GLEAMING UNREVEALED TAPESTRIES (IN A WHISPER)

Unearthing shared narratives through 'architectural inter/trans-laction'

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Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering
Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability MPDSD

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Abstract

This thesis employed a transdisciplinary approach to investigate the spatial and social dynamics of an informal settlement (in Lahore, Pakistan), integrating ethnographic, artistic, and ethical methodologies. It aimed to transform perception of informality and informal settlements (through the discussion of architectural education) by emphasizing on its 'recognition' as dynamic and adaptive environments, rather than areas of deficiency.
Set against Lahore's vibrant and complex urban landscape, the study focused on the themes of 'home' and 'belongingness,' to examine how these concepts are manifested in the daily lives and spatial practices of the residents. This exploration revealed how personal and communal identities are intricately interwoven.

This research process was conducted with the support of iterative ethical, theoretical, and methodological frameworks that synthesized elements of human geography and architecture. Techniques such as narrative interviews, storytelling, autoethnography, and creative mapping were pivotal in achieving respectful and thorough engagement with the community, allowing for a deep understanding of the cultural and spatial dynamics at play. The fieldwork process, described as an 'ethnographic symphony,' is synthesized from the experiences and learnings gathered through intimate interactions with the community, where stories were shared and visually documented. These narratives were carefully crafted with the connection of vignettes that represent the observed and heard stories of inhabitants, ensuring individual voices were respected while situating them within a broader socio-cultural framework.

The outcomes of this research including a 'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~ (it's not a toolkit: towards a framework for working with others' stories)', illustrative vignettes and an audio-visual narrative aims to capture the sensorial and emotional landscapes of the fieldwork. These crafted components, collectively, emphasize on the unrecognized potential of informal settlements. Ultimately, this thesis intends a critical dialogue regarding architectural education's role in developing a deeper, empathetic understanding of informal settlements, to stimulate existing pedagogical practices, to recognize and value the innovative potential of these communities. This project encourages future researchers and planners to perceive urban informality not as a liability but as a reservoir of opportunity and innovation.

Keywords:
Unrecognized — Informality — Narratives — Storytelling — Autoethnography

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

Dear Reader,
Embark on a journey, where formality fades,
Visuals rugged and rough, boundaries unmade.
In the spaces between, creativity springs,
Challenging conventions, where freedom sings.

A master's thesis, architecture's embrace,
Spatial ethnography finds its place.
Yet beyond the walls, our vision extends,
To culture, to life, where every path bends.

Social interactions, daily routines,
Cultural appropriations, vibrant scenes.
In the heart of informality, stories reside,
Join us, dear reader, let our worlds collide.

Batool & Elena

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Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

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   and Pathfinding
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Find the poem in this Table of
Contents...look for the text in
italic and read it in one breath.
We hope you will enjoy !

Palette of Terms

Unrecognized Architecture

Inspired by Rudofsky's attempt to dissect our narrow understanding of the art of building by introducing the unfamiliar world of what he calls 'nonpedigreed architecture', we interpreted his concept and used it in support of our idea of 'unrecognized architecture'. In his book *Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture*, Rudofsky (1987) express the fact that "it is so little known about such concept that we don't even have a name for it". As a generic label he suggests "vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural, as the case may be", we interpreted and name it '**unrecognized architecture**'.

Informality

Adherence to established rules, conventions, and standards, characterized by structure, hierarchy, and official procedures is termed as '**formality**'. Whereas, '**informality**' exhibits behaviours, practices, and arrangements that diverge from established norms or standards. It is characterized by flexibility and spontaneity. Informality can manifest in various forms, such as informal economies, social gatherings, communication styles, and living arrangements. The dichotomy between formality and informality highlights contrasting approaches to organization, interaction, and governance within societies. While formality provides structure and stability, informality offers adaptability and inclusivity.

Informal settlements

In our thesis, we delineate our understanding and interpretation of informal settlements as spontaneous communities characterized by makeshift dwellings predominantly situated on urban peripheries or within city limits. Arising as a response to urbanization, these settlements exemplify resilience and ingenuity in confronting housing inadequacies. Despite lacking formal infrastructure and legal recognition, they nurture vibrant social networks and grassroots attempts, challenging conventional urban development paradigms and advocating for housing as a fundamental human right. Through this narrative we redefine the notion of *slums* as dynamic urban neighbourhoods rich in diversity, resilience, and a strong communal ethos, where inhabitants exhibit remarkable resourcefulness in surmounting adversities. Despite limited resources and infrastructure, these communities serve as crucibles of innovation and creativity, where individuals exhibit resilience in the face of socio-economic challenges, inspiring novel solutions to pressing urban issues.

This interpretation underscores our perspective on informal settlements (also known in Pakistan as *katchi abadi* in the local language) within the framework of our thesis.

Architecture inter/transl-action

Architectural Inter/Transl-action is a term we coined during our thesis to encapsulate the unique process of interpreting narratives and observations from fieldwork and translating them into visual representations using unconventional architectural methods. This term signifies a novel approach developed within our practice, emphasizing the innovative fusion of storytelling and design principles to capture the essence of cultural contexts and social dynamics.
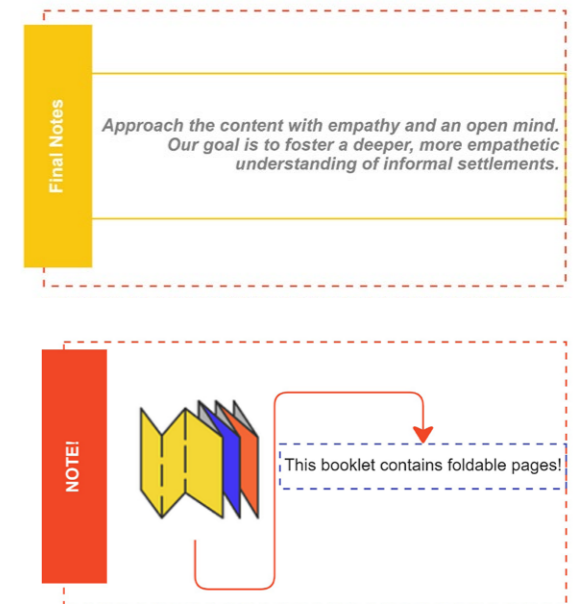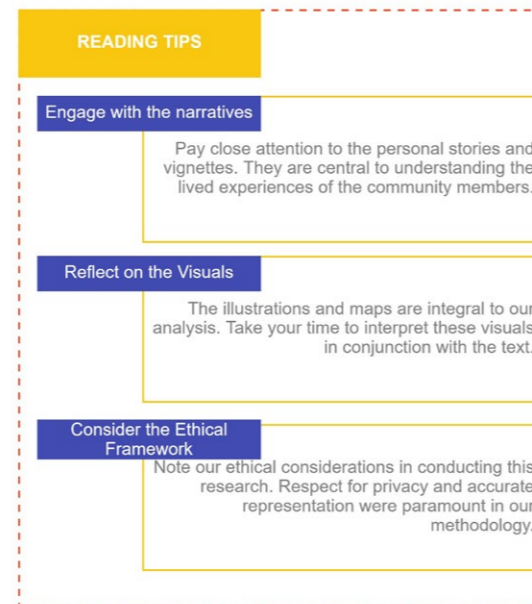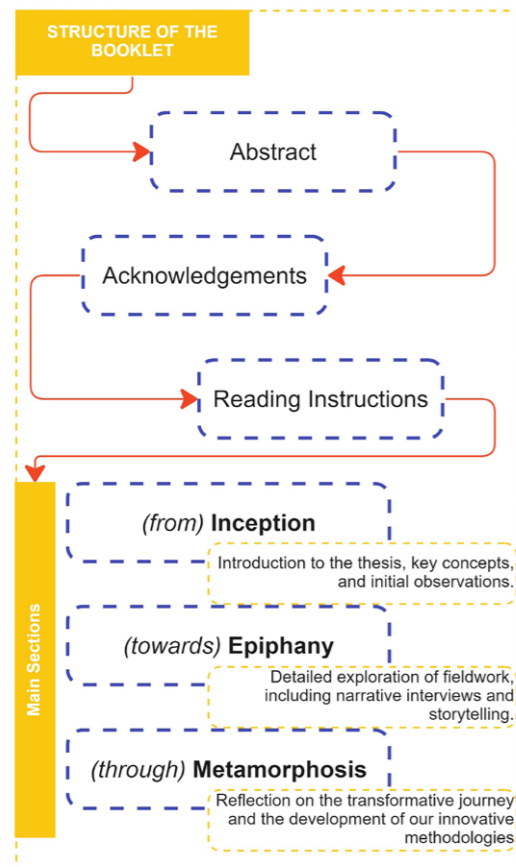
Gleaming' highlights the unrecognized value of informal settlements. Blue symbolizes connectivity in the project, reflecting the interconnectedness of these communities within the city.

'Unrevealed' points to the hidden stories and intrinsic values within these settlements. Red emphasizes the importance of recognizing these elements, drawing attention to the insights uncovered during our research.

'Tapestries' reflect the rich and varied stories from the settlement's inhabitants. Yellow, a colour that blends with the environment, symbolizes the community's resilience and the dynamic nature of their daily lives.

GLEAMING UNREVEALED TAPESTRIES
(IN A WHISPER)

This phrase indicates the subtle yet profound impact of the stories shared by the residents. Gray suggests humble approach of the project, emphasizing the influence these narratives have on our understanding.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOKLET

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Reading Instructions

Main Sections

(from) **Inception**
Introduction to the thesis, key concepts, and initial observations.

(towards) **Epiphany**
Detailed exploration of fieldwork, including narrative interviews and storytelling.

(through) **Metamorphosis**
Reflection on the transformative journey and the development of our innovative methodologies

READING TIPS

Engage with the narratives
Pay close attention to the personal stories and vignettes. They are central to understanding the lived experiences of the community members.

Reflect on the Visuals
The illustrations and maps are integral to our analysis. Take your time to interpret these visuals in conjunction with the text.

Consider the Ethical Framework
Note our ethical considerations in conducting this research. Respect for privacy and accurate representation were paramount in our methodology.

Special Sections

Palette of Terms
Located at the beginning of the booklet, this section defines key terms used throughout the thesis.

Multimedia Storytelling
Links to audio-visual materials that complement the written content, providing a sensory and immersive experience of the fieldwork.

Final Notes
Approach the content with empathy and an open mind. Our goal is to foster a deeper, more empathetic understanding of informal settlements.

NOTE!
This booklet contains foldable pages!

"Imagine a group of individuals,
families,
facing the harsh realities
of 'not belong-ing'...
They find abandoned or unused spaces,
often in the hidden corners of cities,
and transform them into makeshift homes...
These spaces,
though lacking the comfort
and security we often take for granted,
become sanctuaries...
They echo with the resilience of people who,
despite all odds,
are determined to create
a sense of belonging
for themselves and their families...
Squatting represents
not just an act of desperation,
but also a testament
to the human spirit's ability
to adapt and survive..."

Batool & Elena

(from)
INCEPTION

(from) Inception

This section serves as the genesis of the thesis, introducing the key concepts, background, and purpose. The poetic title 'Inception' captures the essence of beginnings, marking the starting point of our journey into exploring the informal settlements.

'Palette of Terms' - A glossary defining crucial terms used throughout the thesis to ensure clarity and shared understanding. The word 'palette' suggests a range of colours or tools, metaphorically representing the variety of terms necessary for understanding the research.

'How Did Our Paths Cross?' - Explains the collaboration between the two authors and their shared interest in the subject. This title highlights the moment of intersection in the authors' professional journeys, leading to this joint research effort.

'The Backstory' - Provides the project background, detailing the context and inspiration behind the research. This title conveys the foundational narrative and circumstances that the project leads into.

'...and the Question' - Introduces the research question guiding the thesis. The ellipsis indicates a buildup to the pivotal element—the main research question.

'Why This Journey?' - Explains the project's purpose and aims, outlining the motivations for undertaking this research. The title evokes a sense of exploration and purpose, emphasizing the reasons behind the research.

'Is/Not About' - Defines the project's delimitations, clarifying what is included and excluded from the study. The title succinctly differentiates the scope of the project by stating what it addresses and what it does not.

'Ethical Framework' - Describes the ethical considerations and guidelines followed during the research. The term 'framework' implies a structured approach to maintaining ethical standards throughout the project.

'Theoretical Framework' - Presents the theoretical underpinnings that inform the research approach and analysis. This title suggests the academic theories and concepts that provide a basis for the research.

'Methodological Framework' - Details the research methods and strategies employed to conduct the study. 'Methodological Framework' indicates a comprehensive plan for how the research was carried out.

'But Where?' - Provides the geographical and social context of the project, explaining where the research is situated. The question 'But Where?' emphasizes the importance of place and setting in the context of the study.

How did our paths cross?

Why discuss the collaboration and convergence of the two authors in such detail? The genesis of this project lies in the authors' mutual recognition and appreciation of each other's core interests. This crossing of our paths marks a significant junction, making our collaboration essential to the project's existence.

This thesis emerged from a shared desire to research two contexts: one explored in the following chapters, and the other being the Freetown of Christiania, Copenhagen, a former squatted community. The underlying idea was to create a dialogue between these two contexts, sharing knowledge across geographical boundaries. However, due to time constraints and the project's scope, researching both contexts was not feasible, and one had to be set aside for now.

This is to mention here that things are not just what you see sometimes, there lies stories behind!

The collaboration and intersection of our paths are foundational to the narrative and findings presented in this thesis, as reflected in the personal notes by authors below:

Dear Diary,

It was the 19th of September 2022, we were having our first lunch at the canteen. She kept looking at me and I kept looking at her, so much light shining in her eyes, so much joy in her smile. It took me the whole break and lots of laughter but now I finally can pronounce it right, her name is Batool! (…) two years, endless laughs, ups and down and everything upside-down. Different cultures are beautiful as they are, but when they teach each other and grow together they become the most powerful glue for two very different persons to bond in a friendship

(…) lot of discussions, lots of common interests, lots of common fears and struggles, I didn't ask her, and she didn't ask me, we both knew this thesis was going to be possible only if done together! Her interest sparked my curiosity, my curiosity sparked her interest…let's talk about 'unrecognized architecture'! May the adventure begin and lead the whispers of this voyage into the deepest chambers of our heart and mind.

Love you, Elena

Starting this thesis journey with Elena feels like digging into the heart of our shared experiences— the fleeting 15-minutes lecture breaks, lively lunch discussions and constant exchange of thoughts on WhatsApp.
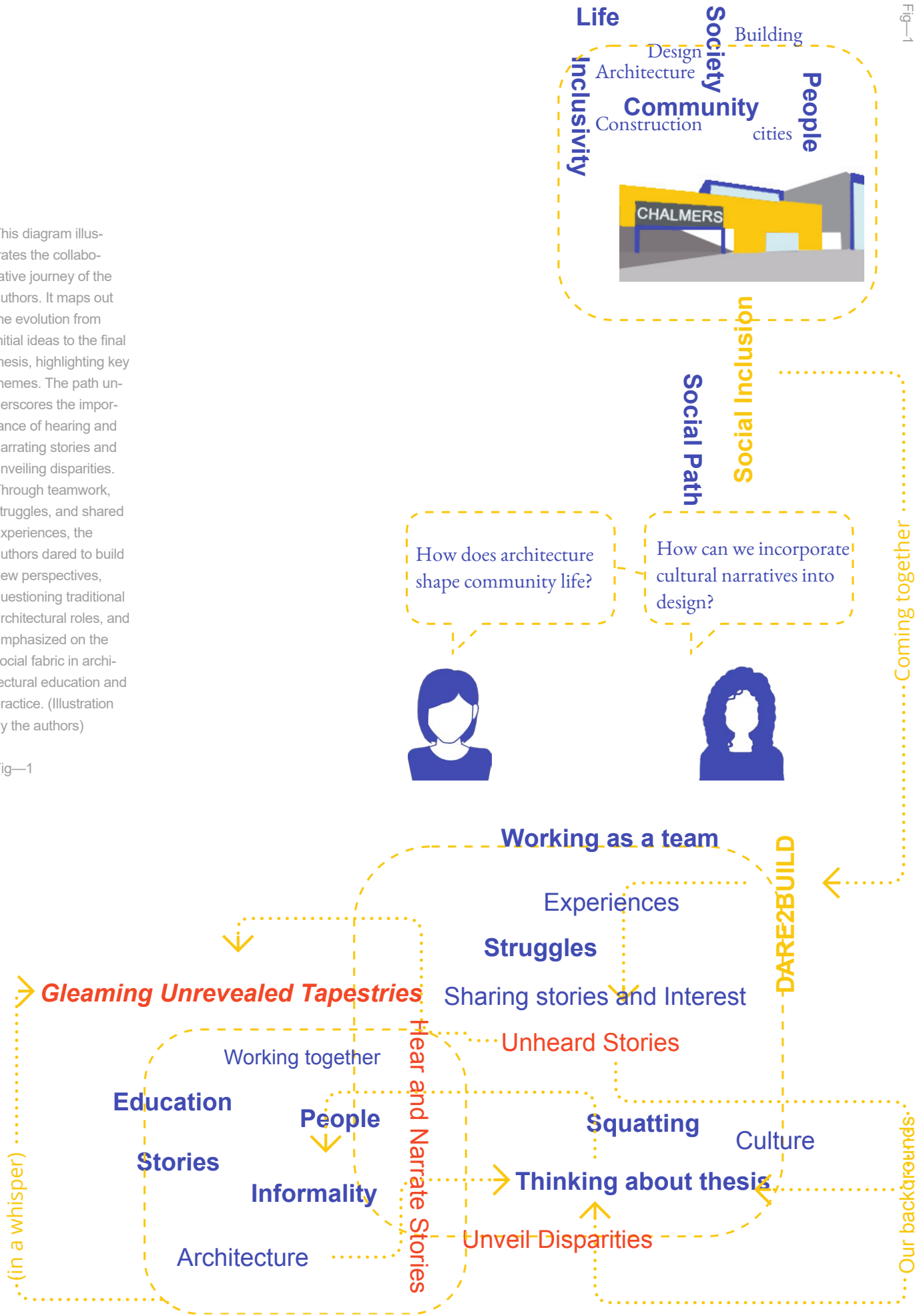
Continuously discovering our shared interests and uncovering similar patterns with in them has become a powerhouse, driving our passion for this thesis subject.

Regardless of the outcomes, this thesis journey will be the coolest of all our master's adventures.

Batool

Fig—1

This diagram illustrates the collaborative journey of the authors. It maps out the evolution from initial ideas to the final thesis, highlighting key themes. The path underscores the importance of hearing and narrating stories and unveiling disparities. Through teamwork, struggles, and shared experiences, the authors dared to build new perspectives, questioning traditional architectural roles, and emphasized on the social fabric in architectural education and practice. (Illustration by the authors)

Fig—1

Life
Society
Building
Design
Architecture
Inclusivity
People
Community
Construction
cities

CHALMERS

Social Inclusion

Social Path

How does architecture shape community life?

How can we incorporate cultural narratives into design?

Coming together

Working as a team

Experiences

Struggles

DARE2BUILD

Sharing stories and Interest

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries

Unheard Stories

Working together

Hear and Narrate Stories

Education

People

Squatting

Culture

Stories

Thinking about thesis

Informality

Architecture

Unveil Disparities

(in a whisper)

Our backgrounds

The Backstory

"In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity."

- Sun Tzu[a]

There is always a trouble or difficulty when we cannot fit or categorize people and their lives into neat and tidy lines, we draw on our papers. These groups of people who we are unable to categorize become 'misfits' of our society. Inevitable to wonder that why they do not fit in the people-made categorization and groups of societies. The prevailing belief is that they do not contribute to the society (Whiteford, 2008). And the constant top-down struggle to 'empower' these communities does not seem to create any effect.

One of the drives to focus on informal settlements as the core of this thesis lies in the fact that such settlements become 'home' for those who cannot find space or place for them in our people-made world. These groups of people, after 'dismissal' from 'authorized groups' then find shelter and solace in these informal settlements.

By directing our attention to and doing field study in an informal settlement in Lahore, Pakistan opened the possibility to closely observe and integrate ourselves in the community thriving there, and firsthand experience how people create opportunities for themselves. Observing the self-creation of

'home' and the aspect of 'belongingness' in the community with absence of building codes and architects depicts that there is a lot to learn from beyond conventional architecture (Abrahamson & Fischer, 2021).

Our interest in exploring the role of 'culture' in our analysis comes from recognizing its unique ability to bridge physical gaps. Cultural elements woven into daily life create a sense of shared identity and community foundation. The perspective of Mahatma Gandhi's (1968) quote, "a nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people," emphasizes that it is the intangible aspects of culture, such as traditions, beliefs, and practices, that imbue a sense of belonging into our spaces, transforming them into what residents genuinely consider as 'home' (Ahmed, 1999).

Incorporating the theoretical concepts of 'belongingness' into our analysis is to better understand above mentioned 'misfits' in our societies. These groups, often perceived as lacking a genuine place or home within society because we typically view 'home' as a physical space, meeting basic needs like shelter, water, and safety. This narrow view overlooks the emotional and psychological aspects of home

tied to aspects of belonging. We believe it's essential to broaden our understanding of 'home' to consider identity, belonging, and what role it plays in creation of a space (Ahmed, 1999).

With the intention to learn from the selected informal settlement in Lahore, Pakistan, our aim is to adopt the roles of both 'listener' and 'narrator,' delving into the lived experiences of its residents. Through this thesis, we intend to illustrate and represent those stories to lift the discussion of 'informality' in the domain of 'recognition', seeking to shed light on the lived realities of informal settlements and advocate for their acknowledgment and inclusion within broader societal frameworks. Through this thesis we also took a chance to discuss the idea of informality in the broader discourse of pedagogy of architectural education, contemplating its potential to challenge colonial mindsets or be influenced by them (Abrahamson & Fischer, 2021).

Fig—2

...and the Question.

The primary research question highlighted in blue is the core drive of this project. In this work, blue symbolizes connectivity, and this central question unifies the various phases and steps of the process. The supporting question, depicted in yellow, which represents community's resilience in the project, emphasizes the importance of sharing knowledge and fostering recognition within architectural education. Together, these questions guide the exploration and underscore the significance of informality in Architecture and urban dynamics.

Method:
Using (auto)ethnography and storytelling methodologies

Mission:
Changing how we understand the value and acknowledgement

Aim:
How this change in perspective can help us understand what informal settlements can mean for the cities

How does reshaping our perception of informal settlements (through spatial ethnographic storytelling) enhance our understanding of architectural informality and urban dynamics?

...and how can this revised perspective of informality/informal settlements influence architectural education(in the context of Lahore, Pakistan), to foster recognition and knowledge sharing?

Medium:
Highlighting the significance of sharing knowledge between different communities

Goal:
Ensuring everyone feel included in both physical design and cultural practices

Drive:
Reasoning how Architecture is taught in respect to informal settlements

A lone kite drifts across the full moon, reflecting the project's goal to reassess the distinctions between formal and informal architecture by bring-ing attention to the often-overlooked hu-man experiences and cultural practices with-in informal settlement communities (Photo taken by authors).

Fig—3

Fig—3

Why this journey?

The primary aim of this project is to critically re-evaluate the traditional distinctions between formal and informal architecture by introducing the concept of **'unrecognized architecture'** and its related practices. This exploration challenges conventional architectural boundaries and broadens the discourse to include forms of architecture that are often overlooked.
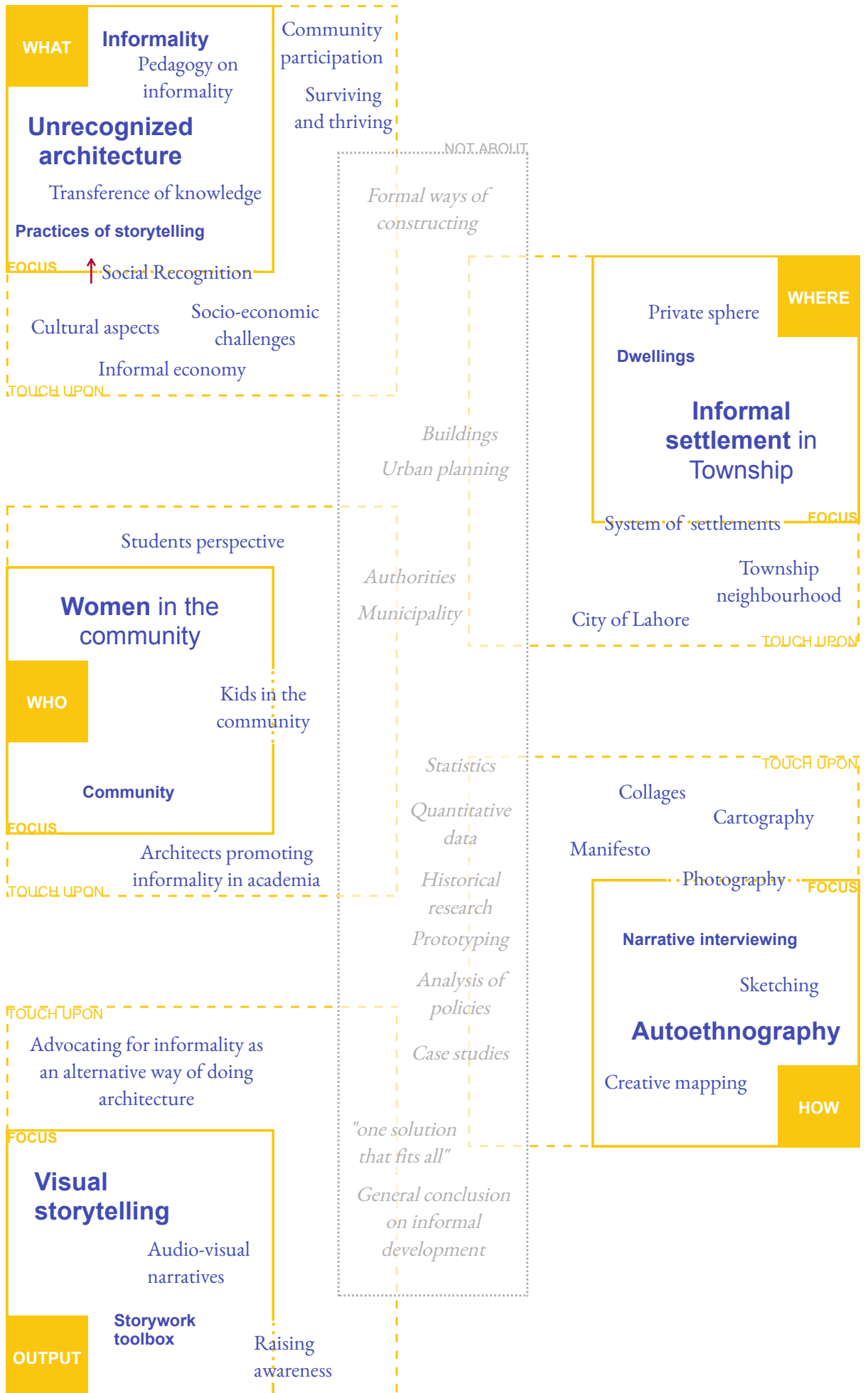
Building on this foundational aim, the project seeks to illustrate the human experiences and personal stories of those living in these informal settings. By adopting an empathetic and culturally sensitive approach, it strives to enrich architectural discourse, ensuring it captures the diverse realities of the people in these communities (Roy, 2011).

Furthermore, the project interrogates the accepted norms that govern these spaces and their integration into our neighborhoods. It explores the reasons behind the marginalization of certain communities and the dismissal of their spatial practices. This necessitates a thorough investigation of the interplay between space, society, and the built environment. This line of inquiry questions the rigid separation between theoretical architecture education and its practical application in these settlements, aiming to challenge and reshape existing views on architectural pedagogy. By questioning standard approaches, the thesis seeks to unsettle and redefine prevailing views about these communities, exploring how 'recognition' of these informal spaces can be incorporated into architectural education.

Additionally, the project emphasizes the importance of intangible cultural elements and their role in fostering a sense of community within these informal settlements. It seeks to delve into the complex dynamics and spatial characteristics of these areas, understanding how their unique features impact their sustainability, prosperity, or decline. This includes a critical examination of the socio-cultural and ethical issues arising from labeling the use of vacant lands as illicit rather than viable architectural interventions, advocating for recognition of these practices as legitimate architectural strategies.

Fig—4

WHAT

Informality

Community
participation

Pedagogy on
informality

Surviving
and thriving

Unrecognized architecture

NOT ABOUT

Transference of knowledge

Practices of storytelling

*Formal ways of
constructing*

FOCUS ↑ Social Recognition

WHERE

Private sphere

Cultural aspects

Socio-economic
challenges

Dwellings

Informal economy

Informal settlement in Township

TOUCH UPON

Buildings
Urban planning

FOCUS

System of settlements

Township
neighbourhood

City of Lahore

TOUCH UPON

Students perspective

Authorities
Municipality

Women in the community

WHO

Kids in the
community

Statistics

TOUCH UPON

Collages

Cartography

*Quantitative
data*

Manifesto

Community

FOCUS

Photography

FOCUS

Architects promoting
informality in academia

*Historical
research*

Narrative interviewing

TOUCH UPON

Prototyping

Sketching

*Analysis of
policies*

Autoethnography

TOUCH UPON

Case studies

Advocating for informality as
an alternative way of doing
architecture

Creative mapping

HOW

FOCUS

*"one solution
that fits all"*

Visual storytelling

*General conclusion
on informal
development*

Audio-visual
narratives

**Storywork
toolbox**

OUTPUT

Raising
awareness

Is / Not about

Working iteratively with delimitations as a tool helped us narrowing down the research throughout the entire thesis process, allowing the research actions to have as much sharp focus as possible. As mentioned at the start, from a concept composed by different interconnected ideas, topics have moved across and away from the diagram and the overall thesis as the research journey unfolded.

The diagram that we propose here, as the final iteration, has been deconstructed and re-arranged into five areas of delimitation of this thesis. Counter-intuitively, we use 'what' to define the topics, thematic and field of research in which we position our work. With the intention of working hyperlocal[(1)], we define under 'where' the scale of observation (geographic scale), and under 'who' the scale of interaction – latter not to be confused with the target group or target audience, as we use 'who' in reference to the people we encountered and engaged with during field study. Exploring different methodologies and methods of research in practice has been a vital part of this research, however delimiting the extent of applicability was fundamental and we labelled it 'how'. Lastly, the 'output' which is not a question anymore but our response to the research findings translated into different outcomes and outputs.

This thesis is a constant active exercise in distancing from what Eve Tuck describes in her Letter to communities as the danger of romanticizing, paternalizing, exotifying or pathologizing when carrying out "research on Native communities, city communities, and other disenfranchised communities about informality in relation to native communities residing in informal settlements (Tuck, 2009). Instead, it focuses on the power of storytelling as a mean of collecting narratives of resilience and adaptation from the community. We become the listeners, and the thesis becomes a white canvas where these stories are visualized in respect of their beholders.

(1) With 'hyperlocal' we refer to information centered on the specific community we interacted with, focusing primarily on the issues and interests of its residents.

Fig—5

Theoretical Framework

(from) INCEPTION

Ethical framework

somewhat (auto)ethnography

Fieldwork

Architectural Inter-Trans/laction

Storytelling

Methodological Framework-methods of narration

Methodological Framework-methods of collection

(towards) EPIPHANY

(through) Metamorphosis
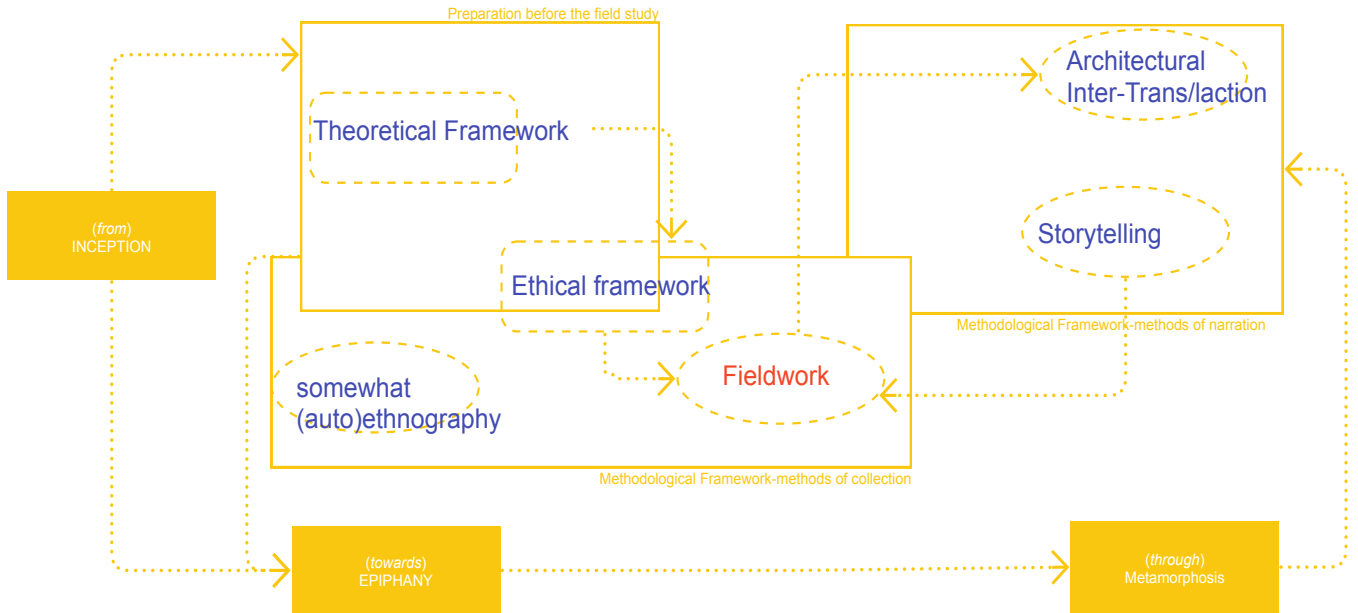
Ethical Framework

As we prepared for our field study in Lahore's informal settlement, it became evident that establishing an ethical framework is essential to our process. The framework designed to respect the dignity and rights of the community, assists in ensuring that our research practices are both responsible and culturally sensitive. Serving as a balancing scale, it helps us to align our ambitions and curiosity responsibly and with ethical considerations. This reflective practice is crucial for approaching community interactions with respect and fostering beneficial relationships, consistent with decolonizing methodologies that prioritize indigenous values and perspectives (Smith, 2015).

Respect for Persons is fundamental to our process, to treat the community with dignity, acknowledging their autonomy and obtaining informed consent before collecting any sort of data. This involves clearly explaining the purpose of the study, how the data will be used, and respecting their right to refuse at any point. Carefully navigated privacy concerns, ensuring that identities will be protected and any information that could be sensitive will be handled with discretion (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009).

Building Trust and Reciprocity: Establishing trust is vital for our process of field study. To foster a sense of mutual respect, it's essential to first spend time with the community, engaging in activities such as sharing meals and participating in daily routines before we begin collecting any data. These initial interactions help build strong relationships grounded in understanding and respect. Additionally, small gestures of gratitude serve as symbols of reciprocity, acknowledging and appreciating the community's cooperation, thus strengthening the respectful bond we aim to create (Kawulich, 2005)

Cultural Sensitivity and Integrity: To our research with an awareness of cultural differences, striving to understand and respect the community's ways of life and self-made systems without imposing external judgments. This sensitivity is to our interactions and the interpretation of collected stories, ensuring that the community's perspectives are represented authentically (Chilisa, 2012)

Non-beneficence and Transparency: While the research cannot benefit the community in material terms, it is crucial to communicate this transparently to avoid misunderstandings about the purposes and potential outcomes of the study. We intend to clarify our goals to document and analyze lived experiences without promising or implying direct benefits from the research (Israel, 2014)

This framework is tailored to our methodological approach and the ethical challenges inherent in ethnographic research within informal settings, emphasizing respect, reciprocity, cultural sensitivity, and clear communication about the research's scope and limitations.

Theoretical Framework

Conducting field research with the support of a theoretical framework allows for the integration of varied concepts that are crucial for comprehending the dynamics of informal settlements. This framework, created to guide our research approach and analytical methods, offers deeper understanding of the interactions between residents and their environments. By doing so, it not only informs our understanding of how residents influence and are influenced by their physical surroundings but also sheds light on the broader socio-cultural forces at play. This perspective enables us to see beyond the physical structures to the lived experiences and adaptive strategies of the community, highlighting the interplay between human agency and environmental context in shaping the architecture and social fabric of informal settlements (Yiftachel, 2009)

Theory of Belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995): This theory explores the human need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships to places/spaces. It helps us understand how individuals in informal settlements create connections and a sense of belonging within their communities despite physical and legal uncertainties. This understanding guides our approach to gathering stories that reflect these emotional and social ties.

Post-Colonial Theory (Bhabha, 1994): This theory examines the lasting impacts of colonialism on cultures and societies. In our research, it provides a lens to analyse how colonial legacies influence the spatial layouts and social structures of informal settlements, shaping residents' identities and their spatial choices.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007): PAR emphasizes the involvement of community members in the research process to ensure that the research is relevant and beneficial to them. By integrating PAR, we engage the residents as collaborators, allowing them to influence the study's direction and ensuring that our findings reflect their perspectives.

Concept of "Non-Place" by Marc Augé (Augé, 1995): Augé defines non-places as spaces where social connections and community identities are lacking. Applying this concept, we explore how areas within informal settlements might be perceived as non-places and how the community create ways to transform them into meaningful "places" rich in social context.

The Urban Commons (Harvey, 2012): This theory addresses the collective management of resources that are accessible to all members of a community. It helps us analyse how communal spaces in informal settlements are used and governed, and how these practices affect the built environment and living conditions of the community.

Fig—6

EPIPHANY

fieldwork

INCEPTION

participant observation
narrative interviewing   CRITICAL
storytelling   ETHNOGRAPY
photography
field notes

'somewhat (auto)ethnography'

autoethnographic writing
ARTISTIC   visual autoethnography
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

reflexivity

**'conceptual
framework'**

METAMORPHOSIS

**'architectural inter-
transl/action'**

SPATIO-TEMPORAL
RELATIONING   creative mapping
multimedia storytelling
sketching from memories

—— Methods of collection

- - - Methods of narration

—— Thesis journey 'from
inception to metamorphosis'
(- - - the great unknown)

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework tailored for this research is a *transdisciplinary*[2] experimentation that intersects methods of *human geography* as research methodology and architecture as a methodology for translation, exploring the challenges and possibilities of working with *creative methods* (which are explained further in the chapter) across the two disciplines (see Fig. 6). Human geography, also known as anthropogeography, is the subfield of geography dedicated to study the spatial relationships between human communities, cultures, economies, and their interactions with the environment (Johnston, 2000). By embracing a transdisciplinary approach, human geography integrates theoretical frameworks and empirical insights from sociology, anthropology, economics, and environmental science. Our transdisciplinary approach aims to utilize such to enable a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex spatial relationships that shape lived environments. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, human geography reveals the spatial correlations between social interactions and environmental dynamics, providing valuable insights for architects engaged in spatial ethnographic research.

Methods of COLLECTION

"People are hungry for stories. It's part of our very being. Storytelling is a form of history, of immortality too. It goes from one generation to another."

- Studs Terkel[b]

This methodological framework diagram outlines the transdisciplinary approach of the research, combining methods from human geography and architecture. It features 'somewhat (auto)ethnography' for data collection, a 'conceptual framework' for theoretical grounding, and 'architectural inter-transl/action' for interpreting and translating fieldwork findings. The diagram illustrates the journey from inception to epiphany, emphasizing reflexivity and creative methods of narration. (Diagram by the authors).

Fig—6

[2] *For this research, 'transdisciplinarity' involves unifying intellectual frameworks beyond individual disciplines, adopting broader perspectives in research (Manolakelli, 2022). With 'transdisciplinary' we define the use of research strategies that transcend disciplinary boundaries to develop holistic approaches. This approach helps us understand the matter of 'informality' which span multiple fields and allows us to explore methods initially developed in one discipline but now used widely in others. For example, we adopt ethnography and autoethnography as research methods from anthropology and apply them within architecture through 'spatial or architectural ethnography'.*

Somewhat (auto)-ethnography

"Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno). This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011)

Horton (2021) defines "somewhat autoethnographic" as, those practices plainly rooted in particularly located personal experiences but not necessarily weeded to conventional written autoethnography. "Somewhat autoethnographic" (or creative autoethnographic) research (Horton, 2021) offered us the possibility to experiment with a range of "creative methods" (Horton, 2021) which in the case of our research have been **creative writing** (through diary and field journal), **film-making** (through audio and video recording and editing), **storytelling** (through memory sketching), **photography**, and **reflexive poetry**. Our research is deeply inspired by 'creative autoethnographic' practices, however in our process of fieldwork we embrace and interlace those methods with practices of ethnographic research. We define our research methodology as 'somewhat (auto)-ethnography', which borrows the concept of "somewhat" from Horton (2021), applying it to both autoethnography and ethnography. For so the term 'somewhat (auto)-ethnography' is coined where the ()- represent the interaction of the two methodologies, such representation of the term is applied and will repeat in the explanation of our methodology further.

Artistic (auto)-ethnography

You "want to tell a story that readers could enter and feel a part of." You want to "evoke readers to feel and think about your life and theirs in relation to yours . . . to experience your experience as if it were happening to them." (Ellis, 2004)

In artistic autoethnography, the deep sense of reflexivity[3] and "embodied mode of inquiry" from autoethnographic research enters in a dialogue with the creative process of artistic research (Bartleet, 2022). This exchange gave us a broad spectrum of less conventional methodologies, such as visual autoethnography, ethnographic writing and documentary, to navigate the challenging task of communicating the personal and cultural processes in conducting our fieldwork. Employing autoethnography together with artistic research resulted in a process that embraced "non-linearity," explored the field of study through "improvisation," and unfolded from "embodied knowledge and understanding" (Bartleet, 2022). The chaotic process of analyzing 'messy' data from our fieldwork becomes the outcome of such non-linearity and it reflects in what Crisp (2014) defines as "messiness," "jaggedness," and "bricolage" of conducting artistic research. This non-linear approach guided our fieldwork through

"cycles of creation, reflection, and refinement" (Bartleet, 2022). Before and while conducting fieldwork, full predictability became impossible to achieve as the day-to-day encounter with people from the community led the direction of our research cycles. In shifting from pre- to unpredictability, artistic methods within autoethnographic inquiry, such as improvisation, came to be of key importance. Letting the research unfold and re-route along the process enabled us to delve into 'unexplored territories' where the unexpected and unplanned plaid pivotal roles in the research process. The utilization of non-linear and improvisatory modes of inquiry placed the body at the forefront as both the source of knowledge, and the "locus" of understanding (Spry, 2006) allowing us to submerge our body and mind in a sensorial experience of the field. In her writing, Bartleet (2022) refers to Snowber who emphasizes that our essence is embodied — "we do not have bodies, we are bodies", referring to dancers and musician who works from a bodily standpoint. Spry (2001) echoes this sentiment, suggesting that in the autoethnographic process, the boundaries between text and body become blurred, undergoing a dialectical redefinition. Ultimately in our reserach, artistic autoethnography served as rich model for perception and conceptualization, captivating audiences emotionally and sensorily while nurturing dynamic processes and products of autoethnographic inquiry.

Visual Autoethnography & Autoethnographic Writing

Inspired by the significant role that visual arts have taken in merging artistic research and autoethnography (Adams, Jones & Ellis 2015), this thesis explored such integration employing visual autoethnography and autoethnographic writing to delve into unconventional modes of inquiry. Within the research journey we use poetic inquiry and sketching from memory, to address matters of identity. The resulting pieces are not only visually expressive but also serve as performative acts, encouraging active engagement from the audience of this thesis. Using photography and videography as research methods, we examine the complexities of human experiences and social interactions. These mediums also provide a platform for marginalized voices, facilitating creative expression (Adams, Jones & Ellis 2015). Ultimately, the visual autoethnographies — such as the analysed sketches, composed poems and manifestos presented in this thesis, they are designed not for passive consumption but to spark conversations and inquiries, fostering dialogue and exploration rather than presenting definitive conclusions.

Autoethnographic Documentary

"Autoethnographic documentaries can allow those who have been traditionally marginalized in films to reclaim their images and rewrite their own stories." (Bartleet, 2022)

In our research, autoethnography has also extended its reach into the realm of documentary film. Autoethnographic documentaries, in contrast with traditional documentaries that prioritize a sense of "objectivity", often convey the filmmaker's life experiences, or present a topic through their subjective viewpoint (Bartleet, 2022). Visual elements and sound, as used in film and video production, have the power to enhance the emotional impact of the narrative that we aim to convey. Consequently, the audio-visual narrative that we produced through autoethnographic documentary gives us the opportunity to go beyond educating, offering the chance to actively engage the audience in the communication of our personal stories and experiences from the field. "Those working in this field" argue that film allows for the amplification of the "tellability" of stories, enabling vivid portrayals that surpass the limitations of traditional research methods (Bartleet, 2022).

Methods of NARRATION

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

- Maya Angelou[d]

Architectural inter-transl/action

"If the world is a complex and messy place, surely our ways of investigating phenomena should not be neat and ordered." (Law, 2004)

Architectural inter/transl-action is a term we coined during our thesis to encapsulate the unique process of interpreting narratives and observations from fieldwork and translating them into visual representations using unconventional architectural methods such as artful mapping and audiovisual narrative. This term signifies a novel approach developed within our practice, emphasizing the innovative fusion of storytelling and design principles to capture the essence of cultural contexts and social dynamics.

Spatio-temporal relationing

'Spatio-temporal relationing' is a constructed term that we introduce to define how conventional and less explored methods of architecture are being used in this thesis to interpret and translate the empirical[4] knowledge produced during the fieldwork. If we dissect the term, relationing refers to "the action of establishing relations between things"[5], and spatio-temporal[6] does so by intersecting the tangible spatial qualities we observed in the settlement (spatio-) with the intangible memories and stories narrated in time (temporal) by its inhabitants.

A summary table that lists the methodological framework in an order that you see the methods, a short description and a brief elaboration on their use in the process. (Diagram by the authors)Fig—6.1

[3]"Reflexivity is a contested theoretical concept and methodological practice that dwells at the heart of autoethnography. Goodall defines reflexivity as the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal the deep connections between the writer and her or his subject and suggests that to be 'reflexive' means to turn back on yourself the lens through which we are interpreting the world. In this sense, reflexivity is an introspective and autobiographical process of reflecting on the cultural experiences and selves autoethnographers have lived and performed, and using these experiences and selves to inform the stories we tell and examine." (Berry, 2022)

[4] "That pursues knowledge by means of direct observation, investigation, or experiment (as distinct from deductive reasoning, abstract theorizing, or speculation); that relates to or derives from this method of pursuing knowledge." Oxford English Dictionary. (2023). Empirical, adj., sense 3. Oxford University Press; Oxford English Dictionary. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1144217934

[5] "The action of establishing relations between things." Oxford English Dictionary. (2023). Relationing, n. Oxford University Press; Oxford English Dictionary. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3388070987

[6] "Belonging to space and time." Oxford English Dictionary. (2023). Spatio-temporal, adj. Oxford University Press; Oxford English Dictionary. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2924732988

METHODS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF USE
Narrative Interviews	Collecting stories through structured conversations	Conversations with residents about their daily lives and challenges
Mobile Interviews	Conducting interviews while walking through the settlement	Gathering insights on spatial dynamics and daily routines
Photography	Capturing visual aspects of the community and environment	Documenting housing structures and communal spaces
Filming	Recording video footage of the settlement and its activities	Creating a visual record of community interactions and events
Storytelling	Sharing and documenting personal and communal stories	Narrating experiences of resilience and resourcefulness
(Auto)ethnographic Research	Using personal experiences to understand cultural contexts	Reflective journaling about fieldwork experiences
Ethnographic Research	Observing and participating in the community's daily life	Field notes on community interactions and routines
Creative Mapping	Visual representation of spatial and social relationships	Mapping informal settlement layouts and social networks
Audio-visual Documentation	Using audio and video to capture and present findings	Creating documentaries or multimedia presentations
Memory Sketching	Drawing from memory to illustrate experiences and spaces	Sketches of significant places and events in the settlement
Reflexive Poetry	Writing poetry to reflect on and convey research insights	Poems capturing emotional and cultural nuances of the fieldwork
Architectural Inter/Transl-action	Translating narratives into visual architectural representations	Creating diagrams and models based on field observations
Spatio-temporal Relationing	Combining spatial qualities with temporal narratives	Analyzing how physical spaces change over time and use

Fig—6.1

But where?

Situated at the western edge of South Asia, Pakistan is a nation with a deep-rooted history and a lively culture. History filled with stories of ancient civilizations, like the Indus Valley Civilization, which thrived thousands of years ago, over the time, different empires and rulers, like the Mughals and British, shaped the land. In 1947 breaking free from the shackles of British colonialism, a new nation for Muslims in South Asia was formed, thus named the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Since then, although encountering a range of struggles and difficulties, the nation has evolved into a mosaic of traditions, languages, and faiths (Zia & Burton, 2023).

The world map highlighting Pakistan, situated at the western edge of South Asia (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—7

The map of Pakistan highlighting its provinces and regions, with Lahore marked in red, located in the Punjab province. (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—7.1

Fig—7

Fig—7.1

Township Area in Lahore

Fig—7.2

● The Settlement

Fig—7.3

● The chosen informal settlment

Fig—7.4
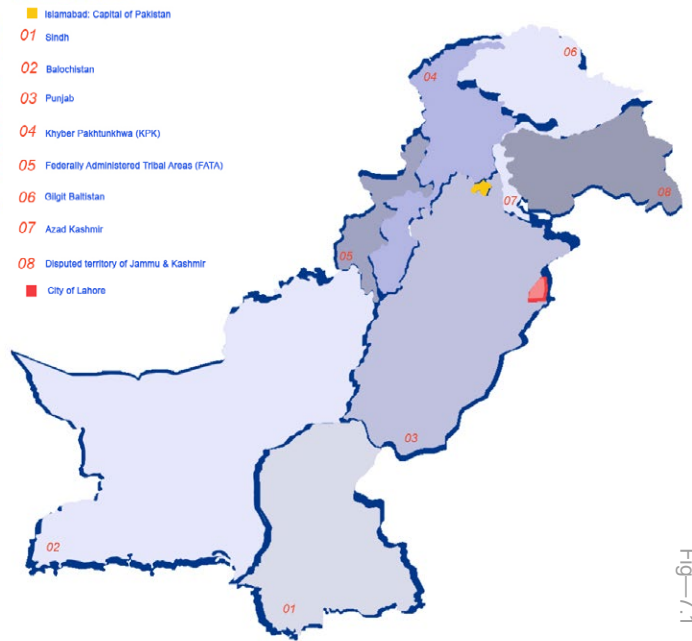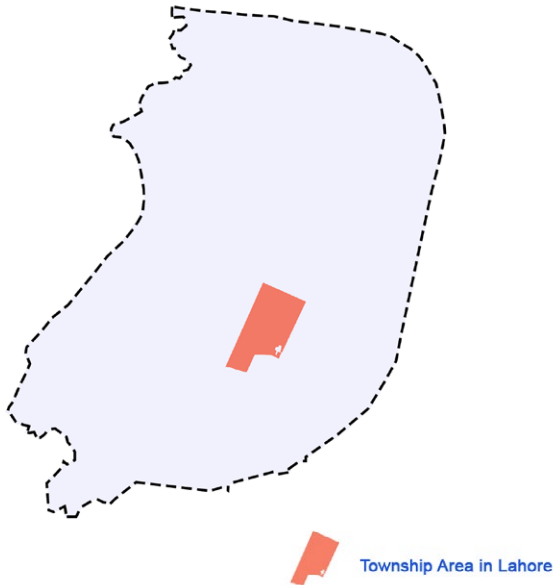
Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city, is a bustling economic hub in the Punjab region of Pakistan (see Fig. 7.1). Recent demographic data shows that approximately 11 million people call it home, representing a diverse population. Known for its rich history, culture, and resilience, Lahore carries echoes of its colonial past. Locals often proudly declare "Lahore is Lahore" to emphasize on the city's uniqueness. However, within the lively cityscape, many residents navigate the challenges and opportunities of informal settlements (Mollaun A., 2013).

Selecting Lahore as the focal point for our field study is deeply rooted in the core motivation driving this project. Our aim is to gather narratives of individuals thriving within informal settlements, shedding light on their resilient lifestyles and resourcefulness. Despite encountering some challenges along the way, the warm hospitality and rich cultural fabric of the country facilitated our engagement with the local communities, allowing us to forge meaningful connections and gain valuable insights into their lives.

We explored numerous informal settlements scattered across Lahore, meticulously observing, and documenting the diverse typologies that characterize these communities. After careful consideration, we decided to focus our efforts on a settlement located in the Township area of the city (see Fig. 7.2). This particular settlement captured our attention due to its unique characteristics and the friendly demeanour of its residents, which later opened us up to the compelling stories of resilience and community spirit that unfolded within its bounds.

The map of Lahore highlighting the Township area, where the chosen informal settlement for our study is located. (Illustration by the authors)

Fig—7.2

The map pinpoints the specific informal settlement within the Township area of Lahore that was selected for our field study. (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—7.3

This detailed map highlighting the specific informal settlement within the Township area of Lahore, marked in red. (Illustration by the authors)

Fig—7.4

(from) **INCEPTION**

(towards) EPIPHANY

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**
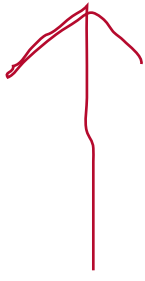
Ethnographic Symphony

The summary encapsulates our comprehensive exploration of urban informal settlements. It begins with 'Cultural Echoes', emphasizing cultural insights and the role of cultural appropriation. 'Beginning in the city' outlines initial observations, while 'Mapscaping' showcases creative mapping methods. 'The spectrum of urban encroachment' delves into diverse settlement types, and 'Pathfinding' explains our selection process. 'Contextual Borders' sets research boundaries, while 'Engaging with local lives' and 'Engaging Beyond the community' discuss community and external interactions, respectively. 'Chasing meanings of informality' offers a deep dive into observed informal aspects.

Contemplation

The collection done in the phase above leads to this section, titled 'Contemplation', comprises both vignettes and illustrated narratives, which have been compiled through various methods of collection in ethnographic symphony. It features an overall story of the settlement titled 'Story of Adaptation and Resilience', which encapsulates the collective spirit of the settlement. Additionally, this part of the project presents individual narratives called 'Stories of Informal Abodes'. Each story is tied to the inhabitants of specific units within the settlement. These accounts are vividly brought to life using a variety of media and illustration styles, thoughtfully chosen to honour the diverse experiences and interactions observed within each space.

Multimedia Storytelling

Transitioning from the detailed narratives in 'Contemplation', we move into the dynamic realm of 'Multimedia Storytelling', where we discuss the crafting of an audio-visual narrative, constructed through the visual documentation of stories, experiences, and cultural insights collected during the fieldwork in 'Ethnographic Symphony'. This artistic composition is created to highlight the sensorial experiences of the authors, enabling them to convey their reflective insights effectively to viewers. It aims to immerse the audience in the atmosphere of the field, providing a vivid representation of the context's vibrancy and the research process's immersive nature.

(towards) Epiphany

This section represents our journey toward achieving insights and understanding within the informal settlement through the field study. The term 'epiphany' is chosen to reflect the moments of clarity and revelation that arose from our immersive fieldwork, emphasizing the significant discoveries and deeper comprehension we gained along the way.

Ethnographic Symphony

This term captures the harmonious blend of various methods, observations and field study activities that together create a comprehensive understanding of the settlement. Akin to a symphony where each instrument contributes to a cohesive piece, our ethnographic methods-including photography, sketching, mapping, and interaction—merge to form a cohesive depiction of community life and a unified narrative of our findings.

'Cultural Echoes' This section captures the reflected echoes of cultural understanding and appropriation, showing how deeply ingrained cultural practices resonate through our observations and interactions.

'beginning in the city' is our initial exploration and navigation of different informal settlements in the city to lay the groundwork for our study.

'while Mapscaping' refers to the creative process of mapping, using innovative techniques to visualize the spatial dynamics of informal settlements.

'the spectrum of urban encroachments' This title is chosen to reflect the range and diversity of informal settlements. This part categorizes and identifies three types of informal settlements, highlighting their unique characteristics and the complexities of urban encroachment.

and 'Pathfinding' This title signifies the process of navigating and discovering. This section details how we selected our study site and established feasibility criteria, exploring various locations to find the most suitable one.

'contextual borders' This title reflects the cultural and demographic boundaries of our study. This section explains the demographic context of our chosen site and outlines our limitations within it due to cultural and ethical considerations.

'Engaging with local lives' This title emphasizes direct involvement with the community. This section describes how we interacted with the residents, built relationships, and gathered firsthand stories.

'engaging beyond the community' This title highlights our efforts to extend our perspective. This section details how we gained broader insights through interviews and interactions with individuals in the context of Lahore but outside the chosen community.

'through scholarly insights' This title underscores the value of academic and professional perspectives. This sub-section details our interactions with various educators and practitioners in Lahore, enriching our understanding with their knowledge.

'and emerging voices' This title emphasizes the importance of new and developing perspectives. This section covers a workshop held at IAC Lahore with students, capturing fresh insights from the next generation of architects and planners.

'Chasing meanings of informality' This title reflects our pursuit of deeper understanding. This section explores the multifaceted nature of informality, developing a nuanced comprehension of its various aspects.

'Contemplation'

This title signifies thoughtful reflection. This phase involves synthesizing and narrating the collected stories, providing a reflective overview of our findings.

'Story of adaptation and resilience' An overarching narrative of the settlement, focusing on the community's adaptive strategies and resilience.

'Stories of informal abodes' This title emphasizes personal narratives within living spaces. This section presents individual stories that provide spatial ethnography of specific residents with whom we had significant interactions.

> -Ruby's Story
>
> -Mumtaz's Story
>
> -Shazia's Story

'Multimedia Storytelling'

This title highlights the use of various media forms to tell a story. This section uses a short video to convey the sensory and emotional experiences documented during our fieldwork.

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

Ethnographic Symphony

Contemplation

Multimedia Storytelling
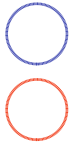
Cultural Echoes

"There's a general saying amongst Lahoris – Jinne Lahore Nai Dekhya, O Janmyai Nai, – meaning, one who hasn't seen Lahore is not even born."

– Malkeet Kaur[e]

This 'ethnographic symphony' starts from recollecting and remembering echoes of culture, a composition of discoveries that Pakistan's richness in cultural heritage has offered us during the two months of field study. Before delving into the findings of our fieldwork, we are compelled to reflect on the profound influence of culture on our research journey. Our exploration of this vibrant nation's cultural landscape was not merely an academic exercise but a deeply personal experience that shaped our perspectives and understanding in unexpected ways.

Our journey begins with a profound recognition of the centrality of culture within the context we have studied. From the bustling streets of Lahore to the serene landscapes of rural villages, cultural traditions served as the backdrop against which our fieldwork unfolded, informing, and enriching our research endeavours. It is impossible to ignore the palpable presence of culture in every aspect of daily life where cultural traditions serve as the foundation upon which communities thrive. Seeking to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of Pakistani culture, our exploration celebrates its richness and diversity while acknowledging the challenges and complexities inherent in its preservation and transmission.

As we delve into the various facets of Pakistani culture, we are guided by the uniqueness of a dual perspective within our team. One of us, a native of Pakistan, offers invaluable insights grounded in a lifetime of immersion in the culture. For her, cultural practices and traditions are deeply intertwined with personal identity and lived experience. However, this journey of exploration has prompted a newfound introspection, challenging long-held assumptions and inviting critical reflection on the subtle nuances of her own cultural heritage.

"Growing up immersed in the cultural tapestry of my homeland, certain traditions had become so ingrained in my identity that questioning their significance had never crossed my mind. Her questions and insights prompted me to reconsider aspects of my own culture that I had long taken for granted, challenging me to articulate and explain customs and practices that had become second nature to me" (from Batool's field notes).

Conversely, the other one of us is an outsider to Pakistani culture, whose fresh perspective offers a lens through which to view familiar traditions with curiosity and wonder. Through her eyes, every cultural artifact becomes a treasure trove of discovery, prompting questions, insights, and reflections that enrich our collective understanding. However, this outsider perspective also brings ethical considerations to the forefront, as she navigates the complexities of cultural appropriation with sensitivity and respect.

"As I reflect on my journey through Pakistan's cultural landscape, I am reminded of the profound interconnectedness of culture and identity. This exploration has deepened my appreciation for the richness and diversity of Pakistani culture while challenging me to confront the complexities and ethical dilemmas inherent in cultural research" (from Elena's field notes).

As we navigate the complex terrain of cultural exploration, we are mindful of the ethical considerations that accompany our research endeavour. We strive to approach our work with integrity, humility, and a commitment to fostering dialogue and understanding across our own cultural boundaries.

In presenting our findings, we hope to not only honour the rich heritage of Pakistan but also to contribute to a deeper appreciation of the diverse tapestry of human experience that unites communities. Through the embedment of this exploration of cultural echoes throughout the research, we aim to amplify the voices of those whose stories have shaped the nation's identity and celebrate the resilience, creativity, and diversity that define Pakistani culture.

Collage: This sensorial collage encapsulates the vibrant cultural essence of the field study in Pakistan, highlighting the dynamic life of Lahore. It showcases the rich heritage, resilience, and community spirit that define Pakistani culture, illustrating the profound impact of these cultural experiences on our research journey (Illustration and photos by the authors).

Fig—8

EPHEMERAL

BUSTLING

RADIANCE

MELANCHOLY

ENCHANTING

Fig—8
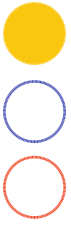
Beginning
in the city.

Preparing for a two-month field study in Pakistan was a pivotal experience in our project. Lahore, a city characterized by its vibrant mosaic of cultural and social diversity, captivated us. At first, we focused on understanding the city's demographics, its layout, and the various transportation options available. The companionship of working on a thesis as a duo significantly enhanced our process. On this occasion, the invaluable insights of a team member who is a local and has lived in the city for several years were particularly beneficial. Their familiarity with the area and its people greatly aided our communication and helped us forge a connection with the city.

After overcoming initial challenges, we identified several potential informal settlement locations in Lahore and began visiting them.

Recognizing the limitations of Google Maps in accurately depicting these areas, we opted for a more localized approach by asking residents for directions to these areas, thus accurately reaching the targeted settlements.

During our visits to seven distinct informal settlements in Lahore, we discovered significant diversity among them. No two settlements were alike; each was molded by its specific spatial constraints, urban setting, and the resources available to its inhabitants.

As we gathered and recorded observations from each informal settlement, our discussions and evaluations of various approaches ultimately led us to select one of the visited locations as our primary area of study.

Fig—9

This sketch captures the early stages of the field study in Lahore, from arrival to exploring various informal settlements. It visualizes the experiences, challenges, and key moments in navigating the city's diverse cultural and social landscape, using local insights to connect with the community and selecting the primary area of study (Sketch by the authors).

Fig—9
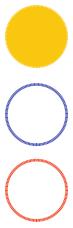
Mapscaping

Embracing culture, smell, taste, sight, hear, feel...

In this section, we delve into the creative and artistic mapping methods that underpinned the initial phase of our field study 'beginning in the city'. As we embarked on our journey to explore the informal settlements of Lahore, we recognized the need for innovative approaches to capture the essence of these dynamic and complex urban landscapes.

Our mapping endeavours were not merely about charting geographic coordinates but rather about illuminating the socio-cultural fabric that defines each settlement and their encroachment within the urban tapestry. Driven by curiosity, we found great

inspiration in the collection of unconventional "Artful Maps" from Harzinski (2013). Our conceptualization and use of mapping as a method found alignment and support in his work as most of the maps presented in his book are used to "relate personal stories that reveal glimpses of life's processes".

Mapping, for us, was not merely a method of data collection but a vehicle through which we could articulate our observations within the framework of what we term 'spatio-temporal relationing'. Each map we created during our fieldwork was imbued with the same purpose: to capture the spatial, psychological, and

Hustle of city becomes a complex canvas, where formal and informal co-depend on each other

Within the complex arrangement of density, lies a empty land, as if everyone around cannot see it, which is "survival" through an informal settlement

Culture integrated in the layers, a man with dhol(local musical instrument like drum, standing at the junction while the life around goes on

A representation of urban 'lines' where act of navigation the city reflects the intertwining of 'identity'

A reflection from sensorial experience gathered from the visit of an informal settlement at the periphery of the city

Affordable bikes

BUS STOP

BAND ROAD

Life revolving around 'needs...
Finding opportunities in others'...
LEFTOVERS!...
Where to draw the line?

Human, Sub-human?
Need, Survival!......
Formal or Informal...
Where to draw the line?

Who am I here?
ADAPTATION...
Over-crowded Senses...
Clenched hearts...
Curious eyes.....
INFORMAL SETTLEMENT,
OR SLUMS?
Where to draw the line?

Fig—10

2. To semi-permanent informality..
While realizing how your physical presence makes you evident in the setting

1.Travelling through the city with diverse spatial encounters. Identifying diversity in spatial configurations of informality in the city 1. from most temporary....

3. To more permanent..
To wondering how our feeling of home is different from theirs, if it is in any way...?

Fig—11

sensorial dimensions of our surroundings.

However, the methods of production varied significantly. Some maps were crafted in situ, drawn directly while immersed in the environment, while others took shape as we traversed from one location to another. The majority, though, were synthesized afterward, drawing upon our memories, and supplemented by reflective contemplation.

We found that this retrospective approach yielded the most fruitful results, allowing us to distil the essence of our experiences without the distractions inherent in live sketching. By fully immersing ourselves in the moment,

activating all our senses, we were able to glean a multifaceted understanding of our surroundings, blending seamlessly into the fabric of the community rather than standing apart as detached observers.

Paired with our mapping activities was a continuous process of reflection, wherein we scrutinized our intentions and interrogated the narratives emerging from our 'cartographic endeavours'. These maps became more than just tools for navigation; they evolved into instruments for introspection, enabling us to unravel the intricacies of the areas under study.

This sketch illustrates the journey through Lahore, highlighting diverse spatial encounters and the varying degrees of informality. It reflects the evolving understanding of what constitutes 'home' and our introspective questions about belonging and identity within the context of informal settlements (Sketch by the authors).

Fig—11

This sketch explores themes of permanency, privacy, and social construction. It reflects the observations and questions about gender dynamics and infrastructure, illustrating the complexities and intertwined nature of these elements. (Sketch by the authors).

Fig—12

Fig—12

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries (in a whisper)   41

Specturm of
urban encroachments

Fig—13

Barbed wire and construction materials surround the informal settlement, highlighting the resilience and ingenuity of residents building homes just outside formal housing systems (Photo by the authors).

Fig—13

Through our observations in the city and the process of mapscaping, we gained a deep understanding of the context, the interconnectedness, and the complexity of informal settlements. During our exploration and learning phase, we encountered a wide range of these settlements.

Informal settlements typically arise in encroaching urban areas as makeshift communities that exist outside formal authorization processes. They become 'homes' for those excluded from conventional housing systems, prompting residents to become the architects and maintainers of their living environments.

Despite common misconceptions that portray informal settlements as the unsightly aspects of urban areas, Katchi Abadis can be recognized as ingenious responses by the typically labelled "uncreative" and "uneducated" segments of society. They represent their adaptation to city life. For many low-income individuals, these settlements serve as the only viable housing option in the absence of legitimate, affordable alternatives (Mustafa, 2019).

Upon visiting various settlements in the city of Lahore, observation based on the physicality and spatial characteristics, we identified 3 different typologies of informal settlements in the area.

1 **The most temporary (Jhuggi):** The term "jhuggi" refers to temporary and makeshift shelters found in the urban areas of South Asia, especially in India and Pakistan. These structures are often constructed from scavenged and recycled materials such as plastic sheets, scrap metal, and cardboard. Characterized by their impermanence, jhuggis represent some of the most vulnerable and transient forms of urban settlement, both in terms of their physical structure and the uncertain tenure of their inhabitants (UNICEF, 2020). As we observed around the city, the most prevalent material used in these Jhuggi structures was bamboo and thatch roof.

Fig—13.1

Fig—13.2

Fig—13.3

2 **Semi-permanent settlement:** Such settlements are characterized by their partially constructed structures. These are often made up of self-built brick walls and may have floors composed of mud or clay, reflecting a blend of durability and traditional building practices. Bamboo is a prominent material in these settlements, utilized extensively not just for its structural properties in creating frameworks for walls and roofs, but also as a primary component for the roofs themselves, which may additionally incorporate materials like fabric and hay. These communities represent a middle ground between temporary makeshift shelters and fully developed, permanent housing, providing a more stable yet still impermanent living solution for their residents.

3 **More permanent settlement:** These settlements feature well-constructed houses built with purchased materials, overseen by hired contractors or masons during the construction process. Despite their seemingly permanent structures, these communities are classified as informal settlements for a couple of key reasons. Firstly, they often evolve gradually from temporary shelters to more stable, permanent structures over many years. Secondly, the land on which these houses are built typically remains under disputed ownership. This lack of formal land tenure and the progressive, unauthorized development of the housing contribute to their classification within the informal settlements.

These classifications, based on detailed observations and interactions with local residents, enhanced our understanding of the diversity within urban informal settlements. It revealed how the different settlement types reflect the varied economic conditions of the communities that inhabit them. For instance, most temporary settlements typically accommodate nomads, migrants moving from city to city in search of employment, and often the local beggar community. In contrast, the more stable semi-permanent and permanent settlements generally house laborers, domestic helpers, and factory workers. This gradation in settlement types underscores the socioeconomic spectrum and the adaptive strategies of urban populations.

The most temporary (Jhuggi): The image shows a makeshift shelter constructed from recycled materials like bamboo and clay, representing the most transient form of urban informal settlement in Lahore (Photo by the authors).

Fig—13.1

Semi-permanent settlement: The image depicts a partially constructed shelter with brick walls and a roof made from bamboo and fabric. These structures represent a middle ground between temporary makeshift shelters and fully developed housing. (Photo by the authors).

Fig—13.2

More permanent settlement: The image shows well-constructed houses made with purchased materials, overseen by contractors or masons. Despite their permanent appearance, these communities are classified as informal settlements due to disputed land ownership and gradual, unauthorized development (Photo by the authors).

Fig—13.3
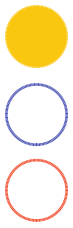
Pathfinding

After conducting initial visits along with documenting and mapping the observations to various informal settlements and gaining an understanding of their co-existence within the city, our next critical step was to select a specific settlement for our ethnographic research process. This decision, influenced by ethical consideration, which is *non-beneficence and transparency*, proved challenging. Communicating our research intent was particularly difficult in the most transient settlements, where residents, including children who often rely on begging, expected tangible benefits from our presence.
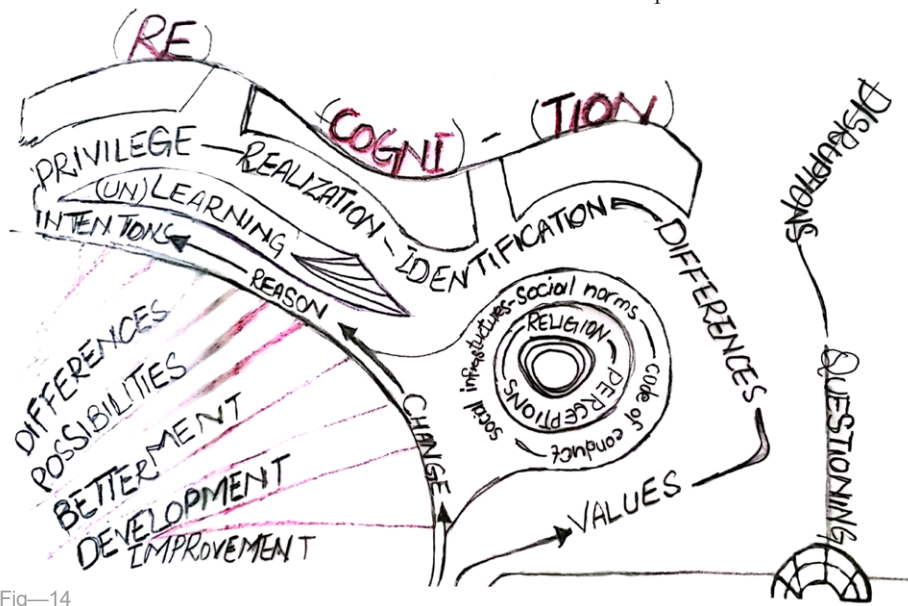
Fig—14

The selection process required us to set clear criteria based on our observations and interactions. These criteria included:

1 **Feasibility:** Essential to our research was the ability to establish meaningful connections with the community and collecting the stories to build the narrative. Respectful communication from both ends (us and the community) is an underlining aspect to consider when selecting the settlement. This required communication and consideration of both' time and availability. Our early visits showed that in the most temporary settlements, adults were often absent, leaving mainly children during the day.

2 **Typology:** This refers to the classification of informal settlements, as described in "spectrum of urban encroachments". We needed to consider the physical layout of the settlements, aiming to choose one where our presence would be minimally disruptive.

3 **Expectations:** Adhering to our ethical commitment to transparency, we decided that we cannot build the ground of our research approach on false promises or expectations of financial aid. This guided us to leave out the settlements predominantly inhabited by local begging communities.

Fig—15

Fig—16
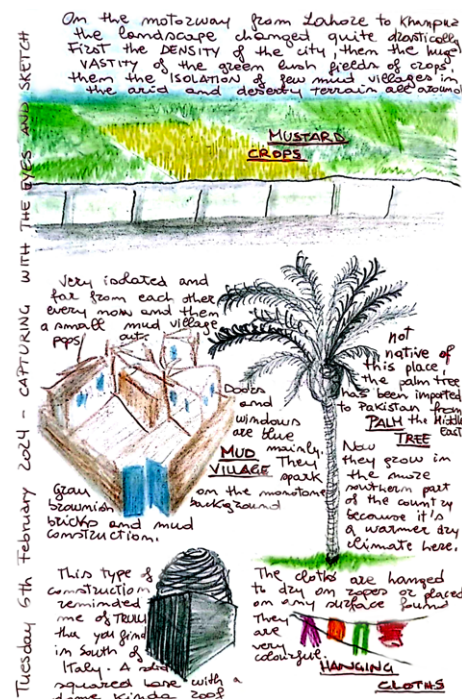
(RE-COGNI-TION sketch): The sketch visualizes the cognitive journey involved in selecting a specific informal settlement for ethnographic research. It highlights the processes of realization, identification, and questioning as we navigated ethical considerations and community interactions to make an informed and respectful decision (Sketch by the authors).
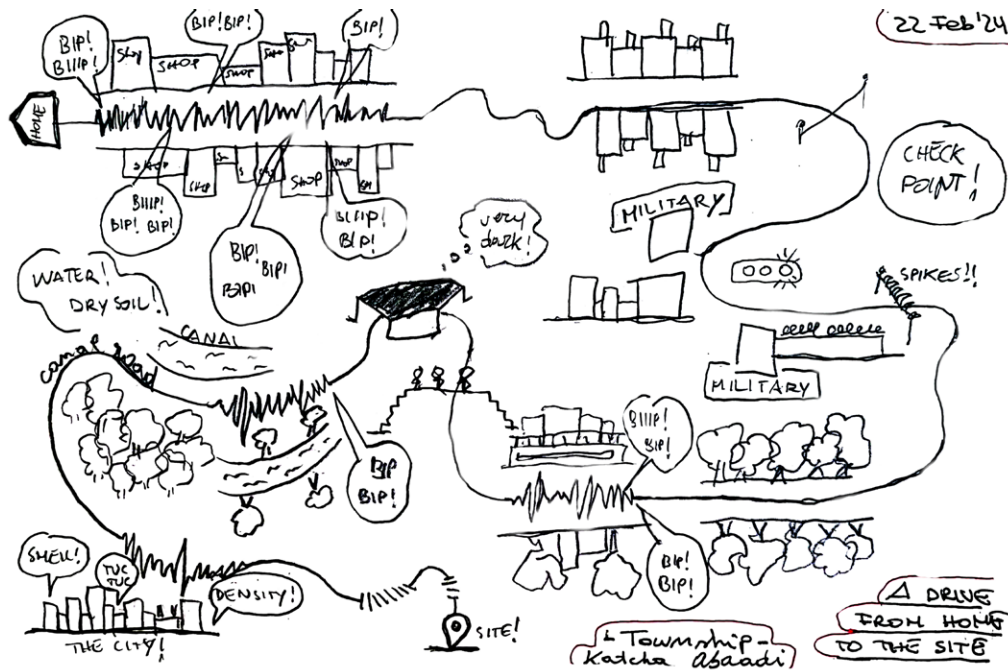
Fig—14

The sketch captures our observations along the motorway from Lahore to Khanpur, highlighting the transition from urban density to rural isolation. As part of our pathfinding process, it illustrates the diverse landscapes and cultural elements we encountered, which informed our understanding and selection of the study settlement (Sketch by the authors).

Fig—15

The sketch maps our journey from 'place of stay' to the selected site in the Township area of Lahore, capturing key landmarks and checkpoints along the way. It illustrates the various elements encountered, reflecting on pathfinding process and the challenges of navigating the urban landscape to reach the informal settlement (Sketch by the authors).

Fig—16

After setting our selection criteria and reflecting on our initial visits and interactions, we transformed our discussions into several key considerations for choosing a suitable settlement for our research:

Accessibility: It was imperative to select a settlement that we could easily access.

Community Interest: We aimed to identify areas where there was evident interest from the community in engaging with us.

Gender Dynamics: As female researchers, we anticipated that women in the settlements might be more comfortable interacting with us, influencing our choice.

Spatial Suitability: We needed a settlement with enough space to conduct our research without intruding excessively on the residents' daily lives.

Managing Expectations: It was crucial to maintain clear communication about the scope of our project to avoid creating false hopes and to prioritize our safety and ethical considerations.

Following this approach, we decided on an informal settlement in Township area of Lahore, a densely populated and diverse residential neighbourhood. This area's varied economic backgrounds and positive responses from the women of the community on initial visits further facilitated our selection process.

Contextual Borders

Emerging from a meticulous selection process, our research now turns its focus to the chosen site nestled within Lahore's Township neighbourhood. This area boasts a unique characteristic: it encompasses all three typologies of settlements within a mere half-kilometre linear distance. However, guided by our 'Pathfinding' process, we opted to centre our interactions and exploration within the semi-permanent settlements delineated in the accompanying sketch, adjacent to the main road junction (see Fig. 18). This settlement, measured from an aerial perspective, occupies a roughly square-shaped area spanning approximately 7,000 square meters, accommodating around 40-50 dwellings.

Most significant element to be observed while crossing this part of the city: 'Ganda Naala' roughly translated "dirty sewage

Lined by green patches, many of which contains nurseries or plant store/shops

Dolphin - a security force launched for Lahore specifically - headquarters

Driving licence centre

Cinestar: a movie theatre with parking spaces both sides - a very known one in Lahore

132kV grid station

Another settlement more permanent

A new construction extension of security forces quarter

Passage (bridge over the canal/sewage) which extends & connects to the nearby market

Significant landmarks to locate the region on Google maps: the Hospital

Regional training institute by Population Welfare Dept.

Less permanent settlement 'jhuggi'

Fig—17

46   Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries (in a whisper)

Fig—18

*RED text and graphics on the map show mobility within and towards the settlement, highlighting access points, dead-ends, main roads, junctions, and an unpaved road leading to two more settlements: one is **more temporary** and the other is **most permanent**.

*YELLOW graphics on the map represent communal spaces in the settlement, distinguished by serial letter codes:
'C-00' for general communal gathering areas,
'A-00' for shared animal enclosures,
'S-00' for small shops.

*BLUE graphic layer in lower opacity indicates the dwellings in the settlement

C-01   A informal gathering/sitting place just before entering the street

C-02   A informal gathering/sitting place within the dwellings where we mostly were received in our visits

C-03   A mosque: Serves as a praying space as well as a "decision-making space" where communal needs are discussed and resolved.

C-04   An informal edication centre: An extension of mosque where few members of community teaches religious education to women and serves as a praying area for women too

A-01/02   Shared animal enclosures where members from the neighbourhood keep their animals

S-01   A small shop by one of the community member where basic amenities are sold

S-01

A-01/02

C-01/02

C-03/04

The site map illustrates the selected semi-permanent settlement in Lahore's Township neighbourhood, highlighting key land-marks such as the main road junction, access points, and surrounding areas. The map provides a detailed view of the spatial configuration and significant features that guided our research focus and interactions within the community (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—17

The map outlines key access points, communal spaces, and residential areas within the selected semi-permanent settle-ment. It offers a clear overview of the settle-ment's layout, essential for guiding our research. (Illustration by the authors)

Fig—18

Building upon insights gleaned from our initial visit during the 'Beginning in the city' phase, we realized that selecting the specific location was just the initial step in a series of decision crucial to advancing our research within the community. The spatial configuration of the settlement, intertwined with the intricate social dynamics among its residents, prompted us to define additional contextual boundaries for our engagement.

1 **Proximity:** What can be accessible for us emerged as a primary consideration. As depicted in Fig. 18, the settlement features two main access points linked by an unpaved road primarily traversed on foot, occasionally accommodating a small tractor or trolley alongside a pedestrian. This main road, curving through the settlement in a U-turn, terminates in dead-ends on its shorter sides. On both side of the street, dwellings succeed one another interrupted at time by shared animals' stables and communal courtyards which serves as gathering places. Walking to the settlement from the main road junction, our natural inclination led us to enter via the first access point from the main road, however we could not observe from the people flow any clear distinction between entry and

exit point. Although it may initially appear inconsequential, the choice of entry point significantly shaped our initial interactions within the community, ultimately determining the areas where we primarily spent our time on-site.

2 **Privacy**: We identified 'layers of privacy' inherent within the settlement. While units adjacent to the main road typically have direct access, a secondary cluster of dwellings nestled behind the front row required passage through the front units or shared spaces, delineating varying degrees of privacy among residents. Reflecting once again our initial ethical considerations, we resolved to enter spaces only upon invitation and agreement, respecting **individual autonomy** and privacy. Our approach prioritized initiating contact from communal spaces, laying the groundwork for **trust-building**.

These delimitations heightened our awareness that certain areas within the settlement might remain undiscovered, emphasizing the imperative of fostering connections and rapport within the community as the next step in our research journey.
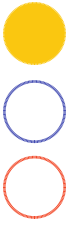
Engaging with local lives

Establishing and nurturing relationships with the local community of the settlement was a crucial part of our research process. Adhering to the ethical framework, we prioritized **building trust** by gradually increasing the duration of our visits, which allowed us to **integrate respectfully** into their daily lives without overwhelming them.

Our first visit to the settlement occurred on February 12, during our initial phase of fieldwork: 'Beginning in the city'. As we neared the street (Access 01 see Fig. 18), we received curious glances from around. A woman approached us, advising that the road ahead was dead-end. We courteously clarified our purpose and decided not to advance further that day. During our second visit, we delved deeper into the settlement and encountered Mumtaz. Her friendly manner facilitated our first significant exchange. Upon noticing a gathering moving toward a house, we asked Mumtaz about the commotion. She informed us that the community was visiting a sick neighbour. We requested if it would be appropriate to come back at another time, to which she agreed. Mumtaz thus became an essential link in our ongoing interactions with the community.

In addition to our conversations, we also conducted a drawing activity with the kids from the community. As the purest and most curious souls, the children provided a natural entry point to engage with the broader community. (see Appendix 1). This activity not only helped us gain the trust of the community but also allowed us to observe the dynamics among the children. Through this engagement, we discovered that many kids attended a local public school, while others, though not formally enrolled, exhibited a passion for learning and a strong curiosity to discover more.

As our visits became more frequent and prolonged, we gained insights into the community's social structure. We consistently initiated conversations by sharing personal details and explaining our intentions, which helped us to meet and engage with new community members. We learned that the settlement consisted of 40-50 closely related families, highlighting the role of kinship in their living arrangement and social support system. This observation led us to reflect on how squatting, as a collective act, has become a normalized and adaptive strategy within this tightly knit community, further strengthening their social bonds.

We devoted most of our time to interacting with the women of the community, although we occasionally spoke with some of the men. Mumtaz introduced us to Shazia, Naseem, Shakeela, Ruby, Nadia, and Khadija, women from various households on the street where we frequently conducted our study. Typically, our visits lasted until sunset, during which time we primarily encountered women and children, as most men were away at work. Apart from two or three women who worked as house helpers in nearby residential areas, the others remained at home, engaging in productive

"We make whatever we need, (...) whoever learns a skill teaches it to the others. (...) Virtually everything in our lives is self-created, (...) would you like to see all that makes up our lives?"
(Mumtaz, from field notes)

Shakeela

Shazia

Mumtaz

Ruby

Nadia

Batool   Elena

→ Direct connection

--→ Secondary connections

····→ Inner relations
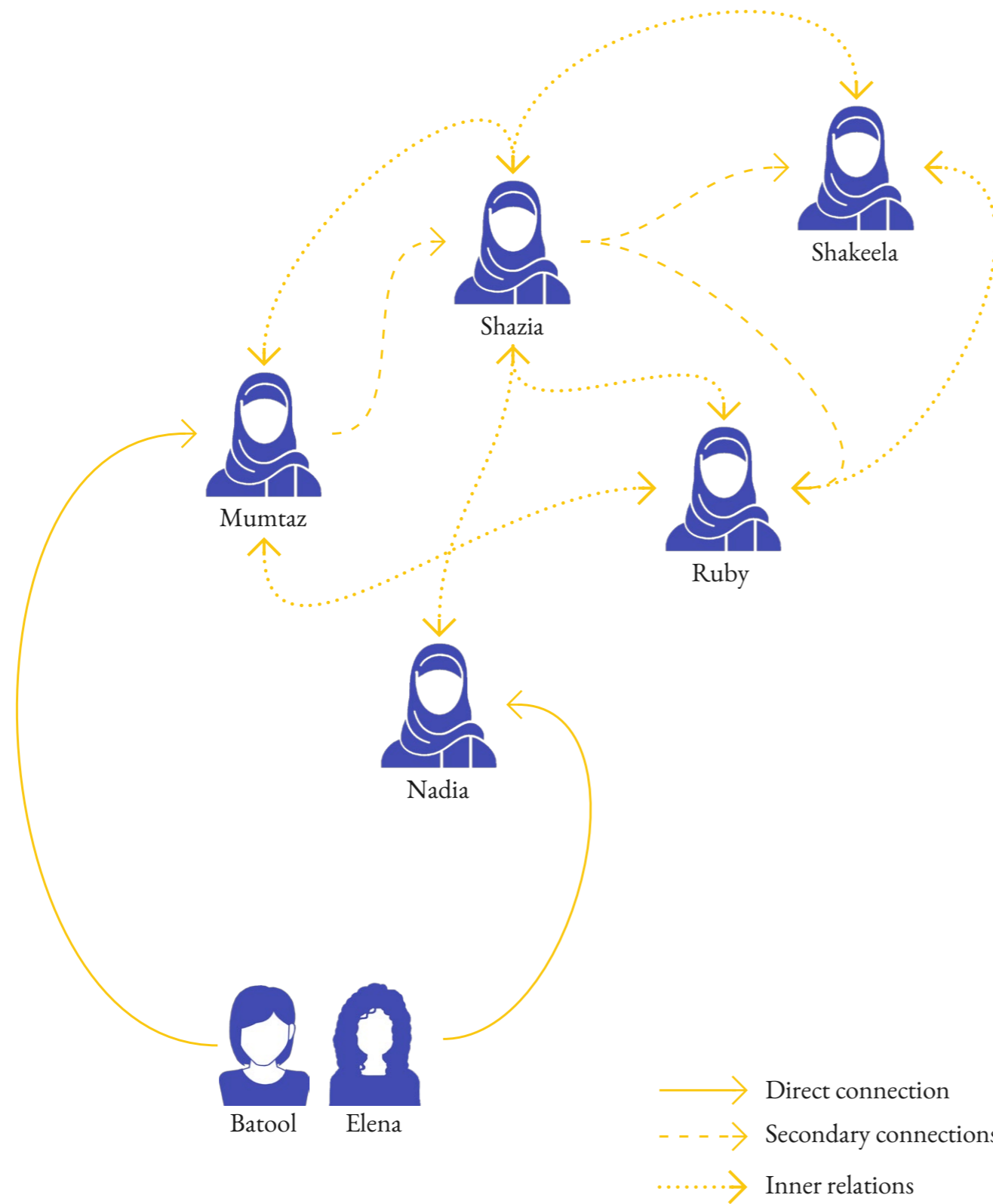
Fig—19

Fig—20

tasks, and managing daily necessities. One common activity among them was stitching; they often purchased fabric, designed, and stitched their own garments.

During one of our discussions, Mumtaz shared an intriguing aspect of their self-sufficiency. *"We make whatever we need,"* she explained. *"For instance, with our clothing, we visit women tailors in nearby areas, observe their techniques, and learn about different designs. Then we return home and replicate what we've seen. Whoever learns a skill teaches it to the others."* She added with a relaxed smile, *"Virtually everything in our lives is self-created, from our clothes to our furniture—like this mora (a traditional stool), this charpai (a traditional woven bed), and these razai (traditional cotton winter blankets). Would you like to see all that makes up our lives?"* Her laughter punctuated the conversation, highlighting the sense of ownership they take in their resourcefulness and community learning.

Moreover, many community members revealed that they are second or third-generation residents of Lahore, emphasizing that their roots in the city are deep and significant. A few shared that they originally came from nearby rural areas, but for them, this community is now their true home.

Documenting our interactions and observations within the community required careful consideration. Initially, we refrained from using any recording devices to respect personal spaces and maintain privacy. As trust developed, we consulted with the community members, who expressed their preference to avoid personal identifications in photographs (see Fig. 20). They agreed to the documentation of their homes, streets, and other non-personal objects. Due to these constraints, we adapted our approach to align with Archibald's methodology, emphasizing engagement and the capturing of cultural knowledge through active participation and listening. This method, inspired by Archibald's (2008) concepts in *An Indigenous Storywork Methodology,* focused on treating research as a conversation, a chat, and storytelling, thus fostering a deep immersion in the community's culture through "oral and heart memory." This approach allowed us to draw insights and reflections directly from our experiences and the narratives shared with us.

The visual accompaniments (Fig. 18 & 20) in our study illustrate the social structure of the community members and their spatial arrangements within the settlement, enhancing our understanding of their interactions and the environment they inhabit.
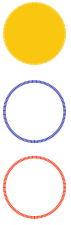
Image from the work-shop conducted with architecture students and educators, at the Institute of Art and Culture (IAC) in Lahore, discussing the integration of informal settlements into architectural education. (Photo by the authors

Fig—21

Engaging beyond the community

During our thesis research, we broadened our scope through formal and semi-formal engagements with various contributors in Lahore. While these individuals were not directly connected to the settlements we studied, their insights significantly expanded our understanding of how informal architecture is perceived within educational and professional contexts.

Leveraging the local connections of a team member who completed her undergraduate studies in Architecture in Lahore, we reached out and initiated discussions with both current and former academics. These interactions provided a comprehensive overview of the informality in the given context, which is detailed in the subsection titled 'Through Scholarly Insights'.

Furthermore, we sought the perspectives of both educators and students by organizing a workshop at the Institute of Art and Culture (IAC) in Lahore. This event offered an exchange of views on the informal settlements in the city, enhancing our grasp of how these environments are understood by those teaching and learning about architecture. The workshop is further discussed in the sub-section named 'and Emerging Voices'.

Engaging with these two groups helped clarify how informal architectural practices are integrated into educational frameworks and the potential ways to bridge existing knowledge gaps.

"Despite limited resources, their resilience and creativity enable them to construct homes virtually from scratch"
(Dr. Mansoor Ahmad, from meeting notes)

Through scholarly insights

Post-it sketches from the workshop at IAC, illustrating architecture students' creative responses and reflections. For the full documentation of the workshop and its outputs see Appendix 1. (Photo by the authors)

Fig—21.1

1 Dr. Mansoor Ahmad

In our search to engage with architecture students, we reached out to Dr. Mansoor Ahmed, who is an architect, a former teacher of our team member and the current Director of the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) at the Institute for Art and Culture. Dr. Mansoor not only facilitated by connecting us with a diverse group of students at IAC but also initiated a rich dialogue about **"knowledge transference"** within informal settlements during our meeting.

Dr. Mansoor shared compelling insights during this semi-formal discussion, which he framed with his observations and examples from the different Katchi Abaadis he has encountered. He noted, *"The residents of Katchi Abaadis are among the most resourceful people I have encountered. Even young children know how to securely tie roof knots to withstand wind. These skills are not formally taught but are passed down through generations. Despite limited resources, their resilience and creativity enable them to construct homes virtually from scratch"* (meeting notes, Dr. Mansoor Ahmed, February 21st, Wednesday, 10-11 am).

Reflecting on Dr. Mansoor's observations, it becomes evident that the informal transmission of knowledge within these communities is not only a survival mechanism but also a rich cultural heritage that academic structures might overlook. This perspective made us wonder how such grassroots knowledge could be recognized and integrated within formal educational frameworks.

This discussion deepened our understanding of the 'learning processes' within the settlement, providing us with a unique lens to observe and engage with these processes during our interactions with the community. Dr. Mansoor facilitated connections not only with students from the Institute of Art and Culture (IAC) but also introduced us to educational consultant Israr ul Hassan Syed. Mr. Syed is involved in a project aimed at integrating indigenous knowledge systems into mainstream educational curricula, further expanding the scope and depth of our research.

2 Israr ul Hassan Syed

We met with Mr. Israr on Saturday, February 24th, in the rural locale of Karianwala, Gujrat. Our visit, enriched by insightful discussions, also provided us the opportunity to explore a shrine and mosque. This site, exemplifying a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation, featured traditional construction techniques using brick and lime mortar and was designed by Kamil Khan Mumtaz. Situated close to Mr. Israr's home, the mosque, along with the shrine and a neighbouring courtyard that functions as a learning centre, forms a crucial part of his initiative to broaden educational opportunities. His vision includes the creation of a school that blends religious teachings with modern educational methods, integrating indigenous knowledge systems within the curriculum.

Historically, mosques have been central to community building, acting not only as places of worship but also as hubs for education and social welfare, thus promoting community cohesion and solidarity (Ezra Institute, 2017). Observing the mosque's role in Karianwala provided valuable insights into its function as a community binder and its influence on the learning processes within the settlement. The mosque indicated in Fig. 18, we observed that it acted both as a learning ground as well as a space to share resources an plan for the community.

In our discussion with Mr. Israr, we inquired

about how education shapes or distorts societal views. This conversation prompted a thoughtful examination of education's role in bringing to light the often-overlooked aspects of our society, such as informal settlements. We explored how educational approaches can either acknowledge or neglect these communities, emphasizing the critical need for an educational framework that truly recognizes and integrates all societal elements.

3 Pervaiz Vandal

Professor Pervaiz Vandal is a distinguished architect, planner, and educator, known for his role in founding and developing architecture and design departments at several universities, including the Institute of Art and Culture (IAC). He also leads Pervaiz Vandal & Associates, a firm acclaimed for its contributions to heritage conservation and architecture, earning the prestigious Sir Robert Matthew Commonwealth Award (World Architecture, 2016)

As prestigious as the opportunity was to meet Mr. Vandal on March 13, the meeting and discussion was so engaging that the time felt short. The discussion somehow moved towards the idea of **architecture without architects**, and he created a tangible relation to history where there were no architects or even the concept of being an architect, and construction of houses or dwelling used to be a social activity (Oliver, 2006)

This discussion triggered the reflection that in the modern day we have mechanized the process of designing and building that the social aspect connected to this process is lost over the history. But conversely reflecting on how we observed in the settlement, informality sustained the social aspect of building and how the process of resource collection and construction in the settlement is still a community binding process.

4 Kamil Khan

Dawn of March 14 brought us to another insightful meeting with Kamil Khan Mumtaz. Mr. Mumtaz is a renowned Pakistani architect, artist, and writer, based in his native Lahore. Well-known for his commitment to environmental protection and heritage preservation, his work is closely associated with architectural tradition in Pakistan (Re-thinking the Future, n.d.)

Mr. Mumtaz's humble approach to our

interaction made the meeting exceptionally engaging, which centred around the acquisition of skills outside the traditional educational system and how such knowledge is culturally transmitted. A memorable remark from Mr. Mumtaz captured the essence of our conversation: *"What exactly is an architect? A maker or a creator? Who decreed that this title must be obtained through formal institutions? Learning isn't confined to institutions; it's an ongoing journey"* (meeting notes, Kamil Khan).

His understandings invited us to reconsider the conventional pathways of architectural education and the recognition of informal,

experiential learning as equally valuable. This perspective aligns with our observations from the settlement, where construction and spatial organization occur outside traditional academic frameworks, driven by community needs and inherited skills. This mode of learning and building, which Mr. Mumtaz regarded as a 'never-ending phenomenon,' highlights a dynamic process of adaptation that is not only spontaneous but deeply rooted in cultural identity. This approach challenges the traditional boundaries of architectural education and practice, proposing a more inclusive understanding of what it means to be a creator of spaces.

The workshop held with architecture students on March 18 proved to be a pivotal moment in our fieldwork. Engaging a diverse group of 25-30 fourth and fifth-year students—some preparing for their thesis and others actively writing them—the event was structured to promote a deep understanding of informal architecture within their educational journey.

Opening Session: Poetry to reflect

We started the workshop with an icebreaker that involved reading a poem by us (mentioned at the start of the booklet). Students expressed their initial thoughts and feelings after hearing the poem. The responses received in this session reflected immense creativity and visual outcomes (see Fig. 21.1). This exercise set a reflective tone, encouraging students to open-up and share their intuitive reactions, paving the way for deeper discussions.

First Segment: Exploring Interests in Informality

In this initial discussion, we gauged the students' interest in focusing their future careers or thesis projects on informal settlements. Questions were posed about what aspects of informality they found compelling and whether they could envision incorporating these elements into their professional journeys (see Appendix 2). The students shared various observations about the informal settlements

within the city, providing a robust foundation for understanding their perspectives.

The conversation proceeded towards how students perceived the role of architects in informal settlements. The consensus was that creating opportunities for empowerment within these communities was more valuable than imposing external solutions. A memorable comment from one student encapsulated this sentiment: *"Who said they need our solutions? They do not rely on our solutions anyway. They encounter a problem; they think of possible resolutions, and they just go for it. Simple as that"* (workshop notes, a student). This highlighted a respect for the self-sufficiency and resilience of these communities.

Second Segment: Integrating Informality into Architectural Education

The final section delved into how informality could be better integrated into architectural education. Students discussed the challenges posed by the traditional educational frameworks, which often disregard anything beyond established norms. They also noted how the focus on revenue generation in architectural practice impedes the incorporation of spatial justice. This feedback emphasized that architectural education must embrace a broader pedagogical approach that values cultural knowledge and community practices (see Appendix 2). This

involves rethinking educational frameworks to incorporate principles of spatial justice and sensitivity, ensuring that students are prepared to engage with and contribute positively to all types of urban environments.

The discussion on educational challenges revealed a critical gap between current architectural education and the needs of informal settlements. The traditional curriculum's focus on technical and aesthetic aspects often sidelines the social justice and community engagement elements crucial for addressing informality (Till, 2009).
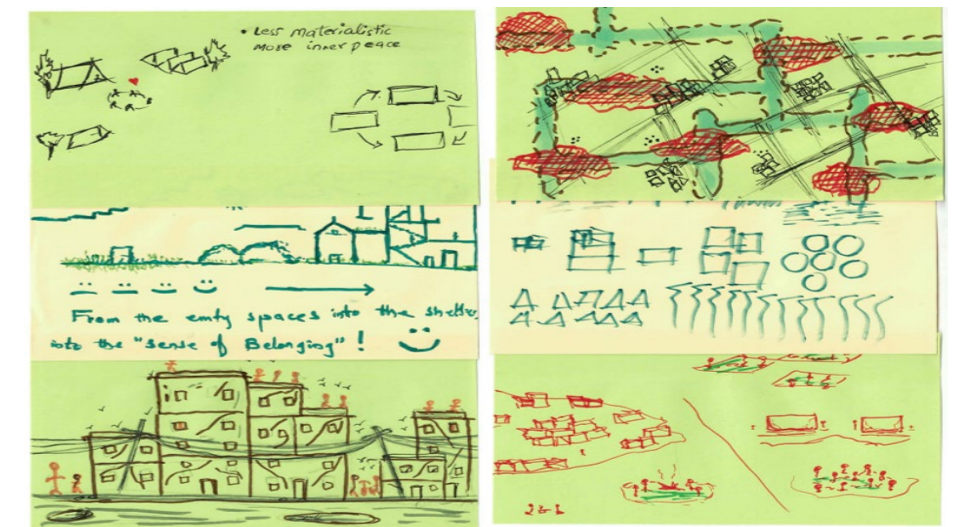
The students' responses suggested a strong preference for enabling rather than imposing solutions, reflecting a shift towards more

participatory approaches in architectural practice. This sentiment aligns with recent academic discourse advocating for architects to act as facilitators of community-driven projects (Sanoff, 2000). By emphasizing the resilience and innovation within informal settlements, the students recognized the value of learning from these communities instead of merely intervening.
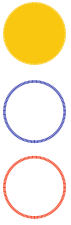
Reflecting on the discussions, it became evident that embracing informality within architectural education requires foundational changes. Starting from the grassroots level—acknowledging and integrating the significance of cultural knowledge and community-oriented practices—is essential for fostering an equitable architectural future (Dovey, 2009).

And emerging voices

"Who said they need our solutions? They do not rely on our solutions anyway." (a student, from the workshop)

Fig—21

Fig—21.1

Chasing Meanings
of Informality

Our preliminary investigation into the selected Township site led us to unravel its spatial configuration, comprehend the nuances of its morphological structure, and delineate the contextual boundaries. This initial engagement, encompassing interactions with residents, the collection of their narratives, and insights gleaned from scholars and students, culminated in a profound epiphany. Through these immersive observations and analysis, a multifaceted understanding of informality within the settlement began to unfold.

1 **Infrastructure Dynamics**: The settlement's formation process has influenced the configuration of the main road, shaping it into an adaptable pedestrian infrastructure that facilitates everyday movement within the community. The community demonstrate resilience and adaptivity by ingeniously addressing the absence of formal amenities, such as electricity and water. Despite the proximity to a power station, legal constraints hinder direct connections to the grid, necessitating alternative solutions like the use of batteries and makeshift electrical setups, which are done through improvised wiring of light bulbs and fans. Regarding water access, the municipality provides a bi-weekly water distribution system. During these scheduled times, residents collaborate to gather and fill numerous plastic water tanks, ensuring a steady water supply for the week. Additionally, sanitation facilities are individually organized within each dwelling, typically featuring a small toilet facility situated outside the main room within the courtyard.

2 **Social Cohesion**: The strong bonds among community members foster a dynamic social fabric characterized by mutual assistance and support. Beyond mere survival, residents actively collaborate to enhance their living conditions. This collective ethos is exemplified during significant life events, such as weddings, where a reciprocal exchange of skills and resources occurs. Some individuals contribute their expertise in crafting decorations, while others showcase their sewing abilities in creating attire. Additionally, communal efforts extend to times of distress, such as illness or bereavement, where community members rally together to provide both emotional and financial support for funeral arrangements. This reciprocal solidarity not only strengthens individual bonds but also enriches the collective well-being of the community as a whole.

Fig—22

The photo highlights the intricate texture of a brick wall within the settlement, showcasing the unique craftsmanship and strength embedded in the community's infra-structure. (Photo by the authors)

Fig—22

This diagram outlines the key elements of the infor-mal settlement in Town-ship, Lahore. It highlights infrastructure dynamics, social cohesion, resource management practices, economic cooperation, and knowledge transfer-ence, showcasing the community's resilience, adaptability, and collab-orative spirit. (Diagram by the authors. All photo taken by the authors)

Fig—23

Fig—23

Infrastructure Dynamics

Social Cohesion

Resource Management Practices

Economic Cooperation

Knowledge Transference

3 **Resource Management Practices**: This informal settlement offers valuable insights into conscious resource utilization practices. Throughout our fieldwork, we identified two primary resource categories: building materials and fuel for firewood stoves. The process of acquiring and utilizing these resources involves a systematic approach of collection, storage, and utilization. When undertaking construction projects, residents gather various building materials from different locations within the city. In instances where specific materials are unavailable, they opt for reused materials, such as bricks, which are procured based on financial feasibility and stored until needed for construction. Additionally, we observed a communal system for accessing fuel for cooking purposes. Alongside roadside locations, we noticed stacks of thin scrap wood and branches, sourced from collected vegetable crates. These materials are flattened

and stored for communal use, providing readily available fuel for cooking needs throughout the day.

4 **Economic Cooperation**: All four above mentioned elements collectively form part of a larger, self-organized system cantered around the concept of a shared economy. At its core, this system operates on the principle that community members reciprocate assistance, both financially and in practical terms, whenever a need arises. While this ethos is evident in daily interactions, it becomes particularly pronounced during significant life events, such as weddings, funerals, or construction projects, as previously mentioned. Importantly, monetary contributions are not the sole form of assistance. For instance, during the construction of a new dwelling, neighbours or skilled community members often contribute their expertise to the project.

Furthermore, the community establishes collective funds, wherein individuals contribute what they can towards larger initiatives aimed at enhancing the settlement's infrastructure and communal spaces. For example, during our observation period, funds were being raised to install solar panels in the mosque, enhancing its functionality during the sweltering summer months with the aid of fans to alleviate the oppressive heat.

5 **Knowledge Transference**: The fundamental principles of caring, reciprocity among community members, and shared values are the unwritten pillars that unite and fortify this community. These principles are exemplified through the practice of educating one another based on individual capabilities. Education transcends formal institutions, permeating daily life through communal spaces like the mosque. Serving as a central gathering space the mosque becomes

a platform for religious education, with Quran classes providing an avenue for literacy development. The diverse array of skills present within the community is shared and passed down through generations, facilitating the transfer of knowledge across different skill sets. Moreover, children whose families can afford basic formal schooling share their acquired literacy with their friends in the settlement who lack such opportunities. This exemplifies a unique instance of communal growth and collective advancement.

With a deeper and enriched comprehension of informality in its various manifestations, there arises an imperative need to reassess prevailing definitions of informal settlements. In conventional criteria, as outlined by the UN (UN-Habitat 2007), these settlements are characterized as urban expansions lacking essential amenities, including durable housing, adequate living space, access to

reliable water, and improved sanitation facilities. However, we argue that such a broad definition fails to acknowledge the resilience and adaptability inherent to communities inhabiting those settlements. The evolving delineation between formal and informal realm becomes increasingly blurred and underscores the necessity for contextual sensitivity. In our pursuit of understanding informality, we encountered narratives of generations navigating cycles of appropriation and adaptation, often finding solace and belonginess in small acts of reciprocal nurturing. Through narratives of resilience and communal care, this informal settlement in Township illustrates the rich tapestry of informality, challenging conventional paradigms and affirming the significance of localized perspectives.

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

Ethnographic
Symphony

Contemplation

Multimedia
Storytelling
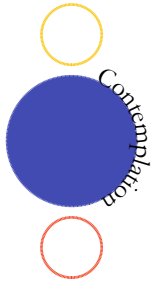
Story of adaptation
and resilience

– Story of the overall settlement

Despite multiple displace-
ments due to develop-
ment projects, the com-
munity has continuously
rebuilt and resettled. Their
unwavering spirit under-
scores their resilience and
unity, reflecting the power
of spatial appropriation
and community strength
in shaping their collective
identity. (Sketch by the
authors)

Fig—24

Initial Squatting and Eviction Act 01
From Jhuggi settlements to be replaced by a formal building of
Dolphin Headquarters in Lahore (a security force agency)

Squatting and Eviction Act 02
Re-established with temporary and semi-permanent units, removed
again for security forces ongoing building construction
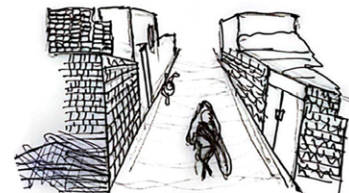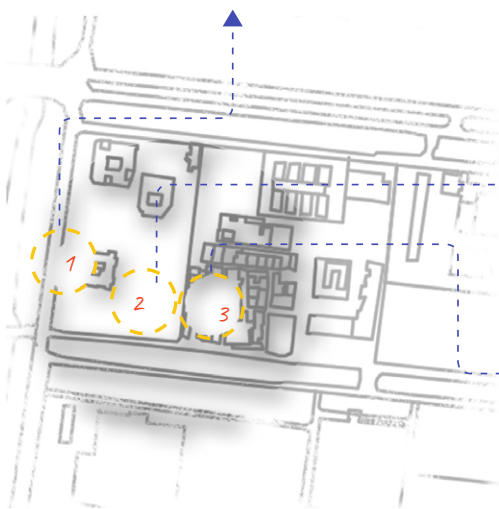
Settlement's Current Location
And thus settlement reached its current location and is
thriving here for 30-35 years.

Fig—24

56   Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

It's our second last day here. We arrived a bit early today—early for Ramadan (month of fasting and spiritual reflection for Muslims), that is, when time takes on a different pace. After Sehri (the pre-dawn meal before beginning the fasting), the community usually rests for a few hours following the morning prayer, so our arrival, though later than usual, was still early in the day. Now, it's almost 16:00, and we're sharing with Shazia, Mumtaz, and others—women, children, and a few men—who are standing around at varying distances, that soon we will have to leave for home. There's a mix of emotions as we confront the realization that our next visit will be our last.

As we attempt to explain that we need to leave to be home in time for Iftar(meal to open the fast after sunset), the evening meal that opens/breaks the fast, the community urges us more and more to stay and open/break our fast with them. Grateful for their invitation but hesitant to impose, we remember how they've hosted us for Iftar once before. It was wonderful, yet we're cautious about not wanting to inconvenience them again.

The cultural practice of hospitality here is profound, always offering food and company regardless of the time or situation. This tradition is so ingrained that to refuse feels almost impolite, despite our repeated attempts.

After some struggle, we decide to stay. We're sitting in Shazia's home, the first house on the street. Everyone is already bustling

about, preparing for Iftar. The enthusiasm is appreciable and comforting like a cool breeze on this warm afternoon.

Shazia's home is a large, multipurpose room cleverly arranged with areas for sitting, sleeping, and storage. The layout allows for smooth circulation, accommodating everyone comfortably—even with a crowd of neighbours and their children (see Fig. 26). Just outside, there's a square courtyard, enclosed by makeshift brick walls and open to the sky, featuring a toilet hidden behind a fabric curtain and an elevated washing area. Here, Samina, a neighbour, is bathes her young son. We sit on two Charpai (traditional woven bed commonly used in South Asia), surrounded by the curious and excited kids of the community.

In conversation with Shazia, who has now joined us after planning the Iftar menu with other neighbours, we talk about our homes. She is eager to learn about where we come from, hanging on every detail as we describe our far-off residences. The talk then shifts to her own living space. She reveals that, thankfully, she has never had to live in a Jhuggi (type of small, makeshift hut or shack found in informal settlements of South Asia). Her family, along with many others in the community, originally settled on a nearby vacant land some 40 years ago. They were forced to relocate not once but twice, due to development projects but always found a way to rebuild and re-establish themselves. Her parents and others finally moved to this

location, where they have been thriving since.

This cycle of displacement and resettlement underscores their resilience. About a decade ago, the community initiated a legal battle for the land rights where they now live, though the matter remains unresolved. Listening to Shazia's stories, we are moved by the community's enduring spirit of resistance and adaptation. Their commitment to securing a home not only speaks to their determination but also enhances the social dynamics and cohesion among them.

As we listen, thoughts about the power of spatial appropriation and community resilience swirl in our minds. These acts of making and remaking space are not merely physical but are deeply intertwined with their identity and survival, offering insights on the impact of architecture and space in shaping and sustaining communities.

A view of the settlement's alleyway, illustrating the community's adaptive use of space and resources, from makeshift brick walls to piles of collected materials for daily use. (Photo by the authors)

Fig—25

Story of informal abodes

– Shazia's abode

Unit nr.	:	*01 (see ref. map)*
Story Author	:	*Shazia*
Householders	:	*one familiy*
Familiy size	:	*2 adults, 1 kid*
Dwelling size	:	*ca.20 m2*
Aspects of informality		
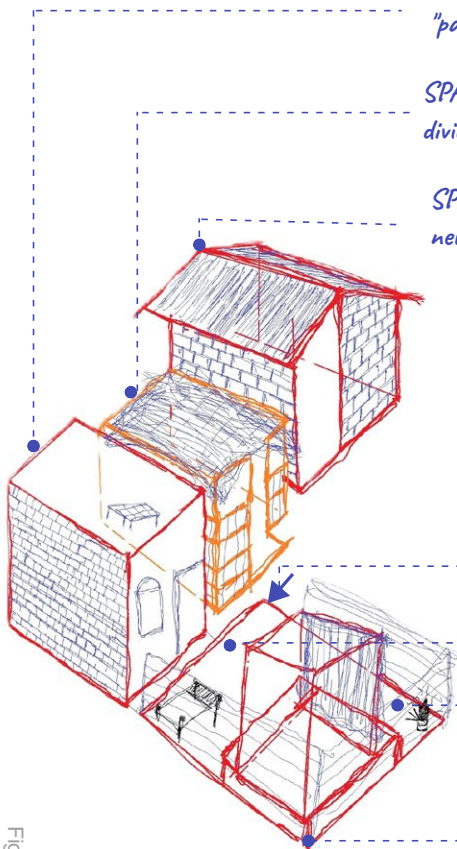
SPACE 01: A multipurpose room with brick walls, featuring a bed, a long sofa against the right wall, a mirror, a cabinet with a glass door, and a large metal storage container known locally as a "paiti."

SPACE 02: A shelter for Shazia's sheep and goats, constructed with bamboo supports and dividers. It has a hay roof inside and an exterior layer made from reused floor carpet.

SPACE 03: A storage room for hunted materials and blankets, also used for extra storage by neighbors. It has a mud floor and is accessed from a shared space just outside Shazia's home.

ACCESS POINT: The entrance to an open courtyard with a brick floor at Shazia's house.

SPACE 04: A courtyard located in front of SPACE 01.

SPACE 05: The rightmost corner of the courtyard, in front of an elevated area with a toilet. It features a clay stove, locally called a "chulha," and serves as a kitchen.

SPACE 06: A without a roof, using a curtain as a door, with a small washing area in front.

Fig—26

"We don't really need that much electricity. During the day it's anyway light outside and we spend and work outside in daylight and all we need in the night to sleep is this fan. More to keep the mosquitos away then the heat actually"
(Shazia, from field notes)
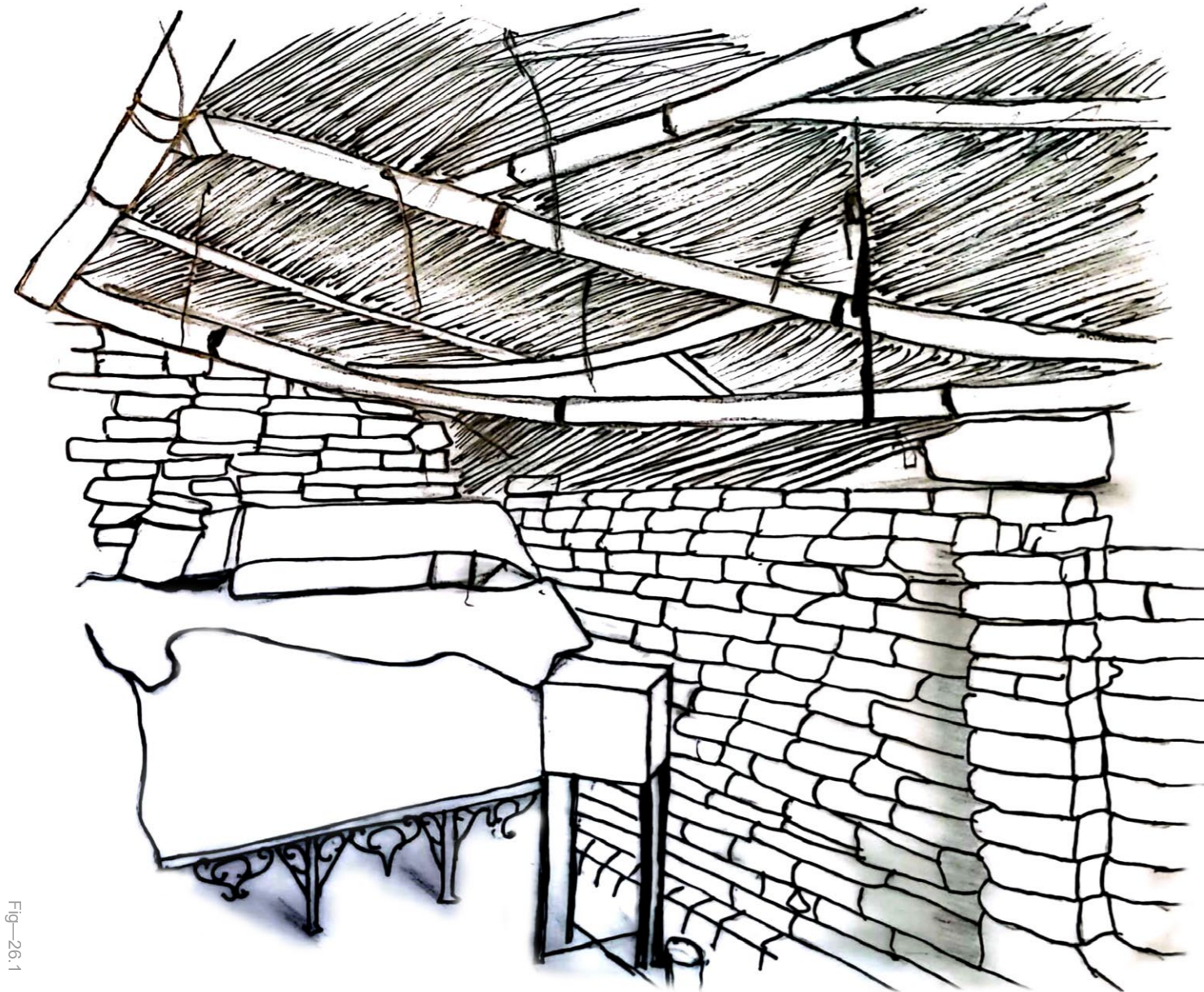
Detailed sketch of Shazia's home layout, highlighting multipurpose rooms, shelters, and storage areas, showcasing her family's ingenuity and adaptability (Sketch by the authors)

Fig—26

Sketch of the inner roof structure of Space 03 in Shazia's home, illustrating the use of different materials to create functional living spaces (Sketch by the authors).

Fig—26.1

In Shazia's big multipurpose room, laughter fills the air as she demonstrates the sturdiness of her bed, much to everyone's delight. We're in Space 01(see Fig. 26), and it's a room that feels lively even as night falls and the darkness outside deepens.

We've spent the whole day here, but as the evening creeps in, we find ourselves intrigued by something peculiar: the bricks under the legs of Shazia's bedframe. With a warm smile, she explains that over time, the bed began to wobble, and the bricks are her clever solution to keep it stable.

Shazia sits on her elevated bed, legs swinging slightly above the floor, illustrating just how much the bricks have lifted the bed. We sit opposite her on a long wooden sofa that stretches along the wall, along with a tall cabinet on the right that displays dishes through glass doors. Last time we visited, Shazia showed us a hanging of decorative flowers above this cabinet, which Shazia had crafted from the traditional wrapping covers used in local wedding customs (see Fig. 27).

"You people call it Dowry in English, right?" she queries, bridging our cultural lexicon with her own.

To the left, there's a large metal box called a 'Paiti' (a local Punjabi language word for such storage containers) where Shazia keeps blankets and other items that aren't needed daily. The room's quite tall, but instead of a ceiling fan, there's a stand fan near the door, working alongside a light to keep the room cool and bright enough. These run on a battery that's charged by a solar panel on the roof.

"We don't really need that much electricity. During the day it's anyway light outside and we spend and work outside in daylight and all we need in the night to sleep is this fan. More to keep the mosquitos away then the heat actually" Shazia said with a laugh.

Shazia lives with her husband and their nine-year-old daughter, Amina. She's already preparing for Amina's future by slowly gathering items for her dowry. Opening the 'Paiti,' she shows us a pair of trousers she's recently decorated herself.

"It's convenient like this," she says. *"I save up a little money, buy what I need, and store it here for Amina. It's one less thing to worry about when the time comes. It is just something parents do for their daughters here, and it's not nice to send them off without giving them the essentials of life at least. And end of the day you do as much as you can, right?"*

The light flickers occasionally, a reminder of the group of neighbourhood kids who've gathered around us, curious and shy. They accidentally bump the light's wire now and then, causing brief outages. With a mix of tiredness and affection, Shazia eventually tells them, *"Run, go home now."*

This room isn't just a backdrop for our study; it's a vivid example of how people creatively use their space to make life work. From the cleverly placed bricks under the bed to the items stored in the 'Paiti,' every corner of Shazia's home tells a story of adaptation and care. It's a perfect snapshot of how architecture serves real life in this part, blending practical solutions with personal touches.

This image shows Shazia's creative display of decorative flowers made from traditional wedding wrapping covers, adding a vibrant and personal touch to her home (Photo by the authors).

Fig—27

A close-up of a mora, a traditional woven stool made by Shazia, highlighting its craftsmanship and everyday use in her household (Photo by the authors).

Fig—27.1

A window with an intricate pattern, demonstrating small cultural elements of her home (Photo by the authors).

Fig—27.2

Solar panel installed on the roof of Shazia's home (Photo by the authors).

Fig—27.3

Story of informal abodes

– Ruby's abode

Unit nr.	:	*03 (see ref. map)*
Story Author	:	*Ruby*
Householders	:	*one familiy*
Familiy size	:	*2 adults, 2 kids, 1 elder*
Dwelling size	:	*ca.30 m2*
Aspects of informality		

Reference map

Fig—28

A 'formal ' house behind the settlement

Bamboo column for hanging curtains

Pile of dismantled vegetable crate wood for firewood purposes in the street, for the community to use

Street of the settlement, with Ruby's house on the right, and then street turns both right and left where left leads to a dead end

Stack of gathered bricks before starting with the construction of new room

In the heart of the bustling informal settlement, we found ourselves drawn to Ruby's humble abode, where the rhythm of life beat with a vibrant energy. It was just yesterday that Ruby shared with us her excitement about the forthcoming construction project in her courtyard. Her brother's upcoming marriage had prompted the need for an additional room. As she proudly points towards a pile of red bricks lined up just outside the courtyard, she explained how they had diligently saved money for the necessary construction material, as soon as the marriage was arranged.

As the sun dipped below the horizon and rose once more, we are walking down the dusty street hand in hand with the children, and we notice the diminished pile of bricks. Something feels different today, the transformation of Ruby's courtyard catches our attention. Ruby, peeking out from the entrance of her courtyard, waves at us with her radiant smile, her baby snug under her dupatta—a multi-purpose fabric used for modesty, warmth, and sun protection.

We can hardly believe that just yesterday we sat in her home where now, in that same courtyard space, a wall is halfway erected, with Ruby's brother's new bedroom swiftly taking shape under the skilled hands of five men working tirelessly under the scorching sun.

Ruby shares the tale of their resourcefulness, "*My husband started collecting materials little by little from different parts of the city, helped by my brother. Then with a stroke of luck he found a good deal—a thousand bricks for only a thousand rupees. We usually don't buy materials for building, but this time we were lucky to find these reused bricks nearby, giving us something to start with until we find the rest.*" Grateful for the opportunity to utilize reused resources, they eagerly had commenced construction, fuelled by the communal spirit that permeates the settlement.

The sun is still high in the sky, and the Roza (act of fasting in the local language) keeps us from feeling the thirst; our throats are as dry as the dusty air we breathe. Ruby crouches in front of the flame, patting dough between her hands, readying the roti for Iftar as the fire from the chulha emits as much heat as today's sun.

Ruby lives here with her mother, husband, and two daughters. Her home nestled at the heart of the settlement, right where the road makes a U-turn, often becomes a gathering place for neighbours. Its spacious courtyard in front of the two bedrooms has access from both roadsides, and becomes often a hub of activity for the children.

"*That is the room where I live and next to it is my mom's room. She helps me by taking care of the kids during the day while I work in a house not too far from here,*" Ruby invites us to sit and take a break from the heat as the paint a picture of their daily lives pointing out the layout of their abode. "*The kitchen is usually set up in that corner of the courtyard, but I prefer to make the fire here because it's more open. Once my brother's house is finished, we will move the chulha a bit further away,*" she points out as she explains the different components of her home and helps us visualize their plans for the new construction.

As the aroma of fresh roti fills the air, signalling the time to break the fast is near, a friendly debate ensues about whose house to sit in for today's meal. The anticipation makes our stomachs crunch, not from hunger, but from the emotion of sharing this last meal before our departure. We glance again at the dwindling stack of bricks, asking Ruby which of the men is her husband. "*He builds most things himself but often other people from the neighbours come to help and this is how we all help each other out when someone needs to construct a new part of the house,*" she explains while pointing to the man whose legs are balancing between the pile of bricks and the wall, "*it's rare anyone can afford to pay workers, and the beautiful thing about living in a community like this is knowing you can always count on each other.*"

In the dwindling light of the day, we savour our final moment with Ruby's family. Taking a pause to reflect on the emphasis put on the collective effort within the community to uplift one another in times of need, this day was another testament to the resilience and strength found in unity amidst the challenges of life in the settlement.

Fig—28.2

A selfie image with group of kids and adults gathered in Ruby's house, as it has a big courtyard and an accessible location in the settlement

Stack of piled bricks-serving as a divider in the courtyard

Ruby cooking behind us with all the utilities for kitchen around

Reused fabric stitched together to create a curtain, serving as a door for the house, hanging on a bamboo-first access to Ruby's house

Reused and collected bricks stacked to create a spatial partition in the courtyard

Fig—28.1

A house in a 'formal' settlement just beside this settlement

Fig—28.3

Hunted reusable material comprising floor carpets

Collected firewood from vegetable crates

Location of construction of new room for Ruby's brother, in the courtyard of the house

Two adjacent constructed rooms in Ruby's house

Pile of collected reused bricks

Utilities for kitchen/cooking

Cooking setup in the courtyard of Ruby's house

Story of informal abodes

– Mumtaz's abode

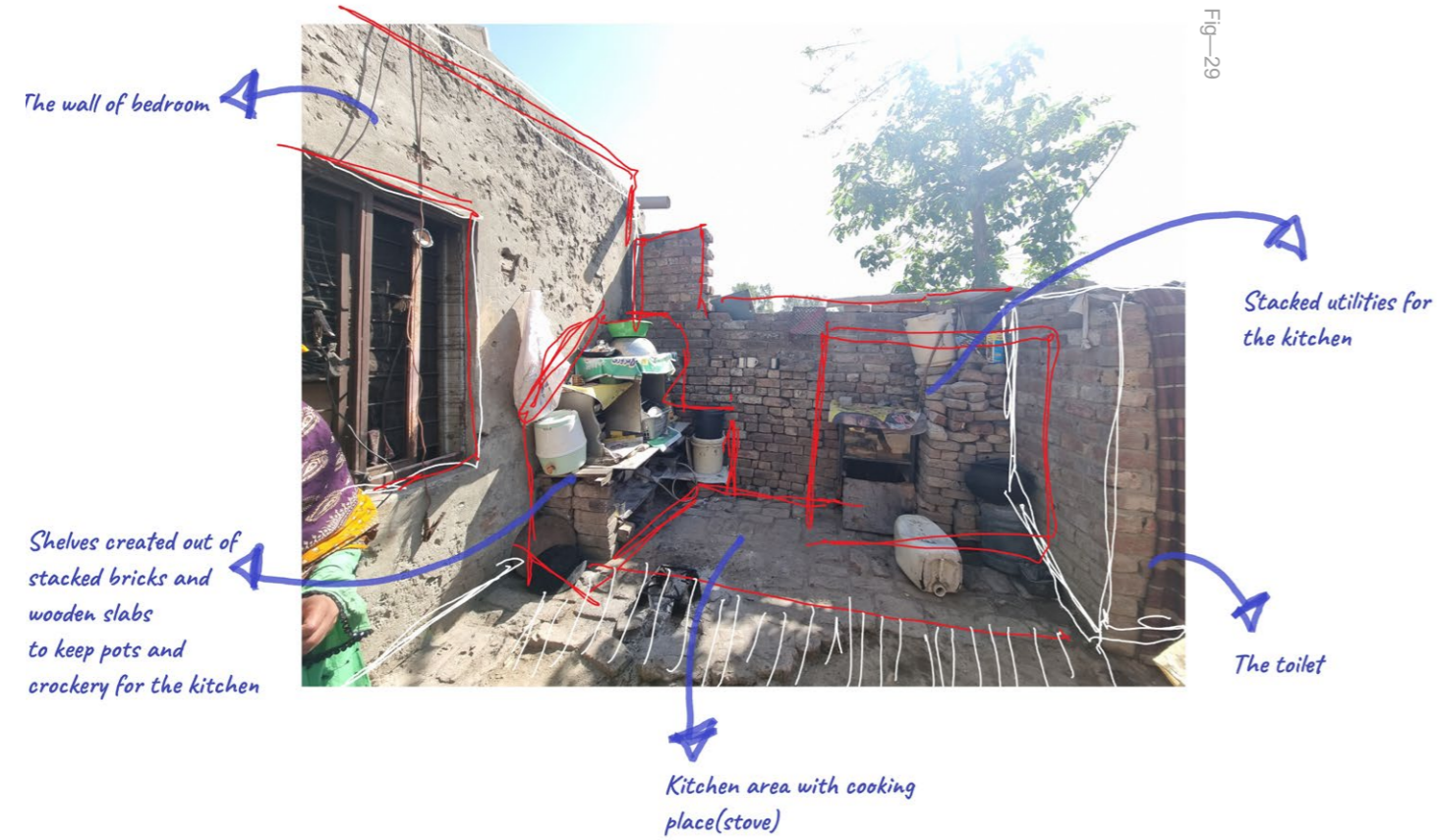|		
Unit nr.	:	*04 (see ref. map)*
Story Author	:	*Mumtaz*
Householders	:	*one familiy*
Familiy size	:	*2 adults, 1 teenager*
Dwelling size	:	*ca.20 m2*
Aspects of informality		

The 19th of March finally aligns with our schedules, and we are set to experience our first Iftar with the community. Mumtaz and Shazia had warmly insisted on hosting us, and after several plans fell through, today was the day. Before heading to Mumtaz's, we stopped at the township market to pick up fruits and other items, hoping to help with the meal preparations. Yet, true to her generous nature, Mumtaz wouldn't hear of it—she wanted to prepare everything herself before inviting us into her home.

As we approached her home, children from the neighbourhood, buzzing with stories from their day at school, surrounded us. Their laughter and energy filled the air, setting a lively backdrop as Mumtaz invited us into her home with a bright, welcoming smile that matched the inviting aroma of her cooking. Her face lights up with excitement, and the warmth of her welcome, coupled with the delicious aroma filling the air, instantly makes us feel at home.

Mumtaz's dwelling is modest yet greatly welcoming, humble abode that embodies the essence of her community. Entering the settlement from access point 01 (see Fig. 18), her home is just a few doors down on the right. Walking from the uneven street into her home's small common area, the boundary between public and private space blurs seamlessly. This common space (called *sehan* in the local language) is directly connected to the street. The transition from the street to the inside of her home underscores the seamless flow between public and private spaces and a testament to the community's open and

The wall of bedroom

Stacked utilities for the kitchen

Shelves created out of stacked bricks and wooden slabs to keep pots and crockery for the kitchen

The toilet

Kitchen area with cooking place(stove)

Annotated photo of Mumtaz's kitchen area, showing stacked kitchen utilities, shelves made from bricks and wooden slabs, and the adjacent toilet space (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—29

Annotated photo of Mumtaz's courtyard, highlighting the practical setup with fabric curtains, a bamboo frame, water containers, and kitchen utilities, demonstrating her resourceful and organized living space (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—29.1

Fabric curtain serving as a door for the toilet

Toilet in the corner of central courtyard

Kitchen wall with infront stacked bricks for storage purposes, and a corner with stacked utilities for kitchen

Brick floored paved area, serves as kitchen space

Mud and clay floored central space(courtyard), layered up at intervals to maintain

Bamboo used as a support to hang green fabric-used to create a cover from the sunlight and to hang clothes to dry

A rack with water containers, filled up from a local water source and stored here for the supply

integrated living style.

Right upon entering, one is drawn to the practical setup of this common space. To the right, against the exterior wall made of self-laid bricks, a rack neatly held water containers, strategically placed for easy access and visibility, ensuring they never ran dry. Behind this setup, a simple curtain hung from a bamboo frame discreetly enclosed a small toilet. The central area, acting as a communal space in the house, lies in front of a modest, open-roof kitchen and is now flanked by a dastarkhwan (name used across Central Asia, South Asia to refer to the traditional space where food is eaten, also a big table cloth to put on floor for food) — an inviting spread, laid out for this evening's iftar.

The main and the only room in Mumtaz' abode served multiple functions, a marvel of spatial efficiency, serving multiple functions within a compact footprint. To the right, as we entered, was Mumtaz's sewing station, complete with a sewing machine and stacks of fabric, showcasing her skill and self-sufficiency. Metal storage containers are stacked behind her workspace, with each positioned so one can be accessed by stepping on another. The family's sleeping area includes a double bed and a charpai (a traditional woven bed) for her daughter, Fatima, thoughtfully arranged to maximize the limited space. It's a small family of three living in this house currently, Mumtaz, her daughter Fatima and her husband. Mumtaz' son lives in another city for work and visits time to time. Near the doorway, a chair supported a battery, crucial for powering a fan and light, providing relief and visibility during the sweltering Lahore evenings.

As we settled on the dastarkhwan, the quiet moments before the Maghrib Azaan (the call to prayer marking the end of the day's fast) allowed us to reflect on the organization of Mumtaz's 20-square-meter home. Every corner is thoughtfully utilized, demonstrating her ingenuity in creating a functional and comforting living space. Each item and

arrangement spoke volumes about her ability to optimize her surroundings for functionality and comfort. The care with which she maintained her home reflected not just a necessity but a great pride in her environment.

The array of dishes on the dastarkhwan was generous, far surpassing what our appetites could manage after a day of fasting, but Mumtaz encourages us to taste everything, especially her husband's favourite dish, which she prides herself on cooking exceptionally well. As we dine and converse, Mumtaz exchanged greetings with passersby from the central space of her house, it reflected that she feels a deep sense of security and belonging in this space — contrasting sharply with the external labels of insecurity often assigned to such settlements.

As the day's light faded and the Iftar meal drew to a close, the layers of Mumtaz's life and her community's resilience were illuminated in the warm glow of her modest home. Our experience at Mumtaz's table was more than a meal; it was a great opportunity to understand the intricate dance of survival and joy that characterizes life in the informal settlement. The evening revealed the strength and creativity of individuals like Mumtaz who, in the face of limited resources, construct lives filled with dignity and communal care. This intimate encounter challenged our perceptions and broadened our understanding of what constitutes safety and community. It reminded us that beneath the often-misunderstood facade of informal settlements pulse vibrant lives, rich with stories and solutions crafted not just to cope but to thrive.

A wooden cabinet/dressing

Mumtaz" daughter climbing the metal storage containers to fetch a dress stitched by Mumtaz to show us

Stacked metal storage containers arranged in a manner that one could climb on it to reach others

A long bed, created out of stacked planks layered with thin mattresses, serves as sleeping and sitting area

Charpai (traditional woven bed) for Mumtaz' daughter

Photo of the interior of Mumtaz's home, showcasing a multipurpose room with a wooden cabinet, a long bed made of stacked planks, metal storage containers, and a charpai for her daughter, highlighting the efficient use of space and living arrangements (Illustration by the authors).

.Fig—29.2

A photo depicting a corner of Mumtaz's room, featuring a stack of blankets covered by a bedsheet, a curtain made of reused plastic sheets covering the window, and her workstation with a sewing machine, highlighting her practical approach to utilizing limited space efficiently (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—29.3

Curtain made out of reused plastic sheets, nailed to the wall, covering the bedroom window

Pile of blankets, covered by a bedsheet. Start of the day all the blankets are folded and piled in a corner to create space on the bed for sitting

Mumtaz's workstation with sewing machine, also serving as a table to keep other things

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

Ethnographic
Symphony

Contemplation

**Multimedia
Storytelling**
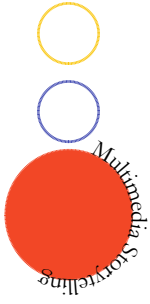
Multimedia Storytelling

Ethnographic research in our process unfolds through an organic process of engagement, where one immerses oneself in the field, interacts with individuals, and pursues intriguing questions as they arise. Much like the fluidity of our narrative interviewing, our research embraced an unstructured methodology to capture raw, unfiltered data, minimizing our influence on the upcoming events. As those unfolded like an entangled narrative in the field, our research journey remained characterized by constant surprises and unpredictability. Our capacity to navigate uncertainty with curiosity became integral to the narrative that emerged from our ethnographic exploration.

Moving forward from the immersive methodology of the 'Ethnographic Symphony'—a cascade of fieldwork events—we transitioned to 'Contemplation,' where we synthesized and narrated the gathered stories. Now, we move into the dynamic realm of 'Multimedia Storytelling,' embracing ethnography's essence as a pursuit of clues and narratives. Through visual (auto)-ethnography, documented largely via photography and videography, we synthesize our findings into an audio-visual narrative, capturing the sensorial and emotional dimensions of our field experiences.

Audio-Visual Narrative

Now, as we delve into the realm of audiovisual narrative, we reconnect with the core principles of ethnography, particularly its emphasis on narration. This transition arises from the recognition that certain aspects of our fieldwork experience resist conventional methods of conveyance or representation. Specifically, the sensorial richness of our (auto)-ethnographic journey in Pakistan and within the community in the settlement eludes full replication or explanation. Thus, the creation of this audiovisual narrative becomes a means to immerse our audience in the profound sensory experience of our journey. Through the fusion and interplay of images, words, and sounds, we aim to evoke a multi-dimensional tapestry of sensations

encountered that transcends traditional documentary plots. Importantly, we embrace a departure from traditional documentary conventions, opting instead for a multimedia storytelling approach that allows the narration to organically unfold, mirroring the fluidity and complexity of our ethnographic venture. By preserving the local language without subtitles, we shift the focus from mere comprehension to emotional resonance, intertwining the voices of the community with our own reflections. This divergence from conventional storytelling paradigms underscores our commitment to fostering a deeply immersive and evocative experience, where the narrative emerges not as a linear plot, but as a living, breathing entity in its own right.

Scan Me!

Click here to whatch our audio-visual narrative on the project's Instagram account
or click here to whatch the video on YouTube
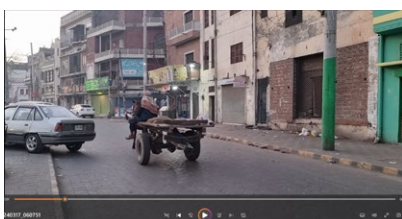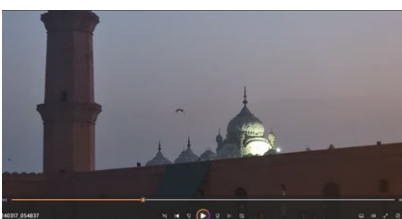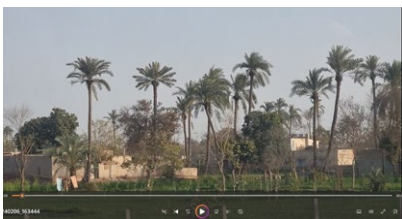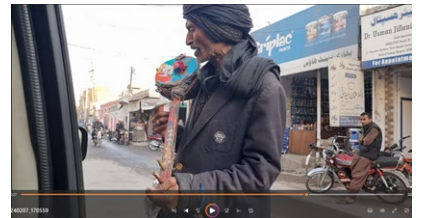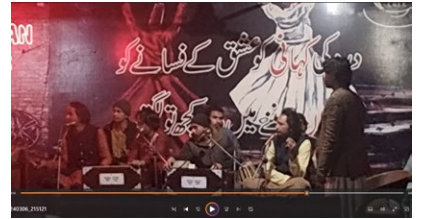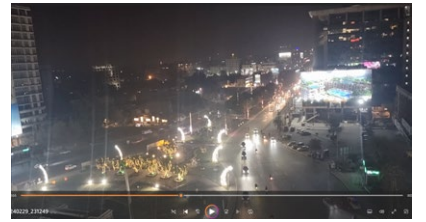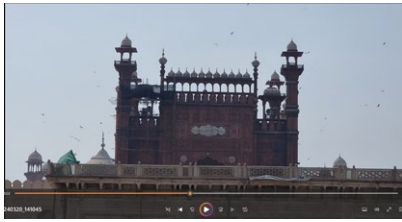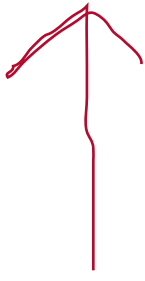
(towards) EPIPHANY

(through) METAMORPHOSIS

(through) Metamorphosis

This title symbolizes the transformative journey of our project, emphasizing the changes, learning and growth that occurred during our research. This section highlights how our understanding and presentation of informal settlements evolved, thus metamorphosis.

'Relationing' This title signifies the process of forming connections. This section illustrates the interconnections among the different outcomes of our project, showing how each element relates to and enhances the others, creating a comprehensive understanding of the informal settlements.

'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~ (it's not a toolkit: towards a framework for working with other's stories)' The distinct crossing over of the word toolkit is to emphasize on the idea that there is not any certain tools or ways through which one can ensure to be ethical and respectful to other's stories, but instead it's a continuous iterative process of reflexivity and critically analyzing one's own actions. It contains learning derived from the fieldwork process and provides a foreground to think about, reflect on and continuously consult while working with stories of others as well as doing research in such communities.

'Tapestry of informality' This title evokes a woven fabric, symbolizing the intricate and interconnected nature of our findings. It also sheds light on the beauty of work created through finding and patching, which is resourcefulness of the informal settlements. This manifesto synthesizes our insights and reflections from the fieldwork, challenging conventional views and expanding the discourse on informal settlements.

'Reflections in ripples' This title suggests the expanding influence of our work, like ripples in water. This section presents a series of discussions and reflections on our research process and findings, illustrating the broader impact and implications of our work.

'Bibliography' A collection of some our greatest insipirations.

'Behind the words, meet the minds' This title provides a glimpse into the creators' perspectives. This concluding section introduces the authors, offering a personal touch.

S

Ethnographic Symphony

Contemplation

Multimedia Storytelling
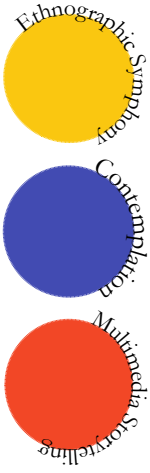
Relationing

This 'relationing' diagram visually represents how we interconnected various outcomes derived from our research methodologies to construct a project narrative. The process began with an 'Ethnographic Symphony', where we integrated photography, sketching, mapping and other tools to synthesize our fieldwork findings into a unified whole. This synthesis paved the way for 'Contemplation', a deeper reflection and narrative construction of the overall and individual stories within the settlement, illustrated through vignettes that capture the essence of community life and individual experiences.

Central to our approach is the 'Storyteller's Toolkit (it's not a toolikt: towards a framework for working with other's stories)', which informed every phase of our research. This 'Storyteller's Toolkit', grounded in ethical practices and the principles of storywork (Archibald, 2008), provided a structured approach to engaging with the community, ensuring that our methods and interactions were respectful and culturally sensitive. It served as both a guide and an output, encapsulating the challenges we faced and the learnings we acquired during the project.

The culmination of our efforts is represented in 'Multimedia Storytelling'. This component employed audio-visual narratives to document the sensorial and cultural dimensions of our field experiences, creating an immersive, artistic presentation that highlights the lived experiences and autoethnographic moments captured during our fieldwork.

Together, these elements form a comprehensive portrayal of our project, illustrating how each component relates to and enhances the others, thereby enriching our understanding and presentation of informal settlements.

The diagram illustrates the interconnected outcomes of our research: 'Ethnographic Symphony' synthesizes fieldwork using photography and sketching; 'Contemplation' reflects and narrates community life; 'Storyteller's Toolkit' ensures ethical and sensitive engagement; and 'Multimedia Storytelling' captures sensorial and cultural dimensions through audio-visual narratives. (Diagram by the authors)

Fig—30

Outcome1

Ethnographic Symphony

Synthesis of Fieldwork processes

Photography   **Sketching**

Mapping

— synthesized to →

Outcome2

Contemplation

Vignette writing with illustrated stories
of individual units in the settlement

Sketching   **Narration**

respect of narration

Storyteller's Toolkit

Based on Principles of Storywork

Ethical Framework   **Challenges and learnings**

Output

bounds of respect

recreate the experience with (auto)ethnography

incorporate cultural paradigms in the representation of stories

Outcome3

Multimedia Storytelling

Audio-visual Narrative

Visual (auto)ethnography   **Sensorial and Cultural Impressions**

Fig—30

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**   71

Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~

(it's not a toolkit: towards a framework for working with other's stories)

This 'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~' is crafted from a deep and challenging journey of ethnographic research within an informal settlement in Lahore, Pakistan. Developed with the aim of transforming our research process into a reflective instrument for future scholars, it integrates Archibald's (2008) principles of storywork into both a practical tool and a comprehensive methodology intended for ethical and effective storytelling. The structure and essence of this 'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~' are directly informed by our fieldwork experiences, later refined through autoethnographic methods to adeptly navigate the complex narratives found within vibrant, yet often overlooked, communities.

Serving as a bridge between academic inquiry and practical application, this 'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~' aims to enhance the impact and ethical grounding of storytelling within the complex, dynamic settings of informal settlements. By grounding it in the principles of storywork and blending these with real-world experiences from our field encounters, it provides a solid foundation for anyone interested in deeply and respectfully engaging with communities. This 'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~' is a reflection of the power of storytelling as a mean to highlight and advocate for the rich realities of life in informal settlements. See Appendix 3 for the detachable pamphlet.

An illustration that symbolizes how this 'Storyteller's ~~Toolkit~~' and ethical framework guided our process in conducting the research respectfully (Illustration by the authors).

Fig—31

Fig—31

Left diagram

What?

Preparation

Fieldwork

How?

Synthesis

Why?

Reflection

Fig—32

Right diagram

Topic

Frameworks

Reflections in ripples

Theoretical Framework

Ethical Framework

Belongingness
Participatory Action Research
Residents as collaborators
Non-place
Rich in social context
Observing day-to-day lives of the community

Trust
Respect
Sensitivity
Cultural Integrity

Challenge of overcoming personal biases

Pathways of reciprocity

Dialogues of Transformation

Insights of Courage

Echoes of Ownership

Stories of today to shape the tomorrow

Education
People
Culture

Unrecognized Architecture
Informality
Squatting
Stories

Curiosity
Ambitions

Inception of Ethical Framework

Methodological Framework

Engaging with local lives

Challenge of maintaining narrative coherence

"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose." – Zora Neale Hurston

Prep. Courses (ACE370+ACE425)

Start

Self Studies

Master Thesis

End

(from) INCEPTION

(towards) EPIPHANY

(through) METAMORPHOSIS

Challenge of grasping unspoken cultural subtleties

Challenge of relying on heart and oral memory

Preparing for field study

Cultural sensitivity and Integrity

Personal capital
Stereotype
Non-human
External
Urban poor
An informal settlement in Township area of Lahore
City of Lahore
Pakistan

Initiation: Cultural Appropriation and understanding

Observation to mapping: being the silent viewer

Respectful Documentation

Circles of Respect
Weaving Holistic Narratives
Integrity in every stroke

Ethnographic symphony: synthesis of findings from the field study
Contemplation: synthesis of narratives and stories
Multimedia Storytelling: synthesis of narratives and stories

Context

Fieldwork

Synthesis

Output

Side captions

The diagram elaborates different step of the research process and how we moved towards the framework of working with other's stories (Diagram by the authors)

Fig—32

The diagram outlines the overall journey of this thesis, detailing its various phases and steps. It illustrates how the ethical framework and the principle of respectful interaction evolved to create this 'Storyteller's Toolkit'. (Illustration by the authors)

Fig—33

(next page) A matrix illustrating the seven principles of storytelling (inspired by Archibald's principles), including reflective questions, inherited challenges, and insights from the authors' lived experiences with each principle. (Illustration by the authors)

Fig—34

Fig—33

Echoes of Ownership

"Voices echo in spaces they call their own; their stories, their rights to tell."

And a Question for You..	How might we ensure that each narrative remains tethered to its teller, honoring their ownership?
Lived Perspectives	*We navigated the settlement with respect, letting residents lead us through their world. They pointed out landmarks and shared their histories, maintaining ownership of their stories. Our one member's linguistic capability and other member's devotion to sensory observations allowed for a rich, dual-layered capture of these narratives, which later with translation of recorded conversations instigated insightful discussions.*
Challenges	Balancing sensitivity with ongoing consent and respecting intellectual property rights is complex, especially when narratives intertwine. Documenting limitations often require reliance on memory and detailed discussions.
Pointers	Let residents direct the storytelling. Engage fully by listening attentively and immersing yourself in the narrative. Use gentle prompts to confirm details, to help ensure accuracy and demonstrate respect for the integrity of their stories.

Circles of Respect	Pathways of Reciprocity	Weaving Holistic Narratives	Insights of Courage	Integrity in every stroke	Dialogues of Transformation
"Respect encircles the storyteller, creating a sanctuary for shared truths."	"Give and take—the pathway of stories where both sides walk away richer."	"Every thread of life contributes to the tapestry of tales; none can be overlooked."	"Brave are those who tell, braver still are those who listen to the hard truths."	"With integrity as our guide, each stroke of the pen or click of the shutter captures truth."	"Through stories shared, we dialogue with the past, sculpting tomorrow's landscapes."
What steps can we implement to ensure that every story is treated as a sacred contribution to our understanding?	How can we construct a reciprocal relationship through our storytelling practices?	How can we ensure that our storytelling captures the full complexity of each narrative?	How can we create a space that encourages the sharing of challenging or sensitive stories?	How do we maintain integrity in our storytelling while navigating the ethical complexities of fieldwork?	How can the stories we share today help shape a collective future?
We navigated the settlement with respect, letting residents lead us through their world. They pointed out landmarks and shared their histories, maintaining ownership of their stories. Our one member's linguistic capability and other member's devotion to sensory observations allowed for a rich, dual-layered capture of these narratives, which later with translation of recorded conversations instigated insightful discussions.	Recognizing our temporary and privileged role, we practiced transparency to build trust. Our final exchange of gifts symbolized the formation of a bond.	We embraced a variety of media to include all community members in our storytelling. This holistic approach allowed us to respect participant space and gain a multifaceted understanding of their lives.	Moments when participants shared vulnerabilities and we described where inquired about ours were crucial in building trust and gaining deep insights.	We adhered strictly to ethical guidelines, ensuring the dignity and privacy of participants were upheld.	Our interactions and interest led to moment of advocacy, enriching the discourse on informal settlements within architectural education through a workshop with architecture students in IAC.
Understanding often unspoken cultural subtleties requires careful consideration to avoid misunderstandings.	Occupying community time without offering material reciprocation poses ethical dilemmas.	Maintaining narrative coherence across a diverse range of experiences is challenging.	Overcoming personal biases and creating a truly open space for difficult conversations is a challenge in such processes.	Consistently applying ethical standards in dynamic field settings is an ongoing challenge.	Ensuring community-led transformation efforts and adapting our plans to meet community needs.
Use cultural liaisons, speak respectfully, and create environments where feedback is valued. Learn and respect unspoken cultural norms to bridge the gaps.	Communicate clearly and consistently. Value each interaction, reciprocate kindness, and maintain transparency about your research intentions.	Utilize diverse methods of collection and continuously refine the narrative to ensure completeness and complexity.	Train in empathy and active listening, ensuring all participants feel safe and supported.	Develop a robust ethical framework before beginning fieldwork and adapt practices as needed.	: Use stories to initiate discussions on emphasis of opening the borders of architecture realm.

Fig—35

This manifesto visualizes key concepts from our ethnographic study, emphasizing the interconnectedness of architecture, pedagogy, values, and narratives. This representation highlights the importance of dialogue and human experiences in understanding informal settlements. (Illustration by the authors)

Tapestry of Informality

This manifesto is born from the interplay of observations, interactions, and reflections experienced during our (auto)-ethnographic fieldwork within an informal settlement in Lahore, Pakistan. As part of our thesis, this poetic document serves not only to synthesize our learning but to challenge and expand the discourse surrounding informal settlements.

Structured as a poem, the manifesto captures the essence of our process—it is both a methodological output and a reflective mirror of our journey. Poetry as a medium was chosen for its ability to convey depth and emotion, allowing us to articulate the complex layers of community life, resistance, and resilience. This format reflects our commitment to presenting the voices and stories of the settlement's residents not just accurately but evocatively, emphasizing the vitality that defy the often-negative connotations associated with informality.

The creation of this manifesto also stems from our desire to influence how informal settlements are perceived and discussed within architectural education and broader societal contexts. By presenting our findings and reflections through poetry, we invite readers and viewers to engage more deeply and empathetically with the material, fostering a deeper understanding of the intrinsic value these communities offer beyond their physical structures.

This evolving manifesto is an integral part of our project. It demonstrates the transformative potential of integrating creative and ethnographic methodologies in architectural studies, urging a revaluation of what constitutes valuable to understand human habitats.
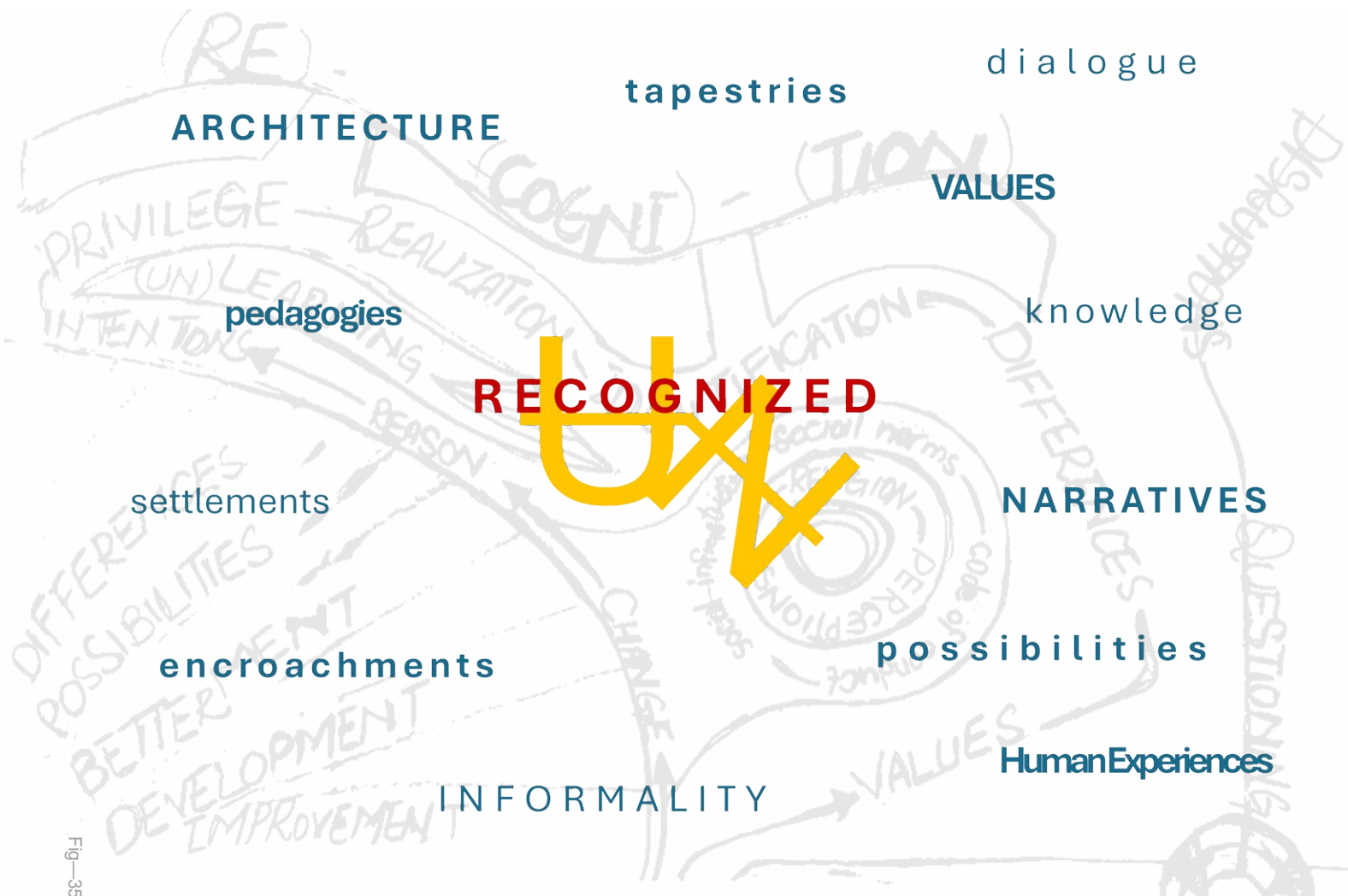
Fig—35

What is it you **THINK** when I say **'Slum'** Well,
You see all that,

What is it you **SEE**

But,

Do you also see groups of kids, running naked?

Let's for once **HEAR** what I SEE,
Listen to

Do you also feel mud puddles under your feet?

what I think,

When I hear, **'SLUM'**

The very instant,
Do you feel..
Anything you touch,

When you say "slum", **I FEEL**...

FREEDOM,
Freedom,

Will get you dirty?

running through my blood,

I HEAR..

CAREFREE LAUGHTERS.

I FEEL..

RESISTANCE,
The urge to survive against all ODDS,

I SEE..
Ways you thought were impossible to take,

I HEAR,
Banging pots, no walls to buffer the sound…

I FEEL,
I entered a world where..
no one is afraid,

To **LIVE,** to **BREATHE..**

DO YOU SEE THAT TOO?

The manifesto, expressed through a poem, encapsulates our (auto)-ethnographic journey within the informal settlement in Lahore, Pakistan. It challenges conventional perceptions by highlighting the vitality of community life, urging a deeper, empathetic understanding of informal habitats (Illustrated by the authors).

Reflections in ripples

This dialogue between the two authors of this thesis provides a personal and reflective perspective on their experiences. By presenting their discussions as a dialogue, we aim to present evolution of understanding that occurred between a local and external perspective. This format allows us to explore the intricacies of the collaboration, highlighting how their backgrounds influenced their approach to the project and their interactions with the community. The dialogue represents a synthesis of shared experiences, challenges faced, and the learnings gathered, offering a deeper look into the complexities of conducting sensitive and impactful fieldwork. It serves not only as a conclusion to the project but also as an introspective look at the transformative power of collaborative research in shaping both the subject of study and the researchers themselves.

Reflecting on our project, I feel our combination of ethnography and autoethnography really helped us engage authentically with the community. Now that we're concluding, how do you think our ethical framework held up?"

It was fundamental. Adhering to ethical standards shaped our interactions and ensured we respected the community's rights and narratives. The continual checks on our consent processes were crucial. It's something I've learned to value deeply."

"Integrating theories like belongingness and urban commons also enriched our perspectives, didn't it? It allowed us to view the settlements as more than just physical spaces."

"Absolutely, those theories were brought to life through our fieldwork. Yet, adapting to the cultural dynamics was quite challenging for me. Your insights were invaluable in helping me understand and respect those subtle social cues."

"I saw your efforts to adapt, and it made a difference. Participating in local customs and communal activities like Friday prayers really opened doors for us. Those moments were crucial in helping us both see the community's true essence, don't you think?"

"Incredibly so. Those experiences were vital. But synthesizing the diverse data into a coherent narrative was challenging, wasn't it? Balancing individual stories with the broader community context wasn't easy."

"It certainly wasn't. Our mapscaping and the use of different media helped, but integrating all those perspectives required significant reflection. Do you feel we managed to do justice to the complexity of their stories?"

"We did our best within our limits. Our ongoing discussions were significant for keeping our narrative authentic. There's always that lingering question, though: did we let their voices lead enough?"

"That's the challenge of our work. We strive to amplify their voices without overshadowing them with our interpretations. As we wrap up, what are your thoughts on the impact of our research? Could it be an influencing tool to incorporate in architectural education to recognize and value informal settlements, though it is a long way to go?"

"I believe it can. Our discussions and efforts, especially those included in the 'Emerging Voices' section, can inspire future researchers to view these communities through a lens of resilience and potential."

"Exactly, and it's crucial we continue advocating for community-led initiatives that respect the residents' needs and visions. Our work isn't just about observation; it's about paving a path to facilitate meaningful changes."

"Agreed. This duo has taught us both a lot about empathy, respect, and the real impact of collaborative research. Hopefully, our efforts will encourage others to approach such communities with the empathy and respect they deserve."

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Motivational quotes

Behind the words.   Meet the minds

Discover the stories behind the authors of this thesis, where you uncovered the journeys that shaped their unique perspectives and contributions. Come along as we introduce the minds whose experiences and insights have intricately woven the fabric of this work.

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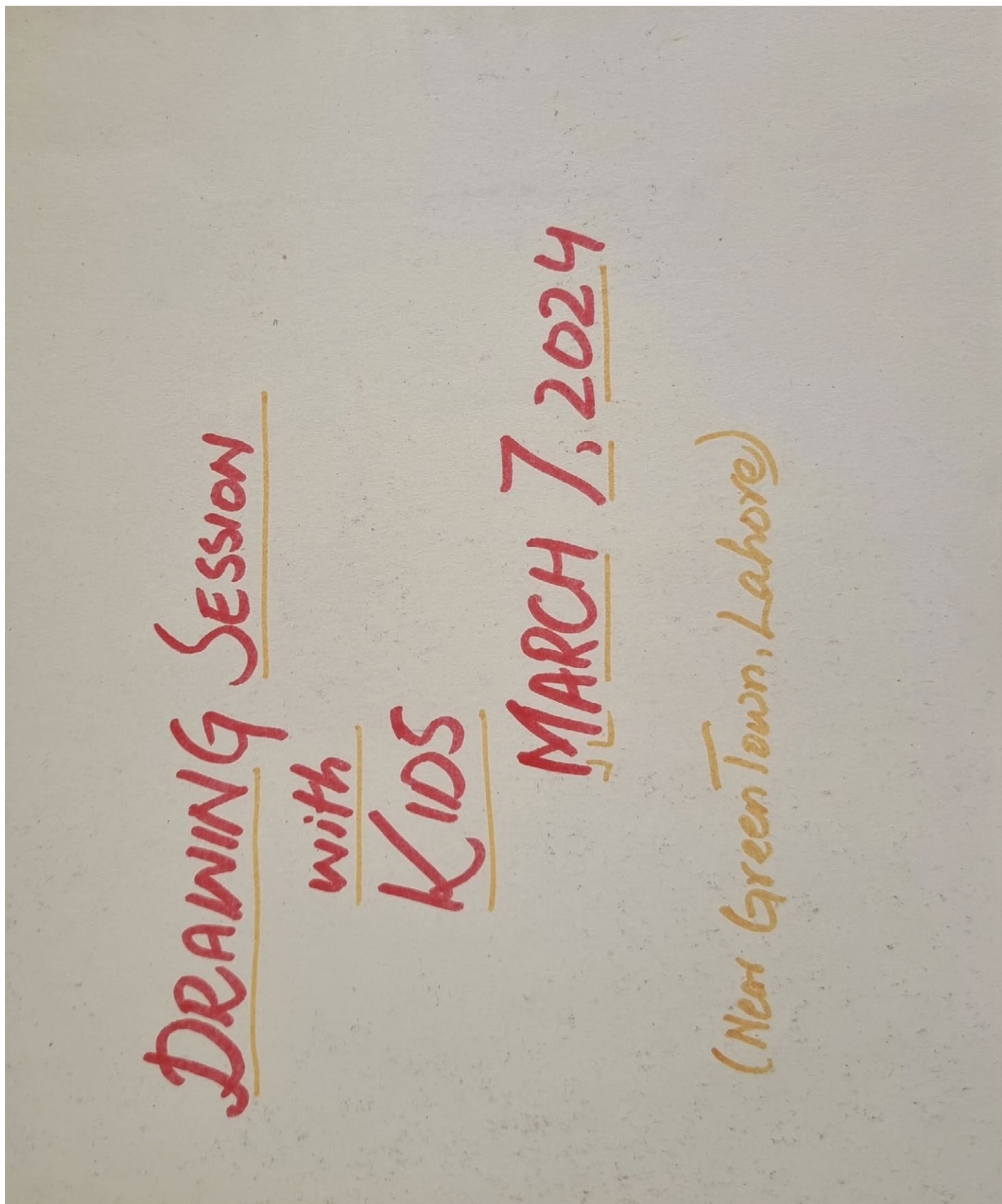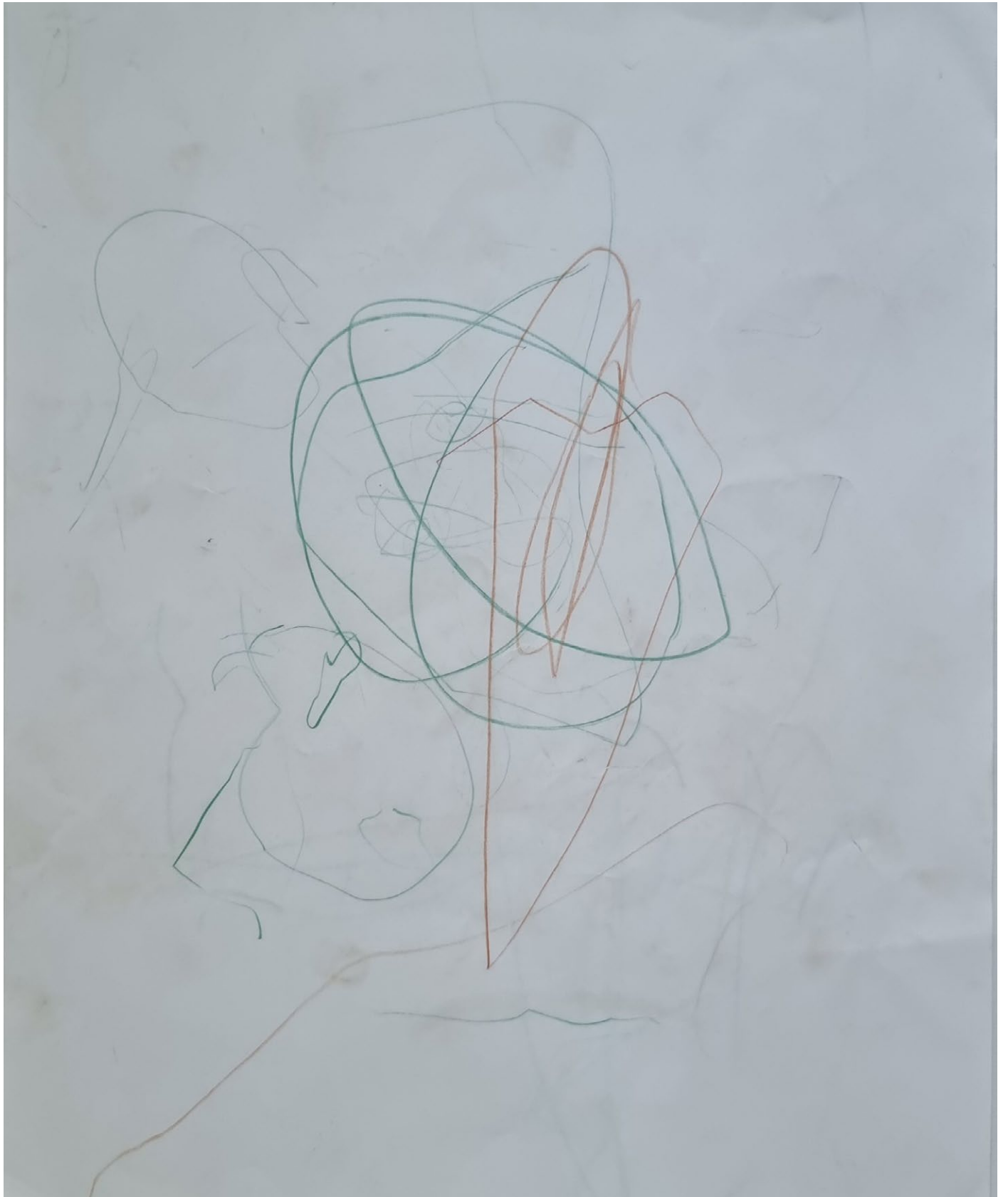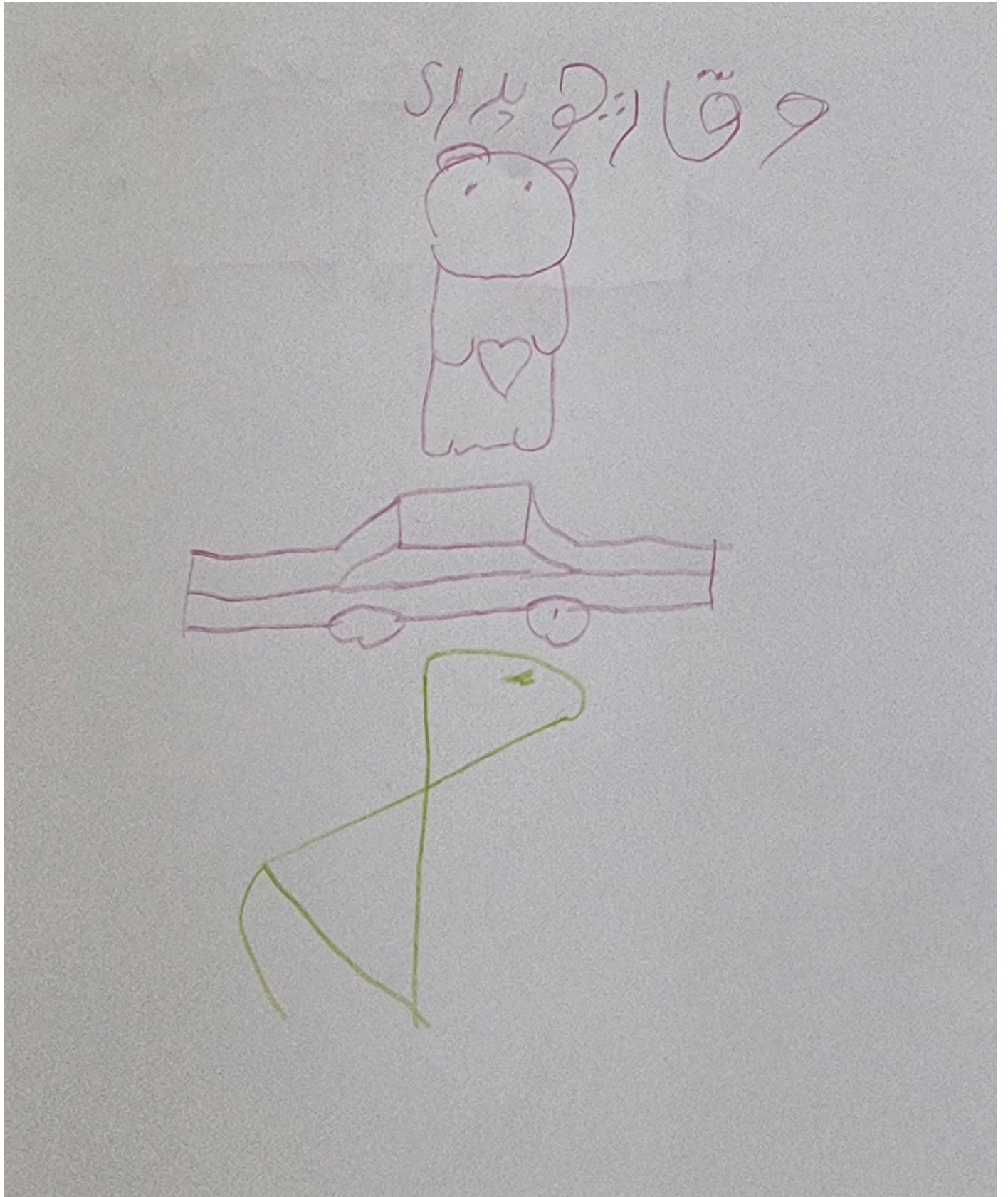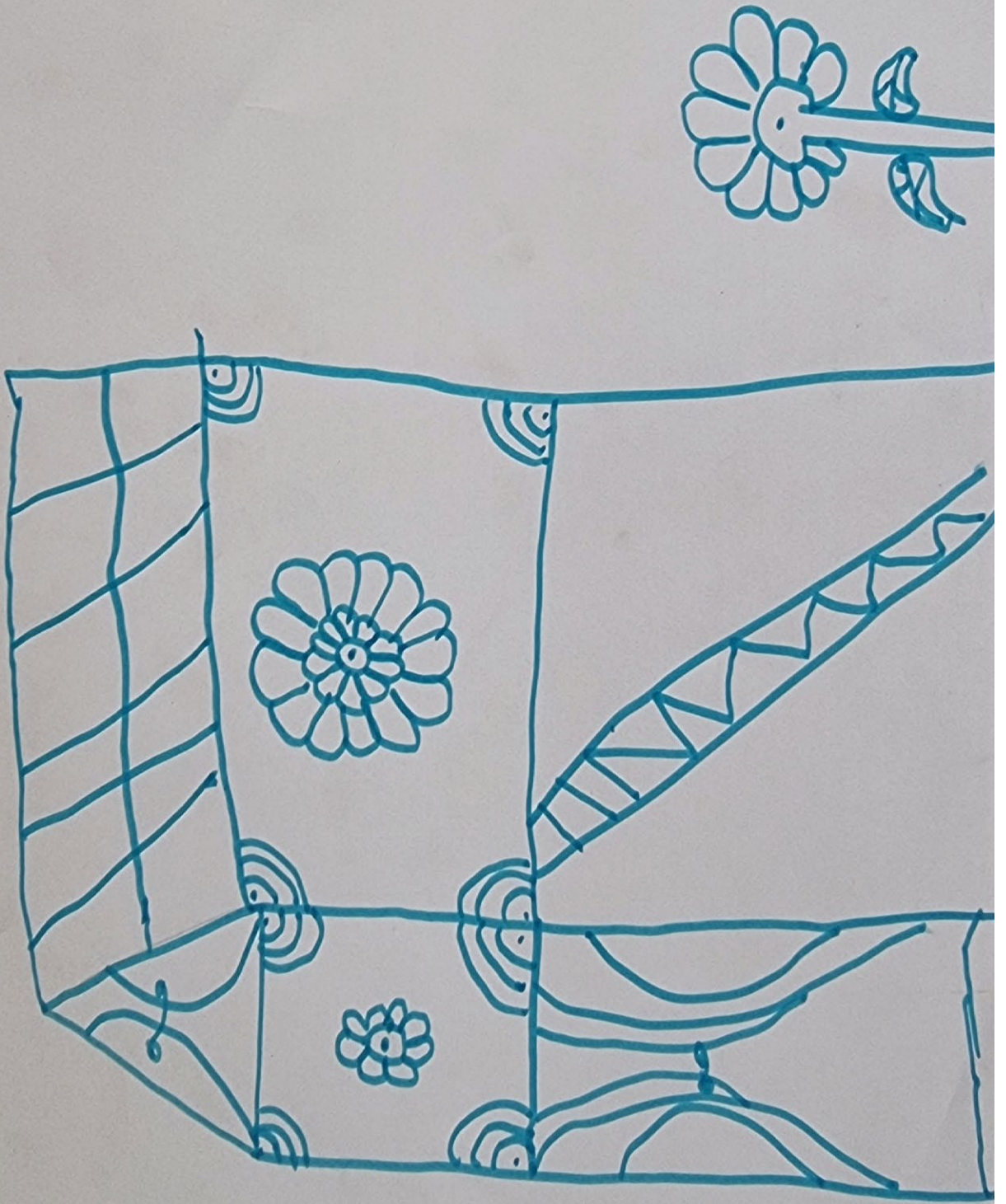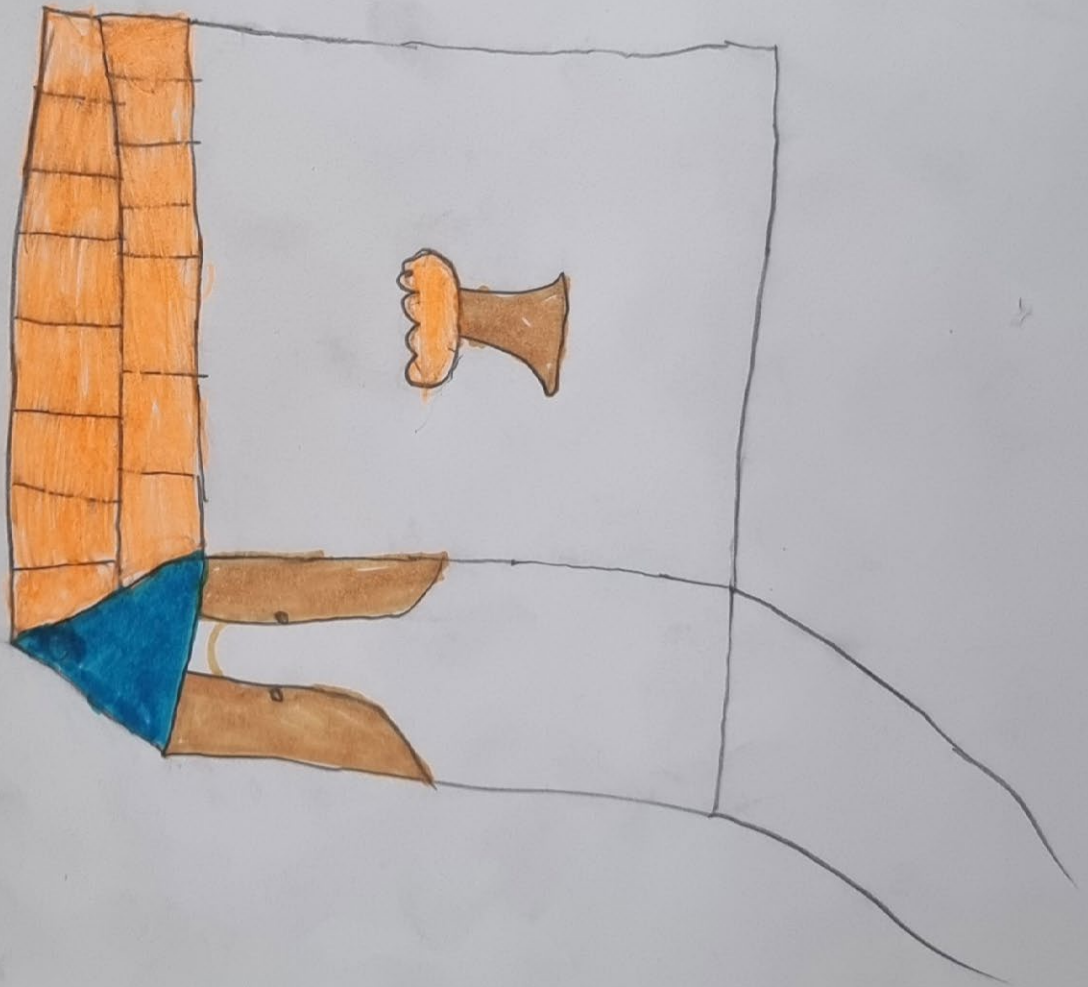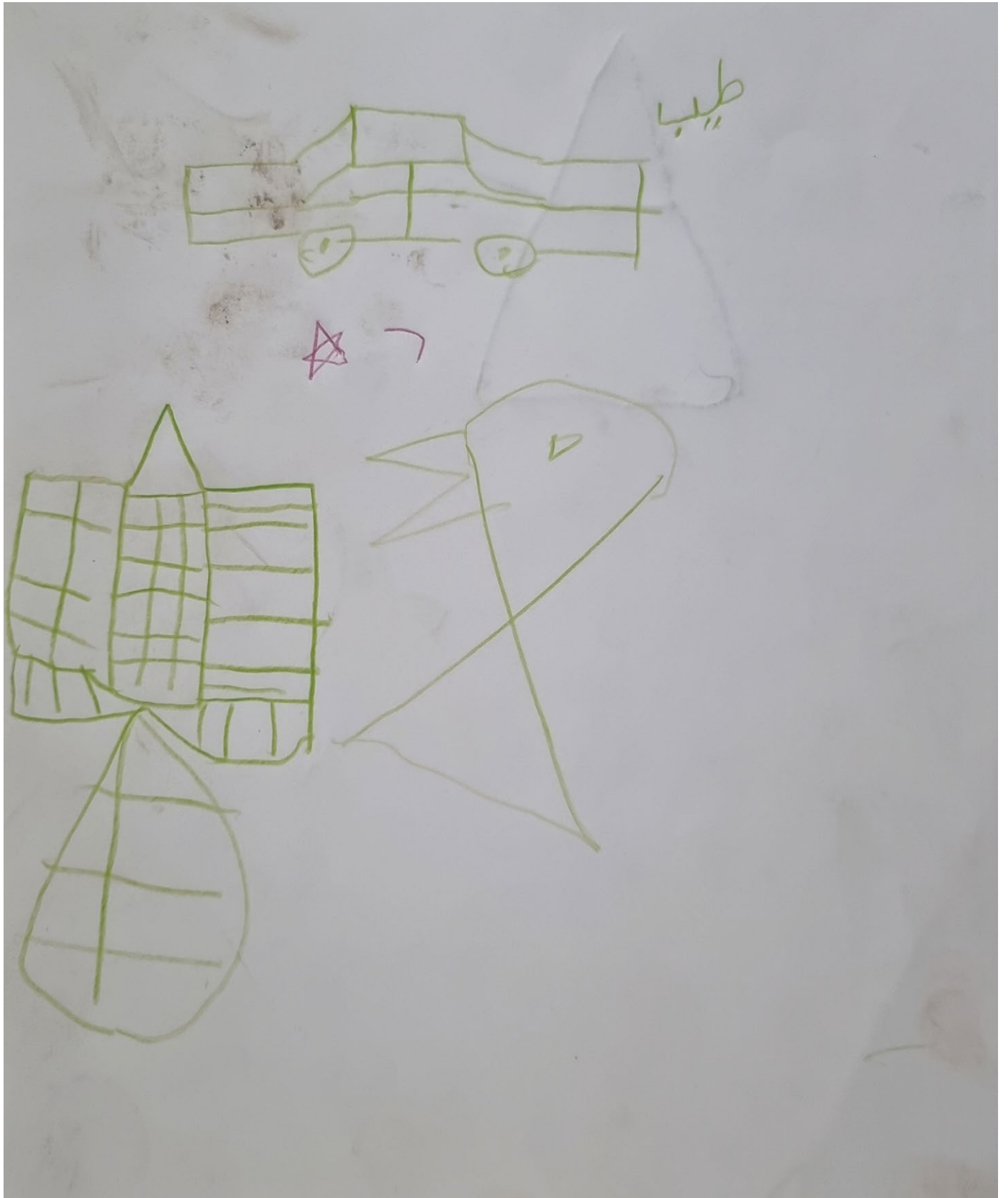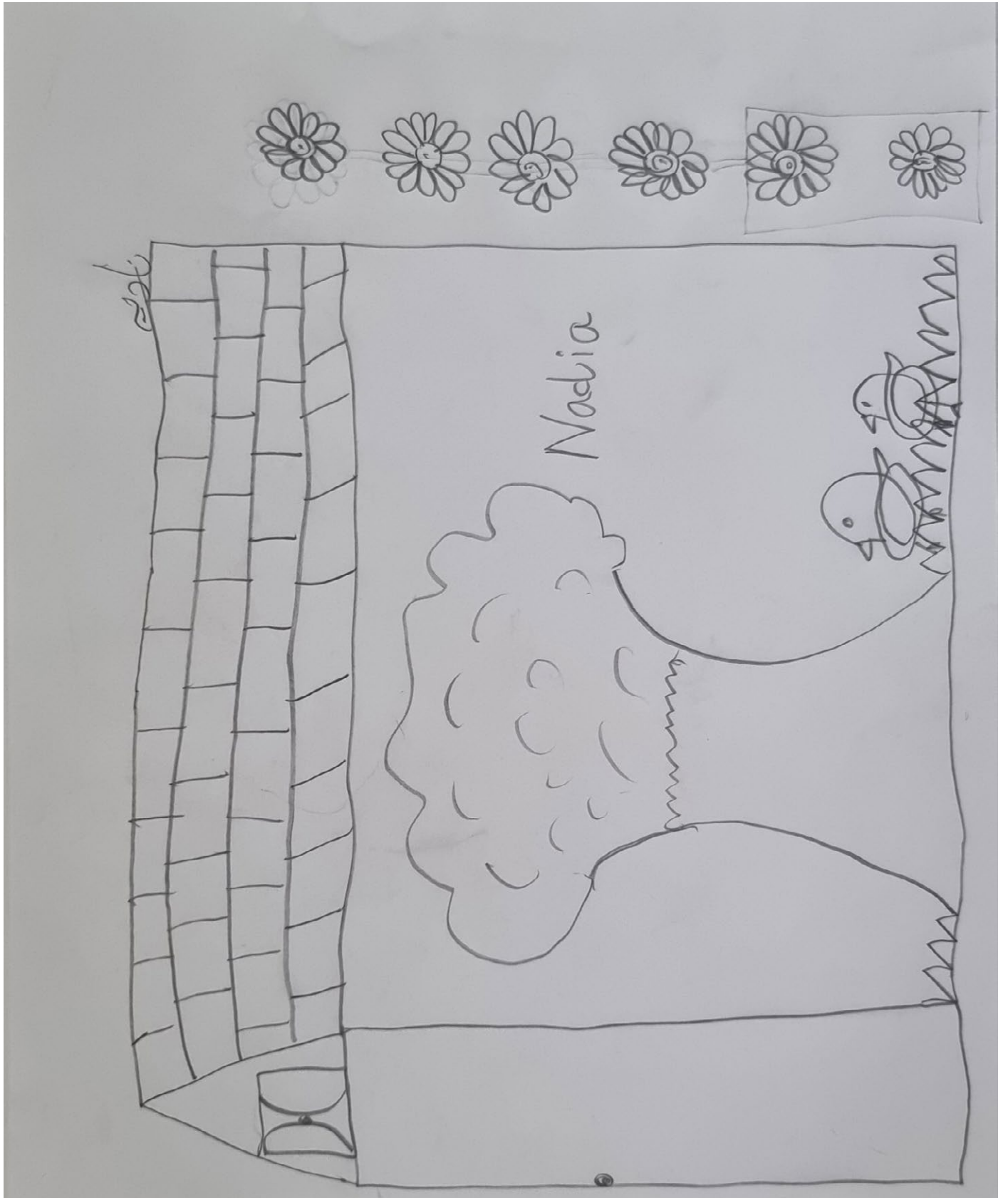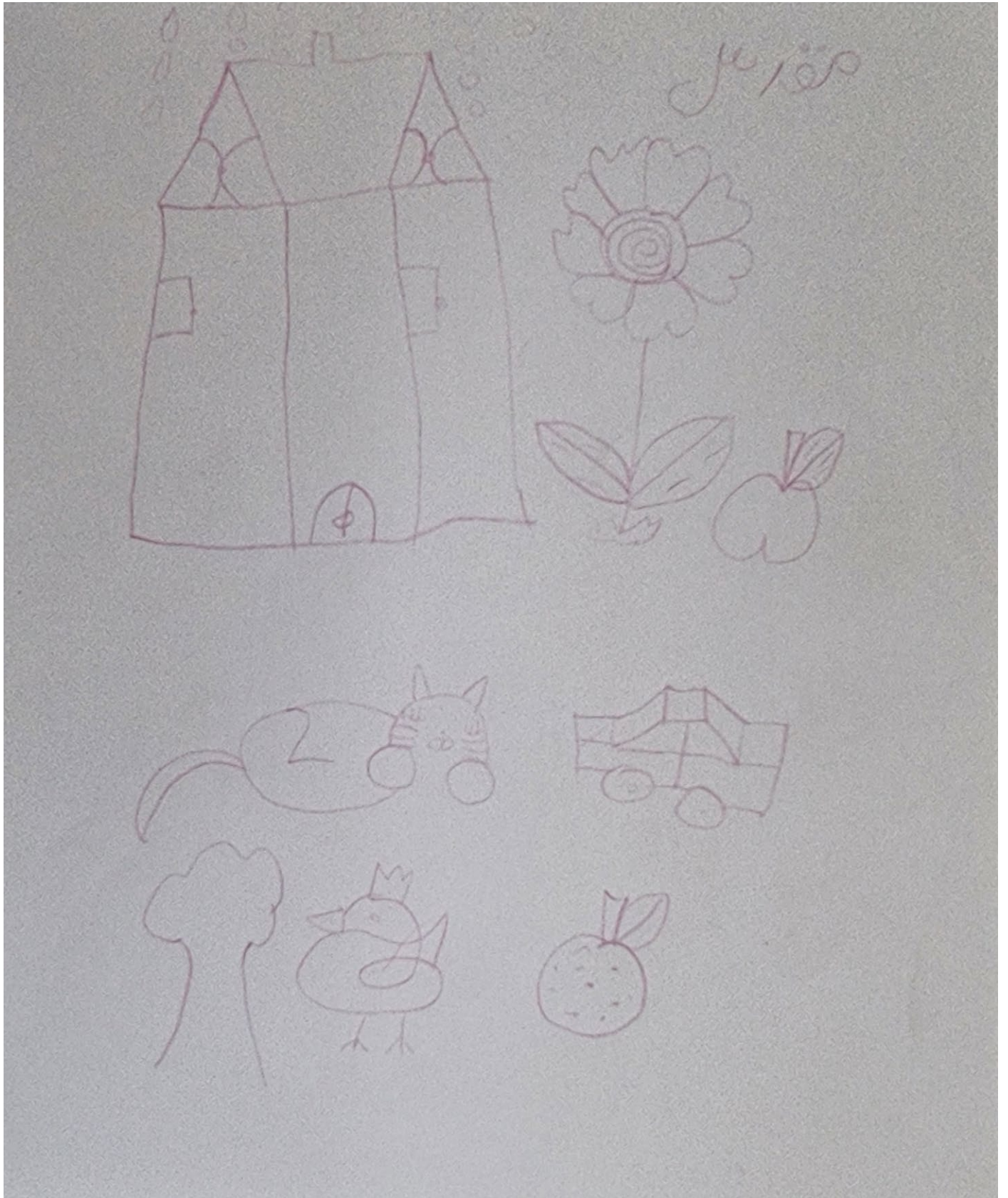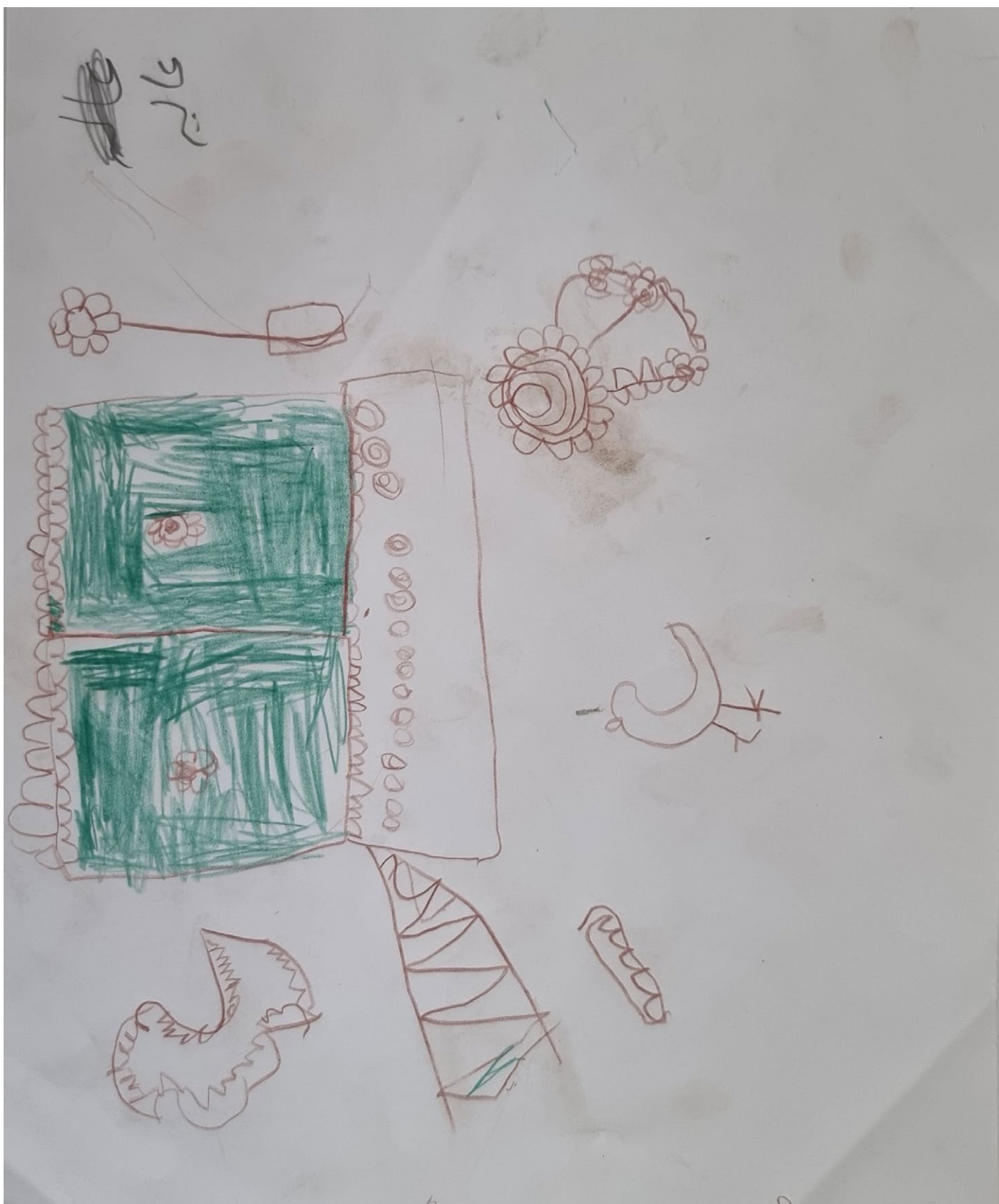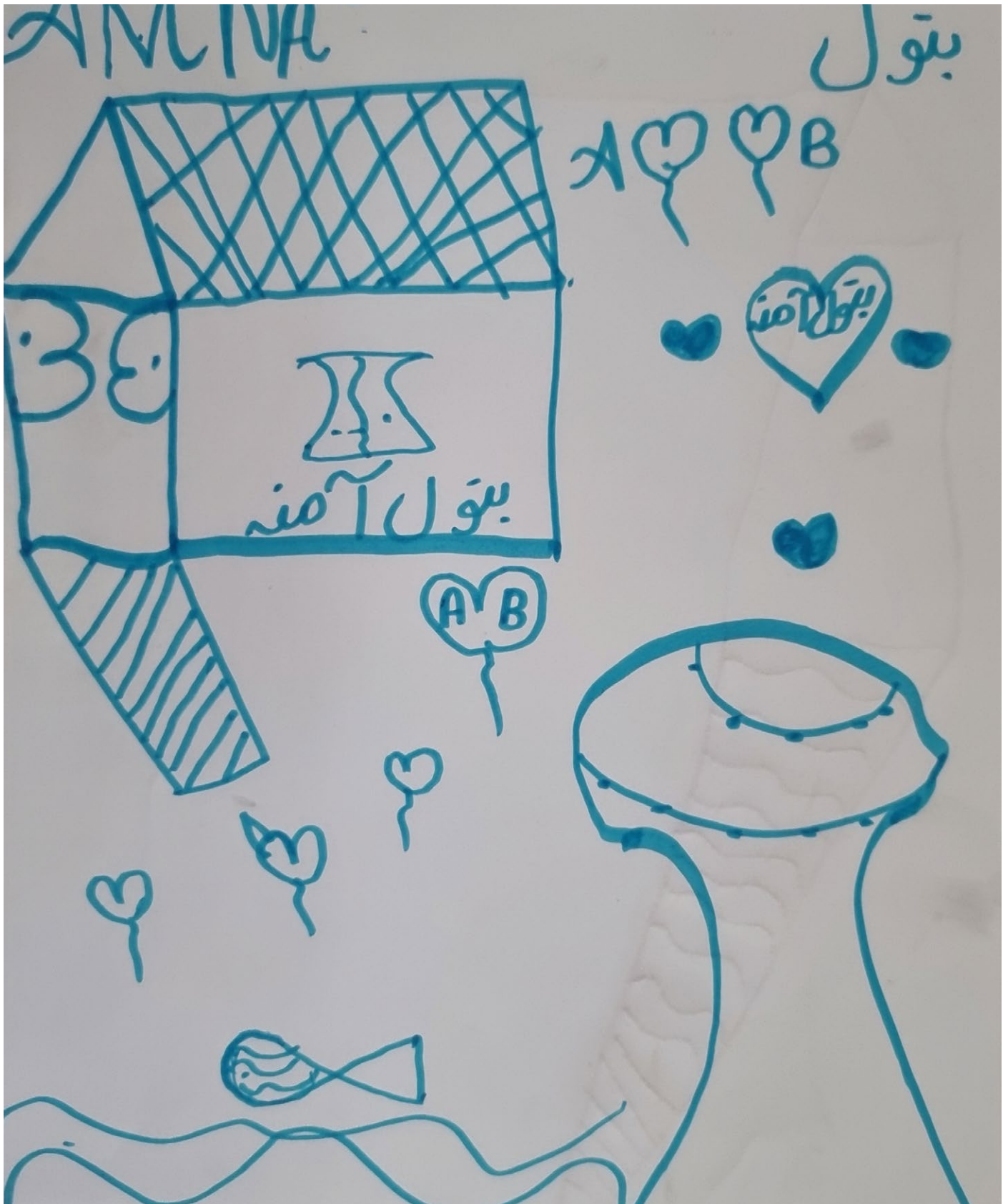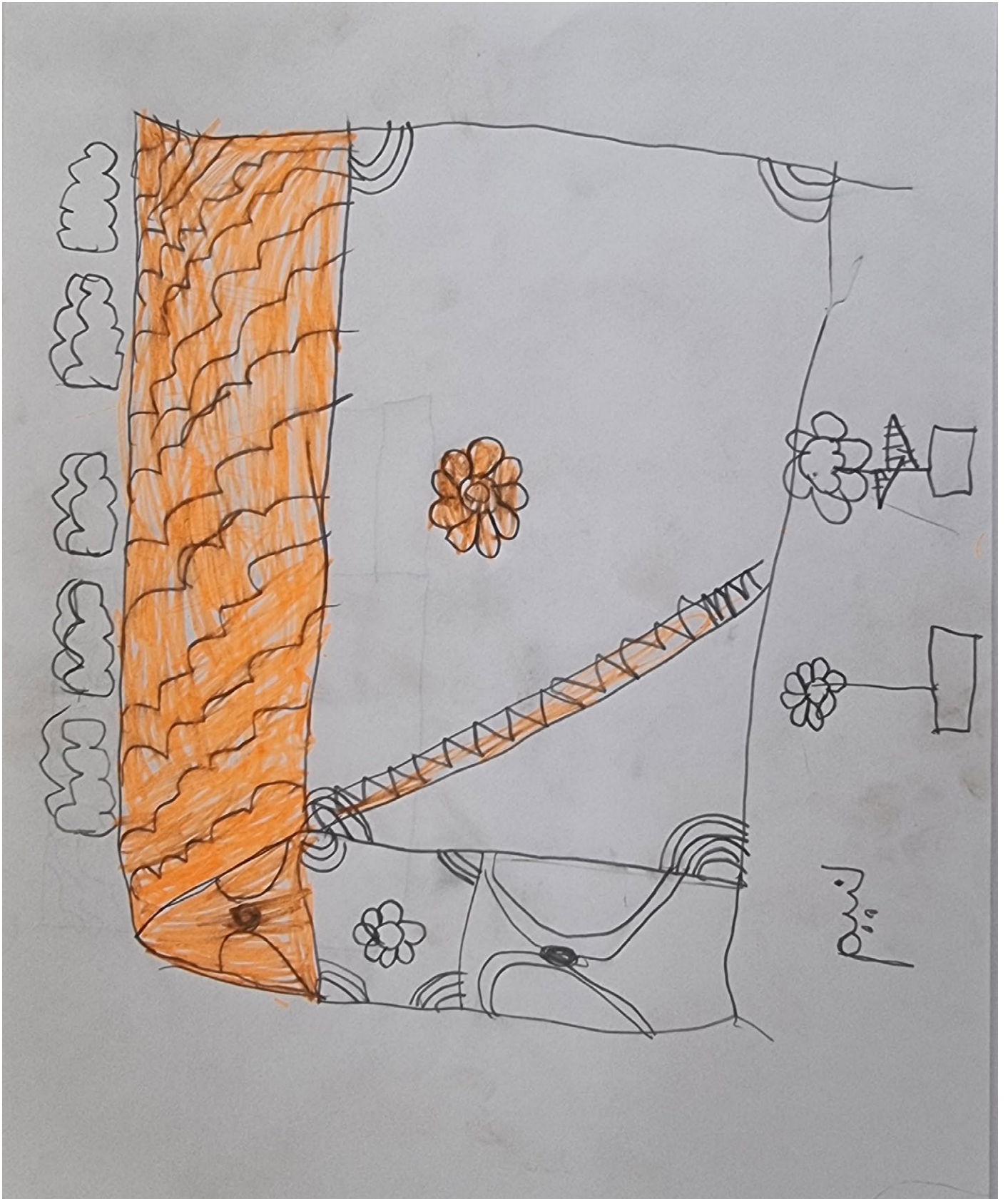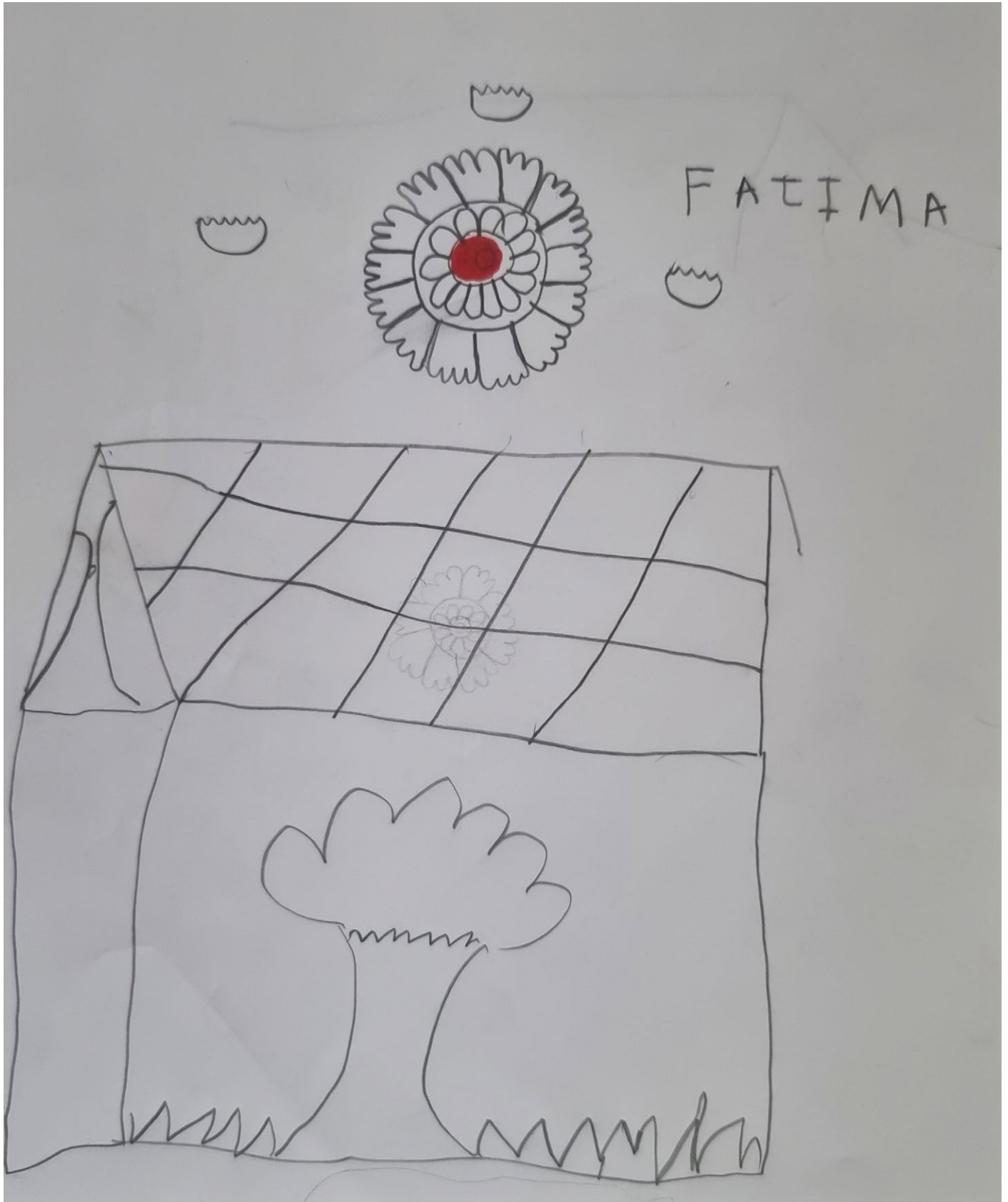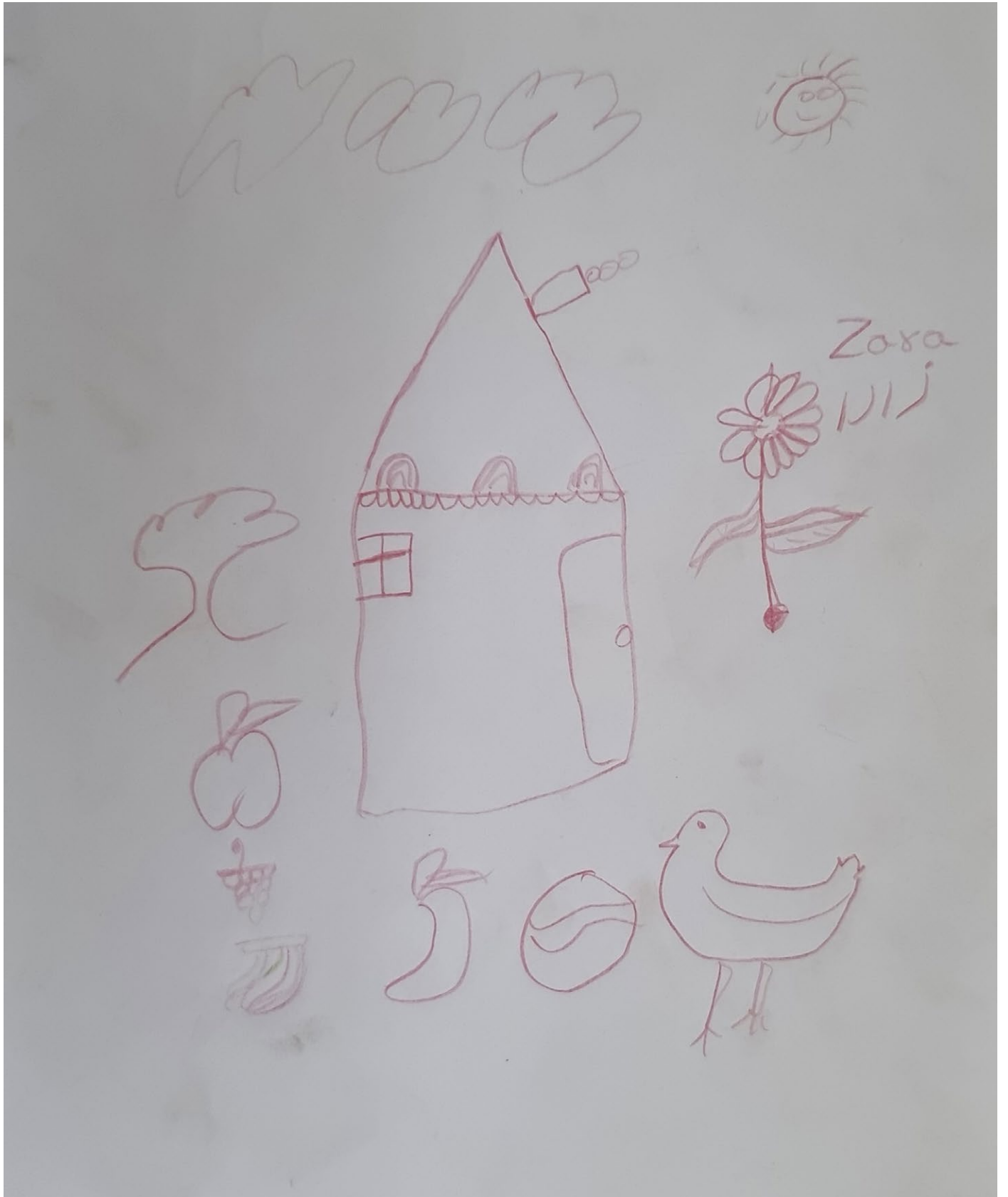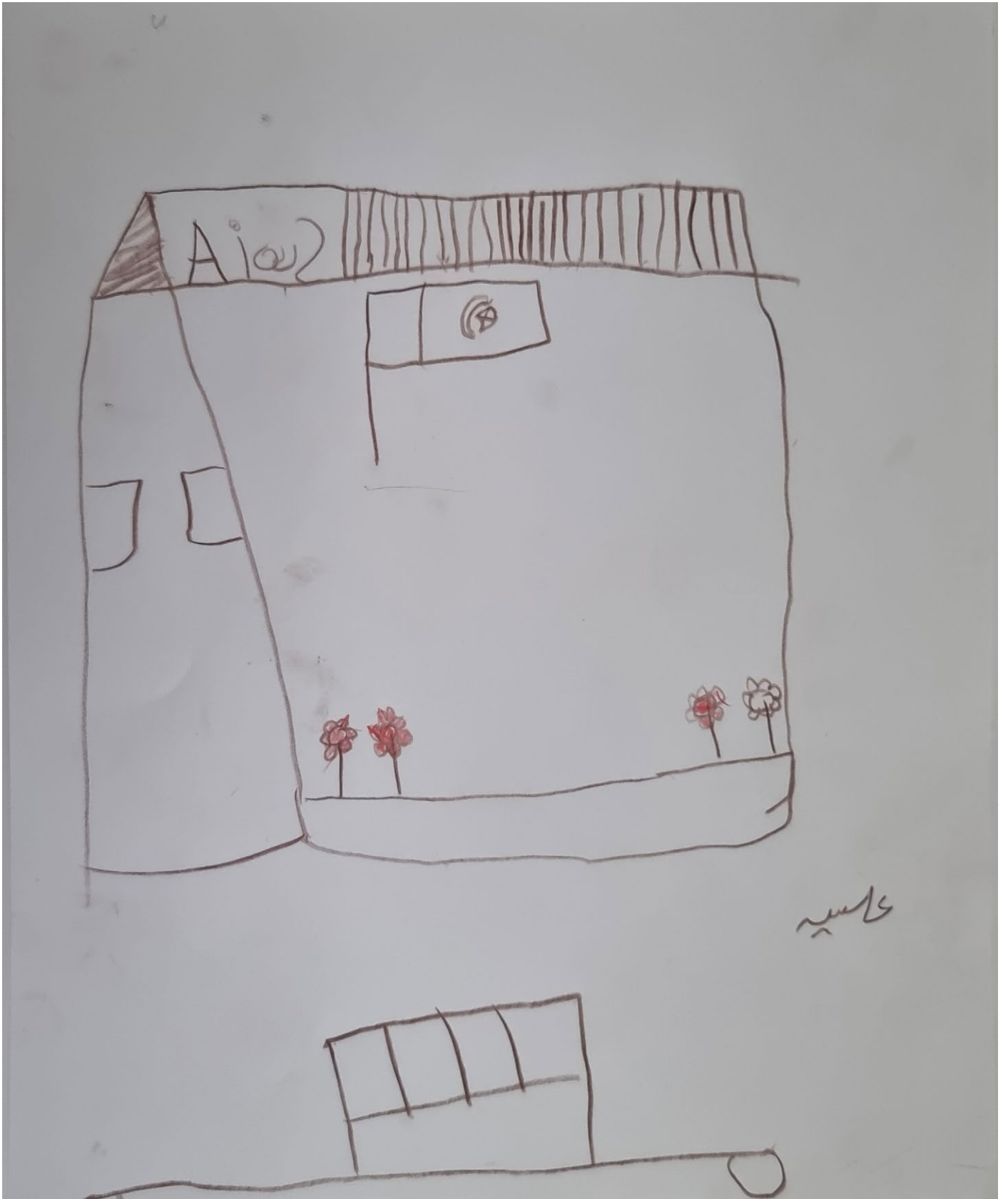
Drawing Session with Kids

March 7, 2024

(Near Green Town, Lahore)

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

Shakila,ASLam

طيب

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

FATIMA

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**

WORKSHOP DRAFT – "Exploring the concept of informality and urban encroachments in Lahore's *tapestry*".

Time:1 hr 30 minutes—2 hours (flexible)

Format:

1 workshop (mind mapping, sketch storming, etc.)
3 sessions (in smaller groups?)
Final open discussion (everyone together?)

Starting with brief introduction of ourselves and our purpose for this time

1ˢᵗ SESSION: personal understanding and perception of informal settlements within your own context.

30 minutes max.

- Prompt the students with a poem, a question or a statement that introduces the concept of informal settlements.
- The students can use any graphic or artistic means to express their personal perspective on the topic – maybe use stick notes and just keywords to leave more space for different interpretations (**individual**).
- Share in the group and try to map connections between different interpretations (**group**).

2ⁿᵈ SESSION: intention of working with informal settlements both within their studies (thesis project, research, etc.) and as practitioners after graduation.

30 minutes max.

- Prompt the students with a question i.e. *"How would you work with these settlements in your future carrier as architects?", "Would you consider this topic for a thesis project of research? Which aspects of it would you wish to tackle?"*
- Reflect on the question and put down some thoughts, curiosity or more questions (**individually**).
- Share and discuss (**group**).

3ʳᵈ SESSION: learnings needed in the curriculum to be able to get there.

30 minutes max.

- Prompt the students with questions i.e. *"What learnings and/or exposures (within your current education) you think are necessary to be equipped for the future work with informal settlements?"*
- The students can use any graphic or artistic means to express their opinions and even make suggestions for further improvements/changes (**individual**).
- Share and discuss (**group**).

CONCLUSION: open the floor for discussion and sharing of 'findings' from the different groups. Conclude with a small provocation to prompt the development of new thoughts.

30 minutes max.

Thank you!
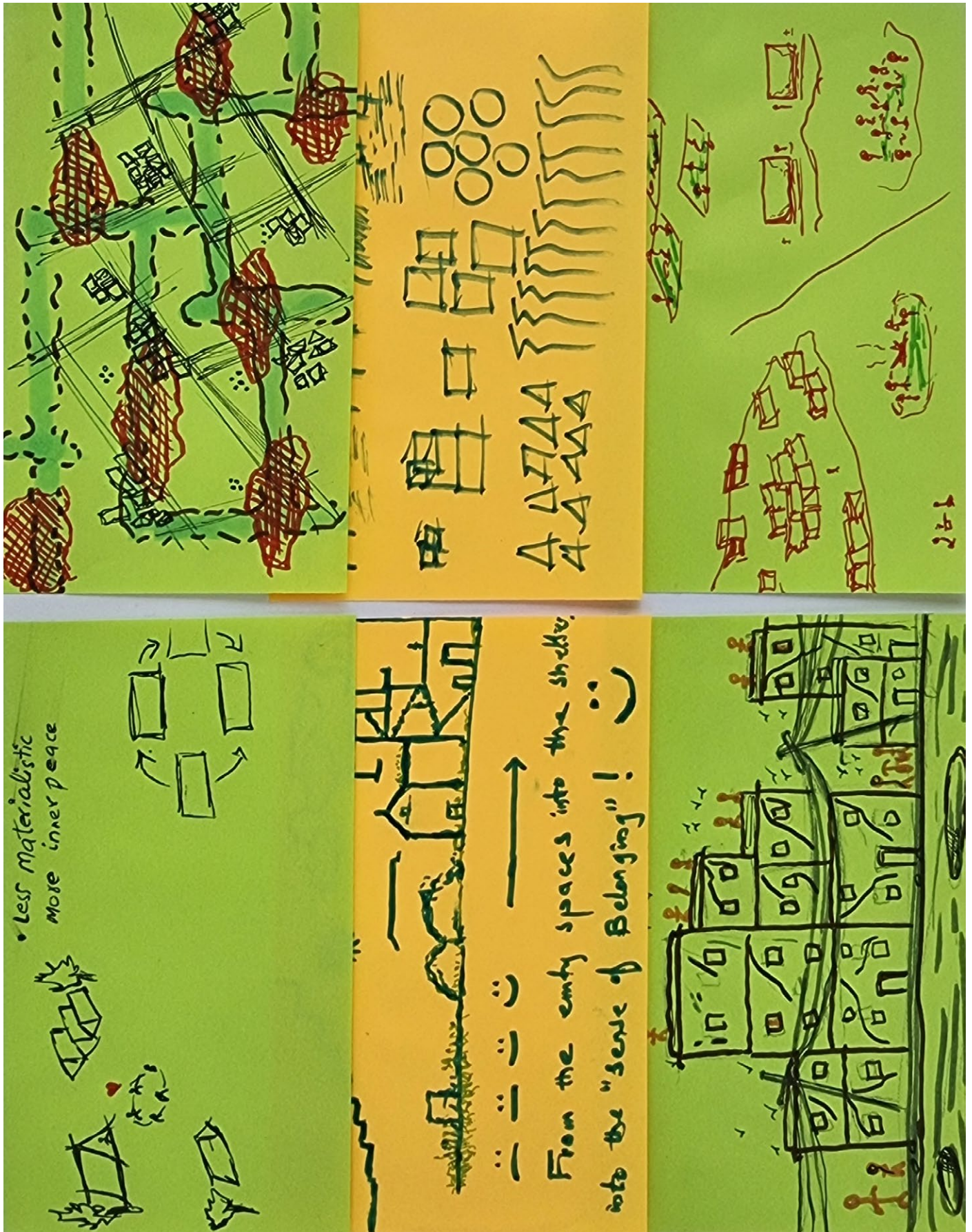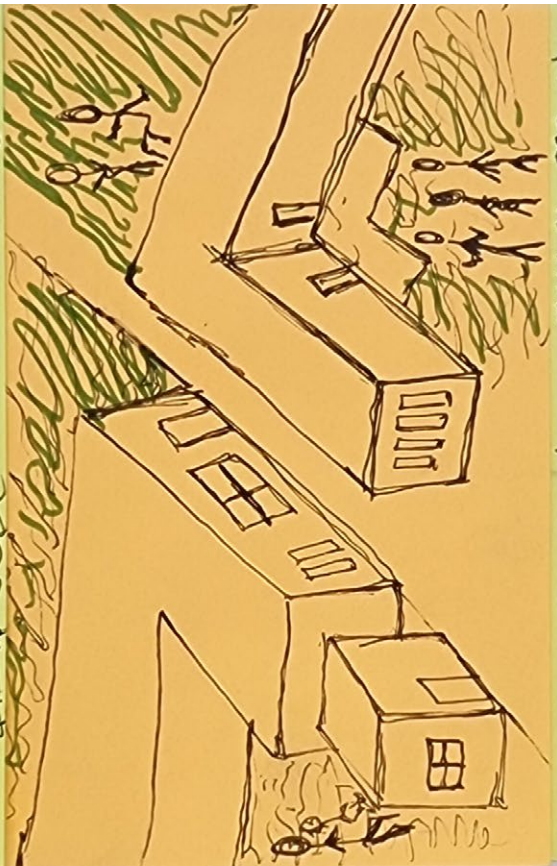
transform them
into makeshift
homes.
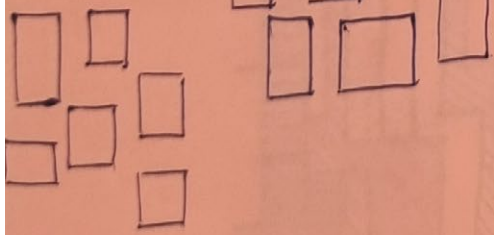
hidden corners of
the city.
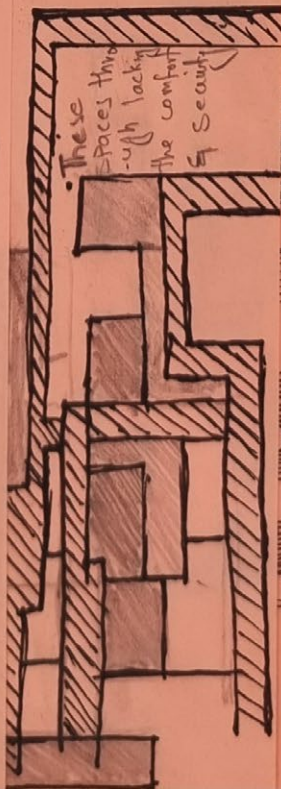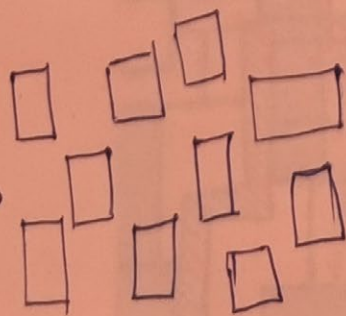
These
spaces thro
ugh lacki
the comfort
& securit

If we talk about
a group of individuals
or families that
inhabit in various voids
that are by default established
due to unused areas.
In the Pakistani context
they are mostly
beggar community that
is an entire mafia, or
either garbage collector
that inhabit in these
areas, which face
harsh treatment by
clearing their areas.
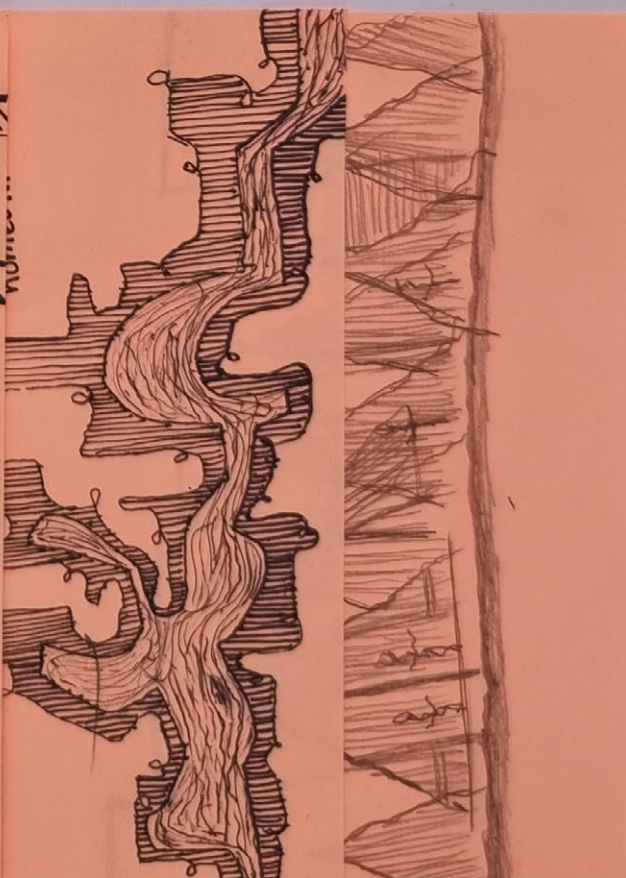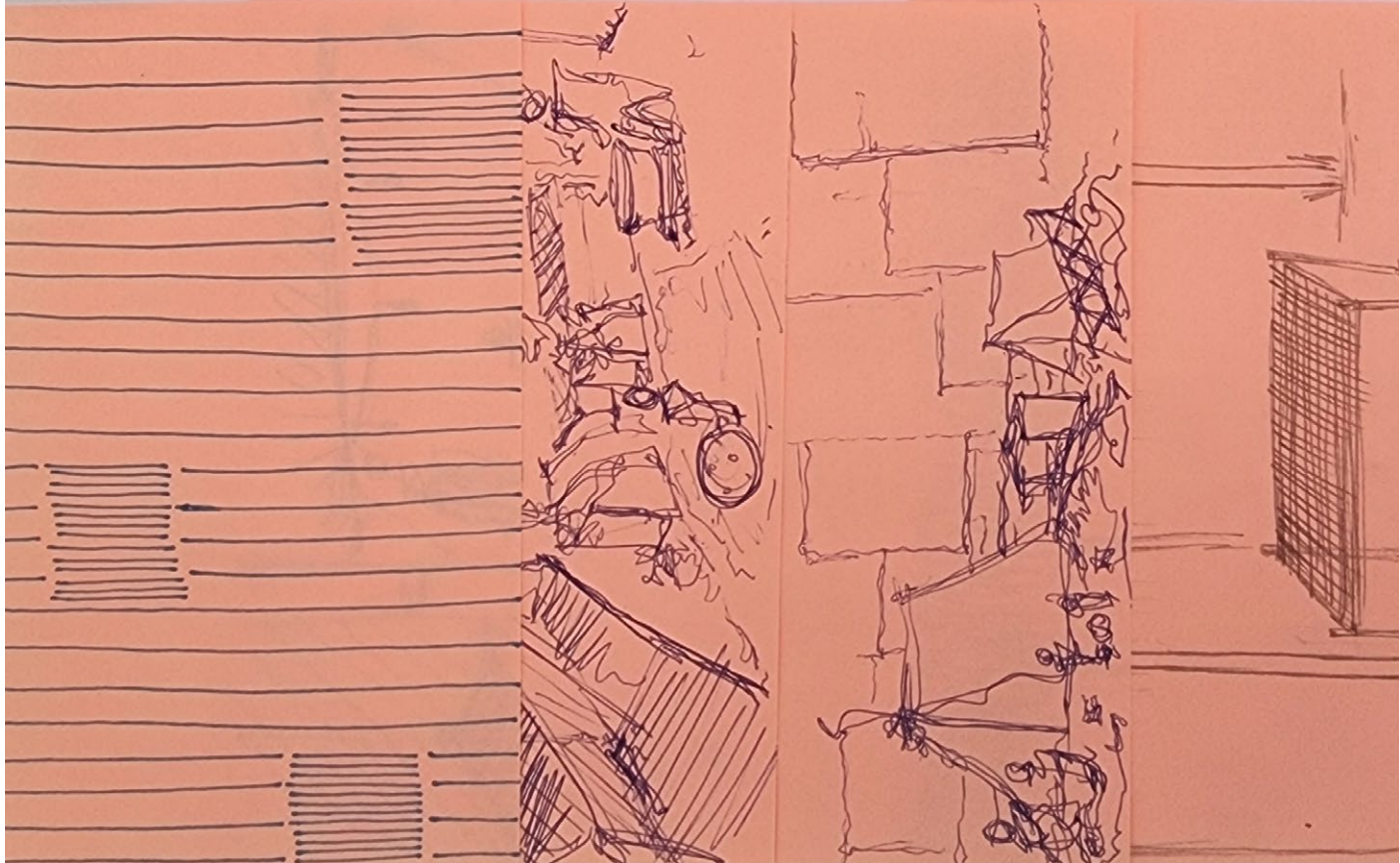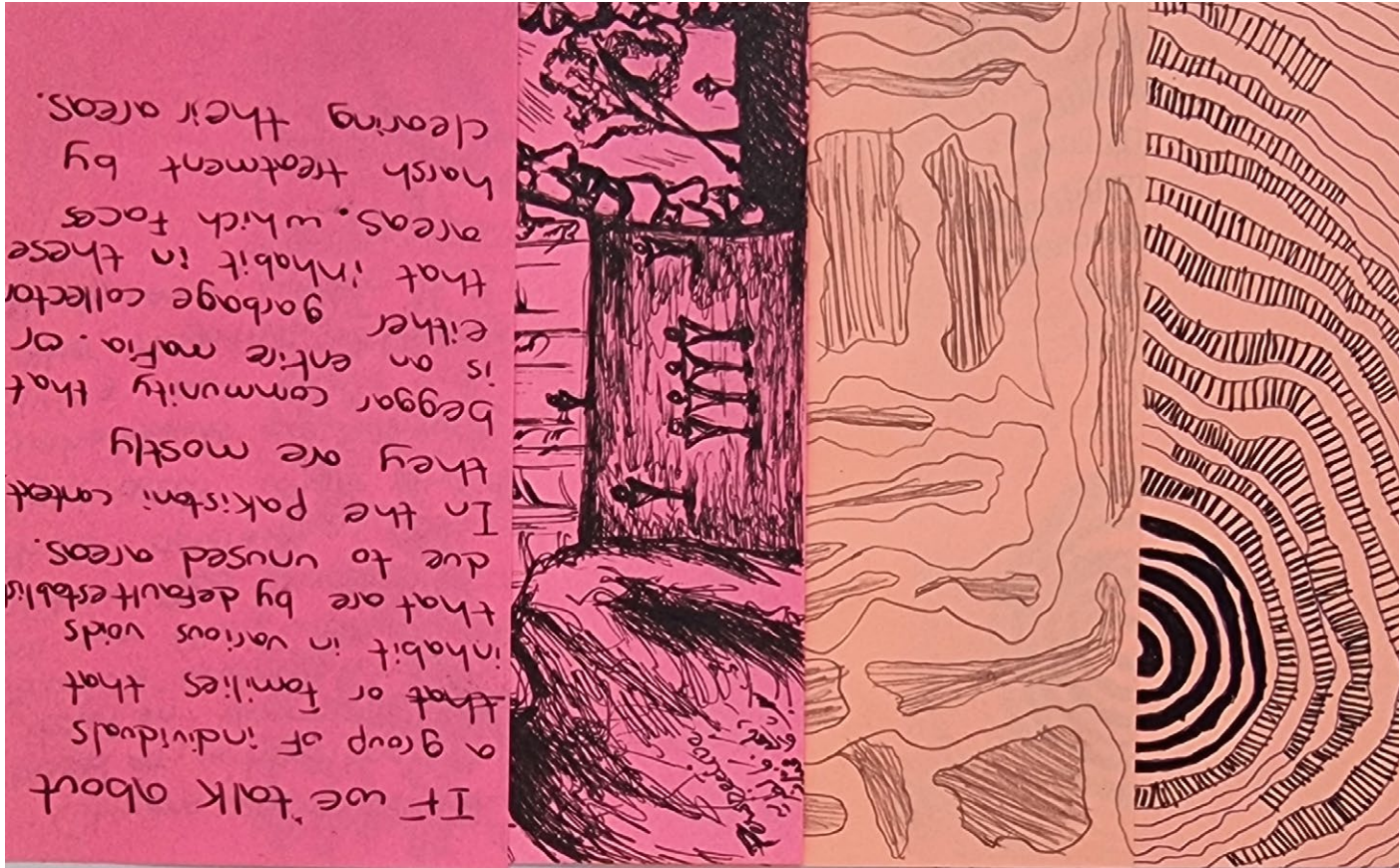
It's similar to what the people of Palestine are facing. Moving from one neighbourhood to another because some are incapable of living. Living with people they have never met in their life. Making their own

culture. Adapting their way of life to a new environment. Eating what is only aveible in their neighbourhood. Either it's grass or anything. They have adapted to the new surroundings, living with unkn--own people. and sleeping in a single room where already 10's of people are sleeping.

- impoverished
- adaptibility
- rejection of the status quo and the ideals of society.

- make shift settlements
- unmet needs of society
- affordability
- partitions between different classes of society
- rural to urban migration
- no governmental regulations
- impoverished
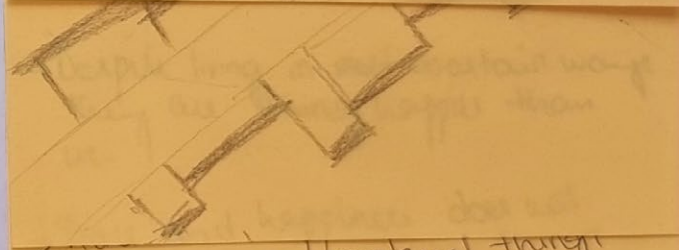
depends on material things actually-

→ little children living in streets of [informal settlement, seem happier than those living in lavish concrete structures.

Gleaming Unrevealed Tapestries **(in a whisper)**
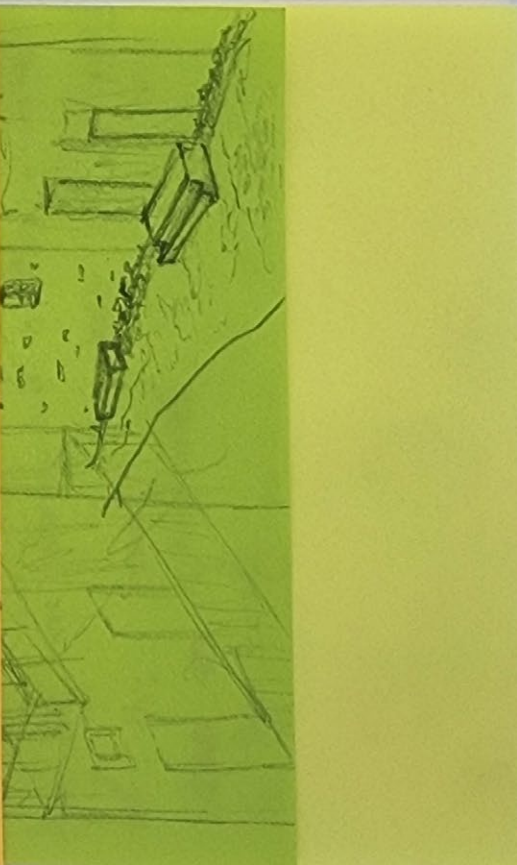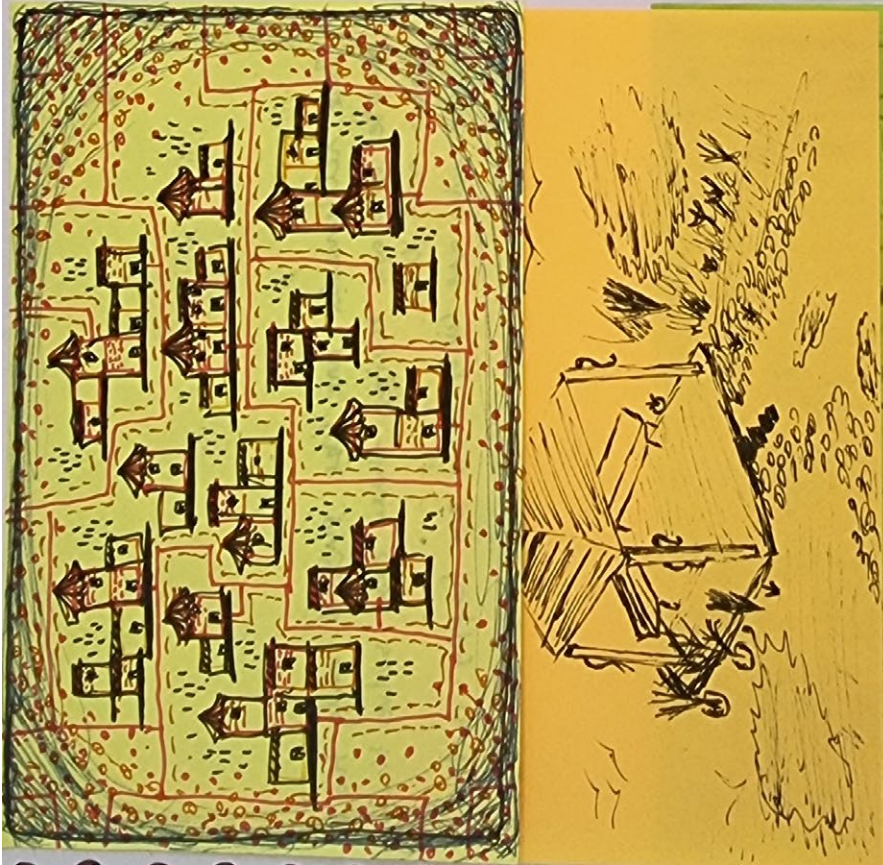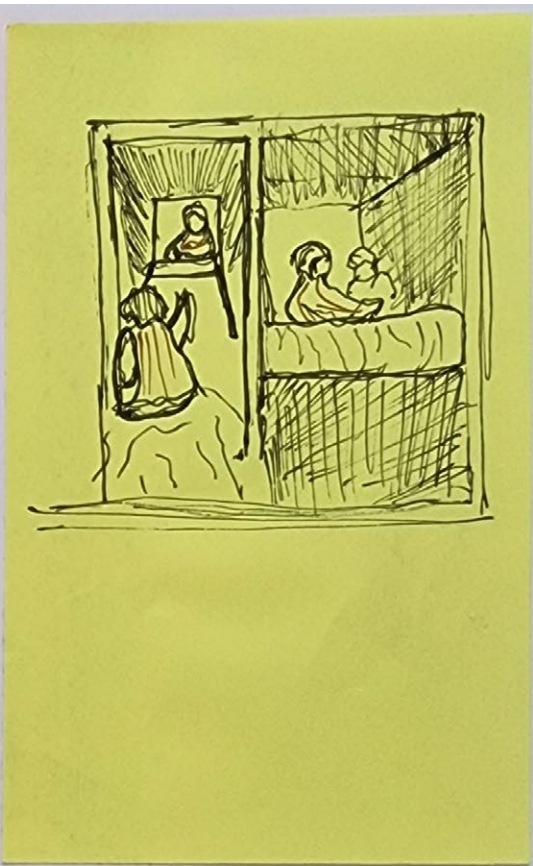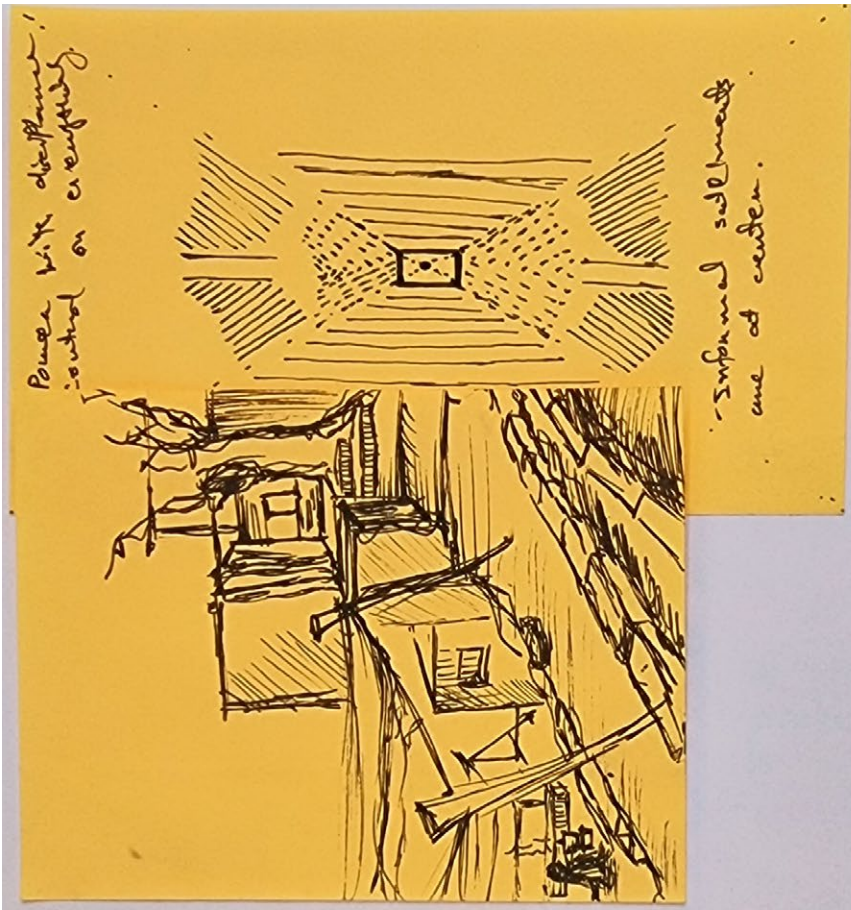
A home is where you currently
are, weather you are in a castle or
a make-shift home. Where there is heart
there is home.
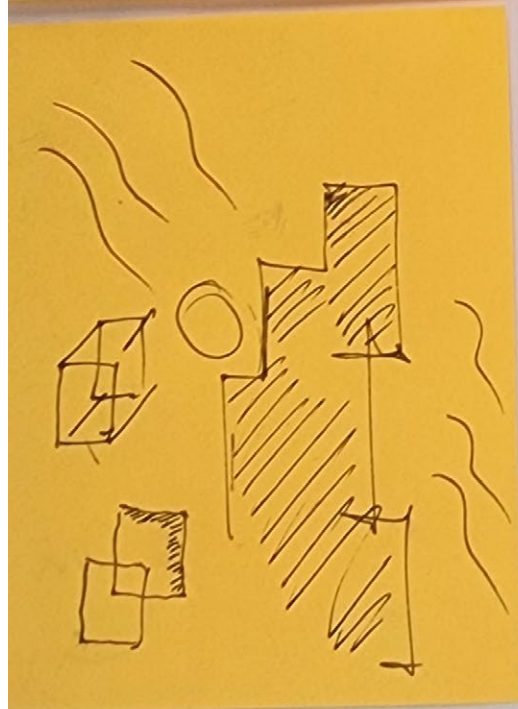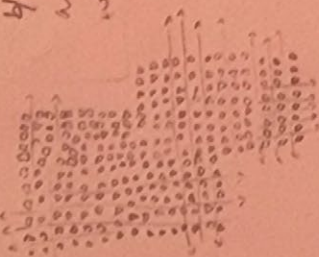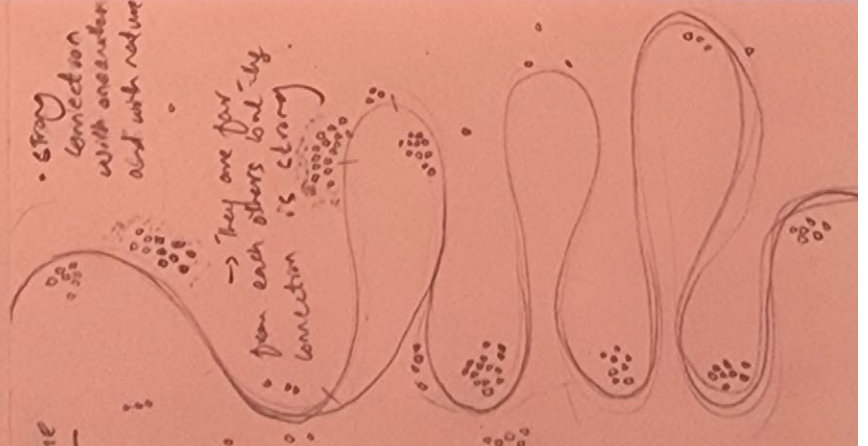
Slums in areas of the city
People ~~more~~ living there have a
very poor lifestyle they people living
there work in the ~~de~~ developed
areas ~~i~~in a form of labour / sweepers,
beggers. e.t.c

I think Slums are necessary to create
a balance and harmony ‼
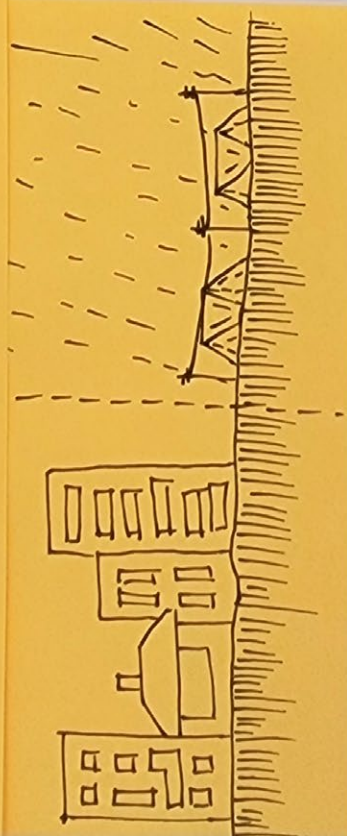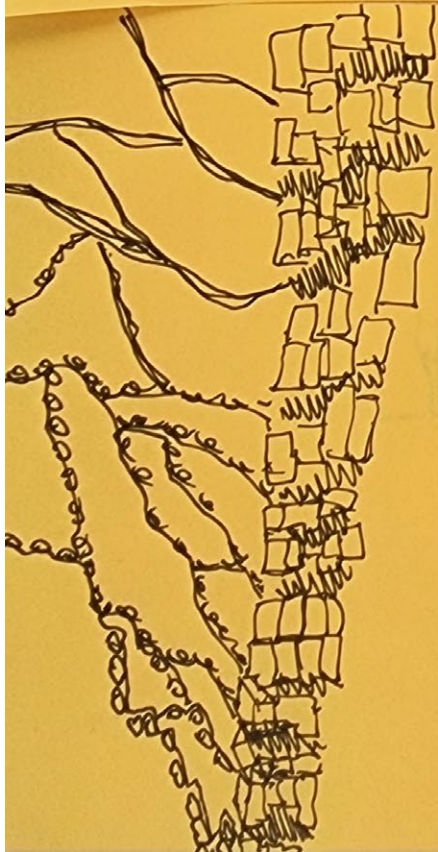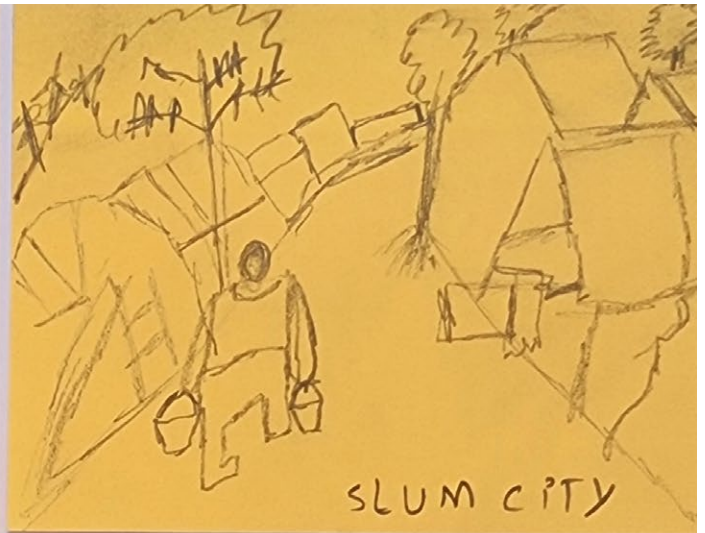
★ In lahore, the poor and nomads, have fabric based house. These are portable, foldable and light to carry.

• In other regions outside Lahore, e.g in city of Bahawalpur, you would find tents made of grass and bushes, many have clay coverage and reinforced by grass and sugarcane straws.

• On the the boundary/edge sectors of lahore you will find the same too.

2

★ Mainly, on the topic, I would say that there aren't any slums in Lahore, This is debated by many but in my opinion places mistaken as slums actually are places inhabited by nomads and they move from place to place with their cattles. They ask for electricity from neighbours and pay what is due. They also share water from nearby clean sources. If you revisit the site months later you wont find them there.


3-
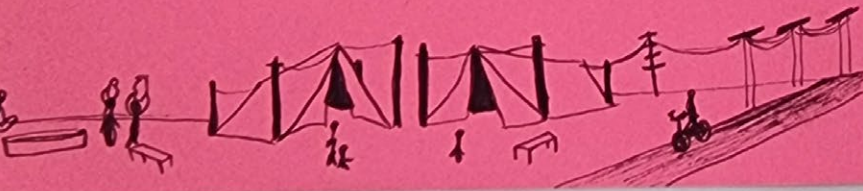
★ nomads actively work as cattle raiser, milk man rickshaw wala (driver) & house maids

4-
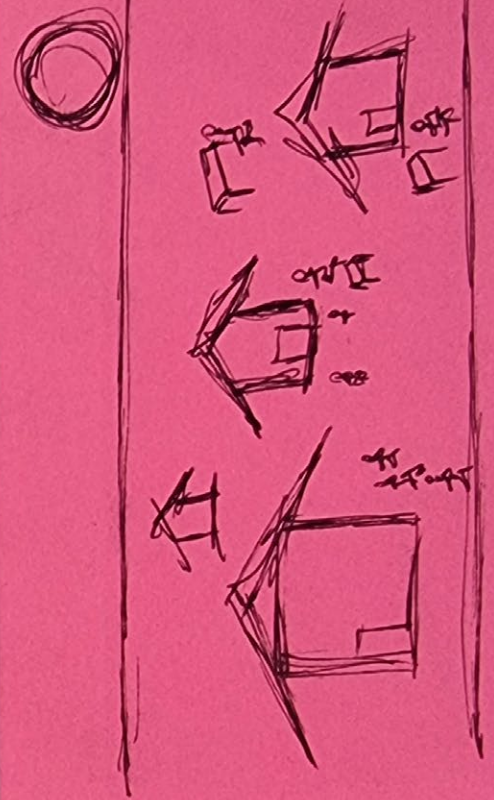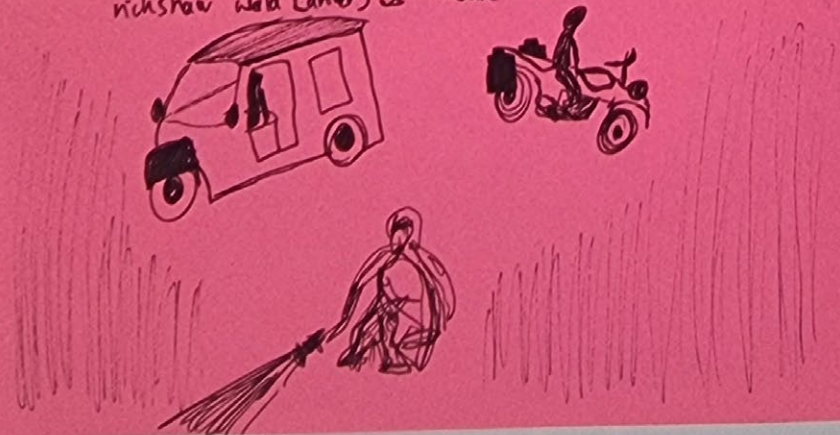
★ Towning companies e.g Bahria Town are reponible for forcefully removing nomads and those settlements form the land where these Town are constructed on now.

★ Mafia & missionaire are hired to get rid of these people & settlements

★ In the end they dont have any where to go to after being striped of land where they lived for decades.

Community Engagement — natural
Sustainable City — services

LIFE OF
MAZE...
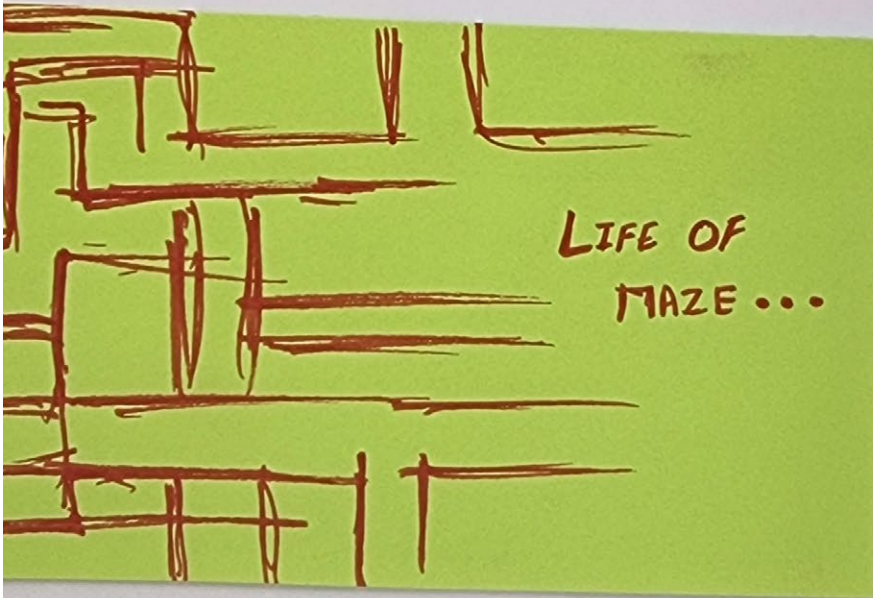
1) How would ... ?

I would turn the slums into highrise buildings. because to control the urban sprawl. Give them a life style in which they can get facilities.

Would you consider .... ?
No i would not consider, Since this is Pakistan, people can't understand this problem as a problem because there have been many projects in lahore regarding to slums, yet

none of them are sucessld, people with money have occupied those buidings. Hence people living in Slum will always live in slum because they can never get any oppurtunities similar to us.

I would want to know why they live in such settlement by choice. As I know most of them live in -them by choice despite having the money to afford-

* I have worked on informal settlements in my 5th semester. when I interviewed the People living their they were happy and dont want to Leave or Live in aproper settlement.

* As an architect I would work on their living condition by improving the existing informal settlements because they dont want to leave.
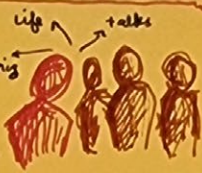
* Course dedicated to Slums/ informal settlemen

* Visits to Slums and their casestudies.

* Power with d

* sted must involve them sabalment

How would you work with these settlements?

I will know the value of their livings. culture. engage with them. prioratize their need. & connect them with other communitie
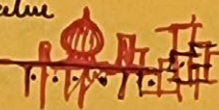
would you consider such topic for theris?

Yes I would love to work for these settlements because there are more interesting then any other. they are filled with culture, people and minds.

.If yes, which aspect of it would you consider to tackle?

I will solve the puzzle of their living.
solve the needs of thier own goods.
Respect thmie thoughts, religion.
Use of verneculor architecture
old architectural study of the space.

I were ... to the ...he

...essence ... on how these inhabitants too took place in these areas, the whole layer of history and try to identify the problems that purely benefit not just their lives but give a practical solutions with the constraints rather than hypothetical solutions i would also try to create some policies that the politicians can implement it.

Ans② = Not entirely on this topic but I would pick an area which Simulton covers every aspect even the slum equrly areas in an urban scale.

⟷

he future - I would like to incorporate informal settlements into the realm society. instead of treating them as invisible bodies. The villages, along with farmland and their inhabitants are a valuable community. with passed down knowledge, traditional crafts, artisans and endangered building techniques, which are passed down generations.

①

②

1. Low cost housing/ Skills/ independent
2. I would not.
3. Eduction

Q1. Yeah, sure. I don't plan on doing so but if situation is such, It will be exciting and a good experience, would love to do something helpful for these communities.

Q2. Well not exactly on slums but I would mainly work on a a long area and on urban design. I would like to include this slums and would love to resolve them.

Q3. Mainly technology and would love to mix it with tradition methods of mud houses, tents, bush houses. and work on portability and sustainability.

⇒ The informal settlements face harsh weather conditions due to the material they use for their huts. If focusing on this issue new construction methods and low cost and sustainable material can be used to design their huts to protect them from harsh weather conditions.

→ As an architect, I would promote a better solution to the problems, the residents are facing.

→ Maybe, It is a good thesis topic, because It is a major architectural & urban issue, with a lot of social problems.

→ The aspect I would work, will be proper sanitation, betterment of living conditions and a better design solution.

• Would you consider such topic for thesis project?

⇒ Working for informal settlements can be an interesting topic for thesis. You have so many possibilities & so many doors to open for such topics.

• If yes, which aspects of it would you consider to tackle?

⇒ I am inspired by the orangi pilot project in Karachi. How the architects formed a town for these settlements by the help of the people living there. People themselves worked & improved for where they were living & turned it in a ~~space~~ much better space.

• As an Architect I would work for the Construction. will work on their Community Engagement, Collaborative Designs, Adaptive Re-Use and upcycling. would also wants to work on the Green Infrastructures, Partnership & funding.

• No I would not consider such a topic for my thesis.

PROPER AND THOROUGH RESEARCH. THIS KIND OF TOPIC HELPS THE [TO UNDERSTAND] THE NATURE OF BEING AND RELATION
ARCHITECT (and me) [TO UNDERSTAND] THE NATURE OF BEING AND RELATION
SHIP OF HUMAN WITH SURROUNDING

ITS MOSTLY EMOTIONAL BASED AND HELPS TO FOSTER CONNECTION AND
I THINK THIS IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PART OF ARCHITECTURE

i PERSONALLY LOVE TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN AND
HOW THEY [HOLD THEIR SPACE] BUT AS ITS A VERY VAST TOPIC ITS
BETTER THAT i FULLY DEVELOP MY UNDERSTANDING WITH IT [RATHER]

[WORKING FOR IT] i PREFER [WORKING "WITH" IT] and that means
acknowledging the intangible things and nature of informal
settlements) (i would rather work with it, rather working for it)

"INTANGIBLE NATURE AND ESSENCE OF THEIR LIVING."

WE DON'T GO WITH RESEARCH WHEN MAKING UNIVERSITY PROJECT
THERE ARE CERTAIN LIMITATIONS OF TIME AND MAXIMUM

i THINK WE DONT TALK MUCH ABOUT INTANGIBLE THINGS
RATHER TANGIBLE AND THAT IS BASED ON PROFESSION. Maybe
WANT TO WORK ON THIS TOPIC AS ITS CONSIDERED A TREND-

PUSHING STUDENT TO LEARN MORE FROM ROOTS

OF OUR CULTURE AND DEARER NATURE. IF WE START
FROM THE ORGANIC NATURE WE CAN TALK ABOUT
THIS TOPIC RATHER MOVING DIRECT TO INORGANIC ONE-

(ALSO TAKING LOCAL CASE STUDIES RATHER INSPIRING BY INTER-
NATION)

of view

---

people who leave there to know what are there needs, what
is the all concept of there living like this

→ As a student, we try to play safe, we dont like a
topic in which we caught two aspects of the things
which can be in parte - as well as negative,
so it will all depend on the my research + study of
that lonely area

→ if it's yes, I would love to tackle, there vision of
life. The life of maze....

If you know
consider to tackle?

● If I approach the social aspect I would
cater them in such that would help them
get in some

---

and usage

2,3. Yes, I would love to consider those topic
for my thesis project. I would like to tackle
this economical aspect, how they can utilize-

---

in. The design
should be based
on there needs.

{ so worry with there
    resours would be different
    to fully destroy the slums
    (as you all vegal facilitis

i will introduce and space for
them.

f I had to work
s an architect On slums
future I ~~and~~ would work
a sustainable slum
esign ~~where~~ along
ith a ~~sustainable~~ proper
to sanitry system.
ecause the people
iving here ~~feel~~ have
o basic facilities like
ater, electricity and
shroom facility.
e to which they have
ry diseases / infections due to

ck of ~~the~~ wash room facility
~~by~~ I have seen these people
~~by~~ digging method (they
a hole and use it as
washroom seat

If I get a chance
I will work with
them but like other
client these people
priority most (be on
Top...)

Yes for Sure...
No - break boundaries
b/w us and them...

Current education
is mainly
d on the upper
class development.
mainly bring
ideas for
ny people ignoring
class. Cause
are emotionless
think that all
same which
is not.

one has different
ives different
anding of life
ent approach
ing and different
yles.
education system
focused on
understanding.

Students slum
these informal
ts & projects
ced related
ents.
ts should be
who opt
social issues.

As a future Architect
id design ty build
Multiple spaces which
can be Assembled or
Assambled at any Tim
or Take/des
urban spaces blurri
the line between form
& informal Urban
Spaces.
— 2 — NO
/—/

Slums with proper
facilities.
=> Sustainable
=> Slum schools for
the childrenss
living in these
slums.
=> Counsling the
People living there
to improve their
Lifestyle.

In future as an architect while working with these settlements, I would try to communicate with them understand their prespect and their needs and the way of life they prefer and imagine then I will shape the area accordingly

How would you work with these (informal) settlements in your future careers as architects?

• Invest in Temporary Architecture do, it would be easy for them If they want to move - And shape their space however they want

essential. This may involve creating multi-story buildings to maximize land use efficiency or utilizing innovative construction technique and material to reduce costs.

be sustainable, using sustainable materials, and also being weather friendly.

→ As necessary

→ infrastructure

• Topic must be included in SOS.

Identifying the location and peo would they want to live in new spaces. Designing spaces by stu pattern. But what they don't out from their old spaces? This topic is quite on a 9ts related to living style as well Lahore's currently sprawl. 9ts much more Emotions. They no quite life. it as materialistic. 9 less materialistic. 9 Quite interested in Yasmin thesis project. 9

Towards a framework for working with others' stories

GLEAMING UNREVEALED TAPESTRIES
(IN A WHISPER)

Unearthing shared narratives through 'Architectural inter/trans-laction'

(a) **Architectural Inter/Trans-laction** is a term we coined during our thesis to encapsulate the unique process of interpreting narratives and observations from fieldwork and translating them into visual representations using unconventional architectural methods. This term signifies a novel approach developed within our practice, emphasizing the innovative fusion of storytelling and design principles to capture the essence of cultural contexts and social dynamics

Insights from the Field

Courage and Integrity

"Brave are those who tell, braver still are those who listen to the hard truths."

Maintain integrity in storytelling while navigating ethical complexities.

Dialogues of Transformation:

"Through stories shared, we dialogue with the past, sculpting tomorrow's landscapes."

Use stories to advocate for informal settlements and initiate critical discussions in architectural education.

Preparation — What?

Fieldwork

Synthesis — How?

Reflection — Why?
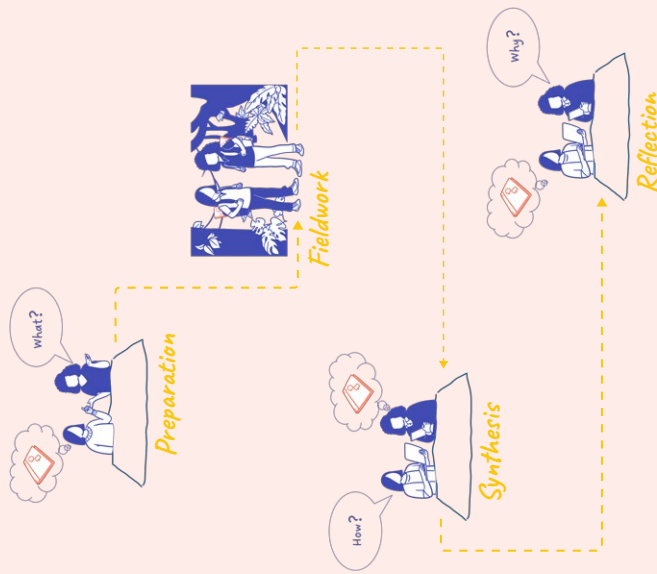
"Every interaction and story shared contributes to a deeper understanding and mutual respect. Let these stories guide us towards a more inclusive and empathetic future."

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Echoes of Ownership
Understanding Informal Settlements

"Voices echo in spaces they call their own; their stories, their rights to tell."

Overview:

This project explores the spatial and social dynamics of an informal settlement in Lahore, Pakistan. Using a transdisciplinary approach, it integrates ethnographic, artistic, and ethical methodologies to transform perceptions of informality. The research emphasizes recognizing informal settlements as dynamic and adaptive environments, not areas of deficiency.

Foundations to Ethical Storytelling

Weaving Holistic Narratives:
- Acknowledge every thread of life in the tapestry of tales

Capture the full complexity of each narrative

Pathways of Reciprocity:
- Engage in mutual exchange, enriching both parties

Construct reciprocal relationships through storytelling practices

Circles of Respect:
- Respect encircles the storyteller, creating a sanctuary for shared truths

Treat every story as a sacred contribution to our understanding.

Research Methodology

Diversity in Methods:
Utilize diverse collection methods. Continuously refine narratives for completeness and complexity.

Transparency and Trust:
Be transparent about research intentions.

Value each interaction, reciprocate kindness, and maintain transparency

Dual-layered Capture:
Combine linguistic capabilities and sensory observations for rich narratives.

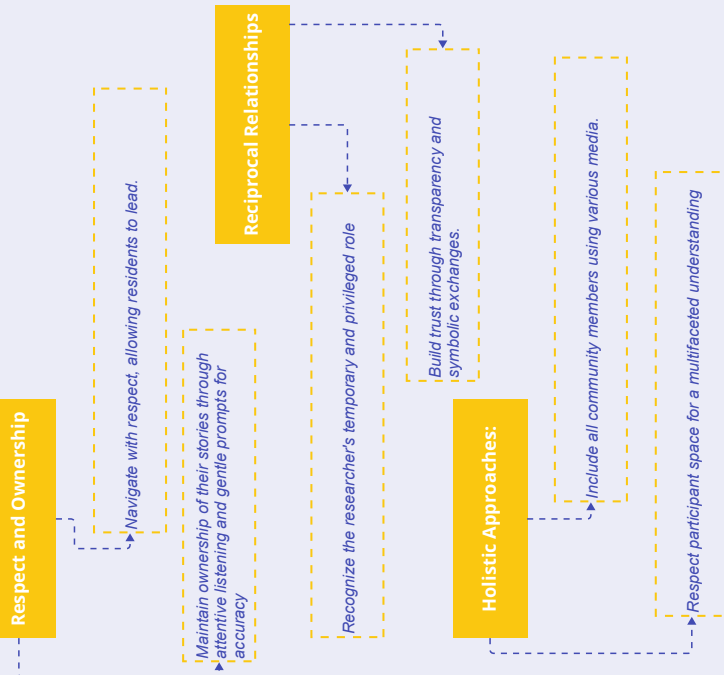*Translate recorded conversations for insightful discussions*

Towards a framework for working with others' Stories...

Respect and Ownership

Navigate with respect, allowing residents to lead.

Maintain ownership of their stories through attentive listening and gentle prompts for accuracy

Reciprocal Relationships

Recognize the researcher's temporary and privileged role

Build trust through transparency and symbolic exchanges.

Holistic Approaches:

Include all community members using various media.

Respect participant space for a multifaceted understanding

Key Challenges and Pointers

Community Involvement
-Ensure community-led transformation efforts.
- Adapt plans to meet community needs

Cultural Sensitivity
- Understand and respect unspoken cultural norms.
- Use cultural liaisons and create environments where feedback is valued.

Ethical Considerations
- Balance sensitivity with consent and respect for intellectual property.
- Overcome biases and create open spaces for difficult conversations.
- Consistently apply ethical standards in dynamic field settings

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But Why?

This toolkit (*not a toolkit: towards a framework for working with others stories*) is crafted to transform research into a reflective tool for future scholars. It integrates Archibald's principles of Storywork into a practical and ethical methodology for storytelling.

Creation:
- Informed by fieldwork experiences
- Refined through autoethnographic methods to navigate complex narratives

Function:
- Provides a foundation for respectful community engagement
- Highlights the power of storytelling to advocate for the rich realities of life in informal settlements

Purpose:
- Bridge academic inquiry and practical application.
- Enhance the ethical impact of storytelling in informal settlements.