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Closet Capitalism – A New Form of Deterritorialization in Pakistan

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Abstract

Whenever new territorialization is formed for capital accumulation, concerns related to discrimination begin to incite within the existing life forms where system participation is prohibited because of class, colour, creed, and gender. This study aimed to uncover the potential of one such territory, that is the LGBTQ deterritorialization. Discourse Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Approach, helped uncover underlying social structures, power relations, and cultural meanings by examining participants' language, perceptions, emotions, and meanings attributed to their gender identification. The concept of Deterritorialization, as expounded in the Philosophy of Giles Deleuze, further explored the nature of the process of capital accumulation and how LGBTQ communities in Pakistan may contribute towards its legitimization. By exercising non-probability convenience sampling, 12 respondents were selected for interviews to gain insight into their lived experiences as members of LGBTQ. After careful thematic analysis, deterritorialization (social, political, expressivity, desire), economic participation, culture (Heteronormativity, Stigmatization, Religiosity) and biology emerged as themes, which revealed that LGBTQ discourse is not a cause but rather an effect of the process of territorialization and deterritorialization in Pakistan i.e., the surfacing of LGBTQ communities in urban cities is a result of broader societal transformations, acceptance, legalization, cultural transitions, and/or involuntary visibility.

Keywords: Deterritorialization, LGBTQ, Gender Neutrality, Capital Accumulation, Capitalism.

Introduction

All collectivities follow a usual trajectory: First, they unite out of a common cause, then they start accumulating resources to sustain and build power, then dissidents within start to develop, and so they disintegrate. This is the internal dynamics and very nature of capitalism: to deterritorialize because failing to do so would otherwise compromise the legitimacy of accumulation (Munro & Thanem, 2018).

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The imperative of capitalism is the ceaseless accumulation of capital (Hung, 2012). However, if accumulation is not carried out for the sake of accumulation that would make it as something having only an instrumental value. i.e., why does one wish to accumulate? The obvious answer: is to protect and sustain "collectivity", whether it be in the form of family, class, nation, or religion etc. (Joseph, 2017). This resorts capital accumulation to mere means and renders all other collectivities as ends.

Now, if that be the case then there surely will come a time when such collectivity shall be propelled to impose certain restrictions in the process of accumulation, generation, and multiplication of capital, all in the name of protecting their class interests. Because, unless the instrumentality of accumulation is not controlled and regularized, there always exists a threat of disintegration for that collectivity. However, the moment a restriction is imposed upon such class accumulation, disadvantaged variants emerge from within the class, clamoring about injustice for not being able to participate in the accumulation process, and accusing those in power of abandoning possibilities of accumulation (Rutkowski, 2021).

In other words, the process goes on like this: first, a territory is formed, then based on this territory, accumulation is legitimized, and members start to participate in the process of capitalization, which is aimed at the protection and preservation of collectivity. However, since the primal goal is the preservation of the collective territory, powerful members then start imposing restrictions upon whom they consider to be deviant members as to who can accumulate and who cannot, contrary to the very nature of capital which demands that accumulation must not be hindered in any way. This impels the marginalized groups to rebel against their collectivity and so, they champion their voices, protesting to alleviate imposed limitations. Then, once these limitations are lifted, class-in-itself tends to disintegrate, or as Deleuze would put it, "Deterritorialized" (Colebrook, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework examines the concept of “Closet Capitalism” as a new form of deterritorialization within the socio-economic and political landscape of Pakistan. The concept of deterritorialization, as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), refers to the weakening of ties between culture and specific geographic locations. It involves the displacement of social, cultural, and economic practices from their traditional territorial associations, often driven by the forces of globalization and transnational capital. In the context of Pakistan, closet capitalism signifies a covert or implicit adoption of capitalist practices, cloaked under rhetoric that emphasizes traditional values and national sovereignty. Capitalism, as an economic system, prioritizes private ownership, profit maximization, and free-market competition (Harvey, 2005). In Pakistan, capitalism has evolved within a complex historical and political context. While socialist and nationalist ideologies have often

dominated public discourse, capitalist practices have persisted in subtle and disguised forms. Closet capitalism thus emerges as a strategic adaptation where capitalist motivations are pursued without openly acknowledging their capitalist nature, to maintain socio-political legitimacy.

The theoretical grounding of closet capitalism draws on critical perspectives from political economy and postcolonial theory. Harvey (2005) highlights that neoliberal capitalism frequently results in processes of dispossession-based accumulation which undermine established economic systems and promote spatial changes. Although it is concealed by nationalistic and cultural discourses closet capitalism in Pakistan is consistent with these neoliberal imperatives. Similar to this Bhabha (1994) talks about cultural hybridity which is the intersection of local customs and contemporary capitalist ideas to create two distinct and frequently incompatible socioeconomic identities. Globalization which brings capitalist practices into local contexts without obviously changing cultural landscapes also shapes deterritorialization through closet capitalism (Appadurai 1996).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and other infrastructure projects in Pakistan are prime examples of this phenomenon as capitalist investments are portrayed as development-oriented and patriotic rather than as neoliberal incursions. Through its promotion of capitalist expansion and appeal to nationalist sentiments this hybrid presentation reduces opposition. Additionally, closet capitalism can be viewed through the prism of dependency theory which holds that developing nations present themselves as independent endeavours while preserving capitalist dynamics that benefit global interests (Frank 1967). This dynamic is demonstrated in Pakistan by the growth of multinational corporations and the privatization of public assets where capitalist exploitation is passed off as economic development. Global consumer trends the growth of private businesses and the implementation of neoliberal policies masquerading as local development are all examples of how capitalism has deterred in Pakistan. A socioeconomic environment that seems resistant to Western capitalist models but is inherently involved in capitalist globalization is produced by this duality. A multidisciplinary approach will be used in this study to analyze this phenomenon incorporating ideas from postcolonial theory cultural studies and political economy. The goal is to understand how closet capitalism functions as a deterrent allowing capitalist activities to flourish within Pakistan’s sociocultural fabric without directly questioning established conventions. Through an analysis of this subtle integration, the study seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of capitalism's flexibility in situations that appear to be resistant.

Research Problem

The legitimization of the collectivity by acknowledging their rights delegitimizes its territory because it provides an opportunity to deterritorialize on legitimate grounds

since that territory has now been acknowledged. Thus, the extended literature review insinuates a qualitative analysis of individuals who identify themselves as LGBTQ and are also involved in the process of capital accumulation. This analysis at the micro-level can help us gain an alternative perspective and is likely to increase our understanding of this new form of deterritorialization in Pakistan because once a territory is acknowledged and recognizes a space, it can open the door to changing or moving things within that territory.

Research Question

How effective is the LGBTQ discourse as a new form of deterritorialization in Pakistan?

Review of the Literature

- **Emergence of LGBTQ Territory**

Understanding the emergence of LGBTQ territory requires a line of argument derived from the historicity of territorialization. Capitalism is always on the lookout for what forms of discrimination provide a legitimate justification to participate in the process of accumulation and for whom accumulation in itself should be the real objective. This is because desire, freedom, and capital are three ideas synonymous with each other, participation in the process of accumulation is the freedom that is desired by all (Cohen, 1981). Hence, if accumulation is restricted, freedom is also hampered for many, and so the disadvantaged group exerts so much pressure that at one point limitations upon accumulation must be revoked. But the moment limitations are lifted collectivity is also disintegrated, and a new form of collectivity emerges.

For instance,

Marxists considered individual forms of capital accumulation to be discriminatory. They protested class discrimination, incriminating the Bourgeoisie for ignoring the interest of the Proletariat. This called for the proletariat to accept class antagonism and engage in a class struggle so that accumulation can be concentrated for the benefit of the exploited class, resulting on the one hand in their domination and the other increasing production to end exploitation altogether. They must convert class-in-itself into a class-for-itself only then the restriction in the process of accumulation can be overturned (Perry, 2021).

The capitalist class initially resisted this struggle, however, gradually they had to revoke restrictions on capital accumulation, which resulted in the assimilation of the labour class. However, this newfound territory later fell victim to a similar sort of constriction, where variants amongst the labour class voiced dissent against their collectivity, disintegrating the territory of the proletariat (Callinicos, 2020). This

weakened the argument for class participation, ultimately dismantling the entire notion of class struggle. In the mid-40s, Americans and Europeans witnessed the fall of Marxism, and so the end of the 2nd World War spurred the need for a different kind of collectivity to legitimize capital accumulation. This segued into two different forms of collectivities, one on the base of colour and the other on gender. Blacks and Women were the front-runners who were primarily being restricted to participate full-heartedly in the process of accumulation (Geddes et al., 2012). This was their reason for disenchantment with the promise of Enlightenment, i.e., Freedom to Accumulate.

Women, for instance, have long been protesting for equal rights and opportunities to participate in the process of capital accumulation, such as the gender pay gap, occupational segregation, discriminatory workplace policies, etc. Their complaint (to the most extent justified) was that men are dominant beneficiaries of the legal infrastructure whereas the same are frustrative and even molesting for women. In totality, however, this was a plea to be allowed to participate in the process of capital accumulation (Onyina, 2021).

Women-liberation movements advocated awareness that women are discriminated against, abused, and marginalized so now they must form a collectivity and stand up against injustice. This new territorialization legitimized women-participation in capital accumulation, affording them opportunities to prove their competence and prowess. Women, when entered in the process of accumulation, outperformed men in a variety of sectors such as Education, Healthcare, Research & Development, etc. (Clerkin, 2017). Previous territories under Enlightenment were “Humans”, “Class”, and “Nation”, which now mutated into a new territory, “Women”.

Unfortunately, as their quest for freedom progressed, this new territory met with a similar fate to that of its predecessors and women soon realized that instead of being beneficiaries of accumulation they too are mere and are not ends but rather means to the process of accumulation. Foundational Feminist voices such as Camille Paglia, Jessica Langer, Cornelia Butler & Abigail Shrier, all have raised concerns that our vigor, kindness, and intelligence have been brutally instrumentalized for sustaining the process of accumulation. This leaves women to fall prey to a unique kind of servitude when they realize that being women doesn’t mean living a life free of restrictions and so start imposing limitations to preserve their collectivity, initiating a discourse on being a woman vs. becoming a woman (Bolatito, 2003; Assiter, 2005).

The irony of capital accumulation is that initially a collectivity is required through which it legitimizes itself, but in turn, is also the cause for the disintegration of that very collective territory. The Woman argument is no longer valid and appealing within the West, and so this territory would also disintegrate (Oyěwùmí, 1997). The existing territories such as social, political, and/or gender, etc., each has its community, and that community thrives upon rules and regulations for its preservation and protection. However, these very rules pose hindrances in the process

of becoming because the territorial limits and the process of becoming are not compatible with each other (Wellner, 2022). So, the reconstruction of the existing community requires a new form of identity. But the essence of human freedom, for Deleuze, lies not in identity but rather in difference, so the LGBTQ form is detecting the possible difference within the identity paradigm of gender (Davy, 2019).

Hence, LGBTQ emerged as a deterritorializing new form of territory serving two functions simultaneously: on the one hand, it challenged the existing territory of gender which directly questions the legitimacy of law, relationships, property rights, political activism, etc. inadvertently changing the societal landscape and potential delegitimization of the conventional legal structure, family structure and political structure; and on the other, carved out the space which eventually creates opportunities of capital accumulation.

- **LGBTQ a New Form of Deterritorialization in Pakistan**

May 08th, 2018 witnessed a historic moment in Pakistan when Transgender Protection Act, in an attempt to shelter the marginalized community, provided legal cover against discrimination and harassment. This act, similar to previous attempts, only recognizes the predicaments of Transgenders and is oblivious to the associated LGBT&Q sections (Alm & Martinsson, 2016). However, the subsequent years that followed also witnessed hue & cry over the potential for irreparable harm this act can weave into the fabric of society (Rehman & Maqbool, 2022).

When freedom and capital accumulation are recognized as universal values, this difference of identity will incline to provide alternative territory that challenges the preexisting territories in post-colonial societies. Because traditional collectivities hinder obstacles to capital accumulation and multiple spaces can only be formed by breaking the traditional collectivities (Kennedy, 1996; Slater, 1998). Sporadic resistance, however, does not pave the way for alternative mechanisms of capital accumulation, but rather resistance only provides space for possible accumulation.

Currently, in Pakistan LGBTQ communities garner overwhelming support amongst feminist advocates, and that too only within the privileged urban upper class (Iqbal, 2020; Mazahir, 2021). So, the existing pact between transgender and women is the constituency that is at present enjoyed by women. However, in Pakistan women's participation in the process of accumulation is not yet an obligation but rather an incentive. Working women, having immense potential, are still a powerful collectivity, that still has 'Woman' as the justification for the expansion of the capital accumulation process. This expansion also does not compromise her religious values, affording 'Woman' a moral high ground (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020). Therefore, currently, it is difficult for the LGBTQ territory to find its own space in the process of accumulation due to women still comprising a substantial portion of human resources.

However, the real constituency under which the LGBTQ communities are competing is not Men but instead Women, and so it can be predicted that within ten to fifteen years feminists are going to face head-on collision, particularly with transgenders, because they shall be the ones who would be truly affected. Not just being affected because of the disenchantment of the "Woman", but because women will no longer be able to seek legitimacy or to get a privileged status in a gay society, simply because that she is a woman (Malik, et al., 2021). This research is grounded in "Deleuzean Deterritorialization Theory", which examines how established structures and norms shift in response to economic, technological, and social pressures. The present paper attempts to establish how a marginalized community can embrace capitalism.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

The present study, despite the obvious accusation of not being objective enough for scientific research, undertakes an interpretive analysis that dates back to the 19th century with Max Weber (Kadyschuk, 2023). However, this approach is still most suitable as it inculcates an empathetic and participatory understanding of social phenomena (Barton, 2020). Thus, to delve deep into the phenomenon at hand, methodological individualism is exercised as the research strategy, and elucidation of participants' insights is interpreted to test the research question.

Research Design

The premise is that one absolute reality in its objective totality is inaccessible to our faculties of understanding, as different people encounter varying perceptions depending upon their lived experiences. And so, such contingent experiences cannot be measured but rather require comprehension using qualitative research designs (Dodgson, 2023). The nature of the present study being exploratory, attempts to explore and predict the potential of LGBTQ discourse in Pakistan. Instead this, Phenomenological Analysis facilitates the gathering of a multitude of perspectives, diverse experiences, and anecdotal accounts about the lives of LGBTQ members who are also participants in the process of accumulation.

Population Sampling

In-depth exploration of individual experiences requires the dedication of time and resources for a thorough investigation into each participant's unique context, for which a smaller sample size is more adequate (Creswell & Báez, 2020). Nonetheless, consideration for data saturation cannot be overlooked. So, keeping intact the sample

diversity and complexity of the research question, a sample size comprising 12 participants is opted for this research.

Pakistan being a religious society at its core, extensive caution was exercised during the selection of participants due to the sensitivity that is concomitant to this phenomenon. Purposive sampling allowed for the selection of respondents with knowledge, experience, and characteristics essential to the research study.

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is always a challenge in social research, however, responsibility is ensured while maintaining the anonymity of respondents for this study. To eliminate the risk of imposter participation, all interviews were carried out in person after having obtained informed consent from all participants (Roehl & Harland, 2022).

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol implemented for this research is thoughtfully synced with the Research Question and improvised accordingly based on the social, cultural, and language encumbrances of the participants. While designing the interview protocol, it was ensured that the questions did not exhibit any ambiguity or elusiveness, being categorical to the understanding of participants (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022).

Data Collection

The research study is based on primary data collected using unstructured conversational interviews. Pensive consideration during the interview process accrued all participants opportunities to reflect and articulate their experiences as per their understanding of what they found relevant to the phenomenon in question. Interviews were initially conducted in Urdu and were subsequently translated into English for analytical purposes. Concurrently, comprehensive field notes were taken during the interviews to contextualize any key insights such as expressions, gestures, and impressions conveyed by the interviewees as well as the environmental setting in which the interviews transpired.

The interviews spanned from 40 minutes to 1 hour and were recorded with the participant's consent. The questions delved into concepts drawn from the literature review, such as deterritorialization, capital accumulation, culture & environment, biology, and sexuality. Open-ended questions were utilized to foster a conversational atmosphere, aimed at gaining deeper insights into the lived experiences of the participants. The study employed the Snowball Sampling technique to approach and enlist participants.

Trustworthiness / Reliability

Research findings, when faithfully reflect the best possible depictions of the participants being examined, are said to be reliable with all pertinent details systematically documented (Declercq & van Poppel, 2023). Maintaining Reliability required giving scrupulous attention to any factor that could have impacted the credibility of the study. This involved employing field notes consistently throughout the data collection process to document narratives and meticulously record observations made during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis helped with the creation, categorization, comprehension, and summarization of data collected from the interviews, facilitating the analysis of results, and enhancing precision (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Personal narratives digitally recorded by the participants related to their experienced trials and tribulations as members of the LGBTQ community were later transcribed. Coding themes helped with data structuring, notwithstanding the likelihood of undergoing evolution as the data collection progressed. Later, these transcriptions were carefully analyzed to discern the meanings embedded in the participants' experiences related to the phenomenon.

The tables below summarize the demography and themes investigated in the present study:

Demography

Respondent	Age	Gender Identification	Profession	Experience
R1	27	Closeted Gay	Banker	5 years
R2	29	Transgender	Medical Doctor	3 years
R3	35	Closeted Gay	Trade Officer	10 years
R4	28	Openly Gay (Queer)	Stylist	4 years
R5	27	Closeted Gay	Computer Scientist	5 years
R6	33	Bisexual Male	Civil Servant	6 years
R7	25	Transgender	Political Activist	1.5 years
R8	32	Closeted Lesbian	HR Specialist	7 years
R9	28	Transgender	Social Entrepreneur	2 years
R10 R11	30 31	Closeted Gay Transgender	Civil Servant Tax Collector	3 years 2 years
R12	34	Closeted Lesbian	Academician	8 years

Themes

Themes	Sub – Categories	Category Description	Examples
Deterritorialization	Social	Overcoming imposed societal limitations	R6'Coming out would mean I have grown astray from what our society deems morally correct.'
	Political	Exercising authority and power in the existing system	R2 'Recently we have witnessed political activism from LGBTQ people, but still, it's a long road to perdition'.
	Expressivity	The state of Becoming and the continuous process of change and transformation	R4' I don't fit into any boxes, and I like it that way. At times I shake things up for my family, but that's the price you pay for different experiences.
	Desire	Creation of new connections and possibilities	R5 'I understand that my society would never approve of how I feel, but for me, love is more powerful than any restrictions'
Economic Participation	Prohibitions	Restrictions on actions deemed immoral	R8 'Coming out would do more harm than good; I can't be a cause of prejudice for my family or where I work'
	Permissibility	Acceptable actions	R12 'As long as I pretend to be normal, nobody cares, and I too am safe to carry on the work I like to do'
	Preferable	Actions which are encouraged within the society	R3 'No matter how frustrated I become here when the salary is credited into my account it helps me forget all the pain'
Culture and Environment	Heteronormativity	Workplaces imbibed with heterosexual norms and assumptions by default	R1 'Common assumption is everyone's straight so, if I would openly know who is like me in my office, I might get strength from this because visibility matters'.
	Stigmatization	Prejudice based on misconceptions or stereotypes	R9 'This is no privilege class, we a barred from access to better living and mental health opportunities.
	Religiosity	Fervently embracing their connection with God.	R11 'Being a true Muslim I don't allow myself to be afraid, because I believe depression is from being away from God'.
Biology	Sexuality	Rejecting stereotypical and binary notions of gender norms	R10 'I am gay, that means I am into guys and not girls'
	Genetics	Aspects of sex, such as reproductive systems and chromosomes	R7 'Assuming what's normal is a narrow understanding of biology, we ought to avoid oversimplification'

Study Findings

Discussion: Deterritorialization

As discussed above whenever a new territory is formed, its objective is initially not capital accumulation in a capitalist society, but instead, it is aimed at removing restrictions and limitations imposed by the traditional collectives through disintegration and deterritorialization. Following are stated a few of the responses:

"As a citizen, I have never felt that being gay stops me from participating in any political or social activity …. Probably because as far as no one knows that I am gay, I am saved from being judged or rejected." **(R10)**

"Even if I chose to prioritize my happiness, I would still prefer being closeted as I don't think letting the world know that I am gay would do me any good … I am comfortable." **(R5)**

Five of the six Respondents who identified themselves as closeted, showed indifference when it came to revealing their identities, not out any fear or guilt but simply because they found that being gay neither created any hindrance nor in any way contributed towards a position of influence within the society. Responses below cover the narratives expressed:

"This whole LGBTQ thing is a political agenda … I mean I am not saying one should disregard his emotions or desires, but there's no need for announcement with the entire world … opportunities are all around if you know what I mean." **(R3)**

"My narrative is against LGBTQ, not because I think homosexuality is wrong, there is nothing wrong in it, but at a political level I would say it is unfair to impose a western framework on the East." **(R6)**

"*I have worked very hard to reach where I have … and surprisingly my man-like exterior benefits me more than it harms me … people respect my authority*." **(R8)**

However, contrary to the notions of the closeted people, respondents who identified themselves as openly gay or trans reported relief, freedom, and more political power as the difference it brought into their lives.

"*Socially speaking, I have lost my male privilege … I Can't tell you how many times I thought of ending my life … I even went to the extremes of deepening my voice and getting injections which bodybuilders use just to gain the privilege that comes from having a hairy beard and mustache*." **(R2)**

"*I paid the price for being the way I am … I mean I always had to keep up the protective guard so that I kicked hard anyone first who even dared to attempt to hurt*

me … I gained this confidence because very early I accepted and embraced my true self and overcame societal biases." **(R7)**

"*At first it was scary for my family, but I am one of the lucky ones where my family accepted me the way I am which allowed me to build more authentic connections with them."* **(R11)**

"*I do the kind of work I have always wanted to do … being comfortable with my identity makes me more creative with the work I do … I love that in our line of work embrace and celebrate diversity*." **(R4)**

Even, while communicating their political aspirations, advocates of visibility in contrast to their closeted counterparts embraced perseverance in their struggle to gain a political say within Pakistani society.

"*We advocated and put up a hard batter to have our rights accepted, laws passed but got challenged by the Federal Shariah Court*." **(R7)**

"*I am most inspired by people like Shehzadi Rai* (Transgender City Council Official) *and Reem Sharif* (Transgender Bureaucrat) *… it gives me hope*." **(R9)**

Deterritorialization of the existing territory of gender in Pakistan emerged as a powerful theme, which ultimately has the potential to provide legitimacy for capital accumulation. Hence, from the discussion, it can be presumed that LGBTQ discourse, particularly with transgenders in the forefront, is not a cause but rather an effect of the process of territorialization and deterritorialization.

Economic Participation

During interviews, almost all respondents recorded various incidents involving practices that have a significant influence on their capacity to participate in the process of capital accumulation.

"Despite having the education, best CV, the best interview, the recruitment committee decided that we cannot hire a person like that … they thought it was too derogatory for them." **(R2)**

"*The primary issue for transgenders in Pakistan is not gender bias or violence, it's the lack of opportunities to participate economically … adequate housing is the main issue*." **(R7)**

"*Housing insecurity and problems with homelessness is the main anxiety within our community … even if someone agrees to rent us a place, we have to pay higher rent than other people.*" **(R11)**

Even the closeted lot expressed grave concerns about economic participation in case they risked revealing their identities to others. Discussions revealed that LGBTQ communities, like any other community, fear the risk of class segregation.

"*Well, one significant potential risk is that my economic participation will become limited … who would want to hire a gay man to sit in an office where more than 70% of the workforce is male-dominated.*" **(R1)**

"*We are more a class community than a gender community … it's evident our community is deliberately thrust into poverty and is pushed to earn a livelihood by begging, sex-working and dancing*." **(R9)**

Under capitalism, only efficiency is most valued, and it is always in search of those who are willing to work tirelessly (Misra, 2016). Nevertheless, the reason one would choose to be tirelessly efficient in the first place is because of the family, tribe, or religion. But these traditional forms of collectivities disintegrated long ago in the West, and so now capitalism requires whole new forms of collectivities to thrive upon. Data from our sample also revealed similar indications, highlighting the potential legitimacy sought by the global capitalist order with this new emerging identity from a post-colonial society.

Culture & Environment

All the respondents exhibited optimum cultural sensitivity in their discussions related to work environments, religious connotations, and anti-stigmatic discrimination, while simultaneously expostulating grief over the lack of a similar sensitivity from other members of the society. While there were differing opinions amongst members, all acknowledged the efforts taken by recent government administrations in Pakistan towards inclusivity, leading to a mix of both satisfaction and discontent.

"*Our culture has immense potential to embrace LGBTQ narratives, primarily because we have always been an artistic society … some of the world's best art and literature is from this region … only if a little optimism is imbued in a few people, who unfortunately happen to be in power positions in the country, they shall realize that this is a matter of pride and compliment rather than insult*." **(R4)**

"L*ook at Aisha Mughal (Human Rights Activist), she represented Pakistan at the UN on behalf of the Ministry of Human Rights … which country has done this … I mean look at America where Trump was advocating against laws favoring Transgender washrooms, but here federal representation is being done by transgender."* **(R2)**

"*I pride in my belongingness from a community which has a 4000-year-old documented history* in this region … *so why would I hide behind the LGBTQ movement in the 1980s and 90s which began the American Stone Wall Movement.*" **(R11)**

However, respondents voiced concerns regarding ubiquitous heteronormativity prevailing within the workplace and the society at large, which does not allow room for LGBTQ inclusivity at present. Workplaces are infused with heterosexual norms and assumptions, considered as the natural order of things. This makes stigmatization inevitable, and if LGBTQ expressions are manifested in any way, they are liable to face social exclusion, unequal treatment, and prejudice.

"*Traditionally transgenders and girlish men were all linked with performance economies such as dancing, entertaining people, etc., but this mode of livelihood was penalized by the British colonial rule … so all our miseries came as the result of criminal tribes act, which unfortunately is still not amended in our society*." **(R11)**

"*It is cruel to label us as prostitutes or beggars … a very small portion from our community may do that for a living … give them a seat in the parliament, provide them with employment and even they would not do sex work.*" **(R9)**

"*I couldn't sustain the pressure from my family … got married … but I just couldn't physically consummate the marriage … but I couldn't leave her either because of all the shame I would be bringing upon my family … eventually she filed for divorce and everybody knew.*" **(R3)**

Such instances, as described above, are now starting to surface more fervently which contributes towards broadening involuntary visibility. Another more prominent issue that was articulated by the respondents was economic anxiety which exacerbates mental health issues for many.

"*Even when we go out for lobbying or advocacy we are being told when will you stop the dirty work."* **(R7)**

"*So, what if I like a guy who works next to me … I can never express how I feel, because even if I dare do so, I'll immediately get expunged … I can't risk my career … it gets too frustrating at times."* **(R5)**

It is a relatively common phenomenon in societies that feel economic pressure to become suicidal or have mental health issues, and LGBTQ people are no exception. However, among transgender people, resultant psychological problems are compounded by drug addictions. Homelessness, economic anxieties, violence, and loss of social support thrust them towards substance abuse. Not only do these hamper

their cognitive abilities but more importantly attach various stigmas which nonetheless tend to take a toll on their mental health.

"*They are barred from access to professional help … psychotherapy is so expensive than two tokens of heroin*." **(R2)**

"*What do you do, you just go and get that dopamine hit … that's how many of us have learned to deal with society's injustices*." **(R11)**

"*I have been dealing with the whole gay stigma my entire life … they think I am some kind of a sex freak … but now I think this has helped me make more resilient and powerful."* **(R4)**

Another significant environmental effect observed was the evident high value that all the respondents placed upon their religious convictions, identifying themselves as spiritual beings, subject to various religious obligations.

"*I have always had a strong spiritual connection with God … I firmly believe that all depressions and anxieties are due to being away from religion*." **(R12)**

"*Being a true Muslim, I don't allow myself to be afraid … because I am the portrait of God … then I have my closest relationship with God."* **(R11)**

"*Being homosexual is not a sin, but acting upon it is … I seek forgiveness whenever I fall prey to my carnal temptations.*" **(R1)**

"*I am in a relationship … it may not be legitimate in the eyes of the world, but my God knows it true … I am not a conservative Muslim who is practicing Islam just to deal with their insecurities while they keep doing dirty deeds hidden from the world*." **(R4)**

It was apparent from the interviews that respondents aligned their spirituality and religious undertones mostly with the androgyny reflected amongst various Sufi traditions existing in South Asian cultures (Kuehn, 2021). Their religious beliefs stemmed from their self-speculative convictions rather than the established notions propounded by religions. The cultural and environmental milieus discussed above serve as powerful motivators to participate in the process of capital accumulation based on a newfound space for a different kind of territorialization.

Biology

One crucial notion that emerged out of lived experiences of the respondents was from the biology of gay men/women and transgenders. Ten out of 12 participants vehemently believed that they possessed superior physical strength than most women, because of their capacity to provide augmented pleasure experiences, i.e., they can

play both active and passive roles in a relationship. For them, Sexuality and sexual pleasure are concerned with the ability to perform two functions simultaneously.

"*For me gay experiences are normal … I appreciate the versatility in my relationships … I mean we both enjoy taking turns in different roles … we fulfill each other's needs.*" **(R10)**

"*Diversity of Experiences that is possible in a homosexual relationship is far more than in a heterosexual one … I mean its way more fun, enjoyable and above all freedom that comes with it.*" **(R6)**

"*I am khwaja sara (Transgender) and I have a 4000-year history … our ancestors have been warriors and have served in the Mughal armies.*" **(R7)**

A common narrative that prevailed was the aversion towards privileges afforded to women in Pakistan. The voices are:

"*A woman doesn't deserve a privileged status just because she's a woman … I think women have been playing the Woman card for too long now, which is frustrating.*" **(R11)**

"*This is inhuman to take the seat of a man sitting there because you are taking the seat of a legitimate participant.*" **(R8)**

"*If I am not a boy then I am not a girl either … so why should I be subjected to roles primarily associated with women … I have my own unique identity.*" **(R7)**

This perceived capacity to provide enhanced sexual pleasure not only has the potential to break the existing women constituency but would also play a proactive role within the society in terms of gaining legitimate territorial power.

Conclusion

From the discussions above it can be reckoned that the territorialization of LGBTQ is not a cause but is an effect that is gaining strength through broader visibility, either voluntary or involuntary. Thus, policymakers in Pakistan must realize that LGBTQ territorial expansion is not an intentional or planned endeavor pumped by a distinct agenda or motive. Conversely, the surfacing of LGBTQ communities in urban cities is a result of broader societal transformations, acceptance, legalization, cultural transitions, or involuntary visibility (e.g. The rise in divorces occurs when it is revealed that either spouse is homosexual), that creates an environment where LGBTQ individuals feel safe in expressing their identities openly and participate productively the process of capital accumulation.

One significant point worth noting is the realization that what may pose a threat to capitalism is not the collectivities but rather individualities, i.e., an intelligent, critically well-equipped, and opinionated mind that chooses to freely opt out from the process of accumulation.

Thus, it is safe to conclude that when the rights of LGBTQ are adopted comprehensively by the system, this territory too shall disintegrate. Like in the West, the appeal to belonging to the labour class has lost its charm and so has the women-class lost its enchantment. Women no longer enjoy any privileged status in such societies. The voices are "A woman doesn't deserve a privileged status just because she's a woman". "This is inhuman to take the seat of a man sitting there because you are taking the seat of a legitimate participant". However, for now, this can indeed serve as a justification for sustaining capital accumulation.

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