

**Mapping Environmental Criminology in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner*  
and *The Spinner's Tale***

Thesis

In partial fulfillment of Master's Degree Program for Department of English for Languages and  
Literature

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**Title of Thesis: Mapping Environmental Criminology in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale***

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, “**Mapping Environmental Criminology in Omar Shahid Hamid’s *The Prisoner and The Spinner’s Tale***”, is entirely my own carried out under the supervision of Dr. Hafiz Abid Masood. I declare that the work is original and has not been published previously in any journals or for any higher education institution. I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where reference is acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Afaq Amin", is written over a blue horizontal line.

Afaq Amin

750-FLL/MSENG/F22

## **DEDICATION**

**To my baba Fazli Amin, and my mother Neelofar Malik**

**Thank you for your unwavering support and countless sacrifices.**

**I am who I am today because of your struggle and love.**

**Thank you so much!**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Mapping Environmental Criminology in Omar Shahid Hamid's <i>The Prisoner and The Spinner's Tale</i> .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Cartographic Features of Karachi: Visible and Invisible Sub(urban) Spaces..	17
Environment, Urban Spaces and Crime Patterns.....	30
Environmental Criminology and Carceral Spaces: State Oppression and Political Assassination .....	42
<b>Chapter Three: Spatial Dynamics of Crime and Violence in Omar Shahid Hamid's <i>The Prisoner and The Spinner's Tale</i>.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Urban and Sub(urban) Spaces and Violence.....	55
Political Institutions and Violence.....	62
Religious Institutions (Madrassas) and Violence.....	72
<b>Chapter Four: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Work Cited.....</b>	<b>86</b>

## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that crime and violence in Karachi are deeply intertwined within the city's spatial patterns and urban environment. It contends that criminal activities such as target killing, political engineering, corruption and religious extremism are not random occurrences but are shaped by specific (sub)urban spaces that include police station, slums, madrassas and political institutions. With reference to Omar Shahid Hamid's texts *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, I focus on the relationship between space, environment and crime. As one of my main research objectives has been to examine how sub(urban) spaces and environment facilitate criminal activities and foster violence within the built environment of the city of Karachi, I argue that systemic negligence, marginalization by the elites and subsequent social deprivation create such illegal spaces where crime emerges and infiltrates within the built environment. Such an environment facilitates criminals and provides them safe havens for their criminal activities. This thesis uniquely builds a nexus between space, environment, and crime in the context of Karachi's urban and suburban landscape. In each of its two chapters, by combining fictional works and theorists, I contextualize political and social spaces and their relation with environment which contribute to the proliferation of illicit activities and violence within the city of Karachi. I do so by grouping my main texts into two categories: 'cartographic features of Karachi relation with environmental criminology' and 'spatial dynamics and violence'. Whereas Chapter One focuses on different spaces of Karachi's urban and sub(urban) landscape which provide grounds for criminal activities taking advantage of environment, the later category, the focus of Chapter Two discusses the overlapping of violence with space and time which shapes different forms of violence

through various spatial temporalities. By linking the concept of spatiality with crime and environmental criminology, I examine the physical and social environments that shape criminal behavior and influence the occurrence of crime within the urban and sub(urban) spaces of Karachi. My thesis also explores a holistic approach that unravels the complex interplay between social structure, political power and environmental conditions which perpetuate systemic violence and marginalization within the urban landscape of Karachi.

**Keywords:** Karachi, spatiality, violence, environmental criminology, marginalization, spatial dynamics, socio-political spaces, manipulation, urban landscape.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

This thesis investigates the intersections of environment, spatiality and crime in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*. Taking cue from discourses surrounding environmental criminology and spatiality (Anderson 2010, 2017, 2019; Brantingham 1991; Soja 1989, 1998; Calvino 1983), I discuss how the built environment, urban and suburban spaces and spatial patterns influence and map crime and violence in the city of Karachi. I explore the way in which Hamid's fictional narratives describe various cartographic features of Karachi, specifically (sub)urban spaces, invisible city spaces, such as red-light areas and crime hotspots as well as secluded places such as Pathan madrasa, Hajji Hill or Pirabad Hill, where crimes emerge and are intercepted. I am particularly interested in the environment that facilitates the proliferation of criminal activities and criminal behavior. Drawing upon the fictional representation of Karachi in Omar Shahid Hamid's novels *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, which provide a vivid depiction of the (sub)urban geography of the city of Karachi and its spatial patterns, in particular illegal spaces that provide safe havens for criminal activities, I focus on how the metropolitan city of Karachi has continued to face many challenges related to terrorism, ethnic conflict, political insurgencies, street crimes, kidnapping and violent activities, perpetrated by political and crime mafias, and masterminding attacks. The selected fictional narratives represent different forms of violence (subjective as well as objective, as specified by Zizek) and criminal activities against the backdrop of a vivid landscape of Karachi city. I argue that physical and social characteristics of a location, and the architectural patterns can significantly impact an individual's decision to engage in criminal activity. In a similar vein, when a criminal selects a target within a specific environment, the decision is not arbitrary; rather, it is a calculated choice, influenced by various spatial dynamics. The criminal's decision-making is shaped by a combination of spatial factors and the victim's established routines, which collectively create a conducive environment for criminal activity.

Against this backdrop, this thesis uniquely engages with the idea of environmental criminology, which is also referred to as spatial criminology, in order to understand how physical and social spaces can impact the nature and patterns of crime and violence in urban areas. Largely, this discipline has helped the urban planners identify patterns that facilitate crimes in urban spaces, thereby contributing to the field of security. Extending these debates to marginalized suburban areas (such as red-light areas and invisible crime hotspots which are not part of the map of Karachi) as well as to different institutional spaces (such as police station, madrassas, offices held by political parties' heads and prisons), my research draws an intersection of violence, space, crime and environment to discuss how at times stare, law enforcement institutions and political parties also help perpetuating crimes in an intricate manner. Paul J. Brantingham's notion of mapping crime and environment is useful in order to discuss the ways in which the environment cannot simply be taken as "a passive backdrop for criminal behavior; rather, it plays a fundamental role in initiating the crime and shaping its course" (4). Brantingham suggests that crime does not occur randomly but is instead shaped by an interaction between offenders, targets, and the surrounding environment. The design of urban spaces, land patterns, and even routine human movements create opportunities for crimes by influencing offender's decision-making. For instance, poorly lit streets, abandoned buildings, unguarded parking lots, or overcrowded transit hubs are areas with low surveillance and may facilitate criminal activities because they offer concealment or easy escape routes. Conversely, well-monitored and organized spaces can discourage criminal activities and violence. Therefore, the physical and social environment actively facilitates or discourages crime by influencing offender decisions. These areas can function as crime generators (places where large crowds unintentionally create opportunities for theft or disorder) or crime attractors (locations deliberately sought out by offenders, like drug markets).

Here, Martin A. Anderson's theorization of environmental criminology, especially the geometry of crime, is also useful in understanding how an individual is "most likely be victimized in those places where they spend most of their time. This is one reason why some people suffer from

repeat victimization" (57). With reference to Karachi, my argument corroborates Anderson's views that routine activities of an individual create opportunities for committing a crime and this is further facilitated by "suitable target-rich environments" (58). This is precisely where crime and spatiality intersect. In order to have a better understanding of criminal incidents, one must consider the specificities of place and space, something I call spatio-temporal dimension of crime and violent activities, as I discuss with reference to Hamid's narratives which highlight the critical interplay between spatial dynamics and the execution of such violent acts.

Hamid's fictional narratives have often been discussed in relation to space and spatiality. The most significant critical studies include "Spatial Manipulation in Karachi: A Postmodern Marxist Study of Hamid's The Prisoner" (Zaidi 2024), "Crime and its control in Karachi An analytical study" (Chohan 2019), "Spatial legibility: A study of the Interaction between the selected Characters and Karachi in the Works of Omar Shahid Hamid and Samira Shackle" (Kalsoom 2024) and "Structural Violence and Societies of Fear in Hamid's "The Prisoner" and Tanweer's "The Scatter Here is Too Great" (Khalid 2025). The unpublished dissertation include, "Strategizing Violence: An Anarchist Perspective on Omar Shahid Hamid's The Prisoner and The Spinner's Tale" (Hafeez 2019) which engages with representation of the moral corruption and clash of non-state actors institutions with the state's machinery. These works mainly focus on either the underlying economic factors that foster marginalization in the city of Karachi or discuss the social and political structures informed by the neoliberal policies that lead to exclusive and inequitable social and cultural structures in the society. In contrast to these studies, my thesis uniquely focuses on the intersections of environmental criminology, spatiality and violence in order to have a deeper understanding of an interplay between spatial dynamics and the execution of crimes in specific environments within the city of Karachi. The concept of environmental criminology and spatiality offer an deeper understanding of the processes and architectural patterns that create an environment in which crime can be committed without being visible.

In order to draw a nexus between spatial dynamics of the city of Karachi, various forms of direct and slow violence and environmental criminology, I have divided this thesis into two chapters. In Chapter One, I discuss the cartographic features of Karachi by exploring urban and suburban areas and the way space plays a significant role in perpetuating criminal activities. Karachi has always been known as a city of lights but unfortunately, the city is also notorious for ever-increasing ratios of crime, fear and power struggles that influence its social-political landscape. Karachi is labeled as a dark city due to its spatial and temporal patterns – from skyscrapers to “the city’s famous slums” (Inskeep 233) – that enable criminal activities in urban and sub(urban)areas. By highlighting Karachi’s various social spaces and their environment, I particularly investigate how Hamid’s novel *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner’s Tale* depicts Karachi cartographic features, particularly slums, red light areas, political and religious spaces and urban areas that foster criminal behavior within the built environment. Drawing upon the notion of environmental criminology, spatial studies (Brantingham, Andreson, Soja), and Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, I demonstrate how Karachi’s spatial environmental factors contribute to persistent criminal patterns in the city. Furthermore, I discuss how urban and sub(urban) geographies are interlinked with crime in the context of Karachi’s urban landscape. Karachi’s urban structure is not just a physical space but is deeply intertwined with different forces such as social forces, politics, religion, environmental challenges and cultural influence. I contend that urban and sub(urban) spaces become a hotspot for criminal activities due to systemic neglect, poor administration, spatial injustice and flaws in urban planning. The city’s overpopulation and social inequalities foster an environment that disrupts social harmony.

For instance, the systemic neglect and spatial injustice in the urban and sub(urban) areas are driven by political elites and powerful economic interests who benefit from maintaining marginalized conditions. By providing poor infrastructure, lack of resources, education and health facilities, these actors push them towards deprivation into what Jonathan Raban calls “drop effect” (18), forcing individuals into harsh and marginalized situations. This marginalization fuels social injustice and disrupt societal norms and hierarchy. This systemic oppression flares up violence, criminal activities,

ethnic clashes and fuels gang violence within the society. Thus, against this backdrop, this chapter unravels various crimes, including: political manipulation, target killing, abduction, and street crimes.

Expanding on the themes in Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*, which portray Karachi's urban struggle, this thesis highlights how crime is deeply embedded in its political and social fabric and how the environment facilitates such criminal activities. The prevalence of gang culture, arms, street violence, madrassas and militant hubs and political interference all contribute to Karachi's entrenched culture of crime. Examining slum neighborhood and marginalized communities reveals that criminal behavior is not a natural act but politically and socially constructed and stems from multiple factors such as ethnic division, identity crises, lack of resources and religious extremism (Ahmar 1995; Siddiqui 2012; Crisis Group 2007; Rakisits 2015). This study particularly examines how environmental conditions in Karachi's urban and sub(urban) spaces facilitate crime, as depicted in Hamid's novel. Taking cue from the theories of environmental criminology, I examine the critical role of physical and social environment in shaping criminal behavior. Brantingham's framework of environmental criminology is useful in understanding that crime emerges from the intersection of four elements: offender, target, place and law. The convergence of these elements leads to a crime event. This study analyzes that crime does not occur randomly but follows a spatial pattern influenced by spatial dynamics, social engagement and urban design. In Karachi, crime occurs due to multiple reasons such as ethnic tension, political engineering, overpopulation and negligence on the part of law enforcement agencies. The dense population and social deprivation create an environment where criminal acts can be carried out easily without any detection. The lack of resources and social instability escalates such tensions by making urban spaces a fertile ground for illicit activities. Such criminals take advantage of the environment and use it for personal objectives like recruiting militants, gang wars, corruption, political manipulation and religious extremism.

My second chapter discusses the relationship between spatial dynamics and violence within Karachi's urban landscape. I discuss how violence overlaps with space and time which perpetuates violent activities. I explore how such spaces including: state institutions, urban and sub(urban) areas and religious institutions (madrassas) produce violence by using spatial-temporal patterns. These locations generate different forms of violence, which often converge during a specific event. By analyzing Hamid's novel, *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*, this thesis investigates how violence is depicted through overlapping spatial configurations and temporal framework by highlighting urban and sub(urban) spaces and the movement within such parameters. Here Slavoj Zizek's idea of objective and subjective violence, Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence are useful along with Brantingham and Andreson's environmental criminology. Nixon's concept of slow violence and Zizek's idea of violence demonstrate how different forms of violence emerge and intersect across different spaces and flare up violent activities in Karachi's urban landscape. Furthermore, I particularly investigate the connection between spatial dynamics and violence, focusing on how different spaces proliferate different acts of violence by taking advantage of spaces and environmental conditions. I contend that sub(urban) areas, such as slums and lower-class families, function as concealed spaces that are separated from the elite because of their social background, culture and economic conditions. This division causes racial discrimination and anxieties and ultimately shapes different forms of violence which I discuss using discourses surrounding slow violence, subjective and objective violence. Such violence is committed by the oppressors including: state institutions, religious leaders and sometimes the society elites. Here, I explore the process of slow violence which is deeply rooted in social structures and consequently results in social injustice. My special focus in this regard is on deprivation of poor communities' rights by the state, the role of madrassas in fostering slow violence to create tension and silent suffering within the society.

One significant focus of this chapter is the way Hamid's crime fiction foregrounds diverse forms of violence such as physical violence, assault, murder, verbal violence, inequality, and dominant power structures. Here, Slavoj Zizek's "Concept of subjective and objective violence" is

useful in understanding the complex interplay of individual actions and systemic forces in shaping the experiences of fictional characters and the broader social landscape, which I explore in this thesis. According to Zizek, “Subjective violence is the violence of the individual agent, the visible spectacular violence that we can easily identify, such as crime, terror, and war” (12). On the other hand, objective violence is “inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (8). Hamid’s narratives underscore the emergence of both kinds of violence, from direct criminal activities to violence such as policing, direct threats to the public, and assault in police stations. For example, in *The Prisoner*, law enforcement agencies employ brutal tactics to torture civilians within police station confines. This includes the use of abusive language, blackmail, and psychological torment, all of which occur in the oppressive environment of the police station. Likewise, Hamid’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale* depicts violence within police- controlled spaces, where the protagonist, Uzair Sufi experiences the repercussions of this violence as he navigates a world where police brutality shapes his identity and choices.

Hamid’s novel *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner’s Tale* illustrates Karachi’s urban sub(urban) environment, depicting how violence is intertwined with different spaces, ranging from abusive police conduct, political manipulation and religious activities which perpetuate ethnic conflict and religious extremism within the built environment. These spatial disintegration and social alienation generate both direct and hidden violence. Unlike urban violence and sub(urban) violence tends to be less visible which is embedded in social structure and language where offenders assert their power to control individuals through violence. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the interplay of spatial dynamics and the multifaceted manifestation of violence occurring within certain temporal contexts. Therefore, urban spatial-social design of the above-mentioned regions of Karachi helps in understanding higher levels of crimes and violence in certain spaces.

As Edward Soja in “Urban Geography and Crime” argues that “[t]he geography of crime is not just about where crimes happen, but also about how urban spaces are constructed and perceived,

influencing the actions of individuals with them" (89). Following Soja, I analyze the relationship between (sub)urban geography and crime because these spaces are not just physical entities but are also shaped by various dynamics such as, control and power, social and political dynamics, and multi-ethnic contexts. For example, Karachi is considered to be a multicultural space with different ethnic, multi-lingual groups and religious minorities. I show how social structures and networks in relation to ethnic and religious minorities are informed by stigmatization and physical environment, as Soja rightly points out, "[u]nderstanding crime requires an analysis of the spatial practices, where crime is not merely an act but a spatial phenomenon deeply embedded in the *urban fabric*" (56). This nexus of spatial dynamics and crime, is depicted by Hamid in *The Spinner's Tale*, in which the protagonist, Uzair Sufi, experiences manipulation, informed by various spaces, that include politics with college space, the depressing environment of the city, and the indoctrination experienced at the madrasa. Likewise, *The Spinner Tale* explores how the city's spatial configurations, such as the narrow alleyways and crowded markets, can both facilitate and hinder social interaction and crime behaviors.

Consequently, the city of Karachi can be imagined as a place of both hope and despair. The desires and fears that shape urban life are often reflected in the city's physical and social structures. This resonates with Italo Calvino's idea that "[c]ities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else" (44). Here, Calvino argues that cities are complex and multifaceted places that not only reflect the deepest desires and anxieties of the common masses but also of the criminals whether due to vulnerability or power dynamics. For example, in Hamid's novel *The Prisoner*, the protagonist's incarceration exposes his vulnerability, both physically and psychologically. He is forced to confront the harsh realities of prison life, where violence and intimidation are commonplace. Similarly, in *The Spinner's Tale*, the protagonist, Uzair Sufi finds himself stripped of his authority and is shown to be at the mercy of the system. This paradigm shift fuels his anxiety about the harsh reality of prison life and the uncertainty of his future.

## Statement of the Problem

The intricate relationship between environmental factors, violence, and criminal activities in the urban and suburban landscapes of Karachi has not been sufficiently examined despite extensive research on urban crime. My research aims to explore this underexplored nexus of space, environment, criminology and violence by drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Paul J. Brantingham's crime mapping, Martin A. Andreson's criminology, Slavoj Zizek's Theory of Violence, and Edward Soja's concepts of urban geography and spatiality. The research investigates the mechanisms through which environmental and spatial patterns contribute to criminal behavior in Karachi. By conducting a comprehensive textual analysis of Hamid's novels, *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, this study aspires to enhance the understanding of the complex interplay among environmental criminology, power dynamics, socio-political contexts, religious extremism, extrajudicial killings, and criminal activities prevalent in Karachi.

## Research Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between environmental criminology, violence and spatiality in Karachi, as depicted in selected texts.
2. To discuss the ways in which Karachi's invisible sub(urban) spaces facilitate criminal activities that foster terrorism and violence.
3. The relationship between spatial dynamics and various form of direct and indirect (slow) violence.

## Research Questions

This research addresses the following question:

1. How do the selected texts *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale* portray the interconnectedness of environment, crime, and spatiality within the urban context of Karachi?

2. In what ways the protagonists' journeys and experiences shape their perspectives on the relationship between environmental and spatiality criminology in Karachi?
3. How different forms of direct and indirect violence are informed by spatial dynamics within the city of Karachi?

## Methodology

Across two chapters, this thesis explores the relationship between environment, spatiality, violence and crime via qualitative textual analysis of Hamid's Novels *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*. Expanding on the theoretical framework of the relationship between social disorganization, environmental criminology and spatiality (Andreson; Brantingham; Soja), along with Zizek's Theory of Violence and Nixon's idea of Slow Violence and Calvino's concept of Invisible Cities, I focus on the ways in which spacio-temporal dynamics inform violence and criminal activities within sub(urban) and invisible crime hotspots in the metropolitan city of Karachi. In so doing, this thesis intervenes in expanding discourses surrounding environmental criminology in urban contexts to suburban contexts and invisible city spaces also. These suburban and invisible spaces add another layer of complexity to understanding crime spatiality. For this it was important to take into consideration spatiality theorists such as Soja, Calvino and Foucault who not only engage with physical architecture of the city but also discuss social, historical and political factors in understanding city dynamics.

## Significance of the Study

The novels offer a glimpse into the rapid urbanization of Karachi and its associated challenges. This allows for an analysis of how changes in the environment (both place and space) have impacted crime patterns and social dynamics. By examining Karachi's environmental and spatial landscape through the lens of literary fiction, this study can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between spatiality, violence and crime in urban environments. This research

also provides insight into Karachi's urban spatial factors that contribute to or mitigate criminal activities. The novels explore the power structures that underlie Karachi's urban landscape. This provides valuable insights into how these structures influence the distribution of opportunities, resources, and risks, ultimately contributing to criminal behavior. Moreover, this study also intervenes in promoting interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars in various fields, including literature, criminology, urban studies, and sociology.

## Chapterisation

The proposed study may consist of three main chapters with an introduction and conclusion.

Introduction:

Chapter 1: Mapping Environmental Criminology in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*

The first chapter deals with making a connection between crime and spatiality within the context of the urban city of Karachi. Exploring the cartographic spaces of Karachi city about crime. The chapter highlights different spaces of Karachi's urban landscape which provide grounds for criminal activities including: terrorism, corruption, political engineering and target killing. Drawing on Soja, Calvino, Brantingham, and Andreson's concept of criminology, I argue that crime is not a random act but is deeply influenced by spatial factors and the role of the environment which provides grounds for such illicit activities.

Chapter 2: Spatial Dynamics of Crime and Violence in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*

The second chapter investigates how spatial dynamics (space and time) intersect with different forms of violence within Karachi's urban and sub(urban) landscape including: slums, political spaces and religious institutions. It explores how Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* and *The*

*Prisoner*, depict violence as it unfolds through spatial and temporal settings. Drawing on Zizek's notion of objective and subjective violence, Nixon's concept of slow violence and Brantingham and Anderson's concept of environmental criminology, this chapter reveals how different forms of violence originate across various spaces. Thus, this chapter highlights the complex relationship between violence and spatial configurations in Karachi's socio-political landscape.

## Conclusion

## Chapter Two

### Mapping Environmental Criminology in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*

Italo Calvino in *Invisible Cities* writes, “[c]ities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else” (38). Calvino’s understanding of cities as desires, fears and concealment corroborates an intersection of space, crime and built environment of the city of Karachi that I intend to engage in this chapter. The city of Karachi is not only known for its multiculturalism and economic development but also for its ever-increasing criminal activities, violence, and environment of fear, informed by various power dynamics. Karachi, which is often referred to as the city of lights, is now commonly referred to as the dark city due to its spatial dynamics and the built environment which facilitate various kinds of crimes in urban and suburban areas. Hamid’s fictional narratives depict a vivid picture of Karachi as a multifaceted city immersed in fear, violence, torture, spatial injustice, and social strife. Against this backdrop, the first chapter focuses on the spatial representation of Karachi and the environmental factors in the context of criminology, foregrounding the ways in which various crimes within the urban and suburban spaces of Karachi are carried out. I explore how Hamid’s texts *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale* represent cartographic features and spatial patterns of Karachi, specifically red-light areas, slums, and social spaces that facilitate and perpetuate criminal activities. Drawing on the concepts of “social disorganization” (Shaw and McKay 16), environmental criminology, spatial studies and urban geography (Anderson; Brantingham; Soja), and invisible cities (Calvino), I discuss how spatial patterns and the environment have continued to play a significant role in understanding crime patterns and related offences that frequently happen in the city of Karachi. My discussion on the relationship between sub(urban) geography and crime is premised on the argument that Karachi’s

urban spaces are not just physical entities but are also related to different social dynamics, such as power control, environmental issues, and political and cultural dynamics.

What is particularly significant in understanding crime patterns in Karachi is the consideration of the different ways in which urban and sub(urban) areas provide grounds for illegal activities owing to a range of overlapping perspectives, such as social structure of the city, negligence of state-operated policing system, and spatial organization of mainstream and marginalized areas of the city. The rapid increase in population and social injustice create spaces for activities that disturb the social environment of the city. In addition to this, vulnerability of people living in slums and red-light areas illustrate the dark face of society due to poor infrastructure, institutional flaws and the lack of resources, and therefore turn out to be spaces where criminal activities easily take place. Hamid's novels *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale* portray Karachi's slums as spaces where basic resources (for example, educational institutions, sanitation, health, surveillance and security etc.) are missing, and these spaces provide individuals opportunities to engage in violence and illegal activities. In fact, the spatial patterns of these areas produce a "drop" factor (Jonathan 18), where individuals are dropped and dislocated into different fragments. This process flares up marginalization in the community. People from different backgrounds and cultures are victimized by such oppression, which leads to gang culture and ethnic conflicts (Aikins n.p.). Therefore, this chapter focuses on various criminal activities, such as murders, target profiling and political engineering, street crimes, kidnapping, and ethnic conflict, influenced and informed by Karachi's spatial patterns, as I discuss in the next two sections.

Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* is a fast-paced political thriller deeply rooted in the gritty reality of Karachi's crime-ridden and "anarchic breakdown within Karachi's urban" landscape (Ansar et al 943). The story unfolds over a few frantic days in December when an American journalist is abducted from the center of the city. His captors threaten to execute him and release the video on Christmas Day, placing immense pressure on the Pakistani government, already under international scrutiny. This sets off a tense situation that demands his immediate saving to avoid a diplomatic

crisis. The story revolves around Akbar Khan, a former police officer imprisoned for killing a prominent politician, a crime, which he claims, he did not commit. Akbar is depicted as a complex, morally ambiguous figure — a dedicated law enforcement officer who often crosses legal boundaries to uphold justice but is ultimately betrayed by the very system he serves. His knowledge and contacts within criminal and political circles make him the only eligible person who may find the American journalist. However, his incarceration complicates efforts to involve him in the investigation. The government enlists Constantine D'Souza, the Superintendent of Karachi Central Prison and Akbar's former colleague, to persuade Akbar to cooperate. Constantine finds himself caught between competing forces: the Agencies desperate to resolve the kidnapping, and a powerful political group, called the United Front (UF), which controls Karachi and asserts influence over the city. The UF opposes Akbar's release, fearing his involvement threatens their criminal-political nexus.

The narrative shifts between the present kidnapping crisis and past events, revealing the history of these two men, the police system, and the city's intertwining networks of crime, politics, and intelligence agencies. The novel portrays Karachi as a place engulfed by jihadis, corrupt officials, ruthless political enforcers, and law enforcement officers, operating under constant duress and moral compromise. It showcases how the police, despite being demonized, struggle to maintain authority in a city where political interference and crime function in a parallel structure. Throughout the story, the clock ticks toward Christmas Eve — a looming deadline for the captors — while the protagonists navigate betrayals, shifting alliances, and desperate efforts to save the hostage. The book offers an authentic glimpse into Karachi's complex reality—an urban battleground where the lines between good and evil, right and wrong, are blurred, and where individual courage clashes with systemic corruption and violence. Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* goes beyond a simple thriller, delivering a commentary on the paradoxes and perils of policing and politics in Karachi, grounded in the author's own police experience and knowledge of the city's underworld realities. It presents

a layered, unvarnished portrait of a city and its people entangled in the war on terror, power struggles, and the costs of survival in a fractured society.

Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, is a powerful and intense thriller that traces the transformation of a young man from a privileged Karachi schoolboy into Pakistan's most feared jihadi militant, Sheikh Ahmed Uzair Sufi. The novel features three close friends — Ausi, Eddy, and Sana — students at an elite school in Karachi. While Eddy and Sana leave Pakistan for higher education in the West, Ausi stays behind, enrolling in a local university where he becomes politically active and is shown to be transformed into a jihadi. Once a cricket-loving, fun-loving boy, he evolves into a ruthless jihadi commander involved in kidnappings, armed conflicts in Kashmir and Afghanistan, and brutal acts of terrorism, including the notorious beheading of a pregnant Western journalist on camera. His letters oscillate between nostalgia for their youth and chilling descriptions of his militant life, highlighting the stark contrast between his former innocence and his current fanaticism. The novel also introduces ASP Omar Abbasi, a determined police officer charged with overseeing Sheikh Uzair's security after he is moved to a remote detention facility in the harsh desert near the India-Pakistan border. Abbasi tries to decipher the true meaning of Uzair's letters, and his previous background. Through Abbasi's investigations, the novel explores the painstaking efforts of law enforcement to understand and counter extremism in a deeply complex socio-political environment.

*The Spinner's Tale*, delves deeply into the factors fueling radicalization in Pakistan: ethnic and political manipulation, social injustice, personal trauma, religious extremism, and the state incompetency. It portrays how young men like Ausi can be drawn into militancy by a combination of ideological zeal, personal circumstances, and the lure of belonging to a violent cause. The novel provides a broader commentary on Pakistani society, shedding light on how militants are sometimes nurtured, protected, and proliferate their hidden agenda under the banner of religious institution. It portrays figures like Sheikh Uzair, who manipulate religion for violent ends, and brainwash young minds for personal gains.

## Cartographic Features of Karachi: Visible and Invisible Sub(urban) Spaces

This section maps Karachi's cartographic features surrounding urban and sub(urban) spaces. Karachi is one of the largest cities in Pakistan and has continued to show a high rate of population. According to the 2024 census, the estimated number of Karachi's population is around 20.3 million. The present tapestry of Karachi has dual dimensions, the elite and the deprived public. On the one hand, half of the city is urbanized and developed but on the other hand, it is surrounded by slums, red-light areas, dark streets with illegal occupations by the underworld mafia. Here, Soja is useful in understanding the ways in which “[t]he city [becomes] a complex interplay of social and spatial practices, where crime is not merely an act but a spatial phenomenon deeply embedded in the urban fabric” (56). Soja argues that a city is a complex web of spatial patterns where crime operates easily and cannot be traced due to its urbanized structure, its diversity, economic powerhouse, and architectural diversity. Following Soja, I argue that Hamid's novels, *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale* can be seen to present Karachi as a risky city due to its socio-political dynamics and intense ethnic and sectarian experiences triggered by architectural spaces. Both texts illustrate an intricate relationship between crime and urban life. Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* explores various themes such as the gloomy intersection of politics, target killing, political engineering, and secret agencies in Karachi. The novel unravels the socio-political landscape of Karachi where the protagonist Akbar chases the state-sponsored mafia and bargains with the Big Brothers for his promotion. Hamid's text perfectly illustrates Karachi as three-layered where the point of interest is the same for everyone but the level of justice is different. The lower layer, referred to as poor mohalla, the mid layer is referred to as neutral area and the rich mohalla, inhabited by elites. As one of the characters perfectly describes this hierarchy: “In a poor mohalla, even if a hundred people get killed on your watch, no one will be too bothered. In a rich mohalla, if someone's cat goes missing, they will hang you by your balls” (92). Similarly, referring to the neutral territory of red lights, one of the prostitutes in the novel describes the red area as a space where “All men irrespective of which side of the law they

their money there" (79). These different levels describe activity spaces where offenders commit crimes.

Likewise, in *The Spinner's Tale*, Hamid divides the city into different spaces: elite areas, red lights, slums, religious and political spaces, and imaginative spaces, as Hamid writes: "The city spread[s] like a cancer, random and menacing" (45). Hamid portrays the city as a complex web that is full of unknown citizens and horror stories. Such spaces are open-ended and semi-porous, where mobility is easy and anyone can operate and commit a crime within these activity nodes. Sometimes law enforcement institutions, due to poor management, provide shelter to criminals, thereby complicating the crime-punishment procedures. In this context, police station also becomes one of activity nodes for criminals, For example, if a murderer commits a crime in the street, he surrenders himself to the police and then he will use the police station as shelter for his protection. In Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, the protagonist Uzair Sufi operates from prison. "[H]e [is] passing messages to his comrades on the outside, using the stupid guards as couriers" (18). Therefore, it is quite certain that these criminals use prison as a space for their protection and to communicate with their gangs, something which I call invisible city spaces for the proliferation of criminal activities.

Calvino in *Invisible Cities* writes, "The city ... does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets" (9). Here, Calvino argues that cities reflect the past, which portrays its history, culture, signs, infrastructure, and scars on every street. For example, broken buildings, road potholes, and heaps of garbage epitomize social deprivation and social injustice. It would not be wrong to say that the landscape of Karachi is quite unpredictable, insecure and full of fear where everyone is different from one another due to high mobility and multiculturalism, informed by spatial disorientation. In *The Spinner's Tale*, Hamid aptly describes the city as a thick forest where the night and day are the same: "In a place like this, the mind starts playing tricks on the senses. Every shape, sound, and shadow bring with it an associated sense of dread" (3). Importantly, this sense of dread is captured in the physical built of the city, sub(urban) areas, red lights, and congested spaces, creating suffocation and discomfort in the surrounding

atmosphere which gives birth to criminal activities. Against this backdrop, Calvino's idea of the two levels of the city is useful: According to him, one is visible and "all the rest of the city is invisible" (81). Here, Calvino argues that most of the area of the city is invisible, even untracable on the map. This is indubitably true in case of slum areas (Kachi Abadi) and camps, which remain invisible spaces but have a huge impact on the built environment and criminal activities.

As slums in Karachi (Kachi Abadi) are located on the boundaries of the cities, they are marginalized and alienated from the outside world. According to Calvino, "Beware of saying to them that sometimes different cities follow one another on the same site and under the same name, born and dying without knowing one another, without communication among themselves" (26). Calvino suggests that people who live in slums are alienated from the outer world and they have a different style of living – broken houses, and narrow streets with no boundary walls. In fact, in government records, slums do not exist on the map of Karachi. Most of the inhabitants of slums have migrated from different parts of the city and reside in illegal areas. Due to negligence on the part of state institutions and lack of resources, they indulge in criminal activities such as street crimes, and many become pickpocket and drug dealers. Areas with a high-density population, a lack of resources, street blocks, and poverty produce more crimes. Karachi's spatial dynamics illustrate a complex web of factors including hotspots, racial diversity and socio-economic status which play a significant role in high crime rates within the city. Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* gives us a clear picture of the residents of Karachi who are socially and economically deprived with no possibilities of progress and social mobility. People who are living in slums or Kachi Abadi are marginalized; most of them work in factories and the rest join gangs: "[w]hat it was to have been born without any advantages, the son of a dirt-poor laborer in a village in the middle of nowhere, with no prospects of ever being able to get out of there" (50). These lines suggest that people live a life of oblivion due to low income and lack of opportunities, and this victimization compel them to get engaged in criminal activities. Here, it is important to note that these individuals do not enjoy the status of a respectable citizen and hence experience a loss of identity. The state's failure to grant them a

citizenship status results in disguising one's identity as non-state actors. Similarly, *The Spinner's Tale* also reflects the loss of identity “[b]ut for some reason, when he got into this... business, my son decided to switch his names around” (196). Here it is now clear that people who are deprived socially, economically, especially while living in slums seem to be disowned by the city, as Jonathan Raban rightly points out, “[t]he wellbeing of the citizen involves wearing away the skin that separates him (or her) from the complex metropolitan organism” (7), thereby viewing its citizens as potential villains (29).

Here, Raban's concept of hard and soft cities gives an insight into different spaces and their relationship with citizens. According to Raban, cities and small towns are “plastic by nature”. This means that cities are durable and can be molded in various shapes, “[w]e mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose our personal form on them” (Raban 13). What Raban points out is that the city is not just a physical entity, it is a mixture of different elements, such as fear, trauma, psychological experiences, personal geographies, dynamic interaction and emotional attachment. These traits are interlinked with human nature and they perform accordingly with this pattern. In the context of Karachi, most of the residents are unconsciously attached to such spaces because they construct their feelings, identities and memories on their own. As Gayer rightly points out that “the city's increasingly complex security architecture creates its own share of insecurity” (Hussain n.p.). In *The Spinner's Tale*, for ASP Omar, Karachi brings negative vibes although “[t]here was also another, deeply personal reason why Omar disliked Karachi. This was where he had fallen in love for the first time. It had happened unexpectedly, one of the unplanned events in his otherwise meticulously planned existence” (46). Here, I am unraveling the relationship between the individual's past experience relating to the city's spatial structure, which is based on nostalgic feelings, and attachment to a place. According to Raban, personal geographies shape an individual's personality, experiences, and the memories associated with different places. Such psychological experiences construct human identity, social mobility, and human behavior.

Against this backdrop, soft city can be seen as a space shaped by individual feelings, emotions, personal affiliation with geographies and dynamic interaction: "In an urbanized society, 'urban' is everywhere and nowhere; the city cannot be defined. If that is true, the truth seems a little dim and wet; and it smacks of a certain academic blindness to a very real imaginative experience" (Raban 38). According to Raban, spaces create a new world and have different parameters and are categorized in different levels such as the elite on the primary level, the middle class on the secondary level, and the poor class or slums located on the boundaries. Similarly, these different levels flag up disconnection among individuals, alienation, and affect the emotions and behaviors of the residents. But interestingly, these levels resonate with each other in different variations. The elites give instructions and the poor receive the orders for their survival. In Hamid's novel *The Prisoner*, the elites are shown to manipulate the entire city structure and divide the city into different zones. The elite industrialists build spaces for their economic and political gain. Sometimes, even law enforcing institutions such as police stations and prisons become protective zone for the offenders, where they organize a crime and then execute their mission. They use the prison as a commanding office for their personal gains. Hamid's texts, *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*, perfectly describe the internal temperature of the prison, in which prisoners have complete access to everything and give orders to their gang members. Similarly, in the novel the protagonist Akbar is a high-profile prisoner but he has an access to the outer world, and "[o]ccasionally you see him walking on the track in the evenings. The tableeghis are the only ones who go to that barrack, and with whom he meets" (*Prisoner* 18). Here, the prison has been shown as a diplomatic corridor between the prisoners and their master mind mafia. Apparently, the prisoner (Akbar) is imprisoned but he has an access to the outside world and passes messages to his colleagues. In both the texts, prison has been described as a control room for criminals or we can call a war room.

In both the novels, three threads are common: the prison setting, prisoners' significant control over the outer environment and kidnapping case. In *The Prisoner*, the story moves around the main three characters: Constantine D'Souza, a superintendent in Karachi's prison, navigates the

relationship between Akbar and other high-profile authorities related to a kidnapping case. Akbar Khan is a notorious criminal murderer, a former police officer, who is accused of high-profile murder and is imprisoned. Tarkeen is an agency guy, working for the big brothers through back doors. The novel is deeply rooted in Karachi's crime environment, portraying its chaotic streets, gloomy atmosphere, sub(urban) areas, underworld, politically corrupt and crippled government. The story revolves around a foreign journalist who has been kidnapped by some militants, a day before the arrival of the U.S. President. His captors announced his mass execution publicly on Christmas Day and the U.S. government is pressurizing Pakistani authorities to release him without any casualties. Similarly, *The Spinner's Tale* delves into the transformation of protagonist Uzair Sufi known as Ausi, a young student who joins a jihadi organization and is guilty of committing murders and suicide bombings. The novel revolves around four main characters: Uzair Sufi, Eddy, ASP Omar Abbasi and Sana. Eddy and Sana are schoolfellows of Uzair Sufi. He begins his journey with these fellows. Eddy and Sana pursue their studies abroad while Ausi remains in Pakistan and joins extremist organizations in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The story portrays various social factors such as corruption, radicalization, social injustice and the disillusionment of the political system. Through the character of Uzair Sufi, the author reveals urban life and its gritty landscape, which is full of suffering and deprivation. Both novels reflect the same notion that Karachi is not just a physical space but a dynamic environment controlled by different mindsets.

In addition, Hamid's texts highlight the political and religious spaces where crime operates and is professionally executed. These spaces provide safe havens for criminals and shelters where they manage their illegal activities. Both texts are highly politicized and revolve around the political and religious sphere, such as the police station, the minister's house, madrassas, prisons, and training camps which facilitate criminal activities. While acknowledging the role of police stations and religious institutions (madrassas) in the proliferation of criminal activities, I argue that political institutions and religious institutions are interlinked and function in parallel mechanisms. In Pakistani context, madrassas have a huge impact on Pakistani society in terms of education, social

dynamics, religious extremism, and politics. For example, currently 19 Islamic political parties are working in Pakistan, including Jamat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, Sunni Ittehad Council, and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan which is right now banned due to violent inclination (*Agenzia Fides* n.p.) and extremism. Nevertheless, they have a big vote bank and devoted followers. Furthermore, these political parties have their headquarters and sub-divisional offices in the entire country and they control every district, village and street through their agents. According to different surveys, these Islamic political parties are linked with madrassas, which help them in their elections. These madrassas are linked with political parties, including state institutions, police and secret agencies, which resultantly influence national and global politics. The religious leaders build public perception and create sectarian escalation. Through lens of Hamid's *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*, I explore the intricate relationship between architectural spaces of political, religious and state institutions and the ways in which these foster criminology within the urban and suburban landscape of Karachi.

Like religious parties, the political parties in the multicultural and multi-ethnic city of Karachi have also played a significant role in perpetuation of crime. Currently, in Karachi, major political parties are PPP (Pakistan People's Party), MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement) and Jammat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP). According to various surveys, JIP (Jammat-e-Islami Pakistan) is the second dominant political party in Karachi after Pakistan People's Party (PPP) because JIP believes in street-level activism, leveraging Islamic values, mobilizing Islamic identity and social welfare foundations (AlKhidmat Foundation) which has equally helped them in achieving their political targets and increasing their vote bank. The agents of these parties work in different places within urban space such as schools, colleges, and universities, where they create organizations (Tanzeem) in line with their particular ideology. The students in colleges and universities are then mobilized for their political purpose in what Gayer calls "full-blown campus war" (61). Similarly, MQM which is known as a secular party and has a strong hold in the main city of Karachi. MQM is highly active in different sites including educational institutions as well as public and government

offices. They also have a chain of organizations which hire students and young adults to propagate their migrant ideology that post-1947, migrants have continued to be marginalized in the Islamic state of Pakistan. What is significant to note here is that despite their separate ideologies or political agendas, political parties provide financial assistance to various madrassas in the form of funds, shelters, free education to lower-income families children and in return use them for their political agendas and perpetuate cycles of violence. As per Asia Crisis Group Report, “the madrasa landscape in Pakistan is still scary not because some are directly involved in creating terrorists but because they all create a particular mindset in which – under certain conditions – terrorism can easily take root” (n.p.) In Hamid’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale*, the police captures a high-profile terrorist Uzair Sufi from a madrassa compound where he is hiding from the police because this place is a blind spot where he cannot be traced: “the police has captured him after launching the manhunt in the country’s history that culminated in a siege of a madrasa complex in Karachi” (11). Hamid argues that madrassa and religious spaces are linked with criminal activities, which provide safe zones to criminals where they can be protected and remain invisible. The protagonist used a madrassa for his protection because such spaces are sacred and the state cannot interfere easily without proper protocols. Here, I am not accusing the political parties or religious institutions of their wrongdoing or blaming them directly. However, I am referring to the ways in which Hamid perfectly describes the complexity embedded in role of politicians, state institutions, and madrassas in perpetuating criminal activities.

*The Prisoner* and *The Spinner’s Tale* portray a vivid picture of religious and political spaces where crime originates. In *The Spinner’s Tale*, the protagonist, Uzair Sufi, is a young, brilliant student from a middle-class family with big dreams, who undergoes a significant transformation in his ideology outlook. He has been manipulated and brainwashed by a specific group (Tanzeem). This transformation has not just changed his views about religion and politics but earned him the title of “Bhai,” which symbolizes his deep affection towards the extremism, both in religion and politics, promoted by the particular group. In fact, this changes identity as a student to a party

worker, as he says: “[I] was sold. I started spending more and more time involved in Party affairs. I quickly became one of the top organizers in college and was acknowledged as being Sohail’s right-hand man” (81). As I mentioned earlier, these political parties or so-called Tanzeems have a big network in the urban and suburban spaces where they target schools, colleges, and universities and brainwash young minds because urban spaces have a high ratio of mobility. These educational institutions are a suitable place to establish their network. The same case is with Uzair Sufi, he was from a middle-class background, which made him a suitable candidate for their mission. His vulnerability dragged him into tanzeem. Moreover, the organization shaped his personality and nominated him as their leader to mobilize other young students.

Here, Raban’s concept of *Soft City* is useful in understanding the ways in which “Like a soldier in a war, you die or are maimed because you were wearing the wrong uniform. What was the mistake? His clothes? His expression? His mere attendance at a rather snooty resort of the cultured middle classes?” (14). Here, Raban is critiquing the rigid social codes and expectation of certain spaces which explores societal dynamics, identity and displacement. The wrong uniform symbolizes the physical attire that refers to one’s demeanor, appearance, or presence which might clash with unwritten norms of the society. People do struggle to fit into places to preserve their identity in a particular environment, but unfortunately, it takes a wrong turn and makes them suffer. Similarly, people of the middle class face immense pressure to maintain a high living standard, resulting in lethal consequences. This is exactly what happens to Uzair Sufi during his college life, where he was brainwashed and joined a political party to be in the limelight among his friends. The sudden transformation introduced him to another world and labeled him a terrorist.

Furthermore, Karachi, as a multicultural society with people from different ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, showcases a complex social structure. Such spaces as slums, political institutions, madrassas are not just maintaining distinct social relationships but also influence one another, shaping the city as an interconnected fabric. In *The Spinner’s Tale*, the protagonist struggles for his authentic identity by joining the political party to fit himself in the big brother’s category,

“all of a sudden, my status in the college changed. I wasn’t a pariah anymore. Instead, I was someone who had the backing of the largest political organization in the city. The teachers started paying attention to me” (80). Here, Hamid unravels the protagonist’s demeanor by taking cover under a political party to achieve his goal and reshape his identity for his survival in society. Thus, the spatial dynamics of Karachi’s urban spaces, where political parties and tanzeems exploit the informal educational institutes and other sub(urban) spaces to assert their power and control and recruit youth for their personal agendas and criminal activities. Such spaces not only disrupt the city’s urban fabric but also destabilize individuals’ behaviors and morality as seen in the novel.

Taking inspiration from Calvino’s *Invisible City* “the city displays one face to the traveler arriving overland and a different one to him who arrives by sea” (14). Calvino rightly suggests that cities present themselves differently depending on the individual’s perspective who engages with them. In Karachi, political parties and other religious institutions have exploited the landscape of the city, leveraging different urban spaces such as madrassas, slums, and state institutions for their objectives. Just as Calvino’s cities reveal the contrast of the observer’s approach, Karachi’s urban landscape reflects the same notion such as power struggles, reshaping identity within these particular contested spaces.

In a similar vein, *The Prisoner* reveals the invisible spaces within police stations, state institutions and madrassas where crime evolves and is planned meticulously, making it easy to execute it silently. In the novel, the protagonist Akbar is imprisoned in a high-profile cell in the Karachi prison. The secret agency guy named Tarkeen pays a few visits in a week and asks Akbar to help them in their secret mission. In fact, they pull him out of prison and involve him in their mission. These invisible spaces in law enforcement institutions help in perpetuating criminal activities, thereby complicating the boundaries between justice and injustice, law and lawlessness. As I mentioned earlier, the state is run by different factors that include political forces, religious values, social and justice institutions, all these elements are interlinked with each other and perform in a parallel structure. Interestingly, all these factors are foregrounded in the text, including the

police station, the Chief Minister's office and a political party named United Frontier (UF). Such institutions assert their power to control city and proliferate illicit activities. For example, Corruption, political engineering, drawing room diplomacy and recruiting youth for their extremist ideologies etc.

In Hamid's novel *The Prisoner*, the political party is referred to as the United Frontier, which is the representation of Muttahida Qaumi Movement because MQM has historically been a dominant political party in Karachi, known for political engineering, ethnic-based politics, often charged with militancy and asserting influence over the city. However, the novel does not mention MQM directly but from the discussions surrounding UF closely align with the MQM's historical role in the Karachi social-political landscape. In addition, political parties often interact with different criminal gangs which help them in their elections. This relation is always based on the pay and return policy, where the criminals wash the mess of the political parties and in return, they bargain with the political leaders for high-level seats in public office. For example, in Hamid's text *The Prisoner*, "Maqsood Mahr was one of the most powerful in the city. He was connected to everyone the government, the opposition and all the Agencies. Some said his influence stretched all the way to the presidency in Islamabad" (Prisoner 45). Here, Hamid uses the character of Maqsood Mahr to highlight the deep pockets and influential figures in Karachi which are directly linked with the country's high-profile personalities by describing the character of Maqsood Mahr linking with state institutions, agencies and even the presidency office in Islamabad. Hamid's depiction suggests that figures like Maqsood disrupt the political spaces and influence not only local politics but national governance. Such figures hijack the socio-political landscape and use it for personal benefit.

Here, Soja builds upon Foucault's idea of "spatial politics," which shows the relationship between space, power and knowledge. According to Foucault, spatial arrangements are deeply interwoven with power structures and social control, creating opportunities for oppression and resistance. In fact, spaces are not neutral but are actively produced and reproduced through power relations "[s]pace is fundamental in any exercise of power" (Soja 150). Here, Foucault argues that

spaces create a gap in the power structure which destabilizes the social structure of society.

Furthermore, space becomes a mechanism for controlling individuals, making them visible while those in power remain invisible. Such political figures or officials take advantage of loopholes within the system and destabilize the system through corruption or political manipulation. In Maqsood's case he is using the same agenda to control the police officers by exercising his power and cleaning his mess.

Following the discussion, police stations, as a physical space within the social-political landscape of the city paradoxically proliferate criminal activities. Most of the police stations in urban and suburban areas are directly linked with criminals through back-door channels. Here, I am discussing "Thana Culture" in the context of Karachi's urban landscape. As I discussed, Karachi plays a significant role in Pakistan's economy and politics. Karachi is a battlefield for the political parties due to its street politics, racial diversity, ethnic composition and economic influence. Most political parties confront each other by taking advantage of such elements and influencing the city. In the past, Karachi has been considered a red zone for militancy and gang war. The paramilitary forces and rangers have been deployed in various areas of Karachi, including the Old City, Saddar, Kati Pahari, and Lyari. The Pakistani government has conducted Operation Lyari to maintain law and order in the city and started a crackdown against local gangs and militants. Para-military forces, police and rangers such as Sindh Police and the Sindh rangers have been involved in the socio-political landscape of Karachi. These para-military forces are directly linked with the political parties to maintain their political influence over the city. This is where the role of thana culture becomes important. The police supporting the ruling party often engages in fake encounters and at times hire criminals to eliminate other high-profile criminals creating problems for the existing party in government. As Hamid in *The Prisoner* writes, "[o]ur duty is to obey the ruling party, not the law. And the Don and his wardias rule this city. Who are we to say anything to them?" Yes, the great Don controls this city from America but doesn't have the balls to step inside it" (*Prisoner* 30). According to Hamid, this practice promotes Thana Culture where law enforcement agencies are

politicized and used as a tool for revenge politics which destabilizes the urban landscape. Here, I argue that, Hamid's narrative in *The Prisoner* explores the same idea by criticizing the elite and police stations where criminals are facilitated and perpetuate illicit activities such as bribery, fake encounters and physical assault: “[h]ow's the money in this thana used to be very good. There were several gambling and prostitution dens running in the area, but now they all pay the ward instead of the thana because they recognize that the real power lies there” (*Prisoner* 43). Another criminal activity common in red light areas is the ransom demanded by the wards or the police officer for staying mute. Even some police officers are take bribes from the criminals to brush their crimes under the carpet , as one of the characters in the novel says, “[t]hey also took money from cop killers to look the other way. And whatever other crumbs the ward boss chose to give to them” (*Prisoner* 44).

Here, Hamid indubitably exposes the dark side of Karachi's law enforcement agencies, where corruption and political motives are interlinked which physical and social environment of the city. The police sometimes collaborate with criminals to eliminate other parties for revenge politics. Such processes evolve into extortion, injustice, land grabbing and other illegal activities. The narrative reflects real-life scenarios in the case of Naqeebulah Masood's murder. A police officer named Rao Anwar made a fake encounter and charged Naqeebulah with terrorism. This narrative echoes Calvino's idea of *Invisible Cities* where the visible and invisible layers of society coexist. Calvino's observation quintessentially represents Karachi's complex socio-political dynamics “[f]or those who pass it without entering, the city is one thing; it is another for those who are trapped by it and never leave” (113). These lines perfectly illustrate the complex nature of Karachi's political and law enforcement dynamics where the city's slums, political networks, and imposing presence of madrassas play a vital role in transforming and expanding the visible city into another layer of invisible city, where crime and politics work in parallel structure, thereby, opening a range of possibilities for unimaginable encounters.

## Environment, Urban Spaces and Crime Patterns

Building on insights from Hamid's novels *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*, which vividly depict Karachi's urban dynamics, the above discussion clarifies that the city's criminal activities are deeply interlinked with its political and social structure. The presence of armed gangs, street activism, madrassas, training camps, prisons, the influence of militant groups and the role of political parties all underscore the criminal engineering in Karachi as Andrew Abbot used the term "power over disorder" which prolongs violence in the society (Gayer 208). As we go deeper specifically in slums and suburban areas, it becomes clear that these crimes are associated with different factors such as ethnic politics, multiculturalism, lack of resources, identity crises, low-income class and religious extremism. Here, I am unraveling the environmental factors, both physical and social, that perpetuate criminal activities in the urban and sub(urban) spaces of Karachi city, as depicted in Hamid's novels, *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*.

Drawing on the concept of social disorganization and environmental criminology, I explore how the environment plays a key role in the proliferation of criminal activities in Karachi's urban landscape. Here, Paul J. Brantingham's concept of environmental criminology is useful in understanding that "a crime is a complex event. A crime occurs when four things are in occurrence: a law, an offender, a target and a place" (Brantingham 07). According to Brantingham, committing a crime requires different parameters such as place, target and offender. These factors are closely related to each other and maximize crime probability. Behind every crime, there would be a suspect, a targeted location (space and place), and a cause. Such parameters intersect and a crime occurs within a specific framework. In other words, the environmental clues, spatial patterns, crime site, social interaction and offender collectively function in a proper mechanism. In fact, in urban spaces crime ratio is very high due to overpopulation, ethnic diversity, and lack of security and crime can be easily committed because of high mobility, and challenging surveillance strategies which increase social friction and make it easier for criminals to commit crimes without any detection.

Against this backdrop, I argue that Hamid's novels, *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale* provide a vivid depiction of criminal activities within the built environment of the city of Karachi. In both novels, various criminal activities have been highlighted, such as murder, kidnapping, gang war, underworld, political assassination, corruption, bomb blasts, prostitution, fake encounters, brainwashing and ethnic conflict. These criminal activities perfectly illustrate the connection between crime and the environment and their mutual effect which facilitates and helps criminals to commit crimes. For example, *The Prisoner* explores the environmental space of a police station and prison where police corruption is a daily routine and crime often emerges from within the police department itself. The story highlights a wide spectrum of law enforcement institutions and their involvement in criminal activities within a certain spatial pattern. According to a local newspaper, “Officers who are paid adequately are less likely to succumb to bribery and other illicit activities” (*The Express Tribune* n.p.). For such contexts, Brantingham uses the term ‘Micro-analysis’ (21) which means that crime in a specific site. According to him, “Micro-analysis involves the study of specific crime sites. At this level of analysis, the focus is on the building type and its placement on a lot, landscaping and lighting, interior form and security hardware” (22). This concept of micro-analysis and organizational environment is useful in understanding how police station facilitates corruption in a city like Karachi. For example, in *The Prisoner*, Hamid refers to “some godforsaken police station in the middle of the desert” where the “ward bosses extorted money, ran gambling dens, carried weapons openly, kidnapped people’s daughters . . . and we would sit in our police stations and do nothing” (25). Police station’s location in a desert is suggestive of the fact that there is almost zero surveillance or no monitoring at all of the police staff which provides ample opportunities to the upholders of justice to engage in illegal activities within a police station. Inspector Deedar is also frustrated at Constantine due to departmental pressure; as per the norm, he has not managed the daily fixed amount for his superior: “I had to pay the ward boss half of his month’s collection to get them clear to us! I have no desire to end my days arresting sheepfuckers on the edge of the desert or worse, being taken into a ward office and tortured” (32). The above-

mentioned lines perfectly capture environmental factors, physical as well as social, which inform the criminal activity. In other words, it is the physical design of the environment (in this case the police station in a desert) that provides stimulus to a peculiar criminal behaviour (bribes, gambling and kidnapping) within that space. It is also important to foreground economic perspective behind the culture of bribes so prevalent in Pakistan. In Pakistan, police recruitment is not a transparent process; most of the policemen are recruited through the political intervention or nepotism. At the time of selection, people offer heavy bribes for granting legal or illegal favours or to join the police department because it is the only department where an individual can earn a lot through alternative means. The lower staff in the police department is more corrupt than higher officials because of a wide gap in the salaries of lower and higher police personnel. They cannot afford to support their families due to which they take bribes, make connections with political figures, commit illegal arrests and fake encounters which are the major sources of their kickbacks. These police officers also give bribes within the department to their superiors to get promotions, desirable allocation and postings, and extra benefits such as extra guards and influential connections. Therefore, police officers with low income are more inclined towards corruption.

Another worth discussing aspect related to environment and criminology is what Martin A. Andreson calls ‘activity node,’ which represents regular activities or activity spaces such as a building, department office, or bus station (Andreson 52) where individuals engage in day to day activities. Anderson writes in his book *Environmental Criminology*, “Activity node is the term used to describe those places/locations in which we spend most of our time. And because of the planned physical structures of modern environments most of these activity nodes are designated as mass activity nodes” (52). This activity node creates activity spaces or locations where crime emerges and is committed easily through social cohesion and engagement. Interestingly, criminals are more comfortable in such nodes because they are aware of their surroundings. These nodes serve as a power point and most of the crime occurs due to social influence and opportunity within these nodes. For example, if read in this context, police officers can be seen to have used these activity nodes

for their illicit activities because the police stations, government offices and prisons are highly engaged due to the influx of the public, which makes them comfortable and take bribes within such location or activity space. For instance, in *The Prisoner*, police stations and bureaucratic offices become “activity nodes” where corrupt officers take bribes, search for suitable targets and favors, thereby creating an activity space for their illegal activities. Hamid highlights the police culture “[a]re, sahib, leave it. Do you know how many times I had to go sit outside the ward office to get my posting here? While the rest of us run after one sifarish or the other” (28). From the textual example, it is clear that, police stations and government offices are activity spaces or activity nodes where individuals actively engage and do bargaining and favors. The spatial behavior and routine activity play a significant role in the perpetuation of criminal activities. Hamid’s novel *The Prisoner* perfectly describes the environment of Thana culture and public spaces where police officers and government officials engage in unlawful activities and as well as they facilitates criminals within the premises of prison by providing them cell phones and unknown visitors. Prison is not just a place but it’s a crime network space where the insiders communicate with the outsiders and commit crimes. According to Anderson’s concept of the geometry of crime, “[g]eometry of crime investigates how the spatial-temporal dimension of criminal event interacts with the other three dimensions of crime to produce a criminal event. Consequently, any criminal event is a dynamic, social, and patterned phenomenon” (Andreson 50). Therefore, prisons cannot be seen as a static space but a dynamic space that changes with interaction, mobility and crime networking. In the novel, the agency guys Colonel Tarkeen , Major Rommel and Tableeghis are continuously shown to be visiting the prison to collect information from the Akbar and to help them in their covert mission: “Mr. D’Souza, you are to hand over one of your prisoners, No. 2377, Akbar Khan, to my custody ... I am to interrogate him on a matter of the utmost national urgency. When we are done with him, you will be duly informed and can collect the prisoner” (10). Hamid portrays prison as an abduction point where outsiders used to abduct the criminals and use them for their personal gains. Major Rommel is the junior of Colonel Tarkeen and he is interrogating Akbar in a case of

kidnapping a foreign journalist by using back-door channel. Aligning with the environmental criminology perspective, dynamic environment or criminal networking, social interaction and spatial behavior and patterns proliferate such illegal activities. Therefore, the law enforcement agencies take advantage of such an environment and spatial patterns to bargain with prisoners. They use prison as their activity space and conduct their covert and illicit activities within the prison.

Similarly, Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* illustrates the ongoing illegal activities of the police department in the city of Karachi. He highlights the backdrop of Karachi's prisons and police department and their professional incompetence. He describes prison as a psychological and ideological battleground where the protagonist Uzair Sufi exerts his influence over policemen despite his captivity. According to Hamid, Uzair Sufi uses mind games with prison wardens to capture their weaknesses and manipulate their honesty. Here, I argue that Uzair Sufi's mobility from a high-profile prison to the vicinity of the Nara desert puts a question mark on the credibility of police because Sufi broke the prison twice and his devoted followers tried to rescue him under police protection. The reason is very clear, most of the policemen in the department are uneducated and unprofessional and they can be manipulated easily in the name of religion and faith. Uzair Sufi too "started preaching to his guards how meaningless the comfort of this world were, and that their true calling was to work for God. He brainwashed them completely in a matter of weeks. It started with them growing their beards" (17). Here, Hamid argues that Sufi is well known jihadi terrorist, with a charming personality. He knows the tactics to manipulate others with his sugar-coated words. He first attacks psychologically and then slowly imposes his ideas and brainwashes others' minds. This is how he selects his target and manipulates them with his power of words. Here, I suggest that a peculiar environment creates opportunities for such criminals where social engagement between the criminals and state institutions intersects with each other. When state institutions are weak, they provide ground for the criminals' influence in order to keep silence or exchange of information and favors. Brantingham's concept of geometry of crime is useful here, "The environment emits many signals, or cues, about its physical, spatial, cultural, legal and psychological characteristics" (29).

According to Brantingham, the criminal uses environment as a radar for selecting a target and space.

The environment functions as an antenna which provides information, cues, a checklist and space to criminals. Most of the criminals made a checklist to locate and eliminate their target including, space, social interaction and psychological features to control the victim. In the case of Sufi, he targets security guards and imposes his religious ideology to manipulate their honesty and make them his true followers. He uses spatial patterns and psychological tactics for his target within the prison. Consequently, he uses the prison guards as his messenger and passes his message to his comrades “[h]e was passing messages to his comrades on the outside, using the stupid guards as couriers” (*The Spinner's Tale* 18). Here, Hamid highlights the vulnerability of the police department, which can easily be manipulated and controlled by a criminal. In fact, terrorists manipulate security guards' vulnerabilities and fulfill their desires to gain control over them. According to the environmental criminology perspective, the police station and jail are activity spaces or activity nodes for both the criminal and the victims, where they engage and exchange favors and illicit activities. These spaces are socially constructed and perceived by different actors. For example, criminals may see prison as a place of punishment but at the same time they use prison as a facilitation center where they feel comfortable and exert their influence to negotiate with government officials or outsiders.

These religious and political contexts are historically driven, as Soja flags up in his concept of “Socio-Spatial Dialectic”. I argue that space, power and justice are mutually constitute. In *The Prisoner* too, space is not just a passive entity but it's the product of social power, politics and economics. These three elements create a space where an individual or group of people perform their social relationships and engagement. Since space is socially constructed which functions accordingly with social behavior, environment and interaction, Henri Lefebvre argues “[s]pace has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies” (80). Here, Lefebvre argues that space is merely political and ideological and it is a product of human activity, power

dynamics and historical process. To explain it further, physical geography (resources, borders, buildings and past human activity) shape spaces and they can be interpreted through political decisions and power. Spatial organization uses a power structure which prioritizes the elite structure and marginalizes certain communities creating a hybrid space against a certain group and react back upon them. The reaction might be political, ideological, or even strategic through violence and conflict. For example, in Hamid's novel, *The Prisoner*, United Frontier party is involved in political engineering and criminal activities and manipulates space, power and violence to maintain control over the city and to show resistance to the government. The UF party controls the urban space and political spaces through organized networking, gangster and militant groups. They turn Karachi's urban landscape into a war zone space which is controlled by a third party "the Don, had started out as a student activist at the university" (23) He created the structure of the "UF's wards and ward bosses, The wards were crews of young men who were supposed to create a party structure at the very basic neighborhood level" (23). But in reality, it's a parallel government. Here, Hamid unravels the nexus between space and power and grassroots politics which is embedded in Karachi's political landscape. Here, he is referring to the fictional character in the novel 'the Don' (a fictitious character of Altaf Hussain, leader of MQM party) who controls the city through ward bosses and tanzeems while setting out of the country. Basically, they establish a basic structure party for the welfare of their locals but in reality, it functions as a parallel government with extensive power and networking. They recruit youth in their parties and use them for their political interest. According to Hamid, the Don's creation of establishing of wards and ward bosses is to extent a political power in the neighborhood which works as a shadow authority that governs through violence and facilitates criminal activities (Waseem 393). The ward bosses manipulate public space, turning it in to an ungoverned space where they exercise their power, creating a safe haven for their illegal activities such as land grabbing, violence, target killing and extortion ( Latif n.p.). Thus, the area becomes a buffer zone. Furthermore, Hamid's novel highlights the brainwashing of young minds and giving them Kalashnikovs provided by the UF party. As I discussed earlier, the area becomes a buffer zone,

the UF party recruits students from educational and religious institutions and armed with guns to protect their neighborhood and the party office. Most of the students belong to lower-class families which have low income, lack of resources and opportunities. The UF party hires such students for their motives and use them for their illegal activities such as propagating their political ideology, creating violence in the city, threatening the elites and target killing: “The ward bosses extorted money, ran gambling dens, carried weapons openly, kidnapped people’s daughters . . . and we would sit in our police stations and do nothing” (*Prisoner* 24). Hamid’s work reveals that, the law enforcement agencies also face many challenges due to political interference and superior orders. If a police officer disobeys his superior order, he face suspension and termination from the service because the political system has hijacked the entire system. Due to a lack of accountability, these criminal networks operate under political patronage.

Building on this notion, Hamid’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale* reflects the same idea of political engineering, brainwashing young minds, organized criminal activities and the nexus between militancy and religious institutions. The novel reflects the hardcore reality of Pakistan’s political and real-life dynamics, particularly Karachi city, where educational, political and religious institutions have historically been used for manipulation, specifically in terms of young minds who are underprivileged and deprived of basic resources. The novel illustrates the true picture of Pakistan’s governance structure, that how systemic corruption, violence and exploitation shape the lives of its citizens. The “spinner” in the title itself symbolizes how politics, religion and crime are spun to dominate the public, specifically those who face identity crises, economic challenges, and lack of opportunities. Here, I am building a nexus between environmental criminology and how Karachi’s social, political and religious environment facilitates criminal activities. Taking inspiration from Brantingham’s environmental criminology perspective, I argue that the occurrence of a crime is not a random process but it is politically and ideologically motivated including: target, selection of place and space and hidden agenda. According to Brantingham, “[I]abeling theorists have argued that those in power not only make law which act to ensure the disproportionate amount

of power the ruling holds, but also establish and control the agencies and agents of social control” (98). Here, Brantingham argues that crime is not just the product of biased enforcement but it is shaped by spatial, temporal opportunities. Many theorists consider crime as a socially constructed entity but according to Brantingham, it emerges from routine activities, urban design, opportunities and decision making. The ruling class marginalizes the lower communities and put them into a high-crime environment. This alienation creates a crime spot where offenders are free to commit crimes due to system negligence. He also argues, crime is not a natural process but it’s an engineered project by urban policy, lack of resources and system negligence and biased policing. The ruling class or political forces create such conditions to exaggerate crime and then use policing to maintain law and order.

For example, in Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, Karachi's urban landscape reflects as a crime zone due to segregation and different communities. In the novel, the protagonist Uzair Sufi belongs to a middle-class family, but the environment drags him into a war zone due to marginalization and a toxic environment. “The truth is that the extreme contrast between his past and what he hopes for in his future, makes him uncomfortable. On the one hand is depressing news from Krachi, of growing violence, a Kalashnikov culture, rampant corruption”. (110). Here, Hamid argues that Uzair is trapped in a hybrid space where he is thinking about his past and future. The toxic environment is pushing him into an extreme position. Uzair's story revolves around Karachi's harsh landscape where he faces social injustice, crime, misuse of power and class struggle. After joining a political party, he lost his friends and later these spaces fractured due to class division and Uzair's transformation towards politics and radicalization. Uzair's involvement with a political party is an example of a “routine path” that drags him towards crime. His daily interaction in the political rallies transformed him into an extremist. Intriguingly, this marginalization creates a space for him as Brantingham refers to “activity space” where the political party recruited him for their political gain and put him in a criminal environment through a politically engineered process. Here, I argue, the elites deliberately marginalize communities by making such urban policies and grouping and

funneling them into criminal spaces. Brantingham rightly describes the power-holding mechanism and agents' control process where the elites use their power to segregate the communities and control them with their urban policies but in the backdrop, they produce crime spaces. This process can be seen in Hamid's novel where Uzair Sufi falls into criminal space due to a middle-class clash with systematic barriers, corruption, under-resourced neighborhood. Therefore, such chaotic urban infrastructure creates awareness space for criminal networks and pushes them towards militancy and radicalization.

Furthermore, Uzair Sufi's transformation in *The Spinner's Tale* reflects the country's corrupt governance structure, social injustice and political manipulation which fractures his true identity and put him in a radicalized environment. The novel illustrates that such socio-political conditions not only breed criminals but also brainwash young minds through their hidden agendas. Uzair's transformation is not a natural process but has been manipulated politically and strategically using his middle-class background. Interestingly, first he becomes the victim and then he makes others his victims. This transformation reflects his real-life experiences such as his middle-class background, urban infrastructure, lack of confidence, arrest charges and clash with the political system, such a chaotic environment compels Uzair towards extremism. Uzair, who are manipulated by jihadi leader put him into isolation from the outer space just like a newly fetus and feed him gradually through brainwashing. Here I argue that, systemic corruption and criminal neighborhoods create not only physical spaces for the criminal network but also ideological spaces where militancy, radicalization, and manipulation take place (Hussain and Shelley n.p.). Most of the crimes emerge through ideological spaces where certain ideologies function and propagate jihadist and anti-state narratives. In many cases, offenders take advantage of ideological spaces to trigger an action which causes an event such as murder, turning into extremist ideology. As Anderson talks about pattern crime theory, “[a]n individual is simply doing something, their current actions. It does not matter what these actions are, but for simplicity, we shall assume that these are legal actions. Then something happens: the triggering event” (92). Here, Andreson argues that individuals often engage

in different actions which trigger events which provoke their minds towards criminality or extremism. The event acts as a catalyst which disrupts an individual's behavior, beliefs, and emotions and pushes the individual towards violence and radicalization. Here, the environment acts as a catalyst that triggers the individual's actions and his feelings towards an extreme position. Besides that, offenders may take advantage of ideological narratives, emotional vulnerabilities, using trigger tactics just to justify their actions such as brainwashing young minds, calling for Jihad as a religious duty and murder for a noble cause.

For example, in Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* Uzair Sufi faces brainwashing process in the form of extremist ideology by jihadi leaders, convincing him to perform his sacred duty (Jihad) against Kafirs. Uzair confronts a sheikh who calls himself a so-called Islamic leader. The Shiekh used the same strategy as Andreson mentions, 'the current action' and 'triggering event': "You are right. I do have better things to do. But you are lost, Ahmad Uzair Sufi. Lost, filled with guilt and anger, and rudderless. I am here to help you find your true path" (161). Hamid argues that, the Sheik is using his religious power to manipulate Uzair Sufi and controls him through false-flag ideology. Here, the Shiekh mimics the divine legitimacy model to control someone by narrating Hadith from the Quran to use them for illegal activities. In real life events most of the Jihadi leaders narrate verses and Hadith pretending to be Islamic leader but in reality these are tactics to weaponize Islamic rhetoric to grab innocent people for jihad and terrorist activities. From an environmental criminology perspective, guilt, anger, rudderless identity are emotional triggers that create opportunities for exploitation and illicit activities emerging from the environment. Uzair Sufi is still trapped in Karachi's toxic environment which is reflected from his behavior and tone.

As per Andreson's concept of routine activity theory, Shiekh is acting like an offender searching for a target and manipulates Uzair Sufi's guilt as the "target". In addition to this, as I mentioned earlier, first he became the victim and then his others became victims. Now, Uzair Sufi is transformed into a different personality who believes in revenge, violence, bomb blasting, and performing the sacred duty of Islam (Jihad). Due to Karachi's toxic environment, Uzair Sufi realizes

a sense of alienation and engages in criminal activities. The corrupt city environment fuels Uzair's revenge against the system and pushes him towards violence and terrorist activities. After his new personality, he is engaged with different militant organizations and hired young minds who can propagate his ideology and fight against the state. His acts of killing innocents, bomb blasts, kidnapping, and terror reflect the incompetent governance structure and ideology that shape his life.

Unlike spaces of day-to-day activities, I now discuss spaces of deviation. Taking cue from Foucault, Soja refers to the idea of heterotopia which illustrates "other spaces" which exist outside everyday life or norm. These spaces are significant in a sense that they serve a unique function. Foucault divides these heterotopic spaces into two categories: heterotopias of crises and heterotopias of deviation. The heterotopias of crises, Foucault claims, is "being rapidly replaced by the more modern heterotopia of deviation, spaces in which those whose behavior is deviant from "required" norms are placed. These include rest home and psychiatric hospitals and of course prisons" (*Third Space* 159). According to Foucault, heterotopias are "other spaces" that have a special significance in your past experiences and personality. It can be found in every culture, norm and personality but has different forms and importance. These include, prisons, hospitals, graveyards, colonies, streets, urban structure, cemeteries, libraries and museums. For example, a political leader who is imprisoned for his political narrative but suppressed by the outside world, finds prison as a heterotopic space where thoughts and inner self becomes intense and refined. Although, physically confined, his mind operates behind the prison walls and shapes his resilience and resistance. In *The Spinner's Tale*, Uzair Sufi is more inclined towards deviant heterotopia both psychologically and ideologically. Therefore, the training camp becomes a heterotopic space for Uzair Sufi where he recalls his past experiences, such as, when he was newly recruited and brainwashed for the sacred duty of Islam. This realization makes him deviant due to personal experiences and the training camp space creates a special significance in his life where he recruits young boys and other followers which gives him a sense of satisfaction. Uzair as a highly educated person turns into a jihadi militant, where he deviates from Karachi's sociopolitical and cultural

space, fitting more conveniently into a radical ideology. After becoming the leader of the camp, he also recruits young fighters from different regions of the country and brainwashed them in the training camp to make them potential suicide bombers. Uzair Sufi acts like a spiritual leader to assert his influence to use them against the state power: “I am here to help you with the mental readjustment. You see, you will become a vessel, traveling from one dimension to the next. You must be ready for your new life when you arrive there” (284). Here, Hamid unravels the deep structure of militant groups where they exercise such tactics to provide a comfortable environment to the young minds to make them fearless in what Gayer calls “geographies of fear” (qtd in Kirmani 117). The main duty of the jihadi leaders is to make an individual fearless through brainwashing so that they become unwavering deviant fighters. Over time, this training transforms their personalities into disciplined fighters who can accept their task without any doubt and sacrifice their lives for a so-called sacred mission. In the case of Uzair Sufi, he considers the training camp as a heterotopic space where he resonates his personal life with his fighters. The training camp exists in isolation where social norms are suspended. Based on Foucault’s hererotopias as mirror and distort, Uzair’s guilt and purpose are magnified and refracted through the collective experience of the camp. The training of Uzair Sufi acts as a space of transformation where the previous identity is replaced with a new one. Therefore, Uzair as a leader, uses heterotopic spaces to construct an alternative reality where he rejects social values and imposes a different moral order by blurring the boundaries between his inner conflict and outer realities of his fighter.

## **Environmental Criminology and Carceral Spaces: State Oppression and Political Assassination**

Hamid’s novels *The Spinner’s Tale* and *The Prisoner* intersect on political assassination but with different narratives. In *The Spinner’s Tale*, jihadis or militants attack the president’s convoy, while in *The Prisoner*, the state-sponsored police personnel commits a political assassination of the Chief Minister’s brother. Each novel reflects a different perspective of violence and power in Pakistan.

One foregrounds militant violence and the other focuses state-sponsored criminal activities. The dual perspective illustrates the gritty image of the complex power struggle of Karachi's socio-political landscape. For example, in *The Prisoner*, Akbar and his team back the intelligence agencies to arrest Nawaz Chandio. Nawaz Chandio is the brother of the opposition leader, the intelligence team (Colonel Tarkeen and his Team) approach Akbar to take action against Chandio's brother because he is considered as a national security threat because of his involvement with foreign agencies (KGB and RAW). Akbar prepares a team for his arrest. When he approaches the target, suddenly his bodyguards start firing on Akbar. Due to the heavy firing, Akbar fires in self-defense and hits Nawaz Chandio. Basically, the operation is framed as counter-terrorism and is shown to be politically motivated. Akbar and his team name this killing as a self-defense but Akbar previous practices suggest that this is a fake encounter. The entire operation was already surveilled by the third person noticing Chandio's activity routes and activity nodes. Behind Chandio's assassination, government machinery has been used, including law enforcement agency and framed Chandio as a national security threat. Akbar and his team member chase Chandio on a coastal highway and neutralize him along with his gang members: "The highway had no U-turns, so Akbar planned to be long gone by the time Chandio's vehicle could make its way back to this point" (247). Here, Hamid argues that Akbar and his team members intentionally organized this incident to arrest Chandio but unfortunately, he was killed in a crossfire on a highway. The Chandio's murder is a preplanned murder due to his routine activity pattern, his timing, travel and place. The police used his routine pattern and highway route to encounter him and neutralize the target on the spot. The highway, a routine passage for Chandio, became a suitable target place for the attack without any eyewitnesses. As Andreson uses the term lack of guardianship, the police used the same strategy by selecting the ideal spot for extrajudicial killing. The method of targeting Chandio in the novel reflects the manipulation of government structure and political engineering by adapting criminal procedure and using ambush practices to neutralize political figures. Chandio's murder is not a random move but strategically they followed his routine activities and stopped him on a highway

where no one could help Chandio. It is quite clear that the law enforcement agencies acted as the offenders and framed the Chandio murder as an accident due to personal gain.

Furthermore, Chandio himself whose predictable routine, travel and movement make him vulnerable and trapped. The police team took advantage of the highway and framed his murder as an accident because, during the firing, there was no outside intervention and they covered up the scene. Here, I want to mention the role of the environment, which allows such activities as the highway to be considered as a transient space with low surveillance where law and order status are minimal and gives opportunity to offenders to commit murder and other illicit activities. Moreover, in Pakistan, “encounter killing” by the police or rangers often targets murderers, gangsters and opponent political leaders using self-defense mechanism. Figures like Sarfaraz Shah (2011) and Naqeebulah Mehsud (2018) were killed in a fake encounter after being moved to an isolated location. Similarly, in Karachi, many fake encounters occur in peripheral areas such as Karachi’s outskirts and the Baluchistan highway. Even in the Lyari gang war, most of the police dragged criminals to desert areas by examining their activity node, daily routine, time and space. This corroborates with what Nida Kirmani writes about Lyari, “[t]he name ‘Lyari’ itself has become synonymous in Karachi with violence, crime and gangs” (Khan 116). Therefore, crime flourishes when routine activity is compromised and simultaneously, law and enforcement agencies manipulate these routes for fake encounters and extrajudicial ends.

Likewise, the same tactics and manipulation of the state are also highlighted in Hamd’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale*, where the police officer Omar Abassi interrogates Sufi in prison and twists the investigation through different strategies. He exercises his power over Sufi, compels him to write his confession, and asks about his previous profile. Hamid’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale* highlights state humiliation through dialogue, twisting investigation and manipulation of memory. Here, I argue that state or law enforcement agencies taking advantage of prison by conducting hardcore investigations and manipulating prisoner memory for a so-called confession, as Foucault perfectly describes in his book *Discipline and Punish*, prison is a space of psychological control where the

mind becomes a prison and power is exercised through the body. Taking inspiration from Foucault's concept of carceral archipelago, to describe the modern penal system as a network of interconnected institutions and a strategy of social control. According to him, "The examination, surrounded by all its documentary techniques, makes each individual a 'case': a case which at one and the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power" (Foucault 191). Here, Foucault argues that examination (medical, legal assessment, educational background, psychological and previous history) is used as a tool to observe an individual's past experiences, their social contacts, affiliations and behavior and to exercise power over them to control their mind and catch the loopholes. The environment of prison gives advantage to state institutions to investigate closely the individual and manipulate their mind through various tactics. For this method, they use different techniques to exercise power over the individual such as "documentary technique" that involves checking his police records, attachments, family bonds, and tracking progress. The law enforcement institutions use these evidences and proof as a weapon to trigger the individual and assert their power over the prisoner or individual in the prison. Therefore, carceral space and confinement cells are sometimes used for such activities where state institutions manipulate prisoners' mind and twist their investigations to extract the truth.

In Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, Sufi acts as an immigrant who shifts from Hyderabad jail to a backward area of the Nara desert where they put him in low low-profile prison in order to avoid a security threat. The officer named Omar Abbasi is the highest-ranking officer of that police station, where he put Sufi under high surveillance. At first, Abbasi takes the least interest in the Sufi case but his meeting with Sufi compels him to pull out the truth from Sufi mouth by using many techniques such as his early school life, his relationship with Eddy and Sana, then his parental relationship and love affair to make Sufi psychologically oppressed. Such tactics helps Abbasi in his investigation and triggered Sufi to reveal his inner self and criminal history: "Well, imagine what will happen to your precious standing in the jihadi community when the insanity of your letters comes out. The great Shiekh Uzair, madder than a rabid dog. Writing letters to a man he murdered,

his best friend, a Shi'a of all people. How do you think that will go down with your people[?]" (294).

Here, Hamid suggests that, Abbasi triggers Sufi showing his previous history and describing his past criminal activities to control his mind and exercise power over his mind to find him guilty. As Foucault describes, documentary techniques and power knowledge mechanism he uses the same tactics over Sufi mind to manipulate his inner self and pull out the facts from Sufi. Here, Abbasi, dismantles Sufi's mind, proving him guilty and making escape impossible if he leaves the cell. The Space of prison destroys Sufi autonomy through emotional and psychological manipulation. Sufi's forced confessions mirror Foucault's observation of how state institutions oppress individuals in prison and how interrogation techniques break prisoners' inner selves by twisting investigation and signing a forced confession. Thus, physical spaces such as prisons and black site spaces or carceral spaces facilitate crime and state control. State institutions implement spatial designs such as prisons, surveillance, and criminal profiling to enforce power coerced confession. Besides, Brantingham's criminological perspective describes prison as a controlled environment where state (offender) exploits the spatial design and the victim. There can be many reasons such as an isolated state of mind, prison spatial design and routine manipulation. In the case of Sufi, the state put him into a confinement cell where he is isolated from the outer world without any family visitors and a lawyer. The spatial design of the prison-like interrogation room, dim light on hanging from the roof is specially designed for hardcore investigation and deprivation. State institutions use different tactics to manipulate prison memory, trigger his emotions, behavior and routine disturbance during sleeping hours, where law enforcement agencies intentionally disturb prisoner's routine, sleep deprivation and repeated questioning to break the silence. The state deliberately designs such spaces and interrogation rooms where they easily break prisoners' memories and play with their emotion through various tactics under harsh conditions. Here, I want to emphasize that such activities by the law enforcement agencies come under the domain of illegal activities which are not written in the law. Such legal spaces (courtrooms, prison, interrogation room) become an extension of carceral system, imposing power, signing false confessions.

In fact, sometimes they use legal spaces for political motives to pressurize other political opponent to give false statement against other political leaders. In Pakistan, such cases are the daily routine of law enforcement agencies where the state abduct political leader and put them into black sites and compel them to written confession against their party or withdraw from elections. As Foucault rightly describes the term “modern interrogation,” which signifies modern tactics used by state institutions to break resistance (40). Thus, the boundary between the actual offender and state agencies becomes dissolved, as both participate, the one through crime and the other through sanctioned violence in illicit activities. The state institutions intentionally engineer prison environment for their personal gains to extract information from the offender and use the prison as a rigorous space to control prisoners.

Furthermore, In Hamid’s novels *The Spinner’s Tale* and *The Prisoner*, kidnapping emerges as a persistent element reflecting Karachi’s vast urban landscape. Both novels reflect the same theme of the foreign journalist which is interlinked with socio-political factors that define Karachi’s urban dynamics. Karachi’s underworld is mainly known for kidnapping and target killing for ransom which is still a daily routine in Karachi. Gangs and militant groups kidnapped people for various reasons, such as for funded operations, political confrontation and exploiting the city’s law enforcement institutions which may be involved indirectly with different militant groups. Karachi’s history of ethnic conflict (MQM, ANP, PPP opponents) uses kidnapping as a tool for their political intimidation. Kidnappers often target elites in the city who are privileged and have a high net worth. Most of the criminals are connected to political figures and work for them, and in return, the political leaders provide them shelter or police protection.

In 2011, Karachi was mainly known for killing and kidnapping including journalists, businessmen, political leaders and police officers. They put bounty on their head and bargaining with the state to provide them ransom amount or an exchange of prisoners. As I mentioned earlier, it reflects Karachi’s socio-political landscape where law enforcement institutions and judiciary allow kidnappers to operate with impunity. Moreover, due to high mobility and hybrid culture

different militant groups operates in Karachi's urban area such as religious extremist group which kidnap foreigners and use them for their personal agenda. Different sectarian groups Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have used in kidnapping to exercise power and extract resources. These religious groups kidnap civilians and put them in their madrassa background and demand high price from their families. Sectarian groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, TLP and TTP use abduction to terrorize Shia's communities (*SATP* n.p.), businessmen and professionals and demand a high price for their hidden agenda such as funds for militant operations and training camps. In addition to, local gangs such Lyari gangs facilitates such militant groups and sharing profit with the religious groups for their protection and hideouts (Kirmani 7). Hamid novel *The Spinner's Tale*, reflects a real based event of a foreign journalist Daniel Pearl who was abducted in Karachi by Ahmad Omar Saeed Sheikh, a British-born Pakistani militant, on January 23, 2002. Hamid represents Daniel Pearl in his novel in *The Spinner's Tale* as a female journalist character and presents Omar Saeed as Uzair Sufi a fictional character.

The novel depicts a real-life event of Karachi's famous kidnapping case of the foreign journalist who is abducted from the main city and shifted to a madrassa compound. Here, I argue that such militant groups or extremist leaders take advantage of the urban landscape due to a hybrid population and use tanzeem offices and madrassa spaces for abduction purposes. The extremist groups manipulate urban structure, social mobility, religious spaces, and institutional spaces to commit crimes such as kidnapping and target killing. Moreover, they take advantage of urban landscape, hybrid population and the uses of tanzeem offices and madrassas. Such religious groups operate in cities where public influx are high and they can be monitored easily and perform their activity without any detection. Urban centers are often congested and have a high ratio of mixed population such as natives, foreigners, tourists and businessmen. People belong to different ethnic backgrounds walk around in urban areas but unfortunately, militant groups set an organized network who chases their target and neutralizes them. The militant group hires youngsters for such activities; they exploit divisions and monitor routine activity of the target. Furthermore, such militant groups

create tazeem offices and operate madrsaasa's for their missions and use them as a black site for kidnapping where they hide individuals in the basement of their madrasas and tanzeem offices. Madrassas can sometimes be misused for infiltration or harbor militants or abducted victims while tanzeem offices serve as a front for militant activities and abduction purposes.

Offenders tend to commit crimes in their own spaces where they are comfortable and neutralize their target easily. They already calculated time, routes, individual interests and movement but within a specific spatial and temporal manner. Crime occurs when the activity space of a potential offender overlaps with victim. When it overlaps in a specific time and space, it creates opportunity and crime occur. This is not just about the offender but it illustrates the intersection of the victim and offender time space where and how they overlap. For example, in Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, Sufi is described as a sharp militant who plays with others' emotions and gains their trust through different tactics. The pregnant journalist came to take an interview from Sufi but before abducting the journalist, Sufi notices the victim's activity space-gaining trust and blending into an environment by overlapping their routines and interaction. His familiarity with the environment and spatial patterns allows him to create the opportunity for the kidnapping by gaining a sense of trust, overlapping social and spatial patterns between the offender and victim which gives him a space to commit a crime. The female journalist investigating terrorism in Karachi and eager to break a story. She accesses someone from Sufi militant wing to take interview off-the record to discuss the truth about jihadi network and operations. After meeting Sufi's bodyguards, she is being abducted and put in a black site or madrassa compound "yes, your multivitamins are in the shopper. I apologize for the delay in my visit, but I had to go out of town on some urgent business. I wouldn't want your baby's health to suffer" (*The Spinner's Tale* 262). Here, Hamid argues that, Sufi is consoling the woman and gaining her trust by playing with her emotions. The multivitamins here symbolize her vulnerability depending on Sufi's help, by making a soft target and to exploit her.

Furthermore, the delay of Sufi's visit illustrates the calculated time because at midnight the city becomes invisible and no one walks around. Here, it reflects the lack of guardianship, enabling

criminal activities in the city. The interaction between Sufi and the journalist happens in a private space or a trusted space which is easy for Sufi to manipulate her emotions and create an opportunity to commit a crime. As I mentioned earlier, Sufi is an intelligent militant, he knows how to pick the target and use it through manipulation, gaining trust, and brainwashing. His strategies are very aligned with the rational choice mechanism by picking the suitable target in the center of the city and putting her in an isolated place, taking advantage of the lack of guardianship. In addition, the female journalist becomes a suitable target for Sufi because she wants to break a story on terrorism, so here the interest or activity overlaps which creates a space and crime occurs. Sufi's apology to the female journalist serves two main purposes, one he uses the tactic of reducing guardianship and to disarm third party without noticing him and the other reason is to increase dependency because the journalist's pregnant situation makes him more assertive and confident. Hamid's depiction of Karachi strengthens rational choice theory principles through Sufi's character due to the vast landscape which allows criminals like Sufi to operate freely, selecting a target easily within favorable conditions. He exploits temporal-spatial gaps by manipulating micro-environments such as target vulnerability, medical conditions and executes his plan within certain spatial patterns without any detection. Ultimately, Hamid's narrative goes beyond storytelling; it functions as a socio-criminological critique of a city where crime is structured and space is weaponized, which can be seen in Sufi's character, where crime flourishes and justice remains nowhere.

Such spaces are located in isolated which cannot be easily traced. The suitable environment (isolation and secluded spaces) gives them an advantage to conduct such illegal activities. As Calvino's concept of Invisible Cities states

[or] even that its substance is dark and malleable and thick, like the pitch that pours down from the sewers, prolonging the route of the human bowels, from black hole to black hole, until it splatters against the lowest subterranean floor, and from the lazy, encircled bubbles below, layer upon layer, a fecal city rises, with twisted spires" (Calvino 112).

Calvino argues that urban city is made of waste and having thick layer. The “fecal city” and “twisted spires” represent the thick layer and complex structure of urban landscape such as hidden spaces, basement, compounds and narrow streets which is composed of different layers. He suggests that every city carries its pasts, experiences and a harsh reality beneath the surface of urban life, where beauty and decay are parallel and or simultaneously visible and invisible. This duality of nature unravels the hidden layer of the city and its uncomfortable truth.

For example, in Hamid’s novel, *The Prisoner*, the city of Karachi operates similarly: political institutions, religious madrassas, and prisons function as invisible nodes where criminal activities operate covertly. Madrassas and tanzeem offices are suspicious hideouts and tableegi’s groups operate in prison, turning these spaces into an ideological center where hidden agendas propagate and proliferate criminal activities. The foreign journalist kidnapping case reflects these invisible nodes where madrassas function as black cites.

They descended into the dark corridor and made their way through the labyrinth of passages to a side door, which led out onto a very narrow street. Qari Saif led them through the street to a group of undistinguished-looking buildings. The houses looked dilapidated. The bricks and mortar had not been plastered over, and rusty old iron bars covered the window openings. Garbage lay outside the front door, creating a nasty stench around the place.

(Prisoner 328)

Here, Hamid argues that the Shiekh pretends to be a religious scholar teaching young boys but in the backyard yard he has a black site where he hides the American journalist. The narrow streets, dismantled buildings and dusty rocky houses describe the militant compound where they operate criminal activities. Such spaces are used for kidnapping, killings where they put individuals in isolation away from public spaces to maintain control over recruits and victims under their surveillance. Such compounds often function such as training camps, weapon storage and detention cells all in one radius. Akbar follows Qari Saif through a street where he notices rusty houses, broken windows and unfurnished houses which gives him an indication towards the target. Calvino’s idea

of *Invisible Cities* reflects the same notion where city is composed of different layers and each layer is different from another which unfolds strange events. Ultimately, militant groups take advantage of these spaces to operate freely without any third party and the government and law enforcement agencies often fail to dismantle such hidden spaces and fortified structures due to the city's complex structural division.

## Chapter Three

### Spatial Dynamics of Crime and Violence in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale*

Henri Lefebvre in *Production of Space* writes, “[d]ominated space realizes military and political (strategic) models in the field.” However, “there is more to it than this, for thanks to the operation of power, practical space is the bearer of norms and constraints. It does not merely express power - it proceeds to repress in the name of power” (358). According to Lefebvre, space is designed, organized and controlled by power structures such as state, law enforcement agencies, military forces as well as the dominant elite groups who exercise their power and reinforce their hidden agenda. This political instrumentalization of space creates instability in the urban landscape and affect other public spaces, producing marginalization, repression and criminal activities. Furthermore, space not only reflects the notion of power but also represses an individual’s voice. For example, bulldozing a slum area for building a highway in the name of progress quintessentially gestures towards suppression of communal social space and lives. Similarly, skyscrapers in the center of the city show corporate power and dominance which reinforce their control through architectural violence and repression. Ultimately, such repression and marginalization, as Kirmani rightly uses the term “organized forgetting” (qtd in Rajani and Islam 26), create violence in the form of psychological torture, dehumanization and disruption in everyday activities.

The second chapter focuses on the intersections of spatial dynamics, built space, violence and human activity in the context of Karachi’s urban and sub(urban) landscapes, including, slums, red light areas, public spaces, political institutions (police stations, interrogation rooms, black sites) and religious institutions (madrassas, tanzeem offices) which produce different forms of violence. I explore how Hamid’s texts, *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner’s Tale*, represent the spatial dynamics of violence, specifically focusing on connection between space and phenomena of violence as well as

spaces of violence such as prison, madrassas, police station and urban and suburban spaces. Drawing on the Slavoj Zizek's concept of violence, both subjective and objective, Rob Nixon's theorization of slow violence, and Brantingham and Anderson's concept of environmental criminology, I show how different forms of violence emerge and overlap through different spaces in the context of Karachi's urban and sub(urban) landscape.

While exploring the nexus between spatial dynamics and the emergence of violence or violent behavior and the way spatial configurations generate conflict, I argue that areas that are considered to be hidden spaces and are marginalized from the main urban city, either due to poor infrastructure, lack of resources and sectarian differences produce what I call invisible violence. As Nida Kirmani points out this issue in her book *Marginalisation, Contestation, and Change in South Asian Cities*, "the poor not only live near toxic waste streams, but are often threatened by beautification projects that would displace and relocate them rather than improve amenities" (210). Such invisible violence is more systemic and deeply embedded in social structures in slum areas where people are more deprived of the basic right due to poor governance and state negligence which leads to silent suffering. For example, police extortion and injustice in police stations with the locals create disharmony and produce direct violence against poor people. Hamid's novels *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner* portray Karachi's sub(urban) landscape where violence is interlinked with different social institutions and groups, such as, the police behavior with locals, torturing them in police stations using abusive language; political leaders' manipulation of law enforcement agencies; religious groups' activities which aim to divide communities on the basis of sectarian and religious affiliations. Unlike urban violence, sub(urban) violence is less invisible which is embedded in social norms and language, where the offenders impose their power and hierarchy. Therefore, this chapter focuses on spatial dynamics and the violence that occurs in different shapes in a specific time frame.

## **Urban and Sub(urban) Spaces and Violence**

Before discussing the text chosen for this chapter, it is important to discuss spatial dynamics in terms of Karachi's landscape and how spatial dynamics overlap with violence. Spatial dynamics describes how different forces interact and influence and transform spaces within different periods. It reflects the transformation of space across different periods which shows how power and violence transform urban and sub(urban) landscapes. Karachi, a city of 23 million population with high inequality, marginalization, and lack of resources is a city where the government deploy rangers and police check posts, converting them into what as Lefebvre calls "dominating space." These dominating spaces are controlled by the state institutions that transform the city into a weaponized space. Several gangs, organized networks or political parties tend to hijack the entire city, turning it a war zone by putting roadblocks in the center of the city. Furthermore, the corporates and the elites have invaded the city through buildings which show power and domination over marginalized spaces. This transformation reflects the spatial dynamics where space and time overlap and produce deprivation, suffering and flare-up violence. Highlighting this deep class division in a multicultural city, Zizek argues that societies create imaginary boundaries and walls through the black zones which function as psychological and ideological spaces where fears and anxieties are projected and considered as a threat to the outer world. Following Zizek, it can be said that the marginalized communities in Karachi are separated from the outer world because the elites consider them a threat by describing "threat on the other side of the wall" (103) which refers to the deprived ones. Zizek's idea is significant in relation to Karachi's slums areas or Kachi Abadi which are spatially marginalized and are on the borderline. The slum communities as ghettoized spaces, on the other side of the wall due to its poor infrastructure, arguably are considered a threat to the social order. Therefore, Karachi sub(urban) areas are imagined as "blank zone", the excluded spaces onto which the city elites and capitalists project their fear and portray slum residents as a threat to their security as well as progress. Indubitably then, these kind of spaces of exclusion and indeterminacy within political and social system can be referred to as what Zizek calls symbolic violence which is less visible and embedded

in deep layers which is a form of objective violence. This type of violence is physical but layered deeply and is often envisaged as a threat. Gayer usefully describes this phenomenon as “bypassing” in his book, which describes the life of lower-class families where mega projects, flyovers and demolition have ruined the lower class and instill a feeling of exile in their minds (Gayer 272). Such social narratives produce violence and a state of denial within spatial configurations and escalate social disharmony and spatial injustice.

Following Zizek, I argue that Hamid’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale* and *The Prisoner* portray Karachi’s landscape as a dominated space where multiple forces intersect and perform their activities, within state institutions, tanzeem offices, political and religious institutions. Both texts reflect violence and spatial dynamics that work parallel in a particular time. Both novels unravel different forms of violence such as kidnapping, target killing, psychological torture, bomb blasts, police brutality, marginalization, militant attacks, political patronage and violence of bureaucracy. For example, in *The Spinner’s Tale*, in the case of Uzair Sufi, slow violence is represented in the form of his act of leaving his family in perpetual uncertainty and the slow death of the lower class. The urban mainstream spaces inhabited by elites of Karachi create a psychological and physical disconnection from the rest of the city. Spaces like Clifton and Defense area in Karachi are more developed and enjoy resources in terms of education, hospitals, sanitization, security, schools and water supply but the rest of the suburban spaces are marginalized and can be understood in terms of what Zizek calls “blank zone”. Such divisions also produce process slow violence.

Here, Nixon’s concept of slow violence is also significant: “Crucially, slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded” (3). Nixon usefully points out “emergencies of slow violence … dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention, these emergencies whose repercussions have given rise to some of the most critical challenges of our time” (3). Hamid’s novel *The Prisoner* reflects more or less similar emergencies where the elites are extracting the basic

resources from the public and use them for their personal spaces. For example, in the novel, a police officer describes the rich class who capture the city and its resources “[t]hey weren’t even used to the questioning of the police. The barey log, the big shots, had buffered themselves from the droll problems of everyday life. If the water board didn’t provide water, they would just buy private tankers. If there were power outages, they bought generators” (Prisoner 108). On the other side of the city, deprivation of these sources create resentments among the common masses. What is important to note is the fact that this kind of invisibility of slow violence would hardly draw stakeholders’ attention to common masses’ unseen poverty. This “intensified assaults on resources” by the elite makes it even difficult for the poor community to deal with their everyday life. Consequently, some will pit their energies against “the normalized quiet of unseen power” (Nixon 12) by resorting to violent or criminal activities.

Taking inspiration from Nixon's perspective of slow violence, I argue that space and violence are intertwined with each other because space and environment provide the opportunity to produce violence. As I mentioned earlier, spaces shape different forms of violence. It can be slow violence or hidden violence. In Hamid's novel, police is often shown to be taking bribes from lower-middle-class families to give them justice within a police station which is a form of slow violence by manipulating their trust and using power tactics over poor people. But this equation of the slow violence of the poor also includes those who are agents of the state. For example, the police inspector Akbar takes bribes in the police station for the survival of his family because the superiors are not taking care of lower staff and demand “Hafta” from them and in return they bargain with common masses and ask for bribes due to their economic instability: “[o]ur department doesn’t take care of its men like your army does, sir. We have to do everything for ourselves. You might think why would anyone want this miserable job? (137). Police constables are the lower class of the police department and mostly they have very low salaries. For survival, they take bribes from the public directly or indirectly to address their economic crises through manipulation and misuse of power. If police take bribes from poor people in exchange of justice, it comes in the domain of slow violence, it does not

look like a sudden act of violence but it disrupts social justice and equality among individuals. Interestingly, public and law enforcement agencies are interlinked in a slow violence process where the poor receive slow violence and the superior produce slow violence over their subordinates through a systematic procedure taking advantage of hidden bureaucratic spaces which affects both parties in a specific time and space.

In a city like Karachi, ecological degradation, pollution and health crises are the consequences of overpopulation, industrialization, social consumerism, which all fall into the category of slow violence, deeply embedded in social structure due to poor governance and poor policies by the capitalists, which affect certain groups, leading to social injustice, suffering, deprivation and economic death. Objective violence is not a direct act of violence but a systematic procedure which affect morally and psychologically through different practices. Elites often control the city's natural resources, build industries, executing different policies that promote their personal interest at the cost of marginalized communities' national future. Nixon describes this administered invisibility as "spatial amnesia, as [certain] communities, under the banner of development, are physically unsettled and imaginatively removed, evacuated from place and time and thus coupled from the idea of both a national future and a national memory" (151). This indubitably resonates with Zizek's idea of objective violence:

[t]he exemplary figures of evil today are not ordinary consumers who pollute the environment and live in a violent world of disintegrating social kinks, but those who, while fully engaged in creating conditions for such universal devastation and pollution, buy their way out of their own activity, living in gated communities, eating organic food, taking holidays in the wildlife preserves, and so on. (27)

Here, Zizek is critiquing a certain elite class who are responsible for environmental violence. He rejects the common narrative of the average class who damage the environment and produce violence but he is representing the hypocrisy and ideology of invasion among the global elite. He argues that the ordinary class participates passively in this process they are not the primary agents

who damage the ecological structure but the elite who are sitting outside enjoying the bounties of nature and flaring up violence over the common class. Furthermore, the elite maintain a clean hygienic level by eating organic food and enjoying fresh air from nature, while the ordinary class is forced to inhale the toxic pollution from their waste. Their selective morality serves as an alibi, masking their role in environmental exploitation. The elite believe that they are doing their best for the welfare of human nature but in reality, they unleash violence over the poor class, which leads to anxieties, health crises, and social deprivation.

Such anxieties are captured by Hamid in *The Prisoner* in which the spaces occupied by the poor are filled with “the odors of working men’s sweat, and the stink of the carbon fumes that choked the air” (110). On the other hand, urban elite spaces are filled with “the glossy and spacious boutiques stood cabins, barely ten by ten, selling all sorts of wares, from car tires to open spices heaped in little mounds in front of the customers” (110). It is important to note that even the cartographic features and spatial configuration of the city begin to change as the elite move out of the certain areas, leaving the city in the state of crisis. Hamid’s novels unravel Karachi’s urban landscape where open roads and unpolluted air are replaced by a harsh environment and traffic pollution. When Constantine, the police officer visits Zamzama market, he realizes that the entire market has changed. Once it was full of elite fragrance, boutiques of fabric but now the place is a mess. The shopkeepers bypassed their shop premises, extending their stuff till the main road. Now, the place is full of carbon fumes and pollution. People can neither park their cars nor walk due to high traffic. Interestingly, camels, dogs, donkeys and rickshaws are all over the market and the traffic police are not taking any interest. There is no sign of Mercedes and SUVs in the city, the elite are gone. Hamid’s depiction of the marketplace is the true picture of ecological damage, marginalization and systemic violence which transformed the city into an environmental crisis.

The crowded market symbolizes objective violence which is invisible but deeply structured, where profit becomes greed and nature and residents are treated as expendable. Likewise, Hamid’s novel *The Spinner’s Tale*, reflects the same notion of Karachi’s urban and sub(urban) spaces where

deserted and dismantled buildings are used for prisons. In *The Spinner's Tale* too, dismantled building serves as a confinement cell in a Nara district. The confinement cell is an old husbandry school where the police official put Uzair Sufi as a prisoner. The procedures in the police station can merely be seen as a formality because there are no FIR sheets available. The police station hardly gives an impression of a law enforcement institution because of the poor infrastructure and cows and goats roam freely within the premises of police station. The poor infrastructure and presence of animals within the police station premises metaphorically highlight the failure of state institutions and their negligence. The district Nara is described as a marginalized and isolated space forgotten by the authorities. The setting of the police station implies that state institutions is ineffective, corrupt, and fail in governance. The novel illustrates the prison's spatial-temporal structure, representing that state institutions have ignored sub(urban) spaces and have not taken an interest in maintaining law and order situations. In the novel, the Nara district gives a vivid description of a police station where only two constables are on duty “[t]his was especially of the small group of policemen who huddled together over a campfire in this particularly desolate corner of the Nara district” (3). Furthermore, they were talking about a ghost “listen Peeral, the only spirit passing this place would be the ghost of a horny buffalo who died while mounting a cow” (4). After all any self-respecting ghost wouldn't be caught dead here. The narrative presents the police station inside a husbandry school which is an irony and symbolizes the failure of state institution and a lack of interest. Capturing an animal husbandry, school reflects two significant points. Firstly, the state deprives the suburban areas of resources and consequently no law and order situation can be maintained in these areas for common masses. Secondly, the liminal space of Nara district reflects the constables' own internal alienation because they are situated on the last boundaries of the city without proper infrastructure and back up force. Moreover, the voice of ghost metaphorically refers a psychological haunting. The ghost may represent the voice of the silent and the oppressed who are ignored through systemic violence. The inability to see ghosts but listening their voice symbolizes invisible suffering where people feel suppressed but can't raise their voice or identify the source. In

addition to this, the constables and prisoners' internal alienation and loneliness are not just physical but temporal; they are stuck in a period where time does not move and space offers no rescue. The missing boundary walls of the police station illustrated that state regulation is absent but their omnipresence through prison's building shows their control and surveillance over the city. This infrastructure of law enforcement is also meant to control public resources (animal husbandry) where violence unfolds slowly away from the public gaze. Ultimately, such activities create a space of alienation and psychological traumas which are deeply embedded in the systemic structure that gives rise to slow violence.

*The Spinner's Tale* also unravels an intersection of bureaucracy and spatial configuration. For example, Abbasi's posting to Nara district is not just a bureaucratic procedure but a form of spatial, structural and class-based violence. Abbasi belongs to a lower-class background but after securing a position in competitive exams, he is allocated in a far-sighted area due to his background. His other teammates are allocated with higher officials. Abbasi is the "son of a humble village schoolmaster, he had been a scholarship boy all his life, attending some of the country's most prestigious institutions, but always remaining an outsider" (7). Moreover after completing his training in the police academy "Abbasi's turn came, there was no place left to go but the wilderness. [a]nd Nara really was the wilderness. They said that a directly appointed ASP had never posted" (8). Not other than before Omar arrived. Here, Hamid is critiquing the bureaucratic structure and their racial discrimination. In the novel, Abbasi's posting to Nara district is a geographical punishment and racial exploitation by the police department. Nara is an isolated place, geographically isolating Abbasi from basic resources and career advancement. This a type of objective violence where the individual is removed from the center and sent into exile. Here, the space becomes itself a tool of control through which Abbasi is marginalized due to his socio-economic background. Despite being a high-ranking officer in the police department Abbasi faces spatial discrimination when the state deliberately places him in a neglected area where basic resources are missing. Abbasi experience discrimination because his lower socio-economic and class background do not qualify him for the

elite posting. Here, the institution reinforces objective violence over Abbasi because he feels suffocation which intensifies his alienation. His posting to Nara signifies his spatial othering. As Zizek aptly points out, “the true evil of our societies is not their capitalist dynamics as such, but our attempt to extricate ourselves from them all the while profiting by self-enclosed communal space, from ‘gated communities’ to exclusive racial or religious group” (29). According to Zizek, elite communities make comfort zone for their survival and shield themselves from the consequences. This activity proliferates social division and inequalities such as spatial dislocation and racial-discrepancy which escalate objective violence. The elite and government use such tactics within the system to divide spaces based on resources, geographic and ethnic background, where they easily manipulate the spatial structure. In Karachi’s urban and sub(urban) landscape contexts, people who are living in slums are deprived from basic resources, even the state deploys low background officials in marginalized districts to serve the system and maintain law and order just for formality.

## Political Institutions and Violence

Political institutions are the backbone of a state which maintain stability and justice and give basic rights to the public. Considering Karachi’s political landscape where different political parties are working on the ground such as PPP, MQM, ANP and JIP, every party has a different narrative which serves its ideology. Karachi’s politics is deeply divided in different ethnic and political lines. MQM historically represents Urdu-speaking Muhajirs, Pakistan Peoples Party dominates in Sindh with the support of Sindhi-speaking public and ANP represents Pashtuns and a nationalist narrative while JIP (Jummat-e-Islami Pakistan) propagates an Islamic narrative based on Islamic values and norms. These political parties are involved in different activities which perpetuate violence, thereby, destabilizing city’s landscape, through political engineering, land grabbing, smuggling, extortion, corruption, establishing militant wings, brainwashing and political assassination. All this violence comes in the domain of objective and subjective violence as Zizek mentions in his book *The Violence*.

Moreover, state (political institution) are indirectly interlinked in such activities, as foregrounded in Hamid's fictional city of Karachi.

In the novel, the political institutions are shown to deliberately flare up situation and resort to such violence to gain control over the city and its resources for their personal objectives, which leads to anxieties, marginalization, nepotism, illegal activities and a state of insecurity. Zizek rightly points out that every individual is caught in

a kind of ethical illusion, parallel to perceptual illusions. The ultimate cause of these illusions is that although our power of abstract reasoning has developed immensely, our emotional and ethical responses remain conditioned by age-old instinctual reactions of sympathy to suffering and pain that is witnessed directly. (43)

Here, Zizek flags up an important distinction between direct and indirect violence that cause pain and suffering. Human beings are conditioned to respond to direct and visible violence perpetrated by criminals and hence ethical responses towards victims are naturally evoked. On the contrary, pain and sufferings caused by indirect violence will not promote empathy because perpetrators of violence cannot be held accountable for their action. For example, sometimes the state actors escalate tension in order to hide their own involvement in a matter, thereby creating ethical or perceptual illusion (due to the absence of single identifiable perpetrator) to manipulate public perception. Resultantly, public is inclined to hold political parties responsible for the incidents. Many a times, political institutions create chaos to suspend normal rights just to exercise their power. This type of subjective violence does not serve common masses but strategically serves the elites. For example, Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* resonates with Zizek's critique where abstract laws mask systemic violence exercised by the elite, one of the characters says: "These are legal terms, made up by judges and magistrates and senior police officers sitting in air-conditioned offices. All I know is that the people who use these words don't live on the streets of this city" (86). These lines reflects character's frustration with the disconnect between legal system and lived realities of ordinary people. The higher authorities impose their orders and rules without understanding or addressing the hardship

realities of the ordinary people most affected by them. The protagonist feels distant from this class and criticizes his superiors and their systemic violence over lower staff and ordinary people. The narratives foreground the ways in which the United Frontier Party manipulates city's political landscape due to its alliance with the government. Such alliances are used to cover up their political mess, corruption and protection but unfortunately, government and politics are two sides of the same coin and always work as a parallel structure. The police officers and political figures operate within in symbolic order, making decisions that produce silent violence against the residents. In one of the episodes, when a party member commits a murder, the police officer negotiates with political leaders to preserve the integrity of their parties. The political leaders do not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of their workers for their own protection and larger benefits. This is indubitably another form of subjective violence unleashed on common masses or common workers of the parties.

Hamid unravels another form of subjective violence perpetrated by political figures who hire young recruits for their political parties. These young workers are bound to help them in their rallies and other illicit activities, mainly exploited because of their economic vulnerability as most of them belong to lower-class families. Working for various political parties and tanzeems as "party workers", but behind the scene, they are involved in illegal activities, ranging from target killing, kidnapping, street crimes to threatening opponents. Most of these young workers are below 18 years and they work as a sleeper cells for their party. The political institutions provide them with shelters and safe haven where they can easily proliferate criminal activities. Furthermore, they pick young adults from colleges and university and involve them in political matters by providing them free hand. They start their journey as a political worker but after gaining some credibility and experience in illegal activities, they ultimately gangs and some of them form their own gangs and exert their power over the city. Here, I argue that it's a two-way violence; they serve as both victim and perpetrator. First they become victim of political parties through brainwashing that make them violent characters, and then they make others victims, epitomizing both subjective and objective violence.

In order to understand a spatial shift in violence in the context of Karachi, Nixon's concept of slow violence is useful. According to Nixon, “[b]y slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2). Slow violence is deeply structured and is informed by a hidden agenda which is not visible but processed through space and time. When considered in relation to institutional spaces, the political institutions can be seen to normalize environmental degradation, economic deprivation, or political repression, which produce slow violence by alienating certain groups of society. Later on, this process transforms into direct violence (physical violence) which enhances terror and fear among individuals, such as, marginalization of a certain group is pushed to the brink but when their resistance emerges the state often reacts with direct violence, such as police brutality and physical assault. *The Prisoner* portrays kidnapping cases in the vicinity of Karachi's urban landscape where kidnappers demand high ransom: “[I] got this complaint, that someone was kidnapping young boys from their neighborhood in New Karachi and demanding ransom from the parents” (34). In these lines, Hamid particularly foregrounds the spatial mobility pattern of kidnappers in urban areas which pose a huge challenge to police and other agencies responsible for combating criminal activities in posh lesser populated areas. Moreover, they were doing this for side business “I haven't worked in that area before, but my informer gave me a hint of who it was. Turned out it was a group of madarchod ward boys who were making some money for themselves on the side. I dragged him in the street and he threatened me” (34). In Karachi, kidnapping is a daily routine mostly in urban area because the elite class lives in the center of city and kidnappers take advantage of such spatial patterns and victimize elite families. These criminals are not ordinary criminals but are well-connected and are often receive backing from the police. As Nixon mentions that across time and space, such violence transforms into direct violence and fractures the social fabric. First, the boys become the target through slow violence and then they victimize other citizens through direct violence. In the novel *The Prisoner*, Akbar's raid on the kidnapper's apartment where the kidnappers confront him “He tried to threaten me, so I told him

I'd fuck his mother in front of his eyes, and then I thrashed him in front of everyone" (34). Here, the way Akbar is threatened by the kidnappers symbolizes the political power backing them, which shows that they are above the law and high connection, no one can penalize them. Ultimately, the cycle continues in the same direction and the political institutions provide them safe zones for their illicit activities, encouraging and strengthening them.

Following the discussion, the law enforcement agencies create such political spaces for their personal objectives and use these spaces as a tool to perpetuate violence. These political parties obey orders of the agencies and serve as a puppet. Most of the time such political parties take decisions with their consensus and design policies under their instructions. In Pakistan, the law enforcement agencies often backed some political parties and their leaders to ensure their dominance in national security and foreign polices. It is not surprising that the law enforcement agencies often manipulate political parties to pressurize the government and other stakeholders by escalating violence and tension in the country. From 2000-2008 during Pervez Musharraf's era, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) was considered to be a pro-military party which served under a dictator. Furthermore, in 2018, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came into power with the help of the military establishment. Similarly, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is far-right Islamic extremist party, mainly known for religious extremism and violent protests supported by Pakistani law enforcement agencies for their own purpose such as to put pressure against Nawaz Shareef's government. Using public mainstream spaces, political parties in Pakistan have continued to be the source of both subjective and objective violence which destabilizes the country's political landscape, causing economic loss and deadly protests. For example, in 2017 TLP held a protest in Faizabad (Islamabad) for twenty days which led to a deadly clash with police. In 2018-2021, multiple nationwide protests over blasphemy issues, hundreds of civilians and police personnel were killed and injured. Many deals were signed between the government and TLP and some of the political workers got bail quickly and asserted pressure on the government. This proves that political parties produce and fuel what can be understood as systemic violence in the country with the help of law and enforcement agencies which use them for

their own political purposes. Zizek's theorization of Systemic violence is useful here. According to Zizek, it is something like "the notorious 'dark matter' of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence" (10). Although it is invisible, "it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seems to be irrational" (10). Here, Zizek argues that political parties and law enforcement agencies perpetuate violence, which seems to be invisible but it has a direct impact on the victims. For example, discriminatory laws that produce violence when someone is targeted based on their ethnic and social background or marginalize a certain community or repress public voices against the state, such activities flare up violence. Furthermore, when political parties pass a bill against the will of public opinion, the state and law enforcement agencies directly engage in repression which is a form of systematic violence but when the public reacts to this systemic violence, it takes the form of direct violence, such as, protests and rallies where law enforcement agencies directly react to neutralize the mob. It would not be wrong to say that in this manipulative game of state/political institutions/agencies, public or communal spaces are transformed into volatile political spaces where radical ideologies are played out by political leaders and workers as well as state agencies. Nevertheless, during such events, both citizens and party workers are equally victimized.

For example, Hamid's novel, *The Prisoner*, portrays the interplay of political institutions and law enforcement agencies by highlighting their mutual relationship and common interest. In the novel, the agency guys engage in political engineering by using the opponent party as a tool to pressurize the government for their personal gain. Akbar and Constantine are shown to be discussing the role of agency in politics because they have an offer to join the special unit and serve the agency but Constantine denies the request because he knows about the dirty politics of the agency: "You and your damn Agencies, Akbar. They are also badshah log" (40) First they created this monster of a party "when that party started getting too big for its boots, they are tired of it and decided that it was being run by a bunch of anti-state criminals" (40). In this manipulative game, agencies first use people for their agendas and then throw them out. Here, Hamid highlights the complex web of political institutions and the role of agency in the country's politics. The agency functions as a big

brother in the country. They control the country's stakeholders as puppets and proliferate their illicit activities by using political leaders (Siddiqa 67). Moreover, if a party doesn't obey their command or shows unwillingness against their policy, they provoke the opposition party against the government and give them political support in the form of a political coalition or sometimes they coup the government. For example, on 12 October 1999, Pervez Musharraf seized control of the civilian government and on 14 October, he suspended the constitution of Pakistan and became the chief executive. Likewise, the Operation Midnight Jackal, Pakistan's secret premier agency, ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) political wing, launched an operation to topple Benazir Bhutto's government and set the stage for new elections in the country.

Hamid suggests that these types of incidents reflect systematic violence where law enforcement agencies assert power over social institutions and fracture the social structure of the city in the form of political exploitation. Even the political institutions are to be blamed for such events by adopting unethical ways to achieve power and putting the public's rights at stake. Hamid clearly mention this issue in his novel by describing agency as a tool for political engineering and exploitation where political leaders and agency are on one page and perform in parallel structure: “[t]hey should never have given these UF bastards so much leeway. Now it's impossible to control them. No one is willing to move against the ward bosses” (38). According to Hamid, the state agency bargains with the political leaders by providing them extra cover in elections or give protection to their illegal assets and money laundering cases. The narratives highlight the way agencies give leverage to political parties and its members due to their common interest. The criminals consider themselves above the law and proliferate fear, violence and illicit activities which destabilize the social landscape and lead to systemic and direct violence including: kidnapping, target killing, political assassination, robberies and political engineering. As a result, the city's atmosphere is increasingly polluted with fear, anxieties, alienation and most importantly, these events disintegrate social relationships and resistance.

Likewise, Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* reflects a similar problem in the context of psychological manipulation. The novel discusses the way political parties pick young boys from the colleges and universities and engage them in their political activities through psychological manipulation. The political workers target young boys in the universities who are underprivileged and are deprived of basic resources. Consequently, the political worker dragged them towards politics and involved them in so-called Tanzeems, giving them trust that they will protect their integrity and will give them name and fame in politics. Such Tanzeem works for the politicians and they give them leverage to operate easily without any fear. In many cases, boys who belong to lower-class families, are often involved in such activities for the sake of financial stability of their families. Basically, the political workers use psychological tactics to brainwash their personality to manipulate them easily what I have called slow violence in this chapter. Importantly, these political actors use communal spaces where students gather, such as cafeteria, cricket ground or open spaces to expose them to a certain narrative or ideology. These ideological narratives rang from a sense of belonging and identity to triggering feelings of humiliation, or taking revenge on someone. Having pushed to the margins due to social and economic vulnerability, these young minds can be easily made to believe that they are denied basic privileges of life which the privileged class enjoy. This process can be subtle and prolonged which leads to systemic violence that seems invisible but erodes ethics, peace, tolerance and sympathy among individuals, especially in youth and they become more violent and brutal in the name of demanding their basic rights. Politicians play with human emotions; they are ruthless and selfish. First, they use them and then discard them through a systemic procedure. They take advantage of people's deprivation, emotions and their trust. In many cases, such political agents gain individual trust and make them realize that they will help them, but after completing their task, they dump them or deny their existence. Usually, youth are very emotional and impulsive and can easily be trapped.

In Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, Sufi and his friend Sohail face a similar situation and are manipulated by political activists. Sufi belongs to a lower-middle family and his father was a

retired government servant. After promoting to college level, he faced an identity crisis because most of his classmates were very bold and aggressive but he was diffident. One day, college boys humiliate him and slap him because he is talking to a girl. This becomes a turning point in Sufi's life when he meets the political workers of a certain political party. The police actors take advantage of his humiliation and involve him in politics, Sufi says, “[I] came out of class, this fellow with a beard came up to me and asked why I had spoken to the girl” (78) All of a sudden “I was surrounded by a bunch of goons who started grabbing my collar. The bearded fellow slapped me in front of everyone in the yard” (78). No one was there to help me. But this results in Sufi's transformation from a middle-class youth to a militant, a shift driven by his humiliation and victimization by a specific group.

Here, I am building a nexus of Sufi's humiliation and political agents' intervention. Interestingly, the political agents take advantage of Sufi's underprivileged position and offer him to join the party where he can be a leader and can also easily take his revenge from his opponents: “[m]y friend, there were people in the crowd yesterday who had tears in their eyes when you finished. We could use people like you in our party” (79). This line clearly shows that the political agents are manipulating Sufi's mind by giving him courage to join the party and become a leader. Hamid compares these political leaders to a fisherman who waits to catch a fish from the oceans and this is precisely what happens with Sufi who becomes a victim of of slow violence. This shows a slow violence tactics that operate in a systematic structure through exploitation which is not visible but has serious consequences. Sufi's friend, Sohail, also becomes a victim of such an operation when he is killed in a police encounter in while returning back home. Sohail was on the police hit list due to his protests and radical activities. It is important to highlight that political parties use political workers for their radical activities and encourage them to resist more by resorting to direct violence: “[t]he party, of course does nothing to stop them, in fact, encouraging them to more radical action” (98). Hamid argues that such political parties encourage political workers to do more which triggers young minds such as Sufi and Sohail but when they get arrested, the party disowns them or gives them a small

grant to their families. Sohail's family also gets a small amount from the political party in the return which shows his sacrifice for the party, just giving them thousand rupees "Even, now, on the cold bus, Ausi thinks about the money. The exact price for martyrdom" (97). It's a bitter reality that "all political parties are the same, that they use workers for their own ends and then discard them" (97), as party used Sohail for its personal political objective.

Here again the public and private spaces are supposed to be blurred through objective violence, thereby disenfranchising the party workers, as it is evident through sexual exploitation Sohails' sister is subjected to. The subjective violence that starts in public spaces in the form of the death of party workers is shown to have penetrate the domestic spaces. For example, Sohail as a party worker loses his life for the party leader. As compensation, his family is offered some money in the form of charity so that the family remains mute over this violence, unleashed on Sohail. However, this compensation is not granted in good faith. This takes the form of another exploitation and another party worker Wasim sexually victimize Sohails sister in the name of charity or donation. It might be consensual but still, it is morally and ethically wrong. Such political workers use their financial power to mask exploitation, including the demand for sexual relationships and abuse. As Zizek says,

In liberal communist ethics, the ruthless pursuit of profit is counteracted by charity. Charity is the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation. In a superego blackmail of gigantic proportions, the developed countries "help" the underdeveloped with aid, credits, and so on, and thereby avoid the key issue, namely their complicity in and co-responsibility for the miserable situation of the underdeveloped (22).

According to Zizek, dependency, charities and donations lead to exploitation, harassment and bodily abuse. In the novel, Sohail's sister is lured into luxuries of life on a condition that she would provide sexual pleasures to Wasim. The violence that started on streets in the form of Sohails' loss of life in a police encounter because of his participation in protests and rallies, ultimately takes his domestic space in grips where his sister experiences sexual violence albeit consensually. When Sufi gets angry

with Sohail's sister that she is tarnishing his brother's name, she replies, “[h]ow dare you accuse me of tarnishing my brother's name! My brother isn't here anymore, and like you said, the only thing the party was willing to give was five thousand rupees for his coffin” (102). Sohail's sister acknowledges that “Wasim give me an offer and I took it. If you want to me to be direct about it, I will. Yes, I fuck him. I fuck him and he give us things” (102). Waseem relationship to Sohail's sister, given to her in the form of charity, is also a form of objective violence that involve a chain of perpetrators: political leader, agencies, and Wasim. This form of indirect violence serves to mask the face of the real perpetrator, as Zizek usefully points out that charity and donation are merely a humanitarian mask to hide the true face of spatial temporal behaviors and economic exploitation. Here, the relationship between Waseem and Sohail's sister is consensual at first, Waseem takes advantage of Sohail's death and begins a physical relationship with Sohail's sister. However, later Sohail's sister becomes a victim of direct violence through a gradual process of escalating abuse. Thus, such political leaders' generosity is not a genuine kindness but a strategic tool to manipulate deprived and marginalized individuals through a systemic process.

## **Religious Institutions (Madrassas) and Violence**

Religious institutions or Madrassas are Islamic religious schools, where Islamic scholars teach the Quran and translation, Hadith, Islamic law and other theological subjects. They are all prevalent across Pakistan, even in every city and district including Karachi and play a significant role in the country's Islamic education and religious landscape. After 1947 and under the General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, their number significantly increased, especially during the Pak-Afghan war, gesturing towards an interrelationship between madrassas and extremism (Malla n.p.). Under Zia's regime, the Afghan war was declared as jihad, which potentially and religiously motivated the growth of religious institutions in the country. By the early 2000s, the number of madrassas had reached 28,000 to 30,000 which are still operating in Pakistan and many of them are unregistered. These institutions

enrolled millions of children who were war-affected and provided them with free education and shelters. Currently, there are 40,000 madrassas operating in Pakistan and across the city of Karachi.

A large number of madrassas in Pakistan follow the Sunni Deobandi school of thought (Darul Uloom Karachi), though there are some Shia school of thought and other sectarian madrassas including, Barelvi (Jamia-tul-Madina), Shia (Jamia-tul-Muntazar) and Ahl-e-Hadith (Salafi oriented), each of these train students according to their own curriculum and religious interpretation. In Sindh, there are 2,146 madrassas which are registered with the Pakistan Madrassa Education Board and some are operating independently. Madrassas in Karachi, like Jamaia Binoria and Jamia Forooqia, are well known and house thousands of students. Such religious institutions are used for the welfare of human beings which spread the message of peace, teach humanity and Islamic values to students but unfortunately, some madrassas are linked with radical groups that propagate hatred, ethnic conflict, radical ideology and extremism among students. This is not a new phenomenon; it was the repercussion of the Pak-Afghan war, the time when religious institutions were established to train mujahideen to participate in Afghan jihad against the Soviets. These madrassas were established with the US aid. Many of the mujahideen stayed in different madrassas with the support of the Pakistani military establishment and were encouraged to fight against the Kuffar (infidels) to safeguard Islam. This was the time when the concept of Muslim Ummah was launched and these Talibans joined hands with their Muslim brothers in Afghanistan in their jihad. However, after the war, the Pakistani government and the U.S left the mujahideen to infiltrate various regions of Pakistan and these were declared as terrorists and a threat to national security. In the context of Karachi, Laurent Gayer, in his book *Karachi Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City*, writes that the city is taken over by jihadists “[w]hile sectarian group have taken root in Karachi since the mid-1980s, the city has also been a haven for jihadi groups active in Kashmir and Afghanistan” (183) Furthermore, “madrassa such as Binori Town provided encouragement and legal justification to anti-Shia sectarian group and to anti-Indian or anti-western jihadists” (Gayer 183). Karachi has continued to be under attack from these militants. According to Gayer, after the 1980s, the spatial temporality

of madrassas in Karachi has been changed due to the Pak-Afghan war. Due to multiculturalism and high mobility, the jihadists move towards Karachi and search for a safe haven where they can stay and perpetuate their illegal activities. Steve Inskeep writes in his book *Instant City*, “Taliban fighters are believed to visit Karachi when they need places to hide” (27). They found Karachi a suitable environment where they can operate easily by taking advantage of these religious institutions

Against this backdrop, Hamid's novel *The Spinners' Tale* reflects the same issue where Sufi, the jihadist takes advantage of religious institution and manipulates young minds to prepare them for jihad. He strategically controls young minds to propagate his violent agenda using madrassa and groom them for suicide attacks. Instead of teaching Islamic values and culture, Sufi runs radicalized madrassa where extremist ideologies are taught under the banner of Islamic education. He presents himself as an Islamic leader, gaining trust from socially deprived people who send their children to madrassa for Islamic education and shelter but he betrays their trust and makes them suicide bombers. Here, I am unraveling the deep structure of the religious spaces, madrassa politics and their systemic violence which create traumas, suffering, and militants in the society. The process of transforming deprived children into violent jihadis through madrassa spaces is not ideological but it is a systemic psychological and political operation.

Besides, madrassas function as a recruitment hub in a sub(urban) areas where law enforcement agencies are not around. Religious leaders strategically choose their targets on different bases including, poor families, orphan children and isolated ones. Poor families send their children to madrassas to get Islamic education but unfortunately under the guise of religious knowledge, they fall prey to Islamic extremists. In most cases, jihadist groups also trap these children by isolating them from their families to serve their extremist ideologies. As Zizek says, “[t]he predominance of religiously (or ethnically) justified violence can be accounted for by the very fact that we live in an era that perceives itself as post-ideological... Religion or ethnic belonging fits this role perfectly” (144). According to Zizek, we live in a time where grand narratives have lost their influence and

religion and ethics has taken over the so-called post-ideological era in which people justify the notion of violence.

In Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, Sufi misuses the space (madrassa) and religion, using false ideology to recruit young boys for terrorist activities such as target killing and suicide bombing: “[a]bu Yahya—the Graciousness of God. Well chosen. It is you who will be the first among us to receive that graciousness Have you prepared your body to be received in Jannat? Yes, Shiekh sahib” (283). Sufi is manipulating the young boy through a false narrative, portraying the wrong perception of Jannat, defying spatio-temporal reasoning to lure young minds with transcendental rewards. This kind of manipulation is not necessarily malicious but it is a systemic operation in the form of spiritual and psychological influence that shapes person's perception of life, purpose, death, after-death and the reward in the life hereafter. Zizek critiques the assumption that religion and ethics are always misused to perpetrate objective violence, which is not visible but deeply affects the social structure and morality of an individual that creates violence and terror in the form of direct violence. The boy is psychologically manipulated through systemic violence but the post-ideological conditioning makes him violent and he becomes a suicide bomber, which affects hundreds of individuals through direct violence.

Furthermore, Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* reflects three incidents which prove that religious spaces are used for violence: the kidnapping of foreign journalist Ms Boyd, the suicide attack on the president's convoy and the spreading anti-Shia narrative which produces ethnic violence. All these events highlight two major things, violence and spatial dynamics. As I mentioned earlier, violence is interlinked with space and time (Spatial temporality). In Hamid's novel, the madrassa represents the religious space, misused for criminal activities, such as, the kidnapping of the foreign journalist and hiding her in a madrassa compound. In the novel, the pregnant journalist faces direct violence from Sufi via her confinement in a cell without any food and medicine. The female journalist wants to break a story on the militancy in Karachi to make it a piece of international news and put it to Western leaders but unfortunately, her meeting with Sufi takes a wrong turn and

she becomes a victim of Sufi's violence. Sufi's kidnapping of the foreign journalist is informed by his anti-US sentiments that most religious minded people have for kuffar but these sentiments inculcated in religious spaces result into violence, as Zizek says, “[t]he ultimate irony, of course, is that the ire of Muslim crowds turned against the very Europe which staunch anti-Islamists, such as notorious journalist Oriana Fallaci who died in September in 2006, perceived as far too tolerant toward Islam” (121). According to Zizek, subjective violence can be a reaction to a deeper systemic tension surrounding cultural and political clashes. Ironically, Sufi's kidnapping and slaughter of the female journalist suggests double edged emotions that make him victim and perpetrator at the same time. On the one hand, his kidnapping of a foreign journalist reflects his hatred for the long standing western hegemony, legitimizing Sufi's position as victim of western imperialism and hegemony. However, despite his justification as a victim of western hegemony, Sufi cannot justify his violence against a pregnant woman journalist by any standards of morality. As I previously discussed, some religious leaders spread an anti-Western agenda by using religious institutions under the banner of Islamic culture. In the novel *The Spinner's Tale*, Sufi is unraveling his hidden agency blaming the Western world and their policies “You are right, Ms Boyd, The Qur'an doesn't give me permission to kidnap you. No religious text does. But what can I do?” (363). My colleagues did the same “Osama crashed plane into the Twin Towers, so I had to respond by kidnapping a pregnant woman” (363). Hamid suggests that Sufi's interest is not in killing the journalist but he is more interested in asserting his power and dominance over Western world by kidnapping an American woman. Consequently, Sufi's violence is a two-way process which starts from objective to direct violence. Kidnapping the journalist and putting her in a confined cell reflects his objective violence through which he can spread fear in the international community and slaughtering her is a direct violence which is a form of reaction to the Western world.

Intriguingly, this kind of violence “is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the “normal” peaceful state of thing” (Zizek 10). In Hamid's novel, Ms Boyd first becomes a victim of objective violence within the frame of spatial

temporality when she is kidnapped and kept in madrassa. Later, she become victim of subjective violence in the form of slaughtering “[h]is motion is smooth and the cleaver is sharp, cutting its way through muscle and fibre, almost halfway through. A stream of blood gushes out from her exposed larynx, splattering on him and on the reader” (265). Hamid uses an intense gory imagery which portrays the brutality and immediacy of violence. Here it is important to mention that killing a human being is sin in Islam. However, despite being a religious person, Sufi weaponized Islam to execute his extremist mission to fit into a false perception of winning Jannat as a reward (Bano 169).

Referring to Brantingham, Andreson argues that “[g]iven the motivation of an individual to commit an offense, the actual commission of an offense is the end result of a multistaged decision process” (232) which help in identification “within the general environment, a target or victim positioned in time and space” (232). By using different strategies and tactics, Andreson suggests, an offender commits crime it requires motivation and target spatial-temporal patterns which is important for his target. The motivation could be anything including: psychological manipulation, indoctrination, reward etc. This element triggers the offender and helps him to carry out the target within in specific framework.

In Hamid’s novel, Sufi motivates the target through indoctrination and weaponizes to carry out the presidential convoy attack: “[t]he shaheed receives greater honour, and more importantly, a greater number of houris too. Why do you think over volunteers are so eager to put on jacket? The explosive velocity of the jacket makes you reach heaven faster” (page). Hamid argues that Sufi is motivating the young boy for a terrorist attack by giving him a false perception of Paradise to justify terrorism. The false portrayal serves as a motivator, encouraging the boy to sign up for the attack by suggesting that the violent act will smoothly grant him an entry into paradise and even sometimes their families feel proud of them because their children have sacrificed their lives for the noble cause (Fair 139). This is how the religious leaders exploit space and time in the form of recruiting young minds in madrassas, compelling them to commit suicide bombings by taking advantage of the environment and spatial patterns. Moreover, the novel illustrates ethnic conflicts between Sunni and

Shia within the training camp to create sectarian division among the recruiters to consolidate power and control. Such as in Karachi and Kurram Agency (KPK), the third party easily manipulates the public and escalates the tension which leads to ethnic violence, and target killing. Here, Nixon's concept of slow violence is useful in understanding the way in which "a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (2). According to Nixon, violence is gradual process that unfolds slowly over time, with harmful effects and spreads across different period, years even the next generation. It's a form of low violence which is less visible but with the passage of time, it becomes stronger and affects other individuals and the community with great damage.

Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale*, gives a vivid description of the camps where jihadis in camps perpetuate sectarian division and create a confrontation between Shia and Sunni relationship. Usually, it happens in every madrassa where religious leaders manipulate their students against other sectarian groups such as Shia, Salafi, Sunni etc. This division leads to violence and creates sectarian violence in the community and flares up radicalization. In the novel, a jihadi is manipulating Sufi against Shia's sect while he is a trainee under a leader "[e]ven you cannot be naïve, Uzair, The Shia's are the original sinners, the schismatics" (173) Despite being only a minority in Pakistan, "they control everything. Look at the big landlords, the government bureaucrats, the politicians" (173) All the elite are Shia. Here, Hamid argues that the religious leaders manipulate madrassa students for their personal agenda because this is not about religion but a political narrative. The hatred for the Shia community is not a religious but a political issue due to their authority and power. Hence, this proves that sectarian violence is not something sacred war but political and slow violence that spreads over time and creates ethnic confrontation among various groups by using madrassas and a hidden agenda as a tool to perpetuate violence.

Hamid's novel *The Prisoner* also reflects the same notion where religious madrassas are used as black sites where they hide victims who have been kidnapped. In the novel, the Shiekh hides the foreign journalist in the backyard of the madrassa far from the public eye. Here I argue that

madrassas are often secluded and unmonitored nature because they have limited visitors and lack of guardianship is a plus point for the offenders to operate easily without anyone noticing. The combination of privacy, public trust and minimum surveillance makes madrassas convenient for different operations such as kidnapping, assassination, and jihadis recruitments.

Taking cue from Brantingham, Andreson argues that, “[t]he crime template may be thought of as a checklist that must be satisfied for a potential offender to undertake a particular criminal event” (26) The checklist could be “various conditions (environmental cues) that must be met for a crime to occur, a set of conditions that must not be present for a crime to occur” (26). It might be for both. According to Andreson, when an offender is committing a crime, he makes a checklist which includes environmental factors such as target selection, public engagement, rural or urban areas and lack of guardianship. Such spatial patterns and temporal behavior motivate the offender to commit a crime without any hindrance. These spatial and situational factors influence criminal behavior and increase the probability of crime.

For example, in Hamid novel *The Prisoner*, Shiekh follows the same spatial pattern by using madrassasa as safe space where he hides the journalist: “Aziz drove a little further until a fork in the road took them onto a narrower path, which led into a neighborhood of small, closely clustered houses” (320). At the end of the street, “an elaborate mosque complex with whitewashed walls and marble tiles stood in stark contrast to the grim-looking buildings that surrounded” (320). Interestingly, “The Mosque and the side walls were decorated with quranic inscription” (320). The complex was protected by security cameras. Akbar receives a tip from his source that Shiekh is behind the kidnapping of a foreign journalist and he hides him in his madrassa. The outlook of madrassa portrays a gloomy picture, as it resembles a compound where high-profile personalities reside. The cameras and the guards on the gate reinforce a suspicious impression, which proves that the Shiekh is highly cautious and possibly involve in some illicit activities. As I mentioned earlier, such madrassas used to be a recruitment center for the jihadis and the government provided security for their operations. Ultimately, it is clear that Shiekh has assessed the environmental factors and

turned the madrassa into a hideout for a kidnapping and torture cell. Such religious institutions are used as a violent space where they serve political and hidden agendas, which spread sectarian violence, terrorism, and instability within the society.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that space is not a physical entity but deeply intertwined with social and political structures which provide fertile grounds for criminal activities in the context of Karachi's urban and suburban landscape. My main focus has been on the way that different spaces create opportunities for criminals and terrorists and to provide safe havens for their illicit activities by taking advantage of the environment (Ali n.p.). Additionally, this thesis uniquely links spatiality and environmental criminology, covering socio-political, urban and sub(urban) areas and religious spaces where crimes emerge and intercept through spatial and temporal patterns. My aim, throughout this thesis, has been to provide a deep understanding of the emergence of crime through social spaces and the role of environment which facilitates offenders and their illegal activities. For this reason, using Omar Shahid Hamid's novels *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner* as a lens, I unravel the complex interplay of socio-political and religious spaces including: urban and subareas, slums, red light areas, police station and religious institutions (madrassas) where crime and space intersect with each other.

In order to highlight Karachi's spatial dynamics and its social-political structure, which perpetuates violence and illegal activities, I discuss Karachi's cartographic features that foster criminal activities. This was highlighted in Chapter One through an exploration of urban and sub(urban) spaces, where crime emerges from sub-urban spaces due to state negligence, deprivation and 'drop effect' (Jonathan 18). Here, I have particularly discussed slum spaces where the crime rate is maximum because of elite manipulation and power control, as well as political interference. Therefore, I examined the cartographic features of Karachi's urban and sub(urban) spaces where elites pushed the marginalized community into slums without any basic resources. The city is very diverse and overpopulated and consist of three layered: the elite

One, I emphasized that how elite supremacy and political interference impact the subaltern communities within the slums. The communities that live in the slum areas not only feel neglected but also show resistance by indulging in criminal activities. Since these areas are hidden from the mainstream society, these become safe zones for criminal activities. It is precisely this situation that I explored – the relationship between environment and crime, where environment facilitates criminal activities in the form of killing, terrorism, corruption and political engineering.

I began my main analysis in Chapter One with Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner* that unfurl the gang culture and militancy in the urban space of Karachi. The urban landscape, particularly in cities like Karachi, reveals a deep fragmentation where certain group of people, despite living in close proximity, remain isolated from the urban city from one another due to a lack of resources, socioeconomic background and spatial segregation. Slums are often inhabited by marginalized communities that remain invisible in official records, and often face harsh conditions and limited opportunities, which push many of them into criminal activities and identity crises. Additionally, such criminals take advantage of slum areas and commit illicit activities. The interplay of rapid urbanization, multiculturalism, poverty and state negligence creates an environment where social cohesion weakens and crime flourishes. Drawing upon the notion of Soja, Calvino and Brantingham, I analyze the city's socio-political spaces and the hidden structures which facilitate such criminal activities.

This Chapter also explores the political spaces where political parties and state institutions operate in parallel, dominating and exercising their power over the city. In reflecting on Hamid's text, *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, I recognize that political spaces and religious institutions are interlinked which perpetuate crime in the urban landscape of Karachi. I believe that paradoxically these state-governed institutions serve as an activity node in the network that also facilitates crime and violence. The nexus between political and religious spaces and state institutions reveals to me a complex web of networks which operate in a parallel structure. This thesis unravels that institutions do not operate in isolation but work in collaboration, sometimes covertly to hold a

strong grip over the city and fuel up tension, anxiety and manipulate public perception. Through this lens, I understand that crime in urban spaces is not merely an individual act but it is deeply embedded within political and religious structures that exploit their feelings, legitimacy and social rights. Such political and religious structures take advantage of environment and create activity node where they proliferate different criminal activities. Additionally, I examined the role of prison which is used as a medium of communication with the outsiders. The prison functions as microcosm of the city's fractured socio-political landscape. Within these spaces, prisoners control outside activities in the form of a network channel and exchange information. They influence external affairs to assert their power and control over the city. I considered prison as war room or control room, blurring the boundaries between captivity and freedom. Prisoners use their power and establish contact with external gangs that enable them to exercise their power beyond prison walls. Ultimately, it reflects that such offenders take advantage of the environment (prison) and operate their activities within the premises of the prison.

In Chapter One, I also discussed the role of political parties and madrassas and the way they exploit youth and manipulate them psychologically for personal objectives. Many political parties recruit youth from college and universities and involve them in their political rallies and other illicit activities. Likewise, religious madrassas also recruit socially deprived kids and use them for their radical and extremist activities. In this thesis, I mentioned different criminal activities related to Karachi's urban landscape. I examine the urban and sub(urban) environment of Karachi, as vividly portrayed in Hamid's novel *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, which highlights different criminal activities in the city. As Brantingham argues that “[a] crime occurs when four things are in occurrence: a law, an offender, a target and a place” (7). I argue that crime in Karachi is not a matter of individual offenders but it arises from different points including: place, target, and with the help of social and political support. I analyze factors such as militancy, religious extremism, poverty, economic deprivation and multicultural tension within Karachi's urban landscape that escalate criminal activities. Most of the offenders use the “routine activity” pattern and exploit individuals

(Andreson 33). Through this pattern, they choose their target and neutralize them taking signals from the environment. I mentioned various examples from Hamid's novels that depict the role of the environment in the proliferation of criminal activities. Therefore, understanding crime in Karachi requires a holistic approach, in particular, environmental and spatial patterns which is deeply embedded within the city's urban landscape.

In Chapter Two, I discussed spatial dynamics and violence in context of Karachi's socio-political landscape, focusing on sub(urban) areas, political and religious institutions. By analyzing Hamid's texts, *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, I contend that violence is not a direct act but produced and experienced through overlapping spatial and temporal configurations. Building a nexus from Zizek's concept of violence, Nixon's idea of slow violence and Andreson's concept of environmental criminology, I have shown that violence in Karachi is multifaced and politically manufactured. Through this exploration, I argue that violence in Karachi cannot be understood merely as an isolated act or event but it is the product of ongoing interaction between power and space. The overlapping of spatial configurations and sites such as police stations, political space and madrassas create an "activity node" where individuals often engage in daily routine (Andreson 52). This spatial perspective reveals that violence is both immediate and insidious, visible and invisible and often slow-moving. Furthermore, this thesis unravels urban violence by foregrounding the role of space and movement in shaping violent activities.

I divided my second chapter into three categories including, urban spaces and violence, political institutions and religious spaces concerning violence. I examine the spatial configuration of sub(urban) spaces linking with various forms of violence such as subjective and objective violence and the idea of slow violence. From Hamid's novels, *The Spinner's Tale* and *The Prisoner*, I have explored that sub(urban) spaces and socially deprived communities face multiple forms of violence, ranging from overt acts like target killing, kidnapping, police encounters and suicide bombing to more insidious forms of violence such as psychological violence (abusing and

brainwashing), bureaucratic violence which coexist in the social fabric of Karachi's urban landscape.

I have also highlighted the concept of slow violence as theorized by Nixon, which portrays the protagonist's life (Uzair Sufi), who faces identity crises and marginalization through which he joined militant groups and transformed into an extremist. Through Sufi's character, I explored the relationship between visible and invisible violence. Furthermore, I have shown the city's spaces such as slum areas and elite residential areas which reflect a socio-spatial division that fosters marginalization. I also discussed the role of state institutions such as police stations and interrogation rooms where the state escalates subjective violence against the public. Such segregation is not merely geographical but deeply political which perpetuates hidden and structural violence. In a similar vein, I explore the relationship between religious spaces (madrasas) and slow violence. In my thesis, I discussed the role of madrassas where they recruit lower-class kids and indulge them in illicit activities through slow violence. Ultimately, by building this nexus, it is clear that specific group manipulates the environment through spatial and temporal patterns, using such spaces for their personal objective and perpetuating criminal activities.

This recent shift opens up further avenues for interdisciplinary research by emphasizing the active role of space in shaping crime patterns and social dynamics. Furthermore, this thesis aligns with emerging trends in micro-place criminology, fostering collaboration across other fields such as sociology, political science and social psychology to better understand crime patterns and its various social dynamics. By integrating environmental criminology, it gives new direction in the interdisciplinary research relating to architecture, building, streets, and land use which influence crime patterns. The fusion of environmental criminology with spatiality and urban informatics plays a significant role in the field of literature by offering a multi-dimensional and data-driven understanding of space and crime. This interdisciplinary approach will allow scholars to understand the spatial organization of cities, including hidden spaces, crime and environmental conditions that foster violence, conflict and the real experience of marginalized communities in urban settings.

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