing in the lives of Karachiites resulting in multiple standardization and segregation on the basis of living standards among different social strata. This research substantiates how in <i>Kartography</i>, Materialism nibbles the roots of social values and norms while sequentially administering Spatial Injustice in the lives of Karachiites. This paper proclaims the scarcity of execution of Spatial Justice in the lives of common people in this postmodern globalized capitalist era. This paper urges the possibility of a utopian urban space with enforced spatial justice where people can be saved from dilemmas of injustice and segregation, especially Karachiites.</p>

Introduction

Spatial injustice in the wake of globalization and capitalistic hegemony has led towards class segregation and spatial cleansing. Space is basically the product of economic, political, technical and strategic activities and can hardly be measured in quantitative ways. It is, in the real sense, the creation of society's social superstructure (institutions and state

itself), elements such as nature, labor, technology and knowledge, etc. and the structures like property and relations. Lefebvre (1991) states that social space is what “permits fresh actions to occur while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others” (p.73). Social space is not something that is determined rather it subsumes many things and places in it. It is something that allows fresh things to occur by using nature as its raw material. Lefebvre compares it with the concept of time and energy and declared the both to be identical and argues that none of them could be considered in isolation otherwise they will be mere illusions (p.12). In our daily life, we are required to face many social spaces and if we think that the growth and development of the society may abolish the pre-existing social space, it will be totally wrong as the global doesn't destroy the local. Similarly, with the passage of time, social spaces are imitated or we can say updated and upgraded according to the prevailing social circumstances and convert into a new social space. Different social spaces “attain their existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches and clusters of relationships” (p.86). It is because if we consider space in isolation, spaces are mere abstractions. They interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. No space ever decimates entirely leaving no trace behind. Taking his inspiration from Lefebvre, Edward William Soja also certifies the importance of city space and laments on the fact that we never find equality among different geographical spaces. He further asserts that “the socialized geographies of (in)justice significantly affect our lives, creating lasting structures of unevenly distributed advantage and disadvantage” (Soja, 2010, p. 20). Considering urban space as the determining factor, the paper elaborates how multiple standardization among people by society and its architecture, engrafts spatial cleansing in Karachiites' lives. The paper also explores how the evil of materialism is eroding the roots of basic social norms and values which ultimately enforce spatial injustice in the lives of Karachiites. When read through this viewpoint, *Kartography* (2002) seems to elaborate the role of city space efficiently just as Lefebvre contends that social space deals with all the circumstances which a human faces in his or her daily life (pp. 88-89). Social space shapes different events and the way they happen determining our lives within a social framework. It is something subject to continuous change depending upon the socio-economic and political scenario in which a person lives. Events do not just take place within a social space rather it often instigates and controls different phenomena happening within a society. Different factors such as economic exploitation, military and bureaucratic influence, culture, politicians and the political discourse and determine social space and the way it functions. Lefebvre further comments that “space is a social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the Living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure” (p.94). Thus, in Lefebvre's view point, social space is the key factor shaping our lives under the influence of socio- economic and political strata. It is what determines our social status and access to resources on which our lives depend. With the passage of time, the focus is shifting upon the significance of space and its influence on both, society and the human life and this is actually what this research is intended to foreground. This paper questions the existence of equality among different citizens of urban space and explores spatial cleansing and spatial injustice in the lives of Karachiites.

Lefebvre's himself defines city space as a space “which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period” (p.73) and strongly favors the notion that it is space that determines what we are going to do in our life span. All the facilities and circumstances which we enjoy in our daily life are dependent upon the three key factors that are: the social/societal, the temporal/historical, and the spatial/geographical. Extending Lefebvre's arguments, Edward William Soja (2010) argues

that during whole of our lives, we try to shape the spaces around us in which we live. Simultaneously, these spaces shape and affect our lives in multiple ways. We can't deny the fact that we are bound in our geographies and we can never escape these boundaries as we play a major role in the creation of our societies, biographies and even our shared collective histories (p.71).

Soja (2010) further documents and certifies a spatial turn toward thinking about the significance of space in shaping and conditioning human life. He argues that spatiality, temporality and social being can be viewed as the abstract dimension which together includes all features of human existence (p.70). Space as a physical context has produced expansive philosophical intrigue and lengthy discussions of its absolute and relative properties, its qualities as ecological container of human life, its objectifiable geometry, and its phenomenological substances. Space in itself might be primordially given, however the association, and importance of space is a result of social interpretation, change and experience. Soja, though, laments on the fact that we can never find perfect equality among different geographical spaces. There can never be an even development among different geographical spaces and no social process takes place uniformly over space just as every individual has different socio-historical development. He puts his emphasis on inculcation of spatial injustice in our geographies and histories due to the inequalities produced in result of uneven geographical distributions and social processes. The illustration of this idea can be found in *Kartography* as in the novel, it is efficiently depicted how the people living in different areas examine different inequalities and face different problems on the basis of their material standards. Soja believes that our socially produced geographies have distributional inequalities and spatial injustices engrafted in them. He argues that the city, space, society and state are interlinked, interdependent and interconnected when we imagine and envision an ideal city or what we call an ideal city space. For him both the spatial injustice and justice are "a conception of social justice in which geography matters in significant ways" (2010, p.75). In *Seeking Spatial Justice* (2010), Soja explores spatial (in)justice (the term refers to both justice and injustice collectively) by stating that in this postmodern world, "[j]ustice and Injustice are infused into the multiscalar geographies [...] from the intimacies of the household to the uneven development of the global economy" (p.20). He declares that the "space is filled with politics and privileges, ideologies and cultural collisions, utopian ideals and dystopian oppression, justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation" (p. 103) and further claims that "we make our geographies, for good or bad, just or unjust, in much the same way it can be said that we make our histories" (p. 105). In today's postmodern world, Soja argues, everything has become materialistic under Capitalism and the postmodern cities have become only the source of sowing in capitalistic thoughts upon the social space; they have become "the control point of the reproduction of capitalist society in terms of labor power, exchange, and consumption pattern" along with its previous role as "the center for industrial production and accumulation" (p.95). He claims that at every standard of life, from the worldwide to neighborhood, the spatial association of society was being rebuilt to meet the earnest need of private enterprise in crisis to open up new chances for super-profits, to discover better approaches to keep up social control, to accelerate better production and utilization (p. 34). Hence, from Lefebvre's idea of social space, Soja reclaims the importance of space in individual's life and blames the current wave of capitalistic hegemony and globalization for broadcasting spatial injustice in the lifespan of everything whether it's living or non-living. Seeing these notions in the literary portrayal of Karachi

City and the lives of its citizens, what this paper asks is if in this postmodern world it is possible to administer spatial justice in the lives of inhabitants of any city with a particular focus on the lives of the Karachiites in relation with the city space they possess or dispossess in certain instances.

Situated in this revitalization in the nature of postmodern city space, Kamila Shamsie in *Kartography* (2002) depicts the decaying nature of Karachi's city space. As the matter of fact, Karachi's social space is the best example of discursive postmodern space for its being in transition since 1947, the creation of Pakistan. Karachi has faced so much socio-economic and political influence that no other city in Pakistan can be compared to it. Especially after the creation of Bangladesh as an independent country, Karachi, as the immigrant's favorite city suffered a lot. Whether it is in the form of ethnic crisis or the forceful control of land mafia, whether it is target killing or political conflict between two religious, political or religio-political parties, whether it is the injustice based on the difference of ethnicity or on the basis of class structure, Karachi's social space has been highly affected in this fragmented scenario. In a city full of multiple ethnicity and various class structures, Karachi has witnessed the phenomena of deterioration which has generated different boundaries among different make ups of human life in the city. It has challenged all previous meta-narratives existing in the lives of common citizens whether religious or political.

Degeneration of Karachi's postmodern city space is efficiently highlighted in *Kartography* as the novel opens with the severe condition of law and order in Karachi that snaps with the turmoil of Pakistani political scenario. It reveals the insecurities that the Karachiites have about the safety of their children. They want their children away from the city just to keep them safe from the terrible, unpleasant and fatalistic conditions of the city. They want to see a better, safer version of Karachi away from all kinds of evil that exists on Earth. The background of all this goes back to the days of 1971 when East Pakistan got separated from West Pakistan and became an independent country, Bangladesh. It was not a simple division of a country; it was the division of a single nation into two. The novel reveals about the psyche, thoughts and reactions of people from both parts of Pakistan and depicts that the history of this crisis of law and order situation in Karachi city goes far back to the 1971 separation and the current scenario is one of its many aftermaths. Shamsie here presents how the division of the social space marks a long lasting impact upon the lives of people and influences the future of other social spaces causing spatial injustice with its citizens. The protagonist Raheen declares Karachi's city space as a "Spider-plant city" (p. 3) which engulfs everything. Karachi is the city that welcomes multiplicity in terms of ethnic, linguistic or religious identities and, like postmodern, challenges the previously built social, religious and political structures.

The lack of freedom to go anywhere in the city and do whatever you want to is also one of the major elements of discursive nature of postmodern city space. People are not allowed to follow their own will. They are bound to their own geographies. Raheen, during her trip to Rahim Yar Khan, comments that it is very weird but true that she had never walked in the streets of Karachi (p. 29). She never got that much space to walk around as she gets in Rahim Yar Khan. She criticizes that the lives of Karachiites are full of marginalization that their "Life compressed into houses and cars and private clubs and schools and gardens too small to properly hide in"(p. 29). The inhabitants face spatial inequity in Karachi and throughout their lives they seek freedom; freedom to live, freedom

to walk on the road, freedom to enjoy the space, the environment, and in a nutshell, freedom to stay happy and prosperous. Bonding with the city and its places are of great importance in a life of humans. City is what gives us our values, our traditions and determines our ways of living. It is our cities that basically define our identities and discriminate us from other. Factors like affiliation with the city architecture, sense of personal space and an essence of living creates a sense of belongingness and generates a person's urge to live in it. *Kartography* discloses the bitter fact that Karachi's social space is not welcoming and absorbing new changes in it. The fact that Karim is born in Karachi and has spent all of his life in the same city doesn't make him a Karachiite. Karachi's space should have absorbed and reciprocated its inhabitants' identities but due to the spatial crisis of the city, Karachi's urban space as being the postmodern city space, fails to create a contextualized and situated identity for Karim and he still remains a Bengali even after so much affiliation with the city.

The metaphor of roots is efficiently presented in the novel as it is our roots which determine our social space. Our roots are basically our bonding with our predecessors and our forefathers. As we inherit different things from our predecessors, we also inherit their social space which they created for themselves and used to live in. We simply have to adopt that social space and make certain changes according to our requirement as Lefebvre (1991) states that these social spaces "attain their existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches and cluster of relationships" (.86). The problem arises when someone tries to destroy the pre-existing social space. In the novel, the whole mess is because the current social space is forcing Karim's family to leave Karachi just because of inheritance of Bengali identity. They are pushed to leave Karachi's city space in which they have lived throughout their lives and become a victim. Instead of embracing them into itself, the space is trying to kick them out where as people like Karim resist any such attempt. The space is playing the opposite role from its prescribed one and thus, doing injustice with them by excluding them from its citizenship.

Another element of enforcing spatial cleansing upon Karachiites is ethnicity as Shamsie claims that even after so many years of partition of Indo-Pak Subcontinent, Karachi has not adopted the immigrants or so called Muhajir community as its citizens which is the greatest injustice done with them by space. They are still others, the strangers, the *Muhajirs* and are facing abstraction upon various levels. As in the novel, Uncle Asif, a character representing the feudal in the country, opposed Zafar's arguments about land reforms and argues that the *Muhajir* community is unable to understand their feelings and affiliation with their lands. He comments that they had moved to Pakistan at the time of Partition and left their homes and the land behind so they have "no understanding of ties to a place" (Shamsie, 2002, p.39). He, by this notion, declares that the immigrants have no bonding with space and they can't even imagine the relationship between natives and the social space. This idea of segregation leads the immigrants to the identity crisis and inferiority complex that ultimately results in a spatial cleansing of that community. Even the psyche of the Muhajir community is highly affected as they face marginalization at each and every level which is the root cause of spatial cleansing in the lives of the *Muhajir* community as they still remain the outsiders in Karachi's social space. Another instance is when Raheen, after knowing all about the differentiation of *Muhajirs*, thinks how someone who is born in Karachi, got married in Karachi with a Karachiite, and even brought up his daughter in Karachi can be a *Muhajir*. Even the dilemma is that the daughter who was born in Karachi and her parents are also Karachiites, is considered as an immigrant. She further thinks "if

I told them Karachi was my home just as much as it was anyone else's, would they look at me and think: another Muhajir" (p. 41). Here lies the actual problem that space is not adopting them and doing spatial segregation. Karachi's society is not ready to consider them as their own and even after so many sacrifices and problems, *Muhajirs* are still others and they will remain others under this postmodern spatial injustice. The cleansing is being continued under capitalistic motives in order to spread globalization but for that, Karachiites are destroying their own social space and damaging their own historical and geographical elements. This is what I am concerned about in this paper how the spatial cleansing is being done with Karachiites and what they actually feel about it.

Kartography also highlights another societal disease named as feudalism as the mean of spatial cleansing. Even the law is supporting the injustice prevailing under this landlordism. The land has been sold to the person who doesn't have any affiliation and does not even know anything about its history and the local customs and traditions of that land. The dilemma is that those who have affiliation and have their own history linked with that particular land are bound for the permission of the land owners or feudal. One can even find the foregrounding of spatial cleansing in the title of the novel *Kartography*. It is basically derived from the word cartography which is the name of art of mapping but as the novel deals with the socio-political scenario of Karachi city space only, Shamsie has written it with K instead of C. Shamsie herself has done cleansing based on the identity of Karachiites and mentions that she is only talking about Karachiites and she herself supports the act of spatial injustice by excluding rest of the nation and other urban spaces of Pakistan. She is the one who has to create the social space in the novel and she has done discrimination as Soja also (2010) asserts that there can never be a perfect equality between different geographical spaces (p.72). Throughout the novel, the story revolves around Karim's passion to be a cartographer in future as he says "I'm going to be a map-maker" (Shamsie, 2002, p.23). Later on, the reader observes Raheen's irritation due to Karim's interests in the names of different roads and streets of Karachi. Even when Karim leaves Karachi for London, he makes a map from his house to the airport (p.112). He even remains curious about Karachi's streets and their names after settling in London. This mapping is not that simple as it seems to be but is basically the framework on the basis of which spatial cleansing is being done in the city. People are segregated on the basis of the living area and streets and the boundaries of the maps determine the social fate of the people and provide the description of lifestyle they are having in that particular space. By showing her lack of knowledge about streets, Raheen presents her ignorance about the social circumstances of that area which is itself a kind of spatial injustice done by Raheen with the lower class as a member of elite class. She also asserts that "This map was Karachi's opposite." (p.131). She declares maps to be disdain and useless as they depicts the opposite of the city and comments that "the maps did nothing but irritate me" (p.131). Here it is not the map which irritates her; it is the distortion and segregation shown in the lines of maps that disturbs her. The maps are the organized form of spatial cleansing and she doesn't want to face the bitter realities of postmodern social space of Karachi.

The greatest example of spatial cleansing in the history of Karachi city happened in 1971's partition and in the creation of Bangladesh about which Zafar, Raheen's father, in his letter to Maheen, Karim's mother states that "Pakistan is died in 1971." (p.312) and "is buried in the battle fields of 71" (p.313). He comments that Pakistan has two wings: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. West Pakistan has absorbed the Bengali culture, norms, language, history and even everything in it. How can we even think of everything being okay

after the separation of East Pakistan? He further criticizes that in what capacity Pakistan could exist even after we have distorted that picture first by guaranteeing the segregation and minimization of Bengali community, both politically and financially, and then by responding to their requests for more noteworthy rights and representation with demonstrations of brutality? In what manner would Pakistan be able to exist when the entire thing is gone and we are left with a section? (p.312). All this perfectly presents the dilemma of social space and how the Karachiites built the basic structure of spatial cleansing of Bengali community and later themselves became victim of the very structure that created spatial injustice.

Capitalism has also created the margins between different societal structures on the basis of facilities which they used to enjoy. It has generated multiple boundaries based upon certain materialistic facts that cause spatial injustice in various sections of society. Spatial injustice, not simply refers to the unequal distribution of geographies of big or small house, it is also linked with the access of the people to the common needs of life such as water, electricity, roads, food, business or job opportunities, law and order, etc. The point is that if a person has a house to live in, it does not mean that he/she has got spatial justice. Maybe space is doing injustice with him or her in other way even within that house. Maybe he suffers from load shedding or problems in the water supply. Maybe he doesn't get proper food or facing many difficulties in settling his business in this capitalistic environment in which money decides what to do and what will happen next.

Shamsie's portrayal of different incidents strongly favor the above-mentioned arguments. One of the many events is when Zia's car is stalled in Mehmoodabad which is basically a lower class area with full of criminals and riots too. The novelist, through the character of fake-Nike man who helps them in restarting Zia's car, foregrounds how the people from the lower social structures are manipulated by the ruling class. This incident is full of satire and criticism upon the postmodern society and unequal distribution of money that ultimately leads class consciousness which results in spatial injustice. The man even judge their class and area of residence from their car and dressing and calls them "Burgers" (p. 174). He admits that he is a car thief but on the contrary he declares that he will not snatch their car because a girl is with them and "These are unsafe times." (p. 174). Here although this thing favors them but here the manipulation of male members of society is depicted. The thieves consider it wrong to rob a girl on the road considering her a weak and dependent person while they consider it okay to rob a man or a boy as they are strong and independent. This idea represents how spatial abstraction is done on the basis of gender and leads to injustice in the lives of male members of society. Later on, the man tells them that he could rather be a civilized civil servant instead of being a car thief if the quota system in the government sector doesn't exist in Karachi. Even Karachi is a place full of immigrants but still this quota system in the province builds the differentiation among Karachiites especially for Muhajirs. It creates the "absurd urban-rural divide" (p.176) for the allocation of government jobs. He criticizes that due to the financial crisis and marginalization, people are taking difficult decisions. As he says that "QOUTA SYSTEM FORCES NICE MAN TO MARRY WOMAN WHO SINGS LIKE GOAT. It'll start a revolution"(p.177). It seems to create humor in the text but it shows how the quota system forces man to do what he actually doesn't want to do and this enforcement becomes a kind of spatial segregation that results in spatial injustice.

Another instance of Capitalism doing injustice is highlighted in *Kartography* where Raheen is distressed after the muddiness of all of their sports week in the end of their previous year in school. She criticizes the common observation of different social structures of society and comments that "And they say the elite aren't affected by what's happening in the city" (p.77). She not only mentions the space which is not doing justice and forces them not to enjoy their sports' week, she also foregrounds the inequality and injustice done by other sectors of society and criticizes the common thought that the elite class doesn't have to face any of the cities riots and their impacts. Shamsie efficiently reveals the truth that capitalism and the deterioration in the social structure affect all the society's fabrics without any discrimination based on money and power and belonging from high class does not mean that they are prevented from the current social scenario and are enjoying spatial justice in their lives. This argument supports Lefebvre's idea of spatial triad in which Lefebvre suggest that the perceived and conceived space is very much different from the space which is actually lived and the lived one "overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects"(Lefebvre, 1991, p.39).

Capitalistic injustice can also be observed in the depiction of the family background of Sonia. Karim says that she is "from a conservative family" (Shamsie, 2002, p.80) upon which Zia argues that "They're just not like us" (p.80). The common thought about Sonia's father is that his means of earning money are suspicious. None of Karim, Zia and Raheen's parents knows her father and uncle or anyone from her family. Basically no one knows her family background because of which everyone assumes that there is something wrong in their sources of earning. Her house is also decorated in a very weird manner and about that Zia used to say that all this decoration is possible when you have money "except good taste." (p.81).He calls it "Horror House" (p.80). The thing is that it is not the matter of decoration of house; it is mainly the distinction from which Sonia's family is suffering due to their unknown background in the city. All of this is not about appearance of Sonia's house, it is about the spatial practice which is, according to Lefebvre, the basic perceived idea about space in which we lives (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). They simply do not perceive this kind of house and because of their anonymous background and earning source; Sonia's family does not meet the requirements of the perceived space of elite class and are being segregated even after having money, power. The social structure is not considering them to be the lawful member of elite class; they are being discriminated because of which injustice is being prevailing in their lives.

Postmodern era forces everyone to indulge in the struggle of fulfilling their materialistic concerns. Today, everyone is running after money without bothering whether the means of earning are lawful or not as Soja declares the spatial association of society was being rebuilt to meet the need of private enterprises in crisis (Soja, 1989, p. 34). Shamsie also depicts that children have adopted pauperizing as their profession. They used to stand on different public places like traffic signals, parks and hotels and ask people for money by cupping their palms. Just as in the novel, Shamsie presents the character of a beggar girl who repeatedly disturbs our protagonists on a lower class hotel. Here the category of hotel is shown in order to highlight class consciousness. In order to get rid of her, Zia shows her a hundred-rupee note and asks her that "If you stay away from us , and keep everyone else away from us until we leave, I'll give you this money after I've paid the bill" (Shamsie, 2002, p.263). And later on, it happens that the beggar girl even starts fighting with the balloon seller boy but doesn't let anyone go near them. The thing is that she wants money so she doesn't bother the inconvenience she had to face as the result of throwing the boy on the

floor. Shamsie also reveals the reason of Zia's harsh behavior with the beggars. He confessed that in his childhood, one of his Ayah tells him that he shouldn't trust any beggar and declares that:

Karachi is full of people in the employ of the beggar master, and they kidnapped children and lop off their limbs so that they can be effective beggars, pulling the heartstrings of passers-by. (p.262)

The role of space is again depicted here as it is the distortion in social space of Karachi who is responsible for his behavior with beggars. Social space is affecting the psyche of children in Karachi and this dilemma is being registered just because the people are blindly running after materialistic concerns and becoming class conscious which ultimately results in causing spatial injustice in Karachi's urban cityspace directly or indirectly.

The text perfectly reveals different ways of spatial segregation and how the spatial injustice is being registered in the lives of common people. What this paper asked was how narratives work *Kartography* unveils the literary portrayal of Karachi's city space and highlights the injustice prevailing in Karachiites' lives. The paper asserts that it is almost improbable to enforce spatial justice in this postmodern scenario as everyone is following their own materialistic pursuits without bothering about the basic societal norms and values. The impact of postmodern materialism and its pursuit can easily be traced in the role of city space as the major determining factor in our lives. City space shapes our identity and determines our acceptance in city's socio-cultural structure. Using Shamsie's *Kartography* as an interpretive tool for contemporary urban environment, this paper inquires the engrafting of spatial cleansing in the lives of Karachiites resulting in multiple standardization and segregation on the basis of living standards among different social strata. This research substantiates how in *Kartography*, Materialism nibbles the roots of social values and norms sequentially administering Spatial Injustice in the lives of Karachiites. This paper proclaims the scarcity of execution of Spatial Justice in the lives of common people in this Postmodern Globalized Capitalist era.

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