# Planning Karachi's Urban Futures

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## Planning Karachi's Urban Futures

**INTRODUCTION**

Travelling in Karachi's periphery across a desolate landscape where new ribbons of asphalt hold the promise of future connectivity, one finds a stronghold of mobility. For some this could be no-man's land or Karachi's margins where dry, dusty paths, aligned with thorny bushes and deficient infrastructure coalesce with unregulated economic activity, illegal subdivisions, house construction and intense physical movement. The new flows of movement, settlement, and economic activity on the peripheral, empty spaces of the city, or on what was once considered a rustic, semi-pastoral frontier encapsulate the accelerating tempo of change that constitutes social and physical life in Karachi. This is a city which grows in all directions, in unexpected ways and with intensifying, often terrifying levels of insecurity. Whether the frontier, the periphery, the outer edge or the margin, the dynamics of displacement, migration and movement altogether remain integral to the prolific expansion of Karachi, where new plans and strategies to chart 'growth' and plan futures barely keep pace. In Karachi, the formal order of urbanization regularly confronts and is disrupted by the 'unplanned' or the 'unplannable'.

With an estimated population of 21 million and as the leading metropolis of a rapidly urbanizing nation that may soon surpass Brazil as the world's fifth most populous country, it is not easy to anticipate what the future in Karachi (or Pakistan) will bring.[1] In tracing the flows of mobility it has become difficult to distinguish a clear demarcation between rural and urban. New realities entrenched in sectarian, ethnic, geopolitical and economic violence, labor informalization, and the contradictory effects of neoliberal economic reform and globalization have destabilized long-standing imprints of community life where caste, kinship and old forms of moral authority have come increasingly under stress. Along with this new aspirations and cosmopolitanisms have added to the complexity of urban life in Pakistan.

In my ongoing fieldwork in Karachi's peri-urban[2] frontier, I focus on a marginal locality recently settled by migrants displaced from the inner city and from Pakistan's northwestern regions. In this frontier old villages and vacant public land are being subsumed by new patterns of urbanization. To an extent, this new process was spurred on by (1) the impact of global social-economic forces on the administrative institutions of Pakistan whereby power is gradually shifting downward from national to sub-national or local governments, and (2) the nature of domestic politics that unfolded under General Pervez Musharraf's (1999-2007) non-representative military regime, a willing proponent of decentralization.[3]

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[1]  Based on preliminary reported findings of the House Listing Survey 2011, Population Census Organization, Government of Pakistan. Migration is a key dynamic with 3% of the nation's population annually migrating to urban areas.  Pakistan's estimated population in 2013 is slightly over 182 million.  Brazil's is estimated at 196 million.

[2]  I consider the peri-urban as an area of complementariness where various exclusions and opportunities arise. See Dupont (2005).

[3]  In the post-1947 independence era, decentralization reforms were also implemented at the behest of two other military regimes, General Ayub Khan (1958 - 1969) and General Zia ul Haq (1978-1998).  See Cheema et al (2003).

Under Musharraf, the Planning Commission's ambitious federal document *Pakistan in the 21st Century – Vision 2030* marked a major moment that gestured not only toward a new, democratic and pluralistic Pakistan with a better quality of life for citizens, but also to a reformed and restructured state that having been set adrift by a former titan of democracy, Nawaz Sharif (1997-1999), was now all set to recover through the implementation of the *Local Government Plan 2000* with policies directed toward attracting foreign direct investment and enhancing competitiveness. Noteworthy in the *Vision 2030* is the emphasis placed for the first time on the future growth of urban centers and management of megacities.

Efforts to catalyze societal transformations, 'empower the impoverished', and strengthen local governance and accountability materialized in the *Sindh Local Government Ordinance 2001* (SLGO), which undergirds *Karachi's Strategic Development Plan* 2020 (KSDP) implemented in 2007 by the ruling regional party, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) allied at the time with the military regime. Declaring Karachi a city district, the *SLGO* subdivided the city into 18 Towns and 178 Union Councils, and fused all administrative institutions into the City District Government Karachi (CDGK). With local elections held in 2001 and in 2005, new mayors (nazims) were elected at the Union Council, town and district levels, thus setting in motion a controversial phase of electoral dynamics.

The KSDP charted a new 'spatial growth strategy' to revitalize the city's center and to redevelop its periphery by incorporating villages (*goths*) and reconfiguring empty land. Inflected with an urban renewal logic and 'world class city' vision, the plan's key objective is to regenerate the inner city by shifting wholesale markets, warehouses and truck stands to the seemingly empty spaces. Interestingly, the attempt to control and reshape the periphery through the augmentation of central authority and the development plan has unfolded in conjunction with the rapid growth of unplanned settlements. My ethnographic explorations are focused on these urbanizing regions, such as Gadap Town (Figure 1) which area-wise is Karachi's largest and least populated town. I also extend my explorations beyond the new metropolitan corridors and into Sindh's peri-urbanizing rural regions.

**Figure 1. Map Showing Gadap Town**



Source: Google Maps

These are sites where the formal state's reach is partial and where power often rests in the hands of *dalaals*[4] or brokers, a dynamic that certain political theorists (Handleman 1975; Hansen & Stepputat 2001; Das & Poole 2004; Hansen & Verkaaik 2009; Anjaria 2011) have recognized as the locus of political authority. *Dalaals* or brokers dominate political life in Karachi's unplanned settlements. The broker's relationship with the Pakistani state is complex and rooted in a postcolonial history centered on a politics of urban space in which the complex interplay between land use, shelter and municipal policies have intersected with mobility.[5]

Moreover, the presence of such figures speaks to the highly localized nature of sovereignty. While this morally ambivalent form of power is based in an extractive logic of paternalism, crime and corruption, such figures nevertheless possess knowledge of the urban world and demonstrate abilities to maneuver, control and govern the urban landscape, a quality that some scholars (Hansen & Verkaaik 2009) have termed *infra-power*. For the poor, the city's knowledge economy often takes secretive, deceptive, and manipulative forms. To enter the domain of urban life, to survive it and subsist it, the broker's expertise becomes a catalogue of how to access the system; his/her knowledge and corrupt practices 'domesticate the rules of the state' (Visvanathan 2008).

Increasingly, settler politics and attendant (de)mobilizations in the peri-urban frontier arise in the context of brokerage and patronage relationships, and are embedded in the material 'stuff' that makes up place: houses, land, infrastructure, ID cards, maps, roads. In the broader project from which this working paper is drawn, I consider other forms of power such as community activists, female dominated and religious networks, and NGOs that also serve similar brokering functions in directing Karachi's urban futures. An underlying objective is to explore how these different forms of power, associated political practices and infrastructures of mobility converge to produce a different kind of movement: a movement toward an inclusive but highly unequal settler politics or a *right to stay*[6]. A key question I tackle in this particular context of tremendous urban upheaval and social change is, where and how do we think about the state in this obscure landscape?

Before I move to a discussion of 'entry points' that enable us to make sense of an unknowable, disparate and fast changing landscape, I provide below an overview of urbanization patterns, of a more *intense* phase of migration and general poverty trends across Pakistan and specifically in Karachi. I return to the question of 'entry points' in Section 2 where I consider the materialities and anchorages that facilitate migrants' emplacement. In the final Section 3, I take up the relationship between brokers and bureaucrats and its relevance to political mobilization in a rapidly expanding Karachi.

## LOCATING KARACHI'S EXPANSION

Akin to many cities across Asia, contemporary Karachi (and Pakistan in general) is also undergoing a period of unprecedented urban expansion. This change is bringing to the forefront new challenges not only in the provision of services but also about questions of ownership and control of urban space. How to move, how to settle, who lives where and what this means materially and politically are key concerns today. Urbanization levels in Pakistan are now considered the highest in South Asia

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[4]   In Pakistan the word *dalaal* literally translates as pimp. A slightly seamier definition is someone who trades women for sex.

[5]   Lindern and Selier's (1991).

[6]   I take this from Blomley's (1994) pioneering work on mobility rights. Mobility rights are viewed as a right to move; Blomley underscores these also encompass the right to remain immobile.

(Table 1), with natural increase and net migration as major contributory factors. A prominent feature in this shift is an expanding middle class comprising a younger generation of Pakistanis with new material and political aspirations (Iqtidar 2011; Nayyab 2011). Cities like Karachi and Faisalabad are centers of new wealth generation tied to export manufacturing, global and local retail, finance/banking and real estate. Pakistan's population base remains young with approximately 50% below 20 years and 60% below 30 years.

**Table 1. Urban Population – Cross Country Comparison South Asia**

| Regions Countries | Urban Population | | | | | | | | | Slum Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % population | | | | | % change per annum | | | | % of urban population |
| | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2011 | 90-95 | 95-00 | 00-05 | 05-10 | 2011 |
| Afghanistan | 18.2 | 19.3 | 20.6 | 21.9 | 23.5 | 9.62 | 4.13 | 5.01 | 3.78 | |
| Bangladesh | 19.8 | 21.7 | 23.6 | 25.6 | 28.4 | 4.01 | 3.64 | 3.29 | 2.81 | 70.8 |
| Bhutan | 16.4 | 20.5 | 25.4 | 31.0 | 35.6 | 3.03 | 6.20 | 6.81 | 4.26 | |
| India | 25.5 | 26.6 | 27.7 | 29.2 | 31.3 | 2.79 | 2.55 | 2.67 | 2.56 | 34.8 |
| Maldives | 25.8 | 25.6 | 27.7 | 33.8 | 41.2 | 2.34 | 3.43 | 5.50 | 4.75 | |
| Nepal | 8.9 | 10.9 | 13.4 | 15.1 | 17.0 | 6.62 | 6.63 | 4.59 | 3.82 | 60.7 |
| Pakistan | 30.6 | 31.8 | 33.1 | 34.5 | 36.2 | 3.40 | 3.33 | 2.66 | 2.60 | 47.5 |
| Sri Lanka | 17.2 | 16.4 | 15.7 | 15.1 | 15.1 | 0.10 | -0.35 | 0.38 | 0.89 | |
| South Asia | 26.5 | 27.7 | 29.0 | 30.6 | 32.6 | 3.02 | 2.79 | 2.72 | 2.51 | 36.8 |

Sources: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2011;
Statistical Yearbook for Asia and Pacific, 2011

Even though accurate data is unavailable due to delays in the 2011 census, it can still be gleaned from alternate sources (See Table 2) that 40% to 50% of Pakistanis live in urban areas (GOP 2010-2011; UNFPA 2007; Hasan & Mohib 2003; World Bank 2011; GOP 1998). [7] Added to this is the increasingly blurred distinction between rural and urban, discernible in the ribbons of development on Karachi's periphery and between major urban areas and industrial satellite towns in provinces such as Punjab.

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[7] The UN estimates at least one in every three city dwellers in Pakistan lives in a squatter settlement.

**Table 2: Projected Population (Million) & Urban Share for Pakistan and Provinces**

| Administrative Unit | %Urban | 1998 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pakistan | Population | 132 | 155 | 173 | 190 | 208 | 226 | 244 |
| | Urban | 33 | 37 | 40 | 42 | 45 | 47 | 49 |
| Punjab | Population | 73 | 86 | 96 | 105 | 115 | 125 | 135 |
| | Urban | 31 | 36 | 39 | 42 | 45 | 48 | 50 |
| Sindh | Population | 30 | 35 | 39 | 43 | 48 | 51 | 55 |
| | Urban | 48 | 52 | 54 | 55 | 57 | 59 | 60 |
| Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | Population | 17 | 21 | 23 | 26 | 28 | 31 | 34 |
| | Urban | 16 | 23 | 27 | 31 | 35 | 38 | 41 |
| Baluchistan | Population | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| | Urban | 23 | 29 | 33 | 36 | 40 | 42 | 45 |

Source: Jan, Iqbal & Iftikharuddin (2008)
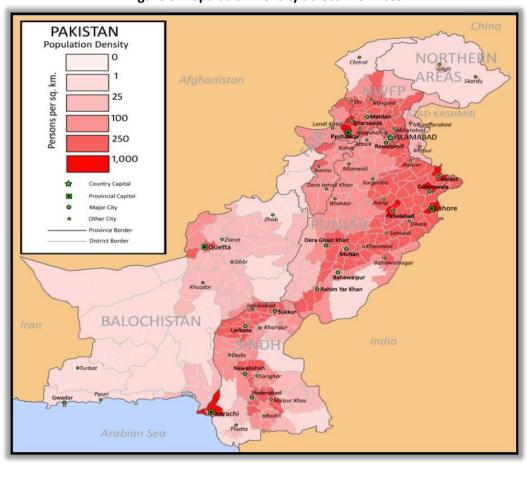
**Figure 2. Map Showing Provinces**

**Figure 3. Population Density across Provinces**



In Pakistan the rural-urban interface is the new site of 'informal urbanization' that signals an intricate fusion of forms and functions, labor and commuter flows, housing types and land markets vital both for the poor and an emergent middle class. In Karachi, informal settlements whether in the shape of *katchi abadis* (unplanned settlements) or ISALs are increasingly the norm in regions situated far off from city centers.[8] In the province of Sindh (Figure 3), the peri-urbanization of rural areas particularly those located near major transport corridors has led to the emergence of three distinct population settlement patterns.

First is the emergence of the 'megacity' region around Karachi which encompasses parts of Thatta and Jamshoro District; second is the trend of peri-urban settlements; and third is the emergence of ribbons of development along national highways. Transport corridors appear to be a defining characteristic of a new 'urban' settlement linked with regional economic activity (ADB 2007). Elsewhere in Asia and in Latin America this type of expansion where small towns and rural densification are incorporated has been labeled *desakota*, 'polycentric expansion' and even a 'postmetropolitan urbanization' indicating new spatialities and urban castings (McGee 1991; Aguilar & Ward 2003; Bayat & Denis 2000).

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[8]   ISALs are Informal Subdivision of Agricultural Land. Based on various reports of the OPP-Research and Traning Institute (OPP-RTI) and conversations with Perween Rahman, Director. See Hasan & Raza (2011).

The question what counts today as urban in Pakistan, and generally across Asia, is no longer just an issue of constructing the boundaries of the urban and the rural or the city and the region, but also one that includes rethinking what the urban means. City expansion through increasingly space intensive processes necessitates we take a much broader view about the relationship between the city, the hinterland and the larger region. Besides, Bunnell et al (2013) propose we approach rural-urban relationships in terms of a space of flows in which a complex, networked society is discernible. Sindh is Pakistan's second most populace province and the most urbanized with 49% of the population living in urban areas (Table 2). Rural Sindh also has the highest incidence of absolute landlessness with a high share of tenancy and low share of land ownership. Approximately 75% of Sindh's total urban population is concentrated in three major urban centers: Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur (Figure 3). Sindh's secondary cities that once flourished as trade centers during the British Empire are growing at an estimated annual rate of 4%. For the rural hinterland, secondary cities offer not only social and health care facilities but also employment opportunities and essential linkages with local markets.[9] But outside Karachi barely half of urban Sindh's population has access to piped water, and typically the quality is poor and flows for approximately two hours per day.

Karachi contains 25% of Pakistan's urban population, generates 15% of the national GDP and 62% of income tax. The city's violent politics, its exceptionalism is also a vantage point of the Pakistani nation state (Verkaaik 2004; Khan 2011; Gayer 2007). Karachi's exceptionalism is tied to the claims of the disenfranchised *mohajirs* or Urdu-speaking migrants from the western and northern provinces of India who had refashioned themselves into a distinct ethnic community. Urban movements such as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) that draw strength from a middle-class *mohajir* electorate have made a mark on Karachi and also heavily influenced the national mainstream, and continue to leave an imprint on urban life and municipal politics.

Over the years, the high rate of migration to Karachi has been linked with a weakening of the formal sector's capacity to provide infrastructure. This has also led to the rise of the notorious infrastructure mafias, held responsible for Karachi's 'turf wars' and target killings of prominent politicians and now even development workers such as Parween Rehman, the Director of the globally renowned NGO the Orangi Pilot Project-Research and Training Institute (OPP-RTI). Rehman was gunned down in March 2013 in connection with a land fraud case.

A housing crisis characterizes conditions across urban Pakistan where nearly six million housing units are required but only a scant number built. While Karachi alone requires 80,000 housing units per annum, an average of only 26,000 building permits are issued resulting in a demand-supply gap that is either met through the densification of existing settlements in the working class areas of the inner city, or through the creation of unplanned settlements on the periphery (Hasan & Rahman 2008) . Consequently, almost 60% of Karachi's population reside in unplanned settlements where security of tenure is weak, infrastructure provision inadequate, and where a working class population is tied primarily to informal economic activities. The bulk of unplanned settlements are located on lands in the margins of the city.

The relationship between 'center' and 'margin'/'periphery' should not be read as just a morphological condition but one that is politically defined. As James Holston (2009) has underscored the periphery is a site of both innovation and degradation. Further, Veena Das (2004) posits the 'margins' are the necessary entailment of the state and where ordinary citizens experience the state as a simultaneously coercive, corrupt and just entity.

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[9]    "7th NED Seminar: Larkana needs planning on outskirts as pressure builds up on centre", in *The Express Tribune*, April 2nd, 2012.

**INTENSIFIED MIGRATION**

Karachi has been a city of migrants for a very long time. As the third largest port city in British India, Karachi was an attractive destination for traders drawn from the coastal districts of the Subcontinent.[10] After Partition in 1947, the 600,000 Urdu speaking migrant –refugees who arrived from India changed the city's demographic balance and its cultural and political landscapes, and its connection with the broader Sindhi hinterland (Ansari 2005). During General Ayub Khan's (1958-1969) rule the introduction of green revolution technologies in Pakistan's agricultural sector and the setting up of Karachi as the center of industrialization, quickly drew migrants from other provinces. Migrants displaced by the green revolution came to Karachi in search of jobs, and especially the Pakhtun from the northwest were new settlers who took jobs in the city's construction industry, and eventually came to dominate the transportation sector and even the local police force. With an estimated 22% of the city's population, Karachi now hosts the largest Pakhtun population surpassing Peshawar, Quetta and Kandahar.

While migration persists, it appears to be happening at a pace that has become more intense and destabilizing. Tied to this new phase are autochthonous preoccupations about who belongs and does not belong in the city, and murky articulations between religious networks and public officials. According to reported results of the 2011 house listing survey, between 1998 and 2011 Karachi grew from 9.8 million to 21 million, adding approximately 11 million persons to its metropolitan base.[11] The staggering increase in recent years is predicated on three key dynamics, which I take up separately below:

(1) First is the displacement and related distress migration of persons from the conflict afflicted province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), which have fallen into the gravitational pull of geopolitics. Since 2001, the USA-led 'war on terror' in Afghanistan has been spilling into Pakistan in complex ways. This has been further problematized by Saudi Arabia and Iran's proxy wars of influence to support various Islamist and sectarian movements within Pakistan. Inside Pakistan, FATA, PATA and KPK (Figure 2) have become targets of the 'war on terror' with several military-led operations being carried out since 2008 against so-called Taliban terrorists, as well as drone strikes that have had negative repercussions for the region's population. Steeped in US foreign policy, Islamist and Pakistani political-economic agendas, the conflict has led to major population displacements.[12] For instance, in a region that had once prospered due to migrant remittances and boasted one of the highest literacy rates in Pakistan, the district of Swat in KPK was quickly turned into a bomb site. It is estimated nearly half a million persons were displaced and a vast number have migrated to urban Sindh.

(2) Second is the displacement from flood affected zones across Pakistan. The Indus Floods of 2010-2011 were unparalleled floods that led to the displacement of nearly 18 million people across Pakistan. Official reported estimates of the economic costs of the damage are approximately US $10 billion (Bhudani & Gazdar 2011). The province of Sindh was reported to have suffered the most with nearly 7 million persons displaced.

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[10]   Migration from the coastal regions of western India was so extensive that by the late 1920s Gujarati was Karachi's *lingua franca*.

[11]   *Sindh population surges by 81.5 pc, households by 83.9 pc* http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-13637-Sindh-population-surges-by-81.5-pc,-households-by-83.9-pc

[12]   See IDMC/internal displacement monitoring centre, Norwegian Refugee Council, http://www.internal-displacement.org/

(3) The third dynamic concerns deep structural changes in rural Sindh where the undermining of feudal relations, insecurity of tenure, rural dispossession and a weakened subsistence economy has catalyzed intense physical and social mobility. [13]

The recent influx of Pakhtun migrants from KPK and FATA has sparked ethnic tensions with Urdu-speaking groups, and especially with the dominant regional party, the MQM which has enjoyed control over municipal matters in urban Sindh since its ascension in local government in 2005. With increased concerns over Karachi's so-called 'Talibanization', the demonization of Pakhtun migrants is pervasive given they share with the Taliban common cultural and linguistic roots. While Karachi has always been the MQM's center where it has used an extensive and powerful network of party workers and political fixers at the neighborhood level to secure electoral support, the city's expanding frontier, urbanizing hinterland and new migration patterns suggest a possible realignment of constituencies and electoral politics.

In the peri-urban context political fixers and infrastructure brokers are not necessarily connected with the MQM's senior leadership. In these regions different political parties such as the Pakistan People's Party and the Jamait Ulema-e -Islam and even brokers representing religious organizations such as the *Tablighi Jamaat*, and community activists linked with NGOs are tapping into new settlements comprising Pakhtun, Baluch, Seraiki-speaking migrants, connecting with men and women, pushing for land tenure rights and providing shelter and party protection. It is rare to find MQM representatives canvassing new settlements in these peripheral regions. These transformations reflect new political realities and mobilities originating from local and national regions that are steeped in long migratory traditions as well as from those without such traditions. Mobility today appears to encompass larger distances and much more of Karachi than was once the case.

Returning to the figures highlighted earlier, when adjusted to 10 years Karachi's 13-year growth rate implies the addition of approximately 8.7 million persons. Some experts assert at present growth rate of 6% per annum, Karachi may become the world's largest urban agglomeration by 2030. [14] The reported preliminary house listing survey results also indicate that Karachi's average household size is increasing whereas the national average has fallen. The reports indicate between 1998 and 2011, Karachi's average household size rose from 6.7 to 7.3 suggesting density increases are within housing units.[15] Unfortunately, the data does not clarify if such increase is predicated on higher fertility rates or on doubling-up of family units.

## POVERTY, REMITTANCES

In the mid-1990s Pakistan suffered a steep rise in poverty levels with urban poverty increasing from 15.4% in 1993-94 to 22.7% in 2000-01 (Awan & Iqbal 2011). Low economic growth caused by structural reforms, high inflation and privatization were some factors that contributed to this rise. Lack of access to resources and economic opportunities along with weak social protection were additional dimensions. The impact of various structural adjustment and stabilization programs to reduce fiscal and balance of payment deficits and promoting market-oriented growth has been controversial in terms of state capacities, employment and poverty (Kemal 2003). State

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[13] See "The impending migration", *Dawn*, December 4th, 2012; World Bank (2006) *Securing Sindh's Future: Challenges Ahead*.

[14] http://www.newgeography.com/content/002940-pakistan-where-population-bomb-exploding

[15] Various Household Integrated Economic Surveys (HIES), Federal Bureau of Statistics, GOP, Islamabad.

retrenchment through declining development expenditures, public employees, cutbacks in subsidies, privatization and even informalization of governance and weak state regulation combined with diminished pro-poor growth have exacerbated poverty across Pakistan. Furthermore, a weak regulatory system has become the domain of extensive patronage politics where ethnic/territorial groups are able to extract favors and transfer resources into the private sphere.

In recent years remittance inflows – the mobility of money - have had a significant impact on urban poverty levels (Siddiqui & Kemal 2006; Irfan 2011). Some reports assert urban poverty tends to be lower among migrant households that are recipients of workers' remittances (ADB 2006). While Pakistan tends to occupy the lower-middle income category with very low GDP since 2008, its per capita income in dollar terms has been increasing over the past several years, giving an impression of rising prosperity and pushing the country into the category of a middle income economy. As can be gleaned from Table 3, between 2009 and 2012, per capita income in dollar terms registered an increase of nearly 38%.

**Table 3 – GDP, Per Capita & Remittance Flows 2000-2012**

| Fiscal Year | GDP Growth (%) | Per Capita Income (US $) | Remittances (million US$) | Remittances (% of GDP) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2000 | 3.9 | 526 | 984 | 1.3 |
| 2001 | 2.0 | 501 | 1,087 | 1.5 |
| 2002 | 3.1 | 503 | 2,389 | 3.3 |
| 2003 | 4.7 | 582 | 4,237 | 5.1 |
| 2004 | 7.5* | 663 | 3,872 | 4.0 |
| 2005 | 9.0* | 724 | 4,169 | 3.8 |
| 2006 | 5.8* | 823 | 4,600 | 3.6 |
| 2007 | 6.8* | 904 | 5,494 | 3.8 |
| 2008 | 3.7 | 1,015 | 6,451 | 3.9 |
| 2009 | 1.7 | 990 | 7,811 | 4.8 |
| 2010 | 3.1 | 1,068 | 8,906 | 5.0 |
| 2011 | 3.2 | 1,258 | 11,201 | 5.3 |
| 2012 | 4.2 | 1,372 | 13,186 | 5.7 |

Sources: State Bank of Pakistan; Pakistan Economic Survey, 2001-2002 to 2011-2012, Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad. *Growth figures for FY 2004 to FY 2007 during General Musharraf's military regime have been the subject of controversy involving accusations of data tampering.

A key factor driving this increase is workers' remittances that since 2007 have jumped from US $5 billion to US $13 billion in 2012 (Table 2), and this increase has helped raise the standard of living for households across Pakistan. Remittances have been used primarily to improve lifestyles and houses and have aided migrants in times of crises, such as floods and earthquakes. In regions such as rural Sindh, remittances have reduced the importance of agriculture as a means of income giving rise to a new underclass of agricultural landless labor that work on the farms of those migrants who once themselves were landless labor.

However, as inflation is an important component of per capita income, all classes have not shared equally the benefits. Gains for ordinary citizens have been minimal. Certainly for the urban middle class household incomes have continually risen from 2002 to 2011, but for the rural poor real incomes have declined with the worst off in rural Sindh where incomes for the bottom 20% of

households declined by an average of approximately 4.4% per annum over the past decade.[16] Nevertheless, average incomes in urban areas are 42% higher than in rural areas and it is expected that a city like Karachi will continue to be perceived as a place where economic opportunities abound.[17] Karachi's building sites, its construction and garment industries, retail trade, hotels, transport and restaurants continue to offer opportunities. In expanding Karachi the demand especially for skilled artisans from rural Sindh is high. Reflecting on changing social dynamics in rural Sindh, Arif Hasan writes:

> The *kumbars* have migrated because earthen ware utensils have been replaced by factory produced plastic and metal and it is better business to migrate and manufacture flower pots and decorative items for city dwellers. The *lohars* no longer manufacture agriculture related tools; the *meghwar* weavers no longer weave cloth; and the *chamars* no longer make shoes. All these items are now industrially produced in the cities and sold in the rural areas and these rural based artisanal skills are in great demand in the expanding urban centres. As a result Sindhi carpenters and masons, unlike before, are now increasingly visible on building sites in Karachi and Tharri tailors in the garment factories of the city. The *sunaras*, who were the traditional bankers, have been replaced by formal banks and bonds on stamped paper and the emerging educated job-seeking-middle-class migrate to Karachi where the vast majority of jobs are located.[18]

In rural Sindh the breakdown of caste and feudal relations combined with poor wages and land inequality has changed radically the social-economic fabric of the region, suggesting that something major is underway in terms of reshaping the interface between Karachi and its feudal/rural hinterland. In the context of changing moral economies and livelihoods, the overriding question remains how survival unfolds amid new loyalties, authorities and political navigations. Along with the demand for jobs and the desire for prosperity is the poor migrant's aspiration for homeownership, future social mobility and self-esteem. Despite myriad disparities, uncertainties and impoverishment migrants who come to Karachi are resolute investing in urban life and owning land and building a home are important means.

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[16] 'Income disparity: The very uneven rise in Pakistani incomes', in Special Issue, *The Express Tribune*, July 30th, 2012.

[17] According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2009-2010, Sindh's retail and wholesale trade and services industry account for the largest share of persons employed. (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, GoP)

[18] Arif Hasan "*The impending migration*", Dawn, December 4th, 2012.

**Figure 4: Estate Agent's Office for 120 Sq Yd 'Illegally' Subdivided Residential Plots in Gadap Town**



Source: Author

In its recent house listing survey, the Pakistan Federal Bureau of Statistics reported a disquieting pattern on Karachi's periphery: an 'abnormal increase' in house construction. The only other province that surpassed Sindh in this category is neighboring Baluchistan. The Bureau posits the unusual increase is significant because it conveys not only shifting populations but also the potential new demarcation of electoral districts and constituencies in the 2013 general elections. It is to a discussion of these new demarcations, related ambiguities and issues of (dis)emplacement and brokerage that I now turn. In the next Section, I dwell on the themes of mobility (physical and symbolic), materiality (land, documents, plans), and brokerage. I propose these entry points offer a productive means for understanding a fast changing and increasingly complex spatial and political-economic landscape that poor migrants negotiate to secure residency.


**MOBILITY, (DIS)EMPLACEMENT**

Pakistan is a space where movement is an entrenched dynamic. In a very broad sense movement encompassing displacement and migration is also the legacy of two Partitions that have shaped Pakistan: 1947 (independence from British rule) and 1971 (secession of East Pakistan now Bangladesh) when millions of people moved continually between points of arrival and departure. Displacement has also been invoked as a theme by the ethnically based urban movement, the MQM who as representatives of the Urdu-speaking *mohajirs* sought to revive a dispossessed diasporic identity in the 1980s.[19]

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[19]   Since Partition in 1947, Urdu-speaking *mohajirs* have been the dominant ethnic group in urban Sindh.

In conceptual terms, displacement is connected with various conditions of coercive movement such as those highlighted in Section 1, and with the spatialization of power and practices of exclusion/inclusion (Ong 1999; Simone & Gotz 2003; Harvey 2008). As the manifestation of a tangible form of deterritorialization, displacement draws attention to how people deemed out of place are forced to relocate. While brute force often propels displacement, there are also commonplace forms such as the imposition of municipal regulations or the everyday enforcements of bylaws and codes related to property regimes and land markets, and judicial decisions that force the removal of unauthorized settlements and criminalize the urban poor (Baviskar 2003). Certainly in Karachi as elsewhere in cities across Asia, expressions of revanchist urbanism, global city aspirations and the abandonment of prior commitments to social welfare signal a dramatic transformation of the urban landscape with consequences for poor people's politics (Weinstein 2009; Roy 2009).

The overarching question then revolves around *how* the poor manage to assume a place in the broader political process of urban change; how do they negotiate the 'right to stay'? For this reason, following Liisa Malkki's observations, I treat displacement as the 'flip side' of *em*placement (1995: 517). Displacement is not only about the loss of a place and attendant bereavement and exclusion, but is also about struggles to make and maintain a place in the world or more specifically in the city. How this process of *making* place is inextricably linked with the nature of localized sovereignties and entanglements between the state and political society is a subject that needs to be addressed in the context of political and economic shifts in a globalizing Karachi and more broadly, a democratizing Pakistan.

In Karachi's contemporary rural-urban frontier, movement is about survival, accumulation and control, a social practice people deploy to orient themselves to a continuously shifting political terrain and economic activities. Mobility encompasses both actual and potential movement, is socially produced and can be understood as a capability that is unevenly distributed along ethnic, class, gender and religious lines (Sheller & Urry 2006; Uteng 2008; Samuels 2012). Hence, any change in mobility can impact different structures of society, for instance gender relations which are influenced by social-geographic networks. It is through mobility that networks link certain places to a bigger world both in terms of inclusion and exclusion whereby people leave certain places knowing the risks involved.

Indeed, moving to a city like Karachi may mean moving toward a larger, more networked city where new opportunities are a step into the global imaginary (Landau 2010). These networks are shaped by diasporas of kin, co-ethnics, coreligionists and co-nationals, and provide advice on making one's way in the city: securing work, finding accommodation. In this context, belonging can be transferred through processes of naming new settlements and constructing houses in ways that are symbolic of or capture the aura of what was left behind. In the region where I continue my fieldwork, new settlements are named to evoke memories of villages left behind in Swat and in Waziristan. For instance, *Gulshan –e–Buner* (Garden of Buner) a new settlement is named after the Buner Valley in KPK. The KPK has experienced extensive upheavals due to Taliban and Pak-military led incursions, resulting in widespread displacement. Such naming practices may have effects on the way the city becomes available for the new inhabitants. The relationship between belonging and space does not necessarily privilege the national, but can be seen as a space where there are multifocal possibilities of emplacement, new spaces of political affiliation albeit always provisional and predicated on a complicated mobile geography of social rights. These social rights can often heighten inequality by casting one group's belonging through the spatialized undermining of another.

The upsurge in Karachi and more broadly in Sindh in the politics of ethnicity and autochthony complicates further how local groups are able to retain power in a destabilized post-military context marked by Pakistan's recent democratic turn and a liberalized press. I refer here to the amplified

discourse of struggle for Sindhi representation pushed by Sindhi nationalist parties such as *Sindh Tarraqi Passand Party* and *Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz*. Persistent contestations and ethnic politics spill over into matters of decentralization. Since 2010 deadlocked negotiations over the adoption of the SLGO in the province of Sindh has sparked prolonged bouts of violence across Karachi.

Dominant parties such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Sindhi nationalists have favored the adoption of the SLGO 1979 which retains powers at the provincial level, whereas the regional party, the MQM, prefers adoption of the SLGO 2001 which devolves power from the provinces to the local government, and in the process unifies Karachi under one district government with single-party control of the city. Since devolution under General Musharraf (1999-2007) the MQM's political reach in urban Sindh has strengthened. The effects of this dynamic on municipal politics and the making of new constituencies and voting practices remain ambiguous. With the recent 2013 elections in Pakistan, it is unclear how a politically mobilized civil society already fragmented and hierarchised along the subject-citizen divide will operate spatial registers for claim-making. What the new frontier presents in terms of the rise of autochthonous discourses rooted in people's experiences of moving habitats, places caught up in processes of urbanization or subject to displacement, gentrification or globalization is a critical question that foregrounds the importance of mobility.

For this reason, it is important to observe how in the peri-urban context claims about political participation and ethnic-religious identity coincide with land transformations, tenure rights, and biopolitical dimensions where United Nations institutions and NGOs such as OPP-RTI have become key players in population and infrastructure management. Here autochthony is recognized not as an extreme 'right-wing' project, but as a lever for development and citizenship empowerment. In Karachi's peri-urban frontier and in Sindh's secondary cities, projects funded and managed by the Asian Development Bank, UN Habitat and bold tenure-rights projects energized by the OPP-RTI are new biopolitical undertakings of mobilizing groups and of re-territorializing spaces. Here I refer specifically to NGO policies where participatory planning and discourses of self-empowerment and tenure rights create new possibilities for migrants to re-territorialize space. What role does political brokerage play in these undertakings?

What does it mean to be emplaced amidst various spatial, material and temporal streams currently flowing in the site where I continue my ethnographic work? These are transnational flows from recent migrations resulting from a circulatory movement to the Gulf region specifically to Dubai, as well as national and local currents driven by dynamics that I have already elaborated in Section 1. Mobility then is not only about dispossession or displacement but also a way to capitalize upon socio-economic opportunities that arise due the city's inability to fully incorporate the demands of new arrivals.

Mobility is enabled under specific systems of support or patronage, each with its own related extractive and redistributive logics in which people find themselves implicated in risky relationships with figures of regulatory authority, land brokers, political fixers linked with major political parties such as the PPP and the JUI and pivoting around a host of issues ranging from illegal status, illicit land ownership, birth certificates, national identity cards, to bribes to low-level municipal agents, administrators and the police, and so forth.

Under a blazing hot sun and desert-like landscape, women, men and children of varying occupations and ages, and diverse educational and economic backgrounds in their quest for a respectable life consign resources and efforts and take risky decisions to eke out new economic spaces, livelihoods, and homes that remain off the map. In my observations, I am always struck by the diverse ways in which these groups calculate the use of limited resources, many having very small income margins to work with, and even then continuously making an effort to pool limited resources and to

speculate on new income generating and property owning activities. These are sections of an urban population that we know little about. Whose efforts count, who has the right to operate and where, are important questions that probe critical aspects of urban life in Karachi and connect in a broader sense with conceptualizing questions of governance and of rights to the city (Simone & Rao 2011).

### BUILDING HOMES IN THE FRONTIER

The quest to build a home in the frontier is more incisive given the availability of publicly owned land. Typically migrants purchase through brokers 120 sq yard plots on illegally subdivided public land, a generous allotment when compared with inner city slums where 40-50 sq. yard plots in dense settlements are the prevailing norm. In the peri-urban frontier illegal land acquisitions are worked out in collaboration with Baluch migrants who as 'old settlers' with *usufruct rights* negotiate with brokers, the police and government officials to convert public land into private property, and later re-sell to new settlers. In the frontier the construction of inchoate communities thrives on processes that evade the panoptic authority of the modern state.

**Figure 5. Peri-urban Settlements**



Source: Author

On each 'illegal' land transaction the police often take a fixed cut. For instance on a 100 sq. yd. plot of land that sells for an average of Rs. 2 lakh (US $2012), on the initial plotting of a one acre plot the police *thana* (local station) generally takes a lump sum of Rs. 250, 000 (US $2515). Much later when plots are sold, the police representatives are 'gifted' Rs. 5000 each (US $50). [20] Moreover, the *dalaal*'s own financial investments range anywhere from paying *goth* elders money to purchase land, to shelling out large sums for land registry, survey and lease fees, for setting up electricity and gas

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[20] Conversations with Perween Rehman, December 2011, January 2012, March and June 2012, and with Pakhtun land brokers and officials in BoR. Conversion rate of PKR/USD = 98.54122.

supply connections, and paying Board of Revenue (BoR) officials who are often on the broker's payroll. The most important challenge lies in formalizing land titles and agreeing with BoR officials on a *rate of bribe* to secure 99 year leases for several 120 sq. yard plots. The OPP-RTI estimate illegal land transactions in the periphery have an annual turnover of Rs. 30 billion (US $302 million).

**Figure 6. The Peri-urban under Construction**



Source: Author

'Illicit' land transactions, conversions and orderings of property unfold in 'behind the scenes' negotiations between state functionaries, brokers and political fixers associated with various political parties. In the region where I continue my fieldwork, brokers who subdivide and 'settle' the land represent the lower end of an upwardly mobile and expanding Pakhtun middle class. The brokers' control over land, access to local politicians solidifies and strengthens their power base and enhances their social positions within the larger Pakhtun community. New migrants/settlers ask for and accept the brokers' interventions because these men are acknowledged as men of authority by virtue of their connections with state officials and politicians.

In Karachi's periphery rural abodes subsumed by new waves of migration are rapidly transforming into *abadis* (settlements), a process that has also been facilitated by the NGO OPP-RTI's interventions. This process has been intensifying since 2002 and has encompassed the conversion of nearly 30,000 acres of agricultural land and the concomitant settlement of almost 9 million persons.[21]

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[21]  Ibid.

**Figure 7. Interior Spaces**



Source: Author

The material aspects of claiming land and making property also embody deeply emotional values shaped by fluid alliances and collaborations. On-ground alliances between competing ethnic groups are often based on pragmatism in the wake of a pro-democracy ideological context. I refer to new notions of inclusiveness that characterize discourses of 'good governance', 'participatory citizenship' and decentralization in Pakistan, and a vague sense of popular empowerment tied to a deep specificity to each social group through various scales of politics, which are yielding questionable inclusive effects.

**Figure 8. Interior Spaces**



Source: Author

The urbanizing frontier represents the tentativeness of urbanization, the area where the poor are expelled to or kept away from those parts of the city where new skylines emerge to form a resplendent Karachi or a world class city. The new frontier is perhaps even more opaque than the center; in a messy terrain of agricultural plots, illegal subdivisions, and *goth* (agricultural) land occupied by Baluch migrants who make genealogical claims on this territory, an entrepreneurial-political-administrative juggernaut in search of cheap land and hopeful of expectations about urban futures and by extension the nation's growth, exerts its own logic of accumulation. In a world of *dalaals*, police, politicians and bureaucrats, the dust bowl of the frontier is a new zone of land speculation tied with new aspirations and wealth creation. But officially this frontier is shown as bare spots on a map that renders invisible the intense competition between groups to define the nature, function and meaning of these empty spaces.

Driving through an area near Gadap Town's *Deh Halkani*, one can observe orderly demarcations of freshly subdivided land with low-rise boundary walls and gates constructed around large plots that stretch for miles. These former *goths* are now part of a development scheme controlled by the parastatal, the Lyari Development Authority (LDA). The LDA plays a key role in the conversion of *goths* into prime real estate. In the official narrative, areas like Deh Halkani are 'recovered' by the Board of Revenue from land grabbers and either 'grandfathered' or earmarked for low-income residential schemes or hospitals.

Ground realities suggest otherwise. The local LDA boss is known to strike deals with Baluch *goth* landowners to convert rural land into up market development schemes. From the balcony of the local LDA office one can see in the far distance the imposing gates to a new middle-class residential scheme titled *Naya Nazimabad* (New Nazimabad – Figure 9). This scheme is being constructed by a prominent financier who is channeling investments into building gated developments for the middle class market.

**Figure 9. Advertisement for Naya Nazimabad**



In recent years mobility in Karachi has encompassed not only the displacement dynamics highlighted earlier, but also fueled by diminishing opportunities to rent homes or buy land, and sustain businesses in the city center. This dynamic combined with large-scale evictions to accommodate multibillion dollar infrastructure projects and intensifying levels of insecurity force people to move out of inner-city neighborhoods and into new, empty spaces on the periphery that holds the promise of a better, secure future or as one Pakhtun broker/informant described: the promise of a home where *fitree sakoon* (peace) is made possible.[22] Moreover, extreme segregation and the encroachment of ethnic politics into municipal governance for consolidating the power of certain political parties, and outright extortion (*bhatha*) through coercive means exacerbate for certain groups the discomfort of not belonging.

In a new structural adjustment phase, the cost of urban living in Pakistan has increased dramatically. With the price of food and shelter increasing and land grabs and land speculation by urban-based elites on the rise, the context of economic hardship necessitates that reciprocal obligations are sometimes maintained between rural and urban households and often within various kinds of networks and linkages. In the locality where I continue my fieldwork, migrants seek footholds in a variety of ways: from urban-based affiliations such as the *Tablighi Jamaat's* religious network that assist in supplying land, building houses and providing healthcare facilities and loans, to local clan-based associations, community organizations and informal networks of apprentices and entrepreneurs, and networks of mobile traders. How do mobile subjects become 'emplaced' in the material sense, and what are the associated mechanisms of emplacement and appropriation?

In Karachi or in Pakistan in general, where state regulatory authority has largely weakened and state institutions do not operate the way they are expected to, it is the lower echelons of the bureaucracy and powerful ministerial positions that ensure a small amount of predictability or certainty. Predictability is also sought in the realm of law where appeals to higher state officials who are seen as defenders of law hold the promise of certainty, stability and order. In the inscription of the new

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[22] The construction of the US $1.5 billion Lyari Expressway led to the destruction of 10,000 homes. See http://www.citego.info/?Lyari-Expressway-in-Pakistan&lang=fr

frontier, law together with the survey and the map promote conflict but also provide conditions of possibility for crafting a sense of local. Building a house and /or mapping the boundaries of an illegal settlement with the guidance of the OPP-RTI's representatives may allow new arrivals to create their own social worlds, while engaging in consumption, embellishing houses with certain types of bright designs (Figure 10) may be an expression of their stake in progress and modernity.

**Figure 10. Decorated Homes**



Source: Author

These are the sites where connections are made and where documents, plans, judgments and certificates are issued on the basis of negotiations. In the realms of political brokerage, NGO governance and law, individuals 'place' themselves as permanent members of a locality based on a series of collaborations and obligations, and in the process enact deliberate campaigns of community formation in an effort to produce a coherent notion of a mobilized collectivity. The anxieties and concerns about who can do what legitimately necessitates that such negotiation in order to remain purposeful unfolds under a cloak of invisibility.

Emplacement also requires acts of movement and of waiting. On the one hand navigating the constantly shifting apparatus of city government with their myriad services, carrying messages or papers to local NGO representatives and infrastructure brokers, and on the other hand always being on the lookout for something to happen, which literally means staying put in the compounds of makeshift homes, hanging around amidst the rubble of houses demolished by municipal authorities, and thinking about the next step to restore order, or sitting at petrol stations near highway intersections not too far from home to see what opportunity might arise.

**Figure 11. Waiting near the Northern Bypass**



Source: Author

In Karachi's peri-urban interface, acts of mobility are sometimes also constrained, maybe even disconnected, fragmented and confined. Those with greater mobility or capacity to move may become inaccessible when the causes of immobility are financial and linked to gender responsibilities and access to different kinds of transport. Some people are better positioned amidst local, national and transnational flows to imagine themselves as mobile and forward looking, while others are perhaps more stuck in a confined zone.

**Figure 12. Main Road near New Settlements Leading to Northern Bypass**



Source: Author

## BROKERS, BUREAUCRATS, BLURRED BOUNDARIES

At the very least then, emplacement, the construction of houses and the building of communities should be understood as a process that unfolds in a world where migrants search for a mechanism to re-envisage social order and to re-present themselves in local efforts at transformation. For many these efforts are articulated through the idiom of citizenship, long the rhetorical cornerstone of the state's inclusive politics. To this end, 'place' and 'home' cannot be assumed as stable objects but where the materiality of the local is contingent and fragile, requiring what Arjun Appadurai calls 'hard and regular work' to produce and maintain materiality (1996:180). Hard work entails all kinds of things, from the building of houses and settlements to the rituals of naming and mapping.

What can take us slightly further in understanding this locality production is Hansen & Verkaaik's (2009) notion of the distribution of certainty and gestures of human potentiality. They astutely posit that knowledge of the urban world rests on those individuals who demonstrate abilities to maneuver, control and govern the urban landscape, and hence are able to create narratives about the city and its people. Such figures convert the opacity and impenetrability of urban life into a resource, and I refer here again to figures such as the *dalaal* and also to state functionaries such as the *tapedar* and the *mukhtiarkar* who have extensive jurisdiction over lands in the expanding frontier. The production of locality or processes of making home in the periphery is inextricably bound with the knowledge and abilities that such figures possess and demonstrate.

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The production of Karachi's unplanned settlements has long been the handiwork of brokers who control the subdivision of public (at times private) land and who with the aid of local police and state functionaries such as Board of Revenue (BoR) officers facilitate plot sales for low and middle-income markets. The *mukhtiarkar* (head) and the *tapedar*(lowest functionary also known as *patwari*) are revenue officers in charge of obtaining taxes and maintaining land records of ownership for subdivisions within their administrative ambit. The origins of these state functionaries who have extensive authority and power can be traced not only to British colonial rule but also to an earlier period of Mughal imperial rule when the role of the *tehsildar* was important in matters of Islamic administration. In Sindh a *tehsildar* is known as *mukhtiarkar*.

While it is not uncommon for these state functionaries to be linked with discourses of corruption or land record tampering, my interest in them lies in the entanglements[23] that draw these figures and *dalaals* into a subversive form of political agency and contingencies steeped in quiet negotiations that provoke new urban forms, orderings of property and citizenship arrangements.[24] It is in these intimate, imperceptible spaces that the boundaries between state and society breakdown (Fuller & Benei 2001), forcing us to consider the relationship between the *dalaal* and the formal Pakistani state. When in a casual conversation a BoR official explained that the Pakhtun *dalaal* is different because he settles land, develops it, does not destroy it and helps the poor, I was struck by how this narrative of distinction not only suggested a collaborative relationship but also presented a moment in which the *dalaal* and the bureaucrat are projected as social protectors who respond to the needs of the marginalized. Can we consider the *dalaal* the face of the state? What do these relationships tell us about the structuring of local power and political practices that are directing new urban futures?

Figures like the *dalaal* straddle the domain of urban life as powerful individuals who are simultaneously revered and condemned and their connections traverse communities enabling and facilitating economic flows and the distribution of favors. They represent the phenomenon of *infra-power* that has emerged with the modern postcolonial city, and in many ways made possible by the colonial habit of government at a distance. What makes infra-power different from patronage is its unpredictability and capacity to breed unlikely connections between disconnected worlds of economic exchange and political alliances.

Such power is achieved through social agency *outside* of the state apparatus or is understood as a power that competes with the authority of the state. In this definition the *outside* tends to resonate with the conventional boundaries that are drawn between state and society. How do we conceptualize infra-power that straddles the blurred boundaries between state and civil society? In this context, is the broker produced out of structures that maintain the distance between state and society or out of some other political space?[25]

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[23] Matthew Hull's (2012) excellent research on planning Islamabad draws attention to the nature of such entanglements, albeit focusing on the materiality of signs.

[24] In conventional terms corruption has been understood as anti-democratic or as a subversion of rationality (Robertson 2006). Visvanathan (2008) underscores corruption is an ethnoscience that sustains the migrant's agency.

[25] This is an epistemological question that I do not have room to pursue in this paper. However, Timothy Mitchell (1991) provides a useful way to consider the conundrum about the state's insides and outsides.

Studies interrogating dynamics of infra-power in spaces where the state's reach is partial have focused mostly on male-dominated networks. This research is significant in that it forces us to think about the relationship between assertions of masculinity and spatial, extra-legal forms of urban protection. However, this research has made limited attempts to connect with more ambiguous, feminized repertoires of power and agency. An exception is Tarini Bedi's work (forthcoming) on political brokerage and Shiv Sena women in Mumbai's peri-urbanizing regions.[26] Nevertheless, to speak of a specific class or group of militant female brokers in Karachi's peri-urban context is deeply problematic as political parties, with the exception of the MQM, do not overtly induct women as trusted patrons or political fixers. Given that politics is always gendered (Brown 1992), how women navigate the realm of patronage politics, brokerage and attendant material transactions in Karachi's urbanizing frontier is a challenging question that demands deep empirical explorations.


**CONCLUSION**

In this working paper I have reflected on Karachi's urban futures in the context of ongoing migrations, displacements and the making of new settlements. These dynamics are placed at the peri-urban interface where social change and upheavals reverberate in struggles to reshape a new frontier through patronage politics, brokerage power, new orderings of property and new kinds of class and physical (im)mobilities. In this fast changing landscape where degradation and anxieties about settling in the 'margins' is pervasive, localized sovereignties in the appearance of brokers and NGOs, community activists and religious networks overlap in complex ways to navigate emergent forms of politics in a post-military, democratizing moment.

A key issue then is how in different spatial, material and temporal streams, contingent forms of power and politics catalyze networks of both male and female dominated brokerage that make possible for marginal residents in new settlements to assume a presence in the broader political process of urban change. Moreover, in a new democratic moment when new notions of inclusiveness, biopolitical interventions and NGO governance have arisen, how should we define the limits and potentialities of infra-power, attendant gender dynamics and by extension the new idioms of citizenship and community with new groups of settlers casting their claims and perhaps precariously accepting their lot as citizens? What kind of urban politics is emerging today and what are the new levers and tipping points available to enable and sustain residency in one of Asia's fastest-growing cities?

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[26]  Tarini Bedi (forthcoming) *Dashing Ladies of the Shiv Sena: Urban Brokers and the Gendered Politics of Performance*.

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